



# lost spaces, found gardens

brooklyn landscapes  
paul raphaelson

February through April, 2009  
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In 2003 I was thrown out of my loft in the DUMBO section of Brooklyn. The neighborhood had been my idea of paradise: architectural beauty, vibrant art community, seemingly boundless possibilities.

In contrast, my new neighborhood—a patchwork of empty lots, row houses, and low-slung factories in Bushwick—felt barren. I couldn't photograph here with the sense of majesty that I'd felt on the waterfront, under the soaring towers of the bridges. A year passed before I learned to look more closely, sometimes at the holes in the fences and the cracks beneath my feet. I'm now drawn to the surprises that I find here, to the curious pieces of local culture and the relentless thriving of flowers and weeds.

These discoveries led me to revisit my old neighborhood and others around the city, photographing them from a closer, more intimate perspective.

*Paradise* is the Persian word for a walled enclosure. As often as not, in the city, the walls are cyclone fences crowned with razorwire. Whatever they lack in charm they make up by providing a framed view from the outside. I find solace in the spontaneous gardens behind the fences. And I'm inspired by all the wild things invading them, by the relief they bring from the city's antiseptic geometry and sheen.