AS SMOKE CLEARS, A CLOUD OF FRUSTRATION TAKES ITS PLACE

MANY QUESTIONS IN GROUND ZERO FIRE

It was a September 11 casualty, a ghost draped in black that has loomed over Ground Zero for years. It grew all the more terrifying on August 18 when fire broke out on the 17th floor, and all the more tragic when it claimed the lives of two firefighters from a SoHo firehouse, home of Engine 24 and Ladder 5. 130 Liberty Street, the former Deutsche Bank building, has been beset by trouble and controversy since debris from the South Tower of the World Trade Center tore a massive gash in the building and caused irreparable structural damage six years ago. What caused the fire that spread through the upper levels has not been determined, though faulty wiring and cigarettes have been the target of a report from the FDNY's Bureau of Fire Investigations.

continued on page 5

DEADLINE PASSED WEEKS AGO, DOT STILL APPROVES GRANT

FEDERAL $ FOR CONGESTION PRICING

On August 14, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced that the United States Department of Transportation awarded the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the New York Department of Transportation (DOT) a $354.5 million grant towards the implementation of a proposed congestion pricing plan. The city had hoped for as much as $537 million, but in a statement made this afternoon, the Mayor said, "We've worked very hard to secure these funds, and this is a major victory for the people of New York City." Federal money is continued on page 6

WITH REFORMS, BLOOMBERG, LOPEZ, AND RATNER ALL SEE VICTORY

421-a Deal Struck

For a moment, it seemed like the months of hard work spent transforming the 421-a tax abatement program into an engine for affordable housing would come crashing down. After the program emerged from the State Legislature in late June, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg felt his plan had been so changed that he asked the governor to veto it if no compromise could be reached. And as often happens in Albany, a last-minute deal was struck on August 7, "a positive result for affordable housing in New York City," said the Mayor in a statement.

"I'm happy with the final outcome of the bill," said Assemblyman Vito Lopez, architect of the bill the mayor opposed. "We didn't get everything continued on page 4

WITH ZONING CHANGE PENDING, CAUTION AMID SPECULATION

CONFEY ISLAND DRUM ROLL

All summer long, rumors have swirled around the future redevelopment of Coney Island, generating an atmosphere nearly as carnivalesque as the boardwalk itself: anonymous media reports of city officials' intentions, tea-leaf readings of ambiguous signals, alarmist claims that Coney is shutting down. Change is coming, but it's not yet clear in what form.

Coney Island is New York City's only C7 zone, a special amusement-park category that bans residences, restricts commercial uses, and limits Floor-Area Ratios to 2.0. However, developer Thor Equities saw massive potential for hotels, timeshares, and other new features in the area should the zoning change. Thor purchased 10 acres (over half the amusement zone), hired a design team, and started to float the plan to the public. They may have jumped the gun: The inevitable battles under the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure await the Department of City Planning's revision of the C7 requirements, serially rescheduled and still under wraps. DCP press secretary Rachaele Raynoff said that no date has been set; Charles Reichenthal of the Coney Island Development Corporation (CIDC) and Community Board 13 continued on page 4

MOSTAFAVI JOINS HARVARD

In deciding to leave his deanship at Cornell's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP) for the same position at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD), Mohsen Mostafavi's reason was simple. "What's exciting is the fact it's one of the best, if not the best graduate program in the world. It has such depth. The range of people who work there and the students are fantastic," he said. continued on page 3

BALMORI'S BILBAO EFFECTS

SEE PAGE 8

NEW GSD DEAN RETURNS, CALM TO SCHOOL

COLOMINA'S HOME FRONT

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VectorWorks 2008
The effort to save the elevated train trestle known as the High Line is one of the more successful preservation efforts in recent memory. It is extraordinary to remember that in 1999, when Robert Hammond and Joshua David began working to raise interest in the idea of turning the abandoned rail into a public space, it was considered a curiosity at best and, more often, a dangerous eyesore that ought to come down. The series of pictures by photographer Joel Sternfeld, whose studio is nearby, were undoubtedly a crucial tool in the fight. For those New Yorkers who saw the photos, the idea of an exquisitely wild and green landscape hidden in plain sight and just out of reach was captivating. One photo in particular, of the northernmost portion of the trestle, best embodied that idea since it seemed to stretch on endlessly, and ultimately it became the face of the High Line. Ironically, it is just that same section that may be the piece to get demolished.

