Miss Gowanus

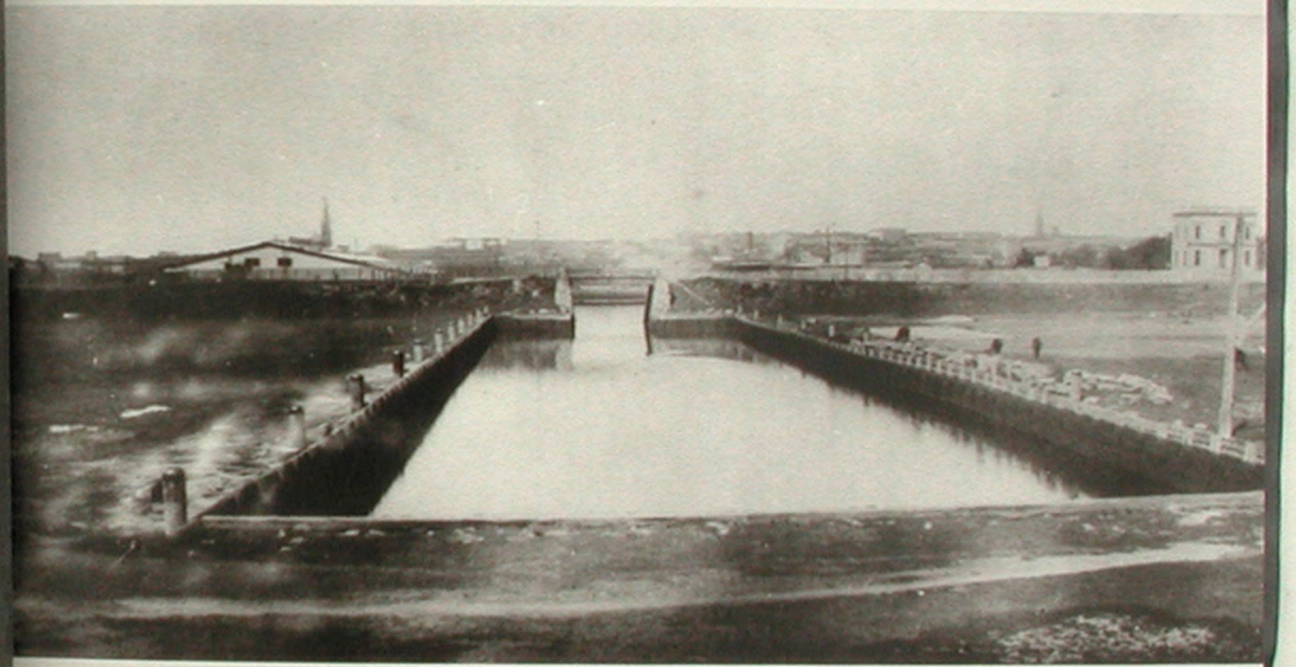
Miss Gomarus

Miss Downing

Gowanus Creek, Brooklyn, New York, 1874 photo credit Brooklyn Public Library

Mac Gowanus ©1996 Meg Betchner

I am the younger sister of a female athletic star
she plays hardball at eight



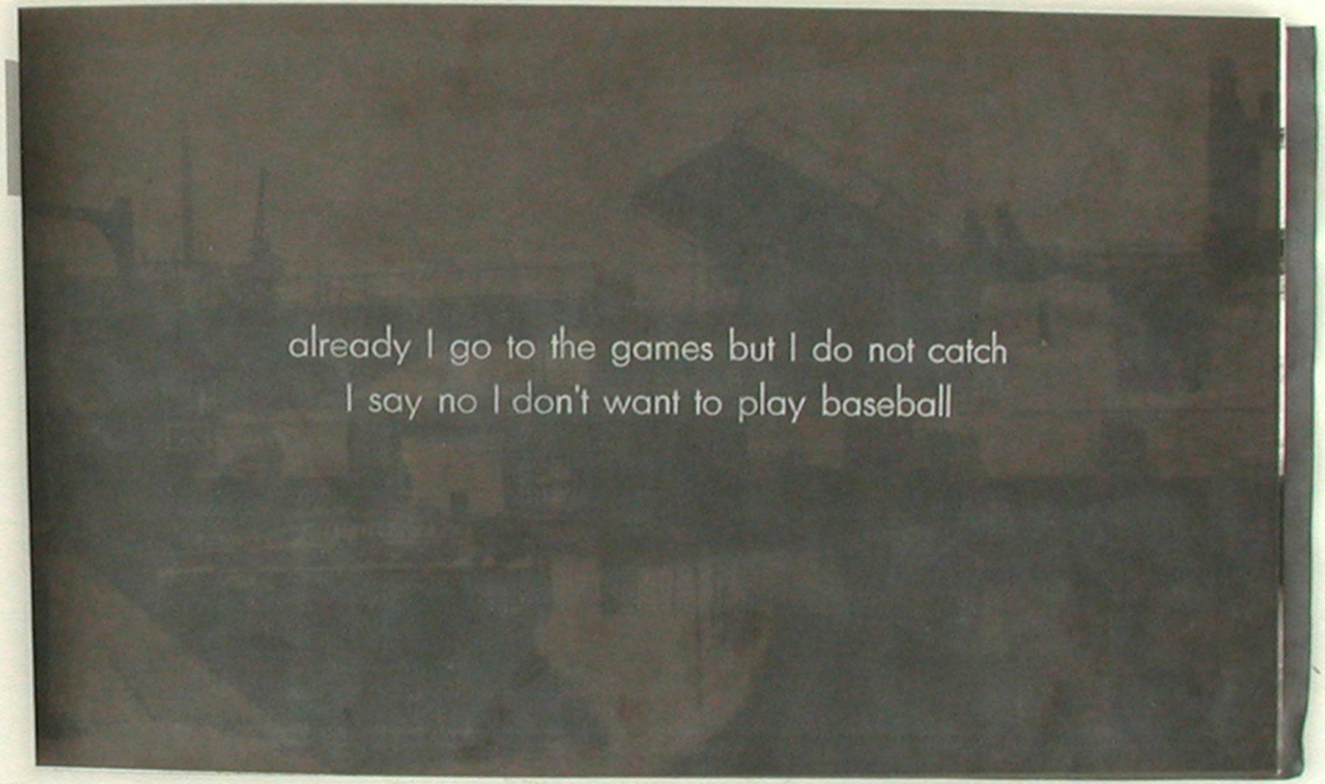
Miss Gowanus ©1996 Meg Belichick

Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York, 1876 photo credit: Brooklyn Historical Society

the summer I turn eight
I am asked if I want to be on a baseball team too
I am standing on the basement stairs facing up
I know this is an important question and I hesitate
resting my eyes on an accumulation of shoe polish
laundry detergent starch rags and glue

Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York, 1877 photo credit: Brooklyn Historical Society

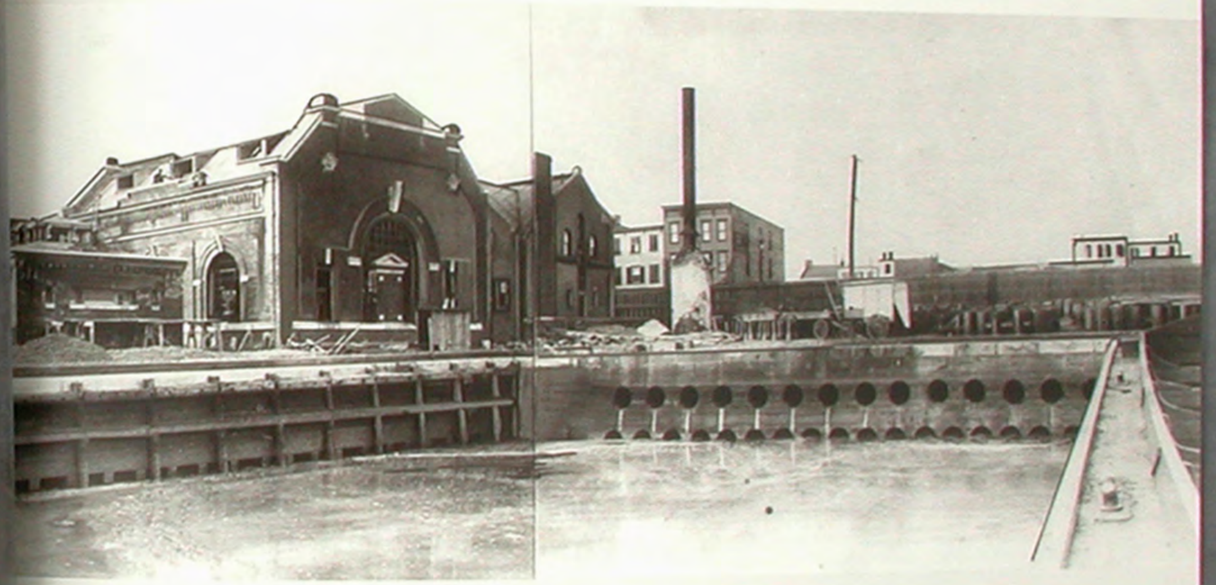
Mat Gowanus ©1996 Meg Belichick



Max Gowanus ©1996 Mary Beth Meehan

Union Street Bridge over Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York, 1905
photo credit Brooklyn Public Library

I love to fish
I am good at putting the worm on the hook
and later removing the hook from the fish's mouth
sometimes taking the whole throat



Gowanus Pumping Station, Brooklyn, New York, 1911
photo credit Brooklyn Historical Society

Mary Cremmins ©1996 Mary Beth Peck

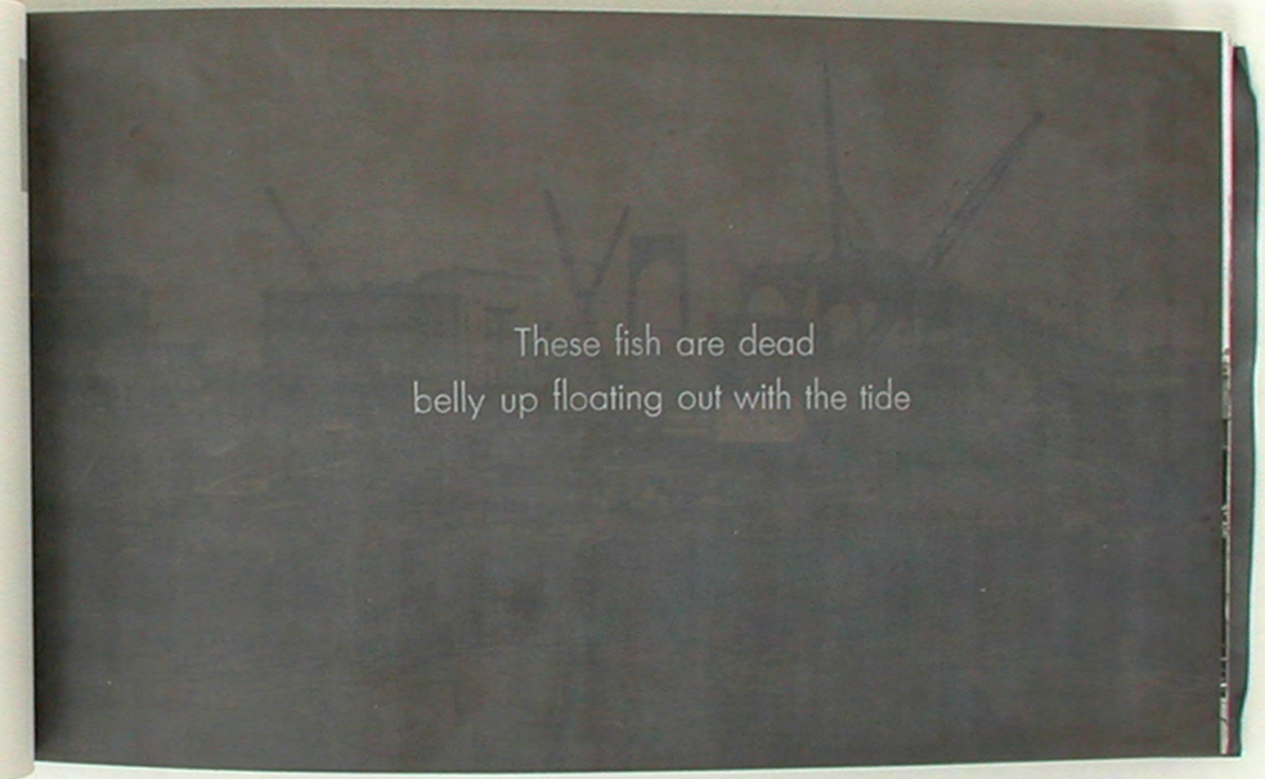
My sister and I catch fish off the end of our dock
with a piece of wood
We have poles but we don't need them or bait

PIES
Coca-Cola

Gowanus

Gowanus Canal floods Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn, New York, 1922
photo credit: Brooklyn Public Library

Meg Gowanus ©1996 Meg Ballard



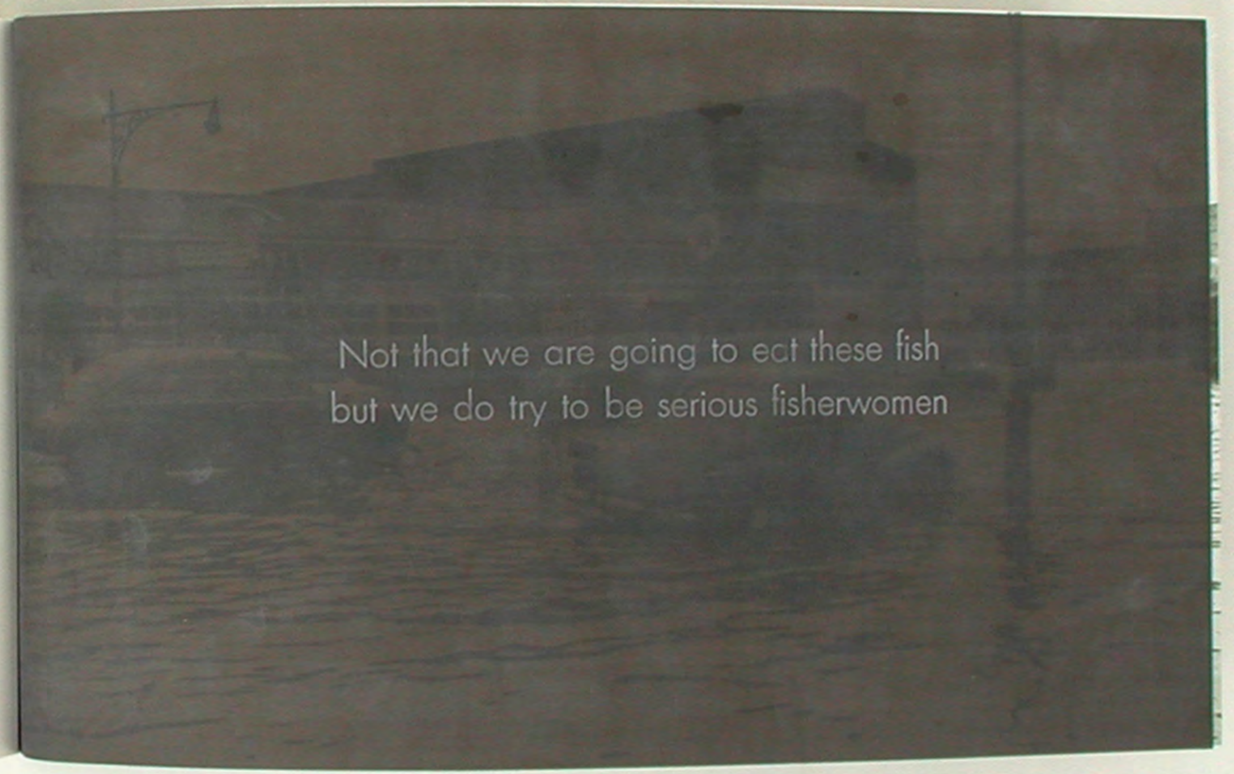
Mary Gowanus ©1996 Mary Ballentine

Building the Brooklyn - Queens Expressway over the Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York c1950 photo credit Brooklyn Historical Society

We take this opportunity to impress our mother
We pull them in on a long board
wrap them in foil and put them in the freezer

Ninth Street Bridge over Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York, c.1950
photo credit Brooklyn Public Library

