

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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NATION'S LARGEST GREEN ROOF ATOP BRONX WATER PLANT
DOUBLES AS DRIVING RANGE



COURTESY GRIMSHAW

Fore!

Mosholu Golf Course in the Bronx is one of a dozen run by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. Its compact layout is typical of New York's urban courses—nine holes, tree-lined fairways, the odd sand bunker—save for one highly unusual obstacle: the \$2.1 billion drinking water treatment facility under construction on what used to be the driving range.

When this heavily secured compound is completed in 2012, it's due to be topped by far more than just new turf. Grimshaw and landscape architect Ken Smith have designed one of the largest and most inten-

sive green roofs to date, which is also a fully functioning driving range. And an irrigation system for the golf course. And an integrated security program for the facility below. Think Pebble Beach meets the Biosphere meets Rikers.

"The distinction here is it's not just a green roof, but a performative green roof that needs to provide all these functions," Smith said in an interview. "I think we're pushing both the design of the green roof and the design of the golf course in new directions. We're working to see how far we can push the diversity of the ecology and still adhere to the constraints of the golf course."

This quietly radical project is the result of more than a decade of debate over whether or not water from the Croton Reservoir, the smallest of the city's three, needed treatment after more than a century of going without. That was followed by **continued on page 9**



THIS YEAR'S
EMERGING VOICES.
SEE PAGE 16

MICHAEL MORAN

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FED STIMULUS FUNDS SIDESTEP
ARCHITECTURE IN NEW YORK

MONEY FOR NOTHING

The ink is barely dry on the economic-recovery legislation that President Obama signed into law on February 17, but it's already clear that the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is no prelude to a new New Deal.

During a February 12 conference call with reporters, Senator Charles Schumer and Governor David Paterson confirmed that New York's share of the spending—an estimated \$24.6 billion over the next two years—offers relatively little in the way of grand public projects that many architects envisioned. Rather than funding fresh parks, bridge upgrades, and government-office **continued on page 3**



DREA, BEIJING/FICKR

FUTURE UNCLEAR FOR OMA'S
FIRE-DAMAGED TVCC

Still Standing

Following the spectacular fire that consumed Beijing's TVCC Building on February 8, questions immediately surfaced about the famed structure's fate. Would the 141-room Mandarin Oriental hotel be rebuilt? Given the portentous nature of the fire, which was ignited during New Year's celebrations, would anyone stay if it were? What about the insurance money?

But above all else, the question was not would Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren's 522-foot tower be rebuilt, but could it even be done? The Office for Metropolitan Architecture and Mandarin Oriental declined to comment, pending a full investigation. Meanwhile, the project's engineer, Arup, released the following statement: "Until the full facts emerge, we can't speculate on the causes of the fire or the extent of damage." Fortunately, engineers not involved in the project were willing to shed some light on the science and history of fires in highrise structural steel buildings.

First off, the taller the building and the higher the fire, the **continued on page 13**

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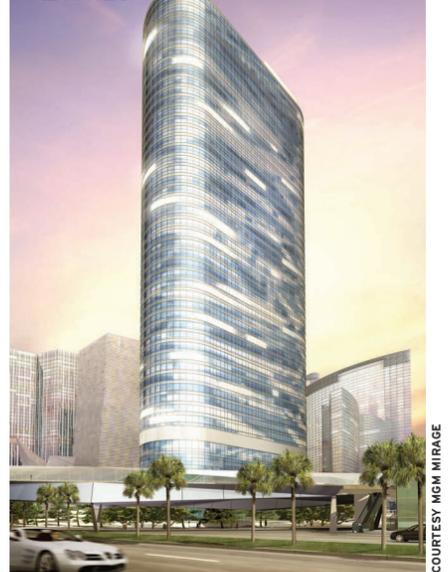
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FOSTER'S VEGAS TOWER GETS
SLASHED



COURTESY MGM MIRAGE

HALF IS ENOUGH

MGM Mirage, developer of the \$9 billion CityCenter project in Las Vegas (AN 12_07.09.2008), has decided to reduce The Harmon, the Foster + Partners-designed hotel and condo in the all-star complex, from 49 stories to 28. The decision came after Clark County inspectors reported flaws in the installation of rebar once the concrete structure had reached 23 floors, but the recessionary climate also played a role in the scaling back. While the tower could have been repaired and completed as originally planned, Vegas' dismal housing market led MGM executives to cut The Harmon's 207 condominium units out of the project altogether, leaving only the 400-room hotel and spa components.

An employee of **continued on page 4**

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THAT SINKING FEELING

For nearly two decades now, America has responded to the nightmare of global warming with numbing predictability: A report emanates from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change charting an ever-wetter future for the world's coastal cities. Dire predictions are made, color-coded maps brandished, appalled scientists quoted, and polar bears invoked. Then, Al Gore's flip charts notwithstanding, the whole matter is roundly ignored for another few years.

And so, on February 17, there stood Mayor Bloomberg at a Rockaway water treatment plant, delivering the grim news once again. The data set this time was a newly released report from the New York City Panel on Climate Change that details a familiar litany of heat waves, rainstorms, sundry coastal inundations, and the onslaught of a 100-year flood as often as every 15 years. Sobering stuff, indeed. But the *Climate Risk Information Workbook* mostly confirms what we already know, that New York should be bracing for summer blackouts, sewer backups, worsening water quality, and snorkelers bobbing in the surf on Water Street. We've waded here before.

Granted, the mayor gets credit for making good on a key *PlaNYC* promise to actually do something about climate change. Funded by a \$350,000 Rockefeller Foundation grant, the city's panel includes respected researchers like Cynthia Rosenzweig of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University's outspoken geophysicist Klaus Jacob. Its findings will now be taken up by yet another task force of three dozen government agencies, public authorities, and private companies that run the city's infrastructure and must now figure out how to floodproof New York City.

The report does put a fresh set of numbers to this threat, and the upshot is alarming. By the end of this century, the city's mean annual temperature will rise as much as 7.5 degrees. Precipitation will increase up to 10 percent. And sea levels will rise by 12 to 23 inches. (If Greenland and Antarctica continue to heat up, the "rapid ice-melt" scenario could mean a jump of more than four feet. Toss in a storm surge, and you've got large chunks of Red Hook, Mill Basin, and the city's two major airports under water.)

What's to be done? To date, we've seen only modest efforts like those at the plant where Bloomberg's announcement was staged. Mere feet from the ocean, the facility is girding for wave and salt-water damage by hoisting pump motors, circuit breakers, and controls to higher elevations. Elsewhere, the Department of Environmental Protection is reinforcing tide gates and battening down floodwalls to protect low-lying infrastructure. These are laudable efforts. But they'll be cold comfort to the Rockaway Peninsula's fantastically vulnerable Arverne residents, who're going to need a dinghy just to make it to the A train.

If New York is getting wetter, architecture ought to be part of the solution, not the problem. Other cities have turned climate change into design opportunities. Holland's floating houses, flexibly tethered to the mainland, are the stuff of eco-shelter porn. Hamburg's Hafencity sensibly raises buildings some 24 feet above sea level, turning waterside quays into public promenades. And London's Thames Barrier—first used defensively more than a quarter-century ago—remains a symbol of that city's bracing forward thinking.

Whether it's renaturalizing portions of the Brooklyn waterfront or designing apartment towers that can sustain a routine soaking, New York needs its own proactive response to the coming deluge. As Mayor Bloomberg pointed out, our failure to act just kicks the burden down the line. "Even in—in fact, especially in—these hard economic times, we've got a compelling responsibility to address all of the ramifications of climate change," he said. "We simply can't walk away from our duty to future generations."

It is sadly telling that this report—billed as the most advanced climate-risk study for any world city—puts New York far ahead of its American counterparts. One could well ask why the Rockefeller Foundation is footing the bill for this desperately overdue assessment rather than the federal government, which seems determined to wait for the next Katrina-scale tragedy before owning up to the future. **JEFF BYLES**

MONEY FOR NOTHING continued from front page construction, Senator Schumer said, the bill will largely plug budget gaps for Medicaid, aid for education, and broad-based transportation upkeep. While this last category might raise hopes in design and planning circles, it remained unclear at press time just how the funds would be apportioned and whether sorely needed downstate investments would fall victim to Albany wrangling.

"We estimate New York will get \$1.3 billion for mass transit, and all money must go to infrastructure," Schumer said. "It will help us upgrade subway stations and rail stations in the New York area and do the newer projects, whether it's the Second Avenue subway or whatever," he said. The conference report that reconciled House and Senate versions of the bill offered just shy of \$400 million for capital improvements to public housing in the city, and the state stands to gain \$2.5 billion for education spending, some of which will presumably boost school construction and renovation.

While this is good news, the bill's main thrust, Schumer and Paterson said, is to help New Yorkers reenter the labor force by tightening the safety net for health care and schools. And Paterson made it clear that the bill would not alter his austere plans for state investment: If anything, he said, it obliged him and the legislature to show even more discipline as fallout from the economic collapse drives the state's deficit even higher. "What's important is that we use the stimulus to stimulate the economy," the governor said. "Where we have deficit reduction programs in effect, that is our responsibility. Preference [in funding] went to states that were managing their crises rather than trying to avoid them."

For his part, Mayor Bloomberg saluted the state's Congressional delegation for delivering for New York, but sounded a note of caution about the bill's ultimate impact. "We are still reviewing all of the details to determine the amount of funding allocated to the city," he said in a statement. "Although it's clear that this new federal support won't solve all our budget problems, it certainly will help address the enormous fiscal challenges we face."

What comes next is a pile-on for money from all jurisdictions, wherein patronage and luck figure to play their usual roles. That much was made clear when interest groups spent much of February 17 lambasting the idea of spending stimulus cash on Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards project, hinting at more arduous political jockeying to come.

ALEC APPELBAUM

LETTERS

DOCKED IN DUMBO

The 18-story tower to be built next to the Brooklyn Bridge ("Dock Street Dustup," *AN* 02_02.04.2009) would affect future generations' views of the bridge and New York City. Marring this historic landmark would be like destroying a piece of the city's soul. People from around the world come with their families just to stroll across the bridge for the pure pleasure of the view and to marvel at its wonder. Hollywood movies are routinely shot here, and everyone around the country and world instantly recognizes the signature bridge view and current open space around it.

Apparently the project is being marketed and made palatable to some by providing a few million dollars of raw space in the building

for a school. If this succeeds, will an 18-story highrise luxury rental tower on Liberty Island right next to the Statue of Liberty be next?

A building with hundreds of transient occupants looming over the bridge would also provide a perfect launchpad for terrorists to do harm to the bridge and the throngs of people crossing it in the event of another terrorist attack. Moreover, intentionally placing a school with young children right next to a prominent and vulnerable site should alarm all of us. This serious threat to the sanctity of a national landmark and to public security must not slip through when no one is looking.

ROBERT R. ZUPP
FRESNO, CA

GREENHOUSE GAS?

In your article on Syracuse University's design competition for green homes ("A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," *AN* 02_02.04.2009), it is not clear what "green" means regarding the competition-winning projects. ARO/Della Valle Bernheimer's house is built of polycarbonate and aluminum, which are top consumers in embodied energy. As for Cook + Fox's house, wrapped in a perforated sun-screen, what happens when snow accumulates between the screen and glass facade? Without a more considered report about the relationship between form-making and energy-efficiency, [Syracuse architecture dean] Mark Robbins' intention to move the conversation about housing forward will just

result in more hot air.

CHRISTIAN VOLKMANN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
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CORRECTION

Our best sources feature ("Playing Favorites," *AN* 01_01.21.2009) listed incorrect contact information for Susan Brady Lighting Design. The firm, known as SBLD Studio, can be reached at 212-391-4230 or www.sbldstudio.com

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

OPEN > BOUTIQUE



> **VERA WANG SOHO**
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Designer: Gabellini Sheppard
Associates

Designer Vera Wang and Gabellini Sheppard Associates have updated a cast-iron building in Soho. Concealing the 2,000-square-foot space's rough edges, columns are hidden beneath matte plaster and beams tucked within stainless-steel enclosures. Throughout, designers took cues from the couture. "There is a performance aspect to her clothes, which became touchstones for the space's layout, materials, and proportions," said Michael Gabellini. Wang's chromatic layers influenced the lighting, created with Tillotson Design Associates, which creates theatrical color planes of lavender, straw, and moonlight. **DANIELLE RAGO**

PAUL WARCHOL

EAVESDROP: SARA HART

EXCELLENCE NO MORE

Scores of architects have fed on the government teat for a couple of decades, thanks to the General Services Administration's (GSA) Design Excellence Program. Established to inject architectural pizzazz into new federal buildings, it has hired the likes of **Richard Meier**, **Kohn Pedersen Fox**, **Cesar Pelli**, and **Morphosis** to improve the damn government's reputation for architectural design. But horrors! The GSA and the Office of the Chief Architect have become a rudderless barge. When Chief Architect **Ed Feiner** left in 2005, his replacement was to be Vitruvian architect **Thomas Gordon Smith**, whose appointment was apparently a concession to the Classical Architects lobby. Smith declined to leave his practice to take the post (a requirement for employment), so GSA journeyman **Les Shepherd** slipped into the position. (Smith was named the first Federal Architecture Fellow, but his tenure has expired and there's no sign of a successor.) Now **Tom Grooms**, who heads the Design Excellence Program as its last original member, is due to retire within the year. Grooms might as well turn off the lights on his way out. The GSA's Obama-friendly focus on technology and sustainability will likely further marginalize the Chief Architect's office. Even as you read, the agency is moving toward build-to-lease projects, which rarely make design quality a priority. It's over.

