

IRENE GRUSS

I Was on a Riverbank

We are like those toads that, in the austere night of the swamps, call to each other without seeing their mate, their cry of love bending the universe's total doom.

—René Char

Irene Gruss was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1950. Her collected poetry, assembled in *La mitad de la verdad* (*One half of the truth*), includes, among others, her books of poetry *El mundo incompleto* (*Incomplete world*) and *La dicha* (*Bliss*). Recent volumes of poetry include *La pared* (*The wall*) and *Entre la pena y la nada* (*Between sorrow and nothing*). She edited and compiled *Poetas argentinas, 1940–1960* (*Women poets of Argentina, 1940–1960*).

Eugenio Polisky authored the poetry collections *Silencio en la nada luz* (*Silence in the Lack of Light*), *Quimera bulevar* (*Pipe-dream boulevard*), and *Desde el fondo* (*From the depths*). He translated the Fundación Shakespeare Argentina's reprint of Leopoldo Lugones's *Dos ilustres lunáticos o La divergencia universal* (*Two Illustrious Lunatics, or The Universal Divergence*). Polisky has translated poetry by Irene Gruss, Liliana Díaz Mindurry, Daniel Freidemberg, and Hugo Mujica into English, as well as poetry by Anne Carson, Stephen Kessler, Dan Bellm, and Zack Rogow into Spanish.

I was on a riverbank—
white, and I saw a white river with my eye
terribly blue
through the peephole of a shrub,
not the gutter.
I probed the nodes of that river, they pulsated
like René Char's toads pulsate,
fortunate.
With this eye I saw my shadow dancing
while I kept still, observing
the shore, the one belonging to a white river. I was there
as anyone might be, just passing through,
on my knees, that's how I watched, I touched abandoned sand
white like a river I'd seen from the shore.
Never say that I have a distinctive
voice, never did my throat plagiarize
that riverbank so much.
I was on a riverbank
white like abandoned sand, warm sand,
I danced and my shadow
scanned the horizon, searching for a direction,
lost islands sought after, on a riverbank,
a white one, with white water.
That water pulsated like a node,
desirous,
wrapped around its peaceful gait,
and leaving on the riverbank only sand,
white sand,
abandoned.

—Translated from the Spanish by Eugenio Polisky

GINA WERFEL

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Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in



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