Another pioneering Paul Rudolph building took a turn toward oblivion on June 17, when the Sarasota County School Board vetoed plans to preserve Riverview High School, hastening its demolition to make way for a 961-space parking lot sometime next year.

The board’s 3-to-2 vote was the latest move in a long-running battle over the 1958 school, Rudolph’s largest Florida commission and a widely admired work by the well-known modern architect.

School authorities, who are spending $135 million to build a new high school on the 40-acre campus, argue that the structure sits on land that is principally needed to fulfill parking and storm water requirements. And amid an outpouring of sympathy from Rudolph fans—including the building’s citation on the 2008 World Monuments Fund watch list—county officials had called for the preservationist camp to put its money where its mouth is.

“We have continued on page 8
CRAFTSMANSHIP. PERFORMANCE.
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Last week the Port Authority made headlines when it came clean about the need to rethink budgets and timelines for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site, but it may have been the least surprising piece of news New Yorkers have had in a long time. What was noteworthy, however, was the straightforward but detailed analysis of the existing sticking points and a commitment to a more pragmatic and hard-nosed approach to moving forward.

At the Governor’s press conference, Port Authority director Chris Ward and his staff conducted a review of the rebuilding process to date, and they produced a report that is well worth reading. It will be particularly interesting to those who find it hard to keep on top of who is in charge of which building, or who will architect’s work is getting scaled back due to budget problems; i.e., about 7,999,995 New Yorkers. The report emphasizes the interconnected nature of all 26 major projects, and identifies 15 issues that must be resolved before any reasonably accurate budget or schedule can be drawn up. According to the report, this new budget and schedule could not—and should not—be released until the fall, since it will take at least that long to coordinate updated information. That may seem like yet another delay, but it will be time well spent, especially if the numbers are accurate and lead to progress. The last thing we need is to be told once again that things are moving along nicely, thanks very much, and it’ll all be grand.

The Pataki “groundbreaking” for the Freedom Tower was a particularly cynical example of that kind of wishful thinking—the July 4, 2004 ceremony to lay the cornerstone coincided neatly with the Republican National convention, but not with anything in the construction plan. (Two years later, it was shipped back to Hauppauge, Long Island, so that site work could actually begin.)

If Ward can institute the suggestions he and his staff have outlined, the ongoing story of the Ground Zero site will no longer be about the need to rethink budgets and timelines for the rebuilding effort, but it may have been the least surprising piece of news New Yorkers have had in a long time. What was noteworthy, however, was the straightforward but detailed analysis of the existing sticking points and a commitment to a more pragmatic and hard-nosed approach to moving forward. Indeed, the city was promising 18,000 in construction alone. The Central Labor Council, which represents some 1.2 million unionists, wanted guarantees those would favor union labor, as well as service employees in new hotels, stores, and restaurants. With the mayor’s assent, the unions acquiesced, offering their support and urging the council, which has final say, to follow suit.

“We hope that the work done together with all parties on this project signals the end of development that forgets the average person and lifts up those in New York City who so badly need a living wage,” said Bruce Both, president of UFW Local 1500—a council affiliate—during a June 25 rally. “From our perspective, we’re glad we reached a deal with the city.”

The other agreement covers three parcels encompassing 22,000 square feet owned by the BRD Group. Between the two, the city has now acquired two percent of the property it seeks. With some 280 businesses located in the area, it has a long way to go, and many may not be as cooperative as these two.

“How can they say something is worth two dollars when you are going to turn it into 10 dollars over night?” G.L. Soni, owner of House of Spices, told the Times. “If you’re going to make it worth 10 dollars, then we want eleven-fifty.”

And on July 1, the local community board also supported the project without conditions, an atypical move that may signal a groundswell of support. MATT CHABAN
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TRUTHINESS IN ARCHITECTURE

On a recent episode of the Colbert Report, Stephen Colbert told a tale familiar to all Eavesdrop readers: planned improvements to his studio—cue rendering of hotel-rollercoaster-waterslide-discos at a 45-degree angle—were hit hard by the financial slump and had to be abandoned due to lack of funding. But the economic downturn has not only put America’s most ambitious construction projects like his on hold, said Colbert, it’s completely taken the U.S. out of the running when it comes to great architecture! Naming Tom Wright’s Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai and Norman Foster’s Crystal Island in Moscow as structures currently kicking America’s collective architectural butt, Colbert was looking for answers from someone. That person was the evening’s guest, New Yorker architecture critic Paul Goldberger. “What are Americans even doing in the field of architecture that’s in any way exciting?” Colbert asked. “We’re doing everything because our architects are building those buildings,” said Goldberger. “So we’re making all the money off of them, we’re not wasting any money putting them up.” (Well, technically British architects are making all the money, of the two Colbert mentioned…) “We’ve got the best skyscrapers anyway,” said Goldberger, naming the Chrysler Building as “everyone’s favorite building in the world.” Uh, it’s pretty all, but at 78-years-old, is that really the best he could come up with?

But then Colbert asked the question we’ve been waiting for someone on Comedy Central to answer all these years: How do we know what’s best when it comes to architecture? We almost fell off our La-Z-Boy in anticipation, but sadly Goldberger named the hyper-obvious Frank Gehry (“he does these amazing shapes”) and then, perplexingly, he name-checked Rem Koolhaas and his China Central Television Headquarters! Come on, Paul, you couldn’t name at least one new project that’s on American soil? We prefer Colbert’s solution for raising the profile of American architecture instead: “We need to build big buildings with high asses and huge titis!”

BYE, BYE DII!

Here’s a little shakeup from the middle of the country that has rippled all the way to the coasts: After eight years as director of the Design Institute, Janet Abrams abruptly departed the program at the University of Minnesota on June 27. In an email, Abrams announced—rather mysteriously, we must say—that she will pursue an undislosed new chapter of her career starting in the fall. Since 2000, when Abrams became its first full-time director, the Design Institute has anchored a burgeoning Minneapolis design scene while amassing a global network of collaborators, publishing several books and a journal, holding design camps for the K-12 set, and organizing a major conferences and summits. But oddly, Abrams won’t be replaced. The Design Institute is closed, effective immediately. (Calls to her phone number at the Institute were redirected.) Although praised by the design community, a source tells us the program suffered from chronically low funding and a lack of support from the university.

TWO STRIKES FOR LORD NORMAN continued from front page

The 22-story glass tower originally envisioned by Foster to rest atop the Parke-Bernet Galleries had been jettisoned over 17 months ago in favor of a five-story louvred copper box that mirrored the proportions of its base. Though the second proposal was lauded for its accommodation to its setting, and the Parke-Bernet Building is an absurd site for it—in an email, Foster announced—rather mysteriously, we must say—that she will pursue an undisclosed new chapter of her career starting in the fall. Since 2000, when Abrams became its first full-time director, the Design Institute has anchored a burgeoning Minneapolis design scene while amassing a global network of collaborators, publishing several books and a journal, holding design camps for the K-12 set, and organizing a major conferences and summits. But oddly, Abrams won’t be replaced. The Design Institute is closed, effective immediately. (Calls to her phone number at the Institute were redirected.) Although praised by the design community, a source tells us the program suffered from chronically low funding and a lack of support from the university.

Highly acclaimed hair stylist Eva Scivo has set up shop for the second time in New York City at a new location in the heart of Manhattan’s historic Noho district on Bond Street. Housed in the former model unit of the adjacent residential development 48 Bond, this 2,500-square-foot salon has both retail and salon services. Designer Norman Roberts partitioned the space into three different sections, organizing each as separate entities independent of one another, yet reading as a coherent whole. Rich purple velvet drapes separate the three areas: retail, waiting/support, and the salon. Using an antique hand-blown tinted glass chandelier Scivo found as inspiration, Roberts developed a palette based around bright white laquered walls, ebony-stained maple floors, and purple velvet.

