

Today's News - Monday, December 1, 2008

- The world mourns the loss of Utzon: ArcSpace brings us a thoughtful remembrance by his son, Jan.
- Farrelly offers an eloquent assessment: "principled, idealistic...he remains a lonely figure in world architecture, a tragic hero, Sydney's Prometheus."
- Sydney Opera House: a legacy worth the pain.
- A recession round-up, from bleak AIA billings index to West Coast layoffs to New York firms' strategies for survival.
- Kennicott examines a complex legacy: "'Gehryesque' may not be so much an aberrational tic...as a style that he can now hand off to other people" (and gives a thumbs-up and a thumbs-down to AGO and Princeton project).
- Saffron savors Venturi's Episcopal Academy chapel: "it may be the most satisfying design his firm has produced locally in years."
- Berliners split over plans to replace communist-era Palace of the Republic with a new version of a Prussian Palace.
- Hume on Toronto's penchant for façadectomies: despite drawbacks, "it's a strategy that can work."
- Top secret(?) plans: Foster and Hadid to redesign Mecca.
- A video of Hadid's master plan for run-down former port of Zorrozaure in Bilbao.
- Shanghai breaks ground on what will be the world's tallest building.
- A call for Muncie, Indiana, to visit Columbus to learn why good design and planning is good business (and how to get it done).
- Hawthorne adores Palladio, but not some of today's "architectural borrowing" in the wrong hands.
- Pogrebin's series on landmarking policies in NYC continues: too many loopholes and not enough communication.
- Meanwhile, after seven years of post-fire restoration, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine is ready for its magnificent close-up.
- RISD students roll up their sleeves to build housing for the poor in Mexico.
- NYC's first co-housing project slated for Brooklyn.
- A city imposes design rules for wireless antennas: they can't all be church steeples.

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-- Jørn Utzon 1918 - 2008: "I think back on my life with my father with great joy and love. To be allowed to spend so much time together with such a remarkable man, father and architect, has been a great privilege indeed." -- Jan Utzon

High noon at Bennelong Point: Joern Utzon...Tall, principled, idealistic...[he] remains, nevertheless, a lonely figure in world architecture, a tragic hero, Sydney's Prometheus...Sydney's craving for glamour shot Utzon to stardom, and our addiction to mediocrity brought him crashing down. By Elizabeth Farrelly [links]- Sydney Morning Herald

Sydney Opera House: a legacy worth the pain: The birth of the Australian landmark caused its architect much suffering, but Jørn Utzon must have known it would be what he was remembered for...a drama that spanned 20 years and saw a promising young architect disgraced, and his designs bastardised by bureaucrats.- Building (UK)

Jorn Utzon, 90...designed one of the world's most recognizable buildings — the Sydney Opera House — but never saw it finished. By Fred A. Bernstein- New York Times

Recession Round-Up: As the AIA billings index reaches record lows, West Coast layoffs are spreading amid the worsening economic crisis; New York firms talk strategy for the downturn- The Architect's Newspaper

A Complex Legacy: Frank Gehry: The Starchitect's Best Work May Turn Out Not to Look Much Like Him..."Gehryesque" may not be so much an aberrational tic...as a style that he can now hand off to other people...who can no more be accused of plagiarism than any architect working in the tradition of Mies van der Rohe. Or Palladio. By Philip Kennicott -- Randall Stout [slide show]- Washington Post

For real this time: Robert Venturi draws inspiration from a 1950 Princeton thesis vision for an Episcopal Academy chapel. It was good then; it's great now. By Inga Saffron -- Venturi, Scott Brown [images]- Philadelphia Inquirer

Berlin split over palace design: Instead of the communist-era Palace of the Republic, Berliners are now getting a version of a Prussian Palace...opponents have criticised the project, claiming that a reconstruction would be a pastiche of architectural styles. -- Philipp Oswalt; York Stuhlemmer; Franco Stella [images]- BBC (UK)

Is a little history worse than none? It's easy to deride façadism. But what can we propose in its place? Every major city...does it. It's just that Toronto does it so often...has become an acceptable method of balancing civic growth and architectural history. And despite the obvious drawbacks, it's a strategy that can work. By Christopher Hume -- Michael McClelland; Charles Dolphin (1941); Calatrava; Chapman and Oxley (1926); Goldsmith Borgal- Toronto Star

Foster and Hadid to redesign Mecca: The top-secret plans are being backed by King Abdullah ben Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia who has asked a hand-picked collection of starchitects to 'establish a new architectural vision' for the 356,800m2 mosque complex.- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Video: Zaha Hadid's Bilbao masterplan for run-down former port peninsula of Zorrozaure- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Shanghai to break ground on new tallest building: ...632-meter (2,073-foot) Shanghai Tower in the city's Lujiazui financial center that will tower over the current highest building, the recently completed 1,614-foot Shanghai World Financial Center. -- Gensler- BusinessWeek

Op-Ed: Good design (and planning) is good business: I urge whoever takes charge of Muncie's initiative to develop a true comprehensive plan...visit Columbus. Discuss in detail "how to do it," with those who have done it and are doing it today with a level of success that is recognized internationally. By Anthony J. "Tony" Costello /FAIA/Costello & Associates- The Star Press (Muncie, Indiana)

A very fine Italian house: Andrea Palladio's balanced villa has had a wide populist power. But architectural borrowing isn't always a positive force...in the wrong hands, can be a pretty destructive force. By Christopher Hawthorne- Los Angeles Times

Preservationists See Bulldozers Charging Through a Loophole: ...property owners rush to obtain demolition permits so their

structures won't receive protection...Safeguards crumble because the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the buildings department lack an established system of communication... By Robin Pogrebin [images, links]- New York Times

After Smoke, Soot and Water, a Great Church Is Cleansed: Since a fire in 2001, one part or another of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine has been closed for restoration...The rededication signifies the return of the whole cathedral — all 601 feet of it — to useful life. [images]- New York Times

In Mexico, Casita Linda is building hope: With the help of Rhode Island School of Design students, American expats and other volunteers are helping to house the poorest of the poor in San Miguel de Allende. [slide show]- Los Angeles Times

A Village Down the Block: At a "cohousing" project planned for Fort Greene, Brooklyn, the residents will share all decisions and some meals. -- Ken Levenson [images, links]- New York Times

Bloomington imposes design rules for wireless antennas: The city doesn't want cell phone antenna towers to all look the same, and that has forced service providers to come up with some creative solutions...the same bell tower can't be replicated over and over again on church grounds all over town. [images]- Minneapolis Star Tribune

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