

aperture press release

For Immediate Release
Aperture announces

Press contact:
Lauren Van Natten
212.946.7151
publicity@aperture.org

Aperture Releases the First Major Monograph by Pao Houa Her, *My grandfather turned into a tiger... and other illusions*

New Publication Accompanies Exhibition Opening February 7 for the Next Step Award, a Collaboration between Aperture and Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York



Book Details

Format: Paperback
Number of pages: 124
Number of images: 79
Publication date: 2024-1-17
Measurements: 6 5/8 x 8 7/8 inches
ISBN: 9781597115650
US \$60.00 / CDN \$81.00 / UK £53.00

New York, January 17, 2023—On the occasion of the 2023–2024 Next Step Award given by Aperture and Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York, in partnership with the 7IG Foundation, Aperture announces the first major monograph dedicated to the work of Pao Houa Her, *My grandfather turned into a tiger... and other illusions*. The publication presents a deeply personal exploration of the fundamental concepts of home and belonging. The accompanying solo exhibition, *And other illusions*, will be on view from February 7 to March 20, 2024, at Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York.

Pao Houa Her’s work draws inspiration from apocryphal family tales, portraits of the artist’s community and self, and reimaged landscapes, with Minnesota and Northern California standing in for Laos, the country she fled as a baby. The work invokes a compelling and personal cosmology grounded in the traditions and contemporary metaphors of the Hmong diasporic community. *My grandfather turned into a tiger* brings together four of the artist’s major series, including the eponymous body of work that reimagines her family’s history before leaving Laos. Other work deals with a scandal within the Hmong community in which hundreds of elders were swindled as part of a fraudulent investment scheme built around the promise of a new Hmong homeland. In another series, tonally rich black-and-white still lifes of silk flowers collected by her mother are presented alongside images of flowers that adorn the digitally manipulated, hyper-colored popular backdrops used in Hmong photo studios and on dating apps. This innovatively designed monograph showcases Her’s

keen eye on the line between ersatz and authenticity; as the artist has stated, photography is “a truth if you want it to be a truth.”

Designed by Studio Lin, each book cover is unique, featuring thirty-two jacket variations. Acclaimed writers and scholars Godfre Leung, Kong Pheng Pha, Kao Kalia Yang, and Mai Der Vang contribute incisive texts featured alongside Her’s work. Fellow artist, curator, and photo historian Audrey Sands conducts an engaging and poignant conversation with Her that delves into her family history, artistic practice, and Hmong identity. *Pao Houa Her: My grandfather turned into a tiger... and other illusions* is edited by Lesley A. Martin, Editor at Large, Aperture, with Noa Lin, Editorial Assistant, and is available at aperture.org/books.

Public Programs

Aperture and Baxter St welcome the public on Wednesday, February 7, from 6 to 8 p.m. for the opening reception of the exhibition and book launch. The Aperture PhotoBook Club, a conversation offering an intimate look at some of the most compelling books in the field, will host a virtual gathering on February 8 p.m. at 6 p.m. with Her in discussion with Sarah Meister, Executive Director, Aperture; Jil Weinstock, Executive Director, Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York; Alex Lin, book designer; and past Next Step Award recipient Tommy Kha. The registration link for the Aperture PhotoBook Club as well as details on future book signings will be available at aperture.org/events.

Pao Houa Her (born in Laos, 1982) is a Hmong American visual artist based in Blaine, Minnesota. Her is an assistant professor in photography and moving images at the University of Minnesota. She received a BFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2009 and an MFA from the Yale School of Art in 2012. She has been awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, the McKnight Visual Artist Fellowship in 2016 and 2022, and completed a residency at Light Work, Syracuse, New York. She has had several solo exhibitions of her work, including *Paj qaum ntuj / Flowers of the Sky*

aperture press release

For Immediate Release
Aperture announces

Press contact:
Lauren Van Natten
212.946.7151
publicity@aperture.org

(2022) at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, *PHH Emplotment* (2020) at the Or Gallery, Vancouver, and *After the Fall of Hmong Tebchaw* (2019) at the Catherine G. Murphy Gallery, St. Paul, Minnesota. Her work is held in public collections, including the Singapore Art Museum and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Godfre Leung is an art critic and curator at the Contemporary Art Gallery (CAG) in Vancouver. His writing has appeared in *ArtAsiaPacific*, *C Magazine*, and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*. At CAG, he has organized exhibitions by Dionne Lee, Sesemiya, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Kong Pheng Pha is an associate professor of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality studies at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. Pha’s work has been published in scholarly books, journals, newspapers, and magazines, including *Aperture*, *Hmong Today*, and *Twin Cities Daily Planet*.

Audrey Sands is a photography curator and historian. Sands has received numerous fellowships, grants, and awards, including a curatorial fellowship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Mai Der Vang is a Hmong American author and poet. A recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship, Vang has published poetry in *Tin House*, *American Poetry Review*, and *Poetry*, among other journals and anthologies. She teaches in the MFA program in creative writing at California State University, Fresno.

Kao Kalia Yang is a Hmong American writer. Yang’s work has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, National Book Critics Circle, Chautauqua Prize, and American Library Association, among others. She is a Soros, McKnight, and Guggenheim fellow.

aperture press release

For Immediate Release
Aperture announces

Press contact:
Lauren Van Natten
212.946.7151
publicity@aperture.org

About the Next Step Award

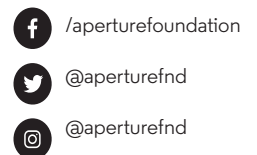
Initiated in 2020 by Aperture and Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York, in partnership with the 7/G Foundation, the Next Step Award supports US-based artists at critical junctures in their artistic development. The award provides a \$10,000 artist's grant, the opportunity to publish a photobook with Aperture, and an accompanying exhibition at Baxter St at CCNY. Reconsidering equity across the country and in arts institutions, the award also supports the presentation of diverse opinions, as well as timely lens-based work that is relevant to today's visual culture and society across a wide array of genres or approaches. Previous recipients include Tommy Kha and Zora J Murff.

About Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York

Founded in 1884, Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York is one of New York City's oldest artist-run nonprofit spaces committed to lens-based arts. Today, the organization is a socially engaged art incubator that prepares lens-based artists for their debut and helps them create sustainable practices to move forward with integrity. In addition to a year-round exhibition schedule, the organization hosts artist residencies, critique groups, and a public series of artist talks and workshops. Baxter St promotes artists of all ages, races, ethnicities, and identities whose work connects with global conversations on culture, human rights, environment, and equality. The organization is committed to uplifting artists by creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments; sharing ideas and resources; and learning together to create profound and lasting change in our organization and communities.

About Aperture

Aperture is a nonprofit publisher that leads conversations around photography worldwide. From its base in New York, Aperture connects global audiences and supports artists through its acclaimed quarterly magazine, books, exhibitions, digital platforms, public programs, limited-edition prints, and awards. Established in 1952 to advance "creative thinking, significantly expressed in words and photographs, Aperture champions photography's vital role in nurturing curiosity and encouraging a more just, tolerant society.



Press Contact

Lauren Van Natten, + 1 212.946.7151, publicity@aperture.org
Thomas Brown, +1 917.968.3351, thomas@thomas-brown.info