

GARY RUDELL

Awakening, 2018
Oil on panel, 48 x 36 in



COURTESY DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

JOEL PECKHAM

Waves

Yesterday I stepped off the beach and felt the water creep into my slacks, riding cotton threads up past my knees as the ball of the sun rose low on the horizon, its light shattering the blues and violets like thrown flowers, like rain on curved glass—as my legs lifted and streamed away and the soft leather of my shoes became a second skin and the soft curves of the hills turned first black and fled down the tree line, thundering in shifting layers, and dove into the water away from the flames and it was all lit all aflame. Lord, let it not be said that I remained unremembering the many times this world has tried to shake me from my sleep.

The sheet flaps in the wind, is the shape of the wind, how we know it and the line that keeps it from blowing down the valley over the far green fields, is part of it, as much as the house fastening to the couple at the kitchen counter eating pancakes and reading the news, their faces not yet flush from this night's coupling. Listen, we are all shaken from the back of this earth like that sheet billowing. Even the space a memory leaves is still a thing. A boy staring from the stained clear plastic of a tent in Greece. The mother whose face he is too young to remember. Who made him that sweater? Who sheared his long hair as the bombs fell and sang a song to soothe him. Even then our shattering is beautiful, our silences a chorus, prayer unending.

Joel Peckham is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Why Not Take All of Me* and *God's Bicycle*. His memoir, *Resisting Elegy*, appeared from Chicago Review Press in 2012 and a new collection of essays, *Body Memory*, appeared from New Rivers Press in 2016. Individual poems and essays have appeared in many journals and anthologies, most recently in *The Southern Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Nimrod* and *The Sun*.