

Today's News - Monday, November 29, 2010

EDITOR'S NOTE: As always, just a few days away and we have lots of catching up to do this week (including lotsa cultcha).

- ArcSpace brings us breathtaking eyefuls of Fogo Island Artist Studios in Newfoundland, Hadid's Evelyn Grace Academy, and a stunning book that documents "a vanishing people in war-torn Sudan."
- Ouroussoff got NYT's front page with his exhaustive report from Abu Dhabi and Qatar re: high hopes for high culture in forging an Arab identity in a global society - the good, the bad, and the questionable.
- This includes the just-released plans for Foster's Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi intended to showcase heritage, history, and sustainability on the "wingtips of falcons" (BD has some stunning images).
- Campbell, meanwhile, finds Foster's MFA Boston "a triumph of intelligence and pragmatism"; even with its "disappointing" façade, the new wing is "a deeply humane, deeply thoughtful piece of architecture."
- Russell x 2: he's taken by Foster's glass cube that "dazzles" and a "planning rigor" that "comes with a silky sleekness...as finely machined as an airliner fuselage" and "sublime glimpses that take you by surprise."
- He's much kinder than Saffron was to Polshek's National Museum of American Jewish History that is a "welcome contrast to the underwhelming parade of institutions" on the "drab" Philadelphia Mall.
- Glancey, Woodman, Merrick, and Moore give (mostly) good reviews to revamped Royal Shakespeare Company's theater: "engrossing, neutral and strange" is indicative (and no one seems very thrilled about the tower).
- Calatrava's Peace Bridge in Calgary is behind schedule, but it's not his fault: his responsibility is for the design and not the construction schedule.
- A most interesting report on CEOs for Cities Community Challenge and The Us Initiative (some amazing things going on under the radar!).
- Modesto Art Museum takes on its own city's urban problems.
- Litt's analysis of the casino design process in Cleveland: it's "a glimpse of a major urban project in the making" - but what to make of a developer who doesn't want to share an uber-glitz video with the public just yet (but he got his hands on it for us to see).
- NYC's transportation commissioner Sadik-Khan "elicits love, and loathing, from New Yorkers" by "executing, on a sweeping scale, some of the globe's hottest urban-planning concepts."
- Next up will be Manhattan's Hudson Square and a "high-powered makeover team" tapped to make it greener, prettier, and more people-friendly.
- Another report on the mass destruction of Beijing's hutongs: "it's time for preservationists and architects to find ways to protect them and ensure their viability."
- Chinese fraudsters fake U.K. firms' identities in hopes to getting juicy contracts.
- A photographer's portfolio of FDR's 1930s Greenbelt Towns built with the "hope that American citizens would meet the challenges of the Great Depression in a spirit of cooperation" (are there lessons for us today?).

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-- Saunders Architecture: Fogo Island Artist Studios, Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada
-- Zaha Hadid Architects: Evelyn Grace Academy, London, UK
-- Book: DINKA: Legendary Cattle Keepers of Sudan, By Angela Fisher & Carol Beckwith

Building Museums, and a Fresh Arab Identity: In Abu Dhabi and Qatar, large cultural projects...are being planned and built in an effort to reshape corners of the modern Arab world...to instill national pride in a new generation of Emiratis while providing citizens with tools, both intellectual and psychological, for living in a global society. By Nicolai Ouroussoff -- Frank Gehry; Jean Nouvel; Foster & Partners; Tadao Ando; I.M. Pei; Herzog & de Meuron; Zaha Hadid; Bernard Tschumi; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; UNStudio - New York Times

Foster & Partners' Abu Dhabi museum takes flight: Five lightweight towers of the Zayed National Museum work like the "feathers of a bird's wing"...References to falcons and flight are deliberate... [images]- BD/Building Design (UK)

Museum showcases heritage, history and sustainability: Education, conservation, environmental protection, preserving heritage, and the embrace of progress...will be celebrated when the Zayed National Museum opens on Saadiyat Island in 2014...the building is meant to resemble the wingtips of falcons, a symbol of UAE heritage and culture. -- Foster + Partners - The National (UAE)

A wing that works: The beauty of the MFA's expansion is how it showcases the art without calling attention to itself. The handsome new Art of the Americas Wing at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston is a place for looking at art, not a place for looking at architecture...a triumph of intelligence and pragmatism. It's better inside than outside... By Robert Campbell -- Guy Lowell (1909); I.M. Pei (1981); Foster + Partners; CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares [images]- Boston Globe

