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## **OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES TWO NEW APPOINTMENTS FOR ITS DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER POSITIONS**

***Valerie Huaco Now Leads OMCA's Curatorial, Collections, Design, and Production Departments as Deputy Director & Chief Content Officer; Leslie Smith Leads Business Operations and Revenue Strategy in a Newly-Created Chief Operating Officer Position***

(OAKLAND, CA) July 29, 2020—Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) announces two new appointments to the Museum's leadership, with **Valerie Huaco** assuming the position of **Deputy Director & Chief Content Officer**, and **Leslie Smith** assuming the newly-created position of **Chief Operating Officer**, both crucial roles as part of the organization's Executive Team.

Assuming her role of Deputy Director earlier this year, Huaco will continue to provide **leadership in the development and implementation of OMCA's visitor-centered curatorial content**, ensuring that the Museum's **multidisciplinary collections, exhibitions, and audience engagement strategies** advance the Museum's **innovative social impact goals** among Oakland's diverse audiences.

Huaco has served as **OMCA's Director of Collections since 2016**, overseeing a team that includes registrars, conservators, and positions devoted to intellectual property. In recent years, she helped lead and secure an impressive grant from the **Henry Luce Foundation** to support the storage, processing, and access for the Museum's Dorothea Lange Collection, which will soon be available digitally for the first time as part of a newly-launched website dedicated to this collection. Among other accomplishments, Huaco has **led OMCA's extensive outdoor sculpture revitalization initiative**, to be completed in late Fall 2020, along with the installation of new outdoor sculptures as part of OMCA's campus renovation project.

Prior to this, Huaco also served as a **Senior Registrar for OMCA's exhibitions**, implementing policies and procedures that managed the care of OMCA's collections and working on every major exhibition at the Museum from 2011 through 2016. Her work in museums dates back to the early 1990s in various roles as a registrar, conservator, and program and publications

manager for organizations such as the **Judah L. Magnes Museum** and the **Western Museums Association**.

**OMCA also welcomes Leslie Smith to the position of Chief Operating Officer**, a newly-created position on the Museum's Executive Team to **support the Museum's effort to increase earned revenue toward greater financial sustainability** while, at the same time, maintaining **OMCA's deep and demonstrated commitment to community access and engagement**. In this position, Smith oversees the Museum's operations related to event production, the OMCA Store, and more during a time of exciting transition as the Museum undergoes a number of campus improvements—including a new **café concept Town Fare by Tanya Holland, led by chef Tanya Holland**—as part of the Museum's capital campaign *All In! The Campaign for OMCA*.

Smith has served as OMCA's **Director of Business Development since 2017**, during which she **led strategic planning for earned revenue generation at the Museum**, working collaboratively across museum departments to find **new ways to operate with greater efficiency and entrepreneurialism**. In this role, she led a search that resulted in the museum's new food service partnership with chef Tanya Holland, expanded the museum's capacity for data-informed decision-making, and facilitated improvements to the operational efficiency and profitability of the museum's business operations.

Prior to this role, Smith was the **Senior Budget Director at the American Museum of Natural History** in New York City, where she was responsible for the financial planning and analysis for museum operations, including business planning and earned-revenue operations that included retail, event rentals, food service, licensing, and fee-based education programs. She also served as **the Business Manager at the Newseum in Washington, DC**.

**OMCA Director and CEO Lori Fogarty** stated, "It has been a great pleasure to work closely with Valerie and Leslie over the years, and I'm thrilled to continue partnering with them as we plan for the Museum's future. Each of their extensive experiences at OMCA and wide range of abilities, particularly in leadership and cross-functional collaboration across the institution, will strengthen the Museum as we rethink how to best serve our communities in this moment."

### **ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA**

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) tells the many stories that comprise California, creating the space and context for greater connection, trust, and understanding between people. Through its inclusive exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and cultural events, OMCA brings Californians together and inspires greater understanding about what our state's art, history, and natural surroundings teach us about ourselves and each other. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA brings together its multi-disciplinary collections of art, history, and natural science with the first-person accounts and often untold narratives of California, all within its 110,000 square feet of gallery space and seven-acre campus. The Museum is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year as a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and

environmental heritage for visitors from the region, the state, and around the world.

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