

Today's News - Monday, September 9, 2013

- ArcSpace brings us Hybel's review of the Mariinsky II: that the architects "managed to work around the leftovers from another architect's half-finished project and still make a building with distinct qualities is in itself an admirable feat" (great pix) + UNStudio uses research and material innovation to achieve "remarkable results."
- A great presentation of the five 2013 Aga Khan Award for Architecture winners.
- A fascinating look beyond China's "ghost cities": forget the quantity of residential buildings, it's the quality of construction that should be of great concern when four-year-old buildings already look 40 years old (and pix to prove it).
- Lamster minces no words about Dallas's Museum Tower: beyond the scorching of the Nasher, it's basically "a gated vertical community sequestered from the neighborhood. It's hard to imagine a less-urban urban building."
- Speaking of scorching, Heathcote has his say about London's "Fry Scrapper": it is "a selfish building amid many other second-rate structures that have turned the London skyline into a crowded, incoherent mess."
- Betsy is even more brutal: the Walkie Talkie "was a bad building before it fried a Jaguar. Putting louvers on the façade might help, but that's applying lipstick to a very large pig" (with comment about the "snarkiness" of readers' comments as "a crowdsourced testament to the hatred" the "public harbors against architects and their products").
- CTBUH comes up with a new measurement for tall buildings: "vanity height" - and confirms "the UAE has the world's vainest buildings."
- Moore takes on the "queen of the curve": "it is hard to escape the feeling that Hadid has become a prisoner of her grandeur" (a great read).
- Malmquist tackles the dilemma of what to do with government buildings in Oslo (that include murals by Picasso) badly damaged in the 2011 terrorist attacks, sparking a debate about historical preservation in Norway.
- Is it "growth and profit at any cost" or "changing aesthetics" - or "shame" - that is "seeing valuable threads" of Australia's colonial history "left to crumble into ruin"?
- An amazing look at the "afterlife" of Berlin's now-demolished Palast der Republik: "Bits and bobs" of it are turning up in skate parks, skyscrapers, and cars, "living on: metamorphosed."
- Chicago's landmarks officials warn a hotel: "Don't mess with Mies" when it asks permission to install a sculpture on the former IBM Building's plaza - it would "sully" the master's minimalist design.
- Meanwhile, another Mies-designed plaza in Chicago will turn "green and cozy": its design problems are "not going to be solved by praying at the altar of Mies."
- Three firms are tapped to come up with designs for a new skate park for London's Southbank Centre (not all are pleased).
- Two firms come up with alternative (but unsolicited) visions for a public plaza in Portland, Maine, with the hope that they "will compel the public and city officials to consider more options for the plaza."
- U.S. State Department shortens the shortlist of six to three now in the running to design the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon.
- Sinclair and Stohr have new plans for themselves and Architecture for Humanity (all good, we hope!).
- A good reason to be in Lisbon later this week: the 2013 Lisbon Architecture Triennale spotlighting "emerging practitioners and protagonists whose work and interests are far from a traditional client-architect model."

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-- The Art of the Possible: The pressure was on Saint Petersburg's recently completed Mariinsky II...managed to work around the leftovers from another architect's half-finished project and still make a building with distinct qualities is in itself an admirable feat. By Jakob Harry Hybel -- Eric Owen Moss; Dominique Perrault; Diamond Schmitt Architects -- UNStudio: ...led by research and material innovation to remarkable results...

2013 Aga Khan Award for Architecture Recipients Announced -- Bernardo Bader Architects; Marc Mimram Architecture; ICHTO East Azerbaijan Office; Riwaq - Centre for Architectural Conservation; Studio Tamassociati [links to images, info]- Aga Khan Development Network

Housing boom or bust: While the Chinese economy has boomed, the construction sector (especially residential market) has also seen a dramatic rise...Housing problems are not confined to...over-supplied/under-used...'ghost cities'...the quality -- as opposed to the quantity -- of residential buildings, is of some concern...all of this makes buildings look very old, very quickly.- MPTF [masterplanning the future] (China)

Museum Tower reflects poorly on Dallas Arts District: Reflectivity issues, however serious, can be mitigated. But there's no easy way to alter Museum Tower's essential nature as a gated vertical community sequestered from the neighborhood that surrounds it. It's hard to imagine a less-urban urban building. By Mark Lamster -- Scott Johnson; Renzo Piano [slide show]- Dallas Morning News

Walkie Scorchie blinds us to a blighted skyline: ...the fuss and the frying pans are a distraction...20 Fenchurch Street is a selfish building amid many other second-rate structures that have turned the London skyline into a crowded, incoherent mess...The "Fry Scrapper" has shone a light back on to the fragile ecosystem of streets, which is what we should be looking after. By Edwin Heathcote -- Rafael Viñoly; Frank Gehry; Renzo Piano- Financial Times (UK)

