On September 4, in an announcement that surprised few, Robert A.M. Stern Architects was selected to design two new residential colleges at Yale, the first expansion of undergraduate housing by the university since Eero Saarinen completed Morse and Stiles colleges in 1962. Stern, the dean of the

In his 35 years at Beyer Blinder Belle, managing partner Frederick Bland has become one of the city’s foremost preservation architects. He has worked on projects like Grand Central Terminal, Ellis Island, Rockefeller Center, and, most recently, the renovated Domino Sugar refinery. But he will

On September 9, Governor David Paterson vowed that a memorial to the events of September 11, 2001 must open before other planned commercial development at the World Trade Center complex. This left architect Craig Dykers of Snøhetta with a delicate task: Create a focal point between

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I just returned from my first Venice architecture biennale from where I wrote my first blog post. Now I have been asked to write a Letter from the Publisher. I am not going to start writing regularly for the newspaper—there’s too much else to do to keep the business going—but the editors threw me a bone, and I felt like I had something to say about recent and future developments.

Over the past year, we’ve not only redesigned but added functionality to our website. I hope you have noticed the improved diary listings and the additional web-only stories that we post weekly. We are certainly gaining traction. We also stepped up our social networking capabilities and launched a blog: www.blog.archpaper.com. It’s about time, as the younger editors around here so often remind me. Until about two weeks ago, I never really paid blogs much mind, and then I became glued to Huffington Post and Mudflats.com following the antics of our current political circus.

Here at AN, we have had many conversations about how to blog: what’s appropriate to blog; how long a blog post should be; and what does a blog want to say? The young editors obviously have one set of ideas and the older set are catching on fast. In any case, our blog will reflect our “newspaper family” and our interests as your eyes and ears in the world of architecture. I think that what we do on a daily basis has interest that goes beyond these four walls on Murray Street, whether it’s a new product announcement, a press conference, a book, or a building. Of course, it’s big news when one of our own, namely Bill Menking, is named the commissioner of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (see this issue’s feature) and our creative director, Martin Perrin, does all the graphics for the exhibition. But we also think you might be interested in what we heard at a party last night, or how that starchitect reacted when we cornered him at a Show & Tell. Whatever it is, we will get it out fast. In any case, our blog will reflect our “newspaper family” obviously have one set of ideas and the older set are catching on fast. In any case, our blog will reflect our “newspaper family” and our interests as your eyes and ears in the world of architecture. I think that what we do on a daily basis has interest that goes beyond these four walls on Murray Street, whether it’s a new product announcement, a press conference, a book, or a building. Of course, it’s big news when one of our own, namely Bill Menking, is named the commissioner of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (see this issue’s feature) and our creative director, Martin Perrin, does all the graphics for the exhibition. But we also think you might be interested in what we heard at a party last night, or how that starchitect reacted when we cornered him at a Show & Tell. Whatever it is, we will get it out fast. In any case, our blog will reflect our “newspaper family” obviously have one set of ideas and the older set are catching on fast. In any case, our blog will reflect our “newspaper family” and our interests as your eyes and ears in the world of architecture. I think that what we do on a daily basis has interest that goes beyond these four walls on Murray Street, whether it’s a new product announcement, a press conference, a book, or a building. Of course, it’s big news when one of our own, namely Bill Menking, is named the commissioner of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (see this issue’s feature) and our creative director, Martin Perrin, does all the graphics for the exhibition. But we also think you might be interested in what we heard at a party last night, or how that starchitect reacted when we cornered him at a Show & Tell. Whatever it is, we will get it out fast.
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Fashion designer Matt Levine of Steelo’s fame has brought his gift for the arresting runway look to the world of interior design. “You never get a second chance to make a first impression,” as Levine told AN. And when you walk into The Eldridge, you understand what he means. Owned and designed by Levine, this Lower East Side lounge puts on a sophisticated air, from its exclusive door policy to its detailing and décor. The space features an oak-planked ceiling and hand-stamped cement floors that mimic the appearance of wood, wildly styled with gold polish and real gold flakes. Fieldstone wraps the walls, finished with gold flakes. Intimate Chesterfield banquettes are pushed to the edges of the 1,500-square-foot room, creating a rectilinear volume that feels surprisingly ample for such a modestly sized space. Complete with a tiger-wood bar, the lounge also features an entire mirrored wall lined with bottles of Armand de Brignac Gold Champagne. At the rear of the space, a large chandelier sits behind a partially mirrored panel, animating the room with reflected light. Tending to the smallest details, Levine has also designed laser-engraved menus and—of course—the gold-infused cocktail list.

**THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 1, 2008**

**Javits Redux**

More than three years after signing up as second fiddle to Richard Rogers for the design of a new Javits Center on Manhattan’s Far West Side, local firm FXFowle is now leading the masterplan for a dramatically smaller renovation in a thoroughly different neighborhood. Firm founder Bruce Fowle hopes to sell Javits board members on the scheme by November, and unveil drawings to the public soon thereafter, spokesman Brien McDaniel told AN.

The outlines of a downsized plan are beginning to come into focus. Last month, The New York Times reported, state officials announced bid solicitations for construction oversight on a $1 billion package that would increase exhibit space by a mere 60,000 square feet, with a new hotel possibly located between 39th and 40th streets, in a northward expansion of the Javits site. The project would be completed by 2012.

Such a scheme, if realized, would be a remarkable retreat from visions of a new urban district. Long considered a lackluster far-flung urban district. Long considered a lackluster far-flung urban district. Several years ago, the New York Times, in honor of Frank Gehry’s Golden Lion. Things were going smashingly until we were told to sit at table 16, only to realize that the numbers stopped at 15. Feeling Cinderella-ish, we sat ourselves down at the table indicated by a frazzled if reassuring Gehry’s staff. A glamorous Gallic guest had different ideas, however, and told us that she was certain that we were interlopers, and implied that this simply would not do. We considered offering her the lap of our handsome young neighbor, Andrew Yang, thought better of it, and were about to suggest that everything would surely be fine when she declared, “WE ARE FRIENDS OF JEAN NOUVEL!” Indeed! Since WE are NOT, we decided not to push our luck and skidded off to an empty- looking table before we got into any more trouble.

**NON-SENSE & SENSIIBILITY**

We are feeling rather serenissima ourselves after a trip to beautiful and improbable Venice for the Biennale. This benevolent mood will no doubt be of short duration, and will not keep us from our appointed rounds, which include a moment to marvel at the wall text that folks put up next to their installations. Remember, if it’s not really confusing, people won’t think you’re smart! Right. Jureqing Meyer. H? We swear we hadn’t had a drop of Campari when we came across the Berlin architect’s very beautiful and very orange wallpaper based on data protection patterns in the first room of the Italian Pavilion. But perhaps we should have, because we’re wondering how it “thickens the skin of discretion.”

**ARCHITECTURE BEYOND BUILDINGS, DINNER BEYOND TABLES**

We managed to smile our way into a fancy dinner on the roof of the Peggy Guggenheim villa held by Thomas Krens in honor of Frank Gehry’s Golden Lion. Things were going smashingly until we were told to sit at table 16, only to realize that the numbers stopped at 15. Feeling Cinderella-ish, we sat ourselves down at the table indicated by a frazzled if reassuring Gehry’s staff. A glamorous Gallic guest had different ideas, however, and told us that she was certain that we were interlopers, and implied that this simply would not do. We considered offering her the lap of our handsome young neighbor, Andrew Yang, thought better of it, and were about to suggest that everything would surely be fine when she declared, “WE ARE FRIENDS OF JEAN NOUVEL!” Indeed! Since WE are NOT, we decided not to push our luck and skidded off to an empty- looking table before we got into any more trouble.

FXFOWLE TO DEBUT NEW MASTERPLAN BY YEAR-END

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**EAVESDROP: ANNE GUTNEY**

**WIGLEY’S WHACK-A-MOLE**

Don’t mess with the Mark, people: At an afternoon conference at the Biennale including the artist Matthew Ritchie, Paola Antonelli, and Greg Lynn, Columbia’s Mark Wigley declared that “architecture isn’t about people.” An outraged Brit in the audience wasn’t having it, however, and stood up and shouted, “Yes it is! Architecture is about people, and art is about metaphor—this is Rubbish!” Unfazed, Wigley responded, “If you would just self-loathe for a minute and let me finish…”
The lobby level of the Memorial Museum; right, the entrance corner.

GATEWAY TO GROUND ZERO
continued from front page
three proposed towers and the memorial itself that commemorates a tragedy while tying together an obstacle course of a site—all in a 47,500-square-foot, three-story building.

Dykers presented a brave face at a press conference later that day to unveil the most recent designs for the site’s museum pavilion. His $80 million building, a glass-and-steel volume composed of tilted planes, is to open in 2012 as the only above-grade portion of the memorial museum. His remarks subtly referred to the jousting that made the pavilion so modest. “As important as any event in the past may be, people of the present and the future will connect with this place,” Dykers said. “So the design tries to balance the initial Libeskind scheme and recent commercial planning.”

The original plan for the site included a 220,000-square-foot cultural center fronting the sunken footprints of the World Trade Center towers. Former governor George Pataki rejected one of the site’s designated tenants, the International Freedom Center, and the zone was subsequently reworked as part of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, honoring victims of all terrorist acts. It is that museum, which visitors will enter underground, to which Snøhetta’s angled building opens through a stand of 50-foot-tall trees. The pavilion will also face the three proposed office towers, each with double-height retail at street level, designed by Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, and Fumihiko Maki. (The Freedom Tower, to the north, is still scheduled to open in 2011.)

Searching for a connective language, Dykers and his team looked to the street-facing pediments of the lost World Trade Center. Since some had likened the famous Y-shaped columns of the center’s lobby to “tree trunks,” Snøhetta borrowed the metaphor to make a gesture with its roof. “We wanted the atrium to be a web structure, so that as much light as possible comes in,” Dykers said at the presentation. The roof, a trapezoid with carats on top, features the vein-like pattern of a leaf. This gesture relates the building to Santiago Calatrava’s PATH station, planned for Fulton Street on the east, and the trellices of Battery Park City on the west.

But as site leaseholder Larry Silverstein reiterated after Dykers’ talk, other projects are on hold until the agency releases a report on September 30 that presents a feasible construction schedule. It is not clear that Silverstein can get financing or tenants for the other proposed towers. Perhaps to preempt the Port Authority’s report, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg called on September 16 for the city to take over site management. If that were to happen, the Snøhetta project could get fast-tracked. Deputy Mayor Robert Lieber emphasized after Dykers’ talk that the city’s chief priority remains opening the memorial by September 11, 2011. Unlike the office towers, the memorial has a committed occupant, and can draw tourists while making good on a civic promise to victims’ families. And while that logic places a heavy burden on a small building, Dykers welcomed the challenge.

“Being small in a place like this sets you apart,” he told AN. “In New York, smaller spaces, like pocket parks in the Village or a small club, can be more memorable.” Of course, other Ground Zero elements have been getting scaled back, notable among them Calatrava’s transit hub for the Port Authority. In that spirit, Dykers’ closing words to the press corps had a poignant ring. “Your memory of this place will not be a physical object,” he said, “but an experience.”

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Stern Choices continued from front page

An architect and university professor, Girona played a prominent role in shaping the built environment of socialist Cuba after 1959. Born in 1924 in the city of Manzanillo, Girona grew up with an affinity for working with his hands. He went to a trade school as a teenager before pursuing architecture at the University of Havana. Girona gained early experience in the construction of private residences as an intern. Following graduation in 1954, he participated in numerous projects, notably the construction of the Hotel Capri in 1956.

After the revolution in 1959, as many of the established Cuban architects decided to leave the country, Girona chose to stay. Over the subsequent decades, he became a consistent and pragmatic voice in both professional practice and education. His collaboration with Celia Sánchez Mondulé, who then held the title of Secretary of the Council of State, resulted in various significant community and cultural centers. The Coppelia ice cream pavilion and park in Havana is his most recognizable project for Cubans and visitors alike. Completed in six months in 1966, it was the flagship of the Coppelia chain of ice cream parlors built around the island in the 1960s. Today, Girona’s Coppelia is often obscured by a curtain of foliage; the long lines at the corner of 23rd Avenue and L Street, however, mark the spot.

A student of the Cuban greats Le Corbusier, Girona encouraged collaborative thinking with and among his students; he was also an advocate of the generation of the 1980s in their quest to reform the architectural profession and pedagogy. His work represents one of the more successful architectural careers in Cuba following 1959 and is significant not just for the history of the recent past illustrated in his buildings but for the legacy of the early building campaign of the Cuban revolution.

Catherine Elizabeth Gavin

MARIO GIRONA, 1924–2008

Cuban architect Mario Girona died in Havana at the age of 84 on August 28. An architect and university professor, Girona played a prominent role in shaping the built environment of socialist Cuba after 1959. Born in 1924 in the city of Manzanillo, Girona grew up with an affinity for working with his hands. He went to a trade school as a teenager before pursuing architecture at the University of Havana. Girona gained early experience in the construction of private residences as an intern. Following graduation in 1954, he participated in numerous projects, notably the construction of the Hotel Capri in 1956. After the revolution in 1959, as many of the established Cuban architects decided to leave the country, Girona chose to stay. Over the subsequent decades, he became a consistent and pragmatic voice in both professional practice and education. His collaboration with Celia Sánchez Mondulé, who then held the title of Secretary of the Council of State, resulted in various significant community and cultural centers. The Coppelia ice cream pavilion and park in Havana is his most recognizable project for Cubans and visitors alike. Completed in six months in 1966, it was the flagship of the Coppelia chain of ice cream parlors built around the island in the 1960s. Today, Girona’s Coppelia is often obscured by a curtain of foliage; the long lines at the corner of 23rd Avenue and L Street, however, mark the spot. A student of the Cuban greats Le Corbusier, Girona encouraged collaborative thinking with and among his students; he was also an advocate of the generation of the 1980s in their quest to reform the architectural profession and pedagogy. His work represents one of the more successful architectural careers in Cuba following 1959 and is significant not just for the history of the recent past illustrated in his buildings but for the legacy of the early building campaign of the Cuban revolution.

Catherine Elizabeth Gavin

Girona in front of the Coppelia Ice Cream Parlor in Havana.

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Following their work in the early 1970s on Arrowhead Stadium, five architects realized they had hit upon a new niche: sport-specific stadium design. Before then, most teams awkwardly shared outdated baseball stadiums or ungainly hybrids. Realizing they would need help in executing such massive work, the designers looked across the state to Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, who would provide technical support to their architectural vision. In 1983, HOK Sport was born. On August 28, HOK SVE, now the undisputed leader in sports facility design, came full circle with the announcement of a buyout from HOK Group.

