

## Today's News - Wednesday, March 30, 2016

- Kimmelman explains (most eloquently!) our "craving for public squares," from Washington Square Park to, most touchingly, a West Bank Palestinian refugee camp: "The perfect square, it turns out, is also a state of mind."
- Binger compares Havana of today to his first visit 17 years ago: "Cuban design is now experiencing a resurgence, albeit with a sober but refreshing sense of designing within often severe limitations in materials and economic resources" (there are lessons for us all).
- Two takes on the controversial Building the Border Wall? competition: Hong explores the "fierce debate among architects and border communities," and "the ethics of participating in a competition that seemed to promote xenophobia" - "Why improve on a bad idea?"
- Quirk takes a very different - and provocative - tack: "The important questions that this competition provokes - ironically, questions all parties in this controversy are deeply invested in - have been largely forgotten in the furor."
- Heaton looks at Australia's efforts to integrate architecture and urban design to combat terrorism: "considerations regarding the layout and design of the built environment are critical," but "efforts to raise awareness amongst planners and designers has thus far been limited" (but improving).
- Miller parses why the economic value of design is so often underestimated, and "why design presents such a challenge to statisticians."
- Budds delves into how the National Building Museum is making "people give a crap about architecture - it started with a few games of minigolf. The experiment worked."
- Capps, meanwhile, reports that all those gazillion plastic balls from NBMs "The Beach" will end up in "Raise/Raze," the inaugural exhibition for the Dupont Underground.
- Rice Design Alliance's West pens a most thoughtful report from TCLF's recent conference in Houston: while the city is being praised for its public spaces and parks, there are some "uncomfortable but perhaps unavoidable truths about the character of Houston's green transformation - that access to green space is growing but remains highly inequitable."
- As part of his "Building on Burnham" initiative, Chicago's mayor considers the river the "next great recreational park," but "skeptics say he's prioritizing flashier projects over basic needs."
- Speaking of the Windy City - and the gigantic hole left by the Calatrava's never-built Chicago Spire, now wallowing in "its weeds and its dirt": "there's some movement - though don't get your hopes up" (some neighbors will be a bit happier).
- It's back to the drawing board (again) as Melbourne gives thumbs-down to SHoP/Woods Bagot's "pantscraper."
- Meanwhile, a French-Australian consortium wins the competition to design a crystal palace as "an iconic 'hero' for Parramatta Square."
- The Crystal Bridges Museum has big plans to expand with a new art venue carved out of a defunct Kraft cheese plant in Bentonville, Arkansas.
- Slipek says Shepley Bulfinch's new "bold and welcome" library for Virginia Commonwealth University is "not just another make-do wedgy, but a significant architectural unifier."
- Q&A with Gottesdiener, Duffy, and Haney, who reflect on SOM's origins, its 80 years of architectural evolution, and its big ambitions for the future."
- One we couldn't resist: Schiller considers the "insane" winner of the eVolo Skyscraper competition: "Digging up Central Park and surrounding it with a massive glass-covered building might be a step too far. But this building design should be built somewhere" (and where would that be, exactly?!?!?).

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[The Craving for Public Squares: The public square has always been synonymous with a society that acknowledges public life and a life in public...parks give us room to breathe and feel alone. Squares reaffirm our commonality, our shared sense of place, and our desire to be included...The perfect square, it turns out, is also a state of mind. By Michael Kimmelman -- Sandi Hilal; Alessandro Petti - New York Review of Books](#)

[Letter From Havana: ...Cuban design is now experiencing a resurgence, albeit with a sober but refreshing sense of designing within often severe limitations in materials and economic resources...perhaps it will be useful to think about what Americans might learn...like the kind of power that can only be attained through personal resilience...and a certain kind of elegance that comes in a life lived with fewer material expectations. By Steven Binger - Common Edge](#)

[The Problem With Designing Trump's Border Wall: An online competition...has launched a fierce debate among architects and border communities: Many have questioned the ethics of participating in a competition that seemed to promote xenophobia...opposed the notion that the border wall could be made better by design. "Why improve on a bad idea?" By Sukjong Hong -- Building the Border Wall?/Third Mind Foundation; Hacker Architects; Jones Studio; Torolab; Teddy Cruz - The New Republic](#)

[Can We Please Get Beyond the "Building the Border Wall?" Boycott? You could...call it a publicity stunt, but if it generates fruitful conversation, is this not the exact kind of publicity stunt worth having? ...The important questions that this competition provokes - ironically, questions all parties in this controversy are deeply invested in - have been largely forgotten in the furor. By Vanessa Quirk - Metropolis Magazine](#)