Notable absences at the meeting included not only Lord Foster himself, but also the coterie of cultural stars, including Jeff Koons and Larry Gagosian, that Rosen paraded before the commission the last time he attempted to get his project approved. But one marquee name did show up, just as expected. Channeling From Bauhaus to Our House, Tom Wolfe said Foster’s building was not only out of place but out of fashion. “It’s another old-fashioned style,” said the writer, who appeared to be wearing his signature spats, “This style has been with us since at least 1919.” Wolfe added, “(Lord Foster) does not have to use just the straight edge of the protractor. This needs to be more in keeping with the Upper East Side.”

In addition to the building’s appearance, which was roundly panned, its scale was a major issue. Though many appreciated the restoration of the sixth floor and gardens, the addition of tens of thousands of square feet, which would abut the building’s existing street wall, was considered excessive.

Many speakers also insisted that the commission not be tricked into approving the new designs by comparing them to the old. “The fact that this addition is not as horrifying as its predecessor does not mean it is appropriate,” declared Robert Stein, a resident of East 77th Street. Though the commission declined to discuss the project or take a vote, it expects to do so in the coming months.
PROTEST IN PASADENA continued from front page
replacement for Koshalek by the end of the year.

“Upon my departure, after ten years as president of the college, I look forward with the greatest optimism to developing a series of international ideas and initiatives,” said Koshalek in a separate statement. “Above all, I will continue to be unwavering in my support of and enthusiasm for the future of Art Center.”

On June 18, students and organizers of an online petition named Education First presented the trustees with a letter—signed by over 1,400 students, faculty, and alumni—demanding that work on the Gehry building be halted. The group called for funds to be devoted instead to the improvement of existing facilities, faculty support, rising tuition costs, scholarships, and recruitment. Another petition, Honestly First, in support of the building and Koshalek, had only 400 signatures.

In a written statement, he acknowledged the students’ demands. “Significant concerns have also been expressed about the balance between investment in current facilities, future projects, and near-term educational needs,” he said, noting that the Gehry plan, among other projects, will be “reevaluated and reprioritized by the facilities and finance committees of the Board.”

Edwin Chan, design architect for the project at Gehry Partners, did not respond to requests for comment.

Koshalek is known as a charismatic leader who came to the school in 1999 after 17 years as director of MOCA. He immediately embarked upon a global fundraising mission for a new master plan that included Gehry’s Design Research Complex (DRC) as a centerpiece of the program. (Alvaro Siza was also attached at one point, but was dismissed when the plan was scaled down.)

According to Patricia Oliver, senior vice president of architecture and education planning, the Design Research Complex would contain a technology center with planning, the Design Research Complex, a technology center with planning, and could go before the Pasadena City Council as soon as August.

The Gehry building is not universally supported by neighbors, who have bemoaned excessive traffic and overcrowded parking lots. Oliver hopes to address the concerns of angry homeowners with more details in the future. “They are afraid of the Gehry building because they see it as Disney Hall on the hillside,” said Oliver, who once worked in Gehry’s office. “We are trying to assure their fears and explain that the building isn’t designed yet.”

A past president of the Linda Vista-Annadale Association, Sharon Yonashiro, agreed that the Ellwood building was difficult for neighbors to accept. “Here comes the next generation of people who want to leave an imprint, and suddenly there’s a 90-foot building in a single-family residential neighborhood,” said Yonashiro of the proposed design. “Had there been a dialogue that had been meaningful with the neighborhood, they wouldn’t have this building,” she added. “We feel it’s out-of-character and an extremely insensitive project.”

That lack of communication has also frustrated those on campus, said Robert Quintero, an industrial design student who graduated this spring. He attended an environmental impact hearing on the Gehry building.

Kevin Daly of Daly Genik, who designed the two structures for the South Campus and worked for Gehry in the 1980s, said he’s surprised by the whole fracas. “It’s enormously frustrating,” said Daly. “Frank Gehry is someone who made his career by doing these simple industrial-inspired buildings made for artists. To imagine he doesn’t have the same credentials to do this for Art Center is ridiculous.”

A faculty member who has been at the school for over five years, but only agreed to speak anonymously, cautioned that it’s not all about buildings. Several faculty members, including chief academic officer Nate Young and two chief financial officers, have resigned or been fired.

No matter how supporters and detractors feel about Koshalek’s mission, now, it was clear in 1999 that he was hired to raise the center’s profile in the design community and beyond.

“If anyone thought when they brought in Richard Koshalek that Art Center would remain quiet and self-contained on a suburban hill, they hired the wrong guy,” said Chee Pearlman, who served as director of Art Center’s three conferences. “Richard is about breaking down provincialism in all forms and acting on big ideas.”

ALISSA WALKER
“On a bad day, I feel like we’re a glorified laundry service,” said Leslie Paisley, standing in Stone Hill Center’s paper conservation lab, “because we’re cleaning, pressing, and mending.” Salvaging prints and drawings from the ravages of time is notoriously slavish work. But this wasn’t a bad day for Paisley, who heads the paper department for Stone Hill’s main tenant, the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Not a bad day at all. Paisley and her dozen colleagues were setting into a remarkable new space that—with its opening on June 21—has pulled art’s scullery work out of the cellar and onto the global architectural map.

Designed by Tadao Ando, Stone Hill isn’t your typical new museum building. Set into a steep slope up a winding footpath in Williamstown, Massachusetts, it sits amid enveloping stands of birch, beech, and sugar maples. When you reach this mountain redoubt—the latest addition to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—you’ll find no soaring atrium, no signature reflecting pool (though one of those is coming in the next phase of the Clark’s expansion). What you will find is a lavishly appointed, $25 million, art-sudsing laundromat.

Though it does sport a cafe, classroom, and lovely galleries—with white oak floors and windows that open onto the woods—Stone Hill’s showpiece lies elsewhere, in the main painting conservation lab. There, with work stations flanked by elephant-trunk-like vacuum tubes, a wall of glass washes conservators with northern light. On a recent visit, two monumental Arshile Gorky paintings were set opposite one another. Refugees from the Newark International Airport, they had once been blotted out with 14 coats of house paint. Inch by inch, conservators were stripping away decades-old sludge to reach the mother loafe: Gorky’s original 1937 brushstrokes. The building was designed, Ando said, to give its occupants the same natural light under which such canvases were first created. Gorky, I’m sure, never had it quite this good.

In today’s age of mega-museums, the center’s varnish spray booths, vacuum hot tables, and assorted studios give the place a refreshingly workaday feel. (How many trophy buildings can claim, at their core, a lead-lined x-ray room? Top that, Daniel Libeskind.) Credit Gensler, the project’s architect of record, for knitting together the 32,000-square-foot building around a generously proportioned, 24-by-24-foot module, with a geothermal heating and cooling system.