“Sport” had always been an atelier of sorts within “Group,” utilizing its resources but maintaining its own stable of designers. The two would occasionally collaborate on projects, but as HOK SVE grew into a 350-person global firm that dominates the stadium design market it began to outgrow its need for HOK Group, which has grown considerably itself in the intervening decades, becoming one of the largest firms in the country.

“It’s a tortured analogy,” Bob White, HOK SVE’s director of international marketing, said, “but it really is like the adolescent growing up into adulthood and moving out on its own.” Since 2000, HOK Sport has effectively been its own firm, when it became a limited liability partnership, relinquishing all but a few administrative and legal duties with the wider firm. There is also the issue of stock. Since HOK is employee-owned, HOK Sport cannot fully exercise control of its own stock, as it can when the buyout takes effect on December 12. (Some details of the deal are still being worked out, but it passed a shareholder vote at both companies.) “This will give us more power to incentivize our employees’ work,” White said.

Under the tentative terms of the deal, neither firm will compete in the other’s design area for two and a half years, during which time HOK Sport may also continue to use the HOK name. After that point, they may begin to work in certain ancillary fields, such as recreational facilities for colleges and hotels for sports complexes. After five years, “all bets are off,” White said, though he acknowledged there was little reason to compete. “As far as we can see into the future, we can’t see ourselves relinquishing our expertise,” he said.

Clark Davis, vice-chairman of HOK, agreed. “In the non-sports practice, we have lots of areas to focus on, from airports to healthcare to universities—all have been booming for us,” he said. “We want to be able to focus on what we’re good at.”

For the time being, both sides stressed, it remains business as usual. Don Muret, the facilities reporter for the Sports Business Journal said the only possible problem could be when HOK SVE must relinquish a name that has become synonymous with stadium design. “There could be some confusion,” Muret said. “But as long as you know the architects are still there, I don’t think there’d be a problem. Everyone knows who these guys are.”
Jersey City’s Ward F is home to Liberty State Park, the largest in recreational area in the city, but despite all that lush open space, the neighborhood is all but devoid of athletic fields. “It’s a very scenic park,” Ben Delisle, the director of development at the Jersey City Redevelopment Authority, said. “But it’s not very active. There are some hiking trails, but that’s about it.”

When the city created the Morris Canal Redevelopment Plan a decade ago, one of the top priorities was the creation of such a park. The canal, long filled, still divided and disrupted the city because numerous old industrial sites lay vacant, many of them contaminated. One such plot was a 17-acre lot that once served as a rail yard. The city released an RFQ for Berry Lane Park in 2007, and a team consisting of Dressner Robin, a local environmental and civil engineering firm, and Rogers Marvel Architects were selected. After a year of work, they are preparing to unveil their final proposal for what will become largest recreational park in the city.

“We wanted to give them something unique and not just slap down as many fields as possible,” Mark Vizzini, the associate-in-charge for Dressner Robinson, said. He said that it was this sort of progressive thinking that led his firm to partner with Rogers Marvel, after first working with the architects on the Canco Lofts. “Not to draw too heavily on the sport analogy,” Vizzini said, “but when you play with better people, you play better yourself.”

After first meeting with the community last September to hear what locals wanted from the park—basically, lots of athletic facilities—and consulting with city officials, the designers returned in February to present three different plans: Community Rooms, Neighborhood Quilt, and Big Backyard. Though the final proposal draws on all three, it most closely resembles the latter, which concentrates circulation around the perimeter and places the ball fields and other facilities within.

One of the primary reasons for this approach is that the old rail yard had long riven the residential community it surrounds. The city especially wanted to increase access to a light rail station at the southwest corner of the lot that opened in 2000. The railroad made access from the eastern neighborhood a long and even dangerous walk. “It was a barrier that had long split the community,” Vizzini said.

This approach also offered the opportunity for a more creative arrangement to the fields within. Rogers Marvel placed a particular emphasis on highlighting the site’s industrial past. In a nod to the canal, the park’s smaller facilities—basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic areas, and a skate park—run in a line along its original path, now called the “activity canal.”

And a stretch of concrete silos that once housed coal for the trains will serve as the backdrop to an amphitheater on one side and a spray park on the other. East of the canal and the spray park are the larger ball fields, with two baseball diamonds to the north and a regulation soccer field to the south. Between these rises the projects most distinctive feature, a concession stand with an arched roof that makes the building resemble a butterfly in flight. Pushing the symbolism to its extreme, the roof will be planted with flowers to attract the very same insects. “We thought how can we get a green roof and turn it into so much more?” Vizzini said.

The same could be said for the rest of the park. “We wanted something different,” Delisle said. “And I think we’ve gotten that. When it’s finished, it’s really going to be a place where people really just step back and go, ‘Wow.’”

Finding a place to hang your hat in New York City can be tough. TEN Arquitectos and DeSimone Consulting Engineers rose to the challenge, merging one Civil War-era warehouse with a 14-story, glass-clad expansion to create the condos at One York. Structural steel gave them the flexibility needed to get the job done. The result is an award-winning engineering scheme, proof that residential construction doesn’t have to mean concrete.

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Glancing at the bold, blue and clear-glass curtain wall of the Chelsea Modern, and a serene design for a steel-and-glass condominium at 57 Irving Place, you might not guess the same architect designed them both. But for Audrey Matlock, diverse styles reflect the districts in which these buildings sit. “The West Village is a more traditional neighborhood, but far West Chelsea is being redefined by architecture,” she said during a recent visit to her Tribeca storefront studio. Built for the same developer, Robert Gladstone of Madison Equities, the two projects show Matlock’s knack both for reinvention and for satisfied clients, many of whom return with multiple commissions.

An alum of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Matlock established her practice in the mid-1990s. She struck out on her own without a client, quickly getting pre-qualified for city work. After renovating and upgrading the public library in Fresh Meadows, Queens, she collaborated with the Washington, D.C.—based office of Gensler to renovate and expand a corporate campus for Armstrong. Only within the last few years has she begun to find the kind of work you expect of small, downtown firms. “At first I couldn’t get a loft renovation,” she said, “because everyone thought I could build only skyscrapers.”

As her high-end Manhattan residential projects continue, Matlock is aggressively pursuing work abroad, and in this, too, her firm has tremendous formal and programmatic range. “For me, there are no plateaus. You’re always pushing upward, trying new things,” she said. In Trinidad, she has designed a freestanding, waterside restaurant with generous indoor/outdoor spaces. Across the world in Kazakhstan, she is completing an enormous private residence for the developer of a new sports complex which she also designed. It is composed of zinc-clad bands that admit light through irregular, glazed clerestories, reflecting its own sense of place within the region’s rugged landscape.
Within view of Frank Gehry’s IAC building and Jean Nouvel’s still-rising 100 West 11th Avenue—and next door to a boldly graphic condominium building by Della Valle Bernheimer Architects—Matlock’s Chelsea Modern sits among some of New York’s most assertive architecture. With folded bands of cobalt-blue and clear glass, the facade is further animated by pop-out windows that extend with scissor hinges, a feature Matlock believes has never before been used in New York. The 85,000-square-foot, 47-unit building also includes a below-grade swimming pool, illuminated from above with glass set in the sidewalks.

Alternating between transparency and translucency, and thus between public and private, the facade of 57 Irving Place features five-foot-wide by ten-foot-tall panes of glass, which pop out like those at Chelsea Modern. These, however, are so large that they are operated with automated controls. The translucent panels feature a silk-screened dot pattern, drawn from clouds, which create subtle variations in the glass panes. The nine-unit building is comprised primarily of duplexes, and an on-grade garage entrance is nearly invisible behind one of the clouded panels.

