

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Two hundred million years ago, tectonic conflict forced portions of the Pacific sea floor crust to the surface. Tacked on to present-day Utah and Arizona like a geological afterthought, California has never quite fit in. While states to the East were embroiled in wars of independence and slavery, California was oblivious, independent—free.

It is no accident that the event that populated California (and led to its inclusion as the 31st state) was delivered of an ancient, geological ordination. Millions of years ago, the confluence of water and molten magmas in the Sierra Nevada dissolved stable minerals into large veins of quartz, iron, copper and zinc sulfides—and gold. The California Gold Rush is too often associated with the underpinnings of American greed, or the Death of Industry, or else quite apocalyptically as the Conception of Modern Ills; too often do we ignore its hopeful, egalitarian esprit. The Forty-Niners redeem by an impeccable logic. If there is poverty, find wealth. If there is no wealth to be found, then by all means: Go West, Young Man!

But today, California's logic is confused. There is a moral logic of the innocent and of the corrupt, an economic logic of the poor and of the affluent, and a temporal logic of the established and the establishing. There is another logic altogether of the north and of the south, and of the urban and the suburban. Californians are keen adherents of techno-liberalism, but also preach euphoromoralism—and as we well know, the two cannot be wholly reconciled. Inconsistency and accidental unconformity have become definitive.

It is no secret that California's geology takes away as it gives. In 1906, near Daly City, CA (and again in 1989, at Loma Prieta Peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains), we witnessed the massive rupture of the San Andreas Fault. Thousands died in fires that swept San Francisco, turning Golden Gate Park into a refugee encampment; the Cypress Street Viaduct collapsed, crushing dozens of cars; the 1989 World Series was postponed for ten days; even the brilliant minds of Stanford University were twice forced to pause, grab hold of the nearest table, and consider. The geological faults that cleave the state of California are far more powerful—and potentially destructive—than the fault lines which divide us humans above-ground. Amidst our modern confusions, perhaps we can latch onto this instability. It reminds us of the limits of intellectualism, of politics, of culture and wealth and creativity. Above all, it reminds us of the limits of ourselves: of the fragile, quivering geology that governs each of our own little worlds. This is a commendable logic: it is something we should know.

— NICK HOY
& the editors of *Leland*

