

KARI WERGELAND

Stage Ride to Tassajara

A stagecoach once shepherded people fourteen miles between James Ranch and the Tassajara Springs Resort, located not far from Monterey, California. Today's "stage" is actually an eight-passenger, four-wheel-drive vehicle that travels that same treacherous road. The resort is now the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.

When she unzips her little case,
I sneak a peek at color—
the felt markers nestled inside—
and feel a smile beneath my skull.
She sits snugly belted,
with an open notebook cradled in her lap.
I watch the thoughts cocoon
over her, germinating a world
inside a world; and my own thoughts
spark briefly another one—
a different girl
with a precious notebook,
pages that were later burned inside a steel drum
for being too naive.

I make an offer of privacy,
turning toward the window
to watch the long scene pass:
trees and mountains and sky.
But I can't stop wondering about the rainbow
exploding across her notebook.

Maybe she'll open a pack of Life Savers—
let them tumble randomly
until her vision is clear.

She's too old for plastic alphabet letters—
cheerful numbers—
those colorful magnets
we put on the fridge,
as perhaps I am too old
to ever again rest on a cushion
that does not reveal seams of ash.

Do crayons still beckon her
with sharpened tips like buds?
Does she keep them neatly arranged
so that every hue ripples
across a cardboard container garden
waiting for lengthening fingers
to descend
and shake up their world?

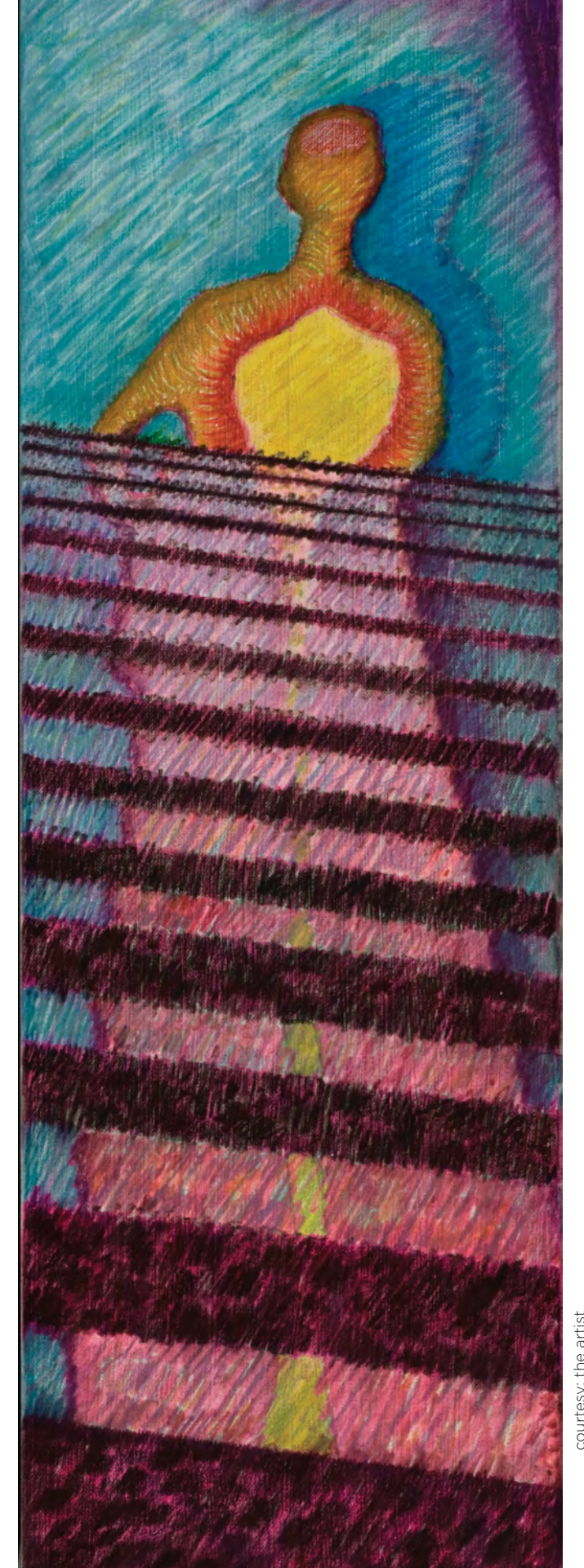
Kari Wergeland has received recent acceptances from *Mission at Tenth*, *THEMA*, and *Meat for Tea: The Valley Review*. She works as a librarian for Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, California, and also lives part-time on the Oregon Coast. kariwergeland.wordpress.com.

Trees and mountains and sky
jostling outside.
A book of poetry flies.
That's my Dad's.
A notebook follows.
The man sitting in the middle
seat is sure to be
in the workshop on Poetry and Zen.

Our bones shift down the road.
Fatigue loosens.
At some point I decide
to look at her world,
and my eyes dart
over a spindly math problem
completed
amid a shock of lined white space.
She's just figured something out.

BRAD ORSBURN

Hopeful Shadows, 2010
conté pencil, copic marker,
with glaze on canvas 10 x 30 in



courtesy: the artist