

RICHARD BLANCO

Genius of Stars and Love

*On the occasion of The Tech Awards,
The Tech Museum of Innovation,
San Jose, California, November 2013*

The tiny billion eyes of the stars have seen it all. They've watched us as long as we've stared up at them, their twinkle whispering in our eyes, eons before our tongues tamed breaths into words that could name them, chart and connect them in the likeness of our heroes, gods, and beasts. They knew our minds would dare kindle fire: fire to cook, to draw and write with soot, fire to reach the moon someday, then aim toward their sparkle.

They knew once they heard the first tree we felled and hollowed into a hull, cutting across the mirror of a lake to a far shore—simply because there was a farther shore. They held our hands stitching sails to cup wind across seas, glide over the flat earth before it was round to us. They knew, following us as we followed them for centuries to map our world in pastel colors, then stitch continents with tracks, roads veining over the land. They knew we'd solve the mystery of bones and feathers to forge steel into wings for ourselves, kiln sand into glass to peer at our cells dividing, atoms spinning, and the heart of their starriness breathing like our own bodies.

They saw us speak with smoke, then dots-dashes—now they eavesdrop on our voices, pixels made air traveling at the speed of light through our satellites like fireflies flashing beside them in the night sky. Sky from which they've also mourned our wars, pitied our crisp air turned heavy and dark, our reflections drowned in rivers and lakes spoiled by our spoils, our land stripped barren by drought and flood.

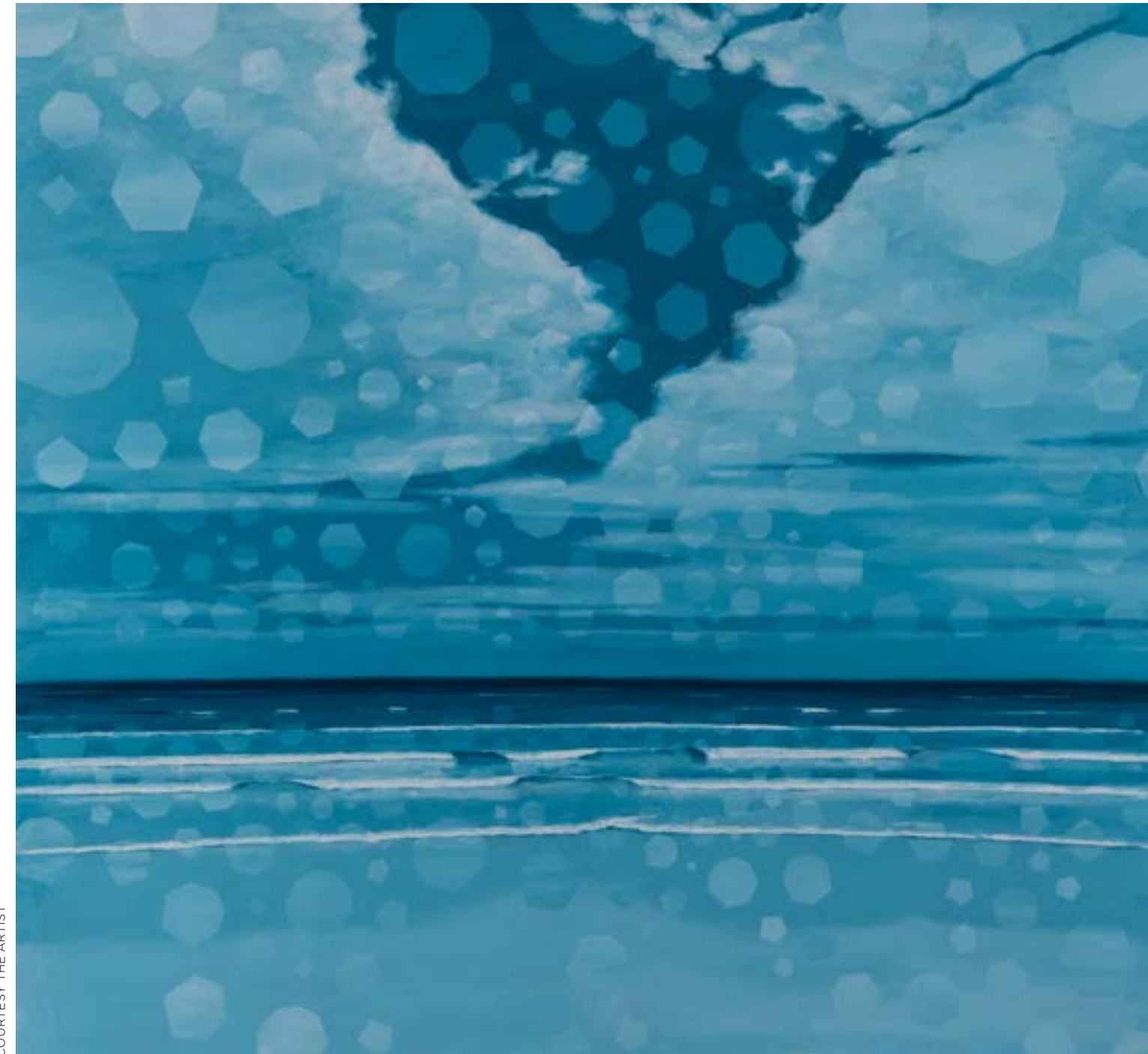
They knew. But they waited, hoping someday we'd understand what we're understanding now: it takes the soul's mind as much as the gears

of love if we are to survive ourselves and reach their starlight someday. Love to graph the arc of a child's smile tasting fresh water, tasting a fresh tomorrow. Love to design an arm of steel for an armless man, measure the joy in his eyes able to touch his wife's face. Love to calculate what we took, must return to the earth to sow the seeds of a farmer's trust. Love to integrate all the voices of the voiceless into the gigabytes of words claiming the world. Love to harness light to give life and save lives, the same light from the stars that have always known: love is our wisest formula, most elegant calculation, our most noble science, most brilliant invention. Love, our greatest genius, as genius as the fire in the still eyes of the stars, still watching us.

Richard Blanco is an American poet, public speaker, author, and civil engineer. He is the fifth poet to read at a United States presidential inauguration, having read for Barack Obama's second inauguration. He has published three collections of poetry, *City of a Hundred Fires*, *Directions to the Beach of the Dead*, and *Looking for the Gulf Motel*, as well as a recent memoir, *The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood*.

BRUCE POLLOCK

Sea and Sky, 2016
acrylic on linen, 60 x 65 in.



COURTESY THE ARTIST