



**PORTFOLIO**

*A Summer  
in Brooklyn*

*Photographs by Thomas Roma*





**F**EW PHOTOGRAPHERS are so closely identified with one place anymore as Thomas Roma is with Brooklyn, New York. He has lived there from birth in 1950. . . . The landing strip where immigrants to the United States first touch down and find their feet, Brooklyn is one of the five most racially diverse counties in the nation and, with a population of more than two million, one of the largest. His present home in the ethnic potpourri of Greenwood Heights is a half-hour drive from Bensonhurst, one of the capitals of Italo-American life and the neighborhood where he did most of his growing up. . . .

The "Sunset Park Pool" series, begun in the

summer of 1991 . . . developed its own character as Roma broke with one of the unstated rules of the documentary style. Many of the pictures are staged re-creations of events or actions that blur the usual stern distinctions between formal and spontaneous portraiture, constructed and discovered behavior. The pool was one he had visited since he was old enough to swim, and one which was now a recreation center in his neighborhood. The series extends his investigation of figures in groups, in which formal rigor is often tinged with sensuality. . . . But it also continues his own contemporary history of the unique urban experiment in which he has always lived, an idiosyncratic panorama of people and place.



*Thomas Roma is an associate professor of art and the director of photography at Columbia University's School of the Arts. The text is by Richard B. Woodward, a critic and film maker, from the book Sunset Park: Photographs by Thomas Roma. The book was published this month by Smithsonian Institution Press, with Constance Sullivan Editions. An exhibition of Mr. Roma's work, "Intimate City: The Photographs of Thomas Roma," will be at the International Center of Photography, in New York, from September 20 through November 29.*

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