

SASKIA STEHOUWER

Footsteps in the Street

the child who is born here knows
that weather comes from the north
the child who is born here
is equipped for great deeds
the child who is born here
can taste whether a dish is well prepared
even though his grandmas can't cook

if there is snow the child
will tell the others what to do
before the harvest can fail
he will intervene and stake the plants
the child who is born here
doesn't miss a full moon

the child who is born here
will have the key to every door
will care for little messages
and every afternoon the child will
look at the trees in the garden
and he will keep each leaf to be seen
for the children who are born here

the child who is born here
feels the grief of a dead animal
holds out a white sheet
he chooses the color of his message
and knows that bread exists
by the grace of butter

when he sleeps, his mother's
voice resounds in his dreams
when he plays, he feels
how young his legs are
when he eats, the warmth
of the country slides down his throat
and he hears the music of the fields

the child who is born here
will leave something behind
will be at home

—translated from Dutch by Joel Thomas Katz and Robert Perry

Joel Thomas Katz and Robert Perry, fellow poets living in Palo Alto, California, have together translated poems by the Dutch poet Saskia Stehouwer into English for an upcoming book, *iets anders | something else*, to be published by Dutch Poet Press in 2017. The poem in translation here comes from her first book, *Wachtkamers* (Waiting rooms), published by Uitgeverij Marmer in 2014. *Wachtkamers* won the prestigious C. Buddingh' Prize in 2015. Stehouwer's poems explore a universe of real and imagined circumstances with illustrative imagery and language drawn from her native country of the Netherlands.

MATHEW ZEFELDT

Abundant Still Life, 2015
Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in



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