We Don’t Testwell

At one point in time, the name Testwell Laboratories was probably an accurate moniker, but now it just seems like a bad joke. On October 30, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau indicted the company and seven of its operators on a litany of racketeering charges for not testing at all. According to the indictment, the firm, which is one of the city’s busiest concrete testing companies, did not perform work it had filed—and billed—for on 102 projects, including some of the city’s most significant and recognizable, both under construction and long-complete.

Both Morgenthau’s office and the Department of Buildings said they have investigated some of the buildings and intend to do so for all, but the buildings do not appear to be in danger of falling down, though the concrete used could have a shorter lifetime than it otherwise would. “These charges are serious,” Morgenthau said. “But these actions endangered lives of people, and that makes them doubly serious.” (Calls to the company and its attorney were not returned.)

The indictment includes a full list of the projects affected by Testwell, which, from a design perspective, is dizzying. Most notable is the Freedom Tower, continued on page 8.

With Heavy Heart, LPC Votes for O’Toole’s Demolition

The only thing gloomier than the weather on October 28 were the members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission as they decided on the fate of Albert C. Ledner’s iconic O’Toole building, which St. Vincent’s Hospital hopes to demolish and replace with a new 300-foot-tall hospital facility.

“This is the most distressing challenge to the landmarks law that I have witnessed since the Grand Central case in the 1970s,” commissioner Roberta Brandes-Gratz said.

Fred Bland, the commission’s newest member, said he awoke at 3:30 that morning, unable to sleep, and stood out in the rain for one last look at O’Toole. He had hoped it would help his “highly frustrating” decision between continued on page 5.

The Hardest Choice

One of Testwell’s many strikes.

NYPL’s New Architect Unveils Gallery on Bowery

A bright spot opened in the state’s dreary economic-development outlook on October 22 when the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation authorized funds to start construction on the waterfront project’s first phase of development on a pier in Brooklyn Heights. The board ok’d a $47 million construction contract for the space just south of the developed pier beside the Sperone Westwater Gallery on Bowery, continued on page 10.

Brooklyn Bridge Park Gets Phase 1 Funding

The transformation continued on page 5.

Pier’s a Go

Barely a week after it was announced that Foster + Partners would be designing a new $250 million circulation library to be housed within the halls (and under the Rose Reading Room) of Carrere & Hastings’ New York Public Library on 5th Avenue, a quieter project, but one with more impact on the street, was unveiled: the Sperone Westwater Gallery on the Bowery, continued on page 10.

Foster Old, Foster New

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When a steam pipe exploded in Midtown last July, and the 1-35 bridge in Minneapolis collapsed just weeks later, people around the country began listening to the Cassandras who had been warning about the decrepit state of our infrastructure, urban and rural alike. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that the cost of bringing it all up to date would be $1.6 trillion, and at the time, that number seemed just impossible—would Congress ever allocate that kind of money to something as useless as infrastructure?

No way.

Fast forward 15 months—and one $700 billion bailout later—and it doesn’t seem so crazy. More traditional quarters of the Republican Party may regard New York Times columnist David Brooks as the skunk at the picnic, but he is squarely in line with a growing number of people who believe that the only way to pull us out of the looming recession is to devote significant federal resources to public works, especially those that focus on transportation and the development of alternate sources of energy. A “Green New Deal” has been championed in one form or another by people across the political spectrum: President-elect Barack Obama, Al Gore, T. Boone Pickens, the Regional Plan Association, and even Martin Feldstein, the economist who advised President Reagan on policy.

For New York City, and the Northeast in general, Brooks’s argument for transportation spending is the central one. In a recent Times column, he suggested a “National Mobility Project,” which argues that we should take the mix of fiscal stimulus and research in alternative energy, and focus it on the realm of transit. This makes sense: Many supporters of a Green New Deal advocate turbine farms in the Southwest and the Dakotas to capture that region’s least-exploited resource, the wind. Our version of that is our regional transit system—everything from Amtrak and Metro–North to NJ Transit and the MTA. One of the Obama campaign’s platform issues was a commitment to thinking about cities on a metropolitan scale, and that means thinking about transportation of every kind.

One of the most striking elements of the Skylcrapers Museum’s recent symposium on density in Hong Kong was the way that the government there believes in the centrality of investment in infrastructure and transit to future development. Project after project detailed train stations built before the new neighborhoods that would use them, and the assembled panel of New Yorkers—Brooks, Chris Ward, and developer Vishaan Chakrabarti of the Related Companies—looked on with a mixture of awe and envy. There are many reasons why the Hong Kong model wouldn’t work here, but the straightforward premise that infrastructure feeds growth does. Architects, developers, planners, and urbanists have a rare opportunity to argue for the kind of investment that will strengthen the city and its connections to the region. If the Obama administration does in fact begin to formulate an infrastructure-based stimulus program, New York must be a part of it.

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* Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration
NEWS

**LUX, LIQUOR, ET VERITAS**

Who knew so many architects were so true to blue—and we’re not just talking donkey dems, here. Waves of Yale’s—past, present, and indeterminate—descended upon New Haven on November 7 to commemorate the rededication and reanimating of the improbably once-revived A&A Building, henceforth Paul Rudolph Hall.

Among the silvery-haired eminences squirming in the restored benches of Hastings Hall during a soporific keynote by curator Timothy Rohan were Vincent Scully, Kevin Roche, Charles Gwathmey, Peter Eisenman, Cynthia Davidson, Sid Bass, and Joan Davidson, plus younger eminences Deborah Berke, Tod Williams, Billie Tsien, Joel Sanders, and assorted journos, including Newsweek’s Cathleen McGuligan, Tim’s Richard Lacayo, Bob Ivy, and Paul Goldberg, and faculty too numerous to name. Then came the exclusive dinner for three hundred—reminding us of the last stand at Thermopylae—where host Stern, demonstrating either inscrutable savvy or a surprisingly tin ear for seating buzz, placed Vanuit Fair’s Matt Tynaer at a chilly upstairs table one remove from a roomful of faculty players, among them Michael Haverland, who until now, we were told, has not even been on speaking terms with Yale since his contract ended. Former Princeton dean Bob Maxwell flew into London a day earlier than famed Rudolph students Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, slated to speak at the symposium on Saturday, but we have yet to find anyone who stuck it out past midnight, the latter fresh from a grand pooh-bah dinner in celebration of Artschwager’s lozenge-shaped “blps,” which could just as well apply to this project, which is not only intelligently modest but smart. If you visit the space, look for Artschwager’s signature mid-cadmium (or sign painter) yellow frames. Above the windows and doors are slender transoms of mirrored glass, reflecting the streetscape, the viewer, and—for the time being—the sky across the street above a row of one-story buildings.

The Artschwager facade, like his artwork, features modest and ordinary materials that slide effortlessly into their ordinary context while stylishly framing the interior gallery, which is smartly designed by studioMDA. The long, windowless interior has a ceiling of metal flooring material and a floor of smooth concrete that could be a ceiling. They both point to a single back wall widow. Like Artschwager in his own work, Dochantschi inverts materials in a way that questions what is high and low art and architecture. Artschwager has said of his work that it is meant to be “a garlic sliver into a joint of mutton,” which could just as well apply to this project, which is not only intelligently modest but smart. If you visit the space, look for Artschwager’s license- shaped “dips,” which he has placed around the gallery in odd corners to highlight its ordinary materiality and space.

**STREET SMART ART**

The West 29th Street block between 10th and 11th avenues is one of those scruffy mixed industrial blocks that used to be so typical in Chelsea but are becoming a rarity everywhere in Manhattan. It is still predominantly a street of garages and small manufacturing shops, but the new David Nolan Gallery fits deftly into this landscape without succumbing to the artiness that typifies so much in Chelsea. David Nolan asked Markus Dochantschi of studioMDA, who worked with Zaha Hadid on the Cincinnati Art Center, to design the gallery. Nolan originally wanted the first floor of the storefront to feature a single large, pivoting window but that turned out to be too expensive. He then turned to the artist Richard Artschwager who had designed the facade for the Georg Kargl Box gallery in Vienna in 2005. Artschwager suggested various options, ultimately creating a facade that is not unlike his art, which has long been concerned with architectural issues of design, space, and materiality.

The four-story black and gray building features two tall and slender windows and adjoining doors outlined with Artschwager’s signature mid-cadmium (or sign painter) yellow frames. Above the windows and doors are slender transoms of mirrored glass, reflecting the streetscape, the viewer, and—for the time being—the sky across the street above a row of one-story buildings.

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**EVES DRO P: JULIE V. IOVINE**

Our party at the glassy and classsy USM showroom in Soho may not have been quite so upper-crust but it was just the blast among well-wishers we wanted to usher in our fifth year in business. Among the loyal (and the loaded) who joined us were Calvin Tsao, Charles Renfro, Morris Adjmi, Carol Willis, James Sanders, Stan Allen, David Ling, Sylvia Smith of FXFowle, Ashley O’Neill of SOM, Lee Washesky of Polishek Partnership, and AN contributors Alex Gerlin and Aric Chen, the latter fresh from a grand pooh-bah dinner in celebration of Zaha Hadid’s double hitter—Chanel Pavilion and Sonnabend Gallery exhibition—where Pin-up’s Alex de Leoo sat rapt in attendance at her side while Craig Robbins, Han Rashid, and Lise Anne Couture marveled at the fact that he didn’t recognize anybody. Among the throng, former Princeton dean Kevin Roche marveled at the fact that he didn’t recognize anybody. He then turned to the artist Richard Artschwager who had designed the facade for the Georg Kargl Box gallery in Vienna in 2005. Artschwager suggested various options, ultimately creating a facade that is not unlike his art, which has long been concerned with architectural issues of design, space, and materiality.

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**ARTSCHWAGER FACADE FRONTS NEW CHELSEA GALLERY**

**ROUGE TOMATE**

10 East 60th Street
Tel: 646-237-8970
Designer: Bentel & Bentel Architects/Planners

Bentel & Bentel, known for The Modern and Gramercy Tavern, are specialists in creating elegant restaurants in which the atmosphere resonates with the restaurateur’s sensibility, and in Rouge Tomate, they’ve done it again. Housed in the former space of the Nicole Farhi boutique and restaurant on East 60th Street, designed by Gabellini Sheppard, Rouge Tomate incorporates elements of Sheppard’s original design like the floating walls and ceilings, while nodding to the restaurant’s ethos of a balanced approach to sourcing and preparing food. The 15,000-square-foot space contains two floors of seating with custom-made furniture, and includes a cafe, lounge, bar, private dining room, and an open kitchen on the lower level. Each floor showcases the cuisine: On the upper floor, the juice bar is housed in a walnut box with a vibrant red interior, while downstairs, the organically shaped kitchen has a bright wood ceiling. Alongside the recurring oak walnut, seasonal ingredients like tomatoes, rosemary, and cranberries float in a wooden pool, giving the space a warm and energizing aura.
LIVING PROOF

Margot Gayle 1908-2008

Few people can be said to have gained legendary status in their own lifetime. But for anyone with even a modicum of interest in the historic beauty of New York City’s built environment, Margot Gayle was one of those exceptional few. Perhaps adding to that legacy was the fact that she lived to just over a hundred, with her centenary a joyful celebration of all she accomplished and all there was yet to be accomplished.

