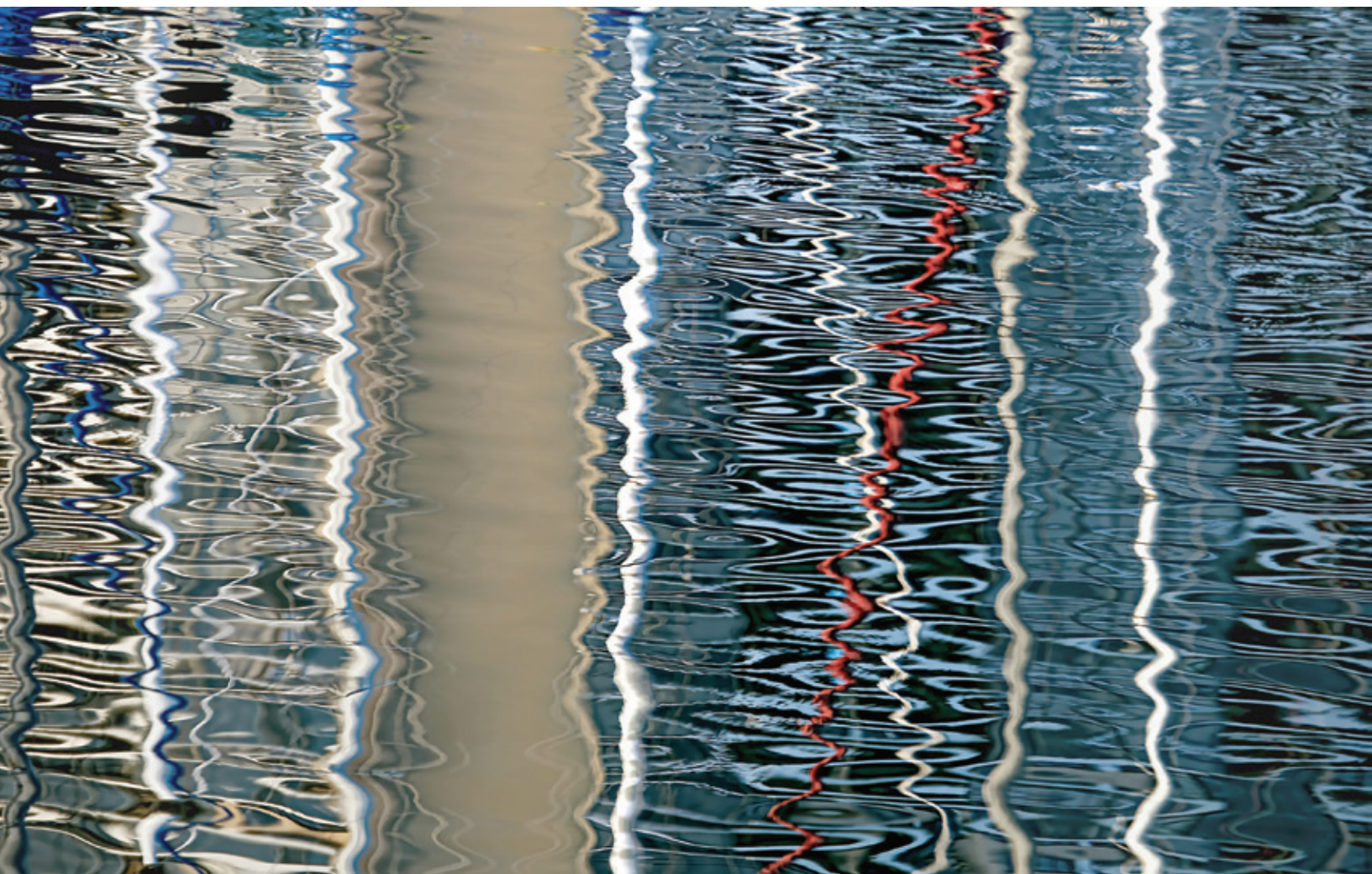


BARBARA VAUGHN

Pyrgi, 2015
Archival pigment print, 50 x 80 in



COURTESY: DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

JEFF EWING

In the Forcing House

The blooms, when they come, are thunderous.
The glass panes, the glass roof, rattle above us
waist deep in loam. The rioting colors filter in
through our slitted eyes and ears coiled in Fibonacci
folds like stunted buds as branches scrape their
names in the condensation and the day turns over.

We come of age tucked under mats of peat, skin
jaundiced with pollen. The sun multiplies through
the glass; we think there are many, not just the one.
Rose scent, the death-smell of gardenias propagates
a constant reminder. We don't want to leave, ever.
We want to stay right where we are, but that can't be.

We're raised for reasons that aren't ours, plans so
obscure we may never learn their point. We whisper
memories to each other, to hold onto them a little
longer. They will dry, eventually, and fall to the floor
of the forcing house, and we'll forget. Here and there
ghosted stains stir something, just under the surface.

A finger to the cheek, a hand on the head. Nights
opening in showers of stars. It was so warm once,
and green. Why can't it be always as it was within
these walls? Our veins branching and twining, little
blue rivers we trace with our fingers. Spring pulsing
inside, a promise budded tight, waiting, waiting...

Jeff Ewing's poems, stories, and essays have been published in *ZYZZYVA*, *Crazyhorse*, *Barrow Street*, *Ascent*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Utne Reader*, and elsewhere. A graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, he lives in Sacramento with his wife and daughter.