

## RALPH JOACHIM

*The Big Bang!*  
(stage one of the  
creation series), 2015  
Acrylic on Canvas, 120 x 48 in



COURTESY R. BLITZER GALLERY

## MAGGIE PAUL

# Poetry, Paradise, and Ecstasy

An Interview with  
former California Poet  
Laureate Al Young

**F**or poet, novelist, musician, and teacher Al Young, words and music come together in an alchemy of truth, song, vision, and delight. Regarded as “a man of belle lettres” by the late poet, teacher, and friend Morton Marcus, former California Poet Laureate Young has a list of honors and awards that leaves one breathless. They include a Guggenheim, the Wallace Stegner, a Fulbright, National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, the PEN-Library of Congress Award for Short Fiction, the PEN Center USA Award for Nonfiction, two American Book Awards, and two New York Times Notable Book of the Year citations. He is coauthor of several volumes of literature on California and has written film scripts for such notable actors as Richard Pryor. Young’s signature writing styles are as varied and multilayered as the fields of poetry and music themselves. Words are notes and one can (as he sometimes does) sing them off the page. Drawing from the conventions and techniques of poetry and song, Young’s unique voice can best be described as a synthesis of sound and sense that crosses boundaries of history, race, culture, and ethnicity. A citizen of the world, Young speaks to readers of all backgrounds directly from the heart.

*Al Young’s connection to the Central Coast of California runs deep. Following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, he addressed the effects of the tragedy on the Mexican immigrant population, the families of farmworkers who grow our food and keep the agriculture industry one of the most productive in the world:*

### Watsonville After the Quake

On Central Coast radio KOM blasts  
Eddie Rabbitt thru waves of air the sea  
surrounds, & all the other country stars  
come out (Claude King, Tammy Wynette, Shelley  
West) & spread themselves in droplets.  
The sacred moisture of their song is skin  
to seal a pain that quavers in this ash blue night  
coming on just now like a downcast motel date,  
who’s warned you from in front that she’ll be coming  
‘round the mountain when she comes.

Whose tents are these? What’s with these shot  
parking lot & alleyway families peeping around  
the raggedy backs of undemolished fronts?  
That brownskin kid on a grassy patch along Main,  
catching a football & falling with joy  
on the run, is his family up from Mazatlán,  
up from Baja or Celaya— or edges of eternity?

Network tv didn’t do this news up right.  
For all their huff & puff & blow your house down,  
the mediators of disaster and distress  
didn’t find this sickly devastation sexy.  
Besides, who’s going to cry or lose sleep  
over a spaced out, tar papered, toppled down town  
by the sea, brown now with alien debris?

*To do justice in one interview to the wide body of work (and play) of Young’s poems is, in a beautiful sense, impossible. Peering through two very different lenses, the poet asks us to consider the wide lens of the cosmos and the zoomed-in lens of the particular. His visionary poem “The Alchemy of Destiny” reaches out to our humanity from before we were marked with “ancestral codes” and acknowledges our lives*

as part of the larger universe; it drives home how pivotal it is for us to “never forget our origin.” The human instrument of language plays a vital role in connecting us, just as it does the electric sounds of the crickets. We are “programmed” for connection, wherein “the alchemy of destiny is prized.”

“You Listened, You Watched,” a poem in memory of Morton Marcus, speaks to the magic of sharing both tangible and intangible gifts, including “good food . . . wine, and bread” and the ability to reach “for the moon / in tongues / [which] language alone frees up.” The poem aptly ends with an appreciation of inner and outer worlds, reflecting the art of poetry, and the very nature of love: “Over and over you walked the sea, / you talked to me, you gave your heart / over to poetry, Paradise, ecstasy.”

These three words traverse the multilayered terrain of Young’s poems. How fortunate we are to be invited on the journey!

**Maggie Paul:** In *The Geography of Home: California’s Poetry of Place*, edited by poets Chris Buckley and Gary Young, you mention that moving away from the flat landscapes of your childhood Mississippi and Michigan to the “now-you-see-it-now-you-don’t” landscape of California engendered in you a different kind of vision, one in which you cannot see beyond the mountains, fog, and infinite expanse of the Pacific. Can you talk a little about how this is reflected in your poetry? And more generally, how much you believe place enters into the fabric of a writer’s vision?