The one part of the High Line the city doesn’t own curves around the Hudson Rail Yards from 30th to 33rd streets, and its future is dependent on what happens to that contentious site. While proposals from developers aren’t due until October 11, some likely bidders have already made noises about the need to take it down to make development financially feasible. The Durst Organization, in particular, has gone public with concerns about the structure, arguing that the trestle would need underpinning because the wooden supports have been exposed for so long; that it would prevent construction trucks from accessing a site; that it would minimize rentable space; and so on. However, the group that Hammond and David launched, Friends of the High Line, also commissioned a study from Robert Silman Associates and came up with some very different conclusions. For example, 136 of the 147 piers the structure sits on are in fact concrete, not wood; and so underpinning wouldn’t be required. For access as heavy construction equipment, not only is it possible, it’s happening: The Standard Hotel is under construction, and they are some of the most high-profile in the area. Condos by architects including Jean Nouvel, Annabelle Selldorf, Neil Denari, Steven Holl, Gary Handel, and Della Valle Bernheimer have been attracting attention since the day each was announced. Add in the new Renzo Piano–designed Whitney’s satellite space, and you’ve got a design district, which will undoubtedly pick up momentum as more buildings are complete. The city calculates that the High Line’s net benefit to the area is almost $900 million. As extraordinary as those numbers are, the High Line’s value is social and historical; it is one that ultimately can’t be quantified.

The New York design community has always supported the High Line—industrial ruins are basically porn for architects, after all—but now is the time to make that support vocal. We remember better than most the loss of Penn Station, and in watching the years-long struggle over Moynihan Station, know how hard it is to rectify mistakes. We know that nothing is a better foil for all of the sleek new towers in the neighborhood than a piece of outrage. The city calculates that the High Line’s net benefit to the area is almost $900 million. As extraordinary as those numbers are, the High Line’s value is social and historical; it is one that ultimately can’t be quantified.

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CONEY ISLAND DRUM ROLL continued from front page

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investigators are also looking into why a pre-fire plan had not been devised for the building's most complicated demolition project in the city's history, which involves the piece-by-piece deconstruction of the building while also dealing with a suffusion of dangerous toxins, including asbestos and "World Trade Center dust," a mistana of pulverized metals created by the collapse of the twin towers ("In Deconstruction, 130 Liberty Street," The New York Times, June 20, 2007).

The lack of such a plan has partially blamed for the deaths of two firefighters, Robert Bedell, 53, and Joseph Graffagnino, 33, because the labyrinthine system of plywood walls used to keep toxins at bay created unusual and disorienting conditions. Another reason is that the standpipe, which feeds water to the various stories in tall buildings during a fire, had in one place been dismantled. The FDNY admitted in an investigation update on August 20 that the standpipe had not been checked since November 1996, when the building was still occupied. The FDNY also revealed in the update that it must visually inspect standpipes every 15 days for buildings under demolition; this had yet to happen. The Manhattan District Attorney's office announced on August 20 that it had opened its own investigation into the fire, and State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo said he was also looking into 130 Liberty Street. The Department of Buildings (DOB) required Bovis Land Lease, the general contractor on the project, to maintain the standpipe. According to a DOB release, a recent investigation of the standpipe on decontaminated floors showed no problems, suggesting it was intact. A 20-foot section was missing in the basement, which was flooded with the water needed by firefighters above. It is not yet known why the pipe section was removed. Since deconstruction began in March, the DOB inspected 130 Liberty Street 60 times, issuing 19 violations and six stop work orders. "We are not speaking to the press at this time," a Bovis spokesperson said. Bovis did speak with the subcontractor in charge of deconstruction, the John Galt Corporation of the Bronx. In a letter obtained by The New York Times and posted on its website on August 23, James Abadie, Bovis' principal in charge at 130 Liberty Street, informed Galt that its contract had been terminated. "Over recent weeks and most notably in the days following the tragic accident that occurred at the Project site on August 18, 2007, Galt has demonstrated an inability to comply with the terms of its Trade Contract with respect to site supervision, maintenance, and Project safety," he wrote. The Times reported the day before that Galt was a shadow corporation for two legally suspect companies, Regional Scaffolding and Hoisting Company and Safeway. The latter had Mafia ties and one of its executives has served two jail terms. Bovis reportedly hired the companies because no other contractors would take the dangerous and uncertain project, especially during a construction boom. "There was only one contractor willing to work on taking down the building, as far as I know," said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. Perhaps the one piece of good news about the fire at 130 Liberty Street is that the complex system keeping the asbestos and other toxins at bay seems to have protected the city from further contamination by the poisons entombed in the building. The state Environmental Protection Agency, which has been monitoring the site for two years, announced that dangerous levels of toxins were not released by the fire. Though the DOB has determined the building to be structurally sound, no one yet knows when demolition could continue. "We have to let the investigation run its course before we reassess any timelines," Errol Cockfield, spokesman for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which is overseeing the project, wrote in an email. He said it could take months to clear debris and replace damaged systems to return the building to the same place it was before the fire. This does not account for the need to find a replacement for Galt, no doubt a challenge given additional problems now surrounding the site, as well as those of the past, such as insurance and labor disputes and environmental concerns, all of which delayed the project for years. The specter of 130 Liberty Street may well remain with the city for some time to come. MC
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FEDERAL S FOR CONGESTION PRICING continued from front page

The MTA would receive $184 million for new bus facilities and the city would receive $112.7 million for a faster and more efficient five-borough bus system. $39.3 million would be allocated for traffic signal and pedestrian improvement. $10.4 million would go towards implementing the congestion pricing project. $18.8 million would be allotted for ferry service that would connect Brooklyn and Queens with Midtown and Lower Manhattan. The remaining $2 million would go towards research.

