

MIND
LEAVES
BODY

Elisabeth Condon Susan Luss Alyse Rosner

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WESTBETH GALLERY 55 BETHUNE ST. NEW YORK, NY 10014 WESTBETH.ORG



Mind Leaves Body Elisabeth Condon, Susan Luss and Alyse Rosner at Westbeth Gallery, New York, NY

Mind Leaves Body: Landscape, Mindscape, Immersion

by Paul D'Agostino

Mysterious are the mechanisms governing the interoperations of our bodies and minds. A relative mystery is even the extent to which such operations are interoperative or cooperative, independent or interdependent, clearly traceable in physical manners or cleanly expressible via semantics. While some such distinctions are understood to an extent, underlying questions of degree persist, and discussions and debates surrounding these concerns are often characterized by nebulosity. In this sense, the present series of observations is no exception. And yet, it's also the nebulosity of it all that makes it all so compelling. Conundrums of body and mind are as fuel for the imagination.

A counterpart to this swirl of mysteries is the notion of creative flow – a type of sensation, to which many visual artists can relate, that the mind seems to sometimes relinquish control of the properly physical operations of the creative mode. Some artists perceive such states of flow as the mind leaving the body. For others, it seems more like the body letting the mind go. For others yet, assiduousness of focus on tasks at hand sometimes gets so deep that awarenesses of body and mind alike seem to fall by the wayside, while the active mechanisms of making – abuzz with the energies of creating ‘in the zone’ – just seem to churn along on their own. ‘On autopilot’, ‘mindless’, and ‘unconscious’ are commonly used as descriptors by those familiar with such ‘zones’ of activity. ‘In the flow’, of course, is another. Yet regardless of how different artists parse their experiences of creative flow, many would agree that the mindless body is often the more fluidly productive one in the studio. Some sense of inhibition or apprehension, however slight, is bypassed, at which point making the work proceeds freely and uninhibited.

Mind Leaves Body is an exhibition of works by three artists – Elisabeth Condon, Susan Luss, and Alyse Rosner – for whom various aspects of creative flow are so integral to their studio practices that they might well factor into their lists of materials. This is not to say that it's their lone mode of making, nor that it's something they simply elect to tap into every time they're in the studio. But it is something all three of them have in common as a manner of making they recognize and cultivate, and that they experience as a recurring creative circumstance. For all three artists, it's also a creative state that can be catalyzed or instantiated in multivalent ways with regard to materials and process, conceptual and thematic focus, and considerations of scale, all of which are indicative of various types of immersive engagement in methodologies of making. For instance, their mixed media processes are involved and layered, ranging from preparatory pours, washes, and dying to variably abstract gestural, textural, descriptive, and meticulous mark making. Broadly defined notions of landscape are among their shared thematic concerns, understood as counterpoint or complement to urban settings, places of respite or remove from the valleys to the cosmos, or all-encompassing spaces of exteriority.

While such considerations of materiality, process, and subject matter aren't readily equivalent to mandates for immersive, flow-state-like creative modes, they do potentiate such circumstances when activated at large scales. In simply objective terms, treating, composing, and bringing to completion a more expansive surface will require more materials and time alike, thereby raising the level of physical and temporal commitment,

and thus engagement. In turn, a deeper engagement, at larger scales and over more time, with variably and vastly envisionable subjects like nature, landscape, and celestial spheres, will also tend to usher in immersive states. While working as such, Condon, Luss, and Rosner harness intuition and improvisation to channel direct experience. Rather than observation or transcription, the artists let impulse and instinct lead the way as they reimagine and reanimate the landscapes inhabiting their minds, infusing them with ecstatic dynamism and losing themselves in the process. While nurturing such types of physical and imaginative engagement as ways to get lost in acts of making – and to create potential pathways for synesthetic transmissions and creative flow – the artists invariably transpose certain aspects of their creative circumstances to their viewers’ experiences as well. In other words, work made immersively translates to immersive looking. On some level, as one’s flow state becomes another’s, creative flow is wont to keep flowing.

Elisabeth Condon’s featured artworks in *Mind Leaves Body* comprise paintings of various scales, sculptures, and scrolls. The artist’s sources of inspiration for these pieces are family memories, decorative patterning, processional traditions such as parades, and of course, landscape, especially of the atmospherically lush, robustly botanical sort. Of particular interest to the artist is also the extent to which such settings might be inflected by the realities of urban dwelling. Condon’s recent paintings show her deploying sequential strata of immersive processes such as staining, dying, and pouring – processes, to wit, that are at once physically immersive for the practitioner, on the one hand, and materially immersive for treated surfaces, on the other – until indications of desired imagery begin to emerge. For the artist, an important outcome of this methodology is that “all layers are left simultaneously visible, creating spaces that seem to breathe.” These qualities are unmistakable in *Lost Garden*, an engulfing, chromatically bountiful dance of a painting, in gouache and ink on paper, measuring approximately five feet in height and over twenty feet in length. Here, expansive washes, splatters, and broad suffusions of rich greens, warm browns, and earthy yellow notes furnish the backdrop to an erumpent procession of deep crimson, soft pink, punchy violet, creamy white, and golden yellow blossoms in the foreground. Meticulously described and delineated, and so fully alive that they seem to audibly sing, these animated florals appear to preen and sway in place, responding to a hint of breeze passing through a roiling patch of brush on a humid evening in a bayou. The different suite of materials and surface in *Folded Flower* – this one acrylic and polymer on canvas – lend themselves to a similarly vivid and dynamic, yet markedly more graphically assertive, even while more abstract, composition. Here, Condon’s washes and pours of variable purples seem to bleed outward, ever so viscously, from the center until delimited by linear interventions and triangular forms near the edges of the surface. From our vantage point as viewers, it’s as if we’re tucked inside of an enormous iris or tulip, coddled by its velvety petals and drunk on its sensuous aromas. In a way, it’s a microcosmic sense of landscape expressed with utmost interiority.

