

Brooklyn Before Photographs, 1971–1983

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY RACIOPPO
ESSAYS BY TOM ROBBINS & JULIA VAN HAAFTEN

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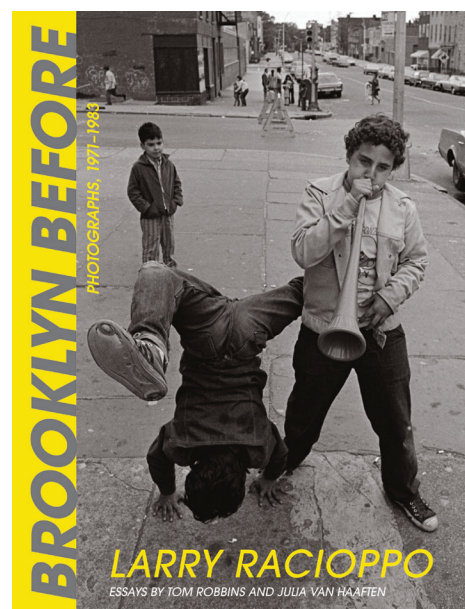
128 black-and-white photos of 1970s Brooklyn

Before Brooklyn rose to international fame there existed a vibrant borough of neighborhoods rich with connections and traditions. During the 1970s and 1980s, photographer Larry Racioppo, a South Brooklynite with roots three generations deep, recorded Brooklyn on the cusp of being the trendy borough we know today.

In *Brooklyn Before* Racioppo lets us see the vitality of his native Brooklyn, stretching from historic Park Slope to the beginnings of Windsor Terrace and Sunset Park. His black and white photographs pull us deep into the community, stretching our memories back more than forty years and teasing out the long-lost recollections of life on the streets and in apartment homes. Racioppo has the fascinating ability to tell a story in one photograph and, because of his native bona fides, he depicts an intriguing set of true Brooklyn stories from the inside, in ways that an outsider simply cannot. On the pages of *Brooklyn Before* the intimacy and roughness of life in a working-class community of Irish American, Italian American, and Puerto Rican families is shown with honesty and insight.

Racioppo's 128 photographs are paired with essays from journalist Tom Robbins and art critic and curator Julia Van Haaften. Taken together, the images and words of *Brooklyn Before* return us to pre-gentrification Brooklyn and immerse us in a community defined by work, family, and ethnic ties.

LARRY RACIOPPO, born and raised in South Brooklyn, is the author of a previous book of photography, *Halloween*. He received a 1997 Guggenheim Fellowship in Photography and grants from the NEA, NYSCA and the Graham Foundation. Racioppo's photographs are in collections at the Museum of the City of New York, The Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Public Library, El Museo del Barrio, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.



"*Brooklyn Before* is a delight. The effect is to convey an urban grittiness that was authentic working-class reality in this patch of Brooklyn. Fantastic!"

—Jan Ramirez, Chief Curator, National September 11 Memorial & Museum

"If you're born and raised in Brooklyn like me, the rhythms and attitudes within Larry Racioppo's photographs are like voices of old friends: Before Brooklyn became a brand they contained worlds now nearly vanished. When I open this book, these worlds spring defiantly back to life."

—Larry Blumenfeld, jazz critic and culture reporter

"In this eye-popping jewel of a book Larry Racioppo immortalizes the Park Slope Brooklyn where I was raised before it lost its unique character. *Brooklyn Before* is as close as we can get to saving what was once a glorious working class Brooklyn."

—Denis Hamill, author of *Fork in the Road*

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