

HELENE SIMKIN JARA

The House

The house I saw yesterday
was the face
I saw in the mirror this morning:
faded, worn,
partially lovely but
mostly
forgotten.

I saw
the outside paint,
beige,
like endless sand.

Before,
it was a vibrant blue,
proud,
making a grand
proclamation.

The fireplace had been
excised
from the center
of the living room,
its absence
screaming.

As I walked through the rooms
I was allowed
to see,
I felt tentative,
intrusive,
embarrassed for them,
for what they'd
become.

Like walking down
the corridor
of a nursing home,
seeing glimpses
of the lonely
and elderly
in their state of humiliating
disintegration.

Only the remodeled
kitchen,
now downstairs,
looked happy to be there.

The memories
of each room
could
barely be conjured up.

Like looking at photos
in the obituaries.
How they looked in their twenties,
how they looked right before
their passing.

I expected
to be moved,
walking on my parents' property,
seeing their old house.

It was more like reading
a textbook,
dull,
uninviting,
an assignment that
couldn't end
too quickly.

Helene Simkin Jara has been published in *Porter Gulch Review*, *La Revista*, *Mindprints*, *phren-Z*, *Serving House Journal*, and *Nerve Cowboy* and has self-published a book called *Because I Had To*. She was awarded Best Prose in *Porter Gulch Review* in 2003 for her short story "Josefina" and once again in 2009 for her play *FUBMC*.

LOUISE LEONG

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Gouache on paper, 24 x 30 in