Margot was a key player in several of the most important preservation efforts in New York City. But she not only helped save buildings; she helped foster an appreciation for the kind of architecture mid-20th century eyes had come to devalue and ignore, and helped us envision a new life for our older buildings and cities.

Her first big battle was to save the Jefferson Market Courthouse (now the Jefferson Market branch of the New York Public Library) on 6th Avenue in Greenwich Village. While this building may seem like the embodiment of an urban landmark now, and synonymous with all the quirky charm of Greenwich Village, this was not always so. Sixty years ago, many New Yorkers looked on gothic fantasies like this as anachronistic follies. And when its life as a courthouse was coming to an end in that era of urban renewal, few thought of repurposing the building for some new function. In fact, the whole concept of adaptive re-use of older buildings—an accepted standard today—was still a foreign concept. By succeeding in having the building preserved and put to a new use, Margot and her allies reshaped how architecture, and old buildings, were considered.

Another of Margot’s profound accomplishments was her role in securing landmark designation for Soho. While perhaps hard to believe today, what we now call Soho was not too long ago a dreary backwater of mostly disused or underutilized cast iron. Margot campaigned tirelessly and ultimately successfully for the designation of the Soho Cast-Iron Historic District, without which Soho would likely have eventually been destroyed. I don’t think the impact of this accomplishment can be underestimated; few phenomena have had a deeper impact upon the life of American cities in the last 50 years than the widespread repurposing of older industrial buildings as artists’ workspaces, and then as desirable residences, as was pioneered in Soho.

Margot Gayle’s accomplishments may be too numerous to list here, but suffice it to say she worked hard to the very end of her life furthering the causes she believed in. She lobbed for an as yet unrealized expansion of the Soho Historic District to include those wonderful buildings on the west side of Broadway and east side of Crosby Street which were, somewhat arbitrarily left out of the original historic district. I only had the pleasure of meeting Margot a few times; she served on the Board of Advisors of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, and honored us by granting us an oral history interview, which is now available on our website at www.gvshp.org. While my personal interactions with Margot were limited, I can hardly count the number of people I have met who’ve told me how much of a personal inspiration she was to them in the work they do. Clearly, her legend lives on.

Andrew Berman is the Director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

WE DON’T TESTWELL continued from front page as well as 7 World Trade. There are some projects—the Hearst and Beekman towers, Lord Norman Foster and Frank Gehry, respectively, as well as a number of other celebrated icons like FXFowle’s One Bryant Park and 11 Times Square, Polshek’s Brooklyn Museum expansion, the new Goldman Sachs headquarters in Battery Park City by KPF, Beyer Blinder Belle’s new Greek and Roman galleries at the Met, and Gensler’s new Terminal 5 for JetBlue. Roughly half the projects are straightforward condo towers, like 10 Barclay, 15 Lafayette, 891 Amsterdam, and the Latitude Riverdale; such work constituted the majority of construction in the city during the recent boom. A number of government projects, big and small, local and federal, are listed, including Brooklyn Borough Hall, I.S. 303, and Thurgood Marshall Federal Courthouse, as well as a number of collegiate buildings. The list also includes a range of infrastructure projects the company worked on, such as the Second Avenue Subway, New Rochelle Metro North station, and, scarcest of all, the deck replacement of the Triboro Bridge. There are a few others, too: the USS Intrepid’s refurbished Pier 86, the Yankee Stadium, the massive Xanadu commercial complex at the Meadowlands.

Indicative of the sensitive nature of the indictment, a number of architects contacted about their work with Testwell declined to comment on the record, though one did mention that his firm found the contractor’s work to be “shady,” leading the firm to look elsewhere for its concrete testing.
Even in flush times, the New York City public school system has capital needs that far outstrip its budgets, and so for several years now, the School Construction Authority has been looking at its biggest asset: the land under the schools themselves. At 250 East 57th Street, on a site that used to hold P.S. 59 and the venerable High School of Art and Design, work has begun on the first phase of a one-million-square-foot complex that will house the rebuilt schools, as well as housing and retail. Roger Duffy, the lead architect at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, explained the logic of the idea: “A lot of school sites in New York remain underdeveloped in terms of FAR (floor-area ratio).”

In exchange for the right to create a lucrative mixed-use development on the block-through parcel, developer World Wide Holdings negotiated a deal with the State Board of Education to rebuild and enlarge both schools on the site. In addition to lease payments, a PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Tax) scheme will contribute additional funds to other education programs across the city.

Construction will occur in two phases, with the retail levels and a significantly enlarged P.S. 59 emerging first. A 59-story residential tower and new High School of Art and Design will follow in an estimated four years. One of the more appealing features of the design is the large AstroTurf play area on top of the building’s retail plinth. There are six outdoor terraces, each catering to a different age group—which are unusually generous outdoor provisions for a public school in the heart of Manhattan. The second phase will see the rise of a concertina-like, 59-story glazed tower, housing 320 apartments and condos; 20 percent of the units will be affordable, with another 30 affordable units built off-site.

This type of partnership has been growing more common in recent years (see “You Get What You Pay For,” AN 13_07.30.08) and is not without its critics, but in a time of chronic budget shortfalls, Duffy sees it as an avenue worth exploring: “The involvement of private developers needs to be composed in an intelligent way to create leverage” [for the school system], he said. “But there is also a need to bring the public and private sectors together.”

SHUMI BOSE
The Action Center to End World Hunger recently opened as an interactive educational center for global hunger whose mission is to inspire and teach people how they can participate in the struggle. Located in Battery Park City near the Irish Hunger Memorial and the future September 11 Memorial and Museum, the facility is a partnership between Gary Shoemaker Architects and ESI Design for the development and relief organization Mercy Corps. The center is conceived to be an open space defined by five main areas: entry, briefing, training, taking action, and back-of-house. The readymade aesthetic—an open ceiling grid and exposed wooden framing—reinforces the field station metaphor. The sustainable building consultants Steven Winter Associates helped them include recycled materials like synthetic gypsum board, recycled denim insulation, recycled glass tiles, low-VOC paints, and shelving and furniture made from deconstructed homes that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The center is expected to achieve the first LEED Platinum status for a commercial interior in New York City.

MARIANA RODRÍGUEZ ORTE

PIER’S A GO continued from front page

River Cafe, which recently hosted a summertime pop-up park showing off Olafur Eliasson’s waterfalls installation.

Some had speculated that as Governor David Paterson ordered spending cuts, the process of building the park would get bogged down in political squabbles about where to trim the state recreation budget. Not so, assured state Parks spokesman Dan Keefe. “We’ve been consolidating campgrounds [that are near to one another] and that kind of thing,” Keefe told AN. “Capital money has not been affected.”

Much of the debate about this park involved the degree to which the landscape architect, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, would be able to deploy some ambitious ideas across the site’s 85 acres of piers. While that matter remains unclear—the firm recently scaled back plans to create active recreation on floating piers—it’s clear that the first phase will play straight to weekend tourists and downtown residents. According to the development corporation, work will include a 2.5-acre lawn behind a promenade of around three-quarters of a mile along the river, with 700 new trees and a playground. Eventually, Pier One will include 9.5 acres in a similar vein. The state says the pier will open by the end of 2009.

Van Valkenburgh, who is also working on the renovation of the northern end of Union Square Park, spoke cheerfully of the authorization in a bleak economy. “There’s going to be $90 million of construction activity in the next 13 months, and the playground at the Atlantic Avenue entrance means the Cobble Hill community gets something in the next year,” he told AN. Skanska USA won the first contract. One of the park’s controversial dimensions, the siting of apartment towers near its northern and southern edges, will not affect the appearance or financing of this phase.

For remaining phases of the 85-acre project, the success of this summer’s pop-up site and the mass appeal of the landscaping at Pier One may promote some civic goodwill. Over the last several years, the state has quietly amassed a solid record of improvements to waterside parks, on the Brooklyn piers and at Hudson River Park.

ALEC APPELBAUM
SHORT-LIST FOR D.C. EISENHOWER MEMORIAL ANNOUNCED

Ike Likes Progress

Dwight D. Eisenhower may never have seen a paved road in his youth, but he will soon be honored with some very progressive architecture. On October 29, the Eisenhower Memorial Commission announced seven finalists to design the National Eisenhower Memorial, to be built on an underused plaza along Washington’s Independence Avenue, southwest of the Capitol Building. The memorial would make him the 16th president to be recognized with a monument in Washington.

The finalists include Frank Gehry, Stanley Saitowitz, Peter Walker, Moshe Safdie, Rogers Marvel Architects, Ralph Johnson of Perkins + Will, and Ron Krueck of Chicago’s Krueck and Sexton Architects. The finalists will now go through an interview process in December before the winner is announced in March.

Maya Lin aside, Washington has a propensity for classical and conservative memorial architecture, and so the list is noteworthy for the contemporary style that dominates each of the finalists’ work. “I didn’t see a lot of expectations of pediments and columns on that list, and that’s exciting,” said Rob Rogers of Rogers Marvel.

Daniel Feil, the project’s executive architect at the commission, said the emphasis on contemporary design was intentional. “We have talked with the [Eisenhower] family, and they viewed their grandfather as very progressive and see his legacy being represented by contemporary design as being appropriate,” he said.

None of the finalists have presented designs, and most likely won’t before the winner is selected. “I haven’t really thought of it,” said Saitowitz.

The commission’s charge includes the development of a “living memorial” component as well as the physical structure, with web content and downloadable audio programs to be developed and maintained by the National Park Service. “The model we’re thinking about is, we provide the information, you provide the equipment, be it BlackBerry, cell phone, or iPod,” Feil said.

The commission, a private organization, has been working on plans for the four-acre site across from the Air and Space Museum and north of the Department of Education, since it was approved in 2005.

The memorial would potentially shut off a block of Maryland Avenue, which runs at a diagonal southwest from Capitol Hill, a possibility that worries members of the National Commission to Save Our Mall. “Maryland Avenue is the southern counterpart to Pennsylvania Avenue,” said the group’s chair, Judy Feldman. “Future revitalization of historic Maryland Avenue will open enormous opportunities for the whole Southwest area of the city, and the memorial design should recognize that and not be allowed to close it off.”

Feldman also raised concern about the decision to place the Eisenhower Memorial at the eastern end of the Mall, far away from the monuments to other presidents. “The bigger question here is about the memorial-making process. Washington was designed as a city that tells the American story,” she said. “We are haphazardly locating monuments all over the place. There is no continuity, no story that unfolds. We are losing and muddying the story.”

