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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER

04__03.05.2008

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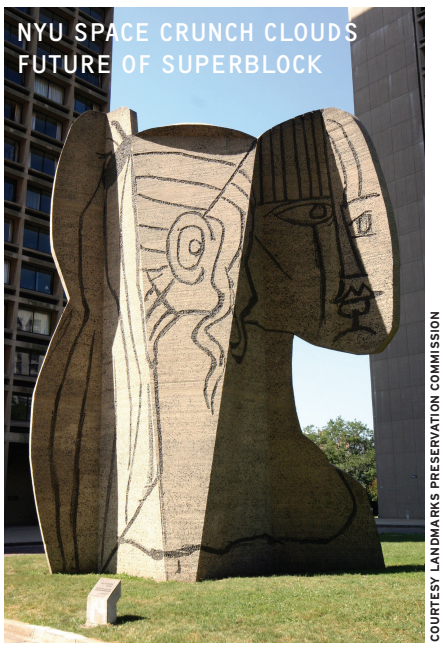

COURTESY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

NYU SPACE CRUNCH CLOUDS FUTURE OF SUPERBLOCK

SILVER LINING FOR PEI TOWERS

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CONTENTS

16 CORZINE'S TRANSIT SQUEEZE

19 EMERGING VOICES, 2008

27 BROOKLYN RISING

26 DIARY
31 MARKETPLACE
33 CLASSIFIEDS

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NEW DESIGN FOR WILLIAMSBURG'S MCCARREN POOL. SEE PAGE 6

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LYNDON DOUGLAS

LONDON CENTER DESIGNED BY DAVID ADJAYE IN MEMORY OF SLAIN ARCHITECTURE STUDENT IS ATTACKED BY VANDALS

SHATTERED DREAMS

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The center houses the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, founded in 1998 in memory of a 19-year-old black architecture student who was killed at a bus stop in Deptford, a neighborhood in Southeast London. The original investigation by police never led to the prosecution of gang members suspected of the crime and became a citywide scandal that led to new anti-racism laws.

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AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 3:03 PM Page 1

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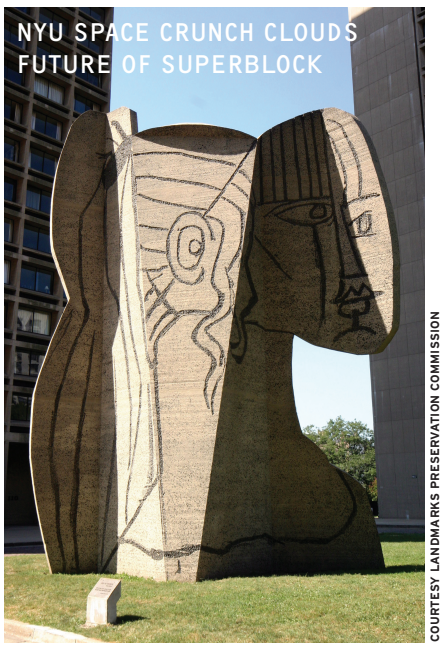

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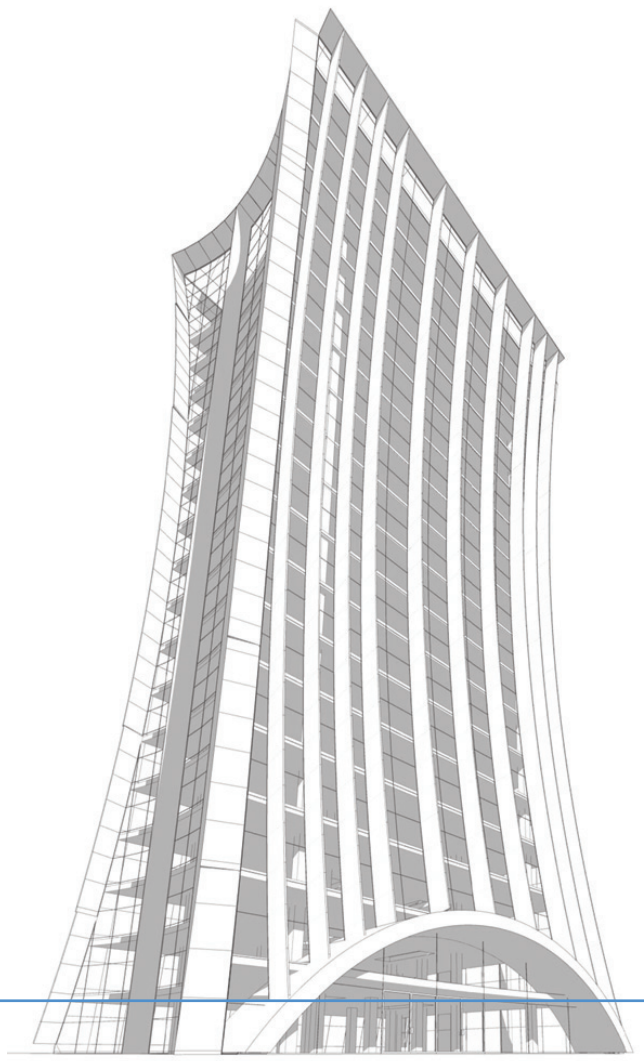

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HANDS-ON ARCHITECTURE

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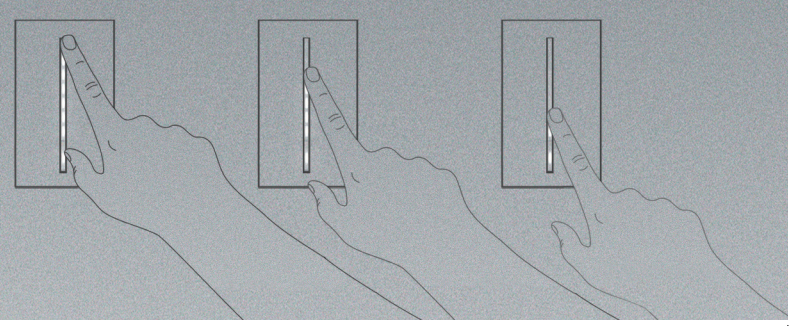

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EAVESDROP: ANNE GUINEY

THE STORY OF O (AND B)

In our role as society page scribe (mother dear, we know you raised us for better things, but ain't nothing going on but the rent, lady) we'd like to congratulate Mr. **Nicolai Ouroussoff** and Miss **Cecily Brown** on their future nuptials. The groom is the architecture critic at the paper of record, and, we're sure, a very nice man. We remembered the bride's name from our misspent youth, when we went to gallery openings, haunted P.S.1., and worried about things like Young British Art; we are older and wiser now. But we digress. Brown is a well-respected painter with a show next fall at Gagosian, but dutiful scribes that we are, we figured a little fact-checking was in order, which led us to the website Here is a partial list of adjectives from the first paragraph (of four, dear reader, *four*!) of the artist's biography: Luscious, feminine, creamy, rapturous, sexually charged, carnal, malleable, and voluptuous. Hel-lo, sailor! We would have read further, but this is a family newspaper. We wish the happy couple the very best.

OF FRANK AND FISH

At the January 31 memorial service for Herbert Muschamp, predecessor of the aforementioned Mr. Ouroussoff, the crowd was a distinguished and exceptionally good-looking one, with a few exceptions, naturally. **Charlie Rose**, **Amanda Burden**, **Rem Koolhaas**, **Victoria Newhouse**, and many others came to pay tribute. **Frank Gehry**, in particular, spoke movingly of his late friend. He told the crowd that Muschamp never actually talked about architecture with him (demonstrating good sense!) and, like a beloved son, would call every Sunday night. Like many other beloved sons, he was also not much of a housekeeper, according to Gehry. He finished by saying that the nicest compliment Muschamp

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MORE FORMS? continued from front page

set of qualifications for designers to complete in order to self-certify their work.

The self-certification program, known as Professional Certification, was created during budget cuts in the mid-1990s to allow any licensed architect or engineer to waive plan examination by the department. Instead, the designer signs off on the documents, guaranteeing their compliance with the city's Building Code and Zoning Resolution.

The program streamlines the filing process but also gives designers more freedom to bend and even break the rules, an increasingly common problem causing embarrassment for the department. The department audits only a small percentage of the certified plans, making it easy for abusers to sneak through, such as Brooklyn's infamous Robert Scarano, who has misfiled self-certified plans throughout the city that were in violation of the code.

Last year, when some 37,000 projects were self-certified, the city passed legislation empowering the department to punish the handful of designers who wrongfully file plans, but the next step is to prevent them from self-certifying in the first place. Phyllis Arnold, the department's deputy commissioner for legal affairs, said the new qualifications program has yet to be defined but will seek to provide oversight. "The idea is to pre-qualify rather than rely on prosecution at the back end," she said. "We're hoping to weed out problem filers at the beginning to keep them from ever getting into the system."

The program, in the earliest stages of development, grew out of last year's overhaul of the Building Code, which mandates the creation of compulsory qualifications for designers to self-certify. The program will function somewhat like a driver's license points system, wherein designers will apply to the department to self-certify, demonstrating their compliance with the qualifications. There will be a monitoring component, and should a designer breach the criteria, the department will take action commensurate with the violation. This could range from a warning, to the suspension of professional certification privileges, to a petition to the state to revoke the offending designer's license.

Above all else, the department insists the new program is not a citywide license. Instead, Department of Buildings spokesperson Kate Lindquist said that the new program is akin to an additional layer of legal oversight. "What will change is, in addition to adhering to the law, you will have these qualifications to adhere to," she said.

"It's long overdue," said Councilmember James Oddo, a department critic who pushed for the new program. "When Giuliani introduced self-certification, it was as a carrot-and-stick operation. The carrot was speed, one-stop shopping. The stick was, 'If you abuse this, we'll come down on you, and you will be punished.' I'm not sure if the carrot worked, but the stick certainly hasn't worked."

Without specific recommendations available—they are due by July 1, with an application deadline of December 31—AIA New York State president-elect Burton Roslyn would not say whether the inevitable changes will be good or bad for architects, but he does hope to be involved in crafting them. "As long as the guidelines as drafted and agreed upon are fair and equitable, there would be no conflict," he said. "If they are arbitrary, then you start to have problems."

MATT CHABAN

OPEN> RESTAURANT

> BAR BLANC

Trump Tower
142 West 10th Street
Tel: 212-255-2330
Designer:
Meyer Davis Studio



THOMAS SCHAUER

A Miami-inspired white palette that embraces shiny lacquers, marble, and mirrors still can't conceal Bar Blanc's New York City roots. The space's original wooden floors, exposed brick walls, and archways are still visible, though the floors have been refurbished and the brick painted with a fine white plaster. "The space is so old and it has all these historic elements. We didn't want to cover them up, we wanted to celebrate them," said project designer Leah Nuzum of Meyer Davis Studio. A wooden wall is coated in a glossy, reflective lacquer, and stands opposite a row of white leather banquettes with oscillating backs. "Because the space is lean and narrow, we wanted to put an undulation in the backs of the banquettes to allow your eye to wander toward the back and really feel the length of the space." On the back wall is a large Japanese paper art light piece designed by the Los Angeles-based artist John Wigmore, who also created the paper light fixtures above the bar. Curtains of various levels of opacity offer degrees of privacy: a merging of diverse textures and materials washed in white. **AUDREY JAYNES**

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EAVESDROP: ANNE GUINEY

SOME MODEST PROPOSALS

These last few Sunday nights we've been glued to the TV, watching as many Jane Austen movies as possible, and this could explain why the immortal words of *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mr. Bennet keep coming to mind—"For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn?" In that spirit, we had ourselves quite a chuckle the other day when reading **Blair Kamin**'s reviews of two new architecture shows in Chicago, one at the Graham Foundation and the other at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. We will never, ever, *ever* criticize the former, because we may ask **Sarah Herda** for a grant someday, but the CAF doesn't give out money and so is fair game! Kamin praises both shows, and both seem interesting. We have to wonder what on earth was going through the curatorial heads at the CAF, however, when they settled on this title: *Do We Dare Squander Chicago's Great Architectural Heritage?* Hmmm, we need a second to think about this—is it a trick question or something? Gosh, we are stumped, but we're going to go out on a limb here and say we think not.

Speaking of odd titles and polemics, we also smiled at **Allison Arieff**'s latest blog entry in *The New York Times*, "Is Your House Making You Look Fat?" It took us a minute to get the joke (we think it has something to do with fat Americans who have to drive everywhere) and then settled in for some good old-fashioned suburb slamming. The former *Dwell* editor mentions a Brookings study projecting the need for hundreds of billions of square feet of space to accommodate future growth, and then tosses in this provocative and inflammatory piece of rhetoric: "In planning for that need, why not think beyond the formulaic subdivisions that threaten to turn our once architecturally varied landscape into indiscernible swaths of cookie-cutter sameness?" Eureka! Why didn't we think of that? Okay, fine, not everyone shares our pleasure in thinking about transit-oriented developments all day long, but come on now, Gray Lady!

SEND ORIGINAL IDEAS OF BREATHTAKING SUBTLETY AND PENETRATING QUESTIONS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

MORE FORMS? continued from front page

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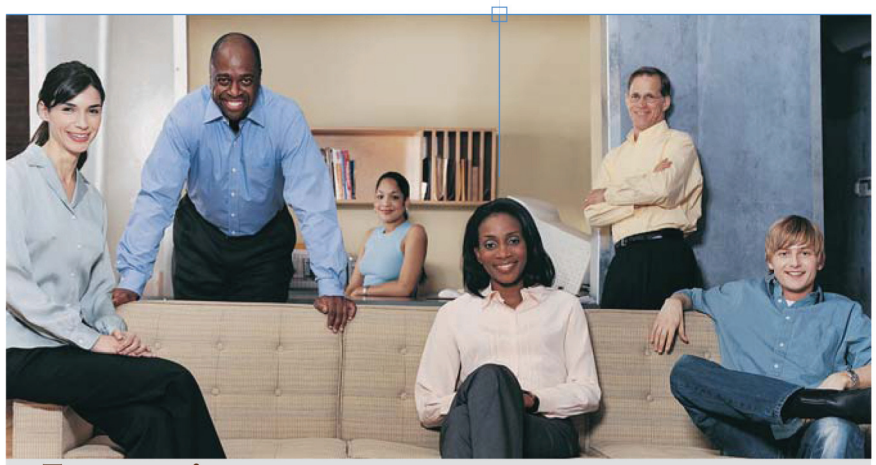

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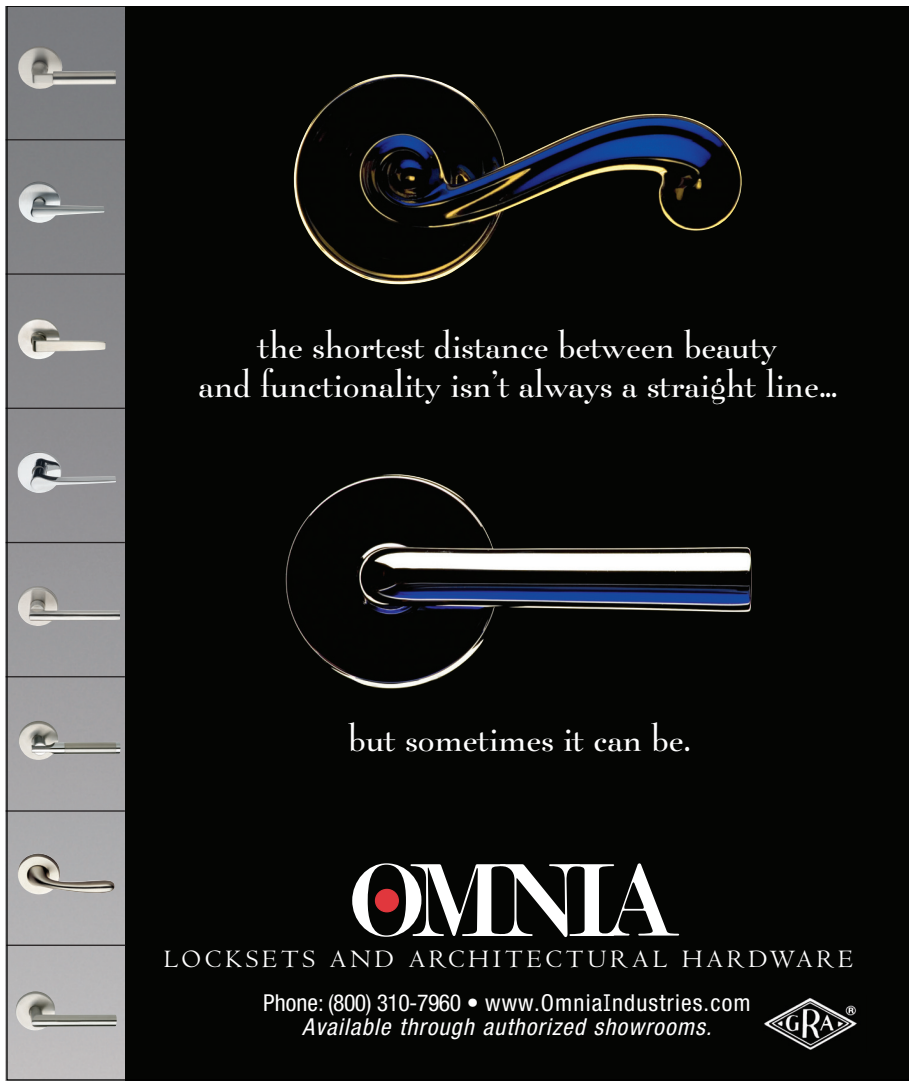




