

Today's News - Monday, November 28, 2011

- ArcSpace brings us an eyeful of the stunning new Severin Wunderman Collection at the Cocteau Museum.
- Leinberger tackles the "death of the fringe suburb" where strip malls are being replaced by higher-density mixed-use developments with good transit connections: it's time to "build what the market wants."
- Barnes confesses he's a "messy regionalist" who cheers the "mix of grit and public interest vision: it's "a question about the most useful scale for solving a problem. So...we should get on with it."
- Benfield cheers the federal government (finally) doing urbanism right with new HUD grants to "help communities improve their planning, mass transit and walkability...The sustainability genie is out of the bottle" and "it's not going back."
- A Kentucky city's faded downtown ("an island of moldering buildings surrounded by a sea of surface parking lots") is thinking - and doing - big things to reinvent itself.
- Things are not so sunny for an eco-home development in Scotland: it seems even oh-so-green high design doesn't make up for lack of public transit and a shop of two.
- In Israel, Abandoned House Hunters seeks solutions to the abandoned-building syndrome that could make thousands of existing apartments livable once again.
- UNESCO inspectors are not pleased with plans for the £5.5bn Liverpool Waters scheme: the inspection "could not have gone any worse" (though the developer "thought it went well"...h-m-m-m...).
- Glancey glowers: "Will Liverpool really sacrifice its world heritage status over the glossy banality of the dockside buildathon?" (and could an upcoming Burdett/Rykwert tête-à-tête offer any solace?).
- Pearman ponders and Moore muses: OMA's new London HQ for Rothschild is "corporate, svelte, positively self-effacing...Can we now say that OMA has grown up?" + it "has ghosted its way on to the skyline with a surprising degree of discretion with touches of wit, irony and teasing."
- Russell raves about Denver's new Clyfford Still Museum: "Single-artist museums can embalm. This one astonishes."
- A museum director questions: "Is it about the art or the architecture? Both. Neither...design too often trumps functionality" and "too often conspires to promote the billboard statement."
- Campbell posits that PoMo, which "was colorful, fun, and popular, instead of bland, solemn, and elitist," could be on the verge of a comeback.
- Brussat certainly hopes not: 30 years later, "it remains just as poisonous. Instead of offering beauty and utility, it is still putting the world off stride."
- Asia Pacific winners of the Holcim Awards for sustainable construction announced (great presentations!).
- Five über-impressive (and miles-long) teams now shortlisted for Navy Pier re-do in Chicago.
- MoMA/P.S.1 names finalists of the 2012 Young Architects Program.

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The Death of the Fringe Suburb: As demand for housing in walkable neighborhoods rises, we should be investing in carless transit options...strip malls have been...replaced by higher-density mixed-use developments with good transit connections...build what the market wants: mixed-income, walkable cities and suburbs that will support the knowledge economy, promote environmental sustainability and create jobs. By Christopher B. Leinberger/Brookings Institution -- Smart Growth America - New York Times

Confessions of a Messy Regionalist: ...the mix of grit and public interest vision that constitutes regional efforts...working through competing interests and values...Regional governance is thus neither weird nor wondrous, nor is it a technocratic silver bullet. It is politics, policy, and problem-solving...it's a question about the most useful scale for solving a problem. So...we should get on with it. By Bill Barnes/National League of Cities - Citiwire

Federal Government Urbanism Done Right: A new line of HUD grants will help communities improve their planning, mass transit and walkability...This is exactly how the federal government should be supporting sustainability...The sustainability genie is out of the bottle...it's not going back. By Kaid Benfield [links] - The Atlantic Cities

A Kentucky City Reinvents a Faded Downtown: The total value of the projects is more than \$1 billion...generating significant new entertainment, hotel, housing, retail, and office development...after World War II, Owensboro's pattern of...development spread out from the downtown core. By the late 1970s...downtown was an island of moldering buildings surrounded by a sea of surface parking lots. -- Trahan Architects - New York Times

Slow sales in green village throw shadow over future of eco-homes: Only four of 32 eco-homes have been sold at Balvonie Braes, an ambitious publicly funded project in the Highlands where homes cost as little as £100 a year to heat...pointed to the lack of...shops, community centres and public transport... -- Brennan and Wilson Architects; Rural Design - Guardian (UK)

How to get people back into those empty houses: ...owners have destroyed sanitary fixtures...to render them technically 'unfit,' and therefore eligible for the arnona (municipal property taxes) exemption...Abandoned House Hunters team...has been seeking solutions to the abandoned-building phenomenon...when a country truly wants to handle the problem, and make thousands of existing apartments usable for housing...it is certainly possible. By Yuval Admon - Ha'aretz (Israel)

Unesco demands radical changes to £5.5bn Liverpool Waters scheme or city may lose World Heritage Site status: ...inspection "could not have gone any worse"...a Peel director, said: "We were given a fair crack of the whip and thought it went well"...company has previously said it will not compromise any further on the scheme... [image]- Liverpool Daily Post (UK)

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: Will Liverpool really sacrifice its world heritage status over the glossy banality of the dockside buildathon? The planners should take a look at the Architect's Eye photography winners...Imagine if the kind of intelligence Le Corbusier applied to the Unité d'Habitation...in Marseilles...could be resurrected in contemporary form in Liverpool. By Jonathan Glancey -- Neil Dusheiko; Simon Kennedy - Guardian (UK)

