

THE MIDWEST ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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Medicine has always been a calling card for the city of Rochester, Minnesota—or at least since Dr. William Worrall Mayo settled there in 1863. The foundation that bears his name is now the state's largest employer, sustaining nearly 33,000 jobs throughout Minnesota and beckoning more than 2.5 million visitors to Rochester each year. Now an ambitious master plan led by Perkins Eastman aims to help the Mayo Clinic sustain

that economic engine over the next two decades by investing in medical and municipal amenities alike. Mayo and private developers plan to pour \$6.5 billion into the so-called Destination Medical Center plan over the next 20 years. The challenge will be in preserving Rochester's small town charm while supercharging medical tourism and potentially doubling the

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For decades, the old Globe Trade Building on the Detroit River loomed like a monumental pile of bricks. Taking up an entire city block on a swath of land not far east from downtown, it was erected in 1892 for shipbuilding; a young Henry Ford worked there as a machinist. Over time, and many changes in its industrial use, the building was abandoned as yet another deteriorating

Detroit ruin. But in 2011 an unlikely developer came on board: the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In a rare case of historic preservation for an industrial building, the DNR announced that it would pour millions into transforming the Globe Trade Building into an outdoor adventure center. Rock climbing, a zip line, an archery range,

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While formerly staid office environments are beginning to look more like schoolyards, some schools are beginning to resemble high-tech headquarters. In Alexandria, Minnesota (about 130 miles northwest of Minneapolis) a new high school designed by Cuninghame Group Architecture and JLG Architects would not feel out of place on a Silicon Valley campus. An expansive, three-story atrium collects daylight

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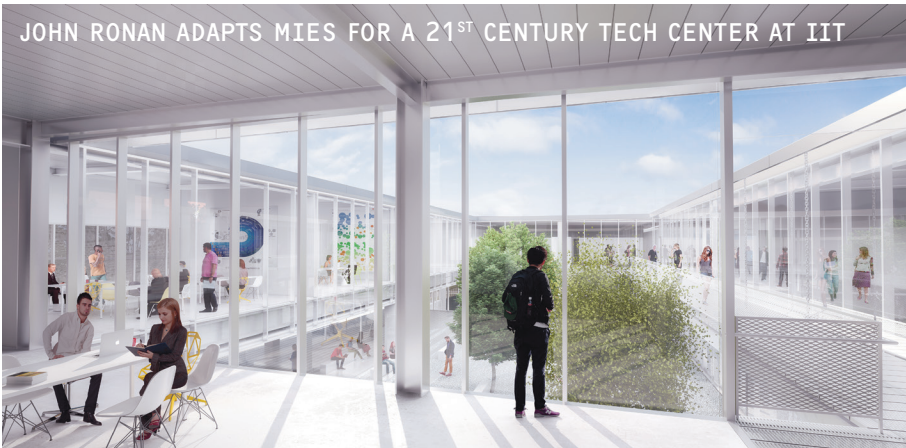
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SPECIAL SECTION: OPERABLE WALLS

AN WALKS THROUGH THE WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY OPERABLE WALLS, ADMIRING THEIR ABILITY TO DIVIDE SPACE ON DEMAND WHILE FITTING IN SEAMLESSLY WITH NEARLY ANY AESTHETIC. ALSO SEE THE LATEST IN WINDOWS, DOORS, AND HARDWARE. SEE PAGE 12

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STEEL AWAY

Demolition is underway at A. Finkl & Sons Co., the Chicago steel manufacturer that in 2008 vacated the riverfront site on the city's Near North Side that it had occupied for more than a century. After the German steel mill Schmolz + Bickenbach bought out Finkl in 2007, it relocated the company's operations to the Burnside Industrial Corridor on Chicago's South Side. That left 28 acres of prime urban property up for grabs in an area with plenty of competing development interests. Now, with local real estate on the rebound, all of them are looking to strike while the iron is hot.

A number of groups have lobbied Alderman Brian Hopkins, a freshman member of City Council representing a tortuously redistricted ward, about what to do with the site, which makes up much of the Clybourn Corridor Planned Manufacturing District (PMD). Some want to maintain the industrial legacy of the area, arguing new manufacturers could offer middle-class jobs with considerably less environmental hazard than in the past. Others want to open up the Finkl site to the kind of commercial and residential development that has gentrified the surrounding neighborhoods since the Clybourn Corridor became the city's first protected industrial area in 1988. *Crain's Chicago Business* last year quoted "real estate experts" saying the property could fetch at least \$100 million at market if it were rezoned out of the PMD.

Residents have organized under the RANCH Triangle Community Conservation Association and, along with some developers, are pushing Hopkins to abolish the site's PMD protection, noting that other industrial tenants like the Gutmann Tannery have also left the area as evidence that Chicago's industrial days are long gone. It would be the first time any of the city's 15 such districts were eliminated—ironic considering the Finkl plant was among the Clybourn businesses that motivated city planners to create the zoning tool in the first place. Hopkins appears open to the idea, telling WBEZ: "A planned manufacturing district is almost like a set of handcuffs. You know, it really limits what you can do. We don't need limits right now."

Others hope the PMD could attract a new kind of industrial tenant, along the lines of the green cleaning products factory built by Method in the city's Pullman neighborhood, or the digital manufacturing hub UI Labs ("Design At Work," p.6) that set up shop in the Goose Island PMD just to the south. Mike Holzer, executive director of North Branch Works, told *Belt Magazine* he wants to see that kind of development, because manufacturers "create head-of-household jobs, and they help create a broadly diversified economy for the city." There's also the concern that left to the whims of the market, the site's unique historic character would get squeezed out by generic big box development and schlocky, high-rent condos.

Time is running out to reconcile those competing interests—cranes are already ripping up many of the buildings on the sprawling site, which in March landed on Preservation Chicago's annual list of the city's most threatened architecture. And any redevelopment will have to deal with the likely steep cost of environmental remediation (a 2008 investigation by the *Chicago Tribune* found Finkl was the city's single biggest polluter), or slough off that burden onto taxpayers.

An interesting sign of the times: Both sides, which might reductively be described as pro- and anti-industry, want to overhaul the area's urban infrastructure in similar ways. North Branch Works has proposed improving public transit and access to the riverfront, along with inviting "artisanal" manufacturers like craft distilleries into the area. It's telling of the overall urbanist sentiment of the day that those cheerleading industrial use are doing so ostensibly for the sake of getting a friendlier neighborhood. Retail and service jobs have grown faster than manufacturing jobs, even in the PMDs, though. And it's likely market pressures will edge out new industrial uses for the site without the PMD intact. But it may set a troubling precedent to allow developers to essentially rezone an area carefully tended to until now by urban planners.

Perhaps there is a middle path, with light industrial businesses keeping up the spirit of the Clybourn Corridor while other uses compete to develop parcels of the site. The aldermen overseeing the site—primarily Hopkins, but also Scott Waguespack and Michele Smith—should make sure whatever succeeds the steel mill serves more than its developers' short-term interests. Do not squander this chance to forge a distinct Chicago neighborhood from the ashes of an historic industrial campus. **CHRIS BENTLEY**



Detroit's Globe Trade Company building is now a wilderness training course.

MICHIGAN DNR/DAVID KENYON

GETTING INSIDE THE GREAT OUTDOORS

continued from front page kayaking, waterfalls, an aquarium stocked with native fish, and more—all in a city that is not historically known for its outdoorsy sensibility.

The \$16 million renovation was the result of a public-private partnership that included the developers Roxbury Group, the construction firm Walbridge, and the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation. It proceeded even as Detroit endured bankruptcy and emergency management, and the state of Michigan struggled with one of the most damaged economies in the nation. Indeed, Governor Rick Snyder chose this under-construction space to sign the "grand bargain" deal that effectively brought Detroit's bankruptcy to an end last summer. The redevelopment results—a hybrid of old and new—are astonishing. The DNR Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) is scheduled to open its approximately 43,000-square-foot space to the public in late summer.

"It's a great old space with a lot of history," said Bob Hoida of Hobbs+Black Architects, the project manager of the redesign. Adaptability was the key word.

"Most places had no roof," said Hoida, explaining that it had rotted away and collapsed, while the floors suffered the same fate. The building's steel structure, however, was in good shape, and much of the brick could be cleaned and preserved. While the redevelopment eliminated half the footprint of the expansive ruin—which was more of a collection of buildings than a single structure—it revitalized the rest by mixing old and new exterior walls, building off of long-lasting masonry. Even now, if you look hard enough, you can see markings that reveal a history of ships being vertically lifted out of the building. Rail lines that went through the structure were also uncovered, as well as a hidden mezzanine floor.

The original purpose of the building is felt in the large open floors, designed with platforms and a high ceiling. The old painted facade reading "Globe Trading Company" is still there. "It doesn't look pristine, and that's on purpose," said Hoida.

