

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Loft Lawless

Dennis sinneD · Thursday, April 11th, 2019

(Para leer en español, [entra aquí.](#))

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*“The closer you are to this deep purple area, the more you should stay away...”*

—Julia Salazar, State Senator, 18<sup>th</sup>District

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Greenpoint and Bushwick, Northside, East and Los Sures “Southside” Williamsburg, where generations of laborers work *en la fabricas*, reduce as they draw attention—the more built upon the less seems to happen t/here. Anyone looking for local symptoms to today’s nationalism, curious how conspiracy theory, fake news and Long Island-New York outerborough bridge-and-tunnel Real Estate took over the Oval Office, exposed white supremacy and shifted national and international relations over declining industry and manufacturing, will be moved by arguments in public right now in North Brooklyn about Loft Law. It’s 2019, and we’re at each other again about politics and capitalism, about the meaning of Art in society and the built environment, but this spring things are different—socialism is on hearts and minds if not yet at hand. What was formerly championed in gentrification, including “gentrification,” draws suspicion and criticism. Each side threatens displacement by the other: live-work ‘loft’ tenants fear eviction if New York State legislature fails to renew and amend Loft Law and critics fear luxury development over manufacturing spaces and increasing alienation of adjacent poor, Afro-Puerto Rican, Dominican and immigrant communities if it succeeds. Perspectives muddle, experience is championed over history, anecdotes are imaginative while data is lacking. Scholars and planners examine Loft Law in Lower Manhattan but there’s no consensus on its role in North Brooklyn’s gentrification.

‘Loft Law’ is Article 7-c of New York City’s Multiple Dwelling Law, along with rent control under similar legislation by New York State—legal codes and passages obscuring powerful forces on all levels of New York society, from tenants, landlords, activists, community organizations and civic associations in North Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan through Wall Street and officials elected to city and state into the gentrification of every place. It was enacted in 1982 to keep tenants in Lower Manhattan certified as ‘artists’ by cultural affairs agencies in manufacturing ‘loft’ spaces they occupied in the previous year *against* the city’s comprehensive zoning, but this straightaway misleads as to how and when mobile persons, typically white, recent college

graduates, middle to upper middle class and higher, took up *adverse possession* of those spaces. Whatever experience endured, whatever *hostility*, between landlords and tenant, the adversaries were not each other but the latter and zoning. Indeed, it also didn't matter if the tenants always paid their rent and were the cleanest, quietest occupants imaginable and relations between the parties was outstandingly congenial—and it's reasonable investigating things to believe something like this. In fact, the more congenial the relations between landlord and tenant the more they are *together* in adverse possession of spaces zoned for manufacturing but used for residency. It also didn't matter how city agencies actually administrated to loft tenants, which was certainly not hostile or even *active*. City Hall was tolerant if not encouraging loft tenants by the establishment and mayoral appointment of Loft Board and the legislation of Loft Law in the early 1980s. But under zoning, loft tenants were, as they are today, in adverse possession of spaces. Similar patterns and conditions appeared in the later 2009/10 amendment extending coverage into North Brooklyn and they appear in the most recent legislation elaborating those protections.

These 'original' tenants concentrated a decade or so before Loft Law and ended a migration to the 1950s—the so-called 'long postwar boom' or, more tellingly, the 'golden age of capitalism.' They settle in SoHo and Tribeca when neoliberalism first appears on the world stage—Williamsburg's gentrification is six years later as neoliberalism dominates the global economy and is installed in every non-Soviet nation. Postmodernism emerges domestically, and so does the 'immaterial economy' Richard Florida positions some two decades *later* alongside a so-called 'creative class.' A New York auction house sells an artwork exceeding the value of the American home for the first time in history. Hipsters appropriate 'punk' somewhere on the Bowery between white Greenwich Village and Afro-Puerto Rican Loisaida. *The Exorcist* plays in movie theaters. The 'squatting' that is popular for 'adverse possession' and characterizing SoHo and Tribeca loft tenants in this period and North Brooklyn loft tenants later and in the present is vivid to the north in downtown Manhattan and to the east over the Williamsburg Bridge, needlessly created by law and housing enforcement in poor, Afro-Puerto Rican, Dominican and immigrant communities.

'Lofts' and Loft Law suggest that SoHo and Lower Manhattan's gentrification, and not Brownstone Brooklyn's, continues through Williamsburg into adjacent North Brooklyn neighborhoods comprising Brooklyn's Community Boards 1 and 3. Informally, certainly among my colleagues, and in recent major announcements by City Hall, the Comptroller's Office and the City Council Speaker concerning reuse of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, designers appear reliant on DUMBO, Clinton Hill, Brooklyn Heights, and Park Slope to plan for the north—isolated from rich services and institutions but especially by public transit connecting central and western Brooklyn with the Financial District in Manhattan. Certainly, this is politics on top of decades of design and planning, but this is due also to comprehension on the grassroots levels of the excellence of Suleiman Osman's *Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn* along with the ongoing redevelopment of the former Domino Sugar refinery on the Southside waterfront by DUMBO-based developer Two Trees Management. The latter is recent and there's little in Williamsburg's past to support such a continuity and much more to support one from Loisaida and therefore from SoHo. The Bedford Avenue and Lorimer Street stations for the L train and the Marcy Avenue, Hewes Street and Lorimer Street stations for the JMZ alone service the geography of Williamsburg's gentrification from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. The Greenpoint Avenue and Nassau Avenue stations for the G train service Greenpoint, which is often combined with Williamsburg when 'gentrification' is referenced but needs parsing. The Broadway station alone offers G train service for the geography of Williamsburg's gentrification. Of these transit lines, the G train alone offers direct connection between North Brooklyn and Brownstone Brooklyn. This does not even consider the specificity by routes such as Grand Street through North Brooklyn from

westernmost Queens and Long Island into Manhattan, or the service and quality of busing north and south along streets between Union Avenue and Bushwick Avenue. Without factoring the loft, there is at least strong suggestion that Williamsburg's gentrification is *isolated* from Brownstone Brooklyn's.

'Loft' is so various one could surrender the ghost right now, halfway complete. It's popularly understood as 'loft apartment'—meaning any manufacturing space, typically warehouse, converted over to residential use. This misleads to its use across history and its relevance to gentrification. Still generic and broadly defined, its previous meaning did not include nor exclude conversion or residential use, it meant any unit in any structure built and used for manufacturing, any enclosed space separate from freight elevators or loading docks though not necessarily exclusive of them, with high ceilings and open floors built to suit with large windows for daylight hours and to compensate for lack of heating or air conditioning though not excluding refrigeration such as in slaughter and meat storage along North 6<sup>th</sup> Street. It also means space for performance and cultural events, as it did for the waterfront and warehouse events organized by the so-called 'Immersionists' and drawing global and mainstream consciousness to Williamsburg and Greenpoint in the late 1980s to mid-1990s.

There has always been a crucial historical connection between lofts and zoning. New York City's comprehensive resolution in 1916, the first zoning plan in the nation, was drafted after lofts encroached upon the city's mid-town hotel and tourist economies. From late 19<sup>th</sup> century to after World War II but before the Vietnam War, lofts were for light to heavy manufacturing and valued less for adverse possession and residence than adjacent commercial spaces, unlike now where 'loft' is romantic and preferred to 'apartment' or 'house' by cultural not pragmatic reasons. Today, when we search for causes and identify conditions in Williamsburg, loft tenants parse themselves from and blame gentrification on the 2005-rezoning allowing for large scale market rate development on North Brooklyn's waterfront. Increasing awareness by Community Board 1, first drawn to the Immersionist events, of loft tenant settlement in Williamsburg and Greenpoint in the late 1980s to early 1990s alongside and out of the Immersionist events, was impetus for that rezoning.

Brownstones were conveyed over and transacted and factored in North Brooklyn's gentrification just as lofts and manufacturing spaces were not excluded from Brownstone Brooklyn's gentrification, but the 'scene of the drama and action,' so to speak, was inside a loft, not a brownstone. Factoring 'lofts' appears to make Williamsburg's gentrification less unique, less valuable to study than SoHo where apparently artists alone in the riff raff played no role in gentrification, or if they did, it was offset by their wonders. This is like saying the 'brownstone' is irrelevant to the gentrification of central Brooklyn, and irrelevant also that gentrification, because the brownstone also figures in the history and gentrification of the Upper West Side and Upper East Side, that Lincoln Center is somehow more interesting than Prospect Park. These gentrifications are distinct in their positions in time and space by places and persons. But there are important respects in common between 'loft' and 'brownstone' outside physical qualities and distinct geographies, outside settings and coordinates. Like the brownstone, the loft is reused in gentrification and in turn reinterprets and *authenticates* its visitors and permanent residents—'loft life.'

