On September 20, the New York chapter of the AIA announced the winners of its annual design awards. After a long day of poring over almost 400 submissions, which are restricted to AIA New York members or New York State-licensed architects practicing in New York City, jurors presented their winning selections at the Center for Architecture. The winners were notified at the day's end, and many were present at the awards symposium. (For a list of winners, see page 4.)

While some of the winning projects in the Architecture category won't surprise anyone—Richard Meier's courthouse in Islip, New York City, jurors presented their winning projects for non-profits," she commented. "It is very challenging to do, and these projects were handled well." Their admiration was not limited to work done for under $200 per square foot. After Joy presented Peter Gluck's Scholar's Library, a tiny box in the woods in upstate New York for a private client, he added "Not only do I want one of these, but I wish I had designed it myself.

The jurors for the Interiors and Projects categories were not quite as effusive, however, and in the lively question and answer period moderated by Anthony Vidler, members of the two groups gently criticized the quality of the submissions they had seen. "Fifteen years ago, the Projects category [for unrealized or theoretical projects] would have been the strongest of the three," said juror Karen Van Lengen, "but that has changed entirely. The other two are stronger, and that speaks about the culture we're in." Fellow Projects category juror Peter Papademetriou expanded on that thought, adding, "There is a notion that ideas can make architecture, but making can also foster ideas that evolve as you get real."

As for the Interiors category, juror Ricardo Roselli said, "The winning projects are an exception to the general level we saw today—many others seem to be fighting the same battles of good taste, and not taking particular efforts to say something new in architecture of interiors."

None of this mild-mannered politesse for Projects juror Pascal Quintard-Hofstein, however. In the Q&A period, he took the opportunity to make an impassioned denunciation of the...
Left Out

In our feature Deans List (15.9.21.2004), we left out two important schools, the New Jersey Institute of Technology and the State University of New York at Buffalo. We hope these insights make up for our omission.

Urs P. Gauchat
New Jersey Institute of Technology
School of Architecture
Founded: 1973
# of students: 653 undergrad., 89 grad., 31 post-grad.
Dean since: 1990

One of the hallmarks of NJIT is a commitment to an engagement with the real world. Students get an insight into the political processes that make things happen, and it is exciting for them to be a part of real, funded projects and not just paper exercises. This can also help economic development in the region. We are a state university and one of our roles is to provide expertise to the state. At the same time, we are not competing with professionals. Our neutrality as architecture's commentators—journalists, critics, historians, curators—are forever at pains to identify the last or next big thing, aware of the need to update continually whatever's au courant.

For the 9th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, director Kurt Forster focused on one "movement," the widespread trend toward organic, biomorphic form-giving, gathered under the rubric of Metamorph. The quantity of compelling projects that Forster has culled from around the world adds up to a provocative polemic—though admittedly one that already seems historic, and that is ultimately limited by its emphasis on architecture's formal properties.

Our reviewer, Richard Ingersoll, traces Forster's agenda to his own close personal history with Peter Eisenman and Frank Gehry ("From the Belly of the Whale," page 8), while Esra Erkan observes in her essay ("The Golden Lion Goes to Africa," page 9) that alternative voices at the Biennale were found mostly in the national pavilions. Peter Cook, director of the British pavilion, also alludes to architecture's closed circuit. In the catalogue accompanying his pavilion's presentation, he reminds that, not too long ago, all the "in" architectural ideas seemed to emanate from "a certain architectural network in the United States [which took] selected French philosophers, found] tectonic links, and then [discussed] these issues by way of rather complicated American verbiage." He goes on to comment that even "straightforwardly talented building architects [were drawn] into the game," threatened with "reputational void" if they didn't play along. Publications and institutions have been—and continue to be—all too compliant in advancing elite trends.

Metamorph does not capture a prevailing Zeitgeist as much as it offers a narrative to understand one of architecture's primary recent evolutions. But it leaves out much that people have come to expect of the Biennale, particularly, the work of young architects. One upcoming effort that might address some of the curiosity left unsatisfied by the Biennale is Archilab, a conference that will be held Orlean, France, from October 13 to 15, accompanied by an exhibition that will be on view through December 30. Critic Bart Lootsma has devised this year's theme, The Nakd City; for the endeavor that was launched by France's regional government in 1999 with the mission of exploring experimental architecture. Rather than look for a single way in to contemporary architecture, Lootsma is seeking "more, everywhere," in his words, he's invited dissimilar voices whose collected efforts probably won't add up to any coherent movement or trend. But they'll hopefully get at the broader range of forces—technological, ecological, socio-political, et cetera—sharing architecture today. WILLIAM MINKING AND CATHY LANG HO
OVERHEARD IN VENICE

Last month, we headed to the Venice Architecture Biennale's opening weekend and, when we weren't pondering the ins and outs of Metamorph-ing (the exhibition's theme), we managed to hear another funny story about Zaha Hadid. The London-based firecracker was at a Venice dinner that included Guggenheim director Thomas Krens where, among other things, her planned Taiwan outpost for the museum was being discussed. At one point, we're told Krens made an off-color comment that prompted Hadid to banter back "I'm going to cut off your balls and feed them to you!" We love her.

Meanwhile, both Hadid and Daniel Libeskind were looking awfully cute and cuddly as they gave each other a big hug and kiss in the lobby of the Hotel Danieli, where Architectural Record was hosting a party. Earlier that day, Libeskind provoked gasps when, at a press briefing for the American pavilion, many learned for the first time that the State Department had appointed him the country's first Cultural Ambassador for Architecture. "I guess he's owed it, after what happened to him with Ground Zero," one well-known architect conceded. "Talk about America losing prestige abroad!" others uncharitably snarked.

