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devious new york:

a radical collective experiment from a phantom city

ryan peeters
I wish to offer my sincere gratitude to those who gave me the support I needed to complete this thesis. To my twin brother Byron, for his great companionship and contagious ambitions. To my parents, Meredith and Robert, for their continued love and support. And to my thesis supervisor Aaron Paterson, for his guidance and exceptional mind.
figure 2 Aerial view of Uptown Manhattan. Through the rigidity of its grid, Manhattan developed a unique urban nature, the Culture of Congestion.
abstract

In 1978, Rem Koolhaas wrote a retroactive manifesto for the peculiar urban development of the island of Manhattan. *Delirious New York* depicts the development of a virgin land dictated by the monotony of an urban grid and its ensuing *Culture of Congestion*¹. It describes an experimental vigor for design that encouraged the feverish output of radical, architectural experiments and an inherent urban nature insinuated by the skyscraper. The growing metropolis was lost in a transformative delirium, as its ever changing skyline brought a contagious character to the city.

Manhattan has since fallen into a state of tenderness. A growing paranoia for terrorist attacks since 9/11, as well as new zoning regulations and urban design controls have induced a security driven temperament that dampens the city’s initial state of innovation and production described in *Delirious New York*. The avant-garde ideas of today’s design world remain unbuilt works on paper.

In an exploration of Manhattan’s Phantom City, *Devious New York* embraces a subculture of architecture, unraveling the imaginary ideas that consume Manhattan’s collective unconscious. It reinterprets the skyscraper typology as a means of re-contextualising a progressing *Culture of Congestion*. *Devious New York* aims to produce an architecture that accommodates the unforeseeable programmatic shifts in society. It is an experiment for a manipulated urban existence that generate fluid, transparent, programmatic relationships and spatial conditions that transform the metropolitan citizen.

*Devious New York* manifests itself in the Chelsea Club, a radical collective experiment where strategies taken from the Phantom City are applied to offer an alternative reality of Manhattan. Motivated by the recent regeneration of the High Line into an urban park, the Chelsea Club capitalizes on this clever act of opportunism to generate a creative frame for the project, presenting itself as a crafted utopia on an urban escape. The awareness of a deviant alternative suggests potential directions for the growth of Manhattan’s urban condition, and the improvement of the metropolitan resident.
1. introduction

2. delirious new york
   2.1 the mythical island
      2.1.1 the city of the captive globe
      2.1.2 hotel sphinx
      2.1.3 welfare palace hotel
      2.1.4 coney island
      2.1.5 rockefeller centre
   2.2 culture of congestion
      2.2.1 the grid
      2.2.2 the skyscraper

case study one: downtown athletic club

case study two: house of culture and movement

figure 3 View of the High Line in Manhattan’s Far West Side. The regenerated park became a catalyst for the project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>delirious no more</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>nostalgia</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>kill the skyscraper</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>devious new york</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>into the phantom city</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>layered urbanism</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study three: high line park</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study four: king’s dream of new york</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>fluid movement</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study five: eyebeam museum</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study six: seattle public library</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>contamination of space</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study seven: yokohama ferry terminal</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>case study eight: national library of france</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>conclusion</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>the chelsea club</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>chelsea and the far west side</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>phantom pocket of reality</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>design principles</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>conclusion</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>bibliography</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rem Koolhaas’ *Delirious New York* describes the creation of Manhattan as an impulsive eruption of fantasy and vitality. This urban playground of opportunity became a model for the modern metropolis – a laboratory to develop an exceptional urban condition. Manhattan was born out of a radical, collective experiment.

*Delirious New York* is the embellished tale describing Manhattan’s creation as a mythical island of fantasy. The implementation of the urban grid established a medium for which each block could exist as an independent experiment. Each plot of land could be reproduced into an indefinite amount of virgin sites. The resultant vertical growth of urban fabric directed an environment saturated with self-governing activity – a characteristic for which the metropolis was nicknamed the ‘Culture of Congestion’.

In *Delirious No More*, Rem Koolhaas admits the vibrant spirit that once built Manhattan has been lost. The city today has fallen into a state of tenderness, where the once unstoppable drive for progress has been compromised by the security-conscious nature of a fearful city.

The urban nature of Manhattan’s skyscraper is composed of fixed spaces, leaving no allowances for the growth or shrinkage of resident bodies occupying each space, and thus an incompetency to serve a progressing society of diminishing boundaries. Such stagnancy suggests the need for a re-contextualization of Manhattan’s urban condition.

*Devious New York* seeks to catalyze the rejuvenation of the Manhattan spirit by offering an alternative reality that better accommodates the city’s evolving Culture of Congestion. The resulting provocation directs higher exposure of spaces and their resident bodies. This project is crafted through a series of unconventional strategies from the Phantom City, which are used to achieve a hybridized, interactive environment.

1. Layered urbanism operates through a reproduction of the urban surface to activate an alternative dialogue between buildings.
2. Fluid movement encourages a re-contextualization of spatial boundaries between two opposing spaces to promote greater exposure of the surrounding activity.
3. Contamination of space involves a self-conscious hybridity of conventionally disparate programmes to develop new atmospheres that are reflective of current societal influences.

Together, these strategies become the woodwork that crafts the architectural project – Chelsea Club.

The Chelsea Club is a prescriptive utopia aimed at a refinement of the citizen and their urban potential for living. It provides incentives for physical pursuits, continued knowledge, and social discoveries learned through programmatic intercourse and spatial junctions. The architecture of the Chelsea Club is driven by its multitude of interrelated activity, a force that becomes an instrument for engineering its manipulated utopia.

This project is an imaginative exploration through Manhattan’s unbuilt history. Its interests lie in the development of an exclusive urban condition that is discovered by readdressing the sociological nature of architectural production. It is experimental in nature, and thus embraces an augmented imagination of the architectural event. The final product offers a greater understanding of metropolitan possibilities, nonetheless a fantastical playground of vibrant synergy.

**figure 4** Empire State Building, completed in 1929.
Figure 5
View over Midtown Manhattan, looking up Broadway and Fifth avenue.
the mythical island

Manhattan was made into a laboratory where the invention and testing of a metropolitan lifestyle and its architecture could be pursued as a radical collective experiment. The entire city became a factory of man-made experience, where the boundaries between realities and fantasies ceased to exist. *Delirious New York* is a retroactive manifesto that describes the development of the island of Manhattan as a place for radical, avant-garde thought. It proposed the establishment of the metropolis as a land of delirious fantasy driven by an ecstasy about architecture. The city would be the product of an unformulated theory, *Manhattanism*, whose objective was so ambitious that to be realized, it could never be openly stated.³

The start of the 20th century saw Manhattan as the epicenter of design and innovation – a playground of opportunity. Architects, urban designers and creative thinkers used this naked land to test new theories and experiment with all aspects of the urban fabric. “For those of us whose artistic, sexual, social, and other desires are farsighted, experiment is a necessary tool for the knowledge of our ambitions.”⁴ The city became a popular notion for the redefinition of lifestyle. Architecture in the modern metropolis was a vehicle that people could use to redesign the world around them. Manhattanism encouraged the emergence of a revolutionary lifestyle describing a Culture of Congestion.

It embraced such an explosion of the Possible that ordinary Realities were buried.⁵ Manhattanism promoted an ambitious desire to transform natural urban realities into a collection of condensed synthetic experiences, presenting the city as a ‘laboratory of the collective unconscious’⁶. Manhattan became a series of “architectural mutations, utopian fragments, and irrational phenomenon.”⁷
In an investigation of the relationships of architecture and its effects on culture, Rem Koolhaas wrote a series of design proposals in the form of surrealist narratives that promoted the fantastical spirit of the modern metropolis. It is necessary to understand the ideas of these proposals.

**the city of the captive globe**

The City of the Captive Globe (1972) celebrated Manhattan’s urban condition set by its relentless urban grid. The modern metropolis is a collection of experiments for architectural ideologies and irrational investigations — “a rich spectacle of ethical joy, moral fever or intellectual masturbation.” Each resulting ideology attracts the masses and grows. Its life culminates in failure or ejaculation, whereby the captive globe saturates and is satisfied to continue the growth of the metropolis. This activity becomes so frequent that the metropolis takes on a style of perpetual motion, whereby the skyline is in constant flux by disappearing and reappearing.

**figure 6** Through a relentless rigidity of its urban grid, each city block proclaims its own birthright, leaving a legacy of theories, dissimulations, intellectual thought and experimental ideas amongst a sea of newfound realities. As a theatre of progress, the success of each individual tower meant the acceptance of idea to theory, a lie to a truth, and a dream from which there was no waking up.

**figure 7** The Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building in bed, a used condom between them. This metropolitan experimental energy challenged conventional realities in favour of an experimental vigor for the birth of innovation. It was an unprecedented plan whose manifesto would have to be written retroactively.
Each block is a testament to the ongoing captivation of the world at
the center, a demonstration to the dynamism of psychoanalytic ide-
ologies constantly being invented, destroyed, and restored at each
city block. "’It is ‘the capital of Ego, where science, art, poetry and
forms of madness compete under ideal conditions, to invent, destroy
and restore the world of Phenomenal Reality.’” Manhattan is the
incubator of the world.

**hotel sphinx**

Hotel Sphinx located itself on an unorthodox intersection facing
Times Square. A luxury hotel used as a model for mass housing,
Hotel Sphinx illustrates the utopian spirit for a congestive lifestyle in
Manhattan.

From the entrance lobby, visitors have access to an international in-
formation center. A complicated network of subway lines allows visi-
tors to easily get to their destination. Through the legs of the sphinx
another large foyer offers theatres, auditoria, ballrooms, conference
rooms and banquet rooms. Above this, a restaurant takes advantage
of views toward the metropolis, as well as a spectacle of the Hudson
River.

The accommodation section of the hotel incorporates a myriad of
luxury spaces; double height studio apartments are located in the
twin towers starting at the tail. Hotels, executive suites, apartments,
villas with private gardens and terraced steps occupy the spine of
the Sphinx. Residents further have a recreational outlet above the

**figure 8** The zoomorphic form of Hotel Sphinx repres-
ented the architectural programme in a distorted com-
position through the legs, neck, head, and face of it’s
Sphinx. The metropolis brought the best parts of life
together in one place – a glorious evolution for living.
restaurant, in the form of an outdoor playground and garden. The lobby in the neck of the Sphinx contains a range of social clubs for various professions and hobbies, which are broadcasted on the face of the Sphinx for Times Square to see.

The head of the Sphinx is built around physical culture and relaxation, with the main feature a swimming pool with connected indoor and outdoor areas. The outdoor pool area takes the form of a beach that looks out to the city, with waves crashing onto the pavement. Below the pool is a health orientated area with a floor for gymnastics and games, a massage parlour, steam-baths and a sauna room.

Above the pool, residents marvel at the world through a planetarium, taking in exciting visions of heavenly space. The planetarium is surrounded with connecting galleries where the visitor gains a greater appreciation for art. Furthermore, residents are able to groom and present themselves through a beauty parlour and hairdresser, while enjoying views of the city below them. Lastly, an indoor/outdoor restaurant and garden offer fine dining and quality time. Hotel Sphinx was made as an anthropomorphic design, having human parts as legs, neck, head, and face. The architectural program, surface and structure are represented in a distorted composition – the zoomorphic image of a Sphinx.

Hotel Sphinx is based on the urban notion that metropolitan life would be a glorious evolution for living. City life brought the best of all worlds to those invested in this new urbanism. “The Metropolis strives to reach a mythical point where the world is completely fabricated by man, so that it absolutely coincides with his desires.” The idealistic qualities of Hotel Sphinx endorse the perfectly balanced lifestyle of the modern metropolitan resident. With access to exercise outlets, education nodes, relaxation areas, and social environments fit for healthy interaction, Hotel Sphinx is a luscious representation of the synthetic reproductions characteristic of metropolitan living. In its spirit of reckless creative flair, it encapsulates the true spirit of the delirious metropolis.
Figure 9 Welfare Palace Hotel presents the comedic rise and fall of Manhattan: the virgin island as seen through the shipwreck in the first zone, to the congestive metropolitan culture of skyscrapers seen in each of the six skyscrapers, and finally to the catastrophe of the city forecasted in the mystical seventh tower.

Welfare Palace Hotel

New Welfare Island grew out of a nostalgia for the early relationship between Coney Island and Manhattan, where Coney Island was used as an urban laboratory for solutions before being implemented in Manhattan. The island was transformed into a historical museum where projects that were never built could be completed ‘retroactively’ - to complete the history of Manhattanism. The project is born of the modern metropolis, embracing its potential to merge the conventional with the metaphysical, the accepted with the sublime, and the refined with the primitive; it collectively demonstrates Manhattan’s established capacity to seduce a mass audience.

The island was imagined as a fantastical escape from the strife of metropolitan life – a chance to complete and disinfect the strains of Manhattanism. Each part of Welfare Palace Hotel becomes a symbol of the origin, rise and fall of Manhattan, presented as a comedic narrative to the world.

The first zone shows a shipwreck, representing Manhattan as a virgin island. A theater and nightclub is open to 2000 people. A stage is made out of the inundated floor. By the water guests can sit, eat, and watch performances, or paddle out to the river on lifeboats. A strip of bare land covered in just sand represents Manhattan in its primal state. Even more symbolically, a reproduction of Gericault’s Raft of the Medusa reflects Manhattan’s metropolitan stresses, revealing both the desire and impossibility of escape.
Each skyscraper dedicates a club on its top floor, made of glass walls with the potential to bring in sunlight. Visitors to Welfare Palace Hotel will visually digest each glass box atop each tower “so that through its subconscious illumination, it’s patrons will suddenly understand the city that presents itself to their view, without exactly knowing why.” These psychoanalytic symbols of Manhattan were manifested in Welfare Palace Hotel.

The clubs represent a fictional ‘story’ of Manhattan; guests experience a progressive understanding as they move from the ground floor to the top floor. The six towers of Welfare Palace Hotel show the growth of Manhattan as a world city.

The first tower has a square beach and swimming pool; the second tower houses office spaces and a secluded bar where guests could drink cocktails like captains; the third tower is an expressive environment, with decorative features and sensual themes for the guests; the top of the fifth tower has a waterfall with a view of the cityscape; and the seventh tower located in the far river overgrown with vegetation, forecasts the eventual demise of the city. Welfare Palace Hotel describes the ambitions and fantasy driven nature of metropolitan life as a city within a city.

**figure 10** Luna Park, one of Coney Island’s amusement parks. Luna promoted a freak culture, a combination of utopic distortions offering an escape from the realities of the metropolis.
Coney Island is a fetal Manhattan – a land where illusions and fantasy overshadow realities, an incubator for Manhattan’s incipient themes and infant mythology. This island tested the components of novel urban life before being implemented in Manhattan. Coney Island was a laboratory for the collective unconscious, where any sensation could be fabricated towards an apocalyptic iteration of the Metropolitan condition. Where the modern metropolis lacked realities, the synthetic realities on Coney Island became a worthy substitute.

Coney Island housed futuristic fragments of Exhibitions and World Fairs, further developing its image as a home for untamed thoughts and hectic deeds. Rather than an escape from the metropolis, Coney became an intensification of the metropolis.

Electric Bathing

The nature of Coney Island embraced the Irresistible Synthetic, artificial reproductions of normal realities - a characteristic that described the congestive metropolis. The shoreline of Coney Island’s beach was a limited entity to the thousands of metropolitan dwellers of Manhattan; electric lights were put on the beach to extend usage of water recreation to those that couldn’t fit on the sand during the day. The novelty of enjoying the beach during the night quickly became a popularized activity among the metropolitan masses. “This illumination was not seen as a second-rate experience, but that its very artificiality was advertised as an attraction in itself: Electric Bathing.”
barrels of love

Even human intimacy between people was tested on Coney Island. Barrels of Love was an experiment that challenged the notion that the metropolis created loneliness and alienation. It involved two oppositely rotating barrels, one barrel dedicated to males, and the other to females. The revolving cylinders made it impossible to stand in the barrels, and so men and women would fall into each other, in a synthetic intimacy that would never have been created otherwise.19

lilliputia

Similarly, social conventions were tested in Lilliputia, an experiment on an augmented metropolitan lifestyle in Dreamland, one of Coney Island’s theme parks. Lilliputia was made into a synthetic society of three hundred midgets, whose lifestyles revolved around a manipulated play on society. This project ignored all human morality and embraced anarchy. “Promiscuity, homosexuality, nymphomania and so on are encouraged and flaunted.”20 Marriages were made to fall apart and illegitimate babies were given aristocratic titles to distort societal hierarchies and class. Since the scale of Midget City was half the scale of the real world, architectural effects could be tested cheaply.

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\[ \text{figure 13} \] Barrels of Love sought to recreate romantic interaction interaction between the sexes. With two rotating barrels unbalancing their inhabitants, men and women would literally fall into one another in a synthetic intimacy not imagined before.
The idea of the metropolis was to recreate elements of life fit for a congestive lifestyle. The cow was thus replaced for an artificial milk product that would accommodate the thirst of millions, and was “superior to the natural product in terms of quantity, regularity of flow, hygiene, and controllable temperature.”

As a reflection of the activities enjoyed in the Island’s virgin state, a synthetic reproduction of horseback riding was created for the masses. Steeplechase involved a mechanical horse that a person could ride around the island on, set on a laid out mechanical track around Coney’s natural landscape. The rider could adjust the speed of the horse by their weight or position on the horse. Considered an activity for the higher classes, the invention of Steeplechase democratized the class differences of society; a form of emancipation granted through the efforts of technology. The reproduction of horseback riding into a synthetic innovation for Coney Island made it an attraction enjoyable by the masses.

The unique conditions that are generated by each experiment reinforce the character of Coney Island – a place of “futuristic fragments, mechanical flotsam and technological litter” made from human fantasy. Coney Island represents the artificial reproduction of natural conventions suitable for an evolution to metropolitan life in Manhattan’s Culture of Congestion and fantasy driven novelties. “It is a superior substitute for the ‘natural’ reality that is being depleted by the sheer density of human consumers.” With such experiments on food and health in the artificial Cow, recreation and leisure through Electric Bathing and Steeplechase, and romance through the Barrels of Love, the natural elements defining the island’s initial appeal were systematically replaced by synthetic reproductions, turning each original desire into “an intricate simulacrum of nature, a compensatory technical service.”

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The ideals of Coney Island as described in *Delirious New York*, offer an alternative reality that is intentional and willful, rather than accidental and subjective. It self-consciously dictates a synthetic reproduction of reality that stimulates greater interest and appeal for the metropolis.

**rockefeller centre**

The beauty of Rockefeller Centre comes from its cumulative nature as five separate ideologies existing in harmony on the same site. "Rockefeller Center is the most mature demonstration of Manhattanism's unspoken theory of the simultaneous existence of different programmes on a single site, connected only by the common data of elevators, service cores, columns and external envelope." A composition of architectural philosophies is uncovered as the visitor moves up through the building.

The first ideology challenges the authority of the Grid. At Rockefeller Centre, the dictation of the New York Grid is dematerialized underground. In a Beaux-Arts sensibility, subway paths and connecting arcades surreptitiously connect adjacent blocks together, denying the independence each block promotes above ground.

The second project of Rockefeller Center was driven by an idea of creating a metropolitan resort within the metropolis. The ground floor would be lined by a sea of red velvet chairs watching a field of spectacles unfold. The cluster of audiences would become a temporarily hypnotized community, fantastically lost in awe. This idea would later manifest itself in Radio City Music Hall.

Radio City Music Hall is an intensification of the environment, an augmentation of the theatrical atmosphere for the experience of fantasy and awe. “Day and night are drastically reduced, time accelerated, experience intensified, life potentially doubled, tripled ...” Radio City Music Hall offered a psychological escape from the metropolis via an intensification of the same reality; it was a drug to seduce the citizen into a hypnotic lust for the metropolis itself.

A third ideology transforms Rockefeller Centre into a world stage. With the implications of TV technology, this electronic arena connects every citizen together through a digital network. “Rockefeller Centre is the first architecture that can be broadcast.” Now, metropolitan life could be shared among a greater population in a single instant.

**figure 16** Hanging rooftop gardens of the Rockefeller Centre - the synthetic reproduction of nature in the modern metropolis.
The fourth project for Rockefeller Centre experiments with the congestive use of nature implemented through the Centre. Landscaped roofs, green houses and hanging gardens are scattered strategically through Rockefeller Centre. It illustrated the synthetic reproduction of nature in the Culture of Congestion.

Designed to be ‘as beautiful as possible’, Rockefeller Centre is the manifestation of metropolitan perfection. It is the amalgamation of theories built around maximum congestion, light and space – and is designed to serve the multi-faceted faces of a metropolitan utopia. The Centre celebrates the ideals of: communication with its underlying subway system to the further extents of the metropolis; representation through a newfound capacity to broadcast and deny the very need for congestion; and imagination through the delirious atmosphere created by Radio City Music Hall.

The development of Manhattan as a modern metropolis set objectives to progress society through the fantastically unconventional; this motivation was a natural desire that is embedded in the city’s foundation. It is necessary for this thesis to carry on those ideals.

**figure 17-18** Radio City Music Hall is an intensification of fantasy - the phantasmagorical environment that escaped the realities of the metropolis. It is a drug to seduce the citizen into a hypnotic lust for the metropolis itself.
**culture of congestion**

With the city’s urban grid laying out fixed plots of land, Manhattan’s urban and architectural growth adopted a vertical nature. The resulting jungle of skyscrapers became extrusions of single plots of land, each floor reproduced to any desirable amount. These floors became independent virgin sites from which any activity could occur, without interference from another floor. This newfound urbanism promoted a Culture of Congestion that described Manhattan as the apotheosis of density, a new architecture that inspired and supported new forms of social intercourse.

**the grid**

The implication of Manhattan’s urban grid to dictate the urban development of the land is said to be one of the greatest and most courageous acts of prediction in Western civilization. With its rigid geometrical layout, the Manhattan grid uncompromisingly dictates the development of the city.

The purpose of the Grid was to envisage a medium where the land could fast become a dynamic breeding ground for ideas, but simultaneously maintain rigor and control through the grid. Inevitably, the Grid would endorse a ‘metropolis of rigid chaos’. “The Grid makes the history of architecture and all previous lessons of urbanism, irrelevant. It forces Manhattan’s builders to develop a new system of formal values, to invent strategies for the distinction of one block from another.”

Through the rigidity of the Grid, each city block becomes a separate identity, a collection of solitudes narrating Manhattan as an archipelago of independent islands. The Grid is a powerful tool controlling the built chaos that strokes the nature of the city. Each city block is the ‘the maximum unit of urbanistic ego’, each inherent ideology contesting those of other blocks in a frenzy of creative output.

Similar to the grid, the podium was an additional organizational medium for the city of built chaos. Each project was made coherent with one another through the monotony of the podium base it sat upon. Rem Koolhaas’ City of the Captive Globe describes a city dedicated to faster theoretical proposals and urban interpretations by setting each experiment on a stone podium – a template “equipped to suspend unwelcome laws, undeniable truths, to create nonexistent, physical conditions.” It was a guide for independence; to proclaim an idea to its fullest extents towards the sky, distinguishing it from everything around it.

The geometric order of the Manhattan Grid informs a Culture of Congestion. It sets a framework of fixed plots of land onto the urban surface of Manhattan, dictating the vertical growth of built fabric. The development of the skyscraper was “inevitable” in a “metropolis of rigid chaos.”

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**figure 19** The Culture of Congestion, as seen in one of New York City’s busy streets.
With the growth of each city block, the metropolis became an archipelago of islands, each one a ‘city within a city’. In 1923, Harvey Corbett proposed a design for elevated walkways and arcades to sustain the metropolis under contingent congestion rises. In his proposal, he surrenders the groundscape to overwhelming traffic stresses as people move through elevated walkways from building to building – a sea of cars as much as 20 lanes wide moving below them. This Manhattan is the modern day Venice, with streets becoming the canals that separate each block.

This proposal offers insight to a progressive state of urbanism in Manhattan. Other than reinforcing the independence of each city block, it suggests another urban surface to separate vehicles from people. This stratification of movement inspires a link between self-governing building masses, perhaps re-contextualizing an urban ground plane by placing it above ground.

**figure 20** Harvey Wiley Corbett’s proposal for the congestive future of Manhattan. The entire ground-plane of the city is eventually surrendered to traffic stresses. People move through elevated walkways and arcades.

**figure 21** A street 20 lanes wide further separates each city block. The new Manhattan is the new Venice.
figure 22  Axonometric of Chelsea, illustrating Manhattan’s urban nature of congestion.
The skyscraper

The introduction of the elevator in 1853 saw the advent of an unexposed urbanism. With the capabilities offered by the elevator and the steel frame, any site could be replicated ad infinitum. The elevator would be a sign of the new metropolitan condition, allowing the vertical ambitions predicted by the Grid, to be realized.

The skyscraper has roots in the theme parks of Coney Island. Dreamland in particular incorporates a congestive culture of independent fantasy bubbles that forecast the advent of the skyscraper’s new urbanism. Fifteen facilities surround a central horseshoe pathway, evenly distributed to each ideology. Dreamland’s utopia is composed of a pier, submarines, a grand ballroom, a city for midgets, an incubator building for babies, a circus, flying in the first air plane, a railway track and a remade model of Venice’s canals. As a city within a city, this notion of congestion would later be transformed vertically through the skyscraper.

The 1909 Theorem presented the skyscraper as a utopian device for the reproduction of a single plot of land into an unlimited number of virgin sites. Figure 16 shows the reproduction of a country house and its attendant facilities, without the disadvantages of the country life. Each floor is entirely independent unto itself, with no relationship to the proceeding floors. It is a collection of privacies – each floor a laboratory for its own intellectual zeal.

Conventional urban notions assume the exterior, or lobotomy of a building to make certain revelations about the interior, which the interior then corroborates. Lobotomy is a physiological shell that encapsulates all the chaos and activity within a building, and is further divided by the vertical schism of independent floors. The concept of lobotomy was to treat the exterior of the building as an envelope for the coexistence of a multiplicity of independent programs, each floor successful to the extent of respecting each space. Lobotomy breaks all ties between exterior and interior relationships, creating an unprecedented freedom for expression on a building’s façade. In this way, “architecture can pretend to be intact while the city continues to change all around it.” Koolhaas describes this neglect to show the interior activities to the outside world as an act of cleanliness. “In this way the Monolith spares the outside world the agonies of the continuous changes raging inside it,” a celebration of metropolitan instability.
The Vertical Schism describes the freedom to layer disparate programmes atop one another without any issue of their cohesive harmony – a "systematic exploitation of the deliberate disconnection between stories." There was no programmatic relationship between floors; each floor had complete neutrality to one another. Each floor was a template to experiment on, entirely separate from all the other floors. By eliminating any dependence from one floor to another, the Vertical Schism endorsed the cultural potential of the skyscraper. The capacity to contain the whole world inside a single building sold the skyscraper as a city within a city.

**Figure 23** “Buy a cozy cottage in our steel constructed choice lots, less than a mile above broadway. Only ten minutes by elevator. All the comforts of the country with none of its disadvantages.”
case study one: downtown athletic club

The Downtown Athletic Club is the 1909 theorem turned reality. Built on the instability and unpredictability of the skyscraper’s unknown urbanism, it is an incubator for the social enhancement and intensification of the human lifestyle in a metropolitan environment. The combination of disparate programmes to create heterogenous spaces as well as enhanced homogenous spaces, introduced higher levels of social intercourse. The social conventions of the old metropolis were deconstructed and then reassembled through a new distortion and intensification of its elements. This achieved new levels of maturity for each inhabitant – “transforming themselves into new beings.”

Inspired by the synthetic enrichment of the privileged metropolitan man, the Downtown Athletic Club was a “machine for metropolitan bachelors.” The club encompasses a full range of athletic pursuits designed to perfect the human body. The lower fifteen floors endeavor to enhance a man through exercise; squash courts, handball courts, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a gym, and a bowling alley intend to physically improve each man. For the successive floors above, the enhanced men are then granted an opportunity to socialize with women in restaurants, bars, and a dance floor. Progressively, the section above the eating quarters is suited for hotel accommodation. The Downtown Athletic Club is a vertical journey of fulfillment, each section a stage of accomplishment corresponding to an increasing refinement and indication of preparation for successive stages.

figure 24 The Downtown Athletic Club is a social condenser of Manhattan’s Culture of Congestion, a machine designed for the perfection of the metropolitan man. Each floor is an independent laboratory for an unpredictable environment. Inhabitants can utilize a full spectrum of environments at the touch of an elevator button.
Each floor in the Downtown Athletic Club is a hybridized environment of novel marriages between previously disparate programmes, so that each space is a different performance within a collection of solitudes – ‘a city within a city’. These unpredictable planning scenarios were a series of radical interventions and societal reconstructions initially suggested by the fantastical ideas on Coney Island. The instability of life in the unsettled metropolis is celebrated in the planning of the building, with each floor an erratic scheme of unprecedented social intercourse, allowing a variety of experiences under one lobotomy that was previously unimaginable.

“Eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked, on the nth floor was but one of the surrealist programmatic promises of what is, in itself, an almost unrepresentable infrastructure.” This social condenser involved the intercourse of virgin spaces with unknown contingencies to encourage a vibrant coexistence of disparate residencies, and generate through their interaction, unprecedented scenarios.

**figure 25** Section through the Downtown Athletic Club. The building was divided into successive sections, so that men would have to reach personal achievements to progress higher into the building, and seek greater rewards.
These bold planning arrangements are evident through an analysis of the 7th through 12th floors. One floor is dedicated to medicinal healthcare. This floor offers massages and rub downs, as well as tanning beds and relaxation spots around a Turkish bath. On the other side, a doctor takes care of five patients at a time, offering “colonic irrigation”, a process where treated bacteria clean and quicken the rate of metabolism in the stomach.

On another floor is an English garden styled golf course landscaped with hills and valleys, and a stream running down the center. This floor illustrates the reincarnation of nature into its synthetic counterpart – a simple layer of the Metropolis, and now just a mere service to the Culture of Congestion.

Furthermore, the independence of each floor from one another made the Downtown Athletic Club a collection of virgin sites, each a promiscuous laboratory for the creation of new environments. The private club was a social condenser intended to produce and exaggerate desirable forms of social intercourse. The fantastic juxtaposition of programmes coupled with the capabilities of the elevator gave inhabitants the opportunity to arrive at completely disparate worlds at the touch of a button. Inhabitants had the freedom to plan life itself, to direct their own personal redesign. This was the advent of an unknown urbanism for which a new metropolitan life awaited.