SoHo's primary resident when it came to be known as 'SoHo' was not 'artist' but professional drawn to live near the Financial District by city planners and influential private and semi-private organizations like Downtown Lower Manhattan Association. The greatest threat to manufacturing

zones in Lower Manhattan when tenants gathered before the original legislation of Loft Law was ‘financial enterprises’—businesses, professional services and government offices. The World Trade Center rose over all, overshadowing even Loisaida to the north—across the East River and over the Williamsburg Bridge from Los Sures Williamsburg. Its construction, operation and destruction appear lost on histories of North Brooklyn’s gentrification. Financial professionals did not follow artists, more specifically loft tenants, into SoHo as generally assumed when thinking of “gentrification” generic and happening *anywhere*, but these professionals became immediate and direct patrons of ‘local arts’ and shifted between financial services and dilettantism through loft life. T/here’s much bochinche by artists against Wall Street that endures to the present. From within the Art world, from out of the lofts, the ‘stock trader’ and ‘artist’ are opposing characters in literature and film. And, *apparently*, much from Wall Street about the easy seduction of artists—the hypocrisy only proves the enmity. Facts are they emerged and developed alongside each other to mutual benefit and ongoing reciprocity. Anyone estranged to the idea or alienated by the facts or unaware of the plasticity of identities is directed to Elizabeth Harris’ “Once a Rapper, a Ballerina or a Model, Now in Real Estate Sales” in 2012 for the *New York Times*, shortly after Loft Law is amended to protect North Brooklyn loft tenants.

‘Artists are vanguard of the bourgeoisie,’ misunderstands Marx. It’s not characteristic nor comprehensive, not based on data, on recorded or surveyed field conditions but comforts egos and privileges the agents of gentrification. There needs parsing, since ‘artist’ and ‘loft tenant’ are unfortunately conflated and confusion reigns as to how gentrification began in SoHo and proceeds in North Brooklyn. Both groups *independently* have genuine social power. The similarities and differences are not trite—they bear on present culture and economy, on the whole of things. The 2009/10 and pending amendments to Loft Law no longer require certification of ‘artists.’ It certainly has not been required of loft tenants identifying as artists in North Brooklyn and one can say that its relevancy in one geography and its irrelevancy in another tells us much about the gentrification between them. Simultaneously, certification of ‘artists’ and validation of ‘Art’ by government and cultural affairs agencies is odious as fuck.

“...how did people outside of the artist community find out about SoHo? What made them want to live in a loft? Part of the answer to this question was that artists’ advocacy groups invited people into their homes to convince them to support legislation legalizing loft housing ... Some artists bought their lofts through cooperatives for modest prices in the late 60s or early 70s ... Policymakers only acted to legalize loft housing for artists because advocacy groups pushed them into action. Other times, city leaders seemed content to let loft tenants live illegally. Though there were threats of evictions, few if any took place. This was despite a survey completed by the City Planning Commission in December 1977 that found that 91.5 percent of recent loft conversions in Manhattan below Fifty-Ninth Street were illegal.”

—Aaron Shkuda, interviewed by David O’Connor, “No One Lived in SoHo. Then the Artists Moved in”

The 2009/10 amendment to Loft Law included loft tenants residing in ‘Industrial Business Zones’ or ‘IBZs.’ While our IBZ is the third largest in sixteen such zones across the city, the protections granted to residential tenants in North Brooklyn spaces zoned for manufacturing are unique. Loft

tenants are already concentrating in Community Board 1 by the original 1982 Loft Law, outside its jurisdiction while influencing its legislation. Instead of Loft Law, they haggle sweat equity over commercial and residential spaces adapting to local housing policies and community organization outreach. The amendment to protect them seemed just and decent and arguable in court—these tenants *precede* the North Brooklyn IBZ. Moreover, some of them argue they deserve credit, that the economy enabling all things, including the IBZ, even the global economy, the crowds marching back and forth Bedford Avenue, the bars and the boutiques, the sheer verbiage online, and “online,” is inspired if not created by them.

