

# A CONEY ISLAND GOODBYE

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## INTRODUCTION

“It is with roses and locomotives (not to mention acrobats Spring electricity Coney Island the 4th of July the eyes of mice and Niagara Falls) that my ‘poems’ are competing.”

e. e. cummings (American poet 1894-1962)

The game starts with the name.

Twenty five cents and it can be yours. C’mon, go ahead, make a guess.

The answer to your questions. What was never seen before. The most amazing journey. Everything is behind this rope. Play. Guess.

Coney Island is not even an island (anymore).  
It isn’t just a beach, or a neighborhood, or a bunch of rides.

The Earthquake Float, the Skating Floor, the Falling Statue, the Human Cage, the Revolving Seat, the Funny Stairway, the Eccentric Fountain, the Dancing Floor, the Electric Seat, the Human Roulette Wheel.

She is the Land Without Shadows (*Narrioch*), for the Native American Lenape culture or *Conyne Eylandt* (Rabbit Island) for the Dutch.

Coney Island floats at the southern end of Brooklyn. South. This detail, the southernness, is important, even more than the westernness, if you want it to serve as a getaway (let’s think about Mexico for an instant in today’s American imagination). She is right at the bottom of Long Island. Part water, part land. Part here, part there.

She floats over the waters, melts with the ocean, makes you think that between her and the sea there is no difference. Almost like a big old wooden boat arriving little by little to the doors of Ellis Island, to the Forgotten Statue and to the crystal walls of the Big City.

She comes and goes like a tidal wave. One day she is so close you can touch her, and the next she is gone away in the waters.

She was in that place forever. Hanging from the land, with both feet in the water, with her back turned on the skyscrapers. She is just trying to hide, to cover, to disguise. She has a mask like all of us, and she uses it from the start. Or maybe we are the ones trying to hide her. That’s why men built a proper tie and pulled her closer.

And the hotels, and the rides and the carousels.

She is our place to hide, our resort, our escape.

But, anyway... Don't take my word for it.

## WHY CONEY ISLAND?

“Albert Einstein created the general theory of relativity and talked about this thing called gravity and Coney Island dismissed it entirely.”

Elliot Willensky, writer, in *Coney Island*,  
documentary directed by Ric Burns.

Well, the main answer may be pretty obvious: IT IS GOING TO DISAPPEAR.

As a matter of fact, while I write these lines I am watching in the news how Astroland, one of the biggest rides, is closing its doors.<sup>2</sup> Everybody around thinks that this is the last Coney Island summer as it is. “Development” plans seem to be finally winning the battle and the long postponed death of Coney Island is, finally, very close.

The importance of the disappearance of such an important place in American popular culture is, I think, vital. Not only by itself, but also because it is just another example of the different forces that are struggling in our societies today. On one side there are the huge economic powers and on the other hand there are the communities that want to maintain certain things that are meaningful for them; more than tons of money, at least.

But, as I said, it is not the only one. Just in New York there are other similar examples in which historic institutions or buildings are going to be either changed or demolished for the sake of “development.” Yankee Stadium, Shea Stadium and the Chelsea Hotel are among them. The words *luxury*, *condominiums* or *mall* are always close by in these cases.

The last of what I would call “original places” or “places with their own personality” is, at least, concerning in our societies. The need of, let’s say “Fierce Capitalism,” to swallow and use these places as a brand once they have been emptied of their own true meaning is amazing. Fierce Capitalism needs them desperately. This kind of capitalism is dumb, rootless, it does not have a true personality at all; true meaning is its most precious need. But the tragedy behind it is that this is just a violent process in itself because it destroys the meaning and just uses the shell of the True Thing like a hermit crab that needs a new place to live. Then, they burn it and throw it in the trash again.

That way, the new Coney Island won’t be like the Coney Island we know today. It will be cleaned up, fancied up, *luxurized* ... but it won’t have a personality of its own.