But Feil said the location between the Air and Space Museum and the Department of Education was appropriate, given that Eisenhower created NASA—which is celebrated at the Air and Space Museum—and oversaw federal enforcement of school desegregation efforts after the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision.

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At three stories high, 339 Lafayette Street is a dwarf in a sea of giants, a 90-year-old unrenovated relic in a gentrifying neighborhood north of Houston. For the past 40 years, this modest brick structure on the northeast corner of Bleecker and Lafayette has been home to the War Resisters League and a collection of social justice groups who pay only $6.65 per square foot for their office space. Past and current tenants include David Dellinger's Liberation magazine, Paper Tiger Television, the Socialist Party, and the Metropolitan Council on Housing. Now the informal collective is at risk of losing the building that Abbie Hoffman famously named the “Peace Pentagon.”

The A. J. Muste Memorial Institute has owned and managed the building since purchasing it from the War Resisters League in 1978. Earlier this year, an independent real estate firm valued the building at over $10 million. Tired of losing money due to the rising cost of managing a building in dire need of renovation, the board of directors is considering the offer. Their plan would be to use the money from the sale to pay off the Institute’s debts and buy an office condominium where they would continue to offer low rents to their tenants.

Many of the tenant organizations acknowledge that the building is long overdue for renovation. There is no handicap accessibility, and heavy scaffolding supports a crumbling foundation. Nonetheless, many of the groups are committed to staying at the current location, even if that means raising millions of dollars for a new structure. "The sense of it being our own, unique building would be lost if we moved to a condominium,” said David McReynolds, a War Resisters League staffer since 1960. "We would have to live under someone else’s rule.”

The War Resisters League purchased the property in 1969. Earlier that year, unknown agents had broken into their office at 5 Beekman Street, stolen their membership list, and trashed the office equipment. Soon after, the landlord, concerned about the group’s radical politics, asked them to leave. At the time, 339 Lafayette was the largest space they could find for so little money: the building cost $80,000.

Built in 1922 by architect Louis A. Sheinart, the first floor of 339 Lafayette boasts four commercial storefronts, which provide most of the financial revenue for the building, while the top two floors contain offices. The structure is a simple loft-style manufacturing building with wraparound windows.

The building’s location soon became one of its major assets. Ruth Benn, a War Resisters League member since 1987, described how a Manhattan location with heavy pedestrian traffic is one of their most valuable recruiting methods. "You meet so many people who became involved with an organization because they walked down the block and happened to see (the building) and came in to see what was going on.”

For the past few months, a group of tenants, including two members of the A. J. Muste Memorial Institute board of directors, have been organizing to oppose the sale. The loose association goes by the name of Friends of 339 Lafayette and they hope to convince the board that they have a moral obligation to keep the building.

The coalition recently launched a website to publicize their efforts, and architects Maureen Shea and Nadini Bagchee are planning an architectural competition for later this year. They will be soliciting individual submissions for the design of a new building, with the plan of creating a permanent community center dedicated to peace. “We want to design a building that projects the message outward,” explained Shea, "and can be a comfortable, safe, sustainable home" for social activist organizations.
GREEN FIRMS SEE BRIGHT FUTURE IN DARK TIMES

WHAT RECESSION?

It may be a relief for consumers that energy prices have fallen in step with the wider markets, but cheap oil has many environmentalists worried that the hard fought gains of the recent “green revolution” could be erased. As companies and consumers alike feel the pinch, there have been reports that hybrid cars, LEED ratings and the like seem like luxuries no one can afford any longer. Fortunately for architects, people may be drawing the opposite conclusion.

“So far, we haven’t seen any slowdown,” Michelle Moore, senior vice president for policy and public affairs at the U.S. Green Building Council, said. “Our green buildings numbers are really strong, our membership numbers remain strong. In fact, we’re at record levels across the board, from registrations and certifications of projects to the number of people taking the LEED AP test.

They’re all way up.”

The council is not the only one continuing to see growth in the face of a cooling construction market. In interviews with a number of architecture, development, and construction principals, the story was the same: There is no turning back. In fact, sustainability might be the industry’s salvation.

“Just because the credit is hard to find, you’re not going to build a bad building,” developer Douglas Durst said. “You’re not going to leave out an efficient HVAC system or a co-gen elevator. You’re still going to build that in because that is now what the market demands.”

As the man who was a driving force in bringing sustainable design to the city’s office market at 4 Times Square, Durst should know. He said that in this day and age, all the top tenants demand green projects, a fact the banks know, making financing such projects easier, not harder. With credit so hard to come by, a few sustainable features or a LEED application may be the deciding factors on that eight-figure loan.

The same is true of housing, especially mixed-income and affordable housing projects. Jonathan Rose, president of the Jonathan Rose Companies, one of the city’s largest affordable housing developers, said that many financiers not only favor sustainable projects but often award more money to projects boasting green features. “Everyone’s looking for it, and they will continue to do so, no matter what,” he said.

Besides falling demand, the other complaint about green design is that it costs more, at least up front, an intolerable burden during a downturn. But just as demand has risen in recent years, so have costs fallen. “Green is still a good play, even in this market, because we have gotten the so-called cost burdens down to one or two percent, which is negligible,” said Michael Dean, chief sustainability officer at Turner Construction. Bruce Fowle, principal at FXFowle, said that a slowdown can give architects the time they need to devise new, cheaper, and smarter sustainable solutions that do not raise costs.

The one area where there could be some decline is on the bleeding edge of the industry, where cost still drives innovation.

“You might not see as many photovoltaics or integrated wind turbines or other bells and whistles,” Durst said, “but that doesn’t mean the projects will be any less green.”

He predicted any lag in technical development would last no longer than the recession itself, and might subside sooner.

One area where such high-level design could see a boost is from Washington.

President-elect Barack Obama trumpeted “green collar” jobs on the campaign trail as a way to revive the country’s moribund industrial sector, a commitment that could feed into more R&D for sustainable building technology and construction methods.

“You can’t outsource this stuff,” Dean said.

In many respects, the Feds have fallen behind state and local governments, which have begun to find creative ways to require projects, and particularly those drawing public money, to go green.

“New York, California, and Washington are among a number of states requiring all government buildings to achieve some level of green certification, usually LEED Silver,” Dean said.

New York City now makes the same requirement of any cultural institution using more than $2 million in city funds. Schools have also taken up the banner because of the desire to provide healthy environments for children.

Lately, the U.S. Green Building Council has put its weight behind rehabilitation work, something it sees as especially viable during a recession. “This is an incredible opportunity for the industry to turn its focus to existing buildings,” she said. “In any given year, new construction makes up only 10 percent of the overall building stock. But now, there will be fewer people building just as many people wanting sustainable living or working environments. We hope architects will respond accordingly.”

As they should, Rose said, since sustainable work can help insulate companies from future downturns. He cited the Vance Building, a green office renovation his firm has put its weight behind rehabilitation work, something it sees as especially viable during a recession. “This is an incredible opportunity for the industry to turn its focus to existing buildings,” she said. “In any given year, new construction makes up only 10 percent of the overall building stock. But now, there will be fewer people building just as many people wanting sustainable living or working environments. We hope architects will respond accordingly.”

As they should, Rose said, since sustainable work can help insulate companies from future downturns. He cited the Vance Building, a green office renovation his firm undertook in Seattle, which raised its occupancy rate from 68 to 96 percent, even with a significant rent increase.

Between traditional and sustainable work, architects involved with both said that those projects boasting green features seemed to be doing better at the moment. George Miller, president-elect for the AIA, said he had heard as much from a number of his colleagues; it is also the case at his firm, Pei Cobb Freed, where nearly every project has some sustainable feature. “Everyone’s looking for it, and they will continue to do so, no matter what,” he said.

And deep down, the name says it all. “One hopes this isn’t a movement tied to boom and bust,” said Colin Cathcart of Kiss-Cathcart, Architects. “One hopes that sustainability actually promotes sustainability.”
Through the building boom of the past few years, Tsao & McKown raced as hard as any to take on work at an accelerated rate. They designed a 500,000-square-foot mixed-use complex in downtown Singapore; a 51-story office tower in Quindao, China; and have been hired by not only one impresario developer, Andre Balazs, but Ian Schrager, as well.

But now Calvin Tsao is catching his breath and taking stock. “I’m relieved that the madness of the last few years is over,” said Tsao, who last year started to concentrate on a project worlds away, both literally and figuratively, from the Lamborghini-yellow Beaver House condo now under construction off Wall Street. “I am not interested in just making architecture faster and bigger,” he said.

Instead, he is in the early planning stages of an entire city located in the rural heartland of China, near Dujiangyan, about 40 miles northwest of Chengdu, in an area known as the cradle of Chinese civilization, where Confucianism was born.

Joined by a brother who is an entrepreneur with a philosophical bent and connections to Chinese governmental agencies and ministries, Tsao aims to bring public as well as private interests together, creating a community with enough economic backbone to support itself. “I don’t want buildings without a purpose,” said Tsao, who has formed a joint partnership with the Ministry of Culture to develop a community prototype for the 250-acre site.

New towns are not a new idea, of course, whether they spring up from reclaimed land in the Netherlands or from corporations like Disney, who built Celebration in Florida. Most recently, the economic boom in China has turned the vast countryside into many a developer’s favorite blank slate. But Tsao is wary of the kind of aloof cities that turn out to be little more than gated luxury residential communities. “I am not interested in being a stylist-for-hire, designing 15,000-square-foot houses.”

With his utopian dreams checked by practical logistics, Tsao is focusing on a development, known as Xiqu, built around a new learning, conference, culinary, and wellness center (historically, the area is a well-known source of medicinal herbs), with an arts community à la Yaddo added for cultural heft. Medium-to high-density, low-rise housing will also be a component. With a plan to engage community input to a degree rarely, if ever, seen in China, Tsao figures that it will be at least two years before construction begins, and at least 15 years before Xiqu is fully realized.

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Although Le Corbusier believed in hanging gardens for "reasons of comfort, sentiment, technique, and economy," the consensus for much of the last 80 years, sadly, has been that terraced rooftops were neither so economical nor so technically feasible. That consensus, however, is changing. With the accelerating enthusiasm for environmentally sound design, architects are turning their eyes upward. While green roofs are hardly widespread enough to measure their impact on an urban scale, it is already evident that a top layer of greenery can add energy savings along with aesthetic appeal to individual buildings. Thanks to recent advances in building technology, green roofs are proving as practical as they are attractive, as borne out by a brace of new projects in New York City.

