

Today's News - Thursday, November 20, 2014

- Kim tackles a timely sticky wicket re: our tendency to blame starchitects for bad buildings, and "the real source of obnoxious, bland, or culturally negligent architecture" - ourselves (dear Brutus, how Shakespearean!).
- Farago gives thumbs-up to Piano's "reboot of Harvard Art Museums - apart from one serious flaw": how it connects to an "especially rowdy neighbor" - Corbu's "glorious concrete bunker."
- Selldorf's expansion plans for the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) in La Jolla will make the existing museum building "kinder. Architecture is the mother of all arts, but our art is to enable other things."
- H&deM's plans for a soaring triangular tower in Paris is seen as a chance for a Bilbao Effect by some, but for others, it would be a major disfigurement to the city's "almost perfect 19th-century skyline": "We are not in Dubai."
- Green considers BIG's master plan to revamp Washington, DC's South Mall to be "a shocker": while it may improve "connectivity" and promote green infrastructure, the changes to the landscape "are perhaps mis-characterized as 'subtle, surgical interventions.' This is a wholesale redesign."
- It's a day of bridges too far: Wainwright x 2 tackles Heatherwick x 2 (and "a serendipitous stroke of Jack and the Beanstalk urban planning"): London's Garden Bridge might be, "as its critics have suspected...but another privately managed tourist attraction, on which £60m of public money is to be lavished."
- He finds "troubling similarities" between the garden bridge over the Thames and plans for Pier55, "a Disneyfied island" sprouting atop toadstools on NYC's Hudson River as "another example of privately-managed 'public' space" - neither should "be shielded from the spotlight of public scrutiny any longer."
- Lamster sees great potential for Dallas's pedestrianized Continental Avenue Bridge as "the love-child of Klyde Warren Park and New York's High Line," but it "fails to knit neighborhoods together."
- Litt cheers Clevelanders selecting Rosales's "bold, dramatic and heroic-looking cable-stayed design" for a pedestrian bridge on the city's lakefront (though not all are pleased).
- Beanland cheers the U.K.'s plans to repurpose some derelict gastometers: "there's clearly something intoxicating about these strange structures."
- A fascinating take on China's "re-education campaigns to teach new ghost city-dwellers how to behave. The irony isn't lost on the people of Ordos: almost 50 years ago they were forced out of cities to farm, and are now being pushed back into them."
- A look at some of China's home-grown design talent "rising in prominence, helping the country's modern architecture develop its own identity."
- Q&A with Greenaway, one of Australia's few Indigenous architects, re: "why there are so few registered Indigenous architects, and why he believes this shouldn't be the case."
- A young British practice makes its mark in Norway with a new cultural center "set to raise Bodø's cachet - as big in scale as it is in significance for this remote peninsular in the Arctic Circle."
- Q&A with Grima and Herda re: plans for next year's inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial, and "how they'll use their \$5 million budget to make a big impression on architecture acolytes."
- Anderton's Q&A with MAD's Ma Yansong re: harmonizing with nature, the George Lucas Museum, and why he's opened a Los Angeles office.
- Eyefuls of Australia's 2014 ArchiTeam Awards for small and medium-sized firms (some very cool stuff!).
- Call for entries: 2015 AIA COTE Top Ten/Top Ten + Awards + 2015 Ceramics of Italy Tile Competition + 2015 Coverings Installation & Design Awards or outstanding use of tile and stone.

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Starchitects Aren't to Blame for Bad Buildings, We Are: ...the real source of obnoxious, bland, or culturally negligent architecture: the client and, by extension, public demand...the Bilbao Effect is over, or was a myth all along...Yet cities and developers continue to believe in brand-name architecture...It's easy to blame the architects, both the heavyweights and the anonymous, for ruining our cities, but we really need to point a finger at ourselves. By Dave Kim - Architizer

Renzo Piano reboot of Harvard art museums largely triumphs: A radical overhaul disguised as a modest intervention, the new building wears its ambitions lightly - apart from one serious flaw...an especially rowdy neighbor: the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, a glorious concrete bunker...wanting to be neighborly, has extended the disabled access ramp...to meet up with Le Corbusier's...Not a good move. It diminishes Piano's work...and it affronts Carpenter Center, which should have been left alone. By Jason Farago [images]- Guardian (UK)

Expansion Plans Presented For La Jolla Contemporary Art Museum: ...plans to make the existing museum building "kinder"...This is Museum of Contemporary Art's third iteration...Selldorf is not one for grand gestures or sculptural buildings..."Architecture is the mother of all arts, but our art is to enable other things." -- Irving Gill (1916); Robert Venturi (1996); Annabelle Selldorf/Selldorf Architects [images]- KPBS (San Diego)

In a City Wary of Skyscrapers, a New Tower May Rise: Plans for a 42-story landmark in...Paris have raised the alarm for traditionalists...a triangular glass office tower...For some Parisians, the new proposal is...an architectural star turn that would further disfigure one of the city's key selling points - an almost perfect 19th-century skyline..."We are not in Dubai"... -- Herzog & de Meuron; SOS Paris [image]- New York Times

Major Revamp Planned for D.C.'s South Mall: The new master...is a shocker. It obliterates the existing landscape, filled with intimate nooks that invite exploration, in favor of "improved connectivity"...promotes green infrastructure...The changes to the landscape, however, are perhaps mis-characterized as "subtle, surgical interventions." This is a wholesale redesign...By Jared Green -- BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Surface Design [images]- The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