Susan Luss’s recent paintings in *Mind Leaves Body*, all very large scale, show the artist continuing to echo, reflect, and refract the landscapes and celestial spheres that have long inspired her. At the same time, these new works show her negotiating new palettes and materials as well, and navigating a range of deeply resonant personal experiences of intellectual and emotional growth. Much of this is most fully and vividly on display in *A Stake in the Ground*, a massive work of twelve by eighteen feet in which poured, dyed, and splattered areas converge with and become tethered by radial linearities, floating geometries, and iterative patterning, all of which comes into elegant confluence in a composition

that somehow scans as both markedly full and sparely, selectively marked – and as a topographic glimpse of a geologically restive mineral deposit. The artist’s materials here are dyes and rust on canvas, creating a vibrant, terrestrially filtered palette that beams predominantly with earthy yellows and ranges of bright and ruddy orange hues, intermittently toned down by deeper reds, subtle browns, and the beige tones of raw canvas. Luss describes this work as a true watershed moment, transitional on levels material and conceptual alike. Making it entailed a temporary turn away from working through the body-centric chromatic gravitas of red to explore the ideas of levity, liberation, enlightenment, and wisdom the artist associates with yellows and golds. Luss likens the ‘stake’ in question to a declaration of freedom: “It’s about making a choice and the freedom that can result from that. It is freedom from indecision, from things that can’t be changed. It is acceptance.” *New Land* channels kindred ideas of liberation and renewal with similar ranges of forms and treatments, yet in a different palette and with a broader range of materials, which here include border lace and Kevlar thread. In this long, formally striking work, deep cerulean and Prussian blues dominate the canvas surface suffused with linear and circular circuitries, rectilinear swatches, and washy splotches – ranges of marks that register as pathways, escape routes, enigmatic symbols, and communal nexuses. For Luss, this ‘land’ is novel both psychologically and geologically: ‘It’s a new landscape that expresses a new awareness, a new presentness, and a new intention.’”

Alyse Rosner’s paintings in *Mind Leaves Body* strike an intriguing formal middleground between Condon’s and Luss’s in terms of layered surface treatments, palette ranges, and variable abstractions. In recent years, the artist shifted from working at small scales in manifold iterations to making substantially larger scale, tapestry-like compositions on stretched and unstretched canvases. The same period also marked a turn away from synthetic colors and towards a deeper, earthier palette of ochres, umbers, and forest and olive greens. And yet, while making new paintings for this show, Rosner was driven to work on multiple surfaces of various sizes all at once, all the while incorporating palette ranges indicative of earlier and more recent usages. What has resulted is a dazzling array of now abundantly colorful, now chromatically limited paintings of various scales, on a variety of surfaces, and subjected to variable treatments and formal interventions – multivalent works channeling everything from landscape and local flora to celebratory fireworks and atmospheric diffusions. Testament to all of this is *Flare*, a large work on raw canvas, in graphite and acrylic, in which Rosner depicts the captivating, virtually uncapturable instant of a firework bursting into explosive fullness. The reds, oranges, yellows, greens, and violets of this dynamically fiery outburst stream upwards and outwards, caroming and careening, curling and swooping, dripping down and fading out in an ebullient blaze of marks that include broad gestural lines, meticulous stippling, subtractive hatching, and saturated staining. In the hinterground is a dark night sky, intercepted by an undulating suite of forms that might be mountains, clouds, or chemically infused hazes from sequential explosions. Here too – inscribed onto the raw canvas and tucked beneath and around the linear marks, washes, and foregrounded flare – are traces of plant life, the yields of rubbing transfers executed in graphite. According to the artist, the work is a loose interpretation of one of her photographs of fireworks, images that are themselves only indirectly indicative of moments that were at best fleetingly glimpsed, “seen in person, but also not.” Rosner’s facility with her materials and enthusiasm for the florid formalities of fireworks are such that most all of the qualities of *Flare* come to bear even in a small painting such as *Burst*, in which rich green and purplish saturations, and sprinkle-like, chromatically piquant dots and stippling, surge forth like a mesmerizing effusion of crystalline brilliance before our eyes.

