

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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MIES AWARD GOES TO OSLO OPERA HOUSE, AS CROATIA'S STUDIO UP NAMED EMERGING ARCHITECTS



## SNØHETTA SINGS

CHRISTOPHER HAGELUND

Since its completion last year, the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet in Oslo has won wide acclaim for its sloping, ice-white rooftop that doubles as a vertiginous public space. On May 28, the country's celebrated firm Snøhetta will add another laurel for the project when it accepts the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture—the esteemed Mies van der Rohe Award—for its civic-spirited design.

Considered the European version of the Pritzker Prize, the Mies Award is granted

biennially by the European Union and the Fundació Mies van der Rohe to built works completed within the preceding two years. To be presented at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion in Barcelona, the award affirms Snøhetta's bid to reinvent Oslo's waterfront as a new cultural center for Norway.

"The Norwegian National Opera and Ballet in Oslo is more than just a building," said jury chair Francis Rambert in a statement. "The building can be considered a catalyst of all the energies **continued on page 9**

23 Caton Place



MATT CHABAN

Twenty-three Caton Place is like countless other developments that have sprung up across the five boroughs during the recent real-estate boom. A mix of middlebrow architecture and high-end finishes built in Kensington, Brooklyn, the 107-unit complex was overleveraged and ill-timed. It now languishes half-built and in foreclosure, its developer in bankruptcy and some 140,000 square feet of concrete looming over the neighborhood.

But there is something special about 23 Caton that sets it apart from many of its sullen siblings: A neighborhood community group that had long **continued on page 6**

LOCALS AIM TO NAB FORECLOSED CONDO TOWER

## Second Life

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The Transformer in Seoul, Korea.



COURTESY PRADA

OMA TAKES A TURN AT EVENT ARCHITECTURE IN SEOUL

## ON A ROLL

It didn't actually transform, but that was the only disappointing thing about the Prada Transformer, a tent installed by the eponymous fashion company on the grounds of Seoul, South Korea's Gyeonghui Palace. The temporary space, 60 feet high and covered with a special polycarbonate laminate, is scheduled to "transform" every few weeks, or so its designers, the Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) promise, morphing from a space for special events to a rectangular cinema, a cross-shaped art exhibition space, and a circular room for "domestically scaled" catwalk shows. The transformation will occur with the help of what OMA project architect Alexander Reichert called "a ballet of cranes" to lift the 160-ton object up and rotate it mid-air before setting it on what had previously been one of its walls. The Transformer's steel frame will click **continued on page 4**

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PLANNERS OFFER FAR BONUS FOR FRESH PRODUCE

## ZONING OUT JUNK FOOD

About a year ago, before the construction boom faded, the Department of City Planning launched a project to boost grocery-store development in places with poor access to healthy food. The idea is that millions of New Yorkers live in neighborhoods with a dearth of grocery stores, and the costs to public health mount when a lack of fresh produce plays out in high rates of obesity and diabetes.

"We found that in some neighborhoods, people were spending their entire food budget at Duane **continued on page 3**

FRANK REPAS & WEIDLINGER'S SHANGHAI CRUISE TERMINAL. SEE PAGE 8



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## CORE CURRICULUM

The conversation on May 4 between Peter Eisenman and Michael Graves—with David Childs moderating—to inaugurate the Urban Center's exhibition *Unpacking My Library* got us to thinking. As reported by AN's Mariana Rodríguez Orte, it was Peter Eisenman who proved once again that he knows not only how to turn a phrase, but also how to pinpoint where architecture is headed at the moment. His notion that architecture schools today are overly focused on teaching either sustainability or computer programming may simplify the situation, but he is onto something important. And he was correct when he said, "You can't study the periphery if you don't know the core." Eisenman should know, given his experience at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, which I seem to recall was accused of much the same thing. But the Institute never forgot that its primary concern was design, and for this reason it was the most influential center for ideas of its time.

If you had spent a few years away from architecture school juries and returned circa 2009, you would possibly have the feeling you'd landed on another planet. The obsession with which many young faculty members and their students now pursue digital research to the exclusion of all contextual and real-world issues (materiality, for example) is astonishing. In some schools, the end-of-the-year exhibits feature project after project resembling nothing so much as extruded dinosaur vertebrae, often hung from a ceiling or set on a barren plinth, appearing as isolated—and relevant—as objects in a natural history museum.

Then there are those schools that are betting the house on sustainability and all things green, where students are seemingly being educated to do little more than qualify a project for LEED Platinum status. In these schools, design is an afterthought—if not considered possibly a little decadent. The resulting student projects, though worthy they may be, have all the charm and elegance of a New York State office building. If these schools have their way, we will soon have scores of the ugliest sustainable buildings, leaving our cities to resemble Albany or Sacramento in the dead of winter.

Of course, some schools have not gone down either of these paths (Yale comes to mind), and there are certainly faculty within all these schools who still teach with the core values of architecture in all its formal, social, and cultural traditions as the focus of their classes. It is also true that architecture education ebbs and flows with different commitments and ideas as the culture changes. But the recent AIA convention in San Francisco proved again how deep is the split in the profession between the designers and the technocrats. It seemed that every single session featured sustainability in its title, while the design stars of the profession were nowhere to be seen—either they were not invited or simply not interested in being there. This divide continues to be devastating for our profession. There is no reason why our best architecture cannot be both sustainable—which certainly should be its starting point—and well-designed. Making buildings that are both green and inspiring as objects is something that needs to start in our schools. Sadly, it seems we may have to wait until the next generation rediscovers architecture in full. **WILLIAM MENKING**

## ZONING OUT JUNK FOOD continued from

front page Reade," said Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden at a New York University forum on April 22, "and that means soda and chips."

To combat both illness and economic waste, the city has unveiled a new zoning strategy: It will encourage landlords to rent to supermarkets or grocery stores by deducting the square footage of such stores from buildings' allowable size, or floor-area ratio (FAR). That incentive should make grocery stores increasingly attractive tenants for developers looking to increase their return-on-investment.

Targeting diverse or high-growth areas like Washington Heights, Sunset Park, and Bushwick, the initiative aims to create retail spaces big enough to refrigerate, display, and sell a variety of fresh produce. Its goals include doubling the average square footage of grocery retail per 10,000 people in a neighborhood, from its current level of 15,000 square feet to a minimum of 30,000 square feet. Only two Manhattan districts on the West Side currently meet that standard.

While the city's plans are nascent, two recent rezonings in Long Island City and Hunts Point suggest a strategic blueprint for encouraging grocery stores. "Supermarkets are now permitted as-of-right, and the parking requirement is reduced for their use," according to a department summary of those rezonings. Planners have also cut supermarkets a break on parking requirements in the new zoning for St. George on Staten Island.

Improving public health would be a major achievement for the department, but there are other benefits to be gained by promoting fresh produce. Expanding supermarkets has been seen as a way to drive economic growth at a time of stagnant new development. And a Planning Commission report on the matter last year noted that an aggressive campaign to locate supermarkets in underserved areas could keep up to \$1 billion from seeping to suburban vendors as residents turn elsewhere to stock the pantry.

In her recent speech, Burden admitted that zoning can encourage—not mandate—a shift in retail strategy. She suggested, however, that the dropoff in development has given her commission a chance to "make ourselves stop and reflect" on changes that would shore up the city for generations. In that light, the supermarket initiative seems likely to spur development when lending picks up speed, while helping New Yorkers eat healthy, too.

**ALEC APPELBAUM**

## LETTERS

## NO RESPECT

In your report on the slowest-paid professions ("The Check Is (Not) in the Mail," AN 07\_04.15.2009), AIA chief economist Kermit Baker's comment that delays of 90 to 120 days in payments of architects' fees "have become an industry standard" only serves to legitimize this shameful reality and underscores the passive acceptance that has unfortunately become the tenor of our profession. Architects have all kinds of leverage, if only we would use it. In this, the AIA should aggressively lead the way. If the fact that architects are among the slowest-paid of all professions does not indicate, as Baker said, "a lack of respect for the profession," what does it indicate?

KAREN ARRIGONI  
NEW YORK

## GOWANUS-GO-ROUND

The EPA recommendation of Superfund status for the Gowanus Canal has developers and local politicians crying foul, while homeowners and environmentalists applaud the move ("Superfunk," AN 08\_05.06.2009). While we practically need a scorecard to keep track of all the vested interests, deciding how to proceed requires asking the right questions about this urban resource's future.

It is well known that the canal and the ground abutting it remain severely polluted, while the communities that surround the canal have seen unprecedented increases in residential real estate values. This begs the question: What is the future of the Gowanus?

It appears that developers and politicians objecting to the Superfund designation have already answered this question. They aim to develop selected brownfield sites without a

completed Environmental Impact Statement or a plan for how the overtaxed infrastructure and neighborhood schools will accommodate 3,000 new families. The Toll Brothers plan alone, with 602,000 square feet of residential space, has designated only 3,000 square feet for commercial and community space. Their consensus seems to be that poorly planned development, with intermingled brownfield remediation zones and newly constructed residential buildings, is a good idea.

Two other questions must be asked: Would designation lead to federal funding? And would that funding, along with monies allotted by the city, be sufficient to complete necessary remediation? A Superfund designation could start to answer these questions and offers additional benefits: It would initiate the process of rigorously studying the canal, determining the level of pollution, and recom-

mending steps for remediation. It would also give the city, community, and developers time to develop an intelligent urban plan.

As architects and residents, we see that the Gowanus has tremendous potential. The area offers affordable, developable real estate, but as a waterway it offers an opportunity to create a restored urban environment that has been thoughtfully integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods.

DAVID BRIGGS AND ANTHONY DEEN  
BROOKLYN

## CORRECTION

In our conversation with James Polshek ("Whatever It Takes," AN 07\_04.15.2009), we misidentified a former colleague. Polshek once shared an office with the architect Walfredo Toscanini, grandson of the conductor Arturo Toscanini.