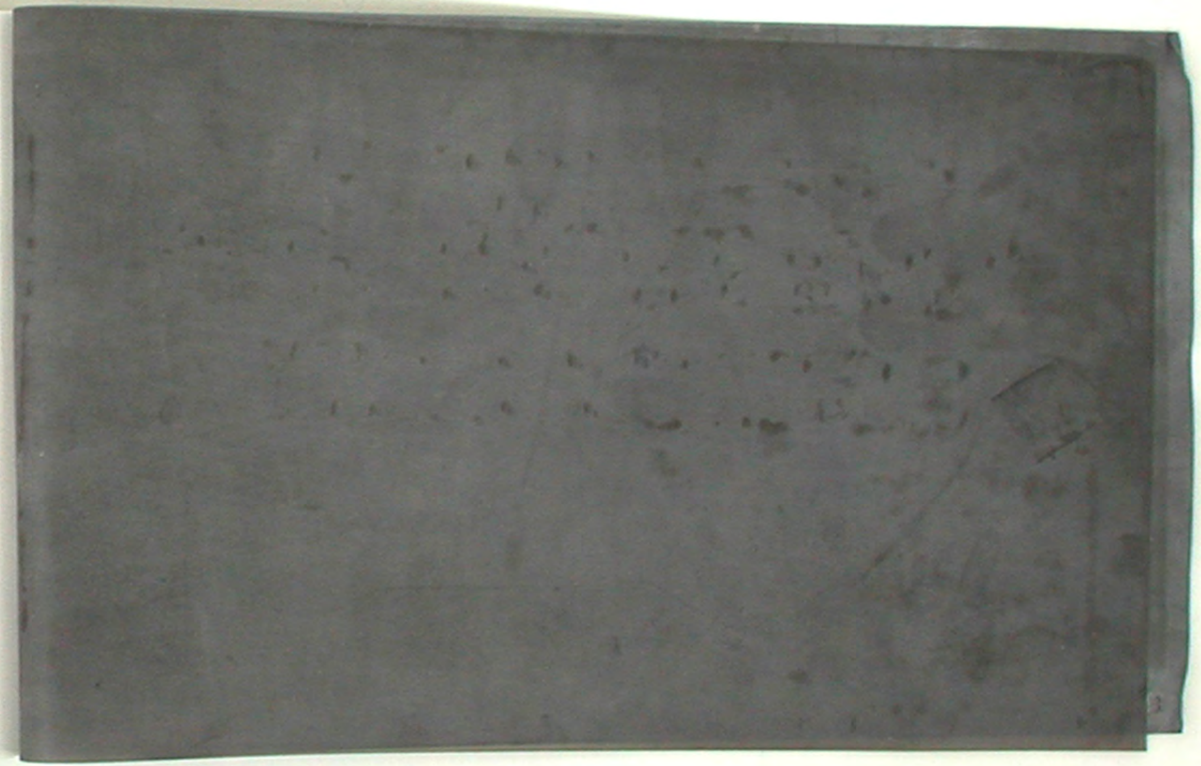
Mary Gowanus ©1996 Mary Beth Heil



LUBRICATION
BRAKES
MARFAK
ESSO
ESSO

Gowanus Canal floods Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn, New York, 1947
photo credit Brooklyn Public Library

Mass Conversion ©1996 Mary Beth Meehan



Over the Gowanus Canal, Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn, New York, 1947
Courtesy Brooklyn Public Library

Over the Gowanus Canal

Over the Gowanus Canal
Margentova Flushing Laurel
that covers its fresh water with each tide
she tosses thousands of tiny white petals from a glove maker's barge
onto the newly mixed waters of the Gowanus Canal.

A pale blue sadly cast over her stenciled letters gives
reads in dizzying glove lettering: Miss Gowanus

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[illegible] ingenious Flushing Tunnel
that carries in fresh water with each tide
she tosses thousands of tiny white petals from a flower laden barge
onto the nerdy mixed waters of the Gowanus Canal

A pale blue satin sash over her starched white gown
reads in shivering silver letters, Miss Gowanus

1996 Meg Belichick Edition of 100 No. 43

Saying out loud what I had only begun to think has made this book happen. I want to thank everyone who has been listening to me throughout this project: ROBERTA WADDELL of The New York Public Library and JUDITH WALSH of the Brooklyn Public Library for early and consistent encouragement and support; the YADDO FOUNDATION for residencies spent concentrating on Miss Gowanus; the WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP for making the commitment to this book that ultimately kept me committed; the NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS and the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS for financial support beyond my wildest imaginings; JOHN KNESL for his brave and direct criticism of my original prototype that led me to use rubber pages instead of paper; DAVID WALL and the STINEHOUR PRESS for the incredible reproduction of the historical photographs; MAUREEN CUMMINS for technical assistance in printing and binding; ANDREW BRESHEARS for holding my hand through the understanding of a thirty-second of an inch; and finally, DAN DAVIS who inspires me at every turn and isn't a bad interlocutor either.

WARNING: THIS BOOK CONTAINS LEAD AND SHOULD NOT BE CHEWED OR SWALLOWED