

CAROL CAMP

New Horizon, 2014
Acrylic, mixed media on canvas, 36 x 48 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

JACK SHOEMAKER

Before Catamaran

George Hitchcock
and Kayak

In the late sixties, South San Francisco and the Peninsula were filled with job printers, augmenting the work done in the city for more than a century by the fine printers for which San Francisco had become justifiably famous. There was, of course, no Silicon Valley. What was officially called “light industry” was punctuated with binderies, printers, paper warehouses, typesetters, and lithographers. The new boom in the print world was the result of increasingly inexpensive and increasingly available machinery devoted to offset printing. A brand new item, the Gestetner tabletop offset press, with its overhead projector stencil maker, had made it possible to have something in your bedroom that could reproduce high-quality pages at a decent speed. I had one in mine.

Offset printing, like its predecessor letterpress printing, ran sheet-fed, not using the giant rolls of paper later developed for general use. Sheet-fed paper, when printed, required the printer to trim off the ends of paper with giant paper cutters, the blades broader than a dining table and sharp as ice. These paper ends, the trims, sometimes forty inches across and sixteen inches high, were waste. An enterprising soul, George Hitchcock, ran his station wagon up to the backs of a few of these print shops and collected this waste as the raw material for his newly founded magazine, *Kayak*. The print shops were upgrading, and in their own minds, the old engravings and woodblocks they’d used to dress up their publications had become worn and dated, and their customers had begun to demand photographs instead. So George was able to have for the hauling boxes and boxes of these plates and blocks, which he dutifully took back to his house. The printers were glad to be rid of them, and George was entirely tickled by his score.

Using a converted treadle-operated Chandler & Price letterpress printing press, together with a cranky but adequate offset press, carefully cutting the ends of paper into useable sheets, and playing with his blocks like a large child with a secret, George produced the early issues of *Kayak* magazine. By the time I introduced myself, *Kayak* had become something of a legend (at least in George’s mind), and he was full of advice about how a print shop/publishing operation could be run on the edge, essentially “recycling” before that word had found currency. George was a big and flamboyant presence, and it was a delight to stand his awe, as he apparently wished.