

**KARI WERGELAND**

## Stage Ride to Tassajara

*A stagecoach once shepherded people fourteen miles between James Ranch and the Tassajara Springs Resort, located not far from Monterey, California. Today's "stage" is actually an eight-passenger, four-wheel-drive vehicle that travels that same treacherous road. The resort is now the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.*

When she unzips her little case,  
I sneak a peek at color—  
the felt markers nestled inside—  
and feel a smile beneath my skull.  
She sits snugly belted,  
with an open notebook cradled in her lap.  
I watch the thoughts cocoon  
over her, germinating a world  
inside a world; and my own thoughts  
spark briefly another one—  
a different girl  
with a precious notebook,  
pages that were later burned inside a steel drum  
for being too naive.

I make an offer of privacy,  
turning toward the window  
to watch the long scene pass:  
trees and mountains and sky.  
But I can't stop wondering about the rainbow  
exploding across her notebook.

Maybe she'll open a pack of Life Savers—  
let them tumble randomly  
until her vision is clear.

She's too old for plastic alphabet letters—  
cheerful numbers—  
those colorful magnets  
we put on the fridge,  
as perhaps I am too old  
to ever again rest on a cushion  
that does not reveal seams of ash.

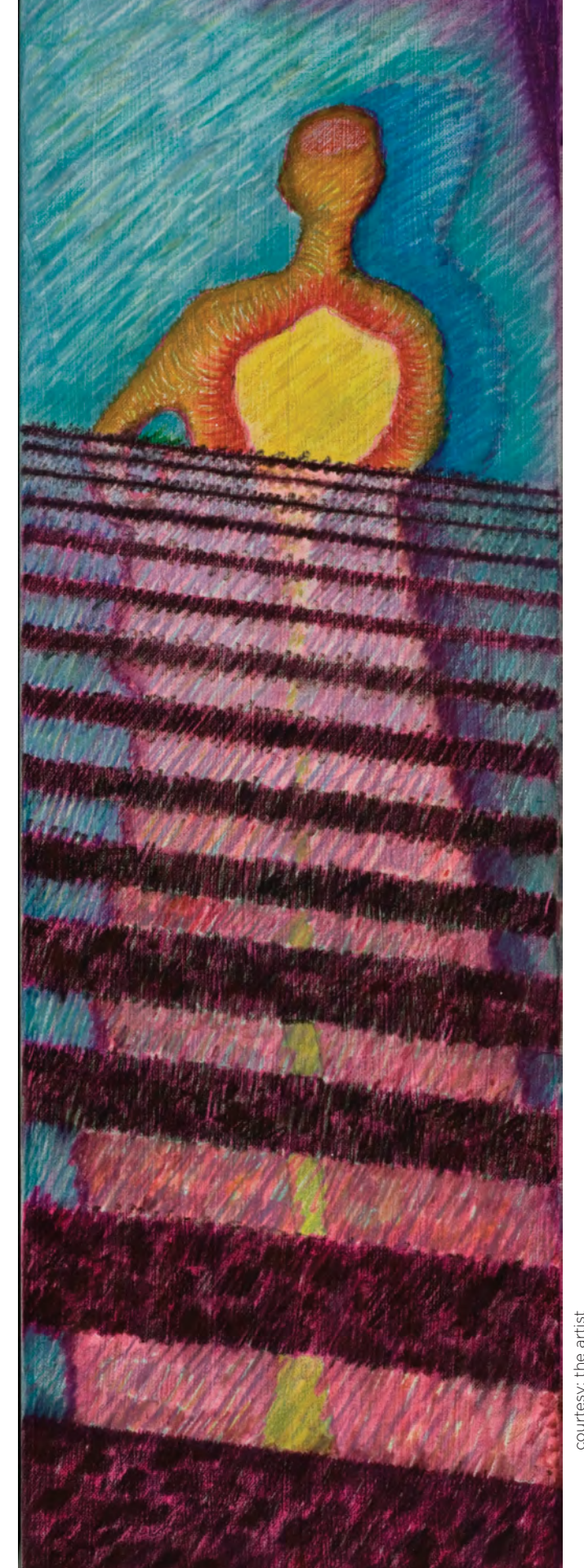
Do crayons still beckon her  
with sharpened tips like buds?  
Does she keep them neatly arranged  
so that every hue ripples  
across a cardboard container garden  
waiting for lengthening fingers  
to descend  
and shake up their world?

Trees and mountains and sky  
jostling outside.  
A book of poetry flies.  
*That's my Dad's.*  
A notebook follows.  
The man sitting in the middle  
seat is sure to be  
in the workshop on Poetry and Zen.

Our bones shift down the road.  
Fatigue loosens.  
At some point I decide  
to look at her world,  
and my eyes dart  
over a spindly math problem  
completed  
amid a shock of lined white space.  
She's just figured something out.

**BRAD ORSBURN**

*Hopeful Shadows, 2010*  
conté pencil, copic marker,  
with glaze on canvas 10 x 30 in



courtesy: the artist