Glazed on the side facing the water, with a largely opaque land-facing side, this restaurant and bar stands on stilts, to keep the view on the land more open and to create dramatic vistas from within and atop the restaurant. The developer, a Trinidad-born New Yorker, aims to create a destination venue that appeals to locals and tourists. “He wants to build a place where he would want to hang out,” Matlock says. The building is further enlivened by a reflecting pool visible, through a glass floor, from the bar area above. Triangular cut-outs, reminiscent of Toyo Ito’s Serpentine Pavilion, puncture the building envelope.

This 30,000-square-foot manse is perched on a mountainside in an earthquake zone. Due to the instability of the soil on site, the project includes massive retaining walls built into the mountain. The architects treat these walls as terraces, creating numerous indoor/outdoor spaces, and tying the building to the landscape. The three-level house includes a large indoor pool and spa, as well as living quarters for a family of five and their staff. The indoor pool opens onto a lawn with large pivoting glass panels.

Located in the Tian Shan foothills, the 20,000-square-foot project includes indoor and outdoor tennis courts, Turkish baths, a children’s gymnasium, lawn game areas, and a barbeque pavilion. An independently supported super-truss holds each zinc-clad section of the roof, which will weather to further reflect the landscape. Though each layer is a different shape, it is built out of a standardized module, with clerestories framing views of the mountains and the valley.
The interim logo for JetBlue’s new Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy Airport showed the abbreviation “T5” rising like a phoenix behind the iconic roofline of Eero Saarinen’s 1962 TWA Terminal. The graphic expressed a literal truth: the new $743 million, 26-gate terminal sits directly behind TWA, embracing it with a series of gently curved roadways and a facade of gray steel and glass. It also expressed the hopes of many preservationists that the spectacular reinforced-concrete TWA terminal would live again, making flying seem as glamorous as it had in the 1960s.

Those hopes have risen and fallen since the building closed in 2001. This spring, the Port Authority, which now owns the TWA terminal, agreed to spend $19 million on asbestos abatement and other repairs so that JetBlue passengers would have the option of checking in, via electronic kiosk, in Saarinen’s building, then trundling up one of the tubes dramatized in the Leonardo DiCaprio movie Catch Me If You Can to catch a flight. A 2006 RFP for other uses—a themed restaurant, a museum of airline modernism—didn’t attract any viable proposals, likely due to skittishness by developers about taking on the cost of the basic upgrades. The Port Authority says it is still committed to reopening the terminal once the abatement is completed at the end of 2008. A second RFP will probably be issued early in 2009, according to Port Authority public affairs officer Pasquale DiFulco. He says that the authority sees TWA as a multi-use building, not an empty shell, but how it could be used is still very much to be determined.

Meanwhile, JetBlue has moved on. Though the old graphic is plastered on its soon-to-be-vacated home at Terminal 6, the new T5 logo disappears behind the Saarinen building, replacing its graceful swoop with the pedestrian outline of the new building’s ground plan inside T5. The logo suggests that the airline is trying to move past the Saarinen shack in its front yard and highlight its own accomplishment.

This might be possible if the new building were the kind of radical aesthetic break TWA was. But the structure, designed by Gensler, is explicitly deferential: low and dark, hugging the ground, and uninflected across its long facade but for the roof that tips-up on the left at an angle that, if you stand in just the right place, extends Saarinen’s roof to the sky. If TWA were not in front, you might not give T5 a second glance. Looking at Kennedy overall, littered with gray and glass and steel buildings, you wouldn’t necessarily realize it was new.

This seems especially strange in light of the news from abroad, where Richard Rogers’ Terminal 4 in Madrid and Norman Foster’s Terminal 3 in Beijing are winning raves as true game-changers. While Gensler has spiffed up, daylighted, and streamlined the airport experience inside T5, nothing really feels different. Most passengers will drive to the front door of T6, but 25 percent will reach it via AirTrain and enter through a curving, elevated hall, a white space with people movers that stands on stilts between T5 and T6. This leaves room for possible expansion, and also gives passengers the opportunity to look out over TWA and the rest of the airport, a ballet of moving ground-level parts. Oddly, though, the
runway-side windows are up at the ceiling, so you can’t see the planes. Gensler project principal Bill Hooper says this was to keep people moving—one can imagine kids, especially, stopping in their tracks to watch, but it also seems ungenerous.

The hall—white terrazzo floors, white-painted steel, white walls—also establishes the non-color scheme followed in the rest of the terminal. JetBlue blue is used sparingly—too sparingly—as an accent, making all the big spaces light and airy but fairly bland. And can those big white walls really be low-maintenance, as claimed?

The arrivals hall has more clerestories, and a pitched ceiling striped with metal trusses. Rows of check-in kiosks occupy the center of the floor, actual agents are against the wall, creating two lateral lines of passenger traffic toward the central security area. The terminal is designed to accommodate 20 million passengers a year, and up to 250 daily flights, which JetBlue says is equivalent to LaGuardia’s total volume. The JetBlue system turns planes around in 30 minutes, rather than the average 75. The space is nice enough—the daylight relieves the onset of airport claustrophobia—but nothing special. There’s no directionality in the ceiling, nothing interesting on the walls, no sense of drama. The best view of the TWA Terminal is from this level, back out the front glass, but who is going to look at anything but the blue flight screens? Saarinen’s oval flight tubes meet JetBlue awkwardly, in a pair of pedestrian boxes, tacked on to the front. What one will see at the end of the oval is a white wall. The landmarked right-hand tube couldn’t be made accessible, Hooper says, and so the nostalgic traveler who wanted to use it would need to descend a flight of stairs, luggage in hand. (The left-hand tube of 1969 has an elevator.) They are not

The designers at Payette found a fitting inspiration for the connecting stair in a new research center at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx: the helical form of DNA. Installed by the master craftsmen of the ornamental metal industry with the same level of perfection inherent in the building blocks of life, the stair fosters creative exchanges between researchers, technicians, and students.

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Architect: Payette
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Photo: © Robert Benson Photography

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continued

Terminals built in the post-9/11 era can accommodate the new indignities, and there will be a 225-foot bench on which to regroup and re-shoe after the check. I can’t say how it works—if it isn’t an improvement that would be a design crime—but it would be nice to have something interesting to look at while waiting. Interest, instead, is reserved for the terminal “Marketplace,” another area of life infiltrated by the brand-speak of the mall. RockwellGroup was hired to make something of the triangular space, which will funnel arriving passengers through the center and down to the baggage claim, departing passengers around the edges to an array of upscale dining and shopping options (Muji! Lacoste! Tapas!). To center the space, Rockwell designed an overhead tension ring, an homage to Saarinen’s staircases hung from a twist of cables. The outside of the ring is lined with screens that will show information and video art. On either side of the ring, down on the floor, there will be aisles of bleacher seating with movable cushions: places to watch the crowd but not get in the way. These were not yet installed on my tour, but will be an interesting experiment—architect David Rockwell cited William H. Whyte’s research on people’s behavior in urban parks as a model.

It is in the Marketplace that people’s behavior in urban parks as a model. The view that would have helped in the AirTrain hall, and is the terminal’s best moment. As for one’s return, the baggage handling system is supposed to be state-of-the-art, and luggage is delivered on big orange-topped carousels below. There’s no way to disguise the underground nature of baggage claim, or to remove one’s instinctive preparation for loss, so while the space seems pleasant enough—the bold blue Panelite on the back wall should be soothing—proof will be in the speedy return of one’s bags.

