

MALCOLM MARGOLIN

# The *Boom* Interview

## California's Heyday

**E**ditor's note: Malcolm Margolin doesn't answer questions. He tells stories. Sitting down to talk with Malcolm is like settling into the shotgun seat of an old pickup truck. You know you're in for a ride. You're going to go places you've never been before, explore back roads and byways, stop in on some old friends, and sit and chat for a while.

Getting out of the office and deep hanging out—Malcolm says that's his job as publisher of Heyday, which this year is celebrating forty years of publishing books on California. Looking back across four decades of Heyday's backlist and perusing each beautiful new catalog as it comes out every season—the catalogs themselves tell stories—the gifts that Malcolm Margolin has brought California overwhelm any attempt to contain them. A new book appears about every two weeks.

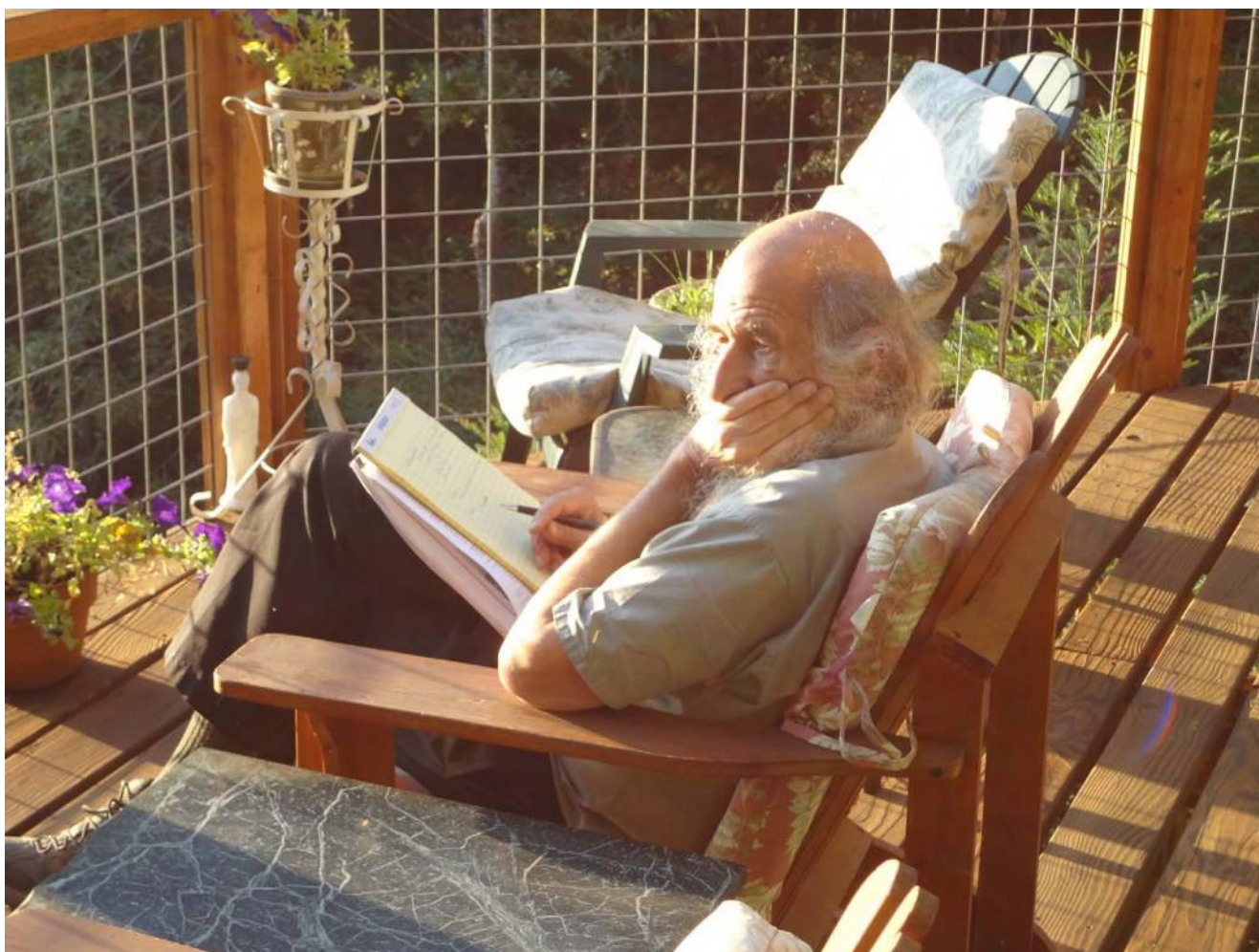
As is his wont, Malcolm is moving on to find the next thing of beauty to bring back to Heyday and all of us. But before doing so, he sat down for a spell in Heyday's Berkeley offices with *Boom* editor Jon Christensen to talk about books, publishing, and his California.

