

Today's News - Friday, March 16, 2012

- Weinstein weighs in on books about Barragán's home BNUM's Omega Center that "reveal how transparently daring designs teach Nature's processes."
- Kent minces no words about what he thinks of critics' high praise for architecture as object instead of architecture creating "place" - he takes architects and landscape architects to task as well (and names names).
- Muscat finds Australian "green-tinged admirers" of "Triumph of the City" have "mostly missed the point": "for Australia, Glaeser's core argument simply doesn't hold."
- Could our current "concrete jungles become urban forests of wooden skyscrapers"?
- Saffron says "seeing the modernized Gardner Museum campus is good preparation for assessing the shock to come at the Barnes...If the Barnes can make the move to its new home with its eccentricity intact, all the rest may be mere details."
- A German architect is breaking new ground by transforming above-ground WWII bunkers into bright living or working spaces; now the government is getting serious about selling the "grim structures" and launching a competition for conversion ideas (alas, we couldn't find competition details).
- Darley reflects on urban wildernesses "loaded with layers of significance" and a book that concludes professionals need "to learn when to stand back" and apply "the aesthetics of thrift": "No one can quarrel with the message but don't for a moment imagine that the light touch is the easiest solution."
- Levinson has a lively Q&A with Czerniak and Sisko re: Syracuse University's UPSTATE interdisciplinary design center that focuses on the impact of design, research and real estate in the post-industrial city.
- In an excerpt from "Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture," CCA's Zardini and Borasi call for a "new moralistic philosophy: healthism": can we "replace the prescriptive solutions of 'cure' with the more expansive goals of 'care'?"
- Weekend diversions:
 - Russell ruminates on MoMA's "Foreclosed": it "doesn't suggest that architecture can float underwater mortgages," and "unfortunately the architects only intermittently make a persuasive case for their visions...I say keep trying."
 - Flint finds "Foreclosure" is an "abject lesson of how not to accommodate a society's population," but his "confidence in mankind's ability to plan for growth was restored" by MCNY's "The Greatest Grid."
 - LeBlanc cheers "Big Enough?" on view in Toronto that asks, how much space do we really need? The show "succeeds because it doesn't preach."
 - "Houses of the Sundown Sea" highlights iconic homes by Harry Gesner: at 86, he still surfs and still ponders turning waste into fuel: "Solid waste is something I've been working on for the last 50 years" (great Q&A).
 - NYC's Japan Society presents the first U.S. survey of Japanese Art Deco, today through June 10 - then it hits the road.
 - Pawson has first major exhibition in Germany: "He is the great master of paring his designs down to a minimum to yield a maximum richness of clarity and purity" + a fabulous eyeful of his photography from a new book (who knew he had an addiction to photography).
 - Welton cheers Lange's "Writing About Architecture": it's much more than just "a delight to read."
 - Q&A with Stelter re: his "By The El: 3rd Avenue and its El at Mid-Century" (great pix!).

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Book Review: Laboratory Architecture for Observing Nature at Play: Books on Luis Barragan's house and BNUM's Omega Center for Sustainable Living reveal how transparently daring designs teach Nature's processes. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow

Toward an Architecture of Place: Moving Beyond Iconic to Extraordinary: We need to be very strong in our criticism. Both architects and landscape designers (many of whom are trying to outdo the architecture profession with shapes and forms and a "greenwash") need to be challenged. + Extraordinary Places/Hall of Shame. By Fred Kent -- Mick Pearce/DesignInc; Overland Partners; Fox & Fowle; CPG Consultants; Renzo/FXFWLE; Thom Mayne/Morphosis; Frank Gehry; Rem Koolhaas/Joshua Prince-Ramus/OMA [images]- Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

The use and misuse of Edward Glaeser's "Triumph of the City": He may be the darling of the green-compact-city set, but his admirers have mostly missed the point...for Australia, his core argument simply doesn't hold...he offers, in the Australian context, a powerful argument in favour of hands-off planning, decentralisation, suburbanisation and urban growth. By John Muscat -- Elizabeth Farrelly; Ross Gittins - The New City (Australia)

Can wooden skyscrapers transform concrete jungles? Swapping cement and steel for timber is the vision of a number of environmentally-minded architects who are planning high-rise buildings across the world...building codes are one of the main reasons we haven't seen more tall wooden buildings..."we're at the stage where we're able to start to show what's possible, a bit like that Eiffel Tower moment." -- Michael Green [images]- CNN

For the Barnes, some parallels at Boston museum: ...seeing the modernized Gardner Museum campus is good preparation for assessing the shock to come at the Barnes...Many warned that modernizing...would destroy the creators' distinctive visions...It's too early to speak about the Barnes, but very little of the experience is lost at the expanded Gardner...If the Barnes can make the move to its new home with its eccentricity intact, all the rest may be mere details. By Inga Saffron -- Renzo Piano; Tod Williams Billie Tsien- Philadelphia Inquirer

