

## Today's News - Tuesday, January 10, 2012

- A sad note to start the day: tributes pour in for Isi Metzstein, "the conscience of the architectural profession in Scotland."
- After a long silence, the Helsinki Guggenheim feasibility study goes public, expecting it to go forward (with a competition surely to follow - we'll keep an eye out).
- Aedas chairman claims western architects (a.k.a. starchitects) who were/are being "badly burnt in Abu Dhabi have only themselves to blame."
- Saffron on "suburbia's outer ring losing shine": the competition "is no longer between cities and suburbs, but between places that have density and good transit connections and those that don't."
- Berg examines two studies that are trying to determine why "some neighborhoods get overrun with chain stores, while others don't": the results could mean "cities may be able to detect gaps in services and encourage businesses to fill them."
- Russell reports on an über-green building in Seattle with "self-imposed high standards" that had its architects and suppliers jumping through some hefty hoops.
- Developer of MVRDV's Cloud towers in Seoul says it will stick to the design: "Allegations that the design was inspired by the 9/11 attacks are groundless."
- The prince of Poundbury sets his sight on Port-au-Prince, along with a few U.K. plans as well ("Surfbury" anyone?).
- Dvir x 2: critics have not been kind to Karmi's renovation of the Habima Theater in Tel Aviv, but the architect could give a hoot: "'nobody talks about my good buildings,' he gripes."
- He tells a most interesting tale of "one of the most fascinating modern architectural experiments ever attempted in Jerusalem" - with an iffy future.
- Herron reflects on his home town of Detroit: "This city is never coming back; whatever happens next will be without urban precedent because the context of city no longer applies in this place where history has finally run out" (great pix).
- Biber on the similarities between London's Commonwealth Institute ("a quirky 1962 white elephant") and Berlin's Palast der Republik: their lives as monuments to lost empires and their future as museums.
- Bey x 2: the sad fate of a once-stunning, now derelict former 1913 synagogue in Chicago moving closer to the wrecker's ball + a brief history and fate of a number of modernist gas stations from the '60s and '70s that "were clever, efficient little buildings" (great pix for both).
- Houston implodes a tower that had been a part of the city's urban landscape for 60 years (it would have cost more to renovate than to demolish - or so they say).
- It's not particularly an architectural story, but a fascinating analysis of how OWS and Tahrir Square expose the limits of the Town Square Test: "we can learn a lot about any country by what people are, and are not, allowed to say and do in public spaces" (who knew there was even such a thing?!?!?).
- Berger hands out his Heritage Turkeys Awards: "Who did most to raze, wreck, uproot, neglect, and generally trash our historic treasures in 2011?" (they're not all in Seattle, either).
- Call for entries: Open ideas competition for the urban-architectural conceptual design for Block Badel in Zagreb, Croatia.

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Obituary: Tributes pour in for Isi Metzstein, 83: ...worked with Andy MacMillan at Gillespie Kidd & Coia..."Isi was the conscience of the architectural profession in Scotland"... -- Charlie Hussey/Colin Harris/Sutherland Hussey; Angela Brady; Neil Gillespie/Reiach and Hall Architects; Clare Wright/Wright and Wright [slide show] - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Helsinki Finishes Year-Long Study, Now Ready to Get Serious About Getting a Guggenheim: ...suddenly after a year of relative silence, both the organization and Helsinki's government are back to chatting publicly about their collaboration...museum would be built on a City-owned site along the South Harbor waterfront... [link to report] - UnBeige

Abu Dhabi architects were 'overoptimistic': Western architects badly burnt in Abu Dhabi have only themselves to blame...Aedas head Keith Griffiths accused practices such as Austin-Smith Lord, Frank Gehry and Jean Nouvel of misunderstanding the scale and pace of work in the emirate. - BD/Building Design (UK)

Suburbia's outer ring losing shine, some economists say: "The word suburb has lost its meaning"...The real competition...is no longer between cities and suburbs, but between places that have density and good transit connections and those that don't. By Inga Saffron -- Christopher B. Leinberger; Edward Glaeser; Alan Berube- Philadelphia Inquirer

Why Do Some Neighborhoods Get Overrun With Chain Stores, While Others Don't? Researchers are working on better understanding the interrelated shifts of retail, demographics, and hyperlocal economies...By better understanding the tendencies of specific types of retail to emerge in certain situations, cities may be able to detect gaps in services and encourage businesses to fill them. By Nate Berg -- Rachel Meltzer; Jenny Schuetz; Jed Kolko/Trulia- The Atlantic Cities

