

Companion to
THE ROBERT AND KERSTIN ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION
at the Denver Art Museum

Jack Lueders-Booth entered the vast garbage dump of Tijuana in the 1980s, introduced to its community of garbage pickers by a minister named Pastor Von who had worked there for years. He discovered a world where people work, eat, sleep, and dream amid the refuse of Tijuana's burgeoning population. The pickers sensed that Lueders-Booth was neither a voyeur nor a muckraking journalist looking for a short-lived thrill but a curious and open-hearted man who sought to understand and document what he was seeing. As his collaborator and guide, the writer Luis Alberto Urrea wrote, "They welcomed him in their kitchens and bedrooms, their churches and their bathrooms. They cooked meals for him scrounged out of the dumps."* So began the exploration of human tenacity, ingenuity, and dignity that forms Lueders-Booth's remarkable 2005 book, *Inherit the Land*.

A self-taught photographer, Lueders-Booth traded a career in business for photography at the age of thirty-five and went on to teach photography at Harvard for twenty-nine years. He devoted the better part of his free time and attention during those years to photographing the Tijuana dump and continued the effort through later teaching appointments at Massachusetts College of Art and Design and Rhode Island School of Design. Such long attention to a subject is a rare thing in today's world—he must now be visiting and photographing the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the people who welcomed him forty years ago. Yet such long-held passion and ever-deeper understanding lend unparalleled gravitas to his work.

Here we see a young woman who has found an exuberant floral-print dress, white stockings, and shiny new shoes in the junk pile. She holds a brush in one hand as she closes her eyes and pulls a white hair band over her forehead. Her surroundings stand in grim contrast to the freshness of her costume, but the picture reminds us of the universal need to step out of one's everyday life and live a little when one can.

EP

* Jack Lueders-Booth and Luis Alberto Urrea, with an afterword by Frank Gohlke, *Inherit the Land* (Boston: Pond Press, 2005), ix.



Jack Lueders-Booth
American, born 1935
Untitled, from the series *Inherit the Land*
1990–95
Gelatin silver print
12¼ × 17¾ in. (30.8 × 45.4 cm)
2018.505

AFTERWORD

Photography is essentially an act of sharing. Photographers discover in the finders of their cameras something so needed that they often end up giving prints away. I have been the recipient of this generosity, and the pictures, like some paintings at the Denver Art Museum that I still remember from my youth, have gone on to reinforce in me a sense of consequence and possibility.

I also value these gifts for what they tell me about those who made them. Consider, for example, the *caring* of the person who pictured the child amid trash in Tijuana (p. 51). This was not a subject at the time that was likely to excite elements of the art world.

Note, too, the *honesty* about our probable future that brought a photographer to record the inhuman scale of New York skyscrapers and another picture maker to single out a prehistoric wasp next to the wheel of a junked vehicle (p. 61 and 67).

And consider the *hope* that must have inspired someone—a mother or father?—to picture two young women, standing straight, by a windmill and the remains of a blizzard (p. 21).

Observe as well the *openness to the unknown* (and to laughter) that enabled a photographer to set up a large camera on a tripod in a school room, to compose a picture on the ground glass, and then impulsively to make the exposure as the composition disintegrated while the children had fun (p. 53).

Not least, consider the *alertness* to beauty—to small, red flowers and sunstruck leaves—that allowed a photographer to find in a characteristic American suburb a revelation (p. 103).

All of which was done so that the rest of us might live with the hope of some assurance. When columnist Mark Shields retired from PBS *NewsHour*, he spoke of a blessing for which I too am grateful: “Everyone of us has been warmed by fires we did not build, and every one of us has drunk from wells we did not dig.”*

Robert Adams
Astoria, Oregon, 2020

* Mark Shields, “Shields and Brooks Celebrate a Lifetime in American Politics,” December 18, 2020, PBS *NewsHour*, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/shields-and-brooks-celebrate-a-lifetime-in-american-politics>.

ARTISTS IN THE COLLECTION

The Robert and Kerstin Adams Collection includes 163 objects (159 photographs, 2 drawings, 1 etching, and 1 sculpture) by several unknown makers and the following artists:

Ken Abbott	Steve Maxwell
Robert Adams	A. J. Meek
Lewis Baltz	Nicholas Nixon
Richard Benson	Dorothy Norman
Pierre Bonnard	Eric Paddock
Mathew Brady	Mary Peck
Daniel Cheek	Edward Ranney
Mark Cohen	Judith Joy Ross
Lois Conner	Leo Rubinfien
Linda Connor	Mark Ruwedel
Edward S. Curtis	Michael Schmidt
Peter Henry Emerson	Richard Serra
Chuck Forsman	Mike Smith
Lucian Freud	J. W. Souder
Lee Friedlander	Mark Steenerson
Linda Gammell	David Stephenson
Frank Gohlke	Paul Strand
Anthony Hernandez	Alfred Stieglitz
C. A. Hickman	Akiyoshi Taniguchi
Bill Jay	Bob Thall
Zsolt Kadar	Jerry L. Thompson
Yousuf Karsh	Carl Van Vechten
Charles J. Katz Jr.	Terri Weifenbach
Stuart Klipper	Edward Weston
Suzanne Lafont	Dennis Witmer
An-My Lê	William Wylie
Jack Lueders-Booth	Marcos Zimmermann
Afonso Malato de Sousa	