

Winter 2009/10

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PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS NEW YORK CHAPTER VOLUME 71 ISSUE 4 \$10

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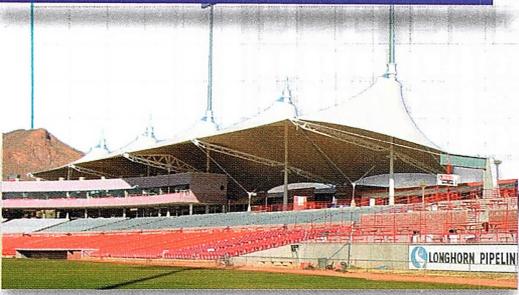
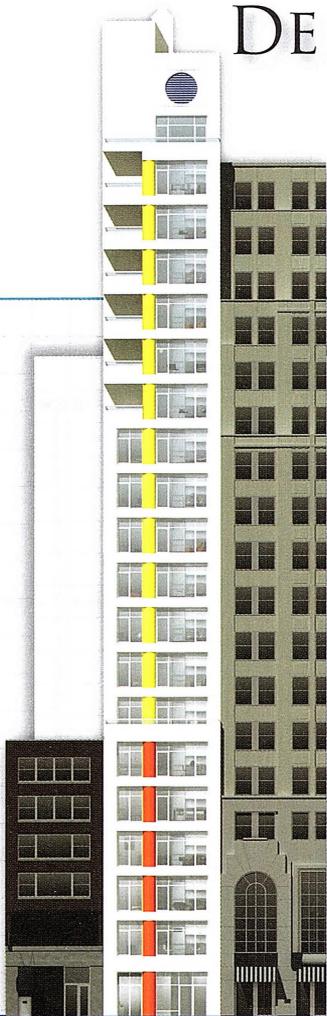
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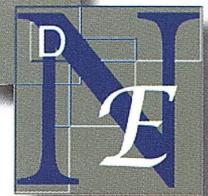
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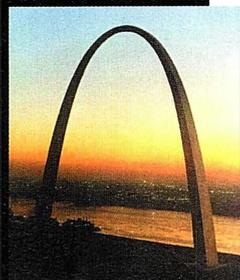


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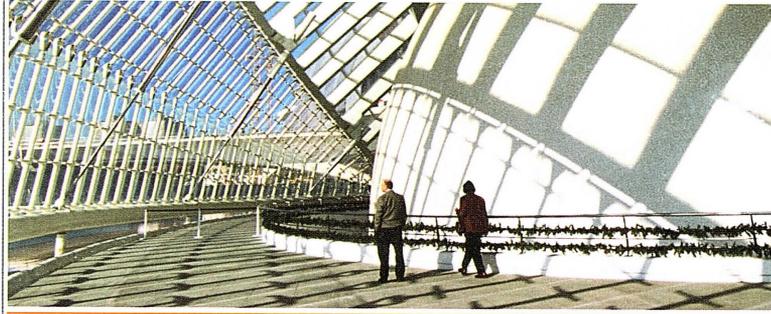
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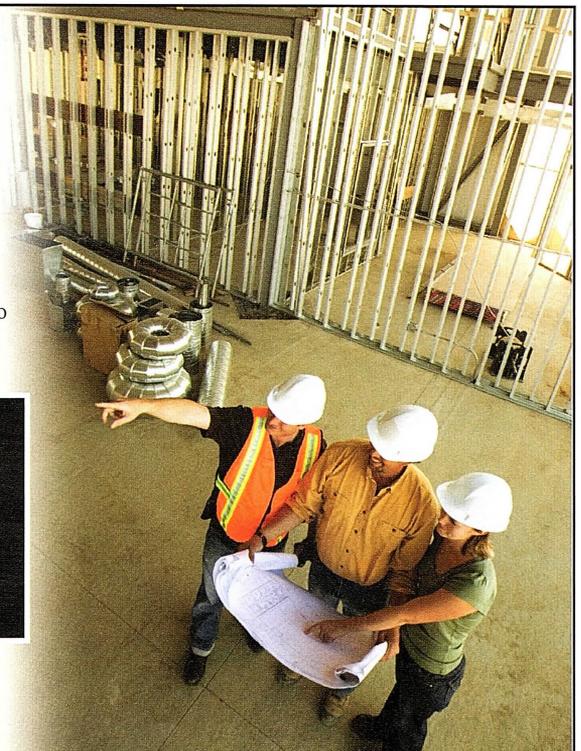
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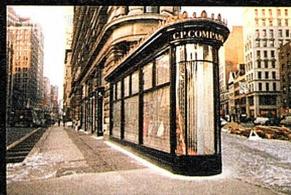
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# Design Literacy and Design Legacy

First Words  
Letters from Two Presidents

The Philip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan, CT, became a National Trust for Historic Preservation site four years ago, and since then has been the setting for many memorable events and activities. The Trust's careful stewardship of the site limits the number of visitors each day to maintain the quiet reserve of this important estate and its rich collection of structures that served as Johnson's laboratory for nearly six decades. The Glass House is now a place of inspiration for all – the landscape, art, and variety of buildings stimulate thinking about Modernism and its place in our architectural history.

On November 2, 2009, the site served as the laboratory for a group of architects, educators, and allied designers in a meeting with National Endowment for the Arts leaders Maurice Cox and Sarah Cunningham. Our objective: to investigate ways to encourage design literacy among K-12 students. Glass House Director of Visitor Experience Dorothy Dunn led our band of explorers through the variety of designs on the site and gave us the places and tools to develop program ideas for schools and communities across the country. We were joined by Eulàlia Bosch, a curator and program designer for Education and the Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, whose native city has invested in its design legacy to elevate the experiences of visitors and residents in an exciting urban environment. As the final Design Literacy event of 2009, the meeting at the Glass House was an inspiration for further collaborations and greater participation in the new Association of Architecture Organizations, which unites non-profit architecture centers and organizations across the U.S.

What a year this has been! The Center for Architecture and the AIA New York Chapter hosted three outstanding major exhibitions: "Make It Work: Engineering Possibilities," "A Space Within: The National September 11 Memorial & Museum," and "Context\Contrast: New Architecture in Historic Districts, 1967-2009." We also launched the Helfand Spotlight Series in the Margaret Helfand Gallery. These exhibitions, along with others we stage every year, are the most visible sign of our engagement in New York and our outreach to the public that the Center was created to attract.

Next year, incoming President Tony Schirripa, AIA, IIDA, will expand our merry band to include the builders and contractors so essential to our profession's accomplishments. Tony will also point the Chapter in the direction of architectural leadership for New York – and beyond.

Thanks to all Center and AIANY staff, led by Executive Director Rick Bell, FAIA, and Managing Director Cynthia Kracauer, AIA, LEED AP, for carrying out so many successful events, especially our Not Business as Usual luncheons, which keep all our members engaged in the process of "Elevating Architecture"!

Sherida E. Paulsen, FAIA  
2009 President, AIA New York Chapter



## Architects Take the Lead

Past AIANY presidential themes have celebrated the work that architects do. In 2010 it's time to celebrate the architect. As one of the worst recessions shows signs of ending, architects will be called upon to design projects that will help lead our industry and nation on the road to recovery and growth. We will also be asked to show the way in designing sustainable buildings and communities in which we live and work.

My theme, "Architect as Leader," will explore the role of the architect in the leadership of firms, projects, communities, and the political arena.

Programs throughout the year will include:

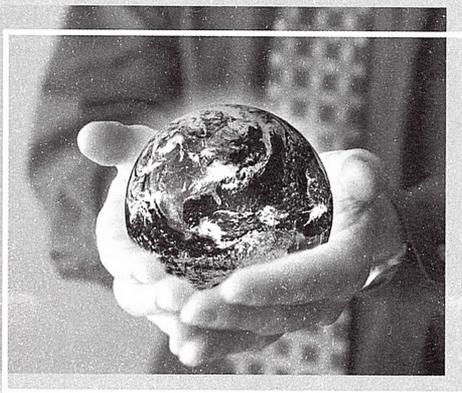
- **Leadership in Sustainable Design** to highlight the ways in which architecture contributes to building a sustainable world.
- **Not Business as Usual** to continue providing the necessary resources and support to our members during the recession.
- **Leadership Training in partnership with a major university** to explore present-day methods and challenges of running a successful business.

In October 2010 the year's theme will culminate with a major exhibition highlighting how architect and contractor come together to build the structures and neighborhoods we design. The exhibition will include interactive elements that demonstrate the close collaboration of design and construction teams during the building process, from BIM to curtain wall erection and testing. Hands-on displays will teach young people about skills such as brick laying, pouring concrete, and setting studs.

I'm looking forward to a resurgent economy, a stronger Chapter recognized for its thought leaders, and an AIA New York City that unifies the chapters in all city boroughs in 2010.

Anthony P. Schirripa, AIA, IIDA  
2010 President, AIA New York Chapter

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Successful candidates will have an opportunity to be part of higher education's trend toward multi-disciplinary curricula; and specifically, to expand upon the college's new Certificate in Sustainable Technology in which courses in Architectural Technology, Civil Engineering and Construction Management Technology, and Environmental Control Technology are integrated into a program that meets industry's need for individuals with the ability to coordinate the facility design and commissioning requirements of all these disciplines. In partnership with the other departments, Environmental Control Technology is performing applied research and developing new laboratory and instructional capacity in such areas as alternative energy systems, BIM, LEED, simulation and modeling techniques, and sensing technologies.

This is a full-time, tenure track position. Faculty members are responsible for the planning, preparation, and presentation of quality instruction. In addition, faculty members participate in department activities including curriculum development, academic advisement, and recruitment. They oversee student activities (job placement, clubs), and serve on college wide committees.

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# Take a Hike

When I began working on this issue, I had a flashback to my first apartment in Rome. The metal cage elevator to my third-floor apartment (fourth floor by U.S. standards) required a 10-lire coin to operate. The very small, artful aluminum coin was nearing the end of its life as legal tender, so it was rarely used and not very easy to come by. I hoarded what coins I would come across for trips with heavy grocery bags or luggage. What made the four-floor hikes quite bearable was the stairway – a wide, graceful spiral of white marble that swirled around the ornate metal grille enclosing the elevator shaft. It made every ascent and descent feel quite grand.

There's nothing new about grand staircases. Architects have been designing them for palaces, civic buildings, opera houses, concert halls, and the like for centuries. What is new is that even everyday stairways are now being designed to encourage people to use them – not because they're grand (though some are), but for health and fitness reasons. New York City's effort to promote the use of stairs is evident in the ubiquitous electric green posters (found even at the Center for Architecture) that declare: "Burn Calories, Not Electricity. Take the Stairs!"

The Take the Stairs campaign is only one small part of the Bloomberg Administration's efforts to create healthier buildings and urban spaces intended to get citizens more active and physically fit. And, as this issue of *Oculus* demonstrates, NYC architects are in on the ground floor, consulting and co-authoring the administration's guidelines for incorporating active design strategies in buildings and urban spaces, and making neighborhood health clinics more neighborly. Other architect-led initiatives driving public policies and industry requirements explored here include the "Green Guide for Health Care" and the New York City Regional Foodshed Project.

We also examine individual projects, ranging from the transformation of a community medical center in Pennsylvania into a major regional (and green) institution, to a hospital in Nigeria where nature is as important as technology in the healing process. But promoting health and wellness goes well beyond clinics and healthcare facilities. Inventive parks and playgrounds let bodies – and imaginations – run wild. Fresh air permeates the city's newest tennis center. The Cooper Union's new academic building sports "a sinuous staircase designed to stimulate students' heart rates – and the school's heart." A group home for adults with autism is warm and inviting, while taking into account the special sensory and organizational needs of its residents. And a master of lighting design explains the importance – and power – of light to "uplift well-being and healthiness."

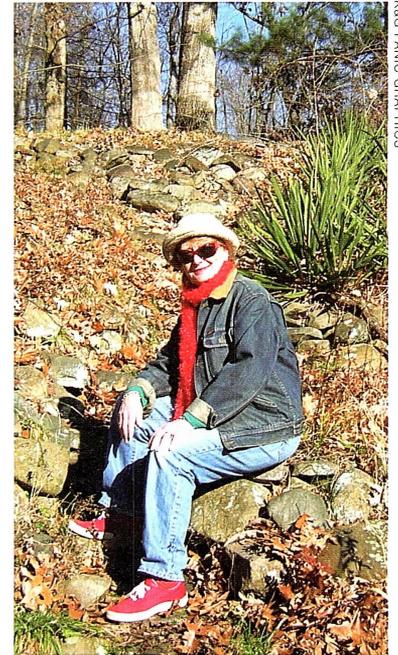
Our regular departments don't stray far from the theme. "One Block Over" looks at how expanding medical institutions on the Upper East Side are putting a strain on the urban fabric of the neighborhood. "So Says..." sits down (on a stair, no less) with Linda Pollak, AIA, to discuss her involvement with Fit City programs and NYC's Active Design Guidelines. "15-Year Watch" revisits the still lively Chelsea Piers. An eclectic mix of tomes populate "In Print+." And "Click Here" finds HealingLandscapes.org a valuable resource for information about healing gardens and restorative landscapes.

We each have our own idiosyncratic habits to maneuver around the city in ways that make our lives less stressful and even stimulating. My favorite is allowing the extra time it takes to ascend from the north end of the West 4th Street subway station and wend my way through Washington Square Park towards the Center for Architecture. There are always surprises that get my pulse racing and bring a smile to my face – good for the body and the soul.

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Editor's Note: Specific questions about the NYC Department of Buildings' green roof program noted in the Fall '09 issue's "What's Your Green Roof Worth?" can be addressed to [GreenRoofandSolar@buildings.nyc.gov](mailto:GreenRoofandSolar@buildings.nyc.gov).

Correction: The Fall '09 issue's "Interior Motives," on the development of Skanska USA Building's new office in the Empire State Building, should have credited BBG/Brennan Beer Gorman's graphics group, ThirdMark Studios, rather than the parent company.



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Editor prefers hills to StairMasters



AIA New York

# 2010

## Design Awards

Architecture

Interiors

Urban Design

Un-built Work

# Call for

# Entries

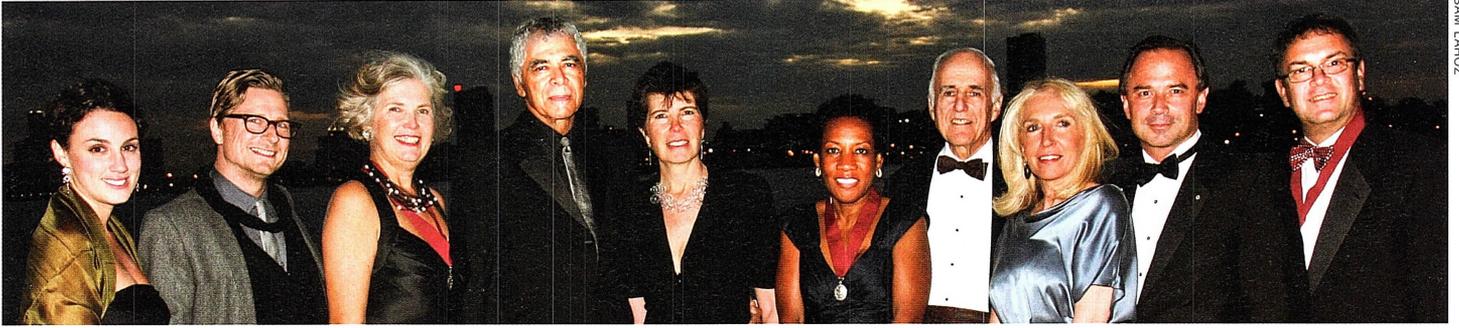
Schedule	05 Feb 2010	6:00pm	Submission Deadline (Fees and full online submission due)
	01 Mar 2010	6:00pm	Winners Announced at Design Awards Jury Symposium
	14 Apr 2010	11:30am	Design Awards Luncheon at Cipriani Wall Street
	15 Apr 2010	6:00pm	Design Awards Exhibition Opening

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# Center Highlights

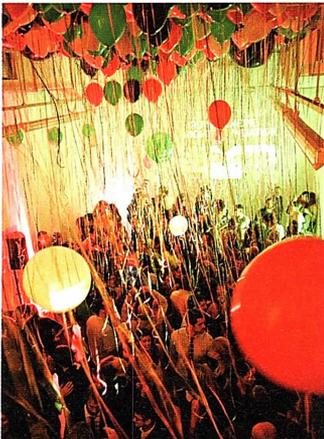
Center for Architecture

## Architecture Week 2009



SAM LAHOZ

At the 24th Annual Heritage Ball at Chelsea Piers, AIANY and the Center for Architecture Foundation's leadership gathered with honorees for a spectacular sunset on the Hudson. (l-r): Jaime Endreny, Executive Director, Center for Architecture Foundation; Charles Renfro, AIA (President's Award); Sherida Paulsen, FAIA, 2009 AIANY President; Ric Scofidio, AIA, and Liz Diller (President's Award); Roberta Washington, FAIA, President, Center for Architecture Foundation; Robert Silman, PE, Hon. AIA (AIA New York Chapter Award); Dinner Chair Laurie Beckelman, Hon. AIA; NYC Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe (Center for Architecture Award); and Rick Bell, FAIA, AIANY Executive Director. The Make it Right Foundation received the Center for Architecture Foundation Award.



