

## JOSEPH STROUD

### Flowers

*Remember, Rafael?*

*And you, Federico,  
under the earth,  
do you remember my house of flowers?*

—Pablo Neruda

*Why all the flowers in your house? my visitor asks—  
yellow tulips on the kitchen windowsill,  
sunflowers in a tall glass vase on the table,  
Peruvian lilies, oxeye daisies, flaming nasturtiums.  
I tell him winter is coming, the long nights are coming,  
I tell him flowers are the candles of my spirit,  
they are a balance between stars and sorrow.  
Oh, he says, I thought someone might've died.  
Someone has died, I say, all my friends are dying.  
I, too, can see the tunnel up ahead, and I don't think  
there's light at the end of it. Therefore in this world  
I place flowers throughout my house, they light up  
my rooms, they are a kind of quiet burning,  
and their evanescence makes me attend to what  
is important in my life, among other things,  
for example, these flowers.*

**Joseph Stroud** is the author of six books of poetry, among them *Of This World: New & Selected Poems*, which was named by the San Francisco Poetry Center the outstanding book by an American poet for the year 2010. It was also a finalist for the PEN Center USA Literary Award, the Commonwealth California Book of the Year, and the Northern California Book Award. His other awards include a Pushcart Prize, the Wittner Bynner Fellowship in Poetry from the Library of Congress, the Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Lannan Lifetime Achievement Award in Literature. He divides his time between a home in Santa Cruz on the Central California coast, a cabin in the Sierra Nevada, and a studio eyrie in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

## KEN HALE

*Earthly Delights #3*, 2016  
Gouache monotype on glossy inkjet print, 17 x 66 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY