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Store Front II - A History Preserved: The Disappearing Face Of New York



Synopsis

James and Karla Murray have been capturing impeccable photographs from the streets of New York City since the 1990s; Store Front II chronicles their continued efforts to document a little-known but vitally important cross-section of New York's Mom and Pop economy. The Murrays' penetrating photographs are only half the story, though. In the course of their travels throughout the city's boroughs the Murrays have taken great care to document the stories behind the scenery. Their copious background texts, gleaned largely from interviews with the stores' owners and employees, bring wonderful color and nuance to the importance of these unique one-off establishments. The Murrays have rendered the out of the way bodegas, candy shops and record stores just as faithfully as the historically important institutions and well known restaurants, bars and cafes. From the Stonewall Inn to the Brownsville Bike Shop and The Pink Pussycat to Smith and Wolensky, the Murrays reveal how New York's long-standing mom & pop businesses stand in sharp contrast to the city's rapidly evolving corporate facade.

Book Information

Hardcover: 348 pages

Publisher: Gingko Press Inc. (November 20, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1584236043

ISBN-13: 978-1584236047

Product Dimensions: 11.8 x 1.3 x 13.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

A must for coffee-table book collectors, NYC lovers, photography fans, city kids, and those interested in urban studies. As a NYC native, this book and its companion volume have provided me with hours of memories and information on much-beloved institutions, but their value is much greater than nostalgia, or the sheer physical beauty of these volumes; James and Karla Murray have captured the very essence of a disappearing part of big-city life, the mom-and-pop institutions

that once were the lifeblood of every community. Through their wonderful photographs and insightful text, they bring hundreds of years of business and neighborhood ties to life, along with all of the social and cultural memories they evoke. Although there is no editorializing here, this book and its preceding volume "Store Front" (as well as their "New York At Night") stand as testament to the importance of local businesses to the communities they serve, and an indictment of the rapid strip-malling of many cities in the United States. By the time the first volume was published, a significant portion of the shops pictured had closed due to New York City's recent, unprecedented commercial rent rate increases, and I already see many businesses in the second volume that have disappeared in the last few years. This book fulfills many roles: as a work of art, as a memorial for what has been lost, a celebration of neighborhood individuality and pride, and a warning about what we lose when we ignore or cease to value our local institutions. Another plus is a lack of the Manhattan-centric focus so often found in books about New York City.

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