CORNELL DEAN MAKES WAVES WITH MANHATTAN CENTER AND KOOLHAAS CAMPUS ANNOUNCEMENTS

MOSTAFAVI MAKES HIS MOVES

On January 19, Dean Mohsen Mostafavi of Cornell University's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP) unveiled two surprises—a multipurpose space in Manhattan and a new architect, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), for Milstein Hall in Ithaca, New York. The moves are just some of the sweeping changes made by Mostafavi since his arrival from London's Architectural Association (AA) in the summer of 2004.

Mostafavi's announcement is a clear reflection of his continued on page 9

DEAN IS COMMISSIONED FOR MASTER PLAN, THEN DE-COMMISSIONED CCNY Shake-Up

City College of New York (CCNY) has finally embarked on a long-overdue effort to revamp its campus, but for architecture dean George Ranalli, it's no cause for celebration. Ranalli—who in 2002 was contracted by the City University of New York to work on a master plan for CCNY's under-built south campus—now looks on as Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) carries the job to completion.

While Ranalli remains disappointed and perplexed as to what motivated the hand-off, City University of New York's (CUNY) vice chancellor of facilities planning Emma Macari proudly touts a bevy of new developments now continued on page 7

FIRE LEAVES PRADA ALL WET

On Saturday, January 22, a five-alarm fire overtook 575 Broadway, which houses the Rem Koolhaas-designed flagship shop for Prada. The fire, which reportedly began somewhere between the first floor and ceiling of the basement, made its way through ductwork, traveling all the way to the building's fourth floor.

The tenants of the five-story building, which is owned by millionaire Peter Brant, houses, among others, the Prada retail store on the basement level and first floor, the administrative offices of the Guggenheim Museum on the second and parts of the third floor, and Art in America and /infemew magazines on the fifth floor.

The 23,000-square-foot Prada interior, which opened in 2001, is a landmark interior for Koolhaas and continued on page 5

FOSTER SKYSCRAPER CLAIMS AIR RIGHTS OF SEAGRAM BUILDING

With an eye towards developing its moderately derelict neighborhood, the recently released concept design for the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center indicates that a more vibrant and active future is in store for Hell's Kitchen. On January 23, the design team that won the commission to plan the center in September 2005 (see AN 17_10.19.05)—Richard Rogers Partnership, FXFowle Architects, and A. Epstein and Sons International—recently unveiled a master site plan and concept renderings.

The plan follows the rigorous program set forth by the client, the New York Convention Center Development Corporation (CCDC), adding approximately 340,000 square feet of space to its existing 750,000, with one contiguous 500,000-square-foot space in the complex.

According to Bruce Fowie, senior principal of FXFowle Architects, that half-million number is a national standard that meets, if not surpasses, some of the biggest in the country. “Right now the Javits Center is the 18th largest convention venue in the country,” he said. “A big issue for the Javits Convention Center is that it can’t attract the major shows due to its limited exhibition and meeting space.” The designers have planned for a total of 170,000 continued on page 3

The expanded Jacob K. Javits Convention Center will include an extended canopy over the east side along 11th Avenue.

MIES VAN DER ROHE'S SEAGRAM BUILDING

May be getting a new neighbor, in the form of a slender, nearly 700-foot-tall highrise building from Lord Norman Foster. The project, spearheaded by RFR Holdings, is planned for the site of an old YWCA on the same block, at 610 Lexington Avenue at the corner of 53rd Street. To build the project, RFR is seeking to transfer unused air rights from the 1957 modernist icon in order to build a tower with 80 to 90 condominiums and a 45- to 50-room hotel.

The Seagram Building's design has been heralded for its continued on page 6
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As architects well know, winning a job by no means guarantees that they will be able to realize it. When the project is the construction of a new architecture school, it becomes a glaring lesson for budding architects. Cornell University has changed architects for a third time, hiring Rem Koolhaas' Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) to design the home for its architecture program. Steven Holl won the original competition for the job in 2001 but left due to unresolved design differences, and the project was awarded in 2002 to Barkow Leibinger Architects (BLA), which made a fair amount of progress on the job before the project stalled in 2004.

It's entirely understandable that the concept for a building might shift in tandem with changes to the program it is meant to house. With Mohsen Mostafavi's arrival as dean of Cornell's College of Art, Architecture, and Planning (AAP) in 2004, he clearly brought new energy and direction to the school, beginning with a renewed commitment to the integration of the three departments within the program. But as building programs grow and change, why are architects often taken off a job rather than given the chance to revise and address clients' new concerns? It's a rhetorical question, of course, and the answer is as unique as each situation. BLA would have surely produced an outstanding building, though likely not as iconic or show-stopping as something by OMA.

We do not disagree that when programs change, sometime it is smartest to start from scratch. We ask, however, what sort of a message this sends to the students currently studying architecture at Cornell? On second thought, perhaps they are learning important lessons: Clients change their minds, tastes shift, and it's very difficult to compete with Rem Koolhaas.
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THE NEW URBANISTS ARE COMING!

Fellow New Yorkers, beware: There are New Urbanists among us, and they have started to organize. Eavesdrop has learned that, in their crusade to spread their radical brand of Main Street nostalgia, followers of the cultish Congress for the New Urbanism are starting a local chapter. At present, however, we're still at Code Yellow: they're too busy focusing among themselves to do any harm. One of our undercover agents infiltrated last month's midtown meeting of the Chapter Organizing Committee of the Congress for the New Urbanism (of the Executive Bureau under the State Commissariat of the People's Directorate) and filed this report: "[Committee chair] Ted Andrews was running everything and, all of a sudden, a large, bearded, overbearing guy stands up and tries to commander the meeting with the aim of making himself leader." The agitator in question was New Urbanist blogger John Massengale, and "rarely have I seen such bluster," continues our spy, who adds that the gathering quickly degenerated into "a hollering match over who was closer to [CNU president] John Norquist—as if he were Kim Jong Il or something. It was so scary it was comical." The arguments, however, were largely over procedural matters. And with his putch getting nowhere, we're told, Massengale (like so many comrades) simply disappeared. But we hear he hasn't given up; later, he sent us a cryptic message saying that "everyone's happy." We, however, are still terrified. "It felt like being in a roomful of Republicans," our informant says, "with their strange fanaticism and extremely bad hairstyles."

S.I. ≠ SMITHSONIAN?

Cooper-Hewitt wants to open on Staten Island! Seriously. (Staten Island, we learned, is a landmass of approximately 59 square miles to the southwest of Manhattan.) Since at least last summer, the museum has been in discussions with the outer borough's Snug Harbor Cultural Center—which we hear is actually a pretty nifty place—to develop a publicly accessible open storage site on its property for the space-strapped (and cash-strapped) Smithsonian museum's collection. The Cooper-Hewitt had no comment on the Staten Island Advance, which first reported the story, and basically offered us the same. But a rep for Snug Harbor, which was made a Smithsonian Affiliate (whatever that means) in December, told us "the talks are still ongoing, active, and positive." As long as Cooper-Hewitt isn't in charge of raising the money.