When Elisabeth Condon, Susan Luss, and Alyse Rosner tap most deeply into immersive flow states as operative modes, it's landscapes of the mind, and mindscapes of the creative self, that they reflect on, channel, and evoke. These artists work with an awareness that creative flow is not something that can be fabricated or forced, expected or invoked, or even sufficiently described. Now it comes, as it were, and now it goes. All the same, creative flow is certainly something that can be felt and nurtured in the studio. As evidenced in *Mind Leaves Body*, Condon, Luss, and Rosner find that working at large scales in immersive processes helps them to cultivate creative circumstances that might usher in flow states. For them, these inspired moments are full of imaginative, at times synesthetic impulses that spark the mind as the body, separately or not, cycles through its muscular memory of creative motions.

** Quotations above derive from the author's personal conversations with the artists, March 2024.*

Paul D'Agostino, Ph.D. is an artist, writer, educator, curator, and translator. He is a writing and thesis advisor for the MFA program at The New York Studio School, and a regular visiting critic and instructor for several other institutions and residency programs. D'Agostino teaches writing workshops, is a translator and editor working in various languages, and writes about art, books, and film on a freelance basis.

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Thank you

Elisabeth Condon lives and works in New York City. She is the recipient of the Pollock Krasner Foundation and Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grants. Her paintings are included in the permanent collections of the Hudson River Museum, United States Embassy Beijing, Tampa Museum of Art, and Perez Art Museum Miami. Condon's public commissions include MTA Art & Design Percent for Art, Norte Maar Collaboration for the Arts, and Tribeca Film Institute's Storefront Art Recovery Initiative (STAR). Her NYCT Ditmars-Astoria subway station design is currently on view as a 2024 selection for the Poetry in Motion series. Condon's work is represented by Emerson Dorsch.

Susan Luss is an interdisciplinary artist based in New York City. She has had solo exhibitions at Lowe Mill Arts in Huntsville, Alabama, and Museum of Art and Culture in New Rochelle, New York. Her work has been included in group exhibitions such as M. David & Co., New York; Union Grove Gallery, University of Alabama, Huntsville, Alabama; The Painting Center, New York; James Howe Gallery, Kean University, Union, New Jersey; Westbeth Gallery, New York; The Hole, New York; Living and Learning Gallery, Burlington, VT; and Kibbee Gallery, Atlanta, GA. Luss's work is held in public and private collections including Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, and La Table des Artists, Paris, France, among others.

Alyse Rosner has had seven solo exhibitions at Rick Wester Fine Art, New York, since 2012. Other solo venues include ARC Fine Art, Mark W. Potter Gallery, Artspace, The Gallery at Three Rivers, Westport Arts Center, and Washington Art Association. Her work has been featured in group shows at Newcomb Art Museum, Tulane University, New Orleans; Flinn Gallery, Greenwich, Connecticut; The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; BravinLee Programs, New York; Odetta Gallery, New York; Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT; Artspace, New Haven, CT; and Barbara Krakow Gallery / Krakow Witkin, Boston, MA. Rosner's work is held in the collections of Google Ventures, Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse, Eastern Connecticut State University, NYU Langone Health, The Fine Art Collection at Montefiore Einstein, The Kirkpatrick Bank Collection, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, Aramco Americas, and The Connecticut Artist Collection.



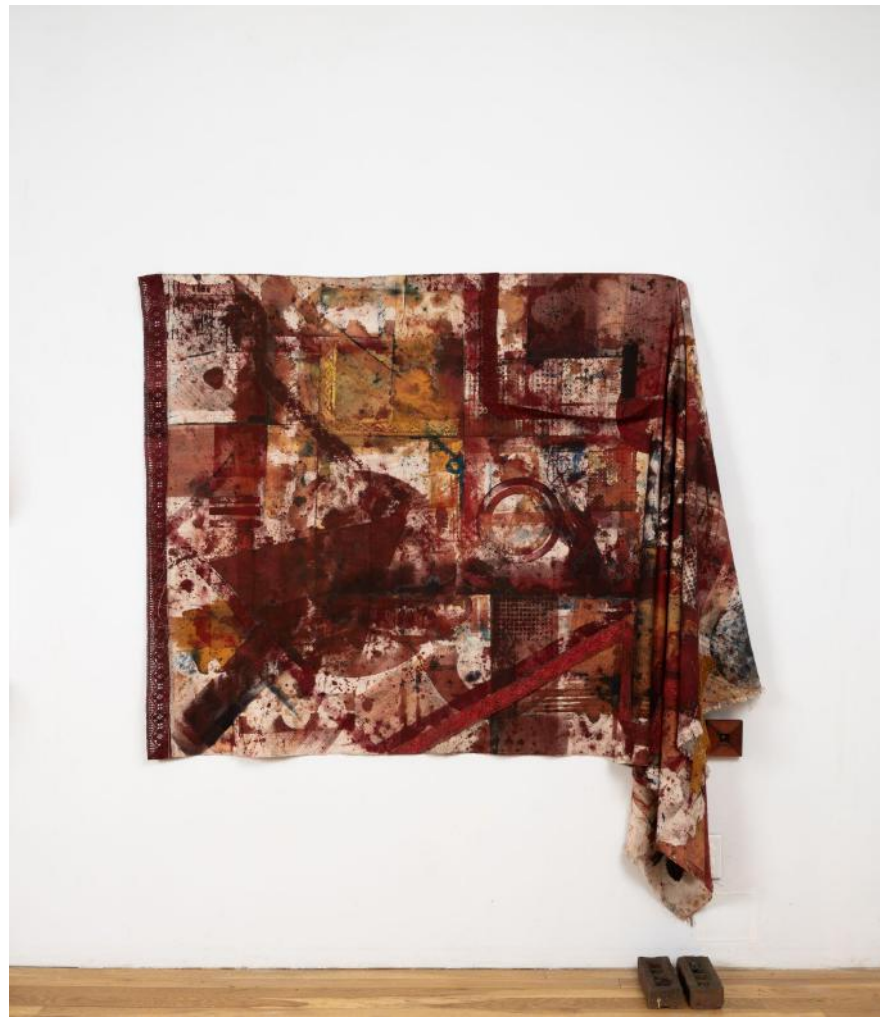
Elisabeth Condon *Lost Garden* 2024 Gouache, calligraphy ink, and acrylic on Fabriano paper 55 x 264 inches
56" x 264" support: Elise Wunderlich Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Elisabeth Condon *Lost Garden* 2024 Gouache, calligraphy ink, and acrylic on Fabriano paper 55 x 264 inches Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Alcove | Installation view



