

Press Release: Melanie Taylor *Terrain*

Location: Bread & Salt 1955 Julian Ave. San Diego, CA

Date: July 9th - August 21st, 2022

For all press inquiries please contact:

Thomas DeMello // breadandsaltgallery@gmail.com

+1 619 933 5553

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Bread & Salt is pleased to announce *Terrain*, an exhibition of new work from artist Melanie Taylor, opening July 9th, 5-8 pm. *Terrain* is a series of landscape paintings and drawings depicting the U.S. and Mexico border region, specifically the Tijuana River Valley. Compelled by the urgency and enormity of the environmental crisis, and characterized by gestural mark-making that is simultaneously deliberate and unpredictable, Taylor's work seeks to capture the physical imprint of an ever evolving collective memory marking a precarious landscape.

*Terrain* consists of a series of large-scale oil paintings on canvas and framed conte and colored pencil drawings on paper. The images are incidental, chosen for their ordinary and anonymous character, while bringing attention to the complexities of the location. Taylor's paintings are layered with gestural paint marks, allowing process to become an intrinsic and recognizable part of the work, and translating the energy of the landscape onto canvas. Light sources within the paintings expand beyond the frame: in *Berm*, a deep space is glimpsed through a canopy of branches and matrix of cast shadows. Spooner's Mesa looms in the distance, beyond which lies the US and Mexico border. *Smuggler's Gulch* portrays a fallen tree, notorious for collecting jetsam and trash in its branches during the floods flowing from Matadero Canyon, lying across a dried creek. While recognizable for their reference points, the paintings exist between representation and abstraction, the variation in line quality and mark are suggestive of a tenuous and disintegrating landscape. Taylor's drawings are direct observations of the region, eliciting a sense of immediacy and urgency. They reveal a feral natural world sidled up against forest trials, berm constructions, pieces of fencing, and derelict farmstead buildings long abandoned from a time when the valley was a farming region. A faint sketch of a bird hides in two of Taylor's drawings, subtly referencing the Pacific Flyway and estuary avian habitat. The drawings are an exercise in seeing and understanding the region visually.

Melanie Taylor was born in Northumberland, UK, and relocated to San Diego from London several years ago. She received her BFA in painting from Rhode Island School of Design and

her MA Fine Art from the University of Southampton, UK, at the Winchester School of Art. She has exhibited her work in galleries and museums in the UK, USA, Spain and India, including the Blue Gallery, London, White Columns, NY, Maidstone Museum & Bently Art Gallery, UK, and Espai Cultural Caja Madrid, Barcelona. She is the recipient of professional awards for her artwork, most recently as a 2022 Artist-in-Residence at Art Produce, San Diego. Her work is held in numerous private and public collections including Art UK, University of Surrey, UK, Sanskriti Foundation, India, and Boston Ballet, USA.