Delirious New York
A Retroactive Manifesto
for Manhattan

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THE MONACELLI PRESS
Europeans: Biuer! 
Dali and Le Corbusier 
Conquer New York

For New York is the Futurist city, the Baden Baden of that dying stench 
called Europe, the ironic gargantuan offspring of the senility, the debilitating 
spirituality and black breath of the European succutus.
— Benjamin de Casseres, Mirrors of New York

BIUER! AI BRING OU SURREALISM.
AULREDI MENI PIPOUL IN NIU YORK JOVE BIN INPECTID BAI ZI 
LAIFQUIVING AND MARVELOS SORS OF SURREALISM.
— Salvador Dali

Manhattan, great unfilleted sole spread out on a rock ...
— Le Corbusier

CONQUEST
In the mid-thirties both Salvador Dali and Le Corbusier — they hate each 
other — visit New York for the first time.
Both conquer it, Dali conceptually through interpretative appropriation 
(“New York: why, why did you create my statue long ago, long before I 
was born?”),1 Le (“its skyscrapers are too small”)2 Corbusier by 
proposing literally to destroy it.
Their reactions — diametrically opposite — are episodes (fueled by equal 
parts jealousy and admiration) in the long history of European attempts 
to “reclaim” Manhattan.

METHOD
“I believe that the moment is at hand when by a paranoid and active 
advance of the mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and 
thus help to discredit completely the world of reality”3 in the late
Reinforcement-therapy patients at hospital party: "sustained and potent challenge to Freud."
A plastic token for each convention remembered — smile, lipstick, small talk, etc. Such "incentives proved very effective in motivating the patients to look after themselves..." (Note large number of Polaroid cameras in foreground, ready to "record" this triumph of simulated normality.)

Diagram of the inner workings of the Paranoid-Critical Method: Limp, unprovable conjectures generated through the deliberate simulation of paranoid thought processes, supported (made critical) by the "crutches" of Cartesian rationality.
twenties Salvador Dali injects his *Paranoid-Critical Method* into the bloodstream of Surrealism.

"It was in 1929 that Salvador Dali turned his attention to the internal mechanism of paranoid phenomena, envisaging the possibility of an experimental method based on the power that dominates the systematic associations peculiar to paranoia; subsequently this method was to become the frenzied critical synthesis that bears the name of ‘paranoid critical activity.’"

The motto of the Paranoid-Critical Method (PCM) is "The Conquest of the Irrational."

Instead of the passive and deliberately uncritical surrender to the subconscious of the early Surrealist automatisms in writing, painting, sculpture, Dali proposes a second-phase Surrealism: the conscious exploitation of the unconscious through the PCM.

The PCM is defined by Dali mostly in tantalizing formulas: "the spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectifications of delirious associations and interpretations... It is easiest to explain the PCM by describing its exact opposite.

In the sixties two American behaviorists — Aylon and Azrin — invent a "reinforcement therapy" which they call *Token Economy*. Through the generous distribution of colored plastic tokens, inmates of a particular insane asylum are encouraged to behave like normal people whenever possible.

The two experimenters "posted a list of desired behaviors on the wall and then gave bonus points (tokens) to those patients who made their beds, swept their rooms, worked in the kitchen, etc. These tokens were redeemable for canteen items or for amenities such as a color TV, staying up later at night or a private room. These incentives proved very effective in motivating the patients to look after themselves and take care of the ward."

The hope that underlies such therapy is that, sooner or later, such systematic simulation of normality will turn into real normality, that the sick mind will insinuate itself successfully into some form of sanity like a hermit crab into an empty shell.

**TOURISM**

Dali’s PCM is a form of reinforcement therapy, but *in the opposite direction*. Instead of the diseased performing the rituals of health, Dali proposes a *tourism* of sanity into the realm of paranoia.

When Dali invents the PCM, paranoia is fashionable in Paris. Through
medical research, its definition has been amplified beyond simple
persecution mania, which is only one fragment of a much larger tapestry
of delusion.6 In fact, paranoia is a delirium of interpretation. Each fact,
event, force, observation is caught in one system of speculation and
"understood" by the afflicted individual in such a way that it absolutely
confirms and reinforces his thesis—that is, the initial delusion that is
his point of departure. The paranoiac always hits the nail on the head, no
matter where the hammer blows fall.

