

RICHARD KOEK

NEW YORK NEW YORK

TERRA



## PREFACE

If you want to know a place, you have to walk it. Particularly such a rich and varied city as New York. You can see bits and pieces from inside a taxi or the swollen streets as you enter a theater or restaurant, all of it at a distance. Or you can dive into its complexity. Walking carries you there. New York can be frightening just by its size and number of people, or it can be exhilarating for the same reasons. The city is not one-dimensional or selective — it incorporates everything, be that in an alley or a skyline, or in its immense diversity of people.

Dutch photographer Richard Koek was compelled to come to New York. Once there, he was drawn to more personal expression than the world of assignments and studios that he knew. He began to walk. He photographed what appealed to him, what roused his curiosity. It was a lot, he photographed it all. And in brilliant color. Not all New Yorkers would think of their city as colorful, apart from a specific item or event, in fact, they would quite likely see it in black and white or in shades of grey. But Richard Koek went after light and color. It is strange but most often it takes an outsider to see the richness of detail and peculiarities of a place. Many photographers have to travel in order to be able to photograph. Koek lives in NY but he is from another world. In his obsession to photograph his chosen place, he spread out into every direction.

Look at the graceful photograph of two workers at night, mending the street, moving like ice hockey players to smooth the asphalt. Or the ubiquitous chess players in Union Square Park with their bodies absorbed in play. Or the man on a subway with his pet iguana on his back, looking right back into the camera. Or the street picnic in Morningside Park on a hot day. Or the couple in wedding gear heading up the stairs to the City Clerk's Office to cement their union, carrying their two children. Scenes of snow that clean the street then leave it a grungy mess. People buried in concentration in the central reading room of the 42nd St. Public Library. Religions, races, economic variations. Everything is taken in and given to viewers with vibrant color and an obvious love of the place.

The buildings are profound. They rise and dominate. The endless light of buildings and streets is like a fairy tale, unimaginable until you see it. These balanced with the crowds of people in flux below. It all moves from high to low, fascination on every level.

The book enters through a bridge and leaves the same way. You are swept in, there's no turning back. There's an unusual shot through the wires of the Brooklyn Bridge at the southern end of Manhattan. The color is not bright, it is a hazy day, probably early morning, the color is a slight yellow. Ships are moving up and down the river, smoke stacks and shipping cranes dot the painterly landscape. And there, patiently standing is the beloved Statue of Liberty, welcoming again and again. It is New York's gift to the world. Koek has made good use of it, offering his searching images in return.

Alice Rose George