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MICHAEL MORAN

Green from its food to its design, Founding Farmers, a new restaurant located in the Pei Cobb Freed & Partners–designed International Monetary Fund Headquarters 2 in Washington, D.C., celebrates the journey of produce from farm to table as much as it does sustainable design. Owned and commissioned by the North Dakota Farmer's Union, a collective of more than 40,000 family farmers, the restaurant is envisioned as a modern translation of the traditional farm. Designed by Washington, D.C.–based CORE architecture + design, the project incorporates materials traditional to an American farm, including wooden beams, white-washed barn wood, and standing-seam metal, according to founding principal and partner Peter Hapstak. These classic materials are reinterpreted and reappropriated alongside familiar architectural forms like the silo-inspired booths inside. To make the design sustainable, wood flooring was reclaimed from an Atlanta textile mill, and furniture was made from wood harvested from Pennsylvania forests and manufactured in North Carolina, all within 500 miles of the job site. With an array of other energy- and waste-saving strategies—including kitchen recycling and composting areas—Founding Farmers has become the first LEED Gold restaurant in D.C., one of just 19 in the United States. **DANIELLE RAGO**

## ARCHITECTS PARSE MAYOR'S RETROFIT PLAN FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

# Greened Out

When city officials unveiled a plan on April 22 to transform the city's building stock into some of the greenest on the planet, the environment was seen as a major benefactor, as was the local economy. "Everyone's been talking about green jobs, but this is the program that will actually do it," said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, noting that the plan is expected to create 19,000 jobs as it cuts the city's carbon footprint by five percent over the next two decades.

But many out-of-work architects are wondering: Jobs for whom? "My understanding—and I'm not an engineer or architect—is that it's work that will principally involve engineers, auditors, building staff, and trades, but not architects," said Russell Unger, executive director of the U.S. Green Building Council, New York chapter, in an interview.

The first major piece of

the program calls for benchmarking standards to track the annual energy usage of buildings of 50,000 square feet or more. Another initiative calls for renovations of buildings over 50,000 square feet to include the modernization of lighting systems, while a third will close a loophole so that minor renovations must also now comply with the energy code.

"There's some work there, but I'm not sure how much," said Chris Garvin, a partner at Terrapin Bright Green, a strategic consulting firm affiliated with Cook + Fox.

Even the most promising—and controversial—piece of the plan, a decennial audit that would require upgrades, might not mean work for architects, because only systems proven to pay for themselves over the course of five years would be required. Then again, Garvin pointed out that with 12,000 buildings in the city falling

into this program, there will not be enough qualified auditors to oversee the work, and many architects are prepared to fill the void.

Garvin's colleague, Bob Fox, finds even greater promise in the program. "If all we're doing is changing light bulbs, then we've totally missed the point," he said. Fox believes that once benchmarking takes place, building owners will see just how much they can actually save if they undertake a major retrofit. "There's no quick fix for these buildings," Fox said. "One needs to develop a plan for the long-term, holistic rehabilitation of them, and that's a job for architects."

The downside is that much of the plan does not go into effect until 2013. But Rick Bell, executive director of the AIA New York chapter, believes cheap labor and special incentives now under consideration by the city will prompt many developers to act at their own discretion. "These changes can't wait," Bell said. "We—architects and developers—have to make it happen now."

**MATT CHABAN**

## FAILURE TO LAUNCH?

We held a cyber-wake for Edifical a month ago, so we were a bit startled to see that it continues to lie in state on its cold, dead website. We're not complaining, but it does bring back memories of *The Gutter*, which joined the choir invisible and then lingered on Curbed for another two years wearing nothing but **David Childs'** image. (After the first year, Childs began to look like an ad for cryogenics.) In contrast, when a print publication goes under, it sinks out of sight after a few half-hearted eulogies. The inverse of that is when a publication launches, it's cause for modest hoopla, Evites, and snarky skepticism. Right? So Eavesdrop is baffled about the nervously promoted launch of *eVolo*—"a biannual architecture and design journal focused on technology advances, sustainability, and innovative design for the 21<sup>st</sup> century." The first issue features the winners of *eVolo's* annual Skyscraper Competition and can be viewed right now at Lilliputian scale on its website. It drops in July, or so we heard fourth-hand.

## YOU CAN'T FIRE ME, I QUIT!

Back in the present, another Eavesdrop source has been following behind **Frank Gehry** as he becomes the **Joe Biden** of architecture with his compulsive disclosures. First, there was his little slip that Forest City Ratner's Atlantic Yards development in Brooklyn is dead. While not exactly breaking news, developers do not want their architects delivering bad news, so Ratner's capos came down on the newly minted octogenarian like a ton of twisting, blue, metallic panels, then spun it by saying the architect was "just venting."

Apparently, that was just the beginning. Farther south, Gehry is publicly complaining about Miami Beach's handling of his design for a New World Symphony outpost with adjacent park and parking garage. When the city saw that the park and garage were going way over budget, it did the unthinkable: It asked the Symphony to ask the architect to reduce his fee, and if he refused, to fire him. But wait! The plot thickens. Gehry said his fee is a modest \$1.9 million. The city claims it's \$4.6 million, a number that includes all the fees for the consultants needed to make the grass grow and the fountains spew. Execution is not Frank's problem, however, and he isn't budging. In a telephone interview with *The Miami Herald*, Gehry is quoted as saying, "I really find it insulting. I'm offended. If they keep messing with me, if I get insulted enough, I will withdraw completely." Eavesdrop is hoping instead for pistols at dawn, poolside at the Fontainebleau, with full media coverage!

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**ON A ROLL** continued from front page into place on a series of concrete supports, the vents near the tent's tops will become openings for air conditioning ducts, and zippers that once hung overhead will allow entry. Then the whole thing will repeat itself again until, presumably, the novelty wears off, the fabric tears, or the object is shipped to some other site where Prada remains popular.

The space for art calls to mind the socially and physically radical crosses, squares, and circles Malevich produced after the Russian Revolution. The cinema is an anonymous box that disappears in favor of the screen. The hexagonal event space is neutral and non-judgmental. Finally, the catwalk odeon implies supreme concentration on what is the starting point for all of this, the body dressed in high fashion—a kind of temple.

In any condition, the Transformer's distended and distorted shape, always moving from one geometry to another, makes it fit into the tradition of modern art object as an unformed, or continually reforming, shape that defies attempts to catch it within historical strictures of good taste. From the outside, it recalled teepees and circus tents, but also the thrusting and splayed forms Naum Gabo pioneered, and the blob-based shapes that have recently invaded the world of architecture. On the inside, it was fragments of the steel armature's insistent geometry, combined with the translucent cloth stretched to breaking point, that drew the eye ever around an endless space. The combination of fluid form and heavy metal, of rough plywood floors and soaring space suffused with filtered light, created a continual tension between definite materiality and abstraction.

This is event architecture: a structure whose function is less important than its ability to re-stage, in form and in content, certain aspects of our visual culture. As a temporary object, it is probably the purest example of such. It is too bad that the participants couldn't collectively roll the object around to change it into whatever they wanted. Instead, you had to buy into the Prada Transformer—literally, by buying a ticket, but also by subjecting yourself to the design team's notion of what an event was and what your place should be in something they staged for you. **AARON BETSKY**

The Prada Transformer seen in two of its four possible orientations.



COURTESY PRADA

HISTORIC UVA BUILDING RESTORATION BALANCES MANY LAYERS

## Jefferson in the Round



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The Rotunda at the University of Virginia is arguably one of the most important buildings in early American architecture. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Latrobe, and Robert Mills, the architect of the Washington Monument, all contributed to the design of the structure, which was completed in 1828, two years after Jefferson's death. Adding a significant twist to the Rotunda's provenance, a fire in 1895 destroyed most of the building—including its timber Delorme dome—leaving only the outer shell. In the aftermath, the eminent Beaux Arts architect Stanford White rebuilt the Rotunda, retaining much of Jefferson's exterior form, but changing the interior and adding a new north portico, reorienting the building to the campus.

Now the university is at work on a phased restoration of the Rotunda, exploring this unusual collaboration across time and hoping to reconcile the contributions of Jefferson and White. "The building is representative of the works of two of America's most significant architects," said Clay Pallazo, a principal at John G. Waite Associates, the firm that has completed a 300-page report on the building and has been engaged in its restoration. "As a piece within a collection, the Rotunda is Jefferson's," he said. "As a single building, it's White's."

The university's \$60 million restoration will have to contend with still other historical layers. Following the fire, the Mills wing, added in the 1850s, was removed. And though White left his mark on the building, his renovation was unusually sensitive for the time, according to university architect David Neuman. "Jefferson's architecture was not all that appreciated

one hundred years ago," he said. "White was, in a way, a preservationist. Everything he did was sympathetic but distinct. He suppressed his Beaux Arts exuberance."

The building was last renovated in the 1970s, when much of White's interior was removed in an effort to return it to Jefferson's design. The structure of the building, including a masonry tile dome designed by White, remained. In replacing the timber dome with one made of masonry, however, White added eight inches to the thickness of the interior walls, so the 1970s renovation was an approximation of the original interior. On the exterior, a new turn-coated steel roof was added in place of the painted copper that White had specified.

With so many overlapping hands in the Rotunda's design, there is unlikely to be a decisive resolution to the competing historical layers, and much of the scope of work has yet to be fully determined. So far, though, the restoration will include upgraded mechanical systems, a new roof, reset exterior masonry, and, in what may be the biggest change, a historically appropriate landscape design.

"It will take a trained eye to

**The Rotunda during the 1895 blaze (above) and as it appears today, rebuilt by Stanford White (below).**

see the changes on the exterior, but the landscape will likely be noticeably different," Neuman said. "Right now, the landscape is neither Jefferson's nor White's. It's just what grew up around the building," he added. "Jefferson was a master at integrating landscape, site planning, and architecture." White's thinking was much more formal and Beaux Arts-inflected, so the north side will retain that sensibility, according to Neuman, while the south side will likely follow Jefferson's informal approach.

Elsewhere, the plan will defer to White. "We have recommended a painted copper roof as specified by Stanford White," Pallazo said. Replacing the roof may be a simple task, or, if water has damaged the tile dome, it could require a more complex reconstruction. "You really can't tell for sure until you go into investigative mode," said Pallazo.

Work is expected to begin in earnest in the fall, and a final project team for the restoration will be announced in the coming weeks. **ALAN G. BRAKE**



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GIORGIO BENNI/COURTESY TANYA BONAKAR GALLERY AND GALERIA FORTES VILACA

## UNDER THE SKIN

A *Tyrannosaurus rex* might elicit awe at the Museum of Natural History, but across town at the Park Avenue Armory, an equally majestic beast has taken up residence. A creation of Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, *anthropodino* is an arched labyrinth constructed out of wooden "bones" towering several feet high, like the rib cage of some gargantuan prehistoric reptile. The art installation that opened on May 14 inaugurates the armory's new annual program of commissioned artworks for the 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall.

