

ANDREW FAGUE

Spring Fires

Daffodils, downcast in a pattering mist, stare into mud puddles.
Grape hyacinths nod solemnly toward the maul, sledge, spikes

leaned against the front porch near a young man
exhaling into his cup to warm his face.

The rounds are waist-high, sections of a culvert
avalanched over the side driveway into the fence,

except this is a pile of the living, year rings burgeoning,
knots wet as the eyes of grandmothers, grandfathers

dying, subtly, gracefully, in their own time:
an old Doug fir and older cedar from a dump truck.

Cherry blossoms, dogwood blooms, saucer magnolias line the streets
that lead to his newborn, here, swaddled near the woodstove;

the logs from last spring that remain in the ravaged woodshed
sustain his flame swirling into space.

He takes his stance near the road by the blue-eyed grass.
What else now but to ping, thud, crack, chop

through tulips, irises, garlic sprouts, fiddlehead fern curls,
the long scent of the lilac behind the shed?

A friend mentions a log splitter down the street for rent.
Pear blossoms scatter over the slaughter area as he sits,

waits for his arms, back, legs to reassemble, congeal again.
Some of the pieces are thick enough that he has to set them aside

until the start of the next session when he's fresher,
new kale or broccoli in hand, later some blueberries or green beans,

then figs, strawberries, eventually an early apple from his neighbor.
The cedar, it seems every time he's on a roll,

swallows his spike rather than splitting, bleeding pitch
from the wound in order to mend,

but soon with his ax he's attacking closer to the edges,
sectioning off parts toward the center,

gnarling his way between burls,
pulling apart stringed and sinewy life

Andrew Fague has taught classes in composition, literature, and mythology as well as poetry workshops at various colleges on the West Coast. He is currently teaching at Cabrillo College and the University of California, Santa Cruz, while hoarding time to finish a collection of poems.

ED PENNIMAN

Soberanes Fire, 2016
Oil on canvas, 20 x 40 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

so he can cure it,
light it.

The peonies fall face-first into deepening grass.
Swollen eyeballs of poppies threaten to burst into
frail flowers.

He scoops the ash out of the black potbelly into
a paper bag,
carries the final remains out the back door

into what shines for all, removes his cap, closes his eyes.
He knows where the sun has been—it's not really
a question.

The tomatoes are blushing, squash seedlings taking hold.
He kneels before them, opens the bag of remnants, the void

already ingrained in the soil he agitates and amends, gently,
discreetly, with these centuries-old histories no one has
to know.