

Today's News - Thursday, May 7, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for not posting on Tuesday that yesterday was this week's floating no-newsletter day (oops!). In the meantime, today is a very starry-lectual kind of news day!

- Betsky takes on Capps in defense of architectural spectacle: "Beam me up, please, Scotty, I am ready to be amazed."
- Darley cheers on architectural critics who "wield their influence to powerful political effect" by "engaging with major issues. Who is designing what has ceased to be of much interest. It is the how and the why of the development that keeps people talking."
- Kamin considers the speculation already swirling around who will be tapped to design the Obama presidential library and museum: "This much is clear - the selection of an architect won't be an aesthetic afterthought."
- Iovine cheers Piano's new Whitney, a "welcoming, creative" place "as tough and ready for action as a Navy warship" (in a good way).
- Heathcote x 2: the Whitney "is ugly, awkward, lumpy. It is also the best building by Renzo Piano for many years - made of a series of spaces pressed together to work well as a museum, not as a logo. And it works."
- He considers Australia's "radical black box in Venice": aside from the controversy of how the design was selected, "what does it say about Australia? The metaphors could be endless - but each suggests a mystical object, something which sits oddly in its landscape and which both attracts and conceals."
- Wainwright is wow'd by OMA's Fondazione Prada in Milan, "a dazzling art space - love has even been lavished on the loos, which feel as special as the galleries themselves."
- Q&A with Koolhaas re: his Fondazione Prada, the danger of turning cities into historical Disneyland, and his desire to raze an entire neighborhood of Paris.
- Olcayto gets hooked on the "weird architectural fun-park" that is the Milan Expo 2015, and "seeing stuff that will no doubt filter through into the mainstream of building, for better or worse, over the next decade."
- de Monchaux is quite taken by Phifer's Corning Museum that presents "a new kind of minimalism" where "less does more."
- Russell gets to actually roam around Gehry's "soaring fishbowl" for Facebook: its "monumental vastness is surprisingly matter-of-fact," and "(so far) feels less adolescently male than many tech workplaces."
- Giovannini is disappointed by the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art's "ill-advised lobby renovation. A space with an extraordinary aura has become ordinary," despite "laudable intentions" (hopefully, the Cincinnati museum will give Hadid a call next time).
- The winning design for the National Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Ottawa is now being considered by a committee which has been critical of the selected site, but the "real question is whether anyone on the board will have the gumption to raise an objection."
- Cornell sues over Johnson Museum of Art, alleging "that Pei Cobb Freed & Partners committed 'architectural malpractice.'"
- Filler pays eloquent tribute to Frei Otto: "there can be no doubt that he helped lift his homeland out of the darkest period in its history through marvelously wrought designs that conveyed not only stunning technical finesse but, more importantly, a spiritual lightness of being."
- Getty and WMF launch the latest version of the free, open-source Arches Heritage Inventory and Management System.
- The V&A names Hawkins\Brown partner Bickle as its new design director, who will be "overseeing a raft of major construction projects."
- Good Design is Good Business 2015 awards go to 9 teams of architects and clients who "demonstrate how design brings up the bottom line."

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In Defense of Architectural Spectacle: Aaron Betsky takes on the question of spectacle in architecture, as posed by CityLab's Kriston Capps: I would rather we spend the money on such spectacles than on that of bombs bursting in air or minimalist lofts in the sky for the super-rich. Beam me up, please, Scotty, I am ready to be amazed. - Architect Magazine

It's the architecture critic wot won it: Today's architectural writers wield their influence to powerful political effect: ...broadsheets have encouraged their architectural correspondents to leave the arts silo and range much wider, engaging with major issues...Who is designing what has ceased to be of much interest. It is the how and the why of the development that keeps people talking – it is what touches the readers. By Gillian Darley - BD/Building Design (UK)

Obama library will be prime architectural commission: ...speculation already centers on...David Adjaye...Yet some are asking: Why the focus on Adjaye? Why not...Philip Freelon...[or] one of Chicago's leading architects, like Jeanne Gang, Helmut Jahn, Ralph Johnson or John Ronan? This much is clear...the selection of an architect for the Obama library and museum won't be an aesthetic afterthought. By Blair Kamin - Chicago Tribune

The Whitney Museum of American Art: Renzo Piano's design is a welcoming, creative machine thanks to its open, changeable spaces...multifaceted and bulky, punched with porthole windows and bristling with outdoor terraces...as tough and ready for action as a Navy warship...a social mixing space at the entrance and the judicious use of highly crafted detail. Both are executed with finesse... By Julie V. Iovine - Wall Street Journal

Faux factory for art on an industrial scale: Whitney Museum. It is ugly, awkward, lumpy. It is also the best building by Renzo Piano for many years...Simultaneously massive, modest and slippery, it is more practical housing than it is a landmark...made of a series of spaces pressed together to work well as a museum, not as a logo. And it works. By Edwin Heathcote - Financial Times (UK)