For some artists, the vast expanse of the Drill Hall space might have been "almost terrifying," according to the armory's consulting curator Tom Eccles, but Neto had already shown his flair for large-scale immersive works, with similarly scaled sensorial installations in Rome, Paris, and Malmö, Sweden. Neto grew up architecturally savvy. His father was a mechanical engineer and homebuilder, and as a boy, Neto often witnessed the construction process of his dad's projects. Nowadays, the artist's sensuous biomorphic installations, which blur the boundaries

between art and architecture, are much in demand around the world. His *Malmö Experience* filled the entire Konsthall there with malleable Lycra environments shaped for visitors to touch and even sit within.

His latest—and largest—creation, *anthropodino*, reflects Neto's fascination with two creatures that have each dominated the planet in their own time: dinosaurs and *Homo sapiens*. Dinosaurs represent awesome power, "But in the end they were too weak to survive the fast transformations of their own habitat," Neto said. "This conflict between strength and fragility has a lot to do with all my work... and with the future of our own human civilization on Earth." Like all of his installations, this one can be seen as "animal architecture," he added.

The curvature of the Drill Hall's barrel-vaulted roof inspired the forms of the installation, which consists of two parts: a "labyrinth" with a central dome rising up from the floor, and a canopy with spice-filled tentacles, or "drops," hanging down from the hall's iron trusses. Conceived in a different design language, the hanging

portion is "not exactly the *anthropodino*, but a voice of it, a thinking of it, a breath of it," Neto said.

The fabrication involved an eclectic high- and low-tech mix. Long Island City fabricator Jan Mollet cut the many pieces of birch plywood frame using a CNC mill, according to project manager Richard Griggs. In Neto's home base, Rio de Janeiro, workers used hundred of yards of Lycra to hand-sew the skins of the tent-like, labyrinthine passageways and central dome, as well as the 190-foot-by-100-foot canopy. The cloth was then shipped to New York and fireproofed.

Right before the month-long exhibit opened, Neto and a team of a dozen helpers worked several days to put the elaborate installation together with a military precision befitting the Drill Hall. First, the canopy had to be hung from hooks attached to the trusses, according to armory president and CEO Rebecca Robertson. The heavy, spice-filled drops were then hoisted into the air using 80-foot articulating boom lifts, and laced onto the canopy by hand.

As for the labyrinth, the arches and central spine of

the frame are slotted together by hand onsite, with no nails. It's designed a bit like a huge version of a toy dinosaur model, curator Eccles said. Next, the wood frame had to be covered with the Lycra skin. Outside the labyrinth are areas devoted to rest and tactile sensations, including a pool filled with 28,000 plastic balls, a soft pink carpet to lie on, and a giant beanbag mattress.

Despite all the preparation, Neto's installations have sometimes surprised him in the final forms they take. "He plans it meticulously, but it's weight/counterweight, and it's stretchy fabric, so when it all drops, he doesn't 100 percent know how it's going to work," Robertson remarked. "It's very alive, in a way."

LISA DELGADO

While nothing happens, 2008 at MACRO, Rome (left). The artist (below).



**SECOND LIFE** continued from front page  
opposed the project is trying, with the help of local politicians and former Pratt Center director Brad Lander, to buy the property and transform it into affordable housing.

The plan is still in an early phase—the first stakeholders' meeting was held May 5—and could take years to resolve, but its backers are already hopeful that it could serve as a blueprint for the plague of similarly stalled developments sprinkled throughout the city.

"Essentially, we are hoping to make lemonade out of lemons," Mandy Harris, founder of the neighborhood group Stable Brooklyn, wrote in an email. "The building is in serious financial trouble and it is a blight on the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood are generally pretty progressive-thinking, so we started daring to imagine what could be done with it that would actually benefit the community in the long term."

Having worked with Lander on a rezoning plan for the neighborhood in response to 23 Caton and two other major luxury developments that cropped up in the low-scale neighborhood, Harris and her group turned to him for advice. The idea is to find a sympathetic developer who will buy the property from its lender, Corus Bank, and redevelop it.

Megan Miller, another member of Stable Brooklyn and a senior architect at Polshek Partnership, said that Corus has already suggested that it would sell if a reasonable offer was made, and that roughly 100 different parties have expressed interest to the bank. The problem is the bankruptcy filing, which began in Connecticut in August of last year. Numerous liens have been placed on the property as a result, and untangling

them could take years, greatly slowing the process. "I'm afraid five years from now, it could still be as is," Miller said.

Another challenge is presented by the architecture. Luxury developments often have balconies, floor-to-ceiling windows, and other amenities that can be difficult to adapt in a building as far along as 23 Caton, which was designed by Karl Fischer Architect. "It's not a clean box," Miller said, noting that making luxury features compatible with an affordable housing proposal could increase the cost of the units.

Still, the group is moving ahead with plans in the event a developer expresses interest. It appears they will be stepping into a favorable political climate, as well. In her State of the City address, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn outlined plans similar to those Stable Brooklyn has proposed. A council spokesperson said details are still being worked out and are largely contingent on the city's cash-strapped budget, but the idea is to leverage city financing to lower rents in completed buildings that currently lie vacant, as well as to entice builders to finish half-built projects.

A spokesperson said the Department of Housing Preservation and Development is considering similar measures, though they are less determined at this point, and lean more toward occupying existing buildings, as that is seen as a more cost-effective approach. Even if comprehensive plans are developed to reclaim these myriad sites, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution, Lander said. "It makes an awful lot of sense," he added. "A lot of people are talking about this. The problem is, how do you do it?" **MC**



An open courtyard serves as the unifying element of the building, with an amphitheater for special events, a "waterpark," and a nature walk to teach children about trees and other plant species.

The museum's exhibits—designed by Amaze Design, Roto Studios, and Aldrich Pears—include ten permanent exhibitions, along with temporary exhibits on themes such as health and well-being, play, civic engagement, and the arts. Projected to attract 600,000 visitors annually, the museum is geared as a gateway to the Washington region for kids and families, and will connect to a special slip on the Potomac River. A temporary preview center, called the NCM Launch Zone, recently opened at National Harbor, and allows visitors to give input about the new museum, from building materials to exhibits and programs. **DR**

**Architect:**  
Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects  
**Client:**  
National Children's Museum  
**Location:**  
National Harbor, Maryland  
**Completion:** 2013

### UNVEILED

#### NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Having operated "without walls" since 2004, the National Children's Museum (formerly the Capital Children's Museum) will provide a new home for the Maryland institution established in 1974 to provide educational exhibitions, programs, and activities to kids. Located in National Harbor—a \$2 billion, 300-acre development on the banks of the Potomac—the Pelli Clarke Pelli-designed building is intended as a physical embodiment of the museum's mission to "inspire children to care

about and improve the world." The 150,000-square-foot, LEED-certified structure packs a range of sustainable components, including recycled steel and brick from demolished buildings, a sun reflector, living green wall, green roof, and wind turbine. "The most symbolic element of the National Children's Museum building will be what we call 'the wind tower,'" explained principal Cesar Pelli, noting that the tower will contain a sculpturally designed turbine whose energy output will illuminate parts of the museum. The entry hall contains a series of sun reflectors to draw light into the darkest spaces of the interior, further cutting down on energy use.



COURTESY GSA

After a four-year odyssey that took him to development projects around the world, Ed Feiner, former chief architect of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), has landed back in Washington, D.C. Effective May 11, he joined Perkins+Will as principal in charge of business development, design, and project delivery.

In over ten years as chief architect, Feiner, 62, brought distinction, attention, and even glory to the GSA. Under his leadership from 1996 to 2005, the administration and its Design Excellence initiative awarded commissions to the country's most distinguished architects. Feiner went on to work as managing director of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's (SOM's) Washington, D.C. office and then as chief architect at Las Vegas Sands Corporation.

A day after the announcement, Feiner chatted with *AN* about his experiences and expectations when it comes to government and good architecture.

#### Where have you been since leaving the GSA?

My last four years have been really unbelievable, like a magical mystery tour. After I graduated from government, I accepted a position with SOM as director of the Washington office, and I was there for three years. Then one day, out of the blue, I got a phone call from the chairman of the Sands Corporation. At the time, it was the largest developer in the country. They knew I had experience hiring good architects, and they wanted to move away from themeing to iconic contemporary architecture. I was overseeing millions of square feet of work.

But Lehman Brothers was a major backer, so ultimately we had to freeze construction and design on all the major projects, particularly Macao. [Moshe Safdie's project in Singapore is still scheduled to open in about a year and a half.] At that point, there wasn't much design intervention for me because that phase was completed. So I packed my four boxes and went back to Washington, D.C.

#### What will your responsibilities include at Perkins+Will?

The whole collection. I wanted to have a full range of what a leader within an organization does. They carry a lot of management responsibility and design leadership—not necessarily designing the buildings—but encouraging and mentoring the next genera-

tion. For a firm that's been around for such a long time [since 1935], I was amazed at how young and motivated the people are there. I hope I can keep up!

#### In terms of business development, where do you think the profession is headed right now?

Publicly funded projects are going to be in vogue again. Not just the federal government work that will be in the pipeline at first. That will filter into state and city governments, so that once they get past this first phase of "shovel-ready" work, there will be a much bigger opportunity for the architectural community.

At the GSA, they'll basically be retrofitting a huge stock of buildings from the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. When you go back and have to improve performance in terms of energy and sustainable design, you're engaging these buildings in more than painting and putting up storm windows. These projects will become real challenges for top designers. And that's just at the GSA. The Defense Department has a huge infrastructure, and there's the Veterans Administration and the State Department. All these organizations are going to start to redevelop their properties.

#### Support for GSA has varied under different administrations. When did Design Excellence get under way?

I started just three months after Reagan became president, and those years were the only ones in which the GSA did very little. When George H.W. Bush came on, there was a backlog of work, particularly for the courts, and then came Design Excellence. I really hate when it's referred to as a program, because it was never envisioned as a design program but as a series of actions we could take to change the nature of design in government. It was all about process. When we started, I would get calls from people out in the field saying they didn't have enough money to do a particular project and would have to remove some of the "Design Excellence features" on the building!

Design Excellence flourished under Clinton, and continued until the Iraq war strained the budget, and then it slowed down. That it commissioned some of the country's really great buildings is what I am most proud of.

#### What do you think the Obama administration will do about architecture?

This is the first administration that I have heard using language I relate to in terms of infrastructure, design, sustainability, and planning. Our profession travels all over the world. We're doing these wonderful projects in China, India, the Middle East, even Canada. The nature of what's going up all around is incredible, and then you look here. There is so much to be done to make us competitive again.