High tea at Rothschild's: OMA and the dynastic bank: ...it's a miracle that a 'foreign' firm with a reputation for the outrageous won the 2005 competition...Here at the heart of old London, you get an OMA building that is well-mannered, corporate, svelte, positively self-effacing...It could all have turned out so terribly ordinary...makes the right urbanistic moves and is enlivened by some flashes of wit. Can we now say that OMA has grown up? By Hugh Pearman -- Rem Koolhaas; Ellen van Loon; Allies and Morrison; Pringle Brandon [images] - HughPearman.com (UK)

Rothschild New Court: Rothschild is one of the world's most august financial institutions, reflected in its discreet yet opulent new City HQ designed by Rem Koolhaas's OMA: ...has ghosted its way on to the skyline with a surprising degree of discretion...It is not all about sheer pomp and prestige...running through the building are touches of wit, irony and teasing. By Rowan Moore [images] - Observer (UK)

Abstract Painter Gets Concrete Bunker in Clyfford Still Museum: Single-artist museums can embalm. This one astonishes...The boxy bunker designed by Brad Cloepfil bristles with ragged concrete fins, evoking Still's intricate compositions...roughened exterior radiates an elegant gravitas...I've never seen another museum that paces the art-viewing experience so well. By James S. Russell -- Allied Works Architecture; Brian Stacy/Arup [images] - Bloomberg News

The Museum as Medium: Is it about the art or the architecture? Both. Neither...Unfortunately, integrating effective interpretation of art with architecture has proven very challenging... Art museums are prone to dealing with architects as artists...Consequently, design too often trumps functionality...legacy, fame, identity, openness to the new — too often

conspires to promote the billboard statement. By Dan L. Monroe/Peabody Essex Museum -- Philip Goodwin/Edward Durrell Stone (1939); Henry van de Velde (1938); Frank Lloyd Wright (1959); Louis Kahn; Renzo Piano; Frank Gehry; Santiago Calatrava; Daniel Liebskind; Zaha Hadid - ArchitectureBoston (Boston Society of Architects/BSA)

Is Postmodern architecture on the verge of a comeback? The movement peaked in the 1980s, but a comeback may be on the horizon...It was a rebellion against architectural modernism, and it tried to be everything modern wasn't. PoMo was colorful, fun, and popular, instead of bland, solemn, and elitist. By Robert Campbell -- James Stirling - Boston Globe

Aha! Postmodernism is modernism: "Reconsidering Postmodernism"...It certainly threw me off stride that this conference...was sponsored by the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art...[its] salutary accomplishment was to prove that classicists aren't postmodern...merely reprised that ultimately tedious egoism. Thirty years on, it remains just as poisonous, too. Instead of offering beauty and utility, it is still putting the world off stride. By David Brussat -- ICAA; Gwathmey Siegel & Assocs.; Le Corbusier; Tom Wolfe; Andres Duany; New Urbanism - Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

Asia Pacific winners of the Holcim Awards for sustainable construction announced in Singapore: Innovative architecture focused on infrastructure for communities in Pakistan, Thailand, and Putrajaya, Malaysia -- Eike Roswag/Ziegert Roswag Seiler Architekten Ingenieure; Isavaret Tamonut/TTH Trading Co.; Kenneth Yeang/T. R. Hamzah & Yeang International [images, info] - Holcim Foundation

Navy Pier picks five teams to compete for redesign of pier's public spaces. By Blair Kamin -- AECOM/BIG/Lead Pencil Studio/Project Projects/Speirs + Major/WET Design/etc.; Aedas/Martha Schwartz/Halcrow Yolles/Solomon Cordwell Buenz/Pentagram/Fisher Marantz Stone/Davis Brody Bond/Atelier Dreiseitl/Ned Kahn Studios/Hoerr Schaudt/Marks Barfield Architects; James Corner Field Operations/Terry Guen/nArchitects/Bruce Mau/L'Observatoire International/etc.; !melk/HOK/UrbanLab/Zoe Ryan/Leni Schwendinger LIGHT Projects/etc.; Xavier Vendrell Studio/Grimshaw Architects/Tom Leader Studio/Harley Ellis Devereaux/Arup/Schuler Shook/Inigo Mangano-Ovalle/Creative Time/Nelson Nygaard/etc. - Chicago Tribune

PS1's Would-Be Makeover Artists: MoMA/P.S. 1 has announced the finalists of the 2012 Young Architects Program. -- AEDS Ammar Eloueini Digit-all Studio, Ammar (Paris and New Orleans); Hollwich Kushner/HWK (New York); IJK Studio (Cambridge, MA); UrbanLab (Chicago); Cameron Wu (Cambridge, MA). [links] - The Architect's Newspaper

"Unbuilt Washington": The National Building Museum explores some breathtakingly beautiful and some simply bizarre proposals to shape - or re-shape - America's capital: Two architect/curators discuss the what-might-have-been architecture and urban design projects that would have made Washington, DC look very different today (and tomorrow). -- G. Martin Moeller, Jr.; Susan Piedmont-Palladino - ArchNewsNow

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