**Jon Christensen:** There will be a lot of people who will read this who haven't, amazingly, heard of Heyday and Malcolm Margolin. So what is Heyday? Tell me a little bit about its mission and its history.

**Malcolm Margolin:** It wasn't deliberate. I didn't want to set up a publishing company. As I'm getting older, people are giving me credit for great vision, that forty years ago Margolin had a vision of a magnificent California publishing enterprise. He's worked hard, and he's fulfilled that vision. The vision that I had was wanting not to work for

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Photograph of Malcolm Margolin by Kim Bancroft.

anybody. The vision I had was being free and independent. The vision that I had was getting through the week, and it's been forty years of getting through the week. It's been forty years of doing what's been in front of me.

As for history, it started somewhere around '73 when I got fired from the East Bay Regional Park District. I turned thirty—I actually turned thirty three years before, but it took me three years to work on it. Houghton Mifflin gave me ten thousand bucks for a book that I'd written. I was a free man with money in my pocket, and I spent the next year hiking in the hills and looking around. I just took off and celebrated the amazing, incredible beauty of the world, the fact that I was free. I had thought that I'd been had. I thought that I was trapped. I thought that I was going to be a pawn in this whole society, that I'd be pushed around by forces beyond my control. But I got my hands on the steering wheel of my

life, and I discovered it was a sports car, and that the freeway was leading to someplace that was utterly marvelous. I just stepped on the gas and I took off. I hiked around, and I wrote these marvelous thoughts about hiking in the East Bay, and I put them together in a book that I typeset and designed and put out. The book ultimately sold a hundred thousand copies. It's called *The East Bay Out*.

I loved writing and I considered myself a writer. But I now discovered that I loved the physicality of putting the type down on the paper. Many years later, I met the poet and printer William Everson, and he was particularly eloquent on what it was to generate something out of your mind that never existed before, to create it, to put it on paper, to give it a physical form, and that physical form I loved. And I also ended up loving getting it out in the world. There was something about just writing a manuscript and giving it to

somebody else that seemed so incomplete and unsatisfactory. It would be as if I was a writer and only did the verbs and let somebody else do the nouns.

The process of writing is getting something into somebody else's mind, and I loved being part of that whole process, of getting it out into bookstores, and giving readings, of being part of the distribution, of being active in the world. And the whole business of sitting there writing, it was so lonely and so filled with delusion and so helpless, so dependent upon other people. But publishing was a way that I could be active. I could get something out in the world. I could ride that horse out into the meadows, into the valleys, into the mountains. I could explore things.

So its origins were to do one book and do it well. So then I did another book.

**Christensen:** And here we are with twenty-five books a year.

**Margolin:** Twenty-five books a year, a couple hundred events a year, a staff of about fifteen.

**Christensen:** How do you describe what Heyday is today and what its mission is today?

**Margolin:** The official mission statement has something to do with deepening people's appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural resources of California, and something about boundary-breaking ideas, and a lot of other shit like that. What I do is, I go out into the world. I go out into the world and I find beautiful things and I bring them back in here, and I bring them back in here to make the people that work on them beautiful. We don't just shape the stuff that we work on. The stuff that we work on shapes us, and I've watched the people at Heyday be shaped by it, and I've watched it go out into the world to shape others.