The reality is that we have to rebuild our country. I don't think the government is going to be there to tell people what to do, but it can be a facilitator with a vision. And I am very excited about the new vision. I hope it's infectious.

## PERMANENTLY MAD



Revamped icon **2 Columbus Circle** doubled gallery space for new owner **Museum of Arts and Design's (MAD)** expanding collection of rotating exhibits. Yet what's captivating visitors is a new permanent display: the cable-suspended ceremonial stair designed by **Allied Works Architecture**. Functional and beguiling, it floats on threadlike wires amidst ever-changing shows of celebrated sculpture, earning its place as another example of the museum's commitment to contemporary handicraft.

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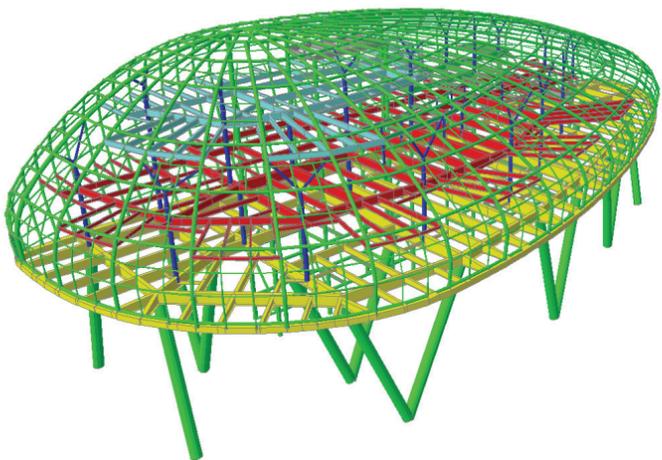
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FRANK REPAS ARCHITECTURE WITH WEIDLINGER ASSOCIATES



Taking a page from New Urbanists and their commitment to density and transit, the city of Shanghai, China, recently built a passenger ship terminal in the Hongku district, adjacent to the historic Bund neighborhood in downtown. Part of a larger project to build a network of parks on both banks of the Huangpu River, the Gaoyang International Cruise Terminal makes a bold civic statement, delivering passengers directly to the center of the city rather than to the outskirts, as is the case with most facilities of this type. It also presented a key urban design problem: How does one build such a large facility, capable of receiving three 80,000-ton luxury liners at one time, without disrupting access to the waterfront? Shanghai's answer: Build it underground, put an at-grade park on top of it, and, for good measure, float an observation and waiting area in the form of a glass bubble above the park on stilts.

By now, the world is quite

familiar with China's engineering feats and failures. This project will go down in the annals under the former category, and serve as an impressive feather in the cap of New York City-based architect Frank Repas and structural engineer Weidlinger Associates. For one thing, the facility has been designed and built to the highest environmental standards, answering one criticism of the country's pell-mell development.

The 220,000-square-foot terminal, which is rectangular in plan, descends three levels beneath the surface, comprising vehicle access, waiting area, baggage handling, and parking functions. To contend with the area's famously sandy soil and keep the heavy concrete box structure from sinking, the facility is supported on a three-foot-thick mat foundation poured atop thousands of concrete piles. While most of the floors are slab constructions, the roof is a concrete-beam structure, with the beams on the top

side, to support the weight of the more than five feet of earth and a forest of trees that cover the terminal and form the park.

In total, the structure reaches 46 feet down, while the water table is less than seven feet below grade. In essence, then, the structure is underwater, a factor that raised obvious concerns about leakage. The project's environmental engineer, Arup, turned this complication into a boon, however. Rather than worry about making the terminal watertight, the engineers allowed water to penetrate the outer concrete wall, where it pools in a cavity space. Intake air is then directed over the water in the cavity to pre-cool it before running it through the building's air condi-

tioners, thus making the HVAC system more efficient.

Much in the way that magma expresses itself in the form of volcanoes, the terminal reveals itself to the city through deformations in the park's surface. Most of these deformations are skylights that open up the first level to daylight. The grandest of them forms a bridge, modeled after the traditional Chinese bridge in the garden, which spans 312 feet over the main waiting area and merges with two massive skylights (see page 1). While the public is not invited to picnic atop the skylights, those glass expanses were engineered to take massive loads, just in case. In the words of Repas, you could drive an 18-wheeler full of bowling balls over

Placing the terminal underground (below) allowed an at-grade park to maintain the city's connection to the Huangpu River. Coordinating the observation platform's glass shell and steel structure (left and below left) required close collaboration between the engineers and facade manufacturer.

them without any trouble.

This level of glass engineering was matched, if not exceeded, in the irregular ellipsoid form of the floating observation bubble. Perched 30 feet above the park atop ten steel HSS columns that increase in diameter from 21 inches to 31 inches, as well as its stair and elevator core, the bubble is a steel platform structure made up of wide flange and HSS members that were primarily joined on site via welded moment connections.

Repas and Weidlinger worked closely with facade consultant RFR of Paris and Stuttgart to develop a weather-tight glass skin for the structure. The cladding had to be made of flat panels for cost reasons, and piecing these together in a way that retained the feeling of a smooth, rounded bubble required very close attention to detail. In the end, no two of the panels are the same size or shape. They are all four-sided quadrilaterals ranging from approximately eight-by-eight feet to narrow slivers about a foot wide. The glass panels themselves are highly insulated, made up of triple-layered, laminated low-e glass lites separated by air spaces.

In an unusual arrangement for an American firm working in China, the city of Shanghai asked Weidlinger to develop construction drawings for the project. Not only is the geometry of great complexity, but the facade assembly fits together with less than a quarter inch of tolerance.

AARON SEWARD



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTOINE DUHAMEL; RENDERING: COURTESY WEIDLINGER

Gymnasium 46°09'N/16°50'E by Studio Up.



ROBERT LES

**SNØHETTA SINGS** continued from front page of the city, and is emblematic of the regeneration of its urban tissue." The six-member jury included Netherlands Architecture Institute director Ole Bouman, Spanish architects Luis Mansilla and Carme Pinós, Milan Triennale architecture and design director Fulvio Irace, Prague architect Irena Fialová, and Slovenian architect Vasa Perovic.

"We feel greatly honored to receive the prize for the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet," Tarald Lundeveall, project architect for Snøhetta, told *AN*. With its marble roofscape, the building is the largest cultural building in contemporary Norway, Lundeveall added. "The horizontal and sloping planes of the roof create a new place in the city, with its plazas and outdoor areas, and are a vital tool for establishing a positive image for the new part of the city," Lundeveall said.

The opera house was selected from a shortlist of finalists that included the Zenith Music Hall in Strasbourg, France, by Studio Fuksas; Luigi Bocconi University in Milan, Italy, by Grafton Architects; the Multimodal Centre and Nice Tramway in Nice, France, by Atelier Marc Barani; and a Library and Senior Citizens' Centre in Barcelona by RCR Arquitectes.

Along with Snøhetta's prize, the jury awarded a special mention for emerging architects to the Zagreb, Croatia-based firm Studio Up and their Gymnasium 46°09'N/16°50'E in Koprivnica, Croatia. The firm's principals Lea Pelivan and Toma Plejić, who both received architecture diplomas from the University of Zagreb in 2001, have gained notice through their Frameworks project, a site-specific work for the 2004 Venice Biennale, and the P10 Mixed-Use Building in Split, Croatia.

For the gymnasium, a mixed-use project that includes a sports hall and high school, the architects designed a spacious interior street and cantilevered, top-floor classrooms, incorporating a shutter and duct system that draws cool air through the building during the summer months. Like Snøhetta's opera house, the gymnasium has helped transform its neighborhood, creating a new social center and landmark on the town's suburban fringe.

"We wanted to create a dynamic spatial experience as a contrast to the surrounding flat landscape," principal Toma Plejić told *AN*. "During the day, because of the polycarbonate sheets, the building reflects its surroundings, while at night it radiates the interior events outward to the neighborhood." **DR**

## AT DEADLINE

## CAST-IRON COLLAPSE

Early on the morning of April 30, the streets of Tribeca shook as half of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century, cast-iron store and loft building collapsed. A number of complaints about the building, at 71 Reade Street, had been filed with the Department of Buildings in the days leading up to the collapse, citing visible cracks in the structure and a quaking beneath the street. The department had issued an order to put emergency shoring in place, but the call was not heeded by the building owner in time to prevent the collapse. Due to structural concerns after the event, the other half of the building was demolished. There had been plans to turn the 1856 structure and its neighbor, 69 Reade Street, into a boutique hotel, although those were abandoned following the downturn in the economy. The cause of the collapse remains unknown, but the demolition of an adjacent building is among the prime suspects.

## A STERN SUIT

Given his success on such high-profile projects as 15 Central Park West and the Comcast Center in Philadelphia, Robert A.M. Stern should have no problem getting paid. But the recession knows no bounds, and the architect was forced to file a lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court on April 24 to claim nearly \$500,000 in unpaid fees for an unbuilt project on East 80<sup>th</sup> Street. According to court papers, Stern's firm had received two partial payments totaling \$93,000, but was still owed an additional \$497,429.

## MAKING NYCHA NICE

It is a sad fact that many housing-related projects in New York City have been shovel-ready for years, if not decades. Now, thanks to the federal stimulus package, some of them will finally get their funding. On April 26, the mayor and HUD secretary (and former HPD commissioner) Shaun Donovan announced \$423 million in funding for some 70 public housing-related projects, including repairs to elevator systems that have posed notorious dangers to residents.