Susan Luss *A Whole Range 1* 2024 Canvas, dye, border lace, rust, kevlar thread 100 x 28 inches

A Whole Range 2 2024 Canvas, dye, border lace, rust, kevlar thread 60 x 115 inches

Kentucky Coffee 1 2024 Wood, dye, seed 4 x 4 inches



Elisabeth Condon *Flower-Lattice* 2024 Acrylic and polymer mediums on canvas 60 x 40 inches

Folded Flower 2024 Acrylic and polymer mediums on canvas 60 x 40 inches Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Elisabeth Condon *Prayer Mat* 2024 Poured polymer and acrylic on decorative paper 26.25 x 39.25 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Alyse Rosner *Princess (black)* 2023 Graphite and acrylic on yupo 60x48 inches
Empress (white) 2023 Graphite and acrylic on yupo 60 x 48 inches



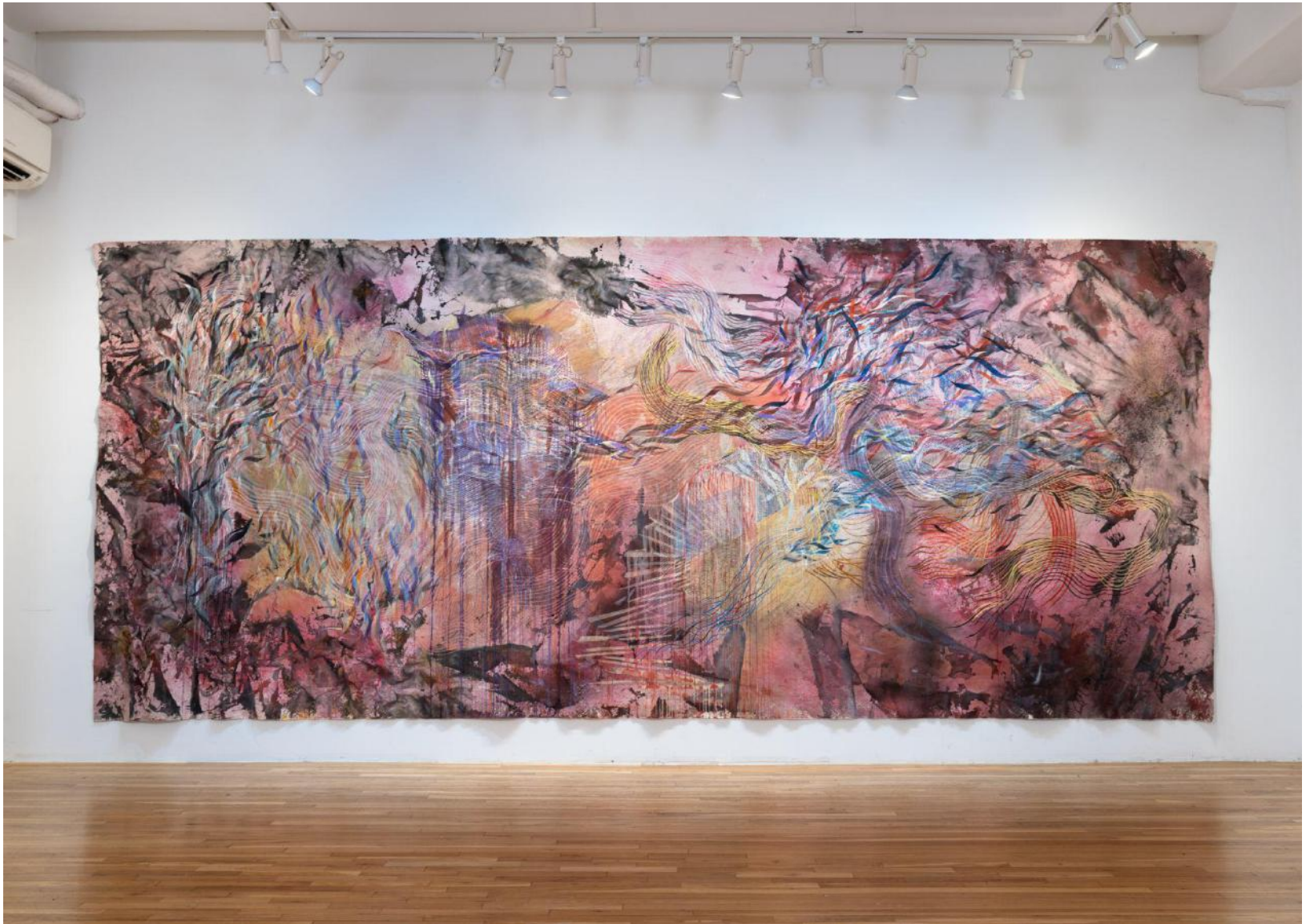
Alyse Rosner *Empress (with figure)* 2023 Graphite and acrylic on yupo 60 x 48 inches



