

## Elisabeth Condon

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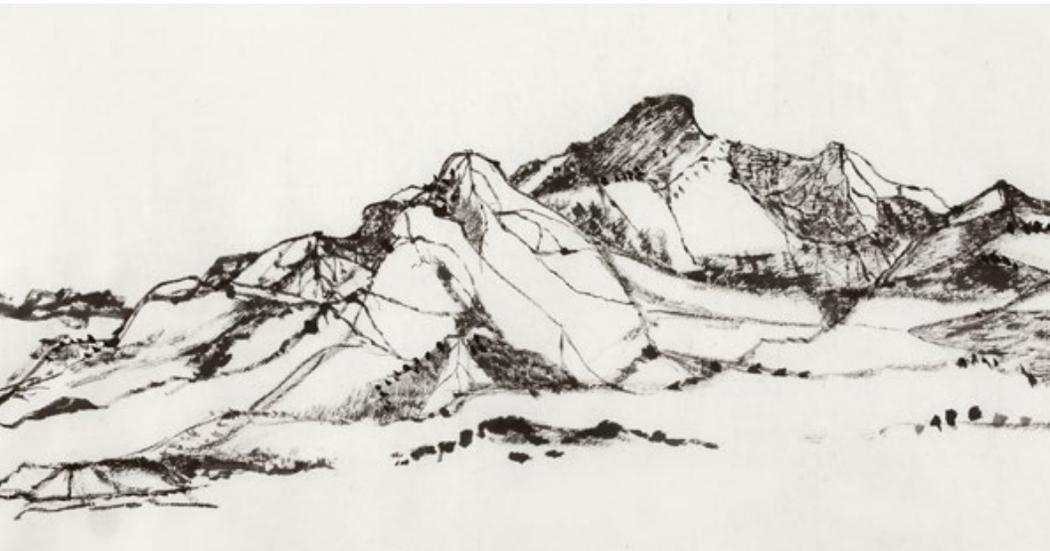


“Tomorrow, off the grid until September...the unknown...” I wrote in late August, traversing the dirt road away from Montello toward Nine Mile Mountain. As dirt plumes coated the car with fine mist, it was surprising to see a landscape so often viewed online materialize in real space and time. Yet no amount of online research prepared for the perfect, self-contained building surrounded by a grey wooden porch under light passing slowly through agrarian time.

Starting each day tramping hills and gullies through juniper and sagebrush to watch the sunrise, I devoted mornings to the library situated conveniently near the bed. Each volume traced ways humans engage and cultivate the wild: national parks, land art, scientific research, white-water rafting, even advice for picking sagebrush on a full moon. My work responds to its immediate surroundings as scroll paintings do, balancing feeling and perception in sensory, even imaginary space. Manhattan’s artifice requires wallpaper



*Near and Distant Views, detail, 2018*



or textile patterns, while drawing Nine Mile Mountain from the light-drenched studio, silent except for the rasp of brush on paper, demanded portraiture. To contrast its *Near and Distant Views* a scroll-sized rubbing of the porch hung in a studio window added charcoal to the vista of dirt, scrub and sky beyond, its length trailing across the floor echoing the source outside. Witnessed only by me this work will never appear the same way it was created, only as a displacement.

In a slim journal, I recorded urgent reminders for later: “silence, air, space, emptiness”; “time allows directed action. Deep time.” Nine Mile Mountain, seen from different perspectives—driving to Elko to get homemade tortilla chips, Tony and Lupe’s hilltop—mirrored the solidity of freedom from distraction. After wending through caves and hills on the dirt road back to Montello, I surfaced in a Salt Lake City eatery blasting AC and Michael Jackson’s song *Thriller*: “After days and days of silence, I see how behavior gets controlled,” I wrote. “The silence, driving through the mountain pass, the sunrises, the sunsets—all hard to let go of.” Montello Foundation reconnects us to earth.