

Today's News - Thursday, June 2, 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for tardy posting - the Internet gods were not happy with us (again). Tomorrow and Monday will be no-newsletter days. We'll be back Tuesday, June 7.

- Willis makes a passionate call to end architecture's style wars: "Maybe our post-partisan era could start with the Pritzker and Driehaus Prize juries meeting for drinks?"
- Zeiger ponders Aravena's Venice Biennale: it "is filled with good intentions, but can architects ever really be honest about architecture?"
- Dodman delves into the New Urban Agenda that will be finalized at the Habitat III conference, and why it "still needs work."
- Darley wonders why the U.K. pushes planners to the margins, while the Netherlands values their expertise: "Which do you think is working?"
- A call for Sacramento to resurrect plans for a five-year-old Hadid-designed civic center: "This is an opportunity for the city to construct an instant architectural icon (and tourist attraction)."
- King looks beyond SFMOMA's "rippled eastern wall that's already in need of a scrub. Instead, think of the mountainous cultural complex as a giant lens that magnifies everything around it on the block."
- Plan to spend some time with a fabulous NYT Magazine special issue about NYC that includes Kimmelman and others (VR included).
- The 2016 China Environmental Press Awards celebrate environmental journalists who "shine despite dark times for local media - the news industry has seen huge changes, and even the most optimistic of observers admit these have not been for the better."
- Call for entries: The Illuminated River International Design Competition: create an elegant and charismatic light art installation for 17 of London's bridges.
- One we couldn't resist (and hope it gets through spam filters): The Landscape Urbanism Bullsh!t Generator (archi-babble at its best!).
- Weekend diversions:
 - Wainwright walks us through Meades' documentary "Ben Building: Mussolini, Monuments and Modernism" that turns the camera "towards Il Duce - one fascist monument at a time."
 - Felperin gives thumbs-up to "Gray Matters" - "a compelling Eileen Gray documentary," and thumbs-down to the "drippy, borderline risible" Gray biopic "The Price of Desire."
 - Saffron is quite taken with "Creative Africa: Building for Community" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and how Kéré's design approach for Third World societies "is now inspiring First World architects."
 - Pawlett Jackson minces no words about what he thinks of RIBA's "saccharine" show "At Home in Britain: Designing the House of Tomorrow" - a "let-them-eat-cake exhibition of sickly home sweet homes."
 - In Paris, "Wasteland: New Art from Los Angeles" features Auerbach's photographic catalogue of "the drab architecture of megachurches."
 - Edelson cheers "Moholy-Nagy: Future Present" at the Guggenheim that "offers bracing insight into his lifetime of art-making, but leaves us to contemplate what his vision for a utopian society looked like."
 - Welton is fairly wow'd by Kwun and Smith's "Twenty over Eighty": "Here we have a book that, as they say in the news business, has legs - and long ones at that."
 - An intriguing excerpt from Andraos's "The Arab City: Architecture and Representation" in which she ponders "what is actually happening as global practices meet local conditions?"
 - Brussat cheers a Scruton essay that "expresses hope that a young female Syrian architect, Marwa al-Sabouni, can transform her hometown of Homs and perhaps Damascus some day" (and do check out her new book "The Battle for Home" - a powerful read!).

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[Calling For An End to Architecture's Style Wars: Utopian as it may sound...I wonder if there is a "post-partisan" way forward for architecture? Dismissively categorizing all new-classical work as "pastiche" unfairly reduces the definition of good, creative architecture to be synonymous with "novelty"...Not that long ago, it was modern design that was the restless minority...We might find the real enemy is a disconnected public and underfunded projects... By Ben Willis/Union Studio Architecture & Community Design- Common Edge](#)

[Is architecture really as guileless as Alejandro Aravena's Venice Biennale suggests? Reporting from the Front...is filled with good intentions, but can architects ever really be honest about architecture...The honesty of what architecture is slips through our fingers and instead replicates "truthiness" - an obsequious quality suited to our global architectural now. By Mimi Zeiger-Dezeen](#)

[Where the New Urban Agenda Still Needs Work: ...will be finalized at the Habitat III conference in Quito later this year...The immediate challenge is to produce an outcome document for the summit that helps to guide more equitable and sustainable urban development around the world...and mechanisms to support this at the local, national and global scales. By David Dodman- Next City \(formerly Next American City\)](#)

[Planners: Your country needs you \(but no one will admit it\): In the UK we push planners to the margins. In the Netherlands their expertise is valued by government. Which do you think is working? Where are the architect-planners, the landscape-planners, the engineer-planners? By Gillian Darley- BD/Building Design \(UK\)](#)

[The Resurrection of Zaha Hadid: Five years ago, our region botched the chance to build a bold structure...Now she's gone. Let's bring her spirit back: Elk Grove decided to convert 78 acres...into a \\$159 million civic center...shockingly bold decision...This is an opportunity for \[Sacramento\] to construct an instant architectural icon \(and tourist attraction\)... \[images\]- Sactown magazine \(Sacramento, California\)](#)

[How SFMOMA reshapes our view of what's around it: ...forget about the galleries inside or the rippled eastern wall that's already in need of a scrub. Instead, think of the mountainous cultural complex as a giant lens that magnifies everything around it on the block... by John King -- Mario Botta; Snohetta; Skidmore Owings & Merrill \(SOM\); Thomas Lile \[images\]- San Francisco Chronicle](#)