Furthermore, in a strange twist, it will kill the true meaning of whatever they are selling. If, for example, they succeed in turning the amazing habitat called the Chelsea Hotel into some kind of high-end, luxury (yes, that evil word again) hotel or condominium, they will use the true stories and the legends behind the building to get money from selling something that they have just killed. Incongruous, indeed. It’s just like selling the skin of a bear just as if it was the actual living animal. *Stuffed meaning*, we could call it.

The New Coney Island won’t have space for the weirdoes. Fierce Capitalism does not like freaks, unless they are funny somehow. It won’t have poor old men sitting on the benches by the beach, or Puerto Rican bands playing in the boardwalk, or working class families having a good time for a few dollars. There won’t be decadent little souvenir stores, or \$1

watermelon in a plastic glass, it won't have a sweaty fat guy with tattoos making fudge in the afternoon sun. There will be uniformed kids and immigrants working in air conditioned stores selling Nickelodeon merchandising.

People won't dress the same way, there will be no space for rarities. Rarities are not liked by capitalism. Personality is not something you can really reproduce or control, so it is no good for the needs of capitalism. But what is funny is that, like I said before, they need to create certain *personality*, they need the history they are destroying somehow. They need it to create a differentiation, to find a niche, but that is all.

Coney Island, like the Chelsea Hotel, is just a rarity. And rarities are not welcome in a Fierce Capitalism society because they show another way to do things, and, also, they don't give the amount of money they could give ... mainly because they are not just money-driven. It's a kind of gentrification. The same way the Village has been emptied gradually so artists and students had to move to Brooklyn (populated mainly by black communities, the Polish ,or Latinos) is now the new goal the "developers" have for their condos. And that pressure is starting to be felt in New York. "Everything is too expensive in Manhattan for an artist or a student," I have been told several times in the city these days. Everything has to be polished and clean for the tourists and those who can pay a lot.

One of the problems of this is that the need for a refuge, a getaway from the pressures of unified ultra capitalist society, is disappearing and this is a symbol of a dying culture because there won't be new personalities to swallow and use in a few years. The power is too *omnimodus*. It is absolute and all-embracing and forgets one of the main lessons of staying in power: You have to allow some leaking. If you don't, there will be no renovation of the system, and that is the beginning of a long death. No evolution means decay in a system that counts on gradual changes as an internal solution to maintain the power.

As we listen in Ric Burns' documentary: "Every nation needs escape from respectability, from the world of what we have to do into the world of what we would-like-to-do; from the world of duty that endureth forever into the world of joy that is permitted for a moment. Perhaps<sup>3</sup> Coney Island is the most human thing that God ever made or permitted the devil to make."<sup>-</sup>

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"It is blatant, it is cheap, it is the apotheosis of the ridiculous, but it is something more. It is like Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone<sup>4</sup> Park. It is a national playground and not to have seen it is not to have seen your own country."<sup>-</sup>

The second reason I've chosen Coney Island is the fact that its history is just a perfect reflection of the history of the USA ... even the history of world. Everything happened first in Coney Island: the "spare time society," the invention of the moving image, the electricity, the tyrants, the daring entrepreneurs, the recorded music, the automobile industry, the excess. Exuberance was a synonym for Coney Island. Luna Park's manager, Sam Gumpertz, for example, in the turn of the last century bought a dozen Somali warriors from French Equatorial Africa and an entire village of Eskimos and 300 midgets. He also hired 600 veterans of the Boer War to recreate their battles in a 12,000-seat stadium and a doctor who saved 7,500 premature babies. But in the history of Coney Island the war, the fires, the decadence are also present because they mark the decadence of the amusement park too.