FAULTY TOWER RE-RUN

Almost two years after a Vanity Fair article famously revealed that all was not well at Richard Meier's Perry Street twin towers—e.g., buckling balconies, heating malfunctions and leaks, many leaks—Eavesdrop has determined that problems continue to plague the buildings. Last month, we hear that work on the three-story penthouse of former fashion licensor and condo board president Calvin Klein (who is already in litigation with the building's original sponsors) caused still more leaks that trickled all the way down to Jean-Georges Vongerichten's new restaurant, Perry Street, on the ground floor. Though we can't confirm the leak's origin, a helpful employee who answered the restaurant's phone acknowledged that it happened. The managing agent's lips, however, were more tightly sealed. "Any of the building's defects have already been, or are in process of being, corrected," is all he'd say.

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FIRE LEAVES PRADA ALL WET

continued from front page from his practice, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). According to a Prada spokesperson, the space sustained mostly water damage, due to fire-fighters' efforts in containing the flames. "There was smoke and significant water damage but fortunately there was no structural impact," she said. "The damage was largely cosmetic." The $40 million space contained many technological innovations, including fitting rooms with electrostatically charged glass, which turns from transparent to opaque, mirrors that reflect a non-reversed image of a shopper in the fitting room, and many flat screen monitors arrayed throughout the space. "Obviously our intent is to get back and running as quickly as possible, but we can't give a specific date," said the spokesperson. "We'll certainly be working with OMA as well and certainly many of the vendors that have been involved with the space." OMA completed the Prada space in collaboration with local architects ARO, and features a frequently changing wallpaper mural by graphic designers 2x4. According to an OMA spokesperson in Rotterdam, all inquiries were being diverted to partner Ole Scheeren, who worked with Koolhaas on the original design, who is now based in Beijing. Calls to Scheeren were not returned as of press time. The Guggenheim Museum also maintains that it suffered mostly water and smoke damage. "We didn't have any art in our offices, and nothing was permanently destroyed," said Anthony Calnek, the Guggenheim's deputy director for communications. "It has mostly impacted our administrative capacities." However, he notes, the Guggenheim's lease was running out and the offices were already prepared to move to another location.

MICHEL CLUIZEL CHOCOLATES

at ABC Home and Carpet, 888 Broadway
Telephone: 212-477-7335
Designer: Turrett Collaborative Architects

For the large contingent of New Yorkers who are both chocolate-mad and apartment-obsessed, the Michel Cluizel Chocolates boutique is here to help. Located between the Pain Quotidien bakery and the Pippa and Lucy restaurants inside ABC Home and Carpet, the store and bar offers shoppers a spot to satisfy cravings while mulling over the purchase of that great overstuffed couch. The centerpiece, a large Macassar ebony refrigerated showcase, is modeled by architect Wayne Turrett after the shape of the cocoa bean; it keeps the flown-in Parisian chocolate at the optimal 60-degree temperature. If the products are not kept cool, the chocolate will "lose its temper," according to sales associate Conrad Miller. It is the only Cluizel retail unit in the U.S., and the shop's décor echoes the dark brown and yellow tones of the company's signature packaging. Even the green and gold-flecked glass-tile mosaics by Ercole sit in brown mortar, which is matched to the hues of the chocolate.

TERESA HERRMANN

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THE BELOVED GREENWICH VILLAGE SPACE—AND ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS SMALL PARKS IN THE WORLD—IS ABOUT TO RECEIVE A REDESIGN, COURTESY OF THE CITY. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT KATE ORFF CRITIQUES THE NEWLY UNVEILED REDESIGN OF THIS ICONIC URBAN SPACE.

WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK:

EXTREME MAKEOVER

Washington Square Park, having languished in a state of benign neglect since its most recent facelift in 1970, is set to be remade. The new $16 million design, with its tranquil lawns and Beaux Arts aspirations, does not necessarily build upon the essential DNA of the park as a culturally mixed and contested public space (it was once a former burial ground in the heart of Greenwich Village). It is difficult to comment on the new plan, since most of the changes—moving the fountain, adding fences, and eliminating level changes—are perceived in section and elevation. However, here are some observations and comment:

1 The Asphalt Mounds
One of the most debated design changes is the replacement of the quirky asphalt mounds near the central fountain with a "graceful lawn." One wonders if the new design could have referenced the mounds, which for all of their perceived faults, represent an intent to inspire adventure and exploration, a sense that radically departs from what prevails in today's parks: the cult of passive occupation and an emphasis on a predetermined experience. Here circular seat walls and a change in grade provoke an almost stage-like atmosphere, where people congregate to sit, see, and be seen. At the same time, replacing the existing fountain with a new "classical" version represents a lost opportunity to create a dynamic, accessible, contemporary water feature that balances aspirations for change while keeping the impromptu, populist spirit of the place intact in order to define a new agenda of use and occupation.

2 The Fountain
A major expense in the Park's rehabilitation is certainly the re-grading, filling, and alignment of a new fountain with the Washington Square Arch. In my view, this move lacks subtlety. The ambition to align, flatten and build a "new" old fountain will profoundly alter the use of this space. Here circular seat walls and a change in grade provoke an almost stage-like atmosphere, where people congregate to sit, see, and be seen. At the same time, replacing the existing fountain with a new "classical" version represents a lost opportunity to create a dynamic, accessible, contemporary water feature that balances aspirations for change while keeping the impromptu, populist spirit of the place intact in order to define a new agenda of use and occupation.

3 Display Gardens
The placement of the new display perennial gardens on axis with the realigned Central Plaza is emblematic of a real shift in ideology: The old Washington Square Park, while dillapidated and unsafe, put people and social dynamics on stage. In the new scheme, horticulture and history serve as a centerpiece.

4 Fence
A lightning rod of controversy, the debate over whether or not to fence the border of the park has become a key issue. The fence, to be around four feet tall, keeps horticulture intact, while defining entries and exits more clearly. Central Park is bound by low walls and fences, forming a complex street edge and interface with the city. It is impossible to comment on the fence in this rendered plan, but surely a mixture of low walls and fences could create a layered, textured relationship with the street and control traffic without presenting a barrier. Such a mix of fencing strategies would be in keeping with the balance between transparency and privacy, openness and enclosure, landscape and activity that a new Washington Square Park should create.

KATE ORFF IS A REGISTERED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S GSAPP.

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Rosen and Fuchs paid $31.5 million for the YWCA property. So far, the project has won approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, a plan that stipulates maintenance standards for the Seagram as part of the transfer. The developers are now seeking approval from the Department of City Planning to waive a setback rule so that the tower could rise as one continuous slab, set back 10 feet from the street. Despite the fact that 610 Lexington Avenue will be nearly 200 feet taller than its neighbor, it is unlikely to cast shadows on the Seagram due to its slender shape and distance from the Mies building. RFR also insists that the tower will be barely visible from Seagram's plaza.

"When you look at the Seagram building from 53rd Street, the form is that of a shaft and a bustle," said Michael Sillerman, legal counsel to RFR, noting that Seagram looks like one slender tower but hides a complex at its base. "The process (transfering of air rights) allows us to mirror that bustle-and-shaft design." ANDREW YANG
The architecture school is being designed to focus on research and technology. KPF has been contracted to build a CUNY-wide advanced science research center, as well as a major CCNY facility to replace SCM's crumbling 1971 Robert E. Marshak science building in the college's historic north campus. The firm was also subsequently commissioned to produce a detailed master plan for the south campus. A new building for the architecture school is being designed by Rafael Viñoly.