The IBZs are established in 2006 by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and need seeing in light of the momentous rezoning of North Brooklyn’s waterfront the year before. Not physically, not by any new construction or building, nor any imagined or real fencing or special paving of road and street, nor any tangible delineation by labor and production did New York City draw these ‘zones’ in 2006 but by *taxation, insurance and grant/loan*. Like in Lower Manhattan two decades earlier, the city is balancing pressures and interests between industry and settlement, this time in and around all sixteen zones and North Brooklyn’s in particular, challenges to manufacturing that is major employer of the poor and persons of color and threatened by large scale construction and development for entirely different demographics in nearby zones. It bears emphasizing that spaces comprising North Brooklyn’s IBZ precede IBZ *and* loft tenant. The IBZs don’t contradict and are not to be confused with the comprehensive zoning splitting regions between commercial, residential, manufacturing and mixed across the city—involving entirely separate arguments into this mess. Manufacturing in Williamsburg stretches into industrial corridors and parks—on Metropolitan Avenue, for example, from the East River to Queens, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the winter before this spring, 34<sup>th</sup> District City Councilperson Antonio Reynoso, representing Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bushwick and Ridgewood, identifies the 2009 amendment to Loft Law with his former nemesis, deceased and disgraced party boss and State Assembly Member Vito Lopez, Jr. Reynoso repeats his constituents’ concerns over threats to area manufacturing and industry, over displacement by rampant market rate development. Importantly, he objects to the lack of input by local non-profits and activists but stops short of calling for public hearings.

18<sup>th</sup> District State Senator Julia Salazar, representing parts of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Cypress Hills, Bushwick, East New York, Brownsville and Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, including the whole of the North Brooklyn IBZ under question by the pending amendment to Loft Law and who will actually vote on the legislation, goes further than Reynoso and calls for public hearings. Her concerns similar to Reynoso’s over adverse impact by Loft Law come further to light and trolling erupts on Facebook and Twitter—loft tenants were advocates in her recent election and now repeat attacks on her character by her previous critics. A public hearing is scheduled then canceled by the City Council when lobbyists and interests meet with local figures—the latter publish their objections to the pending amendment, “The Loft Law Bill: Inequity on Stilts” (*Gotham Gazette* March 2019). The legislation is explicitly connected to area displacement. Salazar’s office also identifies the 2009/10 amendment with Lopez.

Understanding or comprehending North Brooklyn politics and history, let alone gentrification and Loft Law, is impossible without Vito Lopez, Jr. His North Brooklyn and Ridgewood, Queens career is summarized by unreliable sources. A fuller history is necessary. However, support for the previous amendment to Loft Law by many others, involving community boards, city agencies, elected officials across overlapping jurisdictions in New York City Council, State Assembly and Senate, international but especially local journalists and editors in multiple print and online news

media in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and most importantly activists operating semi-independently with area non-profit community organizations, including the ghost and signing writers of “Inequity on Stilts,” is overshadowed. Lopez, Jr. was not alone. Neither was his corruption but his infamy in North Brooklyn is deep and unique. He was indeed an explicit and emphatic sponsor but his sole identification with Loft Law by his enemies is imaginative and political, perhaps justifiable given the closed legislation of the pending amendment by special interests that excludes area workers or unions who are almost entirely persons of color, but it forgets more than remembers, adds to an atmosphere of ignorance, false consciousness and misrepresentation.

“Human beings seem to worship the arbitrary.”

