

Today's News - Wednesday, October 28, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for being absent without explanation for the last two days. We will be absent for the next two days as well (sorry, but family matters trump the newsletter). We'll be back Monday, November 2 with lots of catching up to do!

- Russell considers SANAA's Grace Farms to be "one of the most exquisite works of recent architecture" where "no expense has been spared to achieve maximal minimalism."
- Morgan cheers ARO's Applied Math building for Brown University for being "a handsome, modest, contemporary addition" until one steps inside: "One wonders if Brown seeks out talented architects and then hobbles them, through penury or a lack of visual erudition, stifling the very creative juices that led to their being hired in the first place."
- Frantzman has a change of heart about the Palestinian city of Rawabi: "It's a real success story, one that should be built on and replicated - we see a symbol of wealth and success that combines an entrepreneur's chutzpah with a little bit of a Kevin Costner 'If you build it, they will come' attitude."
- Saffron is not at all sanguine about two new (large!) projects in Philly "that might have been airlifted in from a distant suburban township. Urban design is essentially a form of inclusion"; these offer not much more than "the design of exclusion."
- Jacobs explores "the true significance of the new hotel and transit center at Denver's airport - the plan is a major step in undoing the urban planning mistakes of previous generations."
- King cheers two "emphatically different visions" to reshape the San Francisco Bay Area in the face of rising sea levels: "One is futuristic design, the other resets the clock" - and both will be needed for the region "to endure and thrive."
- Bey is back (yay!) with a Q&A re: Landmarks Illinois' efforts to seek a reprieve for Jahn's Thompson Center death sentence.
- Q&A with Rural Urban Framework principals re: their 2015 Curry Stone Design Prize win, and their work with charities and NGOs.
- Kolson Hurley explains why there aren't more energy-efficient buildings: "The problem is that many buildings aren't energy-modeled at all, while others are modeled too late in the design process - simply to show compliance with building codes or get a green certificate" (early-stage modeling is the way to go).
- Amelar ambles around the Stevens Institute of Technology's "unprecedented" Solar Decathlon-winning Sure House that "responds not only to the contest's rigorous energy challenges, but also to the perils of rising seaways."
- A new report explains "how Australian meat ants build their colonies could provide urban planners with an efficient means of building new neighborhoods."
- Poon reports how "origami engineering" is reshaping structural engineering: "zipper tubes" will especially come in handy during disasters."
- Hosey has issues with Brownlee calling the golden ratio "total nonsense," "an urban legend, a myth, a design unicorn": it "can help designers understand better why people treasure some things and not others - the mechanics of attraction can help us create images, objects and places that resonate with more people."
- Heathcote gives (mostly) thumbs-up to LACMA's Gehry retrospective that presents a "rich haul of 'typically counter-intuitive' work" that "exudes a restlessness, a search for the one thing architecture cannot do: movement."
- Fox Weber finds Goldberger's "fascinating" Gehry biography presents "an architect who is ambitious, cocky and clever - an informative, startling journey into the inner sanctums of modern architecture's power structure."
- Szenasy pens an eloquent ode to Olga Gueft, "one of the most significant foremothers in modern design journalism and advocacy, yet she is barely a blip in our vast digital knowledge base."
- Something to warm your Halloween heart (we couldn't resist!): the Stanley Hotel, famed for its star appearance in "The Shining," will soon sport a horror-themed museum, with backing from some of the biggest names in Hollywood horror.
- The NLA puts New Ideas for Housing International Ideas Competition winners and the shortlisted on view.
- Eye-fuls of the Blueprint Awards 2015 winners (an impressive lot!).
- Shortlist announced in the V&A Members' Room competition.

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Splendor in the Glass: One of the most exquisite works of recent architecture seeks to fade into its bucolic surroundings: Grace Farms...is a spare-no-expense destination for worship, performance, and conferences...No expense has been spared to achieve...maximal minimalism...How can I gainsay such an extraordinary institution that creates such an extraordinary place? By James S. Russell -- SANAA; Olin; Larry Weaver Landscape Associates [images] - JamesSRussell.net

Brown University's handsome new rectangular box: ...Applied Math building is a handsome, modest and sensitively situated piece of modern architecture...contemporary addition quietly respects the past without caricaturing it...totally diminished by the new building's interior...Was this simply a question of budget? One wonders if Brown seeks out talented architects and then hobbles them, through penury or a lack of visual erudition, stifling the very creative juices that led to their being hired in the first place. By William Morgan -- Architecture Research Office (ARO) - Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

Does Gleaming Palestinian City on Hill Offer Hope Amid Violence? Rawabi...is an impressive achievement. It's a real success story for Palestinians, one that should be built on and replicated...subverts the clichéd description of Palestinian-Israeli relations...we see a symbol of wealth and success that combines an entrepreneur's chutzpah with a little bit of a Kevin Costner "If you build it, they will come" attitude. By Seth J. Frantzman - The Forward

In new developments, Philadelphia's urban dreams meet suburban reality: ...Civic Design Review...reluctantly sanctioned two projects that might have been airlifted in from a distant suburban township...As for the architecture...it can best be described as "meh"...Why bother with an architect if you're going to churn out the same building over and over? ...a "classic bait and switch"...Urban design is essentially a form of inclusion...What we have with Soko Lofts and Mount Sinai hospital is the design of exclusion. By Inga Saffron -- Barton Partners [images] - Philadelphia Inquirer