As we can listen in Ric Burn's great documentary about Coney Island: "When you bathe in Coney, you bathe in the American Jordan. It is holy water. Nowhere else in the United States will you see so many races mingle in a common purpose for a common good. Democracy meets here and has its first interview, skin to skin. Here you find the real interpretation of the Declaration of Independence, the most good for the greatest number, tolerance, and freedom."-

Another reason for me to choose Coney Island as a project is because it is just a fantastic place to photograph. The amount of different characters that you can still find there is fascinating. The atmosphere of change, the colours, the light and, of course, the trillions of stories you can find there from Captain Bob, or The Warriors, or the Elephant Hotel, to Charles Feltman (the guy who is said to have invented the hot dog in the Coney Island area in 1874) is amazing. Also the mixed landscapes that you can find in a place that looks like a battleground with all the bulldozers and construction machinery sleeping and waiting in front of the old kitsch amusement areas are very interesting too. And, of course, being an international student, being in this place at this time, and in this city, is the perfect way to take a look at the heart of America today. And that is why I came here.

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## LEISURE AND SPECTACLE

“The whole idea was to have fun and spend your money  
-- no calls to duty, nobody passing moral judgments --  
though some there were who saw social decay, even the shadow  
of evil, in so much carnival exuberance. It really was  
something and very American -- the biggest, the best, open to  
everybody and profitable, proving, as nothing ever had,  
that there's truly no business like show business”

<sup>6</sup>  
From *Coney Island*, documentary part of *American Experience* series, PBS.

In *Amusing the Millions*, historian John F. Kasson <sup>7</sup> submits that amusement parks represented a revolt. Around the turn of the century, he says, a new mass culture had been struggling to be born. The battle had been waged against the over-refined, repressive ways of Victorianism. People just wanted amusement.

Another reason why I think Coney Island is very important is because it is, and it was, the perfect representation of a whole new society a hundred years ago. A society that started out in the USA, and, little by little, transformed the world. A society with some money to waste; some free time to have fun or relax in film theatres, rides or shows. The mass society that Ortega y Gasset talked about in his 1930 key book *The Revolution of the Masses* (“The civilisation of the XIXth Century is, then, of such a character that it allows the average man to take his place in a world of superabundance”<sup>8</sup>).

The new social fact here analysed is this: European history reveals itself, for the first time, as handed over to the decisions of the ordinary man as such. [...] This decision to advance to the social foreground has been brought about in him automatically, when the new type of man he represents had barely arrived at maturity. If from the view-point of what concerns public life, the psychological structure of this new type of mass-man be studied, what we find is as follows: (1) An inborn, root-impression that life is easy, plentiful, without any grave limitations; consequently, each average man finds within himself a sensation of power and triumph which, (2) invites him to stand up for himself as he is, to look upon his moral and intellectual endowment as excellent, complete. [...] (3) will intervene in all matters, imposing his own vulgar views without respect or regard for others, <sup>9</sup> without limit or reserve, that is to say, in accordance with a system of direct action.

Also in 1930, the influential British economist John Maynard Keynes, in his famous book *Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren*, wrote that “[...] for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem-how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science <sup>10</sup> and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well.”— He was one of the first scientific minds who talked about what has been called the *leisure society*. In Britain “the sociology of leisure emerged in the 1960’s largely as an offshoot from the sociology work.”<sup>11</sup>— Also, leisure is “one of the most spectacular commodities to have appeared in Western society in this generation; and, as such, it has drawn large numbers of people into

its service.”<sup>12</sup>— It is based on the principle that the wealthier societies would allow individuals to enjoy much more leisure time than today. As Meabh Quoirin from The Future Foundation writes:

“We are spending more on leisure than ever before: levels of discretionary income have risen across Europe, and the proportion of that spent on leisure has increased. The leisure industry plays an increasingly important role in European economies both in terms of spending and employment. People are increasingly seeking personal fulfilment and balance in their busy lives, and leisure providers must respond to this appropriately. European consumers – especially the young – are looking for new experiences by engaging in an ever broadening array of leisure activities.”<sup>13</sup>—

In Ric Burn’s documentary on Coney Island, we hear: “Play is not a luxury, one reformer wrote at the turn of the century, but an absolute necessity for the working world of today”. But Coney Island was more than a playground. The three great amusement parks that flourished there turned the machine of industry into instruments of play and let loose the bright forces and dark possibilities of a vast democratic culture. Coney Island astonished, delighted and appalled the nation and took America from the Victorian age into the modern world.