Also the subject of chatter was Rem Koolhaas, who was conspicuously absent in both the exhibition and in person, and Peter Eisenman, who was widely rumored to have been allotted somewhere between $180,000 and $250,000 for his installation in the "Episodes" for the New York lotus pavilion, (Eisenman's office says the actual figure is closer to $120,000). This prompted some to speculate that the expenditure may have boosted the budget for a planned but nixed installation of the entire pavilion by Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture of Asymptote, who nevertheless pulled off their design of the Biennale's main Arsenale exhibition hall. In either case, it was somewhat ironic when, just before a breakfast awarding Asymptote the $67,000 Kiesler Prize, Eisenman, who had just won the biennale's Golden Lion award for lifetime achievement, was overheard jokingly offering Rashid half of his own prize for half of Asymptote's. The Golden Lion has no monetary component.

CHEAP, BUT NOT CHEERFUL

Like many architects, we are easily lured by events with lots of free drinks (see also above). So we sympathize with the thirsty freeloaders who recently went to the AIA's Center for Architecture for the opening of its exhibition about the General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, only to find that they had to pay $5 for "plastic cups of cheap, warm wine," as one put-off attendee put it to us. "How tacky is that?!" To make matters worse, the hosts were charging $10 for a GSA-financed book that was supposed to be free. Pamela Puchalski, the AIA New York's deputy director for programs, tells us the latter scandal resulted from a publishing house mix-up by which the GSA's complimentary books were mistaken for those that the Center had ordered and paid for. As for the $5 drinks? The organization's executive director, Rick Bell, acknowledges that the move was the equivalent of taxing pork rinds in Texas, but reminded us of both the number of free events the AIA offers and the budgetary constraints of nonprofits. Fair enough. But despite architects' fondness for boxes, they certainly don't want their wine coming out of them.

HUDSON YARDS STILL ON TRACK

continued from front page

Statement (DGEIS) for the Hudson Yards project, certified by the city in June. Required by law, such a study estimates project, certified by the city in June. Required by law, such a study estimates the environmental review process is appropriate only after the City Planning Commission decides to adopt the statement. He also indicated that the September 23 hearing was a sufficient forum for the public to voice objections to the draft statement. The city's Hudson Yards plan would include zoning changes and the creation of several "special districts" to spur high-density commercial and residential development along major corridors in Hell's Kitchen, currently a low-scale mixed-use neighborhood. Also covered in the DGEIS are an expansion of the Javits Convention Center and the construction of a stadium for the New York Jets on a platform above MTA-owned railyards between 32nd and 34th Street. Advocates of the plan, including members of construction unions, faced off at Thursday's hearing against opponents whose concerns included not only environmental impacts but also the plan's lack of affordable housing provisions, displacement of businesses in the area, and the soundness of project financing.

The City Planning Commission expects to approve a final EIS by November 12 and has set a tentative date of November 22 for a vote on the project. Opponents are then expected to take further legal action, an avenue left open by the September 21 ruling.

NEW DESIGN BY MORPHOSIS EXPANDS COOPER UNION'S ARCHITECTURAL HOLDINGS

THE MAYNE EVENT

The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art manages to float the tuition for 900 architecture, engineering, and art students each year largely through return on its shrewd investments. Cooper's real estate, like the Chrysler Building and the neighboring luxury apartment tower by Gwathmey Siegel, now under construction, will soon be joined by a work by Morphosis Architects. Last month, principal Thom Mayne unveiled the design of a bulbous, 9-story, $120 million academic building on Third Avenue and 7th Street. When completed in 2008, the building will house Cooper's engineering school, while the current engineering building (just north of the site) will be razed and the lot leased to developers. The new structure will replace a two-story academic building, so securing a zoning variance was a priority to Cooper. The project went through the Uniform Land Use Review Process before the design phase started; Mayne had to stay within an already approved zoning envelope to prevent community conflict.

Morphosis' design is a negative image of the neoclassical Foundation Building across the street. The two are nearly identical in height and bulk, but the stone-clad Foundation Building is heavy and opaque while Morphosis' perforated steel and glass design is light and translucent.

For Mayne, the building's transparency exposes the energy of the student life within. The inner atrium, cut through by lighted stairways, will be visible from 3rd Street. The building's motorized, movable steel skin is meant to encourage a dynamic interaction with the building's users and its environment, though Mayne has not yet decided whether the screens will be controlled by students and faculty or by computerized environmental response. "It's like changing clothes according to the seasons," said Mayne.

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on to win at the national level," said Ilya Azaroff, who co-chaired the awards committee with chair Tina Meliti-Ceas. "Competition in New York is so tough."

"If precedent holds, a lot of these projects will go on to win at the national level," said Ilya Azaroff, who co-chaired the awards committee with chair Tina Meliti-Ceas. "Competition in New York is so tough."

Anne Guiney

Word Cultural Center by THINK

Museum of the Earth by Weiss/Manfredi Architects

Perth Amboy High School by Fox & Fowie Architects

DESIGNERS REINTERPRET THE VOTING MACHINE

Visit the polls early this year at Parsons School of Design, where the exhibition The Voting Booth Project will be on view beginning October 7. The show consists of a collection of nearly 50 artworks commissioned from architects, artists, and designers, each riffing on the Votomatic—the flimsy, confusing voting machine made infamous by producing hundreds of inconclusive “hanging chads” on Florida ballots in the 2000 presidential election. According to Paul Goldberger, Parsons dean and one of the show’s guest curators, “The booth is a quintessential object.” She said, “It’s remarkably low tech—brilliant and dumb at the same time.” The Chad controversy arose from the voting machine’s patterned plastic tray, which confounded voters when they attempted to position their ballots before punching out their votes.