"As we went through the building, section by section, along the way people were faced with challenges every day that they could not anticipate," said Hoida. Having a good working relationship with general contractors was essential to being able to make decisions on the run. So was having a clear overall goal for the project: creating a "front porch for Michigan" that welcomes Detroit's young people to discover the joys of the natural world. **ANNA CLARK**

NCARB TAKES STEPS TO ELIMINATE THE TERM "INTERN ARCHITECT"

THE NAME GAME

At the recent AIA conference in Atlanta, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) announced that it will begin working with licensing boards to do away with the term "intern architect." This decision comes from the idea that people

with years of experience working in the field should not be labeled with a term many see as pejorative.

To accommodate the change, NCARB said it will update its *Model Law* and guidelines, but for the word "intern" to officially be stricken from the record, the council's proposal will have to be considered by the country's 54 licensing boards and then receive a majority vote at a future NCARB Annual Business Meeting. And even

then, the change would not go into effect without a jurisdiction actually adopting it.

NCARB CEO Mike Strong told *AN* that a host of initiatives will further streamline the program over the next few years. "The last few years have seen NCARB substantially move to reduce the complexities of the IDP," he said in a statement.

HENRY MELCHER

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> CHARTREUSE KITCHEN & COCKTAILS

15 East Kirby Street, Detroit
Tel: 313-818-3915
Designer: Donna Heligman

MICHELLE & CHRIS GERARD PHOTOGRAPHY

The name of Midtown Detroit's newest restaurant and bar alludes to a color and an aperitif—Chartreuse Kitchen & Cocktails delivers on both. Bright green walls enliven the 3,100-square-foot eatery, which opened in May, while the menu offers a few twists on the namesake spirit first distilled in the 17th century by Carthusian monks.

Plants indigenous to France's Chartreuse Mountains populate a mural painted by local artist Louise "Ouizi" Chen, greeting visitors in the vestibule and establishing a floral theme that continues throughout the restaurant. Florists and artists from Pot & Box have hung dried flowers from Chartreuse's ceiling. A "living wall" by artist Chris Best features an artfully lit forest of succulents.

Chartreuse's design takes advantage of its 1920s-era building. Ample, south-facing windows wash the 100-seat restaurant with daylight. Owners Sandy Levine, left, and Doug Hewitt Jr. kept the bar and a section of marble floor, opting to redo or upgrade the rest of the flooring, carpeting, and light fixtures. They brought on Levine's mother—and retired interior designer—Donna Heligman for the job.

"We wanted to have a decor that was consistent with our food and service concept: bright, fresh, and vibrant, with a heavy focus on produce and vegetables, and an overall sunniness," said Levine. **CB**

OH, SIX-OH-SIX, WE'VE WAITED FOR THIS

The 606 opens just as Eaves is going to press, and we're as excited as most Chicagoans on the city's northwest side to hit the trail. Bloomingdale Trail, 606, whatever—we're over the name change (as long as it's still the Sears Tower) and ready to see if the design lives up to the crazy expectations whipped up these past few years from delayed construction, sparkly renderings, and political bragging. (Also potential profiteering—remember when **Alderman Roberto Maldonado** solved his conflict of interest as an owner of land near the trail by transferring the property to his wife's trust? Good times.) Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates has been busy in Chicago lately, between this and Maggie Daley Park, whose winter opening and fanciful ice ribbon reminded Eaves that we really can't skate but enjoy pretending to nonetheless. See you on the trail this summer!

GET YOUR FEET WET... OR MAYBE DON'T

It's an especially good time for openings of new public spaces, with the expanded Chicago Riverwalk team also cutting various ribbons over the late spring/early summer. Kudos to Sasaki, Ross Barney Architects, Benesch, Jacobs/Ryan and the Chicago Department of Transportation. OK it may be early to start talking about fishing or swimming in the Chicago River (but not too early to start making jokes!). Still this is an exciting day for fans of the river, and not just those gung-ho enough to kayak in it. We'll see how it fares in the winter, but the stairs are already a popular tourist attraction (they're downtown anyway) and a nice place for a lunch break—until a rainstorm overwhelms the city's sewage system, of course.

SEND BIKE PUMPS AND RIVER-BOUND LUMPS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

John Ronan's new building for IIT's Mies campus will have a cloud-like lightness.



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WORKING IN THE CLOUD continued from front page the 92,000-square-foot facility will be in the heart of IIT's historic campus, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Architect John Ronan, who also teaches at the university, said the new Kaplan Institute's design is inspired by—but not fixated on—that legacy.

"It's very sensitive to the history and original intentions of the Mies campus, but it's also forward-looking," said Ronan. "I would say the design is descended from Mies."

In addition to continuing the 24-square-foot grid from Mies' master plan, the new building shares the modernist architect's faith in technology and attention to detail. Perhaps the signature element of that sensibility is a dynamic facade made of ETFE (Ethylene Tetrafluoroethylene) foil cushions. Three thin layers similar to Teflon adjust automatically to shift a frit pattern that can make the facade more transparent or opaque depending on the building's demand for energy and daylight. At one percent the weight of glass, the material imparts a light, "cloud-like" appearance to the building, said Ronan.

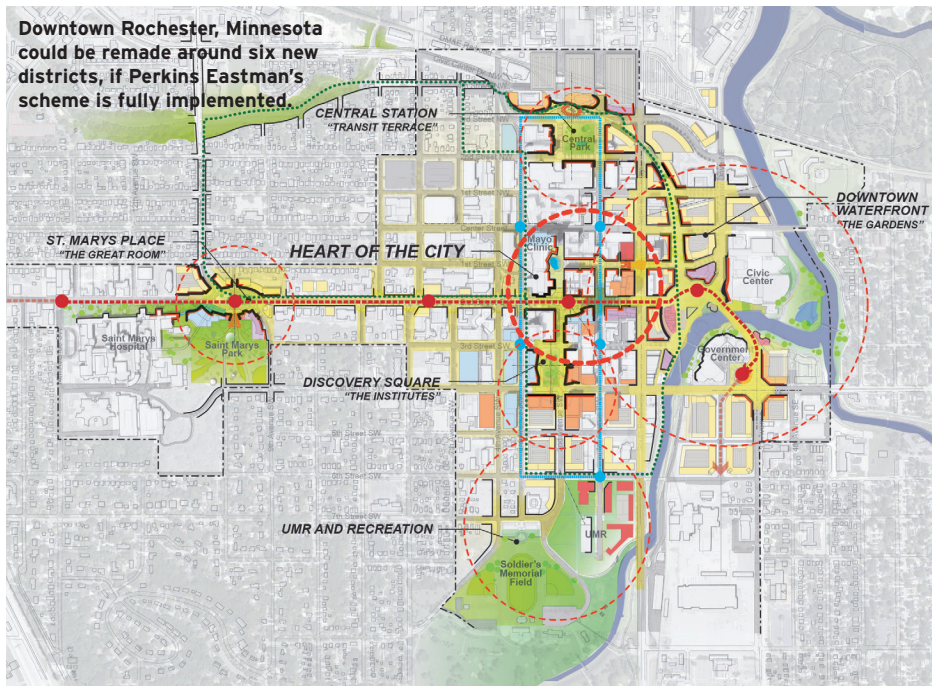
Another high-tech innovation is the Kaplan Institute's radiant heating and cooling system, which Ronan called a "fusion of the structure and the mechanical system." Water-filled tubing embedded in the concrete decking converts the building's floor structure into an engine for heating and

cooling. "We wanted to do something that was technologically advanced, but was also better, more comfortable," said Ronan. IIT said they're targeting LEED Silver certification.

Unlike the traditional classroom buildings on campus, the Kaplan Institute will be devoted to entrepreneurial, project-based courses and interdisciplinary collaborations. That programming is reflected in the building's circulation, which is organized around two outdoor courtyards intended to function as the structure's "lungs," according to a statement from IIT. Situated in Morton Park—a central nexus for many cross-campus treks—the building beckons passersby to cut through. That transparency is meant to get people out of their academic silos, explained Ronan. The spirit of collaboration continues inside the building, where large, open floor plates create sightlines from floor to floor and through the building.

Groundbreaking is expected in spring 2016. IIT estimates a base cost of \$45 million, although total costs are "still being determined," according to a spokesman.

When the building opens in 2018, the building will host entrepreneurial students and faculty, as well as a bevy of equipment for quick prototyping and iterative design. "The emphasis is on being able to quickly come up with ideas," said Ronan, whose subtle workhorse of a building should support plenty of them. **CB**



Mayo Clinic's multi-billion dollar plans cover 550 acres.



PERKINS EASTMAN

EXTRA MAYO continued from front page population of Minnesota's third largest city.