True, conservators can mainly be glimpsed toiling through glass from the building’s exterior terraces. But as compensation, Stone Hill’s natural setting can be lived in the full. The center’s two-story form is pierced by a dramatic diagonal wall, drawing it into the landscape. (During an interview, Ando seemed bowled over less by his own handiwork than the surrounding Berkshire scenery. “I feel like I’m in Switzerland,” he joked.) Working from a campus master plan by Cooper, Robertson & Partners, landscape architects Reed Hilderbrand Associates have restored Stone Hill’s site—once a grazing field—to a tall-grass meadow, so that the building slowly unfolds from the hillside. The effect is heightened by Ando’s trademark concrete walls, formed here with acid-etched pine boards that leave a wood-grained imprint as a trace of the treeline beyond. Stone Hill’s debut bodes well for the Clark’s canny ambition as an art destination (one that’s either in the heart of western Massachusetts or the middle of nowhere, depending on your mode of transportation). An Ando-designed second phase, due for completion in 2013, will reshape the main campus around a reflecting pool (fitted out for public ice-skating in winter) and add new visitor, conference, and exhibition facilities. Meanwhile, New York–based Selldorf Architects will renovate the Clark’s original building and its Pietro Belluschi–designed Manton Research Center (1973), giving the tired galleries and research rooms a much-needed revamp. As if that weren’t enough, New York firm WORK Architecture Company is designing new gallery and storage space for the Clark at the MASS MoCA complex in nearby North Adams, where there may be hope yet for the Clark’s long-suffering archivists: That sprawling former factory would seem another fine excuse to bring the back-of-house to light.

If you arrive at the party late, it helps to be wearing the right clothes. Herzog & de Meuron and Handel Architects understood this when designing 40 Bond Street, which is situated among the gorgeously detailed cast iron facades of NoHo. The architects responded to this context by creating a shining grid of green glass mullions, whose materiality and depth recall its 19th-century neighbors while adding a modern touch and proving that no matter what time you arrive, it’s never too late to fit in.

**FASHIONABLY LATE**

By JEFF BYLES

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Architect: Herzog & de Meuron with Handel Architects

Photo: © Cricursa

**TRANSFORMING DESIGN INTO REALITY**

Jeff Byles is an Associate Editor at AN.
RUDOLPH REMANDED continued from front page. Hundreds of letters of support, but what we really need is money,” said Lenore Suttle, a member of the Riverview committee of the Sarasota Architectural Foundation, just before the vote.

The foundation is still seeking about $200,000 to cover legal and professional fees associated with an alternative plan that Rudolph advocates have put forward for the site. That plan, created by New York architect Diane Lewis in association with RMJM Hillier, Beckelman + Capalino, Peter Brown of the School Collaborative, and Atelier Ten, would incorporate the school into the Riverview Music Quadrangle, a multi-purpose space with a shaded concert yard that has received support from Sarasota’s large musical arts community. Advocates say their site plan would not affect the new high school’s construction, and provides both the required parking and a dynamic new use for a venerable work of architecture. Some school board members praised the plan’s merits. “The vision was amazing,” Kathy Kleinlein, the board chair and one of two members to support the plan, told AN. Yet others felt that after 15 months of work toward saving the structure—beginning in March 2007, when the board agreed to consider preservation proposals—to little progress had been made. “Every month we wait, we pay more for concrete and more for steel and more for everything else,” Kleinlein said. “Time ran out.”

All parties agree that the Rudolph building, long marred by alterations, makes no sense as a modern school for 2,900 students. Still, Rudolph advocates said, their plan would strip away the structure’s crust of additions and adapt its pioneering sustainable features, which included a natural ventilation system and cantilevered shading elements. “The building was ahead of its time,” said Daniel Meridor, the project architect with Diane Lewis Architect. “All of the discussion was focused on parking spaces. No one was looking at the vision of what could happen with the building.”

While Rudolph has seen something of a revival in recent years—including his 1963 Art & Architecture Building on the Yale campus, now undergoing a renovation and addition by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates (“Rudolph Revisited,” AN 10.06.11.2008)—the nation’s building boom has put his lesser-known projects in peril, said Theodore Prudon, president of Docomomo US, the modern-movement preservation group. “We very strongly support the preservation of the building,” he added. “We’ve all written letters to the superintendent. But it’s something of an endgame.”

Since students will remain in Rudolph’s building until the summer of 2009, that game could still result in a compromise. Preservationists have collected $100,000 in pledges, and are continuing to raise funds and explore their options. “This was the first time we presented the project to the whole school board,” Meridor noted, adding that it was impossible to resolve the project’s complexities in one 15-minute presentation. “We do not feel it’s over,” he said. “We think it’s the beginning of a process.”

Lower Broadway, home to some of the newest and most expensive real estate in Manhattan, is now host to the first East Coast retail location of Volcom, a California-based surf-skate-snowboard shop. The brand is something of a cult, and designer David Winston worked to apply Volcom’s cut-up style to the existing building. In no more than six months, Winston and Volcom were able to transform the old Soho site into a punk rock mash-up. In an effort to maximize retail space on a tight schedule and budget, Winston added a laser-cut wave-form mounted on the ceiling, and custom shelving. Volcom’s own graphics army seems to have transformed every other existing plane, installing tagged and “vandalized” mannequins as well. The whole empire is geared toward street invasion, and relies on a viral and vertical marketing campaign. The youth-against-the-establishment aesthetic only falters downstairs, where there’s a top-secret half pipe for a select crew of visitors. But in all fairness, once Volcom gets comfortable in its new ‘hood, it will no doubt involve the community beneath the surface.

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FSB 1020 is one of four models designed by Johannes Potente that, in the summer of 1998, were added to the permanent collection at the MoMA in New York.

There is always a name behind the levers of FSB.
Goldstein said his group now

"We are gratified that the Supreme Court
decided to put an end to this lawsuit," Ratner said in a statement. "The opponents
gave up and failed. There are no more judicial
debates about whether the project is necessary.
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debates about whether the project is necessary."

Vin Cipolla to Replace
Preservation Stalwart Kent Barwick

On June 16, the Municipal Art Society
(MAS) announced the appointment of Vin
Cipolla as its new president. Cipolla current-
ly serves as president of the Washington,
D.C.-based National Park Foundation
(NPF) and is a former vice-president of
the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"The most important thing was to identify some-
one with an understanding of the value of
the physical fabric to the city's culture, as
well as someone with extraordinary leader-
ship and organizational skills."

Starting next year, Cipolla will replace
MAS stalwart Kent Barwick, who is taking a
sabbatical before returning to the organiza-
tion as president emeritus. Barwick has
served in various executive positions at the
organization since 1969. "We are so pleased
to have Kent as an advisor and leader within
the organization. He has unique understand-
ing that is important to maintain," Howard
said. According to Howard, Cipolla's work at
NPF will dovetail with the society's increasing
interest in sustainability. "Environmental and
cultural sustainability are essential to
the city's future," he said.

In addition, Cipolla's interest in contem-
porary art and design may shift the empha-
sis of the more than 100-year-old organization,
which is best known for its advocacy in
historic preservation and land use planning.

"If we build a new building, it will certainly be a contemporary design," Howard said. "The MAS is
extremely interested in contemporary design."

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Though Oslo, Norway- and New York-based Snøhetta regularly competes with the biggest names in the profession, the firm is far from a household name. “Sometimes we end up on lists among the world’s best architects, but often people have no idea who we are, even in the profession,” said Craig Dykers, principal of the New York office. “It’s an interesting place to be, and a nice one.” The firm has completed significant civic projects such as the Alexandria Library in Egypt, and more recently, the new opera house in Oslo, yet they eschew flash and fanfare in favor of Scandinavian modesty, pragmatism, and, perhaps most characteristically of their work, a deep engagement with the sites on which they build.