AFTER DECADES OF WAITING, PARKS FLOATS NEW DESIGN FOR MCCARREN POOL

TAKING THE PLUNGE

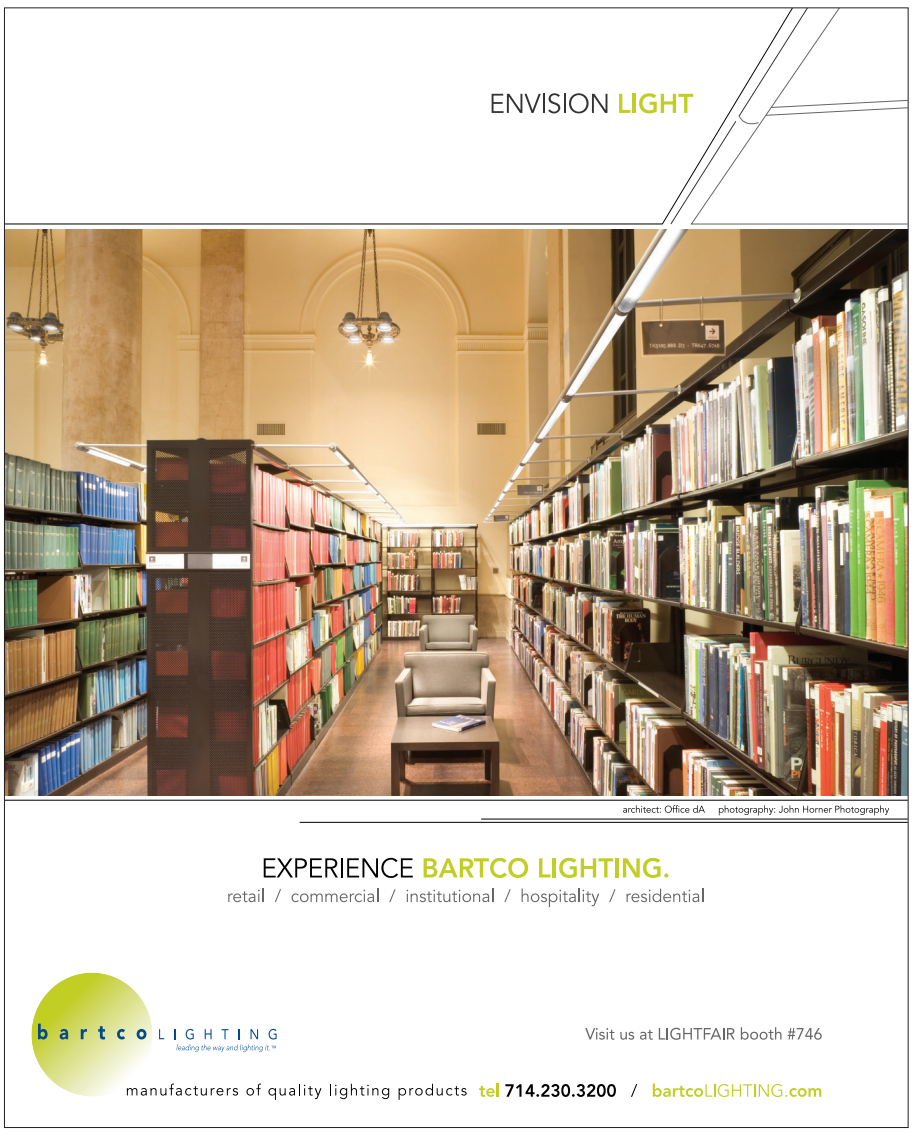
COURTESY NYC DEPT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

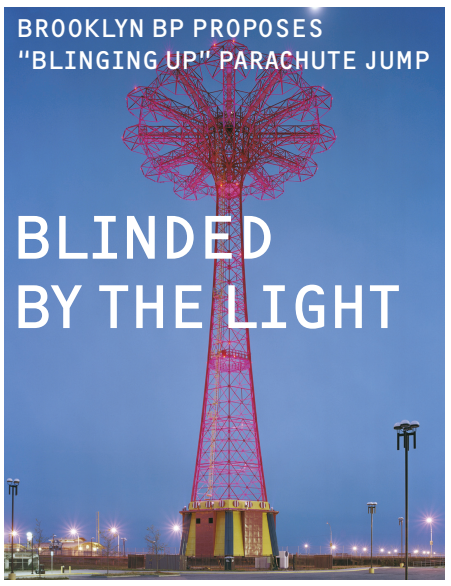
After decades of fighting to see the McCarren Park Pool reopened—the largest of 11 1930s landmark pools built by Robert Moses—Brooklyn Community Board 1 gave unanimous support to a new design by Rogers Marvel Architects. The plans must pass the Landmarks Preservation Commission, but, given community support, will likely pass.

Perhaps the most controversial move is the ouster of the Pool Parties, the music festival that overtook the pool two summers ago. There had been talk of incorporating a performance space into the design, but now the city has promised to find a new venue elsewhere for the popular event, said Parks spokesperson Philip Abramson.

The $50 million project is scheduled to begin in late 2008, after one more concert season, and the pool is to reopen in summer 2011. "We've been waiting for decades. We'd all like a swim," said Evan Thies, who heads CB1's environmental board. The new pool will be U-shaped, roughly two-thirds the size of the original, with what Rogers Marvel calls a "beach" at the center in the summer and an ice rink in the winter. There will also be a diving pool with a 12-foot-high board.

The old bathhouse will have showers and changing rooms. though no exact layout or program has been determined. "Everything is going to be state-of-the-art and edgy but also completely in compliance with the historic design of the structure," Jonathan Marvel said. "We've got to play the new and the old against each other." **MC**





BROOKLYN BP PROPOSES "BLINGING UP" PARACHUTE JUMP

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

Even after it closed in 1964, the Parachute Jump has always been a towering icon for Coney Island. Two summers ago, after a $5 million restoration and light installation by Leni Schwendinger Light Projects, it appeared the 277-foot tower had regained its glory. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz tended to disagree.

"Every move was approved, every change was vetted," Schwendinger told *AN*, "but near the end, it was clear he was unhappy. Marty never said it publicly, but you could tell." On February 7, during his State of the Borough address, Markowitz made his opposition clear.

"Personally, I look forward to phase two of blinging up the Parachute Jump as Brooklyn's Eiffel Tower," he said. "And no promises here, but I still hold out the dream of making the Parachute Jump an operational ride once more. If the Giants can beat the Patriots, there's no reason we can't ride the Parachute Jump in this new century."

This was not just Markowitz's pipe dream: a Request for Proposals for the aforementioned "phase two" was released by the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) just hours before the borough president gave his speech.

While it will not alter Schwendinger's work, the RFP calls for "an enhancement to the existing lighting system that will result in a much brighter and very dramatic illumination of the Parachute Jump." An EDC spokesperson, Janel Patterson, said this could still affect the appearance of Schwendinger's installation. Proposals are due March 7.

It turns out Markowitz is not the only one disappointed with her work. "We need to dump the way-too-tasteful, subtle, artsy-fartsy design and get someone who understands amusement parks," Coney Island USA founder Dick Zigun said. When the project was unveiled on July 7, 2006, many in attendance reportedly expressed disappointment and disdain, which Markowitz spokesperson Nancy Becker said was one of the reasons for pursuing the second phase. She said Markowitz wants three things: "Bigger, better, brighter."

"I guess it wasn't until it was actually done that they decided this isn't what they wanted," Al Thompson, the project manager, said. He added that Schwendinger had proposed a number of "flashier" designs, but there was not enough money for it. "Now that there's money, she would be my first choice," Thompson said. (Thompson, who is a structural engineer at the firm STV, also said that Markowitz's desire to turn the Parachute Jump back into a ride would be all but impossible, given the cost of construction and insurance.)

And there are those who want to keep Schwendinger's lights on. Alex Herrera, director of technical services at the Landmarks Conservancy, which awarded Schwendinger one of her many awards for the project, said Markowitz's desire for more glitz is all wrong. "The way it was done, it's quite stunning," he said. "I can't even imagine how to bling it up even further, except maybe to dip it in gold."

Schwendinger said she would like to return to the project, perhaps with new higher-wattage LEDs. Markowitz would rather she did not. "She did her work and did the project as she saw fit, and we've moved on to other ideas," Becker said. "No, she was not considered." **MC**

AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 9:42 AM Page 7

SILVER LINING FOR PEI TOWERS continued from front page which is scouring the area for millions of square feet to accommodate planned campus expansion.

With a central courtyard dominated by the 36-foot-high sculpture *Portrait of Sylvette*, executed from a Picasso design, the Silver Towers are an unusually urbane case of urban renewal. Designed by I. M. Pei & Partners and completed in 1966, three concrete towers sit on a five-and-a-half-acre superblock between Bleecker and Houston streets. NYU acquired the property in 1963 and hired Pei to design two towers to house university faculty and a third tower that is ground-leased to residents of a Mitchell-Lama cooperative housing project. Built of cast-in-place concrete with deeply set windows, the towers pinwheel in plan, shifting on axis to break up what could have been a fortresslike slab into slender shafts that are deferential to the landscape—despite a Houston Street frontage that turns a cold shoulder to Soho.

"In spite of its flaws, there is so much about this design that is thoughtful and sensitive and innovative in a way that too few of its peers were," said Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, which has been pressing for designation since 2003. "In some ways this is the exception that proves the rule." Admirers cite stylish architecture under budget constraints (all three buildings met city cost-per-square-foot mandates) and particularly welcome designation since an earlier New York project by Pei, Kips Bay Plaza, has been marred by a cinema shoehorned onto the site.

Alas, that fate could befall Silver Towers, where two adjacent buildings (neither Pei-designed) house the Coles Sports and Recreation Center and a Morton Williams supermarket—both of which NYU owns and has considered for development. Preservationists had called for designation of those low-slung structures as "non-contributing" elements, but that seems unlikely, said Berman. Still, he added, "this gives us greater leverage to say to NYU, 'You must be respectful and restrained in terms of what you do on those sites.'" (Through a spokesperson, the landmarks commission had no further comment.)

The Silver Towers debate unfolds against the university's Brobdingnagian plans to add 6,000,000 square feet over the next 25 years. At a January 30 open house, NYU released the first concepts from a team led by design firm SMWM with Grimshaw, Toshiko Mori Architect, and Olin Partnership, who must orchestrate a high-stakes urban chess game to allocate new space among NYU's core campus and outposts elsewhere in the city.

With few parcels left in the West Village, designers have targeted the Silver Towers block and, to the north, the apartment slabs known as Washington Square Village. With their generous open spaces, those blocks could add 2,500,000 square feet above and below grade, inviting scenarios such as razing Washington Square Village and restoring the street grid to that superblock. Near the Silver Towers, concepts include building at the Coles gym and supermarket sites, and even atop Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape*, a quirky miniforest evoking Manhattan's precolonial flora.

Such audacious ideas have stirred little alarm, perhaps because last month NYU President John Sexton announced a pact with community groups affirming principles such as making development sensitive to building heights and densities. NYU also pledged to relocate displaced public uses nearby. And the university has backed the Silver Towers designation as "consistent with two of the agreed upon planning principles—employing a publicly oriented review process on an NYU project and sustaining the neighborhood's character."

With a landmarks hearing expected in the coming months, designers have a delicate task ahead. "The question remains: What is the best way to take advantage of the available square footage on that block in a way that's respectful of those towers and their potential landmark status?" said Jack Robbins, studio director in SMWM's New York office, who added that the team is studying options to one of the community's least-liked scenarios, a tall building at the supermarket site. "I think we all believe there are potentially better solutions in terms of the design and the politics of the community relations," he said.

That's good news for Pei's cooperative tower, where residents overwhelmingly support landmark designation. "We're going to have to be negotiating with NYU very shortly," said Paul Rackow, the co-op's community relations chairperson. "There are alternatives right here on the site. The Coles gym takes up an entire block from Bleecker to Houston. That would be our first suggestion: Build there."

JEFF BYLES



COURTESY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION



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AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 9:42 AM Page 8

IN DETAIL> QUEENS THEATER IN THE PARK







Seen while passing on the Grand Central Parkway, from an approach in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, or even right up close, the former New York State Pavilion of the 1964–65 World's Fair is perhaps the strangest and most haunting architectural ruin in the city. Designed by Philip Johnson with help from structural engineer Lev Zetlin, the now-derelict pavilion was the largest structure in the fair and one of the only ones not to be demolished or carted off. Its most noticeable features from a distance are three staggered towers—one was once a restaurant and the other two were observation decks—which loom above the park at 90, 185, and 250 feet high respectively. They resemble "Jetsons" apartment buildings, thin pedestals topped by saucer-like hovering disks. Adjacent to the towers stands a 350-foot-by-250-foot elliptical plaza surrounded by 16 100-foot-high concrete columns that support a steel-and-cable framework. Originally dubbed the Tent of Tomorrow, the plaza's columns supported a colorful roof of plastic panels that covered a 9,000-square-foot terrazzo map of New York state, now crumbling and overgrown with weeds.

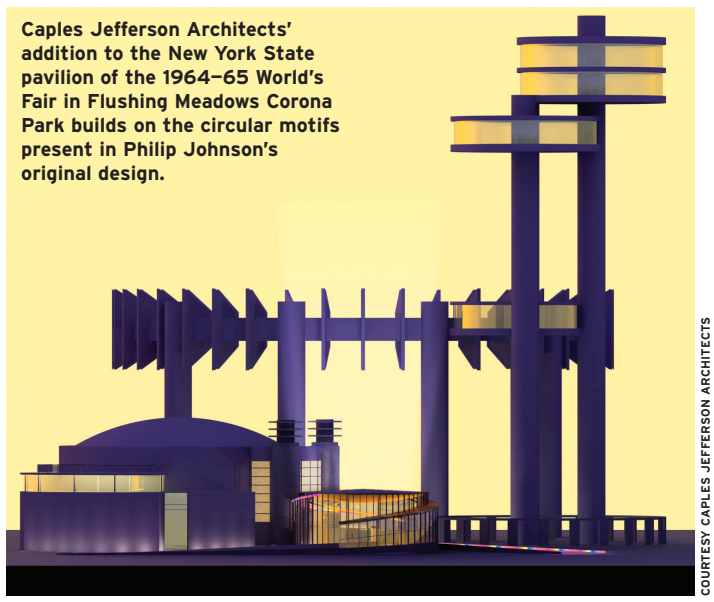
But not all of the pavilion's components have been left to the ravages of time. The most formally unassuming component of the complex is a circular, enclosed theater that crouches at the feet of the towers and plaza. Called the Circarama, or Theaterama, during the fair it housed a 360-degree projected film showcasing the wonders of the state, from Jones Beach to Niagara Falls. Johnson also commissioned several at the time relatively unknown artists to create tapestries for the outside of the theater, including Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, and James Rosenquist. (Andy Warhol was also asked to participate, though his reproduction of the mug shots of wanted criminals was quickly removed.) The Circarama was converted to the Queens Playhouse in 1972 and then renovated again in '94 as the home of Queens Theater in the Park. Now, in the most ambitious addition to the pavilion since it hosted the World's Fair, the theater is completing a $20.45 million expansion, which will open this spring. Designed by Caples Jefferson Architects and Lee/Timchula Architects, the addition includes a 75-seat cabaret theater and a 3,000-square-foot reception area and lobby meant to double as a party room for the borough.

When adding on to the significant structure of a great architect—critic Ada Louise Huxtable called the pavilion a "runaway success" and "seriously and beautifully constructed"—even if it is in ruins, it pays to follow the master's cues or at least give deference to the existing building and fade into the background. Caples Jefferson's intervention does both. In the words of Sarah Caples, a founding partner of the firm, "We built on the different circular fantasies present in Johnson's pavilion." The cabaret theater, known as the Fan, wraps unobtrusively around the north face of the Circarama. A concrete-and-steel box with only a thin line of windows across the top where office spaces were added, it mimics the materials of the existing structure on which it hangs, much like one of the original tapestries.

The party room, named the Nebula, assumes a more prominent role on the site. The original elements of the pavilion are arranged at three points of an axis. Caples Jefferson sited the Nebula on the fourth point, creating a new entry sequence for the theater, as well as a protected platform from which to view the teetering ruins beyond. Circular and open in plan, the new space is completely enclosed with a 360-degree glass curtain wall. The architects wanted to achieve as high a degree of abstract circularity as possible, but budget constraints precluded the use of curved glass; the wall is faceted with flat panes of glass with small fins on the vertical mullions. To further this impression, the horizontal mullions spiral up from the ground instead of meeting the verticals at right angles. The Canadian curtain wall manufacturer Zimmcor had to make 15 new dies in order to fabricate the 5,000 unique unitized panels needed for the Nebula, each of which was pre-glazed with low-e glass with improved acoustical properties.

Many are fanatical about preserving Johnson's pavilion, and several proposals to reuse the plaza and towers have been put forth without much success. Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is an old garbage dump, and any structure built there has to deal with its poor soil conditions. The Nebula and Fan were founded on 80-foot-deep steel piles, but the towers and the plaza, never intended to be permanent structures, were both founded on wooden piles now decaying in the historic mush. In danger of imminent collapse, they appeared on The World Monuments Fund's 2008 watch list of the one hundred most endangered sites. At least with the Queens Theater in the Park keeping the Circarama alive, one aspect of Johnson's work will remain.

AARON SEWARD



Caples Jefferson Architects' addition to the New York State pavilion of the 1964–65 World's Fair in Flushing Meadows Corona Park builds on the circular motifs present in Philip Johnson's original design.

COURTESY CAPLES JEFFERSON ARCHITECTS

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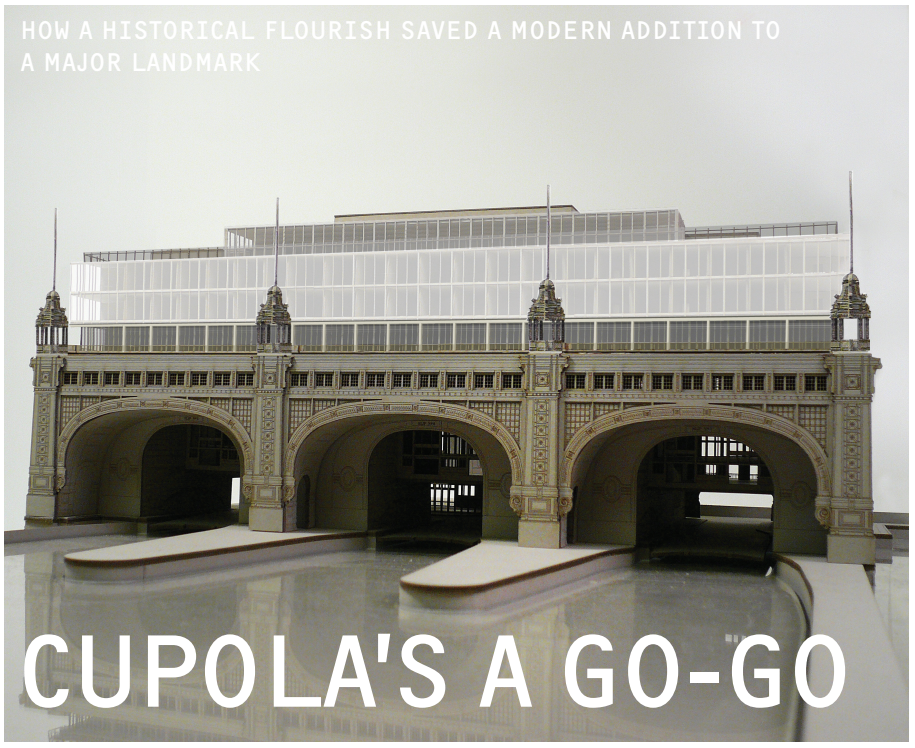
HOW A HISTORICAL FLOURISH SAVED A MODERN ADDITION TO A MAJOR LANDMARK



CUPOLA'S A GO-GO

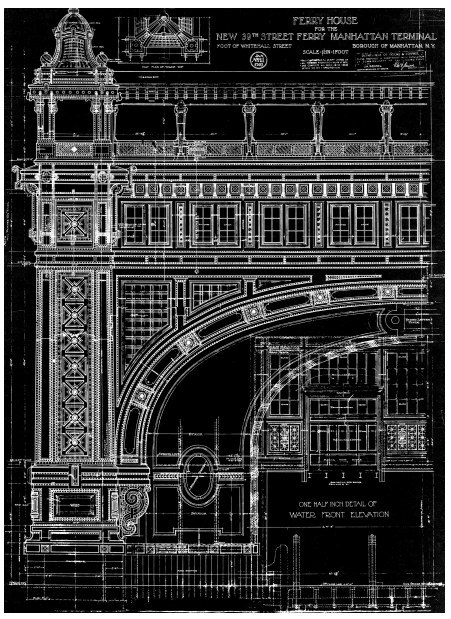
"The cupola became the key to unlock the door for the Battery Maritime Building to enter the 21st Century." That is how Rob Rogers, principal of Rogers Marvel Architects, describes the evolution of his firm's addition to the 1909 ferry building, which received the Landmarks Preservation Commission's blessing on February 12.