That is a balancing act not lost on Lisa Clarke, executive director of an economic development agency set up to guide Destination Medical Center's design and implementation.

"We wanted to make sure that we didn't disrupt the charm of Rochester," said Clarke, explaining that since the plan first emerged in 2009, the team behind it has been conducting research to determine where and how to invest in development. "Seventy percent of the time when a patient comes to Rochester, they're in the community," said Clarke. "It quickly became apparent that it's not just about one product or one service or one building."

Perkins Eastman's Peter Cavaluzzi also stressed the importance of community meet-

ings and the role they play in contextually nuanced design.

"It couldn't be something that was imported or that overwhelmed the cultural trajectory of the city of Rochester. It needed to feel like it belonged to the city," said Cavaluzzi. "At the same time it completely reset their scale and idea of what their city is."

The resulting plan is organized around six new districts spread across 550 acres: It calls for a revamped downtown waterfront along the Zumbro River; an ice-skating rink at the foot of Pelli Clarke Pelli's Gonda Building; an urban office park for biotech companies dubbed "Discovery Square"; and potentially a new rail connection to the Twin Cities, 90 miles to Rochester's north. This kind of investment could presage an explosion of

new housing, hotels, and commercial space—as well as new high-tech medical facilities from Mayo—but Cavaluzzi said the plan's emphasis on public spaces and walkability maintains the "hometown healthcare nature of Rochester."

"Medical facilities are usually very antiseptic, very institutional. They also grow in ways that are very uncomfortable," said Cavaluzzi. By contrast he claims that "Rochester has a chance to create an authentic medical city."

In 2013 the Minnesota Legislature approved a \$585 million funding package for public infrastructure to complement the \$3.5 billion Mayo Clinic plans to kick in over the life of the project. None of the public money can be used to develop private Mayo Clinic spaces.

But as the market for medical tourism

increasingly caters to wealthy international clients, some worry the needs of local residents—including affordable housing and historic preservation—could clash with Mayo's business model. Foreign real estate investment has already begun flowing into Rochester.

To mediate such potential conflicts, Clarke said that Mayo will reevaluate their plans and respond to community input every five years. Work could soon begin on the first phase of the project, "The Heart of the City," which will focus on retail and commercial development around the intersection of 1st Avenue and 1st Street, where an arched "Light Pavilion" canopy will hang overhead.

"It's something totally unexpected for a hospital," said Cavaluzzi. **CB**



HIGH-TECH HIGH continued from front page and ties together Alexandria Area High School's "learning neighborhoods." Flexible furniture upends the typical beehive-like order of the classrooms. Students flock to maple-clad "learning stairs" and other "pop-up spaces," which are more common in startup offices

than in public high schools.

"We all kind of want the same thing," said John Pfluger, design principal at Cuningham Group, "this kind of mash-up between a Starbucks and an Apple store."

That approach first emerged in 2010, Pfluger said, when school district officials held public meetings

and asked community members what they wanted. Two years prior, voters rejected a tax increase to fund the school district, so the new \$73.24 million school—funded through private donations and \$65 million in bonds—represents a substantial investment in a new direction.

About 1,400 students just completed their first academic year in the 280,000-square-foot school, which is expected to be certified LEED Silver. The designers included a chilled beam system to cut energy costs associated with heating and cooling. They also expanded an existing wetland onsite to manage storm water and irrigate athletic fields.

Inside, students from grades nine to 12 circulate through a central "Community Commons," which combines the building's cafeteria, gym, and other social spaces into an airy, three-story volume that serves as the heart of the school. Nearby, a 1,000-seat theater—designed

by Schuler Shook in collaboration with several community arts groups—hosts school and community functions.

"It's [Community Commons] where kids hang out before and after school. It's a community gathering spot," said Pfluger. But, he added, the school does not eschew organization for open-plan dogma: "I think there's an impression that there are no enclosed spaces, but there is a huge variety of spaces."

Four "academies" across two three-level academic wings house the majority of the classroom space, although Pfluger said they do not use the term classroom. Instead of rooms owned by individual faculty members or subject areas, teachers are given a variety of spaces to choose from, including everything from standard, blackboard-oriented rooms to a wide-open "learning stair" or amphitheater-style space.

The curriculum, too, bends a bit from traditional public school pedagogy, elevating vocational-technical education to an essential part of Alexandria students' high school experience. At the heart of both the design and programming, said Pfluger, is the same goal: updating the definition of what a high school should look like for the 21st century. **CB**



The construction of Alexandria, Minnesota's new public high school was funded through bonds and private donations.

COREY GAFFER PHOTOGRAPHY



A dusty warehouse on Chicago's Goose Island is rebooted as a high-tech office and research hub for digital manufacturing.

CHRISTOPHER BARRETT PHOTOGRAPHY

Chicago manufacturer Republic Windows and Doors went bankrupt in 2008, setting adrift 240 employees and a Spartan midcentury warehouse on the Chicago River. In May the facility reopened as UI Labs, an advanced manufacturing office, business incubator, and modern factory floor that Mayor Rahm Emanuel said will help “inspire a modern manufacturing renaissance” from its dusty outpost on Goose Island.

Working with solid if utilitarian bones from the original 1965 Booth Hansen-designed building, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)

have revived the old structure by applying new ideas and technology to old principles—not unlike how the building’s tenants hope to breathe new life into American manufacturing.

A venture of the University of Illinois, UI Labs calls itself a “consortia of university, industry, and civic partners who innovate and commercialize new technology solutions.” The group convenes clusters around specific topics in the world of so-called advanced manufacturing, collecting fees from \$500 to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from its members.

Depending on the level of membership, users are granted access to the intellectual property produced in the lab. The first two institutes are the Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute (DMDII) and CityWorks, which is focused on urban infrastructure.

Funded by a grant from the Defense Department to the tune of \$70 million, and helped along by \$26 million in city and state tax incentives, the fledgling tech hub is no mere startup. DMDII’s senior director of operations Naresh Shah said they’re built for expansion, with about one third of their 94,000

square-feet unfinished and awaiting new tenants.

“The point of this is not to be a standalone project,” said Shah. In addition to some demanding technological specifications, UI Labs tasked SOM with providing flexible workspaces.

What SOM principal Brian Lee calls the “Hall of Machines” occupies the western third of the building, separated from a more standard open-plan office by a wall of glass. The glass partition lets through daylight, which pours in the existing clerestories, but also a bit of machine noise. Lee and Shah said that was intentional so employees and visitors never feel too isolated from the manufacturing activity.

Not a traditional factory floor in the assembly line sense, the building’s “manufacturing lab” instead features 3D printers, prototyping gadgets, and other automobile-sized machinery on consignment from DMDII’s institutional partners, as well as sophisticated metrology tools that can measure objects at a micron scale. Access to such tools is critical to innovation “whether you’re making toasters, washing machines, or tanks,” said Shah.

The cleanly designed office spaces, which SOM Director of Interior Design Jaime Velez spiked with bright colors and flexible furniture, benefit from a touch of industrial grit. Exposed ductwork and pipes run alongside hemispherical, industrial-looking lights that hang from a steel grid mimicking the original latticework. In some cases, SOM was able to simply rely on the existing structure—the building’s contemporary machines are just as heavy as their predecessors and

still need the 20-inch concrete slab floors, for example.

Some new interventions are subtle, like the substitution of clear, low-iron glass to create occasional sightlines across the building. Elsewhere, the demands of 21st century business necessitated entirely new spaces, as with an acoustically controlled, fully interactive media wall for touch-screen video conferencing. A tiered lecture hall dubbed the “Knowledge Theater” can host 75 students or a global audience of businesspeople.

But Lee said the architects were careful to not override the existing industrial context, citing The Republic Newspaper Office and Printing Plant in Columbus, Indiana as a possible ancestor of this design.

“We wanted to make sure we weren’t doing anything too affected,” said Lee.

Shah said he plans to invite community groups and local artists to collaborate on projects and longer lasting initiatives. “This is not a spaceship that dropped into the neighborhood,” he said. “We want the local community to feel welcome.”

Historically a home for heavy industry, including steel and cement, the artificial Goose Island and its environs were designated a Planned Manufacturing District more than 20 years ago. In the years since, it has become surrounded by residential and commercial development in the in-demand neighborhoods of Lincoln Park, Near North Side, and Wicker Park. For its immediate neighbors, at least, UI Labs’ new experiment may well define the image of manufacturing in the coming decades—for better or worse.

But Shah is happy to bear that responsibility.

“I want students to see the manufacturing floor as this pristine place. It’s not the dirty factory of your grandfather’s days,” he said. “So when they’re looking at tech jobs at Google or Apple or in manufacturing, they’ll come here.” **CB**



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MATTER



COURTESY GENSLER

Gensler turns 50 years old this summer. As the world's largest design firm, it counts about 5,000 staffers among 46 offices. But the firm has never been guilty of haphazard growth or overreach, instead allowing its accounts to spawn new offices in new cities. In its formative years, Gensler's founder devised a novel way to thrive in the field, according to the firm's Chicago design director and principal Todd Heiser.

"Art Gensler plugged a hole in the market," Heiser said. "Architects weren't really thinking about what the future office was going to look like. Art centered the firm on corporate interior design."

Today, they do a little of everything. Whether tackling the Shanghai Tower, which recently topped out as the world's second tallest building at 2,073 feet, or healthcare and technology incubators at Merchandise Mart, Gensler comes at every project in a democratic way, involving the client in charrettes and avoiding the "black cape role" at all costs.

The fact that Gensler is employee-owned helps explain this hardwired philosophy. "It really drives the way we act, from compensation to cooperation," said Heiser. "Each person who enters through the door at some level becomes a shareholder in the company."

As interiors specialists, Gensler often collaborates with other architects. They have teamed up with Jeanne Gang on the Wanda Vista tower proposal at Lakeshore East, with Santiago Calatrava on the aborted Chicago Spire, and with HDR on the new Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC) building in Streeterville.

"We listened to Jeanne's story for the Wanda tower and took on the challenge to build an equally compelling interior story," said Heiser. "There's nothing worse than walking up to a great piece of architecture and the interiors are terrible."

The inside of Gensler's Chicago office is certainly not terrible. A staff of 300 claims almost a full floor of Louis Sullivan's masterful Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. Building in a dense but respectful reuse. The build-out relies on oak, steel, and natural finishes to conserve the rawness of the original space. The new design leaves room for the original columns to breathe while keeping the open department store layout, and adding a perimeter of co-working spaces so groups of staff can break off from the main pack.

Though the Chicago outpost has its hands in many projects worldwide, its main sphere of influence is The Windy City and the lower Midwest. **IAN SPULA**

THE ABILITY INSTITUTE OF RIC CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Designed by architecture firms HDR and Gensler, RIC is the new flagship research hospital of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. With the super structure recently topped out, the two firms are collaborating to leverage the design of the new building to fully express RIC's vision, one of an iterative rather than linear process of clinical care and recovery medicine. The building gestures to this with a vertical corrugation disrupting uniform horizontal etchings in the glass curtain wall. The "Ability Lab" is the active nucleus of each of five innovation centers that separate the different categories of recovery. Specific colors were chosen to produce better patient outcomes.

FULTON WEST CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

This is the newest office development mounted by Sterling Bay, a titan of retrofit with several interests in Chicago's West Loop. Large floor plates meet competitive rents at these sites, the most prominent of which is 1K Fulton—Google's new home—and technology firms are biting. 1K Fulton is three blocks away, so Sterling Bay has reason to double down on a modern office district. For Fulton West, Gensler is blowing out the footprint of a skeleton from the dot-com bust and climbing to nine stories. Expected to wrap in late 2016, the end result will be a two-tone soft loft with 290,000 square feet of office space, a café, roof deck, balconies, and a public pocket park.

MATTER CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

A not-for-profit, co-working space designed to reflect the vision and needs of the healthcare technology community, Matter is embedded in the Merchandise Mart as a sequel of sorts to Gensler's 1871 tech incubator. The focus is on collaborative cultivation of ideas between industry powerhouses and entrepreneurs in the medical sub-sectors of biopharma and hospital equipment, giving birth to startups. Design-wise the spirit of cubicle-less flexible interaction, very much en vogue in corporate America, is well served. Interior walls are partial and moveable, meeting rooms and libraries are transparent, and materials are vibrantly unpredictable.

LE MÉRIDIEN COLUMBUS, THE JOSEPH COLUMBUS, OHIO

For this new boutique hotel located in Columbus, Ohio's Short North arts district, Gensler called on the city's diverse ethnic roots and geological landscape. Developer Ron Pizzuti made it a vessel for a few dozen pieces from his renowned modern art collection—a merger emphasized by Starwood Hotel's Le Méridien brand. Fifteen local artists were commissioned to make artworks for guest rooms, much of which is for sale. The 11-story building presents a stack of offset rectangular slabs permeated by floor-to-ceiling windows. The property's architectural envelope is eclectic, fusing industrial elements and opulent materials with intimate settings.



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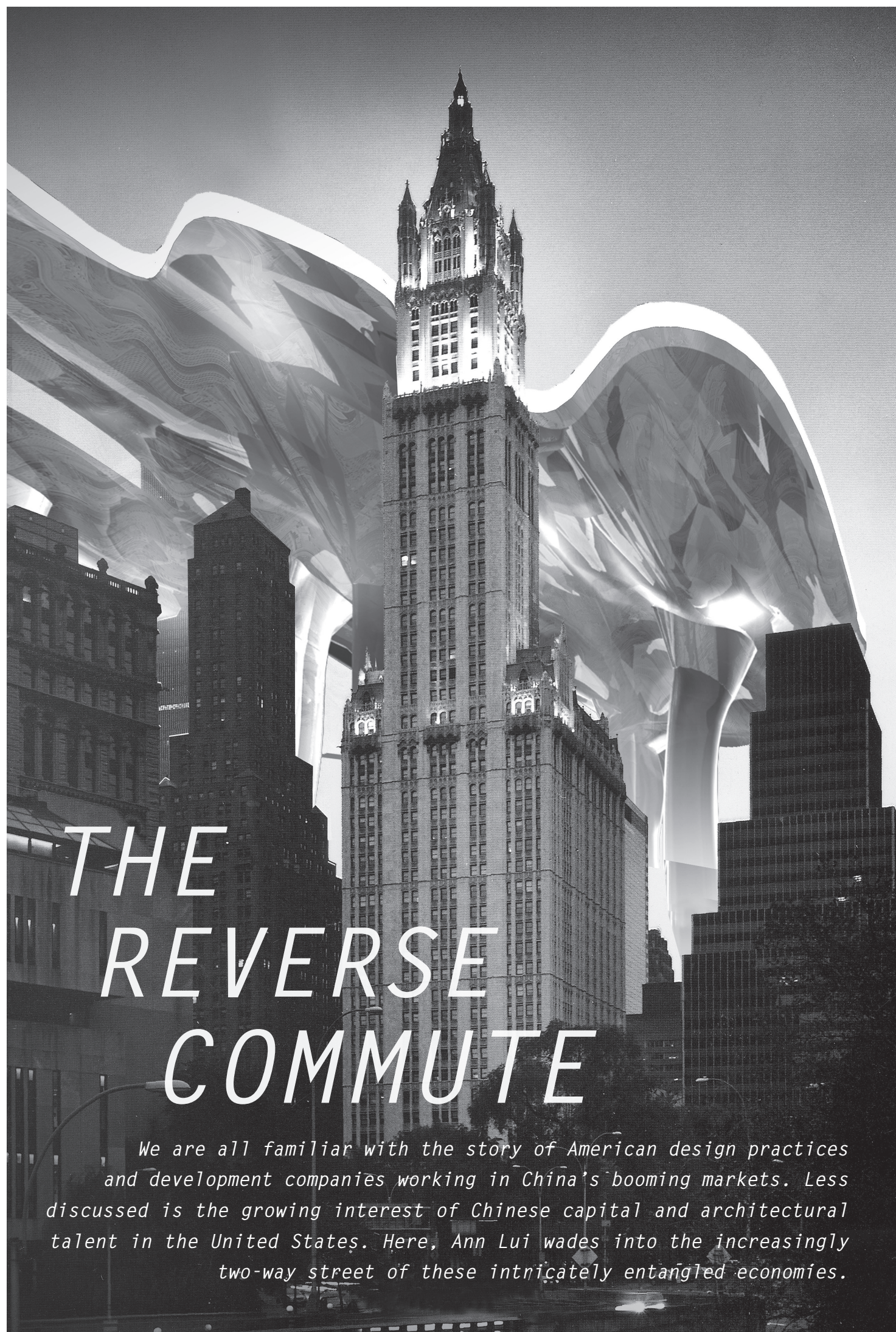


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THE REVERSE COMMUTE

We are all familiar with the story of American design practices and development companies working in China's booming markets. Less discussed is the growing interest of Chinese capital and architectural talent in the United States. Here, Ann Lui wades into the increasingly two-way street of these intricately entangled economies.

Left: Rebuilt WTC by Beijing-based MAD Architects conceptualizes a "Floating Island" above the World Trade Center site in Manhattan, a multi-media metropolis of working and public spaces meant to diminish the machine aesthetic and social divisions of the modern era.