Just as in a magnetic field metal molecules align themselves to exert
a collective, cumulative pull, so, through unstoppable, systematic and in
themselves strictly rational associations, the paranoiac turns the whole
world into a magnetic field of facts, all pointing in the same direction:
the one he is going in.

The essence of paranoia is this intense—if distorted—relationship with
the real world: "The reality of the external world is used for illustration
and proof... to serve the reality of our mind..."7

Paranoia is a shock of recognition that never ends.

SOUVENIRS
As the name suggests, Dali's Paranoid-Critical Method is a sequence of
two consecutive but discrete operations:
1. the synthetic reproduction of the paranoiac's way of seeing the world
in a new light—with its rich harvest of unsuspected correspondences,
analogies and patterns; and
2. the compression of these gaseous speculations to a critical point
where they achieve the density of fact: the critical part of the method
consists of the fabrication of objectifying "souvenirs" of the paranoid
tourism, of concrete evidence that brings the "discoveries" of those
excursions back to the rest of mankind, ideally in forms as obvious and
undeniable as snapshots.

As a didactic model of such a critical operation—in this case, to prove
the paranoiac (i.e., essentially unprovable) thesis of Mary's Ascension—
Dali describes one of his dreams.

"Now that I am awake I still find this dream as masterly as when I slept.
This is my method: take five bags of green peas, collect all of them in
a single large bag and then drop them from an altitude of 50 feet; now
project an image of the Holy Virgin on the falling peas; each pea,
separated from the next one only by space, just like the particles of an
atom, will reflect a small part of the total image; now one projects the
image upside down and takes a photograph."
London Bridge rebuilt in original form at Lake Havasu, Arizona, perhaps the most blatant Paranoid-Critical journey in recent memory: dismantled stone by stone, it now spans an artificial lake, with fragments of London life — the red phone booths, the double-decker buses, the guards — adding authenticity at both ends. "London Bridge Racquet Club in foreground is part of the park complex at the West End of the bridge. Broad promenade under the east arch of the bridge leads to English Village at upper left." "Nearly a century and a half after its inauguration, three years after its demolition in England, a quarter of a world away from Scotland where its stones were quarried, London Bridge stood again, a triumph of engineering skill and determination by English and American Builders five generations apart" — and incidentally solving the Reality Shortage at Lake Havasu.
"Due to the acceleration, conform to the laws of gravity, the upside-down fall of the peas will produce the effect of the Ascension. To refine the effect even more one can coat each pea with a reflective film, which will give it the quality of a screen..."
Here, the conjecture of the Ascension is the initial paranoiac propellant; by recording it in a medium that cannot lie, that postulate is made critical — objectified, made undeniable, put into the real world where it can become active.
Paranoid-Critical activity is the fabrication of evidence for unprovable speculations and the subsequent grafting of this evidence on the world, so that a “false” fact takes its unlawful place among the “real” facts. These false facts relate to the real world as spies to a given society: the more conventional and unnoted their existence, the better they can devote themselves to that society's destruction.

TOE
Facts wear, reality is consumed.
The Acropolis disintegrates, the Parthenon is collapsing due to the ever-escalating frequency of tourists' visits.
As the big toe of a saint's statue gradually disappears under the onslaught of his devotees' kisses, so the Big Toe of reality dissolves slowly but inexorably under perpetual exposure to the continuous Kiss of mankind.
The higher the density of a civilization — the more metropolitan it is — the higher the frequency of the Kiss, the faster the process of consumption of the reality of nature and artifacts. They are worn out so rapidly that the supply is depleted.
That is the cause of the Reality Shortage.
This process intensifies in the 20th century and is accompanied by a parallel malaise:
the fact that all facts, ingredients, phenomena, etc., of the world have been categorized and catalogued, that the definitive stock of the world has been taken. Everything is known, including that which is still unknown.
The PCM is both the product of and the remedy against that anxiety: it promises that, through conceptual recycling, the worn, consumed contents of the world can be recharged or enriched like uranium, and that ever-new generations of false facts and fabricated evidences can be generated simply through the act of interpretation.
The PCM proposes to destroy, or at least upset, the definitive catalogue, to short-circuit all existing categorizations, to make a fresh start — as if