Seattle's Bullitt Foundation Goes Green With Toilets, Cooling Hat: ...reflects founder Dorothy Bullitt's aspiration to turn the Pacific Northwest into a global model of environmental sustainability...building cleans and reuses its own waste water and generates its minimal energy use with solar panels...Its self-imposed high standards have often been a challenge to the project's architect. By James S. Russell -- Miller Hull Partnership; Living Building Challenge [images] - Bloomberg News

No u-turn on MVRDV's '9/11' towers: Developer to stick with "collapsing World Trade Centre" design for South Korea Cloud scheme..."Allegations that the design was inspired by the 9/11 attacks are groundless." - BD/Building Design (UK)

First Poundbury, now Port-au-Prince: the Prince with a craving for paving: Charles's ambitious housebuilding plans are not to everybody's tastes...a significant step in the onward march of what is becoming a development juggernaut -- the property empire of the Prince of Wales...Cornwall County Council allowed a new housing estate...on the edge of Newquay, the seaside town known as Britain's surfing capital...has been dubbed "Surfbury" by locals. -- Foundation for the Built Environment; Campaign to Protect Rural England- Independent (UK)

Sets and the city in Tel Aviv: Ram Karmi doesn't care what you think about his renovation of the Habima Theater. Its purpose isn't to connect with the street, he declares, but rather to act as a monument to the arts...Many see it as an impervious cube...an enclosed fortress designed with an aggressive architectural sensibility..."nobody talks about my good buildings," he gripes. By Noam Dvir -- Dan Eytan; Ada Karmi-Melamede- Ha'aretz (Israel)

Back to the Future / A giant beehive abuzz with controversy: From innovative to bizarre, Ramot Polin was called many things when it was built in the eighties. Today...still the subject of debate...It was one of the most fascinating modern architectural experiments ever attempted in Jerusalem: an avant-garde public housing project...part of an exceptional attempt to create local architecture on a large scale...gave a free hand to leading architects... By Noam Dvir -- Zvi Hecker; Ram Carmi; Abraham Yaski; Aryeh and Eldar Sharon [image]- Ha'aretz (Israel)

The Forgetting Machine: Notes Toward a History of Detroit: Jerry Herron reflects on his home city of Detroit, tracking the excesses of ruin porn, the decline of Hudson's, and the improbable hopefulness of the retrofitted carpark in the gutted theater. [images]- Places Journal

Vestige(s) of Empire: Commonwealth Institute, a quirky 1962 white elephant...Once filled with extensive exhibitions on Britain's vanishing empire...the only reason we think about the building in London is as the Design Museum's choice for its new home...In Berlin there was a similar monument to Empire, the Palast der Republik...they both had, or will have, lives as art museums... By James Biber -- John Pawson; RMJM/Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall (1962); Heinz Graffunder/Karl Ernst Swora (1976) [images]- Design Observer

Time grows short for historic North Lawndale synagogue: A derelict former synagogue could get substantially closer to the wrecker's ball [as] officials begin putting the edifices' demolition contract out to bid...Preservation Chicago placed the 1913 edifice on its 'Chicago Seven'-most endangered buildings list in 2011...anyone looking to rescue the building would have to demonstrate to the city their financial ability to do so. By Lee Bey [images]- WBEZ Chicago Public Radio

A throwback to the high-octane days of modernist gas station design: The 600 or so Clark Super 100 stations built in the '60s and '70s were clever, efficient little buildings. Their tilted glass and angular roofs suggested modernity - and were a perfect way to reinforce the element of speed...Of the old school stations that escaped demolition...a few are still operated as non-Clark stations, and others more have been converted... By Lee Bey [images, links]- WBEZ Chicago Public Radio

Historic Prudential Building in the Texas Medical Center comes tumbling down: It took less than 20 seconds for the building that had been a part of Houston's urban landscape for 60 years to fall...the cost of renovations to the building...would have cost more than demolishing the building...the decision...has been lamented by preservationists. -- Kenneth Franzheim (1952) [images]- Houston News (Texas)

Occupy Wall Street, Tahrir Square Expose Limits of Town Square Test: Central plazas were key places for political action in 2011, but historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom says the Town Square Test fails as a method for assessing the divide between democracy and authoritarian...we can learn a lot about any country by what people are, and are not, allowed to say and do in public spaces. - Miller-McCune

Heritage Turkeys Awards of the year: Who did most to raze, wreck, uproot, neglect, and generally trash our historic treasures in 2011? The envelopes, please... By Knute Berger [images, links]- Crosscut (Seattle)

Call for entries: Open ideas competition for the urban-architectural conceptual design for Block Badel in Zagreb, Croatia; cash prizes; deadline: April 5- Zagreb Society of Architects (ZSA/ DAZ) / City Of Zagreb



Steven Holl Architects: Cité de l'Océan et du Surf, Biarritz, France

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