

## Sunset Park

Photographs by Thomas Roma  
Smithsonian Institution Press,  
1998.

64 pages. \$16.95.

Brooklyn has been called the borough of churches and it seems fitting that Roma, born in that borough of New York City, did a notable series of photographs of Brooklyn churches in his first published book, *Come Sunday*. His empathetic portraits of people and interiors were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1996. In this book Roma focuses on the public swimming pool in an ethnically diverse neighborhood in south Brooklyn, Sunset Park. Working on the pool project simultaneously with his church series, Roma says in a question and answer section at the front of the book, he sometimes had to “direct” the scene he was photographing because he had to get permission from his subjects before he could snap their pictures—a requisite by the city’s Parks Department before allowing Roma to take photographs at the pool. Roma’s images are, for the most part, serene and peaceful, showing sunbathers, groups of teenage boys or girls hanging out poolside, parents affectionately holding small children, couples kissing, and people standing near or in the water. A brief commentary on Roma at the back of the book states that this series “extends his investigation of figures in groups, in which formal rigor is often tinged with sensuality, an approach he inherited to a degree from his friend Garry Winogrand.”