

## MELISSA STEIN

# Cosmos, in vase

This flower huddles round itself, a shell;  
another, flaunting, flat-out dares the sun.  
This one's recurved, just slightly, welcoming,  
and that one's rumpled (not having slept well).  
Only the back of that bloom's visible:  
green spider epicalyx and the stem  
plunging into a frizzy confusion  
of leaves. I could take guesses at canvas,  
wipe the brush across—the white one feathered  
like a poppy, say, paint it in lush grays  
and cream; a hint of blue in the creases—  
but I won't give them up. I won't render  
half-clasped shy wings tricolored in this light,  
burnished—oh it shames me—opalescent.

**Melissa Stein** is the author of the poetry collection *Rough Honey*, winner of the APR/Honickman First Book Prize. Her work has appeared in the *New England Review*, the *American Poetry Review*, *Best New Poets*, the *Harvard Review*, and *The Southern Review*. She is a freelance editor and writer in San Francisco.

## TRACEY ADAMS

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Encaustic, graphite, oil and collage, 48 x 34 in



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