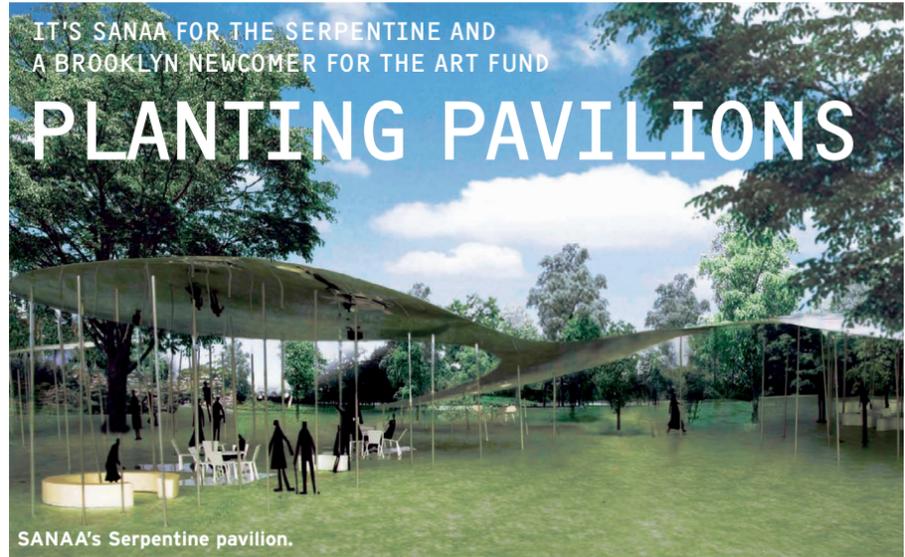


# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

## 08 05.06.2009

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IT'S SANAA FOR THE SERPENTINE AND A BROOKLYN NEWCOMER FOR THE ART FUND

### PLANTING PAVILIONS

SANAA's Serpentine pavilion.

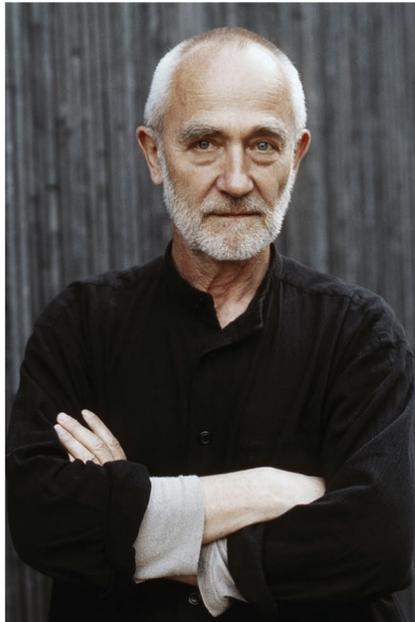
COURTESY SERPENTINE GALLERY

In July, an undulating aluminum canopy threaded through the trees will open on the lawn of London's Serpentine Gallery. Designed by Tokyo-based SANAA, the pavilion is the latest addition to the gallery's high-profile

roster of temporary structures by prominent designers. Also opening this summer in London, the Art Fund Pavilion, from a competition-winning design by the young Brooklyn-based firm Tina Manis Associates,

will serve as an annual seasonal gallery for the Lightbox in Woking, a contemporary art center founded in 1993, which opened its current home in 2007.

The 2009 Serpentine design is **continued on page 24**



GARY EBNER

PRITZKER AWARDED TO FIERCELY INDIVIDUAL SWISS ARCHITECT

### ZUMTHOR AT THE ZENITH

The Chicago-based Hyatt Foundation has named the revered Swiss architect Peter Zumthor the 2009 Pritzker Prize Laureate. Zumthor, 65, will receive the medal and a \$100,000 prize at a ceremony on May 29 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works in the Swiss village of Haldenstein.

With an office of approximately 20, Zumthor is known to be selective about the commissions he accepts. His most recognized project remains the Thermal Bath in Vals, Switzerland, completed in 1996. Other prominent recent projects include a field chapel at Wachendorf, Germany and the Kolumba Art Museum built atop the ruins **continued on page 11**

NRDC PAVES WAY FOR MAYOR'S ENERGY-SAVING RETROFITS

### Leasing Green

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's blockbuster Earth Day announcement of a plan to retrofit the city's building stock won plaudits from sustainable-building advocates, labor unions, and other stakeholders. But as green boosters celebrated at the press conference atop Rockefeller Center, one key interest group remained notably quiet: commercial landlords.

The plan's measures—four laws introduced in the City Council and two provisions in the mayor's PlaNYC program—call for buildings in the range of 50,000 square feet and up to undergo an energy audit every 10 years. Any buildings that fail to meet efficiency standards would be required to **continued on page 4**



#### DERRING-DO DESIGN

THE LATEST FINDS FROM MILAN, OUR ICFF PREVIEW, PLUS A BLAST FROM ITALY'S AVANT-GARDE PAST. PAGES 29-34

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REOPENED DUMBO UNDERPASS PRIMED FOR NEW PROGRAMMING



ANCHORAGE ELEVATION

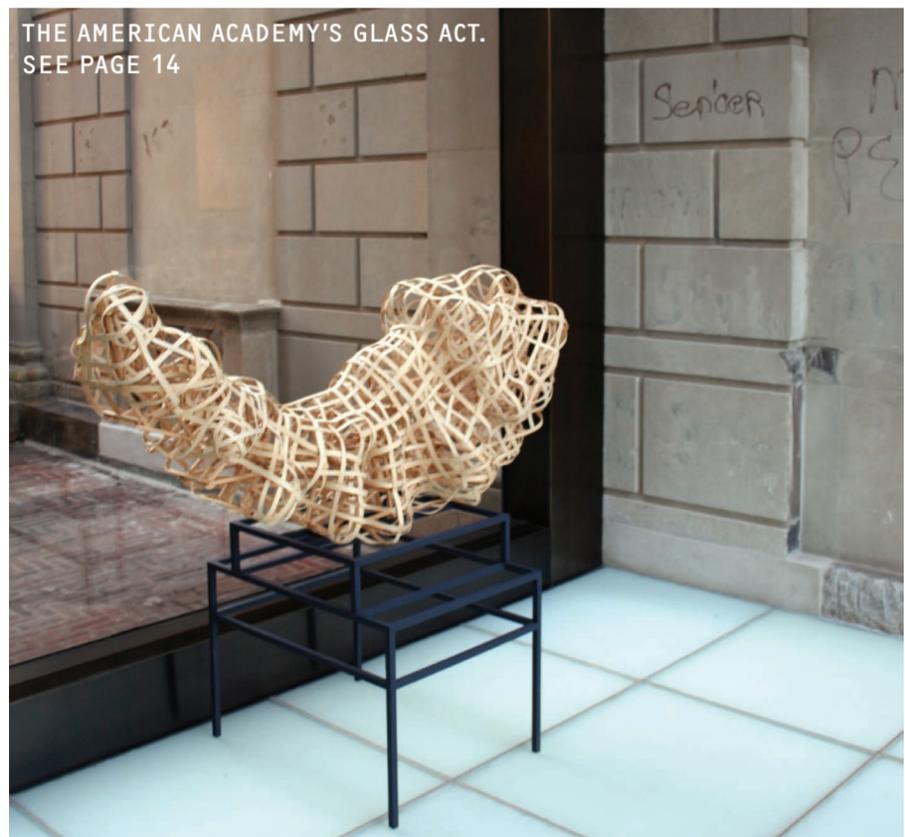
COURTESY DDO

### Walk This (Arch) Way

Long barred to the public, a stone-covered archway beneath the Manhattan Bridge in Dumbo is being reopened for public access this summer, revealing for the first time in decades the elegant public space designed by renowned Beaux Arts firm Carrère and Hastings, which created both approaches. Thanks to the advocacy of the Dumbo Improvement District, the archway is also expected to serve as a stage for a variety of public programming, as well as a temporary summer site for a public marketplace known as the New Amsterdam Market.

Much of the new programming, including the market, has yet to be formally announced pending city approvals, according to the district, which emphasizes that discussions with public officials are ongoing. "The Dumbo Improvement District is working closely with the Department of Transportation and the City of New York to readapt and unveil The Archway," the district said in a statement. "Plans are in the **continued on page 6**

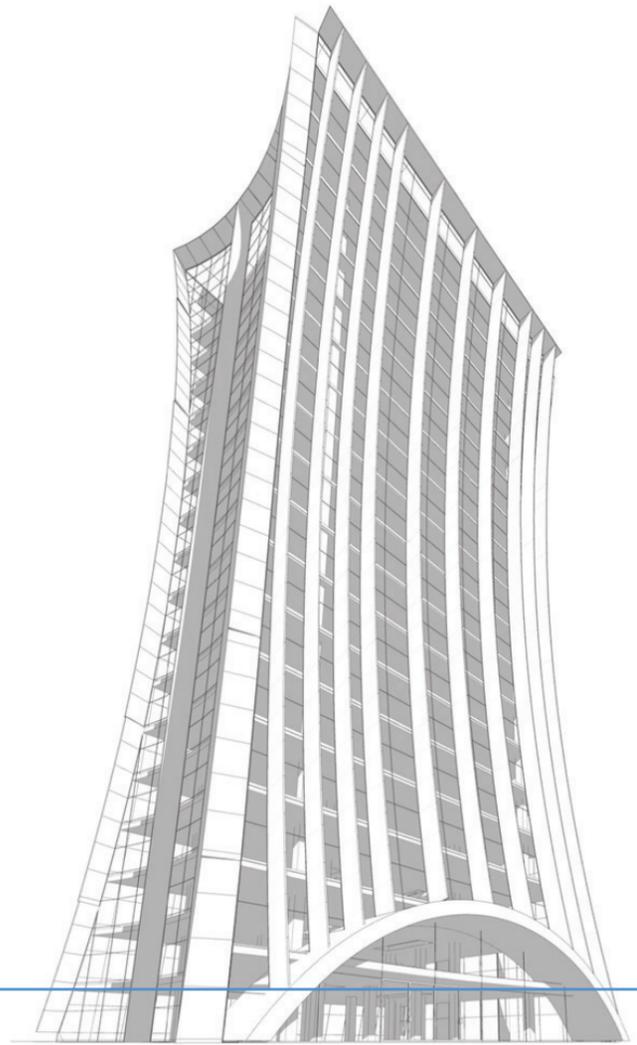
THE AMERICAN ACADEMY'S GLASS ACT. SEE PAGE 14



JAMES VINCENT CZAJKA

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## EXCESS &amp; SUCCESS

It's an awkward time for design. And that's a very good thing. At the Milan furniture fair, the lust of the recent past for limited-edition design *objets*—those sets of 6 or 12 exotic items made with Fabergé-egg exactness and often unusable except as acquisitions—has been redirected.

Recycling is the mantra now, but so are durability, quality, and beauty. The limited-edition craze made a lot of money for a few people, and even turned Miami into a seasonal mecca for something other than winter sunburn. But it made others uncomfortable with its exclusivity and preciousness, and what appeared to be a blunt rebuttal of modernism's core values of productivity and access. Critics used expressions like "bulimia" to describe how the hunger for luxury stuff had overwhelmed a healthier appetite for everyday essentials. Yet the scads of money in play proved irresistible. Designers, and even some architects, wanted in, and it wasn't always easy to comprehend why a resin-molded table might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars apart from the name starting with "Z" attached to it. Karim Rashid, who launched his career sexing up a \$12 trash can—the Garbo—helped pioneer new luxe niches in January 2008, with a limited-edition audio player named like a perfume, Opus N°5.

As with so much else in today's world, all that feels like the excesses of some ancient regime. Indeed, a bellwether of what lies ahead for design as collectible art is taking place at auction this week. In 2006, industrial designer Marc Newson's Lockheed Lounge set the record at \$968,000 for the highest price ever paid for a piece of furniture by a living designer. On April 30, another Lockheed—there were four "artist's proofs" and 10 made—is on the block at Phillips de Pury & Company in London with a surprisingly lowball estimate of \$700,000 to \$1 million. Results won't be in until after press time, but I hear a knell tolling.

As queasy as some of these forced rarities made me feel, I am beginning to wonder if the episode was still an important rite of passage for design. It drew media attention to good design—and to the important minutiae of how things were made—like nothing else. It afforded designers the chance to explore new materials and borrow technologies from other industries, almost exactly as the postwar production boom had enticed the likes of Charles and Ray Eames. Without a lot of historicist posturing, it restored a respect for craft as a worthy complement to technology. And it revealed designers to be more than jobbers doing the bidding of manufacturers. Designers, especially in the United States, don't often get the respect that is their due. And they rarely get the kind of start-to-finish control that was possible back in 1945, when George Nelson became Herman Miller's design director, and commenced a golden era of brilliantly designed products that we could all afford to use. Above all, the recent boom times have restored designers' cred as creative thinkers. And that's worth quite a lot. **JULIE V. IOVINE**

## LEASING GREEN continued from front page

make upgrades, along with other measures to improve performance. By the mayor's reckoning, the plan could reduce New York's carbon footprint by 5 percent, moving it closer to the PlaNYC goal of a 30 percent reduction by 2030.

But landlords have been cautious about the proposal, and understandably so: Many energy-saving solutions saddle landlords with the cost of upgrades, and no way to protect their investment through cost-and-benefit sharing with the building's tenants. Fortunately, a new initiative spearheaded by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has been working to unify tenants and landlords with a new, green lease that will help smooth the way for the mayor's building tune-ups.

Ashok Gupta, NRDC's air and energy program director, notes that a Catch-22 has long stalled green retrofits. "PlaNYC is two years old, and how far have we gotten?" he asked, pointing out that landlords struggle with investments in new heating systems because however money-saving they are in the long run, such systems' depreciation cuts into earnings. Meanwhile, tenants are reluctant to fund such upgrades with rent payments, since they don't see how they share in the benefits.

To remedy this predicament, Gupta has helped lead the charge with a document now circulating among local landlords, corporations, lawyers, and engineers that shows how New York's office buildings can become green while remaining viable.

The document, developed by the NRDC with the help of a young planner named Sean Neill, proposes definitions for fair and efficient cost-sharing in leases. It states that landlords and tenants should understand how energy investments pay off in cost savings for both parties. It then presents a series of sustainable initiatives and shows how those can be incorporated into a typical commercial lease.

The actual implementation of such objectives rests with lawyers and brokers, however, so the NRDC and Neill's firm Cycle 7 led a seminar on March 24 to test the plan's definitions and stage mock negotiations between landlords and tenants. The session also drew experts familiar with the costs and feasibility of common energy-saving measures: Arup engineer Fiona Cousins, Gensler architect Paul Lalli, and Laurie Kerr of Mayor Bloomberg's office.

Neill has also shared the document with some of the city's major landlords, and with help from the NRDC and the civic group Partnership for New York City, he plans to meet with corporations who hold sizable leases in the coming weeks. "All it takes is one bad lease to ruin a building's efficiency," he said.

One major landlord, asking for anonymity due to pending discussions, said Neill and the NRDC are on the right track. "There needs to be a partnership through new lease language, by which tenants and landlords can share the cost of improvements," he said. "Candidly, as the market was going up, greening was really important to everybody, and now purse-strings are tighter."

Neill remains optimistic despite the market's downturn. "Some owners have told me that even if we got this document into a lease negotiation, that would be huge progress," he said. A sample lease, he added, should be available this month. **ALEC APPELBAUM**

## LETTERS

## THE WORLD WITHOUT US

Fred Bernstein provides pertinent insights regarding the plight of the U.S. national pavilion for the Shanghai 2010 World Expo ("Worlds Away," AN 07\_04.15.2009).

The private group authorized by the State Department to develop the pavilion remains grossly underfunded, and the pavilion unbuilt. The reasons given by the group, comprising lawyer Ellen Eliasoph, film industry executive Nick Winslow, and former Bush trade official Frank Lavin, are that U.S. law prohibits government spending on Expos, and it's tough raising private money in a down economy.

It's always tough raising money, but the law's not to blame. The 1991 law in question doesn't prohibit spending on Expos, only the way the spending is done. In fact, it gives the Secretary of Commerce (not State)

responsibility for organizing agencies' support of Expo activities. The decision not to publicly fund the pavilion was made by the Bush administration, and accepted by the Eliasoph-Winslow group.

There's more to the story. In 2006, the State Department issued an RFP for a privately-funded pavilion. A volunteer association of Expo veterans—to which I belong—was the "finalist." But our funding scheme, a for-profit corporation, was too radical for the State Department, which preferred corporate philanthropy; and we wouldn't disclose details of our design without the government's usual promise of confidentiality, which was not forthcoming.

When the RFP expired in 2008, the State Department privately authorized the Eliasoph-Winslow group to create the U.S. pavilion. Without a solid prior critique, the

program and pavilion were uninspiring.

The group resigned from the job last October—but was apparently resurrected by the Shanghai Consulate with Chinese money. It encountered the same resistance as before. Now the U.S. has missed the Expo's nominal deadline for participation.

Today, 233 nations and NGOs have committed to the Shanghai Expo. Only three remain uncommitted: the U.S., Colombia, and Andorra. The Obama administration still can and should arrange for funding, but not for the Eliasoph-Winslow pavilion. Our nation needs a 21<sup>st</sup>-century pavilion that is sustainable and expressive of America's willingness to play its part as a responsible world leader—which we have designed.

ROBERT JACOBSON  
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> **MATERIAL CONNEXION**  
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COURTESY MATERIAL CONNEXION

Relocating its New York office to the second floor of a landmarked building at 60 Madison Avenue, the materials consulting group Material ConneXion has expanded to a space twice its previous size to handle a growing need for its services. Designed by the New York firm Imrey Culbert, the 12,000-square-foot space maintains the Materials Library as the literal and symbolic heart of the office. This collection of 4,500 materials—which adds between 40 and 60 new items monthly—is designed to freely connect to adjacent spaces, from the conference room to the studio, exhibition area, and offices. Naturally, the designers drew on the library's many intriguing materials, looking to products that demonstrated a commitment to design, new technology, and the environment. The final cut included Terramai's World Mix sustainably-engineered wood flooring, reclaimed from shipping crates; PVC-free and 100 percent recyclable Lees carpet by the Mohawk Group; Erco's energy-efficient Emanon lighting; and cradle-to-cradle office furniture by Haworth. Since its launch in 1997, Material ConneXion has become an important resource for designers in New York, and also counts locations in Bangkok; Cologne, Germany; Daegu, Korea; and Milan. The center is open by weekday appointment only, from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. **DANIELLE RAGO**

## MATERIAL GUY

New York architect **Markus Dochantschi**, principal of StudioMDA, has a plum project. His firm is working pro bono with a Malawian architect to design the Raising Malawi School for Girls. The boarding school is a project of Raising Malawi, a charity founded in 2006 by the unlikely duo of pop icon Madonna and rabbi and kabbalist Michael Berg to help the two million orphaned children of the impoverished southeast African country. We hear that the school will have no religious affiliation, but instead will be based on the British system, such as those that Madge's offspring, Lourdes and Rocco, attend.

## MINT JULEP WITH THAT PINK SLIP?

It's not all death rattles and pink slips, just mostly. We were sad to learn that **Gensler** is closing its Wall Street office and moving survivors to Midtown. This isn't firm-wide shrinkage, though. By all accounts, San Francisco and Dallas, to name only two of Gensler's 31 offices, are in good shape. Speaking of Dallas, the town seems recession-proof, at least compared to the east and west coasts. **HKS**, architect for the new Dallas Cowboys stadium, is thriving. Elsewhere, New Orleans-based **Perez, APC**, is said to be in good shape, and ditto for **Brown Chambless Architects** in Montgomery, AL. Anyway, some firms seem to be booming, possibly because so much misery is concentrated in New York. Can it be true that the New York office of global biggie **BBG/BBGM** has defenestrated 75 percent of its employees from the 25<sup>th</sup> floor of the Empire State Building and is down to two projects, leaving it too poor to buy a vowel? Is it also true that **CetraRuddy** is staying alive doing small lobby renovations and storage spaces? We hope everyone will rebound soon, but for now the Big Apple has been rebranded as The City With No Pity.

## THE KNOCK-OFF ARTISTS

What Manhattan architecture firm thinks it's all right to ask a local manufacturer to spend months designing and detailing a custom curtain wall, then rolls up the drawings, specifications, and shop drawings and sends them to China for a cheaper, second-rate copy? We can't wait to see how the inferior knockoff holds up in the unfriendly New York elements. Hint: The building is under construction in the Way West Village, and that's all we're saying at the moment. In future posts, we'll refer to this firm as the Willful Infringers.

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**WALK THIS (ARCH) WAY** continued from front page works for many exciting programs; we have been approached by the New Amsterdam Market among others. In the spirit of Earth Day 2009, we are glad to reclaim this incredible community space."

The reopening of the historic archway, which is already publicly accessible, marks a significant milestone for advocates who have slowly been reclaiming the urban fabric around the bridge's piers. "The archway connects Dumbo east to west. It's crucial to the development of the neighborhood," Kate Kerrigan, executive director of the improvement district, said in an interview.

Work on the archway, which had previously been used for storage by the Department of Transportation (DOT), will improve pedestrian connectivity while providing a number of new design features to make it more amenable to the public. In collaboration with the improvement district, Rogers Marvel Architects has designed benches for the 45-foot-high, 7,000-square-foot space, along with subtle lighting to improve safety and to highlight the original architectural elements.

The new space would offer a stunning—if provisional—backdrop for the New Amsterdam Market, a project spearheaded by Robert LaValva, a former planner for the Department of City Planning who has evangelized for the role public markets can play as both civic gathering spaces and a key link in the sustainable supply chain. "My interest in urban systems comes from my background as a planner, in how the surrounding region can supply the city," he said.

LaValva ultimately envisions a permanent showcase of purveyors that runs year-round indoors and offers a wide variety of goods, similar to the Borough Market in London or Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market. He has long had his eye on the old Fulton Fish Market, but the ambiguous status of the South Street Seaport has made that site unavailable, at least through the summer. While LaValva continues his quest for a year-round location, he would welcome a temporary summer space under the Manhattan Bridge, perhaps setting up once per month, he said. "The archway is a wonderful space for a market," LaValva told AN. "But the goal remains to find a permanent home."

If all goes as planned, the market is expected to make its debut at the archway on June 28. However, an official reopening date for the public space has not been set, and much of the site's programming is still being formalized, according to the improvement district, which expects to announce archway events in the coming weeks.

**ALAN G. BRAKE**



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# PERMANENTLY MAD



Revamped icon **2 Columbus Circle** doubled gallery space for new owner **Museum of Arts and Design's** (MAD) expanding collection of rotating exhibits. Yet what's captivating visitors is a new permanent display: the cable-suspended ceremonial stair designed by **Allied Works Architecture**. Functional and beguiling, it floats on threadlike wires amidst ever-changing shows of celebrated sculpture, earning its place as another example of the museum's commitment to contemporary handicraft.

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BRONX CENTER'S SAGA SUGGESTS ROLE FOR ARCHITECTS IN SECURING STIMULUS FUNDS

## LEND A HAND

In early 2008, the Mary Mitchell Center, an organization that provides social services and community spaces to the Crotona neighborhood of the Bronx, collaborated with Rogers Marvel Architects to draft an initial design scheme for a new facility. To be known as the Austin Jacobo Center, the building would rise beside a hard-bitten baseball field on a derelict block at East 180<sup>th</sup> and Mapes streets. The multifaceted project promised it all: the highest standards of sustainability; space for after-school programs; a library and computer center; and a green roof for growing vegetables. But the center's backers had just started seeking city council support when the recession hit—and hope of receiving city funding for Austin Jacobo went up in smoke.

"The plan to raise money was significantly impacted by the economic crisis," said Heidi Hynes, director of the Mary Mitchell Center, explaining that while the city was once willing to fund projects up front, it is now much more cautious about how it allocates resources. "Now the city says, we are happy to be part of the financial mix, but we won't pay for the whole thing."

The center's saga has provided an object lesson in creative financial thinking, and the role designers can play in drumming up funding in today's down economy. In

Hynes' case, her architects offered plenty of guidance for how to navigate an increasingly tangled web of local, state, and federal funding opportunities.

"Rogers Marvel has been amazing in helping us get support for the project," Hynes said. On March 24, Jonathan Marvel was part of a group of architects, organized by the AIA, who lobbied in Albany for funds to be earmarked for civically sustainable projects. "The reception in Albany was positive," said Marvel. "Everybody felt that this was something they could get behind."

Speaking of the Austin Jacobo Center, he was similarly optimistic. "I think Heidi has a good shot," he said. "We collaborated with her, and put together something that is well integrated in her current community as well as what the community will be in ten years." His partner Rob Rogers agreed: "This kind of project should waltz through every kind of public

support. The federal government should be thinking about what you get for your dollar over the next 20 years, not just printing money for today."

So far, however, Hynes has yet to secure such public largesse. Like many other community groups shut out of city funding, the Mary Mitchell Center has had little luck convincing other sources that the project will become a reality. So Hynes has turned her attention to Albany and Washington, applying to federal agencies for stimulus funding. But while the project's program seems to make it a perfect candidate for federal funds, it is more than 120 days from being shovel ready—a key stipulation in the stimulus bill.

But Hynes isn't backing down. "The point is, that you can't create amazing facilities that answer the needs of communities and expect them to be already thought out right this minute," she said. "There has to be some effort to put pressure on the federal government to expand their thinking."

**AARON SEWARD**

**The Austin Jacobo Center will include a green roof and lab facilities for students.**



COURTESY ROGERS MARVEL ARCHITECTS



> **VOOS**  
103a North 3rd Street, Brooklyn  
Tel: 718-218-8666  
Designers: Serap Demirag and  
Deger Cengiz

Appropriately enough for a store that celebrates locally-made furniture, Voos has opened in Williamsburg, a hub of DIY activity, and draws from Brooklyn's designer-dense neighborhoods of Red Hook, Dumbo, Greenpoint, and the Navy Yard. A collaboration between architects Serap Demirag and Deger Cengiz, the minimally designed, 1,500-square-foot space was sparked after Demirag spotted a table by Brooklyn-based woodworker Palo Samko at last year's *Architectural Digest* Home Design Show. That led to her discovery that "Brooklyn is booming with designers," she told *AN*, and now 90 percent of the furniture on display is Brooklyn-designed, with the remaining pieces from New York's other boroughs. Promoting the local vibe, furniture is also manufactured in town, with about 80 percent of the designers fabricating the pieces themselves. The store has already become a haven for the neighborhood design community, and the ever-expanding list—along with inventory that changes every other month—boasts established names such as Takeshi Miyakawa and City Joinery, as well as up-and-coming designers including store partner Cengiz, Laurie Beckerman, and DMFD Studio. Voos will celebrate its official opening after this month's ICFE show, and aims to serve not just as a showroom, but as a welcoming hub for the borough's growing creative economy. **DR**

## OPPOSITION GROWS TO SUPERFUND STATUS FOR GOWANUS CANAL

### SUPERFUNK

When developers began proposing sizable projects for the shores of the Gowanus Canal a few years ago, at best it was viewed as yet another gonzo deal conceived in the boom years. After all, this was the same body of water known to contain the STD gonorrhea. And so, when the Environmental Protection Agency recently agreed to consider the contaminated body of water for Superfund status, it certainly seemed like good news for the city.

But no sooner had the Feds signaled their intent to clean up the canal, announced on April 8, than a cadre of local opposition rose up, led by Toll Brothers, which won City Council approval in March to build a mixed-use complex including 575 apartments on the shores of the canal, designed by GreenbergFarrow. In a strongly-worded public letter, the developer declared: "The Gowanus Canal should not be mistaken for Love Canal. Substantial cleanup efforts of the Gowanus Canal and the land along its banks are already underway—efforts that could be delayed or halted upon the designation of the Canal as a Superfund site."

The problem is that it has been nearly two decades since Superfund was actually a fund. Now, the EPA conducts studies to determine the polluters, and then pursues litigation to get them to foot the cleanup bill. The process could take decades, something the Gowanus Canal Conservancy said could have a "chilling effect" on both cleanup and development.

In a surprising turn, the city has sided with

the developers, a move that pits it against the state, which made the initial request for Superfund consideration. The city argues that designation would not only stifle \$400 million in planned development—with billions more to come, as a rezoning of the area is forthcoming—but also stall cleanup efforts already underway, such as a \$175 million program that is pumping fresher water into the canal and dredging one thousand feet of toxic sediment.

When *AN* asked at an Earth Day press conference how the city could support residential development on a polluted waterway, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg insisted that nothing would be built before the sites are appropriately cleaned. "We don't need the federal dollars," he added. "We think we can do it with the private money we have." The city may also oppose the designation since it could be named one of the polluters, and thus would be forced to pay part of the remediation cost.

The state still insists Superfund is the way to go. "A comprehensive approach to the remediation of the canal is required, one that will not only cut off all upland sources to the canal, but will also include an overall remedy to the canal itself," Yancey Roy, a spokesperson for the Department of Environmental Conservation, told *The Brooklyn Paper*.

Bill Appell, acting executive director for the Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation, said the real issue is the stigmatization of Superfund status. His group is waiting to take an official position until the city presents its detailed cleanup plan. "While we don't want Superfund status," Appell said, "it may have been good because it brought attention to the issue and finally got the city to take notice."

**MATT CHABAN**

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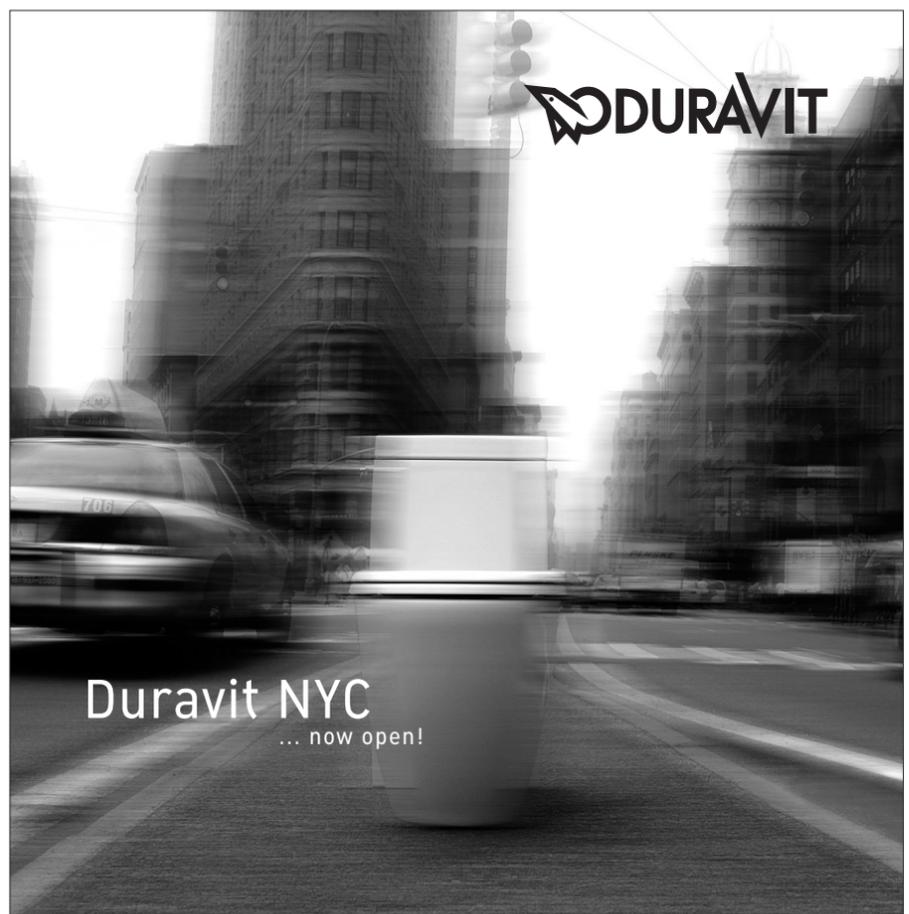
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009

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MALL AND TOWER TO REUSE BALTIMORE'S BRUTALIST THEATER

# RAISING THE CURTAIN



Like dozens of Brutalist buildings in recent years, the Morris A. Mechanic Theater—the building that brought Broadway to Baltimore—has come under threat. But unlike Paul Rudolph or the Smithsons, the Mechanic's designer, John Johansen, is still alive to witness the trauma. "For architects who like to perpetuate themselves, we consider buildings to be our children," Johansen said during a recent interview. "To have them torn down or remodeled beyond recognition is painful."

And so it is with mixed feelings that a team of developers is moving ahead with plans to rescue much of Johansen's masterwork, though in the form of a mall and an adjoining, 30-story residential tower. On April 16, the project, designed by D.C.-based Shalom Baranes Associates, received the first of two approvals from the City of Baltimore Department of Planning.

A lynchpin of the city's urban renewal efforts, the Mechanic was completed in 1967 and played host to numerous traveling shows over the years. But five years ago, the 2,300-seat Hippodrome reopened after renovations to the 1914 building. Ironically enough, the preservation of one historic theater led to the near-demise of another, as the 1,600-seat Mechanic turned out the lights.

The mothballed theater was bought in 2006 by the company that operates a parking garage beneath it, with plans first to turn it into a garage, then a mall. Finally, developer David S. Brown Enterprises was brought in to work with the garage operator, and the new mall *cum* tower proposal was created.

Many actually see the proposed complex as an improve-

ment on its predecessor, whose approach to the urban fabric can be viewed as increasingly outmoded. Until the theater closed in 2003, it was accessed by pedestrian bridges that fed a story-high plinth, ignoring the street below. The theater also presents its main facade to Hopkins Square, a midblock urban plaza and a pleasant space except that the back of the theater then rests on Baltimore Street and Charles Street. The result is mostly blank concrete walls on one of the city's major intersections. "It makes for a really horrific pedestrian experience," said Gary Cole, chief of the land use and urban design division at the Department of Planning.

The architects address this problem by removing the dour, less significant back portion of the theater, a move that not only preserves the Johansen structure's front face but also makes way for the tower and the more active, pedestrian-friendly uses therein. "This whole building was somewhat backwards," said Dan Stuver, the senior associate in charge of the project. "We're trying to make it right on all sides."

To better connect the function and appearance of the theater and the tower, they will each contain 107,000 square feet of retail space spread across three contiguous floors.

**The theater's sense of movement is echoed in the tower and activated street frontage.**

Preliminary plans then call for a hotel on the fourth through 12<sup>th</sup> floors of the tower, while the 13<sup>th</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup> floors will house residences.

Rather than have the tower replicate or recede from its base, the architects split the difference, choosing a mix of terra cotta and glass. "The theater has a great sense of movement," said Shalom Baranes. "It's like there are all these small objects in a large altar. It just pinwheels your eye around, and we really tried to capture that."

With schematic approval in hand, the next step is for the developers to get authorization for the design details, at which point they hope financing will follow. No date has been scheduled for a hearing, according to Cole, and the developer declined to comment. Should the project come to fruition, it will be bittersweet for Johansen. "Let it go ahead, and I can survive it," the 92-year-old architect said. "I have 27 houses designed and built. Nine have been destroyed for bigger houses. This is a far better fate. Sometimes you just have to accept the reality."

MC



COURTESY SHALOM BARANES ASSOCIATES

**ZUMTHOR AT THE ZENITH**

continued from front page of a late gothic church in Cologne, both completed in 2007.

In their remarks, the Pritzker jury commended Zumthor's buildings for their "commanding presence, yet they prove the power of judicious intervention, showing us again and again that modesty of approach and boldness in overall result are not mutually exclusive." *AN* spoke to prominent architects, scholars, and design patrons about Zumthor's work, his influence and contribution to the field, and his method of practice.

