

## HOWARD IKEMOTO

*California Landscape, 2013*  
oil on canvas, 66 x 42 in



Credit: R.Blitzer Gallery

## EMILY STRAUSS

### Leaving Tehachapi, California

driving up from the Central Valley  
the hills are arid but faded green  
with spreading oaks, wildflowers  
in the spring fill the slopes orange

and in the basin at the crest grazing  
lands center peaks high enough to be  
snow-dusted in winter, the air hot yet  
bearable, but keep driving to the far

edge lined in giant wind turbines  
where the freeway descends,  
you will see the line immediately—  
the ground suddenly foreboding

with puny shrubs and Joshua trees  
the wash steep, full of boulders  
falling toward an immense bowl  
of white light and featureless earth

with dark ranges like teeth pushing  
up through clay along the horizons,  
the road runs unwavering across  
this immense absence as if to climb

the sky on the opposite side, and now  
you are in the Mohave, the heat rising  
in pulses broken across the tan washes  
and if you dare to look closely, remove

your eyes from the slash of cement—  
the wind turbines still flailing and pumping  
on the hills—you almost miss the ghostly  
dirt-tinted scrub whose nakedness strips

you bare before you can breathe.

**Emily Strauss** has an MA in English, but is self-taught in poetry. Over 130 of her poems appear in dozens of online venues and in anthologies. She is a semiretired teacher living in California, a place she observes closely in her travels.