

## Oakland Museum of California

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# OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA PRESENTS NEW PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES FEATURING INVESTIGATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CALIFORNIA TOPICS

## OMCA Photography Series Launches with Exhibition Showcasing Intimate Views of Living and Working in California's Central Valley

*Ken and Melanie Light Show a Photographic Journey of Farm Workers' Lives in California's Agricultural Region*

This release is available online at: [www.museumca.org/pressroom](http://www.museumca.org/pressroom)

(OAKLAND, CA) June 6, 2012—This July, the Oakland Museum of California will open ***Ken and Melanie Light: Valley of Shadows and Dreams***, an exhibition of photographs and written word exploring the harsh truths of the daily experiences of farm workers and their families in California's Central Valley. On view in OMCA's Gallery of California Art, **July 28 through December 30, 2012**, the exhibition is the first of a three-part series exploring contemporary topics in California through photography.

Featuring 31 black-and-white photographs—on view for the first time in a museum—the exhibition explores major threads in California history and the global issues of our generation: water, land use, immigration and farm labor and growing economic disparity. A photographic exploration of a region known for its agricultural plenty and the marginalization of its people—***Ken and Melanie Light: Valley of Shadows and Dreams*** delves deep into the reality of farm workers' daily experiences and investigates the legacies of politics, bureaucracy, and control in the region. In the tradition of great partnerships such as the iconic photographer Dorothea Lange and agricultural economist Paul Taylor, the Lights reveal both the beauty and the callous truths of this important agricultural region in California through photographs and writing.

Providing an intimate look into the lives of migrant workers, the photographs showcase the highs and the lows of daily life—from the devastating results of home foreclosures to the jubilant experience of children on the San Joaquin River enjoying the simple pleasures of a rope swing. Through these photographs, Ken Light captures scenes of hardworking people fighting to preserve their livelihoods and traditions.

"*Valley of Shadows and Dreams* reveals a world that all Californians should be aware of," said **OMCA Curator of Photography and Visual Culture Drew Johnson**. "Though Ken Light's photographs are as up-to-date as today's headlines, they resonate with echoes of **John Steinbeck**, **Dorothea Lange**, and others in the past who reminded us about the lives of people who grow food for our tables. I'm particularly excited about presenting this new work in a gallery just steps from Lange's photographs."

The exhibition opens in OMCA's Gallery of California Art on Saturday, July 28, and will be on view through Sunday, December 30, 2012. The project is accompanied by the book ***Valley of Shadows and Dreams***, published by **Heyday Books** in May 2012, which features an introduction by **Thomas Steinbeck**, more than 100 black-and-white photos by Ken Light, and essays by Melanie Light. The 153-page, hardcover book makes an emotive call to action to encourage change in the way the disenfranchised are viewed by offering an intimate glimpse into their lives. For more information about the book, contact **Natalie Mulford** at [natalie@heydaybooks.com](mailto:natalie@heydaybooks.com), or (510) 549-3564, ext. 309. To view more about the book, visit [heydaybooks.com](http://heydaybooks.com) or [valleyofshadowsanddreams.com](http://valleyofshadowsanddreams.com).

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Ken Light** is a social documentary photographer whose published work includes *Coal Hollow*, *Witness in Our Time*, *Texas Death Row*, *Delta Time*, *To the Promised Land*, and *With These Hands*. He has exhibited internationally, received numerous grants and awards, and is an adjunct professor and director of the Center for Photography at the University of California, Berkeley. His work has appeared in numerous magazines, including *Rolling Stone*, *Granta*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Mother Jones*, *The National Journal*, *Speak*, *L'Internazionale*, and *Camera Arts*.

**Melanie Light** is an essayist and author whose most recent work is *Coal Hollow*. Her previous work includes two special-edition books: *Night at the Met*, with photography by Larry Fink, and *Mad Day Out*, featuring photographs of the Beatles. She is the co-founding executive director of Fotovision, a non-profit dedicated to supporting the international community of documentary photographers. She teaches and lectures internationally.

## **ABOUT OMCA'S CALIFORNIA PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES**

***Ken and Melanie Light: Valley of Shadows and Dreams*** (July 28 – December 30, 2012) is the first exhibition in an ongoing series exploring important themes in California photography. The second exhibition—***Beth Yarnelle Edwards: Suburban Dreams*** (January 19 – June 30, 2013)—will feature large-scale color photographs of domestic scenarios revealing how people behave in their homes. The third exhibition—***Peter Stackpole: Bridging the Bay*** (July 20 – December 2013)—features stunning black-and-white photographs of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge construction by one of *LIFE* magazine's first staff photographers.

## **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 1.8 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. OMCA is situated between downtown Oakland and Lake Merritt. Museum admission is \$12 general; \$9 seniors and students with valid ID, \$6 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. 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 new 1000 Oak Street main entrance. For more information, visit [www.museumca.org](http://www.museumca.org).

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