

DEVIKA BRANDT

Oh Give Me the Orange Groves of Southern California

—*I'm told what seems / like joy / is often joy*

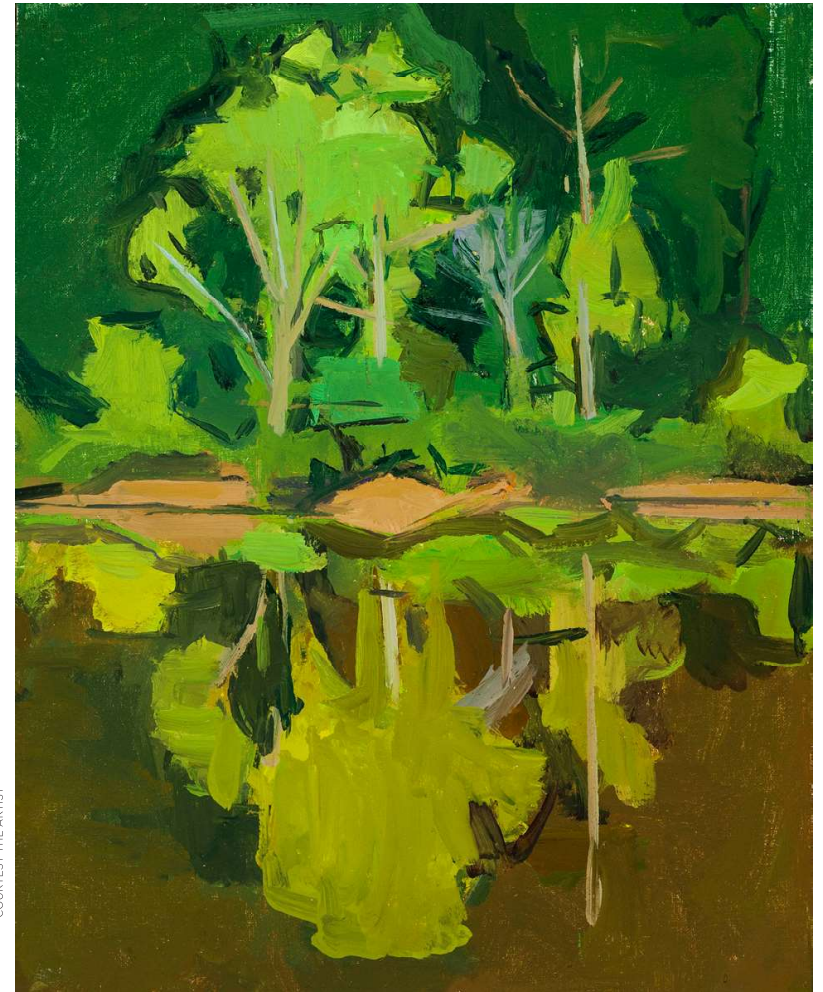
Kaveh Akbar

On all the road trips to visit Grandma Pearl and Jonesie, Pop and Lydia at their filling station, and Lucille, who wore only Dodger blue, all my parents could talk about from Ontario to Santa Ana, Laguna Beach to Oceanside, was the orange groves so many of them gone already, the ones in Pasadena Dad ran through as a boy, speeding from his grandpa's house through the grove, then home, his grandpa who, when the market crashed, tossed himself heartily off, and there was my dad, rich boy turned pauper, needing a leg up from hardfisted hands, but Dad remembers only the groves stretching miles, the ones that used to be *right there* and *right there* where the Texaco stands and the Dairy Queen, but *Look!* Mom would say, *look at this grove, still here, just like it was, right, George?* and he'd roll down the window to sniff and say, *Yes, just as it was,* that scent wafting into the car like the elixir it is, heady aroma of white blossom and orange fruit, tang of juice and rind, a sweetness that softened all of us as if we were a wax family in a wax car on a hot day in a year that would melt away like the short stub of a candle so that even now when I smell orange blossoms, I see all of them, the trees that weren't there and the trees that were, their glossy green leaves, the scent that filled the agitated front seat and the restless turf wars in back, united us all in our one common allegiance to that delicate, hypnotic, coral-colored perfume, indivisible, inhaling what lasted only a moment, but for that moment, we breathed what seemed like joy.

Devika Brandt's poetry has appeared in *Poetry International*, *Nimrod International Journal of Poetry and Prose*, *Rattle*, *Sequestum*, and *B O D Y*, and was named a finalist for the Rattle Poetry Prize and a semifinalist for the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry. She lives, writes, and teaches poetry to children in Northern California.

TIM KENNEDY

Trees and Reflections, 2016
Oil on muslin panel, 8 x 10 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST