

When photographer Daniel Root moved to the East Village in the early 1980s, this constantly changing neighborhood was in one of its periods of greatest ferment. Multiple immigrant groups maintained enclaves there—including Ukrainians, Puerto Ricans, Italians, Dominicans, and Poles—even as drug dealers plied their trade in abandoned buildings and young artists flooded in looking for cheap rents, followed close behind by real estate speculators. Through his lens, Root captured a young Madonna filming *Desperately Seeking Susan* on St. Mark's Place; the storefront galleries of the East Village art scene; Life Cafe, where Jonathan Larson would write—and set—*Rent*; retirees playing chess in Tompkins Square Park; junkies fleeing the police. Forty years later, Root—still an East Village resident—has returned to the very same places where he took those pictures, to document how the scene has changed.

Root's "then and now" photographs, presented together in this volume along with his wry commentary, document the transformation of a legendary New York neighborhood for better and worse—higher rents, yes, but lower crime; displacement, but also the persistence of community and creativity. A foreword by renowned artist Peter McGough and noted Beat historian Bill Morgan shed further light on the history of the East Village. This will be an essential volume for all downtown denizens, past, present, and future.