This concept of a *leisure society* has a lot to do with other similar terms such as *entertainment society* and connects directly with the phenomenon called *society of the spectacle*. The term comes from the work by Situationist and Marxist theorist Guy Debord in his books *The Society of the Spectacle* (published in 1967<sup>14</sup> —) and in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (from 1988)<sup>15</sup>—.

Debord states that, in our society, an authentic *social life* has been replaced with its *representation*. We no longer perceive reality by our own senses and build a reality through them. We, instead, watch television or the Internet and get a particular, a mediated, idea of reality.

Images, according to his writing, are the most important thing in our societies. They dominate the way we perceive the world. We are image consumers, but not only that, because I do believe that we are also turning ourselves into image producers thanks to the Internet and tools such as Flickr and YouTube. In fact, his fourth thesis says: “The integrated spectacle shows itself to be simultaneously concentrated and diffuse, and ever since the fruitful union of the two has learnt to employ both these qualities on a grander scale.”<sup>16</sup>— This way the controlling centre is “occult” and the spectacle has gotten to “almost the full range of socially produced behaviour and objects.”<sup>17</sup>— At the same time “media status has acquired infinitely more importance than the value of anything one might actually be capable of doing, it is normal for this status<sup>18</sup> to be readily transferable; for anyone, anywhere, to have the same kind of stardom.”<sup>18</sup>— This has very interesting connections, not only with the fiction portrayed by Orwell’s *1984* political totalitarian regime, but in our life when the media forgets and remembers things such as the war in Afghanistan, the food crisis in Southeast Asia or the amazing evidence that the economic-political system is more and more outdated.

Douglas Kellner, Professor in Philosophy at<sup>19</sup> Columbia University, in his article “Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle,”<sup>19</sup>— says that:

“During the past decades, the culture industries have multiplied media spectacles in novel spaces and sites, and spectacle itself is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life. The Internet-based economy deploys spectacle as a means of promotion, reproduction, and the circulation and selling of commodities. Media culture itself proliferates ever more technologically sophisticated spectacles to seize audiences and increase their power and profit. The forms of entertainment permeate news and information [...]”

He, building upon Debord’s ideas, wrote that: “media spectacles are those phenomena of media culture which embody contemporary society’s basic values, serve to *enculturate* individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution.” These media spectacles can be seen everyday in our television’s: the new Christmas tree at the Rockefeller Centre, the Super Bowl, the police chasing criminals...

According to Kellner, spectacle culture has expanded and is right now in every area of social life: “In the culture of the spectacle, commercial enterprises have to be entertaining to prosper and as Michael J. Wolf (1999) argues, in an ‘entertainment economy,’ business and fun fuse, so that the E-factor is becoming major aspect of business. Via the ‘entertainmentization’ of the economy, television, film, theme parks, video games, casinos, and so forth become major sectors of the national economy. In the U.S., the entertainment industry is now a \$480 billion industry, and consumers spend more on having fun than on clothes or health care.”<sup>20</sup>—

## HOW

“In Goya’s greatest scenes we seem to see  
The people of the world  
Exactly at the moment when  
They first attained the title of  
‘suffering humanity’.”

**Lawrence Ferlinghetti. A Coney Island of the Mind.**

“If Paris is France, Coney Island, between  
June and September, is the world.”  
**George C. Tilyou**, founder of Steplechase ride.

This multimedia project consists of four different parts. Following the structure of a web site, it has an introductory site with a short intro explaining the project and giving some background and a menu to choose the part you want to watch.

From there, one can access to the different sound slides that are part of the project. The first is an introduction to the Coney Island World featuring images and sounds from Coney Island and also some sound bites from people. Another one of them will be focused on **Dianna Carlin**. She is a designer that founded the association Save Coney Island, owns a store in the boardwalk and recovered a National Landmark building in the same boardwalk that was abandoned and turned it into a roller skate rink.

