

New York City in January 2019, Central Brooklyn, the Bowery, and Bushwick - Elly's notes



A view of Manhattan from Brooklyn: Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges

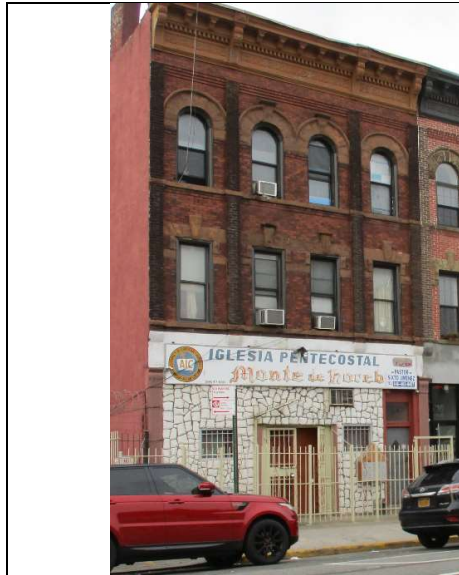
The Linguistic Society of America was meeting in New York City on the eastern side of Hell's Kitchen. Coming to NYC provided a great opportunity to hear talks and also to explore some of the major changes that had taken place when I visited NYC a lot in the 1980s and 1990s. The below is organized in parts: a little on the more well-known parts of Brooklyn, then to Manhattan for a little on the Bowery, and back to Brooklyn for street art in Bushwick.

'Central' Brooklyn

I came a day early and, with a friend, walked across the better known parts of Brooklyn: DUMBO, Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill, Park Slope, and Prospect Park. As can be seen on the map, Brooklyn occupies quite a large space and has over 2.5 million residents (as compared to 1.6 in Manhattan). In 1898, it became a borough of the City of New York but on its own it would be one of the most populous cities of the US with so many nationalities and languages and such varied neighborhoods. For two other days (really early in the morning), I came back for street art in Bushwick (and Williamsburg).



The make-up of the Brooklyn neighborhoods changes fast, as do their boundaries, due to gentrification. DUMBO has cobble-stoned streets and upscale housing but Bushwick (still) has working class neighborhoods and industrial sites. Each street can have several houses of worship: Jewish Orthodox, Eastern Christian Orthodox, Moslem, various kinds of Protestant leanings, Roman Catholic, etc.



Bushwick Pentecostal, not 'central'



Zion German Evangelical Lutheran in Central Brooklyn



Such varied building styles, DUMBO



Warehouses, DUMBO



Still in DUMBO



Labor protest, with rat to the right

From DUMBO, one can walk through beautiful (and very yuppy) residential neighborhoods to Atlantic Avenue, one of the major arteries. Along Atlantic Avenue, a jail was built in the 1950s that closed in 2003 but reopened in 2012 (according to the wiki page). It looks very forbidding and imprisons people who are going through pre-trial proceedings. No windows are visible from the outside: see below. There are also antique stores and lots of food places on Atlantic Avenue which then leads past the Barclays Center, a sports arena for the Brooklyn Nets, very controversial for what it displaced. From there, turn onto Flatbush Avenue towards Prospect Park, the library, and Brooklyn Museum. The Plaza that is the entrance to Prospect Park and Prospect Park were designed by Olmsted and others in the 1860s.



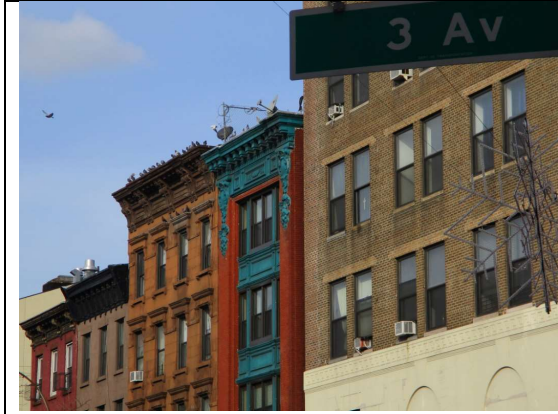
Brooklyn Jail



Along Atlantic Avenue



I love the juxtaposition of old and new, of vivid color and drab concrete. The newest apartments don't add a lot and have displaced a lot of earlier low income and ethnically diverse inhabitants.



