



Paint brushes at Salvation Mountain. Photograph by Aaron Huey.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESKTOP

One big problem with producing “a journal of California” is that you inevitably start trying to see everything through the lens of California. We try to balance that tendency by thinking of *Boom* as a journal of California in the world—and the world in California.

But, still, there is California. As capacious as California can be, it is only one of many places to stand in the world, if we take our state literally, and only one of many lenses through which to look at the world, if we think about California more figuratively. And anywhere you stand, any lens you use, lets you see certain things and not others.

This challenge came home to me most dramatically as we assembled this issue on religion. In what ways can a subject so boundless—concerning life, the universe, and everything—be bound up in a journal of California? Is there something special about religion in California, or California in religion? Does religion play a role in how we think about California? And does California play a role in shaping religion? Is the idea of California itself perhaps even something of a religion?

These were some of the questions that Jason Sexton—theologian, religious scholar, and Californianist—posed to me when I asked him to join me as a guest editor for this issue and to open up his extensive community of colleagues to *Boom*'s readers.

I'm not sure that we've answered Jason's questions. You, the reader, will have to tell us what you think.

That's for the best, I believe. Because here at *Boom* our goal is not to finish arguments, but to open up conversations between scholars and researchers in our great universities and colleges, writers and journalists, artists and photographers, and people from all walks of life.

At the risk of stretching a religious metaphor too far, the magazine that you hold in your hands is something like a communion meal that we put together from the beautiful hard work of many others to share with you. It is our devotional offering to California and its people once a quarter. We hope that you find ideas, stories, inspirations, and insights to share with others, by passing the magazine along or sharing our content online.

We also bring people together to communion in person at events every quarter. You can find those online at boomcalifornia.com, by subscribing to our email newsletter, becoming a friend of *Boom* on Facebook, or following us on Twitter.

A couple of the articles in this issue are the result of a remarkable set of research projects on “religions in diaspora and global affairs” sponsored by the University of California Humanities Research Institute and supported by the Luce Foundation. These projects brought academic researchers together with journalists to figure out how to understand and tell stories publicly about something so deep, so complex, so personal, and so powerful as religion. I had an opportunity to talk with these scholars and storytellers when they were just getting started on their projects. Their quest inspired this issue and is shared by all of our contributors.

In the end, this is what matters most to us here at *Boom*—finding ways to talk with each other about what matters in our lives, here in California and in the world.

Yours truly,
Jon Christensen