**Al Young:** Not only does place locate us; place is us. Everything we see around us that we think of as “environment”—that’s us. We all breathe the same surrounding air, drink the ancient water we’re now lucky to get if we get it. Mostly, though, we don’t get how intimately connected to each other we are. Food-chain linked. Rather, we are cellular members of one another. If you look at “One West Coast,” an early poem of mine, you get it. Biographically, I can say that my earliest memories of Ocean Springs, coastal memories of water that sloshed and fed yet led always elsewhere, and Michigan’s rivers and lakes set me up for migration to the San Francisco Bay Area.

**MP:** Speaking of geography, your poems traverse a wide “geography” of subjects, including those of race, ethnicity, culture, politics, music, and at the crux of it all, the importance of human love. Your poems can be viewed as amalgams of histories—personal, national, global, sometimes told in lyric, sometimes in the vernacular of Southern speech, other times echoing jazz riffs, providing a music and message so intertwined, we may not even realize by the poem’s end how far we’ve travelled, how much the poem has managed to convey. In just a line or two, such poems as those found in your early collection *The Song Turning Back on Itself* capture worlds and transcend time. Though published originally in 1965, these poems are eerily (if not sadly) relevant today. Like pelicans over the Pacific, they aim beneath the surface to the specific. One example is “For JoAnne in Poland,” in which the narrator offers comfort, camaraderie, and wisdom in few words:

You are not to trouble yourself  
with your ladyness  
your blackness  
mysteries  
of having been brought up  
on collard greens  
bagels  
&  
Chef Boy-Ar-Dee

Nor must you let the great haters  
of our time  
rattle in your heart

They are small potatoes  
whose old cries  
for blood  
may be heard  
any afternoon of the millennium  
any portion  
of this  
schoolroom globe

In another poem from this early collection, “The Song Turning Back Into Itself 2,” and subtitled, “A song for little

children,” the prayer-like mantra ends with “Let the always be love / the beginning be love / love the only / possible / end.”

I refer to these early “song-poems” because they seemed to have set the tone for the many books of poems that followed. While your poetry does not shy away from the difficulties and injustices of the real world, it does, as Morton Marcus attested, insist upon hope, celebration, an emphasis on the gifts of living in this flawed yet unspeakably rich world.

**AY:** “For JoAnne in Poland” was penned for JoAnne Ivory, a junior high and high school classmate in Detroit. She was my first girlfriend. After she married Donald Gibson, now a prominent scholar of African American literature, he was awarded a post-doctoral Fulbright Fellowship to teach for a year at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. David, the first of their two sons, was born there. She and I corresponded. She spoke of ever-hurtful racism. I wrote and sent this poem. Little by little, moment to moment, we listen to, comfort, and console each another. We show we care. This is love; this is love’s power.

### Political Poetry

**MP:** It has often been noted that political poems, poems that have a political agenda at the outset, are doomed to failure due to didacticism. A well-known tenet in literature is “no surprise for the reader, no surprise for the writer.” However, the poems in which you address social justice issues do contain elements of discovery and surprise. How do these unexpected moments find their way in the midst of such difficult topics as racism, classicism, and political unrest?

**AY:** One of the reassuring facets of poetry is that it can always restore the whole picture of anything unconsciously or deliberately broken into pieces for focus or convenience. Like many, I keep rediscovering that we’re all of a piece. The poet in me can see and taste the “pie” of that piece. Where does chemistry end, or physics begin? Observer and observed—the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, the periodic table, very fact that there is no “away” as we like to think. Ingrid Hellebrand of Orange

County’s Sanitation District puts it this way: “When you flush the toilet, when you brush your teeth, the water just goes away. And nobody really thinks about where ‘away’ is, but that’s where I work—where ‘away’ is.” I laughed and rejoiced when I heard her tell us this in 2008 on a PRI [Public Radio International] broadcast of *Living on Earth*, a segment called “Toilet to Tap”—Amen.

**MP:** In “A Low-Flying Blues for Somebody,” for example, the narrator asserts, “In these hard and hardening times, poetry looks / and sees and then becomes an honest way to go.” There is a story within a story, a music within a music, in your poems. We are compelled to circle back, hear the music again, revisit what that flying bird was saying so sweetly, while being asked to see the hard truth in that melodic song. Combining the personal and the political, the global and the local, your poems are like Russian dolls, one inside another, stating the facts, asking the questions, pushing forward to the most important question of all as in “Notes on the Future of Love,” in which the narrator contends that “Meanwhile over in yet another time zone / somewhere between Iraq and another place. . . / answers-in-progress stack but don’t add up. . . / In your cozy time zone . . . / where do you come down on the future of love?”