PRESERVATIONIST GETS PONZI'D

Someone with manageable OCD has scanned the 13,567 names on Bernie Madoff's "You've Been Robbed Blind List," looking for AEC victims. Of course, there's World Trade Center developer **Larry Silverstein** and scores of other real estate people, but so far only one architecture-related name has surfaced: **Andrew Dolkart**, the new director of the Historic Preservation program at Columbia University's GSAPP. If it's any consolation, you're in good company, Professor Dolkart: **Pedro Almodóvar** and **Zsa Zsa Gabor** are also reported to be among the swindled.

FOSTER IN A PICKLE

Feeling redundant? You are, but you're so not alone. **Foster + Partners** finds itself suddenly in a financial pickle or, dare we say, gherkin. The firm is closing its Berlin and Istanbul offices. Apparently, the closings came as a shock to employees. Recent chipper public pronouncements from Foster and other principals insisted all was bloody great. Well, why wouldn't it be? In 2007, the London investment company 3i Group bought a minority stake in the firm. Who ever invests in architecture firms? And yet, between 300 and 400 staffers, or 25 percent of the firm, will be let go. That's some heavy pruning.

SEND T-BILLS AND KOSHER DILLS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

HALF IS ENOUGH continued
from front page Halcrow Yolles, the project's engineer of record, first discovered the construction flaws this summer during a tour of the site. The engineer tipped off Clark County, whose inspectors quickly descended on the development. Their August 8 report named several deficiencies in the reinforcing of link beams between floors six and 20. These included unauthorized torch cuts to the rebar, as well as misaligned and missing cap ties. The county's report also led to emergency inspections throughout CityCenter, but these revealed no endemic reinforcing failures and the majority of the project remains on track for a December 2009 opening. The opening of The Harmon has been moved back into 2010.

Scrutiny for the failures fell upon the project's general contractor, Perini Building Co., who in turn attempted to shed blame in a litany of recriminations. In a February 6 statement, company president Craig Shaw pointed an accusatory finger at the designers: "Portions of the



COURTESY: MGM MIRAGE

structural drawings, as designed and permitted, contained elements of reinforcing steel that could not be installed as drawn," he said. He also implicated the rebar contractor, Pacific Coast Steel, as well as the third-party quality control inspector, Converse Consultants, claiming they attempted to smooth over these design conflicts by "modifying the placement of the reinforcing steel."

Regardless of who's to blame, MGM's decision gives rise to an interesting design question: How will the height change affect the overall aesthetic of CityCenter, and what can be done to address proportional issues in the tower itself? While neither Foster + Partners nor architect of record Adamson

Associates responded to AN's request for comment, Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects (EE&KA), who drafted CityCenter's master plan, saw the shortening as largely irrelevant to the project as a whole.

"The most important aspect was to create buildings and activity right at the Strip, which to a large extent is new for Las Vegas, where everything in the past had pulled back and you had a big lake or a volcano in front of the hotel," EE&KA's Peter Cavaluzzi told *The Las Vegas Sun*. "What we tried to do was bring a level of urbanity into public space. That's experienced in the first three to five floors, and it doesn't rely on whether or not you go up another 20 floors."

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HUD SECRETARY AD LIBS AT NYU
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MAKING OF

Days before President Obama unveiled his \$275 billion fix for America's foreclosure crisis, Shaun Donovan, the new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), ticked off the grim statistics: 2.3 million foreclosures last year; entire metropolitan areas—Stockton, Las Vegas—with ten percent of their housing stock foreclosed; distressed sales accounting for 45 percent of all homes sold in December.

And yet as Donovan delivered a sneak preview of the administration's housing agenda at a New York University conference on February 13, he cheerfully admitted that the herculean task before him—restoring the federal government's tattered credibility on housing issues—remains something of a work in progress. "It's early for me to be out speaking," Donovan said with a laugh. "No speech writer, no secretaries—it's a little bit of a risk."

Departing from the script was precisely the point at the two-day conference, called *A Crisis Is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Transforming America's Housing Policy* and packed with policy heavyweights like former HUD secretary Henry Cisneros and Rockefeller Foundation president Judith Rodin. While acknowledging the gravity of the crisis, Donovan laid out broadly ambitious goals that should please longtime HUD critics and advance Obama's campaign pledge of a tightly orchestrated urban policy.

Most importantly, Donovan has landed a seat at the table with top advisors Lawrence Summers, Timothy Geithner, and Christina Romer as they've grappled with the nation's economic collapse. The recovery bill, Donovan said, contains \$13.6 billion that will flow through HUD—equivalent to nearly one-third of the agency's annual budget—to renovate public housing and rehabilitate foreclosed properties, among other initiatives. He also said that investments would bolster the National Housing Trust Fund and tackle housing discrimination, something with which Donovan gained experience as New York's housing commissioner. (In Jamaica, Queens, 60 percent of all 2007 mortgages were subprime loans, he said,

though many applicants had credit scores that should have qualified them for prime mortgages, suggesting that lenders targeted minorities.)

But perhaps Donovan's most far-reaching plans would transform HUD into a force for sustainability. "Just as the FHA catalyzed the 30-year mortgage generations ago, we can catalyze an enormous change in the way that housing is built and renovated," he said, noting that insurance programs or loan guarantees could underwrite solar installations or energy-saving retrofits. More ambitiously, he said, "HUD must be the leader within the administration on thinking about the locational choices that our cities and our metropolitan and rural areas are making, and the impacts they have on climate change." To that end, Donovan is launching a HUD office of sustainability to be headed by deputy secretary Ron Sims, the Seattle-based county executive who has pioneered the use of coordinated housing, zoning, and transportation policies to attack rampant sprawl.

Elsewhere at the conference, Bruce Katz, the Brookings Institution evangelist who led Obama's HUD transition team, said that the still-nebulous White House Office of Urban Affairs, to be led by Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión, would play a key role in uniting balkanized agencies. Katz blasted the Transportation Department, for instance, calling it "the most unreconstructed agency in the federal government today" as it subsidizes the flight of jobs from urban centers. "DOT and HUD should be joined at the hip," he said. "[Transit-oriented development] should become the norm rather than a heroic act." Katz, who will continue advising the administration on urban strategy, sees the White House office as both bully pulpit and think tank, driving innovation across agencies that have been all too friendly toward the status quo. "If this office ends up being a concierge for bankers, then this is a failure," he warned.

It remains to be seen how much headway the team can make in crafting what Katz called "a radically different approach to federalism." But with the fate of American neighborhoods hanging in the balance, the crisis may indeed be a now-or-never chance to act, as Donovan soberly noted in his remarks. "We have an enormous opportunity, but it will not come again," he said. "If we waste it, we will have no one to blame but ourselves."

JEFF BYLES



SEQUOIA AT SINAI

A redwood has sprung up on 102nd Street between Madison and Fifth—but don't blame global warming. The tree is the subject of a photographic mural by Victor Gagliardi in the atrium of Mount Sinai Medical Center's new Center for Advanced Medicine. Perkins Eastman's adaptive reuse of a 140,000-square-foot parking garage, originally designed by Emery Roth in 1928, slips a six-story glass curtain wall into the original brick facade. "When you're waiting for your doctor, you're waiting in the sunlight," said Duncan Reid, the project's lead designer. "We chose the redwood as the image because as a conifer, its strength is year-round, and they grow so old and tall."

JENNIFER KRICHELS

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RANALLI-DESIGNED NYCHA ADDITION RAISES BAR IN BED-STUY

A Bright Spot in Brooklyn

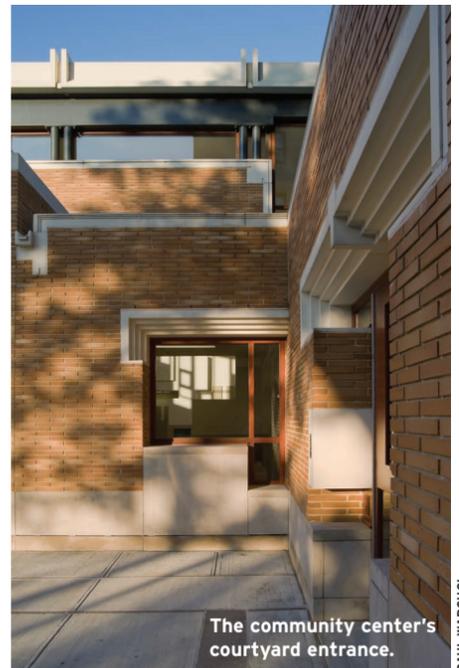
These are hard times for the New York City Housing Authority, and its future looks even bleaker. In order to close a looming \$195 million deficit in its operating budget, the authority is proposing raising rents on its 406,000 tenants (in 2,600 buildings) and closing dozens of community centers all over the city. But with an authority as large and complex as NYCHA, nothing is ever simple. At the same time as these cuts are being proposed, the authority has just opened an extraordinary new community center in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

The Saratoga Street Community Center is a building of a type not seen in New York since the heyday of postmodernism in the 1980s. It was designed by George Ranalli, Architect and is the firm's first ground-up building in New York, although Ranalli has completed many interior renovations and has also been an important teacher—and is now dean—at the City College of New York. In a new monograph, Michael Sorkin points to Ranalli's presence on the design scene: "We know Ranalli's work so well, in part [as] a byproduct of its easy dissemination over the ether. And because his work is exceptionally widely published and exceptionally well regarded in a representational culture that simply elides the conceptual and the literal and grow(s) gracefully from the long rich line of his sensibility—and is simply *there*."

The project comprises the complete renovation of a community center within an 18-story housing tower, plus a 3,500-square-foot addition to hold a new meeting and recreational room (a rental party space on weekends), kitchen, bathrooms, and a new director's office. It was completed on a shoestring for about \$300 per square foot—fairly typical for a NYCHA project—but also manages to achieve a level of thoughtfulness in its detailing and execution that would be impressive for any project, let alone one that is an addition to a public housing complex. What is so unusual, at least within today's design environment, is its unabashed use of historical references, to Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Scarpa, and Raimund Abraham. It's no pastiche, though. The design shows a sensitivity to composition that makes it feel fresh and autonomous

as a work of architecture.

The building not only provides a dignified new community center for an undistinguished NYCHA tower, but anchors its midblock site, creates two usable outdoor spaces (where once there were none), and brings a streetwall to an amorphous urban landscape. The process of constructing such a building can be excruciatingly demanding when value engineers and bureaucrats get their hands on it, and so it's a feat that this beautifully crafted center actually got built. The materials suggest a far richer patronage, and do the housing authority proud. Credit also goes to Ranalli, who must have fought hard to get (and keep) such a rich palette: Warm limestone, buff-colored ironspot brick, cast stone, and harvested mahogany doors all add up to a compelling composition bringing dignity to its adjacent public housing project and its surrounding urban landscape. "It is an excellent demonstration of how much can be achieved on a very limited budget," said David Burney, who was design director of NYCHA when Ranalli was commissioned in 2002. And we hope it's not a never-to-be-repeated accident. **WILLIAM MENKING**



The community center's courtyard entrance.

PAUL WARCHOL

The Banco Nuñez, with Félix Candela, in Havana (1957).



COURTESY EDUARDO LUIS RODRIGUEZ

MAX BORGES, 1918–2009

Havana in the 1950s was a scene of extraordinary architectural creativity, as a postwar surge in the sugar and tourism industries, along with ambitious civic leaders and a cosmopolitan elite, transformed the city into a showcase of progressive architecture. The generation of architects who advanced the modern movement in Cuba with exuberant, avant-garde designs lost one of its finest on January 18, when Max Borges Recio died at age 90 at his home in Falls Church, Virginia. Borges built a remarkable body of work in Cuba during the late 1940s and 1950s, but he will undoubtedly be remembered for the Cabaret Tropicana, the legendary nightclub that came to symbolize the glamour of pre-Revolutionary Havana.

Max Enrique Borges Recio was born into an affluent Havana family in 1918. He studied architecture as an undergraduate at Georgia Tech and earned a master's degree at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. He then returned to Havana and joined the architectural firm of his father, Max Borges del Junco. The senior Borges was a prominent architect, producing important civic, commercial, and residential buildings. (The firm of Max Borges and Sons, incidentally, designed my great aunt's house in the Vedado section of Havana. Max Sr. and Jr. were friends of my mother's family in Cuba and, after the Revolution, in northern Virginia.) As a consequence of his social connections, Max Jr., or "Maxito," as he was known, got an early start with prestigious commissions. His design for the Center for Medicine and Surgery in El Vedado won the Cuban National Architecture Award in 1948, when Borges was only 30.

Major fame arrived in 1951, with the construction of the Tropicana in Havana's leafy Marianao suburb. Borges had worked with the Spanish-Mexican engineer Félix Candela, whose investigations into thin-shell concrete structures and, in particular, his signature hyperbolic paraboloids were influential throughout Latin America. Borges' composition of overlapping slices of concrete vaults joined by delicate glass diaphragms in the Tropicana's "Arcos de Cristal" creates a seemingly weightless enclosure over the

1,700-seat main theater, a sophisticated adult fantasyland without equal.

Borges continued his exploration of thin-shell concrete in the 1953 design for the Club Náutico, a beach club in the Playa district west of Havana. Here the staggered vaults provide shelter from the sun and are heavy enough to withstand hurricanes that routinely batter the shore. Working during the 1950s with his brother Enrique Borges Recio, also an architect, Borges created several celebrated buildings that still stand in Havana, including the Banco Nuñez (1957), a minimalist glass box roofed by a series of inverted pyramidal vaults, also designed with Candela. Borges' own house of 1948 is a refined Corbusian box perched on piloti in Miramar.

After the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959, Borges—by then married with two sons—left the island and settled in Virginia, producing a respectable portfolio of buildings around Washington, D.C. Yet nothing he built in America approaches the genius of his work in Havana. In this sense, Borges' career is sadly typical of most of the great modernists who exiled themselves from Cuba. Nicolas Quintana, Frank Martinez, Manuel Gutierrez, and the great Mario Románach all had Havana careers equal to that of Borges, but could never fully transplant their talents. (The exception is perhaps Ricardo Porro, who has had a thriving practice in Paris since 1964.)

