

Today's News - Friday, March 27, 2009

- A call for the U.S. government to link housing, transportation, and land use "as a way to drive decisions that lead to productive, sustainable, and inclusive growth."
- Cheers for China's full-steam-ahead for urban subway systems, but other policies like allowing sprawling new suburbs undermine the benefits of the mass transit boom.
- Glancey bemoans the lack of craft: "all too many new buildings look and feel like computer drawings," and calls for architects to step away from their computers (time for "slow" architecture to catch on?).
- Becker tackles the (almost bizarre) saga of Chicago's Burnham memorial competition(s).
- McDonald on the RIAI Gold Medal shortlist: a "paucity of submissions in the housing category."
- Russell rambles around Manhattan's new Standard Hotel and likes what he sees: "weirdly in tune with these straitened times" and "stunningly invigorates its motley post-industrial surroundings" straddling the High Line.
- Glancey finds re-do of Raven Row art gallery "east London architecture at its finest," where the ghosts "have been charmed into submission rather than exorcised" (terrific slide show).
- Moore marvels at what they've done to the Whitechapel: the redesign "is not a work of expansive cultural machismo, not an iconic monument," and hopes it's a trend: "as there has been an overdose of shiny novelty in recent architecture, it's a welcome adjustment."
- Q&A with Libeskind: ""Celebrity is a very interesting phenomenon...I hope to contribute something of lasting value, not just a passing fashion."
- Q&A with Architecture 5¢ founder (we thought it was a cool idea, but the miles of angry comments that follow indicate otherwise - time to chill, guys?).
- Weekend diversions: King on Jodidio's "Architecture Now! 6": it "speaks to an age of cultural excess...the most resonant buildings are the ones that point toward a more modest future."
- Kimmelman on Corbu at the Barbican: it's "a large and elegant affair" (great slide show).
- Dietsch is disappointed by "Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes" at the Corcoran (has Lin lost her nerve?).
- Houston's Rice Design Alliance hosts "Small Houses x 9" tours, crammed full of ideas about living.
- Heathcote hails Brit Insurance Design Awards show: "there is an encouraging lack of star objects here, of design-art" (even the labels are rewarding).
- Hawthorne on two shows (closing Sunday) that weave L.A. history and urbanism.
- Smithsonian shows off competition models for New National Museum of African American History and Culture (only until next Friday).
- Esto does videos (music is nice, too).
- Earth Hour is tomorrow night: plan to turn out your lights.

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Supporting Integrated Planning and Decision Making by Linking Housing, Transportation, and Land Use: ...as a way to drive decisions that lead to productive, sustainable, and inclusive growth. By Robert Puentes - Brookings Institution

Clash of Subways and Car Culture in Chinese Cities: Auto sales are jumping while immense subway systems are being built...Western mass transit experts applaud...systems that will put less stress on the environment and on cities. But they warn that other policies, like allowing...sprawling new suburbs, undermine the benefits of the mass transit boom. - New York Times

Whatever happened to craft? Architects should put away the computer and dig into the toolbox for an appreciation of materials and how buildings actually work...the lack of craft around us is becoming not just heart-breaking, but jaw-dropping...many of our new buildings and streetscapes feel increasingly digital rather than real. By Jonathan Glancey -- Siza; Chipperfield; 6a; Zumthor; Makovecz - BD/Building Design (UK)

Symbol vs Substance: Chicago's memorial to Daniel Burnham: Does a proposed memorial...represent an overdue tribute or a colossal failure of nerve? How that whole tale is playing out...may offer up a decidedly unofficial, but far truer, less sentimentalized reconsideration of Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago...Is There a Disconnect between Competitions and Chicago Architecture? By Lynn Becker - Repeat (Chicago)

Croke Park up against pumphouse for Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) triennial Gold Medal: The jury had one major crib -- "the paucity of submissions in the housing category." By Frank McDonald -- Gilroy McMahon; McCullough Mulvin; Grafton Architects; ABK Architects; FKL Architects; de Paor Architects - Irish Times

Commie-style Hotel Has Cool Terrace, Views, \$195 Rooms: You can't miss the Standard Hotel in Manhattan's newly chic Meatpacking District. It poses heroically along the Hudson River like an 18-story, Bolshevik-era emblem of progress...weirdly in tune with these straitened times...stunningly invigorates its motley post-industrial surroundings. By James S. Russell -- Polshek Partnership; Shawn Hausman; Roman & Williams - Bloomberg News

