

boom—a loud deep sound with much resonance

. . . as of a distant cannon or

an earthquake

a rapid advance in prices

or a sudden bound of activity in any business

truth and the consequences that follow from it, as when

one “lowers the boom”

the effective launching of anything upon public attention

an impetus given to any movement or enterprise

a long beam from which a microphone is suspended

to capture conversations in a crowd

a spar run out to extend a ship’s sail

a pole set up to mark the course

of the deep water

the cry of the bittern

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Boom: A Journal of California (ISSN 2153-8018, e-ISSN 2153-764X) is published quarterly (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter) by University of California Press, Journals and Digital Publishing, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Boom: A Journal of California*, University of California Press, Journals and Digital Publishing, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223. E-mail: customerservice@ucpressjournals.com.

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On the cover: Courtesy of the Noah Purifoy Foundation.

Special thanks to our interns Catherine J. Lee and Melinda Noack.



Printed by Allen Press, Lawrence, KS on Forest Stewardship Council™-certified paper.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It's election season again. And so the army of paid signature gatherers again takes to the field, ambushing passers-by, advancing another slew of initiatives on behalf of the governor, unions, corporations, and one or two wannabe visionaries with millions of dollars to spare. Meanwhile, Californians are donating money to out-of-state candidates in such numbers that their opponents are crying foul. But elections are about the future, and when it comes to that subject, Californians can't let well enough alone. We have a special claim on the future because, after all, this is where it happens first.

Given our proximity to it, the temptation to forecast it is almost irresistible. But real prophets are few, and predictions gone wrong litter the cultural landscape. Is there anything so dated, so quaint, as an aged future? When the captain of a light-speed spaceship talks into a hand-held communicator that couldn't stand up to a cheap Nokia, we know we're seeing a prediction gone wrong. Now, it boggles the mind to consider that the creaky moving walkways and monorails that trundle passengers to departure gates at most airports once transfixed the crowds at Disney's Tomorrowland.

Today the titanic struggle to remake tomorrow continues to unfold. Among the antagonists we have the Occupy Movement, who want a future that looks like the not-too-distant past, when the middle class was bigger and controlled more wealth, and their opponents, who want a future that looks a lot like a more distant past, when workers had little wealth and even fewer rights to contest the likes of John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan. The fight rattles every strut and joist of our national edifice, and few questions inspire such heated exchanges as the fate of public universities. The UC, the CSU, and the community colleges teeter from the radical defunding of the last three years. State leaders and university officials demand cuts and tuition hikes. Opponents demand tax hikes and lower tuition. The police wade in, truncheons swinging, the air scented with the acrid stench of pepper spray. Can any election change our predicament?

This issue of *Boom* is in many ways about futures lost and won.

Like perceptions of California, our visions of the future tend to be bright or dark, *Star Trek* or *Blade Runner*. Perhaps this is because we like tomorrows that will settle today's arguments, that prove something to people who disagree with us in the here and now, and prove it for good. Thus the future, from the Book of Revelations on, has made things clear. Like the true meaning of *apocalypse*, it's where something is irrevocably revealed.

While eschewing claims to certainty, this issue of *Boom* is in many ways about futures lost and won. In the rubble of old Mare Island Naval Station, Richard and Jesse White find something that looks like hope. Henry Jenkins shows us how the future of entertainment, or much of it anyway, belongs to the fans. Dowell Myers explores the shifting curves of California demography and how the state that awaits us is radically different from the one we've been expecting.

There is cause for optimism here. And in any case, we caution against despair. The future of higher education can brighten if a movement can coalesce around key demands. Keenan Norris recalls the apocalyptic fears surrounding the contentious trial of Oscar Grant's killer, by way of reminding us that racist excesses often punctuate times of great social progress. From such insights, we hope our readers find the strength to confront their own battles, public and private, to forge a brighter day.

Louis S. Warren