

FOTOFOCUS

FotoFocus Announces Matt Black 2026 Lecture and Visiting Artist Series Speaker

Cincinnati Art Museum | Fath Auditorium | 953 Eden Park Dr
March 26, 2026 | 6:30–8:30pm



Left: Matt Black, *Modesto, California*, 2014. *Corner store*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Robert Koch Gallery
Right: Matt Black

FotoFocus is pleased to announce Matt Black as the latest speaker in its Lecture and Visiting Artist Series. Free and open to the public, the talk will take place in the Fath Auditorium at the Cincinnati Art Museum on Thursday, March 26 at 6:30pm. Registration is encouraged and can be done [here](#).

Matt Black is a world renowned photographer whose work has explored the intersecting subjects of poverty, migration and environmental destruction. His distinctive, long-form approach to photojournalism sees him spend years working with communities and in landscapes transformed by social and economic decay, creating pictures and gathering ephemera that attest to the varied and multitextured nature of material life. For his Spring Lecture, Black will reconsider several of his most important projects such as *Mixteca*, *The Central Valley* and *American Geography*, tracing the historical lineage of social documentary that informs them. Looking to photographers of the American West, such as Timothy O'Sullivan and Carleton Watkins, along with those who looked unflinchingly at the social causes and private experience of poverty, such as Dorothea Lange and Lewis Hine, Black will expand upon his thinking and working methods, examining both their precedents and contemporary concerns.

Starting in 1995, Black began photographing his home region in earnest, seeking to capture the marginalization and fortitude of communities throughout the Central Valley of California. Photo essays such as 'City of Exiles,' 'From Dust to Dust,' 'Dessicated Dreams' and 'The Dry Land,' among others, portray the hardships faced by many Valley residents as they worked to live in one of the greatest agricultural regions of the world,

responsible for billions of dollars in output, but whose communities are marked by poverty, unemployment and lack of health and education. In other essays, such as 'The People of Clouds,' 'After the Fall' and 'The Monster in the Mountains,' Black made dozens of trips to the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, trying to understand the disappearing ways of life and present-day hardships that led to mass migration to the United States.

American Geography, published in 2021, was the result of Black photographing throughout the United States between 2014 and 2020. Travelling from his hometown in California's Central Valley to hundreds of other communities of high poverty across the United States, Black concentrated on cities, towns and counties with poverty rates above 20%, discovering that he could travel from coast to coast without ever crossing above the poverty line. His exploration of this stark American reality grew to cover over 100,000 miles and 46 states, spread across five cross-country trips. In 2024, Black published *American Artifacts*, a companion volume that presents photographs of the humble, discarded objects that he collected during his cross-country travels that form a portrait of America assembled from its roadways and sidewalks, a kind of archaeology of dispossession.

"Matt Black is outstanding among contemporary photographers who honor the history of social documentary while carrying it forward at the same time," said Kevin Moore, FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator. "Through his many essays and landmark photobooks, Black has created a complex, evolving body of work that attends to the human toll of social, political and economic turmoil."

"We are excited to welcome Matt Black as lecturer this year, the 30th anniversary of what has evolved into the FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series," said FotoFocus Executive Director Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth. "The origins of FotoFocus lie in conversations about photography that were organized through the Lightborne Photography Lecture Series, founded in 1996, which welcomed a prestigious cohort of photographers to Cincinnati to speak about their work and the possibilities of the medium. Matt Black will continue this legacy of rigorous and critical reflection on photography."

The FotoFocus Lecture series is designed to expand the cultural dialogue and inspire conversations about the world through photography and film. Previous speakers in the FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series have included: **Doug Aitken, Thomas Demand, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Roe Ethridge, Larry Fink, Sky Hopinka, An-My Lê, Zoe Leonard, Laurie Simmons, Alec Soth, William Wegman and Roger Ross Williams.**

About Matt Black

Between 2014 and 2020, photographer Matt Black traveled over 100,000 miles across 46 states for his book *American Geography*. A counter-clockwise journey around the United States, beginning and ending in his home region of rural California, the project profiled dozens of cities, counties and rural areas of "concentrated poverty."

Other works include *The Dry Land*, about the impact of drought on California's agricultural communities and *The Monster in the Mountains*, about the disappearance of 43 students in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero. Both of these projects, accompanied by short films, were published by *The New Yorker*.

Black's work has appeared regularly in the United States and international press, including *TIME Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *Le Monde* and *Internazionale*. He has been honored three times with a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, received the W. Eugene Smith Grant and has held fellowships from the Emerson Collective and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. He is represented by the Robert Koch Gallery, is a member of Magnum Photos and was recently awarded a MacArthur Fellowship.

About FotoFocus

FotoFocus is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art through exhibitions and public programming. Since 2010, the organization has engaged art and educational institutions throughout the region to support and expand the cultural dialogue around the medium that has come to define our time. With an emphasis on intellectually and academically rigorous programs, the organization provides uniquely enriching access to lens-based art, film and practices inspired by photography. FotoFocus has collaborated with organizations, curators, academics and more than 3,500 artists and participants, to present over 800 exhibitions and programs. In 2026, the FotoFocus Center will open, a 14,700 square foot facility dedicated to the presentation of exhibitions and related programming.

FotoFocus signature programs include the **Biennial**, which has been held in October since 2012, most recently taking place in 2024 with the theme *backstories*. Past editions have presented work across the Cincinnati region by historic and contemporary artists, including Berenice Abbott, Eugène Atget, John Edmonds, Roe Ethridge, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, David Hartt, Baseera Khan, Zanele Muholi, Tony Oursler, Barbara Probst, Thomas Ruff, Ming Smith, Ian Strange, Chip Thomas and Akram Zaatari. Other landmark programs include the **Symposium**, which has contributed significant dialogue and insight to culturally relevant topics including the controversial Mapplethorpe exhibition and the **Lecture and Visiting Artist Series**, which has brought globally renowned artists such as Sky Hopinka, Zoe Leonard, William Wegman and Roger Ross Williams to Cincinnati.

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