Some of this is due to the firm’s make-up and some has to do with their process of working. According to Dykers, about 30 percent of the firm is comprised of landscape architects, and the architects, landscape architects, and interior designers all work closely together without hierarchical differences. It is also due to the way they present themselves and work with clients. “We never bring designs into interviews,” said designer Liz Burow. “We tell potential clients that we are going to have to work very closely with them before we ever design anything.” Finally, it’s how they structure the firm. The Oslo office, which competes for projects in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, currently numbers 90. The smaller, scrappier New York office, which at a mere 16 covers the Americas, acts more like a start-up firm and often works with non-profits and state universities. The two offices exchange ideas and staff as needed, an arrangement that fosters agility and has allowed the firm to navigate complex contexts.

The New York office’s best-known project, a cultural building at the World Trade Center site, for example, has gone through numerous iterations. And while it is still very much alive, the project has been scaled back significantly and now serves as an entrance to the below-ground museum as well as a central core for the transit hub’s ventilation system. Dykers believes that the building’s modest size will provide a needed sense of human scale amid the gargantuan memorial and skyscrapers. He also notes that it will be one of the few buildings in Lower Manhattan that will be visible in the round. “It’s a five-sided building,” he said. “We hope that people will enjoy it in their daily lives.”
Pointe work, the act of dancing on the tips of the toes, requires both strength and skill. Diller Scofidio + Renfro had to do some pointe work of its own when creating an addition within the School of American Ballet at Lincoln Center. The designers floated two new studios within an existing one, choosing structural steel for its ability to accommodate the long spans necessary while adapting to the existing structure and maintaining a delicate, sinuous profile, so like that of a ballet dancer’s.

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INDIANA JONES WITH A SCANNER

Cairo is not so much otherworldly as it is transcendent. The press of its immense population, the overload of many previous civilizations, the vast north African desert pushing up against the city’s edges, the Nile Delta so impossibly fertile, all leave one with the impression that Cairo is frothing at its banks. The multiplicity of downtowns, the breakneck flyovers, the endless agglomerates of concrete-framed, brick-walled structures along Cairo’s sprawling peripheries all succeed in confounding the city’s historic past, rendering Cairo at once teeming and entropic.

Stepping out of Cairo and into the oddly suburban hinterlands, one reaches the ancient wonders of Giza, Saqqara, and Dashur in relatively little time. Most visitors move through these sites as if on some ungodly race, charioteers with loaded cameras and plastic water bottles. But walk around the backside, beyond the camel rides and clichés, and it is possible to glimpse a world where the past and the future wrench at the present. Just before noon on the far side of the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, this observer wandered into a press conference in full swing. Pith-helmeted archaeologists (actually, safety-helmeted), clutches of Bedouins, armed Egyptian police, news reporters, film crews, and photographers were gathered to witness the first public trial of a laser scanner to be rappelled off the side of the Saqqara pyramid.

Built for the Pharaoh Djoser by his vizier Imhotep, this magnificent but alarmingly disintegrating pyramid (from circa 2700 B.C.E.) has become the subject of a long-term digital mapping project carried out for the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities under the direction of Professor Satu from Osaka University, who provided the advanced laser digital technology, and aided by the renowned Egyptologist Mark Lehner, director of Egypt Research Associates.

In a desert spectacle worthy of an Indiana Jones film set, the two unveiled a Phoenix-like, aluminum-winged apparatus strapped to a roped climber, first glimpsed at the very tip-top of the monument. With cameras rolling in 100-degree-plus midday sun, the harnessed scanner nimblly dropped his way down the steep side of the Saqqara slope. Snapping at a rate of some 40,000 laser points per second, the operation will eventually produce the most detailed digital map of any pyramid yet to be made.

As Lehner pointed out, archaeologists until quite recently were still making hand-measured drawings of these antiquities, leaving much to the imagination when considering the structure’s steadily advancing degradation. But technology brings with it other familiar quandaries. Too much data—four terabytes in total to document Saqqara—leaves open the question of just what will be made of the information process. Miniature digital Saqqara replicas aimed at the tourist trade? Or more significantly, another Rosetta Stone to unravel the nature of human existence? Here on the desert outskirts of Cairo, this is where digital data get interesting.

PETER LANG

UNVEILED

41-43 BOND STREET

The now-famous block of Bond Street between Lafayette and Bowery, which is already home to work by Herzog & de Meuron, Deborah Berke, and BKS, welcomes newcomer townhouse architect Steven Harris to the neighborhood on June 24, when his designs for 41-43 Bond received the blessing of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The first project approved in the newly created Noho Historic District Extension, the condo building ably marries the area’s industrial past to its residential present through the forms of the former and the materiality of the latter. Harris spoke of the five-year half-life in many buildings he sees going up in the city (not to mention across the street) and said his goal was to avoid such disposable architecture. “Our building was willing to flirt with anonymity,” Harris said, rejecting ostentatious trappings for ones that enhance rather than supplant the home. It starts with the facade, a demure striated limestone with white bronze shutters, whose openings and closings will help to animate the building.

This detail wraps around to the back of the eight-story building, where each floor features 40-foot glass spans made up of only two panes; according to Harris, they are the largest in the city. This allows natural light to pour into the interior spaces without detracting from its unified front. And Harris brings his usual meticulous style to the interior, with lush materials such as fumed interior, with lush materials such as fumed limestone with white bronze shutters, whose openings and closings will help to animate the building.

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WALTER NETSCH, 1920–2008

Those who were fortunate enough to visit Walter Netsch in his Chicago house in Old Town will never forget the moment; it was such a simple design, but unlike any other. A large open cube measuring exactly 60 feet by 60 feet, the Netsch residence became a destination in its own right: it garnered so many visits, in fact, that Walter once estimated the number to be close to 10,000. Divided into three open levels connected by a half-spiral stairway at the edge, his office was on the lower level, followed by the entry and lounge, then by an upper sleeping area and kitchen at the third level. All of that spatial drama was almost upstaged by one of the better private contemporary art collections in Chicago, which covered a good portion of the house's extensive wall space. There, one might see a Lichtenstein, or a Robert Indiana, or, if you looked out the window to the roof garden over the garage, there was a George Rickey. Collecting art was not a coincidental sideshow for Walter, who had originally wanted to become an artist. His father banished himself from the studio, he became one of its chief designers. The pleasures of visiting Walter Netsch at home weren't limited to the architecture, however. A quitesential Renaissance Man, he was knowledgeable on any number of subjects, whether design, planning, music, or politics. As for the latter, he admitted that his interest in political affairs came after his marriage to his lawyer wife, Dawn Clark Netsch, who taught at Northwestern University and held high offices in the State of Illinois as a member of the Democratic Party. Still very much active in politics, the Netsches recently let the Obama Campaign use Walter's studio on Goethe Street as a local headquarter.

Walter continued to practice, designing the much-published Miami University (Ohio) museum, as well as the Fort Wayne Art Museum. In his later years, Walter continued to enter competitions. On the occasion of a school competition in Chicago, the design for which he submitted himself to his hospital bed, I informed him (as a non-juror observer) that he had made the final round. Although knowing he would probably not win, he remarked that it was all well worth it. For anyone who knew Walter Netsch, who died at his home on June 15 at the age of 88, we can all say that it was well worth it.

G. STANLEY COLLYER IS THE EDITOR OF COMPETITIONS MAGAZINE.
A ROOM OF ONE’S OWN

Like New York’s Center for Architecture or the Boston Architectural Center, the new Philadelphia Center for Architecture provides a gathering place and a showcase for the city’s architects and allied professionals. Like the city’s fraternal motto, however, the emphasis of the Philadelphia center is on community building more than on pushing avant-garde aesthetics. “The opening of the center is a dynamite way to build a broader constituency for design,” said John Claypool, executive director of AIA Philadelphia. “The chapter has a very entrepreneurial and community-minded history, and the center is the latest example.”