Back in October, the commission, as well as a number of preservation groups, criticized the architects' five-story glass box addition to the Battery Maritime Building, saying it dominated and overwhelmed the Beaux Arts building by Walker and Morris ("Recharging the Battery," *AN* 19_11.14.2007). Jonathan Marvel, the firm's other principal, justified the decision because the architects wanted to draw a clear distinction: "We want the new to be new and the old to be old."

In the latest designs, it remains all but impossible to confuse the addition with the original cast-iron structure, but the inclusion of the historic cupolas—part of the original design that was removed during a later addition—have assuaged many of the project's original critics. Marvel said the idea is to now use the addition, which has also been set back an additional nine feet, as a backdrop for the cupolas. "It will reflect a backdrop of sky," Marvel said. "Without it, the cupolas would get lost in the noise of the modern city."

The cupolas were originally part of Jan Hird Pokorney Associates' $60 million 2006 restoration of the building, but their $10 million price tag proved prohibitive. Part of the reason preservationists are okay with the addition, which will contain a 150-room boutique hotel, is that the developers will devote an additional $110 million to restoration work.

And some just like it. "It's just a great step forward for that building," commission chair Robert Tierney told *AN*. "It's already been beautifully restored and this proposal will further that. It will energize the harbor and reinvigorate the waterfront." **MC**





Using original drawings from Walker and Morris, Rogers Marvel achieved a high level of historical accuracy.

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NEIGHBORS AGAINST PROPOSED HOTEL

NOT IN MY VILLAGE

A number of architectural hotspots have sprung up in the city in recent years: the High Line, Astor Place, the all-star block in Chelsea surrounding the IAC headquarters, even Ground Zero. But let's not forget Perry Street. The block between the Westside Highway and Washington Street already boasts Richard Meier's celebrated glass towers, an undulating condominium by Asymptote, and now a proposed 90-room boutique hotel by Morris Adjmi. The latter, like its neighbors, shares both their pedigree and controversy, as was clear at a February 12 hearing of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

"I just want to say this," neighbor Jan Hershey shouted at the commissioners, "176 Perry Street, 173 Perry Street, 166 Perry Street, 145 Perry Street. We are being consumed." The West Village resident, who was referring to the Meier, Asymptote, and Adjmi projects, said all three were out of character and scale with the area's quiet, residential streets, an atmosphere this latest addition would continue to erode while opening the area up to further invasion. "You must stop them," she concluded.

While that will be difficult for the commission, especially in light of the neighbors' chief concern, which is the project's use—the hotel plus a 150-seat restaurant, both of which are completely as-of-right—many commissioners still took issue with parts of its design, particularly its height—though at 90 feet with a 77-foot street wall, that, too, is as-of-right.

The project's scale remains an issue, however, because the developers seek to replace a two-story building with one four times as tall. In a letter to the commission expressing mixed opinions on the project, State Senator Thomas Duane highlighted the strain between what is legal and what is appropriate. "This historic district," he wrote, "is characterized by a careful diversity of massing, which will be put off-balance by the construction of a large hotel in the place of a low-rise building."

Or, as neighbor Myron Beldock put it, "Just because you can build something, doesn't mean you should."

Adjmi, who was selected not only for his design skills but also his expertise in historic work—he has completed projects in the Meatpacking District and Soho among others—is not above compromise. The project has already come down a story and changed from an industrial, loft-like typology, to a more punched-window tenement approach. Adjmi called it "an uncommon DNA I find very interesting."

In spite of local fears, the project will likely be modified and approved, a task Adjmi is preparing for. "We just have to massage the design a little," he said, "but I think we can make everyone happy." **MC**

Locals argue new hotel is too big and will be too busy for quiet neighborhood.



COURTESY MA ARCHITECTS

CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER MTA'S STRIPPED-DOWN PLANS FOR FULTON STREET TRANSIT CENTER

DOME DRAMA

The dome, the whole dome, and nothing but the dome: This was the demand from angry New Yorkers earlier this month when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) discussed its plans to strip down the design for the Fulton Street Transit Center in a meeting with Community Board 1. "We want the Fulton Street Transit Center built as originally designed, and we want it built now," said Alliance for Downtown New York president Elizabeth Berger at the February 11 meeting. "We can't settle for less, and we can't wait any longer."

The MTA first announced its plans to rethink the Grimshaw Architects and James Carpenter Design Associates building at the end of January, when it revealed a paralyzing funding gap ("Folly at Fulton St.," *AN* 03_ 02.20.2008). The project was budgeted at $390 million, but the sole bid for construction came in at $870 million. CB1 World Trade Center committee chairperson Catherine McVay Hughes called the towering glass dome that focuses sunlight onto the subway platforms below "an iconic design that the community fell in love with."

At the February 11 meeting, CB1 passed a resolution demanding the building it says downtown was promised. "It would be utterly unconscionable," the resolution reads, "to not build this project in a timely manner after 145 Downtown businesses were sacrificed to assemble the site and the entire population of Lower Manhattan has been forced to navigate around and through this massive dirty construction site for years."

The dome would enclose 23,000 square feet of retail space that the Downtown Alliance and CB1 argue is crucial to the process of reinvigorating a neighborhood still struggling after September 11. But CB1 is worried that the city's priorities don't match its own. The Transit Center was supposed to open this year, according to Hughes, but it remains in pieces even as other redevelopment projects churn along. "After 9/11, we had meeting after meeting to go over the top priorities for downtown," said Hughes. "The South Ferry Terminal is almost done, and it was at the bottom of the list, whereas Fulton Street was the top priority."

The MTA argues the building itself is just the tip of the iceberg, and less pressing than the mess of train lines submerged underneath it. "Transportation benefits are the most important part of the project," said spokesperson Jeremy Soffin. That part of the project is scheduled to open in 2010.

The MTA is in the middle of a 30-day reevaluation of the design and its funding. It hopes to have a revised plan by the end of the month. Meanwhile, the Downtown Alliance has suggested a public/private partnership to help distribute some of the project's cost overruns. It's unclear at this point what shape the Transit Center will take, but according to Soffin, "This is not going to be left as a hole in the ground." **WB**

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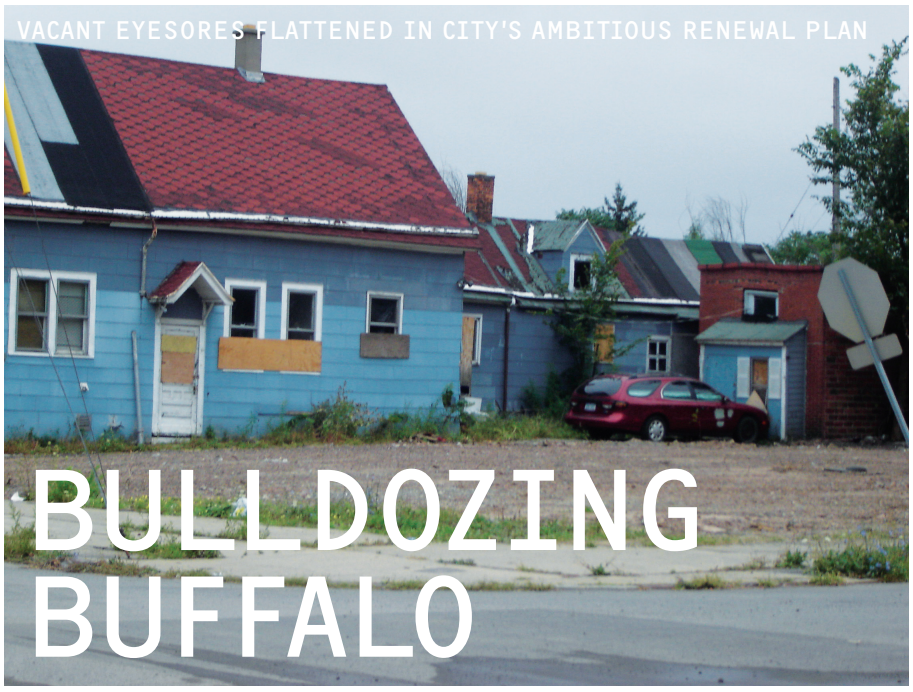

BULLDOZING BUFFALO

COURTESY CITY OF BUFFALO

Like most municipal leaders, Mayor Byron W. Brown of Buffalo has busied himself with land use and zoning law, hustling to lure developers and nurture neighborhoods. But as this city confronts a downsized population and blighted lots, it's taking a page from Detroit: sending in the bulldozers to demolish five thousand abandoned homes by 2013.

Armed with an anticipated $60 million in state funding for its "5 in 5" demolition plan, Buffalo officials aim to raze long-empty homes and assemble parcels for new uses. "We have $4.4 billion in development either in planning or under construction, and because we're landlocked, the only way we can provide developable sites is by demolishing them," said program manager Timothy Wanamaker. "That requires a lot of adjacency." At the same time, Buffalo's population is dwindling. By targeting neighborhoods with a viable density, the plan will create sites that developers can grab or the city can market.

Postmodernists might snicker and preservationists might gasp at the idea of bulldozers roaming where Sullivan and Wright worked. But Wanamaker, executive director of the city's office of strategic planning, calls selective demolition part of rehabilitation.

"The Livable Communities Plan is really the plan," said Wanamaker, referring to the city's attempt to fuse neighborhood-based initiatives and targeted investments in job creation. "We've estimated up to ten thousand units that have been abandoned for quite some time, and the cost for rehab is higher by tens of thousands of dollars than the value once you get it renovated." Since Wanamaker said the amount of private single-family development in the city is negligible, the public good is served by clearing forsaken homes for commercial builders or even urban gardeners.

The city prioritizes buildings that are public safety hazards or attractive to squatters and drug dealers. Then it seeks sites adjacent to schools, to complement a $1 billion effort to bring school buildings into parity with those in nearby suburbs. Next up are sites in neighborhoods with revitalization plans or strong civic organizations—groups whose deep roots can help spur new growth.

The houses in question are contributing nothing to any economy: Mayor Brown told a Manhattan forum on January 25 that Buffalo's foreclosed-on homeowners typically walk away from their houses. The results telegraph such despair that city finance commissioner Janet Penksa, who coordinates the project, has no misgivings about putting blighted homes out of their misery. "They're atrocious-looking!" she said.

Indeed, these aren't mansions. "The typical house we would demolish is a telescope house that started out one side and grew laterally," said Wanamaker. "As you get farther back into the lot, the house gets smaller and smaller." Such homes are common in shrinking cities like Detroit or Cleveland, Wanamaker argues, and don't translate to current uses.

With a total budget of $100 million, the 5 in 5 plan syncs with Governor Eliot Spitzer's upstate attitude, which promotes rational planning and attacks sprawl. A state program, RESTORE-NY, reimburses local governments for demolition in zones with rebuilding strategies.

And Wanamaker promises that new zoning and land use policy will revere Buffalo's architectural heritage. "We make sure that when we rebuild, it's done correctly," he insisted, citing New Urbanist principles such as placing garages at the rear of house lots.

Facing a similar predicament in Boston, Mayor Thomas Menino drubbed abandoned homes back onto the rolls by shaming absentee landlords, who call a hotline when they see pictures of their own residences posted on TV.

If Buffalo's mayor spurred similar calls from landlords, Wanamaker suggests, he would hear dead silence. So the sound of bulldozers this year may well work as a wake-up call.

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AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 9:42 AM Page 13

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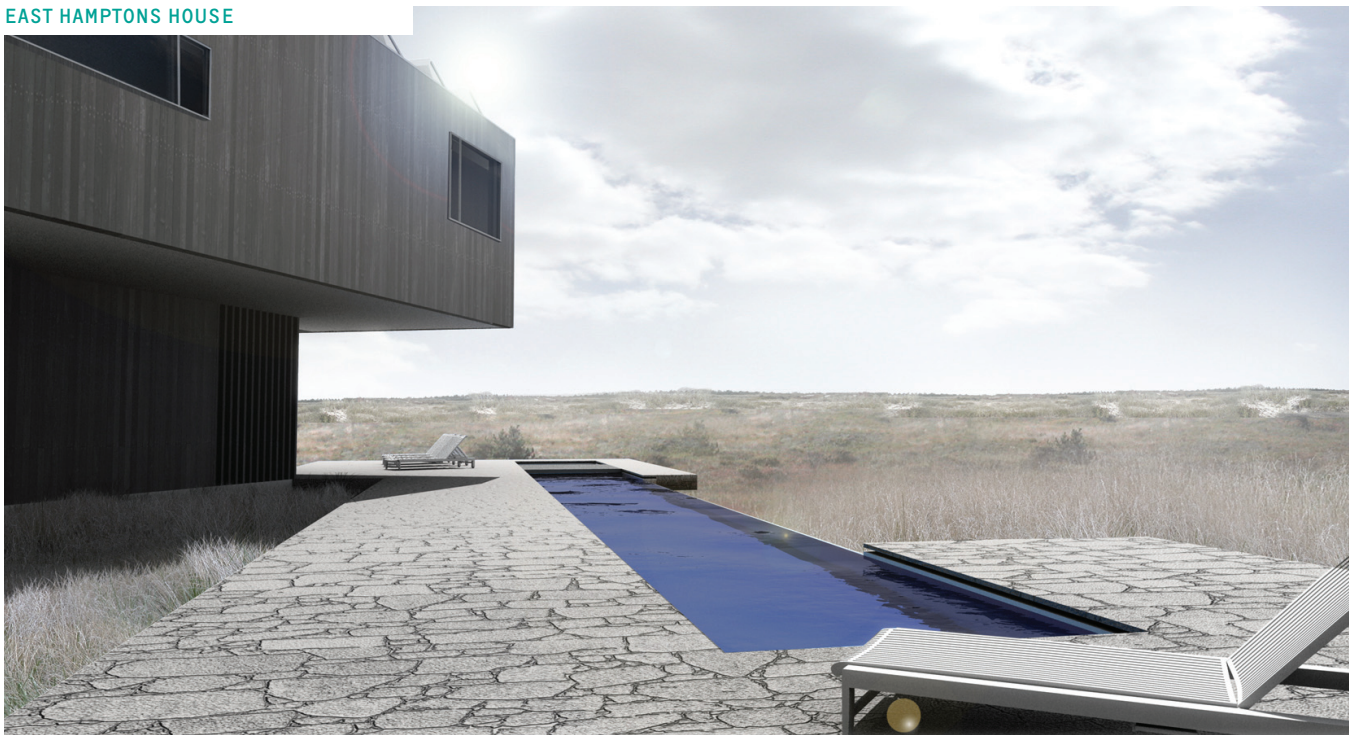
AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 11:01 AM Page 14

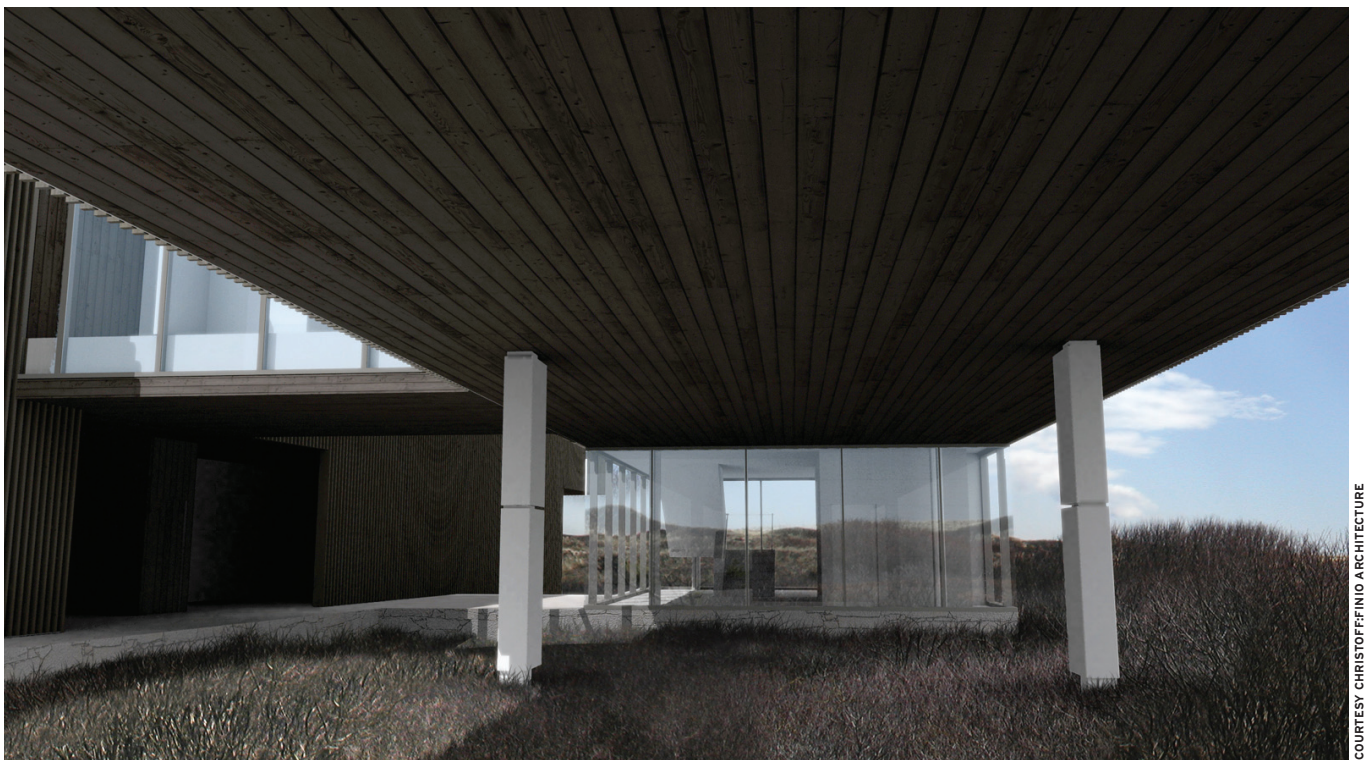
Christoff:Finio Architecture has made the most of New York's rich design culture to make the leap from speculative projects, competitions, and paper architecture to building at a variety of scales, garnering awards and teaching positions along the way. Taryn Christoff launched their practice in 1999 while her partner and husband Martin Finio was still working at Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. Christoff, according to Finio, brought a sense of rigor and discipline from her IIT education and "did the dirty work of slogging through the early unglamorous stuff until I joined the practice." They entered several international competitions in their first years, achieving measured success with an exhibition design for a show of Russian icons at the Guggenheim Museum that was cancelled in the aftermath of September 11, and in 2004 with the City Lights Design Competition, where they were alternate finalists.