Participants, including Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, SHoP, Polshek Partners, Diller + Scofidio, and David Rockwell were each given the same Votomatic. As might be expected, the results vary wildly. Robert A. M. Stern’s 20/20 Hindsight superimposed a Votomatic with rearview mirrors, “to trigger a moment of reflection and put voters back in the driver’s seat.” Milton Glaser proposed a gold-leafed case labeled “Fragile” and “Contains Democracy.” The pieces will be auctioned on October 27, to benefit Parsons and Declare Yourself, a non-partisan voter awareness group. The show will be up through the election.

European Central Bank, Frankfurt, Germany
Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill LLP
Pratt Institute Design Center, Brooklyn, New York
HMA, Hannah Meyers Architects
Stephen Gaynor School/Ballet Hispanico, New York City
Rogers Marvel Architecture
Perth Amboy High School, Perth Amboy, New Jersey
Fox & Fowie Architects
Sustainable Technologies Research Park, Syracuse, New York
Swanke Hayden Connell Architects
World Cultural Center, New York City
THINK

The show was inspired by hotelier Andre Balazs’ unusual collection of several dozen Votomatics, which he picked up at a Florida flea market. Each Votomatic folds up and is contained within a metal attaché case. Goldberger convinced Parsons to take on the show and invited editorial and design consultant Chee Pearlman to be guest curator. "The booth is a quintessential object," she said. "It’s remarkably low tech—brilliant and dumb at the same time." The Chad controversy arose from the voting machine’s patterned plastic tray, which confounded voters when they attempted to position their ballots before punching out their votes.

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MIT Press seeks compensation from McGraw-Hill for copying in architecture book

ARCHITECTURAL WRITER—AND PUBLISHER—UNDER FIRE


Shepherd, who has admitted the duplication, said that McGraw-Hill destroyed all unsold copies of the book last year. In addition to seeking unspecified reparations from the publisher, Roger L. Conover, MIT Press's executive editor, has asked Shepherd to apologize to Clausen. Most of the section on the Equitable Savings and Loan building in Portland, Oregon, in Chapter 5 of Shepherd's book is taken verbatim with small changes of wording from Chapter 6 of Clausen's study, "The Equitable Building and the Postwar Boom." No acknowledgment to Clausen appears anywhere in the book.

Shepherd acknowledged the plagiarism and said that there were "a variety of reasons why some chunks of that book ended up in a book of mine from two years ago." "None of them, I have to say, are reasonable," he continued. "That is, they're reasons but not excuses."

Asked to elaborate, Shepherd said, "It had something to do with one of the research assistants I had hired, and the pressure I was under during 9/11." He said that some of Clausen's book "had been put in as rough stuff, meant to be rewritten, and it remained in."

"There's really no excuse," he said. Shepherd said that it is not the first complaint that McGraw-Hill has received about Structures of Our Time. About a year ago, he said, Princeton Architectural Press contacted the publisher about passages from one of its books that had been incorporated into Shepherd's volume.

Kevin Lippert, publisher of Princeton Architectural Press, confirmed that the press had complained to McGraw-Hill. But he also indicated that material from one but three of the press' titles had "appeared without attribution or permission" in Structures of Our Time.

"McGraw-Hill went so far as to recall the book," including the remaindered copies, said Shepherd. "It's shredded them."

After that, McGraw-Hill's vice president for communications, confirmed that the press had received a complaint about Structures of Our Time in 2003, but said that the book had not been withdrawn because of the plagiarism charge. "For business reasons," she said, "it was taken out of print."

Copies of the book remain in circulation, however. Clausen said that in late June, she received an e-mail note from a British reader "with a good eye and a keen memory" who noticed overlaps between Shepherd's book and hers, and "said that he was appalled."

At first, Clausen said, she was not particularly concerned: "I didn't get around to doing anything until a couple of weeks later." Then she examined a copy of Shepherd's book. "I was just amazed," she said. Encouraged by a lawyer to pursue the matter, she prepared a document comparing the two volumes. She cites 19 passages from Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect—including several long paragraphs—that also appear in Structures of Our Time. (Clausen's book was reissued in 1999 and remains in print.)

At times, the wording varies slightly. Someone identified as "an all but ideal client" in Clausen's account "proved to be the ideal client" in Shepherd's telling. Sentences appear to have been copied intact, then altered for punctuation. In each case, Shepherd's book follows exactly the sequence of information and argument presented in Clausen's work, including her quotations from primary sources, without adding new material.

"This is about as clear a case of copyright infringement as I've seen," said William Strong, a lawyer in Boston who is representing MIT Press. "It isn't just plagiarism, though a lot of people don't get that distinction."

"Plagiarism includes a variety of ways of appropriating another work without giving credit—for example, by paraphrasing it without acknowledging the source."

"Plagiarism is a moral violation," said Strong, "but it's not illegal."

Reproducing the actual words appearing in a copyrighted text, however, is legally actionable. It is a matter to which Strong has devoted close attention over the years, as author of The Copyright Book: A Practical Guide (MIT Press), now in its fifth edition.

Clausen said she had had qualms about seeking remedies, at least at first. "I don't like inflicting pain or suffering on anybody," she said, "and I knew this would certainly have some sort of impact" on Shepherd.

Apparently the last straw came when she learned that Structures of Our Time was on the list of recommended readings for an introductory architecture course at her alma mater, the University of California at Berkeley.

"Knowing that students were going to be reading Shepherd's work, and thinking that it was he who came up with the insights and the connections, that was really painful," she said. "I thought of all those hours I had spent interviewing Belluschi before he died, travelling back and forth from Seattle to Portland, largely at my own expense."

Paul Goldberger, dean of the Parsons School of Design and architecture critic for The New Yorker, said that he had not heard about the plagiarism charges against his faculty member. "Without knowing the specifics," he said, "I can't comment more, except to tell you that we take this very seriously, not at all casually or lightly."

For his part, Shepherd said that he is now writing a letter to Clausen. "I'm going to tell her I have remorse for this, and that I take total responsibility. And in fact, I'm probably not going to be able to write any more books. It's really a tragedy, probably the worst thing I've ever done. Nevertheless, it's being addressed.

"SCOTT MCLMEME"

In August, Pennsylvania became the latest state in the New York area to implement the International Code Council’s (ICC) construction code, fulfilling a nearly 90-year goal for architects across the state. Maureen A. Guttman of AIA-Pennsylvania said, “The Pennsylvania chapter of the AIA was founded in 1909 with the express purpose of passing statewide construction legislation. We’re finally instituting a code that’s easy to understand and execute.” Under the uniform code, architects, engineers, designers, contractors, and code enforcement officials are required to adhere to one comprehensive model, as opposed to separate, often poorly integrated versions. The ICC was formed ten years ago when three regional U.S. code organizations—Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc., the International Conference of Building Officials, and the Southern Building Code Conference International, Inc.—merged in an effort to standardize the language, format, and content of building codes for the entire country. Since then, it’s been up to individual states, cities, and counties to pass, administer, and fund the code switch. Many communities have adopted at least sections of the ICC code, often enacting localizing alterations. According to Guttman, Pennsylvania’s enactment of the code differed from the national standard: “Pennsylvania is unique because we enacted 11 out of the 14 ICC codes with minor or no modifications.”

The state of New York passed an adapted version of the ICC codes in 2002, but New York City was exempt from the process due to its size and complexity, as well as the timing of the bill’s passage, one year after 9/11. “The city is a different animal,” said Barbara Rodriguez of AIA-New York. “Excluding the city gave the ICC code a better chance of passing through the state legislature.” However, New York City is currently pursuing its own ICC code on top of the state’s uniform code, which currently only enforces the residential section of the code, is anticipating its full adoption by mid-2005.

Detectors of the uniform code argue that unfunded mandates put too much pressure on already strained local community budgets. Many communities are attempting to rectify this problem by lobbying for state- or local-funded education and training. Supporters say the code will eventually save money by saving time and energy now spent researching and implementing differing codes across counties. For example, a construction company could stock code-compliant materials in bulk rather than buying them project by project. Although the code’s financial benefits remain to be seen, one potential advantage is a leveling of the playing field for developers who will no longer gain by crossing state lines to build more cheaply in zones with fewer regulations. The code can thus prevent local gov­ernments from accepting less safe structures in exchange for the economic benefits of development. As Diane Harp-Jones of AIA-Connecticut argued, “public health and safety is what this is all about. When all the codes of a region speak the same language, the people living in its buildings are the ones who benefit the most.”

For Upcoming Aztec Show, The Guggenheim’s Serpentine Gallery Goes for the Soft Look

The Plumed Serpent Wears Gray

With commissions to design the Visual and Performing Arts Library in Brooklyn, a 42-story office hotel-residential tower in Harlem, and another mas­sive multiverse complex in Los Angeles, Mexican architect Enrique Norten has become a player on the world architectural stage. Now that the Guggenheim Museum is discussing a satellite branch with the Mexican city of Guadalajara, where Norten is in charge of the master plan for a huge cultural and business center, there’s talk that he might be a favored con­tender for that juicy museum commission. The Guggenheim’s choice of Norten’s TEN Arquitectos, in collaboration with J. Meejin Yoon, to design the exhibition for the New York blockbuster The Aztec Empire, opening October 15, certainly augurs well.

In the 1990s, Norten named himself for his native Mexico City by eschewing the folkloric color-saturated modernism of Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legorreta for a sleek, transcendent minimal­ism. His was the kind of "anyplace" architecture then gaining favor as suited to the "anywhere" urban conditions of the dawning millennium. (Norten’s hip glass-wrapped Hotel Habita, the city’s first "design hotel," would look equally at home in Rotterdam.) Though sinning, choaking, teeming, and occasionally yacking, Mexico City had world capital ambitions, so it quickly embraced Norten’s trendy, increasingly signify­ing free architecture as its own. But no Mexican artist, not even Norten, works entirely without metaphor. His design of the display wall for The Aztec Empire is inspired by Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent god of Aztec myth. Sheathed in charcoal gray felt, the serpent structure will wind its way up the museum’s spiral galleries, its dark, undulating form imbing the interior with a shadowy mystery through which visi­tors may glimpse remnants of a once magnificent civilization. It’s fitting that an abstraction of an Aztec divinity should shape the show’s design. Religion informed Aztec culture, and abstraction defined their art and ceremony. The aztecs were constantly perform­ing religious rites and sac­rifices in order to maintain their harmonious relation­ship with the natural world. Thomas Krens, the Guggenheim’s director, came up with the idea for the show last year after seeing the exhibition Aztecs at London’s Royal Academy of Art. No doubt needing a box-office draw to compete with the immit­tant unveiling of the new MoMA, he immediately contacted Felipe Solis Olguin, the London show’s co-curator, and director of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. Within months, Solis Olguin put together The Aztec Empire, an exhibition of some 440 objects, culled from public and private collec­tions in the United States and Mexico, which will be the most comprehensive survey of Aztec art and cul­ture ever assembled. Some of the show’s most important pieces were only recently discovered in the archaeological excavation of the Templo Mayor (Great Temple), part of the sacred district of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, now down­town Mexico City. These include a life-sized clay eagle warrior and a ritual offering of a miniature greenstone, with tiny mother of pearl fish, one of the show’s several never­before-exhibited artifacts. A major challenge for Norten was to design a display system that could guard a series of objects in an array of variously scaled works. Unlike previous Aztec exhibits, this show will present these pieces as aesthetic objects, not archeological artifacts. Its conception is as minimalist as its display—a few images, no diagrams, models, or maps, nor any indication of the colorful splendor that defined Aztec life—just the objects themselves. Ever since the late 19th century, when Mexicans began to seek an identity beyond their Spanish colonial heritage, they have regarded the Aztecs with special fascination. Like their ancestors whose greatness derived in part from their genius for cultur­al assimilation, they have welcomed new ideas and influences, transforming them to suit their own needs. There is a caution in such openness, though. Legend has it the Aztecs—ruler Montezuma I welcomed Cortés because he thought the Spanish king might be the legendary god king Quetzalcoatl returned. Will the new vogue in minimalist architecture prove as tasty for the Mexicans? It’s too soon to say. In the meantime, New Yorkers should feast their eyes on the two great icons of two of the leading orien­tal cultures, in both the earth and the cosmos.

MARISA BARTOLUCCI

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THE LATEST WTC LIST

Last month, the LMDC announced two shortlists of architects to design the 300,000-square-foot museum and 275,000-square-foot performing arts complexes planned for Ground Zero. Two firms—Polshek Partnership Architects and Moshe Safdie and Associates—made it on both lists. Four other teams made it on the museum list: Pei Cobb Fried and Partners; Roobrecht en Daem Architects with Pasanella + Klein Stoelzner + Berg Architects; Shigeru Ban Architect + Frei Otto with Dean Maltz Architect; and Schnetfell. Meanwhile, eight more were picked for the performing arts development: Bing Thom Architects with Meyer/Gifford/Jones Architects; Gehry Partners; DMA with LMN; Rafael Viñoly Architects; Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen with Adamson Associates Architects; Studio Daniel Libeskind; TEN Arquitectos and H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture; and Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. The future tenants—the Drawing Center and the International Freedom Center in the museum and the Joyce Theater International Dance Center and the Signature Theater Center in the performing arts venue—will make their final architect selections early October.

THE WTC STORY NEVER ENDS

The Deutsche Bank Building at 130 Liberty Street is finally coming down. The LMDC finalized its $90-million purchase of the 40-story structure in late August, and is preparing for demolition by studying environmental impacts.

CLASSICISTS GET FOOTHOLD IN MIDTOWN

The Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America opened a new, 2,700-square-foot national headquarters at the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen building at 20 West 44th Street in September. The facility was renovated pro bono by Robert A. M. Stern Architects.

PINCHING PENNIES

Brooklyn homeowners are irate, but this time it's not because of another arena or big-box development. Due to a spike in anonymous tips phoned in to the Buildings Department's hotline, the agency has issued hundreds of Canarsie and East Flatbush residents building code violations, ranging from illegal construction to improper placement of washers and dryers.

THE CENTER UNDERGROUND

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund picked Polshek Partnership Architects from a pool of 39 firms in a national competition to design a $40 million Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center in Washington, D.C. The facility will be sited directly beneath Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Lin served as an adviser to the jury that selected Polshek's design, a collaboration with exhibition design firm Ralph Applebaum Associates.

On September 11, millions of moths added a sinister spark to Tribute in Light, the Municipal Art Society and Creative Time's annual World Trade Center memorial designed by John Bennett, Gustavo Bonevardi, Richard Nash Gould, Julian Laverdiere, Paul Marantz, and Paul Myoda. Swarms of moths left cometlike trails as they dove into the heat of the memorial's skyward spotlights. "There was smoke and a strange smell. Above, birds and bats were feasting on them," said photographer Stefano Giovannini. Maureen Sullivan of Creative Time said, "The Audubon Society determined that the moth and bird influx was due to the absence of the moon. The creatures were flocking to the brightest light source."
Asymptote conceived of the environmental design for the Metamorph exhibition, which occupies the Carcerie dell'Arsenale (top). Renzo Piano Building Workshop's 2002 Parco della Musica in Rome (left) resembles three beetles. Foster and Partners's The Sage Gateshead in Northern England (above), slated to open in December, looks like a giant sea slug.
WITH THE THEME METAMORPH, THE 9TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION OF THE VENICE BIENNALE IS AN AQUARIUM OF EXOTIC ARCHITECTURAL CREATURES. RICHARD INGERSOLL ATTEMPTS TO MAKE SENSE OF THE MÉLANGE.

It probably all began with a fish. Not Günter Grass' tale of the world-weary flounder, but Frank Gehry's love of wiggly marine life. The hundreds of models that recently washed up for the central exhibition of the 9th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, installed in the 100-kilometer-long Corderie dell'Arsenale, appear like partially digested morsels of underwater creatures clinging to a series of colossal, stark white plaster ribs. Snacks for the Leviathan. The trend in architecture, privileged by the Biennale's mercural director, Kent Forster, oscillates between the current interest today to discover and forms that have metamorphosed from the conventional notion of building and the desire not to represent at all, but to create random shapes through the accidents of computer "morphing." Thus the exhibition's syncretic theme, Metamorph. The ribbed installa­tion, designed by the digitally endowed New York office Asymptote, breaks down the inside as an axonometric diagram­med hall by placing each exhibition platform laterally, forcing the visitor to meander in picturesque circuits. Each of the three dozen pods has an irregular stream­lined shape that is different from but related to the ones nearest it. These sinuous ribbons are fasci­nating. They are nothing if not well­ for exhibiting the displays (though the flat bases of each of the models had to be adjusted to the platforms' irregular surfaces), and invest the space with a resounding metaphoric unity.

