

Today's News - Friday, July 9, 2010

EDITOR'S NOTE: Just a reminder that we're three hours behind home base for the next two weeks, so newsletter will be arriving a bit later than usual.

- Elbasani, the architect known for plans and buildings that revitalized American cities passed away last week at 69; a recent conversation with the gruff optimist and realistic urbanist about his history, inspirations, and aspirations.
- Kimmelman on the sad state of Rome's crumbling heritage: "The problems are not going to be solved by a few big stars designing buildings but by a larger effort to rethink a city."
- Astana, Kazakhstan, "one of the most astounding cityscapes between Beijing and Moscow" (a bit self-serving, but eye-popping video).
- Iceland's (hopeful) symbol of a rebound lies in the "artistic peacocking" of Eliasson/Henning Larsen's Harpa concert and conference center: "it's been the 'little building that could,' minus the 'little' bit."
- Albert Speer, Jr. thinks plans to turn Nazi rally grounds in Nuremberg into a UNESCO site is "a weird idea."
- A blow to conservationists as Robert Adam's (super) ambitious plan wins appeal to redevelop London's second-biggest private home after Buckingham Palace (talk about over the top!).
- King cheers the rebirth of the long-empty hospital on the edge of San Francisco's Presidio: "architectural make-believe never felt so right."
- Dunham-Jones on the next 50 years' big sustainable design project: retrofitting suburbia.
- A Kansas county has big plans to take the suburbs seriously with a National Museum of Suburban History (we'll keep an eye out for a call for proposals!).
- Pearman and Glancey see red - and like what they see - in Nouvel's Serpentine Pavilion (but neither has anything very nice to say about One Change Place, his first permanent London project).
- Hosey on Vanity Fair's list of greatest buildings of the last 30 years (see ANN, June 30): "what's missing says as much as what's on it."
- Sejima on designing the Louvre-Lens and curating the Venice Biennale (forget technology, new forms or politics - the focus will be "on architecture as a mere container for events, people and society").
- Hawthorne on Pitch: Africa, a prototype to combine soccer fields, a water-storage system and community centers - its "design is straightforward - a marriage of pragmatism and idealism."
- Deadline extended for Architect mag's 2010 Annual Design Review competition.
- Weekend diversions:
- A "smack down" in Chicago: Is Eye the next Bean? (one "is big and shiny"; the other "is big and ... scary").
- Heathcote cheers Hadid-designed "Zaha Hadid and Suprematism" in Zurich: "The transformation of this little gallery is spectacular and it is down to the architect."
- An architect thinks big in small pieces in "LEGO Architecture: Towering Ambition" at the National Building Museum.
- In Shanghai, "Creative Nature" showcases 10 proposals for public gardens designed by 10 universities from around the world (and they will be built!).
- We couldn't resist: "slow is the new fast" is the mantra behind plans for giant floating hotels (great pix!) - all they have to do now is create a new building material that will support them.

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Barry Elbasani, FAIA, 1941-2010: The architect known for plans and buildings that revitalized American cities passed away last week at 69. A recent conversation with the gruff optimist and realistic urbanist about his history, inspirations, and aspirations. By Kenneth Caldwell - ArchNewsNow

As Rome Modernizes, Its Past Quietly Crumbles: ...is looking to contemporary architecture to propel its new identity, while many emblems of its past decay...The problems are not going to be solved by a few big stars designing buildings but by a larger effort to rethink a city...where its past is crumbling. By Michael Kimmelman -- Richard Burdett; Richard Meier; Massimiliano Fuksas; Renzo Piano; Zaha Hadid [slide show] - New York Times

An Astounding Cityscape Springs from the Steppes of Kazakhstan: ...Astana will present itself as the capital that best connects Europe with Asia. For that to happen, President Nazarbayev wants his city to become a paradigm of a new age in architecture. -- Kisho Kurokawa; Foster + Partners [video] - Euronews

With a Building Adorned by Olafur Eliasson, Iceland Seeks a Rebound: ...Harpa, a concert and conference center in Reykjavik...In many ways it's been the "little building that could," minus the "little" bit...artistic peacocking looks glorious when approached by boat... -- Henning Larsen Architects [images] - Artinfo

Son of Hitler's chief architect denounces bid to turn Nazi rally grounds in Nuremberg into UNESCO site: Albert Speer, Jr., 75, who is also an architect, said...that a UNESCO listing was "a weird idea," the wrong way to deal with the Nazi site, and totally out of line with other nations' ways of preserving a repugnant past. - Ha'aretz (Israel)

Prince Charles architect wins appeal to redevelop £50m Highgate manor: Witanhurst in Highgate, London's second-biggest private home after Buckingham Palace...after lying empty for 40 years. Robert Adam's ambitious plans...were thrown out...decision has now been overturned...a blow to conservationists...who had objected to the proposals... [images] - Evening Standard (UK)