**John Pawson**

**John Pawson Architects**

He has an amazing portfolio. It may be only a few, but how many good buildings do you need? It seems to me that his career is exemplary. He puts that extraordinary energy into a rigorousness and an ability to keep on it. The spa at Vals took 14 years, and he had a client and a town council that planned it that way. Usually clients are a lot less demanding of a project than architects themselves are.

If I could know only one living architect, it would be Zumthor. The thought, the materiality—his work is physically very pleasing and just gorgeous.

**Tod Williams**

**Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects**

It's great and inspiring news. There's a difference between his work and our work, but he does inspire us. He's not commercial. He'll continue to be kind of a cult figure. His work is hard for people to understand—it's his blessing and his burden.

**Brad Cloepfil**

**Allied Works Architecture**

He is, unequivocally, the most important architect working today. He mines the realm of the spirit, of profound meaning. He works with the visceral elements of building, which is extraordinarily rare in contemporary architecture. Much of his work is a commentary on the poetics of making. He's had a greater impact than many of the global superstars. His work is like a tuning fork in the chaos.

**Barry Bergdoll**

**Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture & Design Museum of Modern Art**

He's a sort of modern-day version of [British arts-and-crafts architect] Philip Webb, with the same incredible integrity and a desire to keep the office small. Stylistically, he fits into the school of austere minimalism, but he also understands effects of light and materials. When I went to the Thermal Baths, I thought, here's someone who really understands what the Roman Baths were, as social environments and as public spaces.

He's had two exceptional projects recently [the Kolumba Museum and Wachendorf Chapel], and there's a sense that there are incredible works yet to come.

**Kenneth Frampton**

**Ware Professor of Architecture Columbia University GSAPP**

You can almost recognize a Zumthor building from a kind of discretion and reserve, and understatement and peculiar emphasis on material. I'm thinking of the Swiss Pavilion at the Hanover Expo, where he conceived of the



The Kolumba Art Museum (2007).



The Thermal Bath Vals (1996).

HELENE BINET

whole thing as wood being stored in a wood yard. What's unusual is to take that as a point of departure for an exposition pavilion, so it's conceived for recycling from the beginning.

There is also an ethical dimension to his way of thinking. There are Swiss-German minimalist architects who have been influenced by him, but his work is a class apart from people like Diener & Diener and Gigon Guyer. One of the reasons is this very strong integrity. He's not professional in the everyday sense of being professional.

**Ian Schrager**

**Chairman**

**Ian Schrager Company**

We tried working with him [at the Roxy Club site on West 18<sup>th</sup> Street] but it didn't work out.

He's brilliant; he reminds me of Louis Kahn—not the work, of course—but the way he's obsessive about details and stays with it. Like Herzog & de Meuron, every project is different and exciting; he's the anti-Richard Meier. The fact that he's aloof and doesn't play the game has nothing to do with the work. And that he still gets the recognition and success, in spite of himself, is refreshing.

He's built some multiple-story buildings, all beautiful and all different, and I would really love to work with him. But on big projects that are already intense and politicized, it could be treacherous. I would consider him for an interior. Mostly, I think that it's just really great when someone like this comes along every once in awhile.

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In terms of new architecture, Audubon Terrace—on Broadway between West 155<sup>th</sup> and 166<sup>th</sup> streets in Upper Manhattan—hasn't seen much action since the 1930s, when the American Numismatic Society added a west wing to its facility. That addition completed a stately procession of Beaux Arts buildings filling nearly an entire city block and housing over the years such eclectic institutions as the American Geographical Society, the Museum of the American Indian, and the Hispanic Society of America. But the long fallow spell has come to an end with a gleaming bit of modernism. The American Academy of Arts and Letters, whose McKim, Mead & White-designed headquarters punctuates the far end of the terrace, has installed an all-glass corridor, designed by architect James Vincent Czajka in consultation with Pei Cobb Freed & Partners (PCF), which links its walls with those of the Numismatic Society next door.

The Academy reached into its endowment and purchased the neighboring building in 2005, when the coin collectors moved downtown. The idea was to expand the institution's curatorial, exhibition, and administrative space, all of which were overstuffed from more than 100 years of constant output by its members. The two buildings shared a common wall on their first two levels, but the designers chose to create a passageway between them at the third, or terrace, level (there is a significant grade change between 155<sup>th</sup> Street and the mid-block terrace), where the gallery spaces already existed.

At the terrace, however, there is a 12-foot gap between the Numismatic building and the Academy. McKim, Mead & White left this space both to distinguish its structure from the otherwise cheek-by-jowl architectural ensemble as well as to create a sense of arrival at the end of the terrace. Wanting to preserve this effect, Czajka and PCF decided to build their passageway entirely out of transparent glass.

Glass has been de rigueur for this project type at least since I.M. Pei dropped several glistening pyramids into the courtyard of the Louvre in 1989. Fittingly, when Henry Cobb, the Academy's current treasurer, offered his firm's services pro bono for the link, he put Michael Flynn in charge—the very man who completed the controversial additions to France's premier art museum. Unlike the pyramids, however, the link is extremely simple in construction. The structure is composed almost entirely of seven pieces of low-iron laminated glass. It goes together like this: Three 1-inch-thick glass beams insert into and bear directly on the existing masonry walls. At the juncture between wall and beams is a U-shaped steel structure capped with bronze, which runs across the top of the beams and then down to the ground, serving as both a gutter and as a support for the glass. Atop the beams rest two 1-inch-thick glass panels, which slant toward the masonry walls and form the roof. Finally, two 10-foot-wide by 16-foot-high glass panels, each 1-inch thick, fit into the steel channel and form the link's walls. There is almost no

tolerance between these elements, and being glass, there could be no trimming on site—everything had to fit together perfectly. In spite of these challenges, the assembly went smoothly in one six-hour period, with one crawler crane in the street and about 20 ornamental ironworkers from Rockland County-based W&W Glass.

As simple and nearly invisible as it is, this little structure goes out of its way to fit in with the classical architectural context. The 10-by-16-foot wall panels, for example, are precise golden rectangles—the ratio of the long side to the short side is 1.6180339887, the golden ratio, also known as the divine proportion, which is found throughout nature and which architects and

artists during the Renaissance believed to possess the mystical imprimatur of God. (One could assume that working this element of heavenly symmetry into the project was Flynn's way of firing back at the Paris newspapers and the well-known author Dan Brown, who falsely alleged that the Louvre pyramid is composed of 666 glass pieces.) In addition, the pitch of the glass roof matches exactly the pitch of the pediment above the Academy's nearest window. Angling the slope of the roof toward the masonry walls also mitigates streaking across the glass walls by directing runoff to the bronze gutter system. The designers applied a 50-percent, 1/8-inch ceramic frit to the roof panels to help conceal the inevitable water spotting, as well.

The floor of the link is also glass—16 laminated panels with white interlayers—and can be lit from beneath. The concept for this detail was arrived at somewhat by accident. Czajka hired a Pratt student to build a physical model for presentation to the client, but it came out looking rather dull, so they rigged a Christmas light into its base to show everyone how light-filled the space would be. When Henry Cobb saw the model he reportedly said, "Well that's it. We need a glass floor. This baby needs to glow!" **AS**

**While ultra-modern in construction and materiality, the link responds to the classical context. Its walls exhibit the golden ratio, while the roof pitch echoes the Academy's nearest window pediment.**



NEW JERSEY RAIL STATION SPURS TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT



COURTESY RMJM

The Vista Center Tower (left) would rise as one of several new projects near the Trenton train station (below).

## Trenton On Track

Having grown up blocks from Trenton's rail station, Dan Brenna has taken the train thousands of times since childhood. At some point over the years, the developer realized there was something not quite right about his hometown stop. "When you get off the train in other cities, there are buildings, people, action all around you," Brenna recently said. "Not Trenton. There's nothing but empty buildings, parking lots, and weeds. I thought, 'Either I'm missing something or there's a real opportunity here.'"

Brenna is now one of three developers jockeying to build atop those weed-choked lots adjacent to the station, where he plans to develop the Vista Center, a 25-story, 700,000-square-foot office tower designed by RMJM. Those plans have in turn been driven by the station itself, where the finishing touches are being put on an \$80 million renovation and expansion that has transformed what many locals once joked was nothing

more than a Roy Rogers with a rail platform attached.

But the new station, designed by New York's di Domenico + Partners, is not the only thing that makes the surrounding neighborhoods ripe for redevelopment. As the sixth busiest stop on the busiest train line in the country, Trenton provides ample access to regional markets, plus light-rail to Camden and Philadelphia and access to Route 1 and I-95. "Trenton has a greater ridership than either Wilmington or Baltimore, and yet those cities have far more corporate tenants," Brenna noted.

What may finally start attracting such tenants to Trenton is a state program passed last year to provide tax incentives to businesses that locate near mass transit. The program provides credits that essentially allow tenants to pay no rent for the first ten years of their lease. "The urban hub tax credit really seals the deal," said Andrew Carten, Trenton's planning director. "Now,

there's basically no risk for the tenants because they can move in close to rent-free."

It was precisely that credit that solidified Brenna's plans to build the Vista Center. The site close to the station came with other challenges, however. Historically, development in Trenton has taken place near the capitol, about a mile away from the station. Brenna knew that if he wanted to create the kind of Class A office space he envisioned, his building would have to be something special.

To that end, Brenna is not only planning the city's tallest building, but also its most sustainable, with the hope of achieving a LEED Platinum rating. Brenna aims to attract tenants with green credentials, or those seeking them. "They become [green] the minute they move into this building," he said, "and at 60 percent of the cost of other markets."

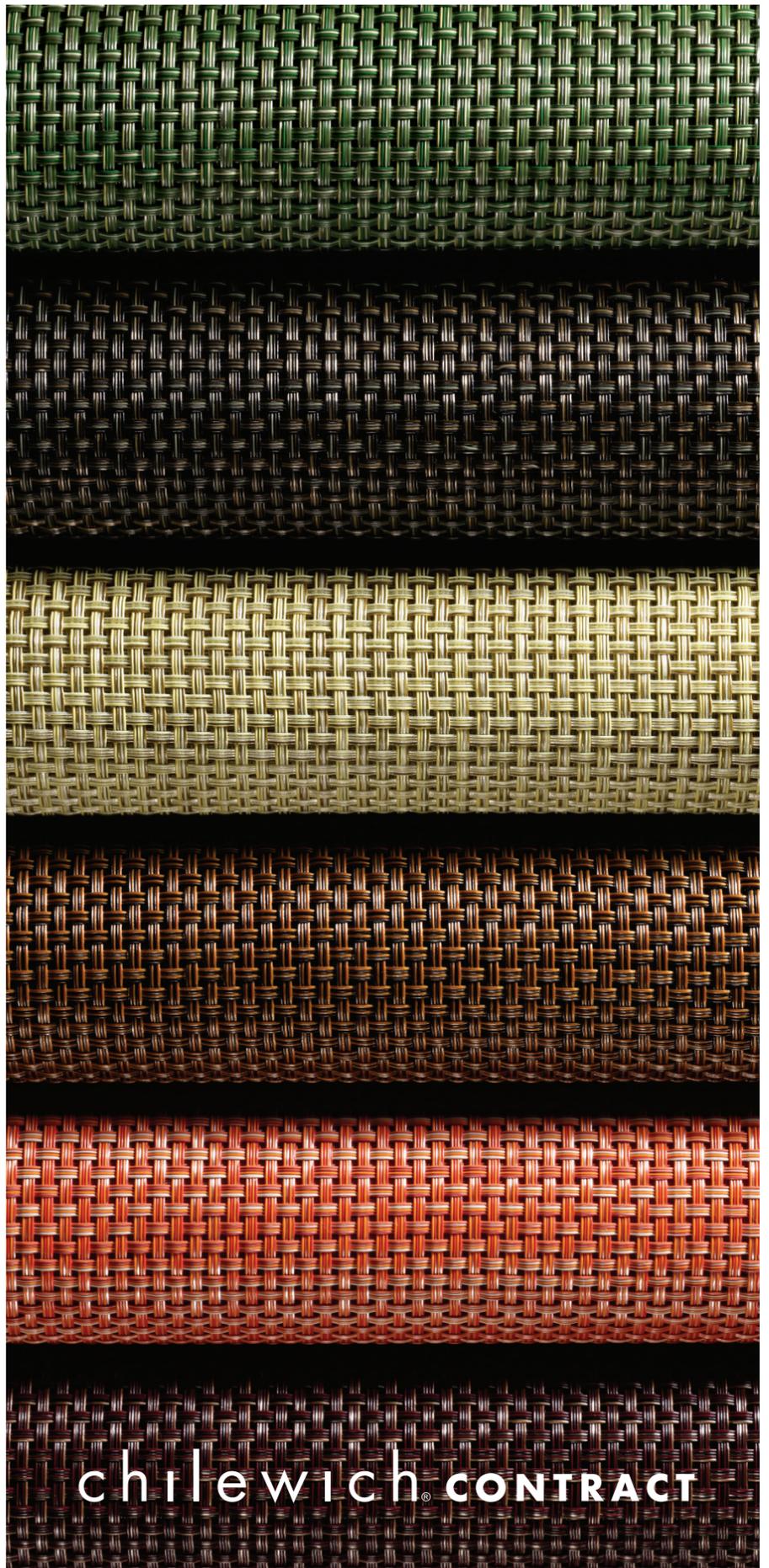
While Brenna awaits financing for his project, he's no longer the only one with big plans. On the opposite side of the station, another local developer, Nexus Properties, is developing One Station Plaza, a 20-story, 500,000-square-foot office complex, and two blocks away, Cranbury-based Matrix Development Group has proposed a mixed-use, midrise complex, including office and residential space. (Calls to those developers were not returned.) Carten, who has seen both projects in public presentations to the city, figures that both are taking a wait-and-see approach based on Brenna's success.

"Initially, we wanted a new train station to improve the city's image," Carten added. "Everyone said, 'We've got to do something about this, we're the capitol city.' But now, it's turned into so much more."

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### GLUCKMAN MAYNER ADAPTS A GREENWICH APPLE BARN AS GALLERY

## A BARNFUL OF ART

An old stone barn in Greenwich, Connecticut, has seen its share of uses come and go over the years. Long a storehouse for fresh-picked apples, the stout, early-20<sup>th</sup>-century structure received a makeover in 1985 as a club room and athletic facility for polo players. Now New York-based Gluckman Mayner Architects has reinvented the barn in turn—this time as an art exhibition space and study center.

Commissioned by the newsprint magnate and publisher (and avid polo player) Peter Brant, the Brant Foundation Art Study Center, which opens on May 9 and is accessible to the public by appointment, will present annual exhibitions curated primarily from the Brant family collection, a vast trove of works by contemporary artists and designers including Jeff Koons, Richard Prince, and Andy Warhol.

The ambitious reworking of this structure—which totals 6,000 square feet and includes three galleries, a video viewing room, and a library—is barely visible from the exterior, whose new use is revealed only by a long rooftop skylight and a freshly landscaped terrace. “Much of the redesign is what happens inside,” Gluckman told AN. “We exploited the existing building to maximize the quality and quan-

city of the exhibition spaces.” To that end, a suspended box was inserted into the open barn, containing one of the three gallery spaces and the library. Delicately floating inside the larger volume, the box lets natural light seep into the lower exhibition spaces, and is positioned to allow for a double-height gallery space toward one end of the barn. An Okalux skylight casts warm

light upon intricate wooden trusswork, while gallery spaces are finished with white plaster walls and terrazzo ground concrete on the lower level, with quartersawn white oak throughout the upper level and library. The surrounding landscape, meanwhile, will showcase high-class lawn ornaments like Jeff Koons’ *Puppy*—one of Brant’s trademark acquisitions. **DR**



DAVID HEALD



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### BALTIMORE NONPROFIT REVIVES A BLIGHTED CITY ICON

## BRAUHAUS PROUD

On May 21, the Baltimore nonprofit Humanim will move staff into the newly restored American Brewery building. The occasion will mark the completion of an ambitious adaptive reuse project by local architecture firm Cho Benn Holback + Associates (CBH) that began in 2006 with the goal of bringing a workforce development center to East Broadway, one of the city’s most blighted areas.

“At a certain point we wondered, ‘Is this the stupidest thing we’ve ever done?’” said Cindy Plavier Truitt, Humanim’s chief development officer. “We’re a \$25 million organization, and this is a \$25 million project.” **AS**

In spite of the financial challenges, the

nonprofit forged ahead, aiming to express its commitment to the city’s less fortunate by moving into their neighborhood. By choosing the brewery building, an amazing specimen of “Victorian Brewery Gothic” that had been abandoned since 1972, Humanim took advantage of a huge federal tax credit, since the building is on the historic register. The State of Maryland also issued a bond sale, adding another \$1.6 million to the funding pot. At the end of the day, the organization only had to raise \$6.7 million.

