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photo book review

What Still Remains

photographs by
Jessica Backhaus

A poster of Marlon Brando, a ripped-open and twisted floral-print-covered pillow, and a broken blue umbrella are amongst the discarded items intriguingly captured by Jessica Backhaus in "What Still Remains."

Backhaus takes photographs of left-behind objects and rooms devoid of people, lending significance to things usually cleared away or overlooked. Her images ask the viewer to imagine where, why, and who — writing a story that illustrates the transience of time.

She began this project in 2006 and attests that the images are purely incidental — nothing was staged, no props were added or taken away. Although "What Still Remains" shows no people, each image is alive with the lingering energy of those who have left the scene as it is. A bent and mangled green tea can bears the imprint of a thirsty and perhaps angry drinker. A hand-print on a dirty kitchen window sparks our own curiosity about what was for dinner.

Backhaus sees the everyday with an artistic eye. "What Still Remains" is a testament to her ability as a photographer. She manages to create a composition and a muted color palette



A Single Moment



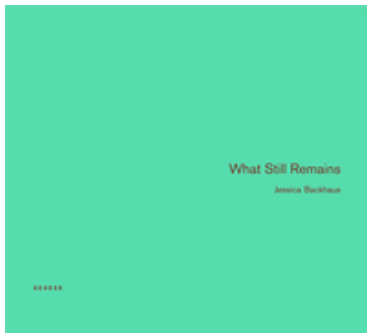
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out of random items, shadows and puddles. She picks details and meticulously frames the shots, centering on just enough information to incite the viewer's imagination.

In the introductory essay, photo critic Jean Dykstra points to the symbolism of emotional-things-lost when a mundane object is left behind. I would argue there's no need to delve into a greater philosophical analogy of "What Still Remains." Backhaus's photos, on their own, are thought-provoking, and simply lovely to look at.

— Hilary Moss

Hilary Moss is a freelance journalist covering arts and culture in Paris.



What Still Remains
by Jessica Backhaus

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