As we toured the terminal, David Rockwell mentioned JetBlue’s retro idea about the glamour of flight. Indeed, especially when it first appeared on the airline scene, the look of JetBlue seemed taken from the Saarinen era. But the terminal doesn’t. Perhaps flying is just too serious a business now, but it feels like JetBlue has lost its sense of fun in its middle age. This terminal is clearly an attempt to further establish and bolster its reputation. But TWA is all too present a reminder of an architecture that once transported.

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Hipsters, grab your swim trunks: On September 9, the Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously approved Parks Department plans to restore the McCarren Park Pool to its Moses-era glory, along with adding new amenities called for by the community. After a three-year reign as North Brooklyn’s premier concert venue, and three decades of disuse before that, the pool should finally be back to its original use by 2011.

The plan, designed by Rogers Marvel Architects, calls for a thorough restoration of the bathhouse, completed in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration, as well as reconfigured wading and diving pools, a “beach” platform that can accommodate an ice-skating rink, and new year-round recreational and community spaces within. “You have to respect the existing architecture and open space, and at the same time create a 21st-century facility,” Jonathan Marvel told AN after the commission voted 7-0 in favor of the project.

At the sparsely attended hearing, however, some preservationists took issue with what they viewed as the plan’s tawdry bells and whistles. “We are sorry to see the Parks Department adopt an agenda that fills so much of the formerly open space with concessions, administrative paraphernalia, and alien attractions,” Christabel Gough, secretary of the Society for the Architecture of the City, told the commission. “It turns a sophisticated design of the 1930s into kitsch with a beach.”

Marvel countered that, like all successful restorations, the needs of past and present had to be balanced, a sentiment the commission strongly affirmed. “For the resources the city is dedicating to this, we’re going to need year-round use from this facility,” commissioner Elizabeth Ryan said, responding to attacks on the skating rink.

Perhaps most controversially, the plan moves the swimmers’ changing pavilions outside of the bathhouse, adding low-slung volumes flanking the main entry. The architects wanted to place them closer to the water and free up interior space for new uses, while creating shaded space on the promenade. Preservationists argued that the pavilions distracted from the building’s scale, but the commission disagreed. “I was worried they would block the view of the robust building behind them,” Fred Bland, the newest commissioner, said. “But I find they do not cover up too much. The transparency and lacy feel of the design is modern, deferential, and appropriate.”

(Preservationists have also objected to a proposed rooftop restaurant, but a Parks Department official said that the design was not presented because it would come during a second phase, with a separate review, if it were pursued at all.)

Marvel said the architects had the good fortune of a nearly complete set of original drawings for the complex. This is how the decision was made to keep a separate spray park on the northern side of the pool, as drawings and photographs suggested had always been the case. The drawings also allowed for the careful restoration of windows and doors that have long been missing or boarded up. The designers even hope to peel back decades of graffiti to reveal the original bricks. “There is a kind of ruggedness to the McCarren complex, and we love that ruggedness, but we also want to make it as beautiful as possible,” Marvel said.

As for concerts, Stephanie Thayer, the executive director of the local nonprofit Open Space Alliance, said she remains optimistic that events might continue in the pool during the off-season, as well as during the summer at one of the new parks along the waterfront. Thayer was also recently hired by the Parks Department, as its North Brooklyn administrator, which could help the new venue become a reality. MC
Herzog & de Meuron (H&dM) has developed something of a specialty at taking our tired old building tropes and finding new ways to interpret them. Now the Swiss architecture firm has turned this talent to the skyscraper. At 56 Leonard Street, an 820-foot-tall luxury condominium development that has begun construction in Tribeca, H&dM has turned its back on many of the inherent efficiencies of the highrise—namely repetitive floor plans—in favor of a design-intensive approach. Each of the building’s 57 floors is unique both in layout and profile. This was done in part to make each of the 145 apartments completely distinct, a selling point for the type of buyer capable of footing a bill that can range between $3.5 and $30 million. But it also created an envelope that entirely belies the standard extrusions we’ve grown accustomed to seeing ever since the Flatiron Building. The stacked floors create a seemingly random series of setbacks and overhangs, effecting plays of light and shadow across the surface that lend a mottled texture and sense of movement to the exterior. A glance at these shifting floor plates might cause a shudder to go down the spine, as it looks as if some serious structural maneuvers must have been devised to make it all hold together. But the structural system is actually quite standard: a poured-in-place reinforced concrete frame, consisting of shear walls in the core linked to perimeter columns by the floor slabs. The core slims halfway up the tower, going from six elevators to four, and there are two sections of structural outriggers on the mechanical floors, which increase the building’s rigidity and allow the columns to be arranged in such a way that increases flexibility in the floor layouts. The increased rigidity also makes possible the building’s startling cantilevers, which extend as much as 30 feet from the last vertical.
support. Most of the tower’s terraces (every unit has one) hang six feet off the slab edge, though the larger ones reach out as much as 10 to 12 feet.

But the most surprising story behind the structure lies in the lavish amount of energy spent on the design. The architects went through innumerable permutations of floor plate arrangements, bandying them back and forth with the structural engineer, Cantor Seinuk, to find an organization that met design goals while remaining within the realm of lateral stability. And while the shifting floor sizes didn’t completely fill the zoning envelope, with a width-to-height ratio of 1:13, the slim tower is at its structural maximum. As the building got taller throughout the two-year design process, it became necessary to install a slosh damper system in the mechanical penthouse. This is basically a large pool of water, 30 feet by 30 feet by 12 feet deep, which acts as a counterbalance against building sway by sloshing in the opposite direction as the wind.

As innovative as this approach to the skyscraper may be, in other aspects H&dM referenced classic high-rise design. The building is composed around the base, column, crown arrangement found in such old standbys as the Empire State, Woolworth, and Chrysler buildings. The tower also tapers gently as it ascends, eroding at the corners while the edges remain square, from 8,000 square feet at the ground floor down to roughly 6,000 square feet at the penthouse level. There is a typical hierarchical structure of amenities and residences: Above the lobby is a level of parking, topped by a lounge and spa, including a 75-foot pool. Four zones of residences comprise the column and crown sections, ranging in size from 1,030 square feet to 6,330 square feet: First there are four to five units per floor, then three, then two, and finally the crown is made up of eight full-floor residences.

The cladding system, however, swerves unexpectedly from the recent trend in high-rise condos. Rather than go for look-at-me-world transparency with ultra-clear, low-iron glazing, the architects specified reflective glass for the window wall system. In part this choice was made to meet code insulation requirements, as the building is completely glass clad, but H&dM used it as a design boon by selecting a higher degree of reflectivity for the balcony doors than for the regular windows, creating sparks of light on the already shimmering surface and further animating the facade.

And then there’s the Anish Kapoor sculpture. Wrapped around the building’s corner columns at ground level, and protruding out onto Leonard and Church streets, the rounded, squished stainless steel form was modeled on a balloon suffering under compression forces from above. In spite of its appearance, it accepts no structural load itself, but it does function as an important cultural barometer: Even in dollar-per-square-foot squeezed Manhattan there’s still a little room for a bit of art, even if it’s not for its own sake.

AARON SEWARD
THE TRAINS! THE TRAINS!
Over its halting two decades, Moynihan Station has swallowed up its fair share of politicians—it is even named after one of them. Governor David Paterson is the latest to stare deep into the maw, where he sees less the need for a dramatic new station than more utilitarian tracks, according to the Observer. The pink paper reports that behind the scenes, Paterson is eschewing his predecessor’s plans for a major real estate swap in favor of a scaled back station that boasts reorganized tracks that can alleviate those already at capacity. Paterson would also put the Port Authority in charge of the project.