Much has been written about United States architects and developers finding opportunities in China's building boom, which is seemingly on perpetual fast forward. American architects are building small and large in the East—from corporate offices' design of tall towers, such as KPF's Shanghai World Financial Center, to the exhibition of boutique firms at Ordos 100, the new community in Inner Mongolia featuring houses designed by 100 architects from 27 countries. Yet, as the U.S. economy recovers from the recent recession, the trend is becoming paralleled by a flow in the other direction. Cities across the U.S., which once saw mostly outbound traffic of architectural design and real estate investment, are now brokering a two-way exchange. Metropolises from New York to Detroit have seen growing real estate interest from individual Chinese buyers as well as large developers. In parallel, Chinese architectural design practices—especially young and innovative ones—are seeking commissions in the U.S. and opening local offices to pursue new work. A fast-growing economy in China and decades-old bi-national relationships in architecture and development are resulting in new types of partnerships in the building industry, rooted in two deeply linked economies.

In the beginning of 2015, two noteworthy buildings made headlines in Chicago, capturing the breadth of new exchanges with China in the city's architectural scene. In November, design publications headlined Beijing-based MAD Architects' unveiling of a scheme for the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art on the city's lakefront. Founding principal Ma Yansong proposed—in his own words—a "futuristic" mountainous building in partnership with two Chicago offices. In April, stakeholders watched in a hotel ballroom as final plans were unveiled for the Wanda Vista: Three towers in Lakeshore East by Studio Gang, the highest of which, at 1,200 feet, will be the third tallest in the city. Behind the scenes, these towers are bankrolled at a cost of \$1 billion by the Beijing-based developer Dalian Wanda Group. Set to break ground in 2016, according to Mayor Rahm Emanuel, these Chinese-funded buildings are estimated to add 2,000 construction jobs to the city. Bi-national exchanges between

COURTESY MAD



COURTESY STUDIO GANG

Above: The Wanda Vista towers, which are set to rise in Chicago's Lakeshore East district, are bankrolled at a cost of \$1 billion by Beijing-based developer Dalian Wanda Group.

Below: MAD Architects' design for the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, on the shore of Lake Michigan.

China and the U.S. in Chicago's built environment are also simmering at a smaller scale. According to the National Realtors Association, in 2014 Chinese buyers purchased \$22 billion dollars of United States real estate, more than any other foreign group. Chinese buyers represented 24 percent of all foreign sales nationally, up from 19 percent the

previous year. According to Sam Van Horebeek, a director at East-West Property Advisors, a company that connects Chinese buyers to U.S. realtors, his clients are buying real estate in the United States to diversify assets, as investments, or for immigration purposes such as supporting a child enrolled in an American university. Increasingly,

cities like Chicago are becoming of more interest. "In the past, it was only New York, Boston, or San Francisco," said Van Horebeek. "Now there is more interest in second tier or third tier cities. We expect that to continue. There's a higher demand than ever before and it will accelerate."

More broadly, Chicago's new relationships with Chinese real estate investors and architects serve as a microcosm for broader currents of interest from China in the U.S. building industry. Wang Jianlin, chairman of the Dalian Wanda Group and one of China's richest men, announced his attention to further his real estate investment in the U.S. beyond the Windy City. "Investing in Chicago property is just Wanda's first move into the U.S. real estate market," he said in a press release. "Within a year, Wanda will invest in more five-star hotel projects in major U.S. cities like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco."

Other Chinese developers have entered the U.S. real estate market, often in partnership with local companies. In 2013, the Shanghai-based Greenland Group purchased a 70-percent stake in Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards project from Forest City Ratner Companies and is functioning as an "active partner" involved in construction as well as financing. Across the East River in Manhattan, China Vanke, the nation's largest real estate developer, is building a glassy 61-story condo building on Lexington Avenue. In Los Angeles, Greenland invested \$1 billion in residential towers and a hotel, in part of the city's push to reactivate the Broadway corridor.

Even smaller cities, like Tacoma, Washington, are benefiting from Chinese investment: Shanghai Mintong Real Estate is constructing a two-tower hotel and condo complex in downtown. Financially strapped Detroit has also attracted foreign real estate interests: This year, Dongdu International purchased three iconic buildings in the city's downtown.

The increased forays by large developers are in part due to the availability of EB-5 visas, which allow financiers to acquire green cards for investment purposes, drawing more Chinese capital to U.S. cities. Other reasons for the uptick include broader economic changes in China, characterized by a stronger yuan and a marked decrease in the nation's own real estate market, which just dropped to a five-year low, according to the country's National Bureau of Statistics. "At an annual Chinese real estate convention," said Van Horebeek, "one [developer] told me that in a two- or three-day convention during which there were a lot presentations on different topics—when typically most would be about the Chinese property market—[this year], one third were about America. So you have Chinese developers, major ones, discussing their plans for expansion overseas."

As Chinese developers increasingly look to the U.S., the country's architects are also looking to enter the market. Two decades ago, most Chinese architectural designers would have been headed for state-run architectural practices. Yet beginning in 1993 with Atelier FCJZ, the firm often billed as the

nation's first private architectural practice, Chinese architects are establishing independent firms with international reach. Yung Ho Chang, who founded Atelier FCJZ, is a former head of the architecture department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He built his career in U.S. academia before establishing his now prolific practice in Beijing. Today, many Chinese architects are trained abroad and establish offices in the U.S. with an international scope. "For this generation of Chinese architects, I think it's very natural for them to practice in any place," said Ma Yansong, the designer of the Lucas Museum. "This generation feels already that they are in the global scene."

Recently, young Mainland Chinese architecture firms have garnered international accolades and are maintaining U.S. offices, paving the way for more commissions abroad. Wang Shu of Amateur Architecture Studio won the Pritzker Prize in 2012, the first time the accolade was awarded to a Chinese citizen. The firm OPEN Architecture was founded in New York City in 2011 by Li Hu and Huang Wenjing, closely followed by a Beijing branch. While the office's projects are mostly in China, OPEN Architecture's increasingly international practice was recognized for its design of "Garden in the Garden," which spoke to both mass production and traditional Chinese landscape, at last year's Venice Biennale. Studio Link-Arc, selected to design the 2015 China Pavilion at the Milan Expo, was founded by Yichen Lu and also operates out of New York.

This model of young cutting-edge



COURTESY LUCAS MUSEUM OF NARRATIVE ART



The China Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015 was designed by Studio Link-Arc, which was founded by China native Yichen Lu and operates out of New York City.

practices with bi-national roots is characterized by SO-IL, a firm founded by Jing Liu, a Chinese-born architect, with Florian Idenburg, who is from the Netherlands. The firm's project "Pole Dance" was constructed for the P.S.1 Young Architects Program in 2010 and the office has since gone on to design commercial and cultural projects in the U.S. and internationally.

Ma Yansong argues for the positive potential of Chinese developers with both civic and investment interests in the U.S., especially when paired with design architects whose agendas focus on context and revitalization. "I don't work with many commercial developers in China," said Ma, "but I think that the Greenland Group, in the U.S., has a good vision. Many large developers come for the market, for financial reasons, and of course Greenland has financial targets too, but they really want Greenland to be a local office [in the U.S.]. Those are the same reasons we come to the United States. We want to bring new ideas to the American city and we want to find people who share the same vision. That's why we have the office in Los Angeles, to try to blend into the community and understand what is going on."

On one hand, China's growing role in the U.S. architecture and real estate scene can be chalked up to the globalized economy,

in which the borders of nations have become less significant in light of multinational corporations and fluid trade. On the other hand, the architectural exchange between the two nations deserves closer inspection. In early 2014, the *Chicago*

Tribune ran a series of articles titled, "Designed in Chicago, Made in China," which profiled the work of Chicago architects working in the East. Yet undergirding the lucrative commissions for U.S. architects working abroad are the architectural

and real estate currents going in both directions between the two nations, emerging from the complexity of two deeply linked economies. As the architectural exchange between China and the U.S. increasingly flows both

ways, critics and professionals will continue to navigate a new iteration of an old encounter that brings both fresh competition and new opportunities.

ANN LUI IS A BOSTON-BASED WRITER AND DESIGNER.



SERGIO GRAZIA

operable walls

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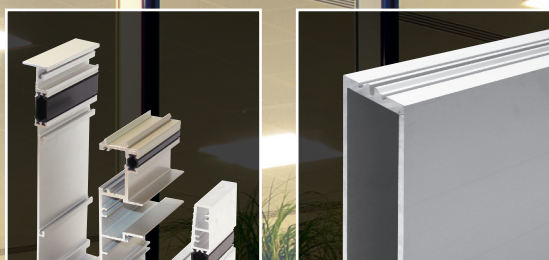
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Reported by
Leslie Claggett

TOM ARBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

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PROFILE

LIFETIME TV CASE STUDY, NEW YORK CITY

LIFETIME TV NETWORKS

ARCHITECT: HOK
ENGINEER: MSJ/PENNONI
CONTRACTOR: LEHR CONSTRUCTION

WALL PANEL SYSTEM: PANELITE
PANEL INSTALLER:
LEHR CONSTRUCTION

A survey of Lifetime Television's programming—"Project Runway," "Hoarders," and "Devious Maids"—are but a few of the network's series—provides quick insight into the culture of the corporation, which is oriented to the flashy and the feminine. When HOK took on the job of transforming a 70,000-square-foot den of gloomy, high-paneled workstations into a vibrant interior for the media company, one of the specific directives it received was to make the office a fun and open environment.