The centerpiece of a $1 billion capital expansion, the proposed new Science Building for CUNY's Lehman College in the Bronx will have a green roof that does double duty. Architects Perkins+Will intend to perch a greenhouse atop the L-shaped facility covering 50 percent of the roof's surface, lining the remainder in solar thermal panels and a white Pyramic "cool roof" coating. "Plant science is a part of the school's research," explained Tony Alfieri, an associate principal at Perkins+Will, "and obviously the roof has the best exposure to the sun—so the green roof emerged out of the program." But it was a programmatic feature that dovetailed perfectly with the goal of energy efficiency. Since roofs tend to leak substantial quantities of heat during the colder months, the Science Building's greenhouse will act as an additional layer of insulation over much of the structure. The greenhouse itself, designed in consultation with the Ohio firm of Rough Brothers, will feature acrylic glazing rather than glass, allowing further gains in heat conservation. Meanwhile the solar thermal panels are expected to provide for as much as five percent of the building's energy needs, a big help in Perkins+Will's quest for LEED Gold certification. But for Alfieri, the roof's greatest contribution is that there isn't much of it. "We made the building footprint, and the roof, occupy as small a percentage of the site as possible," leaving the grounds around it open for cultivation as an "urban wetland."

In Manhattan's Morningside Heights, Murphy Burnham & Buttrick have topped their renovation of St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's private school with another greenhouse, this one less LEED feature than learning.
The ongoing refurbishment, underway for the last eight years, has been eco-minded from the start, incorporating reused and recycled building materials; but principal Mary Burnham puts this in the context, not just of the present green phenomenon, but of the school’s mission: “The sustainability aspect has become an educational tool. The greenhouse is the latest effort to create spaces that nurture an understanding of the environment.” Studying plant life in this simple, sunlit conservatory, featuring low-maintenance finishes and non-toxic materials, the children will develop a rapport with the natural world that will prepare them for the responsibility of environmental stewardship.

Innovation and collaboration are the hallmarks of Rafael Viñoly Architecture’s Adlai Stevenson High School. A coalition including the School Construction Authority, the nonprofit Salvadori Center, and New Visions for Public Schools have singled out the South Bronx school for an ambitious experiment in green design. A lightweight, modular roofing system devised by engineer/architect Joe Hagerman will be filled with the Gaia Institute’s GaiaSoil planting matrix. Hagerman’s invention is simple in section, but padded out with enough insulation to ensure water retention for the plant beds above while providing energy savings for the building below. A planting scheme from the City of New York’s Greenbelt Native Plant Center will stress local flora, as well as provide areas for student and teacher research. Viñoly and Hagerman have worked together in the past; but what makes the Stevenson project stand head and shoulders above previous green roofs is its sheer scale: at 70,000 square feet, it’s sure to make a mark, putting paid to all the barren flat roofs of architecture past and giving a touch of color to New York’s long-neglected roofscape.

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The architect Ricardo Porro was a supporter of the Cuban Revolution, and in the movement’s early days, designed the National Art Schools in Havana, which have come to be regarded as an extraordinary example of Cuban modernism. After leaving the country for exile in France, he set up an office in Paris, where he practices to this day with partner Renaud de la Noue. The 83-year-old recently spoke at the New York Institute of Technology, and AN asked the architect Belmont Freeman to sit down with Porro to talk about his work.

Belmont Freeman: You achieved a revolutionary Cubanismo—an expression of Cuban identity—at the National Art Schools. Do you think that national identity in architecture is still relevant or even achievable, when society is so globalized?

Ricardo Porro: I think so, and that you can find it in a very clear way. Take, for example, New York: There is nothing more American than New York. For me, an image of New York would be a graphic of the price of the land: Areas with higher prices have higher buildings, and the lower the price, the lower the building. This capitalist economy has created a masterpiece. New York is a city of cathedrals.

We see the spiking of real estate prices and towers all over the world now: Hong Kong, Dubai, and places like that. It looks like a scorpion going into the sea, and on the other side, the entrance is like an explosion, and the upper part is also like that, while the rest is very straight, very hard. I wanted to put myself in the spirit of Spain. I took Picasso’s Guernica as a model. With its sense of destruction, and tried to make a building. It has legs like a scorpion going into the sea, and from time to time, we put the world in a very bad situation. In my case, I had nothing to do in Cuba, and had a European education, so I decided to go back to France.

Back to the National Art Schools, and your work there, which was so heroic. Most people would agree it is the quintessential monument to the early optimism of the Revolution. It’s fortunate that you did your work on that building so fast, because it didn’t take long—between 1959 and 1964—for Castro’s government’s attitude toward architecture to turn so diametrically. Can you tell us what happened, and why it was so severe that it compelled you and your Elena to leave your country?

Simply, I did my best to make beautiful architecture, but suddenly, I realized that I was living in a world of Kafka. I was judged and condemned but didn’t know it; I felt it. My life became more and more difficult, not in the economic sense, because nobody touched my salary, but I felt that I was condemned not to do more architecture, to be forgotten. And so I decided to leave.

So it was more implicit, that your opportunities were closing?

It was more than that: Intellectuals are, in general, very naive. We think that we can change the world very easily and arrive at a sort of utopia. We never arrive, and from time to time, we put the world in a very bad situation. In my case, I had nothing to do in Cuba, and had a European education, so I decided to go back to France.

So it was more than concerns about your architecture and architectural expression—you had soured on the way the Revolution was going in general in Cuba?

I don’t like dictatorships. I couldn’t live in one. I have become very conventional, and I think the only system I like is the one I live under in France. I voted for Sarkozy—I like him very much! The sense that I can put him out in the wastebasket is magnificent! But I’m not putting him there yet, he is very intelligent, and I only vote now to make a present of my life to a politician.

One of my favorite projects of yours is a competition for a building in San Sebastian, Spain, which is stunning. That was 1963, and it looks like it could have been from 1933. With its jagged forms, it is like deconstructivism avant la lettre.

It’s very funny when you play with meanings. There are two elements in Freudian thought that are essential, eros and thanatos. I tried to play with thanatos, because in Spain, death is a constant. You find this sense of death in El Greco, in Goya, and in the Romanesque cathedrals.

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You have built a singular body of work that many critics would put in the category of an alternative modernism. I see that even in your early work in Havana in the 1950s—when others were doing buildings in the more orthodox Bauhaus tradition, your work had remarkable plastic and sculptural qualities. Where did that come from?

When I was very young, I read a book by Paul Valery, Eupalinos, or the Architect. It is a platonistic intellectual element of Charles Dickens. China has wanted China to grow up, so Deng Xiaoping decided that he wanted China to grow up, so he went back to the capitalism of Charles Dickens. China has become the England of the 19th century! It’s getting rich as England did, with a lot of people who are very poor. But who can exile tragedy from the world? No one. Tragedy exists everywhere.

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dialogue describing Eupalinos, who made a temple as an image of a girl he met in Corinth. He transmuted her forms in mathematics and architecture. I was very young when I read this, and was astonished to imagine that a building could be a woman. But I forgot it. The first building I did in Havana was the School of Plastic Art in which I made something feminine, a Gaia. Many years later in Paris in a used-book stall by the Seine, I found the book and bought it. I then understood that the book had passed through my unconscious. It was so important that it created all of my aesthetics.

Did that inform your notion of content in architecture? For most people, the idea of architecture having a content or representation in any way is alien. We think of it as an abstract art.

In any work of art, there are two elements: form and content. You take a work by Titian: You have content, and the forms that express that content. In architecture it is exactly the same. You can’t understand Chartres if you don’t read its contents. How do you make an architecture that has content and that special vibration that creates a work of art?

You also mentioned that you like dirty architecture. I am tired of architecture that gives you a sense of cleanliness, the sense that you must keep everything exactly in its place. I like it when it becomes dirty, as cathedrals are dirty, or a city like Istanbul.

Mies van der Rohe is very clean, and I like him very much, but I don’t do that! I like architecture with the sensation that centuries can pass by and leave their trace.

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Mies van der Rohe is very clean, and I like him very much, but I don’t do that! I like architecture with the sensation that centuries can pass by and leave their trace.
Much of Stephan Jaklitsch’s practice has revolved around one very high-profile client, the fashion designer Marc Jacobs. Even as Jacobs continues to rise in the fashion world, Jaklitsch—who continues to design all of the brand’s new stores, including its first free-standing building in Tokyo—is stepping out of Jacobs’ shadow. The 18-person firm, appropriately located in the garment district, is opening a satellite office in Tokyo, from which they will pursue work in Asia. The firm’s residential and retail practices are both growing, and Jaklitsch has aspirations for a greater role in the public realm.

Unlike other luxury brands that have commissioned internationally known architects, Jacobs has pursued a more low-key approach for its retail environments, an approach developed almost entirely by Jaklitsch. An alumnus of Steven Harris Architects, Jaklitsch speaks softly, both in person and in his architecture. “Someone once said of my work, ‘the more you look, the more you see,’ which I thought was a great complement,” Jaklitsch said. The Jacobs retail aesthetic, if there is such a thing, is spare and light-filled without being severely minimalist. “Loft-like” is the term he uses to describe his original stores, though many of the label’s newer boutiques are somewhat more private and luxurious, while the mass-market line retains the loft-like sensibility.

Jaklitsch recently began working with another iconic—at least for New Yorkers—brand, Sol Moscot optometrists. For the hundred-year-old family firm, Jaklitsch reinterpreted the company’s familiar logo and incorporated textures of exposed brick and dark wood into the renovation, while keeping a clear eye on the firm’s history. This contextual approach is also apparent in a recently completed house expansion in Provincetown, which has a landmark 19th-century street front and a contemporary seaside facade.

Bike racks are a far cry from high-end boutiques, but Jaklitsch and his colleagues were nonetheless eager to enter the City Racks competition, and were ultimately named one of five finalists. “It appealed to us as a design problem, since a lot of us bike,” said Mark Gardner, the firm’s senior associate. “The existing U-rack is a little chunky,” Jaklitsch added. The five prototypes have been placed around the city, and thus far the firm’s slim but sturdy design has fared well, exposed to the elements and abuse from the streets. ALAN G. BRAKE
1 COLUMBIA COUNTY RESIDENCE
UPSTATE NEW YORK

Built on the foundation of a 1970s kit log cabin, this low-slung house is designed to largely disappear into the landscape. The architects retained the stone foundation of the old cabin as an outdoor room, which is filled with a small reflecting pool, creating a quiet, meditative space. The 1,800-square-foot, two-bedroom house reflects the firm’s commitment to careful site work, and their intent to making something interesting out of ordinary and found conditions.

2 CITY RACKS
NEW YORK

Using metal from crushed cars, the architects designed a slim new bike rack, which they hope will add to the city’s spiffed up streetscapes. “We felt there was something poetic about using metal recycled from cars,” Gardner said. “We want it to be a sculptural piece of street furniture.” Prototypes of the designs are being tested at Astor Place and at PS. 1. The other finalists are Andrew Lang and Harry Dobbs, Baroni/Valeri/i Architecture, Ian Mahaffy and Maarten De Groot, Federico Otero, FADarch, Jill Miller and Andrea Ruggiero, Next Phase Studio, and Open Thread Design.

