

# Book chronicles visual history of commonplace in an evolving Detroit

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## FULL TEXT

Bruce Harkness began exploring the streets of Detroit with a camera in 1975, when he was a student at what is now the College for Creative Studies.

Over the next 20 years, his wanderings took him to some of the city's aging neighborhoods, including those poised for change, such as the lower Cass Corridor, Brush Park and Poletown. He got to know residents, visited their homes and documented their lives.

Those photos, and many others, have been published in a book by the Swallow Press, an imprint of the Ohio University Press. It's simply titled "Photographs from Detroit, 1975-2019." Free Press Flashback is carrying some of Harkness' work as examples of an evolving city's visual history. He sets the stage in his captions.

In the introduction, John J. Bukowczyk, a Wayne State University history professor who edited the book, writes that documentary photographers "record and thereby ennoble the wonderful, ordinary human lives simply lived for their own sake. They freeze in time places and people that the passage of time and the engines of change remake or efface."

Harkness, 69, reflected in the book's preface on his modest approach to chronicling the lives of a city.

"I never referred to myself as an artist, nor did I care if what I produced was art," he wrote. "I often found as much beauty and mystery in a family photo album as I found in an art-photography gallery. Photographic prints do not need to be big to touch the soul."

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