Borges is survived by his sons Max Borges Olmo, an architect, and Philip Borges Olmo, both of Fairfax County, Virginia, and by his brother Enrique, of Key Biscayne, Florida. Borges also leaves behind the beautiful house that he built for himself and his family in the Lake Barcroft section of Falls Church in 1962. Meticulously detailed in stone, wood, and glass, and filled with plants, it would not be out of place in Marianao or Playa. It is the only work of true Cuban architecture that he built in the United States.

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San Lazaro Apartments, 1950.

BELMONT FREEMAN

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The new, fluid, Moebius-veneered 1,087-seat auditorium and Muirapiranga-panelled lobby (right).

The legendary architectural historian and teacher Colin Rowe memorably delineated the difference between art and architecture for the modern age. He suggested, in 1984's *Collage City*, that "the tradition of modern architecture, always professing a distaste for art, has characteristically conceived of society and the city in highly conventional artistic terms—unity, continuity, system." Modern art, on the other hand, "has always made a virtue of irony, obliquity, and multiple reference." Modern architecture, in other words, loves an empty page. Modern art loves a collage.

Which makes the arrival of Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R) at New York's Lincoln Center a fascinating event. DS+R have developed a singular practice by willfully situating their work within traditions of performance and installation, exhibition and display—an oblique technique of multiple references that Rowe would recognize. Their gorgeous drawings, whether digital or analog, blur in a manner worthy of Michael Webb or Hannah Hoch. Their most thrilling projects, like a 1989 security-camera installation at MoMA or the 2002 mist-machine pavilion at Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland, adopted and adapted

easy-to-miss site conditions, like surveillance or water, and perverted them to educational and entertaining ends. Their work in the academy (including, disclosure, a class I took in graduate school) and in the worlds of art, dance, and theater has reinforced this sensibility.

Lincoln Center, on the other hand, is the ultimate exercise in blank-paper *tabula rasa*, a mid-1960s slum-clearance in which Robert Moses and John D. Rockefeller III colluded to replace a lively but unsightly West Side neighborhood with an insular performance arts complex. The halls and theaters that resulted—lugubrious Philip

Johnson, exhausted Wallace Harrison, subdued Eero Saarinen, overworked Pietro Belluschi—have few present-day virtues other than beloved familiarity and historical authenticity.

Belluschi's 1968 megastructure housing the Juilliard School and Alice Tully Hall has received the first of many interventions to come in the next few years from DS+R, in collaboration with FXFowle. The renovation subverts its vices and sublimates its virtues: extending with Photoshop-precision its Travertine facade along a new cantilevered Broadway-addressing extension; enclosing with cable-

net-glazing an airily open entrance lobby below; instrumentalizing Belluschi's many fussy level changes into bars, benches, and outdoor amphitheatres. The original 1,100-seat concert hall, a sleek Aalto-gone-Goth wooden enclosure, has been reincarnated better than ever, with more intimate acoustics and (thanks to LEDs behind paper-thin wood veneer over composite and resin panels) glowing walls. Aside from providing solutions to long-standing problems (like silencing the nearby subway), the renovation weaves together new and old, sometimes seamlessly and sometimes in salutary disjunction, deftly prompting the questions that Rowe suggests are required by modern art: the "pleasing difficulty of [asking] what is false and what is true? What is antique and what is 'of today'?"

But something else happens, too. With their recent architecturally-scaled projects, from the Institute of Contemporary Art (2006) in Boston and the unbuilt Chelsea Eyebeam gallery (2008) to the ongoing development of the High Line elevated esplanade, and now Lincoln Center, DS+R's arsenal has become increasingly unified, con-

Taubman College thanks you (for hosting a spring break intern)

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tinuous, and systemized—that is, more like Rowe’s modern architecture. To be reductive, their system develops around three continuities of method: the curve-and-cut, the prop-and-strut, and the Bowery-and-Canal. In the first instance, dramatic balconies and canopies slice through fluidly continuous floor-into-wall-into-ceiling surfaces, as with a ballet studio and donor’s balcony at Alice Tully. In the second, drawing on the material culture of exhibition and display, as much visual attention is directed toward the

devices that support something as to whatever they happen to support (usually a screen): At Alice Tully, this tendency reaches a climax in the artful pair of big columns in the lobby, one vertical, one orthogonal to the 16-degree tilt of the ceiling. In the third continuity, the mechanical vernaculars of a bygone, do-it-yourself downtown (steel plates, Plexiglas panels, cathode-tubes, loft-heaters) are crossbred and perfected. At Alice Tully you can see this behind the lobby bar, where standard restaurant kitchen fit-

tings are tailored into deliciously bespoke stainless steel.

These three continuities add up to a bulletproof system. The work is sensitive and ruthless, beautiful and efficient—and, at Alice Tully Hall, evocative of the ardor and labor of its making. But with repetition, such a system can become as insular as Lincoln Center itself. It may be that DS+R will have to eventually subvert the readymade object that is their own system of design if their body of work is to accumulate to an architecture not merely artful but fully art.

THOMAS DE MONCHAUX

FORE! continued from front page

battles with Bronx residents over which and even whether the borough’s parks would be torn up to make way for the new plant. The city finally broke ground on the facility in 2004, and the driving range has moved to a temporary site while the complex roofscape takes shape.

The engineering challenges are formidable. At nine acres, the \$95 million driving range is the largest contiguous green roof in the country. So when it rains at the range, it pours, which creates a paradoxical hazard for the plant below. “It’s of paramount importance to the City of New York that this building stay dry, despite being full of water,” said David Burke, the project architect at Grimshaw. So to handle the millions of gallons that can accumulate on the green roof during a storm, the design team has devised a natural filtration system to collect, process, and store the runoff.

The range’s unique topography not only provides green-like targets for golfers, who tee off from the perimeter of the circular structure, but helps channel rainwater into the collection basins, where it meets groundwater pumped in from the plant’s four sump pumps. The water then travels

through a series of ten cells that ring the range, each one modeled on a different native ecosystem to serve different filtration purposes. It takes up to eight days for water to travel through the cells, at which point it’s collected and used to irrigate the golf course. “We’re not just dumping it in the sewer,” said Mark Laska, president of Great Ecology & Environments, one of two ecological designers on the project. “It’s a true display of sustainable green design in an urban environment.”

The design team wanted to convey such sustainable lessons to the public, especially the kids enrolled in the First Tee outreach program at Mosholu, and so the cells were left in plain view. Furthermore, because they are sunk ten feet below grade, they serve as a moat of sorts that helps protect the city’s water supply, which is seen as a potential target for terrorists. To that end, Grimshaw has also designed the guardhouse and screening buildings that security constraints required, in addition to the new clubhouse and tee boxes on the range—an unlikely commission, to be sure, but one the architects embraced. “It’s very fitting for Grimshaw,” as Burke put it. “We tend to gravitate toward these oddball projects.” **MATT CHABAN**



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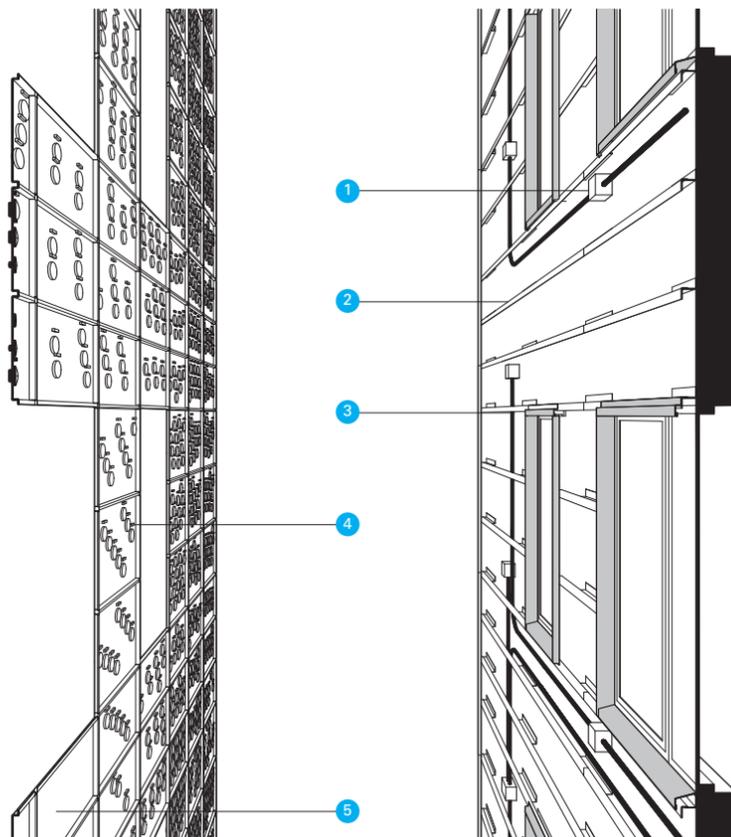
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009



COURTESY CALIPER STUDIO

Since the Commodore shut down in 2002, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, has been without a proper movie theater. This deficit will soon end with the opening of The Cassandra, a cinema/café/cabaret on Metropolitan Avenue. More than filling a gap, this new film venue will embody the spirit of the neighborhood's more recent demographic, catering to a "cinophile audience" with repertory and first-run fare as well as "salacious, fun-loving, late-night programming," according to the theater's website.

Caliper Studio has lovingly rendered this erudite yet hedonistic zeitgeist in the theater that is sited in an existing two-story warehouse. The developers—husband-wife team Cassandra Lozano and Mason Rader—are funding the project by adding

three floors of for-sale apartments to the roof. The architects took the opportunity to make the facade of this addition more than just cladding for a cash cow, turning it into a glowing, abstracted marquee that calls attention to the theater on this somewhat desolate stretch of Metropolitan Ave. They accomplished this with zinc panels that are studded with backlit cast glass disks, arranged in a pattern that functions both as beacon and allusion.

Both Lozano and Rader had a close relationship with pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, for whom Lozano acted as studio manager from 1990 until Lichtenstein's death in 1997, and she is now the managing director of the artist's foundation. The glowing glass disks of the facade were in part inspired by the dots of

Lichtenstein's artwork. In fact, Lozano gave the architects actual templates that the artist used in the creation of his paintings—basically, pieces of paper with holes cut out of them. Caliper used these templates as a starting point, creating drawings based on them in RhinoScript. These drawings came out as undulating planes that the architects then cut to create a pattern of lines that became the layout for the dots. The architects then massaged the patterns in an iterative process that was guided by three criteria: The first was to create a greater density of dots on the left side of the building over the theater entrance as a sort of way-finding device. The second was to create an abstract pattern with an underlying logic, which was supplied by the Lichtenstein

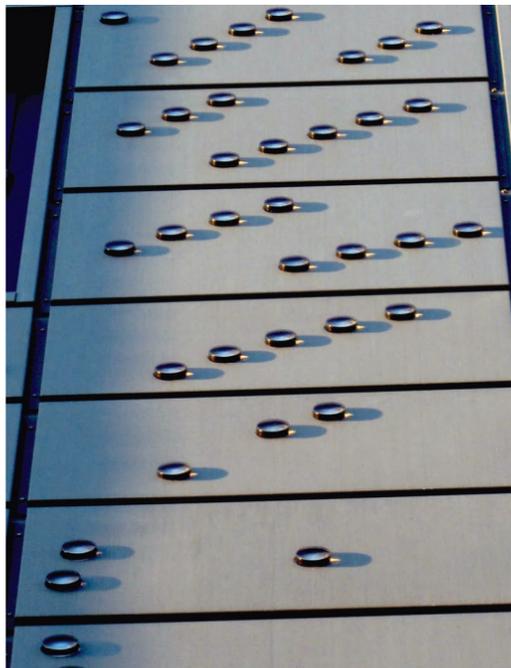
templates. The third was purely practical: The glass disks are backlit by LEDs, which come on pre-wired strips with diodes spaced at regular intervals, meaning that the distance between dots had to be carefully planned to match this spacing. Once a layout was created, the architects laid it over the facade and adjusted the lines to fit snugly with the placement of the apartment windows.

Caliper, which is a metalworking studio in addition to a design studio, fabricated and installed the facade itself. Maloya Laser in Long Island cut the actual holes in the zinc panels, but Caliper did all of the detailing and assembled the units in their shop. The zinc panels themselves are 16-gauge and measure two by three feet on average. The architects chose a pre-welded zinc, a patinated surface that requires no paint and is low maintenance—if it gets scratched or dinged, in a matter of time oxidation will return it to its "original" color. The glass disks more or less resemble hockey pucks. They were cast in the Czech Republic with a flange used for a connecting surface. The portion that shows through is approximately two and a half inches in diameter and sticks out from the plane of the wall by about one half of an inch. The disks were structurally adhered to the zinc with VHB tape from 3M, and an adhesion promoter was applied to the glass to strengthen the bond. Caliper mounted the LEDs in threes at the top of each disk, the back-sides of the disks having been sandblasted. These techniques helped to create an even diffu-

- 1 Junction box and electrical conduit
- 2 Galvanized Z-girt
- 3 Zinc window header
- 4 3-diode LED module
- 5 Patinated zinc panel

sion of light throughout each piece of glass and avoided visible hotspots. It also tamps down light pollution by casting light onto the sidewalk rather than across the street at the neighbors. Set on dimmers to adjust the intensity, the LEDs are wired to 16 transformers embedded behind the facade. With just under 2,000 glass disks, the project only uses about 800 watts altogether. The owners plan to install photovoltaic panels on the roof to match this energy usage.