Grand Army Plaza



Streets off Flatbusch Avenue

Central Brooklyn offers much beauty and variety in its building styles, unexpected colors and designs, and also much modern industrial design and chain stores. The politics of it all are very complicated.

The Bowery

The Lower East Side and other areas of Manhattan are also very colorful and diverse. The Bowery, leading into Chinatown, is one of these areas. It had its start as a footpath used by the Lenape (before and after European colonization) and derives its name from a Dutch word for 'farm.' By the 1920s, it had become a very impoverished area, hence the name 'skid row'. I had recently read an article on one of the last flophouses, the Whitehouse Hotel (see the link at the end), and one of its inhabitants, Sir Shadow, and that prompted me to go back to the Bowery. There is interesting street art in this area too, mainly on the side streets but mostly 'commissioned.' High-rise condominiums, luxury apartments, and art galleries are appearing fast and, unless they make it a landmark, Bowery 340 will soon be replaced.



The Whitehouse Hotel, Bowery 340





Private park



Front doors along The Bowery and Houston

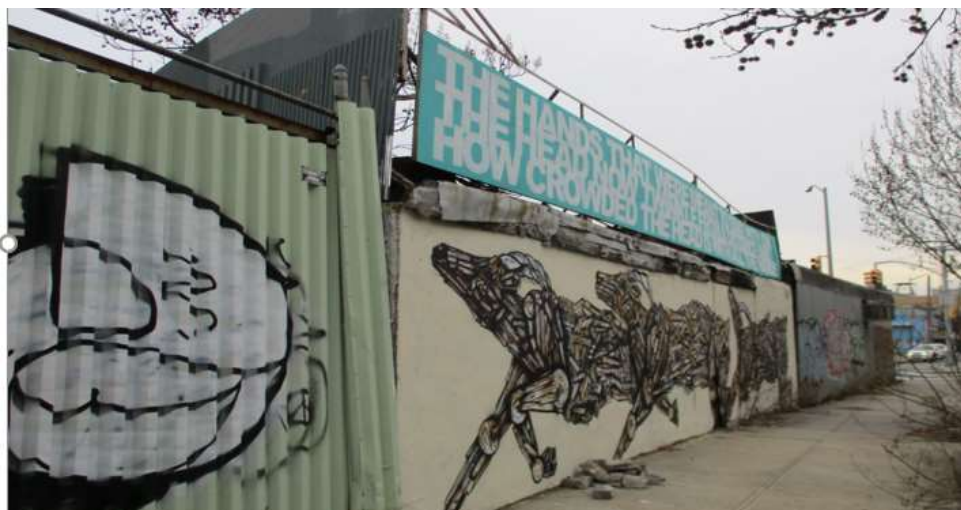
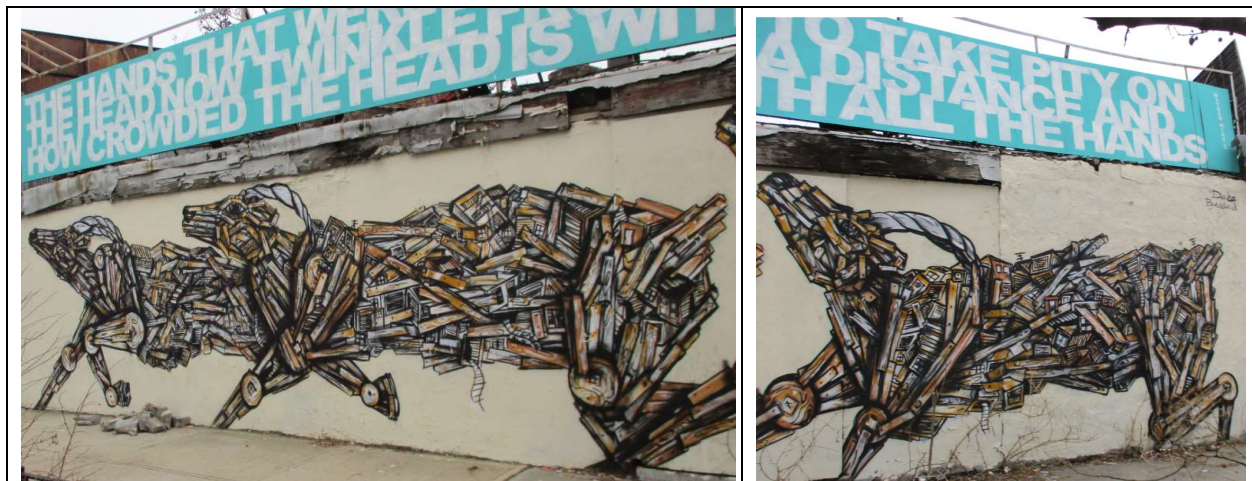
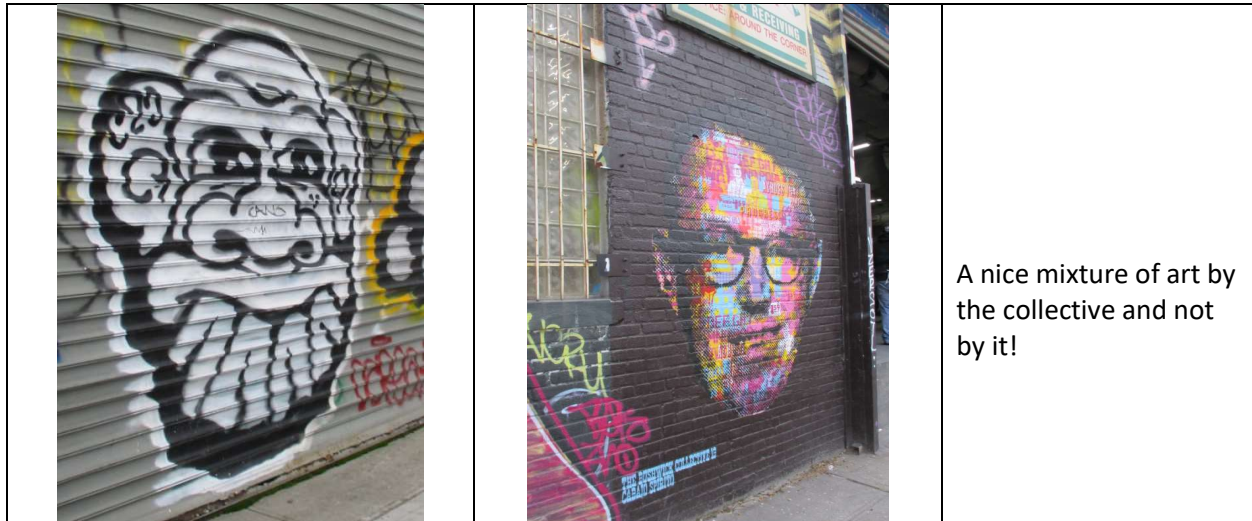
Street art in Bushwick