3 MARC JACOBS PARIS
PARIS, FRANCE

Located in the Palais Royale, one of the most sought-after retail locations in Paris, the Marc Jacobs collection store sets a new standard for the landmark building. Jaklitsch’s firm worked with the Ministry of Culture to create new storefronts for the building, which will be used as new tenants come into the location. The interior is luxurious and understated, and has a vaulted ceiling with casework designed by Jaklitsch and furniture by Christian Liaigre.

4 SOL MOSCOT
NEW YORK

The massive orange-and-black sign with old-fashioned eyeglasses on Delancey Street at Orchard Street is a highly recognizable image of the Sol Moscot company, the hundred-year-old optometrist and eyewear retailer. “They have a very long history, so that became the context on which we built,” said Jaklitsch. The architects found stacks of wooden crates that once held figs which the company had been using to store glasses. The crates became the model for shelving at the store on 14th Street and 6th Avenue, and the architects created new wallpaper featuring a logo made from the company’s old business cards.

5 PROVINCETOWN RESIDENCE
PROVINCETOWN, MA

Like much of Provincetown, Massachusetts, the street-facing facade of this 19th-century house could not be altered. When the crews began working on the foundation, however, they realized the house could not be saved, so the architects replicated the elevation exactly while more than doubling the building’s total size with a contemporary sea-front addition. The water-facing side has massive picture windows, so that “you feel like you’re floating in the water during high tide,” Jaklitsch said.
When you are a design critic and a new parent, your first encounter with much of baby-world leads to many questions. Why does every toy come in three primary colors, rather than a single hue? Why so bulbous? Why does it need to light up and sing “Old McDonald”? My first encounter with the expanded Brooklyn Children’s Museum (BCM), which reopened in Crown Heights this September, raised similar questions—and some of the same fears of being a spoilsport.

Rafael Viñoly Architects (RVA) took a 1977 Hardy Holtzman Pfeiffer building that housed the 109-year-old museum (the country’s first expressly designed for kids) on two underground levels, and wrapped it in a two-story yellow-tile shell, almost doubling its size to 104,000 square feet. That shell is a hovering, L-shaped form that seems intended to evoke many metaphors and cute nicknames from kids, but all it suggested to me was Jell-O. The $49 million new building’s slight exterior curves and its relentlessly artificial hue, augmented by supporting single-story steel boxes in red and green and brown, seem to be derived from the language of Toys ‘R Us, not the natural world.

Which is to say, the BCM looks fun, it looks new, and it looks like it is for kids, so while I might wish for something more, symbolically, RVA has ably done its job in repositioning the museum for the current repopulation of Brooklyn by babies. While the color and shape are wildly out of context in a neighborhood of gorgeous townhouses, the museum lies low, its roofline just under the cornices of the houses across the street, just above the rise of historic Brower Park with which it shares the block, and so is a model contemporary...
we visited were Collections Central, exhibitions. (The two shows when a not-yet-completed exhibition a long staircase takes you up to the carpeted tubes for 45 minutes) or water table and crawled through 13-month-old happily played at the leads to “Totally Tots” (where my rubber-floored lobby, walking inside and into a gray recycled-and the green box (the coat check). (which houses the museum shop) and the green box (the coat check).

To enter, you follow the yellow inside and into a gray recycled-rubber-floored lobby, walking out from under the overhang into a top-lit hallway that branches at 90 degrees. The hall to the left leads to “Totally Tots” (where my 13-month-old happily played at the water table and crawled through carpeted tubes for 45 minutes) or a long staircase takes you up to the cafe; the one to the right leads to a not-yet-completed exhibition space, the stairs up to changing exhibitions. (The two shows when we visited were Collections Central, showcasing craft objects, and Living in Space, aimed at older kids.) Before you is the low, dark expanse of the museum’s previous one-story building and a promenade of sorts: the “People Tube,” which houses a flume of water running alongside a ramp. This waterway should be the museum’s spine, and it does branch at intervals into the museum’s two permanent exhibits—World Brooklyn (culture) on the left, Neighborhood Nature on the right—but it nonetheless fails to organize the big box space at several levels. Inside, it is very dark, making it hard to engage with the flume, which is not marked by explanatory plaques. In photographs, the interior is lined with rainbow neon at intervals, but none of these tubes were lit the busy Sunday I visited. The introductions to the exhibits on either side are outside the tube (where you can descend using stairs), making you feel as if you are entering in the middle if you follow its lead. A kid certainly wouldn’t care, but a completist parent might. And the end of the spine, which in an adult museum would surely end in something glorious, dumps you into a “sand” pit in which children can plant plastic “vegetables.” The museum’s greenhouse and garden are right next door, and it is a shame the renovation couldn’t reposition one or both as the culmination of the downward journey.

There’s an ongoing tension in the exhibits, too, between the real and ersatz. There was plenty of plastic lettuce and stuffed fish, but only in a few cases were there real, living, moving critters to see or touch. Everywhere you looked, there was another little table, a computer-screen, a glass case, without a real sense of progression or even labelling about which activities were appropriate for which age group. To me it felt cacophonous visually, educationally, and sonically.

The exhibit World Brooklyn lines up businesses based on real shops, showcasing Brooklyn’s many immigrant groups—a Caribbean costume shop, an Italian pizzeria, a Mexican bakery. The children seemed thrilled to pile felt mushrooms on a fabric pizza and bus it to a set of cafe tables on a tray, but it’s hard not to feel that the “storefronts” are bland boxes painted spicy colors, less culturally evocative than the real stores they represent. That said, the kids were having a great time running the cash registers, stamping Ghanaian motifs, trying on sparkly headbands. It’s ugly, but it’s fun. Upstairs, where the new yellow box might have provided more framework, the exterior’s curves are regularized inside into a flat sheetrock wall. The portholes turn out not to correspond to any interior program, and are not exploited as an element to explore. In the cafe, for example, a set of coffee urns blocks a hole just the right height for a three-year-old. The windows are just another piece of infrastructural flotsam on a double-height undecorated wall, seeming like afterthoughts.

The cafe, at least, has windows out to the plaza on top of the lower exhibition level. This wasn’t open, but stadium seating was wrapped on an expanse of patterned concrete. Given the museum’s new sustainability agenda (they are seeking LEED certification), this would seem to be the perfect place for an instructional green roof. The library, in the yellow volume’s front corner, has no such view. It is neither cozy, with a rubber floor and gray walls, nor airy, deadened by the lack of exterior windows. Couldn’t the portholes have opened wider here, at least on the inside, and their deep channels have been painted a color? The aridity of both library and cafe makes me suspect that the yellow box was designed without program, and thus doomed to be billboard on the outside and backdrop within. Classrooms and bathrooms are put in boxes along the upstairs halls that only take up half its height; above these the steel underside of the roof is exposed, sprayed with lumpy gray fireproofing. Budget restrictions are to be expected on a city- and state-funded project, but the mismatch of architectural ambition on the interior and exterior was deeply disappointing. It felt as if the museum had all this new space, but not enough stuff to fill it, and that the architects had checked out after the lobby.

I didn’t find answers to my snobbish questions at the BCM, though the organizational flaws inside the museum softened my stance toward its blobby and multi-colored exterior. At least that has a strong idea, a contemporary form, and looks exactly like what it is. I wish the exhibitions could have been devised—by architects, curators, or exhibition designers—with a similar clarity and boldness. Surely children don’t have to be overwhelmed and disoriented to have fun.

ALEXANDRA LANGE IS AN ARCHITECTURE CRITIC WHO CONTRIBUTES REGULARLY TO A.N.
The Holcim Awards is an international competition held by the Swiss-based Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction, run in cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), Switzerland; Tongji University, China; Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico; and the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Recognizing innovative, future-oriented and tangible sustainable construction projects, as well as contributions to sustainable construction in architecture, landscape and urban design, civil and mechanical engineering, and related disciplines, the foundation provides $2 million in prize money per three-year competition cycle for projects in five regions: Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa Middle East, and Asia Pacific.

This year’s winners of the second North American Holcim Awards competition for sustainable construction projects were announced at a ceremony in Montreal last month. Competition submissions for projects were evaluated by an independent jury hosted by MIT, chaired by Adèle Naudé Santos, and comprised of Philippe Arto, Ray Cole, Sarah Graham, Reed Kroloff, Mohsen Mostafavi, Hans-Rudolf Schalcher, Marion Weiss, and Mark West. A total of $270,000 was presented to nine projects from Canada and the United States that demonstrate the most recent approaches to addressing critical topics in sustainable design, including housing affordability, employment, renewable energy, and water efficiency.

The Gold Award, with a prize of $100,000, was given to Christopher J. Collins, executive director of Solar One Green Energy Arts and Education Center, and Colin Cathcart of Kiss + Cathcart, Architects in Brooklyn for New York City’s first carbon-neutral building: Solar 2 Green Energy, Arts and Education Center. The Silver Award, which comes with a $50,000 prize, was awarded to Liz Ogbu and John Peterson of Public Architecture for a proposed self-contained day labor station in San Francisco. The Bronze Award and $25,000 went to John Gunn of Laurentian University; Peter Busby of Busby Perkins+Will; and Jeffery Labarge of J. L. Richards & Associates for Living with Lakes Center for freshwater restoration and research in Sudbury, Canada.

Holcim Award Acknowledgement Prizes were given to: David Stonehouse for Evergreen Brick Works heritage site revitalization in Toronto; Ron Kato, Larry McFarland, and Craig Duffield of Larry McFarland Architects in Vancouver, Canada for Minimal-Impact North Vancouver Outdoor School; and Stéphane Orsolini and Erika Mayr of Berlin for their strategy for environmentally-friendly integration of beehives in Detroit.

The awards also included a Next Generation competition for architects younger than 35 years old, showcasing projects at an advanced stage of design with a high probability of execution. MIT architect Neri Oxman and University of Michigan engineer John Hart were awarded the 1st prize for their visionary building skin research using carbon nanotubes to develop materials that can be assigned specific structural, functional, and environmental properties, entitled “Construction in vivo: Microstructure research for building skins.” The 2nd prize was awarded to Chenglong Wang and Liu Lingchen of Beijing, for their study on residential density for urban spaces in Toronto. Andrew Edward Lantz, a student at Harvard GSD, received the 3rd prize for his responsive urban downtown activity center in Boston. DR

1 Solar One Green Energy, Arts and Education Center, New York, NY
2 Living with Lakes Center for freshwater restoration and research, Sudbury, Canada
3 Evergreen Brickworks heritage site revitalization, Toronto, Canada.
4 Self-contained day labor station, San Francisco, CA
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Look for the RED button
United States Artists (USA), the national artists’ advocacy organization, announced the recipients of 50 USA Fellowships for 2008. A $50,000 award was granted to each of the artists selected from fields of design, literature, media, and the performing and visual arts. The artists were honored November 10, in a celebration at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

The USA Target Fellows for 2008 for Architecture and Design were: Julie Bargmann, Stephen Burks, Douglas Garofalo, J. Meejin Yoon, and Andrew Zago.