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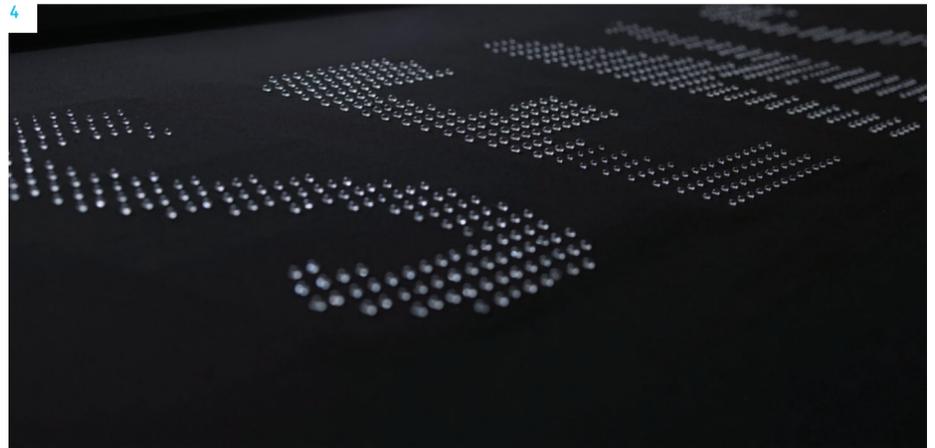
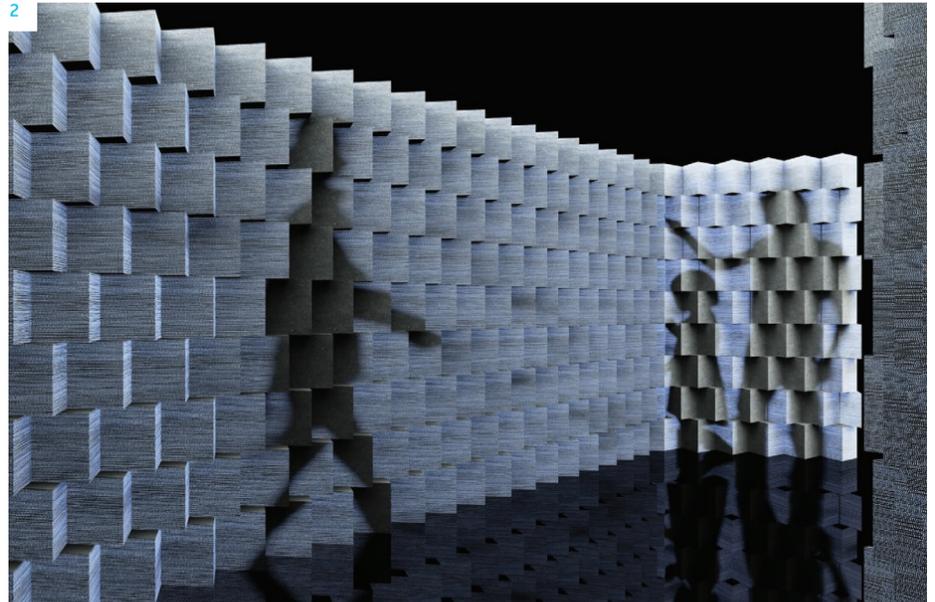
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 20, 2009



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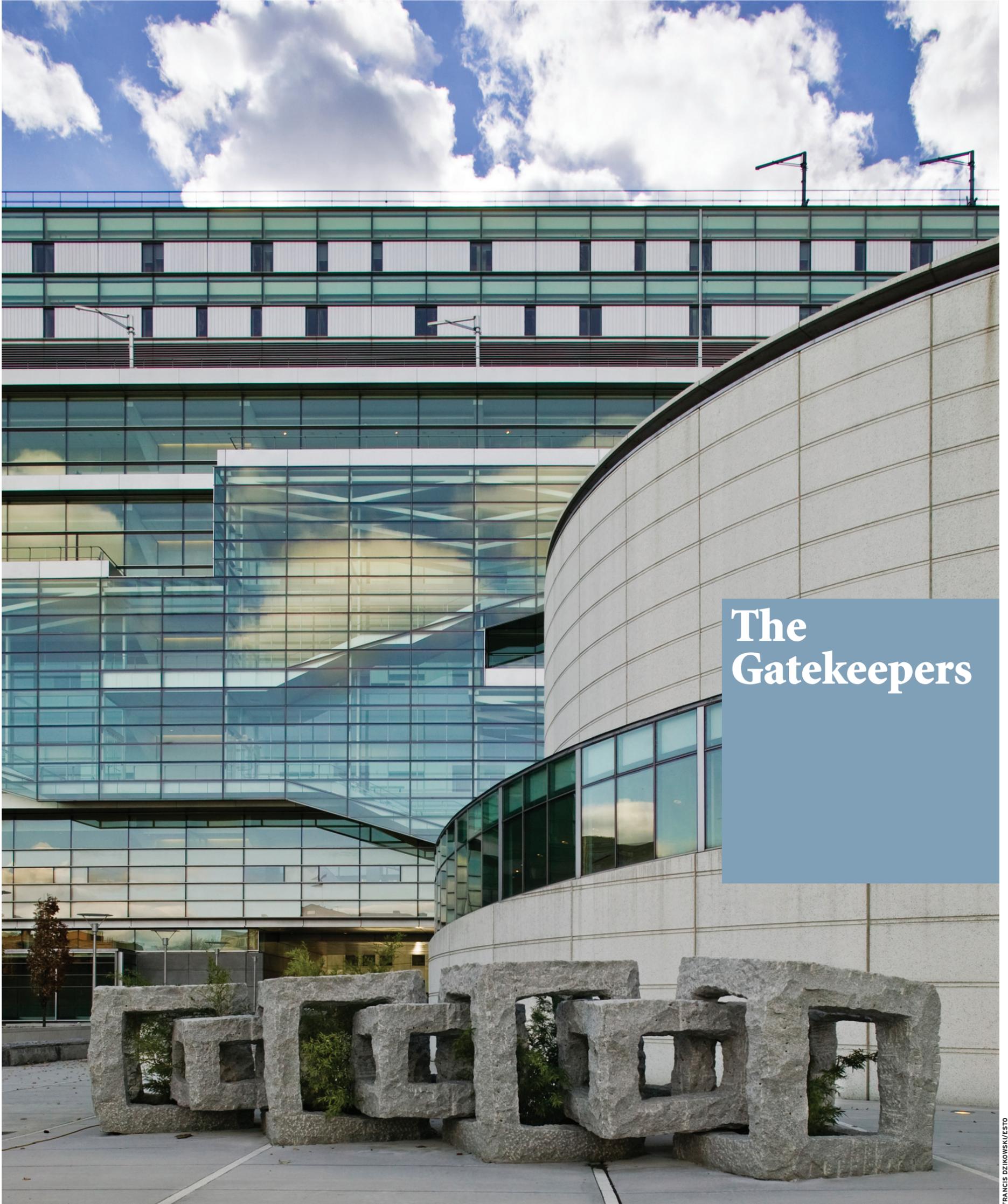
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# The Gatekeepers



FRANCIS DZIKOWSKI/ESTO

Under the PDC's purview, the Collection of the City of New York has encompassed artworks by contemporary artists as well as designs by innovative engineers and landscape architects. *One Stone* (2007) by Cai Guo-Qiang (facing page) was conceived in concert with the Bronx County Hall of Justice, designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects with DMJM + H Architects. The St. George Ferry Terminal pavilion (above) was designed by FTL Design Engineering Studio, while Barretto Point Park in the Bronx (below) was designed by landscape architect Ricardo Hinkle with designer Rachel Kramer.

## Little known to the public and a mystery even to many architects, the Public Design Commission holds considerable sway over the city's urban fabric. From multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects down to tot lots, lampposts, and bike racks, this powerful group helps shape much of New York's public face. Ian Volner pays a visit.

For nearly 35 years, Paul Broches of Mitchell/Giurgola Architects has been working to make Louis Kahn's Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island a reality. On a recent Monday, he unrolled his drawings in a low-ceilinged City Hall annex before one of the least known but most influential deliberative bodies in New York: the Public Design Commission (PDC). On this afternoon, the engineer Guy Nordenson, one of 11 commissioners, took a typically conscientious line of questioning: "Will the park be high enough above the East River waterline," he asked, "to endure rising sea levels due to global warming?" You bet it will, said Broches, who counted the meeting as one more modest victory for the quixotic Kahn project.

For Broches and other architects, the Public Design Commission is a customary stop on the road to public-works approvals. But ask many in the design community about the PDC, and you're likely to draw a blank. Known until last August as the Art Commission, the PDC has maintained an air of mystery even as

it exerts a strong influence over the city's built environment. According to its mission statement, the commission is charged with approving all "permanent works of art, architecture, and landscape architecture proposed on or over city-owned property." Yet many architects who have presented municipal projects for review are unclear how the commission works, where its jurisdiction begins and ends, and what guiding principles the commissioners hold in shaping the city's future.

The Design Commission's low profile is all the more surprising, since its operations are effectively hidden in plain sight. "All our hearings and meetings are open to the public," said PDC Executive Director Jackie Snyder. The commission's online calendar includes a docket of every project currently under consideration, and recent committee meetings—informal rehearsals for city agencies in the early stages of a new project—have featured everything from the installation of signage for a library book drop in Queens to a comfort station in the Bronx. Public

hearings, where official submissions are made and approval granted or withheld, have recently ranged from newsstands on Madison Avenue to the reconstruction of East Fordham Road in the Bronx.

The PDC's bailiwick has remained largely unchanged since the Art Commission's creation in 1898. As called for in the charter of the then newly consolidated City of New York, the commission's first members were appointed for three-year, unpaid terms at the recommendation of the Fine Arts Federation, an independent cultural consortium. The federation nominated one architect, one painter, a sculptor, and three "lay members." Three additional commissioners were selected by the most prominent cultural institutions of the day: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New York Public Library. Today, the PDC's membership breaks down in precisely the same way, chosen by the same process, with one more lay member appointed at the mayor's discretion and a landscape architect rounding

out the group.

The commission's review powers are much as they were over a hundred years ago. In developing any public works project, every branch of the city's vast bureaucracy must prepare a series of presentations for the commission. Usually the work of the consulting architect, these presentations follow a three-step process: conceptual, preliminary, and final. The first two take place during public hearings in the commission's offices, attended by members of the agencies involved (invariably) and by concerned members of the public (infrequently). The presenter outlines the project's

objectives and design strategies, while the commissioners make suggestions and take a casual thumbs-up, thumbs-down vote. The final stage entails only a submission of project documents. The result is fair and reasonable, according to veterans of the process. "I've presented to the PDC many, many times," Broches said. "Even though the character of the commission changes as the commissioners change, I've always found them to be smart, serious-minded, and amicable."