All assembled, each panel weighs between 10 and 15 pounds. Installing them was a simple process involving scaffolding and drills: The metal facade screws to galvanized steel Z-girts that create an air barrier over exterior sheathing on metal studs. Out of architectural deference, the new addition sits back about a foot from the existing warehouse's brick, which was maintained to link the project to Williamsburg's past, even though the entirety of the building was gutted and replaced by a new steel structure. The one exception to this gesture of preservation is at the theater entrance, also set back from the brick, where the shining conglomeration of glowing glass disks descend to a somewhat sober marquee, beckoning the 'Burg's hoards of pleasure-seekers to a night of fun and cinematic salacity. **AS**



DECOMMISSIONED MINNEAPOLIS SKYWAY SEEKS NEW HOME



COURTESY CITY DESK STUDIO

BRIDGE TO ANYWHERE ELSE

The partners at City Desk Studio in Minneapolis do a fair bit of work for the University of Minnesota, so they subscribe to the school's RFQ newsletter. Back in 2006, when they saw that an old skyway was being auctioned off, Bob Ganser, one of three partners at the firm, said they knew they had to check it out. After placing the one and only bid, the skyway was theirs.

The firm has a lot of plans for the 1960s-built skyway, designed by Ed "The Father of Skyways" Baker. The most promising transformation idea would be to turn it into a lake house, Minnesota being the Land of 10,000 Lakes, after all. Ganser said the partners tried briefly to round up support from family and friends, offering 12 timeshares at \$100,000 each. Failing that, they turned to the internet, namely Craigslist, where they have been trying to sell it for the past year: "Skyway for sale—THAT'S RIGHT—AN

ACTUAL SKYWAY!—\$79,500."

For whatever reason, the listing went viral in January (including a post on the A/N Blog). "There was one small story in a weekly financial paper here," Ganser said. "And then it just caught fire within a week." Since then, the office has been flooded with inquiries, about half of them serious. They range from artist studios to home additions to architects actually in need of skyways.

There has also been interest in moving the thing out of the region, but City Desk is hesitant to do so, and not only because of logistics. Ganser explained that Minneapolis is the birthplace and, arguably, capital of these architectural appendages. "In a way, it's a special object," he said. "It has a special character. It's not just being reused. Especially in this area, it's place defining. It's almost mythical." **MC**

AT DEADLINE

FALSE BOTTOM

As the recession continues to deepen, so too does the American Institute of Architects' Architecture Billings Index, which reached its lowest level ever in January: 33.3. With the exception of a brief uptick in December, the index has been in decline since September, and has not been above 50—the threshold for rising billings—since January 2008. The one bright spot in an otherwise abysmal month, where every regional and sector reading languished in the 30s or high 20s, was a five-point jump in inquiries, to 43.5, possibly indicative of hopes pegged to the stimulus package.

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Amid all the horse-trading for stimulus dollars, the Obama administration managed to work in an \$8 billion provision to jumpstart the nation's high-speed rail network—along with weatherizing houses, one of the president's pet projects. There will also be an annual \$1 billion commitment to high-speed rail in the president's standard budget for the next five years, a nearly eight-fold increase from the \$1.5 billion President George W. Bush committed last year through 2013. And this could be just the beginning: Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, has called high-speed rail the president's "signature issue in the bill."

SOM-E GOOD NEWS

A board member since 1986 and booster for even longer, David Childs was named chairman of the Municipal Art Society on February 23. The Skidmore, Owings & Merrill consulting partner has left his mark across the city and the world, most notably at Ground Zero and at one of the MAS' biggest campaigns, Moynihan Station. He replaces Philip Howard, an attorney and author, who has served for the past decade, and joins Vin Cipolla, the new president taking over for Kent Barwick. Also on the upside, SOM is hiring, part of an expansion of its Health + Science practice at the New York office. Finally, the firm as a whole was named one of *Fast Company's* 50 most innovative companies for 2009.

LONDON CALLING

Having redefined the Bowery with the New Museum and Toledo with the Glass Pavilion, Tokyo-based SANAA is now set to storm London, if ever so lightly, as designers of this year's Serpentine Gallery Pavilion. The ninth team and second from Japan (after Toyo Ito), SANAA will follow Frank Gehry's well-received work from last summer.

LANDMARKS AFTER THE FACT

The Landmarks Preservation Commission named its two newest landmarks on February 10: a pair of skyscrapers so celebrated that some commissioners even thought they were already designated. The Con Edison Headquarters at 4 Irving Place and One Chase Manhattan Plaza, two of the city's defining towers, were designated, as well as a tiny historic district in Bed-Stuy, the Alice and Agate Courts Historic District, two adjacent cul-de-sacs off Atlantic Avenue.

EERO DYNAMIC



Once an icon of air travel's future, Eero Saarinen's Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy International Airport was in danger of becoming a relic—until JetBlue hired **Gensler** to bring the building into the 21st century. A structural steel design afforded JetBlue the flexibility to revive the historic Flight Center and keep pace with a rapidly changing airline industry. Easily adaptable to everything from the latest aircraft designs to new security regulations, the terminal is cleared for takeoff.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

IN BANKRUPT ICELAND, ARCHITECTS CONTENT
WITH YEARS OF UNCHECKED DEVELOPMENT

AFTER THE GOLD RUSH



ADDA BIRNIR

When banks in Iceland filed for bankruptcy in October and credit lines dried up, Iceland's building industry went into a tailspin: Contractors halted construction, developers cancelled new projects, and thousands of foreign construction workers left the country almost immediately.

Next to fall victim were architects. As construction ceased, architecture firms saw an almost complete drop-off in new projects. By the beginning of November, architecture firms across the country announced massive layoffs. As of February 1 of this year after a three-month grace period, an estimated 90 percent of Icelandic architects became unemployed.

The past ten years in Iceland have

seen unprecedented residential and commercial real estate development. Inflated interest rates in Icelandic banks attracted large sums of foreign investment, and as money poured into the country, Icelanders began to invest in real estate. Housing prices skyrocketed, inciting a manic building boom that architectural critic Guja Dögg likens to the Wild West. "People were just building and building, with no consideration for what anyone else was doing. It's like they were all cowboys shooting into the air, and now the bullets are raining down on them."

Now, as Icelanders sift through the fallout of a decade of frenzied real estate speculation, much of the detritus is new construction. Large

Abandoned new housing in
Kopavogur, south of Reykjavik.

swaths of suburbs surrounding the Reykjavik metropolitan area stand empty, many of the houses only partially built. In downtown Reykjavik, construction is halted on the 1.07-million-square-foot Icelandic National Concert & Conference Center, a 30 billion ISK (approximately \$500 million) joint venture between Portus and the Reykjavik city government.

The current state of the real estate sector stems from the fact that despite its old history, Iceland is essentially a young country—it declared independence from Denmark only 64 years ago—and lacks an established urban development practice. The Reykjavik city planning authorities were largely unequipped to oversee the sharp increase in construction, leading to embarrassing city planning missteps.

Olafur Mathiesen, an architect at the firm Glama/Kim who now finds himself unemployed after 12 years, explained that the lack of coordination between local communities and zoning and planning practices led to a form of ad-hoc urban development, resulting in a suburban sprawl of shoddily built multi-family housing, out-of-place highrise apartments, little green space, and a road structure so complex that it makes public transportation slow and inconvenient. Past precedent suggests that this kind of development can lead to a serious decrease in standard of living, a cultur-

al reality foreign to a country that has always prided itself on its progressive social policy and fluid class structure.

Sigrun Birgisdottir, director of the architecture department at the Icelandic Arts Academy, explained how the lack of urban organization is symptomatic of the Reykjavik planning authority's difficulty administering such large-scale development. "The regulation system—both financial and political—was accustomed to a small-scale sense of the town," he said. The authority literally was unable to control or account for most of the construction happening in the past few years.

The overwhelming feeling among Icelandic architects is that the architects themselves, as well as developers and city planners, should have known better. "There really has been no organized Icelandic architecture community," said Birgisdottir, a situation that contributed to the current state of affairs. Until 2001, when the art school opened its undergraduate architecture program, there was no institution to foster conversation among architects. "Icelandic architects would return from studying abroad in their late 20s and then meet each other for the first time as professionals in competition with one another," Birgisdottir explained. Guja Dögg agreed, adding, "That doesn't exist among my generation of architects." Birgisdottir, Dögg, and Mathiesen are all hopeful that the current state of the architectural industry

will allow the country's architects the time and space to have these long-overdue conversations.

Bjorn Martensen, an architect and civil engineer, is organizing a team to create a review of quality control and assessment processes, while another group is planning a workshop where architects, industrial designers, and other creative professionals can come together to foster innovative design. Some firms are considering an arrangement with the government whereby architects would continue to work while receiving unemployment benefits if the firm could provide ten percent of the salary.

KRADS, a firm established by a group of young Danish and Icelandic architects with offices in both countries, is probably best poised to navigate the ongoing recession. Since opening the office in 2006, the group has been pioneering a new, collaborative type of architectural practice. "We do a little bit of everything," said member Mads Bay Moller, "architecture, prototyping, conceptual design, and graphic design. And we like to bring people from outside of architecture into the conversation." When they were recently asked to design a church, they brought on a priest as consultant. "Reykjavik is a super-interesting place," Moller continued. He said the creative energy and abundant natural resources make it "a great atmosphere to generate new approaches to architecture."

ADDA BIRNIR

Gaoyang International Cruise Terminal
Shanghai, China
Frank Repas Architects

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STILL STANDING continued from front page better: taller structures have more steel to dissipate damaging heat, and a higher fire means less load to destabilize steel columns. "Think of it as a ten-pound steel box versus a one-pound steel box," said Borys Hayda, managing principal at DeSimone. "The more massive element needs ten times as much heat put into it to reach the same temperature as the smaller one."

And while it might seem that OMA's gravity-defying structures could render them prone to collapse, Hayda said that in the case of fire, complexity helps, because it typically means more structural members are available to provide redundancy. It also helps that the building is a hotel, which means shorter spans—more rooms—and thus more columns and heat dispersion. Another factor in keeping the temperature below the critical 400-500 degree threshold is "blow out." "If windows start breaking, there's a way for the heat to get out, and it can be fine," said Andrew Mueller-Lust, principal at Severud Associates. Photos of TVCC showed most every window blown out.

As to historical precedents for reuse, Mueller-Lust and others pointed to One Meridian Plaza, a Philadelphia office tower stricken by a fire on the 22nd floor in 1991. The fire raged for 18 hours, burning out one floor before moving on to the next, until it ran out of fuel at the 38th floor. Testing showed that the building could have been restored, but no one was willing to reoccupy it. It stood for years before finally being razed.

The same fate may await TVCC. "As I read the Chinese newspapers, according to the official statements, the main structure is very little damaged," said Tian-Fang Jing, principal at Weidlinger Associates. While that might be the case, the greater issue remains whether anyone would willingly go into a repaired TVCC.

And if the building is structurally sound, reinforcement may be warranted. "If you're forced to add so many columns that the space becomes economically unfeasible, that's no good," Hayda said. "And if you need to reinforce the elevator core, and the elevators won't fit, or the stairs are no longer wide enough, that just can't be done." He added that TVCC could turn out to be cheaper to repair than replace. But before that is even an option, those doing the number-crunching are going to be engineers—and not accountants—to make the most important call. **MC**



DAVID SUNBERG/ESTO



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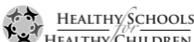
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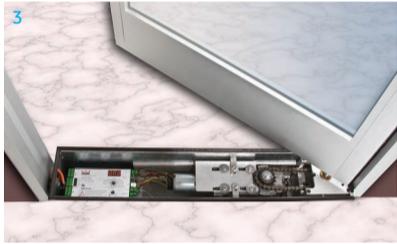
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2 H 5015 SERIE K2
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EMERGING VOICES

2009

Now in its 26th year, the Architectural League's Emerging Voices program is an important rung on the ladder of American architectural prestige. In contrast with the League's Young Architects program, which emphasizes design promise and research, Emerging Voices focuses on building, according to Anne Rieselbach, program director at the League. "That can be building from the scale of installation to architecture and urban design," Rieselbach said. "We look for a strong voice, for a point of view in the work, as well as an interest in community work or teaching."

Chosen by a committee comprised of previous winners and League board members that includes Calvin Tsao, Joel Sanders, Leslie Gill, Jared Della Valle, Lyn Rice, Jonathan Marvel, and the League's executive director Rosalie Genevro, the 2009 group is geographically diverse, with varied

aesthetic concerns and approaches to practice. All, however, share an interest in place-making, whether a reconsideration of suburban landscapes (Shane Coen), urban design elements that also mitigate severe climate conditions (Darren Petrucci), or the blending of American and Mexican vernacular (at103).

With the downturn in the economy, Rieselbach predicts that next year's submissions will bring an emphasis on research or speculative projects, though she does not foresee an immediate return to theory or paper architecture. "The way architecture is made today is so different from earlier downturns," she said. "There are so many ways to be directly involved with fabrication, construction, or with non-traditional clients."

LEVENBETTS

NEW YORK





ABOVE:
MIXED GREENS GALLERY,
NEW YORK
FACING PAGE:
CCO1 HOUSE,
COLUMBIA COUNTY, NY

For Stella Betts and David Leven, prior experience in construction and fabrication has helped to refine their interest in materials and detailing, always with an eye toward clarity and lightness. “We’re very interested in a distillation process, in focusing,” Leven said.

Though they will, on occasion, install elements themselves, as in the CCO1 house in upstate New York where they hung metal cladding, they do not consider themselves a design/build firm. “Our goal is to keep the material and details very simple. We always want the diagram to be legible in the built work,” Betts said. “We’re interested in fabricating components or details, but we don’t want to do all the construction ourselves,” Leven added. “We are fascinated by our design/build friends and our architect/developer friends, but we’re not interested in that kind of practice.” For the husband-and-wife principals, their involvement in construction is a means to an end, not an end in itself. “Design/build can be limiting, in terms of scale, in terms of the time devoted to design,” Betts said.