Perhaps the real mission of Heyday is to create a beautiful place in which there's joy, in which there's creativity, in which there's pride, in which there's a soundness, in which there's playfulness, and to see this spill over into the world at large. But, once again, it has to do with my being regional. It has to do with my being nearsighted. It has to do with my not being too good at systems. It's the specificities that I go for, projects and people that I'll bring into the office and astonish everybody, including myself.

**Christensen:** So that specificity and that regionalism, why California?

**Margolin:** Because I was here. If I'd been in Indiana, I would have been the best publisher in Indiana.

**Christensen:** Is there a California literature, or literatures?

**Margolin:** You know, going on my own experience—let's not talk about Joaquin Miller. We could, but let's not. Let's talk about more recent times, and let's talk about it from a publisher's perspective.

Back East major and long-established publishers dominated the scene. When I came out West, it was swarming with little presses. When I started Heyday, in Berkeley alone there were dozens of them—Alta had Shameless Hussy Press, and John Oliver Simon had Aldebaran. Bob Callahan and Eileen Callahan had Turtle Island. Ishmael Reed had I. Reed Books. Don Cushman had Cloud Marauder. George Mattingly had Blue Cloud. Jerry Ratch had Somber Reptiles Press, a wonderful name for a press. There were these and so many more. And these were all enterprises that had grown up around personalities. And yet it was all invention. This was invented whole cloth. This was not a Houghton Mifflin. This was not a Harper & Row. This was something that sprung up at the spur of the moment, bursting with freshness and energy.

My wonderful friend, Ron Turner, had Last Gasp, with all these underground cartoonists, with Crumb and all these characters arising up. Printers like Clifford Burke were doing limited edition fine-art books. Ferlinghetti had just started publishing under the City Lights imprint. Stewart Brand did the *Whole Earth Catalog*. There was an inventiveness and excitement to it all. It was a snubbing of the nose at the proprieties and at the stuckedness of major publishing. I remember that Harper and Houghton and all these places were sending scouts out because something was happening out here. They didn't quite understand what it was, and they sent scouts to see what they could find out.

But there was something about this self-invention, and there was something about the looseness of this whole thing, that I think gave rise to the Lou Welches, to the Richard Brautigans, to the Gary Snyders, to the Maxine Hong Kingstons, to the Ishmael Reeds, to the James Houstons and Ray Carvers, to the Bob Hasses, to all these people that created Western literature, and I'm not sure they could have created it back East. I'm not sure that that rigid structure would have allowed that sort of thing. And this goes back to the Gold Rush days, when California was cut off



From *Take me to the River: Fishing, Swimming, and Dreaming of the San Joaquin* by Joell Hallowell and Coke Hallowell. COURTESY SALLY ADLESH.

from the East, and it created its own literature. It created its own magazines. There were wonderful magazines back then, and there was something in that self-creation that made it different, it made it more accessible, it made it more vibrant and more connected to the people, to the place around here.

**Christensen:** Describe for me this idea of the roundhouse model of publishing. It's more than a book. What is it? Where did the idea come from?

**Margolin:** The idea came from the sad experience of doing books that would go out into the world and not work very well. Splendid books that would have such a short lifetime, like a mayfly that just kind of flutters around briefly and then disappears. But whatever the sales, doing books is a wonderful way of organizing ideas. The doing of the book brings out greatness in people that do them. The editing

process, the design process, the commitment of the publisher, they're all tremendously valuable. Once it gets out into the world—or maybe doesn't get out into the world—there's often disappointment, regret, and apology.