Glass Cube Dazzles at Museum of Fine Arts Boston's \$345 Million Art of the Americas Wing ...the new heart of the museum...The planning rigor comes with a silky sleekness...austere courtyard walls are as finely machined as an airliner fuselage...glass-walled passages that cross slot-like spaces between the new and old wings. They open long narrow views...sublime glimpses that take you by surprise. By James S. Russell -- Spencer de Grey/Foster + Partners [images]- Bloomberg News

Refined National Museum of American Jewish History Shows Up Drab Philadelphia Mall: ...a welcome contrast to the underwhelming parade of institutions...Though beautiful, the building's elements seem engaged in a private conversation with one another, when the museum needs to offer a vigorous public invitation. By James S. Russell -- James Stewart Polshek/Ennead Architects [images]- Bloomberg News

Royal Shakespeare Theatre: All's well ... that ends well. At last, Stratford-upon-Avon finally has a theatre worthy of Shakespeare's name...The complex feels like a town in itself, one that now reaches out to its surroundings. By Jonathan Glancey -- Elisabeth Scott (1927); Rab Bennetts/Bennetts Associates [images]- Guardian (UK)

The RSC: Stratford unveils its dramatic vision: After a £113 million and three-and-a-half year transformation...a project of dizzying intricacy -- the product of highly taxing technical and conservation constraints -- and not everything about it succeeds; but Boyd's vision of the future of theatre shines through it vividly. By Ellis Woodman -- Elisabeth Scott; Bennetts Associates - Telegraph (UK)

Home of Shakespeare deserves architecture with a sense of drama: Royal Shakespeare Theatre's transformation...has turned a famously stolid architectural mongrel into a re-branded 21st-century visitor experience that is, by turns, engrossing, neutral and strange. By Jay Merrick -- Elisabeth Scott (1932); Bennetts Associates; Buro Happold; Charcoalblue - Independent

(UK)

Royal Shakespeare theatre complex, Stratford-upon-Avon: The revamped RSC...has its faults, but it will make watching Shakespeare a more rewarding experience...Problem-solving and process over-dominate...Contemporary architecture tends to oscillate between the iconic and the efficient...in going from van Egeraat to Bennetts, [RSC] has experienced both. Given that choice, it has made the right one, but it has missed out something else... By Rowan Moore -- Bennetts Associates - Observer (UK)

Peace Bridge delays not my fault, designer Santiago Calatrava says: ...said his firm is committed to ensuring the project's beauty, but the construction delays have little to do with him...\$24.5-million pedestrian span won't be ready until June - eight months behind schedule...[he] noted his responsibility is for the design and not the construction schedule.- Calgary Herald (Canada)

CEOs for Cities Community Challenge: Robust Public Life: On seeking to define and qualify what attracts us to cities...latest project, The Us Initiative, aims to redefine the American Dream by exploring five key elements of it in a series of five multiday challenge events. By Maria Popova- Change Observer

Modesto Art Museum takes on City's Urban Problems: Building a Better Modesto Uses Principles of American Institute of Architects' 10 Principles for Livable Communities...a series of events and activities exploring the place of architecture, landscape, public art, and urban design...- Modesto Art Museum

Rock Ventures' casino design process in Cleveland needs to be transparent: ...video demonstrates the power of computer technology to create highly realistic images of architectural plans...raises questions about how committed the company is to a fully open and public design process...a glimpse of a major urban project in the making...the public needs time to fully understand... By Steven Litt -- Friedmutter Group [images, video]- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Janette Sadik-Khan's drive alters city: The transportation commissioner's changes elicit love, and loathing, from New Yorkers...has transformed an agency long associated with humdrum tasks like filling potholes into an organization that is executing, on a sweeping scale, some of the globe's hottest urban-planning concepts.- Crain's New York Business

Hudson Sq. taps high-powered makeover team: Seven firms led by Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects will put a greener, prettier Hudson Square on the map; reclaiming for pedestrians streets built to handle heavy truck traffic. -- Rogers Marvel Architects; Billings Jackson Design; ARUP; Open; Mercator Land Surveying; VJ Associates- Crain's New York

Siheyuan and Hutongs: The Mass Destruction and Preservation of Beijing's Courtyard Houses...it's time for preservationists and architects to find ways to protect them and ensure their viability. [images]- AIArchitect

Aedas and Broadway Malyan fall victim to Chinese fraudsters: Practices are among those to have identities faked by firms seeking work in China- BD/Building Design (UK)

New Deal Utopias: A portfolio of contemporary images, by photographer Jason Reblando, of Greenbelt Towns built in the '30s as part of FDR's New Deal...Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin...Not only were they prototypes of postwar suburbs; they also embodied the hope that American citizens would meet the challenges of the Great Depression in a spirit of cooperation. [slide show]- Places Journal

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