Over two years ago, Ranalli, as part of his master plan contract, had developed a program distribution study for the south campus and was preparing to design a physical layout when, he said, CUNY effectively tabled the project, informing him that the school had run out of money. According to Macari, however, "Ranalli [had] completed the entire scope of the work that he was contracted to do." She explained that his site assessment "gave us a framework to help us go to the next step—but we always knew we'd do the next step with the architects for the science labs," Ranalli meanwhile countered. "We never got notice that we were officially off the project—we were just told that it was on hold."

Despite the master plan debacle, Ranalli took another stab, bringing CUNY a proposal for an 1,800-bed dormitory with developer LCOR attached. After receiving approval throughout the university board, Ranalli reported, the project was thwarted at the last minute when Macari, citing LCOR's lack of dormitory experience, opted to go with Alabama-based Capstone Development, which will finish the dorm this September. Meanwhile, KPF is now finishing schematics on both science buildings, with a total budget of $400 million. Construction will start in about a year, with occupancy slated for 2009. According to Ranalli, KPF's designs echo the campus' 1960s and '70s "behear" structures, which his plan would have sought to minimize. As dean of CCNY's architecture school since 1999, Ranalli said he assumed that he would play some part in shaping the future of the campus, however he has not been asked for his input regarding the current plans.

Best laid plans die hard, and Ranalli was not the only one to fight defeat. Michael Sorkin, director of CCNY's graduate program in urban design and Ranalli's "urban consultant" on the master plan project, launched his own protest campaign, independently drawing up a master plan proposal and sending it to CUNY officials as a provocation. "But nobody was provoked," he reported, except perhaps Ranalli, who did not concede the effort. "My theory [about why the master plan commission changed hands]," Macari was instructed by the chancellor to hire Ranalli, and it wasn't her own decision," Macari, meanwhile, denied the existence of any conflict. She also clarified that while KPF has done a "mini-master plan" for CCNY's south campus, the university has put out an RFP for a campus-wide master plan that will examine programmatic distribution throughout City College.

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While some of the best design architects in the United States may be in New York City, one has to go elsewhere to see many of the best contemporary projects by American firms. That is the conclusion reached by the juries of the 2006 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honor Awards through their selections. The winning projects, chosen from more than 680 total submissions, were announced on January 13. Of the 30 honor award recipients in architecture, interiors, and urban design, none are located in the New York area. And only three of the honor award winners, all in the architecture category, are by New York architects. The three firms are Richard Meier & Partners Architects, Gluckman Mayner Architects, and Polshek Partnership Architects. The honor awards juries seemingly snubbed New York this year compared to 2003, for example, when nine of the 31 winning projects were in New York City and nine separate New York firms were honored. And as for new, younger New York practices, it's "wait until next year" as three established firms are being honored in 2006. The only stateside project by a New York firm to win is the William J. Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, by Polshek Partnership Architects. "The bridge-like expression of this structure fits beautifully in the riverfront environment in which it is built," said the jury. "The symbolism is skillfully executed in the detailing and craft of the enclosure." Another project, Richard Meier's Frieder Burda Collection Museum in Baden-Baden, Germany, was honored because "it is flawlessly detailed and constructed," according to the jury. "The building's architectural expression is delicately balanced with the fine art it houses." It is a private collection of 550 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper of classical, modern, and contemporary art. Gluckman Mayner Architects and Camara/Martin Delgado Arquitectos of Malaga, Spain won for the Museo Picasso Malaga in Malaga. The architects restored the 16th-century Palacio de Buenavista and added six new buildings to the complex. The jury commented, "This is a beautiful job of restoration architecture. New portions were elegantly inserted in and around the castle, the outdoor courtyards and the city streets." The 30 projects granted honor awards and their architects will be recognized at the AIA 2006 National Convention, June 8–10 in Los Angeles. JOHN CZARNECKI

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AFTER 50 YEARS, THE HEIRS OF BRUNO ZEVI CLOSE UP SHOP

L'ARCHITETTURA FOLDS

After over 600 issues and nearly 60 years, L'Architettura is going out of print. The magazine, founded in 1956 by the critic Bruno Zevi, was entrusted to Furio Colombo, a well-known Italian journalist, after Zevi's death in 2000. In Zevi's absence, the magazine began to lose its polish and energy. While it managed to hang on for another six years, the editor and Zevi's heirs have recently decided to cease publication.

The magazine shined in the 1960s and '70s, when it was at the center of architectural debate. L'Architettura also produced important monographic issues, including one on the work of Giuseppe Terragni, originally published in 1968 and recently reissued.

The magazine suffered from the profession's shunning of its director during the 1980s. Zevi was firmly set against post-modernism, which put him out of favor with the likes of Paolo Portoghesi, Vittorio Gregotti, and Aldo Rossi. Conceived as a magazine with well-delineated and strong points of view, and aligned with the choices of its battle-ready director, L'Architettura was always in favor of experimentation. During the 1990s, it supported action architecture; and in the 1990s, it stood behind the deconstructivist movement.

While its graphic appearance and layout were not particularly striking, the magazine remained a clear and explicit point of reference for generations of Italian architects and, above all, those who did not relate to the traditional historian of Manfredo Tafuri and the school of Venice. The magazine also stood out for its support of local architects who did not belong to the international star system. LUIGI PRESTINKENZA PUGLISI

MOSTAFAVI MAKES HIS MOVES

continued from front page

ambitions for Cornell's AAP, charged with designing a 30,000-square-foot, $24 million building with offices, classrooms, and a gallery. The design was to replace Rand Hall, a 1912 warehouse-style building. B-LA pursued several iterations and completed schematic design in summer 2003. Tishman Construction was hired for pre-construction services. Then former president Jeffrey Lehman initiated an external advisory committee that suggested maintaining Rand Hall. B-LA's design study yielded code issues and increased costs. The project stalled in 2004. Partner Frank Barkow, who taught at Cornell from 1994 to 1996, declared, "I knew the project would be difficult but didn't think it would be impossible." In late 2005, Dean Mostafavi informed B-LA that they would be taken off the project.

Even before notifying B-LA, the university decided to start the entire process over because of a change in program. Mostafavi said, "This is a different project. Now that it is more interdisciplinary, we need to have spaces that enhance these interactions." The enlarged program exceeds the previous plan by 10,000 square feet, with an additional 30,000 square feet left from keeping Rand Hall. The $34 million project is expected to break ground in 2007.

While the new program is meant to invite collaboration, some observers feel the process is sending a message that undermines professional and institutional integrity. Michael Manfredi, a member of the external advisory committee, said, "It's unfortunate but hopefully in 15 years no one will remember the painful process and we'll have a great building." Mostafavi maintains his respect for B-LA, stating, "They are an incredible firm, but certain dynamics and forces made (the change) inevitable. We had to go with who we thought would be best for the project." JAMES WAY
LOST ICON
When the Pilgrim Baptist Church burned down last month, it was a loss for Chicago's architectural and cultural history. The church, originally the Synagogue Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv, was designed in 1891 by Louis Sullivan. The building was in the midst of a $2.6 million restoration when the roof caught fire and left it a complete ruin. The 10,500-square-foot structure was historically landmarked by the City of Chicago in 1981, both because of its architectural merit and its association with the origins of gospel music. The church hosted Thomas A. Dorsey during the time when he is credited with developing the gospel sound in the 1930s.