—Journal, January 30, 2005, Poughkeepsie, New York

North Brooklyn loft tenants are diverse across identities, ethnicities, economic classes, gender, and sexual orientation, are tenacious and resourceful and some are unbelievably affluent. Many are fairly characterized as ‘anarcho-capitalist.’ I’ve yet to meet or speak to one who does not believe themselves outside ‘left-right’ orientations. More importantly, and certainly in the spirit of things, whatever they are accused of they claim to be scourged by—they are not agents of but slow even oppose gentrification. Indeed, all this time they have been champions of Williamsburg’s poor and forlorn and the sole priests of her forgotten. At the same time, they do not dispute claims that every positive social development in the neighborhood for the past thirty or so years is by their hand. They represent themselves as disempowered—this Orwellianism needs special attention. Why use ‘agent of gentrification’ and not ‘gentrifier’—am I contrarian? Pretentious? Motherfucker? I draw attention to *agency* by gentrifiers, their awareness and consciousness of themselves and their decisions in social settings overlooked or obscured in their testimonies and in their characterizations by news media and scholarship. Loft tenants often refer to themselves as ‘commercial tenants’ to draw attention to the loss of protections the city grants residential tenants—let go of this nonsense. Whatever lost with ‘rights’ is gained in ‘agency.’ It would be restricted if not prohibited and certainly unusual if a residential tenant woke up one night and decided to cut passages, partition their space, and install insulation, wiring or plumbing. No matter the economic class of the tenant, the power and effect to modify an apartment in a tenement in the Southside is almost entirely cosmetic—painting, installing furniture, hanging Art, buying dog and cat. *Alterations* are privileges usually reserved to the landlord—if you’re modifying spaces in Williamsburg’s R-6 zones, building walls, wiring, installing plumbing, adding windows, you’re a homeowner. If you’re a tenant, you’re out of fucking mind, if not out of place. However, it would not be unusual for a commercial tenant to *physically* modify their space. Indeed, it is *expected*—commercial and manufacturing spaces, lived in or not, are ‘built-to-suit.’ They constantly undergo modification, even additions or alterations to the building’s structure. These spaces are also vigilantly inspected, their review *increased* in the years of gentrification as New York City’s Department of Building has expanded in size and authority, adding hundreds of new inspectors in the past decade. The filing of variance requests to the Department of Buildings and copied to Community Board 1, reviewed by city employees and occasionally audited by city officials and required under certain conditions not uncommon to loft tenants in those spaces are by landlords on behalf of those tenants. Their filing and recording complicates narratives of landlord-tenant adversity that are already invalid. A loft tenant residing in spaces zoned for manufacturing has much more agency in gentrification than the most affluent and ostentatious dilettante returning ‘home’ to an HDFC or rent-stabilized railroad after a night at the House of Yes.

Claims to be ‘low income’ are also not representative nor believable. For example, residents claim to begin taking up space at 475 Kent Avenue in 1998—five years or so after the Immersionist events end, five years after *Organismat* the former Old Dutch Mustard site, now luxury condominiums along Metropolitan Avenue near the East River, closes large scale events held in lofts and drawing mainstream consciousness to Williamsburg. This settlement at 475 Kent Avenue is also five years after *New York Magazine* features warehouse and waterfront life on its cover and centerfield in Brad Gooch’s “The New Bohemia” (June 1992), and for measure of the neighborhood’s notoriety and rapid increase in value long before these earliest tenants could have conceivably moved into their lofts as they themselves claim see also Max Kutner in 2013, “10 Things We Learned From This 21-Year Old Williamsburg Time Capsule” (*Bedford & Bowery*). It’s incredible, really, that conditions drawing sudden and acute mainstream consciousness to Williamsburg are overlooked or being ignored. Those events were almost entirely quartered in lofts inside warehouse buildings in varying stages of demolition scattered across manufacturing zones inside Community Board 1 that are today being debated across North Brooklyn. I begin describing them in “Meet Me at Union, Where Hope Meets Powers—Grand is Close, But to the South” (*Cultural Weekly* February 2018). It appears lost that this shift in mainstream consciousness and drawing the attention of international real estate, arts and entertainment and told through global multimedia precedes by years loft tenants representing themselves as ‘low income.’ By this point t/here is already consciousness that rent in Williamsburg, but especially *commercial* rent in manufacturing spaces, is prohibitive, is off the fucking hook. Chat is out of Williamsburg and into Bushwick, elsewhere, anywhere—the whole world is gentrifying, apparently.