Some civic construction escapes the commission's purview: Federal and state buildings fall outside their mandate, and some city buildings



MALCOLM PINCKNEY/NYC PARKS &amp; RECREATION



COURTESY MATHEWS NIELSEN

Rendering of a Department of Transportation-sponsored redesign by Mathews Nielsen of West 125th Street at Fairway Plaza; the PDC suggested bench arms to echo the shapes of the viaduct passing overhead.

are the province of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The PDC also passes judgment on a surprising volume of construction beyond the city limits, like the entire Croton Aqueduct system, with its headhouses, gatehouses, and signposts scattered throughout Westchester County. Other projects submitted for review aren't actually being reviewed at all. "Courtesy" reviews are commonplace, delivered by non-city agencies in an effort to garner broad political support. As it turned out, the presenters of Four Freedoms Park, which is to be built on state-owned land, were performing one such courtesy call. "The Design Commission is involved with so many projects on public land in New York, it just seemed eminently reasonable to get their opinion," said Sally Minard, who has helped spearhead the project.

The commission strives to avoid unexpected—and expensive—design revamps as much as is practical. As Snyder explained, "We usually try to have people come in earlier, so that it's easier and less expensive for agencies to change designs." But clearly, the committee isn't just applying

a rubber stamp. At a recent hearing, Department of Transportation (DOT) personnel milled around the PDC's waiting room, having just finished their "second or third preliminary" for a Bronx highway improvement. More anodyne projects—a public toilet for Prospect Park, for example—are sometimes fast-tracked, given final approval at their preliminary hearing.

So what is the PDC's yardstick for successful design? "Our goal is not to turn people into clones of us, but to make their project the best it can be," said Signe Nielsen, principal of environmental planners Mathews Nielsen and the commission's current landscape architect. The "us" of the moment constitutes a fair cross-section of influential New Yorkers: Other commissioners include architect James Polshek, Paula Scher of Pentagram, and a former director of Forest City Ratner, James Stuckey. "Whether we are wealthy patrons or scruffy academics, professionals or artists," Nordenson said in an interview, "we share the belief that we can build a discourse about what is good design or not and cut through the bureaucratic yadda yadda."

At times, New York's small design world can cause complications. At a recent hearing, Nielsen recused herself for one session as Anne Trumble of Mathews Nielsen gave the preliminary proposal for the firm's DOT-sponsored redesign of West 125th Street just landward of the Hudson River. The renovation includes moving and resurfacing crosswalks to coincide with Columbia University's planned satellite campus for the neighborhood. At the advice of the PDC, benches with rounded armrests will be scattered around the site, echoing the looped arches of the Riverside Drive viaduct above.

And the commission has had its share of contention. An uproar over the Parks Department's Washington Square renovation brought crowds to commission meetings in 2005. (To little avail: The project moved forward.) Another episode, described in former commissioner Michele Helene Bogart's illuminating book about the commission *The Politics of Urban Beauty*, involved former Parks Commissioner Henry Stern, whose enthusiasm for "yardarm" flagpoles and animal motifs led him to circumvent the

Art Commission on a number of occasions. This prompted a lawsuit, eventually settled, from Commission President Reba White Williams.

More typically, though, the PDC expressly avoids confrontation. "If the person running the meeting senses there's a mixed opinion, we table the project," said Nielsen. These rare differences are ironed out at executive sessions that are closed to the public, and where, according to Bogart, members discuss projects candidly. "When the politics around a project are particularly sensitive, it's better to have an executive session," Bogart explained.

Politics do occasionally intrude. Former Commission President Jean Phifer of architecture firm Thomas Phifer & Partners described an attempt in the late 1990s to abolish the commission outright, spurred on by a Staten Island councilman. Mayor Giuliani interceded on the commission's behalf, but Giuliani was otherwise less supportive of the commission than Mayor Bloomberg has been. "The difference between now and then is that the commission under Giuliani

had no clout," Bogart said. Mayor Bloomberg's support of the PDC and of urban design generally has helped bolster the commission's efforts, as evidenced by his creation, with the PDC's input, of the Design and Construction Excellence program. One more change under Mayor Bloomberg has been the reassertion of PDC review power in the case of private leases on public land, a move that has helped extend the commission's reach.

The best evidence of the commission's scope and vision is in the city's public works over the past decade. Hudson River Park, the Fulton Street Transit Center, the Van Cortlandt Park filtration plant—if these can be taken together as signal projects, what sort of design preferences emerge? A clarity of visual language; a clean, muscular sense of materiality; an emphasis on environmental sensitivity. Struggling to sum it up, Nielsen simply said, "I could say it in fancy archi-speak, but it boils down to this: Will I still want to look at it in 20 years?"

**NEW YORK-BASED WRITER IAN VOLNER CONTRIBUTES TO ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, BOOKFORUM, AND MANY OTHER PUBLICATIONS.**

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## MAY

**WEDNESDAY 20**  
**LECTURE**  
**Stephen M. Salny**  
**Michael Taylor, Interior Designer**  
6:30 p.m.  
Library at the General Society  
20 West 44th St.  
www.classicist.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Francis Bacon:**  
**A Centenary Retrospective**  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1000 5th Ave.  
www.metmuseum.org

**Parsons School of**  
**Constructed Environments**  
**Thesis Exhibition**  
Parsons The New  
School for Design  
25 East 13th St.  
www.parsons.edu

**Josh Greene & Renée Gertler**  
**That's My Side**  
Artists Space  
38 Greene St., 3rd Fl.  
www.artistspace.org

**THURSDAY 21**  
**LECTURE**  
**Cristina Goberna and**  
**Urtzi Grau, Phu Hoang,**  
**Sung Goo Yang**  
**2009 Young Architect's**  
**Forum: Foresight**  
6:30 p.m.  
Architectural League  
457 Madison Ave.  
www.archleague.org

**SYMPOSIUM**  
**1909-2109: Sustaining the**  
**Lasting Value of**  
**American Planning**  
**Eugenie Birch,**  
**Robert Fishman, et al.**  
Through May 22  
National Building Museum  
401 F St. NW,  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nbm.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Conrad Shawcross**  
**Control**  
Location One  
26 Greene St.  
www.location1.org

**Patty Chang**  
Mary Boone Gallery  
745 5th Ave.  
www.maryboonegallery.com

**Michael Alan**  
**How We Push Time**  
Art:29  
525 West 25th St.  
art29gallery@gmail.com

**FRIDAY 22**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Creating the Modern Stage:**  
**Designs for**  
**Theater and Opera**  
The Morgan Library and  
Museum  
225 Madison Ave.  
www.themorgan.org

**Mel Bochner,**  
**Adrian Piper, et al.**  
**Photoconceptualism,**  
**1966-1973**  
Whitney Museum of  
American Art  
945 Madison Ave.  
www.whitney.org

**Ayad Alkadhi, Zoulikha**  
**Bouabdellah, Adriana Czernin,**  
**Katrina Daschner, et al.**  
**The Seen and The Hidden:**  
**(Dis)Covering The Veil**  
Austrian Cultural Forum  
11 East 52nd St.  
www.acfny.org

**SATURDAY 23**  
**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Jacob Hashimoto**  
Mary Boone Gallery  
541 West 24th St.  
www.maryboonegallery.com

**EVENT**  
**New to Brooklyn Heights Tour**  
11:00 a.m.  
Clark & Henry Sts.  
Municipal Art Society  
www.mas.org

**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Where are We?**  
**Places and Spaces**  
10:20 a.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**SUNDAY 24**  
**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Radical Makeovers**  
12:00 p.m.  
Museum of Arts and Design  
2 Columbus Circle  
www.madmuseum.org

**TUESDAY 26**  
**LECTURE**  
**Tom Klinkowstein, Joao Ribas**  
**Fax**  
6:30 p.m.  
The Drawing Center  
35 Wooster St.  
www.drawingcenter.org

**EVENT**  
**The Party in the Garden**  
7:00 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**WEDNESDAY 27**  
**LECTURES**  
**Rogan Gregory,**  
**Scott Hahn, Leslie Hoffman,**  
**and Julie Gilhart**  
**Sustainable Fashion Panel**  
6:30 p.m.  
Cooper-Hewitt, National  
Design Museum  
2 East 91st St.  
www.cooperhewitt.org

**Veronica Roberts**  
**Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo,**  
**and Mexican Modernism in**  
**the 1930s and 1940s**  
1:30 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Gord Peteran**  
**Furniture Meets its Maker**  
Museum of Arts and Design  
2 Columbus Circle  
www.madmuseum.org

**THURSDAY 28**  
**SYMPOSIUM**  
**Eat, Sleep, and Pray:**  
**Everyday Rituals and**  
**Contemporary Art**  
6:30 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**A.A. Rucci**  
**A(My) Midnight Sun**  
Mixed Greens  
531 West 26th St.  
www.mixedgreens.com

**EVENT**  
**Gary Simmons in**  
**Conversation with Henry**  
**Louis Gates, Jr.**  
7:00 p.m.  
Whitney Museum of  
American Art  
945 Madison Ave.  
www.whitney.org

**SATURDAY 30**  
**LECTURES**  
**Arjun Appadurai**  
**Architecture and Amnesia in**  
**Indian Modernity**  
7:00 p.m.  
The Great Hall of  
The Cooper Union  
7 East 7th St.  
www.archleague.org

**Ethan Zuckerman and**  
**Farai Chideya**  
**YTJ: Networked Equality:**  
**Technology and Access**  
3:00 p.m.  
New Museum  
235 Bowery  
www.newmuseum.org

**EVENT**  
**Survivor: An Artist's**  
**Opportunity Workshop**  
Through June 1  
Dumbo Arts Center  
30 Washington St.,  
Brooklyn  
www.dumboartscenter.org

**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Earth Approved Design Day**  
1:30 p.m.  
Cooper-Hewitt, National  
Design Museum  
2 East 91st St.  
www.cooperhewitt.org

**SUNDAY 31**  
**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Red Lines Housing Crisis**  
**Learning Center**  
Queens Museum of Art  
New York City Building  
Flushing Meadows Corona  
Park, Queens  
www.queensmuseum.org

## JUNE

**MONDAY 1**  
**LECTURE**  
**Deborah Berke**  
**Spotlight On Design**  
6:30 p.m.  
National Building Museum  
401 F St. NW,  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nbm.org

**TUESDAY 2**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Pen and Parchment:**  
**Drawing in the Middle Ages**  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1000 5th Ave.  
www.metmuseum.org

**Portraits, Pastels, Prints:**  
**Whistler in The Frick**  
**Collection**  
The Frick Collection  
1 East 70th St.  
www.frick.org

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**FILM**  
**The Grand Tour**  
6:30 p.m.  
American Museum of  
Natural History  
79th St. & Central Park West  
www.amnh.org

**WEDNESDAY 3**  
**LECTURE**  
**Fran Dunwell**  
**The Hudson: America's River**  
6:30 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