The Mayor's plan is expected to generate millions of dollars in annual revenue that could be used to improve transportation infrastructure.

If it is approved, cars entering Manhattan south of 86th Street during business hours would pay $8, and trucks $21. Cars driving within the designated zone would be charged $4 and trucks $5.50 per day. Cameras installed throughout the city would photograph license plates and drivers would be expected to submit payments to the city.

All of this is part of the Mayor's PlaNYC, a 30 year initiative which is an attempt to reduce the city's pollution, energy consumption, and traffic while increasing the quality of life. "Congestion pricing holds immense promise for the future of New York City," said Governor Eliot Spitzer. "It has the potential to mitigate the city's severe congestion and its associated economic costs while also improving public health by reducing harmful pollutants."

Opponents of the plan say that middle-class borough residents who drive into the city on a regular basis will be hit the hardest. Also, some are skeptical about whether pricing will have the intended effect of steering drivers towards public transportation. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, one of the loudest opponents of the plan, expressed doubt.

"While there has been support for the Mayor's plan, there has also been strong opposition," Silver said in a statement. "I have heard concerns from my own constituents. My Assembly colleagues in and near New York City have heard concerns from their constituents as well. I believe it is essential to consider these concerns, and there is a process in place to do that."

But advocates of the plan say that the price of gridlock is too high. "Drivers are already paying today in delays and unreliability," Transportation Secretary Mary Peters said, according to The New York Times.

"Now we'll work with the State Legislature and City Council to seize this golden opportunity to use Federal funds to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and keep traffic tie-ups from choking our economy," said Mayor Bloomberg. On August 14, the DOT announced five metropolitan areas that will be granted funds to help mitigate traffic.

In addition to New York, they are Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Seattle.

ALEX ULAM

TOR DEPARTS MAD

BLOEMINK "NOT A GOOD FIT" FOR CRAFT MUSEUM

NEW DIRECTOR DEPARTS MAD

After a six-month tenure as deputy director for curatorial affairs at the Museum of Arts & Design (MAD), Barbara Bloemink has resigned. "It was mutually determined that the position was not a good fit based on Barbara's experience and expertise with contemporary art and design, and MAD's continuing emphasis on contemporary crafts, art, and design as a reflection of the museum's craft heritage," Patrick Keffe, MAD's vice president for public relations, said in a prepared statement.

Bloemink, who holds a Ph.D in art history from Yale University, left her prior job as cultural director at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, to work at the MAD, which in 2002 changed its name from the American Craft Museum. In 2006, the museum will also move from 53rd Street to an all-new home at a 2 Columbus Circle redesign of an Edward Durell Stone building by Brad Cloepfl of Allied Works Architecture. In a phone interview, Bloemink said that initially, when she took the job she was excited about the museum's new emphasis on arts, but that over time she came to see the institution as too hidebound by its history to achieve its stated goals. "I was very excited by the idea of the museum really living up to this new title of really mixing the best and most exciting in international contemporary art and international contemporary design with the best of international craft, and not having hierarchies or departments between them," she said, adding, "But the curatorial staff was more looking at the arts based on the institution's legacy and background in the crafts."

Bloemink is currently planning an exhibition focused on women designers for Art Basel Miami Beach. She said that despite her disappointment at MAD, she has not given up on the idea that brought her there. "What I am very interested in doing in the future is exploring the cross over—the cross-pollinating, and seeing how ideas and things translate across these blurred traditions."

ALEX ULAM
WERE 2 BROOKLYN BUILDINGS STOPS ON UNDERGROUND RAILROAD?

UNDERGROUND HISTORY

Three-and-a-half years ago the occupants of seven 19th-century row houses on Duffield and Gold Streets in downtown Brooklyn were notified by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development that they would have to vacate their houses in order to make way for a proposed underground parking garage and public park in connection with the city's plan to revitalize downtown Brooklyn. Lewis Greenstein and Joy Chatel, two property owners in the buildings, began fighting back almost immediately, claiming that their houses had once used as waystations for escaped slaves fleeing the South on the Underground Railroad. The two may still lose their homes, but on August 13 they won a victory of sorts when Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the City Council announced plans to officially commemorate Brooklyn's role in the Underground Railroad.

A six-member panel of noted experts, it was announced, will assist the city and The Downtown Brooklyn Partnership in the creation of an RFP to commemorate abolitionist activities in Brooklyn leading up to the Civil War. Councilmember Letitia James, a Prospect Heights Democrat, said the commemoration could include a museum, historical markers and trails. "But the commission hasn't even begun to discuss it, so I wouldn't want to limit it to just that."

