

FROM THE MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2024

Jonathan Becker's Photographs of the Rich and Famous Offer Glimpses Into a Private, Sparkling World

An early look at the new photo memoir *Lost Time* and its
scenes of a glittering jet set.

BY DAVID FRIEND
PHOTOGRAPHER JONATHAN BECKER

OCTOBER 2, 2024



Jonathan Becker's self-portrait, 1977 COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLISHER.

In the early 1980s, *Vanity Fair*, after a 47-year hiatus, was planning to relaunch. To help fill the pages, art director Bea Feitler turned to a trusted protégé: a 26-year-old photographer with a hungry eye and a devilish grin. His name was Jonathan Becker.



Fran Lebowitz at the 2000 VF Oscar Party. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLISHER.

Recently he'd been driving a cab. To scrape by, he'd relied on free dinners from his pal Elaine Kaufman, proprietor of the legendary Upper East Side boîte Elaine's. Even so, Feitler saw promise in "the kid," as she called him. And in 1983, when *VF* took flight, Becker was on board. His beat became New York's corridors of power, its literary circles, its socialites and swans. Before long he'd be jetting off to Buenos Aires and Cap d'Antibes, applying the wisdom he'd gleaned from mentors like Brassai, Jean-Paul Goude, and Slim Aarons.

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Always stylish and a devotee of fine design, Becker would become a denizen of the beau monde he photographed. Some 40 years on, he continues to make masterly portraits, collaborating with his subjects to achieve, as he puts it, "an almost intimate mutual understanding."



'Jonathan Becker: Lost Time'

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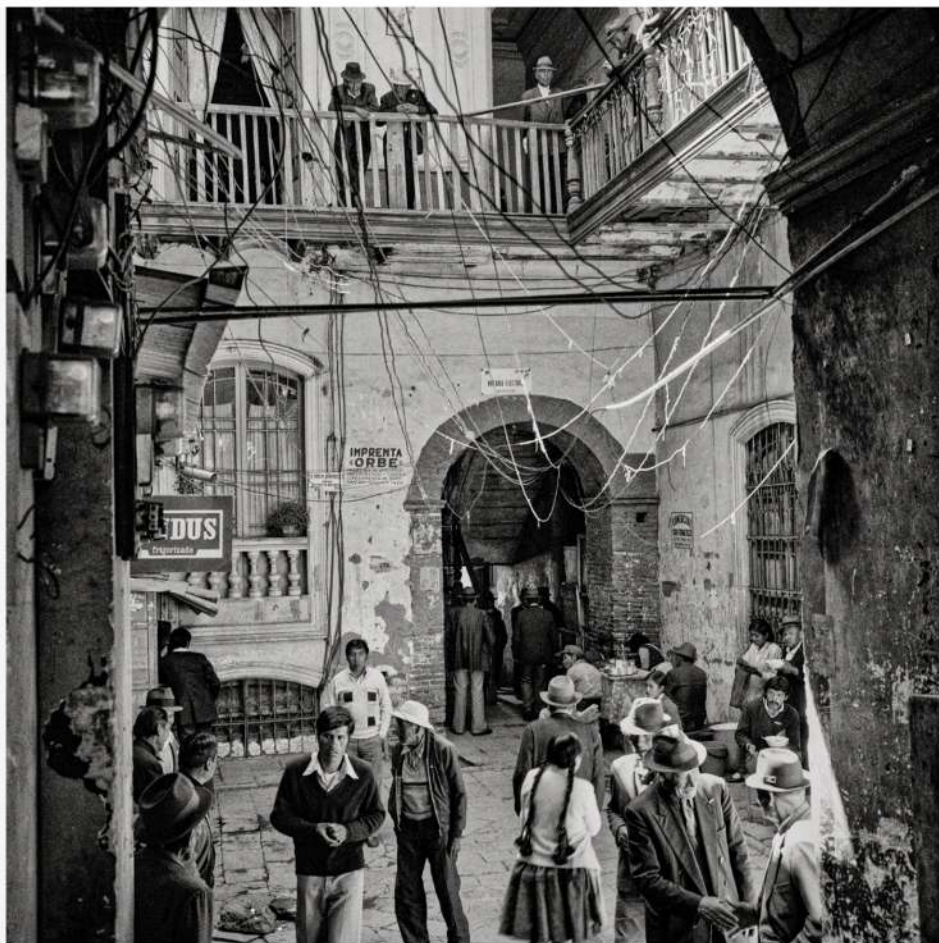
JONATHAN BECKER'S PHOTOGRAPHS