While juggling the responsibilities of running an office, teaching, lecturing, and raising a family in city, the firm produced a series of stunning contemporary residences. Its 2002 design for a new ground-up townhouse in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, exemplifies the firm's design approach. Wedged into a vacant lot between two existing row houses, the design had a modest budget but the usual problems of building in the city. The firm prides itself on coming to projects without any preconceived design notions, and letting the site, appropriate materials, and zoning conditions drive the ultimate design. In Fort Greene, this meant using the existing shared parti walls and incorporating them into the design. This not only eliminated considerable additional construction costs, but gave the clients a modern live/work studio arrangement that was, according to Finio, a "fitting backdrop for the lives of these two urban artists."

Now that the firm has proved it can successfully complete residential and smaller commercial projects, it is taking on projects at larger institutional scales. A design for the Heckscher Foundation for Children on the Upper East Side was a first step in this direction, and now the firm has have been commissioned by the New York City Department of Design and Construction to redesign 20,000 square feet of new courtrooms and support spaces for the Brooklyn Supreme Court building. Finally, they are taking on the most difficult project of any architect, the reconstruction of their own New York duplex loft while living in it. This should prepare them for just about anything. **WILLIAM MENKING**

EAST HAMPTONS HOUSE





COURTESY CHRISTOFF:FINIO ARCHITECTURE

CHARLES STREET CARRIAGE HOUSE
NEW YORK

This two-story carriage house, which replaces one that burned down, sits behind an existing three-story townhouse for which the architects designed a rooftop penthouse in 2004. The penthouse was meant to peer around Richard Meier's Perry Street Towers next door, and the new carriage house was also designed with these structures in mind, providing a green sedum roof for tower residents to look down upon. A series of 9-foot twisted steel rods serve as a screen in front of the structure's glass street wall, creating an urban garage with enough space to store bicycles, garbage cans, and tools. The kitchen features a stainless steel counter that pierces through a glass wall into a shared back garden. The back wall has a partial privacy screen of elongated slate tiles.

HECKSCHER FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN
NEW YORK

Renovating an existing 1902 neo-Georgian townhouse on the Upper East Side, the architects created new administrative offices, boardrooms, and outdoor space for this philanthropic foundation. They rethought the layout of the traditional townhouse and cut away long, narrow sections of each floor plate along one edge, allowing an uninterrupted shaft of light to penetrate the building while creating a visual and physical connection through the space. The building's floors are suspended from a single point on the roof in order to maintain column-free floors and cut away spaces, which contain the stairs. The architects removed the back wall, creating a covered outdoor terrace, with the loads transferred through a new structural steel frame.

EAST HAMPTON HOUSE
EAST HAMPTON, NEW YORK

This 10,000-square-foot house was designed, the architects claim, "as much by the complicated zoning of the area as by its spectacular oceanfront site." Within 150 feet of a small wetland and with two flood zones bisecting the site, the designers created an elevated double-bar building connected by a glass bridge and at grade by a stone terrace and lap pool. The architects had to contend with the infamous 45-degree Pyramid Law, which heavily favors sloped roofs over flat ones, leading them to propose a series of 45-degree sloped roof ridges on which they set south-facing solar panels, the backs of which create north-facing skylight wells. The house is wrapped in a black stained cedar screen that forms rails for balconies and lets light pass through the structure's windows while allowing privacy.

MUSEUM AS HUB AT THE NEW MUSEUM
NEW YORK

An invited competition called for designers to help turn the museum's fifth floor into a space where discussions with allied Kunsthalles around the world could take place. Christoff:Finio's winning scheme focused on the idea of tables as places where dialogue occurs, and they wanted these to have a surface that could be projected upon, so they settled on Corian. In addition, because the space had to be flexible to accommodate various conditions, the tables can be moved through the space on tracks set in the floor. Colorful curtains hung from hospital-like ceiling tracks allow the space to be divided into multiple sections, with tables slid in or out for different types of meetings.

AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 9:43 AM Page 15

HECKSCHER FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN







CHARLES STREET CARRIAGE HOUSE



MUSEUM AS HUB AT THE NEW MUSEUM





AN_04_01_19_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 9:43 AM Page 16

GOVERNOR ARGUES FOR STIFF TOLL HIKES WHILE CRITICS ARGUE CONGESTION PRICING WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE

TRANSIT BELT-TIGHTENING IN NJ

While New Jersey often plays also-ran to New York City, the two regions depend on each other for capital investments in mass transit. On that score, New Jersey has run the steepest debts and started the most controversial infrastructure campaign on either side of the Hudson.

Governor Jon Corzine, declaring the state effectively bankrupt, has started barnstorming for support of a plan to recover financial health in part by creating a nonprofit entity to lease the state's toll roads for long-term fees. The state's transportation trust fund, routinely a feeding ground for lawmakers pursuing separate initiatives, will expire by 2011. And after that, Corzine warns, New Yorkers will suffer with their Garden State neighbors in a massive transit stall.

That's because Access to the Region's Core (ARC), a program to dig a second tunnel to ease surging levels of NJ Transit train traffic into Pennsylvania Station, cannot proceed without federal support, and federal support only comes when the state ponies up its own money. "Failure to identify a consistent source of transportation funding will jeopardize federal matching funds of $1.7 billion," the governor argued. "Additionally, to maintain federal matching funds for construction of the ARC tunnel, New Jersey needs to identify $3 billion of funding."

In that context, Corzine's plan suggests a buck-stops-here commitment to mass transit. And political coverage has played in that key, with protests and newscasts dwelling on the plan's intention to frequently double road tolls. To discount mass transit, of course, would put Corzine at rhetorical odds with his state's congressional delegation and with the bistate Port Authority, whose leadership recently raised tolls in the face of public outcry to support mass-transit infrastructure.

But 27 of New Jersey's environmental groups have derided Corzine's prescription as too kind to driving. By including road widening in the schedule of projects that a long-term lease would support, they said in a February 7 letter, Corzine is consigning the state to more inefficient travel and wasting money he doesn't have. "Congestion pricing, high occupancy toll lanes, mass transit, or a freight corridor are likely to do more in the long term, at a fraction of the cost," the letter says.

The letter indicates how delicate Corzine's political bind has become: NJ Transit has earned praise for upgrading stations and adding trains to keep up with surging demand, but the state's roads remain clogged. The letter also reveals differences in how New Jersey is addressing conditions that New York City's transit leaders are also trying to attack.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, deep in debt while trying to build a Second Avenue subway and relieve crowding on commuter trains, lacks the power to propose a road-leasing scheme. Instead, the authority hopes to generate more than $1 billion by selling development rights over the Hudson Yards rail facility on Manhattan's far West Side and to garner ongoing revenues from a daytime fee for driving in central Manhattan.

And here's where the two states' fortunes blend. The MTA recently notified the five developers bidding on Hudson Yards that it wants to retain an ownership stake in the land over the next hundred years. Someone close to the negotiations, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said this shift reflects the agency's "evolving sense" of how to most firmly feed the agency's finances. But, this person reminded *AN*, "Hudson Yards is for the last capital plan." So any projects to further coordinate MTA networks with New Jersey's would need a totally new source on each side of the river.

Corzine argues that his solution depoliticizes transit funding by creating a long-term source with no elected leadership. New York Governor Eliot Spitzer and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, meanwhile, are struggling to sell congestion pricing and a parallel MTA fare hike to state lawmakers. If Corzine's plan stalls over the steepness of tolls or the width of highways, prospects for fixing the region's connections may make New York's congestion problem harder to attack from within.

AA

UNVEILED

HL23

The list of buildings by prominent architects lining the High Line continues to grow. Sandwiched between Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Field Operation's new linear park and a slender residential tower by Lindy Roy, a new design for a 14-story condominium tower by Neil Denari combines fluid forms with hard-edged realities of the Manhattan gridiron plan. Glazed on the north and south sides, with a thin structural system visible underneath, and clad on the undulating east side with curved stainless steel panels, HL23 will be Denari's first free-standing building. "The site is so amazing. We approached the design as both an excavation and an invention," Denari told *AN*. Endorsed by the Department of City Planning, which granted the project seven zoning variances, the building will cantilever over the High Line by 5 feet. Cheek by jowl, industrial ruin, ambitious design, and commercialized culture combine to form a fascinating amalgam of contemporary urbanism. **AGB**

Architects: Neil M. Denari Architects, Marc Rosenbaum Architect
Developer: Alf Naman Real Estate Advisors
Location: 515-517 West 23rd Street, New York
Completion: Spring 2009



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COMMUNITY FIGHTS PLAN TO SWEETEN JAIL EXPANSION WITH RETAIL

NOT ADDICTED TO SHOPPING

On February 12, an AIA meeting triggered a citywide negative reaction with drawings of the Brooklyn House of Detention by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The recently released renderings depict a jail with retail on the ground floor, lining Atlantic Avenue and Smith Street. According to Department of Corrections spokesperson Stephen Morello, the drawings "merely intended to show people what street-level retail would look like in the expanded jail." Morello added that the drawings were not intended to illustrate a specific business that would be there, or show a specific architectural style or design. They were merely to help people visualize how retail might look at the site.

Built in 1957 at 275 Atlantic Avenue, the Brooklyn House of Detention was a single-cell jail that housed 815 male adults undergoing the intake process or awaiting trial in Brooklyn and Staten Island courts. Nowadays, it is a vacant building twice its original size. The city closed the jail in 2003, an attempt to cut costs by concentrating inmates elsewhere. Two years later, a plan to reopen a larger jail met with opposition in the neighborhood that continues to this day.

In an attempt to win over the community, the city proposed giving the neighborhood retail in the front of the jail, connecting to the developing shopping strip on Atlantic Avenue. The community knew better than to assume the city was doing them any favors. Because the neighborhood was gaining retail space on the lower level of the jail, the city demanded a jail twice its original size. Sandy Barboza, head of the Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association, vehemently opposes the plan. "The position of my organization is that we need to fight the expansion. It's not worth retail to have the jail double in size," Barboza told *AN* in an interview.

An even less savory plan was already shot down by the city: a combination of housing and retail involving architects Rogers Marvel and MVRDV of Rotterdam. With or without retail, the jail is expected to reopen by 2012.

DANIELLE RAGO

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AT DEADLINE

CONTRACTORS FACE FINES AFTER FIRE

Demolition has resumed at 130 Liberty Street, the former Deutsche Bank headquarters adjacent to the World Trade Center, but last summer's fire, which claimed two firefighters' lives ("Many Questions in Ground Zero Fire" *AN* 14_09.05.2007), continues to haunt the building and those tasked with taking it apart. On February 19, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited the project's general contractor, Bovis Lend Lease, and its former subcontractor, the John Galt Corporation, with 44 safety violations and said they could face up to half-a-million dollars in fines. Many of the violations were fire related and classified as "serious." Five were called "willful," the agency's sternest classification.

TAKING OFF...

On February 21, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates Kennedy International Airport, authorized the $19 million "Phase I" restoration of Building 60, more commonly known as Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal. JetBlue, which is building a new $875 million terminal behind the landmark, will populate the Saarinen building with check-in kiosks and hopes the renovation will be complete by this fall, when the newer section also opens. Much of the money will go to asbestos remediation and repairs to concrete, tile, and the roof.

...AND LANDING

Across the tarmac, American Airlines was dismantling one of JFK's lesser-known landmarks, its old terminal, replaced last year by a $1.3 billion complex by DMJM next door. The most remarkable feature of the old terminal was a 317-foot-long, stained-glass window by artist Robert Sowers, which started coming down in mid-February. Preservationists fought for its salvation, but at an estimated cost of $1 million to remove intact, as well as the added costs of transportation and reinstallation, the airline declined. A small portion of the window will be installed in the new terminal, at American's headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, and at the Cradle of Aviation Museum on Long Island.

THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE

New York's very own Amanda Burden, chair of the City Planning Commission and director of the Department of City Planning, has been recognized with a handful of awards this winter in honor of her planning acumen, vision, and leadership of one of the largest planning programs in the city. *Travel + Leisure* magazine named her a Design Champion, and she won the Marietta Tree Award for Public Service presented by the Citizens Committee and the Entrepreneurial American Leadership Award from the Partners for Livable Communities.

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☐ $500,000 to 1 million
☐ $1 to 5 million
☐ +$5 million

EMPLOYEES
☐ 1–9
☐ 10–19
☐ 20–49
☐ 50–99
☐ 100–249
☐ 250–499

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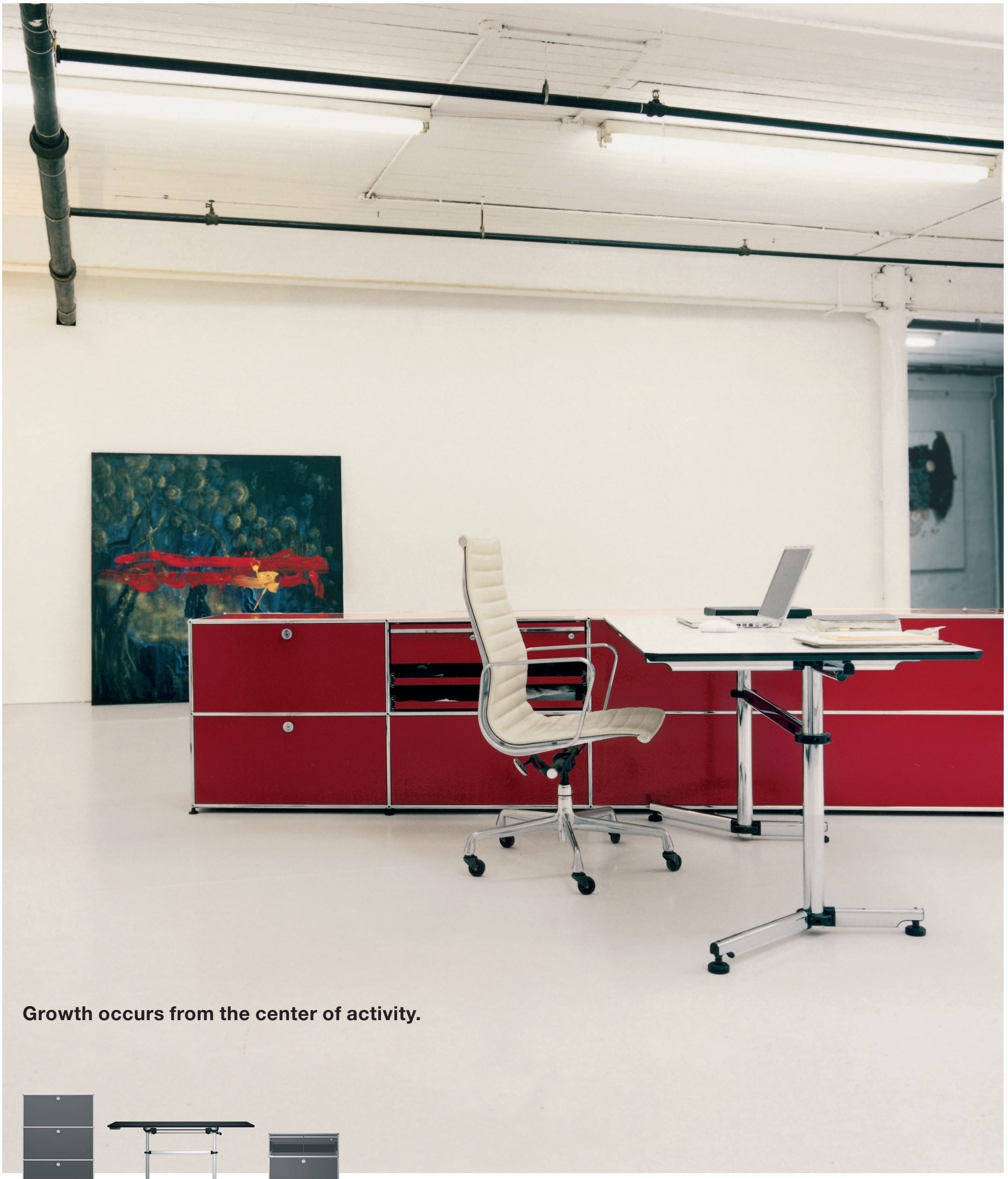
P'ING.



