

Winter 2014

# Oculus

A Publication of the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter Volume 76, Issue 4 | \$10

## Changing Skyline/ Evolving Streets

Hello, We're at a Place Called Vertigo

Tower at the Crossroads

The Mid-block Move

In Step with the Neighborhood

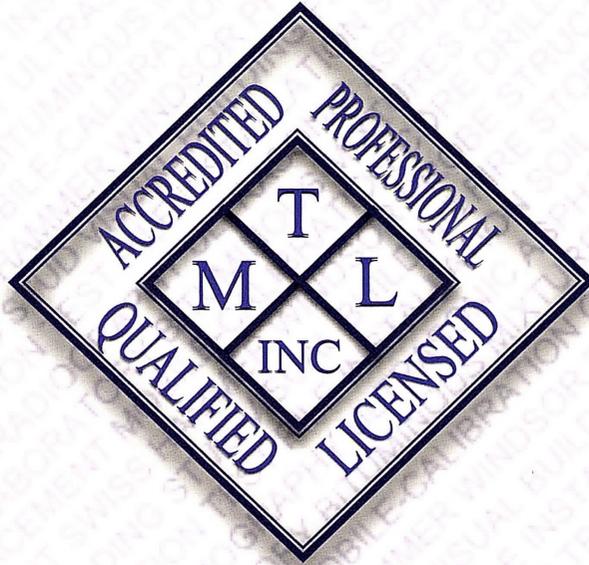
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Winter 2014 Vol. 76, No. 4

Oculus: A publication of the AIA New York Chapter

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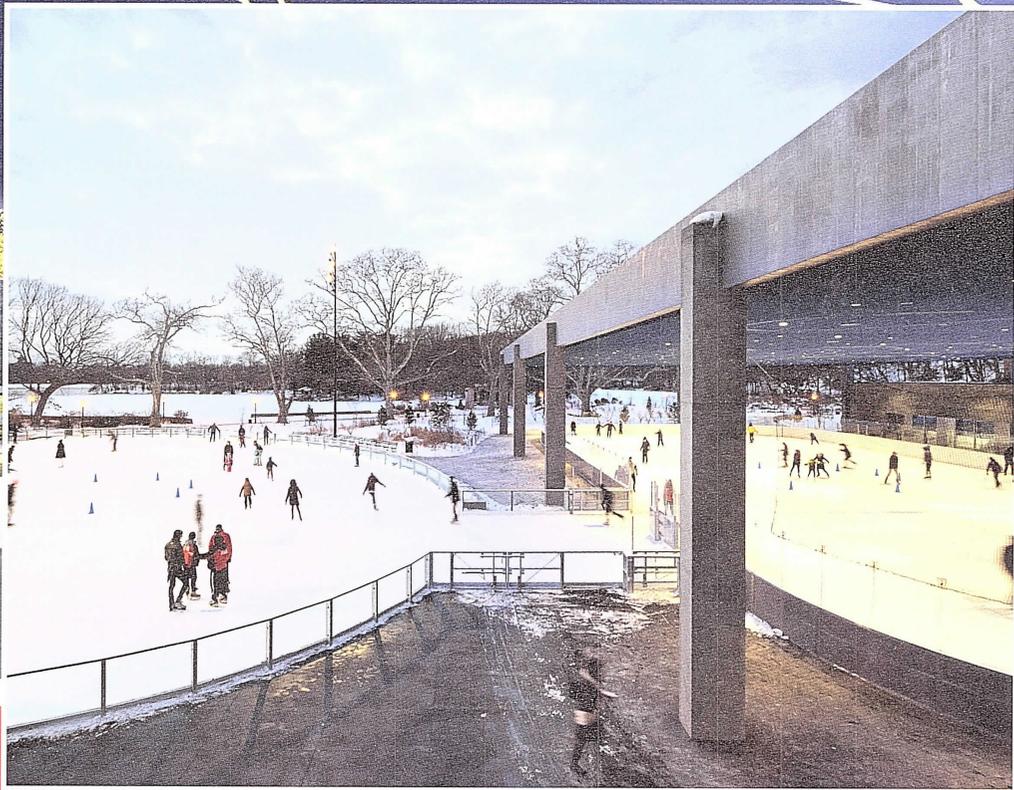
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One-year subscription (4 issues): \$40 (U.S.), \$60 (foreign). The AIA New York Chapter also publishes the twice-monthly online newsletter eOculus. To advertise in Oculus or eOculus, please contact Amanda Goodwin at [agoodwin@naylor.com](mailto:agoodwin@naylor.com) or (352) 333-3491. For reprint or back issue information or to be placed on the e-mail list, contact [info@aiany.org](mailto:info@aiany.org).

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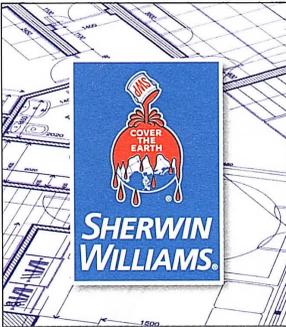
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Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates, One Vanderbilt, New York, NY, pg. 26.  
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## LETTER FROM TWO PRESIDENTS

# Vision and Transition



Lance Jay Brown, FAIA,  
DPACSA, and Tomas J.  
Rossant, AIA

This has been a watershed year for AIANY. Membership broke the elusive 5,000 mark, and the Heritage Ball was a record breaker and the best ever. We had well over 1,000 programs and 20 exhibits, and are approaching 100,000 visitors annually to the Center for Architecture. We are surely rising!

Our 2014 earth-shaking activities began with “Considering the Quake: Seismic Design on the Edge,” with shake-table technology and eye-opening programs. The hard work we did during the run-up to the November 2013 mayoral election continues to pay big dividends for the architecture and design community. We’ve met with many commissioners and Assembly and City Council members, and I pledged our support of the de Blasio Administration’s “One City: Built to Last” report, and to civic and professional leaders responsible for the implementation of the “80x50” initiative to reduce the city’s carbon footprint 80% by 2050. Our “Platform for the Future of the City” and “Post-Sandy Initiative” still inform city leaders. During UN Climate Week, AIANY’s Design for Risk and Reconstruction and COTE Committees sponsored a presentation by Architecture 2030 founder and CEO Ed Mazria, AIA, who pointed out that architects could play an even larger role in responding to environmental challenges. Our joint programs with UN Habitat and the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization keep us at the forefront of global change.

The 2014 Civic Spirit: Civic Vision presidential theme has been a wonderful ride. From our numerous collaborative committee programs, we’ve seen the value of cooperative action. Audiences have been standing-room only. Major exhibits such as the seismic show, “Open to the Public” (with its 30-speaker symposium!); the European Prize for Urban Public Space; the Swiss, Catalan, and Danish exhibits; and our own Design Awards, Queensway, and Furman Center Housing exhibits have highlighted the Center for Architecture as a focal point for discussion and appreciation of a healthier and more beautiful New York. And in no way is the ride over. As can be seen in this wonderfully rich Winter issue of *Oculus*, “Changing Skyline/Evolving Streets,” the theme goes on!

None of the above would be possible without the generous and stalwart contributions of the 27 Chapter committees and the entire Center for Architecture staff. Would that I could name them all here. The staff, the Chapter and Foundation Boards, and Executive Committees are the truly renewable energy we all so depend upon.

As we enter 2015, we will see a reconfigured AIANY Chapter and the Center under the leadership of the very capable Presidents Tomas Rossant, AIA, and Joseph Tortorella, Assoc. AIA. A burgeoning list of challenges and opportunities awaits us all. I look forward to our teamwork in the brave, new, and exciting year!

Lance Jay Brown, FAIA, DPACSA  
2014 President, AIA New York Chapter

Tomas J. Rossant, AIA  
2015 President, AIA New York Chapter

When people ask why I donate so much time to AIANY, my response is always swift: I believe in the Center for Architecture. It is the most vibrant and engaging place for architectural discourse, professional learning, and national and global intellectual exchange on the big issues of our times. I get excited just walking in the door, and I always leave stimulated by the possibilities for design to improve our lives and environment.

As I begin my term as 2015 Chapter President, I will dedicate myself to building a stronger Center as we implement the merger of the Foundation and the Center for Architecture into a single 501c3 entity focused on public education and professional development. With a discrete Center board and new access to fund-raising, the change will ensure the Center continues to evolve as one of the city’s most relevant design-focused cultural institutions.

My 2015 presidential theme is Dialogues from the Edge of Practice. Through monthly events I hope to explore how architects are boldly bringing our critical problem-solving skills and design acumen to endeavors previously considered outside the traditional scope of practice. There has never been a more expansive moment for the role of the architect in society. Let’s find the edge!

I would like to thank Lance Jay Brown, FAIA, for his leadership of AIANY in 2014. As a true professor he has taught me well and leaves me prepared to continue the high standards of his stewardship. I look forward to working closely with Executive Director Rick Bell, FAIA, Managing Director Cynthia Kracauer, AIA, LEED AP, and the tireless staff. And I invite all AIANY members to join me in 2015 to continue the process of constant renewal and improvement of the Center for Architecture.

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Editor ever hopeful for an illuminating skyline.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Tall Is as Tall Does

New York is growing up – and up and up and up. Hardly a day goes by without an announcement (or rumor) of plans for a new tower somewhere in the city. And now, with the arrival of “supertalls” and “super-thins,” even our understanding of “tower” has changed. At what floor does “a tower” become “a supertall”?

As the title of this issue of *Oculus* suggests, we look at how some of the new sentinels soaring into the skyline and built (mostly) for the mega-rich behave at street level. Will they be good neighbors to us earthbound common folk? Time will tell. In the Opener (pg. 21), James S. Russell, FAIA, eloquently puts the case studies presented here into that context. (We will be dealing with housing and affordability in the Fall 2015 issue, “Home.”)

In our regular departments, “One Block Over” considers not only the “museum of architecture” rising along the High Line, but also the changing streetscapes around and under the elevated park. “In Print” hails Jean DeJean’s *How Paris Became Paris*, which explains how its rise to greatness closely reflects “our current preoccupations.” And while Jaime Lerner’s *Urban Acupuncture* may be a slim volume, it is rich with observations about how even the smallest gestures can help make a city work better. Our “80-Year-Watch” looks back at Le Corbusier’s first impression of the city’s skyline, with his proclamation that Manhattan’s skyscrapers were “too small,” which didn’t endear him to America – or bring him the commissions he was expecting.

Corbu would probably approve of what’s going up in my neck of the woods along Second Avenue, in anticipation of the Second Avenue Subway making its way (slowly, but finally) downtown. Though it’s no “Billionaires’ Row,” from my corner at 52nd Street I’ve been watching luxury residential towers rise to what is now considered a modestly-scaled range of 30 stories or so. Their street-front limestone façades line up, in almost friendly fashion, with the rooflines of what’s left of a motley collection of 19th- and early 20th-century brownstones housing the vestiges of small-business retail, ethnic restaurants, and (loud) yuppie-puppy pubs. Yes, the glassy towers sparkle chicly on the skyline. But are they good neighbors? One tower offers a claustrophobic Walgreens huddled behind blocked-out, half-block-long, plate-glass windows. Across the avenue, the street tenant is a generically-styled bank branch. (No telling yet what will inhabit the bases of two other towers still under construction). Gone are the hardware store, with its ancient, sloping floorboards, that had served the ’hood since the 1930s; the shoemaker; the laundromat; and the tiny, tacky – but delicious – Chinese restaurant.

Yes, New York is growing up. A Burj Manhattan anytime soon? Not likely – but never say never (though more likely in Jersey City, perhaps?). Growing up, however, involves more than height. Whether our changing skyline draws oohs or boos, we also need to make sure the streets have light and air, and the public realm inspires. In that, there’s always room to grow.

Kristen Richards, Hon. AIA, Hon. ASLA  
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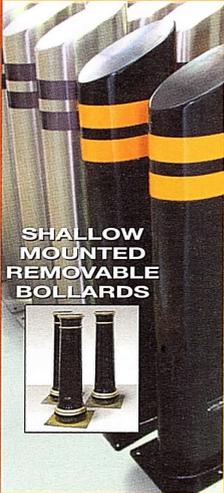
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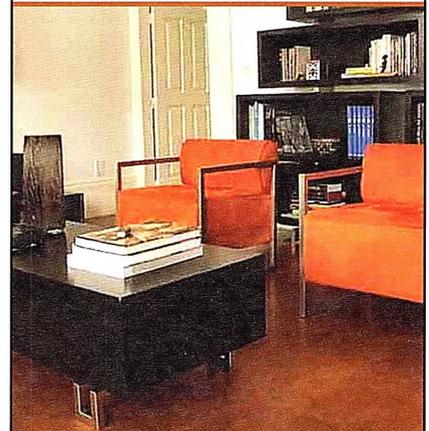
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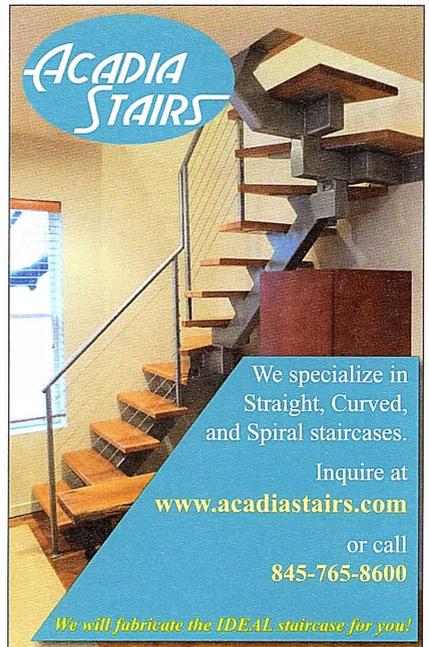
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# Center Highlights



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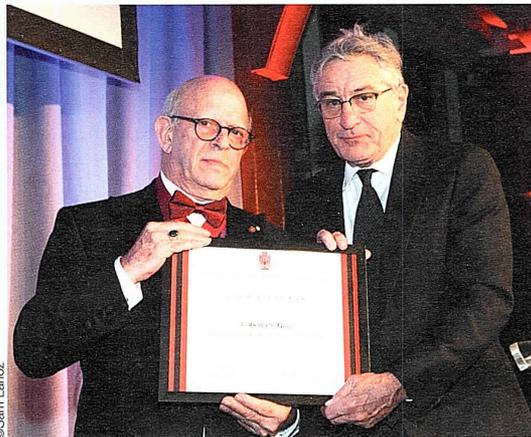
(above) More than 1,100 members of NYC's design community gathered at Chelsea Piers for the AIANY 2014 Heritage Ball on October 23. (l-r) Center for Architecture Foundation Award Honoree **Adam Weinstein**, President and CEO, Phipps Houses; Center for Architecture Foundation President **Joseph Tortorella**; 2014 President's Award

Honoree **Marilyn Jordan Taylor, FAIA**, Dean, University of Pennsylvania School of Design; AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**; AIA New York Chapter Award Honoree **Mary Ann Tighe**, CEO, CBRE New York Tri-State Region; AIANY Executive Director **Rick Bell, FAIA**; and Heritage Ball Dinner Co-chair **Aine Brazil, PE, LEED AP**.