The New York City Loft Tenants Coalition among others organizes on behalf of loft tenants, including professional aid from lawyer and loft tenant Michael Kozek. They respond to “Inequity on Stilts” with “Getting to Truth, and Solidarity, on Loft Law Reform,” support the pending amendment to Loft Law, rebuke State Senator Salazar but do not mention City Councilperson Reynoso—the former and not the latter votes on the amendment. “Getting to Truth” claims t/here’s no evidence connecting Loft Law to manufacturing decline in North Brooklyn since 2010. Indeed, the IBZ being debated shows significant job growth in manufacturing since 2010 and some loft tenants, correctly or not, already use that fact to support claims that their live-work occupancy in manufacturing spaces actually provides jobs—but that does not support the pending Loft Law amendment even if it is technically correct. “Getting to Truth” would be sorry if Truth were gotten. Frankly, the deeper problem is that t/here’s no evidence of *anything* involving ‘gentrification’ in Williamsburg since the beginning of this fucking mess. We don’t even know how to definitively say “the beginning of this fucking mess.” T/here is no gathering by elders, bochineros and other know-it-all to get at the relations of ‘gentrification’; no timeline, mapping, glossary or symposium, nor causation from or correlation to the gentrification by historical conditions that are well-attested and widely understood in policy and scholarship, such as redlining, blockbusting, housing and civil rights discrimination; no surveying of commerce, nor population study of multiple and overlapping jurisdictions and districts across sensible distinctions between ‘displacement’ and ‘mobility.’ Neither is survey of North Brooklyn’s gallery economy employed by community organizations or any policy-making circles but for 37<sup>th</sup> District City Councilperson and recent candidate for New York City Public Advocate Rafael Espinal’s protection of Brooklyn nightlife. The previous amendment to Loft Law passed during the Great Recession—no study is forwarded or proposed connecting them. Scholarship is ongoing but slow-paced and lags behind the facts. Outside of alarmist reference in local housing activism, there is at best little motivation to enact or allow study, connection or reference to “gentrification” between the necessary groups. By far, North Brooklyn’s gentrification and its supposed opposition are *trolled*, posted to social media,

from writings in comments fields open to the public on Internet and multimedia.

All the parties are ahistorical, repeatedly deliberately misrepresent things, accounts indulge themselves and people make outrageous claims. Related social media should be studied but the constant bullshit connecting loft tenants to North Brooklyn's gentrification is old as the Internet. Older. In the early 1990s, artists under pseudonym later bent towards the alt-Right outright attacked local manufacturing *economies*, encouraged encroachment, adverse possession and "big loft installation style" in local print publications. Landlords and property owners were not their adversaries. They may have been anarcho-capitalists but they were hardly anarchist. Technically, it was the city, and essentially, it was the neighborhood, meant as 'adversary' in the possession of spaces.

Two decades or so later when Loft Law first extends into North Brooklyn, discussion about loft tenants ports online and is completely absorbed into larger discussions about gentrification in Williamsburg and Greenpoint on public comments threads within cultural and news blogs such as *Gothamist*. Trolls are completely pseudonymous and virtually hidden, unedited writings are posted with zero to little moderation, and discussion is unimaginably cruel, nihilistic and haunting. It's as if Kafka smashed Orwell and they abandoned a child in North Brooklyn.

Today, advocates on either side still troll, use fake or dormant but reactivated Twitter and Facebook accounts, live day and night, good people away from their keyboards but once the moon is full and they log on transform into character assassins, still demeaning and writing awful cruelties and wishing horrors at their neighbors while making public appeals to sympathy and compassion for themselves. Lots of name-calling, humiliation, fearmongering, conspiracy theories, ad hominem and so on, but mostly, more than anything, is the assumption that the person they're dis/agreeing with at the moment is ignorant. And yet, this is restrained. What's remarkable for all the ferocity in the latest round is how tame the participants comparing to discussion concerning Williamsburg around the previous amendment almost ten years before. There remains a strong pseudonymity, but identities are more out in the open. Civility appears in long passages. People volunteer to meet after discussion—harder when identities were private and neighbors hid behind screennames, avatars and handles and feelings were *different* about 'gentrification.'

