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**OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA TO DEBUT  
WORLD PREMIERE OF LARGE-SCALE SCULPTURE BY  
LOS ANGELES BASED ARTIST COLLABORATIVE,  
FRIENDSWITHYOU**

Immersive, Light-Filled, and Otherworldly Environment Takes Over  
OMCA's Great Hall

*OMCA Invites Visitors into a Magical, Multi-Sensory Experience for All Ages*

**(OAKLAND, CA)** July 11, 2017—In October 2017, the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) presents the world premiere of *Nature's Gift: Humans, Friends & the Unknown*, an immersive experience featuring a large-scale, commissioned work by **Los-Angeles based FriendsWithYou**—the fine art collaborative including Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III. Internationally recognized as pioneers in the field of experiential art, FriendsWithYou is best known for creating experiences that draw audiences into a magical world where the line between imagination and reality is blurred.

OMCA's exhibition will feature a new commissioned installation titled *Nature's Gift*. A **light-filled, interactive environment** and multi-sensory experience for all ages, visitors will escape into the work through a **rainbow passageway that figuratively transports them into an alternative world**. OMCA's Great Hall is transformed into **an imaginative and otherworldly place that sets the stage for visitors to experience friendship, magic, and social connection**.

**"This exhibition is unlike any other experience we've had at OMCA since we opened in 1969,"** said Carin Adams, Curator of Art and Material Culture at OMCA. "Our Great Hall will be transformed into a rainbow-filled universe, becoming both a spiritual space for reflection as well as space for interaction, adventure, and fun. Known for their **immersive installations and interactive artworks, FriendsWithYou has delighted people all around the world, from Seoul, Korea to the High Line in New York City**. We are excited to **premiere this new commissioned work here** in California for our visitors at the Oakland Museum of California."

Enchanting and whimsical, *Nature's Gift: Humans, Friends & the Unknown* will fill an **otherwise dark room with bright, multicolored LED lights and layers of texture and sound**. An ambient soundtrack developed by Norman Bambi will set the tone to bring

visitors deeper into the experience. The space will be activated by programming, with both experiences that facilitate reflection such as yoga and meditation, as well as experiences that encourage movement and expression such as curated DJ selections throughout the exhibition run during Friday Nights @ OMCA. In addition, special merchandising will be available for all ages to augment the exhibition experience.

“Like all of our work, people will complete the experience,” said Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III. “We want those who enter the space to feel a special connection with the work and with each other. The intention is to bring people together through this joyful, immersive experience, accessible and welcoming to all.”

The exhibition will be on view in the Oakland Museum of California's Great Hall October 7, 2017–January 21, 2018.

### **ABOUT NATURE'S GIFT**

Nature's Gift is the official title of the commissioned work designed and created by FriendsWithYou for the Oakland Museum of California, exhibited in *Nature's Gift: Humans, Friends & the Unknown*. The 15-foot tall, 34-foot deep, and 55-foot long interactive sculpture was designed to scale to fit inside the Museum's High Bay Gallery in the Great Hall.

### **ABOUT FRIENDSWITHYOU**

FriendsWithYou is the fine art collaborative of Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, working collectively since 2002 with the sole purpose of spreading the positive message of Magic, Luck, and Friendship™. Known for immersive installations and interactive artworks, FriendsWithYou invites viewers of their work to reconnect with and reinterpret their lives through communal experiences. The artists work in a variety of mediums including painting, sculpture, large-scale experiential installations, live performances, and more recently, virtual reality and animation. Incorporating the healing arts, modern rituals, animism, and unified symbols, their works are meant to prompt a wide spectrum of untapped emotions, from playfulness to self-reflection, enabling both personal and shared experiences. FriendsWithYou's mission is to cultivate moments of spiritual awareness and powerful, joyous interactions.