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(above) After recognizing this year's honorees at the 2014 Heritage Ball, the celebration continued at the Party@theCenter afterparty at the Center for Architecture.



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(left) AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**, presented **Robert De Niro**, actor and founder of the Tribeca Film Festival, with the Center for Architecture Award at the 2014 Heritage Ball for his commitment to NYC's economic and cultural development.



©Wolfgang Werner

(above) AIANY members, staff, and friends joined the largest climate change rally in history at the People's Climate March in September. (l-r) **Emma Pattiz**, Policy Coordinator, AIANY; **Nicole Pesce**, Development Associate, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; **Julia Christie**, AIANY Public Information Assistant; **Zoe Seibel**, AIANY Development Coordinator; **Gretchen Bank**, Assoc. AIA, Co-

chair, AIANY Marketing and Communications Committee; **Pat Sapinsley**, AIA, LEED AP, Co-chair, AIANY Committee on the Environment (COTE); **Margaret O'Donoghue Castillo**, AIA, LEED AP, 2015 President, AIA NYS; and **Rochelle Thomas**, AIANY Membership Assistant.

(right) On October 1, NYC Department of Design + Construction (DDC) Commissioner **Feniosky Peña-Mora** spoke about the search for a new chief architect to lead the DDC's mission to bring beautiful, efficient, innovative, resilient, and environmentally-responsible design to all New Yorkers.



©Emma Pattiz

Forum with DDC Commissioner  
**Dr. Feniosky Peña-Mora**  
AIANY and nycobaNOMA  
October 1, 2014



©Eve Dilworth Rosen

(left) Archtober 2014 kicked off Building of the Day in August with a truckload of Coolhaus New York's architecturally-inspired frozen treats at The Public Theater. AIANY staffers (l-r): Communications Director **Camila Schaulsohn**; Development Coordinator **Zoe Seibel**; Archtober Coordinator **Julia Cohen**; and Office Manager **Inbal Newman**.



(left) The “New Practices New York 2014” exhibition, designed by Pentagram/ Natasha Jen, features the work of six promising young NYC firms (see pg. 37).

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(right) At the Arctober program “Guggenheim Helsinki Competition: Museum of the Future,” panelists (l-r) **Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen**, Associate Professor, Yale School of Architecture; **Jeanne Gang**, FAIA, Founder and Principal, Studio Gang Architects; **Cara Cragan**, Director of Architecture, Helsinki and Abu Dhabi, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation; **Nancy Spector**, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation; and moderator **Joel Sanders**, Professor Adjunct, Yale School of Architecture, respond to a question by AIANY Executive Director **Rick Bell**, FAIA (far right).



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(right) **Ed Mazria**, AIA, founder and CEO, Architecture 2030 (far right), shared the stage with **Susan S. Szenasy**, Hon. AIANY, Editor-in-Chief and Publisher, Metropolis magazine, and AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown**, FAIA, during “DESIGN! Life Depends on Us,” a talk following the UN Climate Summit that discussed architecture’s role in creating a carbon-free environment.

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(above) Past and present co-chairs of the AIANY Emerging New York Architects Committee (ENYA) celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a boat cruise around Lower Manhattan. (l-r) **Amanda Rivera**; **Jessica Sheridan**, AIA, LEED AP BD+C; **Harry Gaveras**; **Venesa Alicea**, AIA, LEED AP BD+C; **Omar Mitchell**; AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown**, FAIA; **Brynnmarie Lanciotti**, AIA; **Emily Kotsaftis**, AIA; **Joanne Fernando**, AIA; **Rick Bell**, FAIA, AIANY Executive Director; **Alex Alaimo**, Assoc. AIA.

## Center for Architecture Foundation



©Martha Sereva

(left) More than 260 children and adults visited the Center for Architecture over the Columbus Day weekend for the Center for Architecture Foundation and openhousenewyork’s annual Family Festival. Youngsters enjoyed hands-on design activities offered by the host organizations and Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, the Museum at Eldridge Street, South Street Seaport Museum, and People for the Pavilion.



©James Rojas

(above) Families enjoyed redesigning sections of each borough in urban planner James Rojas’s community visioning workshop as part of Family Festival weekend.

# Not All High Line Highlights Are On the Skyline

As a “museum of architecture” rises along the lush, elevated park, some streetscapes are coming to life

BY CLAIRE WILSON

“Build it and they will come.” This quote from the film, *Field of Dreams*, is often used when referring to the High Line and the unprecedented residential, commercial, and cultural development along the 1.4-mile-long elevated railroad-turned-leafy park, whose final phase opened in September. While some call the park the greatest urban redevelopment project of the Bloomberg Administration, it is certainly one of the biggest and most ambitious in the city’s recent history.

Designed by James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and horticulturist Piet Oudolf, the High Line runs from Gansevoort Street in the meatpacking district to West 34th Street. Its surrounding corridor has been called a “museum of architecture” and an “architectural petting zoo” that now includes the new Renzo Piano Building Workshop-designed Whitney Museum, set to open next year. The effect is an unusual patchwork of glass, metal, and embossed and pierced metal in building styles that range from Gehry Partners’ squat, schooner-like IAC building and Tamarkin Co.’s industrial style informed by early 20th-century factories, to Atelier Jean Nouvel’s whimsical window patterns, and Neil M. Denari Architects’ cantilevered building.

(right) Under the High Line along 10th Avenue at 17th Street, looking south.

(below, left) Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects designed the street-level courtyard for Robert A.M. Stern Architects’ 312-unit Abington House to reflect the paving and plantings of the High Line – and thrive in its shadows.

(below, right) Renzo Piano’s Whitney Museum, under construction, and the Standard Hotel by Ennead Architects, which straddles the High Line.



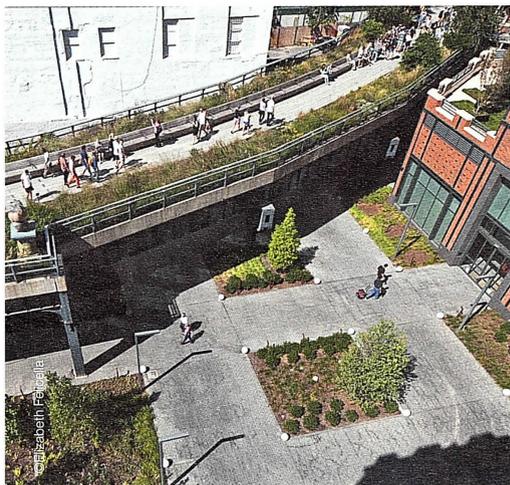
©James S. Russell

Robert A.M. Stern Architects’ 312-unit Abington House at 29th Street takes its cues from the High Line with a street-level garden and a series of four terraces, common spaces for tenants’ use, designed by Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects. Beginning with the lowest terrace, which is level with the High Line, the design is meant to evoke a mountain as it ascends. Each level has different plant material chosen to reflect varying “climactic” conditions, such as more wind up high and sunlight, shade, and water at street level. The walkways and landscaped beds at street level are laid out around High Line support columns. “We wanted people to look at our landscape as if it were part of the High Line,” says Signe Nielsen, RLA, FASLA, principal, Mathews Nielsen. “We interpreted how the paving and plantings weave in and out of each other.”

Galleries still thrive here, and that artsy vibe is an important part of the neighborhood’s appeal, according to Cary Tamarkin, AIA, principal, Tamarkin Co., architect of three area buildings. “It has a younger, artistic bent and a cool factor you don’t find on the Lower East Side or West Village,” says Tamarkin. “There is a young energy about it that is unprecedented.” David Falk, president, Newmark Grubb Knight Frank New York Tristate region, a commercial real-estate firm, notes that vibe spillover is bringing companies like Google, Twitter, Apple, Samsung, and the Food Network to former warehouses along Ninth Avenue. “The location says those brands are hip, cool, and forward-thinking,” he says.

Retail along West 14th Street will get a boost when the Whitney opens, but for the moment, stretches of 10th Avenue have little foot traffic and none of the banks and chain pharmacies so ubiquitous in other residential areas. “The neighborhood needs retail and will get it,” Tamarkin says. “Build it and they will come.”

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*.



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# Of Sidewalks and Skylines

BY JAMES S. RUSSELL, FAIA

With the controversial rise of supertall, super-thin, super-expensive towers, the nature of Manhattan's skyline is fundamentally changing for the first time since the original World Trade Center towers altered New York's wedding-cake panorama.

The rapid pace of development inevitably redefines the city – and not just at altitudes inhabited mainly by peregrine falcons. That's why in this issue, we look down to the street as well as up at the skyline. How do we define livability as a new, larger scale asserts itself, leaving the verities of contextualism and “human scale” behind? What scale works?

Streetscapes of the supertalls are rarely discussed, yet that's what most of us will encounter on a daily basis. Will the intimate plaza and high-end retail of Rafael Viñoly's 432 Park gracefully ground this unshelved shaft? Can a fluttering canopy lend a human dimension to Christian de Portzamparc's One57? Perhaps, yes. On the other hand, the Municipal Art Society's shadow studies depict an ominous impact of great height. When supertalls are super-thin, do shadows matter? I would say that the zoning verities of light and air matter more than ever. We'll want more daylight to replace electric lights if we are going to get serious about energy conservation. Likewise, a well-ventilated building can eschew air conditioning for more of the year than we've been told.

After the Pan Am building besmirched Park Avenue's great vista and a Supreme Court fight saved Grand Central itself from a similar fate, is it really okay to put a 65-story building across the street? Kohn Pedersen Fox argues yes, first by deftly slimming the top, then by opening a new vista to the station at the street, and investing in substantial pedestrian improvements.

Today's real-estate prices have owners and developers moving air rights around at a pace New York has never seen. Along the side streets, traditionally much lower in scale than the wider avenues, the fear of block-busting sliver towers now gives way to creeping cantileverism. The artful dance of two projects by FXFWOLE and Karim Rashid with WASA Studio pushes the limits without (yet) pushing the neighbors over the edge.

A prominent, long-debated triangle of land will at last see a sculpted residence/cultural center combination by TEN Arquitectos that dramatically signals the presence of Brooklyn's long-hidden BAM cultural district. By contrast, neighbors in the Bronx's Melrose Commons passionately defended an infill rather than a bulldozer redevelopment strategy, a riposte to Le Corbusier's 1935 pronouncement that the city's skyline was too timid (subject of this issue's “80-Year Watch”). In SoHo, an insightful “garbage garage” by Dattner Architects and WXY Architecture + Urban Design will force us to rethink what constitutes a LULU – a Locally Undesirable Land Use.

As developers hustle for every cubic inch and neighbors push back, this issue of *Oculus* helps us look deeper at the way design helps us strike the right balance between growth and greatness.

James S. Russell, FAIA, writes for publications ranging from the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* to his own blog at [jamesrussell.net/blog](http://jamesrussell.net/blog). He authored the 2012 book *The Agile City: Building Well-being and Wealth in an Era of Climate Change*. He also serves as editorial advisor to the Oculus Committee.



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(image) MAP Architects, La Terraza, Melrose Commons, pg. 34.

# Hello, We're at a Place Called Vertigo

57th Street is sprouting residential supertalls. With great height comes great expectations. What aspects of these buildings earn so much of the sky?

BY BILL MILLARD

Buildings rise at one pace; sociopolitical currents follow another. The lag between them generates a paradox: just as New York's leadership recognizes affordable housing as a central priority, the skyline shows a sharp increase in what is an understatement to call unaffordable housing.

Thanks to architectural vision, technological advances, and developers' assemblage of zoning lots and air rights, new residential skyscrapers reach great height without huge bulk. They're giraffes, not King Kongs. Still, the Municipal Arts Society's 2013 report, "The Accidental Skyline," charges that the scale of these as-of-right buildings impinges on public assets like light, views, and park space. Noting that Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture's (AS+GG) Nordstrom Tower at 215 West 57th Street, will cast, if current plans hold, a 4,000-foot shadow across Central Park, the report calls for zoning revisions and increased public review of future development schemes.

Then again, for exceptional buildings, it may be easier to forgive them their shadows. The supertalls induce a sense of marvel through formal ingenuity, not just scale and opulence. (Whether the joys of height are accessible to everyone who deserves them – arguably everyone, per Berthold Lubetkin's maxim that nothing is too good for the public – is a different though related question.)

Though neither developer nor architect is currently providing information for publication on the design, according to permit applications reported in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2012, the Nordstrom's roof will reach 1,550 feet and its spire 1,775 feet – one symbolic foot below One World Trade's. One57, the recently opened hotel/resi-



dence by Christian de Portzamparc at 157 West 57th Street, withstood a crane collapse during Superstorm Sandy and rose to 1,004 feet. Rafael Viñoly Architects' 432 Park has topped out at 1,396 feet, with a footprint of 94 feet square. SHoP Architects' Steinway Tower at 111 West 57th Street will hit 1,350 feet, with an even slimmer footprint, 60 feet wide.

Though sheer towers have dominated the skyline for decades, two of these towers rework the post-1916 tradition of setbacks. SHoP finesses the form, refining it with numerous shallow setbacks they call "feathered," a variant that may be its *ne plus ultra*. De Portzamparc morphs the wedding cake by subtly curving the tops of its offset volumes. Viñoly declares independence from it altogether, extruding a simple square to extreme height. Setbacks are height's concession to street-level light and, by implication, privilege's concession to the street-level public. Whatever enticements the new buildings reserve for their occupants and/or investors, they also speak to those who won't live in them but with them. They simultaneously suspend luxury above our heads and bring it within view.

