

HOWARD IKEMOTO

California Landscape, 2013
oil on canvas, 66 x 42 in



Credit: R.Blitzer Gallery

EMILY STRAUSS

Leaving Tehachapi, California

driving up from the Central Valley
the hills are arid but faded green
with spreading oaks, wildflowers
in the spring fill the slopes orange

and in the basin at the crest grazing
lands center peaks high enough to be
snow-dusted in winter, the air hot yet
bearable, but keep driving to the far

edge lined in giant wind turbines
where the freeway descends,
you will see the line immediately—
the ground suddenly foreboding

with puny shrubs and Joshua trees
the wash steep, full of boulders
falling toward an immense bowl
of white light and featureless earth

with dark ranges like teeth pushing
up through clay along the horizons,
the road runs unwavering across
this immense absence as if to climb

the sky on the opposite side, and now
you are in the Mohave, the heat rising
in pulses broken across the tan washes
and if you dare to look closely, remove

your eyes from the slash of cement—
the wind turbines still flailing and pumping
on the hills—you almost miss the ghostly
dirt-tinted scrub whose nakedness strips

you bare before you can breathe.

Emily Strauss has an MA in English, but is self-taught in poetry. Over 130 of her poems appear in dozens of online venues and in anthologies. She is a semiretired teacher living in California, a place she observes closely in her travels.