Designed by the Philadelphia office of KlingStubbins, the 8,000-square-foot center also includes Philadelphia’s largest architectural bookstore, a programmatic element that has long differentiated the Philadelphia chapter from its regional counterparts. “When we were looking to relocate, the health of the bookstore was a very important consideration,” said Joe Castner, director of architecture at KlingStubbins and past president of AIA Philadelphia. As a part of its move near the city’s convention center, it also demonstrates the chapter’s real estate savvy: Though it left the retail-heavy Rittenhouse Square Area (the chapter was displaced for a Kimpton hotel), the new digs are located near the famed Fabric Workshop, a planned W Hotel, and the Redding Square Terminal.

Purchased as a condominium by the non-profit Center for Architecture, which, technically, sublets to Philadelphia AIA, the center is part of an eight-year fundraising campaign, location search, and collaborative design process. After learning the fate of their old space, the chapter looked for an affordable site that also had strong enough foot traffic and retail potential to support the bookstore. For the new location, which boasts 17-foot-high ceilings, cast iron columns, and handsomely patinated hardwood floors, Castner and KlingStubbins led a chapter-wide charette, the design of which KlingStubbins then implemented as pre-bono architects of record. “All our design services were donated to the center,” Castner said. “We felt like it was an important message to send to the community. We wanted to help facilitate the discussion about design from planning to product.”

TARNISHED SILVER

On June 24, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing regarding NYU’s Silver Towers. Designed by I.M. Pei in 1966 for an urban renewal project led by Robert Moses, the three concrete towers were up for designation (“Silver Lining for Pei Towers,” AN 04_03.05.2008), though preservationists sought to designate a grocery store and athletic complex to the towers’ east as well. Though Pei did not design the latter two, preservationists argued that the entire complex is of a piece. NYU, which hopes to construct 3 million new square feet in the next few decades, would rather develop the two sites with additional towers. A vote is pending in the next few months.

TALL IN TRIBECA

Coming off the success of 40 Bond, to say nothing of the Beijing Bird Nest, Herzog & de Meuron have returned to New York with their most audacious project yet, a 57-story residential tower at the corner of Leonard and West Broadway, according to city records. While such tall buildings are all but unheard of in Tribeca, the Swiss duo’s building falls smack between the north and west Tribeca historic districts, meaning it will not have to go before the LPC. And with the 48-story Trump Soho rising just to the north, perhaps such towers will soon become the norm. Official designs are due in September.

GOLDEN BOY

While his hundred or so jewelry pieces for Tiffany may sparkle, and many of his titanium-clad buildings glow, all are outshone by the Gold Lion of Venice, which will be awarded to Frank Gehry for lifetime achievement at this year’s Biennale. “Frank Gehry has transformed modern architecture,” Aaron Betsky wrote in his nomination. “He has liberated it from the confines of the ‘box’ and the constraints of common building practices.” The award was announced on June 27, as was another Gold Lion for achievement in history, a first in honor of the 500th birthday of Andrea Palladio. The award went, appropriately, to James Ackerman, the dean of Renaissance architectural history who has written the definitive tomes on Palladio and Michelangelo.

COURSE MOVES FORE-WARD

Mount Gagne is finally coming down. Built up by carting companies and developers to build a world-class golf course atop the former landfill, the massive mound of dirt in Ferry Point Park in the Bronx has lain quietly for years. On June 16, the mayor announced a new deal with Sanford Golf Design to build a Jack Nicklaus Signature Course on the site. Believe it or not, it will be the city’s 13th course.
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- Design
- Engineering
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- Interior Design
- Landscape Architect
- Planning/Urban Design
- Real Estate/Developer
- Media
- Other

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- Contractor
- Design
- Draftperson
- Firm Owner
- Government
- Intern
- Managing Partner
- Project Manager
- Technical Staff
- Student
- Other

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- Under $500,000
- $500,000 to 1 million
- $1 to 5 million
- $5 million
- $5 million

**EMPLOYEES**
- 1–9
- 10–19
- 20–49
- 50–99
- 100–249
- 250–499
Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown changed the way we think about Vegas, but the city they loved and wrote about so compellingly has changed almost beyond recognition, and will keep on doing so. Its latest metamorphosis is a startling one: high-rise density oriented toward pedestrians. Is this urbanism in drag, or can CityCenter successfully bring traditional ideas about the civic realm to the most car-oriented place in the country? By Sam Lubell

Las Vegas has become a barometer for architecture, though it’s usually a little bit behind the times. It was all glamorous modernism in the 1970s, but by the 1990s, local developers here were obsessed with postmodern fancies that brought the world close, and down to size: The Venetian had its own Grand Canal, and the Paris arrived with a scaled-down Eiffel Tower, while New York, New York went so far as to put maintenance staff in uniforms like those worn by Sanitation workers in the five boroughs. At the turn of the century, developers moved toward upscale, lifestyle-oriented resorts and boutique hotels like the Wynn and the Hotel at Mandalay Bay.

Now another shift is underway: The MGM CityCenter, still under construction, is creating iconic buildings in a dense, mixed-use environment. Believe it or not, Vegas is selling urbanism—or at least a local version of it—and taking a page from cities around the world by using big-name contemporary architects to generate interest. The $7.8 billion, 18-million-square-foot CityCenter will be in the middle of the Las Vegas Strip (on the site of the former Boardwalk Hotel and Casino), and is set to open next year. Touted as the largest privately funded development in U.S. history, it will include hotel, casino, residential, cultural, retail, and entertainment uses connected via indoor and outdoor pedestrian passageways. The major buildings were designed by Daniel Libeskind, Rafael Viñoly, Helmut Jahn, Foster + Partners, Kohn Pedersen Fox, Pelli Clarke Pelli, and the Rockwell Group, with Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn as master planner. The marquee names continue to the art program, which will include work by Maya Lin, Jenny Holzer, Nancy Rubins, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Frank Stella, and Henry Moore.

While CityCenter’s 76-acre site measures about the same as most of MGM Mirage’s properties, it will be about three times as dense, said Sven Van Assche, vice president of design for MGM Mirage Design Group. The push for density was first necessitated by economic conditions: The sharp rise in land prices in the city forced planners at MGM Mirage (which owns a number of Vegas casinos including the Bellagio, the MGM, and the Excalibur) to consider other revenue sources when they first conceived of CityCenter.
Unlike the majority of CityCenter, which attempts to introduce a new form of urbanism to Las Vegas through a pedestrian-friendly, open-access environment, Kohn Pedersen Fox’s Mandarin Oriental goes out of its way to create an isolated and exclusive world of luxury and tranquility, well-insulated from the crush of the city. Sited along the Strip, the 46-story, 1.2-million-square-foot hotel is separated from the development by its main access road, and is further delineated by a high-walled courtyard planted with bamboo trees. “The entry sequence was very important,” said KPF principal Paul Katz, “because this is a five-star hotel, guests will arrive from the airport in a limo and step right out a five-star hotel, guests will arrive from the airport in a limo and step right out of the hotel, guests will arrive from the airport in a limo and step right out of the hotel, guests will arrive from the airport in a limo and step right out of the hotel.”