Alcove and view into gallery 1 | Installation view



Gallery 1 | Installation view



Alyse Rosner *Just where the road begins to tangle* 2023 Graphite and acrylic on raw canvas 84 x 216 inches



Gallery 1 | Installation view



Elisabeth Condon *Two Sisters* 2024 Gouache, acrylic, and calligraphy ink on Fabriano paper 115 x 55 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Elisabeth Condon *Rosebud Lattice* 2024 Poured polymer and acrylic on PVA 25 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Susan Luss *Kentucky Coffee 2* 2024 Wood, dye, seed 4x4 inches



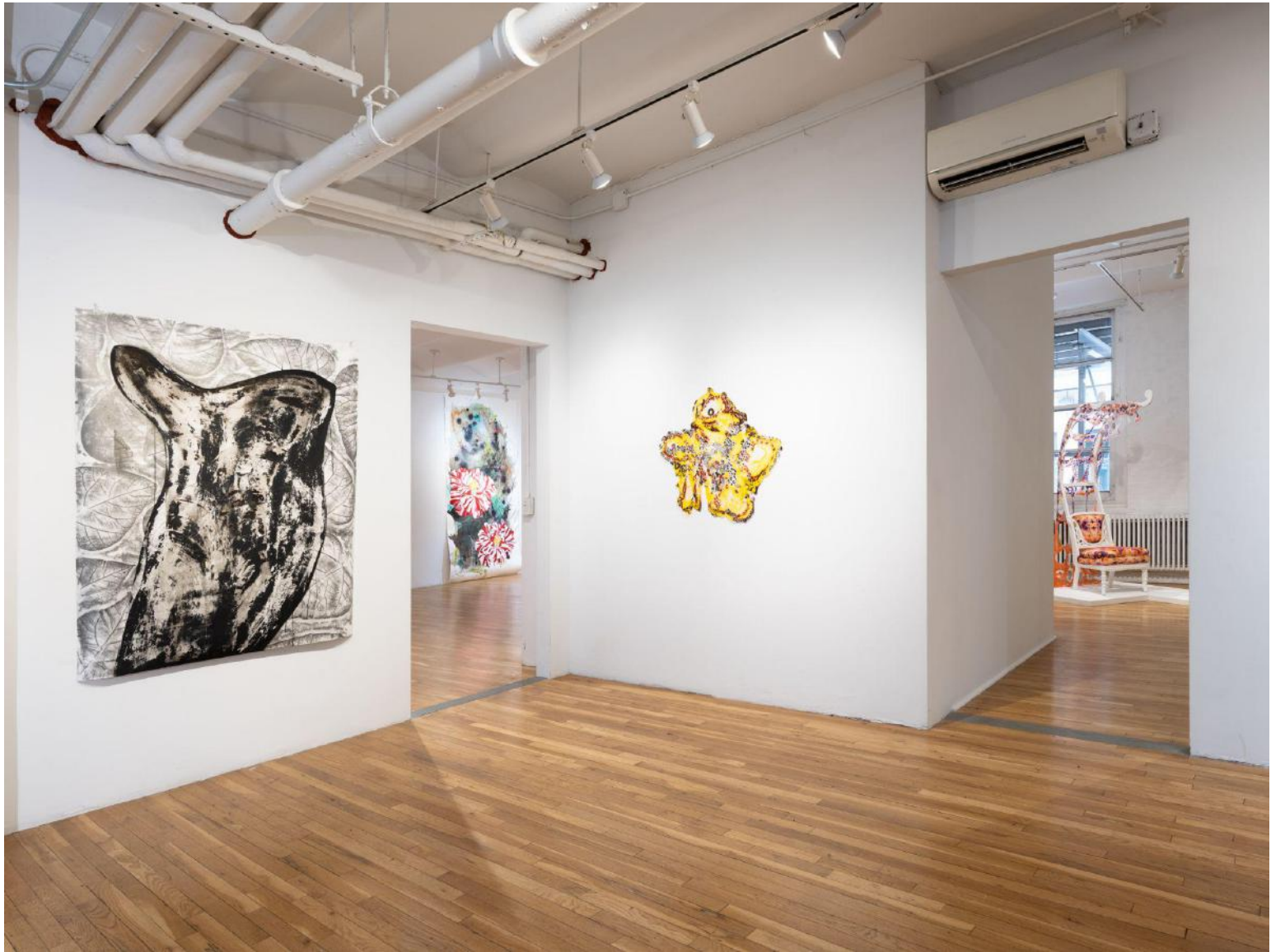
Gallery 1 | Installation view



Susan Luss *Pangaea* and details 2024 Canvas, dye, border lace, rust, kevlar thread 129 x 76 inches



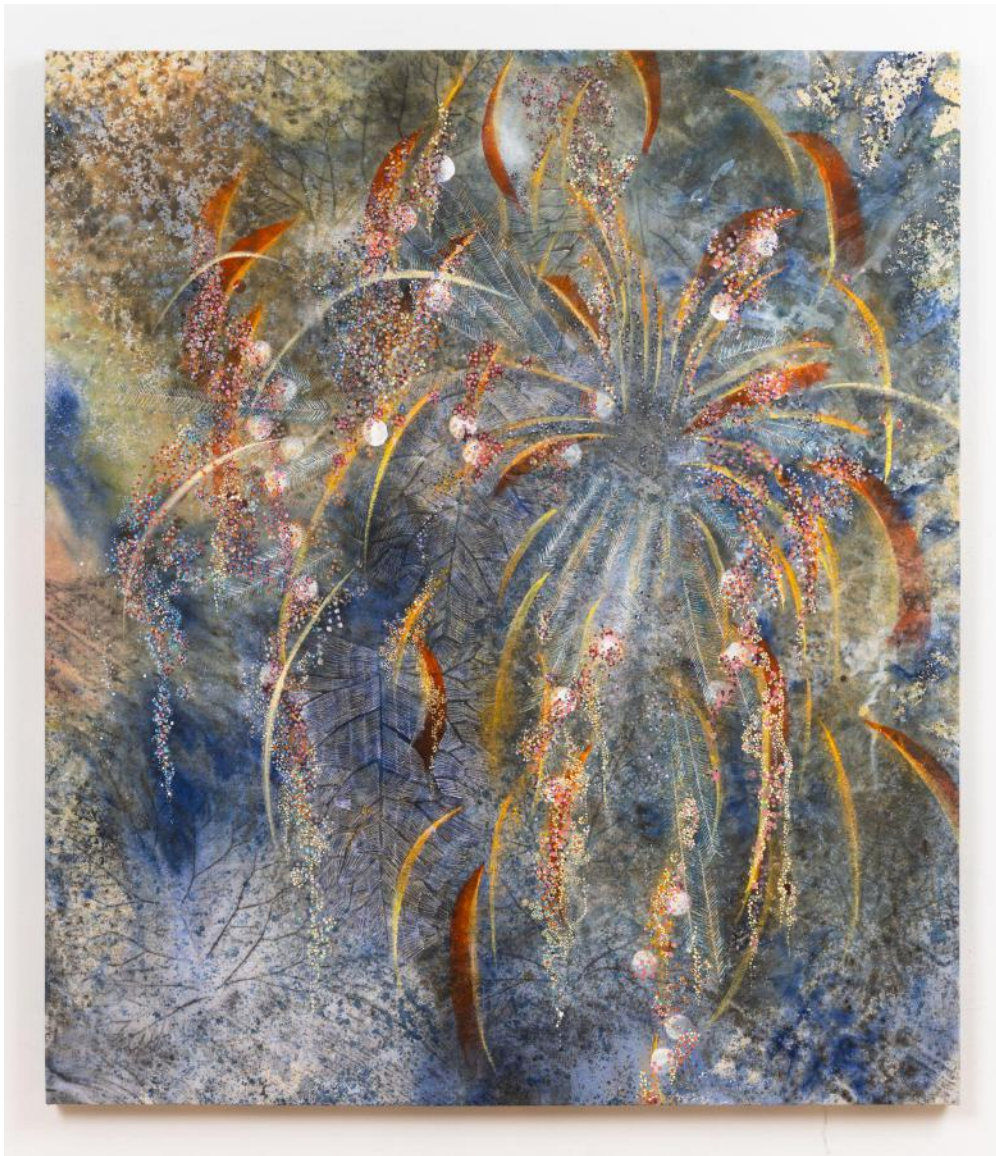
Elisabeth Condon *LA Gold* 2024 Poured polymer and acrylic on PVA 25 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