The second character is **Captain Bob**. He is a retired captain that today is the official tour guide in Coney Island. He visited the place as a child and has researched the history of Coney Island, even interviewing 90 year old people that used to visit the place in the old times. The third one is **about Coney Island out of season** and how different the place is in comparison to the summer.

## HISTORY

"With the advent of night a fantastic city of fire suddenly rises from the ocean into the sky. Thousands of ruddy sparks glimmer in the darkness, limning in fine, sensitive outline on the black background of the sky, shapely towers of miraculous castles, palaces and temples. Golden gossamer threads tremble in the air. They intertwine in transparent, flaming patterns, which flutter and melt away in love with their own beauty mirrored in the waters. Fabulous beyond conceiving, ineffably beautiful, is this fiery scintillation."

Maxim Gorky, *Boredom*. The Independent, 8 August 1907, 309.

"The first sign of change –writes Professor Salomon in his book about Coney Island- came in 1829. That was the year some townsmen embarked on a commercial venture. They laid a road out of the marsh, and built a bridge over Coney Island Creek (which divided the island from the mainland). And on those useless dunes –on that lonely island- they raised an inn. Called Coney Island House, this inn marked the beginnings of the shore resort."<sup>21</sup>

The history of Coney Island is, in many ways, the reflection of the History of the USA; the entertainment for the middle class, the democracy of joy, the electricity driven society. The roller coaster was invented there by a Sunday school teacher named LaMarcus Adna Thompson in 1884 and in 1897 Captain Paul Boyton opened a cluster of attractions and called it Sea Lion Park. In 1876, the centrepiece of the Philadelphia Exposition was moved to Coney -- an observation tower whose steam-powered elevators lifted people 300 feet above the sea. It was the tallest structure in the United States. The hot dog was also invented here by Charles Feltman who called them Coney Island Red hots while others, uncertain of their ingredients, called them *hot dogs*.

Ric Burns directed a great documentary about Coney Island that was released as part of PBS's American Experience series. In it we can get a very interesting explanation of the social environment that surrounded Coney Island's birth: "Once, when men wore straw boaters in summer and women long skirts and picture hats, there was a great city of enticements off to itself by the edge of the sea just nine easy miles from Manhattan. It was Coney Island and Coney Island had everything-- music, dancing, movies, beautiful women, dazzling, snow-white turrets and towers and nights lit up like a wonderland. Other cities had amusement parks, of course, but just as there was only one New York, there was only one Coney Island."<sup>22</sup>

Another main factor in the fast development of the area was the inauguration, in 1865, of a railroad to Coney Island from Manhattan. This made possible for middle class population to arrive to this part of the island while the other parts had high society hotels. As the same documentary remarks: "By the last decade of the 19th century, there were more than three million New Yorkers. A million and a half of them lived in slums, more closely herded than the people of Calcutta or Bombay. Coney Island exploded. A quarter of a million people could be found there on summer Sundays."

The history of Coney Island has been characterised by their *bosses*, or cacique style ruling characters, and John McKane was one of the first ones. He turned the place into a "sanctuary of forbidden pleasures, just beyond the Brooklyn city line."<sup>23</sup> That means that the shore was packed with hotels, saloons, brothels, music halls and the kind. Reverend A.C. Dixon was really angry about this sinful situation and wrote:

“Coney Island, our popular summer resort, has been a suburb of Sodom. Indeed, Sodom bore no comparison to this place for vileness. One cannot speak in public of the scenes which are daily enacted at that resort and by which young people of both sexes are polluted.”<sup>24</sup>—

In 1895, Captain Paul Boyton, a former Navy officer, opened Sea Lion Park which is considered the first amusement park in the area. Captain Paul Boyton had a flamboyant personality that was fuelled by his fame as a dare devil. When the park opened he had already appeared at the beach from the sea like a some kind of sea beast. He used a rubber suit, designed by Pittsburgh manufacturer C.S. Merriman, that was created as a life-saving device for steamship passenger.<sup>25</sup>—