Can you share with us how you manage to maintain such a positive vision of humanity, even in light of the long history of human struggles for basic rights and respect?

**AY:** Yes, it comes down to belief. I believe in chemistry, physics, Ecclesiastes, the Bhagavad Gita, the Buddhist doctrine of inter-origination (which holds that we’ve all been connected from *bang!*), the Sermon on the Mount, and the first law of thermodynamics: Energy is neither created nor destroyed. All physical forms dissolve and transform. We are energy, what many ancestors characterize as spirit.

### Poetry and the Self

**MP:** In a previous interview, you make a distinction between [Walt] Whitman’s definition of the self in “Song of Myself” and confessional self that pervades much of contemporary poetry. With the advent of cell phones

“selfies”), social media sites like Facebook, and one’s ability to create or fabricate a “self” on the Internet, how can we return to Whitman’s vision of the spiritual self which in fact contains “multitudes”?

**AY:** Easily, really. Whitman’s prose-poetry shows us how closely in touch with himself he remained. How many of us these days and nights keep in touch with ourselves? How many take an hour, thirty minutes, or even fifteen minutes a day to put our slavish devices aside and listen to the crackle and silence of our selves?

### A Synthesis of Art

**MP:** Your work and previous comments on the fusion of poetry, jazz, theater arts, and music in your personal life seem to have forged an alchemy of magic that is your poetry. How do you manage to embrace what we often consider separate mediums into the form we know of as the poem? Are you ever satisfied that one poem can contain your world? This world?

**AY:** Certainly not—and that’s the chill and thrill of it. It was in Bahrain in 2002, dispatched by the U.S. Department of State, that I met with three sage poets (maybe Muslim, maybe not) who asked me to consider this: Were the arts of music and dance to disappear, or painting, sculpture, portraiture, literature, drama, film, architecture, horticulture, infrastructure—they [would] remain intact and retrievable in poetry.

### Education

**MP:** In this climate of standardized tests and an emphasis on science and engineering to the exclusion of the liberal arts, how do you think education can be reimagined to include and encourage the creativity of young minds? Can you share some of what do/did in your classes on Imaginative Writing and Creativity at CCA [California College of the Arts]?

**AY:** At CCA, I’ve conducted MFA in Writing grad seminar/workshops that lean of late toward actual seminars. Their titles include Kinds of Blue (in which we explored blue

as color, blue as linguistic idiom, blue as emotion, and the blues as music); Art, Science, Silence (with appropriate writing prompts); and currently Zen Skin and Bones (where we’re reading and talking about [Henry David] Thoreau, Maxine Hong Kingston, Thich Nhat Hanh, Charles Johnson, and David Foster Wallace). The idea in Zen Skin and Bones is not to indoctrinate but, rather, to offer doctrinaire creative writing students ways to look at and listen to the world with fresh eyes and ears. I gave up on orthodox creative writing a long time ago. Show Don’t Tell and all like that. Once I sat on the board of the AWP [Associated Writing Programs] for five years, and began offering panels in pedagogy, I knew the die was cast. As a visiting writer, traveling coast to coast, I’ve enjoyed reading stories, poems, essays, memoirs that fascinate, intrigue, yet don’t electrify the deep, adventuring me. In this once-a-week seminar, I try to stir and stimulate students to contact their playful sides, the childlike mind, the subconscious or unconscious, where imagination thrives, flowers, and flourishes.

**MP:** People often ask whether or not writing can be taught. My question is, in your opinion, can *compassion* be taught? Can the arts be instrumental in doing so? How?

**AY:** Yes, rudimentarily, writing can be taught. At Central High School, Detroit, Dr. Harry Seitz taught me how to hold, breathe into, caress, and play the trumpet. The instrument of poetry and storytelling is language. Language is key; not just reading, but listening attentively and with compassion. And, yes, we teach compassion by example; that is, by caring for one another.

**MP:** One of the most common complaints teachers and writers have about students who claim they want to write is that they don’t read. They want their work to be read, and they have some ambition to become creative writers, but there is a disconnect between reading contemporary authors or those who have been part of the literary tradition for hundreds of years. In the jazz world, the elders mentor the youth to insure a continuation of the art. I notice there is a similar understanding in the poetry community. What might be your suggestion to (1) teachers

who come up against a resistance to reading and (2) to the students themselves?

