ROBERT DAWSON BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Dawson's photographs have been recently recognized by a Guggenheim Fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, an Artists Grant from the Graham Foundation and a Artists Grant from the Creative Work Fund. Earlier recognition includes a Visual Artists Fellowship from the National Endowment For the Arts and a Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize from the Center For Documentary Studies at Duke University. In 1992, he served as a Panelist for the Visual Arts Fellowship in Photography for the National Endowment For the Arts in Washington, DC.

His first book, Robert Dawson Photographs was published by Min Gallery in Japan (1988). The Great Central Valley: California’s Heartland by Robert Dawson, Steve Johnson and Gerald Haslam was published by the University of California Press (1993) and was listed as one of the best books of the year by the New York Times.


Other books include Farewell, Promised Land: Waking From the California Dream with Gray Brechin. It was published by the University of California Press (1999) in conjunction with a large exhibit at the Oakland Museum. This exhibit traveled throughout California for six years and was sponsored by the California Council For the Humanities. Another book on the Truckee River and Pyramid Lake in Nevada called A Doubtful River with Peter Goin and Mary Webb was published by the University of Nevada Press (2000). Dawson was founder and co-director of the Water in the West Project, a large-scale collaboration with several other photographers. The project published A River Too Far: The Past and Future of the Arid West (1991) and Arid Waters: Photographs From the Water in the West Project (1992), both published by the University of Nevada Press. A large collection from the project was collected by The Center For Creative Photography in Tucson as a permanent archive. In 2010 Dawson was Photographer-in-Residence for the City of San Jose’s wastewater treatment plant. He produced a series of exhibits and a permanent installation entitled “The Conscience of the City: Treating Wastewater in Silicon Valley.”

Mr. Dawson's photographs have been widely exhibited and are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the National Museum of American Art, (Smithsonian Institution) Washington, DC; and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. In 1994 The Library of Congress in Washington, DC purchased an entire set of the Pyramid Lake Project.

Mr. Dawson was born in Sacramento, California in 1950. He received his B.A. from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1972 and his M.A. from San Francisco State University in 1979. He has been an Instructor of Photography at San Jose State University since 1986 (now retired) and an Instructor of Photography at Stanford University since 1996.