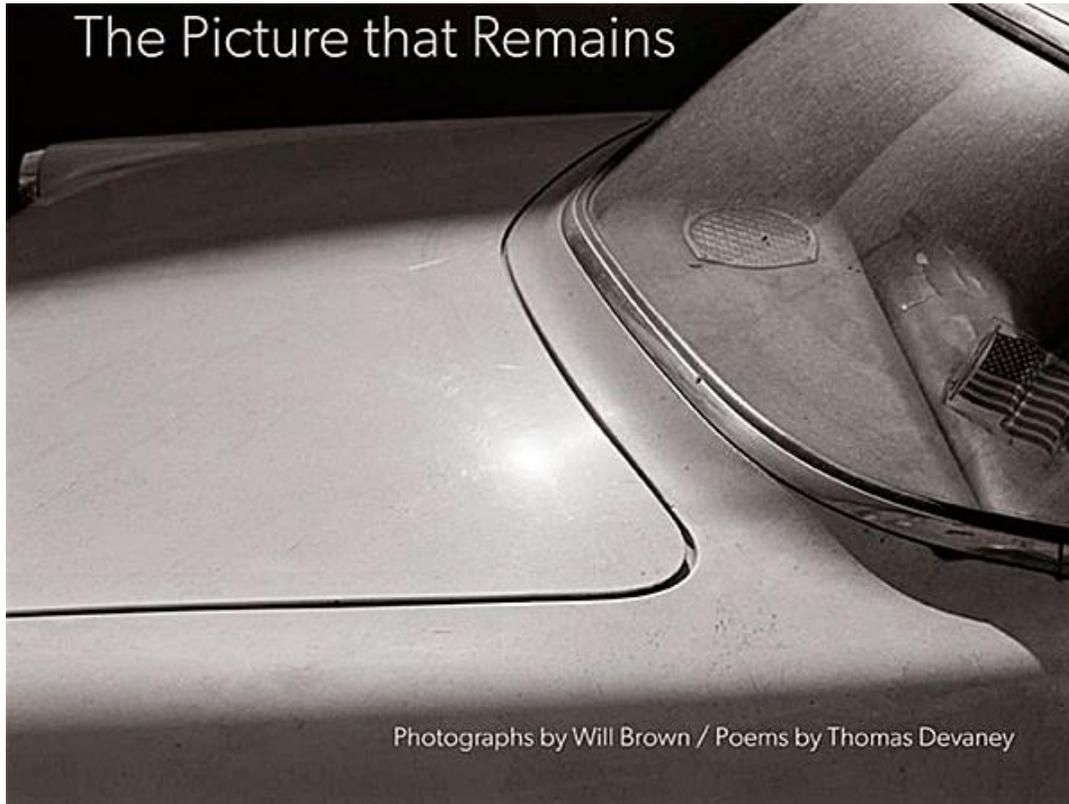


**'Picture That Remains' marries images of '70s Philly with poetry**

Reviewed by Elizabeth Knauss



*"The Picture That Remains," Photographs by Will Brown/Poems by Thomas Devaney. (From the book jacket)*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2014**

**The Picture That Remains**

Photographs by Will Brown.

Poems by Thomas Devaney.

The Print Center. 64 pages. \$35

---

This beautifully designed book would shine brightly in any gallery, bookshop - or in the hands of any Philadelphian.

In 1970s Philly, photographer Will Brown, then finishing up his studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the Academy of the Fine Arts, explored the art of documentary photography on the then-crumbling streets of Queen Village in South Philly.

Brown roamed the neighborhood, from Lombard to Washington, capturing poignant city still-lives - shoddy storefronts; graffiti-covered buildings; abandoned Caddies, sleek and bulky, parked in the sun; empty, messy rooms touched by sunlight; ghostly storefront windows with mannequins dressed in embroidered blouses and signs boasting the day's discount. The photographs were a portrait of a community buckling under economic pressure. Brown turned to a professional life of photographing works for other artists, on top of supporting a family, and his Philly photos were stashed away in boxes.

Flash-forward three decades, and we have the aptly titled *The Picture That Remains*, which marries Brown's long-deserving photos with the poetry of Thomas Devaney, a Temple grad and very accomplished poet. Published by the Print Center, near Rittenhouse Square, and introduced by Vincent Katz, it is a double-charged read, with Devaney's marvelous poems matching the flavor of Philly history in Brown's photographs. If you can't figure out where in Queen Village the images were taken, the book's index provides photograph titles, many of which are clues to location: "South Street Window (4th and South)," "Grays Ferry Clothing," "Fitzwater St. Caddie."

*The Picture That Remains* offers unglamorous and candid vignettes of the way things were. The viewer wonders: What were the stories behind the people who decorated their storefronts with optimistic signs such as "THE BEST STYLES ARE ON DISPLAY INSIDE" or "SEE YOUR OLD FRIEND FOR FINE TAILORING"? What ever happened to the street artists who tagged brick walls with "Kenny" or "Sly Lump" or "Cool Ice"?

That is where Devaney comes in. As befit the photos, his verses reverberate with nostalgia, sadness, and loss, even feelings of neglect. In "That Old Block," next to an image of a jilted, littered rowhouse with boarded windows, Devaney writes:

*Worst things happened on that block.*

*Everyone knows and nobody does.*

*Even back then it was far away;*

*Even to the blocks not far off,*

*It was another world. It always was.*

Just as Brown's images present a town both run-down and spirited, Devaney writes about the stressed community while paying homage to the phantoms within the filmy layers of the photographs:

*The store has been shuttered*

*for a few years now,*

*though you keep coming back to stand*

*at the window.*

*Today the bricks are as poignant*

*And stubborn as the men*

*Who put them there.*

Brown's photos are history, given new voice through Devaney's poems.

In "Rear Window," Devaney writes, "Together, that's the light we are in." We are all bound together by a great city, by the arts of photography, poetry, and publishing, all of which breach the contract of time. The streets in these photographs have changed in the intervening decades - the pictures are all that remain. Brown reminds us of the light, and Devaney reminds us of our togetherness in it.

---

Elizabeth Knauss is a writer living in Philadelphia.