

Today's News - Wednesday, October 20, 2010

- Not such good news to start the day: CABE closed down - though "speculation is already rife that the commission could re-emerge in another format" (wasn't it recently reported that it would be saved from massive cuts?).
- On a brighter note, AIA's ABI reports U.S. architect billings increase for the first time since 2008: "It certainly looks like a sustainable recovery on the commercial and industrial side."
- Saffron cheers Philly finally starting a "long-overdue conversation" about transforming its vacant riverfront: "the most striking thing about the emerging master plan is the modesty of its ambition...And that is mostly as it should be."
- Litt cheers Cleveland finally getting serious about a greener, healthier vision for downtown: "The biggest question was whether this round of planning will give downtown the civilizing, touches it has lacked for decades."
- Bernstein has a most interesting Q&A with the urban planner charged with a "unique - and daunting - job: the reshaping of Detroit."
- A very interesting report on China's "sparkling new ghost towns"; the challenge for Beijing policy makers: is the "Ordos-style expansion and re-engineering of old cities being driven by smart planning or propelled by speculative madness"? (the answer seems a bit obvious to us - at this point, anyway).
- An in-depth look at the "last roar" of a fading Celtic Tiger: the man behind Calatrava's Chicago Spire: he really did believe it would be built, and "the prospect of once more being at the cutting edge was alluring for many Chicagoans."
- Heathcote tools around de Botton's Living Architecture projects and likes most of what he sees, but no matter what, "If it spurs a few visitors not just to refresh but to rethink their lives and their surroundings, he will have succeeded in doing something quite remarkable."
- Hales tools around Thom's Arena Stage: his "bell jar" approach to Weese's originals may make some preservationists "squirm," but he "believes he acted with respect."
- Long is left almost breathless by Hadid's Grace Academy: "an inspiring place...that promises something tangible and valuable for young people with hard lives...a special, out-of-the-ordinary environment without hyperventilation" (with just a few clunky moments).
- Betsky does Bartlesville: FLW's Price Tower is "an example of what American architecture can be at its most optimistic, its most grandiose, and its most beautiful" + Bruce Goff's Bavinger House is an example of "all-American weirdness": it may, in some ways, be "ugly and misshapen. But it is one of those great experiments in finding the basic form of how to occupy this land that makes American architecture great."
- On restoring Rochester's only FLW house: owning one "is a bit like owning a vintage Alfa Romeo - visionary design, but a challenge to keep in mint condition" (great slide show).
- Anderton has a lively conversation with a branding consultant and a graphic designer re: logos and when they need - or do not need - a refresh (think The Gap's gaffe).
- An eyeful of NZIA's 2010 Auckland Architecture Awards.
- But preservationists are offended by one that's more "façadism" than heritage-award worthy: "It's a joke, even if no one's laughing" (+ great slide show).
- A good reason to head to Austin, TX, next week: NTHP's National Preservation Conference: "Next American City, Next American Landscape."

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CABE closed down: The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is to be wound-up after the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) pulled its funding for the quango...design watchdog could have been sacrificed to allow the government to press on with a number of major arts projects...Speculation is already rife that the commission could re-emerge in another format. -- Paul Finch - The Architects' Journal (UK)

U.S. Architect Billings Increase for the First Time Since 2008: ...suggesting a recovery in construction spending might be under way..."It certainly looks like a sustainable recovery on the commercial and industrial side." -- AIA Architecture Billings Index/ABI- Bloomberg News

Master plan for riverfront nearly ready: It's been almost a decade since Philadelphia started a long-overdue conversation about transforming the vacant acres along the Delaware River into a vital urban neighborhood...the most striking thing about the emerging master plan is the modesty of its ambition...appear more attainable than schemes floated in the past. And that is mostly as it should be. By Inga Saffron -- Cooper, Robertson & Partners; Olin; KieranTimberlake [images]- Philadelphia Inquirer

Cleveland's Group Plan Commission launches debate on a greener, healthier vision for downtown: The impetus...is the glaring reality that after spending hundreds of millions in recent decades on investments...the city has done little to connect the new attractions to each other, to the Lake Erie waterfront and the Cuyahoga River. -- LMN Architects Gustafson Guthrie Nichol- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Can This Planner Save Detroit? Toni L. Griffin has just accepted a unique - and daunting - job: the reshaping of Detroit. She talks about population decline, urban ag, downtown's revival, and more. By Fred A. Bernstein- Architect Magazine