Julie Bargmann is known for her work in building regenerative landscapes on derelict sites, restoring the sites so that they heal themselves, producing clean air, water, and soil while retaining visual links to their industrial pasts. Bargmann is the founding principal of D.I.R.T. in Charlottesville, Virginia. Industrial designer Stephen Burks founded Readymade Projects in 1997, and his portfolio includes designs for Boffi, Calvin Klein, Cappellini, Estee Lauder, and Missoni. Douglas Garofalo’s architectural practice was established in Chicago in 1988. He is currently working on plans for Chicago’s Olympic Village, and is known for his experimental early work like the New York Presbyterian Church (with Greg Lynn and Michael McInturf) in Long Island City. J. Meejin Yoon founded MY Studio, from which she creates solo conceptual work as an architect and designer, intersecting art, architecture, and landscape, and cofounded Höweler + Yoon Architecture. Andrew Zago formed Zago Architecture in 1992. He was the founding director of the M.Arch program at City College, but has recently returned to practice in his native Detroit.

1 Douglas Garofalo, house in Green Bay, WI, 2002
2 Stephen Burks, Cappellini Love Table, 2008
3 J. Meejin Yoon, White Noise, White Light, 2004
4 Andrew Zago, Greening of Detroit pavilion, Detroit, MI, 2001
5 Julie Bargmann, Reclaiming the Highline, 2005
WHETHER MADE WITH A TRADITIONAL RATTAN OR ECO-RESIN, CHAIRS THAT ARE AS SMART SUSTAINABILITY-WISE AS THEY ARE TO LOOK AT HAVE BECOME A MATTER OF COURSE.

SECOND NATURE

1. CLUB CHAIR AND OTTOMAN
ANIMAVI
Venice, California-based contemporary furniture design firm Animavi’s Club Chair and Ottoman unites artisan-quality craftsmanship with eco-intelligent design. Comprised of ergonomically contoured surfaces and premium-grade sustainable components and materials, this sleekly styled set comes with a light carbon footprint. A hand-finished steel frame with clear powder coat finish gently cradles a 3form eco-resin internal shell covered with soy-based hybrid foam cushioning, made of a 100-percent-natural flame-retardant wool felt liner. It comes in hand-stitched GreenGuard–certified woven felted wool upholstery; hand-stitched, vegetable-tanned leather; or natural hair-on upholstery, based on individual preference.
www.animavi.com

2. TEVERE
HIDA SANGYO
Bringing its sustainable and eco-chic Japanese conceptual furniture collection to the United States, the HIDA collection, a partnership between Japan’s leading furniture atelier, Hida Sangyo, and Italian industrial designer Enzo Mari, is above all earth-friendly. Made from the finest Sugi wood, a sustainable material found exclusively in the Hida-Takayama region of Japan, Hida Sangyo developed a unique and innovative compression technology to increase the durability of the wood, making it soft and cushiony. The Tevere chair, made of compressed Sugi wood and steel, is designed to cradle a person’s body while maintaining maximum efficiency.
www.em-hida.jp

3. MYCHAIR
WALTER KNOLL
Inspired by his own personal ideology of space, Dutch architect Ben Van Berkel of UN Studio translates his idea of the “after image”—the capacity of three-dimensional objects to produce many different impressions when seen from different angles—to his intricate design and detailing of the MYchair. The multi-faceted arrangement of the soft and rounded curves of the chromed steel bar frame and the two-toned foam seat, upholstered with sustainable Trevira and Kvadrat fabrics, produce a rich and stimulating yet cohesive and balanced product. Through its name alone, the MYchair alludes to its potential to be appropriated, adapted, and customized.
www.unstudio.com

4. KANO CHAIR
FORD BRADY
Creatively integrating natural materials, traditional Thai design themes, and contemporary and often asymmetrical silhouettes, Thai designer Jitrin Jintaprecha, best known for his iFreeze chair, combines artistry with sustainability for his latest piece—the Kano Chair. Composed of Grade A rattan, the Kano Chair is woven together using a proprietary “seamless” technique that resembles the look and feel of expertly woven baskets. An additional cushion is available in custom fabrics.
www.fordbrady.com
STUCK OVER THE TRACKS
The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is notorious for delays on its trains and buses, but now it’s having problems filing paperwork on time, too. On November 3, the authority announced an agreement with the Related Companies to move back the deadline for signing a contract for the development rights to Hudson Yards by 90 days. The MTA partly blamed the global credit crunch, but not for the typical fiscal woes. No, the attorneys responsible for writing up the contract—Paul, Weiss—have been too busy sorting out buyouts and bailouts to finish drafting the documents. The authority stressed that the delay had nothing to do with Related’s financial wherewithal.

ROGERS GOES TERMINAL
As usual, the Port Authority is doing better than its beleaguered cousins at the MTA, who are also suffering from a $1.2 billion deficit that may mean an unexpected fare increase. Vornado Realty Trust—also in dire straits, like many REITs, having shed 50 percent of its stock value since September—struck a long-delayed deal with the authority in July to develop a 40-plus-story tower atop the authority’s West Side bus terminal. Proposals from Pelli Clarke Pelli, KPF, and Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners were unveiled at the time, but Vornado had until next August to decide. It took the company a quarter of that time to make its pick, according to The Architects’ Journal, which reported on November 5 that Lord Rogers had been selected.

RED LIGHT FOR GREEN CABS
Hailing a hybrid cab just got a bit harder. After more than 1,000 of the city’s cabs have been converted following a mandate from Mayor Michael Bloomberg last year, a federal judge ruled on November 1 that the city could not set fuel efficiency standards for cabs, which were to achieve at least 25 miles per gallon, with a bump up to 30 next year. Judge Paul Crotty said that standards are solely the provenance of federal agencies, meaning that the city’s remaining 12,000 can stay just as they are. The mayor has charged the Taxi and Limousine Commission with finding other ways to push hybrids on taxi owners and also said he would lobby Congress for a change. “The courts are not the only way we can reach our goal of a cleaner fleet of taxi cabs,” Bloomberg said. “Greening the taxi fleet is a major priority, and we are going to use every mechanism at our disposal to make New York a cleaner, healthier city.”

Located in the heart of the West Village on Bleecker Street, jewelry designer Alexis Bittar’s second showroom in New York City was inspired by her love of a Hitchcock classic, North by Northwest, 1959. Los Angeles–based designers MASH Studios used a monochromatic color scheme of various gray tones that allow the bold and colorful designs of Bittar’s jewelry to pop against the subtle background. To quietly reinforce the luxurious quality of Bittar’s brand, the materials are rich: Carrara marble floors, stained ash casework with upholstered interiors, antique mirrors, and gray silk wallpaper with hand-painted cherry blossoms. Another influence was 1940s New York City, so MASH Studios created a traditional West Village facade out of an ordinary aluminum storefront by adding wooden detailing.
A startling look at one of New York's often-told tales, Broken Glass: Photographs of the South Bronx by Ray Mortenson highlights the role of architecture as silent witness to ruin and resurrection. Taken between 1982 and 1984, the exhibition's 50 black-and-white cityscapes and interior views document abandoned, burnt-out, and rubble structures of the Bronx, a borough whose decline began with the economic crisis of the 1930s, accelerated with Robert Moses' construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway in the 1950s, and became a national symbol of urban failure in the 1970s. Ranging in size from 11-by-14 to 40-by-60 inches, each image implicitly recalls the thriving South Bronx of the past, as faded storefronts and vacant apartments make their inhabitants all the more conspicuous by their absence. A chair stands forlornly under peeling plaster; ranks of boarded-up windows stretch to the horizon. Such scenes contrast sharply with the affluent urban renewal that the very same neighborhoods have encountered in recent years, reminding us that a thin line separates prosperity from decay. As he has in his powerful photographs of industrial and natural landscapes, Mortenson lets the empty spaces speak for themselves.

FRANK O. GEHRY
DESIGN PROCESS AT THE LEWIS HOUSE
Philadelphia Museum of Art
26th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia
Through April 5, 2009

What began as a run-of-the-mill remodeling project for the Lyndhurst, Ohio home of arts patron Peter Lewis grew into a legendary opportunity for Frank Gehry to develop his trademark architectural style. Though never built, the Lewis House, a decade-long commission that began in 1985, was the preface and inspiration for some of Gehry's later work.

**FRANK O. GEHRY: A LEGENDARY OPPORTUNITY**

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"A 'vision' of the future," said The New York Times, "now an eyesore." That was the headline of a 1979 article about a decrepit housing project, "that seemed soon-to-be-demolished 1967 New Haven public housing project, "that seemed to have everything: daring design (an avant-garde prefab-unit stacking system), a prestigious architect (former Yale Architecture Department Chair Paul Rudolph), and the backing of HUD," the federal housing agency whose resources were expertly channeled to epochal urban renewal projects by then-mayor Richard C. Lee. This particular convergence of late-high-modernist formalism and a public policy that conflated urbanism with mere architectural patronage at a vast scale is the subject of Model City: Buildings and Projects by Paul Rudolph for Yale and New Haven, now at Yale's Architecture Gallery. The show documents 13 projects, including iconic work like the 1962 Temple Street parking garage and unpublished projects like a surprisingly Niemeyer-esque 1958 Church Street shopping center that Rudolph developed for Lee and Yale president A. Whitney Griswold. Curator Timothy M. Rowan, a University of Massachusetts architectural historian, has effectively organized the show around four successive themes: Critiquing Modernism, Monumental Urbanism, Prefabrication, and Denouement, that trace a story of rise and fall. Rudolph's original drawings—some familiar, some strange—are complemented by a lively archive of documents and ephemera, and crisp new models of lost or unbuilt works. But the show's larger topic is how to connect both halves of that Times headline: the vision and the eyesore. How to come to terms with Rudolph in all of his complexity and contradiction: ubiquitous and elusive, brutal and plush, infinitely universalizing and intricately idiosyncratic? How does today's architectural discourse assimilate Rudolph: once glorious, then deeply unfashionable, now ripe for his own renewal?

For David Greene, one of the founding members of architectural iconoclasts Archigram, the expression of ideas in print rather than in built form is a long tradition: His investigations have historically been rolling, incomplete experiments. His L.A.W.U.N (Locally Available World Unseen Networks) projects began in 1967 with The Bottery, a phenomenally prescient imagining of technologies we now take for granted. The present publication, L.A.W.U.N #19, revisits many of Greene's designs dating from the 1960s to projects of the present day. Born of Britain's postwar recovery and the reclamation of modernism by state-funded welfare programs (and arguably the one moment when the country was "groovy"), Archigram was both a group and a magazine. The product was a collision of words—architecture and telegram—and of several young London architects: Warren Chalk, Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron, and Michael Webb. The group used a unique and vivid graphic sensibility to proclaim their radically playful paper architecture, railing against the conservative environment of the era and excitedly exploring the freedom suggested by evolving technologies. Though Cook was the vocalist of the gang, Greene is often credited as being the poet and most visionary wayward of them all.

