



Biodiversity #22 by Hiroko Yoshimoto.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESKTOP

California was part of the Pacific world long before it was part of the United States.

“Pacific world” is a term of art, increasingly used in academia to describe the long history of migration, trade, exchange of ideas, and movement of species throughout the Pacific. In this world, California lies on the eastern shore, one place among many defined by the whole.

At *Boom*, we think of our mission as opening up conversations about California in the world and the world in California. Today, we live in many worlds. The Pacific is not the only one. But it is arguably the most important one for California—and one we still haven't figured out.

We put together this issue looking backward and forward on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco to try to provoke, inspire, and sustain a conversation about California in the Pacific world.

In the process, we found a strong current we didn't anticipate running from the past through the present and into the future: a quest for a kind of California cosmopolitanism in the Pacific world.

I'm tempted to say it's our only hope.

And why not say it?

Well, there is a rather troubling side to cosmopolitanism, which runs through this issue, too.

In 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition sought to stake out a position for San Francisco at the center of the Pacific world. The concurrent Panama-California Exposition in San Diego was only slightly less ambitious—it simply wanted to position

San Diego as the vanguard of the American inheritance of the Spanish conquest of the Southwest and the Pacific.

Under all the happy talk of a new era of peace and prosperity, technological wonders, and global trade and understanding centered on the Pacific ran a strong current of scientific racism, which justified imperial ambitions abroad and segregation at home. This was cosmopolitanism from the top down, for the benefit of some and not others. You can feel those tensions in the pieces that look back at 1915 in this issue on the centenary of the world's fair in San Francisco.

Fast-forward to 2015, and a new spirit of cosmopolitanism from the bottom up courses through a Pacific world transformed by the century of globalization anticipated in 1915. California, it turns out, is not at the center of this world. Indeed, for California, this is not the world conjured by all the talk of the Pacific Rim in the late twentieth century, but instead what we might call a Latin-Pacific world. A lot of the tensions so apparent in 1915 still trouble this more compelling, and no longer imperial, vision of cosmopolitanism—as well as some new ones, such as the global and local environmental and human costs of Pacific trade.

If we look ahead to 2115, what do we see? First, that thinking about the future always tells us more about the present than it does about the future. Today, California, which has defined itself as the home of the future for so long, seems to feel tremendously ambivalent about its future in the world. Some of today's triumphalist tech talk echoes the rhetoric of 1915. California—or at least Silicon Valley—might yet be the center of the world, for better or worse.

If I were a betting man—and I am—I would wager that this is the most unlikely outcome.

I'm doubling down on California's evolving cosmopolitanism in the Pacific world.

I'd like to thank the California Historical Society for supporting this issue of *Boom*. The society's mission is to inspire and empower people to make California's richly diverse past a meaningful part of their contemporary lives—all to inform a more enlightened future. As the official coordinator of San Francisco's celebrations of the centenary of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE100.org), they are certainly doing that.

Yours truly,
Jon Christensen