**SYMPOSIUM**  
**Design Awards Symposium:**  
**Project Winners**  
6:00 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**FILM**  
**Steel Homes**  
(Eva Weber, 2008), 10 min.  
7:00 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**EVENT**  
**City Futures Gala**  
6:00 p.m.  
Angel Orensanz Foundation  
172 Norfolk St.  
www.citylimits.org

**THURSDAY 4**  
**LECTURE**  
**Scott Muldavin,**  
**Ron Dembo, Michael Levi**  
**Zero Net Energy Buildings:**  
**Financial Incentives and**  
**Valuation**  
6:00 p.m.  
The New York Academy of  
Sciences  
7 World Trade Center  
250 Greenwich St., 40th Fl.  
www.nyas.org/financial

**FRIDAY 5**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Patricia Cronin**  
**"Harriet Hosmer,**  
**Lost and Found"**  
Brooklyn Museum  
200 Eastern Pkwy.  
www.brooklynmuseum.org

**New Practices San Francisco**  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**SATURDAY 6**  
**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Skyscrapers:**  
**Prints, Drawings, and**  
**Photographs of the Early**  
**Twentieth Century**  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
26th St. and the Benjamin  
Franklin Pkwy., Philadelphia  
www.philamuseum.org

**SUNDAY 7**  
**FILM**  
**Abstracting the City on Film**  
**Alfred Hitchcock, Busby**  
**Berkeley, William Klein, et al.**  
2:00 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org



HEDRICH BLESSING/COURTESY CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**MARCEL BREUER: DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE**  
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design  
224 Benefit Street, Providence, R.I.  
Through July 19

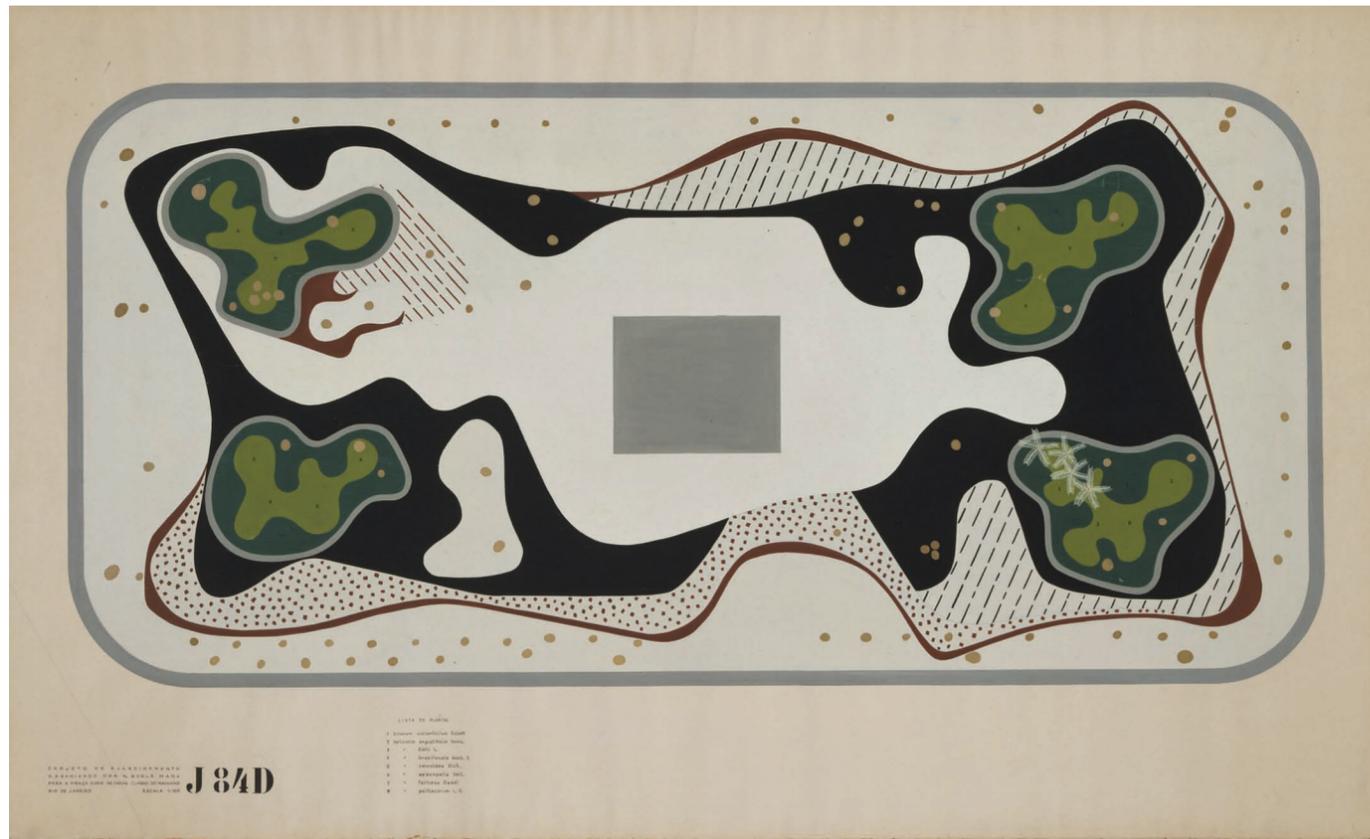
A master of modernism, and Bauhaus teacher as well as student, the Hungarian-born Marcel Breuer produced design at many scales, from chairs to single-family houses, from offices to major religious, cultural, and civic institutions. Developed by the Vitra Design Museum in Germany, *Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture*, currently on view at the RISD Museum of Art, takes a critical and comprehensive look at all aspects of Breuer's extensive oeuvre. The exhibition explores the designer's work through a variety of themes that include materials, houses, spaces, and volumes. Beginning with the materials that Breuer preferred, including wood, aluminum, plywood, and steel, which he used to create his popular tubular steel furniture in the early 1920s, the show features more than 50 original pieces, such as the Wassily Chair (1929) and Cesca S32 Chairs (1928), as well as drawings and photographs of his designs. Twelve models commissioned for this exhibition help document the residential work and the large-scale institutional buildings he designed, among them the University Complex in Collegeville, Minnesota (1964-66, above).



COURTESY SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

**FROM THE GROUND UP:**  
**INNOVATIVE GREEN HOMES**  
Van Alen Institute  
30 West 22nd Street, 6th Floor  
Through June 26

Featuring finalists from the Syracuse University School of Architecture-sponsored design competition for the single-family house, *From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes* promotes creative thinking about design, sustainability, and cost-effective building practices. The competition seeks a new model for revitalizing urban neighborhoods throughout the United States, including the Near Westside, one of Syracuse's earliest residential enclaves. Comprised of 550 acres of industrial, residential, and commercial properties adjacent to the city center, the neighborhood is saddled with condemned buildings and empty lots, a result of the city's "sprawl without growth." The Van Alen exhibit presents models and renderings from the three winning teams—ARO and Della Valle Bernheimer of New York; Cook + Fox/Terrapin Bright Green of New York and Washington, D.C.; and Onion Flats of Philadelphia—and from the four finalist teams: Adjaye/Associates of London; Office dA and Architecture Studio himma of Boston and Seoul (above); do-it-together.org of New York and Kansas City; and Erdy McHenry Architecture and Stenson-Building + Furniture Design of Philadelphia and Syracuse. Also on view will be work from 52 other teams who submitted ideas.



Left: Roberto Burle Marx, Duque de Cexias Square Plan (1948); Below: SITE, Terrarium Elevations (1979).

*Monument*, with its ravishing representations of the superstructure set in cragged seashores and transformed cityscapes, looks sensitive compared to Bernard Tschumi's or Zaha Hadid's designs for the Parc de la Villette, which repeat the "ex novo" approach described in the wall text. Similarly prescient are two of James Wines and SITE's Best Products Stores, which, though they are suburban big-box stores, engage and comment on their context in intelligent, witty, and—at least in the cases of the Forest Building and the Terrarium Showroom—ecologically responsive ways. Works by Yona Friedman and Andrea Branzi also suggest that designers of the 1960s were thinking critically about urban and environmental conditions, and deserve the current reexamination they are receiving in the academy.

Of the works included, two of these projects depart from the others. A pair of site plans by the Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx are as aesthetically arresting as many of the paintings in the adjacent galleries. The only work in the show by a landscape architect, the plans clearly conform to the museum's standards of beauty. Teddy Cruz's *Non Stop Sprawl: MacMansion Retrofitted Project* stands out for its direct political and social engagement—Cruz interviews Mexican immigrants for their ideas about the exurban United States. This work's recent acquisition by MoMA seems to signal a newly pluralistic attitude on the part of the department.

*In Situ* suggests that the museum may be as instrumental in integrating landscape and sustainability into the discourse of architecture and design in the new century as they were in defining the architectural avant-garde in the last. That, at least, marks a welcome change of terrain.

ALAN G. BRAKE IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT AM.

## Tabula Roses

**In Situ: Architecture and Landscape**  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd Street  
Through January 18, 2010

Drawn from the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection, *In Situ: Architecture and Landscape* takes a non-dogmatic view of architecture's relationship to landscape, and the importance of landscape architecture in general, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As it reflects the architecture and design department's attitudes toward landscape since MoMA's inception, the exhibit may signal a greater appreciation for the discipline—and for sustainability—in the century to come.

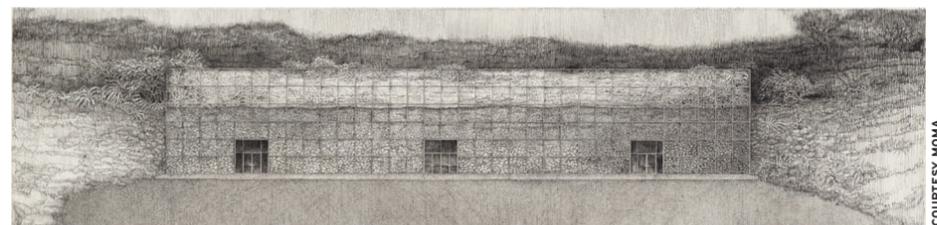
The show's central premise is that in recent decades, the notion of landscape has taken on an expanded definition in architecture. "In

the first half of the twentieth century," the introductory wall text notes, "the architectural avant-garde celebrated autonomy from nature, and architects devised utopian schemes for creating urban realms *ex novo*, with little consideration for their surroundings." MoMA, of course, played a greater role in defining the parameters and members of the architectural avant-garde than any other institution. The text, again without comment, continues to point out that more recently, environmental challenges and rapidly expanding cities have pushed architects to revise their understanding of landscape: "Harmony between the spatial, social, and environmental aspects of human life has become a priority in political thought, and this has had profound reverberations in both architecture and landscape design."