Since Archigram's eventual dissolution in the mid-1970s, Greene has, like the rest of the group, had a peripatetic teaching career. Currently first-year design tutor at London's Architectural Association (AA), he runs the master's program in advanced architectural design at Oxford Brookes University and pursues research at the aptly named Centre for Experimental Architecture (EXP) at the University of Westminster. L.A.W.U.N #19 emerged from a dialogue with Samantha Hardingham, an author and researcher.
Julia Christensen grew up in Bardstown, Kentucky, a town known for its bourbon whiskey and historic architecture. There, she saw Wal-Mart come to town, build and then abandon a big box store, which ended up as the site of the new county courthouse. A writer and photographer who teaches at Oberlin College, Christensen was inspired to visit and photograph other big boxes like Winn-Dixie and Kmart that have been repurposed. Her photographs are currently on view in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie Museum of Art, where her images are included in the show Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes.

In Big Box Reuse, Christensen highlights ten cases. The huge metal sheds have been converted to Head Start centers, senior care facilities, indoor go-kart tracks, and libraries. One houses a Route 66 Museum in Lebanon, Missouri, another the Spam Museum and library and museum in Missouri. Credit goes to Joan True and Charlie Johnson, the interior and exterior architects of that project. None are especially great or inspiring architecture, but several involve extensive refurbishing that nearly disguise their origins.

Christensen’s travels are proof, if we need it, that Stewart Brand’s How Buildings Learn belongs in the architectural canon alongside Delirious New York, Learning from Las Vegas, and Vera Uno Architecture. On the highway, however, reuse is more about earning than learning: Budgets are minimal and the repurposing work, it turns out, requires more than simply redecorating these giant sheds. But while we regularly honor architects for urban reuse, Christensen reports that several of the architects involved in projects were too embarrassed by the work to want their names used. Some of the facilities are grim, others less so, though none of the architects here are as sophisticated as James Wines and SITE’s witty Best Products stores from the 1970s. Still, real creativity is evident, for all the budget limits, in the library and museum in Missouri. Credit goes to Joan True and Charlie Johnson, the interior architect and former teaching colleague of the AA Design Research Lab and founder of mini-maforms took on one of Greene’s best known projects, the Living Pod textile sculptor Ronan Mersh produced the first-ever prototype of The Hairy Coat, extending Greene’s notion of a man who carries his architecture in his pocket. The accompanying exhibition also featured the work of architect and filmmaker Nic Clear, tackling Greene’s ongoing Invisible University project and the idea of education through wireless communication. The book’s real gold, however, is its reproduction of a back catalogue of Greene’s visionary projects, each accompanied by a commentary from the man himself, written especially for this book.

Parts of the text, including the chapter and project headings, can appear ponderous, even deliberately obtuse. This seems at odds with the playful and humorous renderings, naive models that would look at home in kindergarten and contrast with the über-bureaucratic categorizing of the projects they illustrate. Yet a little patience and vision are all it takes to get past initial cynicism: In his commentaries, Greene is candid and informal, explaining the origins and rationale of each project with insight and humility.

The book’s design is remarkable in its holistic aptness. The cover and binding are reminiscent of a “pitter,” or notebook, giving the impression of a loose collection of notes and works—exercises in progress. Inside, the pages are rich with 1960s ephemera, particularly ads for tools and gadgets that hint at Greene’s predilection for mechanics. Following Marshall McLuhan’s statement that “Culture is what most people are doing most of the time,” Greene’s deliberate inclusion of graphic ephemera is an attempt to evoke the climate in which his ideas and approach gestated; reprints of Archigram’s output reveal visual crosscurrents between pop culture, the group, and Greene’s own investigations. Several illuminating essays have been printed using an experimental process, in which shades of ink were varied and modulated during printing, creating a unique gradation on each imprint. This adds up to a lurid joyride through Greene’s mind, which is always retracing from conventional notions of form and moving ever more toward “ideas about ideas.”

The book provides proof that the building inside these modern “ruins.” Readers may be surprised to learn that up to this point growth, not recession, has made most of these buildings available. Wal-Mart finds it more economical to build a new, larger store down the road than to expand an existing one, leaving empty stores behind like so much discarded snakeskin. Moreover, the chain wants to keep the empty stores as placeholders against competitors, Christensen reports.

It would be easy to react to her stories with anger and indignation at the power of chains that have decimated Main Streets (reuse is struggling there), and bemoan a country where the shivering, starving public sector is forced to wear the cast-off clothing of an uncontrolled private one. Christensen, however, is more encouraged by this process than others might be, although some of the statements from officials involved in these projects seem naïvely optimistic, even boosterish. I wonder how many other efforts to reuse other big box buildings have been in vain; most of her tales have upbeat endings.

Still, Christensen’s enthusiasm is an antidote to cynicism, encouraging and humane. “As I stand there in the parking lot,” she writes, “snapping photos of that reused Wal-Mart sign, I look around and observe an endless ribbon of strip malls, full of buildings just like this. I think to myself, they have stories too. All of these faceless, nameless, corporate big box buildings—which turn over so quickly for the sake of ‘business’—actually have stories behind them, stories well hidden behind their stoic facades. These buildings have an impact on the lives of people.”

PHIL PATTON WRITES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, I.D., AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.
ALL RUDOLPH continued from page 29 as Postmodernism in architecture: his successor as Yale architecture chair Charles Moore, and his one-time assistant for a master class on precast concrete, Robert Venturi. Once installed in the 1958–63 Arts and Architecture (A+A) Building that Rudolph had designed for Yale, they nibbled away at its conceptual foundations. Moore told the Yale Daily News on his arrival in 1965: “I disapprove of the A+A Building whole-heartedly because it is such a personal manifestation for non-personal use.” All architects develop personal formal languages in service or search of universal applications or ideals, but Rudolph’s Brutalist counter-vernacular (and Borrominian eagerness to use, say, 37 different levels when two would do) seemed to expose him especially to this critique.

Then, of course, there was the fire. The 1969 blaze that destroyed three floors of the A+A Building (and inaugurated three decades of benign neglect and unsympathetic renovations) might be seen as a miniature of the 1967 riots and fires in New Haven and elsewhere that revealed the fissures of race and class and culture that the “Model City” urban renewal projects of the time had elided. The notion that the fire might have had something to do with students disgruntled as much by the building as by the institution it embodied—enhanced by foreshadowing in a student broadsheet that read, “See the A+A Building. See every building. See them soon...”—gave a ghoulishly populist tinge to the spectacle of a difficult-to-use building being slowly undone. Along with it went the reputation of its creator.

Today’s A+A Building has been lovingly restored and refined, with post-fire accretions erased, as part of a reconstruction with a new adjacent building that houses the History of Art department, just completed by Gwathmey Siegel. The building is freshly legible, and to examine Rudolph’s languid graphite studies and ruthless ink perspectives while standing within the very atrium they depict is a particular pleasure. And yet is it possible that all those erased accretions, while undeniably resisting and obscuring the original structure, were in their rough, fussy, melancholy way actually sympathetic to its sublime spirit? The new building—and the small interventions inserted into the old—uses a familiar contemporary vocabulary of terrazzo and pale wood, stainless and powder-coated steel, drywall, baseboards, and aluminum storefront extrusions. The ceilings are never too low or too high. Everything is efficient, economical, tasteful, cheerful, clean, comfortable, and ultimately—in contrast to the willful complexity, spirited melancholy, and inventive audacity to be found next door—just a little heartbreaking. It may be that after today’s era of caution and credit-freeze, yesterday’s eyesore will be tomorrow’s sight for sore eyes. THOMAS DE MONCHAUX IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.

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In Orange County, the car-centric heart of the American dream, New York landscape architect Ken Smith is creating a complex, urban-scale public space that promotes ecological and social sustainability.

GREENING THE O.C.

Carving a two-mile-long canyon through the heart of Southern California might seem like apostasy in this age of low-impact land use. But the Orange County Great Park is no ordinary place. To build this winding canyon, excavating machines will move over five million cubic yards of earth to create a sluice of space up to 60 feet deep, with selective cuts framing views of the Santa Ana Mountains, all culminating in a new, 26-acre lake.

“The canyon is at once obvious and also unexpected,” said Ken Smith, principal of Ken Smith Landscape Architect, which won a competition in 2006 to become master designer for the 1,347-acre park. “The whole natural landscape in Southern California is composed of canyons. But this site is so flat and barren, the idea to create a feature of this scale is not something people had really thought of.” Moreover, the canyon proved a logical design move because it could be built fairly easily in a region where grading golf fairways is second nature to contractors. Besides restoring fast-depleting natural habitat, the space is so large that it will create its own microclimate: a cool respite for park visitors. As Smith observed, “It’s a big canvas.”
At almost twice the size of New York’s Central Park, the Great Park will be the core of a 4,700-acre community built virtually from scratch on the site of the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in Irvine, California. As the heart of this new chunk of Orange County, the park represents a complex and interlocking model of sustainable development for Southern California and beyond, where once-open vistas have been boxed in by suburban growth. Taking a macro-scale approach, the park will restore critical native plant and animal communities. By integrating with the densifying neighborhoods around it, the park promotes a walkable lifestyle in the land of sprawl. And it brings together diverse user groups to create for the county a sorely needed cultural heart.

The Great Park is an unusual partnership between the federal government, a private developer, and the city of Irvine. Following the air base’s closure in 1999, a voter initiative called for a park and nature preserve on the site. The entire property was purchased at auction by Miami-based developer Lennar Corporation, which transferred the Great Park parcel to the city of Irvine. The park is operated by a nonprofit corporation, whose directors consist largely of elected officials from the city of Irvine, along with other local stakeholders.

Now in the schematic design phase, the park’s parameters were laid out by Irvine planners, who set it upon a bare expanse of earth and concrete. “It came with quite a bit of the brownfields as well,” Smith said. Those include a chemical plume reaching 200 feet down into groundwater, which the U.S. Navy is obliged to clean up. As part of its development agreement, Lennar has put $400 million toward the park and related infrastructure, while another share of the park’s estimated $1.5 billion budget is expected to come from tax-increment bonding, as adjacent property values rise.

From the outset, Smith and his partners—including Los Angeles-based landscape architect Mia Lehrer and Enrique Norten of TEN Arquitectos—conceived of the park as a showplace of sustainability. The site’s environmental backbone is a series of ecological restorations that will renew the region’s vanishing natural diversity. Among the first sections to be built is a two-mile-long wildlife corridor: a missing link in a stretch of land reserves said to be the largest interconnected open space system in the country.