### One57: "the music of the grid"

De Portzamparc's second contribution to 57th Street, more visible than his 23-story LVMH Tower, is already a navigational landmark: gaudy to some observers, assertive to others, but utterly unique. Beginning in 2005, developer Gary Barnett of Extell assembled a patchwork of real-estate and air-rights transactions to create this L-shaped site. ("The zoning code is complicated, like the Talmud," de Portzamparc comments, crediting zoning consultant Michael Parley, Assoc. AIA, as his local-compliance rabbi.) His initial design went on hold during the financial crisis, then reemerged in 2009 in a simpler form, preserving key themes: variety in glazing, vertical components each rising to end in a curve, and prominent asymmetries establishing a northward orientation.

Despite its coloration, One57 has features that read as deferential. De Portzamparc describes its directionality as a salute to Central Park, in contrast to other large towers that proclaim their centrality by presenting similar forms in all four directions. One57's silhouette suggests a stapler, an electric razor, the tonearm of a 1960s-vintage turntable – hints of humble functionality balancing the chromatic clamor. The patches of blue glass to the east and west, some with white ceramic frit, provide a texture that de Portzamparc likens to pixelation or the paintings of Gustav Klimt. The glazing suggests individual windows and diverse

(opposite page) Atelier Christian de Portzamparc's One57 (right), and Rafael Viñoly Architects' 432 Park (left).

(right, top) The "pixelated" west facade of Atelier Christian de Portzamparc's 1,004-foot-tall One57, as seen from 57th Street.

(right, bottom) Undulating canopies mark One57's hotel and residential entries.

#### One57, 157 West 57th Street

CLIENT:  
Extell Development Company  
ARCHITECT: Atelier Christian de Portzamparc  
EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT:  
SLCE Architects  
HOTEL INTERIOR DESIGN:  
Yabu Pushelberg  
RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR DESIGN:  
Thomas Juul-Hansen  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:  
Terrain-NYC  
EXTERIOR PERFORMANCE CONSULTANT:  
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residents: "I was astonished, as a European, to imagine that these will be living places, not offices, at 250 meters high," de Portzamparc says.

One57 meets the street with undulating ribbons that form canopies for the residential entrance and the Park Hyatt Hotel. "The idea was to soften the rigidity of the high structures...fragmentating the reflection at street level," de Portzamparc explains. "With this undulation, you have the sensation of something special," uniting "elements which are not usually totally linked: base, retail, entrance, canopy, façade." The canopies are brightly lit with LED lamps – "a bit too strongly luminous," de Portzamparc now finds, but adjustable via the building management system.

De Portzamparc is fond of a Lao-Tzu passage about emptiness – not walls or roofs – being a dwelling's true substance. Midtown's grid, he finds, sustains a rhythm between buildings and voids he finds less claustrophobic than Downtown. What he calls "the music of the grid" depends on contrasts – lines of light and buildings' vertical lines, varied tower heights – and he believes the local context can accommodate this slender giant. Acknowledging shading concerns, he doubts One57's slim shadow will fall across any area long enough to affect vegetation, though a broader "wall of shadow" from further supertalls would be a different matter.

Civic concerns over One57 may ultimately have more to do with its price-point consequences and imitators than its design. Some buyers are flipping units, not living in them; de Portzamparc strongly wants this building used for



Courtesy of Rafael Viñoly Architects



Courtesy of Rafael Viñoly; ©dbox

(above, top) Rafael Viñoly Architects' 432 Park rises 1,396 feet on a footprint of 94 feet square.

(above) Façade detail.

both hospitality and homes, but demurs on how to ensure it becomes a community of New Yorkers, not a casino for global Scrooge McDucks. Considering the subtle imagination One57 expresses, it deserves to become what de Portzamparc designed it to be: a residence as real as it is rarefied.

### 432 Park: the sturdy vertical grid

Well before its opening, Viñoly's deceptively simple box has redefined the skyline. Balancing restraint and audacity in extending a uniform grid to such a

height, it dominates while asserting the inherent elegance of a regular geometry. It also takes on the challenges of resisting wind and lateral loads on a scale where, as Viñoly told a Skyscraper Museum audience, managing acceleration is "a completely intuitive parameter."

Its structure (gray structural concrete for the core and slabs, white 14,000-psi architectural concrete for perimeter columns and spandrels) offers considerable mass. Two tuned mass dampers lend additional stability. Still, early wind-tunnel tests indicated that acceleration at upper floors would be about 30 milli-Gs: enough sway, Viñoly said, that "your cup of tea moves, and if you are tacky enough to have a chandelier, your chandelier also moves." Subjective testing with a mockup, using 360-degree window-view images, indicated that 30 milli-Gs felt scary enough to compromise marketability, but 8 milli-Gs was bearable.

WSP structural engineer Silvan Marcus, PE, limits sway further by letting the wind in at certain regular points (visible as unglazed floors), guiding currents around internal cylinders. Viñoly describes the tower as six 12-story buildings stacked end-to-end; those levels, says project architect James Herr, AIA, "contain both the openings for the wind vortexes and the outriggers used to bring those forces of the perimeter columns into the center core." This solution, Herr continues, "wasn't meant to create an iconic building; it was meant to consolidate all the different parameters into one solution."

Curtain-wall designer Enclos obtained large panes of ultra-clear, low-emissivity Eckelt glass, giving occupants broad views. With perimeter spaces almost 28 feet from the core, Herr reports, creating "a floorplate that offers a good ratio between the core and the residential sellable area," a pinwheel layout allows configuration of different-sized units according to market needs. Ceiling heights are a generous 12 feet 6 inches.

While public attention has focused on 432 Park's height – until the Nordstrom catches up, it will be the Western Hemisphere's tallest residential building – its base will more directly affect neighborhood life. High-end retail will fill the bottom stories. What Viñoly calls a "floating cube" will house mechanical components within the Park Avenue street wall, and a plaza will add vibrancy to the office-tower-dominated area around the 57th Street/Park Avenue intersection. The project adds only about 120 apartments' worth of population density to the neighborhood despite its height, Herr says, and "the base of the building – the retail functions, the program, and the public plaza will change 57th Street and Park Avenue in a very good way."

### Steinway Tower: layerings of history

"New York is built on the idea of reaching for the sky," says Christopher Sharples, AIA, of SHoP Architects. Early skyscrapers like the Woolworth and One Wall Street, he notes, arose before mechanical systems allowed artificial light and ventilation; their tight floorplates kept occupants close to windows. Bulkier buildings dominated in the post-war air-conditioning era, serving companies' need to concentrate workers on single floors. Slim towers like the new Steinway Tower "take advantage of certain qualities from New York City's skyscraper lineage," Sharples says. "When we first started this project," reports project architect Dana Getman, AIA, "we were asking, 'What makes our favorite buildings in New York City?' And we kept coming back to this generation of lofty masonry/terra cotta buildings that speak to the city scale and the more intimate human scale."

This tower replaces a 2012 CetraRuddy plan, adding air rights obtained when JDS Development took over the adjacent Steinway Hall (1925), a landmarked 16-story Warren and Wetmore building featuring a double-height rotunda, a Beaux Arts limestone façade, and a history as a pianists' mecca. (The piano manufacturer plans to move its showroom to 1133 Avenue of the

Americas.) Sharples finds that JDS, the developer behind CetraRuddy's renovation of Chelsea's Walker Tower, shows comparable respect in converting this acquisition to mixed use. The adjoining tower will step back from the street, elevate its commercial space away from its neighbor, and maintain the zoning-mandated 85-foot street wall as a transparent atrium to "expose and celebrate" the older building.

Locally familiar materials and digital fabrication, two SHoP signatures on widely varying projects, combine to produce intricate and futuristic effects, rewarding the eye at multiple scales and giving what Sharples calls "a sense of a human hand in the process." The tower narrows as it rises through a series of uniform 5-foot 5-inch setbacks on the south façade, resembling 13 vertical laminations from the east or west. On those façades, terra cotta panels with intertwining bronze tracery are CNC-milled into 23 different types of extrusion in repeating, twisting patterns to create long parallel striations whose curved shadows vary with solar angles and "make the building almost look like it's bending," Sharples says. On the flat north façade overlooking Central Park, large glass panels (seven feet wide at the center) allow floor-through views, while widths between mullions gradually tighten toward the east and west edges, harmonizing with the laminations' geometry and bracing the columnless corners against wind loads. The narrow, uninhabited upper stories appear to vanish into the sky.

The tower's contours and rhythms suggest musical imagery: a harp, staves, a long, slim clarinet. Practicality counterbalances the lyricism: the high slenderness ratio (1:24) calls for a tuned mass damper and high-strength concrete, and the

(right) The fully-glazed lobby of SHoP Architects' 111 West 57th Street leaves the east façade of the landmarked Steinway Building visible to the public for the first time in decades.

(below) 111 West 57th Street will rise 1,350 feet from a slim, 60-foot-square footprint.

#### 432 Park

CO-DEVELOPERS: CIM Group and Macklowe Properties  
 DESIGN ARCHITECT: Rafael Viñoly Architects  
 EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT: SLCE Architects  
 INTERIOR DESIGN (RESIDENCES): Deborah Berke & Partners Architects  
 INTERIOR DESIGN (AMENITIES): Bentel & Bentel  
 LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Zion Breen Richardson Associates  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: WSP Cantor Seinuk  
 MECHANICAL ENGINEER: WSP Flack + Kurtz  
 CURTAIN WALL DESIGNER: Enclos  
 CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Lend Lease Corporation

#### Steinway Tower, 111 West 57th Street

CLIENT: JDS Development  
 ARCHITECT: SHoP Architects  
 INTERIORS: Studio Sofield  
 LIGHTING: L'Observatoire International  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: WSP  
 MECHANICAL ENGINEER: Jaros, Baum & Bolles  
 FAÇADE: BuroHappold

#### Nordstrom Tower, 215 West 57th Street

CLIENT: Extell Development Company  
 ARCHITECT: Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture



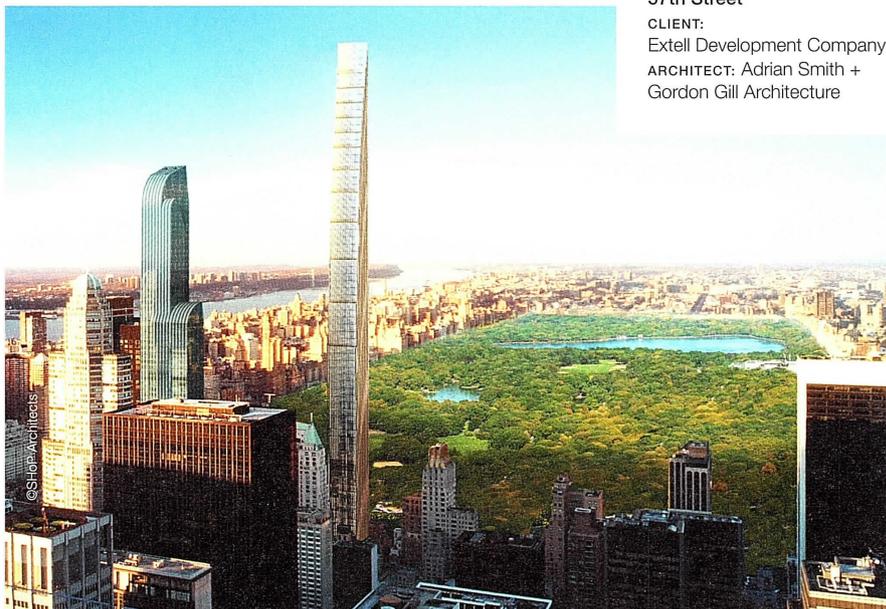
emphasis on masonry helps manage thermal loads. While eschewing LEED certification, the building still exceeds city performance requirements. The Steinway Tower is a building of its era that also acknowledges its background and its responsibilities.

#### Nordstrom Tower: mystery wrapped in enigma, size XXXL

Like Steinway, Extell's mixed-use Nordstrom Tower engages a landmark, in this case cantilevering the exuberantly Beaux Arts Art Students League. Though the Landmarks Preservation Commission has approved, the relationship to the streetscape and skyline cannot yet be truly known – images were not available at press time.

The supertalls reflect developers' risk-taking amid a recession, sensing that whatever happened to the general populace, the luxury market would reach for new heights. Perhaps other areas, where rising prices and rents are not universally welcomed, will benefit indirectly from the concentration of global megawealth in "Billionaires' Row" if it keeps toxic money from destabilizing more mixed neighborhoods. What the rest of us can take from 57th Street is superb eye candy, inferences about the balance of public and private incentives, and case studies in what's possible when advanced vision serves large ambition. ■

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



# Tower at the Crossroads

One Vanderbilt sculpts its top and bottom to trade additional floors for street-level amenity

BY SARAH GOODYEAR

They call Times Square the “Crossroads of the World,” but many New Yorkers do everything they can to avoid the place. For those who live and work in Midtown Manhattan, the real crossroads might be around the corner of 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, just outside of Grand Central Terminal.

Here, tens of thousands of people hurry every day to and from the magnificent station where five subways and Metro-North’s Hudson, Harlem, and New Haven commuter rail lines converge. In a few years, their number will be swelled by passengers using the Long Island Rail Road’s East Side Access line, still under construction. City buses wheeze along 42nd, Madison, and Lexington. Taxis and airport shuttles roll through nearby streets. And anyone who pauses to look up sees the lyrical spire of the Chrysler Building pointing skyward, and the winged Mercury that presides over Grand Central’s façade.

This is one of the most vital pivot points of the city – and why developer SL Green’s plan to build an enormous new tower at the northwest corner of 42nd and Vanderbilt, across the street from Grand Central, has attracted so much attention and controversy since its introduction in 2010.

The proposed building, One Vanderbilt Place, is slated to rise 65 stories. Designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF), the tapered glass monolith seemed headed for approval at press time, although squabbling continues over the deal the city is making to allow its prodigious size – about twice what current zoning would allow as of right.