Built by forced labor, German bunkers become homes: Rainer Mielke has pioneered the art of converting the grim structures into bright living or working spaces, and his work is set to increase as Germany ramps up sales of the above-ground forts, originally designed as air-raid shelters...now stepping up a campaign to sell the structures and this month launched a competition for conversion ideas. -- mielke+freudenberg- Reuters

Urban wildernesses need a light touch: Decayed landscapes are loaded with layers of significance - not necessarily obvious ones..."Urban Wildscapes" edited by Anna Jorgensen and Richard Keenan...concludes, professionals need "to learn when to stand back" and apply..."the aesthetics of thrift". No one can quarrel with the message but don't for a moment imagine that the light touch is the easiest solution. By Gillian Darley- BD/Building Design (UK)

UPSTATE: Design, Research, Real Estate: ...part of a series of profiles of university-based urban design centers...Q&A with Julia Czerniak and Joe Sisko at the Syracuse University School of Architecture about its interdisciplinary center focusing on...the impact of architecture and planning in the post-industrial city. By Nancy Levinson -- From the Ground Up [slide show]- Places Journal

Demedicalize Architecture: In "Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture," the Canadian Centre for Architecture critiques what curators Mirko Zardini and Giovanna Borasi call a "new moralistic philosophy: healthism"...would it be possible to...to replace the prescriptive solutions of "cure" with the more expansive goals of "care"? [slide show]- Places Journal

Foreclosed Homeowners Inspire Architects to Float Housing Ideas: "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" doesn't suggest that architecture can float underwater mortgages...but architectural form significantly derives from finance...Unfortunately the architects...only intermittently make a persuasive case for their visions...I say keep trying. By James S. Russell -- Barry Bergdoll; Reinhold Martin; Jeanne Gang/Studio Gang; Hilary Sample/Michael Meredith/MOS; Amale Andraos/Dan Wood/WORKac; Andrew Zago/Zago Architecture; Michael Bell/Visible Weather [images, links]- Bloomberg News

What Mumbai and Beijing Can Learn From New York: ...the abject lesson of how not to accommodate a society's population

– "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" at the Museum of Modern Art...at the Museum of the City of New York, my confidence in mankind's ability to plan for growth was restored. Wandering through "The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan for Manhattan 1811 - 2011"... By Anthony Flint- [The Atlantic Cities](#)

Harbourfront Centre exhibit "Big Enough?" asks, How much space do we really need? ...can architecture be sold on quality over quantity? ...[it] succeeds because it doesn't preach. By Dave LeBlanc -- [Altius Architecture](#), nKA; rzlbd; Surendra Lawoti- [Globe and Mail](#) (Canada)

"Deco Japan: Shaping Modern Culture, 1920-1945": Japan Society Gallery Presents First U.S. Survey of Japanese Art Deco March 16 — June 10; travels to Sarasota, Florida (July 2012); Albuquerque (February 2013); Palm Beach, Florida (November 2013)...- [Japan Society](#)

The Architect Harry Gesner, Still Riding That Wave: The designer of the Wave House, whose work is the subject of "Houses of the Sundown Sea," by Lisa Germany, created homes that celebrated California's dramatic landscapes...At 86, he is still surfing...you have a few patents on a system to turn solid waste into fuel..."Solid waste is something I've been working on for the last 50 years." [images]- [New York Times](#)

"John Pawson": first major exhibition in Germany on the British architect and "ultra-minimalist" opens in Munich: He is the great master of paring his designs down to a minimum to yield a maximum richness of clarity and purity.- [Architekturmuseum der TU München](#)

John Pawson: the 500-a-day man: He may be one of our leading architectural designers, but he has an addiction: photography. How did he turn his 230,000 'snatched shots' into a book? "John Pawson: A Visual Inventory" [images, slide show]- [Guardian](#) (UK)

Mastering the Language of Buildings: "Writing About Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings and Cities" by Alexandra Lange: It's not only a delight to read...[it] is an instructive treatise on how great criticism comes to be...an informative and concise tutorial for architects and journalists alike. By J. Michael Welton -- Ada Louise Huxtable; Michael Sorkin; Charles Moore; Lewis Mumford; Herbert Muschamp; Jane Jacobs- [Huffington Post](#)

"By The El: 3rd Avenue and its El at Mid-Century: Lawrence Stelter discusses his book on the 3rd Avenue Elevated, which combines a rich archive of his father, Lothar Stelter's photography with a comprehensive understanding of New York's public transit history. [images]- [Urban Omnibus](#)

You Survived: Part 3: Operations, Management, Business Development, Practice: Turn off the auto-pilot and engage: Ideas and tips to foster a thriving practice in 2012. By Michael S. Bernard, AIA, and Nancy Kleppel, Assoc. AIA- [ArchNewsNow](#)



-- OMA: Milstein Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

-- Book: "Project Japan: Metabolism Talks" by Rem Koolhaas & Hans Ulrich Obrist

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