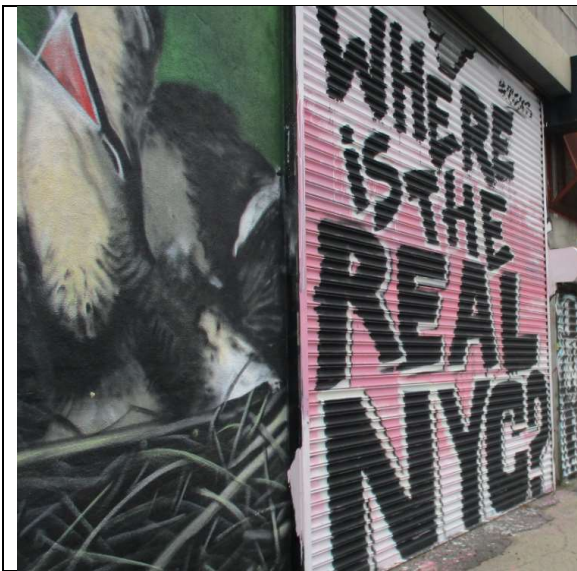
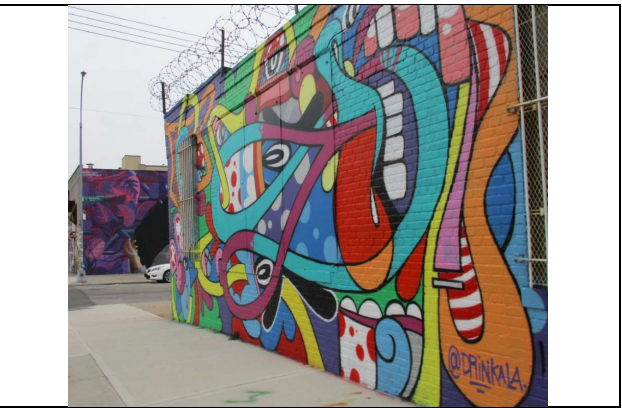
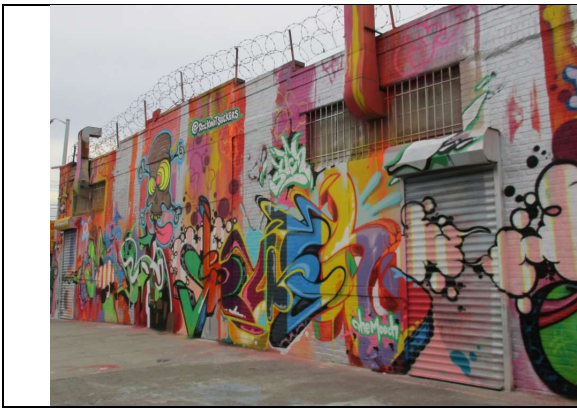
Then, one morning early and another afternoon, I took the subway to Bushwick, also in Brooklyn, to explore some street art. This subway train (the L line) had been in imminent danger of being shut down for repairs to its tunnel, which had made people find other jobs/apartments etc. As I was there, the Governor of NY halted the shutdown (see NYT, 4 January 2019); probably to help developers...