*In Situ* does not offer up specifically what this new understanding of landscape may be. Instead, it presents drawings, models, and a single video with minimal commentary, leaving the viewer to fill in the gaps and draw

his or her own conclusions. Some of these works are beautiful, and mine the subject of landscape deeply, while others seem only tangentially engaged with the subject. Indeed the vast majority of the projects, which include houses, parks, cemeteries, and visionary urban schemes, are by architects. These include large models of classics like Fallingwater, which is so well known for its innovative site planning that its inclusion seems unnecessary, and Richard Neutra's even earlier Lovell House, which in this context looks more literally groundbreaking.

Remarkably, a work as blunt and hard-edged as Superstudio's *Continuous*



COURTESY MoMA

## PUBLIC PRACTICE

**Expanding Architecture:  
Design as Activism**  
Edited by Bryan Bell and Katie Wakeford  
Metropolis Books, \$34.95

*Expanding Architecture* is an upbeat and impressive compendium, its almost 300 pages crowded with texts and images of works dedicated to activist design practices. As described by co-editor Bryan Bell, the emerging public-interest architecture movement seeks "to play an active role in responding to social challenges." Located in big cities and small towns in North America, Europe,

and Asia, the work is animated by the conviction that good design and good deeds are mutually reinforcing.

*Expanding Architecture* alternates between polemical essays that articulate the need for design activism to straightforward accounts of design/research projects. In general, the polemics are the least satisfying, with authors too often lapsing into generalized rhetoric. In "An

Architecture of Change," Jose L.S. Gamez and Susan Rogers call for "infiltrating and dismantling academies" to bring about a "radical transformation in education... a new school for a new school of thought." But they leave this large challenge dangling, with no specifics as to how academies, so resistant to even incremental change, would be dismantled, or what the new schools would teach, how they would be structured, etc. Absent the details—in which shrewd observers have located both god and the devil—this sort of revolutionary stance seems simply too easy, yet another vision of a better, fairer day that's somehow always tomorrow.



Design Corps, Raised House for Patty Broussard (2007-2008).

JAMES SWEENEY/DESIGN CORPS

In another chapter, Kathleen Dorgan and Deane Evans deplore the undeniable

fact that low-income housing is often badly designed and argue knowledgeably that

fundors, developers, and architects could do better, at no extra **continued on page 18**



COURTESY STUDIO SUMO

**PUBLIC PRACTICE** continued from page 17 cost, if at every stage the process were informed by higher aspirations and greater design literacy. Yet the essay relies too comfortably on polarities that feel dated. In recent years, the design gap between affordable (or "workforce," to use the latest euphemism) and market-rate housing has narrowed, and not only due to exemplary projects by offices like Pugh + Scarpa, Koning Eizenberg, David Baker, Rob Wellington Quigley, and so on, not to mention the projects documented in the book. Click on the website of any of the production homebuilders, and it's clear that most market-rate U.S. housing is just as badly designed as most low-income housing (though the ugly expensive houses are much bigger, with more pretentious appliances).

The design initiatives range in scale and structure, from ongoing programs with paid

staff to university-based studios with extra funds for travel and materials. The Community Design Collaborative, in Philadelphia; Public Architecture, in San Francisco; and cityworksLosAngeles, all work to organize and even institutionalize the pro bono efforts of area design firms. The Programa de Viviendo Ecologica, run by a Sonoran non-governmental organization in partnership with the Center for Sustainable Development at the University of Texas at Austin, provides microcredit financing and technical assistance to enable the Yacqui Indians of western Mexico to build ecologically sensitive housing. Platforma 9.81, an architecture and media collective in Zagreb, maps the city's empty spaces and transforms them into temporary art and performance spaces, with the goal of reenergizing public life in post-communist, postwar Croatia.

**studio SUMO's MiniMax manufactured housing (2005).**

Some of the design projects are singular initiatives with impressive ambitions. Some examples: Gans Studio in New York City not only designed prototypes for disaster-relief housing in Kosovo, but also researched the international protocols that govern refugee camps (and make it hard to build anything more permanent than tents). Planners and landscape architects affiliated with National Taiwan University deftly negotiated complex land-use ordinances and organized a group of villagers to restore a polluted creek as the first phase of a strategy to encourage tourism. The Charlottesville Community Design Center worked with Habitat for Humanity and residents of a local trailer park to organize a national competition focused on the redevelopment of the site. Another Charlottesville-based project, EcoMOD at the University of Virginia, tackled the big challenge of creating prototypes for affordable and sustainable prefabricated housing (not surprisingly, affordability proved the more elusive goal).

The list could go on. With 30 chapters organized into eight sections, *Expanding Architecture* assembles a powerful and often inspiring portrait of a discipline grappling with the practical, professional, and philosophical dimensions of the "public interest." And here it is as revealing for what's left out as what's put in. Published in 2008—a year and a lifetime ago—the book is clearly a product of the pre-crash, of the market triumphalism now collapsing. For decades, that mentality has dominated not only our

economics but our politics and culture, and for the design professions it has fostered both the superheated and elite sphere of starchitecture and the idealistic practices described so eloquently in these pages.

What is missing from this volume on public interest architecture is any presence of the public sector. I emphasize that this absence is not an oversight, and it is unsurprising. Three decades into the Reagan Revolution, with its rallying cry of "government is not the solution but the problem," its anti-tax and property-rights advocates, its deregulatory zealots, its market fundamentalists, we no longer expect strong and coordinated action from our impoverished public agencies, with their embattled mandates and diminished staffs, working with vintage databases on creaky computers. We no longer look to our public planning agencies for powerful design thinking, for innovative urban action.

In this sense, *Expanding Architecture* can be read as an unselfconscious reflection of the privatization of our culture, of the extent to which we depend on private non-profits—often fragile, surviving on grants, dependent on the sweat equity of students and practitioners—to confront the challenges of equitable housing, sustainable communities, new energy economies, and green redevelopment.

But now, as polar ice shelves crack and national economies deflate, and as our major banks and car manufacturers plead for public money, it's high time to rethink the dynamics of public and private.

**NANCY LEVINSON IS DIRECTOR OF THE PHOENIX URBAN RESEARCH LABORATORY AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY AND EDITOR OF PLACES.**

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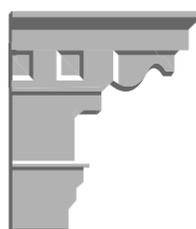
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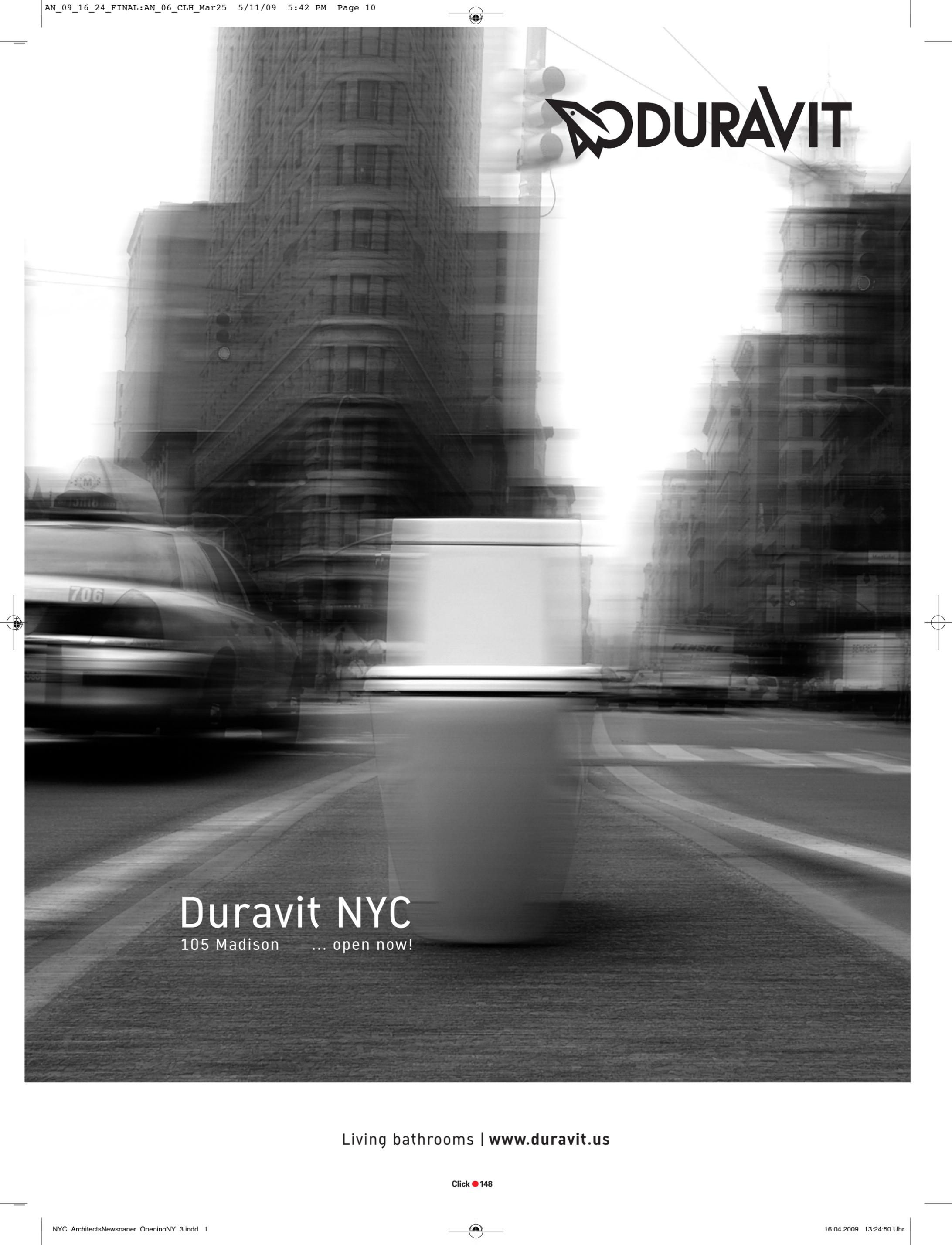
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