Like most of the projects in the show, however, Asymptote's ribs demonstrate a lack of interest in constructive or structural determinants, approaching form as something that could be grown rather than constructed. As Hani Rashid, principal of Asymptote and spokesman for a new generation of digital designers put it, "With the aid of computing ... a newly evolved architecture is emerging. ... It is within the grasp of architects and artists today to discover and evoke a digitally induced spatial delirium, where a merging of sim­ulation and effect with physical reality creates a kind of a sublime morphing from thought to actualization." Let us agree that the Vitruvian categories of commodity and firmness have no place in this hallucinogenic purview. And even the third canonical objective, delight, is much abused. Those who visit the main exhibition of the Biennale will come away with a clear sense of a style—vaguely organic, neo-picturesque, and sublimely homely. Most of the projects also seem technically dubious and extremely expensive to build because of their awkward geometries. While there is an undercurrent of concern for the environment and many designs consciously simulate natural forms, there is no attempt to justify the works from a social, technical, or ecological point of view. Thus the show concentrates almost completely on a current taste—a new version of expressionism—that appeals to some of the cultural elite of advanced capitalism.

Forster, a Swiss-born art historian, the founding director of the Guggenheim Center, and for two years the director of the Canadian Center for Architecture, came to the job with a formidable intellec­tual and institutional background. While one may take issue with the content of the Biennale, its concept has been convincingly displayed and given an excellent pedagogical armature in the three-volume catalogue. In some ways, the basis of the show was prepared by writer Marina Warner, who curated an art exhibi­tion with a similar theme at the Science Museum in London in 2002. In her view, the taste for metamorphosis accompanies the anxious desire for self-trans­formation in an advanced techno­logical society. Historian Juan Antonio Ramirez sees the trend in a more political light, especially after the events of September 11 in New York and March 11 in Madrid, declaring that "the nascent 21st century's love affair with pulverized ruins, relies on the demolition of democratic institutions. ... Any analysis of our social political reality would define the sides of the triangle in which we move as: lies, usurpa­tion, and ruin.

Unfortunately the critical and skeptical insights of the catalogue are unable to shape the experience of the exhibition, which is by nature an object lesson in style. Forster has pursued a personal theoretical agenda that revolves around two of his close friends: Peter Eisenman, with whom he founded Oppositions magazine in the 1970s and commissioned a project for an unbuilt house, Eleven-A, and Frank O. Gehry, for whom he has often acted as an intermediary or glossator. While recently the architectural styles of Eisenman and Gehry seem to be converging toward an organis­tant mode, their approaches to archi­tecture are diametrically opposed. Eisenman's methods celebrate the possibility of autonomy and computation to signify, while Gehry relies on artistic intuition and metaphor. Eisenman's line of thought has led to computer mor­phing, while Gehry's has led to an appreciation of zoomorphic and crystalline iconography requiring computer modeling to be realized. The formal results of each are intentionally monstrous with respect to architectural conven­tions and urban contexts, appeal­ing to the aesthetic theory of the sublime.

Gehry is well represented at the Biennale with the show's largest model, the recently completed Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, a stainless steel-clad sibling of the Guggenheim in Bilbao. Eisenman, meanwhile, was given an entire room to make an installation about his work. The most interesting projects, both currently under construction, seem like ventures into land art: the City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. In addition, Eisenman was honored with the Biennale's Lifetime Achievement Award. His built works, so often instant ruins, such as House VI or the Wexner Center at Ohio State, should serve as a parable for the Metamorph style: You can fantasize and digi­tize all you like, but that won't stop a building from leaking.

To give substance to the trend toward a new expressionist taste, Forster assembled a separate exhibition on contemporary con­cert halls. The peculiar demands of acoustical engineering and the monumental imagery often attached to these projects give them a particular iconic power in an urban setting. Like the museum, concert halls serve as a kind of scapegoat for the demise of civics. Unfortunately, when we see the buildings together, one has little doubt that they adhere to the underlying taste of Metamorph. Starting with Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House and Hans Scharoun's Berlin Philharmonic, both designed in the 1950s, the 40 models of recent solutions demonstrate that the type has yielded some of the weirdest forms in architectural histori­gy. Acoustical engineering seems to have selected a functionalist precept for irregular forms that struggle against the orthogonality of most urban contexts. The continued on page 10
FROM THE BELLY OF THE WHALE

