

ALAN FELDMAN

Picasso at Vauvenargues

To feel you're at the beginning of things,
when you may be close to the end of things . . .

To decorate the big bathroom by painting a faun over the tub,
to have water flowing constantly out of the stone heads on the
garden walls, as if from a wellspring of desire and pleasure,
to pose for flickering home movies, chasing a parade of little dogs,
to pose in the window above the carved entryway—
To live, the former owner of the chateau has inscribed there,
as if one were never going to die—
to wear checked pants, absurd pants . . .

"I have bought Cézanne's mountain," you tell your dealer. "Which
canvas?" he asks.
No, you explain, you've bought the whole mountain.

To put the flag of Catalonia above the bed,
to lift a heavy cowbell each morning, to test your strength,
a cowbell the size of a carry-on suitcase,
the size of a big cannonball or a medium-sized fire hydrant
filled with eternal water . . .

To start by painting over the upholstery of a few chairs, to make
new paintings using a new, darker bottle green. Your dealer
warns the castle will be too austere, too dour. "I'm Spanish, so
I love sadness," you tell him.

You are not old, only on the brink of being old, which you choose
to ignore. You are still Picasso,
and the hills still bear pine trees, and the village is still quiet,
across from the turrets of the castle, its walls
fending off the flow of tourists who can't get near the place.

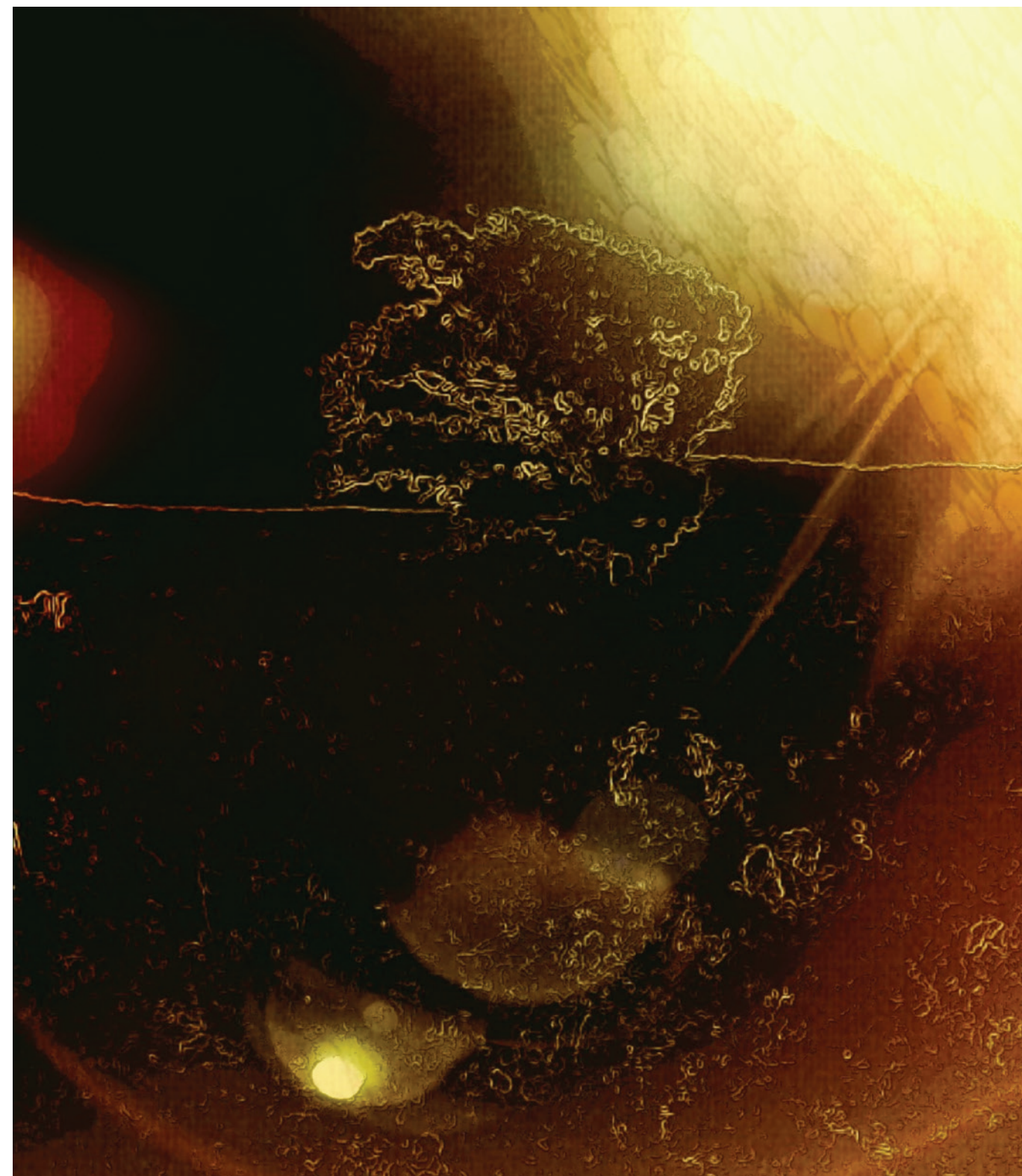
For just two years, two eternal years,
and soon to move away, to be closer to the doctors . . .

Which room is his? Everyone wants to know.
He's in the great room above the high stone portico of the main
entrance, his back to the landscape, painting under floodlights
deep into the night.

Alan Feldman is the author of two recent collections, *The Golden Coin* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), and *Immortality* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2015) which won the 2016 Massachusetts Book Award for poetry. Picasso's (unmarked) grave is at the artist's chateau, and Feldman's poem is based on a visit there in 2009 with his wife, the painter Nan Hass Feldman.

FRED BROWN

Tree of Truth, 2020
Digital photographic print, 16 x 24 in.



COURTESY THE ARTIST