

Today's News - Monday, January 25, 2010

- ArcSpace brings us a new arena, Astana, Kazakhstan, and a new civic space in Southport, Australia.
- Starting from scratch in Port-au-Prince: an optimistic future would be "a smaller, well-built city" (with help from outside architects and engineers), but residents "may simply rebuild shantytowns rather than wait months or years for government action."
- Calls for a trained town planner to oversee Mumbai's Dharavi slum redevelopment project: "Planning here is only about favoring the elites, not taking into account the aspirations of the common people."
- Meanwhile, Mumbai finally pays attention to the plight of pedestrians with a "Yellow Caterpillar" - miles of elevated walkways (though some say it's a "huge mistake").
- Indian officials are "horrified to see the end result" of a British documentary, claiming it was "poverty porn" instead of a promised program about Mumbai's architectural history; the counter-claim: "city planners and architects can learn from the way Asia's biggest slum has evolved and developed high levels of sustainability."
- Big plans to modernize a sprawling slum in Baghdad.
- Levinson on why "the Great Recession is not (yet) sparking a...contemporary WPA"; today, "we confront our crisis in a social-political climate that's to a large degree contemptuous of public sector solutions...hostile to the very idea of the public."
- Campbell cheers a Boston firm dedicated to designing only for low-income people.
- More on Gehry's withdrawal from Museum of Tolerance project: it had nothing to do with "with perceived political sensitivities" - and he supports its being built; a new architect will be named shortly.
- Goldberger x 2: he surveys Gang's Aqua and cheers architecture's other "anti-divas" who are "purveyors of reason who also happen to be able to make beautiful things."
- On a visit to Dubai, he talks about architecture, the sustainability of a skyscraper, and the Burj Khalifa: "I came prepared not to like it, but came around to changing my view."
- Boston's Landmarks Commission reconsiders the city's "most ridiculed" mid-century-modern buildings as (possibly) "architectural treasures" (great slide show; sadly, no architects credited).
- Washington, DC, reconsiders an abandoned underground trolley station beneath DuPont Circle (an RFP will be forthcoming).
- Hawthorne looks at the trend towards digital façades and what it means for architecture: it will "become capable of endlessly reinventing itself" (a good thing).
- P.S. 1/MoMA Young Architect Program winner will have poles dancing on the rooftop this summer (and perhaps a few bruised noses that a small Brooklyn firm beat "Danish juggernaut BIG in battle over a tiny gravel triangle in Queens."
- Gates Foundation HQ halfway finished on the last underdeveloped lot in central Seattle.
- New-York Historical Society has playful plans for a children's history museum within the museum.
- A Glasgow architect (and the first woman) named head of Architecture and Design Scotland - even A&DS critics are pleased (because of her "not ritzy" project portfolio).
- Perhaps geoengeers are being too blinded by science: proposed high-tech fixes re: climate change not involving humans changing their behavior present practical and ethical challenges.

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-- Tabanlıoğlu Architects: Astana Arena, Astana, Kazakhstan
-- Whitearchitecture: Southport Broadwater Parklands, Southport, Australia

Starting from scratch in Haiti's Port-au-Prince ruins: ...Haitian ambassador...sketched an optimistic future...a smaller, well-built city to replace the teeming, chaotic and shoddily built sprawl...Residents...may simply rebuild shantytowns rather than wait months or years for government action...NGOs also will likely begin tackling small-scale projects...though perhaps with help from outside architects and engineers, with stronger quake resistance. -- Patrick Delatour; Lawrence Vale/MIT; Cameron Sinclair/Architecture for Humanity - Seattle Times

"Trained town planner needed for Mumbai": Even as the city's heritage committee pushes for saltpan lands and mangroves to be listed as heritage areas, the opposition from land developers has rung out strongly...experts monitoring the Dharavi redevelopment project...stressed the need for the civic body to create the role of a trained town planner. -- Shirish Patel; Rajiv Mishra/JJ College of Architecture - TopNews Network (India)

Packed Streets Have a City of Walkers Looking Skyward for Answers: Mumbai Builds Miles of Elevated Walkways; 'Yellow Caterpillar' or 'Huge Mistake'? ...one of the most pedestrian-powered metropolises in the world. Until now, however, pedestrians have been largely ignored. [slide show, video]- Wall Street Journal

India accuses Kevin McCloud of making 'poverty porn' in Mumbai slum programme: "Slumming It"..."Grand Designs" host visited...squalid Dharavi slum...granted a filming permit in the belief...making a programme highlighting Mumbai's architectural history, and officials were horrified to see the end result...never talked about architecture at all. - Telegraph (UK)

Baghdad plans 75,000 apartments to modernize slum: first phase of a \$10 billion plan to rebuild the Iraqi capital's sprawling Sadr City. -- Broadway Maylan - Reuters