While much of LevenBetts’ work thus far has been relatively small-scale—houses, a gallery, retail spaces, a small office and printing facility—they are increasingly turning their attention to urban-scale projects. Many of these projects are competition entries or research-based. Their 2003 Chicago Filter Parking—a garage, bike path, pedestrian bridge, and hanging garden in one—stands out as a milestone for the firm and one that they hope to eventually see built. “We worked through the program and started to think about how you could turn it into an amenity for the city,” Betts said. The delicacy and polished quality of their work might seem to run counter to the tough programmatic concerns and size of a 1,000-car parking garage, but they see their approach as a way to rethink one of the most utilitarian and ubiquitous elements of the contemporary urban landscape. “We want to graft something onto the city so that it becomes this very light sort of machine,” Betts said.

ALAN G. BRAKE



ABOVE:
CB30,
MEXICO CITY
BELOW:
ALFONSO REYES 58,
MEXICO CITY

Like most Mexican architects of their generation and just about all North American architects that have started their practice in the last ten years, Dellekamp arquitectos have made housing a cornerstone of their work. What sets the firm apart is a fervent dedication to improving social housing in a country overrun by rapacious developers in collusion with corrupt government officials. Founded in Mexico City in 1999, the studio’s most important project currently on the boards is a project in Tlacolula, Oaxaca, which just began construction. “Most social housing is money-driven,” said principal Derek Dellekamp, “but we were convinced you could make it a business and achieve a high sustainability point.” Noting that the site rested on the outskirts of town, the architects programmed basic services into the project, such as a school and market. They also studied the local historical architecture, some of the most celebrated in Mexico, and emulated its vernacular in their designs.

This careful consideration of context runs through all of Dellekamp’s work. The firm’s CV spells it out nicely: “We

deliberately allow for outside influences to shape the design.” This can be hard work in Mexico City, which changes so rapidly it makes New York City look like the Roman forum. One exception is Polanco, a neighborhood north of Chapultepec Park that enjoys greater stability thanks to its mansions and luxury apartments built in the 1950s. Dellekamp designed two apartment buildings across the street from each other for different clients, cb29 and cb30. Both respond to the neighborhood’s midcentury modern architecture with their clean lines and copious use of glass. What separated them in terms of the architects’ approach was the character of the clients. The developers of cb29 were in their 60s, and that building has a conservative, cloistered feel. But for the thirtysomethings who commissioned cb30, Dellekamp boldly faced the building front and back with unbroken planes of transparent glass. Without spandrel units, this facade not only reveals what the apartments’ occupants might be up to, it also gives passersby a peek-a-boo view of the building’s structure itself.

AARON SEWARD



DELLEKAMP
ARQUITECTOS

MEXICO CITY

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

A-I-R

— SCOTTSDALE, AZ

BELOW, TOP:
COMFORT ZONE,
PHOENIX
BELOW, BOTTOM:
STRIPSCAPE, PHOENIX

Darren Petrucci's designs find strength in numbers. Petrucci is the director of Arizona State University's School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, and founder of Architecture-Infrastructure-Research (A-I-R). And with the trademarked name Amenity Infrastructure, the architect hopes to capitalize on his designs' potential to be multiplied throughout public spaces and communities.

For example, at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, Petrucci's Comfort Zone project is a series of shading and cooling canopies for airport vehicles. His Stripscape design includes a collection of evaporative-cooling units that are also seats, transforming a scorching bookstore courtyard into usable space. Nearby, shades-cum-signs ("lampshades") let merchants comply with Phoenix zoning regulations that forbid most advertising signage. "Each system is addressing a different constituency," he said, and they can be multiplied in a way to translate the human scale of the body into something with much larger impact.

Because he hopes his designs will be duplicated, much of Petrucci's work deals with prefabrication techniques. In 2008, he completed a prototype for a low-cost, low-environmental-impact guesthouse on Martha's Vineyard with structural insulated panels (SIPs). Composed of a rigid foam plastic core sandwiched between two structural

skins, SIPs are strong, cost-effective, and energy-efficient. "The house uses existing technology, but it's smart in the way it's deployed," he said. Like his Phoenix lampshades, the design of the so-called "VH R-10 gHouse" was determined in part by local zoning: The home couldn't exceed 600 square feet. But the ultimate goal was a solution to a community problem—lack of affordable housing—especially for the high-priced resort's seasonal service sector. Petrucci hopes that in the future, the gHouse will provide affordable housing within walking distance of Vineyard hotels, restaurants, and other businesses.

Petrucci emphasizes that a transdisciplinary approach is key to working with communities to develop better infrastructure. With a team that includes a psychologist, graphic designers, construction workers, and architecture students, he is currently working on designs for a wellness clinic suitable for remote, arid parts of the world. "I feel very fortunate to be able to practice and to teach and do research," he said. "I think that really helps me to try to position what I'm doing as having some significance, even though many things I do are not large projects."

JENNIFER KRICHELS

HUTCHINSON
&
MAUL
ARCHITECTURE

— SEATTLE, WA

BELOW, TOP:
COURTYARD HOUSE,
MERCER ISLAND, WA
BELOW, BOTTOM:
HOLE HOUSE 1, SEATTLE

The tiny, Seattle-based firm Hutchinson & Maul Architecture has kept a pretty low profile, especially considering their prolific output. The principals have been more preoccupied with their projects than with self-promotion. "What's our marketing plan? We don't have one," said Robert Hutchinson, one of the plainspoken principals of the eponymous firm, along with Thomas Maul. The firm, currently just the two and never more than five, has built a remarkable number of projects, ranging from installations to houses to what they call "background public buildings."

Both principals have undergraduate experience in engineering, but their work doesn't necessarily put structure front and center. Through careful site and program analysis, they often uncover unexpected design opportunities, which they exploit with an artful sensibility. One such opportunity came in the form of a hundred-year-old frame house slated for demolition on the site of one of their projects. In one day, Hutchinson and Maul, with the help of friends and associates, pierced the structure with thousands of holes, turning the house into an eerie lantern. That night, they threw a party in the transformed space, giving the house a last act before the wrecking ball the next day. "Hole House 1 was about exploring light and structure, and a way to celebrate the life of the building," Hutchinson said. The two replicated the

experiment with a more humble structure, not surprisingly called Hole House 2, and inserted colored acrylic rods to heighten the beautiful and haunting effect.

For a below-grade metal shop, the architects took a code-required parking screen and turned it into a thin, saw-tooth skylight clad in Cor-ten. In profile, it looks like sculpture. Inside, light washes the concrete walls, elevating the quality of the space, while meeting its programmatic requirements. "We don't just grab the latest, coolest thing. We try and have self-control," Maul said. "We like what is tested, what is tried-and-true." This sense of finding unexpected possibilities in the pragmatic spaces of everyday life will be put to the test in their largest project to date, a 16,000-square-foot public works operations center in Bothell, Washington, clad in wooden planks with a broad entrance overhang projecting into the tree-dotted site. The center will break ground in the next few months. **AGB**



COURTESY A-I-R



ALAN A BRAMOWITZ



COURTESY HUTCHINSON & MAUL

COEN
+
PARTNERS—
MINNEAPOLIS
AND NEW YORKBELOW, TOP:
JACKSON MEADOW, MN
BELOW, BOTTOM:
LAVIN BERNICK CENTER COURTYARD,
TULANE UNIVERSITY, NEW ORLEANS

When Shane Coen began Coen + Partners 17 years ago, “landscape architecture had a lost identity,” he said, and to become a landscape designer “was taking a back door to architecture.” From its start, the firm began to reconcile that lost identity with another: suburbia.

“No one has taken on suburbia with the integration of modern architecture. When we took it on, we tried to apply conservation principles. There were some new principles; among those, the most powerful one was that architecture matters, and it matters in a really large way.”

The firm’s inclusion in the traveling exhibition *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes* demonstrates its commitment to shaping landscape architecture’s future. The show is a collaboration between architects, artists, landscape architects, and others who have done significant work in the suburban realm. Coen emphasized that his own interest is not in exposing suburban communities as inherently bad, but in focusing on their future. “What are we possibly going to do about this endless amount of suburbia we’ve built that’s not going to last? These are structures,” he added, “that aren’t possibly going to stand the test of time.”

The firm’s ideas on planning could be both remedy and revolution for urban and suburban communities. Like many of his contemporaries, Coen’s firm

strives to work only on projects that engage them from the beginning in order to have an overall influence on the structure and how it relates to its environment. As lead site designer for the Minnesota cul-de-sac development Jackson Meadow, the firm dedicated 75 percent of the site to open space by positioning homes on only 40 acres. A loop road connects the development’s neighborhoods, and pedestrian corridors surround a central public green. The firm also provides custom site design for each new home in the community.

Through teamwork—the firm collaborated with Salmela Architect on Jackson Meadow, and with Salmela and Altus Architecture on the new Hudson River Valley community Depot Hill—they address “the trend of landscape architecture to overdesign,” said Coen. “Our goal is to create a single statement with the architecture. Everything in the landscape is talking to the architecture.”

As a landscape architect and citizen (not to mention father of two), Coen ultimately bases his firm’s success on its ability to educate others about conscientious residential development. He is disheartened by the lack of architectural education in our public schools, but encouraged by the trend of smaller cities hiring powerhouse architects to design public buildings. “I think we’re in an aesthetic revolution, finally,” he said. “It’s a big battle, but one that more and more people are taking on.” **JK**

GRAY
ORGANSCHI
ARCHITECTURE—
NEW HAVEN, CTBELOW, TOP:
COTTAGE, GUILFORD, CT
BELOW, BOTTOM:
STORAGE BARN, CT

The husband-and-wife team behind Gray Organschi Architecture aims to instill the robust traditions of design-build with a lighter but no less hands-on approach. Using expressions such as “pre-staged,” “lightly pinned,” and “on the site as little as possible,” Elizabeth Gray explained the firm’s philosophy of developing low-impact building practices in tandem with innovative technologies in the service of an architecture of elegant simplicity. A near state-of-the-art fabrication shop at their New Haven studio has helped them undertake ambitious pre-fabrication efforts, from a 75-foot footbridge in a hilly forest to the glue-laminated arches for an acoustical plywood shell within a brick firehouse turned recording space and auditorium.

Gray and her husband Alan met at the Yale School of Architecture (where the barn-raising approach to design-build has a long history), graduating in 1994. Following a grand tour of sorts with stints in Indonesia, London, and Berlin, they returned to New Haven in 2000 and set up their practice in the Ninth Square, a notoriously seedy quarter but also home to many sturdy 19th-century brick warehouses ideal for an expanding design practice with a need for heavy machinery.

More than half of the firm’s built work so far has been residential, including a guest cottage in Guilford completed in 2008 for a couple with expanding space needs but a desire not to

disturb their gardens. Gray Organschi responded with a discreet structure (it had to pass zoning as an “accessory building”) that combines the camouflaging effects of a sedum green roof with the bursting energy of dematerialized glass seams and bamboo-clad folding planes. A storage barn for a landscape contractor turns a simple shed into a thing of beauty by simply stacking materials—with dimensions derived from the size of a pallet—around a void determined by the turnaround space needed for a loading tractor. Ground-source heat pumps and electricity are powered by rooftop photovoltaic panels, with surplus energy to spare.

Moving on to a larger scale, the architects are now working on a residence and chapel for a community of Jesuits at Fairfield University. The 20,000-square-foot center, which includes an administrative wing and student dining room, needs to be both publicly active as well as a serene place of meditation and privacy. The architects tucked the building into the shoulder of a sloping hill, with a garden green roof and a public porch facing east and the Jesuits’ own rooms gathered around a courtyard facing south. “Our goal is to first analyze the program as honestly and as in-depth as possible, and then honor it,” said Gray.

JULIE V. IOVINE

PETER KERZE



PAUL CROSBY



BO CROCKETT

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

AT103

—
MEXICO CITYBELOW, TOP:
OZULUAMA HOUSE, MEXICO CITY
BELOW, BOTTOM:
AVENIDA FENIX FIRE STATION,
MEXICO CITY

Julio Amezcua and Francisco Pardo attribute their methodology to a cross-pollination of American and Mexican ways of producing architecture. Educated at Columbia University, the duo founded their practice in Mexico City in 2001. "We're always jumping from computers to physical models," said Amezcua, "and we do a lot of diagrams, which in Mexico is not very common." But their firm's name, at103, roots it solidly to its locale: "a" stands for azotea, or rooftop, where the studio sits; "t" stands for Tiber, the name of the office's street; and 103 is the street number. While this ego-effacing moniker was chosen to characterize the studio as a place where decision-making is shared equally and no individual has sole control, it also speaks to a studied engagement with the distinct urbanism of Mexico City.

Emblematic of this engagement is their Ozuluama project, a rooftop addition to an existing apartment building. "In Mexico City, there's a lack of space," said Amezcua, "so a lot of the roofs are used for extensions, but they're not done in a proper way." Drawn out of an analysis of the existing structure and circulation, the architects decided to create an addition appearing to be one continuous surface that resembles a nomad's tent clad

in large sheets of Corian. The project also exemplified another trait common to working in Mexico—it took four years to complete. "The other thing you always find in Mexico is you have to deal with the government and licenses, and there's a lot of corruption," said Amezcua. "If you want to make your project work quickly, you pay money, or you do a slow process."

The firm's first big breakthrough came in 2005, when the studio won a competition to design a fire station on Avenida Fenix in Mexico City's 16th District. After scrutinizing the program, which called for government offices as well as the typical fire station facilities, the architects decided to open up the building to the public, turning the inside into a sort of public plaza where children can come to watch the firemen at work. They also conducted an analysis of the neighborhood and changed some of the traffic lights on the busy thoroughfare to create a more fluid circulation strategy for the district. This amount of care for the urban fabric sets at103 aside from most of its contemporaries, in any country. **AS**

ANDREW
BERMAN
ARCHITECT—
NEW YORKBELOW, TOP:
ROOFTOP RESIDENCE AND GARDENS,
NEW YORK
BELOW, BOTTOM:
WRITING STUDIO AND LIBRARY,
LONG ISLAND, NY

Since he founded his namesake firm in 1995, Andrew Berman hasn't had a lot of time for reflection. He's undertaken dozens of projects, moving upward through a trajectory of lofts, apartments, houses, galleries, and small commercial spaces, on to larger civic work, including a library expansion and a series of small renovations and interventions at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Queens.