According to Greenstein and Chatel, local activists including Georgia Warre and former Black Panther Sonny Carson (of "The Education of Sonny Carson" fame, and a controversial Brooklyn figure) helped spread the word about the role their houses had played in the Underground Railroad as far back as the early 1980s, and even did some of the research.

Greenstein said that a tenant of his found a Civil War-era pot-bellied stove in his house's subbasement and later found evidence of a tunnel connecting his house with three others on Duffield Street. "The basement was used as a kitchen," Greenstein said while giving a tour of the premises last spring. "Slaves would use the tunnel to travel between the houses. I saw the tunnel myself years ago when they opened up the sidewalk in front of Joy's house."

Councilmembers Letitia James and Charles Barron support Greenstein's and Chatel's suggestion that the houses be saved and used as an archive or museum. But a study commissioned by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and released in March by the Manhattan-based consulting firm AKRF (a firm that has also done work for the city on Columbia's Manhattanville expansion plan) turned up little concrete evidence that the rowhouses were used as actual stations on the Underground Railroad.

The research shined a light on the already well-known abolitionist activity at Henry Ward Beecher's nearby Plymouth Church and even found that the influential abolitionist Thomas Truesdell lived in Chatel's house for nearly ten years. But since the alleged tunnels were identified by an architectural historian as more likely to have been coal chutes and no other physical evidence could be verified, the EDC recommended at a City Council hearing in May that the proposed parking garage and public plaza go forward.

At the May hearing several councilmembers raised concerns about AKRF's research. When asked, for instance, why they didn't hire an archeologist on a half-million dollar budget to verify whether the alleged tunnels were really there, Kate Collignon, an EDC senior vice president, claimed they would have had to tear down the houses to do so. Councilmember John Liu, a Democrat from Queens, asked why they couldn't use "ground-penetrating radar." You certainly don't have to demolish a building in order to do archeological work," he said. David Yassky, the downtown Brooklyn representative, appeared to harbor concerns of his own, while James summed things up by quoting a Nigerian proverb: "Don't let the lions tell the giraffe's story," she said. "Obviously we need to do more research."

Nevertheless, plans for a multi-story underground parking garage are on the march. On August 13—the same day the Mayor announced the commemoration project—the EDC and the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership officially released an RFP for developers to build a parking garage accommodating 694 cars on the very site where three of the Duffield Street houses now sit. The developer will be responsible for realizing both the garage and plans for a street-level public park.

Councilmember James, a vocal critic of the city's Downtown Brooklyn Plan, said she would continue to fight on behalf of the houses. "We filed a lawsuit to challenge the city's use of eminent domain with regard to the Duffield Street houses," she said. "The city clearly sees the commemoration project as a consolation prize, but as far as I'm concerned the one thing doesn't have a thing to do with the other."
Russell Johnson, who died last week at the age of 83, was a pivotal figure in the field of acoustical consulting, but nobody could have predicted how successful it would be: the “Bilbao Effect” has launched hundreds of cultural renewal projects in cities around the world. At the center of it all was the acclaim and the support he got from artists.

City officials in Bilbao, Spain hoped that a new museum by a famous American architect would start the faded industrial city’s cultural revival, but nobody could have predicted how successful it would be: the “Bilbao Effect” has launched hundreds of cultural projects in cities around the world. At the center of it all was the acclaim and the support he got from artists.

**Russell Johnson at 83**

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JOHANSEN'S BRUTALIST MECHANIC THEATER DESIGNATED LANDMARK

AN ENCORE IN BALTIMORE?

The Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) voted unanimously on August 14 to approve landmark status for the Morris A. Mechanic Theater in an effort to preserve the 1967 Brutalist building by John Johansen. Known as the theater that brought Broadway to Baltimore, the 1,600-seater surrendered the spotlight to the 2,300-seat Hippodrome, a 1914 vaudeville theater that was renovated in 2004. In January 2005, Arrow Parking purchased the Mechanic for $6 million. Its seats have remained vacant ever since.

Michael Murphy, a CHAP commissioner, is pleased with the unanimous vote, but said that the greatest challenges are yet to come. The Planning Commission and City Council must now approve the theater's landmark status, but Murphy is concerned they will not support CHAP's decision. "There is a national epidemic going on that threatens to eliminate the best American architecture of the 1960s," he said.

This year alone, two houses designed by Paul Rudolph were demolished, and a school in Sarasota and an office tower in Boston, both of his design, have been threatened. Kallman, McKinnell and Knowles' iconic city hall in Boston is perennially under threat, and Marcel Breuer's only skyscraper, located in Cleveland, will be razed in the spring. Perhaps fittingly, Johansen's career began as a draftsman for Breuer after he graduated from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1942.