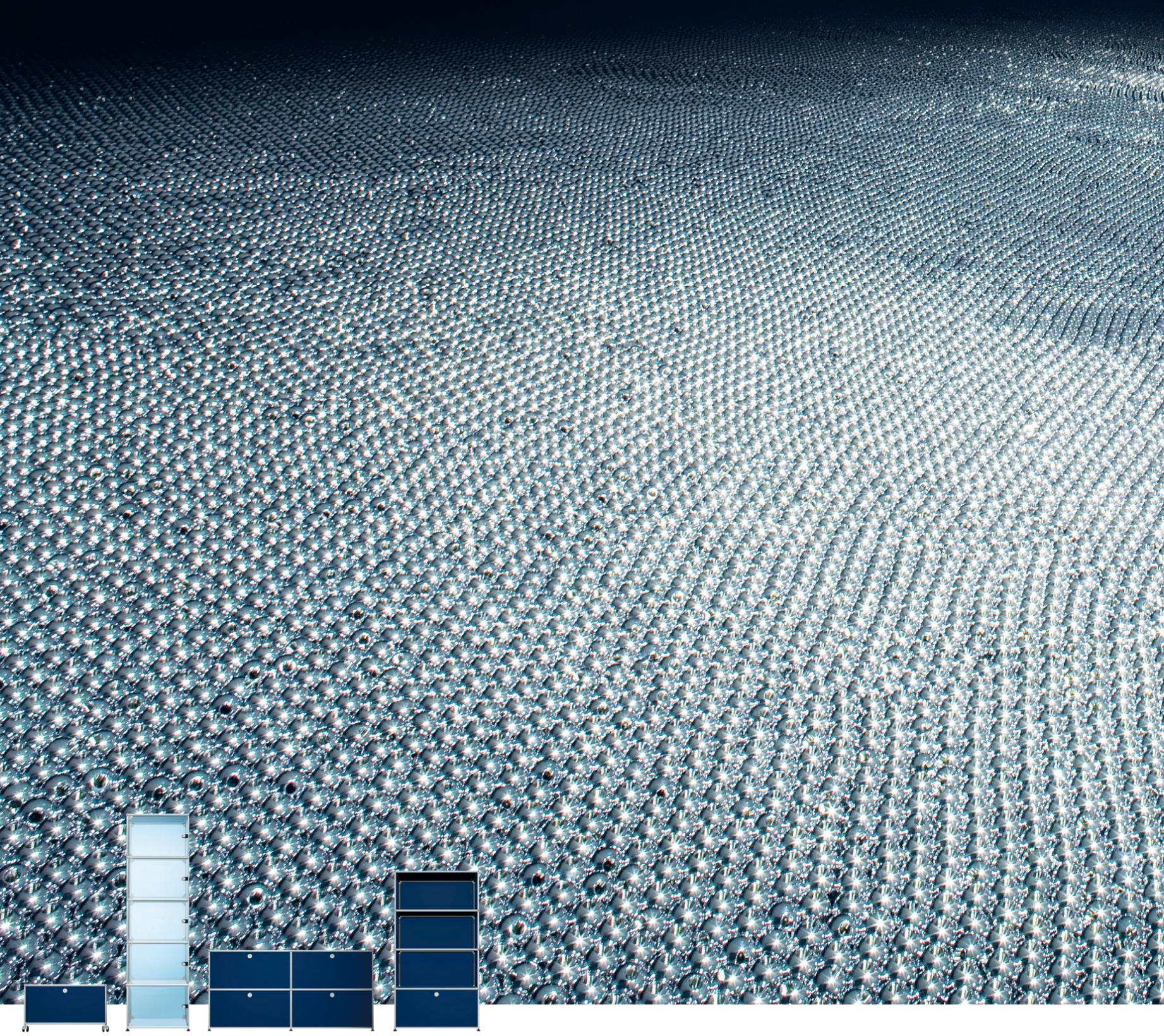
Humanim also picked the structure for its significance to the community. “The local kids call it Darth Vader’s Castle,” said Plavier Truitt. “The community was very vocal about bringing it back to the way it used to be.”

CBH began by restoring the derelict brewery’s exterior to its original appearance, replacing the old slate roof with a new, matching one; replicating the metal and wood trim; cleaning and re-pointing the brick; and replacing the windows. Inside, the architects took advantage of the open, loft-style layouts while making use of some of the building’s industrial elements: One of the brewing tanks was kept and turned into a reading room, and the grain chute was left in place and exposed to view through Plexiglas windows.

**AS**

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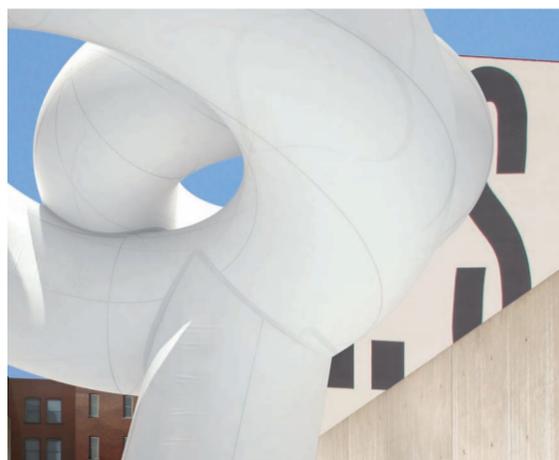
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STUDIO VISIT: BADE STAGEBERG COX

## ART CAVE



JASON SCHMIDT

P.S.1 YOUNG ARCHITECTS  
PROGRAM ENTRY

## SUBTRACTED BROWNSTONE



LEFT: COURTESY BSC; RIGHT: ANDY RYAN

Until recently, Bade Stageberg Cox (BSC) has worked somewhat below the radar. Fittingly, their most ambitious project to date is burrowed into the ground—a private California gallery they call the Art Cave. As a finalist for the annual P.S.1 Young Architects Program competition, the Dumbo-based firm has recently garnered a higher profile, and the contrast between the two projects is instructive of the firm's design approach. The Art Cave is barely visible from the outside, and its interior is muted, with the serenity of a sacred space. The P.S.1 design, which is based on an investigation of lightness and sustainability, evokes carnival inflatables, albeit filtered through an art world—appropriate, abstract aesthetic. Both projects engage their contexts in unexpected ways, and rely on nontraditional building methods. Though the designs are almost diametrically opposed, they express an inquisitive, non-didactic approach to architecture. “We try to say yes to everything,” as principal Martin Cox put it. “We like to see where things will take us.”

This flexibility has been with the firm since its inception. Jane Stageberg, an alumna of Davis Brody Bond, went out on her own in 1998. Tim Bade, her husband, who worked with Cox at Steven Holl Architects, joined her later that year, and Cox arrived in 2006. The office has continued to evolve organically, currently numbering six. Like many of their Dumbo peers, they rent a larger space than they need and rent out desks, taking on interns for projects like the P.S.1 entry.

Aside from their open-minded attitude, Bade finds another through-line in the firm's work. “We approach even small projects urbanistically,” Bade said, “which reflects our backgrounds in working in larger offices.” This approach tends to guide their designs and leads to unconventional forms, as in the Grafted House, which pivots to optimize light and views. The office also strives to analyze program and existing conditions holistically: In the Subtracted Brownstone, they reduced the overall square footage of the house in favor of bringing more light, air, and visual connections into the space. **AGB**

ART CAVE  
NAPA VALLEY,  
CA

Set into a hillside, this 6,000-square-foot private gallery was built with the help of local wine-cave excavators. “We realized there was this local skill that we could use in a new way,” Stageberg said. The strategy helped create a memorable space for viewing art, in addition to preserving precious vineyard land. It was also deferential to an existing, century-old farmhouse. Inside the cave, the concrete shell is coated with porous acoustical plaster on the 25-foot-high ceiling, which is blended, at a carefully feathered joint, with the walls' conventional plaster. Much of the lighting is concealed in a cove, creating subtle washes across the cave's interior.

GRAFTED HOUSE



ANDY RYAN

TWELFTH STREET LOFT



FRANK OUDEMAN

P.S. 1 YOUNG ARCHITECTS PROGRAM ENTRY QUEENS

While the design for an inflatable structure for P.S. 1's courtyard possesses more than a touch of humor, serious thinking went into the project. "Most of the previous entries have used conventional building materials with a 50-year life span," said Stageberg. "We started looking at air structures. We liked the resonance." They also believe the lightness of the design would lead to the consumption of far less fossil fuels, when factoring in transportation costs. The project could also be reused and repurposed at other venues. Though the entry was not ultimately selected, BSC has been in conversation with other cultural venues about commissioning the project.

GRAFTED HOUSE LLOYD NECK, NY

The architects were asked to add a bedroom and a home office to a modest, 1960s split-level. "We decided to add something vertical, the way plants grow toward sunlight," Bade said. This craning volume serves as a light chimney that brings natural illumination deep into the lower level. The new office, pivoted off the axis of the main house, offers views of Long Island Sound when the surrounding trees have lost their leaves. In this low-budget project, using conventional construction techniques and modest materials, BSC turned an ordinary house into a structure both memorable and appealingly inscrutable.

SUBTRACTED BROWNSTONE BROOKLYN

The clients for this project are members of that rare species that prefers the quality of space over quantity. In order to lighten and open up this Park Slope brownstone, the architects "subtracted" a windowless top floor room, creating a light-filled, double-height space that helps connect the family areas, which can also be observed from the bedroom level above. The architects re-milled timber from the project's demolition for use as railings and paneling, and stripped existing moldings and left them unfinished, acknowledging the house's history without prettying it up.

TWELFTH STREET LOFT NEW YORK

The owner of this loft—a true, undivided New York loft space—wanted to differentiate the living quarters without losing the apartment's open feel. BSC used a variety of means to achieve this goal, including a double-sided bookcase between the dining area and an office. Glass sandwiched between the sides of the bookcase allows light to be transmitted, while helping to attenuate sound. A retractable screen can be deployed for formal dinners to keep the kitchen out of sight, while a sheer fabric scrim helps to visually segregate the living area.

Occasionally even the most beautiful objects have to bask in reflected glory.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009

IN EAST NEW YORK, ALEXANDER GORLIN RAISES THE BAR FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## NEHEMIAH'S NEW LOOK



FRANK OUDEMAN

In 1975, I interviewed I. D. Robbins, the founder of Nehemiah Houses, at the organization's first project in East New York, Brooklyn. Nehemiah, named after the Old Testament prophet who rebuilt Jerusalem, had just delivered new homes to the neighborhood's working-class residents for the astonishingly low price of \$40,000. At that time, the neighborhood was a place of "stunning devastation, glaring needs, abandonment, and rubble," according

to local community organizer Michael Gecan, and Nehemiah played a major role in making it a thriving community.

The organization achieved this transformation by replicating the mass-produced building techniques of the postwar suburb, bringing, as Robbins put it, "Levittown to the city." The Nehemiah formula included partnering with community-based religious organizations as co-developers, and convincing the city to offer free land on

which to build. A continuous concrete foundation slab would be poured, and topped by freestanding, two-story residences. Robbins insisted on building only low-density neighborhoods. "Single-family is the way to go," as he said, "because families take pride in their homes."

Using this successful strategy, the group has built thousands of homes in New York, and admirably transformed neighborhoods around the city. But the

architecture of the Nehemiah houses—replicas of medieval half-timbered residences marching uniformly down the block—is less than desirable. The historian Richard Plunz claimed that they "harken back to 19<sup>th</sup>-century mill housing," and I asked Robbins about this in my interview. I pointed to Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, which had been created in the 1920s with more modern architecture and thoughtful landscaping. Robbins was furious with the comparison, calling Sunnyside's builders out of touch with the aspirations of working New Yorkers for the pleasures of middle-class life. I told him I thought that was precisely what Sunnyside had achieved, and Robbins asked me to leave his office.

Now Nehemiah has finally created a large new project inspired as much by the housing tradition of Holland as by the streetscapes of Brooklyn. Designed by Alexander Gorlin Architects, the development Spring Creek is built on a 45-acre former land-fill in East New York. It will eventually contain more than 800 homes that have little in common with the flat brick facades of earlier Nehemiah housing.

The commission came about after Gorlin wrote *The New American Townhouse* in 1999 and wanted to work on larger-scale, socially responsible housing. He wrote to HPD commissioner Richard Roberts, who suggested that he contact Nehemiah, and the group's general manager Ron Walters was not un-receptive to a

new direction for the organization. Gorlin took him on an architecture tour of Dutch housing estates, including MVRDV's Eastern Docklands and J.J.P. Oud's 1927 Hoek of Holland project, and it convinced Walters to embrace the idea of a modern housing estate. But Gorlin, who is best known for his luxury homes, was told that every plumbing turn would cost \$75, and this mattered greatly to the final cost of the house. Despite these constraints, Gorlin has designed several different house types that sell for an average of \$153,000. The two-story, single-family unit is composed of two, 80-square-foot modules prefabricated by Capsys in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and then covered with 4-foot-by-8-foot sheets of colorful HardiPlank. The somewhat flat facades do have small protruding bays, indentations with vestibules, attached canopies, and metal stairs.

Through this economical use of prefabricated components and clipped-on elements, Gorlin has achieved something very important in New York. He has respected the Nehemiah mandate that its houses convey the notion of homeownership to first-time buyers—but not at the cost of importing an ersatz identity to the streets of Brooklyn. And he has done this with perhaps the freshest approach to affordable housing in the city today, showing that urbanity and community need not be mutually exclusive.

WILLIAM MENKING

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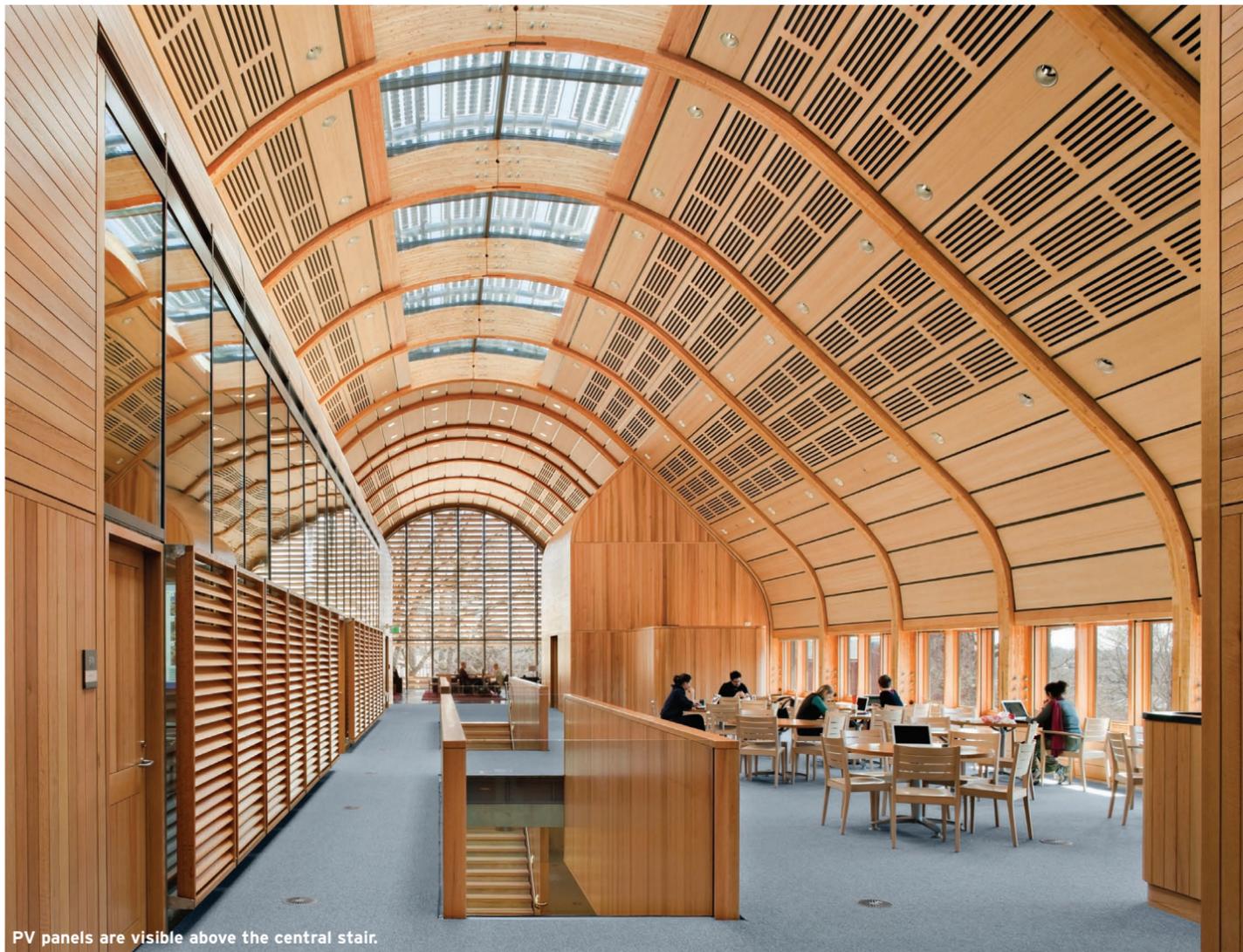
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## CRIT: KROON HALL



PV panels are visible above the central stair.

ROBERT BENSON

With its vaulted roof, communal spaces, and casual materials, the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies' new Kroon Hall feels more like an oversized house than its monumental appearance in photographs would suggest—albeit a house with ambitions. Its long volume, combined with the project's hoped-for LEED Platinum status, evokes the great, sheltering form of an ark, one designed to float Yale into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, training the world's future green leaders along the way.

Designed by London-

based Hopkins Architects, with local firm Centerbrook Architects & Planners as executive architect, Kroon Hall is Yale's fourth green building and, as befits the school's curriculum, its most ambitious in sustainable terms, designed to use 50 percent less energy than a comparable modern building. Didactic features are few, but telling: Touch screens show the status of the building's ground-source heat pumps, 100-kilowatt photovoltaic roof panel array, rainwater-recycling system, and solar hot-water heaters. Among

other high-tech touches, red and green lights on each floor indicate when opening windows would be optimal, and a line of photovoltaics is showcased in clear glass over the central stair.

Despite these sustainable elements, the 58,200-square-foot building as a whole is low-key about its engineering. That sets it apart from most of the highly publicized green buildings of the last few years, particularly those with silvery skins and struts by British architects. There's a hint of the 1970s ski lodge

in the building's wooden beams and abundant daylight. And Kroon Hall's modest form is perhaps its most eco-friendly feature of all.

Hopkins' paramount strategy from both a sustainable and an aesthetic perspective was to make Kroon Hall only 57 feet wide (and 218 feet long). That slimmess makes it possible to daylight the entire interior during part of the year, as well as harness the building's long south side for passive heating, and install operable windows. The result is that the visitor is always aware of the outer walls and the outdoors beyond them, usually glimpsed through layers of glass and oak louvers in a pleasantly constricting way.

