

PAUL FORTIS

Coastal Color, 2013
pastel, 20 x 24 in



ANNIE STENZEL

One Ascent of Mount Vision

If only it were all
uphill from here—
the ground always rising
to meet my feet; each step a slap
at gravity's vanity.

And the steady filling
of the chest
with air—that's the body in business:
aerobic respiration;
nucleotides hard at work.

See, uphill allows the heart
to show its mettle
as muscle (sturdy pump
goes gladly to the well
the well
the well)
this lovely pounding—
bone skull
amplifies the sound
to a drum solo in my ear.

And the sea-level poison
pours out, drop by slippery
steaming drop
to drench
my grey bandanna.

Please, tell me
I need not descend
skitter-foot over rocks and dirt
momentum
like a pushy foe who tries
to chivvy me to the precipice.

Let me continue this steady
climb, angles of afternoon light in my face
the sought object still simple:
invisible
because it is too near.

Annie Stenzel received both a BA and an MFA from Mills College. Her poetry has appeared in various journals and anthologies, including *Academic Medicine*, *Poetry Flash*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Patient Poets*, and *Quiddity*, and her translations of the poet Hilde Domin have appeared in *Parthenon West Review* and *Two Lines*. She is also an unrepentant letterpress printer. She supports her poetry habit by working for a mid-size law firm in San Francisco.