Steeplechase Park, whose smiley logo (the face of his founder) still represents Coney Island, was the next big park to open. And it was something else. In fact, it is one of the most famous (and most influential) amusement parks in the industry's history. The owner, George C. Tilyou opened it in 1897 and its feature attraction was the Steeplechase Ride, a horse race track which wound around the Pavilion of Fun. The world was boiling with new inventions that were creating a social revolution and Coney Island exploded with them. In those times Thomas Edison's incandescent light began lighting the island, in 1896, the motion picture camera was perfected and started modern cinema's history. In that year the motion picture creation was first exhibited at Koster and Bial's music hall, which was were Macy's is today. Coney Island was in the middle of it all whether to show films or to shoot them. Three films are an example of this: *Sea Waves at Coney Island* and *Cakewalk on the Beach* (both from 1897) and *Electrocuting an Elephant* (from 1903).

It was great for Mr. Tilyou... but on May 16, 1903 Luna Park opened at night and it changed everything. Luna Park was founded by Elmer *Skip* Dundy and Frederic Thompson who leased the terrains of the old Sea Lion Park (the one founded by Captain Boyton mentioned before) and built a mad wonderland with 1221 red and white painted towers, minarets and domes. They started their careers in the entertainment business at the Pan-American Exposition held at Buffalo, New York in 1901. There they came up with the idea of creating and operating a cyclorama show called *A Trip to the Moon*. In it, the audience (30 people at once) was taken to the Earth's satellite in a ship.

His architectural *style*, or a crazy mix of them to be more accurate, was created just to astonish and amaze. Domes, nerves, crystal, metal... all covered by an bright cover of shiny lights... 250,000 of them concretely. There are several hypothesis about why they choose the name Luna (Spanish word for Moon) for their park. One of them is that Thompson named the park after his partner's sister Luna Dundy but the most probable is that they named the park after their first attraction: *Airship Luna*.

They built the park around a lagoon and incorporated the previous park's successful *Shoot-the-Chutes* ride, plus its dancing and swimming facilities and plenty of new attractions in a tremendous program of aerial and animal acts. His idea was to space cautiously all of them so that they were able to keep people moving all the time walking and consuming.

Dreamland, the third of the big rides, was opened in 1904 by Senator William Reynolds and a group of local speculators to start the glory days of Coney Island, days that were lost in a fire some years later when both Steeplechase (1907) and Dreamland (1911) were devastated by the flames. Both of them managed to reopen a little time after. Coney got bigger and more populated. The subway lines got there – “you'd get 300,000 people on a great day in 1913, you'd get a million on a great day in 1923.”<sup>26</sup>— After World War I, in

1920, the beautiful Wonder Wheel, a 150 foot tall ferris wheel, opened at Coney Island along with the subway line running from Manhattan to Coney Island. The other two remaining symbols of Coney Island, the Cyclone roller coaster (1927), and the Parachute Jump Tower (brought in from 1939 World's Fair in New York to Steeplechase Park in 1940), began operation before World War II. After the war, Coney Island began suffering seriously from a series of pressures. Air conditioning in movie theatres and then in homes, along with the advent of automobiles, which provided access to the less crowded and more appealing Long Island state parks, especially Jones Beach, lessened the attractions of Coney's beaches. Luna Park closed in 1946 after a series of fires and the street gang problems of the 1950s spilled over into Coney Island. In fact, in 1946 Luna Park closed and in 1964 the Steeplechase did too. And, although in 1962 Astroland USA opened (it closed Sunday, September 7, 2008) Coney has been dying little by little every year until today.

## **EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE**

The equipment that I have used to fulfil this project has been a digital camera, a Canon Digital Rebel XTI with four lenses: a Canon 50 mm, a Canon 24 mm (lent by University of Florida), a Sigma 18-200 and a Canon 70-300 mm. A UV filter on every lens was added too. The software that I have used has been Photoshop and Lightroom to edit the photographs, Soundslides to mix audio and photographs, Audacity to edit the audio and Dreamweaver to create the website. The audio was recorded using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-311 and a Nady SP-5 S microphone.

