

LORRAINE SHEMESH

Sway, 2019
Oil on canvas, 72 x 57½ in



COURTESY GERALD PETERS GALLERY, NEW YORK

STEPHEN KESSLER

How to Look

It's been explained already, always and forever,
those rainbows in the oil puddle,
cloud herds migrating after a storm
in puffy accumulations across the sky,
tough leaves sprouting from cracks
in a rock wall—all ordinary
as anything and equally mesmerizing
when framed in a glance or a gaze—
those eyes easily even more amazing,
all you need do is see
what's there, wildly controlled
as sirens attuned to an emergency.
Those long-lost lives caught in a click
and frozen in a photograph,
in a book that fetches from a city street
a disorienting image,
ephemeral in its fleeting uniqueness,
stopped once in a river
you never stepped into
except those countless times
along all those sidewalks you ever strode
in search of what? Eyes
that might see you back, return
your transient glance? And how
do you look to them? Too cool?
Too curious? Too omnivorous
for everything your hunger meets
as your eyes eat everything in sight?
All of the above
and below also
and in the periphery as well,
wraparound vision even a camera
can't quite catch,
but in your imagination you have seen it all,
you know it all in all the false leads
you followed, all the true
loves you lost, the words
you tried to hold them with
through which they slipped,
elusive as light itself,
illuminating everything
you ever saw.
Look again. It is all still there
and gone.

—after Garry Winogrand

Stephen Kessler's most recent book of poems is *Garage Elegies* (Black Widow Press, 2018). "How to Look" is from *Last Call*, as yet unpublished. His translations from Spanish have received the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award (Academy of American Poets), a Lambda Literary Award, a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship, the PEN Translation Prize, and a Northern California Book Award. His op-ed column appears weekly in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.