



At The Studio Door in Hillcrest, a new exhibition, "The Natural World," celebrates and honors "the breadth of the natural world," says sculptor Pierre Bounaud, who is co-curator of the show with fellow artist Laura Green. Shown is "Saturday Night Light" by Ellen Dieter. **ELLEN DIETER**

IN THE CURATOR'S WORDS

At Studio Door, honoring 'The Natural World'

New exhibition, co-curated by painter Laura Green and sculptor Pierre Bounaud, is 'about how artists engage with the natural world through material, process and personal experience'

By Michael James Rocha
UNION-TRIBUNE

There's something striking about Laura Green's paintings: the unapologetic brush strokes and the vibrant colors. Combined, they make for pieces that are bold, in your face and hardly timid.

At the same time, if it makes sense, there's an air of quiet stillness in them, too, probably because of the subject matter, often animals and plants found in the San Diego landscape.

Green, who lives in South County, describes her work this way: "An impressionistic approach prioritizes emotion and movement over detail, and echoes the fragile, vanishing environments that surround us. Through gesture, texture and animated brushstrokes, my work evokes a sense of belonging, a reminder of the connection found in nature and the unspoken importance of letting nature exist as is."

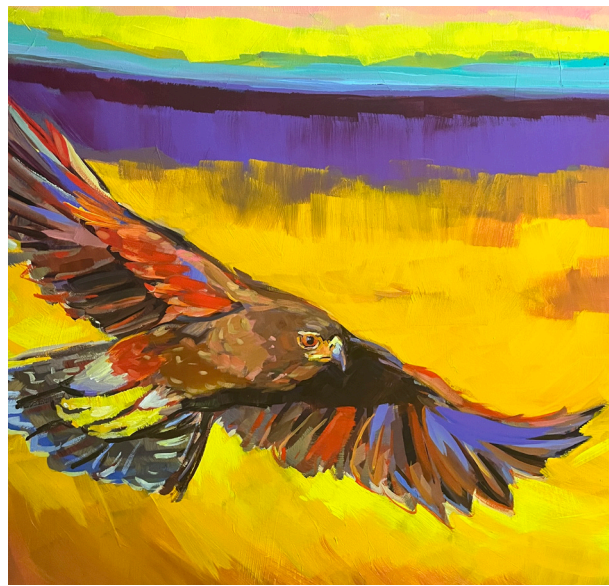
Green and fellow artist Pierre Bounaud have come together as co-curators of a new exhibition titled "The Natural World," on view at The Studio Door in Hillcrest from Friday through June 12.

Working closely with gallery owner Patric Stillman, Green and Bounaud chose artworks and artists that honor "the breadth of the natural world," Bounaud said.

Green and Bounaud took some time to talk about the exhibition.

Q: Tell us about this exhibition, titled "The Natural World," and what we will be able to see.

Laura Green: This exhibition is about how artists engage with the natural world through material, process and personal experience. While we often idealize nature as pristine and untouched, this exhibit presents



is "Hawk in Flight" by Laura Green. **LAURA GREEN**

the human presence in nature. Through materials, processes and personal experience, the participating artists present a portrait of nature that is very much human-touched. Each artist utilizes the symbols of nature as a vital part of their visual language, and together they expand what nature is, something more complex and variable.

Pierre Bounaud: When Patric Stillman of The Studio Door invited me to curate the 3D work for "The Natural World," my instinct, as a ceramic artist, was to begin with clay. Drawn from the earth and shaped by human hands for millennia, clay has evolved from utility to a carrier of ideas and meaning. Glass, though more refined, shares this same geological origin. Far more demanding to handle, it often remains underrepresented in exhibitions. Including both materials felt essential to honoring the breadth of the natural world and the artists who transform these materials into stories.

Q: This is a show curated by the two of you — Pierre focusing on clay and paintings. Before you finalized the works and artist lineup, did you agree on

shared criteria that you would both use to curate the exhibition? If so, what was that?

