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Tightrope Walker

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ALEŠ DEBELJAK

Translated from the Slovenian by Brian Henry

TIGHTROPE WALKER

For Igor Zabel (1958–2005)

Watch the dawn and the embrace, watch the wrong diagnosis, watch
the friction of the rope, monks tied it to a lightning rod,
taut, it hums between the gilded cupola and the study.
At the modern gallery the light is on and a curator works for unknown

clients. He draws maps for artists who refuse to
get stuck in their apartment buildings, plans for levitation
and other repetitions of first steps, tentacles and silk
slippers, much exercise in patience and growing insight.

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A few of us walk a thin rope and it is merciful
that we keep something in the glass without spilling,
masters of modern air currents and critics of emptiness,
we monitor ourselves on screens the color of a squeezed tangerine,

our styles of balancing differ, but our obsession is the same:
to reach the other side, touch the blade, and return.
Watch the uncertain hand here and the temporary shelter there,
the blazing light of the east, a catalog without the last page.