

Elisabeth Condon: “Unnatural Life” at Emerson Dorsch Gallery

[Neil Vazquez](#) May 1, 2017



“Flower Space in Green,” 2016, Elisabeth Condon, Acrylic on linen, 54” x 72”

Photo: courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery

Vibrant, beautiful, and fragrant, flowers have inspired artists as varied as Georgia O’Keeffe and Charlie Kaufman. Brooklyn-based artist Elisabeth Condon uses the natural flora of her adopted home, Tampa, Florida—where she taught painting and drawing at the University of South Florida from 2003 to 2014—as the palette for her whimsical oeuvre. Her latest work is currently on display in a show at Emerson Dorsch Gallery’s new home in the heart of Miami’s Little Haiti neighborhood. Pale-pink, deep-blue, and fluorescent-

green hues mix, mingle, and interact, often just on a single canvass. Yet don't let the awkward pastiche of colors fool you. Behind Condon's jarring hues lies a deep meditation on proportion and abstraction, not just an ostensible exercise in coloristic mishmash.

Working in a flurry, she forms petals, pines, and errant fronds with an ersatz sense of entropy and fecundity. These forms are balanced by a clear feel for color and palette that, though at times abstracted beyond recognition—bleeding out into the edges of the frame, displacing form into large swatches of bright hues—is balanced with neutrals, set against glittery surfaces, and muddled in their mixtures. In *Pink Feeder* (2015), for example, a clean red hue is layered with an iridescent pearl so the pigments show through. The play between a pure color, or a color straight out of the bottle, and another color that moves through the top coat evokes a sense of dynamism, turning static images into flourishing renditions. It's a technique that Condon has slowly developed through her many years of study and practice.

Easily dismissed as frivolity for their apparently superficiality, Condon's work extends far beyond the complex palettes and abstract forms she renders on the canvas. Prompted by a growing fascination with ancient Chinese scrolls, Condon's research led to a reinterpretation of Eastern principles of balance and restraint for an information-saturated world. From that philosophical jumping-off point, she crafts canvasses late into the night. Condon likes to split her time between her Brooklyn and Tampa studios. The two spaces bookend the abstract and representational nodes of her work. The latter comprises the bulk of the current show. Lush and exuberant, these pieces are imbued with the spirit of the tropics.