

ISLAND OF GIRLS

visas dissolved by nightshade milk, they blow in from Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Shanghai...mouths blistered by salty venoms of oleander. babies on the backs of dolphins, they fly down thundering crimson breakers from the death pits of South Asia. steadied by fin and fathom, they crawl up blue gypsum sand of the island / into the ceaseless flitting of hummingbirds—new mothers who lift them into soft nests of coriander and feed them royal jellies of the bumblebee. and soon frizzy-headed scamper girls with smudged knees and sticky fingers run the island. wordless girls in palm dresses somersault through black-eyed susans. girls with nosegays of poppies in their hair take unspoken vows in the esparto grass. roseate girls fragrant as summer figs and quiet sulky girls disappear behind walls of blue mimosa. girls strong as wrestlers, stout as buoys, girls who dance with Blue Morphos and Tiger Swallowtails, girls who swim like sylphs and hamadryads in schools of triggerfish. but there are no crimson breakers, no blue sands, no cherub dolphins or hummingbirds, no murmuring hives. and the trades embrace open sea where mafic upwellings of lava might have cooled into a shore, where millions of girls might have stood, if only for a moment, and listened to the plaintive rustling of elephant palms.

Text by Stephen Eric Berry



Two Figures on Shoreline by John Elkerr
3" x 5.25"
Ink on meatbox