**AY:** All I do is express to students my love or enthusiasm for anything I’m reading, then connect it to what’s going on in the world today. Once I’ve pointed out to writing or any other students the importance of keeping in touch with themselves, they take it and run.

### Racism/Privatization of Prison System

**MP:** What are your thoughts on the value of bringing poets and artists into prisons as a way to rehabilitate and develop a sense of possibility for prisoners before they are released? One cannot help but recall Malcolm X’s famous essay on learning to read and write while confined in a prison cell ...

**AY:** Let’s turn this around. I first visited Soledad [State Prison], juvenile correctional facilities, and prisons in upstate New York with the notion that I was bringing something to prisoners. As it turned out, they were feeding me. Inmates who sign up to attend a writing workshop, for instance, are those who read and are trying to write. For many of them it’s their first opportunity to explore how they got locked up or locked down. What led to this? One afternoon, following a Soledad workshop, a dozen inmates queued up to speak with me individually. One man was asking my views on Jean-Paul Sartre and existentialism, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Chester Himes, Heidegger, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemming, Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy In America*. With ripened impatience, the man behind my inquisitor barked: “You know more shit than Mr. Young. Wind it up and let some of us dumb motherfuckers have our turn.” Inmates who read and think are no joke. They read the hell out of a text. I always thank them for the doors and windows they open.

**MP:** Did racism play a role in your early career—as motivator or obstacle? Does it now? What advice can you give to young black, Latino, and otherwise still marginalized writers and artists to pursue their work in spite of such obstacles?

**AY:** Years ago, in the 1960s, I complained to Ishmael Reed about the label Black Writer. Ish said, “Well, would you rather be a White Writer?” When I answered no, he said, “Be happy you’re a Black Writer. You see and experience stuff no White Writer ever will. That’s what makes you so valuable.” Like those curvatures in the calligraphed Chinese yin-yang symbol, opportunity and obstacle converge.

### Morton Marcus: Poet, Teacher, Film Critic, Friend

**MP:** Every year the Annual Morton Marcus Memorial Poetry Reading honors poet, teacher, and film critic Morton Marcus (1936–2009). Marcus, a nationally acclaimed poet, called Santa Cruz, California, his home for more than fifty years. He taught English and film at Cabrillo College for thirty years, was the cohost of the radio program *The Poetry Show*, and cohosted the film review show *Cinema Scene*.

In his memoir, *Striking Through the Masks*, Morton Marcus recalls his first encounters with you in San Francisco during the late 1960s and early 1970s. He describes how moved he was by the “celebratory quality” of your work, your storytelling abilities, and the music that moves through your writing. “His ear is pitch for speech patterns in pitch perfect,” he says, and any reader of your work, both prose and poetry, will agree. How did growing up in Mississippi contribute to this quality in your writing?

**AY:** I begin “Somebody Done Hoodoo’d the Hoodoo Man,” an essay about my roots as a poet with: “I grew up in homes where the verbal jam session was an ongoing and usually festive fixture.” It’s all true. Everyone told stories. Family and neighbors impersonated, mimicked, joked about, praised, and worshiped others. I’m talking about orality; communities interwoven through language, gesture, and imagination. Now I think I was lucky to have grown up in Mississippi farm villages in the 1940s and early 1950s with no electricity or running water, and with mules and wagons. I have at my disposal all centuries that precede the twentieth—or so official history tells us.

## Music—Jazz

**MP:** Morton Marcus writes in his memoir that you were pursuing a career playing guitar in Detroit, Ann Arbor, New York City, San Francisco, and Berkeley between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, but decided to devote yourself to writing because you could do it anywhere—away from ill-behaved and inebriated customers at the clubs. This brings to mind another California writer, Jim Houston, who also chose writing over his music when it came to full dedication. Your writing, however, merges an inherent love of music, dialogue, and internal reflection, as is demonstrated in part by tributes to such jazz greats as Charles Mingus, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, and Dexter Gordon (and many, many more). In an interview with NPR [National Public Radio] you once said you write in order to “make out the sound of my own background music.” Do you feel that poetry has answered this calling?

