

# POETS RESPOND TO PRINTS

January 7, 2016 at 6:00 p.m., Channing Peake Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA

## Rick Benjamin

After 33 years on the East Coast, Rick Benjamin has returned to California to accept a position at UCSB. He's also taught at Brown, RISD, Goddard, Haverford, as well as at schools, community and assisted living centers. Still serving as state poet of Rhode Island through January of 2016, his books include *Passing Love* (2010), *Floating World* (2013) and *Endless Distances* (2015).

## Rail Yard

Sometimes you catch a glimpse  
from your seat: graffiti on rail  
cars, freight being unloaded,  
locomotives moving toward

the next coupling, steel track  
stretching out in the four  
directions & then some. If  
you've slept in one chances are

your clothes were on your back,  
you were looking for freight-cars  
empty enough for laying down  
a new life, & maybe free enough

of rage against newcomers room  
might still be made for some  
other vagabond looking for  
another way on & out of here.

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One night  
in Gare du  
Nord—one  
part rail-  
station one  
part yard—  
I spread  
my bag out  
against the  
winter cold  
on a wood  
floor, & one  
with more  
claim to it  
made sure  
I knew it by  
hammering  
down blade  
of his knife

by my head  
in a way  
that did  
not say,  
*blood* so  
much as  
*not even*  
*a finger*  
*beyond*  
*here*. I  
was in  
fear for  
my life  
though  
for once  
at least  
not in a  
place I  
knew.

:: :: :: ::

It's true: I've always longed to pull  
the switch, ditch new railcars for  
old, spray-painted ones where

signatures & stencils & tags  
emerge out of dark as if into  
light, the bright selves we

all long to die into among  
ones who are maybe even  
tracking that final transit.



*Rail Yard* by Tony Askew