And, despite the explosive growth of digital publishing, for many kinds of books the commercial vehicles for distribution are attenuating—there is this shriveling of opportunity. There has to be some other way of getting stuff out into the world. And what we deal with are ideas, and what we deal with are emotions. I'm an emotion junkie. I'm not an intellectual. I'm an emotion junkie, and Heyday is an emotional place. When somebody comes in with something beautiful, the staff will spend a lot of time talking about the core of beauty that it has, the core of meaning that it has. What is it that the world has to know, and how do we get it out? And we'll get it out through multiple channels. So there's the book, there's the events, there are the museum

shows we originate, the alliances we form with other cultural and environmental organizations, there's the fact that the roundhouse doesn't just support itself by sales. It has donors. It has foundations that support us. We're a community center, and I love it when people come into this place. There's a porosity to this place. People just come wandering in and they find things. We have a marvelous archive. People are furthered by it all. If people need advice, they'll come to us for advice. They'll come to us for connection. It's a social center. I think the bookstores of the future are not going to be bookstores. I think they're going to be community centers. I think they're going to be intellectual centers. I think they'll be replacing universities—not for professional training but more as refugia for the life of the mind. I think they'll be clubs. I think there's something else that people are hungry for, and it's that sense of community. It's a place that exists on real friendship.

The first law of publishing is you don't deal with anybody you don't like, and the second law of publishing is anything that gets you out of the office is good, that you don't find truth in the inbox. You just get out into the world. And there's something about being out in this world, in multiple platforms, in multiple forms.

You know, we do twenty-five books a year, so every two weeks or so, another book comes back from the printer. Anna will bring me a copy of the book, or Diane will bring me a copy of a book when it comes. I'll take a look at it. I'll admire it. I'll compliment everybody on it. I'll heft it. I'll look at the price of it. I'll think about it. I'll put it aside. I'm proud of it. I'm proud of the quality of it. I'll stand by it proudly but I may never look at it again. What I love is the social network that created it, the artist, the editor, the writer, the people that criticized it, the conversations that were around it, what formed the idea. What I love is what comes out of it all: the radio shows, the reviews, the sales, the publicity. If the book were to disappear, if there were to be no book but everything else were intact, there would certainly be a loss, but what remains would still be of immense value.

**Christensen:** The roundhouse idea comes from the Native American communities you've been involved with and publishing with, and the roundhouse is a kind of community center.

**Margolin:** The roundhouse is a community center. It is a multipurpose community center. It's a church. It's

a university. It used to function as a hotel, and in some places as a recreation center. In the old days, when it was built, people would come from different places. They would help construct the place that corresponded to where they were coming from. There were seating arrangements in those old places, where you would sit in a precise place that defined your relationship to the society around you. Maybe your clan and my clan have reciprocal undertaking arrangements. We bury your dead; you bury our dead. Where we would sit in the roundhouse would reflect this relationship.

Where you would sit was the physical manifestation of the community. There would be a center post, and that center post was a living entity. Those center posts had memories. The center posts had intelligence. The center post was a living thing. And when you were next to that center post, you had to speak the truth, and if you didn't speak the truth, then terrible things would happen to you, because that center post had the power to do that sort of thing. There was something in that place where you would come to tell the truth.

When you go into those old roundhouses, the light is always the same. There's a fire going on. There's a fire there. People are sitting around waiting for a dance. When you go into those old roundhouses, it's the sense that this is the permanent world. The rest of the world, the birds and trees and rivers and cities, it's just an illusion, that this round space is the center of the world. It's always been there, it's eternal and it's immortal, and this is what's holding the whole thing together. It is the most beautiful kind of thing.

**Christensen:** What's interesting is that the roundhouse has to be rebuilt. It's a permanent place, but it has to be rebuilt every generation.

**Margolin:** There was that story that my Miwok friend, Dwight Dutschke, told me, of how a roundhouse has to be built so that it will collapse every twenty years, so that every generation will have the experience of rebuilding it. And what he said was, if you want to build a roundhouse that will last, there's one method of doing it. If you want a culture that will last, there's something else you have to do. It was built for that kind of transmission.