As the centerpiece of MGM’s development, Pelli Clarke Pelli’s 61-million-square-foot ARIA hotel and casino epitomizes the project’s spirit of interconnectivity, featuring easy or direct links to the buildings by Libeskind, Foster, Vidalova, and Jahn. It’s also permeable in other ways: In a revolutionary gesture for Vegas, the architects opened up the casino and convention center to daylight and views to the exterior. The facility also features a black box theater for the Cirque du Soleil, 4,000 hotel rooms, and a pool area arranged within a podium and tower. The podium’s plan of two interlocking circles helps to limit views down the long corridors to the tangent of the circles, creating more intimate environments within the massive enclosure. The tower also plays with views. The high-tech curtain wall combines fritted, low-e coated vision glass panels with shadow box panels of glass to achieve a shading coefficient appropriate for the desert sun while maintaining a consistent materiality. Also, the cladding over each room features an angle, or proce, which invites guests to look out at oblique angles, to take in more of the cityscape and mountains.

Rising above CityCenter’s retail and entertainment district, Helmut Jahn’s Veer Towers distinguish themselves with a seeming feat of engineering. Inclined in opposite directions at 85 and 95 degrees respectively, the towers appear attracted toward each other, con veying the distinct relationship between them. The off-center forms, however, reflect the pragmatic logic of unit layouts. “Structurally, it looks challenging, but it’s not so mysterious,” said Francisco Gonzalez Pulido, principal architect with Murphy/Jahn. The structure is created from a three-floor module composed of repeating unit plans. The 37-story towers will include approximately 337 units made up of studios, one- and two-bedroom residences, and penthouses ranging from a modest 500 to over 3,000 square feet. The transparent reflective glass facade with perforated aluminum framing includes fins to promote energy-efficient climate control. Yellow ceramic frit encased in the glass modulates sunlight and provides residents with privacy, while creating a checkerboard pattern on the facade, boldly expressing the building’s program on its skin.

Daniel Libeskind’s shopping and entertainment hub called the Crystal holds the center of the complex, not so much like the anchor of a mall, but organically, like a heart with main arteries and secondary conduits to enhance free-flowing circulation. “I am aiming for a new sense of orientation where people are not locked in a box with one way in and out,” said Libeskind. “It’s a shaped space with its own topography. There are many ways to come and go or move from level to level. It’s a work in the round.”

The Harmon Hotel, Spa and Residences, designed by Foster + Partners, is meant to be a defining structure that brings gravitas to glitter. Towering above Planet Hollywood across the Strip and diagonally across from the Paris’ faux Eiffel Tower, its walls are glass. Bear in mind that transparency has always been a taboo in this city of windowless casinos, where gamblers don’t know whether it’s day or night. Eschewing decadence, Foster has fashioned a column that borrows more from the Gherkin, his insurance headquarters in London, than from anything Vegas as a city of low-brow kitsch, then the Harmon Hotel, Spa and Residences, designed by Foster + Partners, is meant to be a defining structure that brings gravitas to glitter.

There are no wrinkles and no gambling in Foster’s austere column, but there’s something very Vegas all the same. Building higher and more expensively is another way of raising the ante, and Vegas gamblers love nothing more than a high-stakes game.
In the Vdara Condo Hotel, a 57-story glass ascent of three overlapping curves, Rafael Viñoly echoes the message of the Foster tower at the nearby Harmon Hotel. There is no kitsch-theming here, beyond a cool corporate assurance that says, “Vegas, not ‘Vegas.’” Gambling won’t be among the offerings at this non-gaming facility, and owners of the more than 1,500 condominium units won’t share a lobby with retirees stampeding to the slots. Wedged into the dream-team ensemble, the Viñoly crescents stand in a corner—alone as any 57-story building can be, a block from the Vegas strip, at a distance from the Crystal, Daniel Libeskind’s retail and entertainment hub. And unlike the Crystal, the Vdara does not repeat forms that are signature elements in its architect’s style.

The Viñoly design offers the promise of modernist, even minimalist elegance, once again echoing the larger ensemble’s ambition to refine—and perhaps redefine—Las Vegas. Yet the glass curves send a mixed message: It is part Miami hotel that opens to the sun and sand (the desert, rather than the beach), and part garden corporate headquarters (although the packed garden of highrises in CityCenter barely gives Vdara room to breathe). Its nostalgic simplicity gives off the welcoming feel of Brasilia, rather than a hastily-built Dubai. But not too welcoming. The graceful curves form an enclosure as they turn their back to the street, which is marketed as exclusivity. And exclusive it is: 900 square feet in the Vdara starts at $1.3 million.
"We quickly realized we were getting ourselves into a very urban condition," said Van Assche. "Mixing uses, he pointed out, is not new in Vegas, and most developments now contain hotels, casinos, retail, and even condos. But nowhere is that mix so tightly packed, so large, and so full of programmatic variety."

Van Assche explained that in order to promote CityCenter's variety, MGM looked for several architects, and asked each to design something contemporary. New projects in the city are typically designed by the same group of local firms, but Van Assche said they decided to go beyond the standard modus operandi and "look at the project with fresh eyes." This jump, he added, meant putting architects not accustomed to the Vegas scene through "an intense learning process."

The interaction of the architects, said J.F. Finn, managing director at Gensler Nevada, started out with very few guidelines, but once a vision began to emerge, planners started to rein things in. Working with so many designers helped spur what Finn termed "happy accidents," like the plaza between the casino and the Crystal. That came about when designers decided that Pelli and Libeskind's buildings should have some breathing room. Likewise, a charrette between Libeskind and Jahn helped change their respective projects from one unified, mixed-use building to two very distinct entities.

All seven buildings will be connected by a meandering network of walkways that meet at larger nodes, usually marked with public art or a water feature. "We wanted to create places where people could gather that weren't near slot machines," said Finn, in explaining the nature of these nodes. Because of Vegas' temperature, he added, the majority of these passages will be indoors, although a few outdoor walkways and bridges, landscaped with varied greenery, will act as connectors.

Is this urbanism? Finn argues that it is, and points to the functionally indoor nature of projects in other extreme climates like Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Libeskind's project was originally planned to be outdoors until the team realized it was not feasible. Still, having a retail project at the very front of a development in Vegas is rare. Inside it will resemble a small city with large public spaces, curving walkways, and changes in scale from small nooks to a 200-foot-high grand stair.

Van Assche and Finn both noted that other Vegas developers are looking at the mixed-use and iconic buildings. Boyd Gaming's Echelon will contain five separate hotels, 9,000 square feet of retail, and two large theaters. The newly-opened Planet Hollywood has a massive retail complex at its front door; Las Vegas Sands is considering an iconic tower called the Milam, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; and Harrah's is reportedly considering a mixed-use, building mega-development as well. "I think it's the evolution of where the city is going to go," said Van Assche.

Like anything in Vegas, CityCenter's goal is to attract attention and stand out from the pack. And so it appears that like the flashing neon signs before them, the pyramids and Grand Canals will give way to Libeskind's jagged steel forms and Jahn's diagonal towers, the newest icons in a city full of them.

