

## ***Remain in Light: Visions of Homeland and Diaspora***

*Three diaspora-born photographers trace the evolving social fabric of Armenian life*

June 11–October 15, 2023 | Contact: Erin Connors, 714.270.6426, [erinconnors@arts.ucla.edu](mailto:erinconnors@arts.ucla.edu)



**Los Angeles**—The Fowler Museum presents *Remain in Light: Visions of Homeland and Diaspora*, on view June 11–October 15, 2023. This exhibition of 50 photographs endeavors to visualize the contemporary Armenian experience at home and in Los Angeles. Three diaspora-born Armenian artists living in LA—**Sossi Madzounian**, **Ara Mgrdichian**, and **Ara Oshagan**—offer their perspectives on the life of their people in the old world and the new, collectively impacted by decades of political turmoil, religious persecution, and human rights violations. With intuition and conviction, the photographers illuminate the evolving social fabric of Armenian life: survival in the homeland, the immigrant experience in the diaspora, and the rebirth of Armenian Americans on new soil.

The three artists grew up with a dream of seeing an independent Armenia, free from the bondage of the Soviet Union. Their hope became a reality in September 1991. Armed with their cameras, the three photographers traveled to Armenia and Artsakh to capture the many variations on the theme of survival in those territories. They also documented Armenian life in Los Angeles, where they now reside.

Los Angeles is home to the largest Armenian population in diaspora: half-a-million strong. The first wave of immigrants came in the late 1800s; the second was spurred by the Armenian genocide of 1915; further migrations—from Soviet Armenia, the Middle East, Iran, and other countries—continue to find solace, pride, and connection in traditions, customs, religion, language, memories. They keep faith that they will find and remain in light in their adoptive land.



### About the Artists

**Sossi Madzounian** (b. 1957) was born in Beirut, Lebanon and has been living in Los Angeles since 1968. After studying at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, she enjoyed success as a commercial photographer, before shifting her focus to pursue her primary passion: motherhood. Twenty years later, she returned to her fine art photography roots to capture the essence of “what naturally exists.” Sossi has had numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the last decade, notably at Multiverse Art Gallery, San Francisco City Hall; DTLA // IRL pop-up in Los Angeles; and Ten Women Gallery in Santa Monica; her next show is forthcoming at the Chania International Photo Festival in Crete, Greece. Madzounian’s work has been featured in publications, such as *IPA*, *LensCulture*, *Lucie Foundation*, *APA ‘Off the Clock,’* and *Communication Arts*. Her photography has featured in set designs of TV shows like *Ray Donovan*, *Bosch*, *Big Brother*, and others. She collaborated with the Smithsonian Institute on their folklore project “My Armenia.” Recently, her photography was appeared in the “Lily Vorperian Marash Embroidery” publication. Madzounian’s unblemished approach to life is her inspiration and guiding light.

**Ara Mgrdichian** (b. 1962) has lived in Los Angeles since the age of two, and in the Republic of Armenia from 1990 to 1993, with extended stays in Artsakh. He is a writer, artist, and counselor, whose work—creative, analytic, and therapeutic—often deals with issues of epigenetics, trans-generational justice, trauma, and memory. He has also worked as a teacher, journalist, and essayist; published poetry and prose; and provided curatorial writing and direction for arts and educational projects. Mgrdichian is a founding member of *Exile Biweekly*; his work has been included in anthology with noteworthy authors, such as Donald Freed, Harold Pinter, and A.J. Langguth; and featured in the *Anthology of Armenian Poets*. He is also the voice of William Saroyan in Lusin Dink’s full-length film *Saroyanland* (2013). He previously served as advisor to the Deputy Education Minister of Armenia, while teaching and participating in humanitarian aid projects. He has received a variety of private and public-sector awards for his efforts with young people, schools, and the community. Much of his work, including *The Intergalactic Survivors of the Armenian Genocide*, can be found at [akmipress.com](http://akmipress.com).

**Ara Oshagan** (b. 1964, Beirut, Lebanon), is a diasporic multi-disciplinary artist, curator, and cultural worker based in Los Angeles. Working in photography, film, collage, installation, book arts, public art, and monuments, he explores collective and personal histories of dispossession, legacies of violence, identity, and (un)imagined futures. Oshagan has published three books of photography (a fourth will appear in 2023) and has presented his work at the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles, International Center of Photography in New York, and TedX Yerevan. He has participated in solo exhibitions in Los Angeles, New York, and South Korea, as well as in multiple group shows. His work has been reviewed and featured in *Art Papers*, *Hyperallergic*, *Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly*, NPR's *Morning Edition*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Artillery*, *Mother Jones*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*, among other publications. Oshagan's work is held in the permanent collections of Stockton University Gallery, the Southeast Museum of Photography, the Downey Museum of Art, Pasadena Armory Center for the Arts, and the Modern Art Museum of Yerevan, Armenia. Oshagan is a curator at ReflectSpace Gallery in Glendale.

### **Credits**

*Remain in Light: Visions of Homeland and Diaspora* is organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and curated by Gassia Armenian, Fowler curatorial and research associate.

### **About the Fowler**

The Fowler Museum at UCLA explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Indigenous Americas—past and present. The Fowler enhances understanding of world cultures through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs, informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. The work of international contemporary artists is presented within complex frameworks of politics, culture, and social action.

### **Museum Information**

308 Charles E Young Dr N | Los Angeles, CA 90095 | [fowler.ucla.edu/visit](http://fowler.ucla.edu/visit)  
Parking in UCLA Lot 4: 198 Westwood Plaza at Sunset Blvd, \$3/hr  
Rideshare drop-off: 305 Royce Drive

**Hours:** Wednesday–Sunday, 12–5 pm  
Admission to the Fowler is free

### **CAPTIONS**

Page 1: Sossi Madzounian (b. 1957, Beirut, Lebanon), *The Light Under Dark Clouds*, October 2015; © Sossi Madzounian

Page 2, left-right:

Ara Mgrdichian (b. 1962), *Beautiful Exile. 110 North/10 East freeway interchange, Los Angeles, CA, 2016* © Ara Mgrdichian

Ara Oshagan (b. 1964, Beirut, Lebanon), *Christening, St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church, Little Armenia, East Hollywood, CA (detail), 2002* © Ara Oshagan