That slim profile led to the rest of the structure's form, with its open, column-free interior and a pitched roof that relates to the surrounding buildings without mimicking them. One adjacent roofline of note is the catenary curve of the Whale—Eero Saarinen's 1956 Ingalls Rink—now undergoing thoughtful restoration and expansion across the street. Kroon Hall's soft peak and indented sides suggest the influ-

ence of that modern icon on a traditional form, but Kroon's rooftop PV panels, like oversize slate tiles, seem tame in comparison to the Whale's swooping lines, and the roof seems a lost opportunity for Hopkins, however hard they were trying to fit in on campus.

Granted, they had another intimidating Yale precedent: Louis Kahn's 1974 British Art Center, a major point of reference for British architects. What Kroon Hall has in common with Kahn's masterpiece is simplicity and strength in materials: the oak, the exposed concrete walls and ceilings (the better to absorb and later radiate heat), the clear unfussy form. The building innovates in its entrance facades: three stories of glass shaded by fixed louvers made of Douglas fir. Openness and practicality, homely wood and shiny glazing—it's the pairing of those elements that give Kroon Hall its interest.

It is where Kroon diverges from the simplicity of Kahn that I have my biggest problem with the design, aside from the lingering sentimentality in that roofline. The south and

north facades are faced in sandstone, bright enough to make you squint on a sunny day. The sandstone, its texture rough and ugly, appears nowhere inside the building, and so stands out as alien.

Already, students and faculty have embraced the building as their own, and the top floor (really a top deck) is a hub of chance meetings and chats. The suggested nickname for the Knobloch Environment Center, the Knob, has given rise to a movement to call the adjacent, smaller cafe area the Bloch. In a sign of messy vitality, a competition has already been held to combat the lack of cleanliness of the communal kitchen. Meanwhile, faculty members have overruled the red lights and opened the windows on non-optimal days, deeming the lights unduly authoritarian.

But there's also a certain blandness about the interiors. All that red oak paneling (50 percent from Yale's own forests) is beautiful, but a little monotonous. The high-ceilinged Knob, furnished with red rectangles of carpet and dark brown sofas, feels like an ecclesiastical hotel lobby. Dean Gus Speth, whose tenure spanned the inception, construction, and completion of Kroon Hall, reportedly imagined that space as a boisterous, free-thinking commons, and has been disappointed that it is the quietest of the public areas. More socializing is getting done in the ground-floor lounge: Its low ceilings and carpeted floor suggest a rec room, and behavior follows.

Kroon Hall is a model of comfortable, even beautiful, sustainable architecture, neither institutional nor fussy, informal in a truly modern way. I can't put it in the first rank of Yale's modern architectural wonders, as nothing about it is technically or architecturally stunning. But few buildings can run with that crowd, and several of those (Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building, Eero Saarinen's Morse & Stiles Colleges) were less accommodating to student life from the start. Kroon's greatest strength may be that it feels designed precisely for student life, with lots of room to make one's mark.

ALEXANDRA LANGE



The rounded roofline echoes neighboring buildings.

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- 1 Juhani Pallasmaa with Kristian Gullichsen, Moduli 225, Prefabricated Vacation House System, Prototype (1968)
- 2 Wendell Burnette Architects with Gould Evans Associates, Palo Verde Library/Maryvale Community Center, Phoenix, Arizona (2006)
- 3 Stan Allen Architect, Gwanggyo Pier Lakeside Park, Suwon, South Korea (2008)

Established in 1898, the **American Academy of Arts and Letters** launched its annual architecture awards program with the inauguration of the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture in 1955, and has since expanded its honors program to include three Academy Awards in Architecture. The Academy recently announced its four 2009 winners.

Finnish architect **Juhani Pallasmaa** was awarded the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture for making a significant contribution to architecture as an art. Born in 1936, Pallasmaa is known for work that blends a keen environmental awareness with a sophisticated, constructivist style. New York-based architect **Stan Allen**

and Phoenix-based architect **Wendell Burnette** both received Academy Awards in Architecture for work characterized by a strong personal direction. Allen, who is dean at Princeton University's school of architecture, has long used landscape architecture and ecology as models for urban design, while Burnette has honed an architecture attuned to a regional understanding of the American desert. Finally, architectural scholar **Jeffrey Kipnis** was lauded for exploring architectural ideas through diverse mediums of expression. Kipnis, the well-known curator of architecture and design at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, is the author of *Perfect Acts of Architecture*,

among many other critical and theoretical writings.

Candidates for the architecture awards are nominated by members of the Academy, an organization of 250 architects, composers, artists, and writers who "foster, assist, and sustain an interest in literature, music, and the fine arts." A committee chaired by Billie Tsien made the final selections. This year's jury included Henry Cobb, Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Hugh Hardy, Steven Holl, Richard Meier, and James Polshek.

An exhibition of works by the 2009 award winners, along with work by newly elected members like New York architect Tod Williams, will be on view at the Academy's galleries from May 21 through June 14. **DR**

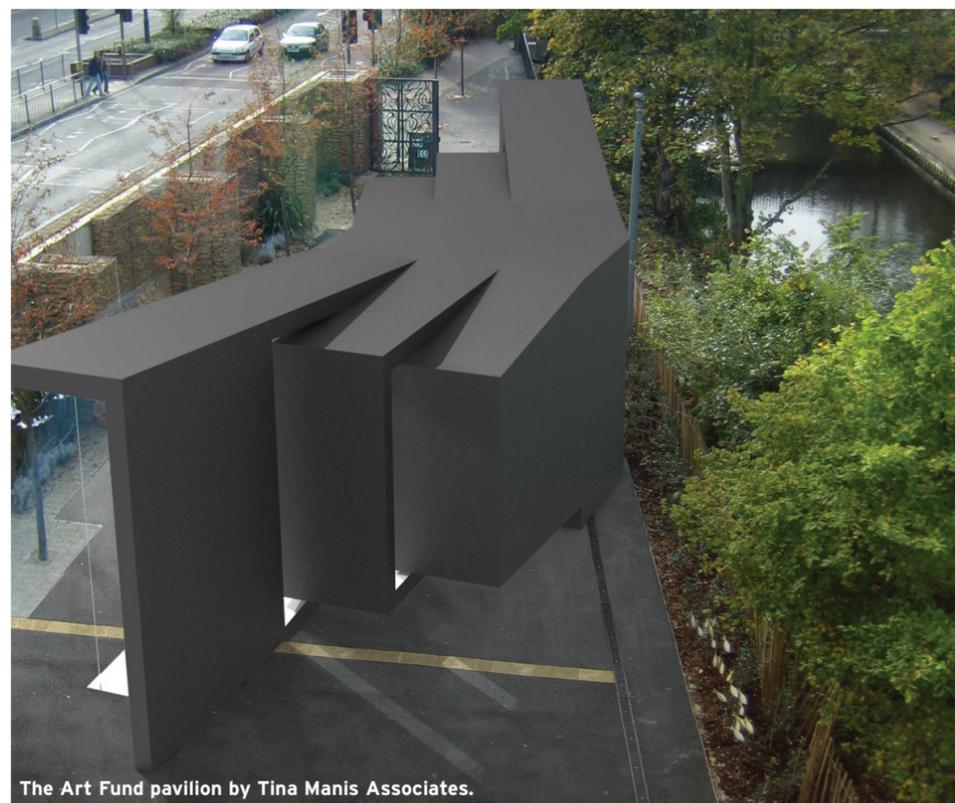
**PLANTING PAVILIONS** continued from front page a stark departure from Frank Gehry's weighty composition of wooden beams, steel, and fractured glass, built last year. True to their ongoing investigations of lightness, thinness, and surface, the SANAA pavilion is designed to blur the boundaries between architecture, landscape, and furniture. The canopy will rise overhead and dip down to table height, reflecting land and sky on its curvilinear planes. "For us it's a dream come true to be working with SANAA, to be able to introduce their first built work in the UK," said Hans Ulrich Obrist, co-director of the Serpentine.

The SANAA design will be executed with the engineering help of Arup and SAPS. "The aluminum will be incredibly thin, thanks to our spectacular design and engineering team," said Serpentine co-director Julia Peyton-Jones. The pavilion will open in July and will remain standing through October. Obrist and Peyton-Jones believe the design will allow for flexible programming, from impromptu picnics to formal symposia.

Unlike the Serpentine structure, which lasts only one season, the Art Fund Pavilion

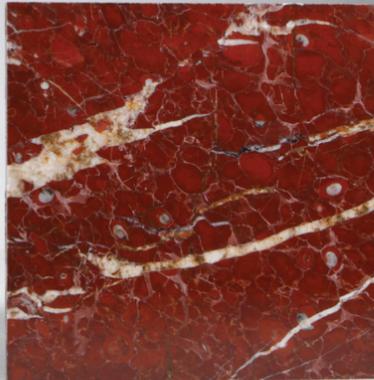
will be disassembled and reinstalled on site each summer. Made of structural plywood box panels with Finnply cladding, the structure is designed to display hanging and freestanding works, while providing seating space for 30, as well as event space. In order to accommodate the program while differentiating the space, Manis conceived of the structure as a ramp guiding the visitor through the pavilion and offering strategic views out to the city and the adjacent canal. "We are creating a new topography for a flat site," Manis said. "The goal is to create a sense of movement, of dynamic engagement with the area."

The project comes with a tight, £100,000 budget, but for Manis the commission is a breakthrough for her four-person firm into the realm of public, cultural projects. "It's the scale and program we're most interested in," she said. The firm prevailed over entrants from around the world. "You rarely see opportunities like this in America for young, small firms. We'll definitely be pursuing this kind of work more diligently now." The pavilion will be previewed in September at Tent London, a fair that is part of Design Week. It will be constructed on the Woking site in the spring of 2010. **AGB**



The Art Fund pavilion by Tina Manis Associates.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009

## IN BID TO STOP BROOKLYN PROJECT, POL BLAMES ARCHITECTS

# JAIL BAIT

The gentrification of Boerum Hill was well underway by the time the Brooklyn House of Detention closed in 2003, but now that the Bloomberg administration wants to reopen and expand the 759-bed jail, neighbors new and old have rallied forcefully to stop it. In the latest move, Comptroller William Thompson came to the neighborhood's defense with an unusual procedural gambit: He rejected the city's design contract for the expansion, just 12 days after a Brooklyn judge allowed the jail to reopen.

In a letter sent to the mayor on March 30, Thompson placed part of the blame on the expansion's designers—a team led by RicciGreeneAssociates and 1100 Architects—finding them inexperienced for the job. The main thrust of Thompson's argument was this: As part of the RFP process, the design team submitted ten previously completed projects. But none of the ten projects, Thompson wrote, "is remotely 'similar in scope and type' to planned renovation and expansion of the BHOD." In particular, Thompson said, none of the projects reached anywhere close to the expansion's \$450 million price tag.

RicciGreene, however, has considerable experience designing correctional facilities and court houses, and the city's Department of Design and Construction, which is developing the project, stands behind them. Matthew Monahan, public affairs officer for the department, called the firm "one of the foremost correctional design firms in the United States" with

ample experience for the project.

Rick Bell, executive director of the AIA New York chapter, also defended the design team, pointing out that if the cost of a project were always the primary factor in selecting firms to design it, small firms would never be able to compete. "The way people work now, firm size has nothing to do with the projects they can undertake," Bell said.

Thompson's real complaint seemed to be that the cost of the project had nearly doubled from an original estimate of \$240 million—and that this was announced three-quarters of the way through the design process. To that argument, Monahan countered that the initial amount was submitted by a different agency and then adjusted afterwards. He added that the cost of a project should have no impact on whether or not a firm is capable of designing it.

Amid the debate, some have wondered whether Thompson's pique over the contract might have something to do with the comptroller's campaign for mayor next year. In response to an email seeking comment, the comptroller's spokesman replied simply: "The facts speak for themselves." **MC**



The Brooklyn House of Detention.

MATT CHABAN

AT DEADLINE

## D.C.'S DREAM TEAM

A team led by David Adjaye, Phil Freelon, and the late Max Bond beat out five others in a competition to design the National Museum of African-American History and Culture, which will occupy the last available plot on the national mall. Their victory was announced April 15 and put the three notable architects ahead of Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Antoine Predock, Pei Cobb Freed, Moshe Safdie, and Foster + Partners. Freelon and Bond previously worked on the master plan for the museum.

## FROM GREEN TO GOLD

When she began "greening the ghetto," Majora Carter probably had no idea how far her efforts would take her. But her Sustainable South Bronx initiative has made her a star among the green set for peeling back its snobbery and making it accessible to all. For those efforts, Carter will be given the National Building Museum's Honor Award this year, along with two other "Visionaries in Sustainability," the U.S. Green Building Council and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. The awards will be presented on June 4.

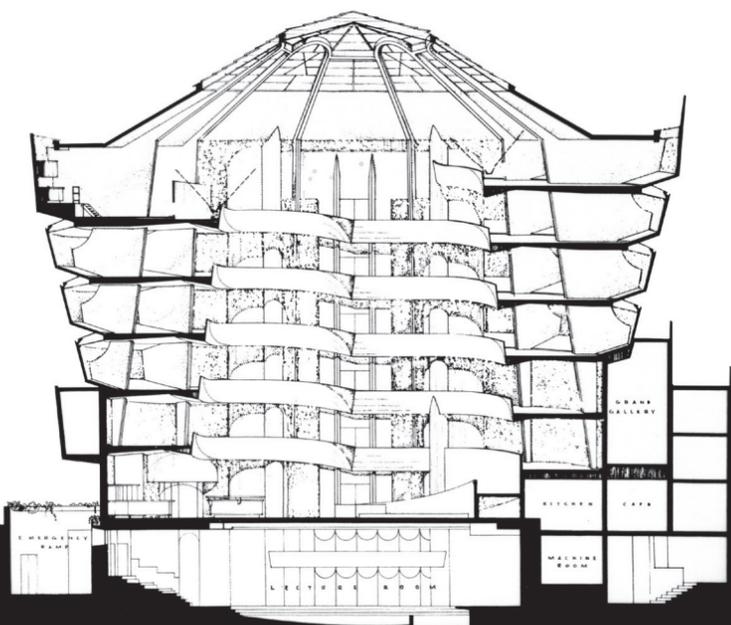
## TENANT-LESS ANTENNA

After years of wrangling, a deal to broadcast nearly a dozen TV stations from atop One World Trade Center has fallen through. According to *The Observer*, which revealed the news on April 7, some of the 11 member stations of the Metropolitan Television Alliance have bridled at the \$10 million in annual rent the Port Authority is demanding for use of the antenna, in addition to its \$20 million construction cost. The authority is now debating whether to build a scaled-down antenna for future use, or one that is purely aesthetic. Whatever the decision, the authority said the building will still reach its symbolic height of 1,776 feet.

## SURPLUS STIMULUS

At an April 13 press conference at the Department of Transportation, President Barack Obama announced the 2,000<sup>th</sup> infrastructure project funded by federal stimulus money. It was a modest job: the \$68 million renovation of an Interstate overpass outside Portage, Michigan. The real news from the press conference, however, was that the industry is so eager for work that many projects are coming in under budget. Bids have been up to 19 percent under budget in North Carolina, 30 percent less in Colorado, and 50 percent less in California. This means any leftovers can be reinvested into additional projects.

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Despite an all-but-certainly tanking market, the annual furniture fair in Milan popped with nervy, even brash designs from the likes of Front and the ever-irreverent Campana Brothers. But beyond such devil-may-care effrontery, the show also reflected a yearning for simplicity and seriousness, especially through wood—be it scavenged, cheap-and-chipped, or just comfortably clunky.

BY JULIE V. IOVINE

# INTO THE WOODS







7



8



9

**Previous page:**Soft Wood Sofa by  
Front for Moroso**This spread:**1 LED Raimond by  
Raimond Puts for Moooi2 Pressed Glass Tube  
by Tom Dixon3 Masters by Philippe  
Starck for Kartell4 Table, Bench, Chair by  
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Marcel Wanders  
for Moooi9 Cipria by Fernando and  
Humberto Campana  
for Edra

Those attending this year's Salone Internazionale del Mobile, the annual orgy of the designer furniture market in Milan, might easily have expected slim pickings. Italian furniture exports to the United States in 2008 were down over the same period in 2007 by some 23 percent. In spite of these sobering numbers, however, there were plenty of savories on view, as well as light at the end of the tunnel from some brilliant fixtures at Euroluce, the lighting fair that takes place biannually alongside the Salone.

While many designers and manufacturers had the rhetoric of a new seriousness of purpose down pat, there really hasn't been enough time to know for sure what impact grim economics might have on the shape of furnishings to come—the most ambitious pieces, after all, went into the works years ago. Designer Ross Lovegrove's bamboo bicycle took Biomega three years to figure out how to produce, and Patricia Urquiola spent five years ironing out the technical complexities for Axor

Hansgrohe, which cut openings into an ultrathin porcelain sink and spa tub. The openings are wide enough for a towel, but the porcelain is also strong enough, incredibly, to sit on.

Derring-do furniture takes time—and investment money—to develop, and quite probably there will be less of it in the years ahead. Italian manufacturers were blunt about the new realities. Edra's Massimo Morozzi told a crowd of Italian journalists that, to his mind, the current situation offered two options: suicide or shine. The creative director of Edra, a firm known for its splashy furnishings, has naturally opted for the latter, showing crazy-colored, artificial-fur-covered couches designed by Edra's discovery for the Campana Brothers; they were inspired by cats hanging around their studio. In spite of the piece's lumpy look, it was deeply comfortable, as reassuring as a cat in the lap. Over at Moooi there was a sparkly light designed by 70-year-old newcomer Raimond Puts, an inventor based in Amsterdam, along

with Moooi founder Marcel Wanders' own porcelain piggy bank with a none-too-subtle porcelain hammer stabbed in its side.

