

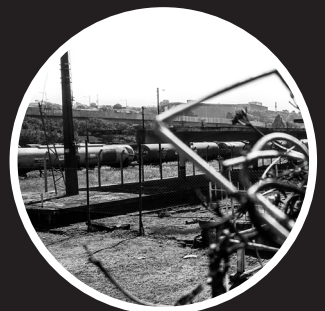
PERMEABILITIES

2024

HARVARD URBAN REVIEW

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All Under Heaven Are Equal

Trent Bullion (*MDes Critical Conservation* '22)

Tianxia (天下), or “under heaven,” is the collective of all living things in a place. With this idea in mind, Trent Bullion has assembled the following photographs as a conversation with the denizens of Columbus Park in New York City. The historic Olmsted and Vaux park sits at the intersection of the Courts District and Chinatown. Both landscapes are evolving: The Courts District physically, with the construction of a 40 story jail set for completion in 2027, and Chinatown demographically, as young folks like Bullion himself immigrate into the neighborhood.

The park has a history of photographic inquiry: in the late 1800s, photojournalist Jacob Riis photographed the site, then an overcrowded and impoverished neighborhood; his work prompted the city to demolish the neighborhood and transform it into a park.¹ While Riis saw the inhabitants of this space as other, Bullion seeks to find commonality and connection.

The work reads as a microcosm of Robert Frank's *The Americans*. Much like Frank, Diane Arbus, and Gordon Parks before him, Bullion documents things no one would witness had someone not photographed them.² He says that he sees the park as “an emotional site, full of both joy and pain” and is interested in the contrast of park visitors recreating and “NYPD officers regularly waltz[ing] through, shackled incarcerated people in tow.”³



References

1. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York, The Gilded Age* (New York: Scribner, 1902), <https://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?GILD;1000549563>.
2. Diane Arbus, *Diane Arbus* (Millerton, N.Y: Aperture, 1972)
3. Trent Bullion in discussion with Kieran Silva, May 2024.





