

| ARROYO GRANDE, CALIFORNIA'S LAUREL SHERRIE

PAINTER WITH A MISSION



above: Laurel Sherrie

Laurel Sherrie enjoys an idyllic life. She, her husband, Bob Harvey, and a menagerie of dogs and birds experience a rare unspoiled bit of California. Their Arroyo Grande home hugs the side of a canyon just six miles from the Pacific's shore. The acre and a half is covered with natural vegetation—fitting habitat for an abundance of California quail. A red-tailed hawk nests in the eucalyptus tree just beyond her property. For Sherrie, days are marked by walks on the beach, plenty of plein-air painting and drives through San Luis Obispo County's picturesque countryside. At night, the Milky Way soars above their slice of heaven on earth; its radiance unspoiled by city lights.

San Luis Obispo County offers the ideal environment for a woman whose work has always been driven by the forces of nature. The Illinois native headed west after college, landed in L.A., and never looked back. After living for a time in Santa Barbara and Ventura, she and Harvey settled into a home of their own further north in San Luis Obispo County.

"I love California in general, with all the different climates and scenes—the ocean, cliffs, beaches, mountains. In this county, everywhere I look I see a painting. I go down the road and there seem to be a million things I need to capture. There's so much I want to communicate, and I do it the best way I can—with paint."

Sherrie, who credits French Impressionists Monet and Pissaro among her primary influences, has a lot to say. "Painting outdoors allows me to be in my favorite 'studio.' I love to work plein-air. There's a need to create fast and without hesitation. I love to paint early-morning and late-afternoon light. The drama of the shadows and the golden cast on the mountains or the sea creates wonderful designs. It just takes hold of me. Outdoor work fosters that intense involvement with the landscape."

Although she also does some still lifes and often finishes a project in her home studio, protecting the landscape through her art is among Sherrie's primary goals. "I hope to share my passion for nature through my work. I'm hoping that it will inspire people to help save what we do have."

Sherrie is a part of the San Luis Obispo Outdoor Painters' Enterprise. "Our group goes out and paints sensitive environments. Then we have a show, with some of the proceeds from the sale going to preserve the place. Her zeal for the natural world found its way into the painting depicted on this edition's cover. "The Snowy Plovers in *Pismo Beach Sunset* are an endearing little endangered bird that nests on the beaches here," she explained. "That was quite a painting. The sunset was so intense it was like the sky was on fire. When I find a scene like that, it so grabs my interest, I get so involved with what I'm doing. It's like time stands still. I don't notice the discomforts that go with painting outdoors like bugs or heat or wind. All that matters is that I'm painting what I love."

Toward that end, she "paints all over this county. SLO is so varied. There's so much here. If I painted everything that I saw, I would be busy for a million years."

However, as Laurel Sherrie knows all too well, time may be running out for some of her favorite settings. "I was out painting some lovely eucalyptus trees the other day. I wanted to paint them again, but when I went back, they were gone," she said.

For more information about Laurel Sherrie, visit www.laurelsherrie.com. ■

PAINTING © LAUREL SHERRIE

BEYOND LAX

| PASO ROBLES

A Place of Wine, Waters and Wonderful Scenery

In the San Luis Obispo County town of Paso Robles rejuvenating water, spectacular wine and wonderful scenery make for a laidback getaway. Nestled in the foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountains, the historic community became known for its healing hot springs during California's mission period. The first hot springs hotel opened in 1868 and modern-day facilities continue to count natural spas among their assets. The area's vineyards have an equally impressive heritage. Grapes were first planted here more than two centuries ago. Today, more than 200 wineries add to the local entertainment options while vineyards enhance the already lovely landscape.

Artists congregate here, eager to capture the area's beauty. Laurel Sherrie, a member of San Luis Obispo Outdoor Painters for the Environment



Laurel Sherrie's *Villicana End of Summer, 9" x 12"* oil. Her art—including this piece—is currently displayed at the Villicana Winery.

(SLOPE), said that painting the vineyards and hills of the county she calls home allows her to spend time in her favorite studio. "Outdoor work fosters an intense involvement with the landscape," she explained. "I am hoping that my work will inspire people to save what we have."

Sherrie's work is currently on display at the Villicana Winery, a small family-owned operation that produces small batches made from estate fruit. Get there via SkyWest service to San Luis Obispo airport, a lovely half-hour drive away. ■



above: *Pismo Beach Sunset* graces the cover of this magazine. Like much of Laurel Sherrie's art, it is aimed at inspiring the viewer to help conserve California's wild landscapes.