



The author as a young journalist hanging out deep in the Amazon. Photograph by Kit Miller.

#### FROM THE EDITOR'S DESKTOP

Malcolm Margolin, a *Boom* editorial board member and publisher of Heyday Books, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year, talks about the joys of “deep hanging out” in my interview with him in this issue of *Boom*. And whenever Malcolm talks about his experiences across four decades of publishing in California, I listen closely.

By taking the time to hang out and listen deeply to the stories of Californians, Malcolm has brought us beautiful, powerful, moving work from around the state. I’ve always found it pays to listen when he talks about how he has done this so consistently for so many years.

“Deep hanging out” is a phrase that anthropologist Renata Rosaldo casually used to describe the irreducible essence of fieldwork in anthropology at a conference at Stanford University in 1994. The phrase caught on, particularly as anthropology’s field was expanding far beyond the discipline’s colonial roots to what historian James Clifford calls the “routes” that characterize the ways that people make and experience culture in the messy zones of contact that abound in our age of globalization.

The “field” is no longer something static in anthropology, as in so many other fields. It never was, in fact. But now it’s virtually impossible not to see any field as anything but a state of constant flux.

And so it is with California. But “deep hanging out”—even along the highways of fast change, in the currents of global commerce, and in the laboratories and startups where tomorrow is being invented—is still a method that resonates with us.

We didn’t start out with any kind of theme for this issue of *Boom*. Instead, we thought we’d open up a rattle bag to include all of the smart, cool, strange, compelling

things that have come our way recently but didn't fit into the themes that have defined some of our past issues. We like this issue so much that we think we'll do this regularly. So keep it coming!

We find that organizing each issue of *Boom* around a particular conversation helps focus our minds and the minds of writers and readers. It also enables us to produce something substantive and beautiful to inspire, contribute to, and sustain conversations about many of the things we're most passionate about in California and the world.

But serendipity is important, too. "Serendipity" is said to be among the most difficult English words to translate into other languages. And, yet, since Horace Walpole first coined it in a 1754 letter to Horace Mann, "serendipity" has proved such a useful concept that it has been adopted into many other languages.

Walpole said he formulated "serendipity" based on a Persian fairy tale. "The Three Princes of Serendip," he observed, "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of." Robert K. Merton, the great sociologist of science, and Elinor Barber traced the history of this idea in *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*, and they asserted that serendipity is, actually, a method, in science, as in life, and—may I add?—producing a magazine.

What have we here then? Nothing, perhaps, as practical and life-changing as penicillin, which is said to be the result of serendipity.

But in valuing serendipity, we did find something valuable that we were not looking for: deep hanging out. Behind every piece in this issue, there is deep hanging out, and along each route, serendipity. Come to think of it, perhaps they go hand in hand.

We hope you enjoy the discovery as much as we have.

*Yours truly,*  
*Jon Christensen*