**AY:** Yes and yes and yes and yes and yes. Poetry provides the most powerful answer to any call. Try writing some family history in poetry. Try writing history of any kind that way. Try putting into poetry Newton’s Laws of Motion, or the art of haiku, or cancer, or drone annihilation, or joy, or the exhilaration you get from any encounter or performance. To my late pal Raymond Carver I’d say, “What we talk about when we talk about love stays put. We beam our excitement, life’s lusciousness, our selves.”

**MP:** As a jazz lover myself, I want to ask if you have you spent much time at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz? What are your favorite places to see jazz in the Bay Area?

**AY:** Indeed, I’ve performed at Kuumbwa, Santa Cruz, several times with wonderful musicians. Bassist Dan Robbins, first suggested to me in 2007 by Tim Jackson, Monterey Jazz Festival director, when I was about to undertake my first “top-to-bottom” state tour as California’s first legislated Poet Laureate. It’s a privilege. To quote Chester Burnett, Howlin’ Wolf: “I have enjoyed things that kings and queens will never have, and never get—and they don’t even know about.” Like jazz, venues keep shifting. Right now, for institutionalized jazz and blues, I like but

can’t always afford the opulent San Francisco Jazz Foundation’s plentiful offerings. But I can always catch good music at humbler SF [San Francisco] and East Bay settings: Oakland’s Yoshi’s and the Sound Room, Sausalito’s Seahorse, Berkeley’s Ashkenaz, Freight & Salvage, Art House Gallery and Cultural Center, La Peña Cultural Center, Bobby G’s Pizzeria, and the current listing makes me gasp.

## On the Teaching of Writing

**MP:** As a college writing instructor I often find myself sharing with my students how writing, and all art, is to some degree a conversation between oneself and the world. In what ways do you experience your writing a conversation with both the world and your inner self? After twenty-two books, can you say that writing remains, for you, a journey of self-discovery?

**AY:** Absolutely. Self-discovery or, as I like to call it, self-realization only began when I found out that ego and personality and the body weren’t all I thought “self” was about.

**MP:** Would it be accurate to say that in a sense, writing and music are, in fact, two versions of the same thing?

**AY:** Accurate to a T. We’re talking the way sound and rhythm and pitch and harmony and silence play against each other. Vibration. Music and speech vibrate. We vibrate. We are vibration.

## Performance Poetry

**MP:** How do you see the role of rap and hip-hop in the culture of poetry? Could you talk about what the current proliferation of poetry slams and competitive poetry events means to the life of the the poetry genre? Are we reinventing the word, in your opinion, or are we actually reaching back to the origins of language itself, which was oral?

**AY:** Of course we’re always reaching back to the origins of language. *Ooo-Poo-Pa-Doo*. Hear how toddlers prattle

and how we love “Hey, diddle, diddle / The cat and the fiddle” or “‘What’s the matter?’ said the doctor. / ‘What’s the matter?’ said the nurse.” / ‘What’s the matter?’ said the lady with the alligator purse”—rhythm, rhyme, and meaning. Corporatist hip-hop leans heavily on algorithm; looped gimmick refrains, drum machines, sound samples. The less misogyny, the less self-absorption, the fewer props an artistic human rap-poet needs.

**MP:** Is the role of the poet *to*, in some respects, reinvent the language, or to revise how we experience language and use it to express what it is to be human?

**AY:** Not only poets. Every day, in increments, we reinvent the language. I can’t forget a neighbor’s complaint of how tired she grows of motorists and rescuers “squeaking these streets,” or the way Rebekah Bloyd, my CCA colleague, not batting an eye, dubbed my wayward, rolling yellow-and-black luggage Bumblebee. From his child’s seat at the back of our car, Michael Young looked down from a hilltop perch upon shining town lights below. “Dad,” he said, “stars on the ground?” Stanford poet Kenneth Fields once recited to me his daughter’s first: “One-two / Barbecue.”

## California Poets—Literary Microclimates

**MP:** California is the third largest state in the U.S., with many regions and climates that have their own characteristics. Californians are familiar with microclimates caused by land elevation in mountainous terrain, fog in its coastal areas, and extremes of hot and cold across inland areas. One might say even the literary landscape of California reveals microclimates; there are regions of the state from which certain writers and types of writing have emerged. Among the long list of writers currently working in California, whether transplants or natives, which would you say have influenced you most?