I once did the most marvelous study of Indian pedagogy, of how people learn things, and how knowledge was preserved in this world before books, before writing, how you preserve sacred text, how you preserve technical knowledge,



From *Vital Signs* by Juan Delgado and Thomas McGovern. Photograph by Thomas McGovern.

and the various means by which knowledge was embedded in things and people, and that marvelous Indian way of knowing. There's a different way of knowing that they have. The stories that they have of how buckeye is married to rattlesnake and gives birth to grizzly bear, and all those stories that are so completely incomprehensible to us, they preserve wonderment. They don't preserve knowledge. They preserve wonderment. They preserve relationship. They teach us our place in the world and they define attitude. They're laid over the world like a blanket, to give it meaning, to give it texture, to give it relationship, to give it magic, to bind opposites together. They don't kill the magic in the world. The magic in the world is embedded in these stories, in those ways of seeing things, and there's that wonderful sense that you get there, that the world is bigger

than our capacity to understand it, that the world is inherently mysterious.

There's that great story that Jaime de Angulo, a linguist and storyteller active in California during the first half of the last century, tells of being up in the Pit River country, talking to some old guy, and asking him about the creation of the world. And the guy says, "Well, in the beginning, it was coyote," and Jaime says, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. In a nearby village they told me at the beginning, it was silver fox." And this Indian says, "Well, there they say it was silver fox. Here we say it was coyote." In Europe, you would have had a religious war in which three million people would have been killed to settle who the true creator of the world was. In this older California, they say it one way, we say it another way. What a marvelous world,

a people so at home in it that they don't need to cling to brittle illusions of certitude.

And the story goes on that Jaime tells. There's a point in the creation—Bob Hass wrote a poem about this one. He got it from me, and he wrote a poem about it, and he garbled it in the most marvelous way that only Bob Hass has. In garbling it, he improved the part. But the guy says something like, "So, at one point in the creation, the world maker was about to do something, and he says, 'I better not do this because what will people think?'" And Jaime says, "Wait a minute. There's no people around. He's creating the world. He can create any kind of world he wants, he can create any kind of people he wants. What do you mean, what will people think?"

And the Indian says, "You know, I always wondered about that. When I was a kid I asked my father about it, and my father said, 'You know, I always wondered about that. When I was a kid, I asked my father about that.'" It's a world in which there were questions that were being asked. It's not a world that's defined tightly. It's a world where people recognized that the wonderments of being alive are so great, and the human intelligence is so limited, that all we can do is be in awe of it all. These stories pay homage to the wisps of knowledge that swirl around the great mystery, rather than try to nail the thing down and kill it.

**Christensen:** Your daughter, Sadie, says, "My overseas was here in California, visiting Indian country, places where you can imagine an alternate history to what we have now, perhaps even a history that should have been but isn't." What did she mean by that?

**Margolin:** We can give her a ring and find out what the hell she meant.

**Christensen:** Well, what are your thoughts about that?

**Margolin:** I think that that alternate history is a different way of looking at history. We look at Indians as a function of the dominant culture. They were a defeated people. They've been marginalized. They're trying to regain their culture. But we contextualize it within our own dominant culture. We try to make them fit into our own narrative. It's nothing more than continuing the conquest. When you get into an Indian perspective, you see something else. You see survival. You see change. You see transmission. You see evolution of things.

Let me see if I can get at this, because there's something remarkable about that other perspective, when you see things in a different manner. We have a triumphalist view of history. It's the triumph of the Western people that have come in. Indian history is not a triumphalist history. This is a different history. It's a history of pain. It's a history of humiliation. But it's a history of greater victory. So we've got this character working for us now, named Vincent Medina. About two years ago, we had twenty local Indians that I invited to our office. We invited some foundation people to listen to them, and I wanted these foundation people to hear what the Bay Area Indians had to say about their world. Vincent is somebody who was twenty-six years old. He's relearned the Chochenyo language from the wax cylinders that his ancestors had created in the 1930s, the last speakers of this wonderful language. They left behind some wax cylinders and some notes. He has relearned the language with utter fluency and utter grace.