TRUMP BUMPED UP
Hudson Square and Soho residents and preservationists continue to fight the Trump Soho, even as it reaches its inevitable completion. Or is it complete? On September 15, Community Board 2 released a letter taking the city to task for “rewarding” Trump with a 43rd floor, the permits for which were issued on September 10. Now, the board, the Soho Alliance, and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation are trying to halt an application for a 44th floor.

BATTER DOWN
As their seasons—and stadiums—wind down, the Yankees and Mets struck out with Assemblyman Richard Brodsky. In a report released on September 16, the Westchester pol declared that both teams misappropriated $943 million in tax-exempt bonds because their projects do not comprise an economic benefit to the city, as well as draining $850 million in city and state funds. Two days later, Representative Dennis Kucinich lashed out at the teams over the bonds, which if interpreted as wrongful, could jeopardize financing at Atlantic Yards.
Venice hosts seven biennales a year dedicated to the arts, and in September it was Architecture’s turn. The main show was curated by Aaron Betsky (the first American director to get the job since architecture entered the biennale in 1975) and it spread out across the city and its gardens. Reporting from the Arsenale, the Venetian empire’s formidable naval yard in its 12th-century heyday; the Giardini, home of more than 30 national pavilions, including the McKim Mead & White-designed US Pavilion, where editor-in-chief William Menking served as commissioner of the exhibit “Into the Open,” and the Italian Pavilion, which was devoted to experimental architecture, AN took it all in.
The theme was "Out There" but the experience was over the top as the leading lights of the profession plus a smattering of young up-and-comers from around the world produced a heroically-scaled display of performance architecture. By Julie V. Iovine
To make sharp critical observers out of his audiences, German playwright Bertolt Brecht inserted blackout moments into scenes. The 11th International Architecture Biennale offered its own alienation effect in a dark-as-pitch room—a forecast to the vast two-mile long Arsenale exhibition space—featuring an installation by Rockwell Group with Jones/Kroloff involving towering interactive screens where scenes from architecture’s favorite movies (Cleopatra, The Fountainhead, A Clockwork Orange, etc.) as complex XY-axis projections leap up in response to the crowd moving through. This Hall of Fragments set a seductive stage for the subsequent installations commissioned from 24 architecture practices by Biennale director Aaron Betsky. The brief was to show architecture “beyond building,” that is “reve- latory, utopian, and critical.” Visitors marched past a Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade of gargantuan works: elegantly embalmed sets of prototyped constructions by Asymptote; Coop Himmelb(l)au’s Oz-like Feed Back Space first envisioned in 1969; and Zaha Hadid’s brand-perfect acid green architecture. Most breathtaking in this sequence was Frank Gehry’s Unapatchket, a three-story timber model of a Moscow hotel that the architect is designing, slatted over with clay in the spirit of Cai Guo Qiang’s ephemeral Rent Collection Courtyard figures shown in New York last winter, but originally exhibited in the Arsenale in 1999.

Even if you had not already been over to the Giardini, the other part of the Biennale dedicated to national pavilions and their individually curated exhibits, and seen the Estonian’s big yellow “pipeline” providentially and ominously running down a gravel slope to the steps of the Russian pavilion, you might have questioned the relevance of the Arsenale’s fabulously blousy installations. The European press has already come down hard, especially on the nudes brought in by French architect Philippe Rahm in an effort to demonstrate space-making through convection air currents instead of walls. The concept was certainly clever, and might have been enough for an art installation, but it cannot pass muster at an architecture fair if it doesn’t actually work. Betsky tried to make an end-run around buildings that “just stand there” in favor of architecture that inspires and “transforms one’s perception of one’s world.” And while there was plenty of food for thought about the latest way to turn data into structure, from artist Matthew Ritchie & Aranda/Lasch’s scale-less, fractal turned structural-dolly to M-A-D’s AirXY, which replicated the technology of Hall of Fragments with LED lights instead of movies, many of the installa- tions looked as if they could too easily end up as catalog fodder for the amusement of galleristas.

The urban problems that preoccupied some archi- tects—the lives of singletons for the Dutch collective Droog; the pile-up of unrecyclable and ghastly plastic toys for Greg Lynn—didn’t seem global enough. Pros at performance architecture like Diller Scofidio + Renfro did not disappoint with a video installation that mashed up interviews with gondoliers in three different Venices—Italy, Las Vegas, and Macau—along with anyone’s belief in authenticity of place. UN Studio, too, satisfied with a slightly namby-pamby con- dition of a villa fit for Zoolander that served as a screen for footage from an Alexander McQueen fashion show.

But as one continued down the vast Arsenale where in the 12th century, entire battleships could be built in a week, the impression that today powerful minds were bent to far less mighty tasks was hard to ignore. Ten months ago when Betsky set to work, presidents and vice presidents had not been nominated, Georgian borders had not been crossed, and hurricanes both natural and financial had not rocked our foundations. Now that they have, architects working in high con- cepts rather than hard realities seem somehow passé.
GIARDINI

By taking the Biennale’s theme “Out There—Architecture Beyond Building” as more guideline than directive, curators of more than 30 national exhibitions in the Giardini found expansive and fertile ground for their ideas. Expansive enough, in fact, to encompass almost anything. Freed from the physical limitations of building, architecture could relate to everything. The two most prevalent (and often intertwined) ideas curators explored were politics and the environment, but the work ranged from the poetic approach of Japan’s Junya Ishigami, who created a dreamland of flower-structures, to Russia, whose installation of a competitive architectural chess game could be read as a mirror held up to contemporary politics. Perhaps the most immediately satisfying project was not in a pavilion, but running between two. Estonia put a real-scale gas pipe on the ground between the German and Russian pavilions to represent a Gazprom proposal to build the Nord Stream pipeline connecting the two countries through the Baltic Sea. It was wonderfully concise in its ability to make a political argument physically manifest, and to raise questions about issues from regional power dynamics to environmental damage.

At the mouth of the Grand Canal, the city’s largest public garden is dotted with 35 national pavilions and a series of outdoor installations. Inside, a few curators showed how architecture can indeed be pushed “beyond building,” with results ranging from poetic to pragmatic.

By Anne Guiney

Belgium’s curators David van Severen and Koenen Geers commemorated a missed centennial—the country first entered the Biennale in 1907—with After the Party, an installation whose main components are confetti and mostly empty rooms.

Poland’s curators took the seldom-sexy idea of recycling and gave it some style by repurposing their pavilion as the Hotel Polonia, complete with beds. Inside, there were a series of photographic triptychs showing a building as it looks today and then one that Photoshops it into the future. A 2004 basilica becomes a fantastic water park, since after a while the only people attending church would be tourists anyway, so why not? Likewise, a university library is rebranded as a mall, and cheekily, a Foster-designed building became
When word first went out that the theme of this year’s architecture biennale was “Out There: Beyond Building,” I suspected that Aaron Betsky would take a more formalist approach and not include the kind of social activism that has recently engaged an increasing number of architects frustrated by a sense of impotence in the face of the country’s crumbling infrastructure and frayed social fabric. I turned to Teddy Cruz whose housing proposals for Hudson, NY, we’ve covered in AN; and he started a conversation with Pratt Institute’s Deborah Ganz. Soon the team also included Andy Sturm of the PARC Foundation and Aaron Levy of the Slought Foundation, two non-profits often involved with architects pursuing alternative practices. There seemed to be an opportunity to provide a counterpoint to the main exhibition with something that focused more on new approaches to engaging with communities and shaping local infrastructure.