SAM LAHOZ

After the ball, revelers celebrated at the Party@theCenter, the official Heritage Ball afterparty.



TYLER COBURN

Liz Diller and Ric Scofidio, AIA, kicked off Architecture Week 2009 with a program at the Center; Diller Scofidio + Renfro was honored with the 2009 President's Award.



JONAH STEEN

Architecture covered the walls of the West 4th Street subway station for "New York Now," the biennial showcase of AIANY members' work. Commuters and design fans alike stopped to look at new projects across the five boroughs.



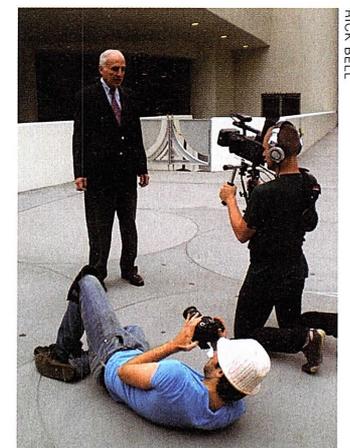
BLOORN WALLANDER

"Context\Contrast: New Architecture in Historic Districts, 1967-2009" was on view at the Center for Architecture from October 6, 2009 to January 30, 2010. Curated by Rachel Carley with photography by Elizabeth Felicella, the exhibition was designed by Moorhead & Moorhead with graphic design by PS New York. It was organized by AIANY, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Center for Architecture Foundation in partnership with the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation, and was underwritten by the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation.



EMILY NEMENS

The jury for the urbanSHED International Design Competition, organized by AIANY and the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB), were intrigued by the 164 submissions. (l-r): NYC DOB Commissioner Robert LiMandri; David M. Childs, FAIA, Consulting Partner, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Margaret Newman, AIA, Chief of Staff, NYC Department of Transportation; Alexandros Washburn, AIA, Chief Urban Designer, NYC Department of City Planning; Frank Sciame, New York City Building Congress; and Craig Dykers, AIA, MNAL, Director, Snohetta; foreground: Ada Tolla, Principal, LOT-EK.



RICK BELL

Robert Silman, PE, Hon. AIA, spent a morning at the Guggenheim with filmmakers David Krantz (l) and Ian Harris (r) as they shot footage for the Heritage Ball 2009 honoree video program; Silman won this year's AIA New York Chapter Award.



In October, AIANY Executive Director Rick Bell, FAIA, traveled to Moscow to represent AIA at the Union of Architects of Russia's 17th Annual Zodchestvo Festival; Bell with Louise Cox, LFRAIA, RIBA, Intl. Assoc. AIA, President, International Union of Architects.

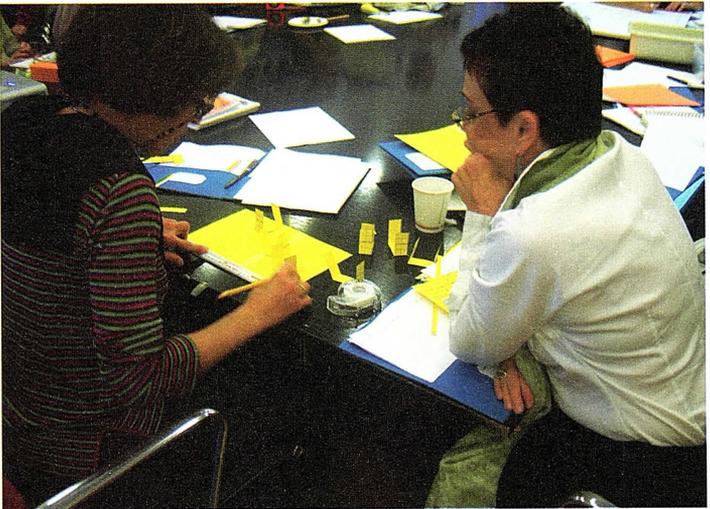


French Architect Christian de Portzamparc, Hon. FAIA, visited the Center in September to speak about his current commission for Extell's Riverside South development. In November, he returned to New York to participate in Paris/New York: 2 Metropolises in Flux program, organized by AIANY and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy.



In October, leading architects met at the Cooper Union's Great Hall for the New York Landmark Preservation Foundation's Inaugural Forum, organized with AIANY as a program of the "Context\Contrast" exhibition. (l-r): Annabelle Selldorf, FAIA, Peter Pennoyer, AIA, Richard Meier, FAIA, and Hugh Hardy, FAIA, discussed designing buildings in historic districts with Suzanne Stephens (center), deputy editor of Architectural Record.

Center for Architecture Foundation



Thirty elementary- and middle-school teachers learned how to integrate the built environment into their curriculums at the Foundation's professional development workshop in November.



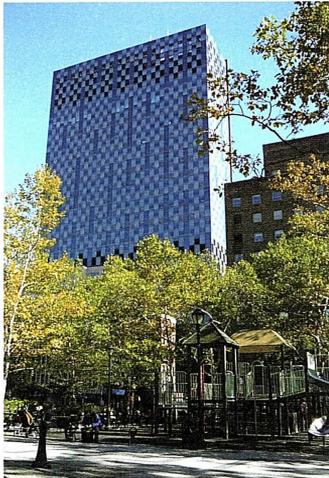
The "Building Connections 2009" annual exhibition provided a detailed look at the Center for Architecture Foundation's architecture and design methodology through a dynamic display of K-12 design work.

# Med Center Metastasis?

**One Block Over**  
By Claire Wilson

A writer of science fiction B-movies might call this scenario *The Hospitals That Ate Manhattan*: Little by little, a swath of the Upper East Side is being consumed by new research and patient-care facilities and staff and student residences being built by major area medical centers, some of which have been in the neighborhood for more than a century.

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center recently completed the 23-story Zuckerman Research Center (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) on East 68th Street, and last October it dedicated the 16-story Evelyn Lauder Breast Center and MSKCC Imaging Center (Perkins Eastman Architects) on Second Avenue at 66th Street. Weill Cornell Medical College is constructing its Biomedical Translational Research Building (Polshak Partnership) on East 69th Street, and on York Avenue in recent years it added the 15-story Weill-Greenberg Center (Polshak Partnership and Ballinger) and three new floors to the campus's main building. The Hospital for Special Surgery (Cannon Design and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson) is likewise adding three new floors to its perch over the FDR Drive; it added a single floor as recently as two years ago.



CLAIRE WILSON

**Memorial Sloan Kettering fought hard for a zoning change to allow the new research center (Perkins Eastman Architects)**

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center recently completed the 23-story Zuckerman Research Center (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) on East 68th Street, and last October it dedicated the 16-story Evelyn Lauder Breast Center and MSKCC Imaging Center (Perkins Eastman Architects) on Second Avenue at 66th Street. Weill Cornell Medical College is constructing its Biomedical Translational Research Building (Polshak Partnership) on East 69th Street, and on York Avenue in recent years it added the 15-story Weill-Greenberg Center (Polshak Partnership and Ballinger) and three new floors to the campus's main building. The Hospital for Special Surgery (Cannon Design and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson) is likewise adding three new floors to its perch over the FDR Drive; it added a single floor as recently as two years ago.

Loss of light and air is only one of many quality-of-life issues facing Manhattan neighborhoods experiencing institutional growth. Scott Spector, AIA, a principal of the Spector Group, which has worked on numerous healthcare projects such as the Mt. Sinai Pediatrics Unit and Maimonides Medical Center, notes that new structures bring about changing traffic patterns that contribute to pollution, as well as noise from

A number of projects have been shelved or put on hold because of the economy – a good thing to some residents who don't like how institutional sprawl has changed their once-charming community. Some will never get over Sloan-Kettering's demolition of the Beekman Theater, a 1952 Streamline Moderne late-period art deco movie house featured in the film *Annie Hall*. Others mourn the loss of light and air when five-story residential buildings on narrow side streets get replaced with high-rise towers. Franny Eberhardt, a member of the board of directors of the preservation organization Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District, calls the buildings "the elephants in our midst." She says that, instead of automatically choosing sprawl, "we would ask all these institutions to look at ways to maximize space in existing buildings," causing less of a strain on the fabric of a neighborhood.



CLAIRE WILSON

**The Hospital for Special Surgery (Cannon Design and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson) is adding three new floors to its perch over the FDR Drive**

construction, mammoth HVAC units, and mechanical floors. Moreover, he adds, green space is in short supply on the East Side. The verdant Rockefeller University campus is off limits to the public, and there are precious few leafy outdoor spaces otherwise. "Creating a public green area or a park in exchange for an extra 10 stories would go a long way," Spector says. "But it would not be possible without the concessions."

Some medical centers' back-office departments have been moved from the campuses, but hospital administrators maintain that research has to stay in the hospitals' backyards. A "bed-to-bench" setup keeps patients close to researchers working on experimental treatments, and fosters easier interaction between researchers and doctors that can lead to medical breakthroughs, according to Mustafa Abadan, FAIA, design partner with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architects of the Zuckerman Research Center. "I've seen this firsthand, and it happens in a very real way," he says.

Manhattan property prices make it unlikely that sprawl will continue apace even as the need for research labs seems to grow. "With the appreciation in property prices, it is very unlikely these institutions will be able to compete for land that could be used for residential development," says Abadan. "There's not going to be any westward creep other than into properties these institutions already own."

If medical facilities want to continue to expand, they will, but in a neighborhood that has a love/hate relationship with them at best. Residents recognize the moral imperative of building more medical research facilities, but some say the institutions can appear arrogant and be dismissive of neighborhood concerns. One public official summed up their attitude thusly: "What does it matter how tall a building is? We're curing cancer."

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*. She lives in Manhattan.

# So Says...Linda Pollak

KRISTEN RICHARDS



Linda Pollak, AIA, Affil. ASLA, is a principal of Marpillero Pollak Architects (MPA), a member of the NYC Design + Construction Excellence Program. MPA's current NYC public projects include Elmhurst Branch Library, Queens Plaza, New Stapleton Waterfront, and Learning Gardens for branch libraries. Pollak's research on architecture and urban landscape has been recognized with grants and fellowships from the American Academy in Rome, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Graham Foundation, among others. She is co-author, with Anita Berrizbeitia, of *Inside Outside: Between Architecture and Landscape*, and author of essays in numerous books and journals. *Oculus* Editor Kristen Richards caught up with her mid-step at her multi-staired (and remarkable) work-live studio to talk about her involvement with Fit City programs and New York City's Active Design Guidelines.

**Kristen Richards:** How did you get involved in Fit City?

**Linda Pollak:** Rick Bell saw the stairs we designed in our studio when he was organizing Fit City 1 and asked if I would be interested in participating.

One way to think about architecture in relation to fitness is to focus on stairs. As much as I'm committed to universal design and access, throughout my career there has been a definitive de-emphasis on stairs, due in part to universal design.

Today we are focusing not only on universal access but on designing for diversity, including active design: to make a great stair

and get people to want to use it, while also providing for those people who cannot.

**KR** Has there been any resistance to this because of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

**LP** In the Active Design Guidelines (ADG) presentation at the 2009 AIA conference in San Francisco, New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Commissioner David Burney, FAIA, said the DDC and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) were initially concerned that ADG might be in conflict with ADA principles. However, those departments found that creating a barrier-free pedestrian environment benefits all users.

It could be that there are different issues at the scale of architecture. Certainly there are aspects of ADA guidelines that contribute to minimize physical exertion. I think it is possible to embrace a different paradigm that has more to do with diversity than universality in terms of making an engaging environment for people of different capabilities – young, old, on wheels, on foot.

In the schematic design phase of the Elmhurst Library, we developed the entry sequence so people would encounter the monumental stair first. And John Krebel in the DDC Office of Sustainable Design said, "That's a sustainable thing to do because more people will take the stair and fewer will use the elevator."

**KR** And that will save energy.

**LP** Yes. And later I realized, in speaking with DOHMH Deputy Commissioner Dr. Karen Lee, one of the authors of ADG, that there is a synergy in something that uses less non-renewable energy and is better for the health of every person walking up the stairs. So the question for designers is: How do you make it desirable to be physically active? That question may have different implications for design at different scales.

For example, small structures in parks or outdoor spaces can provide an anchor for activities. Our firm's project for the Meadow Structure at the Staten Island Children's Museum is a jumping-off point to encourage physical activity in the use of outdoor spaces.

**KR** It gives you a destination within the park.

**LP** Yes – a jumping-off point to new experiences, and a position from which you can become more aware of your environment. Another example: When we were siting the outdoor classroom at Eib's Pond Park, we met with science teachers at P.S. 57,

# AIA, Affil. ASLA

which borders the park. They said, "That's too far to get there and back in one class period." So we sited it on a closer pond that made it a five-minute walk. It's far enough to feel like you're in a different place, yet close enough for classes to use it on a regular basis for environmental education.

Anita Berrizbeitia led a series of landscape architecture design studios at University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia that I participated in. She worked with Dr. Angela Smith, an orthopedic surgeon interested in active design, looking at how to maximize opportunities to encourage physical activity among kids in their regular outdoor environment, not only in parks. One studio focused on vacant lots in an underserved part of the city, looking at the potential to insert exercise stations and special little run-around parks. It gave me another perspective.

**KR** How do you think New York City compares to other cities in terms of focus on active design?

**LP** The city's bicycle and pedestrian initiatives are truly remarkable in terms of the amount of change that's being supported and affected by the New York City Department of Transportation and the Department of City Planning (DCP). This transformation was leveraged by the City bringing in [Danish architect and urban designer] Jan Gehl, and visiting and using examples from European and South American cities to see what works.

The four Fit City programs have been visionary and have contributed to a greater awareness. To have the leaders of the Departments of Design and Construction, Buildings (DOB), City Planning, Transportation, and Health & Mental Hygiene focus on design and collaborate to make the city a healthier, more accessible place where people want to be has made a big difference. And certainly the Bloomberg Administration and PlaNYC have supported this interagency collaboration. Being able to hold events such as Fit City at the Center for Architecture has made a significant difference as well, in supporting the sharing and building of knowledge.

**KR** What can New York do better?

**LP** There could be more interdisciplinary discussion about how active design is different in thinking about building, landscape, and city, and how such thinking could help to achieve integrated environments. Many of the guidelines addressing urban design and planning have to do with horizontal circulation, while those for buildings have to do primarily with vertical circulation.

There are opportunities to address active design in horizontal circulation in buildings, making sure the corridors have light and are animated, active places. It is also worthwhile to look at the integration of

urban spaces, like the boundary between a park and a street, which is also a boundary between agencies, as a place where something can happen. Think of movement not only in terms of circulation, but as an integrated experience of architecture, city, and landscape, and consider how you're constructing that experience as you move from sidewalk to checkout station to stair, and so on.

There's a history in architecture of using design strategies based on movement, such that people realize the order of a space as they move through it, putting it together over time.

A lot of things in the ADG are seeds for further study, such as how to create and support interactivity between buildings and streets. What is exciting for designers is that they focus on the need for environments that people enjoy being in and moving through, in support of healthier living.

The idea that we need to make great places to encourage people to move around and not sit in front of their televisions is particularly important in underserved populations. The ADG itself is a testament to New York City's progressive approach. I think we face a challenge in realizing a walkable, bikeable city in some of the neighborhoods that need it the most.

**KR** Do you think the ADG is just the first step into addressing these issues?

**LP** It is a very big first step. The guidelines are intended to be strategic rather than prescriptive. Obviously, you have to show it would be cost-effective and sustainable in different ways. Knowledge sharing will continue to be important – that's why the charrette at the Center last January, set up to test the guidelines, was illuminating.

**KR** Were some of those findings incorporated into the final version?

**LP** I think the charrette's focus on case studies helped the ADG authors to confirm and expand on some of the strategies that had been identified through different kinds of research. I also think that some version of the charrette could be helpful in introducing practitioners and clients to the guidelines. As participants, we were able to see how the guidelines could work in different situations: for example, how it could be possible to transform an existing building to make it a more appealing place to move through, whether by using daylight, privileging one of the stairways, making nicer surfaces, or bringing in art.