View into Gallery 1 and 2 from Main Gallery



Elisabeth Condon *Flowing Yellow Star* 2024 Poured polymer, acrylic, detritus 32 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Alyse Rosner *Remember the sky* 2024 Graphite and acrylic on raw canvas 53 x 61 inches



Elisabeth Condon *Transporters* 2023 reupholstered sitting chairs, wood extension, polymer medium lattice 76h x 21w x 28d inches
Frederick Gayle, upholstery | Chris Webb, woodwork
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Gallery 2 | Installation view



Susan Luss *Frequently The Woods Are Pink* 2022 Canvas, dye, 120 x 360 inches



Gallery 2 | Installation view



Elisabeth Condon *Green Lattice* 2024 acrylic on linen 30 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Alyse Rosner *Flare* 2024 graphite and acrylic on raw canvas 65 x 72 inches



Main Gallery | View into Gallery 3



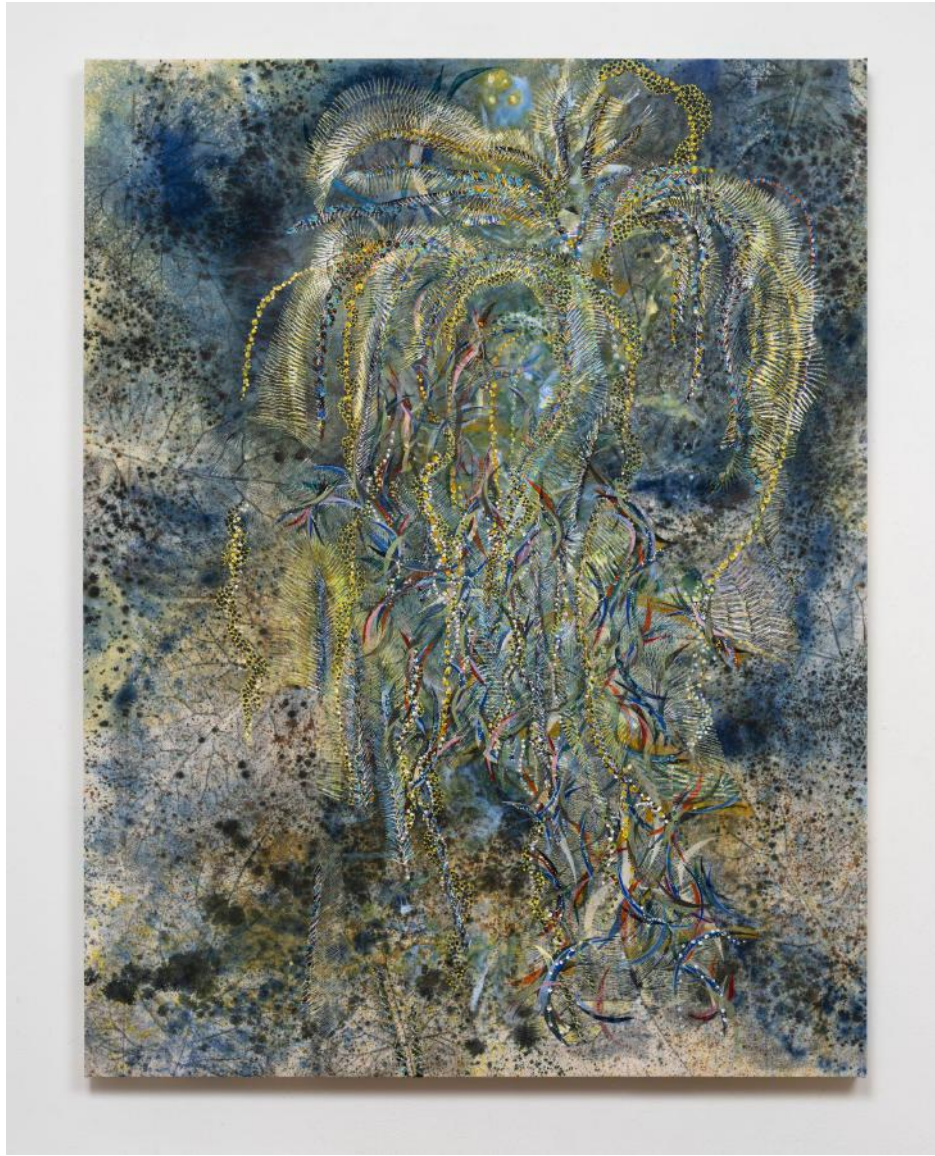
Gallery 3 | Installation view



Elisabeth Condon *Serpent in the Parlour* Full view and detail 2024 Poured polymer and acrylic on vintage wallpaper 32 x 93 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Alyse Rosner *She's light as a star (green)* 2024 65 x 72 inches Graphite and acrylic on raw canvas



Alyse Rosner *Pixie dust and no man's land* 2024 50 x 65 inches Graphite and acrylic on raw canvas



Elisabeth Condon *Green U* 2024 Poured polymer and acrylic on PVA 25 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Gallery 3 | Installation view