S.F. hospital gets proper treatment in makeover: ...the rebirth of the long-empty Public Health Service Hospital on the southern border of the Presidio...will reopen as 154 luxury apartments - and architectural make-believe never felt so right. By John King -- Perkins+Will [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

TEDTalks TEDxAtlanta: Ellen Dunham-Jones fires the starting shot for the next 50 years' big sustainable design project: retrofitting suburbia. To come: Dying malls rehabilitated, dead "big box" stores re-inhabited, parking lots transformed into thriving wetlands. [video] - TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design)

Derided No More, Suburban Life Turning Serious: Suburban America has been the butt of jokes and stereotypes for decades...Enough, say the Johnson County, Kansas, civic leaders planning a National Museum of Suburban History...With more than 50% of the country living in places like Shawnee, it's past time to take the suburbs seriously. [slide show] - KTVU (California)

Yes, we can see it's red. Anything else? ...these days, he likes to have a bit of a laugh as well. Hence the all-red Serpentine Pavilion...But here's the thing: it works, very well...building a huge and rather horrible behemoth of a commercial development just east of St. Paul's Cathedral, but - this pavilion, I like. Good old Jean. By Hugh Pearman -- Jean Nouvel [images] - HughPearman.com (UK)

The new Serpentine pavilion is a rhapsody in red: Jean Nouvel...tells Jonathan Glancey why he created a 'sun machine' in a London park (complete with ping-pong tables)... "This is not a perfect exercise in architecture...It's architecture on holiday"...his ideas can be as romantic as they are philosophical... [slide show, video] - Guardian (UK)

The Best Buildings from Three Decades? ...Vanity Fair's...21 "greatest buildings of the last 30 years"...what's missing says as much as what's on it...Apparently, today's experts are nostalgic for yesterday's icons. By Lance Hosey - Architect Magazine

The Language of Architecture: Pritzker Prize-winning architect Kazuyo Sejima on designing the Louvre-Lens and curating the Venice Architecture Biennale..."People Meet in Architecture" goes back to the essentials...focus is on architecture as a mere container for events, people and society. In short, architecture as background rather than foreground. -- SANAA- Wall Street Journal

Architects make a water-saving pitch: ...backed with a sizable grant from the Annenberg Foundation...Pitch: Africa...prototype for a new combination soccer field, water-storage system and community center designed for use in Africa...design is straightforward - a marriage of pragmatism and idealism. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Jane Harrison/David Turnbull/Atopia Research [image]- Los Angeles Times

Call for entries: Deadline Extended: 2010 Annual Design Review, a juried competition celebrating the best in a year of American architecture; open to professionals practicing in the United States or non-U.S. firms entering projects built in the U.S.; deadline: July 30- Architect Magazine

Is Eye the next Bean? It all depends...Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate is big and shiny...Tony Tasset's Eye is big and ... scary. Both have the magnetic capability to attract any and all tourists...Obviously, all the comparisons call for a smack down. And the winner is... [images, videos]- Chicago Tribune

"LEGO Architecture: Towering Ambition" at the National Building Museum, Washington, DC: Trained architect Adam Reed Tucker has recreated some of architecture's most famous structures - in LEGO form...this is no child's play. [image, links]- NBC Washington

Tomorrow's architecture yesterday: "Zaha Hadid and Suprematism": The transformation of this little gallery is spectacular and it is down to the architect...who has designed the installation to display a striking blend of Russian suprematist works...She may be a radical architect but even Hadid's forms have their roots in history. By Edwin Heathcote [images]- Financial Times (UK)

Crossing the Bridge Between Man and Nature: "Creative Nature" brings together 10 global universities to create 10,000 square meters of permanent gardens for China's ancient capital...July 10-Aug. 7 in Shanghai...will be implemented as part of 2011 Xi'an World Horticultural Expo... -- Qingyun Ma [images]- USC American Academy in China (AAC)

Future of air travel: giant floating hotels: Aircruise...a giant, kite-shaped airship that may herald a new era of luxury transport...set out to challenge the traditional mode of air travel on the premise "slow is the new fast"...The challenge is now to create a building material to support such a large structure in the air. -- Nick Talbot; Seymourpowell [images]- Brisbane Times (Australia)

Proper English, as in "Crikey, It's the Loo!": What in the Sam Hill are lippings, we beseeched? Answer: trim. Conversely, our colleagues from across the pond were anxious to know who, precisely, Mr. Sam Hill would be. By By Jim Coan/Centerbrook -- Hopkins Architects - ArchNewsNow



Competition winner: Henning Larsen Architects: Batumi Aquarium, Batumi, The Republic of Georgia

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