The linchpin of the renovated space is a broad, sinuous central corridor that serves to organize the floor plan. The walls have been covered in Panelite's

Bonded Series of composite panels, which have been backlit by LED lights. HOK designed ten lighting programs for the system. (In what could be construed as a bit of subliminal branding, the colorful, glowing walls recall a television screen.)

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INTERIOR WALLS

New interior door and wall systems encourage spatial efficiency and flexibility. By Leslie Clagett

MAKING ROOM



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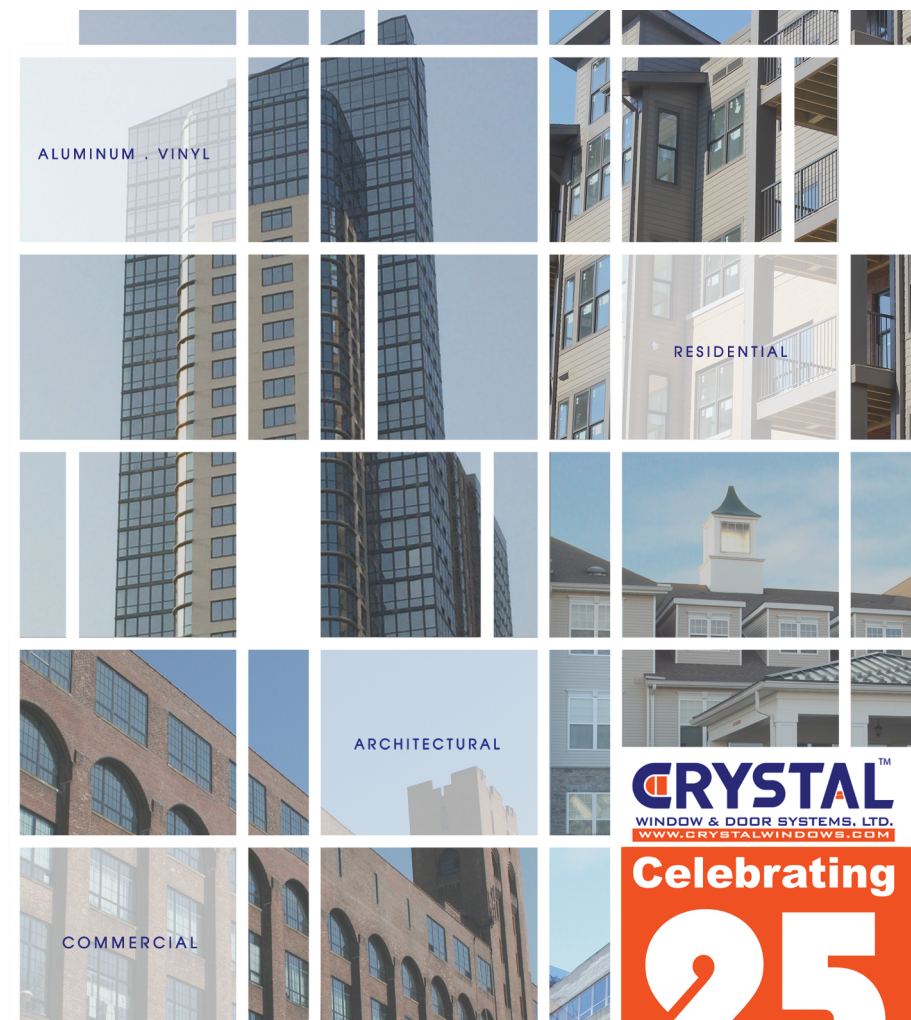
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TOM ARBAN PHOTOGRAPHY



In a perfect world, the construction of a municipal building would be highlighted by both form and function. Most times, because the budget is often determined by taxpayer dollars, the end result is to settle for function.

The Newmarket, Ontario, Municipal Operations Centre—which earned a LEED Silver rating—has achieved both goals. Designed by Rounthwaite, Dick & Hadley Architects & Engineers (RDH), it is an aesthetically pleasing, energy-efficient, and environmentally-friendly facility from the inside to the out, where the facade features 20 bi-fold lift-strap/auto-latch glass portals manufactured by Schweiss.

Research and design alone for this \$20.2 million, 65,000-square-foot facility took about a year. Lead project architect Geoff Miller said, “We were looking for a door product that would have a number of functional aspects and be architecturally attractive as well.”

RDH worked closely with Schweiss to ensure the custom doors met the community’s aesthetic and energy goals. The bi-fold doors measure 19 feet wide by 21.3 feet high to accommodate storage, repair, and maintenance areas for trucks, snowplows, and other large equipment. The doors are clad entirely in a double-glazed curtain wall and installed flush with the primary building envelope. This allows for transparent and fully day-lighted workspaces in the vehicle bays, while maintaining thermal continuity.

Ten doors on each side of the facility—all sporting super-graphic numbers for instant identification by visitors—allow for easy access and drive-through capabilities. They also provide passive ventilation and reduce the energy load. During the summer, the doors can be left open during the day to create a seamless indoor/outdoor workspace.

The doorframes are powder-coated to protect against the elements and prevent rust. They also include safety features such as warning lights and horns, a door base safety edge, and an emergency backup system.



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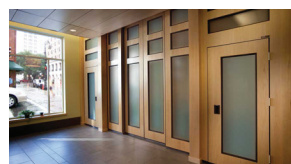
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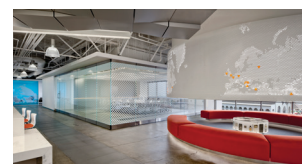
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SPECTRUM COLOR BARN DOOR HARDWARE
REAL SLIDING HARDWARE

Offering a change in palette from stainless steel and hand-wrought iron, this barn door hardware is offered in seven bright colors. Available with flat-tracks from four to 18 feet in length for a variety of door thicknesses.

realslidinghardware.com

FUNCTIONAL HARDWARE

Hinges, rollers, and locksets are the unheralded—and often hidden—components of a door’s design. Here’s a sampling of what’s new in this hard-working, functional hardware. By Leslie Clagett

INTELLIGENT ACCESS



SMARTCODE 915
KWIKSET

This keyless deadbolt avoids problem of “smudge” attacks associated with touchscreen locks, where passcodes can potentially be detected from the oily residues left by fingers on the glass surface. Users are prompted to touch two random numbers in order to display the full screen and then enter the programmed access code. Powered by four AA batteries.

kwikset.com



SLIDO DESIGN 80-M
HÄFELE

The Slido Design 80-M sliding door offers a subtle, sleek presence with concealed hardware so the door appears to float. Design 80-M is a wall-mounted system with the running gear integrated and concealed in the door leaf. On level hard floors, no bottom track is required, and an optional guide track is available for carpeted floors. Featuring a soft-closing mechanism, the hardware may be used with both wood and glass doors and can support up to 175 pounds.

hafele.com



HAWA-VARIOTEC 150
HAWA

This hardware system for stackable, all-glass sliding walls has flexible track routing, allowing straight and curved sections to be seamlessly joined together; radii range from 15 to 90 degrees. It can accommodate both sliding pivot and sliding swing doors. Panels up to 330 pounds can be loaded on the trolley.

hawa.com



ARGENTA
RENSON

This line of invisible hinges promotes a concealed aesthetic while enabling a 180-degree door opening. It features a closed position that completely aligns with the surrounding interior wall. Available for both left- and right-sided doors, the fully adjustable hinges are easily installed, fire-rated, and UL-listed.

renson.us



RITE TOUCH DIGITAL LOCK FOR INTERIOR GLASS DOORS
ASSA ABLOY / ADAMS RITE

This digital glass door lock requires no holes or other modifications to the door, making installation quick and easy. The lock offers flexible access control with single or double glass door compatibility and dual credential access control via card reader or personal PIN code. Includes a fire detection sensor, break-in alarm, and an optional automatic locking feature.

assaabloy.com
adamsrite.com

INSIDE OUTSIDE LIVING.

