

**Contact:**

Young-June Kiehm

[aughtpress@gmail.com](mailto:aughtpress@gmail.com)



## Lawrence Beck: Seeing Nature

Photographs by Lawrence Beck

Essays by Sandra S. Phillips and Michael Rooks

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**Seoul, September 15, 2023** – Aught announces the publication of *Lawrence Beck: Seeing Nature*. This book explores our relationship with cultivating and viewing the natural world by juxtaposing two major bodies of the artist's work, *Water Lilies* and *Italian Gardens*. Beck embarked upon the *Water Lilies* series in the 1990s, picturing scenes of specimens in the artificial ponds of botanic gardens that center their descriptive and taxonomic labels poking up out of the water. The black-and-white prints of the *Water Lilies* contrast with the large-format color images of the *Italian Gardens* from the 2010s, which frame vistas of the grounds of centuries-old villas and Roman ruins, their picturesque sightlines honed by time, generations of care, and the weight of art history. Taken together, the two series offer counterpoints on how we have seen, understood, controlled, aestheticized, and represented nature, and the ways in which a pictorial drive has figured in all of these.

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In the essay “Lawrence Beck’s Views on Nature,” Sandra S. Phillips outlines Beck’s formative artistic influences—primarily Bernd and Hilla Becher on the one hand, and Jan Groover on the other—and positions his work in the context of art history and movements in contemporary photography. In “Lawrence Beck: Picturing a View,” Michael Rooks situates Beck’s work within a history of looking at nature, a history that notably includes Claude Monet and a lineage of Italian Renaissance architects engaged in configuring the world to coincide with the vision of linear perspective. Rooks quotes the artist, who notes that his “photographs are modern translation[s] of art of the past” and that his project is “at its core. . . the search for art in nature.”



After graduating from SUNY College at Purchase in 1984, **Lawrence Beck** (b. New York, 1962) began working as an archivist and staff photographer at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York, where the Bechers and some of their students of the Dusseldorf School became mentors and colleagues. He has exhibited his work at the Palazzo Ducale di Sassuolo; Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne; Timken Museum of Art, San Diego; National Academy Museum, New York; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; The Tang Teaching Museum & Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs; Wexner Center for

1F, 91, Seongbuk-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, 02880, Korea



the Arts at Ohio State University, Columbus; Milwaukee Art Museum; Center for Photography at Woodstock. Between 1999 and 2014, his work was the subject of nine solo or two-person exhibitions at Sonnabend Gallery. He lives and works in New York.

**Sandra S. Philips** is Curator Emerita of Photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She has organized major exhibitions on the work on André Kertész, Helen Levitt, Dorothea Lange, William Klein, Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, Daido Moriyama, Shomei Tomatsu, Larry Sultan, Robert Adams, and Rineke Dijkstra, and curated the groundbreaking surveys *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence* (1997) and *Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera since 1870* (2010).

**Michael Rooks** is Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. He has curated retrospectives of Roy Lichtenstein and H. C. Westermann, as well as exhibitions of the work of Alex Katz, Sarah Sze, Aaron Curry, and KAWS. He was co-curator of the U.S. Pavilion at the 12th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2010.

## Book Details



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For press and sales inquiries, contact Young-June Kiehm, AUGHT, [aughtpress@gmail.com](mailto:aughtpress@gmail.com).