That deal trades the additional height for \$210 million in improvements to the public realm around the building: modified stairways and platforms within Grand Central’s transit infrastructure; underground connections between the rail terminal and new building; and a vast indoor hall adjacent to the lobby, on the northeast corner of the building, through which commuters will pass. Plans also call for closing Vanderbilt between 42nd

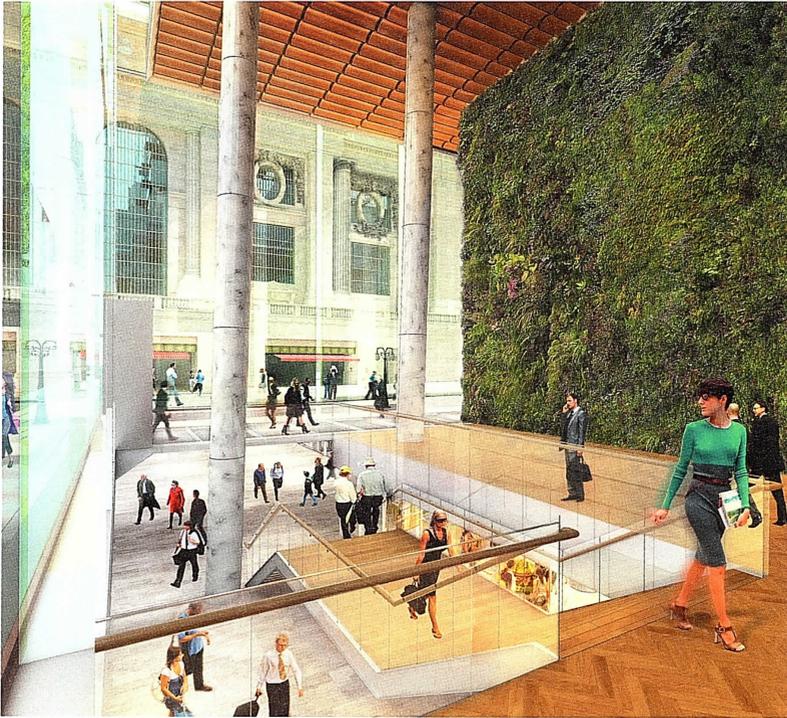


(above) One Vanderbilt as it will be seen from Bryant Park.

and 43rd Streets to traffic. SL Green has agreed to construct a pedestrian plaza to replace what is now mostly a thruway for taxis.

All this was hammered out in the waning days of the Bloomberg Administration, when the mayor’s office was trying to push through a radical rezoning of the entire East Midtown district, an attempt that fell short. One Vanderbilt was, in the words of James von Klemperer, FAIA, who is leading the project for KPF, “the poster child for the program.” That meant the building’s design, he says, was closely negotiated with city representatives, especially Amanda Burden, FAICP, Hon. AIA, then director of the Department of City Planning. “There was to be a dispensation where ‘superior design’ – a term that was not official but used consistently – would be one requirement to get to the FAR 30, both in terms of air rights and in allowing for height and any other allow-

©DBOX: KPF; Photographer: Raimund Koch



(left) A transit hall connection will lead to the Grand Central Concourse.

a building with lasting benefit not only to its developer – one of the largest commercial landowners in the city – but also to the people of New York, who will be crossing paths here for generations to come. “As we designed the building there was a spirit of partnership between developer, city, and architect,” he says. “Everyone involved is trying to make a space that will benefit the greatest number of users.” ■

Sarah Goodyear writes frequently about cities and the people who live in them. She is a regular contributor to *The Atlantic's* CityLab.com, and author of a novel, *View from a Burning Bridge*. She lives in Brooklyn.

ances needed in the envelope of the building,” says von Klemperer. “That’s a fairly subjective term, superior design. What did it mean?”

In practice, the intense negotiation deeply influenced the DNA of the building. “Part of this discussion about superior design had to do with slimness, proportion, tapering,” says von Klemperer. “A tower that then could be likened to the family of buildings that includes the Chrysler, Empire State, American Radiator – even the slimness of Rockefeller Center.” He says the deal also entailed a somewhat vague legal requirement that the new building be in “harmonious relationship” with Grand Central – both functionally and visually.

“There was quite a bit of controversy in the initial discussions with the community board,” he says. “There was a question as to whether the angular and decidedly modern architecture of this building could be harmonious with Grand Central. But in the end, they found that one can be respectful and harmonious without mimicking an architecture of a hundred years ago.”

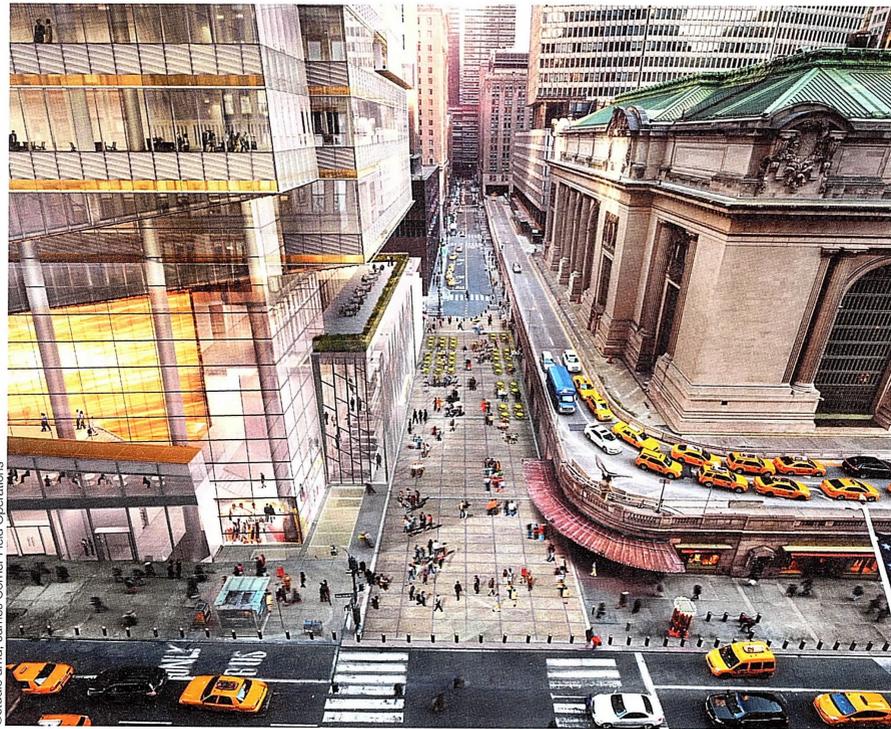
To create visual harmony, the southeast corner of the building is cantilevered, leaving a clear-glass four-story corner, through which “you can see certain elements of Grand Central – cornice, columns, Roman bath windows – that had been visually concealed for a hundred years,” says von Klemperer.

As One Vanderbilt tapers toward the top, it also allows for views of the Chrysler Building from Bryant Park, which might have been blocked by a thicker building. Von Klemperer believes the protracted negotiations over One Vanderbilt will yield

CLIENT: SL Green Realty Corp.  
 ARCHITECT: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates  
 DESIGN TEAM: A. Eugene Kohn, FAIA, RIBA, JIA, James von Klemperer, FAIA, Charles Ippolito, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Trent Tesch, AIA, Andrew Cleary, AIA, LEED AP, Darina Zlateva, Rachel

Villalta, Stephanie Rogowski, Alessandro Boccacci, Javier Galindo  
 DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR: Hines  
 INTERIOR PLANNING: Gensler  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: James Corner Field Operations  
 LAND USE COUNSEL: Fried Frank

PLANNING CONSULTANT: Vishaan Chakrabarti  
 ULURP CONSULTANTS: Philip Habib and Associates; AKRF  
 MARKETING ADVISOR: CBRE  
 PRECONSTRUCTION CONSULTANT: Tishman Construction/AECOM  
 MASS TRANSIT CONSULTANT: Stantec



(above) Vanderbilt Avenue pedestrian plaza.

# The Mid-block Move

Side streets aren't just for background buildings anymore

BY RICHARD STAUB

Developers are building design-forward projects where you wouldn't expect. Two luxury multi-family buildings with strong design profiles are either under construction or in design, but not for a major avenue or cross street, where they're usually found. The glass tower 35XV, by FXFOWLE Architects for the developer Alchemy Properties/Angelo Gordon, is rising mid-block on West 15th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. And HAP 8, by the prolific and trend-setting industrial designer Karim Rashid with WASA Studio for HAP Investments, is set for mid-block on West 28th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues.

According to an article in *Crain's New York Business*, "with the city's condo market at record highs, hordes of developers share...the conviction that Manhattan's once-sleepy side streets have gone from second-best to top tier." The land prices reflect the new valuation. Moreover, cantilevers are being used to maximize air rights when zoning limits height.

Take 35XV. "We'd done a project on the south side of 15th Street for Alchemy Properties," says FXFOWLE Senior Partner Dan Kaplan, FAIA, LEED AP, "and knew the developer had its eye on a site across the street. The project went ahead when it bought the air rights for the adjoining Xavier High School." The result is a dramatically cantilevered, 24-story building with school facilities on the first six floors and a glass-clad residential tower above. The tower offers amenities on the seventh floor and 55 residences on the other floors. BNO Design's Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz is designing the interiors.

The relatively sober six-floor base has a light-granite stone façade that continues the block's prevailing street line. But the seventh floor steps back to create a patio, and the floors above slope further back in a continuous diagonal to the top, substantially reducing the impact of the tower's bulk at street level. The rear of the 170,000-square-foot building angles out from the top in a cantilever that extends 36 feet north over the rear courtyard and then slants down to the base. The tower also cantilevers 17 feet to the side over the school.

(left, above) FXFOWLE Architects: The 24-story 35XV on West 15th Street includes a high school on the first six floors, and a 55-unit, glass-clad residential tower above.

(left, below) The front entrance to 35XV.

## 35XV Residences, 35 West 15th Street

CLIENT: Alchemy Properties

ARCHITECT: FXFOWLE

DESIGN TEAM: Dan Kaplan, FAIA, LEED AP, Stephan Dallendorfer, RIBA, LEED AP, Daniel Schmitt, LEED AP, Stephen Kim, AIA, LEED AP, Toby Snyder, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

INTERIOR DESIGN: BNO Design

MEP ENGINEER:

Dagher Engineering

CIVIL ENGINEER:

Langan Engineering & Environmental Services

SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT:

Steven Winter Associates

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:

Severud Associates

EXTERIOR WALL CONSULTANT:

Gilsanz, Murray, Steficek

FAÇADE MAINTENANCE CONSULTANT:

Entek Engineering

ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT:

Cerami & Associates

CODE CONSULTANT & EXPEDITER:

William Vitacco Associates

VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION:

Van Deusen & Associates



©Courtesy of FXFOWLE/Artist Rendering by Williams New York



©Courtesy of FXFOWLE

(right) Karim Rashid, Inc. with WASA Studio: The undulating, organic forms on the upper floors of the 21-story HAP 8 on West 28th Street are balconies made of glass-reinforced concrete. The building cantilevers out 25 feet.

“Several elements determined the shape of the building,” says Kaplan, “the FAR, structural demands, and what made financial sense.” What helps reduce its bulk is a four-and-a-half-foot-wide inset on its west side, which breaks front from back. Continuing the sense of separation, the rear portion extends four feet farther to the side than the front.

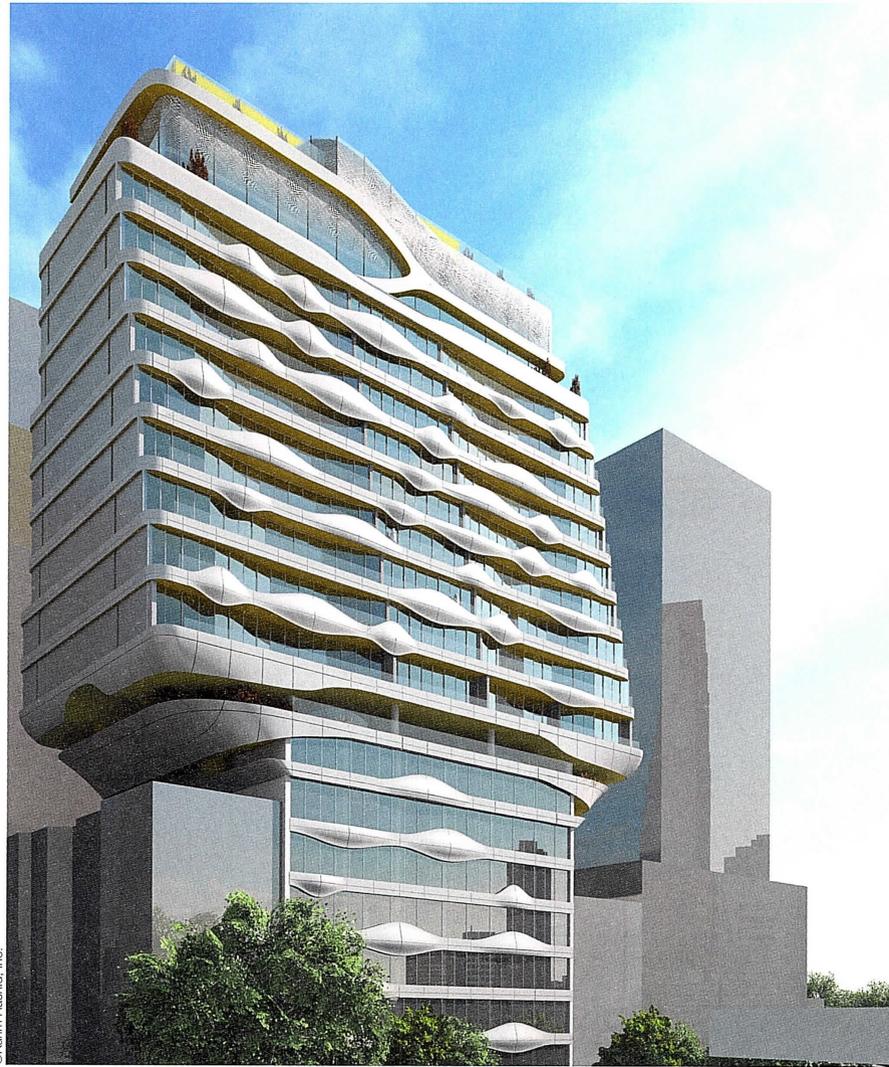
But for all the building’s moves to be a good neighbor, it has a restless presence. That’s introduced on the first six floors by the tower’s sculptural entrance and the pattern of large, angled, punched windows with a frit pattern of large dots. The ample windows in the residential portion have “fins” of powder-coated aluminum that angle out seven inches from the left or right corner, and the same frit pattern. They create the illusion, according to the light, of the windows themselves shifting in or out. Nothing seems still.

### For the adventuresome

West 28th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues is a transitional street. As the northern edge of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), it’s part garment district and part Chelsea. And for Karim Rashid, the location of the glass-clad HAP 8 opposite FIT’s Brutalist forms offers a dramatic conversation in contrasts.

