

Views from the Rock

An artist's process

Emilio Lobato aims to capture 'that moment of bliss'

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 Lobato returned alone for an immersive artistic experience. Lobato's work can also be found Wiliam 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.

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



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.

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



Emilio Lobato during his visit to Cannon Beach.

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 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.

A safe place to land in Cannon Beach

Michele Duncan King is a licensed massage therapist, registered yoga teacher and personal development coach; she is the owner of Sea Spell Massage in Cannon Beach. She enjoys travel, in particular to spiritual-based retreats; recently she returned from just such a sojourn in the French West Indies.

"Re-immersion shouldn't have to be so hard," Duncan King said. Which is why she created "A Safe Place to Land," a series of workshops meeting the first Thursday of every month to help herself and others hold on to that healing, restorative energy and wisdom one gains on a retreat.

"Access your inner wisdom and find your voice using fun and highly effective tools and processes," Duncan King said. "For each gathering, we'll pick a project or topic to explore, but mostly we'll be letting the places that need to come up to the light just do that."

Before becoming a licensed massage therapist, Duncan King toiled in the law field for 20 years. "Then my mom was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease at the age of 53," she said. "I had an immediate realization that I needed to do work that brought myself and others more joy." She later expanded her goal to educating people how to better care for their bodies, including after they left the massage table, developing a practice of alignment based yoga, or what she described as kinesis yoga.

"Something really special and powerful shows up when women sit together in a safe place, authentically sharing of themselves," Duncan King said.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



Sea Shell Massage

"Connection, clarity, support, laughter, solutions, and ease appear effortlessly." She said she'll be sparking the muse with creative projects and thought-provoking topics to inspire in a non-judgmental atmosphere of self-expression and transformative personal growth.

"Together we can create a safe, warm, and caring place where we can share from our heart, have fun, and learn new life skills," she said. "And there will be chocolate at every meeting."

A Safe Place to Land meets the first Thursday of every month at Sea Spell Massage, located at 115 W. Nelchena St. in Cannon Beach. The group meets from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. A \$10 donation is requested, although an item with a personal value is OK if cash flow is a challenge. Even granola or avocados as payment are welcome. For more information or to register, call or text.

To register call or text 541-819-0579 or log on to www.cannonbeach.org/event/a-soft-place-to-land.

Do good, have fun, make money

Do you have a personal operating philosophy? I do. Mine is "Do good, have fun, make money, because we have to pay the bills." Let me explain a little. Doing good is what motivates me. I'm an elected public official, a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), and church lady in order to do good in the world. It floats my boat.

Having fun matters because doing good should feel good, provide satisfaction and joy. Working together in teams that do the greatest good for the greatest number is something that warms and nourishes my heart. It also means using compassion whenever possible.

Making money is an essential element, because we also operate in the material world and a capitalist economy. Good thoughts and good feelings matter a lot, but almost always there's a financial component involved in taking actions in the world.

The job of county commissioner involves considering costs and benefits. We take in money all day long every day, in the form of various taxes and fees. We provide services all day long every day, in the form of programs and services. That's our job. That's why government exists, and we elected officials are your representatives to do that.

When Clatsop County Commissioners are sworn into office, we take a vow to obey the laws of the State of Oregon and of Clatsop County. We vow to act legally as your representatives.

We are also bound by Ethics Commission laws to behave ethically as your representatives.

We are well-advised to behave in a fiscally prudent manner, considering efficient and effective use of public monies to provide public services as your representatives.

I am committed to behaving in ways that are legal, ethical, and fiscally prudent to provide public services to you and for you. You are my boss, and you make the money to pay the bills.

I am committed to providing you the opportunity to be seen and heard in the public process. Just last month representatives came to testify to the Board of County Commissioners at our meetings in Astoria.

TUNNEL ECHOES

LIANNE THOMPSON



ria. Both Falcon Cove Beach Water District and Elsie Vinemapple held up their needs in the public venue. That's good for them and good for everyone, that they had opportunity to be visible.

What other measures of good government matter? To me, accountability and transparency matter. Accountability means that we consider whose costs and whose benefits. We consider the most efficient and effective ways to achieve the outcomes and goals we have thoughtfully articulated in an open and welcoming public process.

Nigel Jaquiss said, "Corruption in Oregon doesn't look like envelopes full of hundred-dollar bills being passed. Corruption in Oregon looks like cronyism without accountability." That makes sense to me. We're all accountable to someone. Who is our boss? Is it the voters, or is it political operatives who put us into office to deliver our voice and our vote to them, when they have an issue or a cause?

I learned some hard lessons early into my career as a County Commission. I received a telephone call from a lobbyist who said, "Lianne, here's how I want you to vote on this issue." I was told by the Board Chair, "I gave you a contribution. You owe me your vote." Someone I had considered a friend sat at my kitchen table and said, "The environmental community got you elected. You have to dance with the ones that bring you. If you don't vote the way we want you to do on this issue, we won't support you. And there's talk of a recall."

Oh. So that's how it works here, I thought. Here's a deeper value, a more significant voice in my mind and memory: my father's. He said, "Let your conscience be your guide." Better advice than those trying to control and command my voice and vote.

You elected me to serve you, using my moral compass and the best thinking I could bring to every issue. I listen to all sides of

every issue, to the best of my ability. Then I use my best judgment, which is what I think you elected me to do, even if we don't agree completely every time on every issue.

Here's a significant challenge: District 5 is sharply and deeply divided on a variety of issues. There are people who think it's morally wrong to cut a single tree and that people who cut trees are evil. There are people who have for generations made their living cutting trees to provide support for their families and their communities.

How do we wage peace together rather than making war on one another when we have widely divergent points of view?

We need good listening, committing to welcoming divergent points of view in a respectful way. We need to do it in public, in a way that is transparent and open to public view.

What I'm seeing in the newly elected chair and the newly constituted board makes me wonder about our collective commitment to transparency and accountability. Things are still developing, but I'm preparing to raise more concerns and raise them more openly if we continue down a path that lessens transparency and accountability.

One more thing about accountability. It's best used as a tool, not as a weapon. It's important to allow for learning curves, growing by doing and making mistakes. Whenever possible, I look for the "no harm, no foul" evaluation if a mistake is recognized and owned and helps us learn and grow.

Most of all, we have to be willing to share our truths, not silence or exclude those who raise questions or concerns. I've seen too much of that. "Denial ain't just a river in Egypt," as the saying goes, and it doesn't help us address what needs to be seen, heard, and resolved.

And I'm still working on housing, ecologically sustainable economic development, and resilience. Those are the bigger picture, longer-term solutions we need, going forward together.

Lianne Thompson is Clatsop County commissioner for District 5.

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THE NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING

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