[The New York Issue: New York at 800 Feet and Above: A city on an island, teeming with cash and ego, has nowhere to go but up. And up. And up. + The Vertical Frontier: New York has always stood above the rest. Now it's reaching even higher - with economic, architectural and social consequences that will once again redefine the most famous skyline in the world, by Michael Kimmelman + Gareth Cook on the physics of the wind at high altitudes, and how architects and engineers deal with it. - New York Times Magazine](#)

[China's environmental journalists shine despite dark times for local media: To mark the 2016 China Environmental Press Awards, Liu Jianqiang explains why supporting investigative reporters is more important than ever: China's news industry has seen huge changes in the past several years, and even the most optimistic of observers admit these have not been for the better. - ChinaDialogue.net](#)

[Call for entries: The Illuminated River International Design Competition: two-stage competition to create an elegant and charismatic light art installation for 17 of London's most celebrated bridges; cash prizes; deadline: July 7- Malcolm Reading Consultants / Illuminated River Foundation](#)

Landscape Urbanism Bullsh!t Generator: Instructions: Simply click the "make bullsh!t" button. Watch bullsh!t appear in the box..."diversify visionary morphologies"- Ruderal Academy / Sarah Cowles

"The dictator who failed to dictate": free-range architecture under Mussolini: For his latest BBC4 film ["Ben Building: Mussolini, Monuments and Modernism"], Jonathan Meades is turning his camera towards Il Duce - one fascist monument at a time...[he] has no qualms about concluding with the work of David Chipperfield and his ilk of austere neo-modernists...their buildings exude the same "inking of mortality"... By Oliver Wainwright- Guardian (UK)

"Gray Matters" - compelling Eileen Gray documentary: Featuring footage of Gray's playfully practical works, this layered and interesting study of the architect and designer stands up well. By Leslie Felperin- Guardian (UK)

"The Price of Desire" - biopic of architect Eileen Gray fails to build interest: The Irish 20th-century polymath doesn't get the film treatment she deserves in this borderline risible production: ...the tacky piano score amplifies the ineptitude of Mary McGuckian's direction... By Leslie Felperin- Guardian (UK)

What western architects can learn from Africa: Initially focused on the needs of impoverished, Third World societies, Diébédo Francis Kéré's design approach is now inspiring First World architects..."Creative Africa: Building for Community" [Philadelphia Museum of Art] replicates the process that public-interest architects use to realize their projects. By Inga Saffron- Philadelphia Inquirer

We're in the middle of a housing crisis, but RIBA's saccharine show offers no serious solutions: ...belatedly weighs in on Britain's acute housing crisis with a let-them-eat-cake exhibition of sickly home sweet homes: "At Home in Britain: Designing the House of Tomorrow" is a lifestyle for hire, a choreography of contracts, a marketing exercise, a warm fuzzy feeling. But, in truth, perhaps it always was. By Phil Pawlett Jackson- BD/Building Design (UK)

House of Worship or Shopping Mall? The Drab Architecture of Megachurches: Lisa Anne Auerbach set out to create a photographic catalogue of megachurches in the US...compiled them into a jumbo "American Megazine," a 60-inch booklet...currently on view in "Wasteland: New Art from Los Angeles"...at Mona Bismarck Gallery in Paris. [images]- Hyperallergic

Guggenheim opens US's largest László Moholy-Nagy exhibition in 50 years: ...what shines through in "Moholy-Nagy: Future Present" is how consistently he explores the same themes across the breadth of his lifetime...offers bracing insight into Moholy-Nagy lifetime of art-making, but leaves us to contemplate what [his] vision for a utopian society looked like. By Zach Edelson [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Twenty Designers, Eighty and Over: Here we have a book that, as they say in the news business, has legs - and long ones at that: Aileen Kwun and Bryn Smith have interviewed 20 of the greats in 20th-century design for "Twenty over Eighty"...a thorough look at designers who are still creating after six decades in the profession...a panel discussion at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan on June 15 Milton Glaser and Beverly Willis will be there - and you should be, too. By J. Michael Welton- Huffington Post

The Arab City: In a region at once feared and exoticized, we have been witnessing for more than a generation the devastation of old centers and the rise of new ones...what is actually happening as global practices meet local conditions? ...As a site both imaginary and real, the Arab city is located at the intersection of much of what's now at stake for architecture. By Amale Andraos [excerpt from "The Arab City: Architecture and Representation"]- Places Journal

Robert Scruton, Haussmann, Syria: In this essay...[he] expresses hope that a young female Syrian architect, Marwa al-Sabouni, can transform her hometown of Homs and perhaps Damascus some day...al-Sabouni's new book, "The Battle for Home," has just been published... By David Brussat- Architecture Here and There



Art of Many: The Right to Space: The Danish Pavilion at the 15th Venice Biennale: Arcspace.com is run by the Danish Architecture Centre, commissioner for the Danish pavilion...Q&As with leading practitioners for insight into what's planned... -- Boris Broman Jensen; Kristoffer Lindhardt Weiss; Esben Danielsen; Nicolai Carlberg/Søren Møller Christensen/carlberg/christensen; Helle Søholt/Gehl Architects

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