

LOUISE LEBOURGEOIS

Beach, 2011
oil on panel, 12 x 12 in



credit: Dolby Chadwick Gallery

ELIZABETH BRADFIELD

Ritual

Each morning, the truck comes early
to the ocean lot. The man has

an out-of-fashion moustache. The dog
is a golden lab. Overweight, eager.
The truck is red and newly washed

always. He lets the dog out, rolls down a window.
Sit, he says. The dog, tongue out, does.
Not reluctantly, about to bolt, but like a suckup.

Slowly now, the truck rolls. *Come*. And the dog
follows around the lot, heels the driver-side wheel
through thin-drifted sand. The dog does not

divert to the beach, does not take off
into rabbit-hunkered brush.
Like a circus pony, it trots. What

the dog thinks of the man, the man
of the truck, the truck of the slow circling
dog at its side, the dog of that bright red

ringleader—what I should think of any of it
as terns plunge for fish and the ocean
continues breaking the shore and I decide

to not walk the soft sand but to sit in my car
and watch it all, window cracked—tell me. Tell me.

Elizabeth Bradfield is the author of *Approaching Ice*, *Interpretive Work*, and the forthcoming *Once Removed*, from which this poem is taken. A naturalist and teacher, she works on expedition ships, is the current Poet-in-Residence at Brandeis University, and runs Broadsided Press. She lives on Cape Cod.