

JULIE BROOKMAN

Mariësa 6, 2018
Encaustic, Oil on panel, 40 x 40 in



COURTESY THE STUDIO SHOP GALLERY

KEN HAAS

At Mile Rocks

From Point Lobos, named by the Spanish
for barking seals they decided, were wolves,
you can see near the breakers,
on a black lava outcrop barely above the swell,
a column, twenty feet high,
red and white stripes almost faded to bone.

Some say it's the stump of a seaswept lighthouse
built, after a steamer from Rio went down in the fog,
not by engineers, who refused, but by seamen,
their wives still roaming Lands End with flashlights,
only the base intact now,
a salt lick for pigeons and gulls.

Some say it's the work of immigrant Wu Zhao,
who raised a pillar at the mouth of the Bay,
then boated out daily for months
to etch the names of forced laborers
into her squat limestone creation, until,
while carving out the character for *slave*,
she slipped and let go.

It's a nice hike over to the crusted beach
closest to Mile Rocks, along falling cliffs,
the Golden Gate Bridge at your back.
Among maze walkers and unleashed poodles,
backpackers and stockbrokers
rinsing toes in the surf, you may meet
a spent mariner staring out to sea
or share the shoreline with a woman from Kinning
who's been out to mix with ghosts,
laid joss sticks and tossed blossoms.

And you may wonder why both stories
can't be true. Why the dead
to whom sailor and stranger are paying respects
aren't your dead too.

Ken Haas lives in San Francisco, California, where he works in health care and sponsors a poetry writing program at the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital. Haas has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has won the Betsy Colquitt Poetry Award, and his poems have appeared in over fifty journals. His poetry has also been anthologized in *The Place That Inhabits Us* (Sixteen Rivers Press, 2010), *The Marin Poetry Center Anthology* (2012, 2013), and *Fire and Rain: Ecopoetry of California* (Scarlet Tanager Books, 2018). His manuscript *Borrowed Light* was a finalist for the 2019 Catamaran Poetry Prize.