Australia's radical black box in Venice: It caused a stir not just because of its stark, blocky form but because of the way the design was selected...The competition effectively excluded young practices from the process and created resentment in the industry...And what does it say about Australia? The metaphors could be endless...but each suggests a mystical object, something which sits oddly in its landscape and which both attracts and conceals. By Edwin Heathcote -- Denton Corker Marshall [images] - Financial Times (UK)

Rem Koolhaas crafts a spectacular 'city of art' for Prada in Milan: ...a dazzling art space...finely tuned moments of tension...where new and old hang in balance, not quite colliding...love has even been lavished on the loos, which feel as special as the galleries themselves...the only nagging question hanging over this spectacular new little city of art is if the Fondazione Prada has the capacity to live up to what the facility offers. By Oliver Wainwright -- OMA [images] - Guardian (UK)

Rem Koolhaas Q&A: 'We Shouldn't Tear Down Buildings We Can Still Use': ...talks about the new Fondazione Prada museum in Milan, the danger of turning cities into historical Disneyland and his desire to raze an entire neighborhood of Paris. - Der Spiegel (Germany)

Milan Expo 2015: first reaction: There may be organisational issues and local protests over its reliance on volunteers, but this Expo will hook you: ...whizzing around this weird architectural fun-park...seeing stuff that will no doubt filter through into the mainstream of building, for better or worse, over the next decade. By Rory Olcayto -- Daniel Libeskind; Nemesi; Wolfgang Buttress/BDP [images] - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Corning Museum of Glass Contemporary Art + Design Wing: The seeming simplicity of the gallery block's icy façades relies on considerable technical complexity...a new kind of minimalism - not of refusal and removal, but of strategic synthesis in which fewer forms perform greater functions...less does more. By Thomas de Monchaux -- Thomas Phifer and Partners [images] - Architect Magazine

An Exclusive Look at Facebook's New Headquarters: Frank Gehry's open, hangar-like design gives Mark Zuckerberg's business ethos of openness three dimensions: ...a soaring fishbowl...monumental vastness is surprisingly matter-of-fact, seemingly the product of pure process rather than of design...(so far) feels less adolescently male than many tech workplaces... By James S. Russell- Wall Street Journal

The Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art's Ill-Advised Lobby Renovation: Zaha Hadid's original design for the Cincinnati museum was compromised...A space with an extraordinary aura has become ordinary. The execution failed the laudable intentions...The museum plans to recast the space in about a year...They can start by giving Hadid a call. By Joseph Giovanni -- FRCH Design Worldwide [images]- Architect Magazine

Key National Capital Commission committee to consider design of the National Memorial to the Victims of Communism: ...it has been critical of the federal government's decision to allot a prime site near the Supreme Court of Canada...The only real question is whether anyone on the board will have the gumption to raise an objection. -- ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture-Ottawa Citizen (Canada)

Cornell University sues I.M. Pei over Johnson Museum of Art: ...alleges that Pei Cobb Freed & Partners committed "architectural malpractice" in its plans for the new wing of the museum, leading to structural deficiencies, cavities in the roof, cracks in the ceiling and other problems. - Ithaca Voice

Frei Otto's Airborne Architecture: ...there can be no doubt that he helped lift his homeland out of the darkest period in its history through marvelously wrought designs that conveyed not only stunning technical finesse but, more importantly, a spiritual lightness of being. By Martin Filler- New York Review of Books

Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund Launch Latest Version of Arches Heritage Inventory and Management System: Free, open-source software system, designed to help safeguard cultural heritage sites worldwide, is now in use by the City of Los Angeles and by the American Schools of Oriental Research for Cultural Heritage Initiatives for Syria and Iraq. - World Monuments Fund/WMF

V&A names architect David Bickel as its new design director: ...a senior partner at Hawkins\Brown, to replace the late Moira Gemmill...will be charged with overseeing a raft of major construction projects, including Amanda Levet's £49 million Exhibition Road building project, Kengo Kuma's new outpost for the museum in Dundee... - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Good Design is Good Business 2015: Nine teams of architects and clients demonstrate how design brings up the bottom line. -- Gensler; Hacin + Associates; Studio V Architecture/Charles Sparks + Company/Kevin Kennon Architects/BHDP Architecture; DesignAgency; Mark Cavagnero Associates; Hugh A. Boyd Architects; Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands; 3XN; Stantec Architecture/KPMB Architects [images]- Architectural Record

Delight & Design: "Provocations: The Architecture and Design of Heatherwick Studio": Wonder and joy pervade the exhibition and enchant its viewers. Skip - don't walk - to experience it...at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. By Julie D. Taylor, Hon. AIA/VA [images]- ArchNewsNow.com



Travel guide: Oslo: ...a unique mixture of breathtaking landscapes and architectural highlights. By Ulf Meyer -- Snøhetta; Jensen & Skodvin; Arnstein Arneberg and Magnus Poulsson; Renzo Piano; a-lab; Arch Uno; Reiulf Ramstad; Element Arkitekter; Julien de Smedt; MVRDV; Arne Korsmo; Sverre Fehn; LPO arkitekter; NBBJ/Pran arkitekter/Bambus Arkitekter; Aviaplan; Kristin Jarmund; etc. [images]

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