Green: For this nature-themed exhibition at The Studio Door, a community-centered gallery in Hillcrest, I selected artists whose practices show the intertwined relationship between humans and the environment. It is really important for me to present the elements of nature including the locations, the symbols, and the materials we use as they are integral to our sense of self. I live in Imperial Beach near the Tijuana River estuary, the most polluted river in the United States, and it drives my focus on conservation.

I wanted to bring in a variety of artists. Oscar Romo presents environmental work where art and science intersect through discarded materials, while Kathleen Kane Murrell uses the monarch butterfly within a broader visual language of transformation and fragility. Ellen Dieter adds a material and process-driven perspective, offering another way of observing and interpreting nature. Together, these artists show how the natural world is interpreted through the human experience.

Bounaud: I am thrilled to



"Ensemble" by Pierre Bounaud. **PIERRE BOUNAUD**

introduce two Los Angeles-based artists I have followed for years to the San Diego community. Caroline Blackburn, an award-winning ceramic sculptor who began as a painter, brings a fluid interplay of surface, texture, color and form. Her pieces feel both primal and refined — objects that invite touch as much as contemplation. Kazuki Takizawa, a Japanese glass artist, brings extraordinary precision to a demanding medium. His large, intricate forms hold delicate details and a quiet narrative presence, seen in series such as "Guardian" and "Container." As a ceramic artist accustomed to smaller porcelain work, encountering the scale and physicality of their pieces pushed me to expand my own practice, exploring new clay bodies, textures and unrefined clay inclusions gathered during my travels.

Q: From a curator's perspective, what was the most exciting part of the process of putting this together? As an artist, what was the most rewarding part of trying to reflect the theme of "The Natural World"?

Green: My artistic journey has been deeply rooted in San Diego. I

returned to my art practice with classes at UC San Diego Extension during the pandemic and soon began exhibiting through the city's many artist collectives. Joining The Studio Door in 2024 was a pivotal step and being invited to curate an exhibition represents an exciting milestone in my growth as both an artist and curator.

Bounaud: Curating this exhibition brought a new sense of responsibility and trust into my practice. Both Caroline Blackburn and Kazuki Takizawa welcomed me into their studios with openness and generosity, allowing me to step into their creative worlds and select work with complete confidence. Visiting an artist's workspace is always an intimate experience; it reveals the rhythms, decisions and quiet moments that shape the finished pieces. As a curator, the task becomes distilling that experience into a selection that honors both the artist and the exhibition's theme.

Q: What do you hope viewers will take away from seeing the exhibition?

Green: San Diego, famous for beaches and mild weather, is the most biodiverse county in the continental U.S., with

"THE NATURAL WORLD"

When: Runs Friday through June 12 with a reception on May 16 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Where: The Studio Door, 3867 Fourth Ave., San Diego

Admission: Free

Online: thestudiodoor.com

wildly varied biomes just hours apart. Nature shapes our sense of self here, yet many feel powerless against environmental threats. These artists show nature as inseparable from human narrative: shaped by our hands, interpreted through our eyes, and sustained or endangered by our choices. The exhibition invites reflection on our interconnected role in protecting what we inhabit and alter.

Bounaud: This exhibition invites viewers into the ways artists converse with the natural world through material, process and lived experience. Clay and glass become nature transformed — substances shaped to hold function, narrative and emotion. I hope visitors gain a renewed appreciation for these materials, especially clay, which carries the memory of the hand and creates a quiet connection between maker, viewer and earth. (Bounaud's portion of the exhibition is presented in partnership with Handwork 2026, presented by Craft in America. It's a national exhibition "spotlighting the power and persistence of hand-crafted art, featuring contemporary artists from across the country whose work affirms the cultural relevance of material, process and skilled making today.")

In the Curator's Words is an occasional series that takes a critical look at current exhibitions through the eyes of curators.