**figure 26** Reproduced Diagram of the Downtown Athletic Club. The independence of each floor from one another promoted the ability to maintain a multitude of programmes.
figure 27 Plan of the Downtown Athletic Club. The intended programmatic interactions produce new archetypes of hybridized spaces. This aleatory strategy of planning opened new avenues of social intercourse.

figure 28 “Eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked on the nth floor;” a concept of heightened social intensities through the promiscuous cross pollination of spaces.
case study two: house of culture of movement

The Downtown Athletic Club draws similar urbanistic ideals of programmatic interaction with MVRDV’s contemporary design for the House of Culture and Movement. Likewise celebrating a congestive, dynamic atmosphere of activity, the building is designed as a collaborative environment for people of all ages to partake in a range of activities. It is an amalgamation of health, culture, leisure and education to form a dynamic destination point for the Flintholm neighbourhood in Copenhagen.

The main building is composed of six dedicated programmatic elements, somewhat haphazardly arranged by their formal characteristics. These dedicated programmes uses include: a theatre, study area and exhibition space, administration block, health zone, fitness and activity centre, zen area and a wellness centre. The spaces between each programme block develop into a transition zone, or ‘play zone’ where the flexibility of juxtaposing programmes contend against each other to generate incongruous hybrid spaces amidst the main circulation.

As a progression from the Downtown Athletic Club, the collaboration of spaces in the House of Culture and Movement take on multiple responsibilities for the building. The flexibility of the theatre allows it to operate as an indoor theatre with different stage and audience settings, and also as an open air theatre serving users in the garden.

The House of Culture and Movement is the first of three volumes articulated around a landscaped garden. The garden takes on a multifunctional role similar to that of the theatre. As an activated public space, it functions as a performance area, can house art installations, accommodates bicycle parking, has health and exercise zones, and offers a relaxing quiet zone. Each space in between creates a feathered transition zone that connects the spaces. These spaces draw the appeal of surrounding occupancies, each staking their ownership on the space to collaboratively produce something novel.

figure 29 The project consists of six programme blocks articulated inside a glass framed box.

figure 30 A visual connection between spaces links disparate spaces together, encouraging the dynamic interaction of programmes, and people. The spaces in between each dedicated programme block become ‘play zones’ – flexible and interesting transition zones that help connect each space. Here, people discover foreign experiences and intensities.
This dynamic, multifunctional environment of the House of Culture and Movement engages its users in a healthy and active lifestyle. The building typology offers insights into contingent deviations away from the conventional ‘sandwich’ typology of the skyscraper. Where skyscrapers like the Downtown Athletic Club involved a vertical schism that disengaged the relationship between floors, MVRDV’s House of Culture and Movement creates an environment where homogeneous spaces pollinate adjacent spaces to create heterogeneous spaces.

These novel spaces offer a greater fluidity of movement through the building, and also stimulate a stronger visual connection that draws people through the building. The dynamic hybridization of spaces ultimately contributes to the overall success of the project as a collaborative space for health, leisure, education, and culture. In reference to further developing the established Culture of Congestion present in Manhattan’s urban condition, this case study is enlightening on potential directions for progress.

**figure 31** Diagram showing the growth of building typologies to generate collaborative environments.
2. Ibid., 26.
8. Ibid., 243.
12. Ibid., 244.
13. Ibid., 301.
15. Ibid., 341.
17. Ibid., 35.
19. Ibid., 324.
22. Ibid., 324.
25 Ibid., 323.
27 Ibid., 210.
28 Ibid., 200.
32 Ibid., 20.
33 Ibid., 294.
35 Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 82.
36 Celestial Real Estate Company in *Delirious New York*, 83.
39 Ibid., 105.
42 Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 158.
**delirious no more**

**nostalgia**

*Delirious New York* is Rem Koolhaas’ playful, quirky understanding of Manhattan. His writing is a poetic celebration of the relentless energy for design once living in Manhattan; the mythical, fantastical, symbolic, avant-garde ideas, and unconstrained freedoms of a developing Metropolis. It describes the development of an unknown urbanism in the skyscraper—a Culture of Congestion. This Manhattan was an exploration of whimsical fantasies and irrational phenomenon.

That spirit of Manhattan began to break down more than 30 years ago. New York began a steady path towards preservation and caution. Today, New York has fallen into a state of nostalgia; it operates in a lackluster spirit of stagnancy that constrains creative output from provocative writing to exciting design. As Mark Stevens critiques of the developing nostalgia:

> Something’s happened to the natural desire for safety. It now saturates our consciousness. It’s become a form of cultural hysteria, one that inhibits, restrains, crimps, smothers, and paralyzes everything from politics to art. Even in once-brave New York.

So much as an extension of a train line is deemed a bold proposal. Perhaps this decline was stimulated with the crisis of the Great Depression along with the various social, political and economic strains preventing the erection of good buildings throughout New York’s history. These circumstances have led to the gradual deterioration of Manhattan’s founding conviction—a belief in a future of progress.

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**figure 32** Statue of Liberty amidst the terrorist attacks of 9/11.
New York Magazine has used the condom as the city’s presiding symbol of a narcissistic age obsessed with security. “We’re wrapped up in ourselves. Our buildings are boring, our cultural institutions tentative, our sex lives constrained. Maybe a world-class city shouldn’t be quite so thoroughly baby proofed.”

Terrorism has contributed to this growing nostalgia in Manhattan. Particularly since the attacks of 9/11 and the city’s reluctance to rebuild Ground Zero, New York has induced an unhealthy obsession for safety and control. 9/11 is the final symbol of defeat for Manhattan. It represents the depletion of self-confidence for a city built on verticality and the potential presented by the skyscraper. This exhaustion emits a fear for the realization of new ideas and progress. Like a viral infection, it paralyzes the ambiance of the city. The Lost Skyline discusses the number of buildings that will remain on paper due to hesitancy of approvals and a “tide of red tape, cost overruns, warring egos, and community sensitivities.”

Ground zero has become a symbol of fear and preservation rather than a statement of a city’s newfound strength. After ten exhausting years since the attacks, New York has begun to see a progressive statement of strength made in the Freedom Tower.

But even this building has been designed with the paranoia of a security-driven city. Architectural critics have nicknamed the Freedom Tower, the ‘Fear Tower’. Progress on the Freedom Tower had been delayed since 2005 by complaints for higher security measures. Now the design involves a 20 story, ‘Baghdad’-like bunker at the

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**figure 33** The heightened sense of security has had a restricted nature on the city.
base. This windowless concrete wall alienates the building from public interaction, and is but a disheartening reminder of the attacks 10 years ago. “No one will want to use any public space next to a 20-story blank wall, no matter how many hi-tech special effects are built into it.”

Police concerns have further dictated the building design to be set back 75 feet, potentially killing one of Manhattan’s most distinguishing characteristics in its streetscape. The implementation of such governing defense precautions adds little more than a false sense of security, overwhelming the creative vigor and spirit of New York City. New York has become an anxious, less imaginative city; the new World Trade Centre is but a monument denoting the city’s surrender to fear; how ironic a conclusion to the delirious playground of creation by which Manhattan was founded.

The notion of the city encourages experimentation. It is a constant cycle of creation and destruction, irrevocably interlocked, and never finished. It is a celebration of technology, intelligence, cultural prowess, and innovation. Its embedded ‘chance-like’ nature invites people to take risks and broadcast their ideas. Was not the idea of Manhattan in Koolhaas’ Delirious New York to be a nucleus for new possibilities, a testing ground with an erotic edge for urban investigation? “Through architecture a city dreams, but what’s New York dreaming about – the safely conventional?” Perhaps the enlightenment of a viable alternative to Manhattan’s urban condition will rejuvenate the spirit of the city - a chance to reinvent itself once again.

**figure 34** Manhattan is arguably emerging from a state of preservation.
**kill the skyscraper**

The nature of the metropolis fosters the perpetual evolution of society and culture. It is an ever changing environment of erection, destruction and restoration. Unlike this rate of development, the extensive process necessary to erect a building is a stagnant process of constant refinement and critique. Comparatively, it cannot keep up with the demands placed by a progressive society. This relationship creates a unbalanced dichotomy between architecture and culture.

The urban nature of the skyscraper dictates a separation between floors, so that each floor is entirely independent of itself, with no relation to another floor. While this urbanism brought an opportunistic Culture of Congestion to Rem Koolhaas’ Manhattan, today’s evolved society supports a collaborative environment of interaction and communication, rendering the conventional skyscraper incompetent. The fixed floor areas on each floor are unable to accommodate future contingencies and requirements on the space. Spaces do not have the capacity to adapt to growing requirements on a space, or for that matter any attenuations on spaces. This uneven relationship between the rigid constraints of the skyscraper and freedom of society to change and progress, renders the dichotomy between the two, unsuccessful.

To be an architecture that accommodates today’s society, it is necessary to recontextualize the skyscraper to contemporary cultural operations in society. The new skyscraper should embrace higher levels of interaction, both programmatically and spatially. Rather than embrace the separation and independence of each floor as Koolhaas did, modern society will draw greater success from the interaction of disparate spaces. Greater communication and programmatic transparencies between spaces and their occupied functions will help to generate further visual stimulation and general exposure to surrounding activity, subsequently fostering a dynamic intercourse of activity. The mixing of homogenous bodies into unique heterogeneous inventions enlightens the environment with new experiences and understandings of the metropolis.

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**figure 35** Diagram describing culture as progressing twice as fast as architecture, rendering an unbalanced relationship.

**figure 36** 9/11 memorial, a place to remember lost loved ones.


3 Ibid.


7 Stevens, “Is New York Too Safe”.

8 Delirious no more
Devious New York is an exploration of Manhattan’s collective unconscious — a collection of unbuilt projects of irrational, radical avant-garde thought forming Manhattan’s Phantom City. This is the ghost city of Manhattan, a second hand energy preserving the ideals of its wonderfully fictitious upbringing. “It’s the city that never was but could have been, sort of an alternate future.”