Raven Row art gallery: east London architecture at its finest: Unlike the sanitised chain restaurants nearby, Raven Row strikes up a compelling conversation with Spitalfields' rough and ready history...it's possible to find new ways of restoring old buildings...ghosts here have been charmed into submission rather than exorcised... By Jonathan Glancey -- 6a [slide show] - Guardian (UK)

Look what they've done to the Whitechapel: ...redesign is not a work of expansive cultural machismo, not an iconic monument...has subtler ambitions...will remain faithful to its founders' "art for all" ideal...a virtue of leaving things alone...Clearly it's the trend of 2009 and, as there has been an overdose of shiny novelty in recent architecture, it's a welcome adjustment. By Rowan Moore -- Charles Harrison Townsend (1901); Robbrecht and Daem; Witherford Watson Mann; Rachel Whiteread [images] - Evening Standard (UK)

Hugh-Rise Dreams: Daniel Libeskind cooks, writes out-there poems, directs plays and builds very big, extraordinary buildings..."Celebrity is a very interesting phenomenon...I hope to contribute something of lasting value, not just a passing fashion." By Donald Frazier [images] - Power magazine (Hong Kong)

Q&A: John Morefield, Founder of Architecture 5¢: ...how the recession has allowed him to transform a clever gimmick into an entrepreneurship. - Architectural Record

Book review: "Architecture Now! 6" by Philip Jodidio: The idea that new buildings should strive for cultural buzz, or that contorted silhouettes are the in-crowd ideal, all seems so ... 2007...collection of 79 works...speaks to an age of cultural excess...the most resonant buildings are the ones that point toward a more modest future. By John King -- Toyo Ito; Coop Himmelb(l)au; Foster + Partners; David Adjaye; Jensen & Skodvin - San Francisco Chronicle

In London, Admiration for an Old Foe: An exhibition devoted to the work of the Modernist architect Le Corbusier has drawn crowds to the Barbican Center, part of a Corbu-style complex once loathed by the public...The show, a large and elegant affair, reminds us instead of the many beautiful buildings he designed... By Michael Kimmelman [slide show] - New York Times

Retreating into the landscape: From the controversy of memorials to the safety of environmental art: "Maya Lin: Systematic

Landscapes"...These explorations sound like they might produce exciting results, but the installations are as insipid as the imitations of her Vietnam Veterans Memorial...creations at the Corcoran only elicit a yawn. By Deborah K. Dietsch [images]- Washington Times

Little houses. Big ideas: Credit the Rice Design Alliance with great timing: Small has never looked more beautiful than it does now..."Small Houses x 9"...nine houses — all built within the past six years, all 2000 square feet or less, all crammed full of ideas about living. -- Savino Architecture; Carlos Jimenez; Christopher Robertson; m+a architecture; Hybrid/ORAArchitects; Brett Zamore; Interloop Architecture [slide show]- Houston Chronicle

Form and social function: Brit Insurance Design Awards, Design Museum, London: ...there is an encouraging lack of star objects here, of design-art. Each winner attempts to redress a social inequality, to change things for the better. Even if you need to read the label to get the full story, each of these winners contains a narrative that rewards the effort. By Edwin Heathcote- Financial Times (UK)

Closing Sunday (and worth seeing): a pair of shows weaving L.A. history and urbanism..."Small Case Study House" and "L.A. Unfolded: Maps From the Los Angeles Public Library" By Christopher Hawthorne -- Tsukamoto/Kajijima/Atelier Bow-Wow [images, links]- Los Angeles Times

Smithsonian Exhibits Six Architectural Models in Design Competition for New National Museum of African American History and Culture March 27 - April 3. -- Devroux & Purnell Architects/Pei Cobb Freed; Diller Scofidio + Renfro/KlingStubbins; Foster + Partners/URS; Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup; Moody Nolan/Antoine Predock- ArtDaily.org

Esto-ordinary Videos: ...a burned out Bed-Stuy school that was transformed by Robert A.M. Stern into the Excellence Charter School [and] a time lapse installation of KieranTimberlake's Cellophane House at MoMA's prefab show, Home Delivery. -- Albert Vecerka [videos]- The Architect's Newspaper

When the lights go out, bright minds pierce the dark: Their goal is to make Earth Hour more than a 'do your own thing' event- Globe and Mail (Canada)



-- Kengo Kuma & Associates: Shiseikan, Kyoto University of Art and Design, Kyoto, Japan
-- Splitterwerk: Frog Queen, Graz, Austria

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