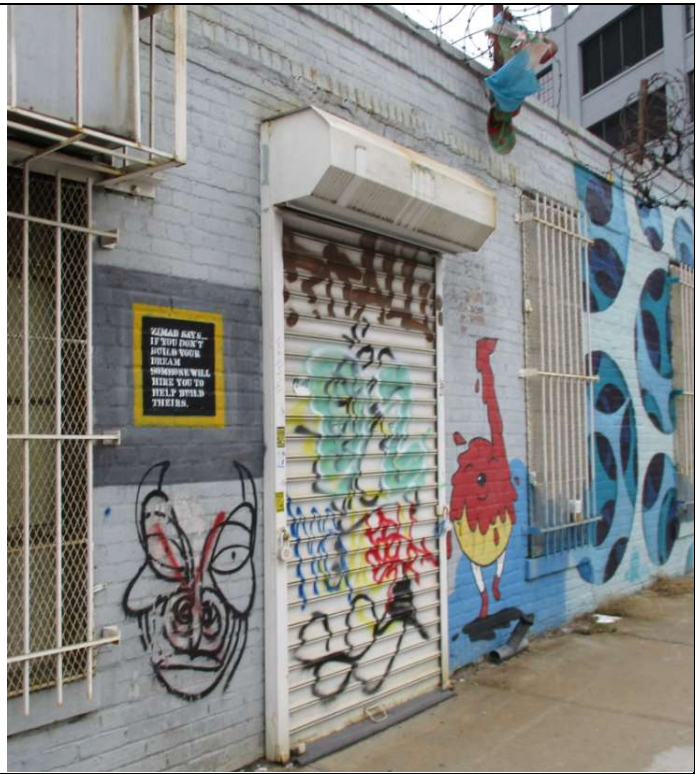
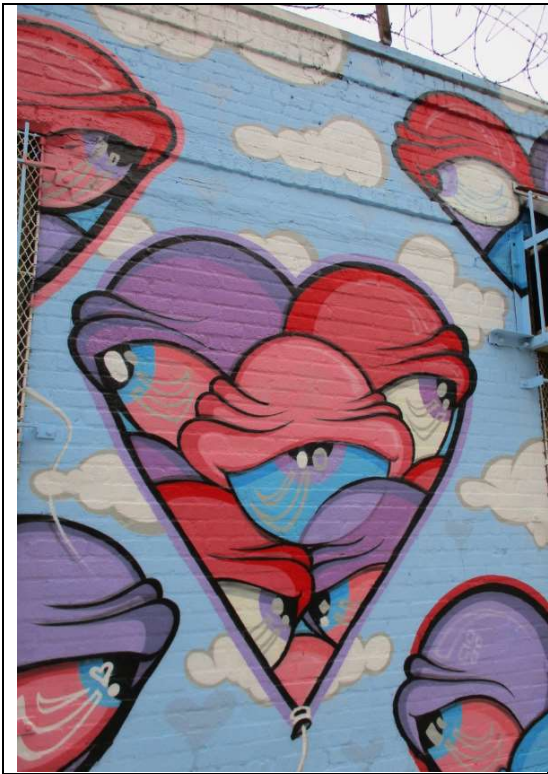
I visited two areas for street art, the Bushwick Collective territory around Jefferson, Troutman, Wyckoff, and St. Nicholas, and another area between Knickerbocker Ave and White Street, around Moore and McKibbin. I'll divide the below between those areas: the first is rougher, the second is becoming gentrified. I also walked a bit further NW to Williamsburg but didn't find a lot there.