Preservationists would like to see the Mechanic repurposed as an arts center, but they are also open to adding a high-rise commercial or residential structure. Murphy said he supports this approach "so long as the modifications to the building are not irreversible." Arrow, which owns a parking lot beneath the theater, has said it wants a clean slate to build on.

Johansen, now 91, is one of many architects who have written letters to the commission endorsing its preservation. In his letter, he writes that the Mechanic Theater has been applauded for "its functional performance, its noteworthy economy of means and remarkably low construction cost, and its aesthetic qualities."

"This building is known and respected by architectural professionals worldwide," he added. Those professional clearly agree, as their letters to the commission prove. "Establishing this building as a landmark would preserve and resurrect an important part of architectural history," Richard Meier wrote. James Polshek saw only money in the owner's eyes. "I urge your commission to save the Mechanic from the wrecking ball of greed," he wrote.

The renovation of the Hippodrome aimed to spark economic development in a struggling section of Baltimore, just as the Mechanic Theater was decades earlier. Hugh Hardy, a supporter of the preservation of the Mechanic said, "It's an interesting theater because when it was built, it was an example of what was hoped to be a renewal of downtown Baltimore." Ironically, Murphy and Hardy's firms were the architects behind the refurbishment of the Hippodrome that has left the Mechanic Theater's future in doubt. But Murphy is quick to point out that the city, not the architects, failed to propose an alternate use for the Mechanic when the Hippodrome was built. "The city deserves some criticism for this," he said.

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the boroughs of Manhattan, NEW HOUSING

On August 9, Governor Eliot Spitzer announced the recipients of $106 million in state funding for affordable housing and community renewal projects. In New York City, this included 10 projects in Brooklyn, and three each for the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. Elsewhere in the state, 141 projects were awarded funding in amounts as small as $34,440 and as large as $2.2 million.

The projects were selected from a pool of 500 applicants. The applications were due on February 26 and the winners were finalized on August 6. Most grants are not for new construction. In Staten Island and Queens, they will assist low-income residents with home ownership, fund efforts to revitalize the streetscape, and make homes more accessible to the elderly and handicapped. One of the Bronx projects consists of 13 units for the homeless in a new six-story elevator building. In Manhattan, funding will support the construction of 40 units of housing for residents with low incomes or HIV/AIDS.

In Brooklyn, the development team at Common Ground Community Housing will build 72 units for low-income elderly and the psychiatrically disabled. Of the 22 AFFORDABLE PROJECTS FOR NYC ANNOUNCED

In the search for sustainable energy, opportunities are popping up everywhere, but paper dreams can be harder to achieve than green realities. In mid-August, Verdant Power pulled six battered turbines from the murky waters of the East River, where they had been in operation for the last six months. The turbines had grown dilapidated under the force of the same tides and currents they captured and transformed into energy. Verdant hopes to have repaired and reinforced versions back by November, and could eventually install 300, generating 1,000 kilowatt hours a day. Meanwhile, the Long Island Power Authority is moving ahead with a wind farm on Jones Beach. Complaints of eyesores and environmental intrusion were rampant, but the ultimate decision came down to cost: an estimated $811 million, up from $200 million.

Amtrak and the state’s Historic Preservation Office may hamper long-overdue plans to transform the Farley Post Office into a new train station. Plans are forthcoming from development partners Vornado and Related, who want to turn the McKim, Mead & White-designed post office into an entrance to the station and a new home for Madison Square Garden, a move that will net the developers major tracts of land for a mixed-use office complex. Amtrak announced on August 3 that it holds veto power over the project because it controls the land the developers would like to build on. It previously declined offers to make Farley its home. The state preservation office told The New York Sun on August 2 that too invasive a design could threaten tax credits the developers are seeking, adding yet more oversight to the project.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center needed a structural system for its Mortimer B. Zuckerman Research Center robust enough to dampen the vibrations that can wreak havoc with sensitive test equipment. But it also wanted to build in flexibility for planned future construction. Architect and structural engineer Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP in collaboration with Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership solved the problem through inspired engineering, and by choosing the right material—structural steel.

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Structural Steel means Design Flexibility

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Since the days of Vitruvius, architects have turned to nature for inspiration, but today's designers are thinking about the way a sea sponge behaves, not just the way it looks. Biomimicry, or the imitation of nature's functions and systems, is helping push the boundaries of structure and sustainability.

By Lisa Delgado

There's a rising star in the architecture and design communities. She can build homes so strong, they withstand more than 2,000 times their own weight. She taught Mercedes-Benz a thing or two about making more aerodynamic cars. And in her spare time, she developed a technique for creating vibrant colors with no toxins.

So who is this superstar? You know her already—her name is Mother Nature. Time and again, she's proven herself to be a master architect and engineer. In case you're wondering, tests have shown snail shells can support more than 2,000 times their weight, the streamlined form of the boxfish helped Mercedes-Benz build an ultrafuel-efficient car, and butterfly wings have their glorious color embedded in their structure. We might feel humbled, but then again, nature's been at this game a lot longer than we humans, honing her designs through the process of evolution.