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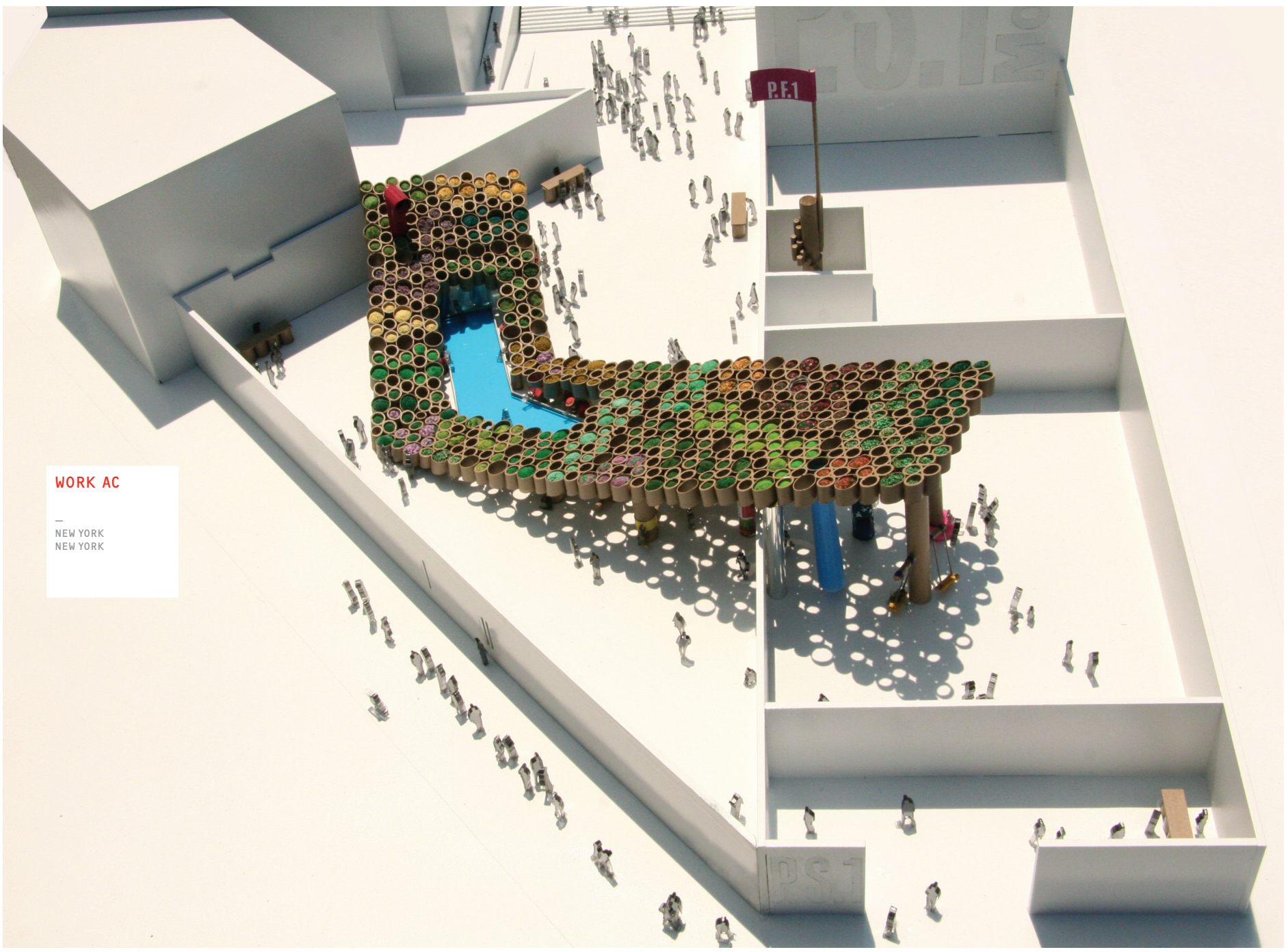
EMERGING VOICES

—

2008

FOR THOSE WHO WOULD DIVINE FUTURE TRENDS FROM THE WORK OF FIRMS SELECTED BY THE ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE AS THIS YEAR'S EMERGING VOICES, WINNER HAGY BELZBERG MIGHT SAY NOT TO BOTHER. "THERE IS AN ENORMOUS AMALGAMATION OF DIRECTIONS IN DESIGN RIGHT NOW," SAID BELZBERG, "AND EVERYONE IS OFF ON THEIR OWN TANGENT. IT ISN'T A PHASE." IF THE EIGHT FIRMS THAT FOLLOW ARE REPRESENTATIVE, HE IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. THE QUALITIES THAT UNITE THEM (BESIDES RELATIVE YOUTH AND CLEAR TALENT) ARE NOT OF FORM BUT SENSIBILITY: FEW FIT NEATLY INTO THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF AN ARCHITECTURE FIRM, BUT EACH HAS FOUND A WAY TO CREATE A PRACTICE THAT INCORPORATES THE FULL RANGE OF ITS PARTNERS' INTERESTS. FROM EL DORADO'S BELIEF IN PROTOTYPING TO MOS' WORK WITH THE ART WORLD TO ONION FLATS' DECISION TO ACT AS DEVELOPER, ARCHITECT, CONTRACTOR, AND CLIENT, THESE FIRMS SHOW THAT INNOVATION IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST FORM.

BY ANNE GUINEY



WORK AC

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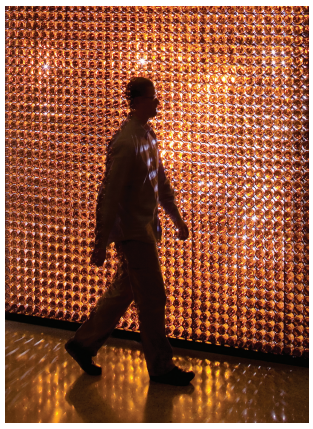
NEW YORK
NEW YORK

AN_04_20_25_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 12:18 PM Page 3

If being chosen as part of the Emerging Voices series is a coming-of-age mark for small firms, P.S.1's Young Architects Program has become another, with the added benefit of a summer's worth of DJs and beer. Each spring, the museum chooses a firm to build a temporary installation in the courtyard that can accommodate its Saturday series, *Warm Up*, essentially a hip block party. WORK AC's Public Farm 1 got the nod this year for a proposal that brings sustainable agriculture back to the city. A sloping structure made of cardboard tubes (facing page and below) will incorporate planters with flowers and vegetables for harvest, rainwater basins for crop irrigation, and solar panels for cell-phone-charging stations and the like in the shade below. According to principals Amale Andraos and Dan Wood, they have details to work out, but that is in keeping with the spirit of the series: With its short time frame and modest $70,000 budget, each year's winner has a chance for on-the-fly experimenting.

The issues WORK is grappling with at P.S.1 are ones that Andraos and Wood have been thinking about for a while. In particular, they are concerned with finding new ways to bring ecologically minded design to an urban level. "For us, it is more than a formal experiment," explained Andraos, "it is a reflection of what is going on around us," from the citywide popularity of farmer's markets to the mayor's PLANYC 2030 campaign to make New York more green. They have clearly hit on something, because in the first 24 hours after their selection was announced, Woods said they received hundreds of emails, including many that weren't from architects. There was a man who has been running a farm in Queens, a high school teacher who has incorporated agriculture into the curriculum, and even staffers at the local botanical gardens. "It is as if we stumbled onto a whole network of people who are interested in this issue and what we are doing," said Wood.







Though all of the big breweries in Milwaukee are gone except for Miller, beer and its production marked the city indelibly, according to Sebastian Schmaling. "The old beer barons were often great patrons of the arts, and there are wonderful old bars downtown that have amazingly detailed interiors," he said. In fact, his five-year-old firm, Johnsen Schmaling Architects, has made its office in one of them. One of the firm's larger residential projects is a renovation of an old Blatz brewery building into apartments. In a subtle reference to the building's past, the architects created screens in the lobby that hold 1,600 of the original old Blatz bottles that they found stored in the building's basement. The panels pivot into place to separate the lounge from the main entrance, and light washes down to illuminate the amber glass (below, left and right) "We didn't want to bring it to a frat-boy level of humor, of course, and the bottles are the only reference, but it is part of the cultural history here," said Schmaling.

The use of the bottles is also indicative of the way that Schmaling and partner Tim Johnsen think about context, and how they bring it into their work. "Context is an overused word," said Schmaling, "but if you can read a site more poetically and less literally, you can develop a language that guides you through the project." Another building that takes this approach is the Camouflage House in Green Lake, Wisconsin (bottom). "We were lucky to be able to spend a lot of time on the site, even camping out on weekends, and began to look at the verticality of the trees, the patterns of bark, and the colors through the seasons," Schmaling said. The finished house echoes the solid-and-void pattern that one gets when looking through trees to the water, rooting the house to its site in the woods.



JOHNSEN
SCHMALING
ARCHITECTS

—
MILWAUKEE
WISCONSIN

COURTESY JOHNSEN SCHMALING ARCHITECTS

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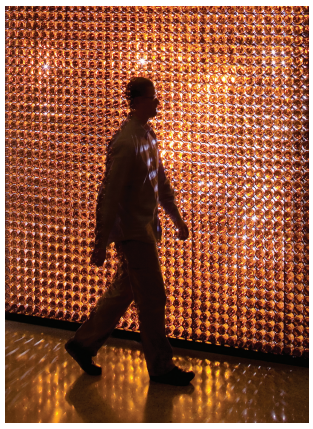



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JOHNSEN
SCHMALING
ARCHITECTS

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ONION FLATS

—

PHILADELPHIA
PENNSYLVANIA



For any architect caught between a client and a contractor—at some point, that's every architect—the idea of jettisoning both must seem tempting. The Philadelphia-based firm Onion Flats has managed to do just that, and for partner Tim McDonald, there's no turning back. "Life is short," said McDonald, "and we have no interest in going back and forth over color or material or budget. We control everything, straight down to the finances, and actually get a lot more accomplished." While they sometimes form joint ventures, as they did for the Rag Flats (above and left) housing, Onion Flats maintains a primary role. To do so, the firm evolved from a more traditional design/build model into one with a development arm called Onion Flats, a design practice called Plumb Bob, and a contracting and construction management firm called Jig. The three are intimately connected, allowing McDonald and his partners (two of whom are his brothers) to rethink the way they work. "Typically, a drawing set has to define 100 percent of a project, but we want our building sites to be creative places, so we have often kept ours smaller, making seven drawings as opposed to 30," he said. McDonald explained that this lets the team respond with agility to the facts on site, which are rarely identical to those on paper.

As the scale of the projects they take on grows—they are currently working on a 70-unit residential building called Stable Flats—their drawing sets are getting more detailed, but the underlying thinking remains the same. "On Stable Flats, we had to rethink the process some, and partnered with a company that makes modular steel and concrete structures," he said. This foray into prefabrication will let the scale and complexity of projects continue to grow while maintaining the same level of control. If it sounds like a lot, it is, according to McDonald, but it is also worth it: "It is so hard to build something, that this just makes life easier," he said, and "by taking on more risk, you actually reduce the stress, because you have full responsibility."



EL DORADO

—

KANSAS CITY
MISSOURI

Think, for a moment, about how many architecture jokes you know, even ones involving severe black eyeglasses. There aren't many, and for good reason: As a group, architects typically take themselves seriously. Not so Dan Maginn and his partners at el dorado, a Kansas City–based design and fabrication firm. "There is nothing less funny than a building that tries to explore humor," he said, "but there is nothing funnier than a group of people trying to do something in an environment that isn't set up for it." Architecture is a tough business, said Maginn, and if you can't hang on to some humor and humility, it's not worth it. Maginn and his partners have set up their firm to make sure they can do just that.

According to Maginn, about 25 percent of el dorado's work is custom fabrication, though the ability to design and produce fixtures informs almost all their work. "Designing and building things in steel satisfies a core need for a lot of us—making is crucial," he explained. There is a full metal shop in the studio, and this allows the architects to test and prototype details before going on-site. "We have a lot of respect for good contractors, and as fabricators, we can form a relationship with them that is really helpful for the project," he said. It also means that el dorado can use prefabricated elements to stay within budget, as it did for the Cox Communications (left) and the Hodgdon Power offices (below), both in Kansas.

The 14-person firm is set up as a confederacy of designers, fabricators, and artists, and on each project, one individual leads the design process and gets the input of the rest. "We can help each other and judge each other, and also make use of a design language we have already developed," said Maginn. "We aren't reinventing the wheel each time, but this way, each project pushes that language forward a few steps."



AN_04_20_25_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 12:31 PM Page 5





MOS

—
NEW HAVEN
CONNECTICUT

When the architect Michael Meredith got a fellowship at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, about ten years ago, the work he produced there was somewhat off the beaten architectural path: He designed a series of cushions for Donald Judd's beautiful but ungiving furniture and wrote a series of theme songs for some friends. Nonetheless, Meredith said that much of the work he and his partner Hilary Sample are working on today has its roots back in Texas. "A lot of it comes from the people we met there," said Meredith, like the Ancram Studio in Upstate New York (right). "The art world has been good to us," said Meredith.

Some work comes over the transom, though not always in the standard way. A wrong number led to one MOS project that is tethered to the shore of Lake Huron in Vancouver (above). Designed for a couple, the house floats a few feet from the water's edge on massive steel pontoons that can also be used as ballast when partially filled with water. Flexible couplings for utilities and waste allow the house to rise and fall with the lake level, which can fluctuate dramatically over the course of a year. "Climate change has really affected Lake Huron," said Meredith.

The house may be one of MOS' more traditional projects. "Because we both teach full-time [Sample at Yale; Meredith at Harvard's GSD] we often gravitate towards the marginal and weird," said Meredith, who then tried to explain what an inflatable factory/theater/community center in Newfoundland might look like. "We don't really have bread-and-butter projects," he explained. But the ones they have are interesting: MOS is one of the one hundred young firms chosen by Jacques Herzog of Herzog & de Meuron to design houses for Ordos, a brand new city for 1.6 million in Mongolia. Though he is no stranger to some of the odder edges of his profession, Meredith was still impressed: "Walking around there is like being in some postapocalyptic movie—there are buildings and museums, but not always roads, and there is just no one there."



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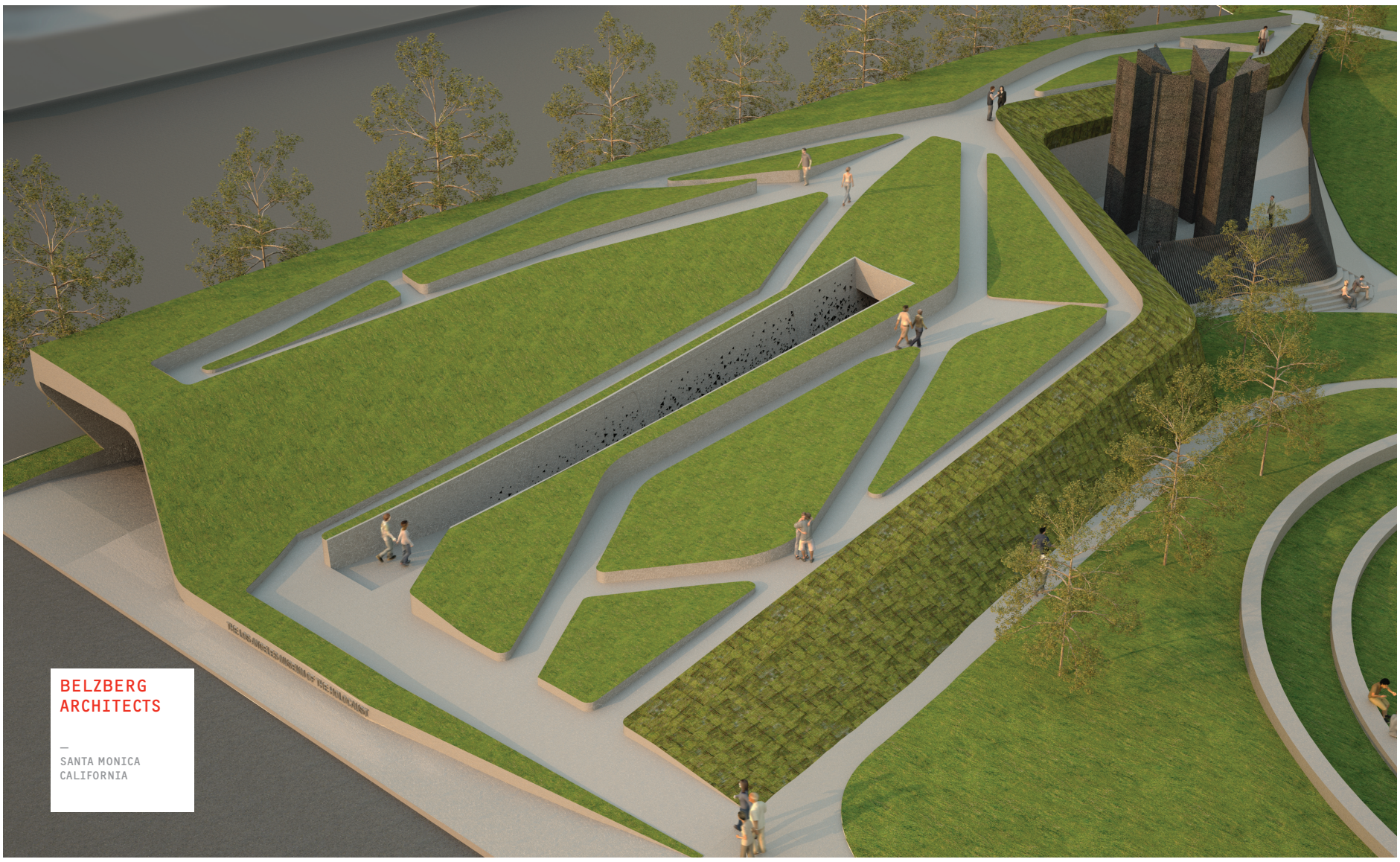
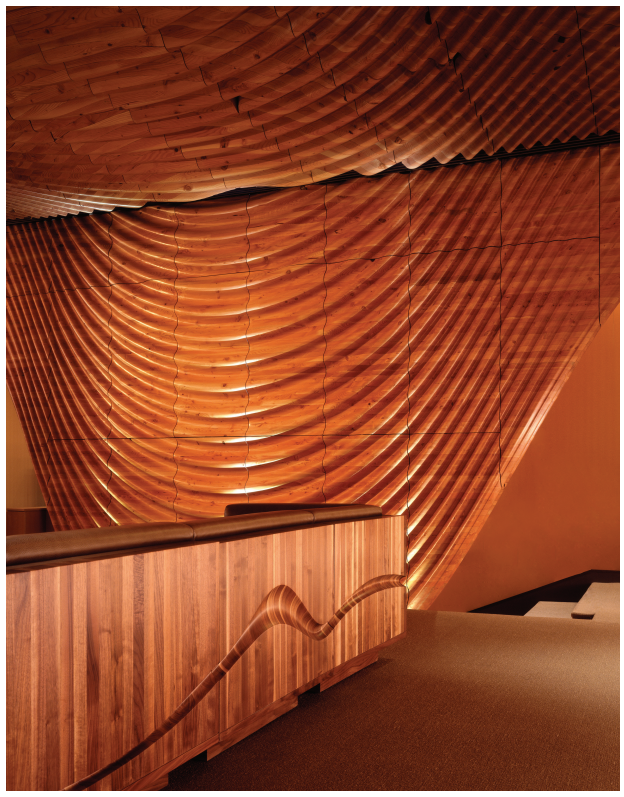


Hagy Belzberg's big break came when his firm was commissioned to do a 12,000-square-foot interior at Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. The building was widely praised by the press, and Belzberg got a share of it for his warm and curvilinear wooden interiors (right). But just as important as the exposure was the sense of possibility it opened: "It gave us the confidence to pursue more complicated forms," said Belzberg.

