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**OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES
DETAILS OF NEW SPRING EXHIBITION
*J.B. BLUNK: NATURE, ART & EVERYDAY LIFE***

Exhibition Explores the Mid-Century Artist's Multi-Disciplinary Work
and Holistic, Back-to-the-Land Creative Approach

On view April 21–September 9, 2018 in OMCA's Gallery of California Art

(OAKLAND, CA) April 4, 2018—This Spring, the Oakland Museum of California celebrates design and craft in a new exhibition titled ***J.B. Blunk: Nature, Art & Everyday Life***. Opening April 21 in the Oakland Museum of California's (OMCA) Gallery of California Art, the exhibition explores the life and work of **J.B. Blunk** (American, 1926–2002), an artist who deeply appreciated the beauty in the everyday life, and whose work continues to inspire all Californians and people who appreciate the connection between creative expression and the natural world.

A broad survey of the artist's life work, *J.B. Blunk: Nature, Art & Everyday Life* brings together over 80 objects to inspire Museum visitors to **see the beauty of nature and art in the everyday**. In addition to the exhibition, visitors are encouraged to **view one of Blunk's most well-known works—*The Planet***, a redwood seating sculpture weighing two tons and measuring thirteen feet in diameter, on view permanently. **Commissioned by OMCA in 1969, the year of the Museum's opening**, OMCA's building was completed around the sculpture, which is situated at the heart of the Museum on the first level outside of the Gallery of California Natural Sciences. Visitors will also encounter Blunk's work outside the Gallery of California History on the second level of the Museum, where one of Blunk's stone sculptures will be on display in the newly-landscaped outdoor alcoves.

"As we begin planning for the 50th anniversary of the Oakland Museum of California's 1969 opening in 2019, it seems especially appropriate to pay homage to the artist whose work lies at the very heart of our landmark building. OMCA was quite literally constructed around J.B. Blunk's *The Planet*, which continues to serve as a point of entry to our Gallery of California Natural Sciences and has served for decades **as a beloved and iconic meeting and gathering place**, especially for families during our Friday Nights @ OMCA activities," said **OMCA Director and CEO Lori Fogarty**.

Encompassing two exhibition spaces within the Gallery of California Art, one space will feature **Blunk's life, nature, and art in equal parts**, with a specific focus on **his time in Japan, the home he built in Marin County, and his dedication to living and making art off the land**. Objects will showcase the wide variety of mediums in which Blunk worked, including **ceramics, stone, wood, handmade buttons, belts, and jewelry, as well as personal photographs from his time in Japan and Marin**. Archival

photographs of *The Planet* in process and letters about its commission will be featured, as well as other ephemera from Blunk's professional life. A seated space will surround a captioned video with **intimate interviews from family, friends, and colleagues** who knew Blunk best will provide in-depth insight into who the artist was, how he worked, and why he had such a deep desire to collect and make.

A second gallery within the exhibition will focus on **Blunk's connection to the natural world of northern California and will feature larger wood and stone works**, as well as **bronze sculptures, ceramics, and works on panel and board**. Objects will be thoughtfully **paired to emphasize the craftsman's connection to nature**, highlighting the natural materials he sought out and used. Quotes from J.B. Blunk, Blunk's first studio assistant, Bruce Mitchell, as well as his wife, Christine Nielson, will **provide insight into his process and legacy**. An ambient video projected in the room will connect visitors to the serene setting of his home, reinforcing how Blunk's life was interconnected with nature.

"Blunk was an inspirational artist who **forged his own pathway** and remained **committed to building his life and practice in concert with the land**," said **Carin Adams, Curator of Art**. "We're thrilled to have the opportunity to showcase Blunk's extraordinary works, **from large-scale wood sculpture to everyday objects** such as his ceramic cups. We hope visitors will leave this exhibition with an understanding of who Blunk was, and how they too can appreciate the beauty in the everyday, as Blunk did."

J.B. Blunk: Nature, Art & Everyday Life is supported in part by the Oakland Museum Women's Board and members of the Donor Forum. The exhibition will be on view April 21 through September 9, 2018 in OMCA's Gallery of California Art.

