

Today's News - Tuesday, August 18, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: We won't be posting the newsletter tomorrow because we'll be swimming with fishies - well, actually riding WXY's SeaGlass carousel (check out Dunlap's review and video below, and you'll understand why we decided to make it a no-newsletter day!). We'll be back Thursday...

- Wainwright minces no words about what he thinks of the winning design for a youth center next to the now-listed Preston Bus Station: it's getting "a zombie makeover - a gigantic fridge-freezer. What an insult."
- Keith offers a most thoughtful take on what it will take to make life livable in 2065: "The naïve belief in technological fixes to deep social and economic problems has left many lasting scars in the urban landscape...we need to lay solid foundations for the future by developing the deepest possible understanding of the present" so we'll have "the very best chance to thrive."
- Budds delves deep into how much design plays a role in making innovation districts work: they can be a "potent driver for growth - but it's who moves in that will ultimately deem them successes."
- As China exports "its own version of urbanization" across Africa, an architect and a journalist have been investigating "whether China's model of urbanism can work in Africa. Their conclusion? Doubtful" (with pix to prove it - ugh).
- Iyer finds intriguing similarities between Las Vegas and the North Korean capital Pyongyang: "both really felt like hallucinations, designed to dazzle (or defeat) the innocent...both cities are products of a mid-20th-century spirit that saw what power and profit could be found in constructing mass fantasies ab nihilo" (a great read!).
- Russell cheers the evolution of the National Mall that "promises to be subtle, yet extraordinary, and brings a human scale and an appealing American idealism to spaces where self-conscious and overbearing grandeur have held sway for too long."
- The 40-year saga of what is bringing downtown Columbus, Ohio, "back from the undead": reclaiming its once-dammed river plays a huge part.
- Dunlap has a whirlingly good time at the SeaGlass carousel about to open in Lower Manhattan: "Don't expect a carousel ride like any you remember"; children's "laughter echoed in the pavilion, sounding a bit like dolphins on the loose" (check out the video! We'll be doing the same tomorrow morning - hence, no newsletter).
- Q&A with TCLF's Birnbaum re: the fate of Friedberg's Pershing Park in light of the World War I Memorial design competition, "and how the submissions threaten the integrity of the site."
- Brussat can barely contain his joy at seeing the classic design for the University of Notre Dame's new School of Architecture (designed by a Brit) that "beautifully suggests its role in rolling back the continuing attack on the built environment. May the new campus be swiftly erected, occupied with brio, and boost the spirit of the classical revival!"
- We love happy endings: how the Portland chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority bought an abandoned, smelly, graffiti-smearred gas station and "turned into a shimmering eco-paradise" for the community.
- Why prefab could be "the new frontier" - once it gets over its "enduring image problem," it "may provide an antidote to a skills shortage in the construction industry and alleviate a housing affordability crisis."
- St. Hill has a great take on Perry/FAT's A House for Essex: it's "a suitably 'bonkers' addition to the north Essex landscape. As bonkers as the architecture is, the story behind it is even more bizarre, playful and just a little bit disturbing."
- An investigation into the ballooning cost of Kuma's V&A Dundee finds it "could never be built to budget," and recommends that, "in future, decision making for major projects including the selection of designs should be supported by fully detailed cost estimates" (what a concept!).
- Pearman explains why he's an architecture critic and not an architect, and "how the worlds of writing and architecture are so very close" (another great read).
- The Chicago Architecture Biennial issues the complete (and impressive!) roster of more than 100 architects and artists from more than 30 countries participating in its inaugural year.
- Call for entries: Participate in "Extraordinary Playscapes," a new national touring exhibition and education program.

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'This design is total rubbish': Preston's majestic bus station gets a zombie makeover: Years of campaigning have led to this: a £13m gigantic fridge-freezer dumped beside Preston's iconic bus station in a bid to revive it. What an insult. By Oliver Wainwright -- Building Design Partnership (1969); John Puttick Associates [images]- Guardian (UK)

Cities, cyborgs and social science: how will we live in the year 2065? The naïve belief in technological fixes to deep social and economic problems has left many lasting scars in the urban landscape...we need to lay solid foundations for the future by developing the deepest possible understanding of the present...identifying how these urban environments -- and the millions of people who create and inhabit them -- can be given the very best chance to thrive. By Michael Keith/COMPAS/University of Oxford -- Economic and Social Research Council/Urban Transformations - The Conversation (UK)

Can You Design Innovation? Innovation districts are popping up all over the country. But will they work? ...have generated substantial momentum recently...While investment in urban form and making a place seem beautiful and attractive seems subjective, it's becoming a potent driver for growth...but it's who moves in that will ultimately deem them successes. By Diana Budds -- Bruce Katz; Hacin + Associates; Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); SHoP Architects; West 8; Studio Gang; Sou Fujimoto; Aranda Lasch [images]- Fast Company / Co.Design

African cities are starting to look eerily like Chinese ones: Across the continent, Chinese companies are building highways, railways, sports stadiums, mass housing complexes, and sometimes entire cities...exporting its own version of urbanization...Journalist Michiel Hulsof...and architect Daan Roggeven...began visiting the continent in 2013 to document and investigate whether China's model of urbanism can work in Africa. Their conclusion? Doubtful. [images]- Quartz