Case studies can also help convince a client that something is doable and worth doing. For example, the way Morphosis used the skip-stop elevator in the new Cooper Union building [see pg. 26] is not coercive, because the elevators open onto great lounges on alternate



# GREG D'ANGELO

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floors – spaces for social interaction. There's nothing punitive about these spaces.

The New York Times building has, instead of the corner office, open offices with a connecting stair. It's integrating social and physical life, and encouraging people not to e-mail from their desk but to run up or down stairs, and talk to somebody.

**KR** Quite a concept!

**LP** Right! And because you make something that's a pleasure an integral part of their workspace, people are more likely to do that. It's the crossover, the integration, that allows it to become cost-effective. Similarly with Cooper Union: the stairs are a social stage, a gathering space that is also circulation space.

What's important about both projects is they contribute a technological innovation that addresses a code issue that would otherwise preclude having stairs open on multiple floors in support of social and physical connection. The New York Times stairs have a horizontal fire shutter at every second floor. In case of a fire at the Cooper Union building, fire shutters drop down all around to isolate the 11-story stair space. Both projects required the architects to work with the DOB; it's innovation that addresses policy. Change has to happen at the level of policy.

**KR** The trajectory we're on...

**LP** Go to the DDC website [[www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)] and see how many different guidelines there are. To accomplish them all in a cost-effective way, it is necessary to integrate them early in the design process: to make physical activity central to the project approach, not an extra.

By Avani Parikh, AIA

# The Architecture of Wellness

- To Move a City 18**
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Health and wellness occupy a unique place in the American imagination. Advances in the life sciences and concerns about rising medical costs are gradually reorienting healthcare from cure to prevention. The body and mind are extraordinarily complex and involve a delicate balance. All of us age, and a multitude of things can go wrong.

As John Currie recently observed in *The Fourth Factor: A Historical Perspective on Architecture and Medicine*, the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates identified three factors as constituting the art of medicine: the disease, the patient, and the physician. Currie proposes that the fourth factor is the environment in which the healing arts are exercised.

Can architecture and design strengthen our bodies and calm our minds? Can they contribute to the prevention and cure of ailments? The task is to make fitness an integral part of design, rather than an external function.

An analogy with the organic food movement may provide some clues. Over the years, as studies have shown a connection between nutrition and health, many of us have learned to fuse our culinary desires with our wellness responsibilities. A little thought reveals a temporal scale in the mingling of these dimensions: from a snack to a whole meal to our intake over a day, a week, and a month. Rather than an afterthought, a healthy diet has become an integral part of the language of food across all cuisines.

We dwell in the physical environment at various spatial scales: room, building, neighborhood, city, and region. At each level, the questions posed above arise in a fresh way: Can a room/building/neighborhood/city/region be designed to make our bodies and minds healthier? Can this concern permeate the language so it becomes part of architecture's unconscious substrate across all styles?

The quality of light in a room, the ease of using a stairway in a building, the presence of trees and parks in a neighborhood, the pedestrian walkways and bike lanes in a city, the systemic balance between city and country in a region – all are means to inspire healthy habits in a structural way. Such measures can serve as a starting point for a comprehensive rethinking of architecture and city planning. This reexamination would have to include public health officials, as the complexity of physical and mental wellness issues would otherwise be overwhelming. To their credit, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the AIANY Chapter instituted Fit City four years ago to promote physical activity through design.

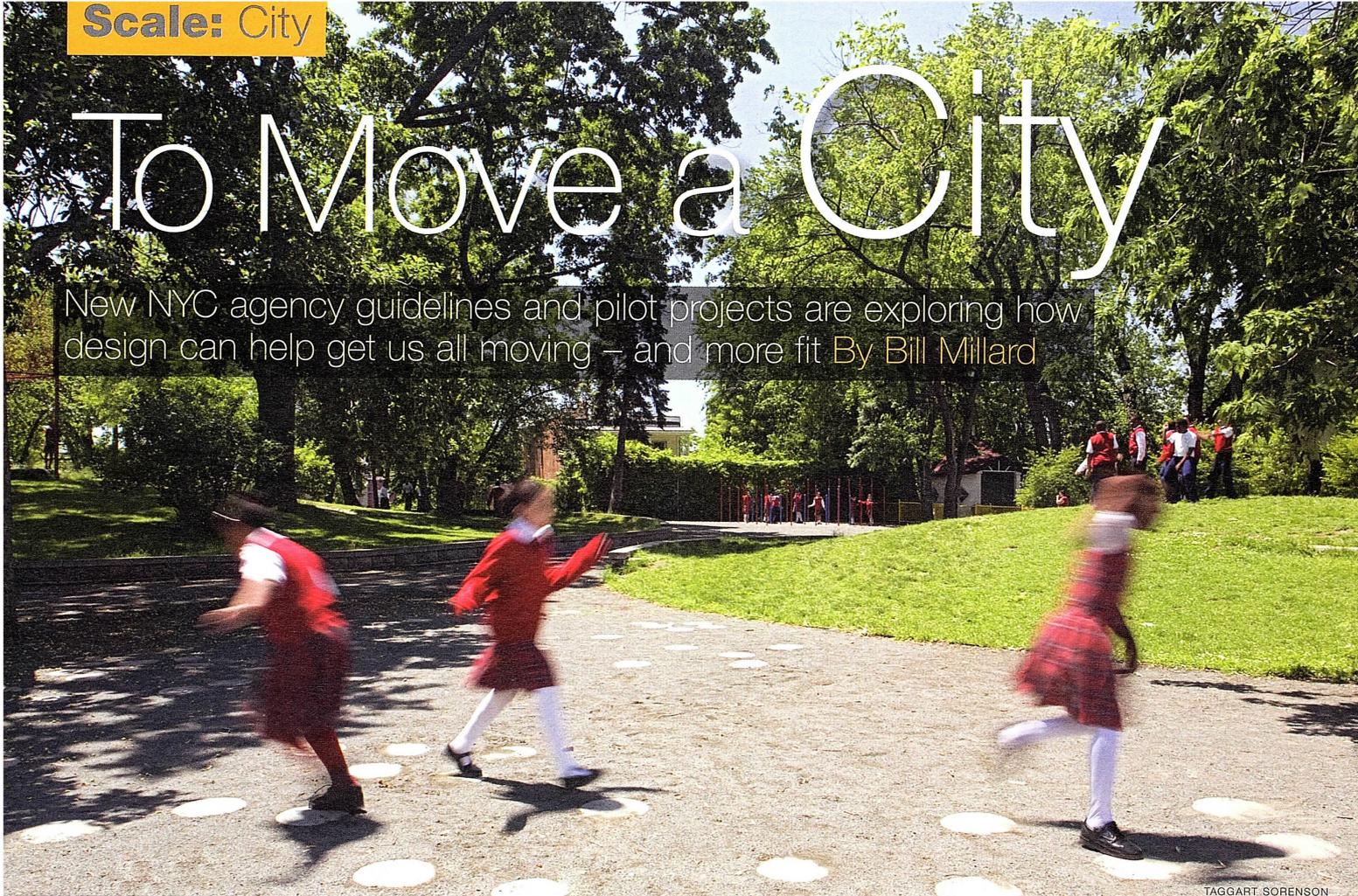
Wellness is only part of the story, however. If architects can make the built environment kinder and gentler for the elderly, infirm, unwell, and disabled, our spaces would become that much more livable. Just as furniture designers have created flexible chairs that are ergonomically sound, so our various spaces can incorporate contextual parameters that adapt to differing needs in the population.

Architecture has always been interdisciplinary, but it has seldom placed health at the center of its mandate. Will we now take on the challenge to create an adaptable architecture that promotes wellness and helps people lead longer, richer lives?

Avani Parikh, AIA, is an architect with her own consulting practice that specializes primarily in the field of healthcare. She is co-chair of the AIANY Health Facilities Committee.

# To Move a City

New NYC agency guidelines and pilot projects are exploring how design can help get us all moving – and more fit By Bill Millard



TAGGART SORENSON

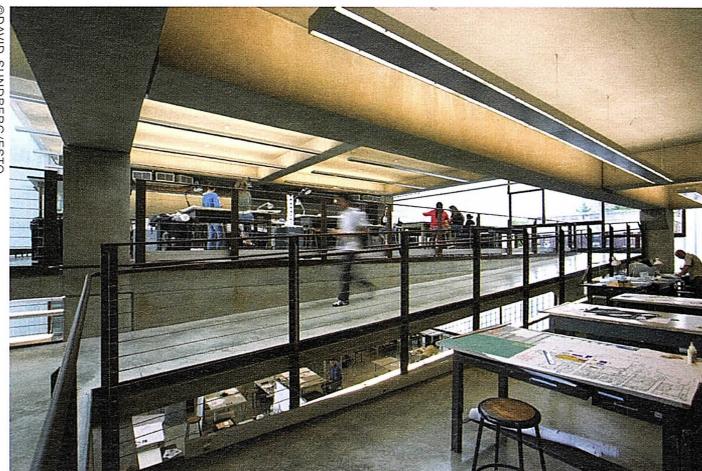
Human bodies evolved to move, not sit behind monitors and windshields. They function better in an environment built for activity than one conducive to sloth. A new public-education document spurred by the AIA/ANY/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Fit City conferences, “Active Design Guidelines: Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Design” (ADG), uses this common-sense principle to link public-health research with practical strategies. Like the high-performance building and infrastructure guidelines published by the Department of Design and Construction (DDC), ADG disseminates best practices developed by city agencies, practitioners, and academics.

Along with the revised “NYC Street Design Manual” and the Take Care New York 2012 policy at the DOHMH, the ADG reflects efforts by city agencies across the board to make physical activity a priority. Among major contributors (including scholars at three major universities, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Buildings), the Department of Transportation (DOT) has also taken highly visible steps to reclaim streets for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists, instead of privileging motor vehicles alone. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation has been broadening its design philosophy to balance athletic uses, safe space for quieter recreation, and natural ecosystems. The Department of City Planning (DCP) is enacting the sustainable-urbanism philosophy of PlaNYC 2030, ensuring all residents access to recreation and nature.

At Fit City 4 last June, Health Commissioner Thomas Farley, MD, MPH, stressed how 20th-century building patterns designed activity out of Americans’ lives. The goal is now to design it back in. Urban

living involves tight space and a fast pace, neither of which is intuitively healthy, but what we now know about health effects at both single-building and neighborhood scales suggests that New York’s physical features can combine with progressive design to improve citizens’ condition. If the public ideal a century ago was the City Beautiful, today’s strategies are building the City Vigorous.

© DAVID SUNDBERG/ESTO



**Above: Pratt Institute School of Architecture, Brooklyn, by Rogers Marvel Architects: Ramps are an example of synergistic design; they contribute to an inclusive, universal environment while providing a non-mechanized means of vertical transport, thereby encouraging physical activity and saving energy at the same time Top: Immaculate Conception School play area, Bronx, by Katie Winter with Bothwell Site Design: Small-scale interventions can have a big impact on children’s physical activity. The outdoor area of the Bronx school is subdivided to encourage different types of active play**

## Better-than-average isn't good enough

"The fact is that New York City is healthy compared to other parts of the country," notes Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, "and compared to the suburbs and exurbs." City parks during his youth, in the era of middle-class abandonment and public underfunding, could be hazardous, he says, but expanded youth fitness programs targeting underserved neighborhoods express the department's new philosophy, "No child left indoors." He is particularly proud of Swim to Safety, a partnership with the Department of Education to provide potentially lifesaving swimming lessons in indoor pools during midday, when usage is light.

Another goal, he says, is to make parks more welcoming to older New Yorkers by increasing safety and providing accessible facilities such as fitness walks. "We need to get away from the idea that seniors want to play shuffleboard," Benepe says. "I don't think we have a shuffleboard court left in this city. They want to walk; they want to bicycle. Most don't consider themselves seniors any more." Getting the most out of facilities, he adds – the "if we build it, will they come?" problem – depends on flexibility. "The best park is one that's used a lot; we've learned that from people like [sociologist and author William] Holly Whyte. If you want a park that doesn't succeed, give it one purpose, and have that be something hard to do."



ELIZABETH FELICELLA

**Diane von Furstenberg Studio Headquarters, Manhattan, by WORK Architecture Company: Articulated and unique stair compositions encourage use**

Density and transit-mode options make NYC exceptionally walkable. Still, an obesity rate below the national average isn't much of a laurel to rest on. DOHMH Deputy Director, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, Karen Lee, MD, MHSc, FRCPC, cites findings that about two-thirds of American adults – and close to 60% of New York adults – are overweight or obese; among children the prevalence is higher than the national average. The epidemics of obesity and Type 2 diabetes have multiple causes, including caloric overconsumption and underexpenditure, dietary changes, and sedentariness; obesity's effects also include asthma, heart disease, and some cancers. "Traditionally we thought of obesity-related behaviors as people's individual lifestyles," says Lee, but "scientific evidence shows that our environments really are critical in helping shape these behaviors."

Lee highlights a historical example of how redesign improved public health: struggles against infectious disease in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Streets full of garbage, sewage, animal waste, contaminated water, and poor living conditions bred cholera and tuberculosis,

the original "diseases of design," remedied by sanitation, water systems, ventilation, and light. Today's equivalents are inactivity and poor diet, second only to tobacco use among causes of premature death in the U.S. Evidence-based architecture and urban design, including simple measures that encourage stair climbing, as well as safe sidewalks and protected bikeways, can improve people's energy input/output balance by reintegrating exercise into daily life.

## Take the stairs, take the bike, take heart

Margot Woolley, AIA, assistant commissioner in DDC's Architecture and Engineering Division and a spearhead for the ADG project, recommends a host of practical features, including wide medians and curb extensions for easier street crossing; prominent, attractive staircases, including two- or three-floor internal convenience stairs in larger buildings; upgraded circulatory spaces, with destinations such as cafeterias positioned to encourage walking; and bike facilities, including storage and showers.

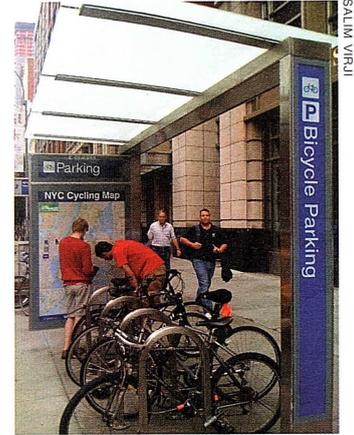
Riverside Health Center, a DOHMH facility on the Upper West Side, won a precedent-setting LEED Innovation Credit by including such features in its renovation by 1100 Architect, with DDC guidance.

Stairs are particularly cost-effective. One study among Harvard alumni found that men who climb at least eight flights a day have a 33% lower mortality rate than nonclimbers. Skip-stop elevators, as in the new Cooper Union Academic Building by Morphosis and Gruzen Samton (see pg. 26), are another subtle way to steer people toward stairs. (Slow or small elevators have the same effect but, as Woolley notes, "Developers may not feel good about some things that are more extreme.")

DOT Assistant Commissioner of Urban Design and Art Wendy Feuer, MA, links her department's ADG contributions with the Street Design Manual and the Safe Streets for Seniors program as comprehensive efforts to reshape streets to welcome all citizens. Citing research by the University of Utah's Reid Ewing, Ph.D., on the "five Ds" of compact development (density, diversity, design, destination accessibility, and distance to transit), Feuer says, the least understood is design. Federal guidelines tend to be based on non-urban areas, but New York is now piloting standards for balanced features creating synergies among activity, sustainability, and universal design.

Noting that changes invariably arouse resistance until time makes benefits obvious, Feuer cautions, "It took 40 years for Copenhagen to become a much more bike-oriented city. Our commissioner [Janette Sadik-Khan, Hon. AIANY] likes to work faster than that, but this change is not going to happen tomorrow. It won't take 40 years, either."

**Bill Millard** is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in *Oculus*, *Icon*, *Content*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, and other publications.



**Cemusa bicycle shelter by Grimshaw: Adding infrastructure like well-designed bus and bicycle parking shelters to city streets can help encourage active transportation and transit use**

SALIM VIRJI



STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT



# Clean Bill of Health

Stephen Yablon Architect finds the right treatment for New York's ailing ambulatory-care clinics  
By Richard Staub

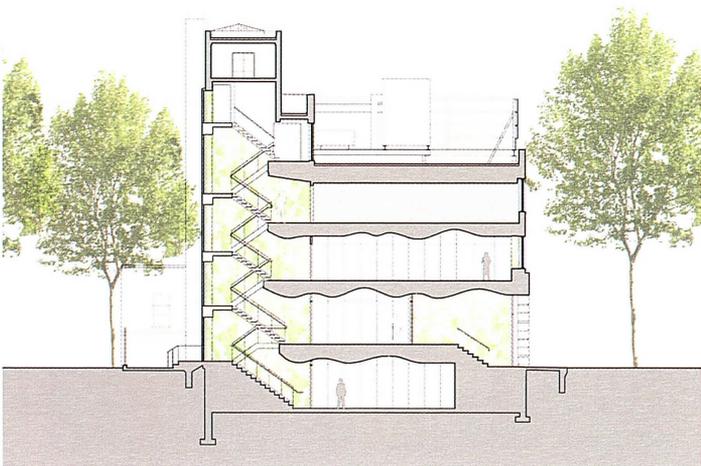
Institutional-looking they're not. Light-filled, welcoming, and design-forward? Absolutely. The two ambulatory-care clinics designed by Stephen Yablon Architect (SYA) for New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) turn a new leaf for the city's healthcare facilities. And along with these comes another achievement: the recently completed "Design Guidelines for Ambulatory Health Care Clinics," prepared by an SYA-led team with the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) and DOHMH to help other architects develop functional, attractive clinics.

An important booster for the clinics and guidelines is DOHMH Deputy Commissioner for Administration Scottie Owings-Leaks, who oversees the development and maintenance of the agency's facilities. Deputy commissioner for eight years, Owings-Leaks had previously worked in the field for 22, and got to know just how inhospitable and confusing the clinics could be.

While most of the DOHMH's ambulatory clinic facilities date from the 1930s, the department's role in disease prevention began with its founding in 1866 to stem a great outbreak of cholera and, after that, typhus, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and other epidemics. At the turn of the last century, the DOHMH combated the very high child mortality rate and, in later decades, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"These clinics perform an important role in treating people with communicable diseases," says Owings-Leaks. "But when the infected person is embarrassed by an STD or other infection and is reluctant to seek help, it doesn't help if the clinic feels unwelcoming and is difficult to navigate."

The first of the two clinics SYA designed under the DDC's Design and Construction Excellence program was the Central Harlem STD Clinic. While Stephen Yablon, AIA, relished the idea of working in the McKim, Mead & White building – the clinic occupies the ground floor – he also understood the challenges. One was to get patients through the building's main lobby to the clinic entrance at the far side. To do that, he moved the reception desk to one side so that people enter-



STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT

**Above: A section of the Chelsea Health Center illustrates how the renovation connects the clinic to the park with a new glass-enclosed stair, undulating wood ceilings, and perimeter "park walls" Top left: Waiting rooms and circulation in the center have park views and "park walls" that evoke the surrounding sycamore trees Top right: Natural shapes and materials and high-gloss white walls in the lobby express the connection between nature, health, and the advanced care offered there**

ing the lobby could see directly across to the glass doors of the clinic entrance. His second task was to soften the clinic environment, bring in natural light, and introduce an easy-to-follow floor plan.

The skill with which SYA resolved those challenges led DDC to award the firm a second clinic, the Chelsea District Health Center. As with Harlem, outlining the project's requirements was one of SYA's first steps. But, as Owings-Leaks realized at the project's start, the basic exam room in doctors' offices doesn't change much in size, materials, and equipment. Indeed, the STD, chest, immunization, dental, and employee health clinics, along with support spaces found at all 10 DOHMH ambulatory clinics, have the same general requirements to comply with standards set in N.Y. State Department of Health Article 28. So DOHMH and DDC commissioned a team led by SYA to come up with design standards applicable to all DOHMH ambulatory clinics. "Whenever there's a repeat typology, it pays to learn from experience," says DDC Commissioner David Burney, FAIA, "which we discovered in creating guidelines for the city's libraries and firehouses. The architect gets it right the first time, and there's a savings in the number of change orders."

The team, which included medical planning consultant James C. Snyder, AIA, and the engineering firm Ambrosino, DePinto & Schmieder, worked closely with the DOHMH and DDC. The guidelines outline the recommended patient flow, adjacencies, room size, equipment, security, and furnishings as well as such "specialties" as bulletin boards, coat hooks, and paper towel dispensers. And one section covers material performance qualities and mechanical system

ration. "We felt that bringing nature indoors would be a healing gesture, so we were always trying to strengthen that link."

Circulation begins with the lobby and a welcoming kidney-shaped reception desk where staff can orient visitors. Large glass doors behind the desk lead to a new main stair and patient areas, whose perimeter windows offer generous views of the park. The straightforward plan is easy to follow, with extra cues reminding patients where they are throughout their visit.

The most dramatic feature is the tiled interior perimeter wall that runs along the waiting areas and up the main stairwell. Taking his inspiration from the bark of the park's sycamore trees, Yablon created an abstract, camouflage-like pattern in pale greens, tans, and grays that offers a subtle link with the outdoors. The clinic has an undulating slatted-wood ceiling throughout the public areas, reflective white paneling for contrast on the corridor walls, and floor-to-ceiling windows in the stairwells that look out on the green lawn and play areas behind the building. The project's sustainable features will qualify it for a LEED-CI Gold rating.

The firm employed similar gestures in Harlem, putting the waiting area near the windows in the back of the space. But since the view was of a service alley, SYA covered the windows with translucent panels embedded with an Ithemba bead mesh created by South African women living with HIV and AIDS. Natural finish porcelain tile and bamboo paneling line the corridor walls on one side, with glassy white epoxy-coated walls on the other. The project will meet NYC's High Performance Guidelines.



STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT

**Left: Natural and high-tech materials interlock in the waiting/education area to evoke warmth and the state-of-the-art medical care provided at the clinic**  
**Below: The Central Harlem Health Center lobby features a luminous oval ceiling set within a bamboo and tile space to create a welcoming entry experience**

standards, with New York City's sustainability goals and ADA compliance informing all of the recommendations.

"While developing these guidelines, we put ourselves in the place of an architect or engineer who would come to this building type for the first time," says Yablon. "So we described, for example, the qualities the casework and countertop materials should have, but never specified a particular material. We wanted to be as thorough as possible without telling other designers how to do it."

The clinic project in Chelsea gave SYA the chance to test how successful they'd been. The three-story Art Deco brick building, set in Chelsea Park on Ninth Avenue and 28th Street, called for a gut renovation, and SYA is now just concluding the construction document phase. As with the Harlem STD clinic, Yablon first addressed the entry and plan, but this time the park's presence provided additional inspi-

ration. "So how well did the guidelines work? "In designing Chelsea, we've realized we should allow for more flexibility in the room layouts and for overflow times when there are greater demands for immunization," says Yablon. "But for the most part we were on target and the project could start quickly." And Burney concurs. "These are now very service-oriented, inviting facilities," he says. "The clinic staff has been very enthusiastic, and people feel comfortable coming to them. We've accomplished a complete turnaround."

**Richard Staub** is a marketing consultant and writer who focuses on issues important to the design and building community.

STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT



# Child's Play

Today's best parks and playgrounds are designed to encourage the imagination to run wild – for young and old alike

By Alec Appelbaum



ALEC APPELBAUM

**Tompkins Square Park: with open paths across the park and across the avenue, the playground offers clear sight lines and equipment for different ages and temperaments**

Playgrounds and small parks, when they first began spreading across the city, served to dampen the risk of kids running wild. Today they serve to excite kids to the idea of running around at all. When kids of all incomes get video games as rewards and see indolent, overweight adults as role models, how can a playground pull them into a more vigorous life? And when adults come from a stew of cultures, each with distinct sports and outdoor playing areas, how can a small park induce active living for all?

Jane Addams, the pioneer of the settlement-house movement who tried to create playgrounds for immigrant children around the turn of the last century, thought she had locked in a formula for containing rambunctious instincts. "The new growth in the plant swelling against the sheath, which at the same time imprisons and protects it, must still be the truest type of progress," she said. For today's landscape architects and playground designers, this philosophy is either winsome or offensive. Immigrants and disenfranchised people face no shortage of constraints and distractions. Old playground plans keep kids in a gated zone where their bodies can go up and down, but not in many other directions.

Playgrounds have to captivate kids, and parks have to engage adults for whom exercise is one of many leisure-time options. Too often, however, playgrounds and parks feel like enclosures – less open than the virtual worlds on an iPhone, less comforting than the pastel colors of a cupcake. The mandate for designers is to attract and compel kids whose frame of reference is not a fire escape, but a screen.

Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe construes this social challenge as a call to designers: "We have to design parks for the sports people want to play," he says. But his most exuberant strategy – to put parks on any parcel he can buy – only creates the platform for this campaign. And his intrepid work following citywide trends leads to astute choices, like the dedication of three cricket fields when membership in city cricket leagues grew to more than 4,000, but does not entice the inactive.

A visit to an older playground nestled in a cluster of brick towers reinforces the idea that kids need to know their place. Chelsea Park, plopped in the middle-income Penn South complex, groups its slides and bridges in a small radius. Two chin-up bars of uneven height and two slanted sit-up benches stand a short walk from a basketball and handball court. The planes are mostly flat and the activity mostly contained.

A newer playground a few blocks away shows how open space can get a toehold amid all the tweets. At Chelsea Waterside Park, designed by Thomas Balsley Associates, a range of twisting steel ladders and tensile rope bridges, with a sandbox, can shift with kids' weights and strengths. Like the ballyhooed "Imagination Playground" that David Rockwell, AIA, has agreed to design, this place changes form and rhythm with each child who uses it.

What's key is that children can use this equipment aggressively or demurely, and can change tack in an instant. Their vistas are always open. On a recent visit my daughter felt timid: offered the pull-up bar and narrow ladder, she still chose to play house. But even this meant imagination. At the top of a staircase the designers added binoculars pointing

to a sandpit, making the nearby waterfront and range of surfaces part of the game.

Chelsea Waterside Park benefits from the flush coffers of the Hudson River Trust, but refurbished city playgrounds like the one in Tompkins Square Park, an East Village hub, provide similar equipment. Here, kids of different ages and temperaments use equipment like hypertext: they can make it move in different directions and assay it from different angles. The slides turn to arrows at their bases; the climbing structures (nobody calls them “jungle gyms” anymore) include irregularly shaped toeholds on the sides and curved benches under the platforms for a variety of approaches.

In an age of distraction, a great playground immerses kids in the roulette of elements. Water features drip on the unprepared, and details in the equipment invite kids to test their limits more ambitiously as they grow. This invites older kids to tutor younger ones or to show off, cutting across class and gender lines. In Jane Addams’ playground, boys and girls would each have found their proper zone and played orderly rounds on the seesaw. In the new Tompkins and Seward parks, the sight lines are open and the equipment has many handles and footholds. Boys and girls shift steadily from playacting to showing off to practicing their spins.

For adults, city parks use interactive design to get new mixes of neighbors feeling cardio-friendly. Benepe proudly cites new cricket pitches and refurbished netball and soccer fields as places for neighborhoods to gel. Even the celebrated Red Hook food stands, where hipsters line up each weekend to sample Latin American foods, support an organized soccer league and attract families of many income levels to the majestic WPA-era pool in summer.

Adults can try the chin-up bar and sit-up bench in Chelsea Park, but the hard, unadorned surfaces suggest a penitent approach to fitness. For a release, there’s the Bronx River Blueway Trail and the bike path on the Hudson River north of the Boat Basin, where it undulates near the shoreline. Other options are tennis at South Oxford Park and basketball at Tompkins, near where kids teach each other to bounce and spin and otherwise master the equipment.

As one three-year-old who initially hated hanging on the pull-up bar can attest, experience in trying something reliably leads to confidence in doing it. That’s true of chin-up bars and civic participation alike.

[Alec Appelbaum](#) writes about how cities can become greener and fairer for the *New York Times*, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, and others. He is business editor at *The Faster Times*, where he writes daily commentary about the green economy.



COURTESY OF THOMAS BALSLEY ASSOCIATES



HUDSON RIVER TRUST

**Top: Chelsea Waterside Park: water features drip on the unprepared, and play equipment invites kids to test their limits** Above: binoculars at the top of a staircase make the nearby waterfront and other play areas part of the game

# Making Hospitals Healthier

New York architects are helping to drive public policies and industry requirements for designing sustainability into healthcare facilities that benefit patients, staff, the community, and the environment  
By Tracy Ostroff



**The Maimonides Medical Center Emergency Department in Brooklyn, by Perkins+Will, completed in 2007, includes a central, custom-designed nurse station affording direct observation of patients. A central “tree of life” element, constructed of cherry panels, visually warms the space, provides a biophilia-inspired focal point and helps alleviate stress for staff, patients, and patients’ families. Sustainable and natural materials, incorporated where possible, improve air quality**

Designing sustainability into healthcare projects has always been complex. Stringent requirements for air quality, energy-intensive uses, and high operations costs have long collided with architects’ and often owners’ desires to green the architecture and operations components and maximize patient well-being. However, new rules that emphasize non-toxic materials, more efficient and renewable energy systems, better air quality, and improved access to daylighting are influencing sustainability measures in states such as Massachusetts. And architects in New York are helping to drive public policies and industry requirements for designing sustainability into healthcare facilities.

Architects note that while it is complicated to apply standards to healthcare facilities, strategies such as those highlighted in the “Green Guide for Health Care” and the forthcoming “LEED for Health Care” (LEED-HC) guidelines help achieve more sustainable hospitals in which patients convalesce faster, staff morale is higher, and visitor satisfaction is greater. Sustainability is also an economic decision that positively impacts the environment, the larger community, and the hospital’s bottom line.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, for example, issued new environmental guidelines early in 2009 requiring health-related institutions to use the “Green Guide” or its equivalent in the design, construction, and renovation of facilities seeking the com-

monwealth's Determination of Need approval. Applicants must declare their sustainable strategy at the earliest stages of the process in their initial Department of Need application, and then submit a completed certifiable assessment as part of their plan review. Final approval is contingent on achieving at least 50% of the possible points in the "Green Guide" or the U.S. Green Building Council's prospective LEED-HC Silver rating.

The new rules in Massachusetts were part of an effort to make a uniform standard across the state, says Bill Ravanese, Boston regional director at Health Care Without Harm ([www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org)), an international coalition working to transform the healthcare sector to reduce impacts on the community and to advocate for best practices that promote healing. Researchers are studying whether these measures increase staff productivity and reduce lost days, improve staff retention rates, reduce stress for patients and staff, decrease patients' hospital stay and amount of medication needed, reduce infection rates, decrease patient morbidity, and result in fewer slips and falls.

The group notes that projects representing more than 32 million square feet of construction are using the "Green Guide" to build and operate hospitals and healthcare facilities that are healthier for people and the environment. Legislative requirements provide clear performance benchmarks that can be reasonably achieved, making it easier for facilities and designers to set reachable targets and reduce their impact on patients and communities.

Ravanese points out that anecdotal evidence, including from the new Carl J. and Ruth Shapiro Cardiovascular Center in Boston, completed in 2008 and designed by Chan Krieger & Associates and Cannon Design to conform the "Green Guide" toolkit, and other published research support the benefits of green design on patients and staff in the healthcare sector. In nurse staffing studies, respondents – who walk up to three miles a day – say sustainable materials are easier on their feet and legs. Other reports show that patients sustain fewer trips and falls in green healthcare facilities. Just those two areas save the hospital on staff retention and insurance costs, Ravanese notes.

As architects working in New York City know, the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) follows all the regulations of Local Law 86, which requires a LEED Silver rating or better for substantial construction projects, including healthcare facilities.

As for the singular effort required to design a sustainable healthcare facility, "we wouldn't even think about designing a building that does not comply with green principles," says Helen Cohen, AIA, LEED AP, senior medical planner at HOK and co-chair of the AIANY Health Facilities Committee. HOK is committed to designing with low environmental impacts, even if green architecture is not a priority for the client or required by local regulations. For example, she says, HOK designers consider strategies to improve indoor air quality for staff as well as ways to reclaim heat generated by energy-intensive imaging modalities. The firm's designs for healthcare facilities maximize daylighting and take advantage of opportunities to incorporate green roofs into the program.