Along with the mordant humor, there was a palpable sense of longing for furniture that was plainer, simpler, and possibly even clunky. Four-by-fours are in, along with just about anything made of cheap wood. (Or even fake wood. For Moroso, the Swedish design group Front made an upholstered couch that only looks like a hardwood bench, thanks to a new photo-print technique.) Brit designer Tom Dixon made his three-legged Offcut Stool out of wood remnants scavenged from a furniture factory, even leaving on the rough bits to show their authenticity as trash. For his part, Tord Boontje did a dining table prototype for Moroso with a compressed wood-chip surface covered in paint splatters that look like violets, mixed with real pressed flowers. And for Artek, Shigeru Ban's Ten Unit System ingeniously solved the global paper manufacturer Upim's problem by using

leftover, plastic-coated paper to fabricate two identical, L-shaped pieces that lock into a chair without waste. Rather than pop-psychologizing about wood and warmth, Murray Moss of the Moss design empire pinpointed why wood now feels so right: "Production-wise, there are lower initial costs to using more basic materials like wood as compared to, say, the cost of injection-molded polycarbonates. I think we'll also start seeing a lot of techno-crafts where high-tech materials are handled in a more craftsmanlike way, or imperfect materials are put into high-tech production. I call it 'random serial production,' where the materials are not stable, so every piece comes out differently, and unique."

Still, a hankering for familiar forms of the past was much in evidence. Philippe Starck, ever the divining rod for new trends, came swanning into the Kartell booth in pajama bottoms—a swirl of pretty girls in his wake—to pose for photographs of his latest piece, Masters, an homage to midcentury pragmatism.

A simple red plastic chair, its back is a mash-up of three iconic chairs by Arne Jacobsen, Hans Wegner, and Charles and Ray Eames. For Established & Sons, Sam Hecht of Industrial Facility designed the bent-wood Table, Bench, Chair, basically an extended slab with table legs and a chair back echoing shapes by the Shakers, Ming dynasty thrones, and again Wegner. "We wanted it to be deliberately low-tech and dependent more on the hand than the machine, even though we usually deal with machines and mass production," said Hecht, the creative director for Muji Europe, and more recently a consultant for Herman Miller. "Lower numbers mean less risk. It just seemed more relevant that way."

And so went the message this year at the furniture fair: Straight on until we are out of the woods. Some designers seemed well suited to the task. The Campana Brothers, whose inspiration has long been rooted in the slums of São Paulo, were perfectly at home in the moment. "A sense of crisis is nothing new

for us," said Fernando Campana at a press conference introducing the furry sofa, Cipria. "We were inoculated by Brazil, so we can bring some positive vibes to the situation. For us, the cure for crisis is always creativity."

That sentiment was seconded by Jeffrey Bernett, an American designer based in Milan and creative director for a dicey new enterprise, called Skitsch, a manufacturer-store and retailer-internet catalog that hopes to close the gap between producers and consumers with a collection of exclusive products by both well-known and newly discovered design talents, from the Campanas to Todd Bracher working out of Brooklyn's Navy Yard. "Right now, everyone is trying to deal with the change and still work in interesting ways," said Bernett at the opening party for the first Skitsch flagship store. "It's easy to do great work when the resources are plentiful. It will be interesting to see what designers can do with just a little. It's a benchmark time."

**JULIE V. IOVINE IS EXECUTIVE EDITOR AT AN.**

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009



**JANG WON YOON**  
LOS ANGELES

A relative newcomer to the design world, Korean-born industrial designer Jang Won Yoon burst onto the scene at this year's SaloneSatellite in Milan, and later this month will appear at ICFF in New York. Upon graduating from the Art Center College of Design in 2008, Yoon has wasted little time introduc-

ing himself and his work to the global design community, manufacturers, and prospective clients.

At ICFF, Yoon will be showing two prototyped designs: Janus, an angular injected polypropylene chair (pictured) and Blade, a gently sloped wooden stool. Both products, though inherently different, embody the young designer's creative philosophy: the duality of organic form and industrial perfection. Yoon's use of sharp angles, high-gloss surfacing, and multi-faceted contours, reminiscent of car design, demonstrate this juxtaposition. His pieces remain strong and bold, yet embody a sense of delicacy and refinement as well.

Influenced by the urban landscape of Los Angeles, where Yoon resides and works, thoughtful lines and contours are a common thread throughout his work, which ranges from stools

and chairs to tables and sofas. Janus was created from the basic observation that "every time you sit on an outdoor chair, you have to clean it," Yoon told AN. Ensuring that only clean surfaces come in contact with the user's body, Janus' backrest is designed to fold and cover the chair's seat for protection from the elements.

Yoon's tables Vue and Revue, which are currently his only pieces of furniture in production, were selected for a special ICFF preview in collaboration with Bernhardt Design. Currently working as a 3D-designer while continuing to pursue furniture design independently, Yoon is primed to increase his exposure through ICFF, and launch more of his work into production. **DR**



**LINDSEY ADELMAN**  
STUDIO  
NEW YORK

Lindsey Adelman's work combines the unique textures and qualities of craft with precise modernist articulation.

After going back to school for industrial design at the Rhode Island School of Design, Adelman worked with David Weeks, perhaps best known for his sculptural lighting mobiles. She later collaborated with Weeks on

an affordable product line called Butter before going out on her own, following a break from the design world to have a child. When she decided to return, she wanted to move away from mass production, back toward having a direct hand in the work. "I'm interested in designing a system that is built to order," she said. "I maintain the connection to the designer or the client."

It is easy to spot the influence of Weeks in products like Adelman's Branching Bubble fixture, with its mobile-like form, but where Weeks' fixtures are large and sleekly polished, Adelman's fixtures are delicate and reveal the imprint of their maker. The Bubble series uses hand-blown glass, with imperfections and custom flecking and other treatments, by a Williamsburg, Brooklyn-based glass artist, Michiko Sakano, combined with precision-machined tubing

and armatures made in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Fixtures can be made into an infinite number of forms. "I think this is the way people are furnishing their homes. They've met the maker. It's unique. It goes way beyond function," she said.

She believes the element of craft adds a charge to the pieces. "You feel the energy in the glass next to the precision-made parts," she said.

In addition to showing the Branching fixture, Adelman is introducing a more explicitly organic series, including Cluster, which shows her thinking about what she calls "beautiful aging." She's also introducing LED bulbs and white glass. "I'm excited to make those bulbs beautiful."

For Adelman, the annual spring ritual of the fair is an essential renewal. "ICFF keeps us in business for the year without a doubt," she said. **AGB**



**1 Blacksmith Table**  
Alexandra Von Furstenberg

Alexandra Von Furstenberg's new collection is a departure from her playful first designs. With its sharp, striking lines, the Blacksmith Table comes with acrylic legs and a 1/2-inch-thick top of black-tinted, tempered glass—and is available in a limited edition of 50. [www.alexandravonfurstenberg.com](http://www.alexandravonfurstenberg.com)

**2 Hyde**  
Bernhardt Design

Designers Fredrickson Stallard have worked with Swarovski and Droog, but the Hyde chair is their first mass-production piece. The leather and walnut chair for Bernhardt evokes stretched canvas, while the seat and back inserts can be upholstered in fabric or leather, allowing for contrasting colors. [www.bernhardtdesign.com](http://www.bernhardtdesign.com)

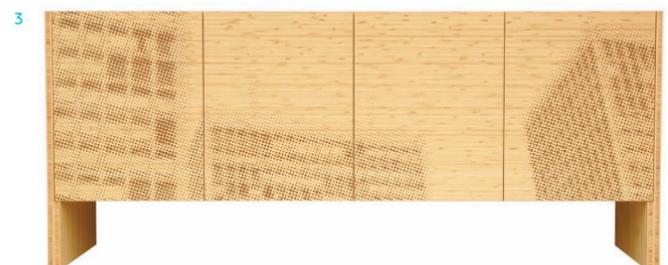
**3 Halftone Storage**  
Iannone Design

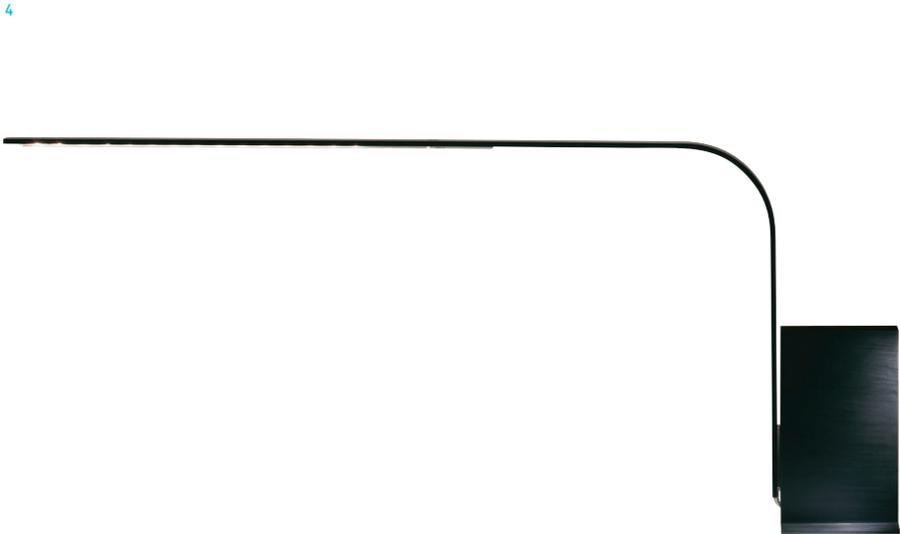
Measuring just under six feet long and two-and-a-half feet high, Philadelphia-based Iannone Design's Halftone Storage features pixelated images of I.M. Pei's landmark Society Hill Towers, composed of hundreds of holes drilled into the unit's bamboo plywood veneer. [www.iannonodesign.com](http://www.iannonodesign.com)

## ICFF PREVIEW

From sleek to scrappy, here's a first look at some products and companies at this year's furniture fair, with an emphasis on American designers. This sampling points to an eclectic and pragmatic moment in the design zeitgeist, and four dynamic talents to watch.

COMPILED BY ALAN G. BRAKE, DANIELLE RAGO, AND DUSTIN SELOW





**PABLO PARDO**  
SAN FRANCISCO

Industrial design veteran Pablo Pardo is no stranger to design shows, let alone ICFF. A winner of the fair's best lighting award last year, one of the industry's highest accolades, Pardo has been a participant at ICFF for 15 years. Born in Venezuela into a family of designers, musicians, and engineers, Pardo's interest in a variety of fields

led to his creation of Pablo Designs, an interdisciplinary design studio based in San Francisco. With a focus primarily on lighting design, Pardo's creations interpret light in its many forms to create refined design solutions that have the ability to transform an unusual array of environments.

A technology-based company, Pablo Designs invests a great deal of time in discovering and developing new technologies and fusing them with materials to create unique yet practical designs. LIM, a sleek, ultraslim LED task light, will be on view at ICFF, and demonstrates Pardo's sustainable lighting technology. Borrowing from the design of his popular Brazo lamp, the LIM light is even more intuitive and simpler to use. Designed to be shapeable, the lamp can be adapted to table-top or under-the-counter and wall use, with a

base unit that can easily mount on any surface. Discreetly concealing 15 high-powered LEDs, LIM's L-shaped arm utilizes a magnet to attach to the sturdy base, and is available in three finishes: polished, graphite (pictured), and satin.

With a philosophy that embraces both simplicity and utility, Pardo explained, "it's all about using materials to their absolute minimum." By paring down his products to their essential elements, Pardo has created designs that are at once beautiful, easy to use, and possess just a touch of play. **DR**



- 1 Janus
- 2 Branching Bubble
- 3 Cluster
- 4 Lim
- 5 Sola



**TALITHA JAMES**  
NEW YORK

When the young, New York-based designer and current Pratt student Talitha James found out one of her designs had been selected for the ICFF Studio, a talent showcase at the fair sponsored by Bernhardt Design, she was astonished. "I'm really shocked and amazed," she said. "You never quite believe in your own work

until it accomplishes something." Her competition-winning Sola desk, a bent-plywood desk and chair in one, came from a desire to improve personal space for students. "I want to make the school room a better-looking place," she said. "When I was in school, all the desks were attached to each other and that always bothered me."

The desk, covered in walnut veneer, has gone through numerous iterations, including full-scale mockups in paper and prototypes in plywood. She built the mold and vacuum-sealed the prototypes in bags so that the glue would set. The prototype that will be shown at the fair will be slightly thinner than the one pictured here. The final design shows a balance between sturdiness and elegance. "I wanted it to be solid-looking, so you'd know you can sit on it, but I didn't want it to look too

chunky," she said. Along the way, she realized she enjoyed the craftsmanship behind design. "I love working in the wood shop and the feel and the smell of the material," she said. "I would love to have a shop of my own."

James chose walnut veneer both for its rich color and for practical reasons. "I'm a big fan of dark woods in general, but it's also better for hiding stains and scratches."

James, who currently works part-time at TZDesign, is happy to treat the fair as a learning experience. "I'm excited to see how the process works," she said. "Maybe I'll meet the manufacturer who will bring my dream to life." **AGB**



**4 Wired Ottoman**  
Phase Design

Designer Reza Feiz has created this simple ottoman with solid steel tubing—available in a chrome-plated or powder-coated finish—and a circular top that comes either upholstered or in solid wood. [www.phasedesignonline.com](http://www.phasedesignonline.com)

**5 MShelving**  
Loadbearing

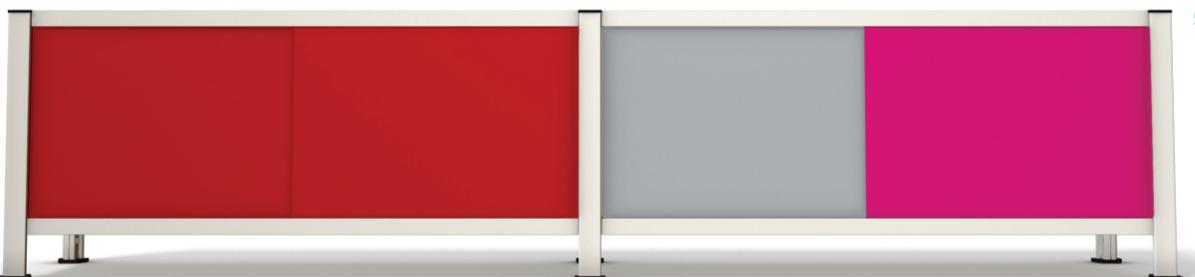
This Swiss/US company offers the customizable MShelving system, with a variety of bright colored panels that can be configured into shelves, credenzas, or—thanks to a new line of cushions—benches. It is available in white or galvanized steel, with panels or drawers. [www.loadbearing.com](http://www.loadbearing.com)

**6 Eileen**  
Misewell Modern Furniture

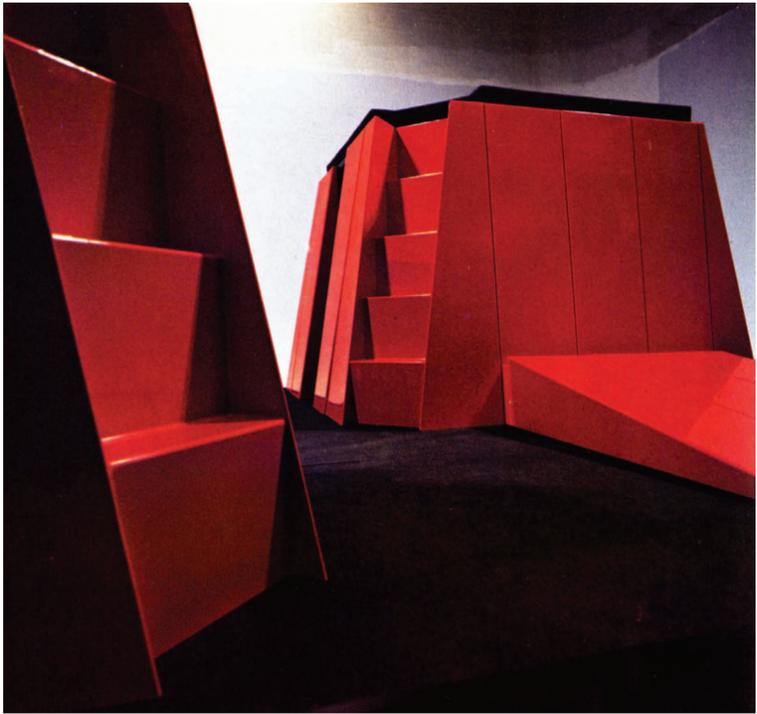
The shade on this simple floor lamp can be raised and lowered, and the neck can pivot side to side, but having a wall to lean against is required. Available in red, white, and black, Eileen shares the sturdy, straightforward lines of the rest of the company's products. [www.misewell.com](http://www.misewell.com)



IMAGES COURTESY RESPECTIVE DESIGNERS



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009



Gae Aulenti's House Environment, produced by Kartell (left) and a scene from one of the exhibit's films.

FROM ITALY: THE NEW DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE (1972)

In 1972, the Museum of Modern Art presented *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, a provocative survey that questioned the role of high design in a world riven by poverty and urban decay. Here, curators Peter Lang, Luca Molinari, and Mark Wasuiata offer a précis of their recent exhibit *Environments and Counter Environments: Experimental Media in Italy: The New Domestic Landscape, MoMA 1972*, which reexamined that landmark show and is on view at Columbia's Arthur Ross Gallery and Buell Hall through May 8.

# DOMESTIC DISTURBANCES

As a striking moment in the history of architectural exhibitions, the celebrated *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, curated by Emilio Ambasz at the Museum of Modern Art in 1972, responded to the dynamic and complexly political Italian design context of the early 1970s.

To organize the exhibit, Ambasz first distinguished between *Objects* and *Environments*, and divided the latter into three groups: design as postulation, design as commentary, and counterdesign as postulation. In a cunning reversal, the *Objects* section was installed in the comparatively natural environment of MoMA's sculpture garden, while the *Environments* were placed within the more conventional space of the galleries. It was this sequence of environments that we found particularly revealing within the context of the era's experimental architecture.