Empty Cities: Where the North Korean capital [Pyongyang] seemed as vacant and two-dimensional as a textbook photograph, Las Vegas was overflowing with an excess of animal high spirits; but both really felt like hallucinations, designed to dazzle (or defeat) the innocent...one is a sort of adolescent's Girls Gone Wild vision of freedom run amok...the other is a terrifying model of order and regimentation...both cities are products of a mid-20th-century spirit that saw what power and profit could be found in constructing mass fantasies ab nihilo... By Pico Iyer [images]- New York Review of Books

America's front yard: Transforming the National Mall: ...turf is finally being upgraded...restored Washington Monument reopened. Further transformation promises to be subtle, yet extraordinary...the recent evolution brings a human scale and an appealing American idealism to spaces where self-conscious and overbearing grandeur have held sway for too long. By James S. Russell -- Weiss/Manfredi; OLIN; Rogers Partners; Peter Walker Partners; David Adjaye; Freelon Group; Davis Brody Bond - The Economist (UK)

Columbus, Ohio, Condemns Dam, Reclaims a City Center: Reclaiming the Scioto River is the latest piece of the puzzle in Columbus' downtown revitalization...The Scioto Greenways project is itself the first phase of a larger plan to create a new arts and culture anchor...two multiphase redevelopment programs have brought downtown Columbus back from the undead. - Next City (formerly Next American City)

New York's New Carousel Puts You in a Whirling School of Mechanized Fish: The \$16 million SeaGlass carousel brings 30 spinning, color-changing fish to Lower Manhattan...Don't expect a carousel ride like any you remember...peals of the children told the story. Their laughter echoed in the pavilion, sounding a bit like dolphins on the loose. By David W. Dunlap -- Claire Weisz/Mark Yoes/Layng Pew/WXY; George Tsylin Opera Factory; Marc Simmons/Front Inc.; Kyle Chepulis/Technical Artistry [images, video]- New York Times

Q+A: Charles Birnbaum, President and CEO of The Cultural Landscape Foundation: ...discusses the ongoing design competition for a new World War I memorial at the existing Pershing Park, and how the submissions threaten the integrity of the site..."it's not an issue of something falling from favor...it's about deferred maintenance. And so often what happens is that there's a major reaction to get rid of it..." -- M. Paul Friedberg; Oehme van Sweden [images]- Architect Magazine

New HQ for classical revival: University of Notre Dame...the unchallenged headquarters of the classical revival...has announced a design for the new campus of its School of Architecture...beautifully suggests its role in rolling back the continuing attack on the built environment...May the new campus be swiftly erected, occupied with brio, and boost the spirit of the classical revival! By David Brussat -- John Simpson Architects [images]- Architecture Here and There

How an inspiring group of women built one of the greenest buildings in Portland: ...chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority purchased a long-abandoned gas station...the idea was to use it as a meeting place. But it was a little dirty. Correction: "It was nasty!"...From a graffiti-smearred gas station, the June Key Delta Community Center has turned into a shimmering eco-paradise, well on its way to meeting the Living Building Challenge... -- Greg Acker; Mark Nye- Grist Magazine

Modular: the new frontier: Dispelling the connotations of bland standardisation that prefab conjures, La Sagrada Familia is a potent symbol that even the most intricately detailed and iconic architecture can be produced offsite...prefab construction may even provide an antidote to a skills shortage in the construction industry and alleviate a housing affordability crisis. But to do all that, prefab must first fight an enduring image problem, stemming from its long and colourful history. -- Mark Burry; Fender Katsalidis; Arup; PrefabAUS; Modscape; Philip Goad; Amnon Weber Architects [images]- Australian Design Review

A House for Essex by Grayson Perry and FAT Architecture: ...'a Taj Mahal on the Stour'...not only FAT's final work, but a suitably 'bonkers' addition to the north Essex landscape...a powerful, immersive architectural experience like nothing before...As bonkers as the architecture is, the story behind it is even more bizarre, playful and just a little bit disturbing...For FAT alone, what a way to go out with a bang. By Cate St Hill -- Alain de Botton/Living Architecture [images]- DesignCurial / Blueprint Magazine (UK)

Kengo Kuma's V&A Dundee could never be built to budget: An investigation into the ballooning costs...concluded that the scheme was unlikely to ever come in on budget...rocketed from £49 million to £80 million...judging panel...may not have appreciated the real cost of delivering it within the prescribed budget...recommended that, in future, decision making for major projects including the selection of designs should be supported by fully detailed cost estimates... [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Fictions and mythologies: how architecture writes itself: I'll set out my stall by explaining why I am an architecture critic but not an architect. Or to put it another way, how the worlds of writing and architecture are so very close. It's an exploration of how what I know about writing and reading and looking and assessing might connect with what you are learning and making in architecture. By Hugh Pearman- HughPearman.com (UK)

Chicago Architecture Biennial adds 40 firms to inaugural festival's roster: ...bringing the total to more than 100 architects and artists from more than 30 countries...In addition to big-name architects and artists...participants include young, ascending firms from several continents. [full list]- The Architect's Newspaper

Call for entries: Participate in "Extraordinary Playscapes," a new national touring exhibition and education program will explore the importance of play in childhood development and showcase how designers translate play objectives into innovative, extraordinary, and outdoor play environments; deadline: October 9- Design Museum Foundation / BSA Space / Playworld



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