Through an exploration of the Phantom City, Devious New York aims to generate a manipulated utopia of intensified programmatic intercourse, as a means of invigorating the revival of Manhattan’s founding ideals. It is a comprehensive formulation for an idea of the new man — of a social space that allows for the emergence of an ‘other’ man — a new way of living in community, in society. Devious New York recontextualizes the skyscraper typology into today’s contemporary environment as a means of successfully accommodating a progressing Culture of Congestion. The project becomes a pocket of escape from the conventions of its current metropolitan reality, into a devious manipulation of programmatic paradigms and exaggerated atmospheres. The process of this architecture isolates an interval from its exterior, and then arranges it in such a way as to increase the probability of an intended effect.

Devious New York is an exploration through Manhattan’s collective unconscious.
The instruments of this strategy lie in the promiscuous collisions of programs and spaces, in which architectural bodies intermingle, combine and implicate one another in the production of a new architectural reality. Devious New York aims to open new perspectives on an architecture that encourages the unforeseeable programmatic shifts in society by creating connective, fluid and flexible spatial conditions fit for the cross pollinations of architectural bodies. “Architecture thus introduces the new by creating frames within which unpredictable urban life forms emerge.”

layered urbanism

Manhattan has largely been critiqued as an archipelago of islands, each city block proclaiming its own independence from one another. Subsequently, each building became its own city within the city, entirely isolated from the surrounding built fabric.

The first strategy taken from the Phantom City involves a reproduction of the urban ground plane to generate multiple circulation currents through the project’s site. The implementation of varied movements will persuade unique moments for communication between colliding architectural bodies, and further construct a vibrant environment seductive to a progressive Culture of Congestion.

**figure 38** The High Line imposes an abstract circulation route through Chelsea and the Far West Side. It further defies the monotony of Manhattan’s urban grid.

**figure 39** The High Line stimulates the concept of a layered urbanism. As an initial step towards linking the city’s “independent” city blocks as suggested by Koolhaas, the implementation of a layered urbanism encourages greater dynamic environments fit for greater social intercourse.
case study four: King’s dream of new york

King’s Dream of New York was a project for Manhattan’s contingent future of congestion. Moses King imagined a city of millions living and working in the metropolis. The built fabric of the future city continued to bring taller and taller buildings, necessitating tiers of sidewalks, elevated trains and roadways, surface cars, bridges between buildings, and even an influx of aircrafts flying between building rooftops. This idea of congestive growth in the metropolis stimulated the concept of a Layered Urbanism. This would alleviate the stresses of overcrowding on a single urban plane.

Kings Dream of New York was a city of maximum density infrastructure and transportation. It creates an awareness of the possibilities of density on the metropolis, where there should be some regulation implemented on skyscraper construction. More importantly, it further stimulates an interest in the solutions to an evolving Culture of Congestion. By multiplying the surface of activity and increasing linkages between the built fabric, the city becomes more accessible and understandable. Each city block would not be an isolated island, but rather a connected part of an integrated city.

figure 40 King’s Dream of New York. Mose King imaged the reproduction of layered urban planes throughout the city’s built fabric, to support an evolving Culture of Congestion.
case study three: the high line

The High Line is a first step in the realization of a Layered Urbanism in Manhattan. A project of adaptive reuse and clever opportunism, it encompasses the regeneration of a run-down industrial rail track into a vibrant green space running through the built fabric of the Far West Side. The High Line is a park in the sky, and offers an escape from the daily strains of the metropolis. Through a number of public street entrances, people ascend into this public infrastructure. They enter into an urban oasis – a safe haven still maintaining a visual connection to the city, but disengaged from the emotions of the Metropolis. The High Line is a journey of surprises, enlightening the visitor with the awe of park serenity, as well as a historical artifact amidst the urban context. It is the new modern theatre for Manhattan, where people re-evaluate a recontextualized city away from the lives they live below.

The High Line ruptures the monotony of the grid. It is a virus spreading through the city blocks of the Far West Side, dematerializing Koolhaas’ notion of an archipelago of islands. It facilitates a connection between solitudes, creating a surface that encourages an active interaction between each block. As a connector between city blocks, it creates a new vein of circulation on the Far West Side. The opportunity of implementing a Layered Urbanism through the High Line stimulates a reinvigoration for radical experimentation and re-evaluation of Manhattan – a catalyst for change.

figure 41 - 42 A collaboration between James Corner Field Operations and Diller + Scofidio saw the regeneration of an industrial rail track into an urban park overlooking the city. The new High Line Park offered an additional urban plane through the Far West Side, an elevated oasis escaped from the overwhelming street life below.
Fluid Movement is the second strategy of Devious New York. It challenges the skyscrapers vertical schism – the exclusive separation of one floor from another. Rather than endorse Rem Koolhaas’ outdated Culture of Congestion, Fluid Movement attempts to create a congestive culture of greater interaction – a dynamic environment promoting the communication of disparate architectural bodies.

Rem Koolhaas used the elevator as vertical transport through the vertical schism of the skyscraper. The elevator reemphasizes the implied split between floor levels; when a person is inside, time stops and the architectural experience is postponed. In contrast, Fluid Movement attempts to dematerialize the barriers between floor and floor, investing in the idea of implementing a collection of hybridized macro-environments.

This strategy is illustrated by the blending of homogenous architectural entities to generate heterogeneous creations of programme. These interstitial spaces blur the boundaries of exclusive operational functions to offer an ambiguous zone that is never exclusively claimed by any of its juxtaposing influences. The freedom entitled to this space encourages fluid movement through a set of continued spaces. Furthermore, the naked exposure of programmatic functions offers visual transparencies to stimulate and extend interests through a space.

The Eyebeam Museum illustrates the juxtaposition of contrasting programmes – the dichotomy between production spaces and presentation spaces stimulates a reciprocal relationship between the creator and the viewer.

figure 43 Fluid movement challenges the conventions of the skyscraper as a facilitator for a multitude of independent environments. It seeks to alter the skyscraper’s urban nature to encourage a collaborative environment of activity.

figure 44-45 The Eyebeam Museum illustrates the juxtaposition of contrasting programmes – the dichotomy between production spaces and presentation spaces stimulates a reciprocal relationship between the creator and the viewer.
case study five: eyebeam museum of art and technology

The Eyebeam Museum of Art and Technology in Chelsea demonstrates the principles of Fluid Movement. Designed in 2001 by Diller + Scofidio, the project houses “exhibition spaces, artist-in-residence studios, an education center with multi-media classrooms, a state-of-the-art new media theater, a digital archive, a restaurant, and a bookstore.” The project is a hybridized proposal that overlaps concepts of the creator and the viewer together to inspire a harmonious symbiosis of activity.

The project uses two undulating ribbons to morph the formality of the building as a continuity of floor into wall and back into floor. The use of these alternating ribbons creates a visual transparency between these two spaces, so that the scientists see the viewers as they move through the gallery, and the viewers see the scientists as they develop new inventions. This approach not only establishes the smooth transition of successive spaces, but also an interaction between the scientists and the museum goers.
This transparency offers an opportunity for the producer to interact with the user. As students, artists, staff, and visitors to the museum move between each other’s spaces, a series of transition zones foster the interaction of each group with the other. They may find themselves on parallel paths separated by a transparent prophylactic, sometimes crossing paths, sometimes merging paths and sharing programmes. As each population observes the other in a smooth transition through the building, both gain a greater understanding of each other’s roles.

Exhibition spaces operate under strict lighting controls and acoustic insulation, while production spaces function best with even lighting levels and the ability to dim each space. These distinctions become evident in the alternating spaces ascending each ribbon. The reciprocity of spaces constitutes a new dichotomy of previously disparate spaces.

This newfound relationship between production spaces and presentation spaces generate instances where production processes are altered according to the effectiveness of presentation. “Laborers actively interact with thinkers – the prosaic with the poetic.”

figure 46-47 Undulating ribbon forms morph floors into walls, and walls into floors. These formal qualities of the ribbon create a successful reciprocity of production spaces and presentation spaces.
case study six: seattle public library

Rem Koolhaas’ notion of the skyscraper was an endless repetition of independent plots of land. These fixed spaces were never designed to cope with the shifting spatial requirements of an evolving society. Unlike the misinformed ideals of the skyscraper, the design of the Seattle Public Library sought to lead the visitor through an undivided sequence of spaces. Each space in the collection is designed with an arbitrary boundary. This helps to blend adjacent spaces into mixed spaces of interaction over several levels, and further allows room for the growth of contingent spatial requirements for information and technology.

These interstitial spaces further activate adjacent spaces by creating break out zones where users are free to interact and play. This articulation of dedicated programme space and flexible break out spaces entices visitors to move fluidly through the building, giving a sense of vibrancy to the building’s functionality.

figure 48 Unlike a conventional library of dedicated programme blocks to secluded spaces relating a genre, the spaces in the Seattle Public Library flow into each other, creating a dynamic environment of information exchange.

figure 49 Diagram showing an increased communication between separate floors through the implementation of a ramp, as seen in the Seattle Public Library.
The building successfully uses ramps as an active means of movement through the building. Rather than segregate each space with the use of lifts, the ramps of Koolhaas’ library offer a greater architectural experience by instigating human interaction.

The programmatic organization of the building is compartmentalized into clusters, together forming five platforms – each of similar media or literature activities. Instead of a random assortment of programme spaces, this tailored flexibility gives a fundamental order to the building’s organization.

Through its demonstration of interlinking programmatic relationships, the Seattle Public Library becomes an “enhanced public space around knowledge.”¹⁰ It is not spatially dedicated to the book, but instead celebrates the freedoms of other information forms in those spaces. Its underlying organization of dedicated programme clusters set between interstitial break out spaces allows contingent changes in technologies, extends the purpose of each space, and further encourages fluid movement through the building. It is a collaboration of spaces – a dynamic melting pot of programmes.

figure 50-51 The building’s spatial organization is divided into five programmatic clusters, each dedicated to a range of similar programmes. Interstitial spaces between dedicated programme spaces serve to activate adjacent spaces to offer break out spaces for visitors to freely interact.
Contamination of space

Contamination of space is the third strategy of Devious New York. It involves the reinterpretation of a homogenous architectural body through the influences of encroaching architectural programmes and surrounding pressures. Of particular interest are Bernard Tschumi’s strategies for crossprogramming, disprogramming, and transprogramming:

- Crossprogramming: Using a given spatial configuration for a program not intended for it, that is using a church building for bowling. Similar to typological displacement: a town hall inside the spatial configuration of a prison or a museum inside a car park structure.\(^\text{11}\)

- Disprogramming: Combining two or more programs, whereby a required spatial configuration of program A contaminates program B and B’s possible configuration. The new program B may be extracted from the inherent contradictions contained in program A, and B’s required spatial configuration may be applied to A.\(^\text{12}\)

- Transprogramming: Combining two programs, regardless of their incompatibilities, together with their respective spatial configurations.\(^\text{13}\)

**figure 52** The continuous ramps encompassing the library’s main collection encourages fluid movement through the building, creating an architectural experience.
The nature of the urban environment encourages unique instances of programme collisions. These unintentional or intentional architectural marriages generate an energy that inspires the roots of innovation. “Architecture is the stage for a story, the making of architecture is itself a story...” The city can be seen as a collection of micro-urbanisms, where a number of programs combine their homogenous parts to form a unique, heterogeneous whole. Subsequently, the new ambiguous surroundings forces the users to adapt their lifestyles, beneficially or detrimentally, to their new environment. These Contaminations of Space lead to social and cultural transformations in the urban environment.

case study seven: national library of france

The National Library of France was a project by Bernard Tschumi in 1989. It is the first manifestation of his writings on transprogramming. It sought to combine the forum and the reading room, and the running track with the idea of scholarly pursuit. The project was inspired by the 21st century ideal that an intellectual would be an athlete, and that the 21st century athlete would also be an intellectual.

Its location away from Paris’ historic centre gave it the freedom to break away from the static notions of conventional libraries. The library project was designed around the idea of movement – that is, of people and of ideas. Thus, five interrelated circuits in the building shaped the path visitors would use to find events and information. These circuits define the building’s primary organization – the visitor’s and administrator’s circuit, the book circuits, multimedia circuits, and the mechanical circuit. Each circuit is strategized to find points of interaction while still operating under an independent logic.

With the concept of circuits embedded into Tschumi’s library, architecture became an event, rather than a frozen monument. The open circuit promoted an endless pursuit of knowledge as well as the physical exertion in the 400-meter running track. Its juxtaposition with the academic environment creates the synchronized operations of knowledge and physical pursuits.
From the entrance, the movement of people revolved around an area of information, small shops, daily media areas, and a conference centre. Through a series of escalators, visitors would then be moved to the various collections, each one pulling the visitor into the next. The final level was a large exhibition space that opened onto the running track, Tschumi’s most extreme demonstration of the circuit.

The National Library of France is a useful case study for an active contamination of space. The concept of active pursuits through a multiplicity of conflicting programmes, and movement through a series of circuits illustrates the affect of the running track to organize the collections of the library. Similarly, the position of the running track atop the collections symbolizes the journey of the visitor towards greater knowledge. Clearly, these disparate disciplines merge and cross-fertilize so that neither programme maintains its rationality without the presence of the other.
case study eight: yokohama ferry terminal

The design brief for the Yokohama Ferry Terminal entailed the articulation of a passenger cruise terminal amidst a range of civic facilities, encompassed in one entity. Foreign Office Architects saw an opportunity to celebrate the site as a series of public spaces for the people of Yokohama – a landmark along the city’s waterfront.

The concept of the design revolved around the manipulation and strategic articulation of the urban surface through a series of folds and bifurcations. The site becomes an extension of the urban ground plane, developed as a systematic transformation of a circulation diagram of interrelated programmes set on this continuous surface.

Previously, the site had only been utilized during peak hours of travel and commute. But by programming the surface with a variety of programmes and provisions, the architects were successfully able to maximize time spent on the site. The resulting twenty-four-hour proposal presented a “heterogeneous mix of functions through the day.”

The design breaks away from conventional notions of water-side structures where movement is constricted to a fixed orientation of back-and-forth flows. Instead, the Yokohama Ferry Terminal offers a multi-directional set of paths, so that users experience a different route almost every time they use the site. The use of surface strategies on the urban ground plane of the site successfully dematerializes the boundaries of interior and exterior spaces on site, so that a visitor’s journey becomes a chained sequence of movement through the site.

The manipulation of the urban surface encourages visitors to move through the series of public spaces the site offers. The public spaces are used for a variety of purposes including runs, dog walking, enjoying the water-side views, and exercising in the park spaces.

The Yokohama Ferry Terminal is a project based on movement through site and the successful linkage of programmed spaces. It is a “landscape of social instruments,” where the project becomes successful only through the uses, adjacencies, and juxtapositions of alternating programs over time.” Through this contamination of the urban surface, the project serves a broader range of functions and people than originally imagined.

figure 55 The contamination of the urban surface at Yokohama Ferry Terminal creates a continuous movement through the site, offering public spaces for the visitor.
conclusion

Through an active exploration of unbuilt projects in Manhattan’s Phantom City as well as other projects of impressionable influence outside the city, the ideals and governing strategies for the design of the Chelsea Club are arranged. Devious New York frames the re-interpretation of Manhattan’s urban condition through three strategies: a layering of urbanisms to produce diverse circulation currents through a project’s site, and also kindle expressive opportunities for the seduction of colliding homogenous units; the fluidity of architectural functions to cultivate smooth transitions through a set of programmed spaces, as well as accommodating future programmatic requirements; and the contamination of architectural surfaces with their surrounding pressures as a means of generating an unprecedented intercourse of architectural bodies.

Devious New York will challenge the existing urban condition of Manhattan by strategically implementing its newfound approaches to design, and compose a delicate amalgamation of vibrant activity in the city. The project of the Chelsea Club will seek to open new perspectives on the metropolitan condition of Manhattan, as well as present a promising prototype for today’s Culture of Congestion.
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Chelsea is bounded by 14th Street on the south and 34th Street on the north, between 6th Avenue and the Hudson River on the west. Chelsea is an upbeat, young neighbourhood equipped with the potential for quality urban living. It has a mix of heritage pre-war apartment buildings and contemporary condominiums. Chelsea offers a variety of food destinations with unique ethnic takeout’s to fine dining, and is also the centre of Manhattan’s exclusive night-club scene and defining LGBT populations. The West Chelsea Arts District houses over 200 galleries, making Chelsea an epicentre for art in New York. This chic neighbourhood has also become a heart of fashion and shopping, with a number of high-end designer stores opening in the area. Chelsea also enjoys a wide assortment of recreational activities at the Chelsea Piers, as well as an escape from the city on the elevated High Line Park.

The regeneration of the High Line into an urban park has been a major catalyst in the recent resurgence of Chelsea and Manhattan’s Far West Side. The Far West Side has transformed in recent years from an area of industrial warehouses to a current hot spot for commercial high-rise developments. The rezoning of the area during the 2012 Olympic Games campaign opened the area up for growth, and stimulated a large popularity spike in the residential and commercial potential of the area. Lucrative developers and world-renown architects now have a desire to build in what is fast becoming Manhattan’s trophy quarter. The warehouses of its industrial past have now been transformed into great pieces of architecture in a hip new destination. “The only thing left are the empty lots.” The newfound attractiveness of the area has also seen many wealthy people move into the area in search of “hipper, cooler, better views and new modern buildings.”

Chelsea is a neighbourhood embracing a diversity of people and culture, as well as the desire for change and innovation. With such clever acts of opportunism as the regeneration of the High Line already in place, Chelsea draws much appeal as a fitting site for a project of devious defiance to the conventions of the city.

Figure 56 View looking out over the Chelsea Club park, from the function rooms in the northern middle tower.
figure 57 Map of Manhattan, showing the neighbourhood of Chelsea.

figure 58 Project site along the High Line in Chelsea.

figure 59 The High Line presents opportunities to multiply the urban ground plane.
figure 60 Chelsea life.
phantom pocket of reality

The Chelsea Club is a manifestation of the principle strategies set by Devious New York. It unravels the hidden side of the city, and presents the subculture of architecture in Manhattan. It is an assertion about a plausible reality of Manhattan, and offers insights into such an existence.

The Oneida Community of New York is analyzed to gain a better understanding of a socially manipulated utopia. In 1848, this community was founded by John Humphrey Noyes, whose religious fervor led him to develop a community of “free love” – his belief of a kingdom of heaven on earth. The Oneida community was inspired by a utopian ideal that depicted an ideal state of being for the human condition. Noyes promoted his theology called Perfectionism, a distorted theology of Christianity. With Noyes’ religion as a medium for societal perfection, the Oneida community operated through a selected range of practices designed to craft a utopian state. The community’s notion of self-perfection manifested itself through “Mutual criticism” – a practice where each member of the community was openly criticized with the aim of bettering themselves. The community also embraced communalism – a substitution of the individual and nuclear family for the group-family. The practice of “Complex Marriages” stated that every man would be married to every women, and vice versa. Each living couple had to get the approval of a third party. No two people could be exclusive, for it was deemed sinful and selfish. Noyes further maintained meticulous control over the members’ sexual lives.

figure 61. Developing off the High Line, the Chelsea Club is an escape from the metropolis, into a controlled utopia. The proximity of the High Line, running track, sky bridge, and above balcony illustrates a layered urbanism.
Comparatively, the Chelsea Club is a social experiment designed to explore a manipulated alternative of Manhattan’s metropolitan condition. It is a conscious distortion of the physical and functional boundaries by which architectural bodies operate, and a dismantling of those conventional processes. The subsequent reconstruction of these bodies into unprecedented atmospheres is generated from visual transparencies and calculated collisions of those initial programme units. The product offers a reassembled environmental dynamic that exposes users to an intensified exposure of physical, intellectual, and social self-improvements.

figure 62  The Oneida Community founded by John Humphrey Noyes was based on radical religious principles as Free Love and Perfectionism.

figure 63-72  Diagrams showing the orientation of programme spaces within the Chelsea Club. (following page)
The effects of social media have transformed modern society to an extent that sharing information about oneself with the world is becoming a norm. With social media becoming more and more a part of everyday lifestyle, the boundaries between an individual's private and public lives are dissolving. With the growing potential of online lives through such social networking devices as Facebook and Twitter, people know things about you before they meet you. People can see your education, workplace, friends, and activities you partake in through photos – life's digital stage. There are over 800 million users on Facebook.5 "With respect to online, the walls of business have already become paper thin with employees blogging and tweeting."6 The rise of social media is transforming offline social dynamics by heightening exposure of one's lifestyle. The metropolitan routine becomes an intermingled existence of physical pursuits, intellectual and information exchanges, living quarters, the workplace, and dedicated social interaction.
greater social spaces

high line and amenities

lobby areas and offices

running track

vertical circulation

living
This evolution of the urban condition encourages the growth of architectonic spaces into interactive, collaborative environments. Boundaries between previously distinct spaces begin to break down as adjacent spaces pollinate one another. The Chelsea Club is a manifestation of the programmatic collisions, marriages, and reciprocal relationships that describe these emerging provisions.