So it goes around the table and Vincent is sitting there, and it comes to him and he says, "My name is Vincent Medina. I'm twenty-six years old. I'm Chochenyo Ohlone from this area. I know my language. I'm practicing my customs. I didn't have the same experience as you people in this room. I'm younger than you. I grew up in a different age. I never experienced the brutal prejudice. I never experienced the hatred. I'm not filled with resentment and anger. I'm so grateful for everybody at this table for keeping things alive during such difficult times, but I want to let you know that I have my language, I have my culture, and I'm going to take it somewhere where it's never been."

And there was something marvelous in that statement. There's something of a victory to that statement, and something in having resurrected something and kept it alive that's such a different vantage point from our own history. There's something in it that's so rooted, that's so emotional, so inconsequential to the culture at large, and yet so self-defined and central, in and of itself. I find that utterly beautiful, and I find going to these pockets of integrity, going to these places of memory, going to these places of emotion and attachment—there's another history in there. There's another way of seeing things in there, and leads me to a hopefulness.

**Christensen:** Describe for me deep hanging out, as a method.



From *Edges of Bounty* by William Emery. Photograph by Scott Squire.

**Margolin:** If you have to describe it, it's hopeless. It comes naturally.

**Christensen:** What don't we know about the rest of California?

**Margolin:** I'm not sure.

**Christensen:** Do I need to clarify who I mean by "we"? So it's partly a question of what are the things that you think that we need to know about the rest of California, and by that "we," I mean those of us who live in the cities, the Bay Area, Los Angeles. But maybe it's the other way around, too. What don't we know about each other?

**Margolin:** This is such a big and wonderful question. Some weekends ago, I went down to Southern California with

Lindsie Bear, who runs the roundhouse. We stopped in at Sam Maloof's house—Sam was a well-known furniture maker—to talk to these people about doing a book on Sam. And then we went off to the Morongo Reservation, where my wonderful friend, Ernie Siva, had a fundraiser for his Dorothy Ramon Learning Center. His aunt, Dorothy Ramon, was the last full speaker of the Serrano language, although Ernie speaks it, too. He has a center devoted to her, and this was a gala to celebrate the center.

We got up early the next morning in Banning and went out to the Mission Inn in Riverside and had breakfast. We then walked up to the street to this Mexican restaurant that has this outsider art in the backyard, magnificent sculptures. Each and every one of these was a self-defined world that somebody had made. Each was a world off the grid. And



the capacities of people not to follow the agenda, to create their own worlds of great beauty is just, to me, an utter marvel. And maybe I see this as a publisher. Maybe people come to me only when they have great ideas or something unusual to say.

I think that what we don't understand is the capacity of people for joy, for creativity, for lives of meaning and for lives of beauty, for lives of devotion to causes, and this great sincerity and this great integrity that people have around us. I'm always stunned by it. I'm always so moved by it. I'm always so moved by the loyalties of people, to their own culture. I'm so moved by the authenticity of the "Hapa" generation, of these mixed-bloods. Whether it's Indian or Asian, it's a crossover of people that are forging something new that means something to them. They're not just taking their identity off the shelf. They're creating new identities for themselves, and these people among us that are doing things that are so quietly creative and heroic.

And I think what we have to know is there's been something in the general tone of the media that diminishes people, that diminishes our capacity for joy, that diminishes our capacity for political solution, that diminishes our capacity for competence in the world, that would present people as a race of incompetents that are addicted to toys and are greedy and are living in a world that's deteriorating, too lazy, selfish, short-sighted, and greedy to be effective. I think you go around and there are people that are just so marvelous, the Mas Masumotos of the world, the people that are doing great things. And this is what I've been doing. I've been going off and meeting these people, and recording their stories, and they're people I'm attracted to. I don't know whether this is statistically widespread. These are the people I know.

