



[Home](#) / [ArtsNews](#) /

ARTSNEWS

# In Search: Jonathan Becker Under the Microscope

By Theodore Heil • December 20, 2024

Jonathan Becker, a photographer who has contributed to magazines like *Town & Country* and *Interview*, puts his subjects under the microscope in [Katonah Museum of Art \(KMA\)'s current exhibition](#), a showcase of the photographer's work.

The Museum's assistant curator, Elizabeth Monti, hopes for the exhibition to function as a potential archive of Becker's work, which "negotiates between that sense of absolute truth and... the slippage that occurs with memory." The featured photos are a mix of his work for magazines and his portraits, including both black-and-white and color photography.

The name of the exhibition, *Lost Time*, which are displayed across three rooms, references the influence of Marcel Proust's series of novels titled *In Search of Lost Time*, which is "a reference to... acts of memory." This reference features prominently across Becker's work, "being able to go back to a photograph and experience it – the image of that scene – visually" while also being able to "emotionally return to a particular moment and live it, and kind of savor it, as if it were happening to you again," according to Monti.

The idea of archiving these photographs plays an important role in the exhibition, as it shows the progression of the artist's vision, including his portraits of French-Hungarian photographer and sculptor Brassai, a major influence on Becker's early work. He first encountered Brassai's work in a class on surrealism, thereby inspiring new works. As such, the KMA exhibition highlights ways in which Becker is "sensitive to the way the ordinary can sometimes, at the wrong moment, become kind of surreal or strange."



Primarily shooting on a Rolleiflex—a camera that is typically held at the waist—Becker often shoots his subjects from an upward angle. With photographs that showcase cultural and artistic icons like André Leon Talley to Jean-Michel Basquiat, the metaphor of the lens as a microscope permeates the exhibition.

The exhibition does not shy away from highlighting Becker's historical, painterly influences. In response to a photo of William and Pat Buckley, Monti suggests an influence of "17th Century Dutch Painting." In other photographs, featuring living room scenes of the Duchess of Alba, "the gestures are often related to ideas of Baroque painting [and]... of Baroque portraiture." Similarly to the Baroque, Monti explains that these scenes, "while [not having an] explicit narrative, keep hinting at one... What does she do? Is she in the middle of telling a story? Why is she gesticulating?" Seen through Becker's lens, the subjects become deeply human and connected to history.

Monti hopes that "for people who are unfamiliar with [Becker's] work, [they] will be familiar with his subjects." For everyone, "it will be really a pleasure to have such an intimate view of the lives of these figures."

*Jonathan Becker: Lost Time* is on view at Katonah Museum of Art through January 26, 2025.

Photos: *Diane von Furstenberg at home, Cloudwalk, Connecticut*, 1981, Archival pigment on rag (Courtesy of the artist); *The Duchess of Alba at home, Seville*, 2010, Archival pigment on rag (Courtesy of the artist)