

Today's News - Friday, March 30, 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for missing yesterday's news - our Internet tubes broke and didn't get fixed 'til late afternoon...

- An architectural study trip to (pre-Arab Spring) Syria "revealed the Old Town of Damascus to be long-abandoned and lamentably neglected"; it continues to deteriorate (some amazing pix).
- Stickells tackles the debates surrounding Sydney's Barangaroo development plans: "Fuller public engagement could have allowed a more meaningful role for architects in helping to negotiate social and political issues."
- Florida explains how "rampant" globalization "exposes smaller, niche cities to an onslaught of ferocious global competition" that will prove "a major challenge for mayors, city leaders and global policy makers for some time to come."
- Kimmelman cheers the makeover of a 1960s public housing tower in a poor Paris suburb that is "a case study in architectural ingenuity and civic rejuvenation."
- Brussat has high hopes that attention will be paid to the CEU White Paper on Three Paris Projects: "The president of France and the mayor of Paris "have plans to destroy Paris as we know it. Will Paris fight back?"
- Mays is dismayed by a new Toronto condo tower that could/should have been so much more than something "formally prim and dull, decked out in a strange and glittering skin - like a post-modern Christmas tree ornament, though not a really delightful one."
- Woodman cheers Chipperfield's choice to make actual "architecture" the subject of the Venice Biennale's "Common Ground" + One-fifth of the 56 architects he picked are Brits.
- Rose reviews the week in architecture: "It was a good week for women architects - except for the most famous one," and he discovers "a practice that not only has one of the best names in the business but looks to be living up to it."
- Weekend diversions:
 - Huxtable finds much to celebrate in MCNY's "The Greatest Grid": it is "beautifully researched and organized" to show off "a strange city of serendipitous side effects, where what seems wrong often turns out to be right."
 - Lange gives mostly thumbs-up to "Deco Japan" at NYC's Japan Society: she "might have preferred more abstraction, fewer animals," but she's still "excited about the cultural intrepidity of design ideas." + Q&A with the curator about the "breathtaking range of Japanese decoera art - highbrow, lowbrow and everything in between" (fab slide show, too!).
 - Also in Manhattan, a chance to see the technology behind Delancey Underground (a.k.a. Low Line).
 - Sooke sails through the V&A's "British Design 1948-2012": the curators "have done a sterling job," but "I could have done with less drum-beating and greater emphasis upon more difficult aspects of the past 60 years."
 - Two takes on Bucky's comeback in San Francisco: "He spent a lot more time talking than doing" (and why "the Web has proved more decisive in his renewed popularity") + The visionary was "always looking for better ways to keep this large spaceship Earth moving forward."
 - King cavorts through the "Möbius strip" that is "Architecture in the Expanded Field" - a "captivating exhibition of creative provocations."
 - "Shorelines - Urban waterfront living" at the Museum of Finnish Architecture takes four different perspectives on waterfront development in five cities sharing the World Design Capital title this year.
 - "Chairs Without Legs" at the Bauhaus Archives is "an almost irreverent celebration of mundane household objects transformed" (great pix!).
 - Ascher's "The Heights: Anatomy of a Skyscraper" is well written and illustrated, offering "a level of handholding that will perfectly suit some but others may find overly pedantic."
 - Q&A with Gesner re: "Houses Of The Sundown Sea" and more: the "debonair longboard surfer" was "something of a renegade who was environmentally conscious long before it came into vogue."

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Damascene Dereliction: An architectural study trip to Syria shortly before the Arab Spring revealed the Old Town of Damascus to be long-abandoned and lamentably neglected. A year on, this precious heritage continues to deteriorate unregarded amid escalating violence and crisis. By Georgina Ward, Niall McLaughlin [images]- [Architectural Review \(UK\)](#)

Op-Ed: Barangaroo redux: Lee Stickells outlines the debates surrounding the development of Barangaroo (East Darling Harbour) in Sydney...The disputes and discontent have been ongoing...Fuller public engagement would by no means have meant a less fraught process, but it could have allowed a more meaningful role for architects in helping to negotiate social and political issues...- [ArchitectureAU \(Australia\)](#)

Why Some Cities Lose When Others Win: How globalization is reshaping the hierarchy of the world's cities...Rampant globalization exposes smaller, niche cities to an onslaught of ferocious global competition...Dealing with this increasingly spiky, concentrated and unequal economic landscape will serve as a major challenge for mayors, city leaders and global policy makers for some time to come. By Richard Florida- [The Atlantic Cities](#)

At Edge of Paris, a Housing Project Becomes a Beacon: La Tour Bois-le-Prêtre: A 1960s public housing tower in a poor Paris suburb now stands as a symbol of pride for the neighborhood...a case study in architectural ingenuity and civic rejuvenation...adding an exemplary landmark to the Paris skyline. By Michael Kimmelman -- [Raymond Lopez \(1961\); Frédéric Druot/Anne Lacaton/Jean-Philippe Vassal \[images\]- New York Times](#)

France must heed cry of SOS Paris: The president of France and the mayor of Paris have it in for the City of Light. Both have plans to destroy Paris as we know it. Will Paris fight back? Is that a bugle in the distance? Are reinforcements on the way? Yes...CEU White Paper on Three Paris Projects lays waste to the mayor's projects... By David Brussat -- [Council of European Urbanism - Providence Journal \(Rhode Island\)](#)

A Toronto condo takes a cue from its neighbours: Sixty Colborne's grids of glass strips tinted rusty orange are meant to 'reinterpret' the ruddy colour of a nearby E.J. Lennox 1889 original...will be something that's formally prim and dull, decked out in a strange and glittering skin - like a post-modern Christmas tree ornament, though not a really delightful one. By John Bentley Mays -- [Peter Clewes/architectsAlliance - Globe and Mail \(Canada\)](#)