continued from page 9
prize-winner in this part of the show, an unbuilt project for a two part concert hall in Stavanger, Norway, by the Danish office PLOT, is an ingenious solution that unites two monolithic paral­lelepips with steps that wrap around the base of the buildings and then continue as a louvered facade to the roof. The risers are translucent, allowing slats of daylight into the structure and at night creating a magical light box effect, like a Noguchi lantern. One can still recognize a humanist bias in the approach, especially when compared to other projects such as the Dutch office NOX’s recently completed installation Son-O-House, which looks like guts spilled on a sidewalk. The trend in zoomorphic transforma­tions and picturesque planning is evident even among the most technologically astute offices. Norman Foster’s The Sage Gateshead music hall rests like a giant sea slug on the banks of the River Tyne and Renzo Piano’s Parco della Musica in Rome resembles three beetles. Despite being the largest international exhibition for architec­ture, the Biennale this year cannot be said to represent the world’s architecture. And while there is no hierarchy or singling out of any particular nation, the curator­ial concentration on the quirks of a particular aspect of high style is unavoidably discriminatory. The Biennale has always compensated for its elitism in the dozens of national pavilions, where each country assigns a curator to assemble a show. The pavilion prize went to Belgium, which pre­sented an artist’s and anthropologist’s vision of Kinshasha, a mod­est consideration of Congolese vernacular adaptations in a situa­tion far removed from the patron­age necessary for the projects of Metamorph. A work of postcolo­nial guilt, it stood out from the rest of the Biennale as a reminder of architecture’s misplaced priorities. The Japanese pavilion was exceptional in its conceptualism, bringing together a myriad of images from pop culture surround­ing the figure of the eternally ado­lescent and aimless computer nerd, christened Otaku. The chaotic but repetitive assembly of plastic toys and bright colored posters creates a convincing idea of how the trivial products, games, and junk of consumerism have become elements of contempo­rary urbanism. The other pavilion that caught my attention was Germany’s, a fascinating pho­tomontage mural that undulated from room to room, seamlessly blending 37 contemporary works of architecture into the landscape of sprawl. Has sprawl finally become beautiful? Finally, the U.S. pavilion, which relies on private sponsors, showed the work of six offices, three of which are very morphi­ch and three that are not. The Biennale’s juried prizes went to SANAA (Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa) for two works, the Contemporary Art Museum in Kanazawa, Japan, and the Valencia Institute of Modern Art in Valencia. Other awards were given to Foreign Office Architects (Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Farshid Moussavi) for its terraced, undu­lating hanging garden scheme for a car park at the Novartis campus in Basel, and Martinez-Lapeña and Torres for its design of an exhibition platform and photovoltaic tower at the new convention center area of Forum 2004, which covers Barcelona’s water treatment plant. The new expressionism of
pavilion, which provides a humanist statement—stupidly closed, impractical to construct, and diffi­cult to adapt to. Their meaning is circumscribed by their unique­ness of form, which greatly limits their chances to be understood. They are doomed to extinction as they are unable to cooperate with reality. Will we someday find ourselves rallying to save the architec­tural whales?

EYRA AKCAN, AN ARCHITECT AND SCHOLAR, IS A PHD CANDIDATE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND VISITING FACULTY AT PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND PRATT INSTITUTE.

THE BELLY OF THE WHALE continued from page 9

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 5, 2004

Those who visit the Biennale will come away with a clear sense of a style—vaguely organic, neo-picturesque, and sublimely homely.
Those who have been watching the development at Ground Zero closely know that the design for the Freedom Tower is a colossal compromise. While the building has been heralded for its structural and promise. While the building has been rebroadcast (check local PBS listings). The one-hour episode is pretty evenly split along the lines of heroes and villains. In the heroes column are Daniel and Nina Libeskind, Governor George Pataki, and LMDC board member Roland Betts, while the villains are represented by WTC leaseholder Larry Silverstein, engineer Guy Nordensen, and chiefly Childs. The city—almost always shown at night, in fog, or through dark subway tunnels—is itself depicted as a treacherous character. Critic Paul Goldberger serves as a referee for the lay viewer, and the Libeskins' colorful attorney Ed Hayes adds a dash of big city grit to the tale. Two relatives of victims provide emotional weight, throwing the archi- s quêbles into an unflattering light.

The film's drama centers on Childs' refusal to work with Libeskind and to stay within the confines of the unconventional master plan—which delineates building heights and certain formal elements—in spite of repeated public statements to the contrary. The documentary includes a rendering for a 2,190-foot high tower Childs and Nordensen designed likening over Manhattan like Frankenstein.

But the story is more about personalities than architecture. Nina Libeskind seethes with anger, calling Silverstein, Childs, and SOM "lairs" at least four times. Betts has the best lines of all: "I thought they [Silverstein et al.] would have behaved better, too. But they've behaved like assholes. Okay? I wish I had stayed in there and been a referee in the active sense of chairing the meetings, and basically saying to David Childs, stop it. Grow up." Libeskind appears wounded, even childlike, in need of protection from a surprisingly earnest Governor Pataki. At the last minute Betts called in Pataki who, like a school principal, delivers discipline, forcing Childs to play nice and make some quick concessions.

Frontline wisely chose to focus only on the struggle over the design of the Freedom Tower. Certainly with all the other buildings, constituencies, and personalities involved in the various projects now adding up to the World Trade Center site, "Sacred Ground" could be the first in a series. But if the petulant behavior seen here is any indication, the reputation of architects would be better served if the rest of the proceedings happened behind closed doors.

ALAN O. BRAKE IS A DESIGN CRITIC AND A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.

### A TOWERING COMIC

*In the Shadow of No Towers*, Art Spiegelman (Pantheon Books, 2004), $18.95

"I never loved those arrogant boxes," cartoonist Art Spiegelman writes of the World Trade Center in his new book, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which chronicles his experiences on and after 9/11. "If not for all the tragedy and death, I could think of the attack as some sort of radical architectural criticism. It's not like I love the way my nose looks...I just don't want somebody ramming a damn plane into it!"

No Towers is iconoclastic and challenging, a soul-searching inner search and pungent rant that pulls no punches, especially when aimed at the Bush administration. Spiegelman, who lives downtown and watched the towers burn and fall, has extracted his painful memories of the event and his anger and worry about its aftermath to create some scab-like strips, crisp panels that are barely contained by the book's oversize cardboard pages. The ten main panels, first published as a serial in the German paper *Die Zeit* and the Jewish magazine *The Forward*, cascade chaotically down the page. Even the comic's collapse after these works, ending abruptly and giving way to an essay about old comics and reproductions of some classic strips that obsessed and influenced the author after 9/11.