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS EXPANSION
Quinnipiac University has announced a $100 million expansion plan for its campus in Hamden, Connecticut. The five-year plan, released on January 31, calls for the construction of a $60 million health sciences center and a $15 million liberal arts building. Funding for the project will come from a multitude of sources including fundraising, operational funds, bonding, and the university's endowment. Final approval of the proposal by the university's board of trustees is expected in May.

MARKET ALTERNATIVE
An alternative proposal has been laid on the table for tenants of the soon-to-be closed Bronx Terminal Market in the South Bronx. Irwin Cohen, developer of the Chelsea Market in Manhattan, has proposed building a new structure directly behind the existing market on the Harlem River that would combine the current food merchants and wholesale businesses with 40 small food preparers to create a synergy similar to his market in Chelsea. The proposed lot is currently slated for park space as part of a larger proposal by the Related Companies, developers of the Time Warner Center and the Gwathmey Siegel tower at Astor Place. Related plans to replace the existing market with a $395 million mega-mall named the Gateway Center.

GREAT PARK, KEN
On January 23, Ken Smith Landscape Architect (KSLA) of New York was announced as the winner of the competition for the master design of the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, California. The 1,347-acre park is the focal point of a larger residential, educational, commercial, and retail redevelopment of the former 4,700-acre Marine Corps Air Station El Toro. The KSLA proposal bested 24 other firms in an eight-month-long competition. The winning scheme includes an amphitheater, sports park, nature trails, hot air balloon rides, and the retention of the base's airstrip, which is to be lined with fighter planes. Contract negotiations with KSLA are now underway and a groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Spring 2006.

VITRA NOVA
On February 1, Hanns-Peter Cohn, CEO of Vitra, appointed Martin Feller as managing director of Vitra Inc., USA. Feller had been acting as the interim country manager since last July before being appointed to the post. Vitra collaborates with architects and interior designers for the furnishings of both office and home designs.

DAMN YANKEES
At a luncheon at the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce on January 31, Yankees president Randy Levine discussed the updated $800 million Yankee Stadium plan, which incorporated measures to mitigate some of the community outcry against the previous plan. A community benefit agreement, negotiated by Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, includes a commitment from the ball club for 25 percent of new jobs to go to Bronx residents, for parking spaces to be made available year-round, and for replacement parkland and a parcel of land for a hotel and convention center to be set aside on the site of the old stadium. The new stadium will recreate the historical façade of the 1923 stadium, including the reinstallation of the original frieze and other details removed from the original during a renovation in the 1970's.

EXPRESS RIDE
Last month the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) announced that, this spring, select subway stations will undergo a trial to study a replacement for the often-frustrating magnetic Metrocard. Proposed stations include all stops on the Lexington Avenue line (4,5,6) between 125th Street and Bowling Green, the Jay Street/Ely Avenue stop (V,E) in Queens. MasterCard and Citigroup will fund the project, which uses radio-frequency technology to create a key chain that activates the turnstile. Later this month, the Port Authority in conjunction with NJ Transit and the MTA will test various smart-card readers at PATH stations.

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Gruzen Samton's project, which faces the Persian Gulf, features mixed-use neighborhoods spliced with ribbons of greenswards. Stepped zoning along the waterfront will preserve views (above, left). The firm also helped to plan sections of an adjacent island development, Palm Jebel Ali (below, left). The large half-crescent to the west of the palm island is a proposed future development.

The idea of designing a city from scratch is usually reserved for urban dreamers and over-the-top Disney ventures. Yet in Dubai, a city of approximately 36 square kilometers designed by New York–based architecture firm Gruzen Samton, is quietly in the works. The developer backing the ventures is Nakheel, a local firm owned by the Sheikh of Dubai, which is also behind the highly visible Palm and World island developments off Dubai's coast.

The firm started with a virgin desert site and an unfixed coastline, the result of a shallow seabed. The waterfront settlement, located between Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the two largest cities in the United Arab Emirates, will include at least 1,000 buildings for a population of around 500,000. It's situated between Sheikh Zayed Road, the highway that connects the two cities, and the Persian Gulf. To the west, it will be bordered by a proposed 75-mile artificial canal that will meander and twist like a natural river, ultimately meeting Dubai's marina.

Gruzen Samton started the project by establishing the basic organization of space and roadway systems. Exits from Sheikh Zayed Road will act as larger boulevards leading to the gulf, and will be spaced about 2 kilometers apart. Running roughly perpendicular to these north-south boulevards are larger east-west roads that segment the city into 15 or 20 smaller sections. Each one will have its own character and be served by green spaces, schools, and community facilities.

While the design team wanted to create walkable neighborhoods with medium to high density, the government required a compromise: Because utilities can't go under highways by law, a system of service roads surrounding the highways had to be created. The buildings along these major roads are thus relatively far apart. According to principal Jordan Gruzen and senior associate Scott Oliver, the team was forced to work with Los Angeles-style sprawl while trying to keep the density of a European city. They responded by requiring what Oliver described as "a four- to six-story Barcelona-like streetwall."

An important feature of the new town is a web of interconnected parks that bridge the 3-mile-long "central park" to the gulf coast. If built as designed, a cyclist could theoretically ride through most of the city via open greenery. Schools have been planned along north-south ribbons of parks.

The team is currently focusing on the more valuable coastal parcels of the development (see plan, above). By carving water channels through the land, the firm created more waterfront property, which are residentially zoned with required community facilities, and will be urbane in spirit. Directly facing the gulf is a strip of hotels.

Gruzen Samton is also proposing the creation of a harbor with a land extrusion to the east they have nicknamed "the thumb." This will be the downtown area of the city, which Gruzen likens to Times Square, and will be zoned for mixed-use (coded orange in the plan, above).

Public transportation includes a light-rail and high-speed bus system. The light rail is an extension of a pre-existing one in Dubai and will connect to Abu Dhabi by way of the main expressway looping north to pass through the center of the city. The bus services will connect to the halo surrounding the palm.

In planning the development, Gruzen Samton wants to create a relatively dense atmosphere while working with a car-oriented culture. The city hopes to capitalize on the booming expatriate community and the economy of tourism that has come to dominate Dubai. According to Gruzen, "By becoming firmly capitalist, Dubai recalls a 1940s Switzerland, a neutral place where anything can happen." JAFFER KOLB
MODERNISM’S FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL ARTISTIC EXPRESSION HAS LED TO EXTRAORDINARY BUILDINGS LIKE LOUIS I. KAHN’S YALE ART GALLERY, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT’S SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, AND PETER EISENMAN’S WEXNER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS. EACH REPRESENTS AN ATTEMPT BY ITS ARCHITECT TO TRY WHAT HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE, TESTING THE LIMITS OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND BUILDING TECHNOLOGY. THEIR PROGRESSIVENESS, HOWEVER, MADE THEM MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO DEPREDATION. AND UNLIKE MOST PRECEDING ARCHITECTURAL STYLES, WITH THEIR FAMILIAR MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES, MODERNIST BUILDINGS REQUIRE UNIQUE ANALYSIS AND SOLUTIONS AS NOVEL AS THOSE THAT BROUGHT THEM INTO BEING.

