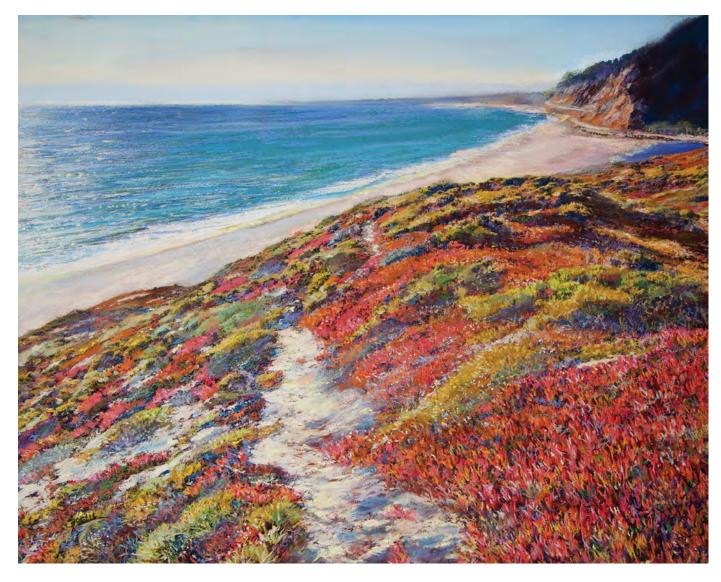
PAUL FORTIS

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.

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