The 21-story HAP 8 or, as Rashid has named it, Pulse of New York, is the fourth and latest in a series of residential projects that Rashid is designing for HAP, and his first real architecture project. This building cantilevers out 25 feet to the west and east, while its front façade maintains the street line for nine floors. The 10th floor is set back to introduce a patio along with apartments and amenities; the floors above slope back to the vertical form of the penthouse on the 20th and 21st floors. The first floor is for retail.

What separates this project from a standard curtain wall solution is what Rashid calls the “bulge.” At the edge of each floor, organic forms seem to emerge, swell, and attenuate. These bulges are balconies made of glass-reinforced concrete. Inside, the interiors will offer what Rashid considers a



©Karim Rashid, Inc.

### HAP 8/Pulse of New York, 215 West 28th Street

CLIENT: HAP Investments  
DESIGN ARCHITECT:  
Karim Rashid, Inc.  
DESIGN TEAM: Karim Rashid,  
Alex Loyer Hughes, AIA,  
Michael Gibson, Julie Shih  
EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT:  
WASA Studio  
(formerly WASA/Studio A)  
MEP ENGINEER: WASA  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:  
DeSimone Consulting  
Engineers  
CODE: Metropolis Group  
ELEVATOR:  
Jenkins & Huntington  
ESTIMATING:  
Spiegel Consultants  
ENVIRONMENTAL:  
Tenen Environmental  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:  
Hailey Development Group

more democratic and contemporary interpretation of luxury. “This is where my experience designing more than 3,000 objects, from air conditioners to flooring, comes into play,” says Rashid, who practices what he calls “sensual minimalism.” He explains, “Suppliers will provide all the fixtures and finishes I’ve designed at cost: a great savings for the developer and, hopefully, the purchaser. But it calls for adventuresome residents who are intrigued to have, for example, a rubber bathroom sink and floor. That’s who this project is designed for.”

Two large-scale, high-profile projects on side streets: another twist in the continuing exploration of how New York deals with density, housing, and bold design. ■

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

# In Step with the Neighborhood

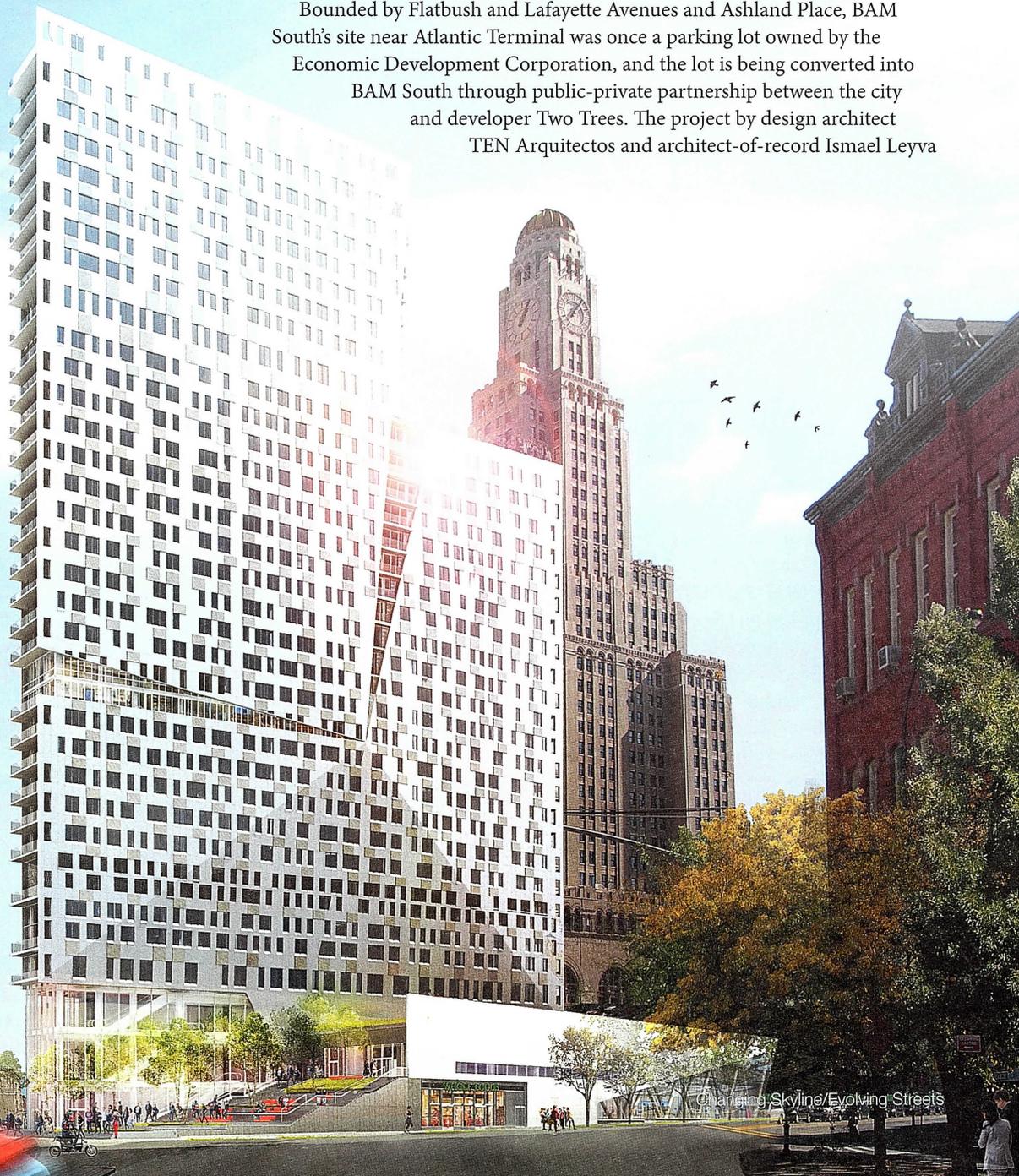
The new BAM South development is designed with equal attention to Downtown Brooklyn's skyline and street-level civic space

BY LISA DELGADO

In renderings, the bold, faceted form of the new Brooklyn tower designed by TEN Arquitectos might seem like yet another flashy addition to NYC's skyline. Yet the 32-story multiuse BAM South tower is actually quite deferential, its roofline stepping down to allow views of the iconic clock tower at 1 Hanson Place beyond. And the slim footprint of the building, currently under construction, cedes most of the triangular site to a new public plaza – a sign of the firm's solid focus on enhancing civic space.

"We believe very strongly that any gesture you make in an urban context has a responsibility towards the city," says Enrique Norten, Hon. FAIA, principal of TEN Arquitectos. "It's not about building another object in the city, the weirdest object in the city, or the most unique-looking object in the city, but about contributing to make a better city."

Bounded by Flatbush and Lafayette Avenues and Ashland Place, BAM South's site near Atlantic Terminal was once a parking lot owned by the Economic Development Corporation, and the lot is being converted into BAM South through public-private partnership between the city and developer Two Trees. The project by design architect TEN Arquitectos and architect-of-record Ismael Leyva



©TEN Arquitectos

Oculus Winter 2011

Changing Skyline/Evolving Streets

(opposite page) The roofline of the 32-story BAM South tower steps down to allow views of the former Williamsburgh Savings Bank's historic clock tower.

(right) The public plaza includes built-in benches and stair seating for programs, and larger flat spaces for farmer's markets or book fairs.

Architects will be a new addition to the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District (formerly known as the BAM Cultural District), an area in Fort Greene with a high concentration of arts institutions. The first few floors of the tower will consist of about 50,000 square feet for cultural tenants, most likely including performing arts organization 651 Arts, Brooklyn Academy of Music cinemas, and a new branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. The 505,000-gross-square-foot tower will also house retail space and rental apartments, 20% of which are affordable housing.

In conceptualizing the 15,000-square-foot public plaza, Norten drew inspiration from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's front steps and other staircases that have become popular hangout spots. The plaza features a terraced topography that steps up as high as the adjacent tower's third floor. In effect, "we multiply the street," says James Carse, AICP, LEED AP, the project manager at TEN Arquitectos. The building could be unusually porous as a result – there are public entrances as high as the second floor – and that will facilitate a lively flow of people into and out of the cultural and retail spaces.

The alternation of steps and flat areas also lends itself to flexibility in outdoor programming. "In such tight space, it allows for a hell of a lot of activities," says Runit Chhaya, principal of Grain Collective, the project's landscape architecture firm. A space dubbed the "amphitheater" near the top of the plaza features built-in benches and stair seating for programs such as outdoor film screenings and dance performances. Lower down, near the sidewalk, larger flat spaces will be well suited for farmer's markets or book fairs. At times with no special events, tower residents and the public can simply hang out in the landscaped open space and "read a book, use their laptop, or whatever," Norten says. "They can use the public space in the center of Brooklyn, which is a very important hub."

The design of the tower itself went through many iterations, and the final version was guided by the Department of City Planning's request for it to avoid appearing too monolithic, Norten recalls. When viewed from the north and south, the tower's silhouette is very slender (about 60 feet wide). On the tower's broad east and west elevations, the roofline's stepped form is accentuated by a line of balconies running down the building,

CLIENT: Two Trees Management  
DESIGN ARCHITECT: TEN Arquitectos  
DESIGN TEAM: Enrique Norten, FAIA, Andrea Steele, AIA, James Carse, AICP, LEED AP, Erik Martinez, AIA, Joe Murray, Hannah Lee, Christian Ayala, Chris Glass, Hank Byron, Shary Tawil, Eduardo Ponce, Wook Kang, Andrew Deibel, AIA, Irina Verona, AIA, Arno Adkins, Julie Cho, Hale Everets, AIA, Jeannie Chung, Vicky Daroca, Elsa Ponce  
ARCHITECT-OF-RECORD: Ismael Leyva Architects  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Grain Collective  
MEP ENGINEER: Ettinger & Associates  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Rossenwasser/Grossman  
GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: RA Consultants  
LIFE SAFETY CONSULTANT: Rolf Jensen & Associates  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Green Star Builders



breaking up the mass. The play of light on the faceted façade of slightly bent, silvery painted aluminum panels also breaks down the building's scale, Carse adds. The prow-shaped southern end of the building is designed to have an air of lightness and openness to the street: the base appears to lift up above the ground, with a highly transparent retail space underneath.

By stepping down to allow views of the historic clock tower of the former Williamsburgh Savings Bank, the new building shows a clear respect for the past, yet its decidedly contemporary look presents a strong contrast to its older brick neighbors. That kind of diversity is what makes the city's architectural mix so vibrant. "That's the city: the different models, different ideals of history," Norten remarks.

Many more new residential towers are rising nearby, to satisfy high demand for housing. The area will become "a very important corridor in density and height," Norten observes. "The Williamsburgh Bank stood alone there as a needle" on the skyline for nearly 100 years. "Now it's becoming part of a collection of much more."

With the increasing number of residents in the neighborhood, BAM South's combination of new public space and cultural offerings seems well timed. "There's not a ton of open space around BAM South, so we think this will be a significant neighborhood amenity," says David Lombino, director of special projects at Two Trees. "It will draw people from the surrounding buildings as well. There can be cultural programming in that open space on a regular basis."

The mix of uses, affordable housing, and public space will pay off for Two Trees in the long run. "We build multifamily rental housing and own it long-term," Lombino says. "To the extent the neighborhood surrounding it is desirable, that helps us achieve higher rents for our market-rate units."

Or, as Norten puts it, "by giving back, you always get a lot. Giving back to the community, to the city itself, you can always get much further." ■

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



## LULU Hits the Streets

A sanitation garage shows how to make a Locally Undesirable Land Use...desirable

BY JANET ADAMS STRONG, PH.D.

Sanitation garages rank among the least-loved building types, typically served by bulky structures so functionally constrained as to preclude any art in their architecture. That formula was trashed in the new Manhattan Districts 1/2/5 Garage (M1/2/5 Garage), co-designed by Dattner Architects and WXY Architecture + Urban Design.

Mike Friedlander, director of special projects at New York's Department of Sanitation (DSNY), set the tone: "You can't build a cheap, ugly building and just dismiss it as a sanitation facility. What does that say about the department? About its attitude toward the city? We have to do the best building in the neighborhood, not only visually, but how it fits in, how people feel walking by it."

The project began in 1998 when DSNY had to vacate the new Hudson River Park. The search for a two-acre replacement site led to a UPS parking lot on Spring Street and the creation of an innovative industrial condominium, whereby UPS owns and occupies ground-level parking, while the city owns and occupies a newly built five-story garage. For increased efficiency and reduced overall impact and cost, the shared facility serves Man-

hattan Community Districts 1, 2, and 5. An outmoded DSNY garage on an adjacent block will be replaced by a sculptural salt shed, also by Dattner and WXY. Both facilities are ideally located so that sanitation trucks and plows, part of the city's emergency response team, can fan out from the West Side Highway.

SoHo residents fiercely resisted the "Garbage Garage" and the odor, noise, and reduced property values it threatened. Paul Bauer, AIA, LEED AP, principal-in-charge for Dattner, remained confident: "It's a parking garage. Once people realize no trucks are parked on the street and no garbage is stored on site, they'll forget their fears and embrace this urbane building and streetscape." Indeed: the garage has become a positive selling point for nearby luxury residential buildings.

The garage's five façades include a green roof with an enclosed mechanical penthouse to protect neighbors from noise and unsightly views. The ventilation system draws fresh air from a roof monitor and exhausts through separate ductwork to the west, away from the community. To further reduce emissions, Con Edison specially extended its steam network; no fossil fuels are burned on site for heating or cooling.

At ground level, linear brick rustications echo the fins and add texture and scale. “We were adamant about making a brick base work,” explains Claire Weisz, FAIA, principal of WXY. “The compressed height conveys a nice solidity so the garage visually floats rather than crashes to the ground.”

Perforated aluminum fins shade the garage and unify the many vents and structural elements that come together in an artful patchwork. Except in office areas, the angled fins are stationary, yet their 2.5-foot placement makes for an exciting dynamic, especially from a moving car or boat, so the walls seem to flutter open or closed.

Breathtaking river views entice employees to bypass elevators and climb an appealing, glazed stair in the building’s notched southwest corner to two-level district offices, lunchrooms, and locker rooms; this “active design” element contributes to anticipated LEED Gold certification. Each functional district is painted a different color with the surprising outcome that the layered palette, seen from the city, very closely resembles the preliminary renderings that helped quell community fears.