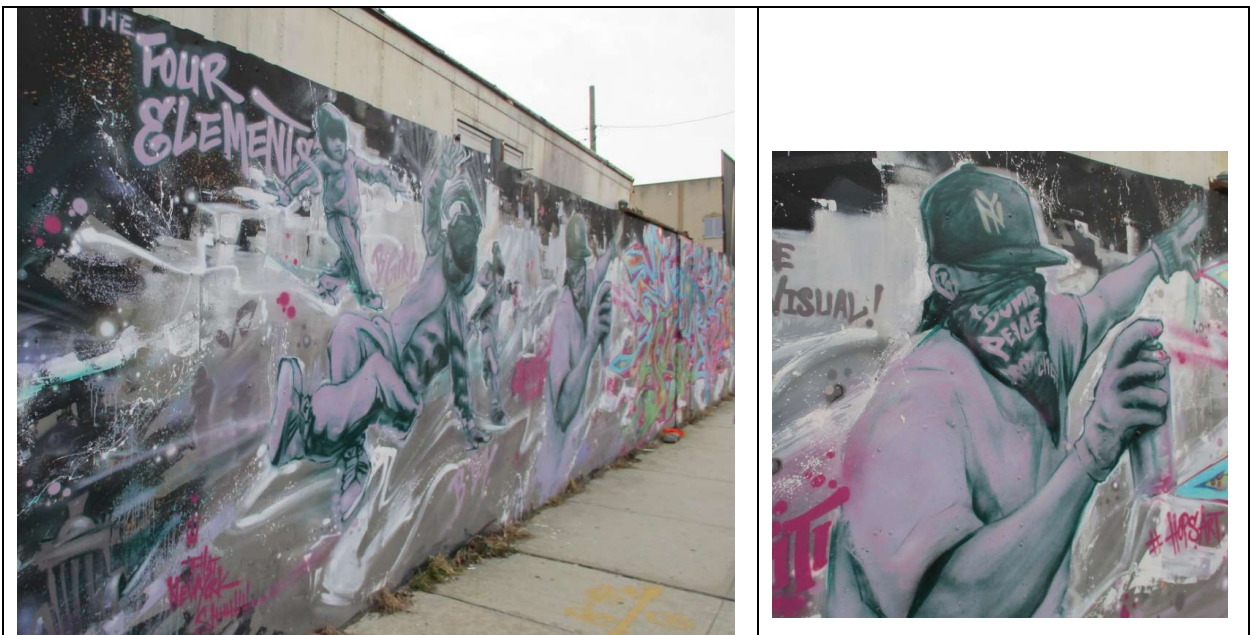
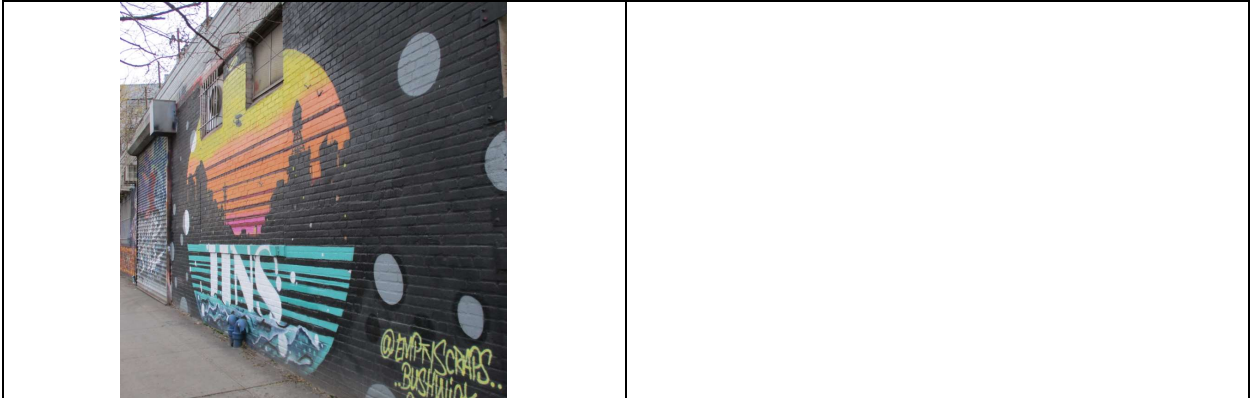
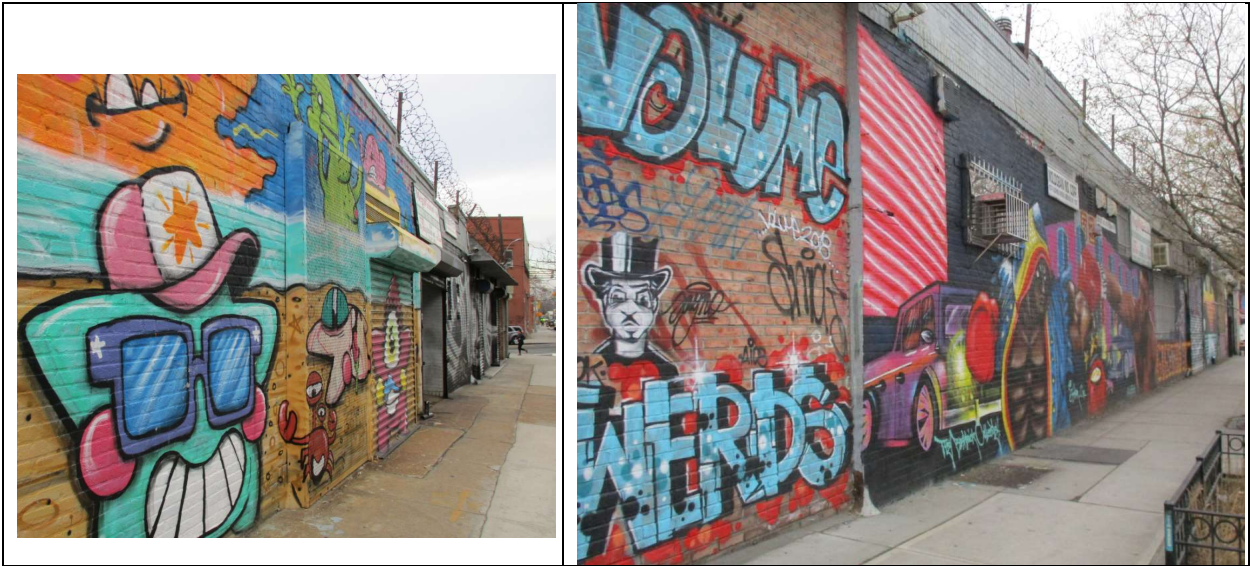
Bushwick Collective