As scientist Janine Benyus wrote in her influential book Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature (1997), "After 3.8 billion years of research and development, failures are fossils, and what surrounds us is the secret to survival... All our inventions have already appeared in nature in a more elegant form and at less cost to the planet."

Scientists and technologists have been imitating nature for years to foster innovations in engineering. The strategy is known as "biomimicry" or "biomimetics," meaning "imitation of life." Many architects and designers are catching on, reading Benyus' book and others on the topic, and some are giving biomimicry a try themselves.

Biomimicry can be applied at various levels: forms (biomorphism), functions, or entire ecosystems. In architecture, mimicking nature's forms is one of the oldest tricks in the book. Consciously or not, builders of primitive huts echoed the form of a skeleton, crafting simple wood frames covered by animal skins. More modern architects, too, regularly develop their designs visually inspired by organic forms: the curves, tendrils, and floral shapes of Art Nouveau, the spiny spires of Gaudi, the structural vertebrae of Calatrava.

Biomimicry gets more interesting, though, when it goes beyond form. "For us, it's asking a deeper question of how the natural world does it: not what is the form but what is the function that that form provides," says Dayna Baumeister, who helped found the Biomimicry Guild, along with Benyus. The group is devoted to biomimicry consulting, education, and research. Best of all, according to the guild, is biomimicry that echoes the workings of entire ecosystems, encompassing principles of adaptability, synergy, and efficient uses of limited resources.

While the deeper forms of biomimicry have more to offer in terms of sustainability and functionality, they're also more tricky to execute well. "It needs very careful thought. 'It needs very careful thought,' says Julian Vincent, director of the Centre for Biomimetic and Natural Technologies at the University of Bath. "When you're looking at biological systems, they tend to solve problems in very different ways from engineering systems, which is why the area is so interesting. But that means that if you're
Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the Pearl River Tower (right) was inspired by the sea sponge. Four 26-foot-by-13-foot holes (below) on mechanical floors will each be lined with a wind turbine to harvest energy.

In a symbiotic blend of plant life and technology, "supertrees" facing pagod provide a home for climbing plants on their own lattice skins. Destined for a garden in Singapore, the structures even mimic natural processes of photosynthesis and transpiration.
looking for an answer, you shouldn’t look for it in the most obvious place. “To even be able to formulate the right questions to ask and the right areas of nature to emulate, “you always need a biologist on hand,” he says. Despite its potential pitfalls, architectural biomimicry has resulted in some striking successes. The most famous example is the 1996 Eastgate building in Harare, Zimbabwe, which uses natural air conditioning modeled after the airflow in a termite mound. Designed by architect Mick Pearce with engineering by Arup, the office and retail building reportedly saved its owner $3.5 million in energy expenses in the first five years alone.

Biologically obsessed architect Eugene Tsui once designed a house in Berkeley, California, with lightweight, strong trusses modeled after seagull bone marrow and a subsurface solar heating system based on the bone and capillary structures of two dinosaurs, the stegosaurus and the dimetrodon. Grimshaw Architects covered their Waterloo International Terminal in London with glass sheets that overlap like snake scales, to better harness the wind. Sponges also shelter and protect a multitude of tiny inhabitants, which benefit from the flow of food-bearing water.

So what do you get when you cross a highrise with a sponge? The design for the Pearl River Tower is porous, with four holes that house wind turbines to create electricity from the strong winds that blow above the ground. Defying convention, the tower faces the wind, to better harness its energy; the holes also relieve wind pressure. The building soaks up energy from the sun as well, thanks to strategically placed photovoltaic cells. With these and other energy-saving measures such as radiant cooling, the building’s energy use will be reduced by 58 to 60 percent. Frechette claims it will serve as homes for orchids and ferns, and shelter the humans below from rain and sun, as real trees do. The plants grow on and through the supertrees’ steel lattice skin. “Current computer analysis studies are investigating a structural design solution for the skin that reflects natural patterns of branching and cellular structures,” says Andrew Grant, director of Grant Associates.

The super trees also absorb solar energy in a way that’s analogous to their organic counterparts, since they support extensive arrays of photovoltaics and solar thermal panels, he says. Canopies collect rainwater, and the structures even have irrigation and misting systems that mirror natural transpiration. At night, the trees’ high-tech origins are revealed, for they transform into lanterns for the garden.

Kein Stack, president of Syracuse, New York–based Northeast Natural Homes and Northeast Green Building Consulting, exemplifies biomimicry on the grandest scale: emulating the intricate interworkings of ecosystems. His sustainable strategies go into the aquifer, 30 percent is taken up by vegetation, and 40 percent evaporates. He now makes sure his buildings don’t disturb those natural proportions.