Perkins+Will Principal Robin Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP, co-author of *Sustainable Healthcare Architecture* and a co-coordinator of the "Green Guide for Health Care" ([www.gghc.org](http://www.gghc.org)), notes that the healthcare archi-

ecture sector can be more owner-driven than other practice areas because of the total project expense and the specific attitudes toward sustainable buildings. A member of the 2010 AIA Guidelines for Construction of Hospitals and Health Care Facilities Revision Committee and the steering committee devising the LEED-HC system, Guenther observes that there has been an explosion in sustainably-designed healthcare projects. "The city," she says, "is interacting with the healthcare sector in taking measures to reduce their carbon footprint."

Wellness is also incorporated into hospital designs with "single-handed" exam and patient rooms in which furniture, fixtures, and supplies are in the same place in each room to cut down on the potential for staff error. "The design removes one level of decision-making," Cohen explains. Similarly, single-patient exam rooms cut down on errors and infections and promote family-centered care. The layout of patient rooms also contributes to comfort and safety, with patient beds on the same side as grab bars, and materials that architects select to reduce slips and falls and promote better air quality.



**HOK's Jurong General Hospital in Singapore fuses green and smart technologies and embodies much of what the Green Guidelines are intended to achieve. Derived from the firm's Healthcare Practice experience in New York City and coupled with the resources and needs of the Singapore region, the design emphasizes the holistic, healthy relationships between caregiver, institution, and the local community**

"It's easier when green building requirements are required by local authorities," Cohen says, because the team spends less time convincing the owner that building green is the responsible thing to do for patients and the community. Sustainability is also getting easier to justify to clients as capital budgets are not as siloed from operations budgets. "CEOs are starting to see energy costs as something they can control," Ravanese notes. From more complicated projects like incorporating fuel cells into whole building designs and renovations to switching out tungsten lights for compact fluorescents, these measures now are easily identifiable line items, Ravanese says, and in many cases "low-hanging fruit."

Tracy Ostroff is a freelance writer in New York. She previously served as a writer and editor at AIA National headquarters in Washington, D.C.

# I See U

Forget Facebook. The Cooper Union's new academic building by Morphosis and Gruzen Samton is the perfect social networking site anchored by a sinuous staircase designed to stimulate students' heart rates – and the school's heart

By Alec Appelbaum

Here's an exam question for architects and engineers: Prove that universities spend money wisely on creating vertical campuses. Is a design that stacks a traditional university's series of common spaces and classrooms into a single building an untenable mash-up – or a concept for lively architectural expression?

The New Academic Building at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, designed by Morphosis and associate architect Gruzen Samton, answers this question by making the institution's scientists and artists share public areas in a single building for the first time since the school's founding in 1859. The design turns the interior of a double-skinned structure into a joyful celebration of motion.

Placing a sinuous staircase at the center, the building design encourages students to move beyond the comfort of their lab or studio and into contact with each other. Morphosis founder Thom Mayne, FAIA, says he hopes this active circulation will improve the health of everyone in Cooper's world and promote interaction among

people from different disciplines. Indeed, the staircase's congenial purpose is to stimulate students' heart rates – and the school's heart.

On the outside, two sheets of gray run in irregular, coordinated shapes along the breadth of the façade, with skinny windows on the narrower sides. On the inside, the experience opens from the center. Stairways, including the grand one from the lobby, run wide. The main elevator stops at only two floors, compelling people to face each other. Lights in the corridors support impromptu conversation, while nooks for sitting, both formal and found, abut passages for walking. And the public space in the cellar offers views up to the street.

Cooper has always charged engineering and art students the same tuition price: zero. In the bargain, it has stressed civic involvement, hosting controversial speakers from Abraham Lincoln in the 1850s to the executive vice president of Tishman Speyer during the Hudson Yards design selection. "Social space and transparency are essential to the institution," Mayne says. "Our job is to concretize that." But because even in tight



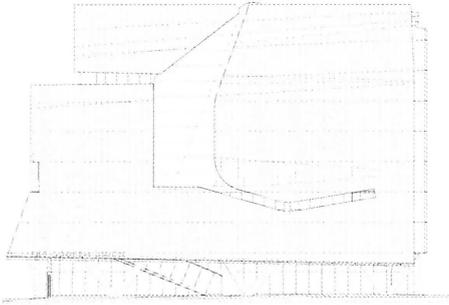
Above: Irregular, coordinated shapes along the breadth of the façade create a striking presence on lower Third Avenue Inset: View to the top of the luminous atrium

IMWAN BAAN

quarters people can avoid each other, the building's design makes students and faculty more transparent. It stretches staircases' widths and deposits public halls strategically in separate areas, creating a plan that evokes a traditional college with classrooms around a quad.

One weekday afternoon, Morphosis project designer Jean Oei shows how the \$112-million project, which opened last fall across from Cooper's landmark Foundation Building, follows the propulsive design and loose feeling of a campus. From the lobby, she glances up at a thick, snaking railing along one side of the grand staircase.

The railing is wide enough for students to lean on, she says, and the steps are as tall as code allows, seven inches, to create a sense of movement. A skylight effect, which Morphosis gets with removable panels, suggests to Oei that the building's volume is "floating at night." This is not a place to hide or burrow. Even the staircase railing on the third floor, beneath what Mayne calls a nearby "Juliet balcony," is too bumpy to hold both a coffee cup and a notebook. "The idea is that you don't gather dust," says Oei.



MORPHOSIS

This idea draws punctuation, as Mayne often does, with impertinent elevators. Like Morphosis's office for the California state transit agency's Los Angeles office, the New Academic Building uses "skip-stop" ascension. While one service elevator opens at all floors, the showcase one stops at the fifth and eighth. The precast concrete walls at the skip-stop landing frame the staircases below, and the windows outline the stately old building across the street. Like the Caltrans building, Cooper expresses civic responsibility with a knockout LEED score. Tasked to achieve LEED Silver, the building design easily achieved LEED Gold. "We are now striving for Platinum," Oei says. The most stirring spaces, she says, become vistas on other people sharing space at other levels. The antecedent may be L.A., but the ancestry reaches back to Oxford. "It's so medieval!" she enthuses.

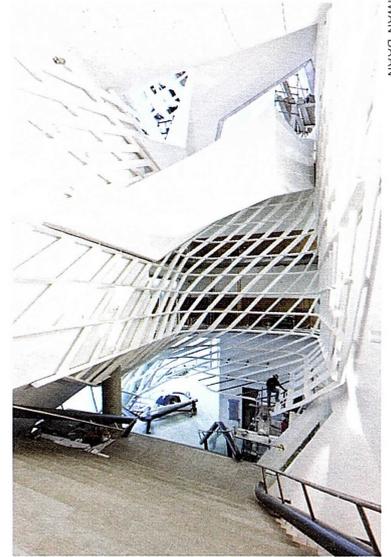
The circulation strategy also evokes fondness for the 20th-century sense of New York as a place in a hurry. A second wide staircase leads down from the lobby to public rooms, including a theater. A strip of window from the basement shows the feet of passersby on Cooper Square, and doors to the downstairs seminar rooms allow visitors to "peek in," says Oei. By framing the building around floor plates that the architects call "plazas," the design guides students and visitors to explore daily life together.

Cooper's approach to the student's inquiry, though, seems more refined. Each art student gets his or her own easel and space; each instructor gets a classroom according to a new centralized schedule. "In the old building, the distribution of studio spaces was like pancakes in a stack," Oei says.

And in a deep echo of a traditional campus, students are moving around the building in ways the architects may never have planned. Oei says students populate the grand stair and nooks under the higher levels' railings, creating unexpected zones for lunch meetings and discussions. Paper flyers on walls at every landing advertise sports clubs, concerts, and special interest groups. Oei frets that these flyers clutter the public spaces, but they evoke the curiosity of a traditional campus.

During the design phase, the notion of forcibly mingling scientists and artists provoked some amused speculation. But Oei says that so far, the mandatory congregating seems to be going down easily. "You're forcing people to walk across floors and mixing art and engineering, so you can't tell which person comes from which school," she says. "It's going to change the culture."

**Alec Appelbaum** writes about how cities can become greener and fairer for the *New York Times*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, and others. He is business editor at *The Faster Times*, where he writes daily commentary about the green economy.



IVAN BAHAN

**Above: View down the stairs to the lobby Left: West façade elevation**

- Client: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art
- Architect: Morphosis
- Associate Architect: Gruzen Samton
- Project Management: Jonathan Rose Companies
- Construction Management: F.J. Sciamie Construction
- Landscape Architect: Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects
- Structural Engineers: John A. Martin Associates; Goldstein Associates
- MEP: IBE Consulting Engineers (Mechanical Concepts); Syska Hennessy Group (Engineer-of-Record)
- Lab Consultant: Steve Rosenstein Associates
- Graphics: Pentagram Design
- Performing Arts/Media: Auerbach Pollock Friedlander
- Lighting Designer: Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design
- Acoustics Engineer: Newson Brown Acoustic
- IT/AV/Security: Syska Hennessy Group
- IT: Barnes Wentworth
- Civil Engineer: Langan Engineering and Environmental Services
- Geotechnical Consultant: Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers
- Fire Engineer: Arup Fire
- Expeditor/Code: Berzak Schoen Consultants
- Vertical Transportation: Van Deusen & Associates
- Façade Consultant: Gordon H. Smith Corporation
- Water Proofing Consultant: Henshell & Buccellato
- Sustainable Design/LEED; Cost: Davis Langdon
- Environmental Design Peer Reviewer: Atelier Ten
- Co-Generation: Source One
- Commissioning: Synergy Engineering
- Consulting Engineer: Rowan Williams Davies & Irwin

# Net Result

Asked to design the Tennis Center at Randall's Island, Ricardo Zurita Architects aced it; advantage goes to the city  
By Linda G. Miller

The United States Professional Tennis Association lists 34 reasons why playing tennis is good for mental and physical fitness. "It's ironic," says Ricardo Zurita, AIA, "that many tennis centers, built to promote good health through exercise, are hermetically sealed, climate-controlled environments without any natural light or fresh air." So he prescribed the opposite tack in his design scheme for the Tennis Center at Randall's Island.

The \$16-million Tennis Center, operated by Sportime, opened in summer 2009 and is the city's largest tennis complex in more than 30 years. The 160,000-square-foot center features 20 courts (10 hard and 10 clay), stadium seating for 1,000 spectators (expandable to 2,500 with temporary bleachers), a clubhouse with a training and fitness center, lounge areas, a pro shop, a café/bar, classrooms, meeting facilities, and locker rooms with steam, sauna, and treatment areas. Five hard courts are permanently enclosed, with the rest designed to be housed in three air-supported structures during the indoor season.

Sheathed in muted blue metal panels with bright green accents, the pre-engineered steel structure contains the field house with five courts and a clubhouse in six equally-sized dedicated bays. The clubhouse bay is pivoted towards the entrance and away from the tennis court bays, creating a "fissure" within the structure that allows natural

light into the building. To reduce the power loads for heating and cooling, the building features a series of prominent louvers on the north and south façades, placed low on one side and high on the other, allowing for cross-ventilation via a chimney effect.

Creating a healthy environment was a primary concern of Zurita, but when the project began in 2006, a year before PlaNYC was released, budget constraints were more of an issue and he did not pursue LEED certification. "Nonetheless, I felt strongly that we could develop a green building within our budget," says Zurita. "Given the developments in green building design, I believe we would pursue certification if we were to do the project today."



ZURITA ARCHITECTS

The Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF), founded in 1992 as a public-private partnership, works to realize the potential of the island, which is situated in the East River between East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens. Ricardo Zurita Architects designed the master plan for the 480-acre park, re-envisioning it as a citywide destination for sports and recreation. In addition to the Tennis Center, the firm designed three comfort stations, an electrical substation, and, with the Hillier Group (now RMJM), the Icahn Stadium for track and field.

Working with three clients – private developer Sportime, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, and RISF – was challenging for Zurita, as each player was responsible to a different set of constituents with their own priorities. "Stress is unavoidable in any project this large," Zurita observes, "but since I play tennis, this project has provided me with a great outlet for frustration. And I've gotten a huge kick out of seeing some of the greatest tennis players in the world play at the center."

Linda G. Miller is a New York City-based freelance writer and a regular contributor to e-Oculus.

- Clients: Sportime TFM; Randall's Island Sport Foundation; NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
- Architect: Zurita Architects
- Architect-of-Record: Jerome Kerner/Bond Street Architecture & Design
- Contractor: ICA Sports & Building Systems
- Site Engineer: HDR
- Structural Engineer: Structural Consulting Services
- Mechanical/Electrical Engineer: Wesler-Cohen Associates
- Landscape Architect: MPFP LLC/M. Paul Friedberg & Partners

ZURITA ARCHITECTS

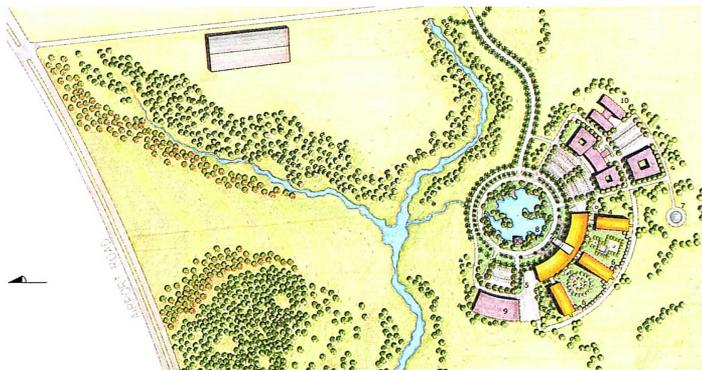


**Above: Tennis Center at Randall's Island: Site plan with detail showing temporary bleachers for competition matches** Above right: The cladding in muted blue metal panels with bright green accents keeps the size and bulk of the building from appearing overwhelming in the park setting

# A View to Better Health

A hospital patient can grow awfully weary of looking at the same four walls. But in a new design planned for a hospital in Nigeria by RKT&B and Perkins Eastman, patients can gaze out at the soothing sight of native trees and plantings in a landscaped garden. “We lowered the window sills so patients can look out onto the courtyard and see the green, see the sky,” says Carmi Bee, FAIA, RKT&B’s design partner for the project.

It’s just one of many ways the design aims to lift the spirits of patients and staff by celebrating the beauty of the hospital’s surroundings on the outskirts of Nigeria’s capital city, Abuja. Called American Hospital, the state-of-the-art facility will eventually form part of a much larger healthcare complex on the 232-acre site, for which RKT&B designed the master plan. The first phase includes a 100-bed, 215,000-square-foot facility; this will eventually expand to 300 beds in 430,000 square feet.



The site plan pictures the first phase for the 232-acre American Hospital campus in yellow

Currently in the design phase, the project is the brainchild of Ifeanyi C.O. Obiakor, a Brooklyn-based doctor born in Nigeria. Familiar with RKT&B’s work for New York Methodist Hospital, Obiakor recruited the firm, which in turn enlisted the help of Perkins Eastman, with which it had collaborated in the past. The new four-story hospital will offer highly trained staff and cutting-edge medical resources, which the country is sorely lacking. Nigerians who need surgery commonly fly to France, England, or the United States.

The quality of medical care is only one ingredient in the success of a hospital, however. When designing such a space, “it’s got to be uplifting for the person’s spirit,” Bee says, “because a person’s spirit is integral to his or her health.”

On the southern façade, large windows yield views of a beautiful 380-foot-diameter manmade pond near the front entrance. The curved section of the building nearest the pond contains core services, such as radiology and obstetrics, while patient rooms lie in

RKT&B and Perkins Eastman use the power of nature in a hospital in Nigeria designed to restore the spirit as well as the body By Lisa Delgado



Horizontal and vertical sunshades along the façades and a double roof that allows for cooling breezes to pass below are two of the indigenous architectural elements for dealing with Nigeria’s hot climate

wings that radiate off it, to the north. Between the patient wings are the courtyards, designed by NYC-based RGR Landscape.

Indoors, a 40-foot-high water wall in a quadruple-height entry space symbolizes the healing and life-giving properties of water. Thanks to skylights and a front wall made of glass, the soaring entry hall is washed in natural light, says Peter Bafitis, AIA, RKT&B’s managing partner for the project. The overall effect is serene and rejuvenating.

The hospital is also designed to be healthy for the environment. Inspired by the indigenous architecture’s strategies for dealing with scorching hot summers, RKT&B incorporated horizontal and vertical sunshades along the façades. A double roof allows cooling breezes to pass below, providing insulation against the heat. No doubt the fresh air will be appreciated by the patients, too, who will use the covered area for exercise.



A 40-foot-high water wall in the four-story-high atrium symbolizes the healing and life-giving properties of water

Lisa Delgado is a freelance journalist who has written for e-Oculus, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *I.D.*, *Blueprint*, and *Wired*, among other publications.