[Can Urban Design Help to Combat Terrorism? Much of the focus of public debate revolves around intelligence and de-radicalisation, but considerations regarding the layout and design of the built environment are also critical...efforts to raise awareness amongst planners and designers...had thus far been limited... Success in designing out terrorism is defined not only by preventing attacks...but also by how the amenity and attractiveness of our built environment is maintained. By Andrew Heaton - Sourceable \(Australia\)](#)

[Why we underestimate the economic value of design: A recent study suggests that we underestimate the contribution that design makes to the economy. We explain why design presents such a challenge to statisticians. By Stephen Miller - Design Council \(UK\)](#)

[How A D.C. Museum Made People Give A Crap About Architecture: It started with a few games of minigolf. The experiment worked...With its progressive curatorial strategy that makes important and sometimes weighty topics - from conceptual architecture to climate change - digestible and fun, the National Building Museum is well poised to keep the architecture conversation lively. And a ball pit never hurts. By Diana Budds -- BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Snarkitecture; James Corner Field Operations \[images\] - Fast Company / Co.Design](#)

[D.C.'s Art Gallery in an Abandoned Streetcar Tunnel Will Finally Open: Hou de Sousa...will open the inaugural exhibition for Dupont Underground..."Raise/Raze," the firm's winning entry in the "Re-Ball" competition...will see more than 500,000 plastic balls fused into more than 18,000 cubes. By Kriston Capps -- Snarkitecture \[images\] - CityLab \(formerly The Atlantic Cities\)](#)

[Houston's Green Makeover Only Reaches Some Neighborhoods: The Cultural Landscape Foundation's recent conference...comes at a time when the \[city\]...is receiving national acclaim for its public spaces and parks...TCLF conference...highlighted uncomfortable but perhaps unavoidable truths about the character of Houston's green transformation - that access to green space...is growing but remains highly inequitable. By Allyn West/Rice Design Alliance - The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects \(ASLA\)](#)

[Chicago Mayor: River Is City's "Next Great Recreational Park": Skeptics say he's prioritizing flashier projects over basic needs: ...many of the projects...were previously released or are even already in the works...But \[his\] plan brings these projects and others together as part of a broader initiative he's calling "Building on Burnham." - Next City \(formerly Next American City\)](#)

Chicago vs. This Very Large Hole: What happens to a magisterial tower project deferred? The Santiago Calatrava-designed Chicago Spire was supposed to be the tallest tower in the Western Hemisphere...the recession followed...everyone left the site to its weeds and its dirt...there's some movement - though don't get your hopes up. - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

Melbourne's 'pantscraper' rejected: In spite of being almost half the height of the original proposal, the revised tower design did not alleviate the minister's concerns of overshadowing. -- SHoP Architects; Woods Bagot [images]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Parramatta's crystal palace: From four finalists, the jury unanimously chose a transparent crystalline design by a French-Australian consortium...will be an iconic "hero" of Parramatta Square. -- Manuelle Gautrand Architecture; DesignInc; Lacoste + Stevenson- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Crystal Bridges Museum plans new art venue in defunct cheese plant: Bentonville's Kraft plant to host exhibits, performances: ...site is being developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art... -- Wheeler Kearns Architects - Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Virginia Commonwealth University/VCU's New Cabell Library Is a Bold and Welcome Addition to Richmond: The splendid interplay of glass, stone and strips of metal that comprise the facades...injects sophisticated modernity to the campus' wildly disparate architecture...not just another make-do wedgy, but...a significant architectural unifier. By Edwin Slipek -- Shepley Bulfinch Architects; Mosley Architects [images]- Style Weekly (Richmond, VA)

Q&A: The Making of Modernity: SOM on 80 Years of Architectural Evolution: ...three key Partners - TJ Gottesdiener, Roger Duffy and Gary Haney - about the firm's origins, its extraordinary evolution over the decades and its big ambitions for the future. -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill [images]- Architizer

This Insane Skyscraper Shouldn't Be Built Around Central Park - But It Should Exist: Digging up all of Manhattan's crown jewel and surrounding it with a massive glass-covered building might be a step too far. But this building design should be built somewhere: "New York Horizon"...where burying architecture could be fun. Let's get this built somewhere. By Ben Schiller -- Yitan Sun; Jianshi Wu [images]- Fast Company / Co.Exist



Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Kalamazoo, Michigan: Studio Gang's Arcus Center embodies the ideas of social justice - an inclusive building encouraging equality, openness and conversation...continuously considered how they could use their agency as architects to address issues of social justice themselves. By Nina Tory-Henderson [images]

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