

OOLONG GALLERY

John Notham

June Artist in Residence

6030 La Flecha, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067 | Hours: Wed – Sat 11–5pm & by appt

Opening Reception Saturday June 6, 2026 from 5-8pm with libations.

In June 2026, Notham will undertake a month-long artist residency at Oolong Gallery, where he will expand upon a new body of paintings exploring California light, transitional architecture, coastal atmosphere, and figurative tableaux rooted in cinematic Americana. The residency will serve as both a studio laboratory and public-facing dialogue, including an opening reception to his show June 6. This framework allows viewers insight into Notham's evolving process as he further develops a painterly language situated between realism, memory, and psychological narrative.

Born into a large working-class family in Wisconsin, John Notham developed an early affinity for drawing and painting long before he entered the business world. Although he excelled in studio art throughout high school and college, the cultural emphasis of his upbringing favored stability and practicality over a life in the arts. He ultimately earned a degree in Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, launching a successful thirty-year professional career while maintaining a deeply personal commitment to painting alongside it.

For decades, painting operated as both refuge and discipline for Notham — a meditative counterbalance to the pressures and structures of corporate life. What began as a private necessity gradually evolved into a rigorous visual practice grounded in observation, memory, and atmosphere. Now working full time as a painter, Notham approaches each canvas with the sensitivity of someone reclaiming a lifelong vocation rather than discovering a new one.

His work draws heavily from the traditions of American realism and Impressionism, particularly the psychological stillness of Edward Hopper, the luminist sensibility of the Hudson River School painters, and the restrained tonal atmospheres associated with New England landscape painting. Whether depicting wooded paths, shoreline light, marinas, roadside architecture, or anonymous interiors, Notham is concerned with the structural behavior of light across painted space — how shadows fracture form, how muted chromatic transitions create emotional tension, and how fleeting environmental conditions can become psychologically charged through paint handling.

His landscapes often balance painterly looseness with disciplined spatial construction, combining broken color and soft-edge atmospheric passages with tightly observed compositional geometry. In recent figurative works, Notham has turned toward psychologically charged character studies that evoke a distinctly American cinematic vernacular. These paintings frequently carry the quiet tension of East Coast social realism — solitary men in bars, suited figures in transitional spaces, ambiguous interpersonal moments — recalling not only Hopper’s emotional architecture but also the understated narrative gravity associated with mafia cinema, mid-century noir, and Italian-American cultural memory. Rather than illustrating narrative directly, the figures function as vessels for mood, restraint, masculinity, isolation, and latent vulnerability.

Notham cites influences ranging from Claude Monet and Gustave Caillebotte to Andrew Wyeth and Eric Fischl, while remaining equally inspired by regional painters and local gallery communities encountered throughout his travels. His work ultimately bridges observational painting traditions with autobiographical memory, positioning everyday American life as a site of quiet psychological depth.

When not painting, Notham enjoys cycling, golf, hiking, reading, and travel. He lives near Del Mar, California, while continuing to spend significant time at his family’s tree farm in Wisconsin — a landscape that remains deeply embedded in the emotional and visual vocabulary of his work.

Founded in Southern California (2022)

by [Eric Laine](#) (13 years NY then 13 years SoCal) eric@oolongallery.com
since graduating in Modern Studies from the University of Virginia (2000)

[4 Cortlandt Alley, New York, New York](#) | +1 917 340 0877 Tue–Sat 10–6pm
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