THE RECENTLY COMPLETED RENOVATIONS OF THE YALE ART GALLERY AND WEXNER CENTER AND THE GUGGENHEIM’S CURRENT FACELIFT BRING THEM INTO THE 21ST CENTURY WHILE PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVISIT LANDMARK MOMENTS IN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY.
Something about modernist buildings keeps them from aging with grace. They do not look better patinated by time, nor more picturesque when blemished with accretions. Their purity does not accept the accidental event that might add character on a traditional building. Their abstraction is a demanding, high-maintenance mistress who would prefer to stay forever unblemished.

The Yale Art Gallery by Louis Kahn, finished in 1953, will be receiving its AARP card in a couple of years. The half-century has not been kind to this landmark of modernism, even though Yale is well-practiced at maintaining its rich architectural patrimony. The university's benign neglect has, over the decades, taken its toll on the gallery, which was not only a seminal work by an American master, but one that kicked off Kahn's career and Yale's historic turn to modernism. "It was the flagship building that set the precedent for other Modernist buildings at Yale," said Jock Reynolds, director of the Yale University Art Gallery. "We also think of it as a great artwork."

Kahn's gallery is a masterpiece of understatement. On Chapel Street, its undecorated brick facade meets the Italianate Gothic Swartwout building, a part of the museum complex, and defer to its elegant arches. Kahn's brick, austere in its planarity but gentle in its coloring, is a foil to the decorative complexity of the adjacent wall, and a datum of simplicity for the new gallery itself. A stairway up to an entrance between two planes of the bronze-colored brick cleanses the visual palette, and prepares the visitor for the geometric clarity of the concrete cylinder and the block prism. The architectural archaeology in this extensive $44 million restoration yielded insights into Kahn's design. "You could retrace his design process and see how he figured things out," said Hazard. "He was working out certain details for the first time, like corner conditions, where he turned the interior back to accommodate a window."

"There are brilliant solutions, like the absolute simplicity and minimalist sensibility" of the building was the root of the problems in its restoration, which is scheduled to be complete next year.

"It's amazing how difficult the project has been," noted Hazard. "Buildings from the 1950s and '60s are tremendously difficult to work with because there's no place to hide anything—there's no poche, as in traditional buildings. In modernist structures, everything is simple and exposed, making it very difficult to bring in new services. Maintaining that purity is very tough when trying to bring it up to 21st century standards."

The architectural archaeology in this extensive $44 million restoration yielded insights into Kahn's design. "You could retrace his design process and see how he figured things out," said Hazard. "He was working out certain details for the first time, like corner conditions, where he turned the interior back to accommodate a window."

"There are brilliant solutions, like..."
It took seventeen years to get the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum built on Fifth Avenue. For the five decades that the museum has been standing, exterior maintenance has consisted mostly of painting. Now the spiral is covered with scaffolding, and the exterior is finally being studied for eventual repairs that are projected to finish in late 2007. The extent of the work is yet to be determined, but the price has been set at about $27 million, ten times what it cost to build the inverted spiral that opened in 1959.

The project is still in its study phase, said the architects from Wank Adams Slavin Associates LLP (WASA), who will do the preservation work. In March 2005, sensors were placed on the building's exterior to measure contraction and expansion. In December, the paint was stripped off to reveal the concrete walls underneath: vast Twombly-esque abstract surfaces with scratched patterns and cracks that look like beginnings of Clyfford Still crevices. Architects are now studying these mostly vertical cracks, and trying to determine their causes before any repairs begin.

"It was a challenge when it was built almost 50 years ago. If we had to build it today, it would still be a challenge, because of the geometry of the building, the construction techniques, and the use of concrete to the extent that it was done here," said project architect Angel Ayon of WASA.

Part of the building's uniqueness stems from Wright's design, said Ayon. "A lot of the work we do is based on having done similar buildings. You develop a tool chest of problems and repairs. This building is so unique that we have to approach it from scratch."

Cracking had been a problem since the concrete was poured, Ayon said, noting that Wright had used a vinyl-based paint called "the cocoon" in the hope that the coating would breach the cracks. Yet cracks were always visible, as were abrasions, bubbles, and craters in the concrete under the paint, even 12 coats later, in 2005. In the 1990s, studies based on limited samplings examined the cracking. "What's different now is that the team can remove the paint and study the extent of the cracking," Ayon said.

Structural engineer Robert Silman, also part of the team, doubts that the cracks pose a structural risk. "The risk is only that, as a crack opens, water gets into it and the water can cause corrosion of reinforcing steel. Over a long period of time, it's a maintenance headache. Will it cause a collapse? Not likely," Silman said that a laser survey, underway as this article goes to press, will indicate where the building could be under stress.

Exterior cracking is the most visible problem. The terrazzo floors on the interior ramp are also cracked, and the rotunda suffers from condensation (an annoying dilemma for anyone operating a climate-controlled space), and the front of the building, on the upper levels of the spiral near the skylight, is moving forward for reasons not yet known. The sidewalk, which Wright embedded with stainless steel circles (which, like the building, are landmarked), is also set for renovation. It was repaired in 1992 as part of the renovation that included the museum's expansion below ground.

The momentum for repairing the exterior seems to have come from one individual, Peter B. Lewis, the former chairman of the Progressive Corporation, who has now contributed $15 million to the project. Lewis was chairman of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation from 1998 to 2005, and he donated a total of some $90 million before resigning his chairmanship in a dispute with Guggenheim director Thomas Krens. Lewis thought that Kren's expansion policies were draining the foundation's resources. "It is the building, after all, that is the museum's most valuable work of art," said Lewis.

Lewis was always an admirer of the Frank Lloyd Wright structure but he was also, he noted, "always conscious of how badly the toilets worked." Lewis offered $15 million towards the renovation, and the board subsequently came up with an additional $5 million. But it still isn't clear whether that will be enough. Lewis said last...
WEXNER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

1989

EISENMAN ROBERTSON ARCHITECTS

BY JAYNE MERKEL

When Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center for the Visual Arts at Ohio State University opened in 1989, admirers lined up to get the architect's autograph, a series of famous artists performed, and the Ohio State Marching Band paraded from the new art center to the football stadium.

When the Wexner Center reopened last fall after Arup's three-year, $15.8 million renovation, the architect was nowhere to be found. A series of performances took place, and supporters of the institution came from miles around, but there was no parade. Architecture, it turns out, is a complicated business. Having a famous, challenging building had been deemed worth the inconvenience and expense, but having this particular famous, challenging building was also, obvi­ously, a mixed blessing.

How could a 13-year-old, $43 million building possibly require a three-year, $15.8 million renovation, largely financed with state funds ($14.8 million from Ohio State University, $1.3 million from the Wexner Center Foundation) at a time of rising tuition and cuts in student loans?

A university press release cautiously explained why: "The new curtain wall system results in significant improvements over the original, both in terms of light levels in the galleries and in temperature and humidity control...[it provides] a threefold improvement in air filtration over the original, which was built to the best 1980s standards. The new system also specifies thermal and condensation resistance tests that were not widely available in the 1980s. The sunlight was entirely redesigned, including its unusual dual-directional slope, to better manage rainwater and protect the exterior seals and glazing gaskets. The new curtain wall framing system...significantly improves the thermal performance of the curtain wall. The curtain wall and skylight glass have been upgraded from the best material available in the 1980s (1-inch dual-pane glass) to contemporary high-performance material (1¾-inch heat strengthened, low-iron triple-pane glass, with inert argon-filled air spaces, reflective coatings, and other features). The new glass reduces visible light to curatorial standards via transmission and diffusion filters and removes ultraviolet light via PVB interlayers. It also benefits the temperature and humidity control in the galleries.”