### **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. [museumca.org](http://museumca.org)

### **UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS & PROJECTS**

#### **Question Bridge: Black Males**

*September 29, 2017–February 25, 2018*

Hailed as one of the Bay Area's Top Exhibitions in 2012 by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Question Bridge: Black Males* returns to the Oakland Museum of California this fall. Immerse yourself in intimate videos—woven together and arranged to simulate face-to-face conversations between participants—among a diverse group of 150 Black men across the United States. Hear these men answer each other's questions with exceptional honesty and vulnerability, and share stories, beliefs, and values in a personal portrayal of their lives. Encompassing themes of family, love, interracial relationships, community, education, and wisdom, *Question Bridge: Black Males* presents nuanced portraits of past, present, and future of Black men in American society. Listen, watch, learn, and start your own conversations with this profoundly moving installation.

In 2012, the Oakland Museum of California presented *Question Bridge: Black Males*, an innovative and widely exhibited video installation from artists Chris Johnson and Hank Willis Thomas in collaboration with Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair. Joining the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Brooklyn Museum, OMCA is proud to acquire this groundbreaking and poignant work for its collection.

#### **Metamorphosis & Migration: Days of the Dead**

*October 18, 2017–January 14, 2018*

This year, OMCA's biennial Days of the Dead exhibition is inspired by the lifecycle of the Monarch Butterfly. Known for its mass migration each winter, this butterfly's journey spans several generations, all of whom follow the same routes their ancestors took. In Mexico, the returning Monarchs also symbolize the returning souls of loved ones who have passed away.

In *Metamorphosis & Migration: Days of the Dead*, explore *offrendas* and artworks inspired by the Monarch's migration and themes of tradition and transformation. View rarely-seen butterfly specimens from OMCA's collection alongside newly commissioned artworks. Artist Hung Liu honors her mother's passing through a series of heartfelt paintings. Favianna Rodriguez ponders migration and immigration in a new way using her "Migration is Beautiful" butterfly imagery. Chris Treggiari and Peter Foucault honor colleague Alex Ghassan, who lost his life in the tragic Ghost Ship fire. And, traditional Days of the Dead altars by Bea Carrillo Hocker and Rafael Jesús González, as well as installations by Oakland International High School and Thornhill Elementary School, energize this communal space for reflection and empowerment in these turbulent times.

### **Take Root: Oakland Grows Food**

*December 16, 2017–January 13, 2019*

Unearth Oakland's multi-layered world of food in *Take Root: Oakland Grows Food*, an exhibition exploring the ecological and cultural factors of how and why food is grown 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.

### **RESPECT: Hip-Hop Style & Wisdom**

*March 24–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.*

### **J.B. Blunk: Nature, Art & Everyday Life**

*April 21–September 26, 2018*

Discover northern California's best kept secret in design and craft: J.B. Blunk (1926–2002), a mid-century artist whose connection to nature governed his daily life. Inspired by Japanese philosophies of nature and art's inseparability, and influenced by rural utopian communities, Blunk's muse and often his source of materials was the beautiful natural environment of Inverness, California. Blunk's home property was his ultimate work of art, filled with his handcrafted furniture, ceramics, sculptures, and other functional objects used by his family. His remarkable craftsmanship also took the form of large-scale public works of art, including *The Planet*, a redwood sculpture commissioned

by the Oakland Museum of California in 1969. *J.B. Blunk: Nature, Art, & Everyday Life* brings together a comprehensive survey of the artist's works. See northern California's landscape anew through Blunk's eyes, and get inspired to find the beauty of nature and art in your own daily life.

## **ON VIEW**

### **[Bees: Tiny Insect, Big Impact](#)**

***Through October 22, 2017***

This exhibition in OMCA's Gallery of California Natural Sciences takes a look at the wildly diverse and intricate world of one of the most important creatures to human agriculture and the natural environment. Through family-friendly experiences, hands-on activities, and media, *Bees: Tiny Insect, Big Impact* touches on topics of honeybees and Bay Area beekeeping, the diversity of California native bee species, citizen science projects, and the similarities between bees and humans. Visitors will discover real bee specimens under a microscope, crawl through a human-sized beehive, and try on a beekeeper suit. In an immersive gallery environment, visitors can explore the causes of bee population decline, learn about the significance of bees to California's economy and ecosystems, and discover how simple but powerful actions by Californians can help bees to survive in a changing world.

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