Venice re-engages with architecture: David Chipperfield...is focusing on architecture as a means of connecting with the wider world. It's a long time since the Venice Architecture Biennale last took architecture as its subject...The promise is of a chorus of multiple dialogues...about architecture's function as a tool of civilisation. By Ellis Woodman - [BD/Building Design \(UK\)](#)

British architects top choice for Venice Biennale: A fifth of all architects...will hail from Britain...11 contributors appointed by director David Chipperfield from a 56-strong list... -- Zaha Hadid, Norman Foster; Farshid Moussavi; Caruso St John; Peter Zumthor; Herzog & de Meuron; Frank Gehry; Patrick Lynch; Eric Parry; Haworth Tompkins; FAT; Sergison Bates; muf; O'Donnell + Tuomey - [BD/Building Design \(UK\)](#)

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: It was a good week for women architects - except for the most famous one - while the British design exhibition reveals a couple of gems...another new discovery...as Architects of Invention, a practice that not only has one of the best names in the business but looks to be living up to it...One to watch. By Steve Rose -- [Amanda Leveté; Roisin Peneghan/Peneghan Heng; Sarah Wigglesworth; Zaha Hadid; John Prizeman; Niko Japaridze \[images, links\]- Guardian \(UK\)](#)

Crosshatching a Miracle: "The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011" at the at the Museum of the City of New York: ...beautifully researched and organized by its curator, Hilary Ballon...and expertly installed by Wendy Evans

Joseph...So what did we get besides gridlock? New York is a strange city of serendipitous side effects, where what seems wrong often turns out to be right. The first lesson of the grid is that scale is everything. There is much to celebrate about the grid. By Ada Louise Huxtable - Wall Street Journal

"Deco Japan" + Designing Women: Japan Society's new exhibition "Deco Japan: Shaping Art and Culture, 1920-1945" is a prime example of the surprising globalism of this little-known period in Japanese design...The exhibition isn't perfect...But I keep returning to the international mysteries of that photograph...and it makes me excited about the cultural intrepidity of design ideas. By Alexandra Lange [images, links] - Design Observer

Japan's art deco interlude: Glimpse the breathtaking range of Japanese "deco era" art - highbrow, lowbrow and everything in between...Q&A with curator Kendall Brown about the themes and influences most evident in "Deco Japan: Shaping Art and Culture, 1920-1945" (and the complicated meaning of "art deco"). [slide show] - Salon

The Low Line, Illuminated: Lower East Side Mark Miller Gallery to Showcase the Technology Behind New York's Future Underground Park: "Let There Be Light" gives eager park-goers a opportunity to actually see the thing. -- Dan Barasch; John Ramsey; Raad Studio [slide show] - Artinfo

British Design 1948-2012: Innovation in the Modern Age": Christopher Breward and Ghislaine Wood, the curators of the V&A's ambitious exhibition, have done a sterling job...I could have done with less drum-beating and greater emphasis upon more difficult aspects of the past 60 years... By Alastair Sooke [slide show] - Telegraph (UK)

An Old Utopian Makes a Comeback, Domes and All: "The Utopian Impulse: Buckminster Fuller and the Bay Area" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art..."He spent a lot more time talking than doing"...His resurgent influence can partly be attributed to nostalgia for midcentury design...But the Web has proved more decisive in his renewed popularity, allowing him to speak freely again, unconstrained by disciples..."Everything I Know" has been anonymously uploaded to YouTube. [images] - New York Times

Bucky Goes West: The Curator of SFMOMA's "The Utopian Impulse: Buckminster Fuller and the Bay Area" Charts Fuller's Impact on Bay Area Design: ...a visionary who sought solutions in transportation, housing, efficiency, and beyond, always looking for better ways to keep this large spaceship Earth moving forward. -- Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher [slide show] - Artinfo

Art, architecture unite in captivating exhibition: If you've ever imagined plunging into a Mobius strip..."Architecture in the Expanded Field," at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco...a mazelike immersion where Richard Serra's rusted steel "Sequence" unwinds beneath the fog-shrouded Blur Building of Diller Scofidio + Renfro...60 architects and artists are represented...and an equal number of creative provocations. By John King [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

"Shorelines – Urban waterfront living" at the Museum of Finnish Architecture: takes four different perspectives on waterfront development in Espoo, Helsinki, Kauniainen, Lahti and Vantaa, the five cities sharing the World Design Capital title this year. It explores various ways of utilising the land-water interface. -- NRT Architects [images] - Museum of Finnish Architecture

Best Seats in the House: The Bauhaus Archives Survey the History of "Chairs Without Legs": ...an almost irreverent celebration of mundane household objects transformed... -- Marcel Breuer; Mies van der Rohe; Frank Gehry; Ernst Moeckel; Stefan Heiliger; Alexander Begge; Ladislav Zák/Antonin Kybal; Stiletto Studios (Frank Schreiner); Vico Magistretti [slide show] - Artinfo

Tall Orders: Kate Ascher's "The Heights: Anatomy of a Skyscraper" from the ground up: Accessibly written and well illustrated...The goal here is basic understanding...makes it very hard to do anything but retain the presented information. It's a level of handholding that will perfectly suit some but others may find overly pedantic. [images] - The Architect's Newspaper

Harry Gesner's Latest Wave: "Houses Of The Sundown Sea": ...a debonair longboard surfer who, at 86 years old, still paddles on his knees to just past the wave break...something of a renegade who was environmentally conscious long before it came into vogue. [slide show] - Huffington Post



-- Caruso St John: Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK
-- Exhibition: Thomas Demand: Model Studies, Nottingham Contemporary

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