
Today's News - Wednesday, July 18, 2012

- Doig does a nifty job of parsing the essays debate re: "creative class urbanism": perhaps "coffee shops and bike shares aren't a real urban policy."
- Priestman ponders who will design the homes of the future if architecture students aren't being taught how to design them: "With a lack of structural knowledge taught at universities, it is easy to see why we create so many terrible buildings."
- Torpiano laments that Malta's "built environment is, generally speaking, ugly and getting uglier," so it's time to re-think how buildings are commissioned: "The young designers of the heritage of the future cannot be selected on the basis of who is cheapest."
- Rykwert, Olcayto, Finch, Heathcote, and others enter a lively debate about what the 2012 RIBA Awards tell us (it's not all hearts and flowers).
- Berger is more than a bit cautious about Seattle's billion-dollar waterfront plans: "are we to become a breeding ground for white elephants?" ("scaled back ambitions" might be smarter).
- Ulam reports on the possibility of Toronto scaling back MVA's grand Lower Don Lands river reclamation plan: it "may succumb to value engineering" (or even turn into a "fire sale of assets" to developers).
- Iovine is a bit concerned about NYC's "city-wide trend of pumping up the volume at outdoor venues" that "favors tricked-out park amenities and flashy attractions over continuing attention to maintenance" (though HWKN's "Wendy" at PS1 "looks spectacular from the elevated subways leaving Queens").
- Kamin gives a hearty "a thumbs-up on function" but a disheartening "thumbs-down on form" to Chicago's new Ronald McDonald House: it "serves families better than it serves the skyline."
- H&deM's Tate Modern Tanks space is ready for its close-up + Herzog pens his recollections of his first visit to the Tanks, a "dark, sinister industrial world...yet it also had a romantic side to it."
- Lerner on the world's tiniest car made by MIT's Media Lab: "When is Hiriko coming? Sometime after the day after tomorrow."
- Bey offers an eyeful of amazing archival images of Chicago's long-gone McCormick Inn, courtesy of its original architect: the interiors had "a Hefner-esque cheese quality going for them - but hey it was the '70s."
- Call for entries: Gowanus by Design's Water_Works Open Design and Planning Competition.
- One we couldn't resist: an Austrian court orders a farmer to remove the cowbells from his herd because the endless clanging keeps residents awake (he's refusing, "arguing that they were traditional and had a generally calming effect").

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Hipsters won't save us: Buzzed-about essays debate the "creative class." Maybe coffee shops and bike shares aren't a real urban policy! There's no shame in discussing this. There's a lot of gray area between Ponzi scheme and perfection. By Will Doig -- Richard Florida; Thomas Frank [links]- Salon

Working lives: who will design the homes of the future? Houses are among the most common structures built today, so why are architecture students not taught how to design them? With a lack of structural knowledge taught at universities, it is easy to see why we create so many terrible buildings. By Louise Priestman - Guardian (UK)

How to build heritage: ...the chairman of Din I-Art Helwa [National Trust of Malta]...declared that, of the many buildings erected...in the last 40 years, there was no single building... she felt that she would wish to keep...Our built environment is, generally speaking, ugly and getting uglier...The young designers of the heritage of the future cannot be selected on the basis of who is cheapest. By Alex Torpiano - Times of Malta

Joseph Rykwert: 'OMA's Rothschild is a symbol of Britain's oligarchy'...symbolic of our undemocratic society: ...warned the Shard could be symbol of a worsening economic climate...at a debate: British Architecture Now - what do the 2012 RIBA Awards tell us? -- Rory Olcayto; Paul Finch; Edwin Heathcote; Murray Fraser; Alison Brooks; Rem Koolhaas; Renzo Piano - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Seattle's billion-dollar waterfront: Worried about the risks of the SoDo arena plan? Just take a look at the bill for the new waterfront park...are we to become a breeding ground for white elephants? An alternative would be less public space, scaled back ambitions, more private development...and less worry about trying to move tourists from one place to another. What about actual commuters? By Knute Berger -- James Corner Field Operations [images, links]- Crosscut (Seattle)

Flow With It: Award-winning Toronto river reclamation and development plan may succumb to value engineering...A new controversy is brewing over the fate of...the Lower Don Lands..."[The mayor and his brother] see it just as a fire sale of assets"... By Alex Ulam -- Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates; Waterfront Toronto; planningAlliance; Ken Greenberg [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Turning Up the Volume in Public: The simple pleasures of a walk in the park are fast becoming outmoded by...souped-up public space...The acme of overwrought spaces for public fun has to be the Young Architects Program organized by MoMA PS1...also fuels a less universally welcome attitude...that favors tricked-out park amenities...and flashy attractions over continuing attention to maintenance...Meanwhile, the Hudson River Park is crumbling. By Julie V. Iovine -- HWKN - Wall Street Journal

Chicago's new Ronald McDonald House...serves families better than it serves the skyline: ...a neither-fish-nor-fowl design...But it redeems itself by being thoroughly attuned to the needs — practical, emotional and social — of the people who use it. By Blair Kamin -- Antunovich Associates; Gettys [images]- Chicago Tribune

Herzog & de Meuron's Tate Modern Tanks unveiled: ...opened its transformation of a former oil reservoir into a new performance arts space + Jacques Herzog recalls his first visit to the Tate Modern Tanks and explains how their sinister and dark rawness still shapes and inspires the museum. [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Is Driving One of the Tiniest Cars in the World In Your Future? A minuscule car that folds up to just 60 inches, made by MIT's Media Lab, will be deployed in cities around the world for neighborly sharing...When is Hiriko coming? Sometime after the day after tomorrow. By Jonathan Lerner -- Kent Larson [images]- Pacific Standard

Courtesy of the architect: A brief return trip to the long-demolished McCormick Inn: It's already been gone as long as it was there. Gone — but apparently not forgotten...the most entertaining response came from Epstein Global, the 91-year-old Chicago...firm that designed the hotel. By Lee Bey [images]- WBEZ Chicago Public Radio

Call for entries: Water_Works: An Open Design and Planning Competition: generate a new typology that will emerge from the symbiotic relationship of a community center and a sewage management facility; cash prizes; Registration Deadline: October 19; Submission Deadline: December 14 - Gowanus by Design

Austrian Court Bans Cowbells After Noise Dispute: ...the constant clanging can be annoying...court ordered a farmer to remove the bells after residents complained they couldn't get any sleep...because of the endless clanging. The owner had refused...arguing that they were traditional and had a generally calming effect. - Der Spiegel (Germany)



-- Park Associati: The Cube, London, UK...a nomadic, stateless and cosmopolitan piece of architecture, a pavilion designed to host a small, temporary restaurant.
-- Gabriela Gomes: Shelter ByGG, Guimarães, Portugal...a mobile, sustainable and itinerant sculpture installed in a public space.

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