

## FRANCINE LINGAD / A memory, yes, but whose?

Once, on a hot afternoon in July, we went on a hike. It was dusty and dry and too hot for thick socks and hiking boots. I was thirsty. I had just come back from New York City, Manhattan, the Midtown East, where the air was humid, human contact constant, hues varied and busy but moderate that year, against all the gray concrete. Everywhere design, everything deliberate, even the greasy pigeons seem to say *hey, I'm walkin' hyeah*. The sight of a blue-brown bird brought me back to the hill, the hiking. It had been flying close by for awhile; its home must be near. I was looking for signs of a nest, trying to be careful, when I heard a crunch under my thick boot. My clumsy heart stopped a second, resumed loud and unforgiving. On the ground, an egg had broken, a wet red still life. The bird landed, flapping its wings, short trills hurried, urgent. I could not speak. We started back downhill without a word, my companion walking some distance ahead while I looked down at where my feet hit the ground.