

## HOWARD KANEG

*Atlantis*, 2010  
Acrylic on Canvas, 65 x 65 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO: DAVID REESE

## ASTRID CABRAL

### Scales of Call

Immense, the ship beyond my reach.  
My toddling step cannot get to bow or stern.  
In my little gaze, confronted  
by horizon all around,  
just the feeling of an island, rocking.  
I, to the waist of tall shapes, beside  
my mother wrapped in mourning and in tears.  
My grandparents told me, you're going to trade the blue sea  
for the Rio Negro. You're going to live in Manaus.  
Strong hands led me along  
the deck rocking between two blues  
a seesawing of clouds and waves.  
Sea, sea, on all sides sea, in all  
the round and bulging porthole eyes.  
Clinging to the gangplank ropes  
I leave Recife behind, the house with pigeons  
the tamarind tree at the end of the alley, beaches,  
animals and familiar voices and enter  
the strange universe of the steamship: whistles,  
machinery and engines purring,  
the smell of paint, cinnabar, pine, soap  
and sea breeze, wind freezing my fingers and my nose,  
ballrooms, corridors, cabins, steps  
and, on deck, the sea framing the world  
while the hours stretch out endless  
interlaid with dawns and dusks,

and moonlight and eyes glistening in ocean dark  
till disembarking in Belém I see  
the port spangled with boats masts sails.  
Unknown people greet me  
and on terra firma bring me  
beneath a canopy of leaves to where enormous  
metal tortoises crawl along  
the cobbled streets, lumbering automobiles.  
I walk close to the rough wall  
and soon am facing a great shop window  
glistening with varnish and high panes.  
And behold, there, as small as I myself,  
a model ship, divine, is anchored,  
a replica of the steamers sailing  
the backs of rivers, channels, a distant reach.  
Finally my gaze can take it in. Finally I come to land  
reconciled to my dimensions.  
I intensely wish to touch it, enter  
its space, insert myself in it.  
However, they drag me away from there. Stymied, I cry.  
I return to ocean solitude, hours on end.  
I stand there watching bubbles burst, bubbles burst,  
as the sea bears me off to the river.

—Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

**Astrid Cabral** has had a long career in Brazil as a poet, teacher, and diplomat. In the USA, her work has appeared in numerous magazines, including *Confrontation*, *Cincinnati Review*, *The Dirty Goat*, *International Poetry Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Poetry East*, *Two Lines*, and *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*. This poem is taken from her book of memory and loss, *Gazing Through Water*.

**Alexis Levitin** has placed his translations in well over two hundred literary magazines, including *Grand Street*, *APR*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Catamaran*. His most recent books are: *Brazil: A Traveler's Literary Companion*, *Tapestry of the Sun: An Anthology of Ecuadorian Poetry*, Eugénio de Andrade's *The Art of Patience*, and Ana Minga's *Tobacco Dogs*. He published Astrid Cabral's *Cage* in 2008.