

ANDREW SCHWARTZ

Quite a Bird Show

this September morning: terns and widgeons,
egrets and sandpipers plow mud at low tide.
It clings to their feet like a dream.

Beaks unearth worms, crabs, razor shells,
whatever marine life lurks in the muck. Last
night, orphaned in our empty

nests, we spoke of ghosts crossing
plains of death, driving paper Maseratis from Shanghai
schlock shops. If those plains exist, my father, I'd guess,

preferred his feet. Home from teaching in Bed-Stuy,
he'd shed his tie, slip into white tee and shorts, skip
rope cut to size, ends wrapped in electrical tape. Push-

ups, sit-ups, three rounds each, then out the door, stilt
legs bounding along the canal: streetlights, shadow
boxing, his temple, his half hour of prayer. Thirty

years back, we walked that street for the last time,
red-faced in the wind. His gaunt hands spun shadows
into twilit trees. Sweet clichés swirled, seagulls to sea.

Andrew Schwartz lives and works in Albany, California. After a lifetime of writing prose, in the last few years he's turned to poetry. His poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared in *Confrontation*, *NER/BLQ*, *Columbia*, and other publications.

STEPHANIE MARTIN

Least Tern, 2017
Intaglio Etching, 5 x 7 in



2/22 ev

Least Tern

S. Martin

COURTESY THE ARTIST