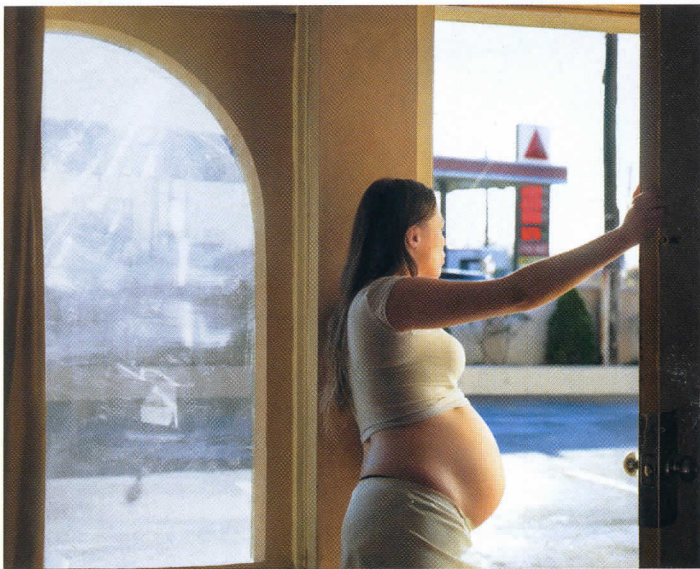




Two views of New Jersey from Joshua Lutz's *Meadowlands*.

The Meadowlands of northern New Jersey is a quiet but disquieting place. A patchwork of wetlands just across the turnpike from Manhattan, it hosts a grisly sort of ecosystem—polluted by years of dumping and favored by mobsters for the disposal of corpses, yet inhabited by wading birds, migratory fish, and tunneling muskrats. Toxic chunks of it have been reclaimed for everything from a football stadium to the city of Newark. Vivisected by the densest human population in America, it clings to a marshy but debased life.

Joshua Lutz's handsome, oversized first book captures the redolent mix of depressed, surreal, bourgeois, and gritty that is the Meadowlands. Its images show a foul canal floating a barge of crushed cars; a stiff-collared priest standing inexplicably in overgrowth; a plaid-shirted mannequin lying face-down in a watery ditch; a bowhunter shooting at something way beyond the plane of focus. Even unoccupied images are about human needs and intervention: the Delayed Cares Motel, the Happily Ever (no After) Bingo Club. Yet few of these photos are free-standing in their impact. Their sum creates a powerful feeling of place, not a dry record of fact. While the Meadowlands may be for most people "a place to pass through and forget on the way to someplace else," as Lutz puts it, for him it is rich ground for bittersweet art. —R.H.



Meadowlands

By Joshua Lutz
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BEAUTY AND THE MARSH