Client: American Hospital LTD; Dr. Ifeanyi Obiakor  
Executive Architect: RKT&B Architects & Urban Designers  
Associate Architect/Interiors: Perkins Eastman Architects  
Structural Engineer: Ove Arup  
Mechanical Engineer: WSP Flack + Kurtz  
Landscape Architect: RGR Landscape

ZENIPEP AYOBI

RGR LANDSCAPE

RKT&B ARCHITECTS & URBAN DESIGNERS

# Manhattan Supermarket Salescape



Mapping and visualization tools are being developed to help understand the potential impacts of developing regional infrastructure on New York City retailers. A Manhattan “salescape” showing areas of high and low retail sales demonstrates neighborhood differences in food access and cost

## Designing a Foodshed for New York

Architects lead the way in developing a regional food system to provide healthful food to underserved urban areas

By Michael Conard, RA, NCARB, and Kubi Ackerman, LEED AP

Architects are increasingly being asked to apply their design methodology to fields beyond the conventional purview of their practice. A prime example of this is the New York City Regional Foodshed Project, a sustainable food system for the city being developed with the help of architects at the Urban Design Lab (UDL) at the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

The plan for this system came out of a two-year project undertaken by the UDL and Collaborative Initiatives at MIT, and funded by United Health Foundation, to develop design strategies to address the problem of childhood obesity. The project focused on redesigning food system infrastructure to increase affordability and availability of healthful foods, particularly in underserved urban areas often referred to as “food deserts.” The connection between urban health and food systems was further articulated in a 2008 Politics of Food conference co-sponsored by the UDL and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer’s office, which resulted in a food policy document calling for the creation of a New York City regional foodshed. The partnership with Stringer’s office has also included a Go Green initiative, by which students in Professor and UDL Director Richard Plunz’s urban ecology studio at Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation developed proposals for enhancing food access and sustainability in East Harlem.

During the course of this work, Plunz, project director Michael Conard, RA, and architect Kubi Ackerman, LEED AP, in consultation with experts in medicine, public health, planning, economics, and environmental sci-

ence, have developed design strategies for changing New York City's regional food system to prioritize health outcomes. Such changes are particularly pressing in light of spiraling costs for treating chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, which are directly related to the shifts in the American diet over the past several decades.

### Food policy and urban development

The complexity of the food system, with its highly dispersed, global network of producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, regulators, and consumers, makes it ideal for the application of design methodologies. More importantly, food directly impacts urban environments in ways that most architects and planners often overlook. Changes in agricultural technologies and resultant increased yields, for example, are the driving factors behind urbanization worldwide, and food policy affects land use and urban development patterns in the U.S. and elsewhere. As cities like New York have grown, the infrastructure for procuring food has expanded and centralized, with the city's wholesale markets gradually coalescing around the Hunt's Point Market in the Bronx, now the largest wholesale produce market in the nation.

Food clearly plays a formative role in the character of a neighborhood, and for this reason food-specific zoning policies are being implemented. One of these is the plan to offer incentives for grocery stores to locate in New York City neighborhoods deemed lacking in healthful food options. While the food system as a whole has succeeded in maintaining a steady supply of relatively inexpensive food from agricultural regions to population centers, the negative health and environmental consequences of this system are becoming increasingly apparent, and the resilience of this resource-dependent system in the face of uncertain energy supplies and climate change is unlikely.

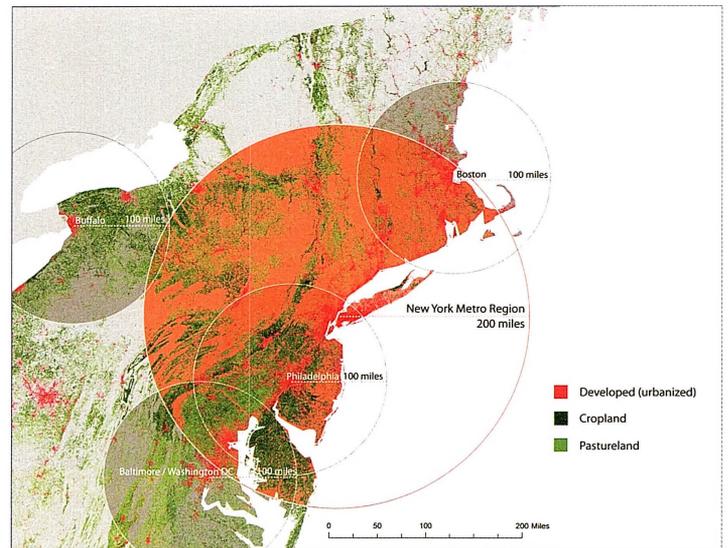
### The multiple benefits of regional food networks

In this context, the idea of the foodshed has gained currency. Based on the concept of a watershed, the foodshed is a geographic area from which a certain percentage of a region's food can be sourced; the concept serves to integrate issues of production, processing, transportation, storage, and retail. While most people don't think of agriculture when they think of the New York City area, we are surrounded by approximately seven million acres of active crop and pastureland within 200 miles. Current consumption data indicate that the region could comfortably produce 40% to 60% of its food needs, accounting for the other population centers that lie within that radius. This shift would lower transportation, processing, and storage costs, and could increase the availability of fresh foods in the city and regional population centers while promoting the local economy. Regional food networks would also increase the resiliency of our food supply in the face of economic or environmental crises.

Of course, for this to become a reality, more than agricultural and land-use practices would have to change. Existing transportation and infrastructure systems currently support a situation in which New York State-grown apples are transported across the nation and globe, while most apples found in New York City bodegas come from Washington State. Enhancing regional transportation systems would be a start, although regional processing and storage capacity also need to be addressed, par-

ticularly since the region's growing season is relatively short.

Now in the analysis phase of the project, the UDL is collecting GIS and other data on existing agricultural production, land use, soil and water conditions, and transportation. Distribution and retail networks are being defined and mapped out. The next phase of the project will focus on the most effective methods for enhancing capacity and engendering change. This involves designing new urban landscapes to support food production, creating new infrastructural systems, and building forms to support regional distribution and healthy food retail. Examples of such ongoing work include the establishment of mobile markets in sparsely populated rural areas; "food terminal" designs that would establish new models for retail in challenging urban sites to combine grocery stores, education, and health clinics; and educational tools such as modular, low-cost urban gardening units for use in schools.



**The New York City Regional Foodshed project involves in-depth analysis of land use and the region's agricultural capacity and distribution networks. The analysis will also consider the sourcing requirements of population centers within or adjacent to the defined New York City foodshed**

Creating a viable regional foodshed is a long-term project that will require a broad coalition of farmers, retailers, community groups, academics, and others. Developing this coalition is as critical to the project as the design proposals, which primarily encourage interest and participation. Asking designers and architects to help set the agenda for the future of food systems and chronic disease prevention will ensure the continued relevance of the field in addressing the complex conditions that define our urban environments.

**Michael Conard, RA, NCARB**, is the assistant director of the Urban Design Lab and an adjunct associate professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. He is a registered architect in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, and a member of the Forum for Urban Design.

**Kubi Ackerman, LEED AP**, is a design research coordinator at the Urban Design Lab. An architect and designer, he has worked at the UDL on projects relating to the 125th Street rezoning proposal, childhood obesity, and urban food systems.

# Center of Excellence

Francis Cauffman Architects transforms a community medical center in Pennsylvania into a major regional – and sustainable – institution

By James Crispino, AIA, and Aran McCarthy, AIA

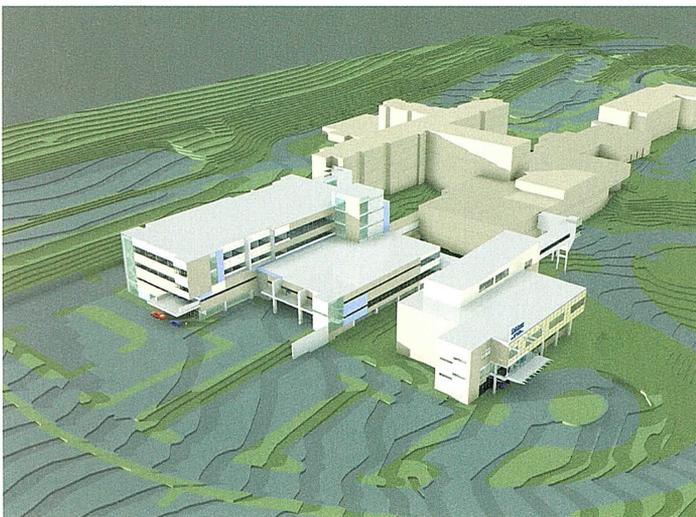
A community's well-being and the health of its environment are intimately interrelated. For the Geisinger Health System, this is a guiding principle. When administrators set out on a much-needed expansion to its Wyoming Valley campus in Wilkes-Barre, PA, they put sustainability at the forefront – for the long-term health of area residents, the region's economic well-being, and the welfare of the land.

Environmental and community responsibility is an integral part of Geisinger's mission. Founded in 1915, the physician-led system offers healthcare, education, and research for a service area covering 20,000 square miles and a population of 2.6 million. The health system owns 39% of all LEED-registered healthcare projects in the state of Pennsylvania and provides more than \$15 million in uncompensated care to needy patients every year.

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FRANCIS CAUFFMAN ARCHITECTS



**Above:** Aerial rendering illustrates how the Critical Care Building follows the slope of the mountain to merge with the natural topography **Top:** The LEED Silver-certified Critical Care Building's expanded Emergency Department acts as the "front door" for acute care services with large expanses of glass that open to the landscape

Most recently, Geisinger's approach earned the attention of President Barack Obama, who has held up its health system as a model, saying: "We have to ask why places like the Geisinger Health System...can offer high-quality care at costs well below average, but other places in America can't. We need to identify the best practices across the country, learn from the success, and replicate that success elsewhere."

In 2000 Geisinger announced a plan to transform its 71.4-acre Wyoming Valley campus from a community medical center into a regional institution. Prior to implementation of the \$121-million plan, most structures on the campus were 20 to 30 years old and unable to meet the needs of a growing community. Different departments were scattered around the site, circulation between them was difficult and hard to navigate, and the services were limited.

## Planning for the future

Wilkes-Barre is situated in Luzerne County, which is home to more than 320,000 residents, making it the most populous county in north-eastern Pennsylvania. Although the region is served by more than 20

colleges and universities and encompasses several major employers, including Proctor & Gamble and Bank of America, there was a pronounced need for additional facilities in the area, especially a trauma center. Demand for intensive-care services was expected to grow approximately 40% by 2020.

“We knew the region did not have a tertiary or quaternary hospital, and we knew Geisinger could fill that role,” explains Lissa Bryan-Smith, chief administrative officer for the Geisinger Regional Ambulatory Campus. “However, we needed to build new facilities – the kind that would attract outstanding physicians and convince our residents they did not need to go outside the region for top-notch services.”

To do that, the architects of the master plan, New York-based Francis Cauffman, earmarked new “centers of excellence,” or sites for specialty care (cardiovascular, cancer, and birthing centers, for example), that served as the nodes of a sophisticated and efficient health-care complex. These centers are standalone buildings, each staffed with a coordinated team of physicians and equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

The first center of excellence was the Heart Hospital (2002), followed by the LEED Silver-certified Critical Care Building (2008), and an addition to the Henry Cancer Center (2009). The Critical Care Building (CCB) alone increased the size of the campus by 50% and added considerably to its capacity. The five-story, 178,000-square-foot



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**Above: Seen at night through the base of the building, a six-color Venetian plaster mural by artist Silvere Boureau looks like stained glass**  
**Right: Local artist Leigh Pawling incorporated elements of the area’s natural landscapes into the Serenity Room mural to reinforce the link between the building and the region**

CCB houses an expanded 32-bed emergency department, a helipad, 12 high-tech surgical suites with robotics, and a 24-bed intensive-care unit. It also contains a Level II-accredited trauma program.

The development of the Wyoming Valley campus means that Luzerne’s healthcare is finally catching up with its transformation from a coal-mining region into a diverse, modern community. The state’s mining industry began in the mid-18th century, and the population of Wilkes-Barre exploded after the discovery of anthracite coal there in 1800, earning it the nickname “The Diamond City.” So it was no surprise that, while planning for the CCB, a series of abandoned coal mines was found under the original building site. Ultimately, the design team moved the project rather than shoring up the mines, because the health system wanted to build the CCB as swiftly, efficiently, and cost-effectively as possible. The new site, located on a mountainside, posed its own set of problems. The design team literally carved the CCB into the geography of the campus.

### Sustaining a region and its people

Another difficulty was creating an acute-care facility that was also

“green.” Critical-care facilities operate on a 24/7 basis, and emergency departments require inordinate amounts of energy to support around-the-clock, high-tech operations. To achieve a LEED Silver rating for the CCB, the design team used systems that were known to be efficient, such as the high-performance variable air volume system. Light levels were reduced to 1.8 watts per square foot, which resulted in a 19.1% reduction in energy use while maintaining work-appropriate light levels. In addition, 40% of the materials used in construction were from regional sources, and 85% of construction waste was recycled or diverted from landfills.

These energy-saving techniques resulted in an immediate savings of about \$100,000 in energy costs annually. Geisinger also focused on employing local subcontractors; in the end, 60% of the 33 subcontractors were local. Surprisingly, the design team achieved the LEED rating without any additional costs to the budget.

Planning for the future is also important to keeping costs down, so the design team built the CCB with long-term sustainability in mind. Inside, the CCB’s infrastructure has the extremely high level of flexibility typically found in research buildings but not in hospitals.

Beyond cost concerns, the design of the CCB reflects the new “soft-touch” style of healthcare design. Great expanses of glass allow natural sunlight to penetrate throughout the building’s interior, so that many of its rooms have views to the outdoors and the valley. The hospital features a serenity room for visitors of all faiths, and ample teaching space for Geisinger’s two new residency programs. Local artist Leigh Pawling was commissioned to create artwork for the building, adding inviting, tranquil scenes of the area’s natural landscapes.

“The process did not go in a straight line,” says Bryan-Smith. “We actively sought feedback and changed the design to incorporate suggestions from the community. Whereas the original buildings on campus were built for the health system, our recent buildings are built for its people. In the end, they are also more sustainable – not only because they save energy, but also because they are a long-term investment in the lives of our patients and our region.”

[James Crispino, AIA](#), is president of Francis Cauffman Architects, based in the firm’s New York City office.

[Aran McCarthy, AIA](#), is a principal at Francis Cauffman Architects.

MEP Engineers: Ram-Tech Engineers (Critical Care Building); Martin Rogers Associates (Cancer Center)  
 Structural Engineer: O’Donnell and Naccarato Engineers  
 Civil Engineer: Borton-Lawson  
 Geo-technical Engineer: Geo-Science Engineering Co.  
 Cost Estimator: ICI Cost Estimators (Critical Care Building)  
 Construction Manager: Alvin H. Butz  
 LEED Consultant: Flood & Sterling; BETA Engineers



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# A Space of Their Own

Bradley Thiergartner Interiors creates a Brooklyn group home for residents with autism

By Lisa Delgado

We take for granted what our five senses tell us – but sometimes designers have to create spaces for people with special needs, who perceive sensory stimuli and personal space in a whole different way. That was the challenge faced by Ben Bradley and David Thiergartner, principals of their eponymous interior design firm, as they set out to design a new home in Brooklyn for five young men with autism. Their task involved the renovation and interior design of a Borough Park three-story house.



**Above: Soothing photography and warm wood tones create a calm, homey ambience in the living room and TV room Right: Headboards with built-in shelves provide an efficient way to help residents personalize their space**

In designing the group home, Bradley and Thiergartner relied heavily on the advice of their client, Birch Family Services (BFS), a local non-profit devoted to helping people with special needs. “People with autism can easily be overwhelmed by sensory stimuli,” says Mindy Small, BFS coordinator of autism services. “They do best with a lot of structure and clarity in their environment.” Yet the space needed to feel welcoming, not sterile. “The constant struggle the designers had was making it warm and inviting, because it’s a home, while addressing the sensory and organizational needs of the people.”

The designers gravitated to warm, solid, soothing colors and comfortable fabrics, but they looked for ways to subtly add visual and tactile interest, Thiergartner says. In sofas upholstered in solid beige ultrasuede, the grain and warm hues of Mission-style oak frames added visual flair and complemented the wood elsewhere in the turn-of-the-century townhouse. The frames also made the furniture sturdy

enough for the residents, who can sometimes be rough on their surroundings. Many choices were made with durability in mind. Wood blinds provided a sturdier alternative to curtains, and sconces proved more practical than table lamps that could be knocked over.