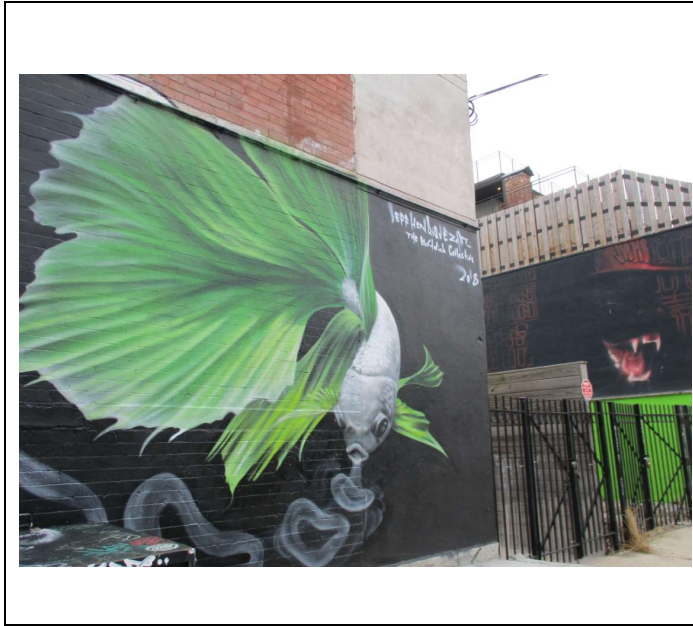
Absolutely amazing how the entire neighborhood is a canvas. Too bad there are so many cars parked along the streets! I don't know the politics: art is often a trigger for gentrification (generification).