Stack regards the trees that surround his construction sites as natural capital since they provide shade and oxygen and their roots help manage stormwater, so he treats them accordingly. “We actually hand-dig around their root system when we have to get close, instead of just excavating roots out of the way, we’ll bend them by hand,” he explains. “If we have to cut a root, we cut it cleanly, and we apply a hormone that stimulates regrowth.” Instead of using materials that would have to be shipped in, such as bamboo, he chooses local ecofriendly materials such as recycled wood from old barns and PureBond, a type of plywood made from local hardwoods using a natural, nontoxic adhesive.

When it comes to green building design, “everyone’s going out, looking throughout the entire world for this special item or technology or material, but the answers are right in front of us,” Stack says. “You just need to pay attention.”

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David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings
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Among young architects, David Adjaye enjoys the unusual distinction of being dubbed a rising star even as the Queen has just awarded him an O.B.E.—first step on the road to knighthood—for distinguished service to architecture. The first major American exhibition of his work at the Studio Museum in Harlem makes a strong case that the regard for the star even as the Queen has just awarded him an O.B.E.—first step on the road to knighthood—for distinguished service to architecture. The first major American exhibition of his work at the Studio Museum in Harlem makes a strong case that the regard for the economist Peter Adjaye. (The architect is well justified. The compact but thorough exhibition includes 10 public buildings undertaken since 1994, four of which will be completed this fall. There are also two slide shows and a video flickering through images of architecture around the world that has inspired Adjaye’s work; the soundtrack is by the architect’s brother, composer Peter Adjaye. (The architect’s photographs of African cities will be the subject of an exhibition next April at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design.)

It’s a time-crunch architect’s dream of a show: not loaded with descriptive detail but knowingly and seductively presented. Each project is represented by three exquisite scale models that show context, massing, and interiors, as well as material samples. Beyond these bare facts, Adjaye has included a glimpse of a source of inspiration, such as the long-toothed wooden comb from Ghana that is echoed in a woven textile pattern. Adjaye often describes unfolding space as a journey rather than a procession, and that sense of passage in and around volumes is especially keen at the Museum of Contemporary Art | Denver, his first public commission in the United States. From the outside, the Kunsthalle museum (which will be complete this fall) appears as a monolithic block veiled in slightly shimmering gray and clear sandblasted glass. The galleries within are arranged in three discrete stacks so that one rises through the roof to become a members’ room and another a pavilion for education spaces.

Circulation winds its way around the stacks and even between facade and gallery, allowing an almost geological sense of space, as if one is scaling crevices and canyons rather than strolling from floor to floor. The oblique vistas and dramatic thresholds of raking light that result were apparent even in a pasteboard model illuminated by indifferent ceiling lights.

Other projects on display endorse Adjaye’s stated dedication to public engagement and include a brass-and-bronze-clad affordable housing scheme in London; two completed Idea Stores, a new concept in public library-cum-community attraction that Adjaye helped to develop; the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, which includes original work by a frequent collaborator, the artist Chris Ofili, and a community arts center and memorial to a slain architectural student located in London’s...

continued on page 18

The highs and lows of Beatriz Colomina’s remarkable new book match the battle she describes between high and low culture. For whatever else Domesticity at War discusses, it is a polemic about how modern architecture, when it touches American soil, is forced to test the claims to the democratic and the everyday that were so somberly put forward by the high priests of modernism. Colomina provocatively describes the struggles and the hollars of high culture (as embodied by the Museum of Modern Art) as modern architecture became equated with mass production and the consumable product. She has developed this idea throughout her career in Architectural Reproduction, Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media, and now in Domesticity at War. Her overarching argument describes how mass culture produces, commodifies, popularizes, and propagandizes architecture in the modern era, and in so doing, underscores architecture’s schizophrenic attitude toward cultural hegemony. Domesticity at War’s eight focused chapters ostensibly describe the intertwined roles of American domestic architecture and Cold War politics. More than this, it describes how both use and are used by contemporary modes of production to enter and manipulate the American psyche.

The higns of this book rest on two things: Colomina has gathered an amazing series of photographs that depict various icons of American architecture during the Cold War years; the second is its inventive structure. The book is physically divided into two: The top is the series of photographs and the bottom a series of essays. The author juxtaposes professional shots of architecture with ads selling lifestyle, and most of them have the grainy, low-res quality of old magazines. The images have a remarkable breadth, but their strength lies in their insistence that even here in this book, images serve not to aggrandize architecture but to disseminate it as effectively as possible. Moreover, they draw out the best and most subtle of Colomina’s observations; as a reader of cultural architectural images, she is unparalleled.

