

TIFFANY HIGGINS

Legacy Tattoo

The waters have washed you ashore.
The flood, the rising.
(The continents asked for more.)

Cast adrift, floating.
Now you've found land again.

Legacy tattoo: it hit, scratched
you when it made you.

You bear the scar at the base
of your spine, where lies
the shadow of the moon.

We choose our tattoos,
our tattoos choose
to alter us before we can begin.

Sea green-blue ink waves in skin.

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Let's begin again.
Something carries over,
once we lived in oceans,
aquatic ancestor.

You remember, right?
It's what's brought you here
by my side to the edge of the sea

Where we gather kelp in our hands.
Okay, right, help me?
Somehow we are drawn
to the brink where water clinks land.

Look, out there: a man
stands on the wave

in black seal suit
aloft sea foam curl

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Yes, I was a dolphin too,
you were a manatee
Keep gathering, please

kelp in our mouths
keep gathering

Cast your gaze out
stare across sharp rocks
to the man who is paused
if only briefly on water

and then descends
and then he is swallowed
and then the sea
takes him in unceasingly

as all of us, as we—

(as for me, I float
on time)

the salt chest rises,
the salt chest falls,
the salt chest hollows,
the salt chest swells—

and the wave caroms
as the crest, sudden
lurch, throws
the salt searcher in

BRUCE TELOPA

Bird Feeder, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 30 x 42 in



Tiffany Higgins is author of *And Aeneas Stares into Her Helmet* (Carolina Wren Press, 2009), selected by Evie Shockley as winner of the Carolina Wren Press Poetry Prize. Her poems appear in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Taos Journal of Poetry & Art*, and *From the Fishhouse*. She recently was a resident at Nebraska's Art Farm. She writes on ecocultural poetics, and she translates contemporary Brazilian poets.

COURTESY THE ARTIST