London's garden bridge: the public park where groups and cyclists aren't welcome: ...not actually going to be open to all..."It will enchant everyone who uses it." But not, it turns out, if you're in a group of eight or more...and certainly not if you're planning a protest...as its critics have suspected, is not in fact a bridge...but another privately managed tourist attraction, on which £60m of public money is to be lavished. By Oliver Wainwright -- Thomas Heatherwick [images]- Guardian (UK)

Thomas Heatherwick plans \$170m hovering miracle island for New York: ...a Disneyfied island on stilts...But is this fairytale of urban planning too good to be true? For all the...promise that Pier 55 will be "a new paradigm of public parks," there are troubling similarities with the garden bridge over the opacity of its origins...another example of privately-managed "public" space...Like the fungi on which they are based, these plans seem to thrive in the dark - but they should not be shielded from the spotlight of public scrutiny any longer. By Oliver Wainwright- Guardian (UK)

Continental Avenue Bridge straddles purpose and potential: ...offers many diversions, primarily great views, but fails to knit neighborhoods together...might be described as the love-child of Klyde Warren Park and New York's High Line: a work of legacy urban infrastructure repurposed as an obsessively programmed elevated walkway...It is not quite so popular...not yet, anyway... By Mark Lamster -- Wallace Roberts & Todd/WRT [images]- Dallas Morning News

Cable-stayed design, preferred by public at meeting, is likely choice for lakefront pedestrian bridge: ...bold, dramatic and heroic-looking cable-stayed design...would likely be the cheapest and easiest to build, and that it would produce fewer negative impacts on the lakefront railroads and Shoreway. By Steven Litt -- Miguel Rosales [images]- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Gasometers: Icons of energy architecture: The National Grid will be turning derelict gasworks into thousands of new homes.

But that's not the only use for these haunting structures...there's clearly something intoxicating about these strange structures...Dublin and Vienna have turned theirs into flats...a restored Gasholder No. 8 at King's Cross will live on as a neat new circular park. By Christopher Beanland - Independent (UK)

'Re-education' campaigns teach China's new ghost city-dwellers how to behave: Don't spit, don't play loud music, don't drive on the pavement. Farmers moving to the former ghost city of Kangbashi are getting lessons in how to be urbanites...The irony isn't lost on the people of Ordos: almost 50 years ago they were forced out of cities to farm, and are now being pushed back into them. By Adam James Smith - Guardian (UK)

The Rise of China's Design Generation: A group of Chinese architects is rising in prominence, helping the country's modern architecture develop its own identity. -- Zhang Xi/EXH Design; Zhao Yang Architects; Li Xiaodong; Ai Weiwei; Wang Shu; Xu Tiantian/DnA-Design and Architecture; Lyndon Neri/Rossana Hu/Neri & Hu [images] - Wall Street Journal

How architecture can give voice to narratives of Indigenous culture: Jefa Greenaway: Q&A with one of Victoria's few Indigenous Australian architects...why there are so few registered Indigenous architects...and why he believes this shouldn't be the case..."an active, articulated and talented number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander design leaders are contributing to reshaping the way in which projects are realised for, with and by Indigenous communities." -- Greenaway Architects; Gregory Burgess Architects - Architecture & Design (Australia)

DRDH Architects' new cultural block Stormen is set to raise Bodø's cachet: A series of tectonic forms rise from the harbour of the Norwegian city...as big in scale as it is in significance for this remote peninsular in the Arctic Circle...house a library and a three-auditorium concert hall...new beacons in the city's resurrection after it was flattened during the Second World War. [images] - Wallpaper*

What the Chicago Architecture Biennial Will Look Like: Q&A with artistic directors/curators Joseph Grima and Sarah Herda reveals the blueprint for next year's inaugural exhibition [and] how they'll use their \$5 million budget to make a big impression on architecture acolytes..."an activist project can also be an aesthetic project." - Chicago Magazine

DnA/Frances Anderton: Ma Yansong Seeks Harmony With Nature in Museum for George Lucas: ...his philosophy of blending nature and building which he calls "Shanshui City," why he chose to open an office in Los Angeles and how a maturing China is developing an architectural voice rooted in its own traditions. -- MAD Architects [images] - KCRW (Los Angeles)

2014 ArchiTeam Awards announced, small and medium-sized firms rejoice: ...represent a mixture of commercial, residential, unbuilt, community and sustainability projects. -- Thomas Winwood Architecture; manjarchitects; Studio OSK; RMR Architects; Branch Studio Architects; Snowdon Architects; Index Architecture; Jean-Paul Rollo Architects [images] - Architecture & Design (Australia)

Call for entries: 2015 AIA COTE Top Ten / Top Ten + Awards: open to architects licensed in the U.S.; submitting architects are required to be signatory to the AIA 2030 Commitment; deadline: January 26, 2015 - American Institute of Architects (AIA)

Call for entries: 2015 Ceramics of Italy Tile Competition: open to North America-based architects and designers; no fee; prizes: cash + trip to Italy; deadline: January 16, 2015 - Confindustria Ceramica (Italian Association of Ceramics) / Italian Trade Commission

Call for entries: 2015 Coverings Installation & Design Awards for outstanding achievements using tile and stone (international); cash prizes; deadline: January 20, 2015 - Coverings



-- Atelier Peter Zumthor: Vals Thermal Baths, Vals, Switzerland: ...might be one of the most iconic buildings in Swiss contemporary architecture. By Pol Martin

-- What's On? Architectural Exhibitions, November 2014 edition

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