



# Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan

*Rem Koolhaas*

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# Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan

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## **Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan** Rem Koolhaas

This lovely and informative 264 page book traces the history of Manhattan from 1850 when it became a "mythical laboratory for the invention and testing of a revolutionary lifestyle: the 'Culture of Congestion.'" [This book] is a polemical investigation of that Manhattan; it documents the symbiotic relationship between its mutant metropolitan culture and the unique architecture to which it gave rise. [This book] exposes the consistency and coherence of the seemingly unrelated episodes of Manhattan's urbanism; it is an interpretation that establishes Manhattan as the product of an unformulated movement, 'Manhattanism', whose true program was so outrageous that in order for it to be realized, it could never be openly declared. 'Delirious in New York' is the retroactive manifesto of Manhattan's architectural enterprise; it untangles the theories, tactics and dissimulations that allowed New York's architects to establish the desires of Manhattan's collective unconscious as realities in the Grid. It proves above all, that Manhattan has been, from the beginning, devoted to the most rational, efficient and utilitarian pursuit of the irrational. In this vision Coney Island becomes an embryonic Manhattan, testbed of a Technology of the Fantastic, the Skyscraper a self-contained universe, Manhattan a man-made archipelago of architectural islands, Rockefeller Center the first and last fragment of a definitive Manhattan. The decline of this movement sets in with the European Modernist Blitzkrieg unleashed by Le Corbusier in the mid-thirties. An appendix presents a series of projects that announce the 'second coming' of Manhattanism, this time as an explicit doctrine that can claim its place among contemporary urbanisms. An impressive documentation of original materials and unpublished projects provides the evidence for this architectural manifesto, which reads, in its insistent tracing of subconscious clues and themes, like a psychological thriller."

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