We are not talking about an ancient hut sheathed with animal skins here. Surely building technology has not leaped forward so dramatically in a decade and a half that such drastic measures should be necessary?

What the press release did not say was that all this was necessary because the roof leaked badly, the original curtain wall subjected works of art to ultraviolet glare, and the inside temperature could shift as much as 40 degrees. And while innovative buildings do often encounter technical difficulties, not all innovative buildings do. Eero Saarinen’s, for example, have survived astonishingly well for over half a century even though almost every one used new materials, structural systems, or technologies. On the other hand, university officials are rarely wild men. If they decided to make an investment of this kind, they must have decided that the building was worth its weight in gold.

The Center for the Visual Arts (as the project was initially called before Leslie H. Wexner pledged $25 million) was not a building created to house an existing institution. It was conceived to create energy on and draw artistic activity to a campus known more for its football team than anything else. Ohio State is the biggest research university and has many solid departments, but its flat, spread out campus is not very lively, and the school was not known for academic excellence or artistic daring. Also, Columbus did not have major art museums like Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo. The Wexner Center has helped change all that.

Peter Eisenman (who was practicing with Jacqueline Robertson at the time) won the commission to design the center (with capable Columbus architects Trott & Bean) in a highly publicized national competition in 1983, edging out finalists Arthur Erickson, Michael Graves, Cesar Pelli, and Kallman McKinnell & Wood. It was Eisenman’s first major building. And since his scheme and that of his old friend Michael Graves were easily the two most successful, it amounted to a contest between modernist and postmodern approaches and a duel between friendly rivals.

Working as a critic in Ohio at the time, I was initially attracted to Graves’ entry, which was eminently sensible, occupying an ugly underused site, elegant, and dignified—a proper museum on a proper site. But Ohio State didn’t need a museum. It didn’t have an art collection and was not likely to get one. It needed an energizer, something to get people excited about the arts and about life on campus, and the Eisenman Robertson scheme did just that.

It slashed between two existing...
ARCHITECTURAL STAIRS THAT MOVE THE BODY, MIND AND SOUL.

### SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM continued from page 14

"The building needs a lot of work, and whether $20 million is enough remains to be seen."

The insurance mogul was right. An additional $7 million came from New York City—about $5 million by early 2005 and an additional $2 million around the time of last November's mayoral election. The project is overseen by the Paratus Group, the firm that Lewis designated as owner's representative which reports to Lewis and Guggenheim vice president Mark Steglitz. When the project was initially conceived, a strong and comprehensive maintenance program wasn't in place," said Jon Maass, an architect with the Paratus Group. "The repair policy up to this point was, 'It's dirty, if it's faded, if there are cracks, add more paint to it.' What will be part of this project is not only fixing what's underneath the paint, but designing a more comprehensive maintenance program for the museum. The public may see more maintenance on the building on a regular basis as opposed to just putting more paint on."

The official story from the Guggenheim is that the broader renovation proceeded in stages, beginning with the construction of the current tower on the northeastern corner of the site and the renovation of the Frank Lloyd Wright interior, opened in 1992, which was followed by the renovation of the below-ground theater, now named the Peter B. Lewis Theater in recognition of his $15 million gift for that project. The exterior was always next, say Guggenheim officials. Once the work is done, sometime in 2007, the Guggenheim will open an exhibition devoted to Frank Lloyd Wright and the building, organized by junior architecture curator Monica Ramírez-Montagut.

Yet the experts stress that it's still uncertain what they'll be celebrating. "The exterior finish now is pretty rough and ready. You could see a lot of blemishes through the paint," said Robert Silman. "When the sun struck the building at a very flat angle, all of these blemishes showed. To me it's not very handsome. I don't think there's much there."

"I can't imagine that Mr. Wright wouldn't want the outside to look like that as well, but it never did," Silman said. "Will our repairs be invasive enough that it's going to require us to do some kind of repainting of the outside? What will that patching look like under the paint? We don't know what we have to do yet, if anything."

DAVID D'ARCY IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE ART NEWSPAPER.

### WEXNER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS continued from page 15

BETWEEN NEW YORK CITY AND LOS ANGELES.

"There was never a sense that this was urgent, in the way that the interior restoration was. It looked fine," said Anthony Calnek, a Guggenheim spokesman. "Every time you scraped away the old flaking paint and repainted it, it looked pretty good. It was sort of the last thing that needed to be done. You go from the most urgent thing to the least urgent thing."

Once the work is done, sometime in 2007, the Guggenheim will open a new exhibition devoted to Frank Lloyd Wright and the building, organized by junior architecture curator Monica Ramírez-Montagut.

The building definitely stands out on the campus, in an interesting way. It resurged the oculi of a medieval-style armor that had once occupied the site, but the scheme housed most of the facilities in a glass-walled cruciform grid where sloping corridors overlap with exhibition spaces.

The building definitely stands out on the campus, in an interesting and inviting way. And its wider impact was enormous. When it opened, schemes with shifted grids appeared on student drawing boards throughout the nation.

Although not suitable for the exhibition of many works of art, Syracuse University architecture dean Mark Robbins, who served as the Wexner's first curator of architecture and also showed his own work there, said, "I liked the active quality of the space. As an artist, I liked being able to play off the errant structural system. The building was flexible when we mounted exhibitions that had been organized for more traditional spaces."

The only thing that rankled him was that there was not enough space for the staff. It had been cut from the budget—not surprisingly. The original budget for the center was $16 million. By the time it was completed six years later, it had cost almost three times that.

Some of the practical problems at the Wexner are attributable to the fact that when it was built, it had no strong client voice, as represented by a museum director or curators to insist on appropriate light levels and other criteria.

Eisenman has often suggested that once he has finished a project, he is finished with it. New York Times reporter Robin Pogrebin seemed scandalized at his apparent lack of remorse for the many leaks and faults in the Wexner; an article dated September 18, 2005, quoted him as saying of his buildings, "Once they're up, they lose any magic for me."

The energetic current director, Sherri Geldin, also finds it mysterious that the architects did not consider these things. But she said, "Still, I love this building. It has made so many things possible." It seemed essential to correct its deficiencies. And correct they have: some of the most important elements of the new Wexner are indisputable, true to the original intent.

The energetic current director, Sherri Geldin, also finds it mysterious that the architects did not consider these things. But she said, "Still, I love this building. It has made so many things possible." It seemed essential to correct its deficiencies. And correct they have: some of the most important elements of the new Wexner are indisputable, true to the original intent.