**Christensen:** How many Californias are there, or how many should there be?

**Margolin:** The population is thirty-two million. You could say that there are thirty-two million Californias. But I think California has this reputation for self-invention. I think everybody is convinced they own California, and it's such a flimsy concept. It's such a undefinable concept. In 1849, a bunch of alcoholics sitting around a table in Monterey drew some lines around a map through places that they'd never been, and created this thing called California, and we've been stuck with it ever since. It's not real. It's not real.

In no way does it conform to geography, culture, or anything else in the real world.

We've been doing a lot of work up in the Sacramento Valley. To some extent, parts of the Sacramento Valley are a culture area. You go up into the rice-growing areas up there, and there are people that live up there that are the most peculiarly traditional, conservative, optimistic people. They're so inventive in their technology. They're so forward-looking. And, at the same time, they're so conservative in their social values. I don't know how you make people like this. Bryce Lundberg and the Lundberg family, they're just astonishing people. The people that have Sierra Brewery, the people that are out there on the farms—and this is a culture area, and I'm not sure how far it extends. The people that seem to live around Davis seem to have more of an organic, small-community sort of thing.

We did a lot of work down in what's called the Inland Valley, and there it's completely fragmented. Riverside has its own culture. San Bernardino has its own culture. Colton has its own culture. Fortuna has its own culture. Idyllwild has its own culture. In the Bay Area, Berkeley has absolutely nothing in common with Fremont. Fremont has absolutely nothing in common with Marin County. Marin County has absolutely nothing in common with San Jose. Nobody knows anything about what the others are doing, and yet we call ourselves the Bay Area. I don't know how many Californias there are. You tell me.

**Christensen:** I argue that we're one. We have one state.

**Margolin:** Well, maybe we can have one state. As a political entity, maybe we do have one state. There's a great statement by Walter Lippmann, "Where all people think alike, no one thinks very much." There's something about these differences and dynamics that are so invigorating. So you think there's only one California. How about less than one?

**Christensen:** At times it seems that way.

[Laughter.]

**Margolin:** Why stop at one? Why not continue?

**Christensen:** But it's more of an argument, right? It's an argument I'm making, about more than one California. I'm happy to entertain these ideas that there's more than one California, or there should be more than one California, but if there are, I want them to be things that are useful for us to



From *Scrape the Willow Until it Sings* by Julia Parker. Photograph by Deborah Valoma.

think with, or think about the California we have, rather than things that are destructive. I think that Tim Draper's proposal for seven—

**Margolin:** —for six or seven Californias is idiotic.

**Christensen:** I think it's destructive. It doesn't help us think about the California we have.

**Margolin:** It's completely destructive. It's completely destructive. It assumes that unanimity is good. It assumes that homogeneity is good, and you end up having homogeneous groups, and this is good. And it's one way of eliminating conflict, but with it comes no thinking. With it comes no progress. And we're connected. The waters connect us. The air connects us. It's all bullshit about California being an island. California is not an island. In California, the

storms come in from the Pacific, the salmon come in from the ocean, the whales come down from the Arctic, the geese and the ducks come in from Siberia and Alaska, the people move throughout, the transmission—the air pollution comes from China. It's always been part of the world, and this whole business of insulating something from the world is just absolutely—well, I can't say I care for it very much.

So what are some of the changes you've seen since you've been in California? What do you think of California?

**Christensen:** I think perhaps the reason why I agreed to take on this foolhardy proposition of editing a quarterly magazine—and dedicating it to California in the world and the world in California—is that I'm trying to figure out this question. Or perhaps just keep asking it. I don't know that

I'll ever figure it out, but it's an interesting question to keep asking.

**Margolin:** So Jim Quay came by for lunch. He was head of the California Council for the Humanities, and for thirty years he would ask the question, "What does California mean?" He never found out. He never quite pinned it down. What I keep thinking about is that there's been a major shift, that for the first time in our history, more people are born in this state than migrated in. For most of our history, people have come in as migrants, so they have left family and culture behind, they've come to a new place. They've come to reinvent themselves in some way. And there was something in that reinvention that I think defined California. It defined it in the Gold Rush, when some schleppey young farmer from New England with zits would come out here and suddenly take on another identity of Tennessee Joe, and take on a romantic past that created a new identity for himself.