Adorning the walls are photos by Rob Lang of aging, oxidized ship hulls, images that are semiabstract and calming. Like many other items in the home, the photos were donated, to help in a project with only about \$20,000 in state funding for the interior design and household goods. The house needed to be sonically soothing, too – car alarms and dog barks agitate some residents – so windows were made soundproof.

Four of the residents live in doubles, but headboards with built-in shelves let each young man personalize his area, accommodating a population that often has strong needs for regimentation and personal space. In the bedroom closets, mesh baskets proved ideal for storage, since people with autism respond best to visual cues to keep organized. Whiteboards help residents keep track of their schedules, since they absorb information better visually than auditorially.



One resident, who has a single room, is prone to repetitive pacing. To allow for that, Bradley and Thiergartner transformed part of a sun deck into a section of his room, creating an L-shaped space with one long section where he can walk back and forth. For the flooring they chose cork for its durability, softness, and sound absorbency.

The designers did the project on a pro bono basis. It wasn’t always easy to find the time, but “like with any charity work, what you get back is so enormous,” Bradley says. Plus, in a time of recession, “you have to reach outside of yourself and focus on other things, because the times require it.”

Lisa Delgado is a freelance journalist who has written for e-Oculus, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *I.D.*, *Blueprint*, and *Wired*, among other publications.

- Client: Birch Family Services
- Interior Design: Bradley Thiergartner Interiors
- Supervising Architect: Vassalotti Associates Architects
- Donors: Artistic Tile; Ann Gish Luxury Linens; Broyhill Furniture; Cameron Cook; Elemental PhotoArt; Koroseal; Phillip Ennis Photography; Rob Lang Photography
- Vendors: Bed, Bath and Beyond; Benjamin Moore Paints Campesi Electric; Corning; Design Interiors by M. Kahn; Douglass Industries; Elfa From the Container Store; Fantastic Floors; Glidden Paints; Home Depot; Ideal Restaurant Supply; J.D. Master Plumbing; Mannington Carpets; Next Day Blinds; PC Richards & Sons; Raskin Carpet Installers; Suydam Iron Works

# Health, Wellness, and Light

Light triggers critical physiological and psychological responses within human beings. And since we spend most of our lives in the built environment, the level and quality of light within these buildings have real implications for our health and wellness. Luckily, today's architect is armed with sophisticated structural options that allow for more lighting choices than ever before. It's no longer a question of *whether* to design with light in mind, but *how* to design with light in mind. As the use of light relates to health and wellness, the key points to consider are quality, quantity, and type of light being delivered within the space.

Consider first how light comes into play in a health-oriented society. Many functions necessary for growth and well-being – such as breathing, sleeping, blood pressure, body temperature, appetite, moods, mental acuity, and the immune system – are governed by the endocrine system, which is strongly affected by light, both natural and electric. Evidence also suggests that light is needed for the healthy functioning of parts of the brain, including the cerebral cortex, which controls motivation, learning, and creativity; the limbic system, which stores emotional impressions of the world; and the motor cortex and brain stem, which coordinate body movement and the maintenance of life.

Thus, access to a natural spectrum within the built environment becomes an imperative. Instead of shying away from the integration of natural and electric light in institutional settings and public spaces, architects can safely incorporate the healing properties of light, thereby helping to treat and prevent illness while improving our moods and saving energy.

Nowhere is the focus on light more necessary than in environments that cater to the aged or ill. Well-lit hospital rooms provide a better environment for the treatment of the clinically depressed than bad “cave-like” lighting. In environments where a complete redesign is not possible, where structural plans do not call for sufficient natural light, or where climate conditions allow for little natural light, bright light therapy has been proven to be a non-pharmacological alternative treatment for a number of diseases. Light therapy is one of the most important therapeutic applications in dermatology; some allergen-induced inflammatory diseases, such as hay fever; and a variety of psychological disorders, including ADD, dementia, and depression. It is also used to treat both depression and motor problems in Parkinson's disease patients.

At Prince Aga Khan Hospital in Mumbai, designed by architect Tejal Mor, our lighting design company introduced temporal color by inserting prisms in the skylight, which refracted light at different angles during the day. At Medi-City, a 1,600-bed hospital in Delhi designed by ARCOP, we developed a lighting scheme that did not require any down lighting in the patient rooms. The controls are easy to use and give substantial flexibility of brightness without glare. In the public lobbies, the lighting design provided spatial clarity and augmented wayfinding. The goal was to create a happy and calming space that did not scream

Why and how architects should harness the power of light as a priority in the design of a building By Abhay Wadhwa, Assoc. AIA, IESNA, ISLE



**Indirect and back lighting in patient rooms at the 1,600-bed Medi-City in Delhi, India, creates a soothing visual environment**

“hospital.” By taking a sensitive approach to patient requirements and user comfort, while keeping in mind maintenance and energy efficiency, we created caring and soothing visual environments.

Health and wellness are not the only factors to consider when planning a new building, of course, and architects do not need to become lighting designers to effectively integrate light into today's built environment. But knowing about the quality, quantity, and type of light available can only help create richer, more dynamic structures that are functionally strong and visually pleasing – and uplift the well-being and healthiness of occupants and visitors.

Abhay Wadhwa, Assoc. AIA, IESNA, ISLE, founder and principal of AWA Architectural Lighting Designers, has been designing and implementing award-winning projects for more than 15 years. He has served as the lead designer on lighting projects in hospitality, infrastructure, institutions, transportation, residences, and museums.

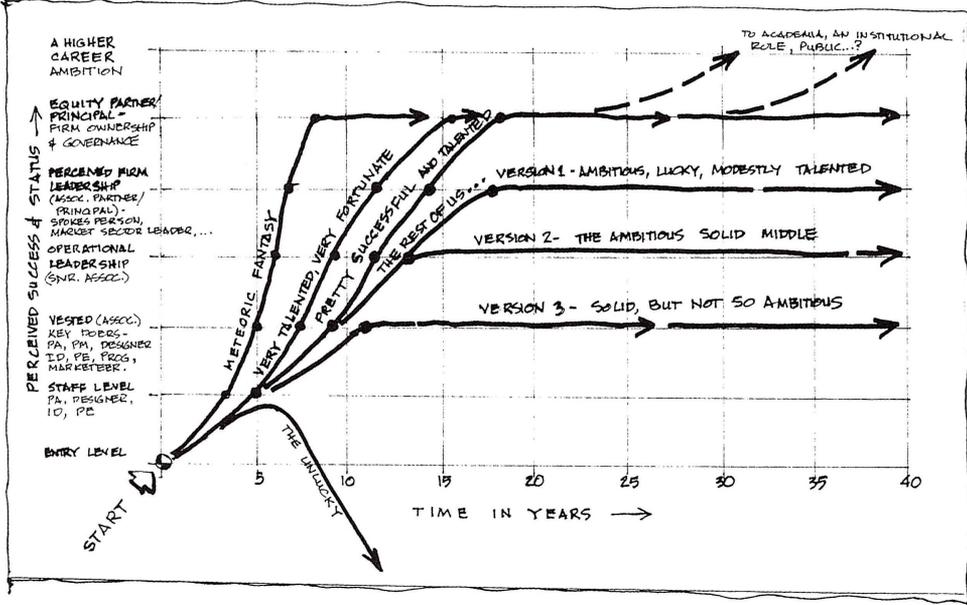
ABHAY WADHWA

# Chronicles of Life in the Profession, Episode 5: Career Path Charting (Part 1).

Careers are capricious and unpredictably multi-dimensional.

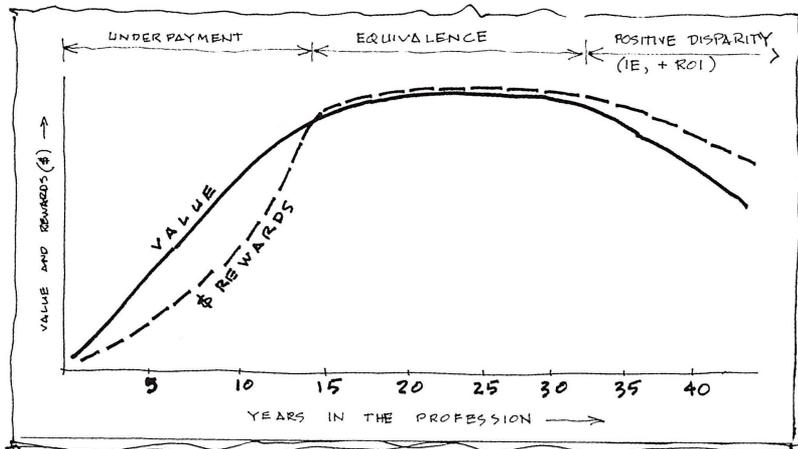
Good Practices  
By Stanley Stark, FAIA

STANLEY STARK



## THE PATHWAYS OF CAREER ASCENT

IT LOOKS STRAIGHTFORWARD BUT IT ISN'T. THERE ARE LOTS OF SWITCHING POINTS AND FORKS IN THE ROAD.



## THE VALUE-REWARDS CYCLE

IMBALANCE, BALANCE, THEN A POSITIVE DISPARITY. THE CYCLE OF VALUE AND REWARDS IS CURVY AND NOT STRICTLY LINEAR.

## THE ESTEEM INDEX

IT'S AS MUCH ABOUT HOW WE VALUE OUR OWN ACHIEVEMENTS AS HOW OTHER PARTICULARLY THE MEDIA MIGHT.



- ☆☆☆☆☆ APPEAR ON CHARLIE ROSE
- ☆☆☆☆☆ PROFILE IN VANITY FAIR
- ☆☆☆☆☆ REVIEW BY PAUL GOLDBERGER IN THE NEW YORKER
- ☆☆☆☆☆ MONOGRAPH (UNSUBSIDIZED) PUBLISHED ON YOUR WORK
- ☆☆☆☆☆ ELEVATED TO FELLOWSHIP (FAIA)
- ☆☆☆☆☆ REVIEW BY OIROUSSOFF IN NYTIMES
- ☆☆☆☆☆ FREQUENT CULTURE CIRCUIT PANELIST
- ☆☆☆☆☆ PUBLISHED IN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, ARCHITECT, OR AN ITALIAN DESIGN MAG.
- ☆☆☆☆☆ WIN AIANY/AIANY'S DESIGN AWARD
- ☆☆☆☆☆ PUBLISHED IN OCLUS
- ☆☆☆☆☆ YOU ARE FEATURED IN A PRODUCT AD

Stark 10/14/09

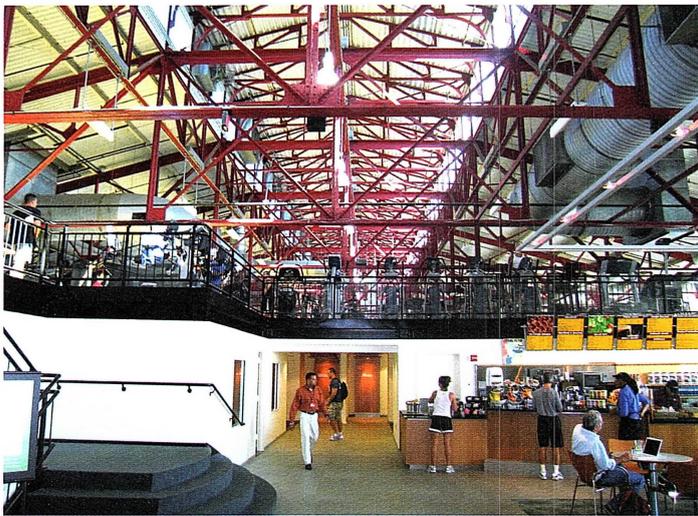
# 15-Year Watch

**Sports and entertainment reactivated waterfront structures in the lively Chelsea Piers complex by Butler Rogers Baskett, 1995**

**By John Morris Dixon, FAIA**

As maritime activities disappeared from most of Manhattan's Hudson riverfront in the mid-20th century, an extended debate arose over how to reuse all that abandoned acreage. While the fate of miles of waterfront remained unresolved, a couple of lawyer/investors succeeded in turning a complex of piers extending from 17th to 23rd Street into a major public-private amenity: the Chelsea Piers Sports and Entertainment Complex.

Initially, Tom Bernstein and Roland Betts wanted simply to add more indoor ice-skating facilities for a city that then offered only the fully-booked Sky Rink. Realizing that one of these piers could provide column-free rink space, they approached the state (which had acquired the piers as part of the aborted Westway effort) about leasing space. The state then requested bids on all four piers as a package, and the partners won the lease rights. Seeking to find uses for the rest of the 1.2 million square feet of space, they turned to architects Butler Rogers Baskett (BRB), who were experienced in both adaptive reuse and sports facilities design.



**Interior of the Sports Center shows how nicely the old structure has been adapted to current uses**

The BRB team, led by partner James G. Rogers III, FAIA (who recently established his own firm in Norwalk, CT), devised ways to fit a wide variety of uses into the piers and their six-block-long headhouse. Sports accommodated include swimming, soccer, basketball, beach volleyball, gymnastics, rock climbing, and fitness training. Much of Pier 59 became a golf driving range. The headhouse features the sound stages where *Law & Order* is shot, restaurants and banquet facilities, and the point of departure for harbor cruises and private boats. Extending around the ends of the piers is more than a mile of 20-foot-wide public walkways.

Built in 1910 to serve the grandest ocean liners of the time (like the Titanic), the piers originally had monumental façades designed by Warren & Wetmore of Grand Central Terminal fame. In a failed 1960s



CHELSEA PIERS

**Chelsea Piers, a 28-acre complex on the Hudson River**

effort to attract cargo shipping, these impressive fronts were replaced by acres of shiny metal. By the 1990s the complex was partially occupied by a towed-car impound lot and other low-rent uses.

The architects' design strategy capitalized on the ubiquitous exposed steel trusses and the broad openings in the pier walls. A consistent use of muted blue surfaces and red structural framing, with wide glazed openings toward the river and ample daylight through original rooftop monitors, suited both the setting and its new uses. Replacing the metal façades of the headhouse wasn't feasible, so the architects relied on subtle painted accents and 40-by-80-foot murals by artist Clem Clarke over the main entrances.

In a 1995 *New York Times* review, architecture critic Paul Goldberger heralded the Piers as an enlightened compromise between residents of Chelsea, who wanted "to see the entire waterfront turned into a public park" (then an economically unattainable goal) and bankers, "who look at every square foot in terms of the profit it could throw off."

The 28-acre complex has undergone remarkably little change over its first 15 years. Management continually invests in upgrades and has added a sleek bowling center. The northernmost of the four piers, which had no superstructure, was relinquished for a now almost complete portion of Hudson River Park. More painted color has been added, unwisely, to the West Street fronts, and the murals there are often replaced with promotional images of the activities within.

Since 2003, AIA NY has recognized the virtues of Chelsea Piers by holding its annual Heritage Ball there.

John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* from 1972 to 1996. In recent years he has written for *Architectural Record*, *Architecture*, *Architect*, and other publications.

JOHN MORRIS DIXON

# Raves & Reviews

In Print +

**Public Art for Public Schools, by Michele Cohen; photography by Stan Ries. Foreword by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. New York: Monacelli Press, 2009. 240 pp. \$50.**

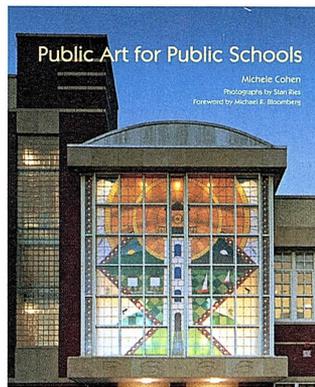
Michele Cohen, former director of the Public Art for Public Schools program of the NYC School Construction Authority (NYCSCA), begins this informative and beautiful book with the question, “What makes a good schoolhouse?” Her answer, which is the core of the book, is that a close relationship exists between good schools and educational programs and good schoolhouse design. Art in the schools helps schoolhouse design by adding a visual and educational dimension to the learning environment.

The book’s overt purpose is to depict the history of the Percent for Art Program and its predecessors, which have commissioned art for the public school system. But the author has created a broader history, tracing the intertwined stories of public school governance, the evolution of school design and construction, and the shifting approaches to artwork and decoration in the schools.

By the 1880s, early in the school system’s history, art and decoration were beginning to exert influence in the school design and construction program. Art and culture were associated with the betterment of society. Educators believed that learning should take place in a stimulating environment, and considered art to be just such a stimulus. These tenets, adopted from British artist and art critic John Ruskin, dovetailed with the goals of social progressives, who believed that continued exposure to art would have a civilizing and assimilating effect on immigrant students populating the schools. From this agenda of civic improvement, the movement to decorate the schoolroom with art gathered momentum and force.