The increased civility encourages further shifts in public debate. Rational and pragmatic descriptions of lofts are emphasized over conspiracy theory and personal attacks. The geography of gentrification is momentarily less psychology and more geometry. Loft tenants keep terms to use and utility—length by height measurements of floor and room, high ceilings, large windows, freight elevators, all the factors of the built environment enabling their vocation. They tell us now, more than anything, they *need* these spaces. For example, such as descriptions of Bushwick lofts by Cara Buckley during the 2009 amendment to Loft Law in "That Cheap, Roomy Loft Can Now Be a Legal One, Too" (*New York Times*). Tools or machinery, fabrication methods, production, even daily personal habits are all referenced though this is Really beside the point and only ironically reveal the design and intended use of these spaces for manufacturing. It's great that everyone calms but these rational and pragmatic descriptions don't account for all motivations. In fact, they are unlike awareness and comprehension of 'loft' outside moments of political necessity when 'be professional' makes sense and things are tamed.

It's not *vocation* that sets apart loft tenants from manufacturers in the history of the neighborhood's gentrification—it's something somehow simultaneously much more frivolous and powerful. 'Work' and 'live-work' are only *parts* of 'loft' more completely understood as a social space



especially for *eros thanatos*. They don't account for the *content* and *circumstance* of North Brooklyn's mysterious events from the late 1980s to the early 1990s along its waterfront and in its warehouses and still driving arts and commerce, still significant to gentrification and cultural history—their alteration of spaces and the conditions of those events cannot be reduced to any situation currently under debate in public. Those events were erotic, even pornographic, revealed, represented even magnified the ruin not just of a Place but also of a People. How else could those so-called Immersionist events have transpired if not in warehouses and by the waterfront? Notions that a loft is for illustrating or sculpting or fabricating or vaporizing or anything of the sort are largely 'professional' and surge into mainstream consciousness whenever legislation, court judgments or cultural and government programs debate and plan live-work spaces fundamental to gentrification—representations are pragmatic, apologetic and clearly appeal to justification. For the remainder of the West and anyone impacted by popular and contemporary Art, the paintings and sculptures and jewelries and tapestries are backdrop and the tenant retreats to the loft to smash. Take any cinematic depiction of the loft space and you'll find the spotlight not on any artifact but on a clearing somewhere the loft tenant knocks boots.

Over the years, loft tenants still assert nonsense—where the identification and conflation with 'artists' most convinces, given how creative their conspiracy theories involving their opponents, their equally imaginative theories of gentrification and histories of Williamsburg, their defiance of physics and other laws of Reality, their constant need for positive reinforcement, and all that is good about Williamsburg and North Brooklyn is to their credit but displacement by gentrification is not. At the same time, it has in fact been five, ten, twenty years since they've moved into the neighborhood—who can challenge them and say their residence invalid? Who dares?—they're with us, now. They've melted into the scenery. They're neighbors.

Shortly after Reynoso and Salazar brought concerns into public a loft tenant greets me on Twitter calling me a 'Russian bot.' We debate the merits and history of Loft Law in the neighborhood—brief, energetic and hard but pleasant comparing to flame wars I've ignited since early this gentrification. He demands and expects my personal information—he accuses me of an 'agenda.' He also calls me 'ignorant,' a tool of real estate developers, a 'secret Republican academic' and worse, 'passionate.' After I explain my desires and motivations, begin to admit my past, I am interrupted as always, before expressing hope—my neighbor insists I am a Russian bot. True, I called him and his colleagues a bunch of motherfuckers.

Because of Loft Law, we can look to Lower Manhattan to perceive invisible conditions in North Brooklyn. We can see into our future peering into the past of an/other gentrification. Appearing before Community Board 1 at their last meeting, Reynoso states he wishes to “close this so the issues aren't discussed again.” The current amendment follows precedent, not just to the 1982 Loft Law but even further back than the 'original' loft tenants in SoHo. We argue in cycles beyond the rising and setting of laws and there appears a spirit coming from all camps that the public anxiety and discomfort is coming from the legislation—by writing more legislation there will be an end to legislation, there will be 'solidarity' and these tensions sealed. Anyone thinking things will end with the passing or blocking of Loft Law has other things coming.

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a Luis A. y Mansur al-H.  
junto con el codificador G. S.  
“¿Cómo ocurre la redención?”

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Cuando “todo está cumplido”

Dennis sinneD

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