

BigSkyBrooklyn.com by Adam Eisenstat



Home is where the heart is



Writing on the wall?

Patinas of Decay: Ruin and Renewal (Spring Comes to Brooklyn)

“Rhythm is the basis of life, not steady forward progress. The forces of creation, destruction, and preservation have a whirling, dynamic interaction.”
—Kabbalah

A late April stroll through Red Hook finds evidence of spring nearing full bloom. The streets are alive with revelations . . . Sun-dappled and shadow-drenched, patinas of decay adorn the landscape in varied patterns. Here and now, decay seems less a manifestation of rot within than a veneer signaling the growth below; not a state of obliteration, but a state of *becoming*—the surface giving way to sprouting vitality.

The roots of a small tree, like convoluted tentacles, burrow under the jagged edge of a factory gate . . . The grit from a crumbling ledge melds with buds from tree branches lodged in the window grating above . . . Shrubbery grows along warehouse fences, interwoven with chain link holes . . . And ivy, supple, wondrous ivy—the way it snakes all over and throughout and between everything natural and man-made . . . Vegetation growing among the built world’s detritus heightens the sense of nature’s rebirth—a fresh, underlying force come to light, engulfing the sullied environment (if given a chance).

Writing on the wall?



Corrugated metal, green and mangled



Majestic Decay

A sunbeam shines through the latticework of a crane boom draped over the highway—a glittering symbol of the horizon/the future/growth. Jackhammers ring in the distance; destroying in order to create, pummeling the old to erect a base for the new.

In urban planning, architecture, and landscape design, it is de rigueur to incorporate vestiges of the past into brand new projects. Often these elements are inoperative or “distressed”—decayed if you will—and are used simply for adornment (a nod to history, a wink to the cognoscenti).

In the scrap business/recycling in general, old, nonfunctioning objects are transformed and reintegrated into the new landscape. In the existence of every such object, though, between its demise and rebirth, there is a singular moment. It occurs at the scrap yard, in a state of transition. In that moment the object, once a uniform piece off an assembly line, is like nothing else—the way it rusts, the gouges and the dents. It is unique, like a snowflake, a metallic snowflake.

Unique to Brooklyn, especially Red Hook, the decay is up front—not behind a sunny façade (a la LA/suburbia). This rawness induces a more probing truth; it is soulful and inviting—a spur to wonderment. That’s the allure of Red Hook, in essence.

All photos by Adam Eisenstat. Visit his blog: BigSkyBrooklyn.com