JAYNE MERKEL WAS ARCHITECTURE CRITIC OF THE CINCINNATI ENSURER IN THE 1980S AND REPORTED ON THE WEXNER CENTER COMPETITION FOR INLAND ARCHITECT.
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   Corporate CAD Manager
   Hassell Pty Ltd
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**FEBRUARY**

**WEDNESDAY 15**
**LECTURES**
Denise Scott Brown
Systems as Pattern
6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Betts Auditorium
www.princeton.edu/~soa

Kari Quintero
Neighborhoods and Traffic
6:30 p.m.
Urban Center
466 Madison Ave.
www.urbancenterbooks.org

Brian O'Doherty
500 and Cube
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENING**
Bad Design Darts and Other Methods for Community-Led Improvement
Urban Center
466 Madison Ave.
www.urbancenterbooks.org

**THURSDAY 16**
**LECTURES**
Eric Allison, Frank Branscomi, Michael Lahr
What Does Preservation Do To Neighborhood Economics?
6:00 p.m.
Pace Institute Manhattan
544 West 14th St.
www.pratt.edu

Craig Dykers
Empathy and Architecture
6:00 p.m.
City College
Shepard Hall
Convent Ave. and 138th St.
www.ccnyc.cuny.edu

Stan Allen
Objects and Fields
6:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place
www.ainy.org

Brian McGrath, David Bergmen, Bart Bettencourt
Green Design
7:00 p.m.
CUNY Graduate Center
365 5th Ave.
www.cuny.edu

**SYMPOSIUM**
Philip Johnson and the Constancy of Change
Jeffrey Kipnis, Terence Riley, Charles Jencks, Vincent Scully, Peter Eisenman, Roel Koosha, Phyllis Lambert, Joan Ockman, Michaelorkin, Mark Wigley
6:00 p.m.
Yale School of Architecture
380 York St., New Haven
www.arch.yale.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENING**
Gordon Matta-Clark and Anarchitecture: A Detective Story
Colombia GSAPP
13 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

TUESDAY 21
**LECTURES**
Steve Christar Peripheral Vision: Recent Works from Studio Granda
6:30 p.m.
Scandinavia House
58 Park Ave.
www.scandinaviahouse.org

Michael Brenson
Primitivism, Myth, and Magic
6:30 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Peter B. Lewis Theater
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

**WEDNESDAY 22**
**LECTURE**
Scott Bukatman
Secret Identity Politics
6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Betts Auditorium
www.princeton.edu/~soa

**EXHIBITION OPENING**
Dave Muller
Gladdstone Gallery
515 West 24th St.
www.gladdstonegallery.com

**MARCH**

**THURSDAY 2**
**LECTURE**
Peter Eisenman
Architecture Against Itself
6:00 p.m.
City College, Shepard Hall
Convent Ave. and 138th St.
www.ccnyc.cuny.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**
Whitney Biennial 2006
Day for Night
Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org

Silvio Wolf
Thresholds
Robert Mann Gallery
210 11th Ave.
www.robertmann.com

SATURDAY 4
**FOR THE KIDS**
Family Day at the Center:
ESTO NOW
12:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place
www.ainy.org

**TUESDAY 7**
**EXHIBITION OPENING**
Samuel Palmer
Vision and Landscape
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

**WEDNESDAY 8**
**LECTURE**
Edward Dimendberg
Falling to Bytes
Preservation and Cinematic Memory in Los Angeles
6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Betts Auditorium
www.princeton.edu/~soa

**THURSDAY 9**
**LECTURE**
Line Voltage vs. Low Voltage Lighting: Choosing the Proper Wiring System
6:00 p.m.
Halef New York Showroom
26 East 35th St.
www.halefonline.com

Peter Lynch
5 After 12
6:00 p.m.
City College, Shepard Hall
Convent Ave. and 138th St.
www.ccnyc.cuny.edu

**Market Forces and Community Vision: The Role of Community in an "A-List Right" Development," Flushing "The City"
6:00 p.m.
Municipal Art Society
457 Madison Ave.
www.mas.org

**FRIDAY 10**
**SYMPOSIUM**
David Smith
A Centennial Symposium
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Peter B. Lewis Theater
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

**SILVIO WOLF: THRESHOLDS**
Robert Mann Gallery
210 11th Avenue
March 2 through April 22

A new exhibition at the Robert Mann Gallery displays the work of Silvio Wolf, an Italian photographer and instructor at Milan’s European Institute of Design. The title of the show, Thresholds, is also the theme that ties the photographs together. Wolf photographs mostly uninhabited structures, and while the exhibition could be bogged down with the obvious symbolism of liminal spaces, the graphic beauty of the photographs more than carries the weight of the show. Images such as The Two Doors (1986, pictured) demonstrate compositional mastery and formally sophisticated techniques that capitalize on the potential for creative framing. But the pictures don’t focus exclusively on the insider outside dichotomy. Some show the threshold at an angle that obscures what lies beyond, instead allowing the subject to stand alone.

**STEVE CHRISTIE**
**PERIPHERAL VISION: RECENT WORKS FROM STUDIO GRANDA**
February 21, 6:30 p.m.
Scandinavia House, 58 Park Avenue

Studio Granda opened in 1987 and struck gold that very year when they landed the job of designing Reykjavik’s new City Hall—a dream come true for any young firm. They are now Iceland’s most prominent architecture firm with such projects under their belts as the Supreme Court of Iceland (1996) and the Reykjavik Art Museum (2000). Steve Christar, who studied from AA in 1994, is now coming to New York to speak at the Scandinavian House about his firm’s recent work. The British-born architect will focus on the cultural peculiarities of working as an architect in Iceland, where verbal agreements take the place of contracts even for large projects, but also about designing for the island’s natural landscape. For instance, in the Skudras Residence (pictured) a terraced garden provides privacy, shelter, and unobstructed views of the Atlantic Ocean.
In less than a decade, J. Paul Getty's multi-billion-dollar trust has put the museum that bears his name to the forefront of Los Angeles cultural institutions. The oil baron's endowment carries an obligation to spend his money—something the sedulous skinflint himself notoriously refused to do—and spend Getty officials have. Nine years after Richard Meier's $1.2 billion travertine-clad complex he believed that by building a replica on his 64-acre estate over the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Getty was spellbound by the ancient world and the past is by no means sacred, or static. The new walls and corridors recede into the background, and the art stands on its own, as it should. The chief accomplishment of the Boston-based firm was to jettison Getty's original conceit of faithfully reconstructing the Villa dei Papiri, a Roman country house buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Getty was spellbound by the ancient world (he even wrote a novella, A Journey to Corinth, about the 1st century Roman statue, the Lansdowne Herakles, which is a central piece of the museum). He believed that by building a replica on his 64-acre estate overlooking the Pacific and endowing it with his collection, he could assure himself a spot in the pantheon of great art patrons and give the local plebes a genuine experience of Roman life. The trouble was, the mid-20th century copy looked a bit like a theme park, which should have surprised no one: the Getty is a faithful reproduction of nothing that had ever existed, a "villa-a-clif," as architectural historian Kazys Varnelis has said. Because the original has still never been fully excavated—two new levels were recently discovered—Getty's architects Langdon Wilson borrowed details from other similar houses of the period. The resulting pastiche can be said to be the apotheosis of aspirations of a nouveau-rich to buy his way into cultural respectability. The public never minded, and came in droves, making it one of the most popular destinations in Southern California. They soaked up the sun, the second-rate European paintings, and the odd piece of erotic black pottery. Through the masterful use of material—stone, metal, concrete, wood—the architects and Silvetti have sent these ghosts packing. At last, you can now gaze at the antiquities without feeling physically lost or claustrophobic. The new walls and corridors recede into the background, and the art stands on its own, as it should. The chief accomplishment of the Boston-based firm was to jettison Getty's original conceit of faithfully reconstructing the Villa dei Papiri, a Roman country house buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Getty was spellbound by the ancient world (he even wrote a novella, A Journey to Corinth, about the 1st century Roman statue, the Lansdowne Herakles, which is a central piece of the museum). He believed that by building a replica on his 64-acre estate overlooking the Pacific and endowing it with his collection, he could assure himself a spot in the pantheon of great art patrons and give the local plebes a genuine experience of Roman life. The trouble was, the mid-20th century copy looked a bit like a theme park, which should have surprised no one: the Getty is a faithful reproduction of nothing that had ever existed, a "villa-a-clif," as architectural historian Kazys Varnelis has said. Because the original has still never been fully excavated—two new levels were recently discovered—Getty's architects Langdon Wilson borrowed details from
GETTY'S FOLLY continued from previous page material, adding a subdued feel that is appropriate to classical antiquity. The new Villa reminds you of any number of Paris museums, where the fact that you are in the 17th century (Hôtel Salé, admirers of Picassos prodigious output, or in the Musee Marmottan, absorbing Monet's purple-blacks, lends another layer of meaning to the works—like a good frame around a painting.

