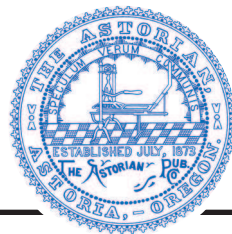


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

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Emilio Lobato outside Sea Level.

R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Cannon Beach through an artist's eye

Is Cannon Beach a getaway or a place to tune in? For many of us it's a little of both.

Emilio Lobato III came to the coast in January from his home in Denver. The painter and his family have returned to Cannon Beach almost every year since their first getaway in 1987. Lobato's wife, Darlene Sisneros, a prominent Denver attorney, died six years ago.

This winter, Emilio returned alone for an immersive artistic experience. His work can also be found in the William Havu Gallery in Denver and the Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland. He has exhibited in Denver's Kirkland Museum, the Denver Art Museum and galleries nationally.

Q: What was it that drew you here?

Lobato: Cannon Beach has always been a good place for hunkering down, cocooning, working on projects. I loaded up my car with supplies and I've been here a month painting.

Q: Why mid-winter?

Lobato: I was a little bit worried about coming to such a small town for an extended period.

I have found that I love it. I absolutely love it. It seems like a place where writers live. It's an incredible place to visit when there's no one around. There have been days I've taken walks and I've got the beach to myself. It feels like it's mine.

Q: Tell me about your paintings.

Lobato: Painting is a misnomer in this case. I'm an abstract painter, but this time I'm doing collages. Collecting antique books, papers, physical materials and gluing them down to a surface.

Q: Like some of Picasso's work?

Lobato: Picasso was famous for taking the daily newspaper and gluing it into his compositions and painting on top of it. His (collages) were political, mine are not. They're very, very personal.

I was trying to think what could I create that would describe this region. And more importantly, my experience with it.

Q: Has it been a productive period?

Lobato: I've finished 16 pieces while I'm here, 24-by-24 inches, all collages. I brought the panels, then scoured the coastline for materials that would speak of this area. I found some beautiful old merchant ledgers in Astoria from the 1800s. I found a big antique map of Tillamook Bay. I love books as art pieces.



Emilio Lobato

'Tillamook,' collage and mixed media on panel, 24" x 24" (2019), by Emilio Lobato. Lobato took local materials and used them in his work.

Q: How do the collages fit thematically with your paintings?

Lobato: My work is typically a little more dark, geometric, with harder edges. This is much lighter, and playful, hopefully capturing a sense of childhood and nostalgia, a quality in the air, pleasant memories.

Q: How does the coastal environment influence your work?

Lobato: When I'm here the rest of the world disappears. The ocean, I'm finding, is sort of hydrating my soul.

I grew up in such an isolated part of Colorado that the nearest neighbor was half a mile away. So my work of the last 20-plus years has been about isolation and solitude. I've worked that into my themes. That landscape always lent itself to my process — to imagine, to wander, to create, to experiment. The ocean affords me that too.

Q: What do you look for when approaching the canvas?

Lobato: The world doesn't need another painting of the ocean. Don't get me wrong, it's beautiful, but there are plenty that exist. What can I do to bring a different perspective to that experience?

My wife was an avid kite flyer. She adored stunt kites. She discovered them here. She bought very expensive, super-fast ones, and we traveled with them. She'd bring them here every year, and fly them. She never felt such bliss. One of my inspirations on this trip was to capture that moment.

Q: Describe Cannon Beach from an artist's perspective.

Lobato: There's beauty in everything. The coastline is beautiful. The quality of light is exquisite.

You don't know where the ocean ends and the sky begins. The earth seems to meet the waters.

It's like the edge of the earth. I can't imagine what that looked like to ancient explorers — no wonder they thought they were going to fall off the edge.

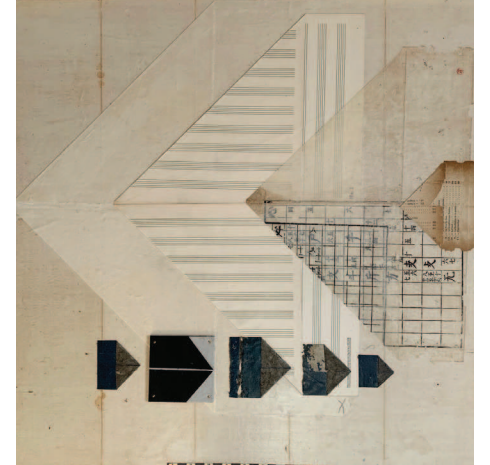
Q: Tell me your impressions of Cannon Beach today.

Lobato: I love the mom-and-pop feeling. I love that automobiles are not allowed on the beach.

Cannon Beach is very clean. It's retained that rugged, pristine look.

Q: How are you handling the isolation?

Lobato: This is the most I have talked



Emilio Lobato

'Salish,' collage and mixed media on panel, 24" x 24" (2019), by Emilio Lobato. The work was completed during the artist's stay in Cannon Beach.



Emilio Lobato

'Elegy, After R.M.,' collage and mixed media on panel, 24" x 24" (2019), named for the painter Robert Motherwell.

in three weeks. I'm a somewhat social guy, but I'm surprised how easy it is to shut down.

I think my next step might be a monastery where people don't speak for a week — I wonder if I'm up for the challenge.

Q: When did you feel you made it as an artist?

Lobato: I feel I have arrived as an artist at many times in my career. I've had exhibitions, for example. When you get one of those, it's validation. But you never really quite arrive as an artist. There's always something else to aspire to. I've learned I've been lucky to paint full time for almost 26 years.

R.J. Marx is editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette, and covers South County for The Daily Astorian.