The book’s split...
Glass House is a rare book: It documents one man’s architectural revelation as it was interpreted by two artists, whose work was then molded into a monograph and kept private for a decade. The subject is Philip Johnson’s home in New Canaan, Connecticut; the man who commissioned the project is Tadahiro Yoshida, who writes that he was deeply moved by a 1997 visit; the artists are photographer Michael Moran and the graphic designer Michael Rock of 2x4. Yoshida wanted a private record of his experience and asked Moran and Rock for a collaborative account of their own interaction with the site. The resulting amalgam was then molded into a monograph and kept in limbo for another ten years before Johnson evidently planned, preserved, and locked it away. The excavation of this site now, as Johnson evidently planned, preserver -the desire to make a book that responds to his mercurial statements. Further, the New Canaan site itself was, as the Trust site’s primary question for the Trust. The site, like the universal, remembrance is as dear as them. Circumstance weighs as heavily as the evanescent building that sparked on ponderous matters of visibility and purity and the reiteration of the argument that the superfi cial gender identification. One feels as well the tension between the two forms these arguments have taken over the years, first as lectures and now as chapters in a book. The anecdotal and blunt wake-up calls that work well in an auditorium before a group of students feel awkward in written form. Perhaps the trite and overused quality of these observations is the result of how long Colomina has been working on this material—she was one of the first to look at these issues—but it leaves us wondering whether the thinking of this as the photographic version of literary deconstruction: Just as “text” doesn’t just illustrate the written page correspond only when one wants or page contributes to the theorization of architectural images and artifacts in general. She is such an influential thinker because she doesn’t mince words about big ideas, which makes them consumable by architects. And the unevensness of Domesticity at War might stem from an attempt to establish a new type of discourse that lets images speak for themselves and allows observations about those images to be simultaneously personal and historical. It was illuminating to read that both her experience in Civil War Spain and in Love and War depart from the Paul de Man set challenged the sub- servient softness of the argument that the footnotes become an equal and par- allel discourse, the upper photographic text doesn’t just illustrate the written one, but tells its own flip-book story. The lows come from the heavy-handed reiteration of the argument that the domestic and the military are intrinsically linked. Essays suffer from needing to make a blunt point with subtle and nuanced materi- al. For example, in the chapter “X-Ray Architecture,” astute observations regarding the link between modern architecture’s seemingly rhetorical obsession with health and the real or imagined threat of tuberculosis aside, the project is part structure in powder-coated expanded metal mesh with a glassed entrance section embossed in a moiré pattern based on a drawing by Ofili. The building has been cleft and pulled apart at an angle with the smaller unit containing studios and sound rooms raised on legs. The gesture eff ectively minimizes the impact of the structure on a residential neighborhood while allowing visual and actual access to a nearby river without dullying its interest. At 41, Adjaye is young for a celebrated architect, but he has lived up to his early promise. This show, presented without the aid of intellectual verbiage or even much by way of informative drawings, is a highly eloquent introduction to an architect still developing his considerable powers.

Julie O’Ivone is the executive editor of AV.

Glass House
Stoshio Nakamura, editor
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Domesticity at War
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On matters of design, many architects regularly get deferred to by their civilian friends: "Do you think it's a good building? You're the architect, after all," is fairly typical. Perhaps it is the theoretical language so many architects use to describe their work, but in the larger civic conversation, architecture doesn't come up as often as it should given growing interest in the field. Control Group, the Storefront for Art and Architecture, and The Architect's Newspaper are all keenly interested in opening up that conversation, and to that end collaborated on a competition that celebrates clearly presented and rigorous student work. The faculty at 18 architecture schools submitted what they considered to be some of the best work of the year, and the best of the bunch were awarded the Control Group/Storefront Award.

The seven premiated projects were presented last month at Storefront, and have been incorporated into the virtual and communal world of Second Life. William Memenk

To learn more visit: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Zaie/153/78/24 and http://www.storefrontonews.org/
OPEN: 3.1 Philip Lim (p. 5):
The custom chandelier was fabricated by Bocci, PO Box 75381, White Rock, BC, Canada, V4C 5, 604-710-4208, www.bocci.ca.
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Imitation of Life (p. 12):

Flora lamp
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This lamp gracefully springs from the ground like a flower. The polished aluminum stem supports a glass-blown bud that encloses a diffused halogen bulb, creating a soft white light. The 82-inch lamp can rotate up to 90 degrees from its tubular chrome base (above). The lamp can also be secured directly into the floor. The baseless lamp rotates up to 340 degrees, and its organic look is heightened, for it appears to grow out of the floor.

Material Matters fabric collection
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Just one more example of how architecture has seeped into pop culture—this new collection of eight fabrics honors the designs of the Guggenheim museums. Inspired by the prominence of concrete in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim in New York, Fossil (in onyx, above) emulates concrete’s pattern of natural cracks. Swirly cutouts in the Die-Cut Ingeo drapery celebrate the round da of the same museum, while the Thumbnail Sketch, an upholstery fabric, imitates Frank Gehry’s line drawings from his design of the Guggenheim Bilbao.

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