Opinion: The Public Works: ...it seems increasingly - depressingly - clear that the Great Recession is not (yet) sparking a new New Deal, a contemporary WPA...in 2010, unlike in the '30s, we confront our crisis in a social-political climate that's to a large degree contemptuous of public sector solutions, and more, hostile to the very idea of the public. By Nancy Levinson - Places Journal

'Building justice': Creating low-income housing is a higher calling for Boston firm...The Narrow Gate...architects design only for low-income people. Their latest and biggest achievement is Dudley Village... By Robert Campbell - Boston Globe

Celebrity architect withdraws from Museum of Tolerance project: Frank Gehry says his withdrawal "has nothing whatsoever to do with perceived political sensitivities." He continues to back the museum, saying it "will serve as the embodiment of human respect and compassion"...Wiesenthal Center "will shortly name the new architect for the redesign." - Jerusalem Dispatch

Wave Effect: Jeanne Gang and architecture's anti-divas: ...Aqua...is practical and affordable enough to please real-estate developers and stirring enough to please critics. Not many buildings like that get made at any height, or by architects of either gender...women who have built successful architectural practices by selling themselves not as divas but as purveyors of reason who also happen to be able to make beautiful things. By Paul Goldberger -- Deborah Berke; Cathy Simon/SMMW [now Perkins+Will]; Marianne McKenna/KPMB; Denise Scott Brown/Venturi, Scott Brown - New Yorker

Talking Tall: Paul Goldberger finds the Burj Khalifa more than just a tall tale...talks about architecture, the sustainability of a skyscraper and of course, the Burj..."I came prepared not to like it, but came around to changing my view...[has] elegance to its thinness...in many ways, it is more restrained than many of the other buildings."- Khaleej Times (UAE)

In praise of ugly buildings: Could this be the decade during which Boston's most ridiculed are recognized as "architectural treasures"? ...mid-century-modern buildings..."are very noble, authentic architecture"...Landmarks Commission...concluded that earlier surveys of post-World War II buildings had displayed a "widespread lack of understanding, appreciation, and context for buildings of this period." -- DOCOMOMO; pinkcomma gallery; Paul Rudolph [slide show]- Boston Globe

D.C. art activists see old trolley station as buried treasure: Abandoned food court...Once an underground trolley station beneath Dupont Circle...could become a social nexus for Washington's arts community and the general public...District plans to put out a request for proposals next month to solicit other ideas for the space...do not have to be arts-oriented... -- Julian Hunt/Hunt Laudi Studio [video]- Washington Post

Digital video runs a screen on the cityscape: When all the walls talk, what does it mean for architecture? As the separation between buildings and their digital exteriors falls away, architecture will become capable of endlessly reinventing itself, constantly refreshing the face it shows the city...blurring the distinction between decoration and structural engineering. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Greg Lynn; Eric Owen Moss; HKS [images]- Los Angeles Times

Pole-Dancing at P.S.1: SO-IL Wins 2010 Courtyard Installation Amid Controversy: Brooklyn studio SO-IL beats out Danish juggernaut BIG in battle over a tiny gravel triangle in Queens. -- WORKac; MOS; SHoP; Easton+Combs; Freecell); William O'Brien Jr.; BIG/Bjarke Ingels Group; SO-IL Solid Objects Idenburg Liu [images]- Fast Company

Gates Foundation's new home halfway finished: ...eight-acre campus...featuring a park-like courtyard with a waterfall as well as two glass-clad, boomerang-shaped buildings...on the last underdeveloped lot in central Seattle. -- NBBJ; Olson Kundig Architects; Gustafson Guthrie Nichol [link to images]- Seattle Times

New-York Historical Society to Open DiMenna Children's History Museum: An interactive "museum within a museum," focusing on the lives of young New Yorkers...will be one of very few history museums for children. -- Lee H. Skolnick Architecture & Design Partnership [image]- New York Times

First woman appointed to head architecture body: Glasgow architect Karen Anderson has been named...chief of Scotland's architecture and planning "champion" Architecture and Design Scotland. The appointment of an architect with a track record of quality, "not ritzy" projects to head the quango was welcomed even by A&DS critics. -- Anderson, Bell and Christie- The Scotsman (UK)

Geoengineers: Blinded by Science: High-tech fixes are increasingly being applied to all sorts of problems - why not climate change? ...proposes not that humans change their behavior but that we change the way the planet operates...would present practical and ethical challenges..."Hacking the Sky"...- Utne Reader

INSIGHT: Redeveloping Downtown Pittsburgh - The Last 20 Years: Many factors have led to an interesting take on the traditional tension between central city decline, suburban competition, and revitalization efforts to bolster Downtown's primacy in the region's economy and identity. By Michael A. Stern, ASLA, LEED AP - ArchNewsNow

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