Susan Luss *A Slash of Blue* 2022 Wood, dye, pigment, rust, graphite 18 x 18 inches



Susan Luss *New Land* 2024 Full view and details Canvas, dye, border lace, rust, kevlar thread 146 x 55 inches



Susan Luss *Kentucky Coffee 3* 2024, Wood, dye, seed 4 x 4 inches

Kentucky Coffee 4 2024 Wood, dye, seed 4 x 4 inches

Kentucky Coffee 5 2024 Wood, dye, seed 4 x 4 inches



Susan Luss *A Stake In The Ground* 2023 Canvas, dye, rust 144 x 216 inches



Main Gallery | View into Gallery 3



Main Gallery | Installation view



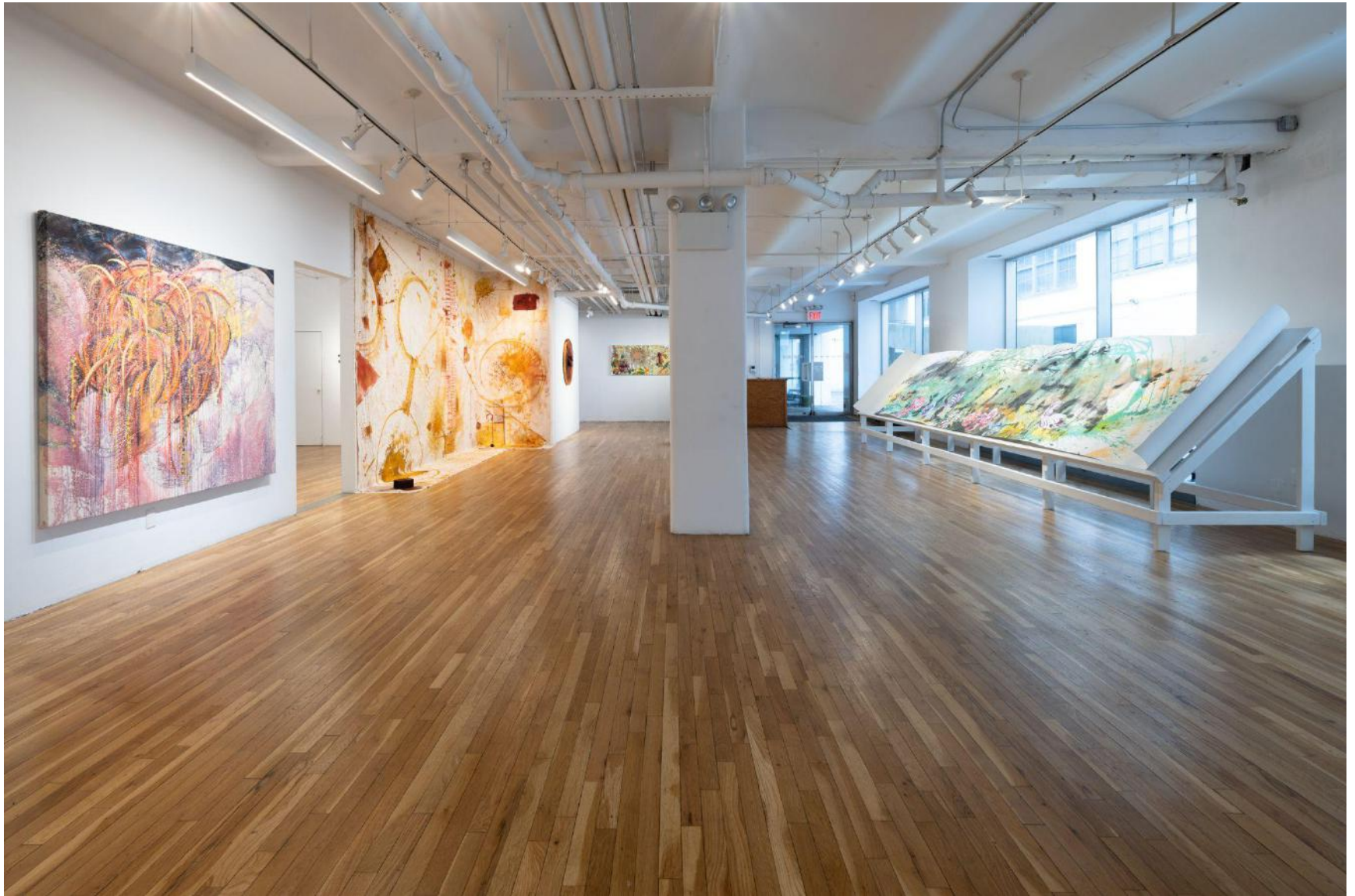
Susan Luss *Gaea* 2024, Wood, dye, root, border lace, kevlar thread, tacks 36 inches



Elisabeth Condon *Elegy* 2024 Gouache, acrylic, and calligraphy ink on Fabriano paper 132 x 55 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Elisabeth Condon *Trilogy* 2021 Acrylic and mediums on linen (3 panels) 30 x 63 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Main Gallery | Installation view