The frameless insulated sliding doors by Sky-Frame blend naturally into their surroundings. So it is hard to say where the living room ends and where the view starts: **SKY-FRAME.NET**

SKY-FRAME

JUNE

WEDNESDAY 17
EXHIBITION
Accumulus
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis
3750 Washington Blvd.
St. Louis, MO
camstl.org

SATURDAY 20
SCREENING
**A Cinematic Study of
Fog in San Francisco**
10:00 a.m.
Wexner Center for the Arts
Ohio State University
1871 North High St.
Columbus, OH
wexarts.org

TUESDAY 21
LECTURE
The Rocks Estate Today
7:00 p.m.
Glessner House Museum
800 South Prairie Ave.
Chicago
glessnerhouse.org

WEDNESDAY 24
LECTURE
**Material, Method
and Place: Students as
Designers and Builders**
5:00 p.m.
AIA Chicago
35 East Wacker Dr., Ste. 250
Chicago
aiachicago.org

WEDNESDAY 24
EVENT
YAF Tour and Social:
Architecture Is Fun, Inc.
6:00 p.m.
Interactive Science Forum
The Latin School of Chicago
59 West N Blvd.
Chicago
aiachicago.org

THURSDAY 25
EVENT
**Municipal Design Review
Network: Downtown
Tour of Skokie, Illinois**
9:30 a.m.
Chaddick Institute of
Metropolitan Development
DePaul University
1 East Jackson Blvd.
Chicago
las.depaul.edu

SUNDAY 28
PANEL
Green Varnish
2:00 p.m.
Contemporary Art Museum
St. Louis
3750 Washington Blvd.
St. Louis, MO
camstl.org

TUESDAY 30
EVENT
Women in Architecture
5:30 p.m.
The Center for Architecture
50 West Town St., Ste. 110
Columbus, OH
aiacolumbus.org

JULY

SUNDAY 5
EXHIBITION CLOSING
The Mid-Century Mood:
**Milton Schwartz in
America, 1953–1965**
Art Institute of Chicago
111 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago
artic.edu

WEDNESDAY 8
EVENT
**The Science Behind the
Beauty: Discovering Biomim-
icry and Biophilia and their
Application to Design**
5:45 p.m.
Lurie Garden, Millenium Park
Chicago
aiachicago.org

THURSDAY 9
LECTURE
Contentious Conversations:
**The Cost of Art, Museums,
Funding and the Public Trust**
7:00 p.m.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
4000 Michigan Rd.
Indianapolis, IN
imamuseum.org

TUESDAY 14
LECTURE
**The Art of Social Change
Series: Maximizing
Community Collaborations**
6:00 p.m.
Sam Fox School of
Design & Visual Arts
Washington University
1 Brookings Dr., St. Louis, MO
samfoxschool.wustl.edu

SUNDAY 19
LECTURE
Going Green: Green Roofs
11:00 a.m.
Contemporary Art Museum
St. Louis
3750 Washington Blvd.
St. Louis, MO
camstl.org

SATURDAY 11
EVENT
LEGOLand Jumps In!
11:00 a.m.
The Nelson-Atkins
Museum of Art
4525 Oak St., Kansas City, MO
nelson-atkins.org

SUNDAY 19
EXHIBITIONS CLOSING
Human-Altered Landscapes
Cincinnati Art Museum
953 Eden Park Dr.
Cincinnati, OH
cincinnatiartmuseum.org

**IN FOCUS: Lynn Davis,
Iceberg Photos**
University of Michigan
Museum of Art
525 South State St.
Ann Arbor, MI
umma.umich.edu

THURSDAY 23
EVENT
Opening Reception:
Perspectives from North Korea
5:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary
Photography
600 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago
mocp.org



DAVID HARTT

DAVID HARTT:
INTERVAL
Art Institute of Chicago
111 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL
Through October 11

Canadian artist David Hartt examines the culture and built environment of a given locale through the changing needs and values of its community. For this essayistic series of films and photographs, Hartt selected two economically and geographically isolated sites: Whitehorse in the Canadian Yukon and Sakhalin Island, a Russian territory at the tip of the Japanese archipelago. The exhibition is accompanied by a musical score by composer Mitchell Akiyama, and backed by a series of walls simulating the reflective exterior of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. Hartt's work focuses on the "periphery of their respective societies" as a precept for commenting on their centers. Meanwhile, the exhibition's title calls attention to temporal and spatial displacements that occur at these sites in an increasingly globalized world.

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Togetherness

Lina Bo Bardi: Together
Graham Foundation
4 West Burton Place, Chicago
Through July 25



IOANA MARINESCU

Typically used to assign blame, the act of finger-pointing has prickly connotations. Not so in the Graham Foundation's latest exhibition, *Lina Bo Bardi: Together*, where visitors are greeted by a sprinkling of pointing, paper cut-out hands, all suspended from the ceiling. Inspired by architect, designer, writer, and curator Lina Bo Bardi, who used a hand motif to direct attention to important design elements in her drawings, the hands in the Graham Foundation's foyer gesture toward the visitor, suggesting that you are important, too.

Making its American debut at the Graham, the exhibition presents a unique look at the work of Bo Bardi, an accomplished figure in the 20th-century modernist movement who has only recently begun to garner the

attention she deserves. Just as artist Madelon Vriesendorp's hanging hands encourage Graham Foundation visitors to actively engage as viewers of the exhibition, the show highlights the people and cultures that informed Bo Bardi's work and continue to activate her buildings with life today.

Bo Bardi began her prolific career in her native Italy before moving to Brazil in 1946. There, she became director of the Museum of Art São Paulo, founded the design journal *Habitat*, established an architecture studio. Her design portfolio includes furniture, clothing, jewelry, textiles, and theater sets, in addition to several of Brazil's most progressive modernist structures. Bo Bardi took an interest in the local craft traditions and vernacular art forms she encountered in the

**Interior of Lina Bo Bardi's former residence,
The Glass House, 2012.**

Bahia region of northeastern Brazil—her wide range of work married the local and international, as well as the traditional and avant-garde.

The Graham Foundation's exhibition is as kaleidoscopic as Bo Bardi's work and professional life. Curated by Noemí Blager, it is organized around three of Bo Bardi's built structures: her former residence, The Glass House (1951); Solar do Unhão (1959), a museum, design school, and center for crafts; and SESC Pompéia (1977–1982), a community center. Videos, photographs, text, and objects represent distinct areas of Bo Bardi's practice. They coalesce to convey not just the substance and breadth of her work, but to impart a sense of the continued vitality of her architecture.

Photographer Ioana Marinescu's images of The Glass House are like windows onto the structure that Bo Bardi called home until her death in 1992. Mounted on stands and designed by the London-based design collective Assemble, the still photographs are illuminated in light boxes, giving the house's sun-bathed interiors—with their floor-to-ceiling windows offering views of the surrounding tropical landscape—a sense of warmth and life. The photographs hover several feet from the walls to create a feeling of closeness and intimacy. You're invited to snuggle into Bo Bardi's playful 1951-designed Bowl Chair—produced in a limited edition by the furniture company Arper for the launch of the exhibition—making yourself at home amid Marinescu's photos.

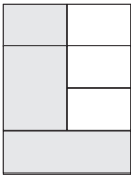
Many of Bo Bardi's curatorial projects showcased Brazil's distinctive material culture—devotional objects, ceramics, clothing, cookware, and other handmade goods. She was interested in democratizing the arts and diffusing the boundaries between the products of high and low culture. In this spirit, the show features toys, ex-voto figurines, and small utilitarian tools collected by Madelon Vriesendorp in Salvador de Bahia, as well as children's crafts produced during workshops led by Vriesendorp at Solar do Unhão. While the objects, arranged in theatrically lit dioramas made of metal and rough-hewn concrete, are intriguing, the majority are unlabeled and unattributed to a maker. Their anonymity is perplexing given Bo Bardi's democratic tendencies.

Tapio Snellman's films partially compensate for this by documenting Vriesendorp's workshops, daily life at Bo Bardi's buildings, and the bustling activity on the streets of Salvador de Bahia. Beyond visually describing the context in which Vriesendorp assembled her collections, the films demonstrate that Bo Bardi's buildings, with their varied spaces and textures, were conceived with the community in mind. They are aesthetically interesting, buoyant, and supremely functional.

Bo Bardi argued that "love for everyday objects... is a vital necessity to be found in the origins of human life." The collections, furniture, images, and videos assembled for *Lina Bo Bardi: Together* entreat you to fall in love not simply with the objects and work on display, but also with the ideas and ingenuity that fueled Bo Bardi's prolific career.

