

Ryki Zuckerman

## wildfire

the old trees burning,  
trees that had been spared  
when other trees  
were cut down for lumber  
to build houses  
where humans could inhabit  
and spoil the forest habitat  
by sending sparks into the air,  
rushed to four corners  
by santa aña winds  
named after a mexican general,  
part of whose country was annexed  
to become california.

yes, yes, it was so dry,  
water forsaking the area  
climate in a strangle hold.  
let's burn something anyway.

barbeque, burning coal made from trees.  
the elder woods hear the cries  
from babies of the old growth,  
their anguish muffled by the booming sound  
of electric saws and lumbering trucks  
bringing the slaughtered  
to be stripped of their skin  
and sanded smooth.

wildfires whipping up the blaze,  
burning down the multimillion dollar homes  
of owners who thought themselves protected by wealth.  
a flare for style extinguished.

*this tract of land now available at cut-rate prices.*

wildfire. dancing around the campfire  
wild abandon, smoky gaze from across the embers,  
embers of youth smoldering,  
smoldering glances from him to her. and her to him.  
the fire burns wildly. the night is young.

## how to clean an old silk lampshade

pack the shade carefully  
wrapped in acid-free white tissue paper  
and entwine that in fresh, non-inked newsprint paper.  
fit it into a box.  
silk disintegrates with time.  
time disintegrates with fog.  
buy two tickets to japan.  
time travel to 1930 if possible.  
bring the shade, of course.  
pay a local guide  
to drive you to the silkworm fields.  
show a silk grower the shade  
and ask for repair, cleansing,  
reparations, or new silk.  
pay in silver coins.  
repack and reverse your time machine.  
return home.  
avoid bringing the silk grower back  
with you, especially to WWII era,  
where she will be sent to an internment camp  
but will first understand your previous reparation offer,  
too late and too little.  
avoid the late 1880s if you are a handsome white naval office  
and the silk grower is a shy, beautiful butterfly wearing  
a silk kimono, walking behind you  
with small steps, eyes cast down.  
or fill a vat in 2020 with mild, soapy, lukewarm water,  
dip the shade in, swish, then rinse gently  
with the tears of a geisha girl.  
dry with repeated pressed flowers and thick towels  
from the turkish bath you stopped at  
on your way back  
from the far east,  
on your way back from the filamental past,  
on your way to the light  
emanating from the lamp  
underneath the silk shade.