

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Phil Taggart: Four Poems

Phil Taggart · Thursday, June 9th, 2016

Phil Taggart has three collections of poetry. His latest is *Rick Sings* (Brandenburg Press). His other two are *Opium Wars* (Mille Grazie Press) and an art book in collaboration with Texas artist Ann Harithas, *Cowboy Collages*. He served for nine years as the Poetry Editor of *Art Life*, and is currently editor and publisher of *Askew* with Marsha de la O and Friday Gretchen. Phil runs the weekly poetry reading at the EP Foster Library in Ventura.

Birthday

He's outside his hotel
 pacing muttering
 waiting for dinner
 waiting for me
 Rick's 50 today
 his party is gathering
 at a restaurant downtown
 pacing is never a good sign
 I check in with Rick first
 it's always dicey taking him public
 his hair is sticking straight out
 clothes disheveled and dirty
 he's ranting
 we go to his room drop off presents
 Rick rants begs-off-dinner rants
 I leave, walk down Main Street, call my sister, cry
 and join the party

Rick Phones

Says he hasn't eaten in a week
 could I bring some peanut butter
 and jelly sandwiches over
 toward the end of the month

his food money is stretched to gone
 I got some burgers
 he opens the door
 Jasmine is there
 broken foot crutches
 staring at the TV
 once she was manager here
 Rick takes me aside,
She's homeless now
 I drop off the burgers and leave
 tomorrow I'll be kicking her out

Food and Cigarettes

I pass him
 sitting at a
 picnic table
 in the park
 go to my
 PO Box
 return and watch
 Rick's on the move
 checking trash cans
 eyes wary
 looking again and again
 over his shoulder
 not entirely
 comfortable here
 this safe zone
 could easily be disturbed
 if the police
 clear the park
 Rick settles into
 a bench swing
 smokes swings
 He called me
 a few days ago
 said he wanted a job
 he was tired
 of choosing between
 food and cigarettes

He's with Me

At the bank Rick waits

sitting in a chair
while I'm in line
he's hunched down
trying to be invisible
as the security guard approaches
he says to the guard,
The paintings are nice
Rick's pretty grubbed out
I'd like him to bathe more, wash his clothes,
clean his room, not drink so much
I'd like to tell him about my problems,
talk politics, art, watch a game with him
I yell out to the guard,
He's with me. He's my brother.
[embedvideo id="D7j2dU9SkYc" website="youtube"]
[embedvideo id="0JiXMCsgd78? website="youtube"]
(Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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