While the form of the book is striking and unique, Spiegelman's ideas will seem familiar to many of his readers. In one panel, Bush and Cheney ride a bald eagle, crying out "Let's Roll" while sitting the bird's throat with a box cutter. It is an unusually potent expression of a political opinion fairly common among liberal New Yorkers. But the book is really more a personal object than a public one. Spiegelman, with his uncompromising introspection, has produced a cathartic work that, while not coherent or beautiful, is raw, pow- erf ul, and fresh. GREGORY KATZ IS A NEW YORK-BASED FREELANCE WRITER.
The fifth annual National Design Awards will be announced at a gala dinner in the Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum on October 19. This year, lifetime achievement honors go to graphic designer Milton Glaser, creator of the “I Love NY” logo as well as hundreds of other logos, ads, posters, album covers, and corporate identities. Other honorees include chair of the New York City Planning Commission Amanda Burden (Design Patron Award), and the Aveda Corporation (Corporate Achievement Award). Four finalists—Rick Joy, Polshek Partnership, Joseph E. Spear, and Rafael Viñoly—are up for the architecture prize. Other award categories include communications, environment, fashion, and product design. Besides the nominees, expect to see honorary patron Laura Bush at the gala, along with chairman Richard Meier and vice-chairmen Beth Rudin DeWoody, Reed Krakoff, Murray Moss, and Deedee Rose. If the price of the gala tickets—$1,000 to $5,000 per person—scares you, go to the after-party instead.

Cooper Hewitt National Design Awards Gala Dinner and After-Party
October 19
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 2 East 91st Street
Gala: 6:30 p.m.—9:00 p.m., $1,000 to $5,000
After-party: 9:00 p.m.—12:00 a.m., $75 for nonmembers in advance; $125 at the door.
Go to www.nationaldesignawards.org.

Maxine Leighton, Michele Renda, et al. Working with the SF 330: An Update
5:30 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.smpasy.org

Monica Ponce de Leon
Figuring Configurations
6:15 p.m.
Yale School of Architecture
180 York St., New Haven
www.architecture.yale.edu

SYMPOSIA
OCTOBER 12–13
4th Annual Empire Energy and Environmental Exposition: Clean and Green Gideon Putnam
24 Gideon Putnam Rd., Saratoga Springs
www.eba-ny.org

OCTOBER 13–15
Building Together: Partnerships for Successful Community Development
Mayor Michael Bloomberg, David Shipler, et al.
Marriott Marquis
1535 Broadway
www.enterprisefoundation.org

OCTOBER 14
Globalizing Cities and Urban Imaginaries: New York, Africa, Cairo, and Istanbul
Andreas Huyssen, Abdualllahi Simone, et al.
2:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

OCTOBER 15
Of Our Time: Changing Attitudes in Historic Preservation
Robert A. M. Stern, Nina Reppaport, et al.
9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
New York School Of Interior Design
170 East 73rd St.
www.classicist.org

OCTOBER 18–22
Design 101
Steve Kroeter, Barry Bergdoll, et al.
NYU Woolworth Building
15 Barclay St.
www.design101.info

EXHIBITIONS
OCTOBER 8–NOVEMBER 15
The Voting Booth Project
Parsons School of Design
2 West 14th St.
www.parsons.edu/votingbooth

OCTOBER 13–NOVEMBER 14
Place for the Self
apexart
291 Church St.
www.apexart.org

OCTOBER 13–JANUARY 2
Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Wurstel Museum
National Academy of Design Museum
1003 5th Ave.
www.nationalacademy.org
With Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s recent announcement that New York City will soon overhaul its procurement processes for design services, the Center for Architecture’s exhibition, Civic Spirit: Changing The Course of Federal Design, could hardly be timelier. The exhibition celebrates the first ten years of the GSA’s Design Excellence Program, featuring renderings, intricate models, and photographs of 19 of the most notable projects commissioned through the program.

Since the initiating the Design Excellence Program in 1994, the GSA has made working for the government somewhat fashionable again. Formulated to address the crippling effects of the government’s intimidating qualification and submission process and an unflinching allegiance to the lowest bid without regard for the quality of design, the program has been fairly successful. Initially limited to federal courthouses, Design Excellence has been expanding its reach. Civic Spirit also showcases office buildings, border crossings, and research facilities.

Perhaps more importantly, smaller, younger firms like Lake/Flato, Morphosis, and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson are prominently featured alongside more established names like Richard Meier and SOM. The agency clearly has a predilection for exquisitely minutely detailed models—a preference brought into sharp relief by a beautifully abstracted model of Mies van der Rohe’s Federal Plaza in Chicago, displayed in the first room. Well organized and prominently displayed, models of the GSA’s proudest accomplishments form the heart of the exhibition.

But a show like Civic Spirit has the potential to raise more fundamental questions of how decisions about public architecture are made, and the individual projects only provide an indirect answer. A fuller discussion of GSA’s own program would have contributed immensely to the debate. Instead, issues such as the problems that initially compelled the GSA to create the Design Excellence Program or the direction of its future growth are condemned to obscurity in lengthy, poorly structured wall texts that litter the show in a disjointed manner. Ultimately the texts, and with them the broader discussion of the how we as a society choose our public architecture, simply disappear, overshadowed by the celebration of the architecture itself.

The GSA and the Center for Architecture have planned a number of related public events (www.aiany.org/civicspirit) and hoped-on-the- GA’s own program would have contributed immensely to the debate. Instead, issues such as the problems that initially compelled the GSA to create the Design Excellence Program or the direction of its future growth are condemned to obscurity in lengthy, poorly structured wall texts that litter the show in a disjointed manner. Ultimately the texts, and with them the broader discussion of the how we as a society choose our public architecture, simply disappear, overshadowed by the celebration of the architecture itself.

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