Like many of his contemporaries, Belzberg is a huge supporter of the technologies that allow him to pursue innovative forms without seeing them as an end of their own. "We only take on work that can be built, because there is a real joy in building," he said. "You can't get seduced by the image of what the software allows you to imagine—it's good to have limits like budget, program, and building code."

One project currently beginning construction is the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust (above), and for Belzberg, it presented the most productive constraint of all: a public client. They decided to submerge the building underground to keep from losing any open space, and so worked very closely with the LA Department of Parks and Recreation, which he described as a collaborator on the project. "They weren't an approving body, but they acted as a design review board on every major decision," Belzberg said, adding that it was an invaluable part of the process because they were so well-acquainted with the many constituencies. "As architects, we sit in the office all day thinking we know what all of the voices out there are saying, but we don't. Working with a public agency made us much more sensitive."



LECTURE SERIES:

Wednesday, March 5
Jamie Darnell, David Dowell, Dan Maginn, Josh Shelton, and Douglas Stockman, el dorado
Amale Andraos and Dan Wood, WORK Architecture Company

Wednesday, March 12
Johnny McDonald, Pat McDonald, Tim McDonald, and Howard Steinberg, Onion Flats
Chris Reed, Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Wednesday, March 19
Brian Johnsen and Sebastian Schmaling, Johnsen Schmaling Architects
Granger Moorhead and Robert Moorhead, Moorhead & Moorhead

Wednesday, March 26
Hagy Belzberg, Belzberg Architects
Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample, MOS

All lectures begin at 7:00 p.m., with the exception of the March 5 lecture, which will begin at 6:45 p.m. Lectures will be held at the New Museum, 235 Bowery.

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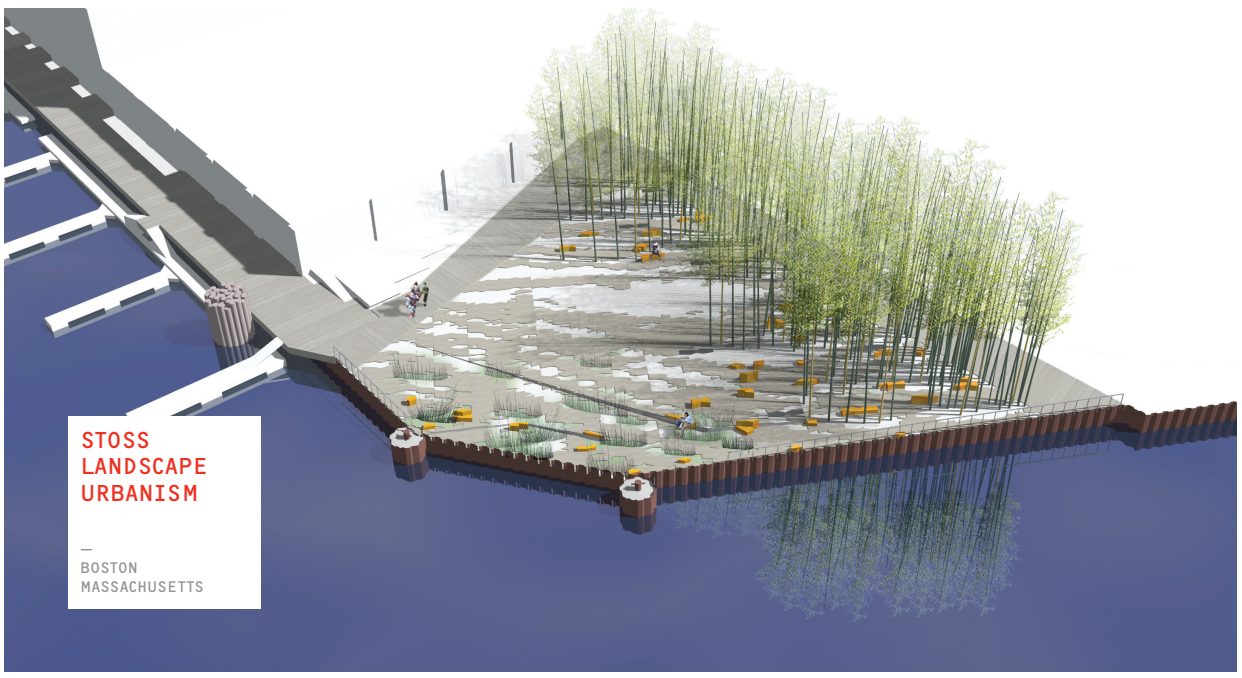

STOSS LANDSCAPE URBANISM

BOSTON
MASSACHUSETTS





A stoss is a geological term describing the side of a landscape that has borne the brunt of a glacier's force, and it comes from the German word for "push." There are ruder translations, too, according to principal Chris Reed, and while he wasn't aware of them when he launched Stoss Landscape Urbanism eight years ago, the mix makes sense. Reed described his firm's approach to the design of landscapes large and small as inventive about a place's nature and willing to bring flexibility into urban spaces. So why not have that in a name, too?

A playground in Quebec called the Safe Zone (bottom left) makes good on that approach. The brownfield site needed to be sealed off for safety, so Stoss designed a series of mounds covered in soft rubber pips made out of sneaker soles and old tires, creating a brightly colored landscape that doesn't dictate how the kids who play there will use it. For Perkins Park in Somerville, Massachusetts, (bottom right) Reed described watching the way his own children horse around and make use of whatever catches their eye, and so he incorporated a series of overlaid patterns and colors into the design that don't dictate what the game should be. "We wanted to provide a full palette of colors and textures and forms to give a sense of free play," said Reed.

The same sensibility informs larger projects like the Erie Street Plaza in Green Bay, Wisconsin (top), albeit in a more adult way. "Sometimes you have to let the environmental conditions or bureaucratic conditions determine the way a project evolves over time," he said. The Fox Riverfront in Dennis, Massachusetts is perhaps the most representative of this ethos: Reed described a landscape whose different parts will essentially duke it out over the years. Four conditions—salt marsh, cedar meadow, junegrass, and a filtration meadow—will grow or shrink as drought or municipal maintenance budgets allow. "If the town can't afford to mow, then perhaps the cedars will grow into the junegrass, or if there is heavy rainfall, then perhaps the salt marsh will expand." Either way, Stoss is willing to let it play out.



MOORHEAD & MOORHEAD

NEW YORK
NEW YORK

Sometimes architects test out ideas by making furniture, and industrial designers often itch to work at an architectural scale, but for Moorhead & Moorhead, this regular back and forth is a given: The two-man firm consists of brothers Granger and Robert Moorhead, the former an architect and the latter an industrial designer. "Each discipline has its own logic," explained Granger, "and that logic connects material to program. In architecture, there is a logic to detailing in the field, whereas industrial designers are detailing for production."

According to the Moorheads, who have worked together for eight years, they try to approach each project—be it the residential compound in Uruguay they are just completing or the rubber lamp they designed for the 2002 *Skin* show at the Cooper-Hewitt—with the understanding of both those scales at once. Last year, they worked with their father (also an architect) on a project in North Dakota, where they grew up, that is part public art installation, part architecture. A local artist commissioned six designers to make small spaces for reflection and art that would be mobile so that many more people could use them. Their solution was to use thermal plastic rods much like the struts of a tent set into a rigid bench that is both seating and structure. The result (left) suggests something between an open-air chapel and the frame of a covered wagon, and is a compelling synthesis of the two brothers' respective disciplines.

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MARCH 2008

MARCH

WEDNESDAY 5
LECTURES
Rahul Mehrotra
Architecture and Cultural Significance
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

Dan Dowell, Dan Maginn, Amale Andraos, Dan Wood
Emerging Voices
6:45 p.m.
New Museum
235 Bowery
www.archleague.org

THURSDAY 6
LECTURES
Dru Crawley, Peter Ellis
Building for the 21st Century: EnergyPlus and Google SketchUp: The Next Phase of High-Performance Design
12:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW, Washington, DC
www.nbm.org

Cynthia Field, Isabelle Gournay, Liana Paredes, Richard Longstreth
Paris on the Potomac
6:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW, Washington, DC
www.nbm.org

Edward Glaeser
The Future of the City
6:30 p.m.
Harvard Graduate School of Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA
www.gsd.harvard.edu

Jutta Müller-Tamm
On Space and the Spatiality of Aesthetic Experience in Georg Simmel
8:00 p.m.
Columbia University
Deutsches Haus
420 West 116th St.
www.columbia.edu/cu/german/dhaus

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Marcel Dzama
Even the Ghost of the Past
David Zwirner Gallery
519 West 19th St.
www.davidzwirner.com

Angelo Filomeno
Betrayed Witches
Galerie Lelong
528 West 26th St.
www.galerielelong.com

FRIDAY 7
LECTURES
Thomas Phifer
The Changing Role of Architects
6:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW, Washington, DC
www.nbm.org

Amale Andraos, Ziad Jamaleddine, Hashim Sarkis
Reimagining Risk: Beirut
7:00 p.m.
The Urban Center
457 Madison Ave.
www.archleague.org

Rhoda Eitel-Porter
Michelangelo, Vasari, and Their Contemporaries: Drawings from the Uffizi
7:00 p.m.
The Morgan Library and Museum
225 Madison Ave.
www.themorgan.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Rococo: The Continuing Curve, 1730–2008
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
2 East 91st St.
www.cooperhewitt.org

SATURDAY 8
LECTURE
Deborah Dependahl Waters
Scenic Designs by Donald Oenslager
2:00 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

SYMPOSIUM
David Kunzle
Rodolphe Töpffer & the Word/Image Problem
3:00 p.m.
Parsons the New School for Design
Theresa Lang Community and Student Center
55 West 13th St.
www.parsons.edu

SUNDAY 9
LECTURES
David Cohen, Bill Berkson, Yvonne Jacquette, et al.
The Chelsea Ethos: The Artistic World of Yvonne Jacquette and Rudy Burckhardt
2:00 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

Helen J. Langdon
A Wild Beauty: The 17th–Century Sublime
2:30 p.m.
The Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

MONDAY 10
LECTURES
Frances Bronet, Donna Robertson, Karen Van Lengen, Wanda Bubriski
Women of Architecture
Challenging the Paradigm: A Conversation with Three Women Deans of Architecture
6:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW, Washington, DC
www.nbm.org

Jacques Herzog
Herzog & de Meuron
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

TUESDAY 11
LECTURES
Lynne Cooke
Dia:Beacon: Making a Museum
5:15 p.m.
Cornell University School of Architecture
Sibley Hall, Ithaca
www.architecture.cornell.edu

Shampa Chanda
New York City Housing Futures
6:00 p.m.
General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen
20 West 44th St.
www.generalsociety.org

EXHIBITION
Beauty and Learning: Korean Painted Screens
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

FILM
Still Life
(Jia Zhangke, 2006), 108 min.
5:30 p.m.
Pratt School of Architecture
Higgins Hall Auditorium
61 St. James Pl., Brooklyn
www.pratt.edu

WEDNESDAY 12
LECTURES
Inaki Abalos
The Future Skyscraper
6:30 p.m.Harvard Graduate School of Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA
www.gsd.harvard.edu

Johnny McDonald, Pat McDonald, Tim McDonald, et al.
Emerging Voices
7:00 p.m.
New Museum
235 Bowery
www.archleague.org

THURSDAY 13
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Fawad Khan
33 Bond Gallery
33 Bond St.
www.33bond.com

Out of This World: Shaker Design Past, Present, and Future
Bard Graduate Center
18 West 86th St.
www.bgc.bard.edu

FRIDAY 14
LECTURE
Marianne Cusato, Ben Pentreath
Authentic Architecture
6:30 p.m.
Institute of Classical Architecture
20 West 44th St.
www.classicist.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Katy Moran
Andrea Rosen Gallery
525 West 24th St.
www.andrearosengallery.com

EVENT
William Gass
7:00 p.m.
192 Books
192 10th Ave.
www.192books.com

SUNDAY 16
EVENT
Off the Wall: Artists at Work
The Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.jewishmuseum.org

WEDNESDAY 19
LECTURES
Lynn Kelly, David Gratt, et al.
The Future of Coney Island
6:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

Brian Johnsen, Sebastian Schmaling, Granger Moorhead, Robert Moorhead
Emerging Voices
7:00 p.m.
New Museum
235 Bowery
www.archleague.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Geometry of Motion 1920s/1970s
Projects 87: Sigalit Landau
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

LECTURE
Design Remixed: Jürg Lehni
6:30 p.m.
Apple Store, Soho
103 Prince St.
www.aigany.org

THURSDAY 20
LECTURE
Werner Sobek
High-tech Ecology
6:30 p.m.
University of Pennsylvania School of Design
B1 Meyerson Hall, Philadelphia
www.design.upenn.edu/arch

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Barnaby Whitfield
31 Grand
31 Grand St., Brooklyn
www.31grand.com

Daan van Golden
Greene Naftali
526 West 26th St.
www.greenenaftaligallery.com

FRIDAY 21
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
McDermott & McGough: Because of Him
Cheim & Read
547 West 25th St.
www.cheimread.com

Utagawa Toyokuni
Utagawa: Masters of the Japanese Print, 1770–1900
Robert E. Blum Gallery
Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org

Shibata Zeshin
The Genius of Japanese Lacquer: Masterworks by Shibata Zeshin
Japan Society Gallery
333 East 47th St.
www.japansociety.org

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JAMES KING/COURTESY MOMA

DESIGN AND THE ELASTIC MIND
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
Through May 12

PCs, the Net, wireless—each technological milestone has dramatically changed the way we humans act and even think. What's the Next Big Thing that'll reboot our bodies and our brains? Get a glimpse of the future in *Design and the Elastic Mind*, an exhibition featuring more than two hundred objects, concepts, and installations representing futuristic fusions of science and design. Perhaps the doctor of the future will take an unexpected form: In Susana Soares' *BEE'S, New Organs of Perception*, trained insects use their superior sense of smell to diagnose human diseases and even track fertility cycles. James King's *Dressing the Meat of Tomorrow* (pictured) is an experiment in molding in-vitro-cultured meat into natural, organic-looking shapes. A project by Michele Gauler is a sort of better-dying-through-circuitry scenario. Equipped with a Bluetooth connection, *Digital Remains* lets mourners log in to view a deceased loved one's electronic items, such as family pictures. By Ammar Eloueini, the *CoReFab #116 chairs* evoke a day when consumer choice will be nearly infinite; designed using stop-motion animation, the chair is an ever-shifting character that can be frozen and fabricated in whatever form the consumer prefers. Now that's a clever way to please picky customers.



MATT FLYNN/COURTESY COOPER-HEWITT, NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

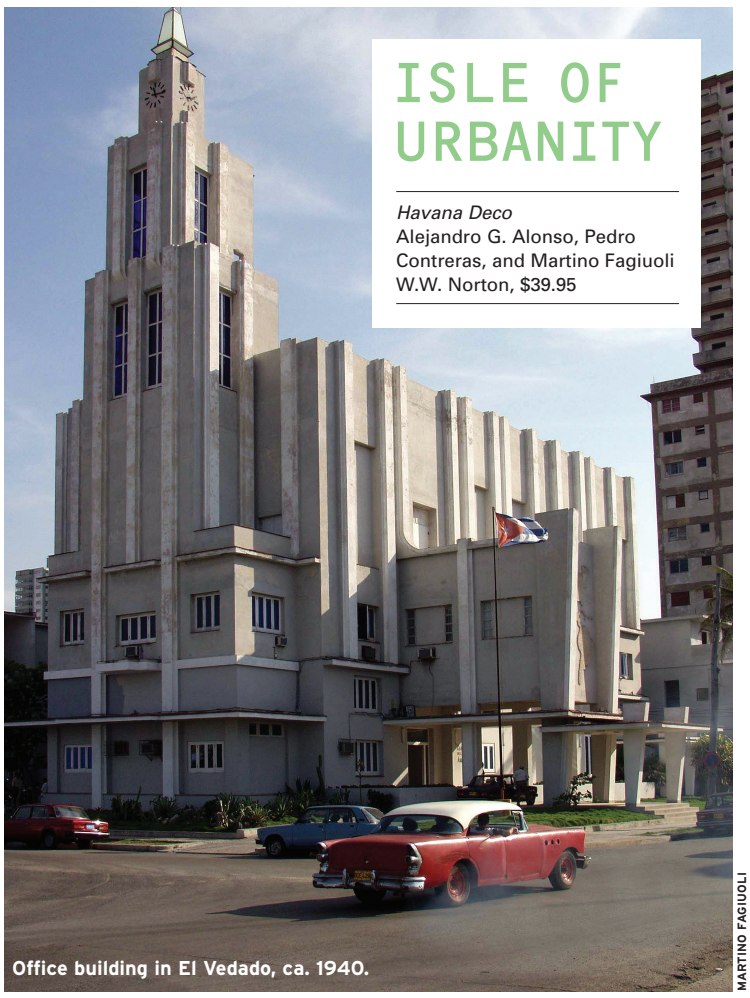
ROCOCO: THE CONTINUING CURVE, 1730–2008
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
2 East 91st Street
Through July 6

After emerging from the opulent grandeur of 18th-century Paris, the Rococo style—light, ornamental, and elaborate—has materialized in other forms throughout Europe and the United States. This exhibition examines the evolution of Rococo across centuries, continents, and media through items including furniture, decorative arts, prints, drawings, and textiles. The show begins with quintessential examples of the style by designer and silversmith Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, whose tureen and platter are teeming with shell, crayfish, and vegetable forms. While artists and craftsmen made their own modifications and refinements to the aesthetic, certain characteristics of the original style have endured, such as its curvilinear form. The Thonet Brothers' rocking chair No. 4 (pictured) exemplifies how Rococo translates to wood craftsmanship, evoking the feeling of movement through spiraling and intertwining organic forms. More surprising inclusions are some modernist designs such as Alvar Aalto's Savoy vase and Verner Panton's Stackable side chair. But despite their simplicity, the items incorporate asymmetrical forms and sensuous curves that the original Rococo masters might appreciate.

AN_04_26_36_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 10:49 AM Page 3

ISLE OF URBANITY

Havana Deco
Alejandro G. Alonso, Pedro Contreras, and Martino Fagiuoli
W.W. Norton, $39.95



MARTINO FAGIUOLI

Office building in El Vedado, ca. 1940.

Havana's antiquity, wealth, and historic receptivity to cosmopolitan influence have bestowed upon it the most comprehensive portfolio of high-quality architecture in the western hemisphere. Masterpieces survive from every period, including the baroque, neoclassical, 19th century eclectic, and mid-20th century modern. The art deco is no exception, as beautifully presented in *Havana Deco*.

