

## CHARLES SCHMIDT

*Outgoing Tide*, 2016  
Oil on linen, 22 x 30 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## HENRY HUGHES

### Fishing for Lingcod

Bottom brown and blotchy green, lying  
long in his kelpy stone chamber.  
Amber eyes tilting up, gills fanning faster  
as tide slacks  
and he blasts, bites, and swallows  
a crunchy crab, inky octopus, a too-good-to-be-true  
soft little greenling cousin  
struggling  
at the end of my line.

Small can become big  
when you deal in nature, trade up prey.  
I reeled in both fish. And you netted the lingcod's milky bulge,  
twenty pounds of deck swash and clatter,  
its daggered mouth tearing my thumb and pointer.

Everyone said it was a gorgeous day off the Oregon coast.  
Licking bleeding fingers, I threw the small mauled greenling to a gull  
and sliced the lugging cod's crisp gills, packing  
him in bloody ice with the others.

Filleted back home,  
the firm flesh glowed bright blue under my knife,  
until the pan's sizzling heat cleared the sea out of our heads  
and brought it to our mouths.

**Henry Hughes's** poems have appeared in the *Antioch Review*, the *Carolina Quarterly*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Humanities Review*, the *Seattle Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*. He is the author of four poetry collections, including *Men Holding Eggs*, which received the 2004 Oregon Book Award, and *Moist Meridian*, which was a finalist for the same award in 2011. His newest collection, *Bunch of Animals*, was published by Cloudbank Books in 2016. Hughes is also the author of the memoir *Back Seat with Fish: A Man's Adventures in Angling and Romance*, and he is the editor of the Everyman's Library anthologies *The Art of Angling: Poems about Fishing* and *Fishing Stories*. His commentary on new poetry appears regularly in *Harvard Review*.