**SARAH ROGERS MORRIS IS A CHICAGO-BASED
DESIGN AND CULTURE WRITER.**

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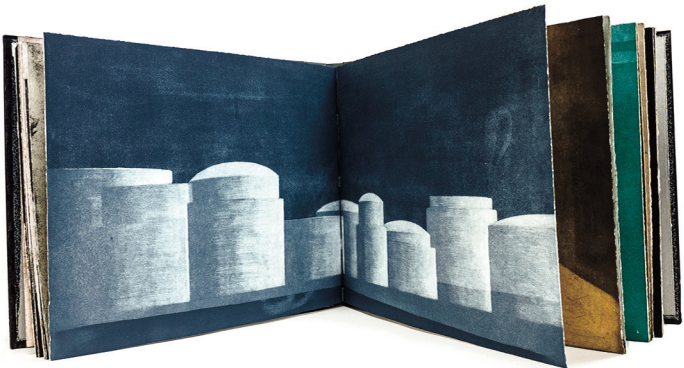


Esto Jeff Goldberg Photographs The Whitney esto.com



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Live: MAS Studio



Iker Gil is the Bilbao-born, Chicago-based architect behind MAS Studio. He doubles as editor-in-chief of *MAS Context*, the magazine he founded to spark more cross-disciplinary conversations on design in the city. For *AN*, **Kristen Moreau** met Gil at his Wicker Park studio to discuss underdogs, publishing in print, and curating shows at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Kristen Moreau: What process do you go through when you get a new idea?

Iker Gil: Many of the projects that we do are about exploring how we can use existing but underutilized assets of the city. Sometimes it is at the actual scale of the city, sometimes it is a very small intervention. The potential of the project is more important than the scale or the program. Once I identify an opportunity, I put together a team depending on the type of project. It is a flexible structure that allows everybody to work on projects that they are interested in. If the projects are similar in scope, we might repeat the team but we also introduce new people when we have the opportunity. It is a balance between the strengths of a team that knows how to work together and the benefits of incorporating new people that can bring new

energy, ideas, and expertise.

Do you see any threads across your range of projects?

Despite the diversity of projects, I think there are some common threads. One is rethinking the assets that cities have. I think that comes from growing up in Bilbao and working in Chicago. Both cities are, in a way, underdogs. They are not the *main* cities but, if you look carefully, you can find qualities that are unique to them and that can put them ahead. We also like to work with clients that are open to explore new ideas. We have been very lucky with this and the projects have been enriched immensely from this open conversation. We have learnt a lot from our clients. And another common thread is exploring ways of communicating our work or things that we value. For example, when I worked on *Inside Marina City* with photographer Andreas E.G. Larsson, we wanted to engage with people who were not architects. You don't have to tell architects that Marina City is good; they all know that. We wanted to show to other people the positive qualities of a building that is 50 years old. And we did that through photographs documenting the residents of the buildings. It was about documenting and presenting—

through the lens of the residents—how the architecture of the building had facilitated the presence of a diverse and vibrant community.

It's a bit of a rarity to get a print journal like you produce. Can you talk about that decision to stay analog in the context of your global digital presence?

When we started *MAS Context* in 2009, there was always the idea that we would produce a print publication. As a designer, I like to think about the object itself and how it feels when you hold it and read it. We print a small number of copies per issue, so we want to make sure that they are worth the effort and the cost. And I also like that there is a sequence for the articles. It's the difference between downloading one song and buying a full record. With the record you have to decide the sequence for the songs, and it's the same for each issue. But we also think about our online presence. Through our website and Twitter we connect with people from all over the world that read and contribute to our issues. We're grounded in Chicago, but the topics of our issues are not limited to this city. The ambition is to engage with architects and designers, but also with people who have nothing to do with these disciplines who



wouldn't buy an architecture or design publication.

Besides print and online, we think it's important to organize events where people come together to discuss some of those topics. In a way, the publication of each issue is the start of the conversation, not the end of it. And we want to help build a strong environment of cultural exchange in Chicago. This spring we have organized lectures, studio visits to places such as JNL Graphic Design and Pitchfork, as well as a film screening of *Josep Lluís Sert: A Nomadic Dream*. With our lectures, we organize them in places that are a little bit unconventional. Last fall we organized a series at the International Museum of Surgical Science, which is a great old mansion on Lake Shore Drive. We use these lectures to make people explore new places in the city, facilitate interactions between people from different backgrounds, and make everybody feel welcome to participate in these conversations.

In the end, all those three components (print, online, and events) feed off each other and provide multiple ways of engaging with the content that we produce.

Could you talk more about your process working on the exhibition currently on view at the Art Institute of Chicago, *Chatter: Architecture Talks Back?*

Karen Kice, the Neville Bryan assistant curator, invited me to design and curate one of the galleries of her *Chatter* exhibition. Her focus was on five contemporary architecture practices exploring how each of them engage with history and technology. Building on what she was exploring, I wanted to focus on how communication can be productive in architecture, how it can go beyond a press release from an office or the perfect rendering trying to sell something. Through a selection of projects by US and international practices, my section explores how communication can be empowering, challenging, satirical, collective, diagnostic, revealing, interpretive, and constant.

Just to give a specific example, "empowering" is represented by a project by Ecosistema Urbano,

the winning entry of a competition to design a plaza in Hamar, Norway. Instead of providing a finished design solution, they created a participatory and networked design process that allowed their citizens to determine the final configuration. It is a process that involves urban actions, an academic network, physical and digital labs, workshops, lectures, and engagement with school children.

Why is it important to you that this *Chatter* show is happening here at the Art Institute of Chicago?

The Art Institute reaches a very large audience that goes beyond the architecture and design community. It takes issues into a public setting that might normally be discussed in academic institutions or explored in offices. It is also able to bring together people from different schools and offices that might not connect otherwise. I think the public conversations held inside the *Chatter* exhibition are good examples about possible ways of engaging this larger audience. The key is to figure out how to engage with a diverse audience while maintaining the quality of the content. That quality will position not only the Art Institute but also Chicago as a place where current issues about architecture and design are critically discussed. It will make Chicago a reference in architecture thinking. Chicago has an incredible architecture legacy. When I was studying in Barcelona, my history classes were filled with Chicago buildings. It is important that we have the same ambitions now: We don't want to rely on that legacy, we want to create new legacies. We have very smart people practicing and teaching in Chicago, so the pieces are there.

What would you say to emerging design professionals as they enter this complex architectural community?

Don't wait for the perfect opportunity. Don't wait for a person to call you with a project. Don't wait for the perfect competition. If you identify something that can be better, go ahead and propose a way to improve it. The more you do, the more you learn what you are interested in, who to work with, and how to communicate your ideas. But, apart from producing, think about who could be interested in each one of the projects and contact them. You want to put your work out there, in front of the people that can make it happen. That will help you to create your own path and let other people know about the way you think. It is not quick or easy, so make sure to persevere.

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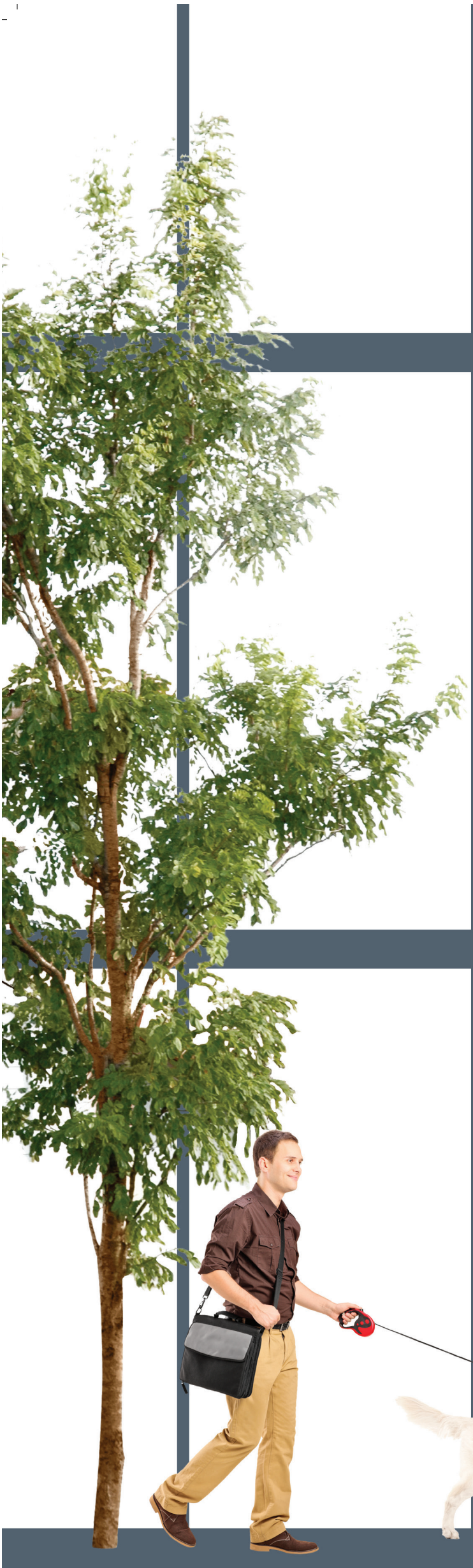
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