The art deco style hit Havana at the tail end of the biggest building boom that the city had ever experienced. Between 1899 and 1929, the city enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and development. No longer fettered by Spanish colonial rule, Cuba attracted lavish North American investment. The sugar industry, newly mechanized on a large scale, boomed when war in Europe extinguished beet sugar production and prices for cane sugar soared. Huge fortunes were made, and swollen municipal budgets enabled Havana to remake itself as the great republican capital it aspired to be. The grand boulevards, municipal buildings, and private mansions of the first quarter of the century, built in the classical and historicist styles of the Belle Epoque, gave Havana the urban identity it retains today. By the 1930s, when the Cuban economy cooled, practitioners of art deco would have encountered a more conservative clientele and more limited design opportunities than in prior decades. This perhaps explains the restraint of much of the architecture shown in *Havana Deco*: houses, apartment buildings, and commercial blocks don't stray radically from classical forms, but are accented with curved balconies, zigzag ironwork, and sculpted tropical floral ornament: elegant modernism imbued with a tropical Latin spirit.

Contrast Havana to Miami, the brash upstart ninety miles to the north. In the 1920s, Miami seemed to rise overnight from swamp and sandbar. The art deco style was deployed by Miami's real estate developers as an alluring symbol of modernity and, in the absence of much existing context, put its indelible stamp on the city. Mature Havana had no need for such self-advertisement. The Cuban elite of the time probably viewed the flamboyance of Miami art deco as vulgar excess. When it comes to art deco design, Havana is more Paris than Miami, and affluent Cubans in the early 20th century were notably Francophile. Witness the home of Catalina Lasa and Juan Pedro Baró, one of the most fully-realized art deco interiors anywhere, gorgeously presented in this volume. The interiors are largely the work of Rene Lalique, imported from Paris, as is Lasa's exquisite jewel-box of a tomb in the Cristóbal Colón cemetery.

To say that Havana's art deco design is less flamboyant than Miami's, diluted in urban impact by the rich architectural context of the city, is hardly to diminish it. Alejandro Alonso (journalist/critic/curator), Pedro Contreras (art historian), and Martino Fagiuoli (photographer) have done an impressive job of hunting down the art deco treasures of Havana. Their research is thorough and the text, tailored to a popular reader, is illuminating. The photography is superb. Probably because the writers are Cuban, working in Havana, *Havana Deco* avoids the clichéd obsession with Havana as a romantic ruin that afflicts most recent books on Cuban architecture written by North Americans and Europeans.

Havana Deco looks not just at architecture but also interior design and furniture and, in so doing, beautifully illustrates the "total design" character of the art deco style as practiced in Havana. It is the felicitous intersection of traditional Cuban crafts—ironwork, ceramics, terrazzo, wood carving—with the new modern style that produced the most dazzling artistic results.

The authors give the same respectful treatment to modest suburban villas and shop fronts as they do to the great civic and commercial monuments. A stand-out in the last category is the Edificio Bacardí (Esteban Rodruíguez Castells), built in 1930 in a strange Babylonian style when the rum company moved its headquarters, with a splash, from Santiago de Cuba to Havana. Movie theaters are well represented as a building type and, as this book reveals, Havana has many splendid examples. The Teatro Fausto (Saturnino Parajón, 1938) is a gem, and the perfectly preserved interiors of the Cine Teatro América (multiple artists, 1941) are fully on par with Radio City Music Hall.

The authors of this book stretch the definition of art deco to fill out the volume. This reviewer has never considered the Hotel Nacional, a Spanish Renaissance Revival pile by McKim, Mead & White, an example of the style. Likewise, the impressive hospitals and university buildings from the late 1930s and 40s have more in common with the stripped classicism concurrently popular in Rome, Berlin, and Washington, D.C. A streamlined building like the splendid Edificio Solimar (Manuel Copado, 1944) belongs not in a book on art deco but in one on Havana's last great period of architectural production in the 1940s and 50s, when a building boom was again fueled by a wartime spike in sugar prices and augmented by tourism and gambling revenues.

The organization of *Havana Deco* is choppy, mixing disparate sections on building types, geographical areas, stylistic groupings, and building components to disorienting effect. The text would benefit from rigorous English language copy-editing. That aside, the beauty of the photography and the value of the documentation make the publication a success that belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in the architecture and decorative arts of the great city Havana. **BELMONT FREEMAN IS A NEW YORK ARCHITECT.**

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics after Modernism
Felicity D. Scott
MIT Press, $29.95

In the stroboscopic corner of architectural history dedicated to the neo-avant-garde, Felicity Scott's *Architecture or Techno-utopia* is long-anticipated, having been previewed over the last six or seven years in papers published in such vanguard journals as *October* and *Grey Room* (the latter of which Scott is a founding editor). The book unfolds the map of the neo-avant-garde in the United States in such a way that we can see familiar and less familiar historical landmarks arrayed one next to the other. No less significant, it insists that the neo-avant-garde legacy of weird pictures, puzzling exhibitions, and outlandish texts helps us to think about the present, though the politics announced by the book's title stay somewhat elusive.

Opening in the 1930s and closing with the Ground Zero site, the book's narrative pivots around architecture's post-modern retreat from the political realm into artistic autonomy. This became overt during the debate between America's "Whites and Grays" in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which presented architecture's future as a formal choice between Corbusian and historicist languages. The radical architects and critics profiled in Scott's book explicitly or implicitly found the postmodern retreat to formalism unconscionable, though conceded that the industrial capitalism with which modernism had attempted to engage was indeed mutating. In the U.S. and western Europe, at least, a late-twentieth-century "postindustrial" capitalism was emerging in which truth dissolved into information, architecture into spectacle, class into consumption, jobs into contracts, critique into mystification. What Felicity Scott hopes to find in the cases on which she focuses—figures like the Marxist critic Meyer Schapiro, MoMA curators Arthur Drexler and Emilio Ambasz, Italian and Californian designers like Superstudio and Ant Farm, hippie settlements like Drop City, and the early Office of Metropolitan Architecture—is the desire and ability to engage the post-modern political economy with the same gusto with which the modernist avant-garde struggled with industrial capitalism in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Architecture or Techno-utopia can be read in two ways. At face value, it is a compelling ideological history of American architecture since World War II, much of it of a reassuringly archival quality. But that history further functions as grist to a critique of contemporary architecture. It infers that post-structuralism superseded dialecticism as the de facto critical method of the neo-avant-garde (whether or not the actors themselves were aware of it), and that this was necessarily so: The postmodern economy found, and finds, its nemesis in a poststructural neo- avant-garde. When the hippies of Chapter 7 don't quite live up to this critical responsibility, they are dealt a stern rebuke in Chapter 8, though the pairing of history and critique is really arresting in the chapters on Italy, MoMA, and the early OMA, where we discover that the neo-avant-garde was reading the very same Autonomia political theorists who blossom, by the book's end, as saviors of the dreadful times in which *we* now live. Autonomia encompasses a notable line of Italian intellectuals such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno, who variously yoke Marxism, anarchism, and poststructuralism to an opportunist struggle against, yet *inside*, late capitalism,



COURTESY MOMA/LICENSED BY SCALA/ART RESOURCE

The New Domestic Landscape exhibit at MoMA, 1972.

continued on page 29

AN_04_26_36_mp_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 2/26/08 10:49 AM Page 4

COMMUNITY UPRISING

Bargaining for Brooklyn
Nicole P. Marwell
University of Chicago Press, $22.00

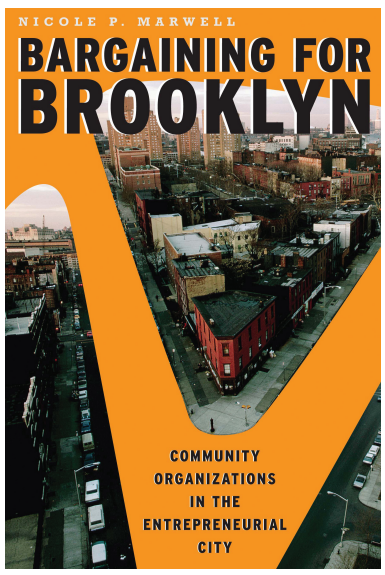
As New York City seems to go through an identity crisis, we attempt to rectify the loss of the old New York while making room for the innovative, new one. Nicole Marwell's book *Bargaining for Brooklyn* requires that we understand how to balance and demand both. She reveals the organizational underbelly for the stabilization of some of New York's more volatile communities. Her tone is sharp, and provides a view akin to a museum exhibit by its balance between firsthand storytelling, political insider referencing, historical documentation, and third party observation. Her perspective provides an insight that sits somewhere between the street-level brevity of The Municipal Art Society's *Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York* exhibit and the breadth of communal insight at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

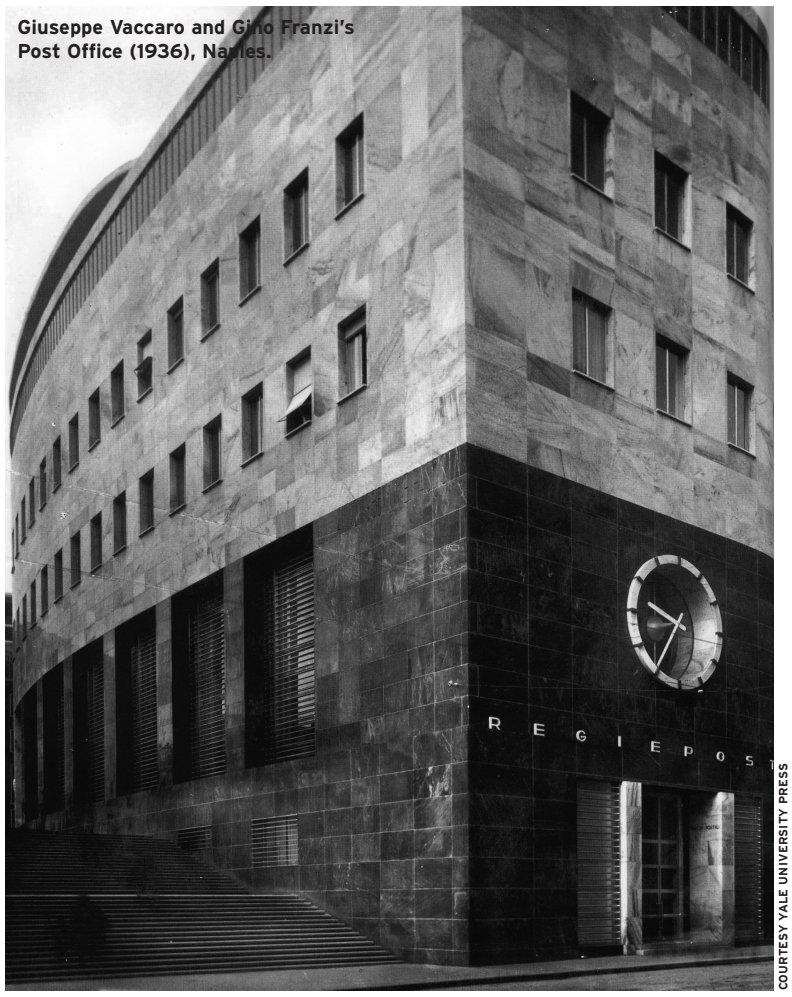
The story begins a century ago, as a group of University of Chicago sociologists led by Robert Park founded the field of human ecology. Park and his colleagues focused on the individual's relationship to the community as the center of their debate on social order and emigrant integration in the industrialized city. Then came the rise in the early 1960s of community-based organizations (CBOs), and in the late 1960s, the urban renewal efforts of the federal government. The renewal efforts in New York cultivated a more formal CBO, better known as the community development corporation (CDC). CDCs were and are organically grown and bureaucratically funded mechanisms of economic and housing development. CDCs, and CBOs like them, have transformed neighborhoods across New York City for 40 years through a network of resources raised locally, funded by foundations, or negotiated at city hall. *Bargaining for Brooklyn* begins early in the 21st century in Williamsburg and Bushwick with Marwell, the University of Chicago doctoral candidate of Latina/o studies and sociology, and her participant-observation of eight CBOs (four representing each neighborhood). Many of these CBOs have worked for decades to support the mostly Puerto Rican population that rebuilt these neighborhoods from urban renewal to the point of their gentrification. While the real estate fight is deemed eminent, Marwell reminds us that the critical social service provision by these CBOs continues to aid and support poor populations who struggle to remain in place through neighborhood transition.

Bargaining for Brooklyn addresses Marwell's disagreement with the focus on the individual's relationship to his/her community as the basis for his/her success in life. These assumptions, she attests, are based on the sheer transience of our urban, postindustrial society. This is why it is important, in Marwell's view, to stop talking about how the individual is responsible for alleviating his/her poverty and start talking about the organizations that are plugged into these communities. They are the ones immersed in exchanging resources outside the community while simultaneously keeping pace with the pulse of their neighborhood. She remains one of the first sociologists to credit the community-based organization as the fulcrum for alleviating poverty, rather than the individual. The individual is not discredited, but Marwell is setting the stage for a much larger conversation about the privatization of social services in the United States and the critical nature of the organizations that administer these services in otherwise underserved communities. Marwell isn't necessarily making policy recommendations, either. Rather, she highlights the value of the CBO in the dialogue of poverty, not only on behalf of the individual, but of the community. These organizations have the power to bargain at the political table in a way that the individual or a group of individuals cannot.

While New York City abounds in trigger words such as affordability, luxury, overcrowded, spacious, and up-and-coming, Marwell directs our attention to the vital role of the nonprofit, community-based child care center, senior center, youth center, church, and CDC in neighborhoods once classified as slums. Marwell illustrates the grassroots impact of these, the smallest of entities, in the highly political battleground for social service contract monies. From a city's identity crisis to a mortgage crisis, the poor, and increasingly the middle class, seem to be the ones marginalized. *Bargaining for Brooklyn* is a stab at an understanding for a solution.

NANCY CAMPBELL IS AN URBAN PLANNER IN NEW YORK.





Giuseppe Vaccaro and Gino Franzi's Post Office (1936), Naples.

COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

LETTERS HOME

Building a New Europe: Portraits of Modern Architects, essays by George Nelson, 1935–1936
Foreword by Robert A.M. Stern;
introduction by Kurt W. Forster
Yale University Press, $45.00

In the years before World War II, European travelers to America brought home news about the shape of the world to come: giant buildings, bright lights, unrestrained commerce, and the teeming mixture of races that characterized American cities. But what about American visitors to Europe? Everyone knows about the travels of Philip Johnson, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Alfred Barr that led to MoMA's breakthrough show *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* in 1932. Before the arrival of major European figures on these shores in 1938–1939, Americans learned slowly about the new architecture. Young architects on their *wanderjahre* visited the new works, MoMA held special exhibitions focused on the new heroes, and magazines slowly took up the new architecture while their readers debated its virtues. It was, at first, a specialized story for a limited audience.

Among the most prolific of the writers about the new architecture was George H. Nelson (1908–1986), a young American editor and designer. Having won a fellowship to the American Academy in Rome in 1932–1934, Nelson used the opportunity to meet European architects and to write up his encounters. A dozen articles were published in the magazine *Pencil Points* from 1936 to 1937 and have now been gathered in a volume with an introduction by Kurt W. Forster and a foreword by Robert A. M. Stern.

The articles are loosely organized. Typically, the young writer describes the architect's physical appearance, relays a few morsels of conversation, outlines the nature of his architectural practice, some current building projects, and concludes with a general assessment. The pieces read like worked-up diary fragments rather than anything more systematic, and the list of architects is equally random. Four interviews were held in Italy: Le Corbusier, Marcello Piacentini, Giuseppe Vaccaro, and Gio Ponti; three in Germany: Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Vassily and Hans Luckhardt; two in England: Tecton and Raymond McGrath; and one each in France, Denmark, and Sweden (Eugene Beaudouin, Helweg Møller, and Ivar Tengbom).

Nelson was a young man in his mid-twenties with no buildings and no bibliography, and lucky to get the interviews. Was his selection of the Luckhardts motivated by a belief (not shared by Hitchcock et al.) in the value of expressionism as a predecessor to the modern movement, or was it that they had good English and time to spare for a young foreigner? Was Asplund out of town when Nelson traveled to Stockholm? Or was Östberg really his prey? When Gordon Bunshaft visited Stockholm on a fellowship from MIT in 1935, he ignored Asplund's works and focused on Östberg. Or did the editors at *Pencil Points* veto certain architects?

Thus it is a stretch of the imagination to conclude, with Robert A. M. Stern, that the young author had an "unblinkered inclusiveness" in comparison with the "narrow focus" of the leading polemicists of the day such as Gropius, Hitchock, Johnson, and Sigfried Giedion. True, there is a genial kind of naiveté to Nelson's accounts. He is awed by Piacentini's "cold detachment and inflexibility." And with Mies van der Rohe, Nelson had a rainbow of experiences, meeting both the lock-jawed German unwilling to extend himself to his young visitor and the connoisseur who liked food and wine, prompting Nelson to note that "with a sufficient quantity of both inside of him he can become a charming and mellow conversationalist." Sitting before the onyx wall at the Tugendhat House, Mies reportedly sat back and said, "Now there is a *wall*." Whatever else, Nelson was one of the few Americans to have met many of these architects, and his reports are among the most complete contemporary English language publications about them.

All this makes entertaining, if not tremendously enlightening, reading. Nelson is tongue-tied with some interviewees and they with him, while in other instances there seems to have been a fine rapport. In the cases of Gropius and Tecton, Nelson constructed reports without a personal encounter. Still, when he can record verbatim comments, he communicates a charming freshness—the encounters with Le Corbusier and the Luckhardts are especially flavorful.

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Nelson was in Europe between 1932 and 1934, but the articles only began to appear in January 1935, time enough for judicious editing when it was clear that these encounters could be published. Time enough, too, to wonder about his characterization of the political mood. He acknowledges the dominating presence of Mussolini in Italy and is shocked by brown shirts "dripping with swastikas" in Germany. Still, even the Spanish Civil War was a way off when the material was gathered, and the basic architectural issue that emerges from his articles has to do with national identity. Mies van der Rohe, he reports, expects to be able to work with the new government.

European visitors to America foretold the shape of the world to come: democratic, rich, and efficient. American visitors thought Europe, with its chaotic, old-fashioned politics, had nothing to offer the new beyond its aesthetic values. In that respect, Nelson is no different from Johnson, Barr, and Hitchcock. Nelson offers an insider's tale, with the emphasis on human detail. Kurt W. Forster deftly sidesteps the question of what one learns about architecture from Nelson's accounts, and focuses on how Nelson's articles coincide with changes in the design of periodicals.