Time was not on our side: We had only four months to conceive, develop, design, ship, and install everything down to the guestbook to Venice. Right at the start, Leanne Mella, with years of experience as a biennale coordinator and with the State Department, warned me, “I’ve done exhibits in Africa, and it can be a difficult place to mount an exhibition, but Venice is tougher!” and then she joined our team, an unbeatable vote of confidence. Our goal was not modest: We were basically trying to develop and encourage an architecture culture that doesn’t yet exist in the United States. And while we included efforts like The Heidelberg Project, where abandoned houses in Detroit have been encrusted by recycled refuse collected in the neighborhood, or Kyong Park’s New Silk Road video montage, the impulse was to provoke new thinking about architecture, not to feature art projects.

While some of the work we decided to include (and that you may have read about in the last issue of AN) was very critical about aspects of American culture and the built environment, some of it was equally proactive about our problems, because they are in fact hard to believe. The reality is that in the last 25 years, this country hasn’t really invested in our infrastructure, and so a lot of the projects in the pavilion looked at that rather than at buildings in order to make a connection between an architectural sensibility and a larger social infrastructure. Finally, I believe that architects are by and large urbanists who love cities and want to make them function better, and the projects we chose to include represented a range of ways to do just that.
The physical sensation made an effective point, and while there was a notice inside that team members were reducing energy consumption to offset the 50,000 kilowatts of electricity the piece will ultimately consume, the choice seemed dubious. A second inadvertently funny moment was an indoor grove of apple trees under Gro-lights, fed by an IV-like sack of radioactively bright liquid that suggested nothing more than Soylent Green.

Japan’s curator Junya Ishigumi took a very different stance on the issue of our relationship to nature, and imagined a world where architecture was not set in a landscape but inextricably a part of it. The seemingly blank white walls of the pavilion were covered with dozens of drawings of greenery-clad structures in different scenarios, and outside were a series of delicate glass greenhouses filled with flowers. Its dreamy beauty made it a favorite, but the ideas it raised were really no more far-fetched than much of the more ecologically-minded work in the Italian Pavilion.

Inside the Italian Pavilion, 56 exhibits showed the range of experiment across the spectrum, from Lebbeus Woods’ drawings to architecture’s future as seen through the I Ching. With a tone set by the early, groundbreaking work of masters like Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, and Coop Himmelblau, the work suggests that the spirit of the new is alive and engaged. By Anne Guiney
The Italian Pavilion in the Giardini promises an overview on the state of progressive practice in architecture, and while it certainly delivers, it does so in a way that is alternately provocative, satisfying, and dispiriting. Curator Aaron Betsky chose to devote the building that once housed the host country’s installation (now relocated to the Arsenale) with the work of 55 experimental firms, many of whom are younger, like MOS, NL Architects, and LOT-EK, and seven of the avant-garde’s old school, most now prolific builders, including Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, and Morphosis. Most of the masters pulled work from their archives—Zaha Hadid’s drawings were particularly spectacular, and a reminder of her extraordinary talent. A noteworthy exception was Herzog & de Meuron, who teamed up with Ai Wei Wei, their collaborator on the Bird’s Nest in Beijing, and made a simple but beautiful installation from the bamboo poles so prevalent on construction sites in China. Almost all of the work on display is drawn from projects that were underway long before the Biennale, and Betsky has grouped like with like. Teddy Cruz’s cross-border work in Tijuana, Mexico and San Diego is catercorner to FAST’s planning and community organizing project in the Arab-Israeli town of Ein Hawd, while Field Operations’ large-scale and long-term efforts in landscape urbanism share a room with the Colombia-based Husos’ engaging Proyecto Cali, which wonderfully manages to include the restoration of a habitat for Monarch butterflies, an exhibitions building, and a soap opera called Butterflies and Passions.

One of the more striking things that emerges from the contrast Betsky sets up between the old-new and the new-new is the preoccupation with creating a more socially engaged practice over form-making, and the use of different means to tell a story. Along with Husos and its racy telemovela, AOC developed a Monopoly-based board game to help Venetians rethink their shrinking city, and J.P.A Jones Partners put together a Marvel-style comic book projecting 50 years into the future of Dubai.

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One of the more striking things that emerges from the contrast Betsky sets up between the old-new and the new-new is the preoccupation with creating a more socially engaged practice over form-making, and the use of different means to tell a story. Along with Husos and its racy telemovela, AOC developed a Monopoly-based board game to help Venetians rethink their shrinking city, and J.P.A Jones Partners put together a Marvel-style comic book projecting 50 years into the future of Dubai. CUP’s intentionally crude Xeroxed posters diagram a link between sneakers and poverty, while Urban Think Tank’s colorful wall of posters from Caracas, Venezuela is as suggestive of a vibrant public realm as any in the show.

Yogi Berra, as usual, had it right: The future ain’t what it used to be, and utopia as we know and love it is in fairly short supply in the pavilion. One of the more provocative pieces calls the very idea into question: Abitare editor Stefano Boeri and a student team took on at the eco-enthusiasm so prevalent in the pavilion and beyond and ask what it would really be like if nature once again was deeply integrated into our cities. Boeri’s Sustainable Dystopias presents three scenarios—the city of energy devices, the city of vegetable surfaces, and the city of wild animals, each of which pushes the proposal to its logical conclusion and points out the pros and cons. As neat as it might sound, the piece argues, there’s also a downside to having elk and moose wandering through protected greenbelts in a city. NL Architects also presents cut-n’-paste what-if scenarios in Virtual Realities that are a little uncomfortable, in spite of their humor. The ice caps are melting? Let’s make one out of trash, since there’s plenty of that! The two projects stand in marked contrast to the visually appealing yet thin suggestion represented by MA0/Emmeazzero’s Footprints, whose vision for new types of public space seems more grounded in the possibilities of Photoshop than in a meaningful sense of how people use city streets and parks.
matters of sensation is a group exhibition of projects by 14 emerging architecture studios from across the united states. the list is impressive, from up-and-coming firms like gage/ciance/anca architects, grufu/var, hiruta, abott & howell-yoon architecture, to innovators such as emergent, iomato/scott architecture, and mos. while the rapid development of computer-aided architecture offers new approaches to surfaces, textures, and materials, it has also spawned a precarious fixation on flat-out forms. the architects here aim to go deeper by exploring materiality itself. the exhibited work, including klen 2008, pictured by ryon klein, examines the potential for ornamentation using digital fabrication by pushing the intricacy of design. by manipulating textures and surfaces, these works work beauty and ornament back to contemporary design.
Imagine a restaurant in the 19th-century. A waiter says to an architect, “Pardon me, sir, but which spirit would you prefer to drink tonight, that of history or that of nature? Or might you prefer a cocktail blend of both?”

In the 19th-century America, most architects preferred the latter, and a heady mixture of architecture. This quest was admitted challenging, and remains only partially documented.

Prior to its canonization as a bona fide art historical movement, Minimalism was widely dismissed as overly simple and utterly lacking in content; the term “minimal art,” coined by the philosopher Richard Wollheim, was originally intended as criticism. The Brazilian artist Ivan do Espírito Santo has often been associated with the Minimalists, and at first glance, his third solo exhibition at Sean Kelly Gallery appeared to itself nearly devoid of content: the only works presented in the main galleries were a subtle site-specific wall painting and two black rectangular objects. Yet as with the best Minimal art, sustained viewing of Espírito Santo’s work opened up crucial questions about vision, perception, materiality, spectatorship, and architectural space.

The site-specific work, entitled En Passant, transformed three contiguous walls into architectural representations of the grayscale; each wall was divided into narrow, parallel stripes that gradually ranged from white to black. According to the story from the gallery, these grayscales alluded to a photographer’s darkroom test strip. The work was lit from above by a sky-light muted with scrims, ensuring that each viewer would have a different perceptual experience of the piece depending on the time of day and the weather.

The grayscale, with its relation to photography and the painter’s range of colors, evokes the methods and practices of pictorial representation, which seems to divide the chaotic field of visual phenomena into coherent, legible parts. Viewing Én Passant, however, one noticed that the ideal order of the grayscale was subtly disrupted by the play of real light and shadow along the walls, so that the white end of the spectrum might appear oddly dulled, or the dark end eerily illuminated. Because one’s experience of the piece depended on the interplay between the representational element of the grayscale and the contingent element of light and shadow in the exhibition space, the piece appeared to suggest that the concepts of perception and representation cannot easily be disentangled from one another.

In addition, by recasting the gallery walls as primarily perceptual phenomena, Espírito Santo subverted the logic of earlier site-specific art. Whereas Minimalist and Conceptual artists had rejected the illusionistic space of painting in order to call attention to the real architectural and social structure of the gallery, Espírito Santo reimagined architectural structure as itself inscribed between the real and the illusory. Yet, characteristically, the implications of this gesture were not fully elucidated in the work, but rather left open to the viewer’s speculation.

The two other major works in the exhibition, both entitled Deposition, also negotiated the problem of real space versus representational space. Each of these nearly identical pieces consisted of a large sculptural representation in black granite of a matted and framed picture. The choice of a large scale and a heavy, monumental material for these works emphasized the status of the picture as a physical (or even architectural) object. At the same time, the exaggerated size of the Deposition pieces, along with their extreme simplicity of form, tended to establish the objects as caricatures, or icons of themselves, thereby bringing them back to the realm of representation.

Ultimately, the strength of Espírito Santo’s practice is not his treatment of any single aesthetic or philosophical issue, but rather his dexterity in weaving together multiple problems and projects that might otherwise seem unrelated, and thereby producing unexpected results. This approach of course runs the risk of lapsing into inconsistency, inconclusiveness, or incoherence, and there were indeed moments when the combined effect of the works in the exhibition seemed somewhat vague. Yet overall, the instability of Espírito Santo’s practice appears inseparable from its promising tendency toward what the avant-garde once termed experiment.

“In the 19th-century America, many designers of the era, determined to blend formal principles borrowed from both history and nature in the hope of creating a new, specifically “American” style of architecture.”

Eidlitz’s predominant message was a call for an architectural “science of the beautiful,” wherein “form, structure and ornament derive from a biological sense of fitness to purpose.” With these principles in mind, Eidlitz conveyed Espírito Santo’s essay—while essential to understanding the organic divergence of his Brooklyn Academy of Music—brought them back to the realm of representation.
The United Nations’ prediction that this year half of the world’s population will be urban dwellers has fueled much commentary about megacities and sprawl. Adding new depth to the topic is Urban Machinery: Inside Modern European Cities, a volume of essays on the design, structure, and formation of modern urban environments in Europe. Through case studies that span the last 160 years, the book explores the role of technology in the economic and social growth of cities, looking at fields as varied as urban energy systems, architecture, city planning, traffic engineering, and tourism. Its conclusions, while focused on Europe, offer cautionary tales for the world’s aging urban cores.

The essays in Urban Machinery are divided into four sections, with a common “focus on the social forces, material structures, and cultural practices” that shaped European cities in their various built forms. The first section, “Modernism and Mastery,” looks at planning at a large scale. In his study of the Rhine river, for instance, Cornelius Disco explains how German, French, and Swiss cities along the polluted waterway managed the contentious objectives of trade, transportation, and water pollution, a tale that perhaps foreshadows the concept of the environment as a shared problem between nations. Elsewhere, co-editor Thomas J. Misia suggests that the uniformity of modernist principles did not necessarily beget identical cities throughout Europe. Instead, he shows, modernist planners and architects of divergent backgrounds imposed enormous changes on cities, but each did so in a unique style, with their ideas adapted by local cultures.

Other essays explore political terrain, often linking infrastructure to unseen social consequences. In “Progressive Dreams: The German City in Britain and the United States,” Mikael Hård and Marcus Stippak probe the history of municipal socialism by focusing on the dawn of public utilities. These large industrial concerns were established to provide basic services, but in the process they created a basic standard of living for all. Similarly, in the book’s “Industry and Innovation” section, Dieter Schott demonstrates how literal power in the form of electricity led to political power, and thus to the independence of cities. Turning to that arena of public space—the street—Hans Buiter traces the transformation of streets from chaotic free-for-alls to orderly urban places. In his essay “Constructing Dutch Streets: A Melting Pot of European Technologies,” he underlines the way that technologies from all around the continent contributed to the taming of the public domain.

Fending off entropy is an overarching theme of this volume. “Throughout the modern period,” the editors write, “city officials have invested tremendous effort in keeping chaos at bay and making European cities livable.” Europe has kept the power in the form of electricity so completely at our disposal, we absorb urban technology shapes our lives whether we know it or not. As Henry van Brunt claimed in 1858, when “Nature yields some of her wild rudeness to man, and man stops her wild rudeness to man, and man stops...”

Given these general intellectual circumstances, perhaps Eiditz’s theories of organic design, as well as those of more famous 19th-century American architects, are best understood as the evolutionary product of a remarkably complex pool of ideas. The chain of formal mutations was a long and intricate one, as long as the evolution of any natural species. Yet, even if Eiditz’s work was not the Big Bang that catapulted American architecture forward any more or less than Root’s, Sullivan’s, or Wright’s, Eiditz’s study of his life, buildings, and writings is fully warranted and an excellent scholarly record. Let us hope that other equally luminous and informative monographs on Eiditz’s contemporaries—Van Brunt and Wright, as well as figures like Jacob Wrey Mould and Detlef Lienau—will, in due time, add to our understanding of the organic ideal in American architecture.

LAURA BRUGGER TEACHES VISUAL STUDIES AT THE CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS.
REVIEW

InterMix Collection
Architectural Systems, Inc.
www.archsysama.com
A collaboration between DuPont, Corian, and Marotte USA, Architectural Systems, Inc.’s InterMix Collection combines traditional craftsmanship with cutting edge technology. A hybrid collection of solid surfacing material and wood veneers, embellished with carved decorative elements, InterMix offers dramatic and modern effects to a multitude of settings including retail, hospitality, healthcare, and corporate projects. Ranging in size from 3 feet by 6 feet to 3 feet by 8 feet by 1-inch thickness, InterMix is ideal for wall surfaces, fixtures, bar fronts, and cash wrap applications. The solid surfacing properties of its composition make InterMix recyclable and repairable, lending itself to sustainable design.

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ZHU Duemilacinque (H 356)
Valli & Valli
www.vallivalli-us.com
Commissioned by Italian hardware company Valli & Valli, Zaha Hadid designed ZHU Duemilacinque to infuse the functionality of a traditional door level with her characteristic dynamism. Originally created for the Puerta America Hotel in Madrid, ZHU Duemilacinque is now part of Valli & Valli’s Fusital Collection, which also features the work of renowned designers and architects including Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, and Cini Boeri. Composed of cold Nikiroll alloy, and available in chrome and satin chrome finishes, this distinctive piece of hardware features an angular downward fold that emphasizes movement through the contours of the grip.

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