SAM LURBELL IS THE CALIFORNIA EDITOR OF AN.
EVENT | First LOOK | 5:00 p.m. | New York Design Center 205 Lexington Ave.  www.aiany.org
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THURSDAY 17 | LECTURES | Linda Dalrymple Henderson  Buckminster Fuller 7:00 p.m. | Whitney Museum of American Art 945 Madison Ave.  www.whitney.org
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SUNDAY 13 | LECTURE | Russell S. Sale  Alexander Calder, Modernist 10:00 a.m. | Center for Architecture 536 LaGuardia Pl.  www.aiany.org
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EXHIBITION OPENINGS | All Things Bright and Beautiful: California Impressionists  | Katsushika Museum of Art 134 Jay St., Katsushika  www.katsushikamuseum.org
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SATURDAY 19 | LECTURE | Sally Shelburne Making it Here: Washington’s Own Sculptors 2:00 p.m. | National Gallery of Art National Mall and 3rd St., Washington, D.C.  www.nga.gov
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EXHIBITION OPENINGS | Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling Museum of Modern Art 11 West 53rd St.  www.moma.org
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TUESDAY 22 | LECTURE | Robert Storr Patterns of Memory, Shapes of Anxiety 6:30 p.m. | Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 1071 5th Ave.  www.guggenheim.org
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EXHIBITION OPENINGS | Collective Exhibition  | Agra Gallery 415 West Broadway  www.agora-gallery.com
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EVENT | Architecture & Re-Use 2:00 p.m. | Battery Maritime Building 11 South St.  www.batterytrust.org
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THURSDAY 24 | LECTURE | Brian Metzalf, Chanell Kennetbrew Connect / (dis)Connect 2:00 p.m. | American Craft Council Library 22 Spring St., 6th Fl.  www.americancraftmag.org
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FILM Man on Wire James Marsh, 2008, 89 min. 7:00 p.m. | Museum of the Moving Image 35th Ave. and 36th St., Queens  www.movingimage.us
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SATURDAY 26 | LECTURE | William McManus Andy Warhol 10:00 p.m. | DiaBeacon 3 Beekman St., Beacon  www.diaart.org
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TAPESTRY IN ARCHITECTURE: CREATING HUMAN SPACES Japanese Society 333 East 47th Street July 10 to August 14
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Japanese artist Mitsuko Asakura creates intricate textile work that asks observers to reconsider the relationship between architecture and space. Often designed with particular spaces in mind, Asakura demonstrates that abstraction evolves as a phenomenon, from the fabric to create designs. Horizontal Dreaming, 1997–2007 (painted), composed of silk and wool, demonstrates Asakura’s sensitive use of color and unusual forms. The feature exhibition includes 11 hanging tapestries, large-format photographs of Asakura’s work in architectural spaces in Japan, and a video documenting the artist at work in her studio creating a tapestry, from selecting dyes to weaving on her traditional Japanese loom. Exhibiting her work for the first time in the United States, Asakura’s show at the Japan Society is part of a larger exhibition traveling throughout North America from July 2008 to June 2009.
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Sibling Rivalry, Saint weaves these should remain so and be seen to the last analysis are distinct. They of art and engineering run parallel, Andrew Saint, “it is that the strands “If there is a moral to the story of City Museum, SPRAWL, is any indic- If the new group show at the Jersey actors and directors? Painters and curling? Why not married? Or parallel? in want of a clear thread.” Why sib- to expect a pattern, but Saint admits instructive and enjoyable, if in the part out, material, or type as far can feel cluttered and disjointed, though that may be part of its point. Somewhat para- doxically, it can also feel monoto- nous (also, perhaps, intentionally). One of the most poignant pieces in the show is among the least technically accomplished: Dahlia Elsayed’s painting Locals Only (2007). Small white boxes and triangles, representing new con- struction, and yellow shapes, repre- senting old buildings, dot the lower half of a large blue field. The land- scape is marked with tiny signs bearing slogans: “Formerly River Now, River Views,” “Formerly Lawns Now, 4-Car Drive Ways,” and “Formerly Smelly, Still Smelly.” These observations are alternately wise, sad, and funny, and all of them feel true.

Another playful yet disturbing piece is parked just outside the gallery entrance: HR2 by Ryan Roa (2006), a to-scale Hummer made of plywood. Rendered in the monochro- me of unfinished wood, the enormous vehicle looks absurd, and its presence is infuriating, call- ing to mind Jane Jacobs’ slur about the “vandal automobile.”

Though few of the works in the exhibition stand out, the overall quality is high, especially for a show focused on the work of artists from a single state. In addition, it is heart- ening to see many artists contend- ing with New Jersey’s legacy as a sprawl capital. After all, its land-use patterns are merely a more exagger- ated version of those practiced across the country.

ALAN G. BRAKE IS AN ASSOCIATE
EDITOR AT AN.

If the new group show at the Jersey City Museum, SPRAWL, is any indica- tion, many New Jersey-based artists are concerned with the fragmentation and degradation of the landscape. This comes as no surprise, given that over the last century the state’s evolution from farmland and industrial cities to suburbs and urban decay has been its most potent image in the public imagination. In addition to this men- tal image—which has hardened into an ugly stereotype across the coun- try—the almost incomprehensible reality of the process is everywhere on display. The evolution conti- nues, of course, as the state’s urban areas are gentrifying, and some of its suburban areas are beginning to decline. All the while sprawl march- es on, devouring the last remnants of open space. Melancholy and anxiety, inter- rupted by occasional moments of humor, pervades SPRAWL. Images of detached houses, green lawns, construction sites, and overpasses abound in the show’s photographs, videos, paintings, and sculptures. As is often the case with group exhibi- tions, SPRAWL can feel cluttered.
Whereas New York City often slips into a cultural lull during the summertime, this year the city is anything but quiet. Besides Olafur Eliasson’s waterfalls in the East River, we are about to get swept off our feet by Buckymania. The large and long-awaited retrospective on the cross-disciplinary designer Buckminster Fuller opened at the Whitney on June 26, and has inspired smaller venues, such as the Center for Architecture and Sebastian+Barquet in Chelsea, to develop parallel events.

The small presentation at Sebastian+Barquet (with Carl Solway Gallery from Cincinnati) kicked off the Bucky Season, albeit quietly, on June 11, but it does not attempt to give a thorough overview on Fuller’s work. By the same token, the show is perhaps not the most effective manner of representation. The organization of the roughly 40 works ranging from original prints, to edition drawings, to small to mid-size models for his lightweight structures and domes—all packed in the small showroom on West 24th Street—gives the visitor a slightly cramped feeling. Navigating this overcrowded space, one realizes how we have grown used to monumental spaces in galleries that are more museum-like than the real thing.

The Sebastian+Barquet show is actually admirable for its clear ambition: selling Fuller’s work. And interestingly enough, the meaning of most of Fuller’s energetic pieces, whether reprinted editions or not, does not suffer from being the centerpiece of this active scene of commerce. Seeing highlights from Fuller’s oeuvre without thematic interpretation proves refreshing. Powerful schemes such as The Dymaxion Air-Ocean World Map (1980)—Fuller’s world map, which received a patent for displaying the world’s geographical data on one surface without distorted relative shapes and sizes—carry enough urgency to speak directly to the senses. Fuller’s maps are a call to arms for contemporary cartographers after the endless data-scaping of the past decade. In the proof prints from the influential 4D Time-lock publication (1928), we can see that scenarios for ever-growing metropolises don’t need to be paralyzing.

Fuller shows us that ambitious schemes and the embrace of new techniques and materials, whether realistic or not, can trigger curiosity that may result in inspirational future developments—something more urgent than ever. This show at Sebastian+Barquet makes one long for more Bucky, something we’ll have no shortage of this summer.

When the Red Hook waterfront opened this June, Brooklynites greeted the event with a mixture of fascination and dismay. For those worried about the breakneck speed at which many of the borough’s neighborhoods are gentrifying, it seemed a perfect metaphor for change: The crumbling infrastructure of industry which had given Red Hook so much of its distinctive character had given way to a big box store selling house-wares that are the same from South Brooklyn to Singapore. Before this particular paradise got paved over, however, Nathan Kensinger spent several years documenting it, and the photographs in Twilight on the Waterfront: Brooklyn’s Vanishing Industrial Heritage, currently up at the Brooklyn Public Library on Grand Army Plaza, is a loving tribute.

