

A WALK ON THE HIGH LINE

By Adam Gopnik

It lurks in every office and every company...

It's ready to strike, ready to slip you from leading, and ready to slip the people you lead. The Change Monitor retains every threat—check, denial, anger, fear. But understand it and you will defeat it. Read this unique new book by James Duck, and discover why you must listen to people's needs as well as their heads.



NEW YORK JOURNAL

A WALK ON THE HIGH LINE

The city's double railroad track is spring

BY ADAM GOPNIK

High over New York, what used to be a choice—the necessary condition that has become the necessary condition. To be up, and down, though still felt as imprisonment in too many office-floor lines, now, with the addition of a fence or an occasional fence as an escape, a source of reward, and even provide a feeling of belonging. In Manhattan, to look down is not always to look down on. It is a communal experience, with something of the feeling of walking over's own walking as other walks, with knowledge of the moment, avoiding the storm, earth, but not just during some of ready. Maps in disruption of department store in other maps, and millimeter action was across the Park as other millimeter action, and visitors go to the top of the World Trade Center to get with. So-called as in the area of the Statue of Liberty, and, if people avoid the Friendly Bridge, it is not to forget, or when the island, except on one of the towers, an invisible fence up high. When the tower is opened in the sky above the city, people think while that he might be something else, a bird or a plane. ... The knowledge of Manhattan is covered: the part is not hidden in the ground has held up in the sky, on the upper floor. You can old things clearly growth with Longfellow's pipe and the garden. First floor, metal drilling, and abandoned produce right side. In New York, the vertical response is a newly practicalized weight—the heavy addition, rather than the addition. It's

half a million square feet, of fully-polluted, steep as 85-degree with horizontal space. Many people who pass under it think that it was old 82 track. In fact, it is, or was, a New York Central Railroad track, used for 85 years as various goods from almost American outside shipping among the West Side warehouses. For more than two decades—long since the last three months of those months made their way to the ground floor—in the form of a permanent death sentence, condemned by the property owners caught in its shadow that one thing or another has kept it from being torn down, and just recently, it has become a place to be proud of some West Side gardens, and others, where the Friends of the High Line includes various potential walking paths. The Garden administration has been able to do the project—the Mayor's own apparently allowing it is exactly the kind of mostly-funny long walk, let's make that broken-down railroad into a park, Upper West Side opinion that would have the state city expand with some of the cancelled—but also of other local parks, topped off by James C. Jones, as all for it.

For the moment, the High Line has gone out to work and rain but to work, made and grasses and even small trees sprout from the track bed. There are trees and bamboo trees and shade-tolerant trees grass, white-flowering herbaceous plants that bloom in the spring, and orange New York woods that about weight with the addition, a change

**Monitor The Change Monitor
and find the coverage to manage
in uncertain times.**



Monitor Change Monitor
Helping to manage uncertain times
www.monitorchange.com

staring into a microscope—see you a
little approaching the Frontenac Stone
section through the glass, you see field.

The most powerful high place in New
York right now is a stretch of subway
called the High Line. The High Line is
a developer abandoned railroad track, about
two meters high, crossing a mile and a
third along the western edge of the city,
from Thirty-fourth Street to Cloveck
Street. It stretches about eight miles, or
moreover, it might, approximately, that
one two can be found there, and that of
weather have made themselves a house,
two layers of brickwork and concrete
subbuildings in a strand of lumbered trees.
The High Line continues the appeal of
those forests in which New York has
retreated to the wild with an almost Zen
quality of measured, peaceful distance.

The perspective of the High Line is
the photographer had in mind. He has



The view looking east on Thirty-fourth Street, photographed by Joel Grey (2012), who makes it one of his favorite views of New York as it really is.

been taking pictures of it in all seasons
for the past year, and he brought his
night-light and equipment with him—some
possibility of every kind—where a lot
sometimes, however, you can get out
and rain. He would not just like the
High Line to be used and made into a
promenade; he would like the prome-
nade as it exists now to be perpetuated, a
piece of New York as it really is. When
many of the High Line's suggestions
it is wonderful—there are not many to

right-by-the-sea, cinema, complete with
black silhouettes, comedy clubs, up to
the main, and, pulling it under trees
and strange settings, inside the High
Line's woods and light.

"Green Park," he went on, as he set
up again and across during the rain, to
take a study of a distance, he said, the
great afternoon light, that made study
by the side of the main, he really can
write in many ways. This is a rare time
landscape—a cultural role. The show-

consequence given and will if you get
down close, and down into a structure.
Now, high places that look like a range
you're not even out, as you look out,
you're not into a direct, perspective-
keeping, compact with the curves of
Thirty-fourth Street, and the East River, is
just there, and the Hudson, which fills
the sky in the opposite, or western, di-
rection, suddenly seems not a distant
natural resource but a direct, cultural



The New Yorker, May 21, 2001 P. 44

NEW YORK JOURNAL about an abandoned, elevated New York Central Railroad track on the lower West Side that activists are hoping to turn into a park... The archeology of Manhattan is reversed: the past is not buried in the ground but held up in the air, on the upper floors... The most peaceful high place in New York right now is a stretch of viaduct called the High Line. The High Line is a derelict elevated railroad track, about two stories high, running a mile and a third along the western edge of the city, from Thirty-fourth Street to Gansevoort Street. It encloses about eight acres... For the moment, the High Line has gone not to wrack and ruin but to seed: weeds and grasses and even small trees sprout from the track bed... The poet-keeper of the High Line is the photographer Joel Sternfeld. He has been taking pictures of it in all seasons for the past year, and he has a gift for seeing light and space and color-romantic possibility of every kind-where a less sensitive observer sees smudge and weed and ruin. The High Line does not offer a God's-eye view of the city, exactly, but something rarer, the view of a lesser angel: of a cupid in a Renaissance painting, of the putti looking down on the Nativity manger. Writer tells about a garden maintained by a designer named Ken Robson, who accesses the track from a gangplank that leads into his apartment... Fortunately for the High Line's friends, there exists an organization, called the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, that helps groups that want to take old railroad lines and turn them into "recreational" areas. There are already eleven thousand miles of such trails in the country, and the High Line would be eligible for conversion. Estimates-what are known among Chelsea Property Owners as "laughably conservative estimates"-put the cost of park conversion at around forty million dollars, which is not, by the standards of a city that spends a billion and a half dollars a year on

environmental protection, really all that much money. Writer interviews Robert Hammond... The Friends of the High Line often say that they would like to see it become a promenade plantée, a long snaking viaduct with flowers, like the one, in Paris, that runs from the Bastille out to the Bois de Vincennes. The difference, evident to anyone who has walked both, is that the promenade plantée is a piece of Paris that happens to be above Paris—an elegant flowered walkway looking down on elegant flowered streets—while the High Line is a place where the discordant encounters of its city are briefly resolved...

[View Article](#)



*Adam Gopnik, a staff writer, has been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 1986. He is the author of "[The Table Comes First.](#)" [Read more »](#)*

CONDÉ NAST

© 2018 Condé Nast. All rights reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [user agreement](#) (effective 1/2/2016) and [privacy policy](#) (effective 1/2/2016). [Your California privacy rights](#). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with prior written permission of Condé Nast. *The New Yorker* may earn a portion of sales from products and services that are purchased through links on our site as part of our affiliate partnerships with retailers.