By 1972, "environment" had already circulated through the worlds of architecture and design via a range of disciplines, from the environmental design movement to biology, cybernetics, and the defense industries. While discrimi-

nating among the various politics and strategies of the participants in the *Environments* section—which included Gae Aulenti, Joe Colombo, Ettore Sottsass, Jr., Gaetano Pesce, Archizoom, and Superstudio, among others—the exhibition also tested the viability of the category itself. At the same time, it considered the potential survival or disappearance of architecture into an environment of perceptual relations and "domestic rituals."

To demonstrate their environments' alterability, the designers were asked to provide a film component. Several of the architects instead chose other media approaches, while Enzo Mari refused the installation and submitted only a text for the catalogue. Implicit in these responses was recognition that the conjunction of environment and media could generate what Ugo La Pietra would call "unbalancing systems." Beyond illustrating the performance of the environments, the films and other media projects more carefully registered the design positions of the architects, especially as calibrat-

ed in relation to a recent history of expanded media practices.

In the encounter with film and other media, the loosening of the types and conditions of domestic space—manifest in the objects and installations—confronted the ever more indeterminate boundaries of televisual and informational territories. If the exhibition organized a debate around the social and political agency of new design, this debate was amplified through the suggestion—still topical today—that a new media environment itself might constitute the most potent landscape of domesticity.

It is therefore worth examining more closely a small selection of the films restored for the Columbia exhibition. Sampling the productions of Ettore Sottsass, Jr., Joe Colombo, and Superstudio out of the total produced for the original exhibition affords a closer perspective on these designers' techniques.

Ettore Sottsass, Jr. envisioned for his series of plastic domestic elements a maximum of possible living scenarios, unrestrained by fixed objects or divided rooms. Massimo

Magri, the director chosen to interpret Sottsass' project, used music from the British rock group Pink Floyd for his score, creating a film interspersed with axonometric drawings, hand-held camera work, fade shots, double exposures, and no dialogue. The film takes the prefabricated units through a series of unsettling interior scenarios, wastelands of discarded objects, revolutions gone totalitarian, and domestic chores becoming neuroses.

The clear anti-commercial but also anti-conformist message of this short "promotional" film reflects Sottsass' lifelong disdain for political ideologies, and his deep belief in the autonomy of the individual. The built-in irony is that Sottsass' units are not intended to lead to the good life. Credit is due to the director Magri for staging a Brechtian theater denuded of distracting contexts; the film as such succeeds in presenting Sottsass' units as the only furnishing necessary to live out one's life.

Joe Colombo died in July 1971, almost a year before the MoMA exhibit, but he instigated one of the most intriguing films of the eight produced for the *Environments* section. The film, supervised by his assistant Ignazia Favata, was a playful denouncement of standard product marketing. That this was no ordinary commercially conceived film is more than evident when considering the creative backgrounds of the two co-directors, Livio Castiglioni and Gianni Colombo, who worked with each other initially in 1962, when Castiglioni collaborated with Colombo and Bruno Munari on a temporary electronic tower adjacent to the Milan Duomo. The opening credits to *Total Furnishing Unit* are presented across a pitch-black background pierced by a dazzling flash of light and scored against an eerie, atonal soundtrack. Not quite the pristine space station module produced by

Rosselli, Colombo's film succeeds nonetheless in completely re-dimensioning the home environment, from the audio to the visual, from outside-in, to inside-out.

Produced by Superstudio, *Supersurface: An Alternative Model for Life on Earth* is filmed in the style of a popular documentary. In keeping with the group's subversive double identity—Superstudio liked to represent itself as a professional architecture office moonlighting as design radicals—they engaged the commercial Marchi film studios to create a promotional version of their nomadic planetary utopia. The soundtrack begins with an incessant heartbeat accompanied by a professional announcer's voiceover; the camera first spirals and then zooms in and out of a series of images of human bodies, electronic probes, engines, and space satellites; landscape perspectives are combined in an animated montage; and a final outdoor segment presents two American students in the Siennese hillside, who, with only the faintest irony, delineate what in effect are Superstudio's "guidelines for a new society."

In the staging of the MoMA exhibition, the films were played on portable, 8mm film cartridge units, located within each environment. As demonstration, elaboration, or challenge to the environmental thesis of each installation, the films offered mediated approaches to redefining the environment that, at the least, transcended popular perceptions of domesticity and in most cases offered cogent experiments in representation that polemicalized the acts of inhabitation, consumption, and communication.

**PETER LANG, AN ARCHITECT AND CRITIC, TEACHES AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY. LUCA MOLINARI IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO DESIGN JOURNALS AND PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES. MARK WASIUTA IS A CURATOR AND VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE COLUMBIA GSAPP.**



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## Upcoming Events

Wednesday  
May 13, 2009  
8:00 - 10:00 AM

### Client Panel: The Federal Stimulus, Infrastructure Projects, and Urban Landscape Design

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) promises to spur funding for numerous infrastructure and landscape urban design projects in both New York and New Jersey. Join us as a panel of clients discusses the not-so-obvious opportunities available for architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture firms within the federal stimulus plan and beyond.

**Confirmed Panelist:** Dino Ng, P.E., Associate Commissioner, City of New York Department of Design and Construction (DDC)

**Where:** The Penn Club, 30 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036

**SMPS Members:** Pre-Registered \$75, Walk-In \$85

**Non-Members:** Pre-Registered \$100, Walk-In \$110

Wednesday  
May 20, 2009  
5:30 - 7:30 PM

### The Evolution of the Internet as a Marketing & Networking Tool

To blog or not to blog? Should you establish a company presence on LinkedIn, FaceBook or YouTube for that matter? Is internet networking and electronic media replacing traditional marketing or simply adding new strategies to your marketing plan? Through a panel discussion, find out how everything you knew about marketing is evolving in the age of Web 2.0 as experts weigh in and forecast the next marketing frontier.

**Where:** University of Connecticut, Stamford Campus, Multipurpose Room #108, One University Place, Stamford, CT 06901

**SMPS Members:** Pre-Registered \$35

**Non-Members:** Pre-Registered \$45

Learn more about these events and register online today at [www.smpsny.org](http://www.smpsny.org).

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## MAY

WEDNESDAY 6

## LECTURES

**Joe Paradiso**  
**Responsive Environments Lab & Things That Think Consortium**  
6:30 p.m.  
New York City College of Technology  
Voorhees Hall  
186 Jay St., Brooklyn  
www.citytech.cuny.edu

**Susan Bass Levin, Janette Sadik-Khan, Kate Slevin, et al.**  
**Investing in Infrastructure: Transportation and New York's Future**  
6:30 p.m.  
Municipal Art Society  
457 Madison Ave.  
www.mas.org

## TRADE SHOW

**2009 Lightfair International**  
Through May 7  
Jacob K. Javits Center  
655 West 34th St.  
www.lightfair.com

THURSDAY 7

## LECTURE

**Sunil Bald, Audrey Matlock, Joel Sanders, and Calvin Tsao**  
**Globalization: Perspectives: Road Stories**  
7:00 p.m.  
The Urban Center  
457 Madison Ave.  
www.archleague.org

## EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Adriana Varejao**  
Lehmann Maupin  
540 West 26th St.  
www.lehmannmaupin.com

**Chantal Joffe**  
Cheim & Read Gallery  
547 West 25th St.  
www.cheimread.com

**Les Lalanne**  
Paul Kasmin Gallery  
293 10th Ave.  
www.paulkasmingallery.com

**Paintings from the Reign of Victoria: The Royal Holloway Collection, London**  
Yale Center for British Art  
1080 Chapel St., New Haven  
www.yale.edu/ycba

FRIDAY 8

## LECTURE

**Kaira Cabañas**  
**Nouveau Réalisme in Context**  
11:30 a.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

## EXHIBITION OPENING

**Santiago Calatrava**  
**WTC Transportation Hub**  
Queen Sofia Spanish Institute  
684 Park Ave.  
www.queensofiaspanishinstitute.org

## FILM

**Unfinished Spaces: Cuba's Architecture of Revolution**  
(Alysa Nahmias, Ben Murray, 2010), 90 min.  
6:00 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

SATURDAY 9

## EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Open Studios**  
1040 Metropolitan Ave.,  
Brooklyn  
www.iscp-nyc.org

**Trisha Brown**  
Sikkema Jenkins & Co.  
530 West 22nd St.  
www.sikkemajenkinsco.com

## EVENTS

**FlyNY: An International Kite Design Competition and Flying Event**  
11:00 a.m.  
Riverside Park  
Pier I at 73rd St.  
www.flynycity.org

Fritz Scholder:

**Indian/Not Indian**  
2:00 p.m.  
Museum of Arts and Design  
2 Columbus Circle  
www.madmuseum.org

## WITH THE KIDS

**Body Buildings**  
10:30 a.m.  
The Skyscraper Museum  
39 Battery Place  
www.skyscraper.org

SUNDAY 10

## EXHIBITION OPENING

**Nils Norman and Michael Cataldi**  
**The University of Trash**  
Sculpture Center  
44-19 Purves St.,  
Long Island City  
www.sculpture-center.org

## WITH THE KIDS

**Where Are We? Places and Spaces**  
10:20 a.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

TUESDAY 12

## LECTURE

**Esa Vesmanen**  
**Finnish Design & Sustainability**  
6:30 p.m.  
Scandinavia House  
58 Park Ave.  
www.scandinaviahouse.org

## EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**John Wood**  
**On the Edge of Clear Meaning**  
New York University  
Grey Art Gallery  
100 Washington Sq. East  
www.nyu.edu/greyart

**The Life and Work of J. Max Bond Jr., FAIA: Architect, Educator, Mentor**  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

WEDNESDAY 13

## LECTURE

**Seth Pinsky**  
**The Federal Stimulus Package: Impact on Real Estate and New York City's Future**  
11:30 a.m.  
Club 101  
101 Park Ave.  
www.aiany.org

## CONFERENCE

**Sustainable Urbanization in the Information Age: Role of Infrastructure in Metropolitan Development**  
9:30 a.m.  
United Nations Headquarters  
3 United Nations Plaza  
www.aiany.org

## EVENT

**Le Conversazioni FMR: An Evening with Renzo Piano and Mark di Suvero**  
6:30 p.m.  
The Morgan Library and Museum  
225 Madison Ave.  
www.themorgan.org

THURSDAY 14

## LECTURE

**Diana di Zerega Wall**  
**Digging Greenwich Village**  
6:30 p.m.  
Salmagundi Club  
47 5th Ave.  
www.gvshp.org

FRIDAY 15

## LECTURE

**Francis Morrone**  
**Architectures of the Grand Concourse**  
7:00 p.m.  
Library at the General Society  
20 West 44th St.  
www.classicist.org

## EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**RE/BUILD**  
Gallery 1889  
1066 Manhattan Ave.,  
Brooklyn  
www.thegallery1889.com

**Frank Lloyd Wright**  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
1071 5th Ave.  
www.guggenheim.org

**Richard Avedon Photographs**  
Staley-Wise Gallery  
560 Broadway  
www.staleywise.com

SATURDAY 16

## EXHIBITION OPENING

**GSAPP End-of-Year Exhibit**  
Columbia GSAPP  
Wood Auditorium  
113 Avery Hall  
www.arch.columbia.edu

## TRADE SHOW

**International Contemporary Furniture Fair**  
Through May 19  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
655 West 34th St.  
www.icff.com

## FILM

**Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go**  
(Kim Longinotto, 2007), 100 min.  
7:30 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

## EVENT

**Inside Out: Winterthur Garden and House Tour**  
8:00 a.m.  
Returning and departing from the ICA&CA  
20 West 44th St.  
www.classicist.org

## WITH THE KIDS

**Sidewalk Art**  
10:00 a.m.  
The Skyscraper Museum  
39 Battery Pl.  
www.skyscraper.org

MONDAY 18

## LECTURE

**Vanessa Gruen, Phyllis Cohen**  
**Inside View: MAS Work in Progress**  
6:30 p.m.  
Municipal Art Society  
457 Madison Ave.  
www.mas.org

## EVENT

**NYLOFT Design Week Party**  
6:00 p.m.  
Design Showroom NYLOFT  
Kitchen & Home Interiors  
6 West 20th St.  
www.nyloft.net

TUESDAY 19

## LECTURE

**Bill Rostenberg**  
**The Intersection of Evidence-Based Design and Eco-Effective Design**  
5:30 p.m.  
Teknion  
641 6th Ave.  
www.iidany.org

## TRADE SHOW

**Ecobuild America**  
Through May 21  
Colorado Convention Center  
700 14th Street, Denver  
www.aecocobuild.com

## EVENT

**Professional Women in Construction**  
**Salute to Women of Achievement**  
11:30 a.m.  
The Yale Club  
50 Vanderbilt Ave.  
www.pwcusa.org

WEDNESDAY 20

## EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Francis Bacon**  
**A Centenary Retrospective**  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1000 5th Ave.  
www.metmuseum.org

## Parsons School of Constructed Environments Thesis Exhibition

Parsons The New School for Design  
25 East 13th St., 3rd Fl.  
www.parsons.newschooledu/sce

FRIDAY 22

## EXHIBITION OPENING

**Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theater and Opera**  
The Morgan Library and Museum  
225 Madison Ave.  
www.themorgan.org

## FILM

**Horse**  
(Andy Warhol, 1965), 100 min.  
1:30 p.m.  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

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JAY ZUKERKORN

## DESIGN FOR A LIVING WORLD

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum  
2 East 91st Street  
May 14, 2009 through January 4, 2010

Making its first stop in a national tour organized by The Nature Conservancy, *Design for a Living World* tells a set of related stories about the lifecycles of products and the impact design has on our planet. Co-curated by the Pentagram designer Abbott Miller with Ellen Lupton, the Cooper-Hewitt's curator of contemporary design, the show features objects made from natural materials by ten leading designers, among them Yves Béhar, Hella Jongerius, Maya Lin, Isaac Mizrahi, and Kate Spade. Each designer not only explores organic materials such as sustainably-grown wood or wool, but addresses a specific place that shows how conservation can shape the planet in concert with design. Maya Lin is paired with Maine, for instance, designing a table fabricated from the state's maple lumber, while Jongerius used traditionally-harvested chicle latex from the Yucatán to make ceramic vessels. Elsewhere, using FSC-certified plywood from community forests in Bolivia, curator Miller created a chair whose parts can be shipped flat and dry-assembled with a rubber mallet (above). While highlighting the wood's natural beauty, Miller's design also minimizes the waste created during the manufacturing process, producing three chairs per sheet of plywood. Naturally, the exhibition itself is also eco-friendly, using the same Bolivian plywood to display the artwork.



CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA

## HARLEM 1970-2009:

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA  
New-York Historical Society  
170 Central Park West  
Through July 12

Since the early 1970s, the Chilean-born and New York-based writer and photographer Camilo José Vergara has been documenting the changing urban landscapes of inner cities such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, and Los Angeles. Known for revisiting identical vantage points over a considerable period of time, Vergara creates a time-lapse portrait of the same intersections and buildings in Harlem in his latest show on view at the New-York Historical Society. Through an expansive collection of one hundred images, the show depicts the ongoing transformation of this vibrant New York neighborhood over the past 38 years. Varying from streetscapes such as *View South from West 117th Street along St. Nicholas Ave., Harlem* (1992, above), to storefronts, buildings, and people, Vergara's photographs tell a powerful story of place and time. As the photographer notes, "The premise behind all the work that I do is that 100 pictures are one hundred times more powerful than one picture. The more you track something, the deeper and more eloquently it speaks." Particularly moving is a sequence of eight photographs taken between 1977 and 2007 that show a single storefront on East 125th Street morphing from night club to smoke shop to Sleepy's bedding outlet, and, most recently, to a forlornly vacant space.

VISIT WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM/DIARY.HTM

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 6, 2009



## The Wild Frontier

**Into the Sunset: Photography's Image of the American West**  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd Street  
Through June 8

Upon entering *Into the Sunset: Photography's Image of the American West*, the viewer is confronted with Richard Prince's *Cowboy (Untitled)* from his series of appropriated Marlboro Man images. This particular cowboy appears to be dancing in and out of a spinning lariat. Prince is performing an ambiguous ideological dance of his own: While *Cowboy* exposes the frank commercial exploitation of one of America's most enduring Western myths, it also revels in our fascination with it—and with the mythic qualities of photography in general. This kind of ambiguity is central to *Into the Sunset*, which explores the complex role of photography in inventing, establishing,

and interrogating the myths of the American West, from the era of the daguerreotype to the present day.

The exhibition is organized thematically, and its natural starting point is a focus on the rugged landscape of the region. While most images here appeal to a sense of the natural sublime, their stylistic diversity suggests that the cultural idea of nature as expressed in American photography is as variable as the landscape itself. Within the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition, for example, Eadweard Muybridge's ecstatic, painterly vision of the Yosemite Valley contrasts sharply with Timothy O'Sullivan's spare, menacing image of a horse-drawn carriage as it struggles over a Nevada sand

dune—nature as transcendence versus nature as threat. Meanwhile, modernist-inflected mountain views by Ansel Adams and Minor White approach the natural world as pure form, and Stephen Shore's photograph of a billboard depicting a snow-capped mountain economically illustrates the slide into present-day theories of nature as simulacral image or ideological construct. Rounding out the section is a series on the exploration and early development of the Western landscape, which serves as a reminder of the economic impulses that underlay the injunction to Go West.

The dialectic between restless movement and long-term settlement is further developed in a section on highway culture and domestic life. The relatively narrow scope of the former allows for a fascinating case study of different photographic approaches to a prominent and polarizing aspect of Western living. Works by Dorothea Lange and Dennis Hopper evoke the myth of the Open Road. At the other end of the spectrum, Ed Ruscha's aerial views of oil-spotted

parking lots give a darker view of auto-centric civilization. Robert Frank's image of a twilight, cloth-shrouded car flanked by palm trees expresses the uncanniness of the automobile's place in the American psyche. The decisive influence of car culture on domestic culture is apparent in depictions of soulless tract housing by William A. Garnett, Robert Adams, and James Casebere. These works join uneasily with images of seemingly happy families in and around their homes by Joel Sternfeld, Bill Owens, and others.