**AY:** Ishmael Reed, Floyd Salas, Reginald Lockett, Maxine Hong Kingston, Adam David Miller, James D. Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Anne Lamott, Gerald Haslam, Dana Gioia, and Terry McMillan. Ishmael, Terry, and Adam brought to California their angry hopes,

where their stories flowered big enough to tell straight out. Native Californians—Oakland’s Floyd Salas and Reginald Lockett, both storytellers and poets; San Francisco’s James D. Houston and Long Beach’s Jeanne Wakatsuki, spouses, who together wrote *Farewell To Manzanar*, her memory of childhood spent in a childhood internment camp for Japanese Americans; Stockton’s Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, and the China ghosts she inherited; Bakersfield’s Gerald Haslam’s working-class and “working poor” ancestry; Hawthorne-born Dana Gioia of the Italian father and the Mexican mother who recited her remembered poems to him and brother Ted Gioia, jazz historian and chronicler.

**MP:** Can too much public recognition disrupt if not destroy a poet’s/musician’s sensibility/stance of being an outsider, with a voice that remains unblemished/unstained by mainstream culture?

**AY:** The years I spent working in and out of Hollywood writing screenplays for the likes of Richard Pryor, Sidney Poitier, and Bill Cosby taught me about the monster celebrity. I’ve never sought it. I know I’m well loved, onstage, on page, and off.

**MP:** The *California Report* on KQED for which you wrote one new poem a month—would you consider these “occasion poems”? How did this “assignment” come about and how did you feel about it as it was happening? Did it propel you to write more, to focus on seasons/time more?

**AY:** It was after I contacted the *California Report* and its producers to suggest my idea for them to air a monthly poem that this project caught fire. I’ve always loved the show. They liked the idea. It was a challenge, but, as I like to remind my students, the best, freshest creative work comes often from unforeseen assignments.

**MP:** You served as California Poet Laureate from 2005 to 2008. How did this position help you to fulfill part of your own personal mission as a poet and teacher?

**AY:** It was splendid. I was knighted.

## The Web

**MP:** Your website does a great deal more than present your poems, reviews, novels, achievements, and musical endeavors—it is an education in art itself, providing links to interviews, books, and film clips of the work of other writers and artists as well as your own. It promotes conversation across the multilayered spectrum of the arts. In your experience, has the Internet enhanced, saturated, or diminished the uniqueness, in any way, of the art of poetry?

**AY:** I don't care what anyone says, the internet has been poetry-friendly. At one point, Google let it be known that one of the most frequent entries in its search engine was simply the word Poetry.

**MP:** You stated in a previous interview that a writer must remember he/she is only competing with him/herself. This statement provides great relief for those who become overwhelmed with the amount of online and in-print literary journals out there, and the increase in MFA programs, which produce many thousands of new writers in search of publication each year. To some it may seem futile to add to the unwieldy body of work already online and in the bookstores.

**AY:** Just work away, I say. Your stuff will find a way to its waiting audiences. When I pick up an old-fashioned poetry or comedy CD and read a blurb that says "one million hits on YouTube," I know I'm on to something Sony or Random House overlooked.

**MP:** What could you say to new or upcoming writers, young and old, who believe they have a unique voice and story to tell, but perhaps question the odds of their work ever getting recognized due, in part, to the aforementioned abundance?

**AY:** I say you have no other choice but to brave your new world, children. Writers today enjoy far more outlets and avenues to air their work and presentation than limited print access permitted.

**Note:** *In memory of Morton Marcus (1936-2009)* appears in the new chapbook, *Seven Poems for Morton Marcus*, a limited edition publication on the occasion of the Sixth Annual Morton Marcus Memorial Poetry Reading (November, 2016). It includes poems by California poets Tom Meschery, Jack Marshall, Ronnie Hess, Joe Stroud, and David Sullivan.

**Maggie Paul** is the author of *Borrowed World*, a collection of poems published by Hummingbird Press, and the chapbook *Stones from the Basket of Others* (Black Dirt Press). Her work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Poetry Miscellany*, the *Drexel University Journal*, *Porter Gulch Review*, and *phren-Z*. She earned an MA at Tufts University and her MFA at Vermont College. Currently Maggie teaches writing at Cabrillo College and works as an independent educational consultant for college-bound students. She lives in Santa Cruz.

## RALPH JOACHIM

*Emerging from Chaos*  
(stage two of the creation series), 2015  
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