

PEP VENTOSA

Golden Gate Panoramic, 2010
Archival print, 24 x 48 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

GENANNE WALSH

Your Hysterical Wife

1.

Your hysterical wife is twerking in a nightclub, look at her go. Now she's sitting outside of Safeway with a backpack and a pit bull. In point of fact, your hysterical wife is standing in line for artisanal ice cream; she is planting carrots; she's replacing the register tape and clocking the hours. No, she's kicking drunks out of a dive bar. Your hysterical wife is picking through the recycling bins on Polk Street in the middle of the night. There she is, taking up two seats on the 22 to Life bus. Your hysterical wife was last seen walking toward the Golden Gate Bridge: alert the authorities.

Let's be honest, your hysterical wife is good at making things but not so good at taking care—she has been known, to paraphrase the incoherent pop hit from the sixties, to leave the cake out in the rain. Really, she is just trying to BART home after a shitty day at the office. She is teaching, diagnosing, emailing, snorting, sorting, shooting, defending, organizing, embezzling, talking talking talking. Your hysterical wife wants you to learn everything about her and then fix it. Your hysterical wife wants you to fuck off and leave her alone.

Your hysterical wife is exhausted by her perpetual state of bewilderment. Equally, she is depleted by her endless capacity to bewilder you.

Even your hysterical wife can't weep forever. Her breathing slows and wheels on iron tracks take over, sounding like oblivion. Two more stops and she'll be home. She puffs a cloud of hot breath on the train window. *Be wilder* she writes. Then, with the sleeve of her prim tan coat, she wipes it off.

2.

Your hysterical wife runs into the Pacific and steam rises. She is fevered all the time: hot feet, flushed cheeks. She wears sandals and sleeveless shirts, but that doesn't seem to help. She requires that car rides be conducted with AC blasting and, if it's cold enough, windows rolled down. She leaves fingerprint burn marks on the kitchen countertops and bursts into flame at the slightest provocation. You watch her in the backyard, practicing with a target for greater accuracy in her flame throwing. What is your