I've created an identity for myself. This is not the kid that grew up in Dorchester. I left that person behind. And it's a place where you could re-create yourself, and there's something in that milieu that allows people to change, that creates something. There's a dynamism to this culture that's really great fun. Silicon Valley began here. Underground comics began here. A new type of music began here. There was something about the innovation of the place, it's the innovation of people that are allowed to reinvent themselves, and maybe that's what here.

**Christensen:** Thinking about this story of the ancient Polynesians setting out on boats to colonize Hawaii, packing seeds of things for the future, what would you pack for the future?

**Margolin:** For the future of Heyday or for the future of California? There's a difference.

**Christensen:** Well, let's take one and then the other, for the future of Heyday.

**Margolin:** The Rolodex. I'd pack the Rolodex.

**Christensen:** You still have one, actually.

**Margolin:** Yeah. I think the question is better than any answer I have. I think that a person lives on a body of values, and it lives on something. I think I would pack it into a theme

song. I think I would pack it into an app, a kind of morning prayer, and the prayer would be for the capacity to take risks, the capacity to be open, understanding that this is not a dog-eat-dog world. It's a kind world and to be kind to other people. I think it's a body of values, that I would bring along. I think this is all that I have. I don't have possessions. I don't own a house. I don't own anything. I own absolutely nothing that if I lost it, I would care about it. This is not just an idle Zen kind of comment. I think that if I was stripped of everything, I wouldn't care. I just don't care about these sorts of things.

I think what I have to offer is a kind of system of values, and it has to do with playfulness. It has to do with risk. It has to do with a desire to see other people happy. I love the happiness of the people that are here. I love to see them happy. I don't want to dominate. I want people to be strong, and I want them to be in a position and place where people are thriving. There's something about that, I think, I would end up capturing that in some kind of a poem, some kind of a song, where a sentence could repeat, and it wouldn't be corrupted by time. These things tend to be corrupted by time, and I'm not sure how you keep that core that has not been articulated. I think that I would keep alive disgust with meanness and selfishness. People come in here with that kind of stuff and I just have no use for it. I just have no use for it. I just don't see it here.

**Christensen:** What about for California?

**Margolin:** I think what you would end up packing for the future are environments. I think there are environments that need to be protected, and I think that what has to be protected is not the species that live on these places but the capacity of a place to change, the capacity of a place to be fruitful and fecund and healthy, and I think it's the underlying health of a place that has to be preserved. And I think that great areas of land have to be taken into the future. I think that we have to preserve the limited waters that we have. I think for California, the future is in the natural resources that have to be preserved.

I would love to be able to preserve the literature of California. I once created something called the California Legacy Project over at Santa Clara University, to get that older literature out. Somehow, there's been no cultural interest in it. There've been no courses in it. The state of the new, this worship of the new, nobody wants to read this Gold Rush stuff anymore. Nobody wants to read these marvelous works



Buckled gypsum, from *Saltsapes* by Cris Benton.

from the past. And somehow or other, I would like to see these preserved. I would like to see these memories preserved of what places were like, what the tonalities of people's lives were like, what the hopes of the people that came here were, what their aspirations were, how these aspirations got molded and realized or obliterated. I think I would love to keep alive the lives of people.

I would love to see more deep hanging out. This art of deep hanging out, it's not done too often. People have become like billiard balls on a table. They click against one another, and they bounce off into their separate worlds.

I go into these Indian communities. I'll go to somebody's house. I'll knock at the door and somebody will open the door, and this old woman will look at me—this has happened recently—and she'll look at me and she'll say, "Malcolm. How good to see you." And you know you're in for a three-hour visit, in which nothing much may get said, but you sit there for three hours and you absorb each other's personality, and the bigness of their lives, the sadness of their lives, the humor of their lives, and this whole business of just getting to know one another. It's so essential. **B**