Finally, though a useful collection, scholarly readers will still need to find the original magazines. There are minor errors in transcription and no indication of the original page breaks. The original photographs have been reduced in number, and captions have been eliminated. Of course, what made the original format so remarkable was that these brief lives came to rest in a magazine that looked as if time had stopped somewhere around 1912—a point that can only be fully appreciated by those who, stimulated by these vignettes, trudge to the library and fetch *Pencil Points* from its place on the shelves.

NICHOLAS ADAMS IS A PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AT VASSAR COLLEGE.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT continued from page 27

nested amongits multitudinous postindustrial subjects. *Architecture or Techno-utopia* seeks a neo-avant-garde architecture of similar stealth, and thus Ant Farm emerges as something of a role model, wryly engaging with electronic media, guerrilla architectures, and environmental discourse.

It is a measure of the book's courage that it acknowledges the great Marxist historian Manfredo Tafuri's doubt about the neo-avant-garde—and takes it on. In so doing, though, one is reminded of the continuing persuasiveness of Tafuri's skepticism. Despite the incantatory repetition in the book of the words "politics" and "critical," there is little detail on how to judge a design's criticality. With the pursuit of lucid objectives deemed disagreeably teleological or managerial, the exact mechanism between architecture and political change is unclear, and one starts to wonder whether class, race, gender, ecology, neoliberalism—anything looking like a component of totality—are themselves all immaterial fictions of a system that can be ruptured by art, language, and romanticism. There is very little institutional critique in the book, and so for all its implicit disdain for hierarchy and discipline, radicalism in this book tends to emanate from top-tier university architecture schools and private museums.

With a measured anger that is wholly appropriate to the times in which we live, this book avowedly hunts for enemies. It finds them in "post-critical" architects and in philosophical dialecticians, who are found to equally and oppositely speak the language of the late-capitalist environment—whereas radical architecture can jack-in and jack-out of this milieu as if it were the hacker of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, shape-shifting, resisting, and confounding the opposition. In this the book's sympathies feel as routinely poststructuralist as they do socialist. Given the Newspeak and "truthiness" of 21st century politics, the Yes Men, perhaps the nearest equivalent we have today to Ant Farm, are a lovely antidote to the psychosis of capitalism and mainstream media. But they are the shock troops of rationality, not an alternative to it.

Regarding architecture's collusive role as a medium for late capitalism and its potential as a vehicle for a politics of desire, *Architecture or techno-utopia* has some strategic pointers to offer, but it is not a complete field manual. It shows us but a few choice tools in the critical box. So while readers are reconsidering the political potential of architectural poststructuralism (following its recuperation as deconstructivist style), they might also consider clemency for other potentially cogent tendencies including, say, ecology, or rational, secular, dialectical engagement, or even post-criticality itself (insofar as it might not be merely irresponsible, but admits to the *limits* of architecture's capacity to change the world, its bodies, its desires, its economy). Like that rare architecture that somehow puts more into the world than it takes away, utopian politics might take place not only in subversion and shock, but also in things done with as much dogged compassion for the world as antipathy to it. We can all do our best to make things right, some through architecture, others through subversion, why not, maybe others through consensus-building? I know, this sounds more like politics *during* modernism than after, and it's a touch pragmatic, and none too exciting, either. Blame, too, a dead dialecticism for responding to the book in this way—and hold the book responsible for being worth engaging with and encouraging disputation as it resolutely looks for possibilities other than melancholia.

SIMON SADLER IS A PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN HISTORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS, AND DIRECTOR OF THE UC DAVIS ART HISTORY PROGRAM.

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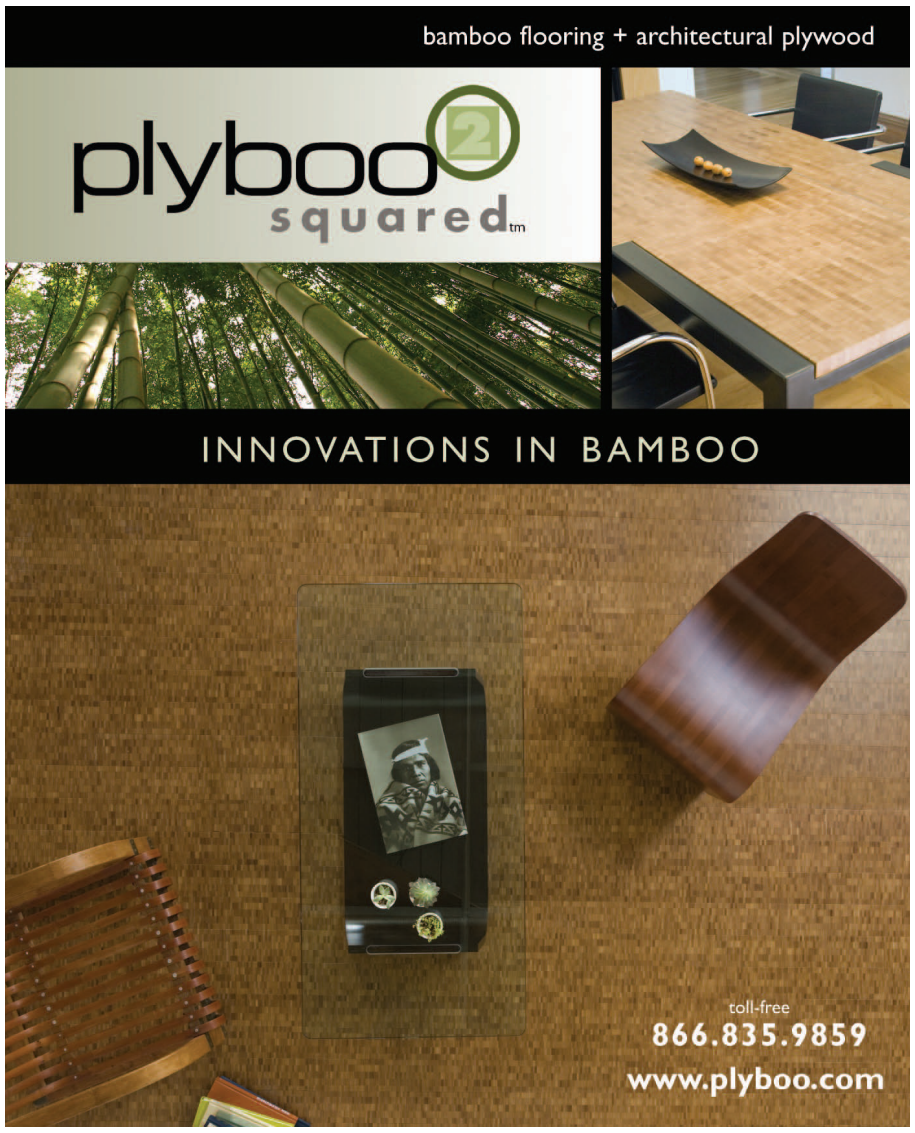

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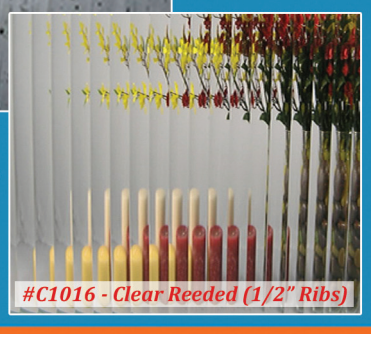

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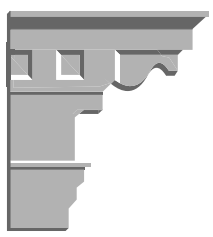

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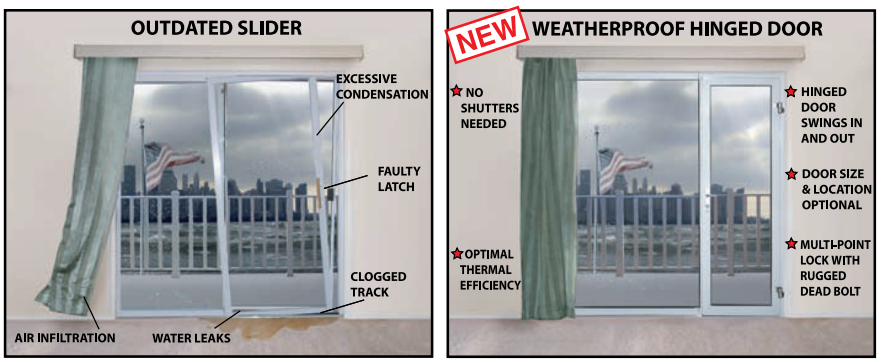

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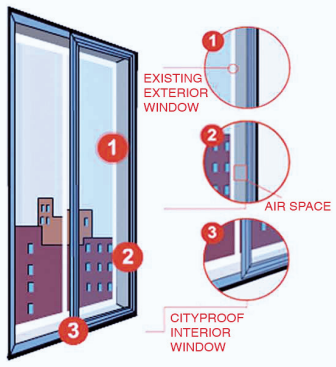

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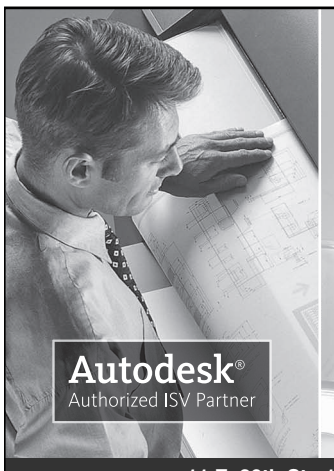

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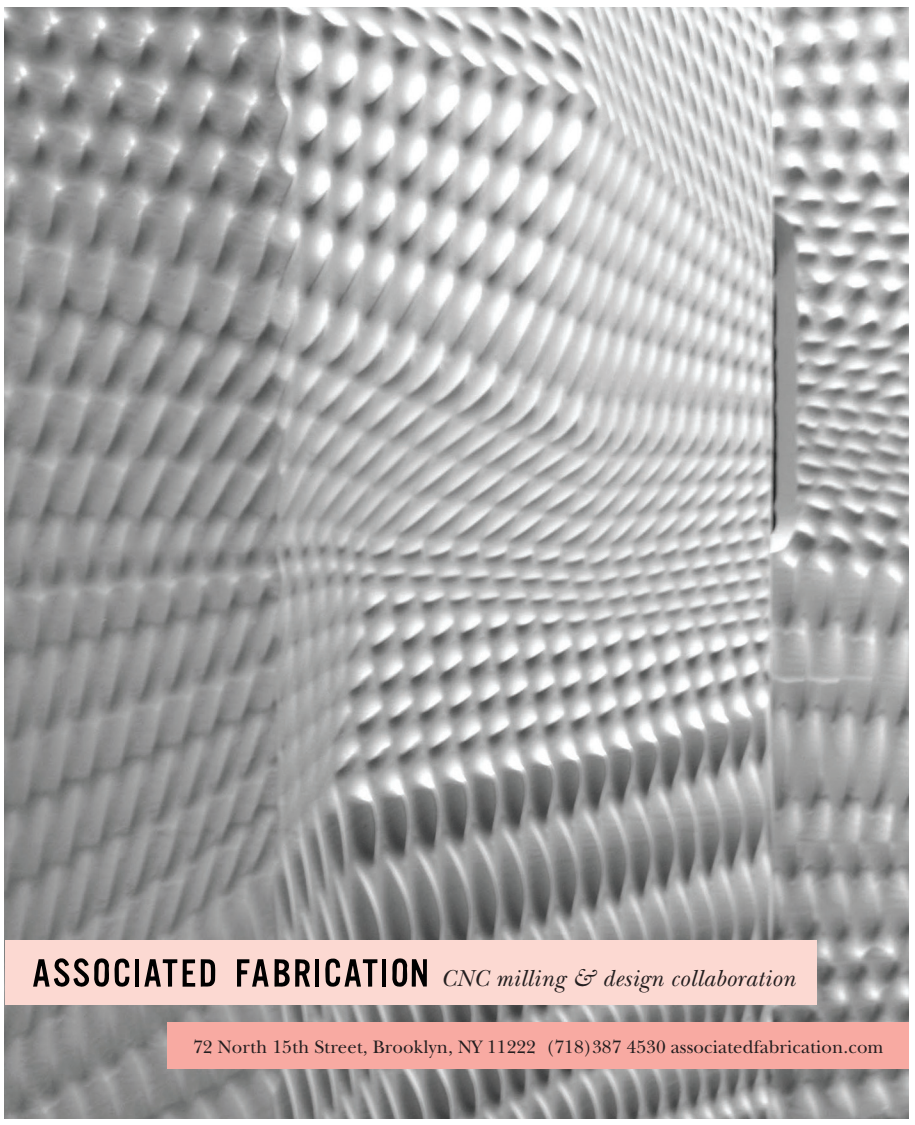

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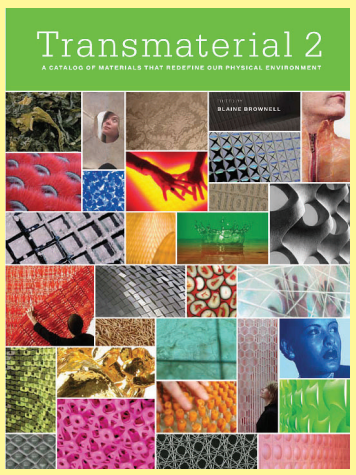

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Barcelona
22–24 October 2008

Entries deadline 20 June 2008
Shortlisting July 2008
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Health
Holiday
Home
Learning
Nature
New and Old
Office
Pleasure
Production
Religion & Contemplation
Shopping
Sport
Transport

Judges include:

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Stefan Behnisch
Richard Burdett
Sir Peter Cook
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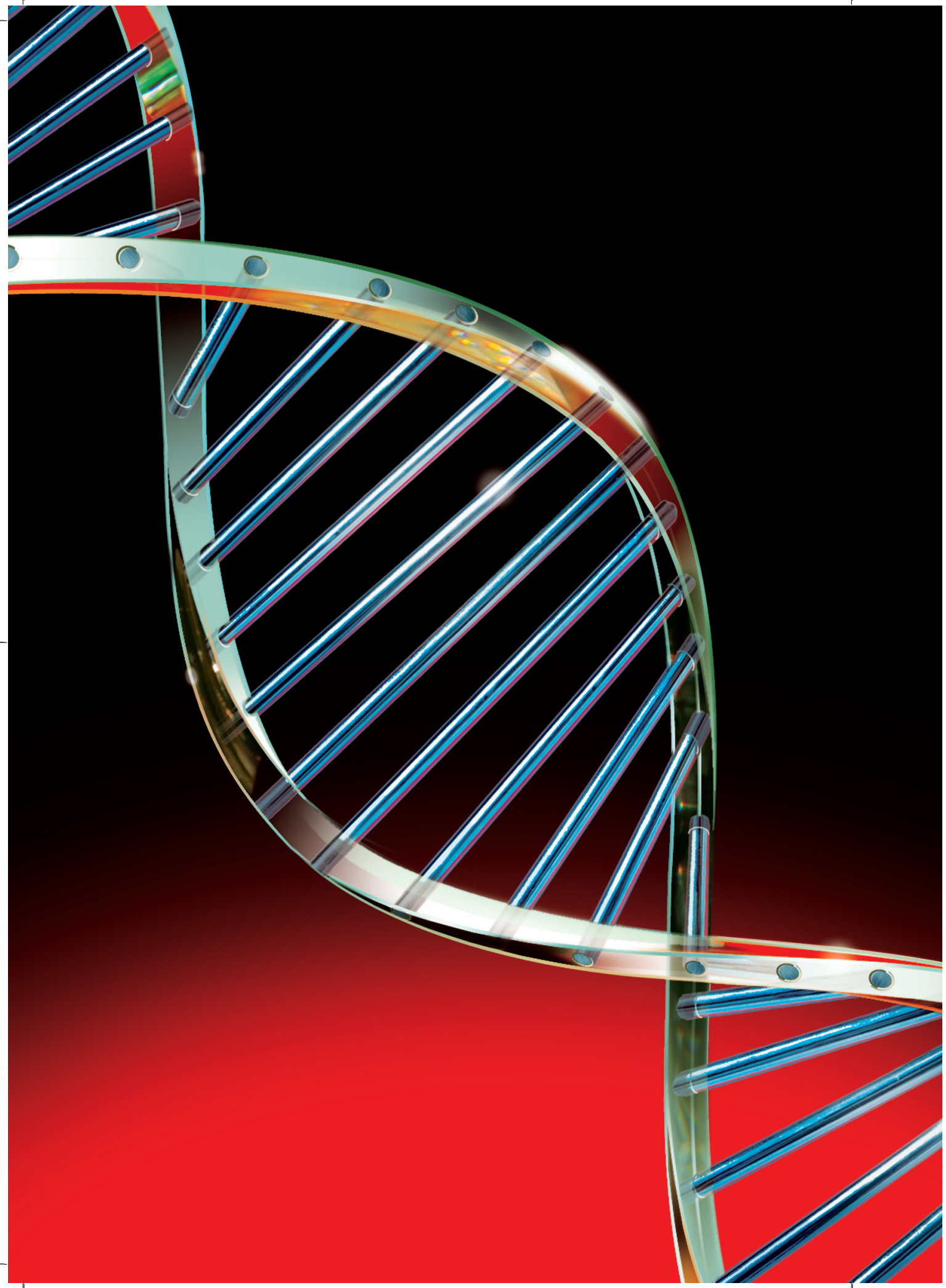

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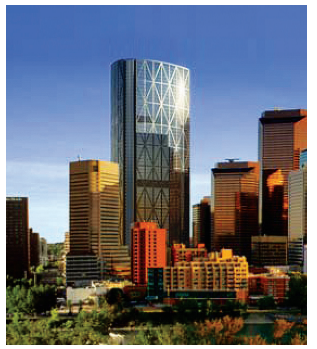

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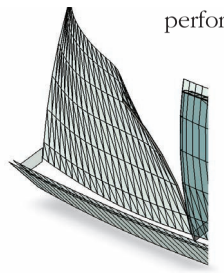

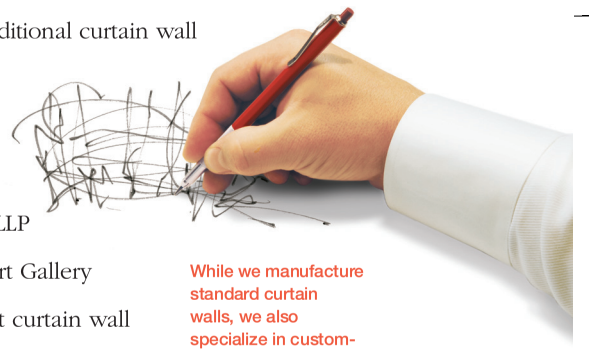

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