**perfection of the human body**

The ground floor of the Chelsea Club is based around exercise and the transformation of the human body. Users are offered a variety of opportunities to better themselves: a basketball court, tennis courts, a gym, cardio machines, squash courts, and a swimming pool. The metropolis is inspired by the ideal human condition, and thus the exercise facilities of the Chelsea Club actively encourage its inhabitants to reach a physical perfection.

The five separate towers are irrevocably connected through various circulation mediums such as the open floor exercise palette in the ground floor. This Las Vegas-like experience reiterates Koolhaas’ idea of hidden communication lines between the buildings, as seen in Rockefeller Centre.

**deceit**

The gym lining the street front of the Chelsea Club facing 10th avenue promotes physical perfection, but behind the gym is the deceitful side of this urban machine. On the southern side of the block along West 17th street is an alleyway. At first dark and mysterious, the curious person approaches the sound of bells and gaming sounds through a brightly lit entrance. It is a casino.

The casino reflects the devious desires of humans, and society’s deceitful manipulation of its citizens towards addictive vices. The possibility of a large monetary reward from minimal input makes casinos so alluring. With no exposure to reality outside, casinos are an escape into fantasy. The lack of natural lighting and clocks creates an illusion that keeps the inhabitants in a perpetual gaming wonderland. These subtle manipulations of the human psyche encourage those already gambling to stay, and those walking around to play.

The juxtaposition of the casino behind the gym reflects the Machiavellian layers of society. The gym symbolizes the active physical refinement of the human body and the conscious effort for individual representation. People strive for the ideal image of themselves to present to society. Contrastingly, the casino is an extortionist – a way of cheating life and the strains of society. With the roll of a dice, pull of a lever, or draw of cards, a person can change their lives in seconds. It is a mesmerizing experience involving both an emotional and psychological rollercoaster. The casino illustrates society’s control over its citizens, and unravels the superficial characters of its users towards an instant gratification of their lives. People leave the casino in a hyper-intensified state of euphoria or depression. Perhaps the seemingly innate desire for material gain is something deceitfully conditioned by a capitalist society, and the casino therefore encourages the demise of one’s character.

**figure 73** The casino operates behind the gym through an alleyway under the High Line. It represents the deceit and demise of one’s character under societal influences. It is the juxtaposition of persistent physical perfection against immediate monetary successes.
The Chelsea Club is a utopian inspired machine for progress. At its most broadcasted facade facing 10th avenue, the gym promotes the perfection of the human body. However, down the side street a hidden alleyway satisfies the devious nature of human desire. A casino awaits those seeking immediate gratification. Its position on the ground floor represents the desires of the old metropolis.

**figure 74** As the centre of activity, the placement of the cafe in the central corridor of the floor plan creates a visual connection with the surrounding basketball courts, swimming pool, squash courts, and tennis courts. It is an interstitial zone fostering fluid movement through the spaces. It is the humble theatre for sport in the complex, reciprocally changing each activity into a performance to the spectator.

**figure 75** The Chelsea Club is a utopian inspired machine for progress. At its most broadcasted facade facing 10th avenue, the gym promotes the perfection of the human body. However, down the side street a hidden alleyway satisfies the devious nature of human desire. A casino awaits those seeking immediate gratification. Its position on the ground floor represents the desires of the old metropolis.
The second storey of the Chelsea Club is motivated by the presence of the High Line. People move through the High Line and have the opportunity to filter into the Chelsea Club. The High Line dictates a new urban plane—a new vein of circulation, layered on top of the conventional ground plane. The High Line breaks the urban nature of Manhattan’s archipelago of independent islands by connecting them at an altitude, and thereby recontextualizing the urban nature of the city. It catalyzes the design frame of the project by facilitating a new mode of movement into the building. People approach the building from an elevated entrance. This major circulation shift sets the Chelsea Club apart from other buildings in Manhattan.

The Chelsea Club is a destination point on the High Line, a pocket of escape celebrating a release from the metropolis. It illustrates the ideals of hyperlocalism, where the project programme is a conglomeration and directed intensification of the metropolitan condition. The project motivation behind the Chelsea Club draws similarities to that of New Babylon in Constant’s New Babylon: the hyper-architecture of desire. The New Babylon project described a society exempt from the responsibilities of human life. Living at an altitude away from those of little value, the New Babylonians were invested entirely on progress through creativity and thought, similarly to the Chelsea Club, offering an alternate society. “The inhabitants of New Babylon were meant to promiscuously combine resources to produce unique transient spaces.”

Retail shops open onto the High Line from the eastern tower. People relax in the serenity of the High Line, and also indulge in a materialist injection of High Line souvenirs. Office buildings occupy the spaces behind the retail stores. Rather than walking out onto a concrete jungle, workers enjoy the tranquility of an urban park at their front-step.

Figure 76 The Chelsea Club park incorporates two amphitheatres that actively connect people with the multitude of activities surrounding them. The southern amphitheatre looks down into the swimming pool below, while the northern version sees into the basketball court below. Both domains draw people from the surrounding bars, cafes, and restaurants outside, where the activities below, as well as the running track above are transformed into performances to these spectators.
retail shops and a gallery space sit on the high line, activating the park space and drawing people into the chelsea club complex. the chelsea club seeks to maximise the potential of each of its users - to morph them into their alpha persona.

the restaurant overlooks the rock climbing wall below, and is able to view the climber as they move up the wall, accomplishing their goal.

the running track borders the library, a glass wall separating the two bodies, and also generating a visual attraction to each function so that the athlete is moved towards knowledge, and the academic is moved towards physical perfection.

the park space in the centre of the chelsea club is embraced by bars to the south. the presence of amphitheatres in the park draws people out of the bars to enjoy the spectacle of performance happening below. this manifests the concepts of fluid movement by generating an interaction between independent floors.

**figure 77** An architectural event where dining spaces of a restaurant and preceding function spaces visually connect with a rock climbing wall, and the intersecting running track.

**figure 78** Second floor Plan shows the High Line as the main facilitator and catalyst for the activity in the Chelsea Club.
As the visitor enters the Chelsea Club park, they enter into a socially intensified environment. On the northern side is a restaurant. Inside the restaurant, the diners oversee the rock climbing wall and its climbers from the floor below. The dining experience is injected with a visual transparency to exercise. The notion of the rock climbing wall suggests reaching new heights and perhaps a form of entertainment as the diners converse.

On the other side of the park, the middle tower is lined with bars. Juxtaposed with the bars and opening onto the High Line is a gallery. People walking through the High Line can stop and look at artwork, and then further filtrate through to the bars as a destination spot. The bars and gallery can also coexist during exhibition openings.

Both the restaurant and the bars open onto the Chelsea Club park. This park is made up of two amphitheatres. The norther amphitheatre looks down into the basketball court, while the southern one oversees the swimming pool. People enjoy drinks and socialize while watching the events below. Public spaces are the social screws of the city, holding everything together. The park invites visitors from the High Line as well as the users of the Chelsea Club together. It sets an informal, democratic stage where citizens communicate with each other. This transparency changes the dynamic of sport and exercise, where each activity becomes a performance to those socializing.

The most distinct circulation node in the Chelsea Club is the running track. The circuit intersects four buildings, sloping from the High Line level on the western end, up to the 3rd floor level as it intersects the middle towers. The running track is a means of inspiration for the entire Club. It is visible from all angles and is a major tool for creating programmatic transparencies throughout the complex. The running track was inspired by an idea that metropolitan life was a continuous circuit through variable events: this is manifested in its intersection with the library, party function rooms, park retreat, and information lounge.
vertical circulation
ground level circulation
high line level circulation
higher level circulation
On the western end of the Chelsea Club is the library. It serves the complex as an educational asset for its users. The library incorporates a collection of books and resources for the fast developing culture of digital media. Surrounded by glass walls, its western end looks out onto the serenity of the Hudson River, while its eastern end visually connects readers and users to the athlete and citizen running by outside and making an effort towards physical refinement. This notion is similar to Tschumi’s programmatic cross pol-lination, where the academic and the athlete are encouraged by the reciprocity of each other’s lifestyle – a move toward the greater metropolitanite.

On the northern side of the complex, the running track slopes up to the 3rd floor, where it intersects the party function rooms. This moment mixes the exhaustion of exercise with the energy of social interaction. Despite their drastic difference in condition at the moment of contact, the seemingly opposite characters share a similar brain wave and mood. The relief from strenous cardiovascular exercise as well as a moderate consumption of alcohol both involve similar releases of endorphins in the brain. Thus, both the runner and the socialite can radiate comparable emotions off each other. The opportunity to party and interact with others is a reward for hardwork spent on the track – a chance to meet the opposite sex, once the task of individual betterance is paid.

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Past the function rooms, the track then curves around to the eastern end of the complex – another layer overlooking the High Line. Additionally, this creates a visual connection and appeal to those walking through the High Line, inviting them inside the complex. The calmness of walking through the park is juxtaposed with the strenuous exercise on the track circuit above. The mixture of activity generates a lively environment of activity.

Through the fifth building, the track intersects the online lounge, an open space designed for people to be online in a communal setting rather than in the isolation of their own homes. People interact with their friends online, and are also given opportunities to meet new people. This is the new social dynamic, where people interact online as well as in person – in the same space. This instance mixes the digital with the real, so that users experience a heightened feeling of connection with both worlds. The online lounge is additionally exposed to the activities on the running track through a glass window, and further looks out over a mezzanine balcony, to the bars downstairs. Both the track and the bar draw the user towards either a physical circuit or a social pursuit – devices subtly encouraging a well balanced lifestyle.

Both running and moderate alcoholic consumption involve the release of endorphins in a human’s brain. The juxtaposition of the running track and function rooms exploits the opportunity for dissimilar activities to connect and form the architectural event.

The running track intersects the online lounge. To the west, the online lounge looks over the bars below. The space is the amalgamation of social interaction, physical performance, and information exchange.