Mile High Connections: ...the true significance of the new hotel and transit center at Denver's airport: For a city shaped by the automobile, the plan is a major step in undoing the urban planning mistakes of previous generations. The airport will finally be linked seamlessly to the rest of the city, with a direct ride to historic Union Station downtown. By Karrie Jacobs -- Curtis Fentress; Gensler; Anderson Mason Dale Architects; Santiago Calatrava; Tryba Architects; JG Johnson Architects; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) [images] - Architect Magazine

2 concepts for shaping region's future shoreline: ...emphatically different visions...Funny thing is, they don't contradict each other at all...One is futuristic design, the other resets the clock. And as sea level changes reshape the bay...the San Francisco Bay Area will need to draw on each approach to endure and thrive. By John King -- Tom Leader Studio [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

Landmarks Illinois seeks reprieve for Rauner's Thompson Center death sentence: Group wants Helmut Jahn building spared. By Lee Bey [audio] - Rivet Radio

Newsmaker: Rural Urban Framework: The principals of this Hong Kong-based design lab took home the 2015 Curry Stone Design Prize...Servicing charities and NGOs, RUF works on projects that vary widely in scale...Q&A with John Lin and Joshua Bolchover. [images] - Architectural Record

Why Aren't There More Energy-Efficient Buildings? Data from an initiative [AIA 2030 Commitment] to make architecture more sustainable shows progress, but there's still a long way to go to make a dent in climate-change risks. The problem is that

many buildings aren't energy-modeled at all, while others are modeled too late in the design process - simply to show compliance with building codes or get a green certificate. Early-stage modeling can produce deeper energy reductions. By Amanda Kolson Hurley - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

Taking the Solar Decathlon by Storm: A resilient house by the Stevens Institute of Technology takes home the competition's top prize: ...taking an unprecedented first place in seven of the 10 competition categories...Sure House (as in, Sustainable + Resilient), responds not only to the contest's rigorous energy challenges, but also to the perils of rising seawaters... By Sarah Amelar [images] - Architectural Record

How ants could influence urban planning: The way Australian meat ants build their colonies could provide urban planners with an efficient means of building new neighbourhoods, a new report says. - The Fifth Estate (Australia)

How Origami Is Informing Structural Engineering: An emerging design technique is based on a centuries-old Japanese art form: ..."origami engineering"...Researchers at Georgia Tech, the University of Illinois, and the University of Tokyo have come up with a new, origami-inspired structural-support configuration called "zipper tubes"...will especially come in handy during disasters. By Linda Poon [images] - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

The Rectangle Is Still Golden: Despite recent claims, the golden ratio is more interesting than ever. According to John Brownlee, that mainstay of art appreciation classes and junior-high geometry is "total nonsense," "an urban legend, a myth, a design unicorn"...behind such techniques is a growing wealth of research that can help designers understand better why people treasure some things and not others. By Lance Hosey - Huffington Post

LACMA's Frank Gehry retrospective: The rich haul of 'typically counter-intuitive' work by the architect is on show: ...tries to cover everything...his work exudes a restlessness, a search for the one thing architecture cannot do: movement. By Edwin Heathcote - Financial Times (UK)

Blueprint for Celebrity: 'Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry,' by Paul Goldberger: Two pages [in]...you know you are in for an encounter with an architect who is ambitious, cocky and clever - and that your guide will present him with a wry and trenchant perspective...an informative, startling journey into the inner sanctums of modern architecture's power structure...Gehry emerges...as a talented, gutsy and energetic man, but not as a top-tier creator. By Nicholas Fox Weber - New York Times

Remembering Matriarch of Modern Design Journalism, Olga Gueft: A memorial to the late editor in chief of Interiors magazine and lifelong design advocate. Olga was one of the most significant foremothers in modern design journalism and advocacy, yet she is barely a blip in our vast digital knowledge base. By Susan S. Szenasy - Metropolis Magazine

Hotel from 'The Shining' to become US\$24m horror-themed museum: ...with some of the biggest names in horror backing the ambitious US\$24m (€21.7m, £15.7m) project....Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado...The 109-year-old hotel is already popular among horror fans. -- MOA Architecture - CLAD (Community of Leisure Architects & Designers)

10 winning ideas announced! New Ideas for Housing International Ideas Competition: ...to help solve the London housing shortage...All winning and shortlisted ideas are on display...at the NLA galleries in The Building Centre to 17 December. -- Bill Price/WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff; Patrick J.A. Massey/CZWG; HTA Design; Natasha Reid Design; Floating Homes Ltd/Baca Architects; David Kroll; GL Hearn/Capita; THE ATAL TEAM; Pitman Tozer/LB Enfield/Naked House; dRMM Architects - New London Architecture/NLA

Blueprint Awards 2015: The winners -- Rotor; Konstantin Grcic; Yona Friedman; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; CHROFI; Studio Odile Decq; Department of Architecture co.; Clive Wilkinson Architects; Studio mk27; LY N Atelier; Dean Skira/iGuzzini - DesignCurial / Blueprint Magazine (UK)

V&A shortlist: Members' room finalists announced -- Carmody Groarke; David Kohn Architects; SHH Architects; Universal Design Studio; Ordinary Architecture, founded by ex-FAT man Charles Holland - BD/Building Design (UK)



-- SANAA: River building, Grace Farms: Nestled into the rolling landscape...the building begins on a knoll and then flows down the long, gentle slope in a series of bends, forming pond-like spaces on its journey. By Kirsten Kiser
-- Call for student writers for arcspace.
-- Santiago Calatrava: ...designs suggest stylized natural objects... By Kirsten Kiser

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