The exhibition becomes more problematic where it turns to portraits of the various denizens of the West. One section presents successive images of biker gangs, Hopi tribeswomen, hippies, beach bums, 19<sup>th</sup>-century miners, and general eccentrics, an ensemble that poses Westerners as the ultimate manifestation of Whitmanesque multiplicity and diversity. Yet this pseudo-ethnography risks reducing individuals to general types, an untenable myth of America as a harmonious union of races, classes, and beliefs. A second "human interest" section

**Above left: Stephen Shore, *U.S. 97, South of Klamath Falls (1973)*. Above right: Daris Kinsey, *Felling a Fir Tree, 51 Feet in Circumference (1906)*.**

catalogues the margins of society: a topless dancer by Diane Arbus, a revolver-toting man by Larry Clark, and a porn ingénue on set by Larry Sultan. An interesting tension surfaces between the photographer's will to mythologize and the subject's self-mythologizing. Cindy Sherman manages to combine these tendencies in the obligatory Cowboys and Indians section of the exhibition: In an early *Film Still*, Sherman portrays herself as a come-hither Western movie damsel, and in a more recent work, the artist is in the role of a gray-haired Native American. The protean nature of Sherman's evolving project is emblematic of the varieties of Western experience that have been documented, critiqued, and imagined through the medium of photography.

**NEW YORK-BASED CRITIC MICHAEL PAULSON WRITES ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER.**

## CHAIRS ON FILM

**Objectified**  
Directed by Gary Hustwit  
IFC Center, 323 6th Ave.  
Opens May 8

Gary Hustwit's new documentary *Objectified* is a primer that tells you much of what you already know: Everything in the man-made landscape is designed by someone, and much of it isn't working or good to look at.

As he interviews design titans from the forthright Dieter Rams of Braun (on fundamentals of aesthetics, usefulness, and understandability) to Jonathan Ive of Apple (on the separation of

function from form), what is most striking is Hustwit's assumption that his audience suffers from design illiteracy.

He dwells on process, as Dan Formosa and Davin Stowell of Smart Design recall crafting an ergonomic handle for a peeler, beginning with the problem that a conventional peeler, which hadn't evolved in years, was a struggle for someone with arthritis. And, in general, Hustwit lets his subjects

sound off with their objects nearby: Karim Rashid wonders out loud why digital cameras still look like cameras through which film moved.

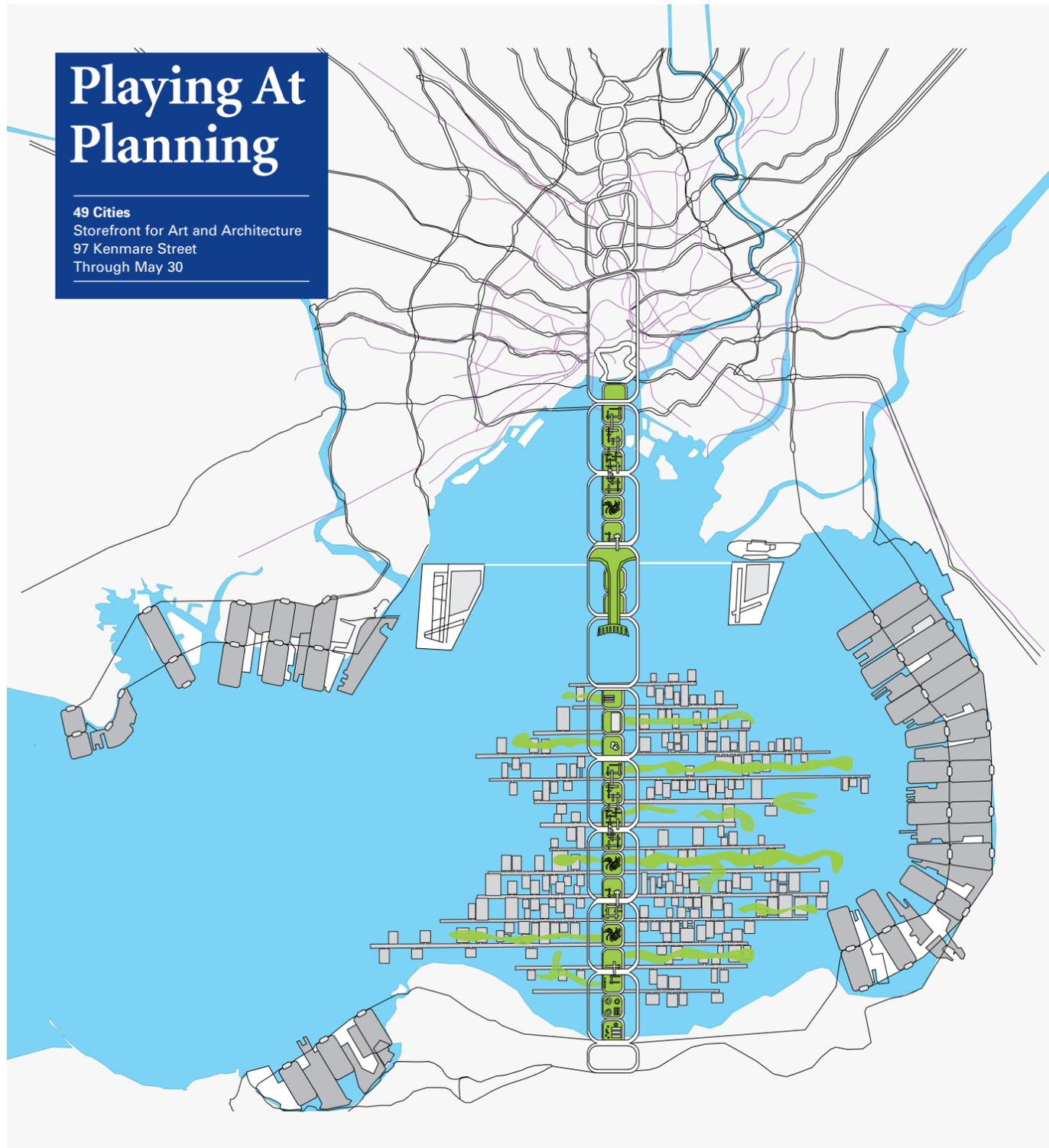
The conversations in *Objectified* are more aggregation than argument or debate. Yet the film's best asset isn't Hustwit's analysis, but his eye. His film (shot mostly by Luke Geissbuhler) can make you feel the impact of design, whether it's observing a product on a workbench, or view-

ing it in the landscape, which can be an office, a city street, or a landfill.

And that landfill, warns Mark Newson, is where most design—by him and anyone else—will end up. Who will then take up Rashid's dare to design mobile phones or laptops in cardboard? In the film's exquisite opening credit sequence, a CNC router cuts the word "objectified" into white plastic, slowly and deliberately. Typefaces in

## Playing At Planning

49 Cities  
Storefront for Art and Architecture  
97 Kenmare Street  
Through May 30



WORKKac's interpretation of Kenzo Tange's 1960 plan for Tokyo Bay.

and wink, WORKKac sticks ribbons next to various plans: "Best All-Around: FAR" or "Winner: Density." The by-the-numbers appraisals of the plans are thereby shown for what they are, ridiculous reductions of complex phenomena. How is an entire city's FAR important? What does it tell us about the character of that city? If we compare, say, Houston's and Brooklyn's average FAR, what do we learn? The data are more whiz-bang than descriptive.

WORKKac also criticizes utopian and rationalist planning concepts as excursions into proto-fascistic population control. For instance, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's unbuilt, Panopticon-inspired scheme for a salt works (1775) placed workers' quarters within view of the main director's building so that the population could be constantly watched.

Or *are* these jibes at planning and design? If so, it's hard to tell if the firm is in on the joke. Aside from the state-fair-like ribbons, the show is earnest through and through. The ribbons themselves can be interpreted as whimsical but uncritical, fun but not *poking* fun. The metrics are presented completely seriously. Further, WORKKac says that the '70s were the last decade of truly visionary thinking about cities. Not the humanism of Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte in the 1950s–1970s, which was truly radical and visionary in its direct challenge to planning and design orthodoxies, but instead the kind of fantastical schemes that dominate *49 Cities*. These plans still operated within those top-down, planner/designer-knows-best orthodoxies, and took them to frightening extremes.

The problem with playing at planning, with planning as conceptual art, is that it's all fun and games until someone loses a home (think of George Orwell's characterizations of British leftist idealism in the 1930s as "a kind of playing with fire by people who don't even know that fire is hot"). Generations of practitioners have done untold damage with reductionist schemes. Just look at the towers-in-the-park public housing projects built across the United States that gutted the social capital of low-income neighborhoods. We can count our blessings that Buckminster Fuller's gigantic pyramids for a million inhabitants and his bell jar over Midtown Manhattan never got off the drawing table. That WORKKac doesn't distinguish between vision and delusion makes for an ambiguity and tension that is (unintentionally) provocative.

**NICK PETERSON IS A PLANNER BASED IN BROOKLYN.**

For the new exhibition at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, WORKKac selected 49 urban schemes that reflect the desires and fears of the times in which they were conceived. Most of the plans in *49 Cities* were never realized, but some were nonetheless highly influential.

Each is illustrated with a map and accompanied by a short, descriptive paragraph and

a table presenting various metrics such as population density, proportion of parkland, and floor-area ratio (FAR). Except for a few Japanese concepts from the 1960s and '70s, the exhibit focuses on the West. The plans range from *Roman City*, a theoretical Roman colonial town, to Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City* and Le Corbusier's *Radiant City*, to Norman Foster's *Masdar* plan for Abu Dhabi.

*49 Cities* at once celebrates and criticizes both the schemes and the discipline of planning itself: Alongside such earnest visions as *Garden City*, they include prescient satires of design and planning, such as Archizoom's *No-Stop City* and Rem Koolhaas' *Exodus* project, which envisioned a division between old, "bad" London and a new "zone of architectural and social perfections." With a nod

the form of products are rendered in three dimensions. The waste from that process is brushed off-camera, a hint of the industrial waste crisis that still awaits design resolution.

That sequence also points to the film's shortcomings. Hustwit has an aesthete's eye, but he suffers from an aesthete's ear. He only talks to designers and those in the clubby circle who write about them. That's not to say that

Rob Walker of *The New York Times Magazine* isn't eloquent, pleading for objects that have stood the test of time. We just miss other parts of the design equation.

In a candid moment, Mark Newson says, "I just wish people would be more critical of design, and of designers, who are responsible for designing some pretty nasty stuff." Where are the consumers who might feel that way? And no corporate deci-

sion-makers respond to David Kelley of IDEO, who says, "Bad design is where the customer thinks it's their fault that something doesn't work. People should demand more from the things they own."

The sequential interview approach made for fascinating testimony in *Helvetica*, Hustwit's first feature documentary about the transformative effect of a typeface. In *Objectified*, you feel there's more to the problems facing

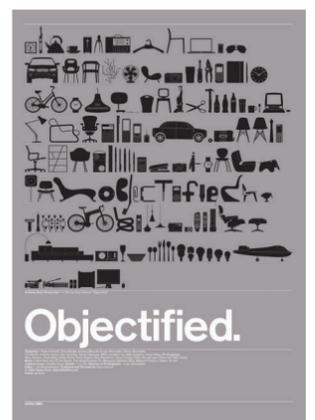
design than what you hear from the creators of high-end consumer products, the most glamorous sector of industrial design. Something is surely astir in the trenches.

Also, like so many products that are overtaken by the new, *Objectified* has been eclipsed by the now. Since the film was finished, the automotive sector in the United States has collapsed. So has finance, which was nothing if not a field of purely designed prod-

ucts. (Eerily, the designers at SMART discuss creating red ATM kiosks for Bank of America, which has now gotten at least \$45 billion to stay afloat from the government.)

If it's true, as the designers say, that this is a time for opportunity and vision, by the film's end you're impatient for them to get beyond the familiar generalizations.

**DAVID D'ARCY IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.**



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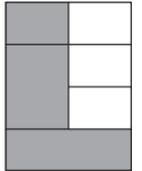
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## DISCIPLINARY TRANSGRESSIONS

The field of architecture is poised to undergo dramatic changes. Beginning in the 1990s, we saw the emergence of the “star” architect as a cultural force, along with the consolidation of architecture as an agent for physical and economic change in cities across the world. The 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing were a culmination of this era, and a demonstration of the potential power of architecture. However, this model of practice has already shown its limits, its weaknesses, and its flaws. It is safe to say that a new generation of practitioners will not be able to follow in the footsteps of its predecessors—and more importantly, that it should not.

Most of us are aware that technological advances paired with economic forces are significantly altering the construction of buildings and the practice of architecture. Conventional techniques will no longer suffice if architecture is to remain a viable venture. In addition, architecture’s role in the construction of culture has become globally associated with elite societies, and as a result, has remained outside of

recent and dramatic cultural shifts.

It is not surprising that in the new economy, architecture has been one of the professions most badly hit. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, architects’ unemployment rate for 2008 more than doubled from the previous year. With more than 50,000 architecture students in schools across the country, this figure should give us pause. At the same time, it is evident that architecture is being left out of the most critical issues on the national agenda, despite the fact that historically our field has proven to have the tools and expertise to address these very pressing problems (such as the environment, housing, and infrastructure, just to name a few). This has precisely coincided with a golden era of architecture in which we have demonstrated extraordinary abilities with an unprecedented sophistication in the use of digital technology. And thus, we must wonder if our concern for very narrow and mostly formal problems has led to our failure to engage the world.

The time has come to examine these

issues and to begin to chart a course for the future of the discipline. This will require new approaches to cultural engagement, and for architecture to rewrite its own rules. These changes need to begin “at home” with our own cultural institutions—namely architecture schools. After all, at pivotal points in the history of our field, the academy has given us critical perspectives with which to measure and evaluate the impact of architecture upon the world. Academia provides a lens independent of the demands of the profession, and as such it has the potential to advance the field in extraordinary ways. But so far pedagogy is not living up to this potential: Our teaching methodologies and the predominant model of studio instruction has remained virtually unchanged for more than 100 years. More importantly, in the last 20 years architecture has stagnated in the midst of architectural research that focused too closely on topics that proved to have little consequence.

The conundrum of academic specialization is not exclusive to our discipline, of course. Our current environmental, economic, and societal crises have exposed the limits of conventional notions of specialization as a mode of research and scholarship in *every field*. Many disciplines are beginning to recognize this, and are moving toward an interdisciplinary model of research and education. In no other area does this become more poignant than in the environmental arena. In this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become painfully clear that by looking at technological advances in isolation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we missed their broader impact. Efficient production methods led to the global proliferation of goods, and it is now unambiguous that unbridled consumption has had disastrous consequences for our planet. This is certainly true for architecture as well. In the last century, as we exalted the benefits of new materials and methods of construction in terms of efficiency and economy, we overlooked how they impacted natural resources. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we promoted the comfort and convenience of the suburbs, while ignoring their effects upon a larger network of natural ecosystems. We have become rapidly aware that environmental degradation has no easy solution, and that the responsibility lies amid many fields. Transgressing the boundaries of academic disciplines may be the only way to address the complex challenges of our time.

Because of its history and its own nature, architecture is best suited to develop an academic model that works across disciplines. After all, unlike most other fields, architecture is an intricate area of study that indeed encompasses distinct branches of learning in the sciences and the humanities. It is not surprising that several schools of architecture mention interdisciplinarity in their mission statements. However, for most of them, this is limited to relationships between architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and urban planning. Instead, I believe that the discipline of architecture should re-examine its place within a larger body of knowledge and develop a new pedagogy as a means of advancing the profession. Only through new teaching

methods that work across disciplines will we be able to allow future generations to look at design holistically, and in this way write a new chapter in the public mission of architecture.

These issues are particularly pertinent today not only because of the dose of reality the new economy has afforded us, but also because I believe architecture finds itself in the midst of deep-seated changes at its core. Educated in the 1980s, I experienced firsthand how digital technology altered the way that buildings are conceived and represented. In addition, this digital revolution fundamentally changed how we practiced, including our relationship to consultants and builders. For 20 years we argued that the new technology was simply a “tool,” but the sobering fact remains that these tools (like any tool) have had a major impact on our design process at all levels. During this first digital revolution the reaction of the field was to strengthen disciplinary boundaries and to demonstrate what we are capable of. Much of our fascination with formal problems has been the result of this encounter with new technology. It is safe to say that during this period architecture looked inward, and technical concerns came to be understood as somehow independent of social engagement, almost with obstinacy.

Today, with accelerated advances in digital fabrication technologies and their widespread application, I believe that we find ourselves in the midst of a second digital revolution. Not unlike the 1980s, as we argue over the significance of these “tools,” digital fabrication is fundamentally changing construction methods and transforming the building industry. This second time around, however, we have a remarkable opportunity to take a more critical stance toward technology and *articulate its potential for social engagement*, or else we risk perpetuating the divides that threaten to limit the relevance of architecture to the actual circumstances of the building industry—as the current economic downturn has demonstrated.

Other fields are wrestling with these very same issues. Not only will architecture be best served by entering into a conversation with these disciplines, but architecture will best serve and participate in the construction of culture. Much of what lies at the core of our discipline is already playing a central role in the redefinition of other fields. It is telling that *design* is now an integral part of the curriculum at top business schools across the country. Engineering departments have developed coursework around notions of *creative practices*, while schools of social work and public policy have aligned social activism with entrepreneurship and *design thinking*. The value of design has increased in all aspects of society, at the same time that the pertinence of architecture has decreased. By remaining hermetic and, dare I say, self-absorbed, we run the risk of relegating to other fields the cultural power of *design* as an agent for social change.

**MONICA PONCE DE LEON, FOUNDING PARTNER AT BOSTON-BASED ARCHITECTURE FIRM OFFICE DA, IS DEAN AT THE A. ALFRED TAUBMAN COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE DIGITAL LAB AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY.**

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4:00 pm

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#### Sunday

May 17, 2009

2:00 - 3:00 pm

ICFF Theatre

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#### Monday

May 18, 2009

2:00-3:00 pm

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