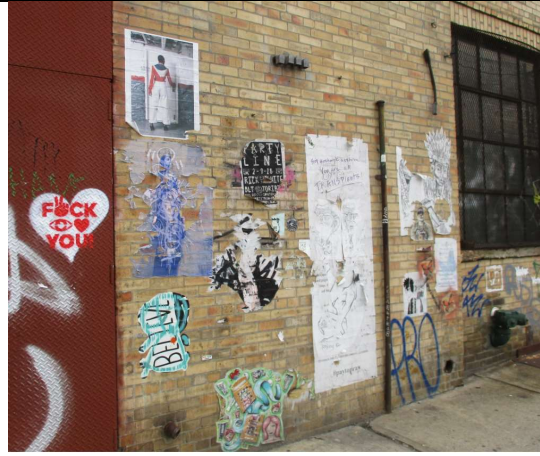








Stencil art







362 Jefferson Street





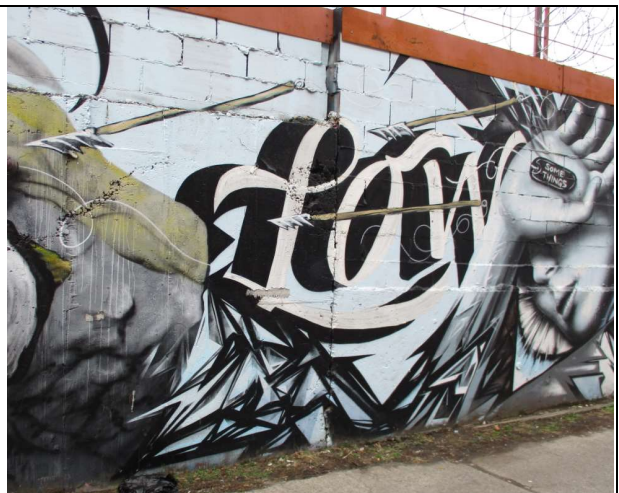
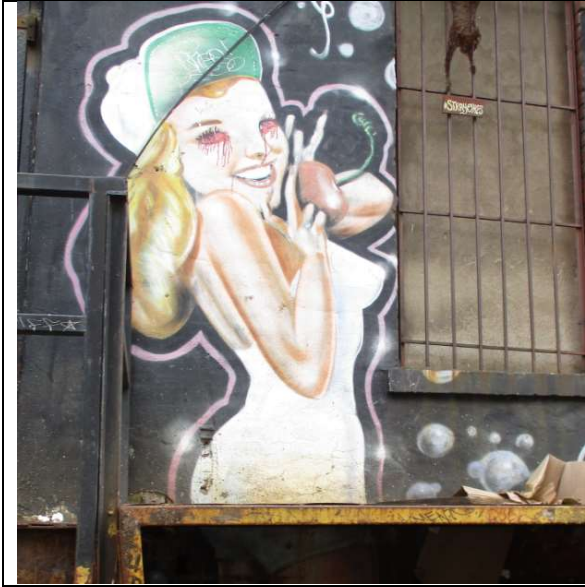
Knickerbocker, with the Manhattan skyline in the distance



Gentrification coming along Knickerbocker but especially west of it: lofts for rent!

Moore street art









And the inevitable change that is coming. Renting one of those lofts WOULD be great but one can see where it will end!



In short, a wonderful trip: meeting friends, hearing linguistics talks, and encountering good street art! Good dinners at West Bank Café (www.westbankcafe.com), Yakitori Totto (www.tottonyc.com), P.S.Kitchen (www.ps-kitchen.com/our-vision), and Bea (www.beanyc.com) and interesting beers, e.g. by Grimm (grimmales.com/beers).

References

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