Press images available to download in the [online press room](#).

ABOUT J.B. BLUNK

Inspired by Japanese philosophy of nature and art's inseparability, the late J.B. (James Blain) Blunk (American, 1926–2002) was **a mid-century artist** who found inspiration in the natural beauty surrounding his Northern California home in Inverness, California. Blunk worked primarily with the organic materials that he found, creating **handcrafted furniture, ceramics, and sculptures** out of clay, wood, and stone that he collected.

In the late 1960s, Blunk was a maverick artist **living off the land in Marin County, making sculptural furniture that disregarded the line between art and craft**. Before he arrived in Northern California, he studied ceramics under Laura Andreson at UCLA. Upon graduation, Blunk was drafted into the Korean War and arranged to be discharged in Japan, where a chance encounter with **Isamu Noguchi** led to apprenticeships with the famed potters **Kitaoji Rosanjin** and **Toyo Kaneshige**. These **transformational experiences and relationships** set the course for his unique approach to art.

ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) brings together collections of art, history, and natural science under one roof to tell the extraordinary stories of California and its people. OMCA's groundbreaking exhibits tell the many stories that comprise California with many voices, often drawing on first-person accounts by people who have shaped

California's cultural heritage. Visitors are invited to actively participate in the Museum as they learn about the natural, artistic, and social forces that affect the state and investigate their own role in both its history and its future. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) is at 1000 Oak Street, at 10th Street, in Oakland. Museum admission is \$15.95 general; \$10.95 seniors and students with valid ID, \$6.95 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. There is a \$4 charge in addition to general admission pricing for special exhibitions. OMCA offers onsite underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the 1000 Oak Street main entrance to the Museum. The accessibility ramp is located at the new 1000 Oak Street main entrance. Regular hours are 11 am to 5 pm, Wednesday through Sunday, 11 am to 10 pm Fridays. museumca.org

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS & PROJECTS

The World of Charles and Ray Eames

October 13, 2018–February 17, 2019

Fueled by their belief in design as a way of life, the innovative husband and wife duo Charles and Ray Eames were two of the most influential designers of the twentieth century. Go beyond their most well-known designs in this intimate and inspiring exhibition portraying their legacy and lives in California. The Eameses—who founded the collaborative “laboratory” The Eames Office—valued knowledge and discovery, embraced the joy of trial and error, and saw no separation between life and work. Through multi-media installations, films, rare prototypes, photography, furniture, toys, products, as well as personal letters, drawings, and artwork, discover the story of the Eameses from a fresh perspective. Explore the breadth of their work across many fields in this interactive exhibition that brings their ideas and playful spirit to life. There is a \$4 charge for this special exhibition in addition to regular Museum admission. *Exhibition curated and organized by Barbican, London.*

ON VIEW

[RESPECT: Hip-Hop Style & Wisdom](#)

Through August 12, 2018

Hip-Hop is one of the widest reaching cultural and social movements of the last 50 years. Discover the unexpected story of how Hip-Hop changed the world, starting from its roots on the streets, before rap, DJing, street art, breakdancing, and street fashion launched into mainstream popular culture. Learn about the West Coast's and San Francisco Bay Area's influences on this global phenomenon. Hear first-person accounts from artists and experts about how, beyond big business, Hip-Hop continues to provide a platform for creative expression, activism, youth development, and education. There is a \$4 charge for this special exhibition in addition to regular Museum admission.

Take Root: Oakland Grows Food

Through January 13, 2019

Unearth Oakland's multi-layered world of food in *Take Root: Oakland Grows Food*, an exhibition exploring aspects of growing food in Oakland. Enjoy this hands-on exhibition with the entire family to understand what factors determine where, how, why, and what is grown throughout the city. Hear personal stories from farmers and growers within the community, see compelling illustrations and maps, and meet the diverse flavors of Oakland. Learn what motivations Oaklanders have for growing food—including access to healthy and delicious ingredients, environmental and social justice values, or simply the joy of tending a garden. Visitors will be invited to share personal stories, explore interactive activities, and gain a deeper understanding of Oakland's agriculture.

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