How Does a Rafael Viñoly Skyscraper Fry a Jaguar? Deadly buildings, like the Rafael Viñoly-designed Walkie Talkie...are something that the public expects from architects. And that's a bad thing: ...[it] was a bad building before it fried a Jaguar...it is still a bad building. Putting louvers on the façade might help, but that's applying lipstick to a very large pig. By Aaron Betsky- Architect Magazine

It's confirmed -- the UAE has the world's vainest buildings: ...United Arab Emirates has been outed...by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. According to CTBUH, "vanity height" is measured as the distance between a skyscraper's highest occupiable floor and its architectural top.- BD/Building Design (UK)

Zaha Hadid: queen of the curve: Ten years ago she was the architect who couldn't get anything built. Now...her buildings are everywhere. But she divides opinion: she's a genius, say some, but to critics she has lost touch with her original ideals...it is hard to escape the feeling that she has become a prisoner of her grandeur. By Rowan Moore [slide show]- Observer (UK)

Oslo Binary: A Black-and-White Debate about Historical Preservation in Norway: The human cost of the 2011 terrorist attacks in Oslo was terrible, but the several government buildings badly damaged...have now come under the spotlight. To restore or pull down and begin again? And what to do with the art...including five murals by Picasso...a debate now raging in Norway with wide social and architectural relevance. By Einar Bjarki Malmquist/Malmquist Arkitektur [images]- Uncube magazine (Germany)

Australia's heritage out of fashion: 'Shame' over colonial history is seeing valuable threads of the nation's story left to crumble into ruin...While the trend in the 1970s to early 2000s was towards stronger heritage protection, says John

[McInerney, the tide has turned, and "there's a new environment of economic rationalism, growth and profit at any cost." Elizabeth Farrelly points to changing aesthetics.](#) - New Zealand Herald

[Zombie Palace: The Afterlife of Palast der Republik in Berlin: Bits and bobs of this showcase building of the East German state...have turned up worldwide, from skate parks to skyscrapers...and in cars, living on: metamorphosed.](#) [images]- Uncube magazine (Germany)

[Landmarks panel to hotel: Don't mess with Mies: When it comes to the former IBM Building downtown, city landmarks officials believe less is clearly more...unanimously rejected the Langham Hotel's application to install 11 statues of people in the building's plaza...in part because they would sully Mies van der Rohe's minimalist design...](#) [image]- Crain's Chicago Business

[Planting the Hardscape: A Mies-designed plaza in Chicago turns green and cozy: "We feel these buildings are so powerful...but there are design problems, and they're not going to be solved by praying at the altar of Mies." By Chris Bentley -- Mies van der Rohe; Wolff Landscape Architects; Goettsch Partners](#) [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

[Architects unveil designs for new South Bank skate area: Southbank Centre has commissioned three architecture practices to draw up designs for a new skate space under the Hungerford Bridge. -- SNE Architects; Rich Architecture; 42 Architects](#) [images]- BD/Building Design (UK)

[Two firms draw up alternative visions for Portland plaza: However, the city has not solicited any alternative visions for Congress Square Plaza...architects said they hope their unsolicited plans will compel the public and city officials to consider more options for the plaza. -- Clifford Tremblay; Andre Guimond/PRESENT Architecture; Canal 5 Studio](#) [slide show]- Portland Press Herald (Maine)

[State Department Shortlists Three Design Teams for U.S. Embassy in Lebanon: ...as moved it's government buildings from the heart of Beirut, to the calmer suburbs of...Awkar. -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Mack Scogin Merrill Elam/AECOM; Morphosis Architects](#) - The Architect's Newspaper

[New 5 Year Strategic Plan Announced: Architecture for Humanity Co-Founders to Transition and Launch Founders Fund: After 15 years of Leadership co-founders, Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr to Transition from Organization and Launch Fund to Support Future Growth.](#) - Architecture for Humanity

["Close, Closer": 2013 Lisbon Architecture Triennale examines the political, technological, emotional, institutional, and critical forms of global spatial practice...will provide a platform for emerging practitioners and protagonists whose work and interests are far from a traditional client-architect model; September 12 - December 15-](#) Lisbon Architecture Triennale

[Monterey Design Conference: 1 Mile of Beach. 3 Days. 20 Speakers. 50 Hours. 100s of Conversations. 1,000s of Ideas: The Julia Morgan-designed Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, CA, will be abuzz at the biennial event September 27-29, 2013. By Julie D. Taylor, Hon. AIA/LA-](#) ArchNewsNow

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