Trucks queue along West Street and inside the garage before refueling and ramping up behind the expressively inclined east façade. A muscular orange truss reinforces the curtain wall against vibration from the 25-ton trucks, adding glimpses of color and movement to the street. Trucks park on Levels 3, 4, and 5 along the river, away from residents, behind a façade that glows so poetically at sunset that one forgets its utilitarian function. A monumental window illuminates maintenance facilities on Level 3, where trucks are also power-washed, using harvested roof water and condensate from a steam turbine that steps down pressure from Con Ed. (Mandated coloring of non-potable

(opposite page) Even before construction is completed, the power of the double-skin façade to articulate the massing, lighten and reduce the apparent bulk of the building, and provide a sense of scale that visually integrates the building with the neighborhood is evident.

(right) The outer layer of the double-skin façade is formed by 2,600 perforated metal fins.

**OWNER:** NYC Department of Sanitation  
**CLIENT AGENCY:** NYC Department of Design + Construction  
**ARCHITECTS:** Dattner Architects; WXY Architecture + Urban Design  
**DATTNER DESIGN TEAM:** Paul Bauer, AIA, LEED AP, Richard Dattner, FAIA, Gia Mainiero, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Jay Chokshi, LEED AP BD+C, Joon Cho, AIA, Jillian Crandall, Assoc. AIA, Michael Daniels, AIA, Ruth Dresdner, AIA, Eric Epstein, AIA, LEED AP, Boris Lakhman, RA, Daniella LaRocca, RA, Brian Nesin, AIA, LEED AP, Matthew Thomas, RA  
**WXY DESIGN TEAM:** Claire Weisz, FAIA, Mark Yoes, AIA, Leed AP, Layng Pew, AIA, Adriel Mesznik, AIA, Christopher Kupski, RA, Iva Filipovic, RA, Joewen Poon, Maiko Shimizu

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Abel Bainnson Butz  
**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** Domingo Gonzalez Associates  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** The Burns Group  
**CIVIL & MEP ENGINEER:** Greeley and Hansen  
**COMMISSIONING:** Horizon Engineering Associates  
**GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER:** Langan Engineering  
**SURVEYOR:** Maitra Associates  
**CURTAIN WALL CONSULTANT:** Front Inc.

**VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION:** VDA  
**ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE CONSULTANTS:** Reginald Hough, FAIA; Terra Tech Associates  
**TRAFFIC:** Philip Habib & Associates  
**ARCHITECTURAL SPECIFICATIONS:** Robert Schwartz Associates  
**HARDWARE:** Jerome Thomson  
**COST CONSULTANT:** J.C. Estimating

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** DeMatteis/Darcon Joint Venture  
**CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:** Turner



©Field Condition

water was waived so that DSNY trucks, proudly white since the 1960s, wouldn’t end up baby blue.)

The 400,000-square-foot garage stands comfortably among sprawling warehouses, but only inside can its vast scale be appreciated. Concrete ramps some 40 feet wide incline with super-highway precision, carefully banked to prevent plows from surface gouging. A crash barrier surrounds each level and keeps trucks inside; higher spandrels along the ramps shield the community from headlights. Initial stem walls and floodgates were heightened post-Sandy, ensuring that the garage, equipped with a flood-proof fuel supply and generator, can operate 24/7 even in emergencies. For added protection against water and salt, the concrete slab was sloped for drainage, built with stainless steel rebar and moisture-inhibiting additives, and top-coated with epoxy.

In an emotional protest against the garage in 2009, performer Laurie Anderson asked rhetorically, “Is this really what the coast of Manhattan should look like?” The answer is yes! The M1/2/5 Garage is a showpiece from land and water at a prominent entrance into the city and, executed under budget, a compelling lesson in expecting more than anti-landmarks from our infrastructure. ■

Janet Adams Strong, Ph.D., is an architectural historian and author, and a principal of Strong and Partners communications.



©Warchol

(above) Designed as the building’s fifth façade, the 1.5-acre green roof softens views from neighboring buildings, protects the roof membrane, and enhances storm water retention and thermal performance.

# Just Another Messy Urban Neighborhood

Remarkable simply for being normal, Melrose Commons flourishes where the Bronx once burned

BY JONATHAN LERNER

Thanks both to New York's skyrocketing real-estate market and a mayor who promised to do something about it, affordable housing is a topic of the moment. The focus is often on below-market-rate units in high-profile new buildings (and, sometimes, on separate entrances for those units' occupants). But a different affordable-housing model has been maturing in the South Bronx for two decades. It possesses absolutely no glam factor. It has altered the skyline, but mainly by reestablishing a version of the closely knit, stylistically unexceptional, low- and mid-rise urban fabric that existed before the project area was decimated by poverty, drugs, and crime. It has certainly transformed the local streetscape, though. Into 30-some blocks now designated Melrose Commons, where it was once impossible to lead a normal life, a neighborhood has been reestablished with about 4,500 new low- and middle-income residential units and plenty of new retail operations. The lessons of this redevelopment project, which are really more about constructing a community than erecting buildings, should be an operating manual for the reclamation of other damaged parts of the city.

## "Develop it organically"

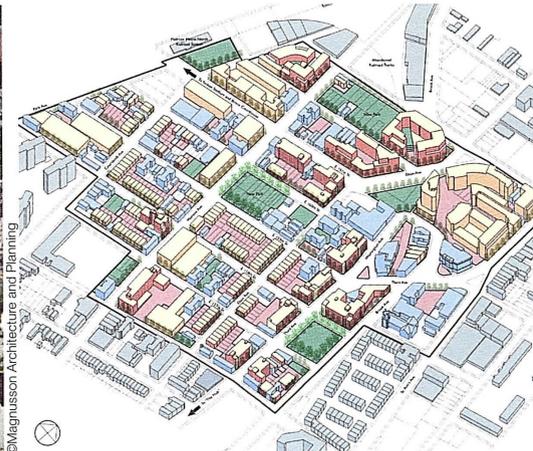
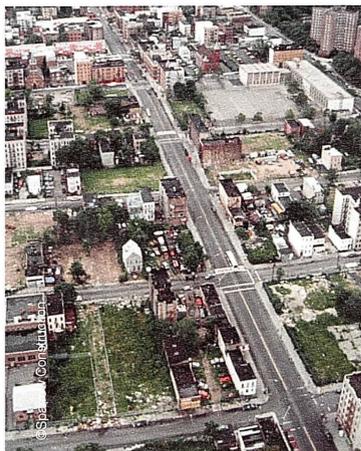
Melrose Commons lies within a larger area called Melrose, which had a population of 53,000 in 1920; by 1990 only 6,000 people remained, amid burned-out blocks and empty storefronts, with a median income of \$12,000. The city floated a wholesale "new town" urban-renewal plan for Melrose Commons that would have razed and replaced buildings that were still standing. It met resistance from people living in them, who wanted renewal without themselves being first removed. Enter Magnus Magnusson, AIA, who met weekly with a community group called Nos Quedamos/We Stay, which coalesced in reaction to the city's initiative. He drafted a master plan adopted by the city in 1994 that, he says, aimed to "develop it organically."



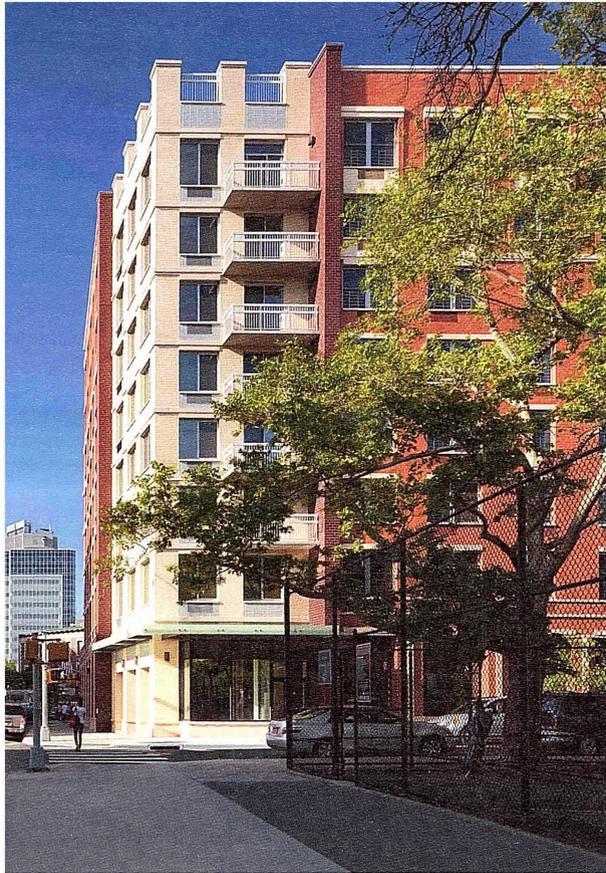
©Seong Kwon Photography

One thing community members knew they didn't want were towers like the dreary public housing a few blocks away; they insisted on an eight-story height limit. Magnusson's plan called for these mid-rise buildings to be located along the principal avenues; responding to another community desire for mixed-use, they typically incorporate retail and institutional spaces at street level. Smaller-scale infill went in on side streets. Adventurous design was not on the community's agenda. "They didn't understand modern architecture, so we created a Bronx palate," he says, taking cues from the area's original early 20th-century building stock, "incorporating things that were familiar." Most of the new buildings are primarily red and tan brick. Many have modest Art Deco motifs. The large ones are generally relieved in scale by variations in massing and in exterior finishes and color. New construction was slotted in where buildings had already been demolished or were unsalvageable. With only three significant sites now left to be filled, the result is a neighborhood that feels intact, human in scale, and much like parts of New York that never experienced the trauma of disinvestment and destruction.

At the time Magnusson Architecture and Planning (MAP) was developing its Melrose Commons' scheme, Magnusson was unaware of the simultaneous founding of the Congress for the New Urbanism. "But since then we've felt that Melrose Commons is very much following the principles



©Magnusson Architecture and Planning



*(left)* Magnusson Architecture and Planning: The 61-unit La Puerta de Vitalidad, 2001 (opposite page), the first apartment building, and 107-unit La Terraza, 2011 (left), the most recently completed building in Melrose Commons.

*(opposite page, bottom left)* Aerial of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area, circa 1995.

*(opposite page, bottom right)* Magnusson Architecture and Planning's 2010 master plan for the area.

*(bottom, left)* Magnusson Architecture and Planning: The 263-unit Melrose Commons North Site C, scheduled to begin construction in 2015, illustrates how the architectural style has evolved for new projects.

*(bottom, right)* A number of "gaps" in the built fabric have become exuberant community gardens.

of New Urbanism," he says, "tried-and-true, form-based planning that learns from what has worked in the past." Among the many accolades Melrose Commons has earned is a CNU Charter Award; it was also the first LEED-ND-certified project in the city.

Magnusson's firm designed the majority of new buildings, but other architects have contributed. Among them are Dattner Architects, which did two pairs of mid-rises that together contain 540

apartments; one includes 23,500 square feet of retail space and the other a 10,200-square-foot community center. Danois Architects designed a three-family townhouse type, 70 of which went up on scattered sites along side streets. With a large owner unit and two rental apartments, it is a revision of a two-family owner-renter model developed earlier by the Housing Partnership, a public-private partnership that promotes affordable housing – and is both a response to the extended-family culture of the area's predominantly Latino population, and a means of encouraging ownership while providing a variety of unit sizes. Going up soon on a prominent remaining site adjacent to the glassy high-rise of Boricua College's "vertical campus" is a large apartment complex designed by Marvel Architects that will incorporate an arts space and a plaza for performances and temporary markets. With a restrained contemporary look, it departs from what Magnusson calls the "Bronx vernacular" of the earlier new construction, but addresses the challenge of massive size with similar tactics: a mix of material, fenestration, and height among its several volumes. "These are all ways to build scale and identity. It is the approach we take on much of our work. Affordable housing shouldn't be any different," says Guido Hartray, AIA, Marvel Architects' partner-in-charge.

### Thriving and exuberant

The cumulative result of all this effort is a thriving neighborhood in what was once a virtual war zone. There are very few gaps in the built fabric,



©Magnusson Architecture and Planning

©Iami Hausman





©Dattner Architects. Photography by Valerie Kohn

and most of those are exuberant community gardens. There is no sense of menace at all. Groups of kids walk themselves to and from school without adult supervision. Moms wheel strollers to the shops; among Melrose Commons' retail establishments, a typical range for a working-class area, there are now three supermarkets where before there was none. In quite a few of the new townhouses, accountants, lawyers, day-care services, and other enterprises have hung out their shingles. Most of the pre-existing buildings appear to be in good shape, too; there are new windows in the old apartment houses, and few signs of neglect in the single-family homes. New and renovated housing has not changed the fact that this is still a predominantly poor and low-income neighborhood, but a slum it certainly is not. "It looks like just another messy urban neighborhood," Magnusson observes with evident satisfaction.

The "organic" way Melrose Commons has been developed – retaining existing structures and the established street grid, and using a contextual architectural language – fits it seamlessly into the larger Melrose district that surrounds it. There is considerable redevelopment taking place just beyond the project area's borders, too; surely Melrose Commons has helped catalyze that. Just across a street, for example, is Via Verde; well-known as a model of green architecture designed by Grimshaw Architects and Dattner Architects, it comprises 222 rental and co-op apartments, a wellness

Dattner Architects: The 323-unit Courtlandt Corners (2010), which include interior courtyards and street-front retail, revitalized two blocks on the main thoroughfare of Melrose Commons.

CLIENT: Nos Quedamos/ We Stay Committee; Phipps Houses; L+M Development Partners; Procida Realty & Construction Corp.; and various other developers.

MASTER PLAN; ARCHITECT (15 PROJECTS): Magnusson Architecture and Planning

OTHER ARCHITECTS: Danois Architects; Dattner Architects; Marvel Architects; Meltzer Mandl Architects

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS: Terrain-NYC; Trivium Design Landscape Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: GACE Consulting Engineers; LMW Engineering Group

MEP ENGINEERS: Rodkin Cardinale Consulting Engineers; Ettinger Engineering Associates

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERS: URS Corporation; Pillori Associates

SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT: Steven Winter Associates

CIVIL ENGINEER: Philip Habib & Associates

PLANNING: Jocelyne Chait; Lee Weinberg

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT: CA Rich Consultants

EXPEDITOR: Design 2147

center, roof gardens, and retail spaces. Next to that, the city's Housing Development Corporation broke ground recently for a building with 175 apartments and 18,000 square feet of commercial and community space. Other new buildings have been and are going up in the area, including a seven-story, 56-room hotel.