## **PROCESS & CONCLUSION**

Every neighbourhood or urban area has its different social layers and important figures interconnecting. But Coney Island is different. Coney Island is the mix of the mix. Coney Island is Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Afro Americans, urban bohemians, motorcycle lovers, actors, musicians, some Chinese, old timers, fishermen... And the ghost of a long time promised change that is somewhat needed and at the same time something to be afraid of.

That ghost is almost always around. Some of them, such as Captain Bob and Dianna Carlin, called it a “spirit”, a kind of feeling that you get when you are in Coney Island and that comes through the history and the characteristics of this place. What some others see is just a menace from the powerful developers or even a big dream that has been slowly dying for decades. This is something that almost any eye can see when looking at the empty spaces and lonely or abandoned old rides.

Two different forces are competing. On one side the “developers”, the “luxury condominiums”, the malls and thematic parks. On the other side those who want to develop those fundamental characteristics, Dianna Carlin spoke about it in the interview (“challenge people’s conception of reality” she said), that made Coney Island the “playground of the world.”

## **LINKS**

[www.coneyisland.com](http://www.coneyisland.com)

“Director Coney Island USA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation based in the amusement park area of the Coney Island neighborhood of Brooklyn New York. In existence since 1980, Coney Island USA has developed and produces a number of different programs including some of New York City’s best loved summer programming, such as the Mermaid Parade and the Coney Island Circus Sideshow.”

[www.astroland.com](http://www.astroland.com)

This is the website of one of the big parks in Coney Island that includes the Cyclone rollercoaster.

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/coney](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/coney)

Website of the PBS’s documentary on Coney Island in the series American Experience.

[www.coneyislandhistory.org](http://www.coneyislandhistory.org)

Website of the Coney Island History Project, and organization that define itself like this: “The Coney Island History Project, founded in 2004, is a not-for-profit organization that aims to increase awareness of Coney Island's legendary and colorful past and to encourage appreciation of the Coney Island neighborhood of today.”

[www.thecidc.org](http://www.thecidc.org)

Website of the “Coney Island Development Corporation (CIDC) is charged with spearheading and implementing a comprehensive planning process for Coney Island and creating a coordinated economic development strategy for the area. Coney Island Development Corporation was formed in September 2003 by the Mayor, the City Council and the Brooklyn Borough President.”

[www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/Coney/coney.html](http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/Coney/coney.html)

Website with some interesting images and stories about Coney Island.

<http://history.amusement-parks.com/coneyislandpages.htm>

Really interesting website about amusement parks that includes a lot of info and images about the most famous of them all: Coney Island.

[http://www.daylife.com/topic/Coney\\_Island](http://www.daylife.com/topic/Coney_Island)

Website that gathers all the news about Coney Island in the media.

[www.thorequities.com](http://www.thorequities.com)

Thor Equities’ website. This company has been buying a lot of land in Coney Island.

“Suddenly, I am at the seashore and no recollection of the train stopping. Everything is sordid, shoddy, thin as pasteboard -- a Coney Island of the mind. The amusement shacks are running full blast, the shelves full of chinaware and dolls stuffed with straw and alarm clocks and spittoons. Over it all, in a muffled roar, comes the steady hiss and boom of the breakers. Behind the pasteboard street front, the breakers are plowing up the night with luminous argent teeth. In the oceanic night, Steeplechase looks like a wintry beard. Everything is sliding and crumbling. Everything glitters, totters, teeters, titters. Everything is a lie, a fake, pasteboard. Everything is made of nuts and bolts. The monarch of the mind is a monkey wrench, sovereign pasteboard power.”

Henry Miller

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20 To know more about this go to Gotham, Kevin and Krier, Daniel. *From Culture Industry to the Society of the Spectacle: Theoretical Affinities of the Frankfurt School and the Situationist International*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA. Aug 14, 2004.

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25 More about Captain Boyton and his park at: <http://www.westland.net/coneyisland/articles/sealionpark.htm>

26 See 21.