But it was C.B.J. Snyder, chief designer for school buildings (1891–1922), who provided the commitment of architects and implemented the process that designed and built schools to enable art to become an extension of the architectural design. The integration of the arts into the school building reinforced Snyder’s vision of the school as a civic and community centerpiece, a great social equalizer.

These two concepts – art-architectural integration and school as community centerpiece – have endured as anchor principles as the arts program evolved into the Percent for Art Program. Since the early 1990s formation of the NYCSCA, the artwork commissioned by Percent for Art has specific, school-focused themes displayed in a variety of forms. The artists employ a wide range of materials, the scales shift dramatically, and the works are deployed pervasively around the schools. But the focus of this very successful program is



always on engagement and reflection of the local community.

The book is helped enormously by Stan Ries’s vivid photography and the excellent archival photos. Cohen admirably fulfills both the broad historic purpose and the more targeted institutional story of the Percent for Art. It’s almost enough to make the reader want to return to elementary school.

Reviewed by Stanley Stark, FAIA

**Learning from Hangzhou, by Mathieu Borysevicz. Preface by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2009. 300 pp. \$45.**

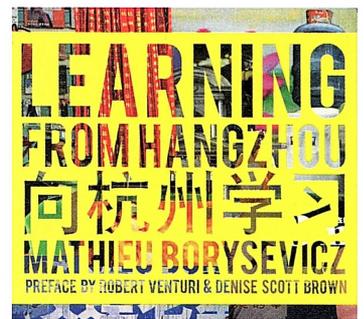
This is foremost a brilliant photo essay, stretching more than 300 pages, about a place that Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown call “today’s Chinese city” in the preface. With a population of 7.8 million people, Hangzhou is a principal commercial city and the capital of Zhejiang province, in the Yangtze River Delta. Visited by Marco Polo, who called it “the finest” city in the world, Hangzhou has attributes that make it simultaneously familiar and mysterious to Western travelers. Borysevicz’s eloquent text helps unravel the code and decipher the semiotics.

Hangzhou is a city sheathed in communications. Signs are everywhere. They are small and large, printed and electronic. Billboards become three-dimensional buildings, and “crownings” top structures with additional messages. This metropolis, perhaps a model of the emergent 21st-century city, is about selling and getting out the message. Public life is intertwined with the needs of local and global markets. Venturi and Scott Brown ask if Hangzhou is the “city of dynamic communication.” Borysevicz, in words and images, catalogues the commoditization as a symbol of the intersection of unanticipated cultural transformation and rampant urban development.

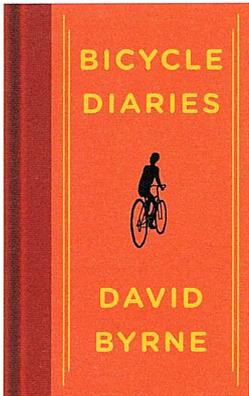
Reviewed by Rick Bell, FAIA

**Bicycle Diaries, by David Byrne. New York: Viking, 2009. 320 pp. \$25.95**

When David Byrne spoke at the Center for Architecture a couple of years ago, he said it was impossible to compose music without knowing something about the architecture of the place where it would be played. His new book, *Bicycle Diaries*, reads as a multidisciplinary



urban design guidebook, comparable to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. The author helps explain each city he visits by making clear the virtue of the bike-height vantage point from which he formulates his impressions. A love song for seeing cities by bicycle, Byrne's book is a must-read for anyone who has ever ridden on a bicycle.



*Bicycle Diaries* is based on journal entries written by Byrne during his frequent travels to bike-friendly cities – Berlin, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Melbourne, and Rome (despite the hills) – and to bike-nasty places – Houston, Detroit, and Pittsburgh, though he says that “most U.S. cities” fall into this category. The musician and visual artist paints a vivid portrait of the pleasures of experiencing cities up close and personal, and at reasonable speed.

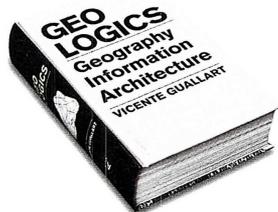
“They don’t teach this kind of architecture at Yale,” he says.

A bicycle becomes the vehicle of choice for connecting person and place. Byrne slowly reveals his ideas about art, politics, music, and geography. He speaks of his journey from biking Baltimore’s suburbs to becoming a world traveler and bike-rack designer (see his “Villager” pup on the sidewalk outside the Center for Architecture).

The book concludes with a conversation with fellow bike enthusiast Janette Sadik-Khan, Hon. AIA, New York City’s transportation commissioner, and, perhaps, the narrative equivalent of Calvino’s Kublai Khan. Byrne praises her new bike lanes and the bike-consciousness that her department has brought to our streets, but asks for more. He ends with a call for the streets of New York to be “even more the place for social interaction and interplay.” And he quotes Congressman Earl Blumenauer, founder of the Congressional Bicycle Caucus, who advocates for “biking as a means of public transportation” and thinks that “now is the time.”

Reviewed by Rick Bell, FAIA

**Geologics: Geography Information Architecture, by Vicente Guallart. Barcelona, Spain: Actar, 2009. 384 pp. \$47.**



*Geologics*, or “logics of the earth,” is an enlightening work organized into two stand-alone sections. The first section of “logics” is a catalogue of Guallart’s methodology, which can be applied to design problems large and small. This is a brilliant, well-presented lexicon for architect, planner, and geographer alike. It is indispensable for those who teach design, site planning, or cross-disciplinary curricula, or who want to impart to others a sense of the complexity and breadth of what architecture can encompass.

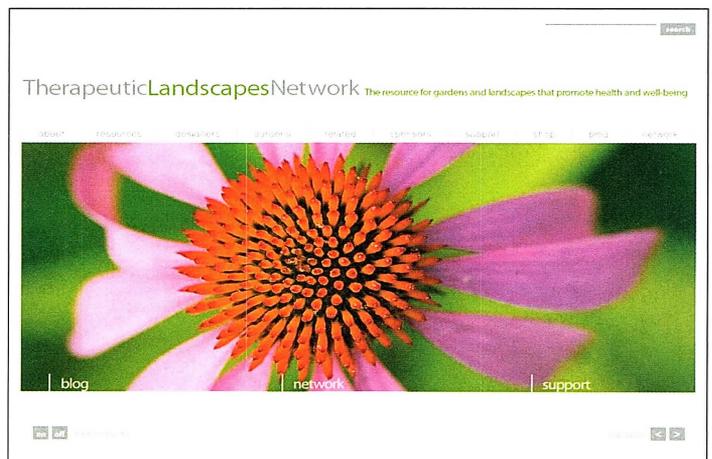
The second section is a monograph of Guallart’s work covering the last 10 years. He relies on technology and a cross-disciplinary

team including artists, scientists, and design professionals to create a sense of place uniquely shaped by ambient forces. Each project is described using the language consistent with Guallart’s logics. How each project is shaped is clear in some cases, while lacking the necessary depth in others. The page size and number of projects inhibit a clear understanding of the compelling graphics. Perhaps fewer projects with greater explanation would have been better. On balance I would recommend this book, with a cautionary note regarding the lack of clarity in a few project descriptions.

Reviewed by Ilyia Azaroff, AIA

**Click Here:** [www.HealingLandscapes.org](http://www.HealingLandscapes.org)

The Therapeutic Landscapes Network is a growing online resource in the field of healing gardens and restorative landscapes. With its intention to “enable people to live fuller, richer, healthier lives,” the database includes resources, suggested reading, and a directory of designers and consultants. Its overarching argument is that designs must integrate nature in order to promote health.



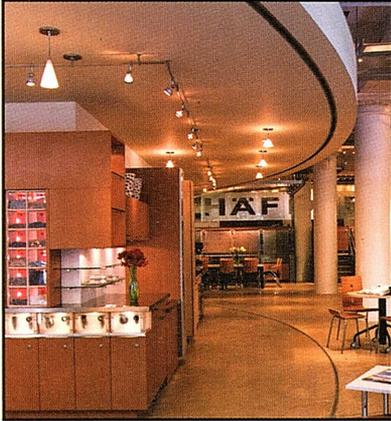
What is interesting is the wide variety of space types. There are sections on healthcare gardens, horticulture therapy, *feng shui* and *vastu*, labyrinths, and gardens that simply encourage outdoor activity. A blog features timely news on the latest developments in healing spaces. Conferences are announced, new books and television series are publicized, and spaces that do not meet curative standards are critiqued.

As the website develops, it promises to become even more user-friendly. For newcomers to the world of therapeutic landscapes, it will provide recommended reading in a section called “If You Only Read Five.” Interactive Google Maps will locate both practitioners and gardens around the world.

Visit the website today, and you’ll instantly feel the fresh air inspire your green thumb.

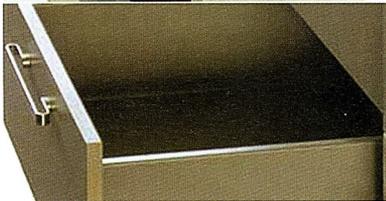
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# Survival of the Fittest

## Last Words

**Rick Bell, FAIA**

**Executive Director**

**AIA New York Chapter**

**“Darwin’s independent criterion of fitness is, indeed, ‘improved’ design...To Darwin, improved meant only ‘better designed for the immediate, local environment.’”**

Stephen Jay Gould, *Darwin’s Untimely Burial*, 1976

**“Nature is indifferent to the survival of the human species, including Americans.”**

Adlai Stevenson

**“I have been over into the future, and it works.”**

Lincoln Steffens, 1921

At the annual Fit City conferences held at the Center for Architecture, the urbane audience is physically fit, comparatively speaking. Three of the speakers, all municipal agency commissioners, compare their body mass index without embarrassment. The Department of City Planning’s chief urban designer Alex Washburn, AIA, bicycles to the conference and leaves his bike on the David Byrne-designed rack outside. New York City’s Active Design Guidelines are announced, and those attending take the stairs after learning about the electromagnetic hold-opens on the fire doors. The statistics projected in map form, however, show a ballooning pandemic of obesity throughout the five boroughs and nationwide.

What can architects do to create livable, sustainable, and *healthy* communities? That was the subject of an exciting discussion that took place during the H209 Water Forum in September, part of the 400th anniversary celebration of Henry Hudson’s arrival in New York Harbor. The forum brought together a diverse group of people to reflect on how things happen in New York. Attendees included Laurie Kerr from the Mayor’s Office of Long Term Planning & Sustainability, and developer Jonathan Rose. Rose spoke of the overarching importance of education. Kerr addressed the impact of climate change and sea-level rise. My presentation was on the linkage between communities that engage the waterfront and opportunities for active recreation.

At the 79th Street Boat Basin, the remaining live-aboard boats (a shadow of the vibrant shanty-boat community I remember from my days living there after architecture school) have bicycles and kayaks on their front decks. Boat dwellers are out on the Riverside Park esplanade in all seasons, along with their West Side neighbors and innumerable visitors to New York. Thanks to the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway and recently completed sections of Riverside South and Hudson River Park, there is a virtually continuous recreational path along the water’s edge from Spuyten Duyvil to the Battery, a distance of more than 15 miles. Much of New York City’s waterfront has become accessible for recreational activities in ways without historical parallel.

Old photos show kids diving into the East River and bicycling on lower Broadway, but the waterfront and streets of New York were primarily locations of trade, manufacturing, and pollution. Now New Yorkers for Parks

makes kayaks available to all who sign a waiver and promise not to sneak away to Port Liberté. Safety for those taking personal watercraft onto the Hudson and East Rivers is an issue of increasing importance.

Similarly, personal safety while riding a bicycle in city centers is of growing significance and varies tremendously from place to place. New York City is rapidly improving, with the Department of Transportation’s creation of bicycle

lanes that prevent car doors from slamming bicyclists. With many miles of dedicated bike lanes, Amsterdam is among the best places to ride. Moscow, with its traffic congestion and car culture, has far to go. Yet in Moscow, people are surprisingly fit. They walk a lot and go up and down stairs to underground passages – *perekhody* – to cross busy intersections.

Five quick thoughts on how architects, clients, and the general public can encourage fitness through design decisions:

1. Add a stair in the middle whenever two escalators are placed side-by-side. Some wonderful buildings are flawed because they rely exclusively on escalators.
2. Walk or bicycle to your destination, or at least get off the subway one stop before or after the most proximate station. Create places, indoors and out, for bicycle storage.
3. Get down to the water in boats, canoes, and kayaks. Advocate for live-aboard communities as low-density social housing and “eyes on the water.”
4. Complete the missing sections of a continuous greenway for bicycles, joggers, and walkers in Manhattan; and why not do to the same from Red Square – where bicycles are currently not permitted – to the hills and birch forests of Krylatskoe?
5. Ask the governor, or the next governor, to adequately fund Governors Island as a recreational oasis – or tell the state to get off the island and let the city do it better.

It is important to establish consensus, bringing people to the same page over the design issues related to public recreational opportunities. The AIA New York Chapter’s ENYA group did so with the Groen Hoek competition in 2004, and is doing it again with HB:BX-Building Cultural Infrastructure, the international ideas competition for High Bridge. We must all work it out together, or with much sweat we will all work out separately.



**Bell on bike in Moscow**

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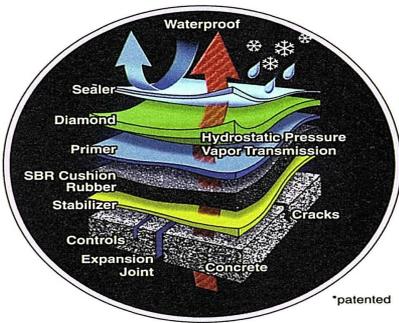
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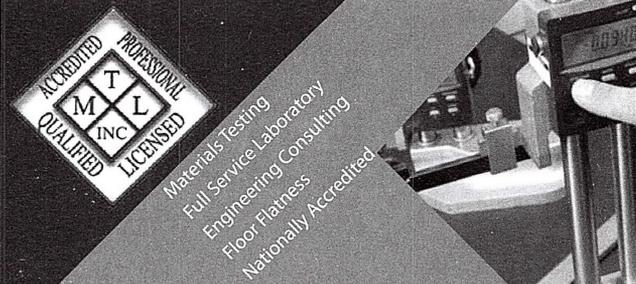
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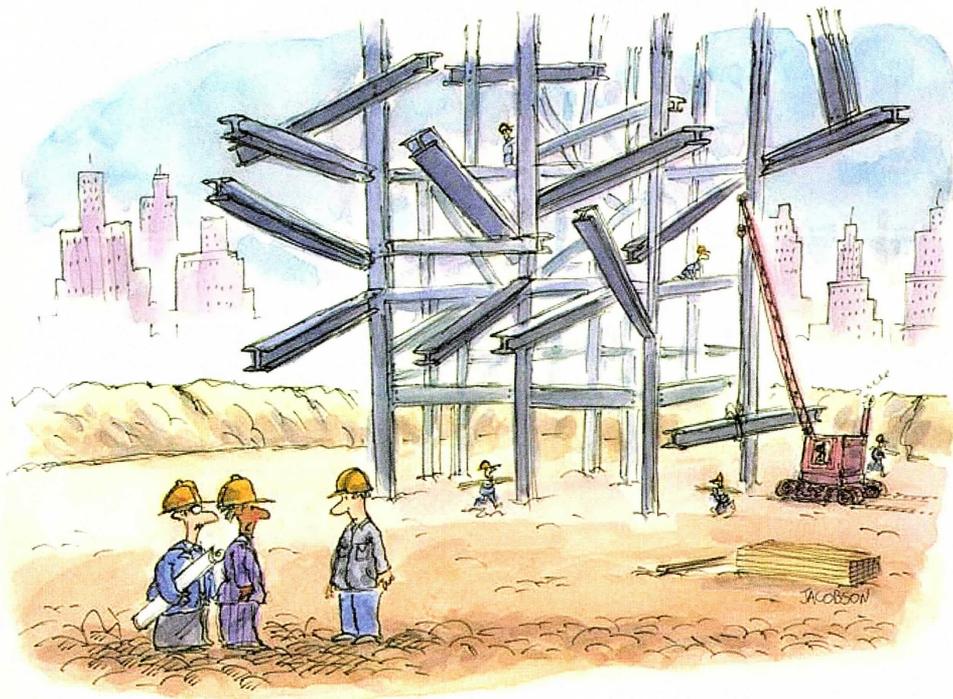
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