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ART | INTERIOR DESIGN



Carlos Valencia freehand pencil work on paper in a project for the Brown Studio architects in Encinitas

MADE YOU LOOK

THE NORTH COUNTY ART SCENE IS ON THE RISE WITH OOLONG GALLERY'S ERIC LAINE

BY GILLIAN FLYNN | PHOTO BY JASON SULLIVAN

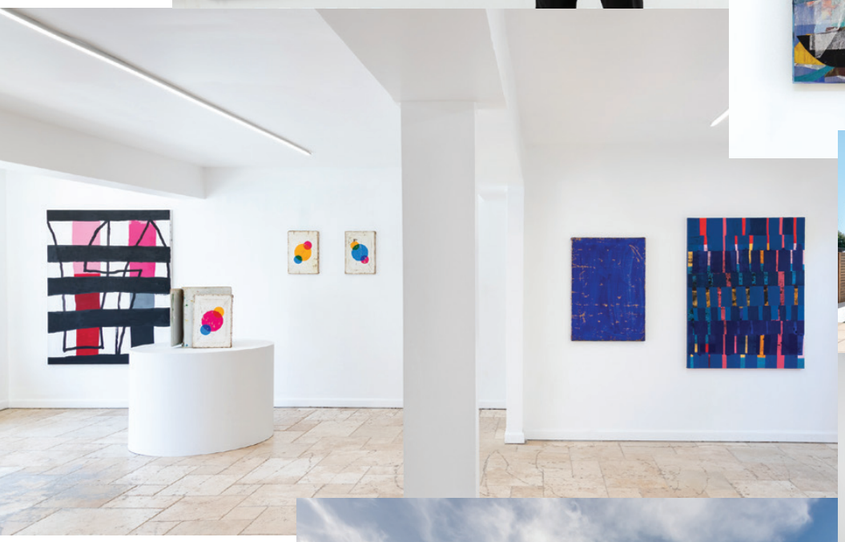
To many, the art world may feel distant and exclusive. That's why art galleries need great storytellers like Eric Laine. With 30 shows and counting, Laine's Oolong Gallery has achieved something profound in a region defined by its creative diaspora: An art community with a life all its own.

Established in 2022 and named for the teahouse appearance of his first space in Solana Beach, Oolong Gallery is now located in Rancho Santa Fe on La Flecha next to Amy Meier. It specializes in painting and sculpture from a compelling mix of artists hailing from San Diego, Los Angeles, Tijuana, New York, and Europe. ››

















CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Oolong founder Eric Laine in front of a Dan Levenson *Helga Lüthy* 2024 oil and graphite on linen; Ivan David Ng *We will feast and weep no more* 2022 mixed media painting; Naomi Nadreau *ruminating t/t* 2024 plaster; *Whispering Apart,* 2018 fabric, acrylic on panel, by acclaimed Poway artist Alika Cooper; opening night at Udo Nöger's exhibition; Oolong Gallery is located on 6030 La Flecha next-door to Amy Meier; Installation of Nick Aguyao and Dan Levenson, two LA-based abstract painters

ERIC LAINE PORTRAIT, *WE WILL FEAST AND WEEP NO MORE, RUMINATING T/T,* INSTALLATION VIEW OF NICK AGUYAO & DAN LEVENSON, ANNEX EXHIBITION AT SWC ART GALLERY: PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIPP SCHOLZ RITTERMANN
OOLONG GALLERY SOLANA BEACH: PHOTO BY MARGO YINGER *WHISPERING APART:* PHOTO BY JASON SULLIVAN

AT CENTER Oolong Gallery in Solana Beach; an annex exhibition at SWC Art Gallery

"Eric Laine's passion for cultivating a space where current artwork can truly be experienced has made him a valued presence in North County San Diego's nascent contemporary art scene."

– Chris Birchby

« "Eric has made Oolong a space of discovery and rediscovery, highlighting the work of artists at various stages in their careers but all meriting more attention," says San Diego-based art critic Leah Ollman. "I always feel I've learned something when I visit."

Some Oolong achievements: Widening the lens on S.D. artists by catapulting them to bigger gallery shows and museum-level attention. Laine also represents artists at NADA Art Fair at Art Basel Miami.

His peripatetic upbringing — raised between Germany and Washington, D.C. — has influenced his roving style. Earlier this year, he presented the work of German painter Marcel Eichner at the Southwestern College Art Gallery modeled after the Whitney Museum's Breuer Building in New York City.

"Marcel's large-scale paintings flirted with the Breuer ceiling, appropriated decades ago by SWC's director who also gave John Baldessari his start there," says Laine, who relocated to North County in 2018 to raise his son.

Next up at Oolong? A solo exhibit of Erin Morrison, a widely collected relief and collage artist.

"Eric Laine's passion for cultivating a space where current artwork can truly be experienced has made him a valued presence in North County San Diego's nascent contemporary art scene," says collector and painter Chris Birchby. *858.229.2788, oolongallery.com* R&C