"The act of building, of making architecture, is a social act," Berman said. "We're not didactic. The considerations that go into our work are very grounded." Berman often works with existing buildings, and his designs, while not meek or severely minimalist, are never flashy. One of his most formally striking works, a recently completed private study and writing studio, is programmatically, not stylistically, driven. The copper-clad studio houses a small potting shed on the ground level. The client enters through the door, the only element of the public facade, up a narrow staircase to enter the studio, which is illuminated from above with a thin, slotted skylight. The writing table faces a large picture window inserted into the surrounding trees (see photograph on page 1). "We want-

ed to create a space that was vibrant, but not distracting," Berman said.

As the designer of the Center for Architecture, Berman's work is well known to most New York architects. "I always say that the Center for Architecture got me no clients," he said dryly. "But what it did do was give us credibility to go after other public and cultural projects." He is currently finishing a firehouse renovation for the city's Department of Design and Construction, and about to break ground on an addition to a Carrere and Hastings-designed library on Staten Island. At P.S.1, Berman is adding a new ticketing booth to the exterior of the courtyard wall, bringing all of the admissions functions outside the old school building. He has been asked back to discreetly renovate some of the galleries as well. "Thinking about the Emerging Voices lecture and looking back, it's nice to know that our work has been used and appreciated," he said. "We know that, because our clients return with new projects." **AGB**



COURTESY AT103



MICHAEL MORAN

MARCH

WEDNESDAY 4
LECTURE
Thom Mayne
Overlapping Realities
(Both This and That)
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
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Parsons the New School for Design
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FILM
Chop Shop
(Ramin Bahrani, 2007),
85 min.
8:15 p.m.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

EVENT
SCOPE Art Fair
Through March 8
Lincoln Center
Damrosch Park
62nd St. and Amsterdam Ave.
www.scope-art.com

THURSDAY 5
LECTURES
Inga Saffron and
Kenneth Greenberg
Urban Design and the
Remaking of Cities
6:00 p.m.
University of Pennsylvania
School of Design
B1 Meyerson Hall,
Philadelphia
www.design.upenn.edu/
arch/index.htm

Lauretta Vinciarelli
Not Architecture But
Evidence That It Exists
6:00 p.m.
City College of New York
Shepard Hall
Convent Ave. and 138th St.
www.cuny.cuny.edu

Shane Cohen and Derek
Dellekamp
Emerging Voices:
Coen + Partners;
Dellekamp arquitectos
7:00 p.m.
Urban Center
457 Madison Ave.
www.archleague.org

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Supervisions
Hasted Hunt
529 West 20th St.
www.hastedhunt.com

Intersections: The Grand
Concourse at 100
Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx
www.bronxmuseum.org

FILM
Thom Mayne: U.S. Federal
Office Building, San Francisco
(Tom Piper, Charles Gansa,
2008), 30 min.
6:30 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

EVENT
Ascension Variations:
Meredith Monk
6:30 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

FRIDAY 6
SYMPOSIUM
Daniel Libeskind,
Sam Goodman,
William Menking, et al.
Intersections: The Grand
Concourse at 100
Through March 7
Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx
www.aiany.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Fashioning Felt
Cooper-Hewitt, National
Design Museum
2 East 91st St.
www.cooperhewitt.org

Trevor Paglen
Bellwether Gallery
134 10th Ave.
www.bellwethergallery.com

EVENT
Discover Classical New York:
Carnegie Hall
2:30 p.m.
Carnegie Hall
57th St. and 7th Ave.
www.classicist.org

SATURDAY 7
EXHIBITION OPENING
Jannicke Låker and
Julika Rudelius
Ecstatic Truth
The Dumbo Arts Center
(DAC)
30 Washington St., Brooklyn
www.dumboartscenter.org

SUNDAY 8
CONFERENCE
The 2009 International
Conference on
Climate Control
Jack Schmitt, William Gray,
Richard Lindzen, et al.
Through March 10
Marriot New York Marquis
Times Square Hotel
1535 Broadway
www.heartland.org

WITH THE KIDS
Materials and Decorations
11:00 a.m.
Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Parkway,
Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org

MONDAY 9
EVENT
Morphoses Choreography
and Design
7:30 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

TUESDAY 10
LECTURE
Nader Tehrani
Pedagogical Practices,
Practical Pedagogies
5:15 p.m.
Cornell University School of
Architecture
Sibley Hall, Ithaca
www.architecture.cornell.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING
Robert Smith
A Child's Garden of
Photographs
Viridian Gallery
530 West 25th St.
www.viridianartists.com

WEDNESDAY 11
LECTURE
Mitchell Owens
Revise, Recycle, Recover:
Billy Baldwin and
Villa Fiorentina
6:00 p.m.
New York School of
Interior Design
170 East 70th St.
www.nysid.edu

THURSDAY 12
LECTURE
Tom Thompson, Dave
Buckner, Greg Kiss, et al.
Solar in the City: The Future
of Solar in an Urban Setting
6:00 p.m.
CUNY Graduate Center
365 5th Ave., 9th Fl.
www.cuny.edu

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
James Paterson
Harvest
bitforms gallery
529 West 20th St.
www.bitforms.com

Jenny Holzer
PROTECT PROTECT
Whitney Museum of
American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org

Myoung Ho Lee
Tree
Yossi Milo Gallery
525 West 25th St.
www.yossimilo.com

FRIDAY 13
EXHIBITION OPENING
KRAZY!
The Delirious World of Anime
+ Manga + Video Games
Japan Society
333 East 47th St.
www.japansociety.org

TRADE SHOW
Go Green Expo
Through March 15
The Pennsylvania Convention
Center
1101 Arch St., Philadelphia
www.gogreenexpo.com

SUNDAY 15
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Burak Arikan, Margot
Lovejoy, et al.
New Media: Why?
Neuberger Museum of Art
Purchase College, State
University of New York
735 Anderson Hill Rd.,
Purchase
www.neuberger.org

The Danube Exodus:
The Rippling Currents of
the River By Péter Forgács
and the Labyrinth Project
Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.thejewishmuseum.org

TUESDAY 17
EXHIBITION OPENING
Art of the Korean
Renaissance, 1400-1600
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

WITH THE KIDS
Art After School
4:00 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

THURSDAY 19
LECTURE
Michael Webb
All About Drawing
6:00 p.m.
City College of New York
Shepard Hall
Convent Ave. and 138th St.
www.cuny.cuny.edu

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Jane Alexander
Survey
Jack Shainman Gallery
513 West 20th St.
www.jackshainman.com

Patti Smith
Veil
Robert Miller Gallery
524 West 26th St.
www.robertmillergallery.com

FRIDAY 20
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Dirk Westphal
Super Über
Mixed Greens
531 West 26th St.
www.mixedgreens.com

Matthew Barney
Ancient Evenings:
Libretto
Gladstone Gallery
515 West 24th St.
www.gladstonegallery.com

Matthias Meyer
Danese
535 West 24th St.
www.danese.com

SATURDAY 21
LECTURE
Kristin Poor
Fred Sandback
1:00 p.m.
Dia:Beacon
3 Beekman St., Beacon
www.diaart.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
David Musgrave
Luhring Augustine
531 West 24th St.
www.luhringaugustine.com

SUNDAY 22
WITH THE KIDS
What is Climate Change?
11:00 a.m.
American Museum of
Natural History
Central Park West and 79th St.
www.amnh.org



KYONG PARK

INTO THE OPEN: POSITIONING PRACTICE

Parsons the New School for Design
Sheila C. Johnson Design Center
66 5th Avenue
Through May 1

Charting the rise in civic engagement among American architects and designers, *Into the Open: Positioning Practice*, the U.S. pavilion's provocative exhibition at the 2008 Venice Biennale, has landed in New York. Co-curated by *AN* editor-in-chief William Menking, the show includes 16 architectural groups in the U.S. that are actively engaged in their respective communities, among them Estudio Teddy Cruz, Gans Studio, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, the Center for Urban Pedagogy, the Heidelberg Project, Project Row Houses, and many others. All of the featured groups creatively confront social challenges such as shifting demographics, changing geopolitical boundaries, uneven economic development, and the explosion of urban migration. In the International Center for Urban Ecology's research project *New Silk Roads* (2008, above), for example, designer Kyong Park journeys through Central Asia and explores new urban landscapes, seeing globalization's havoc through a street-level lens. In another highlight, the Detroit Collaborative Design Center's *FireBreak* shows Detroit's burned-out houses transformed into a new kind of public space. On Friday, April 24, participants including Teddy Cruz, Deborah Gans, Laura Kurgan, and Rick Lowe will take part in a symposium on public-spirited practice at the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center.



MARIETTA HOFERER

**APPARENTLY INVISIBLE:
SELECTIONS SPRING 2009**

The Drawing Center
35 Wooster Street
Through March 28

The Drawing Center's latest exhibition presents the work of nine artists selected from the center's Viewing Program, a longstanding effort to seek greater exposure for emerging artists. The works on view make use of diverse aesthetic strategies, ranging from Marietta Hoferer's abstract compositions with faint pencil and lines of transparent tape such as *Untitled (air)* (2008, detail above), to Chris Nau's site-specific installations that begin with hand-drawn lines on Sheetrock, which are then intricately cut with a jigsaw into terrain-like topographical layers. All of the artists use traces of the drawn line as the basis for formal explorations, and many of the resulting works have an architectural flavor. Elana Herzog uses ordinary fabrics to create large-scale wall reliefs that seem to depict the ruins of some ancient civilization. Playfully distorting the domestic landscape, Sarah Kabot's three-dimensional installation in the Center's bathroom retraces every linear feature of the space—tile lines, floors, walls—in vinyl tape, but cunningly sets each line off-axis by a half-inch. Accompanying the show is a book titled *Drawing Papers 84: Selections Spring 2009* that features an essay by exhibition curators Nina Katchadourian, Joanna Kleinberg, and Rachel Liebowitz, as well as 31 black-and-white images from the exhibition.

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

DATA DECOR

Patterns of Speculation: J. Mayer H.
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Through July 7



Mensa Moltke, a student canteen
in Karlsruhe, Germany, 2007.

DAVID FRANK/COURTESY SFMOMA

When you first hear the premise behind much of Berlin-based architect Jürgen Mayer's work, it seems like a joke. Most of it, explains the text to his eponymous show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), comes from an

investigation of data protection patterns: those sets of numbers, shapes, letters, or symbols used on the insides of pay slips and IRS envelopes to hide the information inside. The patterns, writes SFMOMA's architecture and design

curator Henry Urbach, "recapitulate important properties of architectural surfaces—such as the way boundaries control movement and visibility across space—while providing a contemporary language of ornament."

It's no joke. This "language of ornament," inspired by what appears to be a random exploration, has led to some of the most intriguing formal designs in the world. Clients in Europe have embraced the conceptual practice of his firm, J. Mayer H., and built or are building over 35 of his projects, which move the already tenuous line between fine art and architecture that much closer to the side of art.

At first look, the presentation of his work seems equally ridiculous. Three huge, white, abstract plaster sculptures that slightly resemble dogs sit among a crisscross of floor and ceiling graphics, projected images of Mayer's work, and video clips of these protection patterns, all accompanied by buzzing, race-car-like noises. As you linger, the impact of the work seems to grow in significance.

The most obvious connection comes from the videos of the work itself, beamed from openings in the sculptural installations that, it turns out, are themselves giant versions of the data patterns. The slideshows capture misshapen architectural forms such as the fractured, off-kilter Court of Justice in Hasselt, Belgium; the mushroom-like Metro Parasol in Seville, Spain; and the web-like Mensa Moltke, a student canteen at the Karlsruhe University in Karlsruhe, Germany. Images of some of his sculptures, like his wavy green blob called *beat.wave* for the Pulse art show in Miami, are difficult to distinguish from the architecture.

Shots of the buildings and sculptures are mingled with images of

the data protection patterns, also projected and warped, on small TVs built into the sculptures and drawn on the floor and ceiling. If you listen carefully, the abstract patterns inform the hectic sounds around you. Every part of the show is made up of these patterns, which infuse and overwhelm the senses. They also make the point that this formal investigation, while perhaps random, has the capacity to create and warp just about anything. Mayer is a master at studying and manipulating pure form and pattern, and the potential outgrowths of this investigation seem endless. They produce designs made possible with today's sophisticated building and computer technologies. With the help of engineering firms like Arup, which contributed to several of his structures, they also showcase the fantastic structures that this combination can create. In Mayer's architecture, this investigation of data patterns epitomizes a desire for new, integrated ornament and crystallizes in built form the chaos of our times.

The show, like most architecture exhibitions, is hemmed in by the limitations of trying to capture an art best experienced in person. But its array of media provides ample inspiration to begin thinking about the possibilities of Mayer's work. If this degree of thought can go into a building's envelope, imagine how Mayer's talent could transform buildings as integrated systems or conceive of whole urban environments. **SAM LUBELL IS AN'S CALIFORNIA EDITOR.**



An accessory dwelling unit in
Seattle, built in 2001, is part of an
effort to create affordable "granny
flats" in aging neighborhoods.

COURTESY WILEY

City Limits

Retrofitting Suburbia:
Urban Design Solutions for
Redesigning Suburbs
Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson
Wiley, \$75.00

Strolling among the villas surrounding Regent's Park, one wouldn't think of the area as sprawl; it's obviously urban, and it lies in the heart of London. But when it was built on the Prince Regent's land in 1818, it was decidedly outside the city. London grew through successive waves of sprawl, long before the arrival of cars and even the Underground, and Regent's Park was one of many outlying areas to be absorbed into the metropolis over time.