Chinese City Has Many Buildings, but Few People: China's sizzling economy has created a speculative real estate market - and, in some cases, sparking new ghost towns...determining whether the Ordos-style expansion and re-engineering of old cities is being driven by smart planning or propelled by speculative madness is a prime challenge for Beijing policy makers. [slide show]- New York Times

He reached for the sky: John Meagher profiles Garrett Kelleher, whose 150-storey skyscraper dream came to an end this week as the last roar of the Celtic Tiger fades..."he really did believe that the Chicago Spire would be built"...the prospect of once more being at the cutting edge was alluring for many Chicagoans. -- Santiago Calatrava- Independent.ie (Ireland)

Seaside surrealism: ...Alain de Botton decided to make his stand against the British obsession with heritage...an experiment with its heart in the right place...If...it spurs a few visitors not just to refresh but to rethink their lives and their surroundings, [he] will have succeeded in doing something quite remarkable. By Edwin Heathcote -- Living Architecture; JVA/Jarmund/Vigsnæs Arkitekter; MVRDV; Nord; Peter Zumthor- Financial Times (UK)

The Bell Jar: Bing Thom's daring expansion of the Arena Stage, in Washington, D.C., restores historic structures and creates a new icon by

enclosing Weese's two existing ones...But as an act of preservation, Thom's approach makes some observers squirm...[he] believes he acted with respect. By Linda Hales [images] - Metropolis Magazine

Evelyn Grace Academy is everything a school should be: ...intends to stand out as an inspiring place where generosity and ambition go hand-in-hand with an educational vision that promises something tangible and valuable for young people with hard lives...a special, out-of-the-ordinary environment without hyperventilation. By Kieran Long -- Zaha Hadid [images] - Evening Standard (UK)

Price Tower: All American Champion: Price Tower is a monument to America's natural resources as much as its real skyscrapers and its grain silos, those vertical containers of wealth gleaned from the land and condensed in one place. It is its very exuberance that makes it so American...an example of what American architecture can be at its most optimistic, its most grandiose, and its most beautiful. By Aaron Betsky -- Frank Lloyd Wright [image] - Architect Magazine

Bruce Goff's Bavinger House: All-American Weirdness; I have always been intrigued by...the rebel prairie architect, queer commander of plastics and stones alike, who reinvented one small part of the American home...It is, in many ways, ugly and misshapen. But it is one of those great experiments in finding the basic form of how to occupy this land that makes American architecture great. By Aaron Betsky [images] - Architect Magazine

Preserving a 'Rochester treasure': Restoration of the Frank Lloyd Wright Boynton House: Owning a Frank Lloyd Wright house is a bit like owning a vintage Alfa Romeo - visionary design, but a challenge to keep in mint condition. [slide show] - City Newspaper (Rochester, NY)

DnA/Frances Anderton: When Is a Logo a No-Go? After a lengthy and costly redesign process, Gap unveiled a new logo, to outrage from customers. So they went back to the old one...branding consultant Sasha Strauss and graphic designer Michael Hodgson talk about logos and when they need - or do not need - a refresh; Yves Béhar talks about creating a Herman Miller chair for our time. - KCRW (Los Angeles)

2010 Auckland Architecture Awards: ...entries showed that despite the recession very high quality and exciting architect designed buildings are being built in the region. -- Patterson Associates; Fearon Hay Architects; SGA/Strachan Group Architects; Archoffice; Maxcey Architects; Warren and Mahoney; Woods Bagot; Dave Pearson Architects; Peddle Thorp Aitken; Wingate + Farquhar; Opus Architecture; Herriot + Melhuish: Architecture; Upton Architects; McIlldowie Partners; Architecture Brewer Davidson; Pete Bossley Architects; Matthews & Matthews; HB Architecture; Stephenson & Turner NZ; etc. [images, links] - e-architect (UK)

Critics slate heritage award for 'facadism': A heritage architecture award for the remnants of Auckland's Jean Batten Building has offended preservationists...the final insult to what little was left of the building, now incorporated into the Deloitte Tower..."It's a bit of a joke after all the work that went into trying to preserve it" + Brian Rudman: It's a joke, even if no one's laughing -- New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA); Warren and Mahoney; Woods Bagot; Dave Pearson Architects [slide show] - New Zealand Herald

National Preservation Conference: "Next American City, Next American Landscape" spotlights preservation's role in defining the future of our nation's urban and rural communities; Oct 27-30, in Austin, Texas - National Trust for Historic Preservation/NTHP



Exhibition & Symposium: "Image. Architecture.Now," Julius Shulman Institute, Woodbury University
Burbank, California: Photographer Iwan Baan was presented with the 1st annual Julius Shulman Photography Award. [images]

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