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Father Land



Synopsis

When is a city born? When does it mature? When does it acquire an identity? There is just one answer to all three questions: when it looks death in the eye. This is a land of myths and traditions, where people do not die but, rather, are transformed into legends and live on with their curses and blessings, continuing to put their stamp on their environment, to inspire future generations and to draw up the maps of the country's culture. Vahram Oshagan's *Father Land* by Vahram Oshagan and Ara Oshagan is a poetic and personal journey through the rugged, human-and-history-laden landscape of Karabagh. It is also a unique collaboration between a photographer son and his famous, writer father. A family steeped in Armenian literature and art, Vahram Oshagan's work is the result of an intensely felt connection to their heritage and homeland. *Father Land* is a literary and visual contemplation of Karabagh's present-day, its history, and its culture, as well as a meditation on transnational identity, land, and paternal bonds. Springing from a deep understanding of the Armenian people and their unique past, Vahram Oshagan's essay presents a reflective, yet witty and fluid, account of his encounters with people from all walks of Karabagh life. It touches upon topics as diverse as the happenings of the eighth century BC, the recent war of liberation, the dialect of the people, their worldview, their contradictions, their body language, their spirituality, and their legendary hospitality. It is an accomplished piece of imaginative literature, weaving between literary and literal, creative and factual, objective and subjective reflection. Ara Oshagan's photographs provide insight into the lives of the people of Karabagh on a documentary as well as symbolic level and they reflect his personal encounters in the region. At times capturing an intimate familial moment; at other times, in the street, observing the chaos of life; or reverent in the presence of Karabagh's millennial churches, the images simultaneously document, explore, and reflect upon Karabagh's precarious present and uncertain future. Taken together, the text and images are symbiotic and deeply connected—like the father and son who produced the work—and they portray a region and a culture as old as the bonds of family and society themselves.

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Customer Reviews

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Vahram Oshagan has authored eight volumes of poetry, six volumes of prose fiction, short stories, plays, and literary commentaries, as well as countless scholarly articles and essays on literary and historical topics. Oshagan is the preeminent poet and man of letters of the Armenian diaspora. His career as a writer was marked by a clear break from the past and the introduction of new literary ideas and forms into the Armenian language. In 1998, the President of the Republic of Armenia awarded Oshagan the Movses Khorenatsi medal for a lifetime of service to Armenian culture and letters – the highest Armenian honor given to a living person.

Vahram Oshagan passed away on June 30, 2000. Ara Oshagan is a photographer whose work revolves around the intersecting themes of identity, community, and memory. His first collection, *iWitness*, joined portraits of witnesses of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 with their stories of horror, survival, and redemption. Oshagan has also photographed the Armenian diaspora of Los Angeles in a body of work entitled *Traces of Identity*. His other projects include *Juvies*, focusing on the history of youth in the California prison system, and a project about the Ethiopian community of Los Angeles. Ara Oshagan's work is in the permanent collection of the Southeast Museum of Photography, Florida; the Downey Museum of Art, California; and the Museum of Modern Art in Armenia.

FATHER LAND nous offre un regard croisé sur le monde de Karabakh. Les photos de Oshagan (un ami, avouons-le) ont une franchise qui aidera sans doute certaines de ses images à passer les épreuves du temps. "Uber-réaliste", Oshagan décrit la modestie du quotidien. Dans un style "tric-trac", ce livre est un "must" pour toutes et tous. Citations, mon

kapitain.

"...time sometimes flies like a bird, and sometimes crawls like a worm, but people may be unusually happy when they do not even notice whether time has passed quickly or slowly" -- Ivan Turgenev in FATHERS AND SONS. Appropriately, this quote describes precisely my sentiments when FATHERLAND is in my arms. Father Oshagan is very much alive in these pages. His lucidity, his energy, his vision, his passion are infectious. They are as sobering as they are inspirational. Son Oshagan's images are miniature little worlds unto themselves. I find myself looking at a few images a day, suspended in time, then closing the book and living with them till the next time I longingly open FATHERLAND. The poignant power of the book is the fact that both words and images do not overpower the subject. They are, on the contrary, in humble service to the People and the Land of Karabagh.

Father Land is a layered journey and exploration of identity and belonging. Through their connection with each other, and each to the land, father and son weave a deeply personal narrative record - through powerful words and extraordinary images - which together become the lens through which we are invited to witness, participate in, and embrace the feeling intrinsic in this place and this point in time.

I came across this book on a friend's coffee table and was immediately enamored by the beautiful photography. In scanning the pages I found a unique and moving perspective via pen and images. I am very excited to sit down with my own copy and dive into the world of these special people. I have purchased multiple copies as holiday gifts and hope they will find it to be as striking as I did.

Fatherland offers a refreshing and candid look at the reality of life in a corner of the world that is far from the glare of CNN cameras and NY Times reporters. A father's words, happily collide with his son's photos, to create an interesting, insightful and timeless book.

A beautiful, powerful and elegant collection of photographs portray an intimate life in a corner of the world where not too many have reached. Each photograph is a multilayer storytelling and a captivating invitation to discover the daily life of these proud people.

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