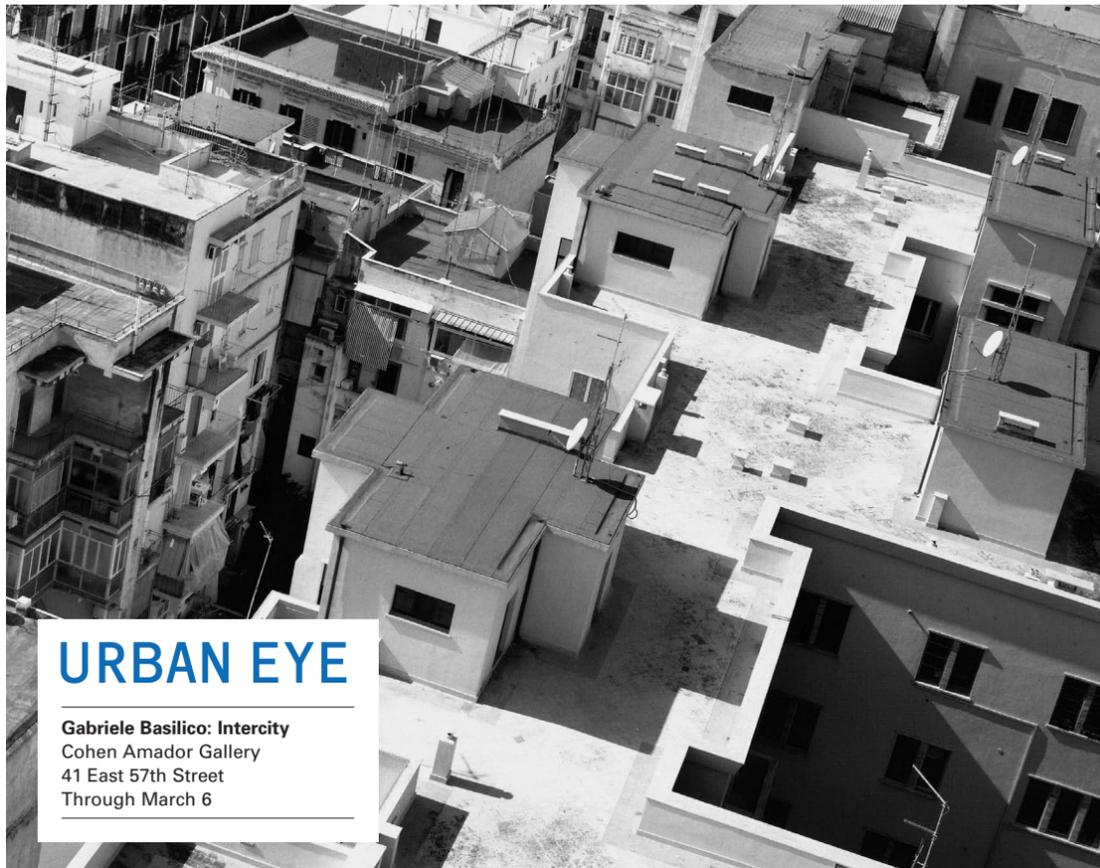
Generally considered an American, post-war phenomenon propelled by the automobile, sprawl actually extends far back into history, past 19th-century London to ancient Rome and even beyond, to Ur and Babylon. On a per-capita basis, suburban life has been attainable by many more Americans in the past 60 years than it was to anyone else before, and sprawl evolved over time due to rail, automobiles, zoning, energy costs, cultural mores, and other factors. But despite the changing nature of sprawl—and of cities—throughout history, it remains, for better or worse, part of the process of urbanization.

Retrofitting Suburbia, by Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson, is the latest volume to tackle the complex problems of this urban-suburban flux. The authors rightly explain that the city and suburbia are intimately interrelated rather than oppositional, and that suburbia is constantly evolving, with many older suburbs around the United States today ripe for urbanization. Further, they describe an ongoing evolution of the U.S. into a series of polycentric regions: a more diffuse and decentralized web of smaller, more numerous urban centers than in the past (not a new concept, but worth discussion). They thus put their finger on how suburbs change into cities.

The authors define "urban" and "suburban," and argue that urbanization is desirable. They suggest that the solution to aging suburbs is simply to redesign them by intro-

ducing streets and mixed-use zoning overlays. They present several recently completed and ongoing projects in which suburban areas have been "urbanized," or made denser and more diverse, in terms of use, than before. Most of the projects are developer-driven and involve large, single properties, and many are not much more than updates of obsolete malls into "lifestyle" centers with fake Main Streets. Yes, some residential units have been added, and perhaps these projects can shift our attitudes about city living. But the authors are not convincing in this regard.

More importantly, Dunham-Jones and Williamson, associate architecture professors at Georgia Tech and the City College of New York, respectively, pay little attention to the market pressures and politics that go into urbanization. Granted, as the book's title suggests, the authors are primarily interested in design; but to treat suburbia as a design problem is to misunderstand suburbia. They also barely discuss the crucial role of the public sector. Once in a while, there's a nod to the impact of government action, such as the construction of transit systems, that elicits a positive private-market reaction. The authors thus overlook one of the primary dynamics of urbanization. No one expects a silver bullet for the suburbs—far from it, since the process of urbanization is complex and often inscrutable. But this book purports to **continued on page 24**



URBAN EYE

Gabriele Basilico: *Intercity*
Cohen Amador Gallery
41 East 57th Street
Through March 6

The Italian cityscape photographer Gabriele Basilico has long haunted Europe's outskirts, a kind of drifter among access roads, factories, byways, and wharves. The current show at Cohen Amador serves as both a concise introduction to his immense body of work and a taut selection of lesser-known images that explore, under the rubric *Intercity*, the hubris of our attempts to manage globalized cities.

Born in Milan, Basilico was trained as an architect, but, influenced by the work of Walker Evans

and Bernd and Hilla Becher, began photographing the densely layered industrial vistas of his hometown in the 1970s. He rose to prominence over the following decade as the sole Italian hired for the now-famous DATAR photographic mission, which documented urban landscapes for the French regional planning authority. From this project he emerged as the Italian master of postindustrial landscape documentary, as his photographs took him through ports and suburbs of factory towns like Antwerp

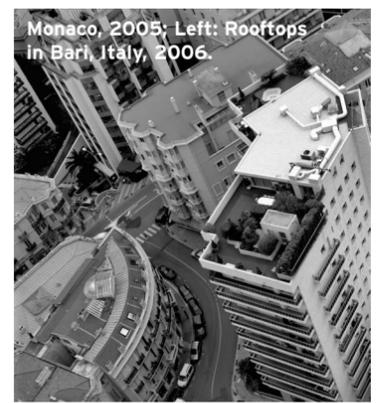
and Trieste, and, later, through war-torn Beirut. While Basilico often explores formal taxonomies like the Bechers before him, his core interest lies in the city's liminal areas—what theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales called *terrain vague*.

The 12 elegantly toned, monochrome digital pigment prints shown here draw from across the photographer's recent work. Some of them are classic Basilico. In *Napoli Vesuvio 04A 10-96*, a high vantage point takes in the city's complex juxtapositions: housing developments

set amid light industry and empty lots; transport networks carving arbitrary shapes through urban fabric; the minutiae of urban developments beneath a vast, smoking Vesuvius. Three other images each show a monolith in Moscow. The solemn Ministry of Foreign Affairs dominates the streets around it, while the Kotelnicheskaya building sits like an outmoded aristocrat, and the exaggerated vertical perspective administered to the thick-set Hotel Leningradskaya slights the structure's skyward aspirations.

Images like these, which transcend factual observation to reveal the poetry of the city, can often evoke the work of Eugène Atget. Although the comparison is instructive, Basilico seizes upon the fragmented contemporary city rather than a more nostalgic world like Atget's, which portrayed a Paris that even then had been lost to 19th-century urban development. In fact, Basilico's modernist impulses, seen in the dynamic compositional experiments in this exhibition, show more of an allegiance to the Russian modernist Aleksandr Rodchenko than to his more obvious French predecessor.

The comparison to the Russian artist might seem peculiar, but several images here practically follow Rodchenko's dictum that objects be shown "with totally unexpected perspectives and in unexpected situations." In two notable arrangements—a triptych of a white highrise in Monaco, and a hypnotic diptych of downtown San Francisco—a vertigo-inducing perspective and subtle shifts in scale strongly contrast with the distant composition typically asso-



Monaco, 2005; Left: Rooftops in Bari, Italy, 2006.

COURTESY COHEN AMADOR GALLERY

ciated with urban photography. However, even among these new images with their less familiar views, the photographs continue to explore the city through its transitional zones. The Monaco triptych's Rodchenko-esque perspective, for instance, also serves Basilico's interest in shifting architectural styles, in the effects of time, and in urban density: a micro-history of the few blocks shown. The San Francisco diptych follows a similar formal logic, with complexly twisting but actually minor shifts in perspective that subtly telescope space and time.

What is most intriguing about this modest exhibition is how Basilico weaves a complex study of urban space, not from an exhaustive exploration of place—his well-known *modus operandi*—but through a disorienting, modernist mode of representation. He suggests that hidden within our experience of even the center of cities is a kind of existential *terrain vague*, a void we call home.

ANDREW ATKINSON IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY.

ARCHITECT SHRUGGED

World's Greatest Architect: Making, Meaning, and Network Culture
William J. Mitchell
MIT Press, \$16.95

Collecting over 30 short essays by William J. Mitchell, *World's Greatest Architect: Making, Meaning, and Network Culture* continues his ongoing investigations into the influence of technology on urban space, architecture, and design. As the former dean of the MIT School of Architecture and the current head of the Smart Cities research group in the school's well-known Media Lab, Mitchell is situated in an ideal position for such academic analysis. These essays, which originally appeared in the British publications *Building Design*

and *RIBA Journal* (and were admittedly written at airports and other non-places during the travels of a global nomad), indicate a predilection for highly accessible writing that is as thought-provoking as it is varied.

Locating itself as a record of the middle of the decade now coming to a close, Mitchell's book touches on timely subjects both obvious (the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Wal-Mart, the Iraq War) and unexpected (plastic water bottles, Whole Foods, potato chips as analogies for architectural form). His personal take on such topics and his search for meaning in artifacts beyond functionality make the reading worthwhile, such as when he links the technology of international transportation and security networks to the retention and prosecution of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay.

Many of the essays are structured as miniature histories. Discussing the Gitmo

controversy, Mitchell moves from the 16th-century Tower of London to the present day, stopping in Australia, Nazi Germany, and *The Gulag Archipelago* on the way. These histories point to an evolutionary treatment of today's digital culture, denying the break with history that some critics envision. Like the paradigm-breaking shifts theorized in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Mitchell's brief forays into technologies like digital cameras and computer-aided-drafting are smoother, more continuous. Amazon's Kindle e-book, as discussed by Mitchell, is linked to previous artifacts (books) via intention (reading text on a page) and design (book-sized and with a cover), before the new device is allowed to exploit its new technology and carry itself in a direction that may have people in the future asking, "Whatever happened to books?" (The device's name

boldly implies a burning, a destruction of the book as an artifact.) It happened with cars and horse-drawn buggies, so why not with Kindle and books? Or so Mitchell would have us believe.

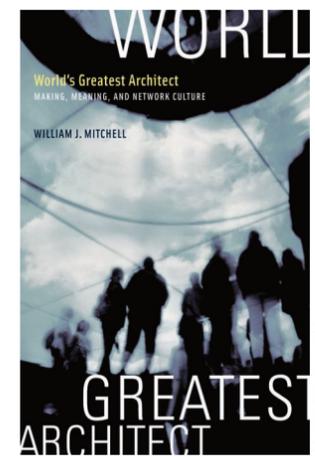
Mitchell's technocratic views are countered, or complicated, by an embrace of traditional public space, numerous references to popular culture, and a cynical attitude toward many of his subjects. The first is most overt in his essay on the "Wal-Martians" attacking American small towns, destroying their downtowns and small businesses in the name of "always low prices." His common-sense criticism of the alliance between commerce and public space is appealing, if hard to align with the technological means by which Wal-Mart expands its retail empire (just about everywhere but New York City, it should be noted). Mitchell's embrace of technology is not value-free, par-

ticularly when something as commendable as the corporation's "brilliant organization of its global supply network" is accompanied by low wages, poor to non-existent health benefits, and dead downtowns. The author begins numerous essays with references to songs, movies, and other bits of popular culture, and these and other essays often conclude with cynical remarks veiled in ironic humor. These two characteristics of Mitchell's writing diminish his text, appealing to readers but without doing his ideas any service.

Two of the book's 32 essays exceed the typical four pages. They focus on surveillance and security, obviously important considerations in the decade that started with the events of 9/11, but also highly contested ones affecting public space. Not surprisingly, he embraces the careful use of these technologies in the urban realm, like a latter-day

Oscar Newman. Calling for civil liberties while simultaneously developing urban defense strategies, Mitchell shows little of the ire he levies against Wal-Mart. While less biting, these essays are standouts in the collection and in Mitchell's ongoing investigations, much more than the essay that lends the book its intriguing title.

JOHN HILL WRITES THE BLOG A DAILY DOSE OF ARCHITECTURE.



COURTESY MIT PRESS

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MARCH 4, 2009

A market in Denton, Texas was redesigned as a library. A mall in Lakewood, Colorado (below) was revamped with new uses and public spaces.



COURTESY WILEY

CITY LIMITS continued from page 22 provide solutions, and it doesn't.

Retrofitting does present a useful survey of urban planning literature, covering everything from Levittown to Richard Florida's "creative class" theory. It also discusses examples of older, suburban areas that are being updated to emphasize public spaces, walkability, and the like. The book lists case studies for several types of suburban developments: strip malls, indoor malls, residential communities, edge cities, and office and industrial parks. The book organizes the case studies by morphology, a term that in itself reduces communities to nothing but shapes. I would argue that organization of the case studies by other characteristics might make more sense. For instance, an office park and an indoor mall might be much more similar in terms of the politics and financing that enabled them than either would be to their morphological sisters. Why not discuss three or four types of economic and political conditions that can lead to retrofits, rather than focusing on their design characteristics?