The museum, in short, is a success. But re-working the 1970s copy is where Machado and Silvetti's work began, not ended. When it closed, the Getty Malibu had two buildings. There are now eleven, including an amphitheater, auditorium, four gardens, a cafe, museum store, several office buildings, three parking lots, and a towering entry pavilion. Carved into the steep canyon walls, the buildings are composed of horizontal and vertical layers of exposed aggregate concrete with black riven marble, deeply sandblasted white cement containing dark brown pebbles, bronze, rough-lawn board-formed concrete, red porphyry stone, Chinese black marble, African teak, translucent Turkish onyx, and not-colored travertine—the last a conscious reference to the Brentwood Getty. The architects call these "strata walls," soft, earthy, heavily textured surfaces with no identifiable style, like the scraped ground of an archaeological dig.

You want to reach out and touch them, you want to step back to absorb the muted spectrum of light radiating from them. The ragged purity and composed silence plainly suggest antiquity without summoning it up wholesale. Yet, these rather conservative 21st-century buildings are proof that the Getty's directors could have been courageous and told the architects to build a museum from scratch. Or, at the least, insisted upon less restraint. The 1974 building, after all, is hardly sacrosanct, and there are moments when you find yourself wishing that the entire approach to showing antiquities had been radically reconsidered. Reverence is not enough.

And, good as the buildings are, they are hatched to an idea that is, in its way, as cock-eyed as Getty's initial folly. The impenetral behind surrounding the original villa was, officials proclaimed, "One Getty, Two Locations." Translation: A discrete museum dedicated to the unalloyed pleasure of encountering the ancient world wasn't enough. A complex had to be built, as with Meier's empyrean, dedicated to research, scholarship, conservation, lecturing, and above all, teaching. Like the great big super-rich colossus is, the Getty showered money to advance its presumed mission.

Alas, they've taken that didactic agenda too seriously. Just to get to the revived museum, you now must pass through the entry pavilion, climb nearly 80 stairs, cross beneath a grape trellis, saunter along a pathway nearly 50 feet above the villa, dip down to the rim of the amphitheater, pass the cafe, only to descend another staircase that leads you past the gift shop, across the amphitheater stage, and finally into the enormous bronze doors opening into the atrium.

This journey is deliberate. In the past, visitors entered the museum via the outdoor peristyle garden, which offered dramatic views of the villa and the ocean. Admittedly, it was a purely concocted southern California vista, and not how Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, Julius Caesar's father-in-law and the owner of the original, would have made his way inside his seaside house. He would have entered through the atrium; so too must we. Why? As the Getty proudly announces, "To use the building as a teaching tool." So, the surprise and thrill of coming upon the huge pediment of Getty's showy villa, andambling amid the reproductions of ancient statuary, has become an afterthought in the service of executing a proper lesson plan.

Art, we are given to understand, must be hitched to some moralizing or uplifting purpose, or it is worthless. Under the guidance of Marion True, who led the decontamination of the quake-scandal-ridden property before her abrupt resignation last year, antiquities were reorganized around themes like Gods and goddesses in one room, monsters and minor deities in another, Alberto Giacometti in another, and so on.

The Getty Villa's outer peristyle.

GREG GOLDEN WROTE ABOUT ARCHITECTURE IN LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE. A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN ITS MARCH ISSUE.
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The Architect's Newspaper February 15, 2006
Since he settled in Shanghai in 2000, architect Qingyun Ma (pronounced Ching-Yoon Mah) has built a considerable body of large-scale work and earned a reputation as one of the brightest native talents to emerge from the current building boom in China. Educated at Tsinghua University and at the University of Pennsylvania, Ma, 41, worked for five years in New York at Kohn Pedersen Fox before returning to China in the mid-1990s. His firm MADA spmn (spmn stands for strategy, planning, architecture, media) has designed major campus buildings for Zhejiang University in Ningpo; Thumb Island, a civic center built on a lake in Qingpu; and the central business district for the city of WuXi. A former student of Rem Koolhaas and an early advisor on OMA’s CCTV project, Ma is teaching a studio at Columbia University this spring. An recently caught up with the young internationalist.

How was the collaboration on CCTV?
It was very exciting. I was Rem’s student, so I really understood his position towards China. Also, the building came in for a lot of criticism, all across the country; if it hadn’t, I don’t think it would be as successful today. CCTV is the biggest centralized media organization in one of the last communist countries in the world—whatever that means. It’s the reverse of a normal survival instinct. Normally, you can never do an accurate budget—you can’t set a date when the client will be ready. But I quickly realized that it can also be an amazing opportunity, because there are fewer rules and you can be very inventive. You can also actively alter or modify [as the project is going on], which for me became an advantage.

How did you win so many large-scale projects?
It’s the reverse of a normal survival instinct. Normally, a practice grows from very small to middle range, then large. But in China, if you start from a firm of two people, you’ll be killed before you grow to five. You have to start big and shrink. I think this process is unique to China. The reason we started so quickly is that we won a competition for the master plan of a whole area [Ningpo], and after that, an entire campus. It was our first job, and it was still one of the biggest jobs we’ve ever done.

You’ve done some of your most interesting work in Xian. I think that in Xian I have a particular advantage because I am from that city. So when I propose something that is seemingly non-traditional, [my clients] understand that I have already thought it through and understand the context. I make an effort to persuade them or expose them to the idea that a tradition or history is not maintained by repetition, but that it actually involves the equal energy of creating something new, a new that’s good. It adds a lot more to the sentiment of their tradition.

How was the collaboration on CCTV?
It was a very exciting. I was Rem’s student, so I really understood his position towards China. Also, the building came in for a lot of criticism, all across the country; if it hadn’t, I don’t think it would be as successful today. I think we worked three times as hard because we were under so much scrutiny. This building—if I may say so—is so bad in people’s eyes that it can only happen once. It’s a true monument, as it was intended to be. It’s bad because it’s so far off from people’s expectations of a building. But what justifies it is the nature of the client. CCTV is the biggest centralized media organization in one of the last communist countries in the world—whatever that means. CCTV needed an image that does not resemble the towers that normally come with capitalism, and that is what Rem brought them.

A significant building, after it is built, elevates the level of the whole building industry. Contractors are being trained as they go through this process. So a bad thing can be a good thing.
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