Magnusson calls it "unfortunate" that the Melrose Commons community insisted on the eight-story height limit. Developers naturally felt compelled to maximize rentable space, which limited the opportunity for more creative design gestures such as upper-story setbacks. "We ended up with simple boxes," he says, "but I feel good about all the families living here now, raising their kids, and feeling safe." ■

Jonathan Lerner's articles have appeared in *Landscape Architecture*, *Metropolis*, *Pacific Standard*, *Modern*, and many other design and mainstream magazines. He also heads the consultancy UrbanistCommunications.com.

# NEW PRACTICES NEW YORK 2014

Farms, think tanks, sausages, and nomadic operations – just some of the things these young design firms are focusing on

BY JULIA VAN DEN HOUT



"Burple Bup," 2011 City of Dreams Pavilion, Governors Island, NY

©Anna Filisch

## The Bittertang Farm

New York, NY

Antonio Torres and Michael Loverich

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

Established 2007

Bittertang founders Antonio Torres and Michael Loverich call themselves a "small design farm." Their "crop" is consistently visceral, organic yet artificial, and immersive. "We are interested in experimenting a lot with materials, spatial effects, and characters," says Loverich. "We try not to have too many rules but let our experiments and discoveries guide the work."

The firm won Boffo's Building Fashion + Michael Bastian 2013 competition with its Walls of Wax; in 2011 it won the FIGMENT/ENYA/SEAoNY City of Dreams Pavilion Competition with "Burple Bup"; and it was one of 12 teams to construct a sukkah in Union Square as part of the Sukkah City competition in 2010. While completing public projects, pavilions, and residential projects, the farm continues its research on "bagpipes, sausages, and other stuffed membranes."



Gowanus Canal Street-End Sponge Park, 2015, Brooklyn, NY

©dlandstudio

## dlandstudio architecture + landscape architecture

Brooklyn, NY

Susannah Drake, FASLA, AIA

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

Established 2005

"New paradigms need to be developed and tested, and we are at an ideal moment in history to lead this charge," says Susannah Drake, FASLA, AIA. Since its founding, dlandstudio has worked on various local projects, including "A New Urban Ground," a proposal designed in collaboration with Architecture Research Office for the Museum of Modern Art's 2010 "Rising Currents" exhibit, as well as international initiatives in Malawi and Nigeria. The firm describes itself as a "think tank," looking for projects where a research-based methodology adds value and leads to unexpected solutions to complex problems.

Working primarily on city-funded projects, dlandstudio is open about the associated challenges. "Young firms aren't often given opportunities by public agencies in New York City," says Drake. In response, dlandstudio has found a way to successfully fund pilot programs for several green infrastructure projects by using income generated through public grants. One such project, to begin construction this winter, is the Gowanus Canal Sponge Park, a working landscape that will treat runoff before it reaches the canal, aiding its recovery from a long history of pollution.

In selecting winners for this year's New Practices New York award, the jury selected firms that embody new and evolving models of practice. Themes of flexibility, collaboration, and community engagement run through their body of work.



Velodrome, 2015, Medellín, Colombia

©Fake Industries Architectural Agonism

## Fake Industries Architectural Agonism

Brooklyn, NY

Urtzi Grau and Cristina Goberna Pesudo

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

Established 2006

Rather than aim for originality, Fake Industries Architectural Agonism instead prefers to replicate, examining what others have left behind and left unexplored. The firm's work functions in realms of production and reproduction, "as literal copies of existing works, and as agonistic responses to previous statements." Principal Urtzi Grau says, "We have been researching the implications of the use of replicas in architecture – specifically, the implication on architectural production, architectural pedagogy, the legal definition of architectural works, and the role that architects play in the production of the city," the conclusion of which will be published as part of the *Treaties* book series.

The office is currently working on a velodrome in Medellín, Colombia, a public square in Guadalajara, Mexico, and an experimental preservation master plan in Cáceres, Spain. But rather than growing the office by hiring new employees, Grau and Principal Cristina Goberna Pesudo instead collaborate with others outside the profession. "Our work develops in a series of horizontal strategic collaborations with friends, experts, practitioners, artists, journalists, scholars, and dubious characters," says Grau. "This model allows us to escape the tyranny of free internship – one of the most serious problems of architectural practice – while remaining extraordinarily flexible to adapt to changing conditions."

This year's New Practices Committee Co-chairs are Philipp von Dalwig, Assoc. AIA, of Manifold, and Christopher Leong, Principal, Leong Leong.



Sushi-teria, 2012, New York, NY

©Berkow Photo

## form-ula

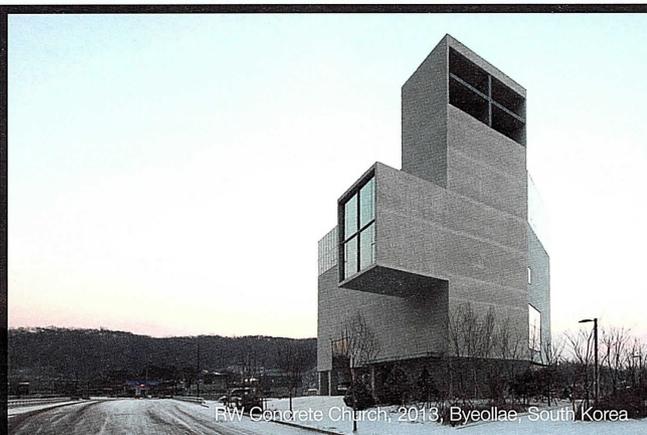
New York, NY

Ajmal Ismail Aqtash, Richard A. Sarrach, and Tamaki Uchikawa

[www.form-ula.com](http://www.form-ula.com)

Established 2009

Since its founding, form-ula has been driven by an interest in the evolution and trajectory of architecture. The firm's three partners see the practice as a "vehicle that will allow us to project into the future." Projects such as F.A.T. (face lift) and their Brooklyn Mosque exemplify the office's interest in revealing invisible forces, focusing on the aesthetics of performance, as an alternative to what partner Richard Sarrach calls the pervasive "fetishization of surface" today. "Our profession needs to do a better job of advocating for architecture and why it has value in our everyday lives," says Sarrach. The firm aims for an open-ended approach and collaborative effort, reaching outside the profession to engage in external conversations. While the partners describe the office as a small firm, they add, "We have always seen the computer as a tool that levels the playing field; it allows smaller practices to compete with firms of 400+ people. This should be seen as very empowering, and the hope is that the best ideas prevail – no matter where they come from."



RW Concrete Church, 2013, Byeollae, South Korea

©NAMELESS Architecture

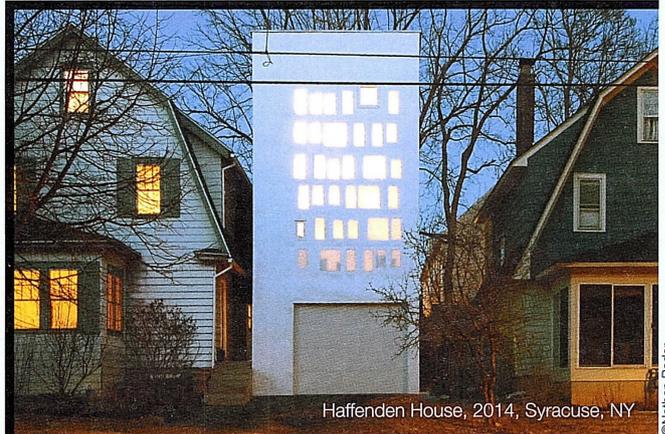
## NAMELESS Architecture

New York, NY/Seoul, South Korea  
 Unchung Na, Sorae Yoo, and Kiseok Oh  
[www.namelessarchitecture.com](http://www.namelessarchitecture.com)  
 Established 2010

"The new role of the architect of our time is envisioned under the belief that everything can be reinterpreted and rediscovered," says Unchung Na. "Our strategy is not rigid, but a flexible and fragile strategy that responds to this shifting paradigm of global practice. We are responding to a rapidly changing world through nomadic operations rather than having a base fixed in one location." With offices in Seoul and New York, NAMELESS Architecture has an unbounded approach, and can employ a strongly locational strategy for each project in an era of globalization. The firm's newest project, the Triangle School in Donong, South Korea, which received a 2014 AIA NY Project Honor Award, was completed in early November.

The winners were selected by a jury that included Alejandro Zaera-Polo, Principal, AZPA; Elaine Molinar, AIA, Director of Strategic Planning and Business Development, Snøhetta; Jing Liu, Principal, SO-IL; Lucia Allais, Assistant Professor, History and Theory of Architecture, Princeton University; and William Menking, Editor-in-Chief, *The Architect's Newspaper*.

JULIA VAN DEN HOUT is founder of the editorial and curatorial office, Original Copy, and editor of *CLOG*, a quarterly architecture publication that provides a platform for discussion of one topic at a time.



Haffenden House, 2014, Syracuse, NY

©Nathan Rader

## PARA-Project

Brooklyn, NY  
 Jon Lott  
[www.para-project.org](http://www.para-project.org)  
 Established 2005

In 2013, Jon Lott of PARA-Project, together with Michael Kubo and William O'Brien, Jr., won first place in the international competition to design the Van Alen Institute's new ground-floor office and event space, currently under construction and slated to open this winter. The three practitioners formed Collective LOK, a team that maintains independent practices but works together on competitions. Collective was also a finalist for MoMA PS1's Young Architects Program in 2014. "I've been very interested in a model of practice that has an independent side and a collaborative side," says Lott.

Nevertheless, independently Lott has completed a wide range of projects of varying scales and media. "I'm very interested in the evolution of building typologies," he says. "I love the difference afforded by use and how that changes over time. Culture and technology move much faster than architecture. That suggests to me a need for the distortion of known types." In addition to the Van Alen Institute project, PARA is currently working on a lake house in upstate New York, an auditorium and pavilion for Syracuse University, and an artist studio complex.

# Raves + Reviews

REVIEWS BY STANLEY STARK, FAIA

## How Paris Became Paris: The Invention of the Modern City

By Jean DeJean

Paris, regarded by many as the world's most beautiful city, was the first modern city. The innovations in urban planning and design between 1597 and 1702 by Henri IV, Louis Le Barbier, JF Blondel, Le Vau, and Louis XIV made Paris the model for Western urban development. It became, as Henri IV said, "the capital of the universe." This deliberate transformation of 17th-century Paris occurred through public works, architecture and planning, new forms of project delivery, and new dynamics of economic development and wealth creation.

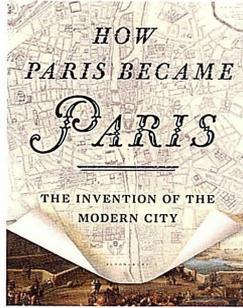
DeJean tells this story with verve. The Pont Neuf reinvented the bridge and the public space. Île St. Louis and the Place Royale became avatars of cutting-edge residential architecture and instituted the public-private partnership as a new method of real-estate development. New urban infrastructure – parks, wide new streets and boulevards, street lighting, public mail, public transit – spawned a vibrant economy. They stimulated the elements that made Paris a culture capital and a tourist destination. Paris also became the center of finance and ostentatious displays of wealth. With enough money, people could reinvent themselves. The new urban culture that emerged on the boulevards and in the gardens took on new social trajectories.

Haussmann's great remodeling of Paris, beginning in the 1850s, closely followed the city invented in the 1600s. Paris remains the first great city of the modern age. DeJean shows us how it came about and how close it is to our current preoccupations.

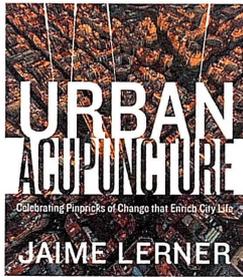
## Urban Acupuncture: Celebrating Pinpricks of Change that Enrich City Life

By Jaime Lerner

Jaime Lerner – architect, planner, urbanist, and three-term mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, in the 1970s and '80s – is a practitioner of what he terms "urban acupuncture" to revitalize cities. These are small-scale interventions designed to improve, make something happen, stimulate change. They may be physical interventions, policy changes, or operational improvements to city services, or alterations of public behavior or perception. The variety and spectrum is extensive, but they share some char-



New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2014. 320 pp. \$30



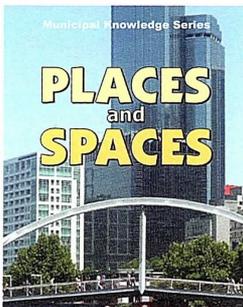
Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014. 143 pp. \$19.99



London: Laurence King Publishing, 2013. 320 pp. \$50



New York: Blank Space Publishing, 2014. 256 pp. \$15



Union, Ontario, Canada: Municipal World Inc., 2014. 172 pp. \$29.95

acteristics: they are limited and focused; they can occur quickly; they can yield outsized results.

Lerner has organized the book into about 40 short chapters relating to his experiences in Curitiba and cities he has visited. Many observations weave between process, action, design and policy, and the personal. Some examples: 24-hour stores in NYC, Paris, Tokyo; urban continuity and filling in pieces that may be missing; distinct songs, musical beats, and dances bound to a city's identity; positive impacts of gestures of urban kindness (e.g., plants and flowers on window washers' scaffolds in NYC). His script rolls in every possible direction, from examples he has experienced at home to those observed around the globe.

Lerner emphasizes that for these approaches to work, designers, planners, and policymakers must understand a place well and respond with simplicity. This slim volume deserves a spot on the shelf next to Gordon Cullen, Kevin Lynch, Grady Clay, and other observers of the city who care about making it work better.

## Noted but Not Reviewed

### 100 Years of Architectural Drawing: 1900–2000

By Neil Bingham  
Luscious!

### Fairy Tales: When Architecture Tells Stories

Ed. by Matthew Hoffman  
and Francesca Guilliani-Hoffman  
The results of an invited competition: 24 fanciful entries from more than 300 submissions.

### Places and Spaces

By Gord Hume  
A primer on urban development for municipal officials and community leaders. Possibly useful to architects as well.

Stanley Stark, FAIA, served as chair of the Oculus Committee from 2005 to 2007.

©Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York



Samuel Herman Gottscho, 1930: View of Lower Manhattan from Brooklyn.

## Le Corbusier's first sight

of Manhattan's skyscrapers evoked a controversial yet prophetic response

BY JOHN MORRIS DIXON, FAIA

During the 1920s, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, aka Le Corbusier, disseminated a sequence of prototypes for ideal cities, intended not just to radically reorganize the urban fabric, but to advance social and economic reforms. His 1933 book, *La Ville Radieuse*, distilled his vision of the future city as an array of freestanding towers rising from open spaces.

It was not until he first visited New York in 1935, however, that Le Corbusier saw any actual skyscrapers. His expectations were primed by the perception, widely held in Europe, that America was the very embodiment of 20th-century progress and efficiency. Seen from the harbor as his ship approached, the skyline of Lower Manhattan must have been a long-dreamt-of sight.

His trip to America was sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, which mounted a one-architect exhibit of his works for the occasion, displaying not just urban schemes but several of his buildings. A demanding schedule of lectures across the Northeast and Midwest had been set up. Corbu undoubtedly hoped this focus on his ideas and accomplishments would yield some U.S. commissions.

The ostensible love affair between Corbu and America hit major snags from the moment his ship docked, when he complained there were no press photographers to greet him. But reporters were present at a press conference held just two hours after his arrival, for which he was clearly ill-prepared.

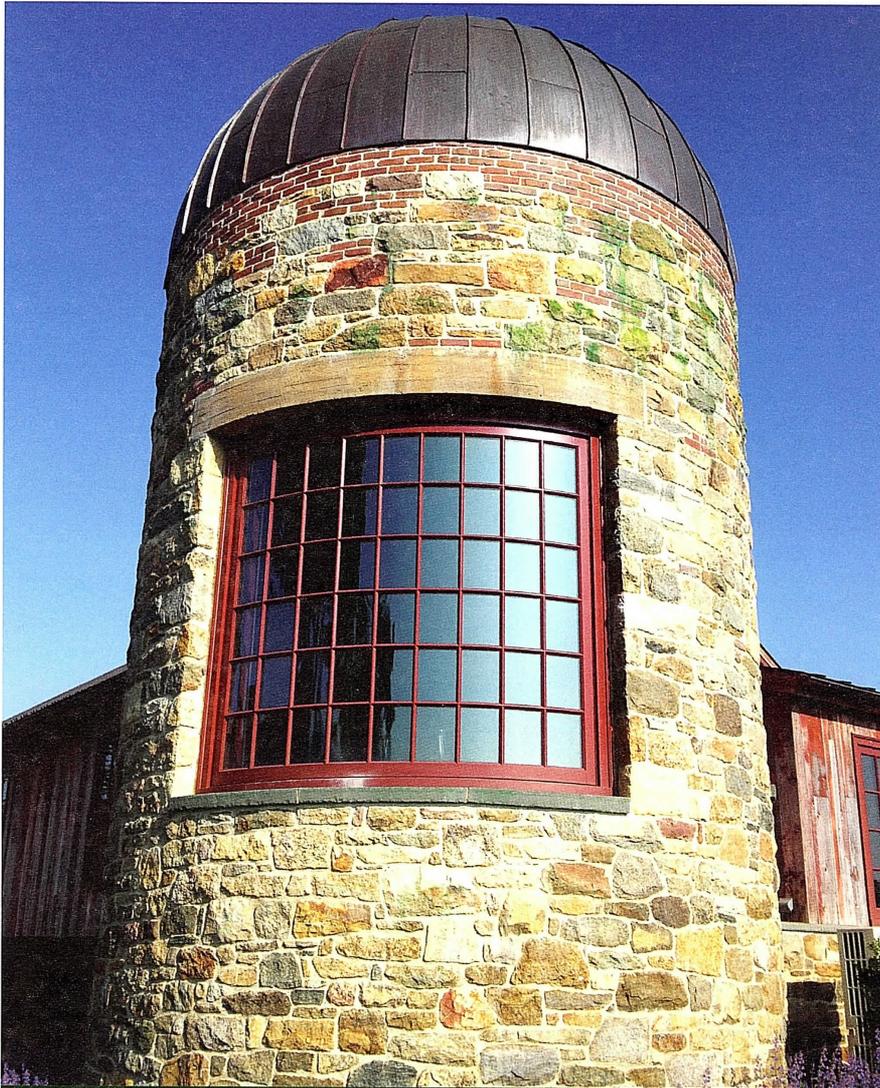
He got their attention by saying Manhattan's skyscrapers were "too small," and explained his ideal for a redeveloped city with "great obelisks, far apart, so that the city would have space and light and order." The following day's *New York Herald Tribune* summarized his comments with the headline "Skyscrapers Not Big Enough, Says Le Corbusier at First Sight," followed by "French Architect...Thinks They Should be Huge

and a Lot Farther Apart." Corbu later explained he made these comments when "he was in a mood for joking," but his image as an ungrateful guest had already been established. No American commissions materialized.

His experiences here took tangible form in the 1937 book *When the Cathedrals Were White: A Journey to the Country of Timid People*. (In my English-language version, the latter half of the title has been expunged.) His planning alternative to timidity would, he explained, open up "an immense area of ground." And, he wrote, "it will pay for the ruined properties, it will give the city verdure and excellent circulation." Swooping through the green areas he foresaw elevated roadways where cars could travel at 90 miles per hour.

His negative appraisals and cool reception notwithstanding, Corbu's ideas were already permeating American city planning by 1935. Housing in towers-in-the-park mode had already been proposed in New York. After World War II, that concept of ranks of freestanding high-rises would proliferate in both public and private developments. In 1961, the city's zoning regulations codified the paradigm of towers rising from plazas. The Corbusian planning ideal would remain largely unchallenged up to the mid-1960s, when urban activist Jane Jacobs reasserted the value of the traditional street, and many built embodiments of Le Corbusier's concepts had begun to fall into disrepute.

John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* from 1972 to 1996. He continues to write for a number of publications, and he received AIANY's 2011 Stephen A. Kliment Oculus Award for Excellence in Journalism.



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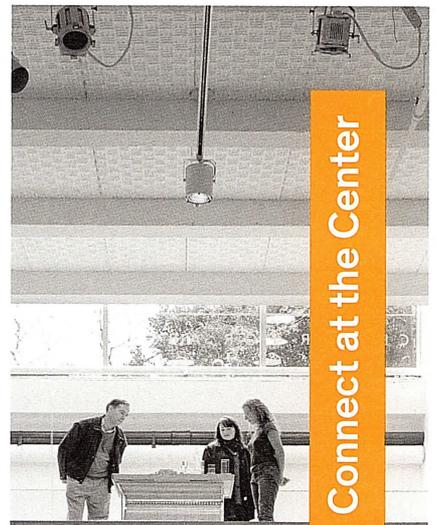


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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Hit the Road

Extraordinary buildings can be defined as those that make it on to the postcard racks at tourist destinations. And some structures are, of course, deemed “iconic” by their architects before the renderings take shape and the forms find their place in the skyline. The sculpted tops of buildings, gesturing sheathed or naked into the sky, give the buildings we have come to love or hate exaggerated prominence, allowing them to be seen from afar. But we all experience buildings at grade, walking through the front door one leg at a time, or finding the entry ramp that gives dignified access to all.

How do the buildings that give cultural identity to a city hit the ground, relate to the street or sidewalk, define a plaza, or create a magnificent oasis? Whether Tower 1 at the World Trade Center or the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, buildings will be appreciated or disdained by what passersby and those entering see up close and personal. The same can be said of the environment-enhancing *Le mur végétal* by Patrick Blanc at the Musée du Quai Branly, and the Last Word café on the wonderful plaza of the British Library.

Picking up on some of the discussion lately in New York, London, and Paris about cultural facilities, the innovations, anticipations, and controversies loom large in regard to museums where the budgets, design skill, and expectations are over the top. Let's start with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where a new public plaza is animated by fountains. Created by OLIN Studio, the new space complements the Met's grand stair. In this regard it can be compared with the combination of the TKTS/Red Steps, by Choi Ropiha with PKSB and Perkins Eastman, and the new Times Square pedestrian zone by Snøhetta, or with the Ennead-engendered entry plaza at the Brooklyn Museum, stripped of its *piano nobile* grand stair.

With luck and panache, Vanderbilt Avenue between Grand Central and the new KPF-designed tower to the west could come to resemble the *parvis* at the Centre Pompidou, or the pavement,

lawn, and birch glade edging the Tate Modern's riverbank. The identity of a place is determined by the people who go there and the welcome they receive from the façades that line the perimeter of these spaces. Speaking of Piano, not to forget Beyer Blinder Belle, the change to the Morgan Library was controversial, with stern architectural luminaries decrying the shift of entrance from East 36th Street to Madison Avenue. Eight years later, it seems to work well – the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation held its 2014 “Lunch at a Landmark” there to celebrate the integration of new and old. Both the Brooklyn Museum and the Morgan Library achieved new recognition and enhanced popularity through the power of architectural transformation.

Will that happen with other current projects, from the Davis Brody Bond proposal for the Frick Collection, to that of Diller Scofidio + Renfro for both the 53rd Street and garden entries of the Museum of Modern Art? Filling a garden to create a more functional entrance lobby or demolishing the American Folk Art Museum to make room for a culture box are implosive – like losing the lollipops at 2 Columbus Circle. The Museum of Arts and Design, 10 years later, doesn't engender anger, nor does I.M. Pei's *pyramide* at the Louvre raise skeletons or pundit profanity.

Does time heal all streetscape wounds? Or do we just get used to not regretting the things that are lost, because the new identities of much-loved places make us think of the value of change? The answer is no. Design quality has to be there. The 1968 Penn Station is objectively *not* better than the original completed by McKim, Mead & White in 1910. For the Frick, for MoMA, and, perhaps, for the Met, the jury is still out. But for now, the excitement, the experimentation, and the engagement of people passing by in all three cases is to be applauded.



Bell at the British Library.

Let's form a big strong line, and get in time,  
We're dancin' in the street.  
Across the ocean blue,  
me and you  
We're dancin' in the street.

—Mickey Stevenson, Ivy Jo Hunter, and Marvin Gaye in “Dancing in the Street,” 1964

Now baby, listen baby,  
don't ya treat me this-a way  
Cause I'll be back on my feet some day.  
(Don't care if you do 'cause it's understood)  
(you ain't got no money you just ain't no good.)

—Percy Mayfield in “Hit the Road, Jack,” 1960

Hey! Think the time is right for a palace revolution  
But where I live the game to play is compromise solution  
Well, then what can a poor boy do  
Except to sing for a rock 'n' roll band...

—Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in “Street Fighting Man,” 1968

Rick Bell, FAIA

Executive Director, AIA New York Chapter

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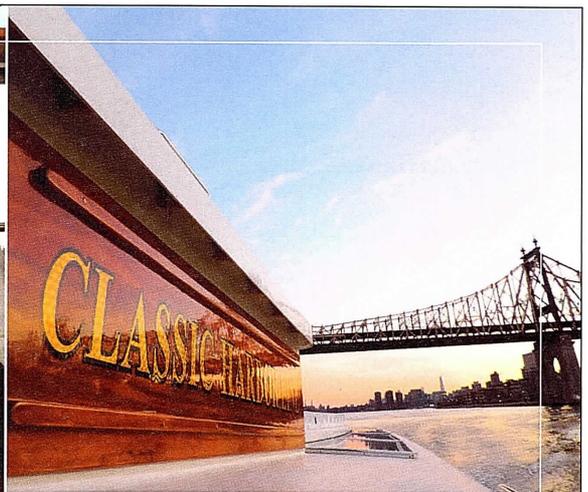
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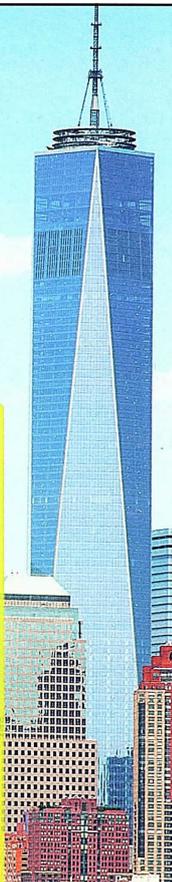
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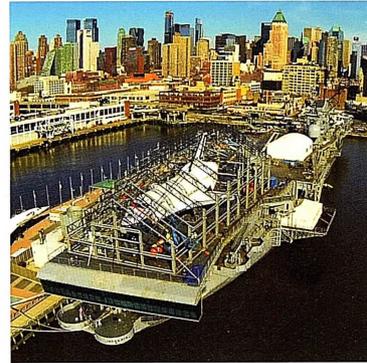
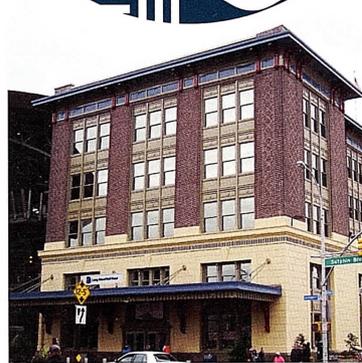
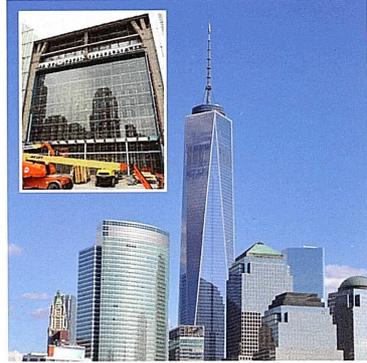
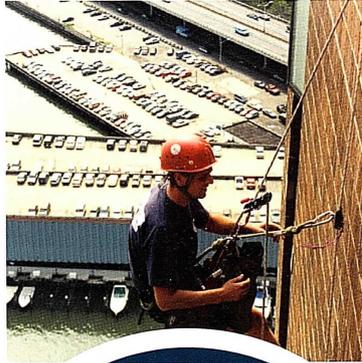
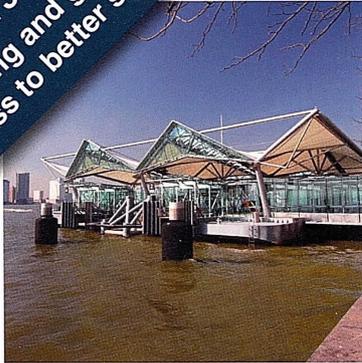


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