



# City Abandoned: Charting the Loss of Civic Institutions in Philadelphia

*Vincent David Feldman*

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A "deeply moving survey of the great civic structures that Philadelphia erected, then neglected."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"An aesthetic masterpiece—most relevant and revealing for our time."—Robert Venturi

With the photographs in this book, Vincent Feldman offers Philadelphians a testament of who we were, who we are, and who we are likely to become. Some of his subjects have succumbed to neglect or demolition (the Ridge Avenue Farmers' Market, for example); some have been successfully rehabilitated to new uses (the Victory Building); while others remain in limbo in their ruined states—their futures far from secure.

Yet besides recording the current state of the buildings, Feldman's photographs can play an active role in their preservation and renovation. His photos can serve, not only as documentary records, but also as catalysts for the rescue and rehabilitation of some of Philadelphia's most significant and neglected "abandoned" city architecture.

"By focusing on buildings that embody the civic aspirations of decades past and by portraying them in such stark terms, Vincent Feldman has created a body of work that is a vivid reminder of the fragile nature of what we have inherited and the need to remain ever diligent in its preservation."—John Andrew Gallery, "On Vincent Feldman's Philadelphia"

"[Feldman's] images move us to a deeper feeling and understanding of the city, as they pose important questions about our stewardship and the city's future. It's the story of a city on the edge, and we're glad to be along for this freeze-frame journey of photographic brinksmanship."—Kenneth Finkel, "Looking at the Past"

"By inviting you to look carefully at buildings from Philadelphia's past, I hope to promote inquiry about our history and also to inspire thoughtful discussion about what we might do for our future."—Vincent D. Feldman, from his Introduction

"[Vincent] Feldman is not the kind of photographer who shoots and runs. An old-school craftsman, he uses a large-format view camera much like the one Mathew Brady hauled around to record the devastation of the Civil War. Feldman then retreats to the darkroom to print his images on paper, rendering them with such precision that bricks and stones appear to leap from the page in three-dimensional relief."—Inga Saffron, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

The *Wall Street Journal* writes that the images of *City Abandoned* are "a melancholy catalog of such civic failures. In understated compositions that transcend merely local appeal, [Feldman] documents schools, theaters, hotels and churches left to deteriorate even as Philadelphia's downtown has boomed."

**Vincent D. Feldman**, a lifelong resident of Philadelphia, has been photographing architecture and the urban landscape for three decades. In the early 1990s his photography came to concentrate on the conflicts and questions that often surround historic buildings in Philadelphia. Feldman's photography helps uncover the stories attached to buildings, thus revealing the nature of the societies in which these structures were

built—and then neglected.

Feldman received a Pew Fellowship in the Arts in 2001. His work is held in the Philadelphia Museum of Art and in museums and private collections internationally. He is a Master Lecturer in photography at the University of the Arts.

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