**figure 82** The combination of the running track and the function spaces is inspired by the similarities of endorphin release in the brain when drinking alcohol as well as finishing cardiovascular exercise. The space seeks to articulate a calculated meeting of the two activities.
The club lounge appeals to the exclusivity of the new york aesthetic and apparent gentrification through society. Its elevation over the High Line symbolizes its privilege over other spaces in the complex. Guests must wear collared shirts and can only gain entry by their status in society.

**figure 83** Third Floor Plan. As the running track slopes upward to the third level, it bisects both the function spaces on the northern middle tower, and the online lounge on the southern middle tower.
From the Chelsea Club park, the landscape slopes upward to the west between the two western towers to a lookout point over the Hudson River. A small café and bar on the northwestern tower opens out onto this lookout point. Together, they form a retreat away from the park and high activity of the complex.

The southwestern tower lobby is designed around the event. People dine, drink and socialize around a stage. This brings the pressures and anxieties of performance together with the energy of social interaction, while offering an element of entertainment to the guests.

Above the retail shops on the eastern tower is a multi-purpose space. During the day, it is used as a clubroom for the privileged classes. Guests must wear collared shirts to enter. They enjoy expensive wine as they mingle on the balcony overlooking the High Line. The physical elevation of the club symbolises the class system that governs Manhattan’s gentrified society. During the night, the space becomes a night club. Like the clubroom during the day, the night club operates under established social value, where a person can only gain entrance by their name or their social network. This reflects the underlying exclusivity that classifies the modern Manhattan image as well as the power of social networking.

Above the night club, the formality of the eastern tower connects to the middle tower via a skybridge. The presence of this connection over the High Line as well as in proximity to the elevated running track, creates an additional Layering of Urbanism. From the High Line, the visitor sees an active spectacle of life as they pass.

figure 84 View from thee privileged Club Lounge, where only those with elite status and extended networks are admitted. The elevated view looks out to the running track across, the High Line below, and the Chelsea Club park in the distance.
Inside the sky bridge bridging the north-eastern towers is a gaming lounge dedicated but not entirely limited to, the athlete. The space is designed as a social breakout space for the competitor after hours. Its amenities include bowling lanes, pool tables, table tennis, a bar, mini-golf course, and a private function room. It aspires to reward the hard working citizen who has embraced himself in physical exercise and the further perfection of their being. People are admitted into the space based primarily on physical achievement through sporting activities. This selectivity encourages people to maintain an element of exercise in their everyday lifestyle.

The angled surfaces of the Chelsea Club delve away from conventional block forms of the skyscraper, allowing more interactive transitions between the towers and open spaces within the complex. The crystal shards of each façade symbolically acknowledge the events of New York’s past, and the multiplicity of its spirit rejuvenated.

The living spaces are inspired around modern lifestyles. Each of three prototypes are designed by the networker always around friends, the socialite seeking self-presentation, and the private personality basking in tranquility away from the limelight.
living

The housing units are designed around the evolution of society today. A composition of three prototypes are designed to suit three personalities of modern lifestyles in today’s society. The first is suited for the highly social, networking person that loves company and is always around other people. This housing type takes the form of a communal hearth, where someone can live with a few of their friends.

The second prototype is focused around the growing pressures of presentation and image as a motivator in society. This housing type is for someone that loves the limelight and loves to show themselves to an audience. The housing type is crafted as a modern stage, with a heavily exposed balcony to the public eye. This person can use her living quarter as a presentation device to show her lifestyle to the world. The balcony can house parties and social gatherings, giving the person an opportunity to proclaim themselves to the world.

The third prototype is for the famously hidden personality. This person is always around the public eye and desires their home as an escape, or retreat from the public eye. This home has a tranquil feel. Furthermore, it is equipped around building one’s public image and mixing the working environment with the home environment. Subsequently, a gym is used to build physical image, and the office space is inspired by the idea that this person can carry on their work life with the comforts and escape of their home environment, while remaining actively engaged.

3. Ibid.

*figure 87* Chelsea Club Section.
In Koolhaas’ *Delirious New York*, the city is an irrational, unpredictable land of ideas governed by an undirected nature for experimentation and innovation. Now at its conclusion, *Devious New York* represents a deceitful, underhanded reinvigoration of those ideals through a celebration of its Phantom City. It is a contemporary interpretation of its lost city and lucid manifestation of the sublime – an operation to reinvigorate the city by offering a distorted utopia of unprecedented freedoms.

The Chelsea Club is an evolution of the metropolitan existence that promotes an alternative urbanism to that of the Downtown Athletic Club. Rather than the independent separation of floors in the Downtown Athletic Club, the Chelsea Club promotes instances where the individual is exposed to a dynamic, interactive environment of shared intensities proposed to exaggerate the intercourse of human interaction. These emerging spatial discrepancies embody today’s evolved urban condition where an individual is subject to multiple exposures in the environment – the physical perfection of their bodies, an extended exchange of information and intellect, and societal discoveries amidst varied social intercourses.

Through exaggerated programme transparencies, the user finds greater exposure to constructive urban vitality, and thus encourages the growth and development of the citizen. The Chelsea Club is a devious escape into a utopic world of pleasures and unconstrained freedoms. After all, “Manhattan has been, from the beginning, devoted to the most rational, efficient and utilitarian pursuit of the irrational.”

The effects of a Layered Urbanism have a strong impact on the project. The strategy was able to clearly produce a series of diverse circulation currents within the site to foster a vibrancy of interactive activity. Initiated by the opportunism presented by the High Line, the elevated park catalyzed the defiance of the conventional ground plane, symbolizing an escape from the New York of familiar. The interaction of the running track with the High Line created a visual connection between runners and park goers, and also links a myriad of different architectural bodies including the function rooms, the library, and the online lounge. The occupancy of the competitor’s lounge inside the sky bridge created an additional urbanism where the inhabitant looks out over a captivating spectacle of the runner’s circuit across from the Club room balcony, sitting over the tranquility of the High Line, and the vibrancy of the ground plane.

*figure 88* View from the Hudson River.
Fluid Movement sought to merge homogenous entities together by creating interstitial spaces that shared the intensities of each imposing programme, and would draw the user through the set of successive spaces. This was most successful in the ground floor of the building, where the palette of exercise activities share a common facilitator space. The tennis players share the surroundings with the basketball players, who share the surroundings with the swimmers and squash players. The interstitial space is maximized by programming it as a café spot to view all of the surrounding activity. Furthermore, the casino around the corner encroaches upon the space of these exercise spaces, creating an interesting twist of immediate gratification and lifestyle pursuits. Similarly, the Chelsea Club Park above generates a supplementary relationship with the bars on the southern middle tower. As users socialize at the bar, the amphitheatres in the park draw them outside, where they can socialize amidst a spectacle of performance in the sporting courts and swimming pool below.

This strategy struggle however, to find success in the higher privacies of each tower, as living quarters permitted minimal flexibilities and associations with the communal functions below. Initially, the concept of fluid movement sought greater appeal in dismantling the skyscraper ‘sandwich’ typology, where each floor operated independently of itself. In retrospect, the project could have benefited greater with the implementation of formal qualities similar to that of the EyeBeam Museum case study, which would have offered more fluid formal qualities to match the programmatic goals of the project. Nevertheless, the strategy did find success in the horizontal succession of spaces and physical formalities.

Contamination of Space sought to intensify and invent unprecedented architectural events through the intercourse of its surrounding architectural bodies. The project found extensive success in creating exclusive instances devoted to the interaction of specific populations: the dichotomy of the gambler and the gym goer to enlighten an architectural paradox; the restaurant overlooking the rock climbing wall and running track above to marry the concepts of dining/entertainment with physical pursuits of life; and the interaction between the running track with the library and social function spaces to contrast the athlete with both the academic and the socialite.

In conclusion, Devious New York achieves the goals initially placed upon a contemporary Manhattan. It manifests itself as the devious transformation of the Manhattan condition by challenging conventions of its urban nature and built fabric. “Architecture should be an instrument that people use to redesign themselves.”

The Chelsea Club re-contextualizes Manhattan as a nucleus of urban transformations that reveals, celebrates, and persuades an alternative reality and the promise of today’s Culture of Congestion.

1 Koolhaas, Delirious New York, 271.


figure 89 View of the elevated High Line.
figure 90  View approaching the project’s entry from the High Line.

figure 91  Perspective.
figure 92  Perspective view of project.
figure 93  Aerial view of project.
figure 94 Aerial view of project.

figure 95 Perspective drawing of Chelsea and the project site.
bibliography

books


journals


**online sources (newspapers, magazines, websites)**


list of figures


figure 22. Chelsea Axonometric. Author’s own work.


figure 26. Downtown Athletic Club diagram. Author’s own work.


figure 31. Interactive Evolution. Author’s own work.


figure 35. Architecture and Culture. Author’s own work.


figure 38. Grid Deformation diagram. Author’s own work.

figure 39. Layered Urbanism diagram. Author’s own work.


figure 43. Fluid Movement diagram. Author’s own work.


figure 49. Skyscraper diagram. Author’s own work.


figure 56. The Chelsea Club. Author’s own work.

figure 57. Map of Manhattan. Author’s own work.


figure 59. High Line Sketch Diagram. Author’s own work.

figure 60. Site Analysis - Chelsea Life. Author’s own work.

figure 61. From the High Line. Author’s own work.


figure 63-72 Programme Diagrams. Author’s own work.

figure 73 Deceit. Author’s own work.

figure 74 Exercise Palette. Author’s own work.

figure 75 Ground Floor Plan. Author’s own work.

figure 76 Urban Performance. Author’s own work.

figure 77 Hyper-activity. Author’s own work.

figure 78 Second Floor Plan. Author’s own work.

figure 79 Circulation Diagram. Author’s own work.

figure 80 Layered Urbanism at Night. Author’s own work.

figure 81 Enhanced Citizen. Author’s own work.
figure 82  Endorphin Heaven. Author’s own work.

figure 83  Third Floor Plan. Author’s own work.

figure 84  Club Lounge. Author’s own work.

figure 85  Athletes Privelege. Author’s own work.

figure 86  Fourth Floor Plan. Author’s own work.

figure 87.  The Chelsea Club Section. Author’s own work.

figure 88.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own photo.

figure 89.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own photo.

figure 90.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own photo.

figure 91.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own work.

figure 92.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own work.

figure 93.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own work.

figure 94.  The Chelsea Club Model. Author’s own work.

figure 95.  Chelsea Perspective. Author’s own work.