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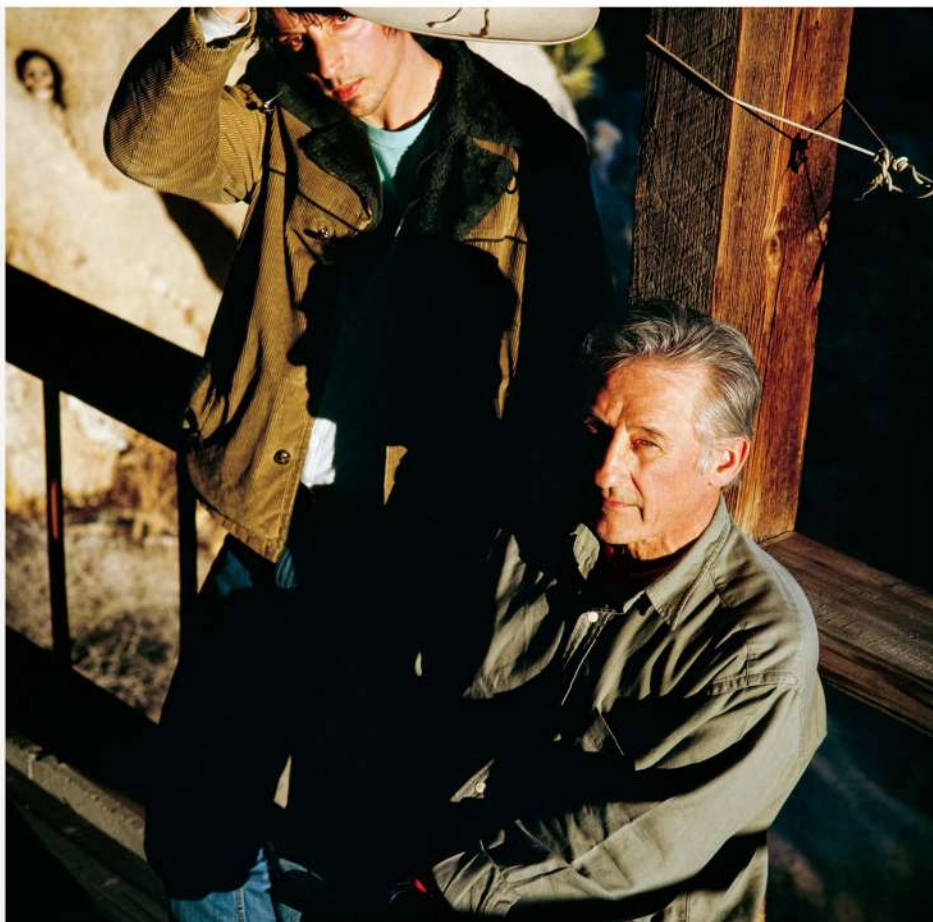
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This month Phaidon publishes *Jonathan Becker: Lost Time*, edited by Mark Holborn. (A companion exhibition runs at the Katonah Museum of Art through January.) The book, a photo memoir of Becker's charmed life and work, is a shrewdly paced gallery of royals, rogues, and statesmen; artists and news makers; pruned gardens and perfect interiors; and, above all, individuals of impeccable taste. Holborn's poignant juxtapositions and time shifts reinforce the sublime melancholy of the passage of seasons, years, decades. Becker's lens is a Proustian hourglass in which each grain is a gleam of light that flashes, then lingers, then fades. Indeed, *Lost Time* seems to rescue memory itself from oblivion.
