

KEN HALE

Pastoral Landscape, 2019
Gouache on digital pigment print, 22 x 30 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY

MCKENNA RITTER harvesting lavender

kneeling on grayish stones/ she reached below the lavender
bush/ to remove the invading/ sweetgrass/ she laid/ the
bushels aside/ to be braided/ dried/ and burned in the eve-
nings/ the felt-like flowers and small tan grasshopper cling/
to the green stem/ swaying/ not noticing the wind/ because
they only know/ this gentle motion/ she held a handful of
strands and cut/ directly under/ the lowest blue beads/ with
a pair of dull hedge trimmers/ and placed the cuttings/ in
into her lungs/ clinging/ to the inflating tissue/ it is first
touch/ it is exploring the lines of their palm/ it is the sweat/
in the crook of their elbow/ it is pressing your ear to their
throat/ listening/ to every suppressed swallow/ *don't disturb*
her sleep/ it is warm/ the sky a dark blue/ even at night/ we
feel the blessing of the sun.

Mckenna Ritter is a young poet from Cleveland, Ohio. She studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a Thomas Wolfe Scholar. She is grateful to *Catamaran Literary Reader* for publishing her debut poem, and she hopes to devote her life to writing and working with other writers.