Elsewhere, the authors include a few winners of design competitions. They devote one page to a Georgia Tech team's winning entry in an Atlanta *Future 2008* competition. The page displays two maps of the Atlanta region: The first shows the region today, and the second shows the team's vision for Atlanta in one hundred years. The vision is lovely—there's a lot of green in it—but the maps lack even a key to explain the red, pink, white, and green areas, let alone an explanation that appreciates the complexities of the proposal. All we learn from the caption is that the team (which included Dunham-Jones) apparently

proposed urban agriculture, biofuel farm/power plants, and several other components. All of these ideas sound good, but how real are they? What about the politics inherent in them? How much would their implementation cost? And who did the team propose to implement its vision?

The case studies themselves are so predominantly single-owner developments that the reader learns little about the impacts—much slower, yes, but also much more powerful—of public-sector investments, especially in transit. The authors recognize the power of such investments, at one point noting that "transit in suburbs is what makes densification feasible," rather than the other way around, and they discuss the impacts, for example, of the boulevardization of arterials. But they spend comparatively little time on public interventions, and never fully explore the leverage these strategies can provide, nor the challenges they present.

This book is important and well-intentioned, and its subject is certainly deserving. I would love to see a revised edition of *Retrofitting Suburbia* (a wonderful title, by the way) that is shorter, more coherently organized, and less textbookish, with fewer, more in-depth case studies. But the larger problem remains. The notion that urbanization is merely a design proposition is fundamentally flawed. The changes that are occurring across America result from development pressures and politics. Without these forces, designers aren't even called into the room—they would therefore do well to understand them better.

NICK PETERSON IS VICE-PRESIDENT AT ALEX GARVIN & ASSOCIATES, AN URBAN PLANNING AND CONSULTING FIRM IN NEW YORK CITY.

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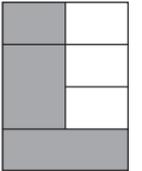
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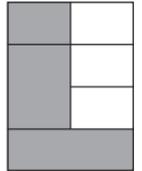
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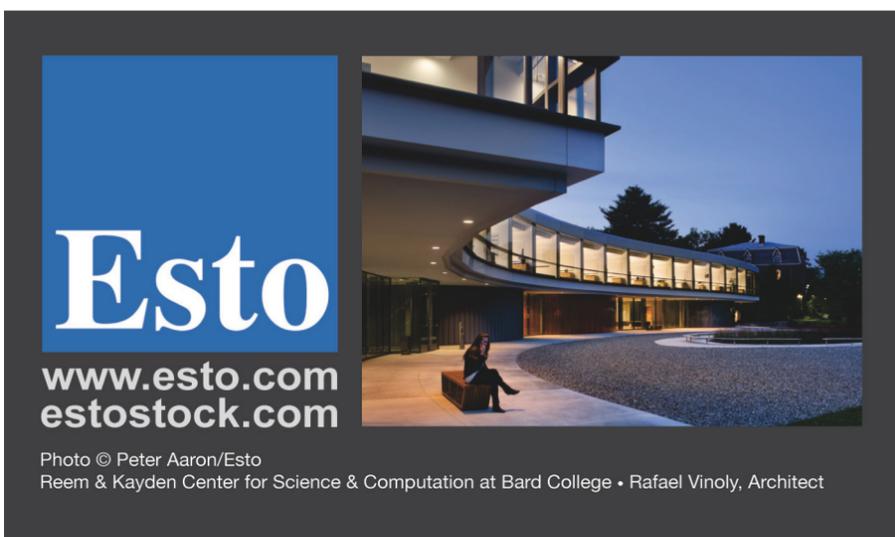
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Just as suffragettes marched in 1913, so the AIA takes its plea to Washington.

outside of her district).

When we spoke with the aides to Anthony Weiner (Democrat from the 9th District, parts of Queens and Brooklyn; health and the environment) and Eliot Engel (Democrat from the 17th District, Bronx and parts of Westchester; particularly interested in energy issues), we delivered similar messages, though admittedly found ourselves losing steam toward the end of the day. Our discussions about the DesignCorps were of particular interest to Weiner's and Engel's aides, and both asked us to provide them with more detailed information on the program.

We were extremely fortunate, however, to meet with Representative Carolyn

On February 4, eight hundred AIA chapter presidents, vice-presidents, executive directors, and board members from around the country descended on Washington, D.C., to urge their Congressional members and Senators to direct stimulus funding toward well-planned, sustainable construction and development, and not merely "shovel-ready" projects. Throughout the four-day "AIA Grassroots" event, the attendees were trained by professional lobbyists and political leaders about the importance of concerted and enduring lobbying efforts in effecting change, how a proposal moves from an idea to proposed legislation, and how one "makes the ask" of an elected official.

Most delegates of the AIA New York chapter arrived on Wednesday afternoon, in time to assemble in the subterranean conference center at the Grand Hyatt Hotel to hear the AIA National leadership detail advocacy positions that AIA members would take to Congress. In short, the positions were aimed at creating more work in the construction industry and, by extension, in the architecture industry, and on improving existing legislation affecting architects. In addition to encouraging Congress to approve funding for projects that would have a more enduring impact on the quality of life in our communities and

provide longer-term opportunity for employment in the construction industry, the AIA platform also recommended an increase in the federal tax deduction already available to incentivize investment in energy-efficient commercial buildings, an increase in funding to public transportation planning initiatives, and the elimination of fee-retainage rules as applied to architects for federally-funded projects.

A host of motivational speakers offered pointers on what we should expect at our meetings with Congress. In particular, they explained that we were unlikely to meet with officials directly, as House Democrats had been called unexpectedly to attend an emergency "retreat," presumably to discuss the stalled stimulus package. Instead, and perhaps to greater benefit, we would meet with the aides and chiefs-of-staff of the electeds, who were likely to be well-informed about the areas we would be discussing with them, would take copious notes, ask intelligent questions, make useful suggestions, and report all that they had learned from us to their Congressperson. We were especially cautioned not to be surprised to find that most of the people with whom we would speak, indeed, possibly the entire staff in the Congressperson's office, would be eager, intellectually advanced,

recent college grads.

Finally, we were educated on the method of "the ask": on the importance of precisely articulating, after a short explanation and background, what specifically we were requesting that the Congressperson do (sponsor a bill, change a rule, make a revision to a bill already under consideration on the floor) and how such action would benefit the officials' constituency. A few role-playing practice efforts by Grassroots attendees revealed plenty of work to be done before most of us would be convincing in "the ask" portion of our presentations.

Futurist David Zack encouraged us not to "think outside of the box," which would leave us weary and alone, but to "get inside of someone else's box" as a way of linking and communicating seemingly disparate and divergent ideas. Over the course of the event, we were scolded often about the profession's inability to convey its broad knowledge and understanding to anyone beyond the cognoscenti. To be effective advocates, we would have to sharpen new communication skills.

The New York chapter delegation, which included current chapter president Sherida Paulsen, Tony Schirripa, Rick Bell, Laura Manville, Margaret Castillo, Venesa Alicea, Mary Burke, Terrence O'Neal, Burt Roslyn, and myself, debated separately how our

presentations to elected officials might be modified to appeal more specifically to each official's particular interests and Congressional committee foci.

At breakfast on Thursday morning, speakers from the AIA Advocacy Federal Relations team (who knew they existed!) brought us up to date on the status of the construction-spending aspects of the stimulus package that had been debated on the Senate floor the night before. Occasionally, "calls to action" were announced, advising AIA advocates to call and send emails to their Senators urging them to ensure that construction-related funding remained in the package. News was out that green initiatives and education spending, in particular, were at risk and it was our job to do something about it. Throughout that day and the days that followed, similar announcements were made.

After breakfast, nearly eight hundred of us headed to the Capitol to begin the day's pre-scheduled appointments with our regional representatives. Passing other AIA delegations with similar missions along the corridors of the Rayburn House Office Building, the New York Chapter's 12 delegates assembled for their first meeting at Representative Nydia Velazquez's office. Velazquez, Democrat from New York's 12th Congressional District

(Lower Manhattan, portions of Brooklyn and Queens) is chair of the House Small Business Committee and senior member of the Financial Services Committee, which concerns itself with housing and community development. Our presentation to Velazquez's extremely able and attentive aide covered as many points as possible, with nearly everyone contributing a few words to reinforce our message and responding to her many questions: Construction of well-planned, well-considered projects will create jobs over the long term for more New Yorkers and more small business owners; funding should be directed toward affordable housing development, school construction, and sustainable development; tax incentives should be increased significantly to encourage owners to retrofit existing office buildings to meet sustainability standards; existing AmeriCorps programs should be expanded to include a DesignCorps to employ architects and engineers to assess and plan the retrofitting of federal buildings. Since small business development and affordable housing are of particular interest in Velazquez's district, most of our points resonated with her aide. She encouraged us to invite Velazquez to upcoming events at the Center for Architecture (located only a few blocks

Maloney herself (Democrat from the 14th District, East Side Manhattan and Queens; chair, Joint Economic Committee). Despite a flustered start as a result of this unexpected audience, our delegation focused its message on its belief that our proposed initiatives would create the greatest number of jobs, not just in New York, but throughout the country. Maloney was sympathetic and already well-acquainted with the number of construction-related jobs that have been and will be produced by the Second Avenue subway and the East Side Access "mega-projects." She encouraged us to provide her with more specific data on the DesignCorps, sustainable retrofit incentives, and federal retainer issues.

At the end of this long day at beginners' advocacy, we dispersed for tours of the Capitol and to take in some new architecture, including Polshek Partnership's Newseum and the new Capitol Visitor's Center (RTKL and Ralph Appelbaum). Although the stimulus bill that Congress eventually approved did not fund the scope of construction projects we had rallied for, we remain charged by that day in February when the architects stormed the Capitol, and ever-hopeful that our continued efforts will make a difference.

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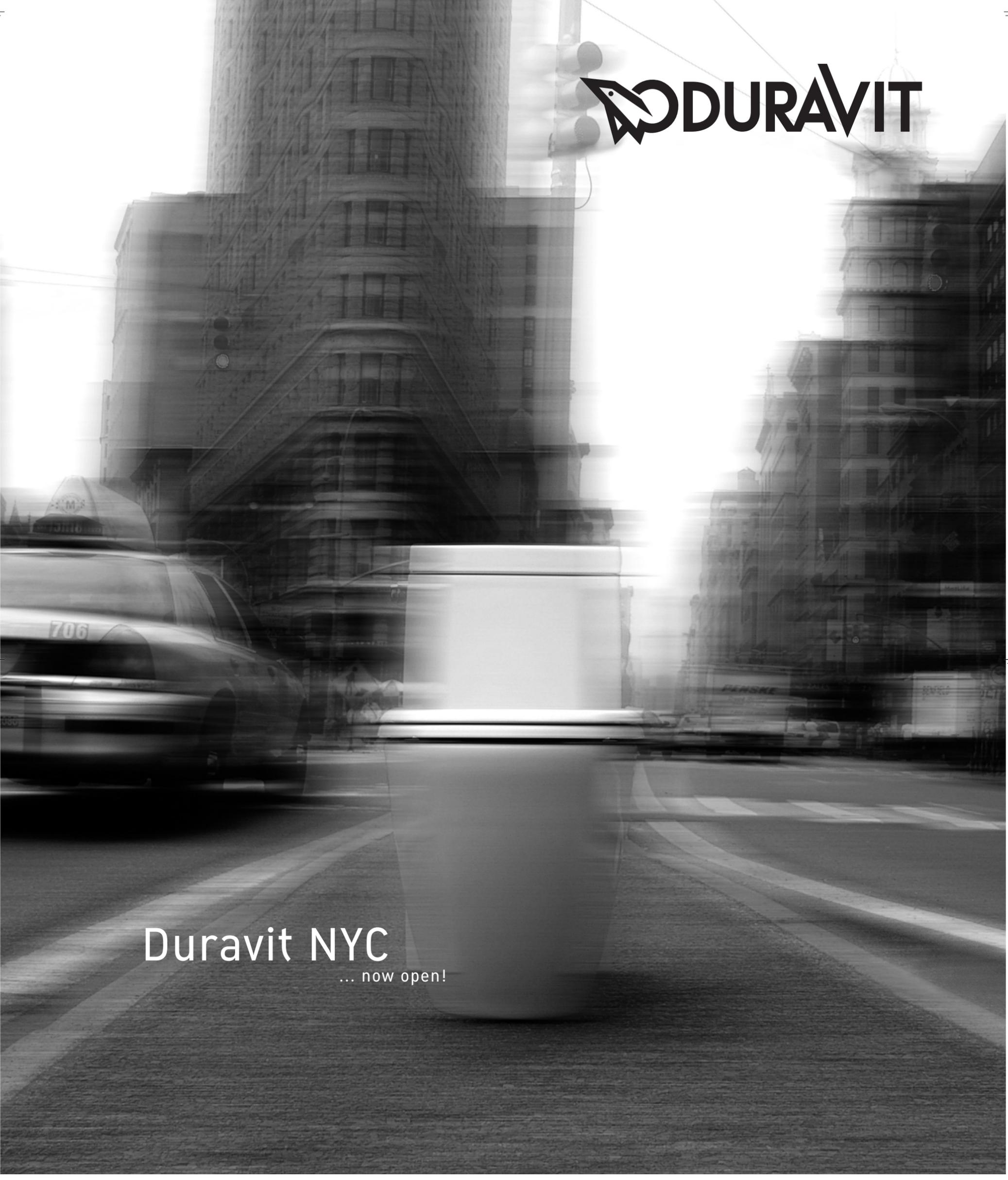
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