The Brooklyn waterfront is strangely easy to overlook since the Manhattan skyline tends to dominate the view. But as Kensinger’s photographs show, its texture and variety reward a closer look. Nature intrudes almost everywhere: In Newtown Creek, an unlikely clump of goldenrod colonizes the remains of a pier, and in Sunset Park, the sections of the Bush Terminal Pier that have been abandoned have been taken over by a wild orchard of apple trees. His goal is not just documentary, though: In explanatory wall texts, Kensinger’s affection for history and dismay at neglect come through. A series of interiors shot in the Brooklyn Navy Yard’s Admiral’s Row are eloquent in their depiction of the peeling paint, listing cabinetry, and fallen platter of these once-elegant town-houses. The caption, however, conveys a flash of anger: “Though heavily decayed, these buildings still contain many amazing remnants of their past. A plan was recently devised to tear them down and build a supermarket.”

Some of the sites he photographs may be beyond saving, but one gets the sense that Kensinger hopes that the photographs may help to awaken a desire to preserve this part of Brooklyn’s history.

While several of the sites Kensinger photographed are gone, like the Todd Shipyard’s drydock and the Revere Sugar Refinery in Red Hook, many more are intact but inaccessible. Places that the average fan of aging infrastructure would never be likely to see include the electric car shop at the LIRR’s Vanderbilt Yards, where the fluorescent lights were left on when operations there ceased in 2005. The effect is eerie—isn’t the last one out supposed to turn off the lights? A photograph taken from inside the Domino Sugar Refinery is similarly unsettling: A shot of the Williamsburg Bridge framed in a window has a postcard-like quality until one notices that the surrounding panes are a turquoise blue, and that the photographer must be inside the iconic plant. Kensinger’s ability to get into these sites is impressive, but even more so is his desire to preserve their memory.
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Open-Salon (p. 5): The Venini chandeliers were supplied by Todd Merrill Antiques, 66 Bleeker St., New York, NY 10012, 212-673-0531, www.merrillantiques.com. The custom architectural metalwork was fabricated by Martel Design & Fabrication, 69 Richardson St., Brooklyn, NY 11211, 718-963-4780, martelfab.com.

Hanger, No Starch (p. 7): The concrete consultant for the Stone Hill Center was Reginald D. Hough, 14 North Chatsworth Ave., no. 3C, Larchmont, NY, 10538, 212-245-0139. The furniture was supplied by EvensonBest, 641 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10011, 212-549-8000, www.evensonbest.com.


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Woodstock, My Woodstock

How do we go back when we don’t even know where to begin? The music and drugs have been well documented, but the sense of space, the softened corners, amorphous shapes, and communal elan of the 60s counterculture are less easily reclaimed. Where are the landmarks and monuments of the psychedelic revolution? Timothy Leary spoke of a Magic Theater and the Beatles sang of Strawberry Field. Carlos Castaneda, in his 1968 best-seller Teachings of Don Juan, wrote of the site, a place of psychic strength.

I start by attending a press preview for the new Woodstock museum in Bethel, New York. My route is across the Delaware River and up through lovely rolling farmland, still bucolic, almost no development, with the sun sparkling on Lake Superior. The road winds through a pine forest with a mossy green glow and magic trees bending down. I can almost see the Caterpillar smoking his hookah, but not quite, and when I arrive at the new Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the TV vans and press busses are already lined up in the parking lot. The main complex stands atop the hill, oddly postmodern, built with local stones, hefty timbers, and copper roofs rising toward glass-sided cupolas. The complex was designed by Paul E. Westlake, Jr., principal partner of Cleveland-based Westlake Reed Leskosky (co-architects with Coop Himmelblau) of the Akron Art Museum, and seems more like a Republican golf club than a hippie hallucination. Richard Meier was chosen originally, but client Alan Gerry reacted with alarm to his “flying saucer” proposal and in truth, Meier’s antiseptic aesthetic might have been even less appropriate for a memorial to funky mud sliding. It’s tempting to imagine what anarchic hippie designer/builders like Steve Baer or Lloyd Kahn might have concocted given the right stimulants: a revolving kaleidoscope? Geodome? Giant bird’s nest? Free-form rabbit hole? But while the exterior architecture seems oddly out of sync, the exhibitions inside are worth the trip, as it were.

The museum’s floor plan is a flowing, spiraling circle, sort of like a giant yin/yang button. An introductory section called “Back to the Garden” explains what happened with the civil rights movement, Elvis, the Beatles, assassinations, moon walks, and “Baby Boomer Emergence,” while a curving wall has a year-by-year timeline leading up to 1969, the year of the three-day love fest. Multi-colored walls are mounted with photo murals, hippie ephemera under glass, collages from the day, video testimonials, and displays such as an interactive map that takes you on a virtual tour of the original Woodstock site, showing the location of the main stage, the Hog Farm, campgrounds, woods, and even the Port-o-Johns. “The Bus Experience” is an actual school bus that has been painted with psychedelic swirls and doves à la the Merry Pranksters’ “Furthur” (sic). You can sit inside and watch rear-screen projections of cross-country odysseys to the festival playing on the windshield. (I imagine Cheech and Chong, smoking reefer, making all of this up 40 years ago, and puff, suddenly here we are, gray-haired, sitting in the pretty psychedelic bus watching movies...)

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a 50-foot-high surround-sound immersion chamber that recreates the spatial/aural experiences of the festival, with thunder cracking overhead and roadies scurrying across the stage. Six video projectors play on four different screens and give a pretty good sense of actually being there, but even better is the hi-def video that ends the exhibition. Shown in a little amphitheater, it tells the story through the voices of the performers themselves. You can see how musicians like Santana, Hendrix, Joplin, et al. were inspired and felt at one with the half-million throng, motivated not by profit or fame (in this instance), but by the idea of something bigger and better than their careers, singing and playing from the heart. Everyone in the amphitheater, even the nearly New York press, seems moved and teary-eyed after the 20-minute film ends. That’s the real thing, and something makes us want to stay and watch again. Maybe it’s because the performances seem so authentic and pre-digital now. Or is it that we all want to share an idealized moment in our collective past, a never-never land of possibility and lost innocence? We need a dreamy, utopian Woodstock, even if it didn’t really happen that way. In the end, the thing you come away with is not the painted bus, the music, or Wayvy Gravy’s handmade jump suit embroi dered with mystic symbols. It’s the great green bowl itself, Max Yasgur’s former alfalfa field that dips down and away from the arts center. You walk past the “Peace Pub” and past the sprawling parking lot, and there it is, a sloping green expanse, catching the afternoon light in just such a way. It’s the real artifact, and possesses a presence that’s hard to describe, but you think “this must be sacred ground,” a place of connection and resonance that needs no interactive display or interpretive text to understand. Festival organizers spotted the naturally embracing amphitheater from a small plane buzzing over the Catskills in search of an alternate site, and it turned into an alternative city, new paradigm, Woodstock Nation. You can see where the stage was set up at the bottom of the slope, near West Shore Road. (There’s a little monument to one side and a split-rail fence surrounding the site.) You can crouch in the field and commune with the spirits here, not of the dead but of the living and loving and tripping multitudes (more than 500,000) who sat out in the rain, shirtless and happy. And for a moment, a kind of hush descends over the spirit, a quiet bliss. Woodstock, my Woodstock...
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