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In The Studio With Artist Elisabeth Condon

Taking Inspiration from sources both close to and very far from home, Elisabeth Condon's dramatic paintings are alive with color and texture.

They say that travel broadens the mind. After moving to New York from Los Angeles, **Elisabeth Condon** traveled to Europe for art projects and residencies. She then ventured to Asia, spurred on by a fascination with the scrolls of the **Song Dynasty painters**. Here she reveals some of her early influences and current techniques.



Elisabeth Condon, photographed exclusively for *Christie's International Real Estate magazine*, at Wave Hill, a public garden and cultural center in New York City, where she recently held a residency. Photograph: Laura Barisonzi. Banner image: *Quit Safari*, 2016. Acrylic, ink, and glitter on linen, 47 x 151 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed

I grew up on Moraga Drive in Los Angeles, a small street near Mulholland Drive abutting a canyon. The neighborhood was idyllic: eucalyptus and palm trees, bougainvillea, and ice plant surrounded modernist homes on winding streets. Later we moved to Encino, where my mother decorated enthusiastically, informing my current work, which is inspired by the wallpaper and fabric patterns she chose.



Elisabeth Condon, *Unnatural Life*, 2016. Acrylic and ink on linen, 54 x 72 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed **Décor, illustrations, and museum works combine** to form my earliest memories of art. Our house on Moraga Drive was decorated in Hawaiian Modern style. A Goji harlequin in my sister's bedroom and the illustrations in a poetry edition of World Book's children's encyclopedia were other, immediate influences that merge in memory with **Degas's ballerinas**, Monet's **Poplars** series, and **Matisse's Tea** (1919) at LACMA.



Elisabeth Condon, *Housing Unit*, 2016. Watercolour, 22 x 30 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed
My childhood ambition was to be an artist, without knowing exactly what that meant. The world of art always drew me in. To express oneself visually, communicating beyond words to direct experience, provides the ultimate freedom.



Elisabeth Condon, *Flower Space in Green*, 2016. Acrylic, ink, and glitter on linen, 54 x 72 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed

I majored in art, studying conceptual practices and the history of film at the University of California San Diego before transferring to University of California Los Angeles and Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design, where my interests shifted to painting, ultimately graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Art was always my path, and I am fortunate to show my work in dialog with other artists. Painting is how I process information: as [the painter] **Philip Guston** said, “I have to see it.”



Elisabeth Condon, *Love, American Style*, 2016. Acrylic on linen, 54 x 72 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed

My paintings are synthetic landscapes that combine real and imaginary worlds. They overlay patterns with different spaces, direct and indirect processes. I begin each canvas with its back on the floor, pouring and spilling color. The pours create random and inventive spaces that excite imagination and improvisation. Adding bits of sketches made in Asia, Europe, the US—or my mother’s fabric or wallpaper patterns—balances multiple paint applications and materials, contrasting line with pour, for example, translucent color with glitter, or imagery with washes of color.



Elisabeth Condon, *Street Noise*, 2016. Acrylic on linen, 54 x 72 inches. Courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery, Miami, Florida/Phillip Reed

Travel clarifies the interaction of mechanical and natural worlds. It also renders time and place permeable, like a scroll unfurling through space. I began to envision landscape as a container for disparate elements to co-exist. Likewise, if the edges of a painting hold any and every thing within them, painting becomes like taking a trip.



Elisabeth Condon, *Broken Links*, 2016. Acrylic, glitter, pumice, and latex on linen, 59 x 59 inches. Courtesy Lesley Heller Workspace, New York, New York/Phillip Reed

Wave Hill contrasts excitingly with The Florida Everglades, where I was in residency last year. **Wave Hill** is a cultivated formal garden, with an abundance of ways to maintain a wide range of plant life, while the cypress domes and mangroves of the **Everglades** subsist on the lowest nutrients possible, and its ecosystems are subtle. Joining these two environments and others is something I dream to realize in new paintings.



"Treating the painting like a drawing invites serendipity and freedom," says Elisabeth Condon. Photograph: Laura Barisonzi

The more I practice ink painting the more I respect its disciplined reminder to remain alert and rhythmic in the balance of elements. The fleeting, gestural quality of touch in scrolls inspires me to maintain a light hand, even on a dense, glittery surface, or to keep areas of the canvas untouched and allow the painting to breathe. I enforce principles more than the appearances of Chinese painting as inspiration for my own language, rather than adopting an already fully developed visual syntax and history.

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