“It’s rare that an ecologist is asked to sit at the table when the basic ground plan is being determined,” said Steven Handel, president of New Jersey–based Green Shield Ecology, who has been part of the design team from the outset. “A lot of the basic plan grew out of ecological principles, not just design decisions.” The wildlife zone has been detailed to create habitats for birds, bobcats, and even a pack of coyotes, down to supplying rocks so the lizards have a place to warm up in the morning. “I’m rebuilding a whole world out of nothing,” Handel said.

Other worlds will be built here, too. “The most visited sites for people who live in Orange County are the shopping centers and the beaches,” said Lehrer, senior partner at Mia Lehrer+Associates. “There’s a real void in terms of a cultural center.” Institutions will cluster in the park’s “cultural terrace,” where buildings are being designed by TEN Arquitectos as earth-bermed structures cut into the canyon. Park leaders are evaluating a variety of programs—an amphitheater, museums, a public library—many of which are expected to be public-private partnerships.

continued on page 35
When 4 Times Square was completed in 1999, the project was touted as the harbinger of a new era of environmental responsibility in the design of tall buildings. But for a while longer, skyscrapers in New York City continued to be designed and constructed in more or less the traditional manner. The games of one-upmanship that would have indicated a dedicated consensus of green builders did not immediately materialize. “When we built 4 Times Square, we were creating a template of a way of building that people would have to follow,” Douglas Durst, president of The Durst Organization, developer of 4 Times Square, told AN. “Not many people did. It takes a while to see how successful and adaptable it is, for it to spread to other people’s projects.” It took some time for the benefits of green design for tall buildings to be better understood, for the industry to accumulate hard data linking healthy, daylight-filled offices to higher worker productivity, and greater energy efficiency to lower electricity bills. But the green building boom didn’t begin in earnest until developers realized that they could charge higher rents for spaces that adhered to greater levels of sustainability. The trend first became apparent in the city when Larry Silverstein decided to seek LEED Gold for 7 World Trade Center, and Hearst did the same for its new tower. “It was disappointing that it took so long, but a lot of people in the industry thought it was a quacky idea,” said Bruce Fowle, partner of FXFowle, designer of 4 Times Square. “Now it’s a marketing tool.” The change in attitude can be seen quite clearly in the example of the New York Times Building. While the project took great strides in energy efficiency and usage of daylight, Forest City Ratner and the New York Times Company opted not to pursue LEED. “In 2004 when we had to make the decision [to pursue LEED], it was still a fairly new idea, and they didn’t feel that they had to put a label on it,” continued Fowle. “In my last pitch to them I told them they were going to spend the rest of their life explaining why they didn’t go for LEED rating. And that’s what’s happening.” The LEED system was still...
Fox, designer of One Bryant, go from 4 Times Square to One a LEED Platinum rating. “It’s finished, the building will seek for Durst’s latest project, the That honor has been reserved envelope on sustainable design. gone far enough in pushing the new green skyscrapers haven’t think, however, that most of the ning in the city. Some experts way to quantify just how it 4 Times Square was designed under development when 4 Times Square was designed and built, so there is no reliable measures up to the certified office towers now up and running in the city. Some experts think, however, that most of the new green skyscrapers haven’t gone far enough in pushing the envelope on sustainable design. That honor has been reserved for Durst’s latest project, the Bank of America Tower at One Bryant Park, which is currently nearing completion. Once finished, the building will seek a LEED Platinum rating. “It’s a pretty easy comparison to go from 4 Times Square to One Bryant,” Serge Appel of Cook + Fox, designer of One Bryant, told AN. “At One, Durst took what they learned at 4 and went on from there. In terms of green building. 4 might be at 29 on a scale of 1 to 100, while One at 78. There’s more infrastructure, more thinking. It’s the next generation.” So what did they learn? What defines the next generation of green skyscrapers? First, One abandoned some of 4’s more showy energy-producing features, namely the building-integrated photovoltaics. In the final analysis, the solar cells generated very little energy, only about one percent of the base building needs. Even at the current state of the technol- ogy, photovoltaics did not prove feasible for a tall building that remains in shadow half of the day. Instead, the designers at One opted for a 4.5-megawatt, gas-fired cogeneration plant, which recycles waste heat from the engine for heating and to power absorption chillers for cooling. And while the plant will not cover the building’s overall energy usage, producing energy onsite is more efficient than pulling it off the grid, which is only about 50 percent efficient.

The interior’s environmental air quality was improved at One with a better filter. It removes 95 percent of particulates, while 4’s removed around 85 percent. Not a huge jump, but the real advance in this area is the usage of underfloor displacement ventilation, while 4 uses a traditional overhead delivery system. The under- floor method was used in the New York Times Building, but only in the newspaper’s half of the structure. One will be the first project to use it throughout. It keeps the interior health-ier by creating successive air chimneys on each floor, which avoid mixing exhaust air, which rises to the ceiling, with fresh air. The method also requires less energy for air conditioning, since it only conditions from the floor to the tops of people’s heads, rather than all the way from the ceiling to the floor.

The building envelopes also differ. While 4 can boast of greater insulation values, as a large portion of its exterior is masonry, at One, the designers decided to go with an all-glass system. The use in energy sav- ings is balanced out by the fact that a completely transparent facade brings more daylight into the interior, which, when combined with daylight-dim ming light fixtures, drastically cuts down on the power need ed for lighting—the greatest energy consumer for buildings of this type. While 4 employed similar strategies, few if any tenants actually implemented daylight-dimming fixtures and many fitted out their spaces with perimeter walls, which cut down on daylight transmission. In addition to the savings in lighting energy usage, the designers of One picked an all-glass system to create a more daylight-filled environment for the workers. And the glass cur- tain wall at One does go as far as current technology allows to insulate the building: It is a thermally broken system, which prevents heat exchange between exterior and interior mullions, and the low-e coating and ceramic fritting on the glass panels significantly cut down on heat loading from the sun.

One takes a definite lead in its conservation and reuse of water, employing systems that were not available at the time of 4. The entire building is out- fitted with waterless urinals and systems for gray water recy- cling as well as rain and ground water collection. Overall, the building should save 55 percent of water usage over a traditional building, easing effluence into the sewer system. Both projects distinguished themselves by adhering to green practices, though it is difficult to compare the two projects in this regard as no metric existed at the time of 4 to let the design- ers know just how green they were being. Materials were sourced locally even when a premium had to be paid. At One, countertops are made from leimestone, a recycled glass product manufactured in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which cost more than Italian marble. Construction components were reused on site. The big item in this regard at One was wire spools—contemporary office buildings have a lot of wiring. The construction teams were coached on green building practices and moni- tored by a third party. But while it appears that One has exceeded 4 in just about every green check box on the list, it’s hard to regard it as the trailblazer that the previous building was. “There’s noth- ing in One that is experimen- tal,” said Appel. “Everything has a legitimate payback period that a developer can justify.” Rather, it seems that the steps taken at One should be taken these days as a matter of course. The next generation of green skyscrapers, then, must lie elsewhere. “We need to be thinking beyond LEED,” said Fowle. “How can we do zero carbon and zero net energy buildings? Buildings that are not just better, but that have a positive effect on the envi- ronment, as opposed to a less negative effect.”

AARON SEWARD IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT AN.
Green roofs are easy to love but their urban-scale benefits can be difficult to quantify.

SEDUM CITY

A roof fitted with solar panels signals that a building is equipped with technology at the leading edge of sustainable thinking, a hard-edged surface with easily quantifiable energy and financial dividends. Green roofs elicit a different response, more emotional and somewhat ambiguous. Their benefits, though diverse, are not so easily tallied. Green roofs provide numerous payoffs for individual buildings, but their impact at the scale of the city is only beginning to be studied. While some cities and states are developing requirements or incentive packages to promote vegetated roofs, more precise tools need to be developed to address urban-scale issues like the heat island effect or storm water runoff, a major contributor to water pollution. These issues take on greater urgency as architects and planners turn to sustainable design as a means to mitigate climate change and resource scarcity.

As most architects know, green roofs consist of a water-tight barrier, a growing medium, and a layer of plants, typically sedum or other drought-resistant plants (referred to as extensive green roofs), though more elaborate designs can include grasses, food crops, or even trees (called intensive green roofs). Vegetated roofs lower energy costs by reducing surface temperature in the summer and providing insulation in the winter. They also last longer than conventional roofs by blocking ultraviolet rays and rapid temperature increases from degrading roofing materials. They reduce runoff during storms, which can reduce water pollution, though it would take very significant acreage concentrated in a single area in order to have an impact. In addition, advocates argue that widespread use of the technology could reduce urban heat islands, which would have broad-based implications for energy use and air quality, such as asthma rates.

According to a 2007 report by the Toronto-based trade group Green Roofs for Healthy Cities, the industry grew by 30 percent over 2006. Chicago led the way with 517,000 square feet constructed in 2007, more than double that of its nearest competitor, tiny Wilmington, Delaware, which planted an impressive 195,600 square feet. New York City placed a meager third with 123,074 square feet. "New York is very far behind Chicago," said Sarah Wayland-Smith, a landscape designer at Balmori Associates who specializes in green roofs. Wayland-Smith cites high up-front costs and an underdeveloped network of suppliers and installers, as well as, until recently, a lack of government incentives as barriers to construction in New York. New York City government has adopted a cautious approach to green roofs, according to Rohit T. Aggarwala, director of the Mayor’s Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability. Working with state legislators, the mayor and the governor recently pushed through a $4.50-per-square-foot tax credit to encourage green roof construction. The mayor’s sustainability blueprint, PlaNYC, encourages green roofs but does not require them. Aggarwala, too, cites high up-front costs. "New York is already the greenest city in the United States," he said. "We should not jeopardize the economic sustainability of the city with financially onerous requirements." Aggarwala argues that reflective roofs can reduce cooling costs, and "blue roofs," or simple gutter lips that slow runoff, can reduce sewage overflows, both at a fraction of the cost of green roofs. Still, he hopes the tax credits will encourage development and bring down costs. "We’ve got to get more experience. As they become better known, they become less threatening to landlords," he said.

Since Chicago Mayor Richard Daly famously planted sedum and native grasses on City Hall in 2000, more than approximately two million square feet of green roofs on dozens of buildings have sprouted across that city. Following a brutal 1995 heat wave that killed hundreds during a blackout, the City Hall roof was conceived as a pilot project for mitigating Chicago’s urban heat island. This proliferation has been fostered by a number of incentives and requirements. Chicago’s program has also helped to bring construction costs down and increase the number of growers, suppliers, and installers in that region. While the surface temperature of City Hall and several other projects has been monitored, little research has been done on the effectiveness of green roofs at the urban scale in Chicago, according to Larry Meredith, spokesman for Chicago’s Department of Environment. Even with the impressive number of square feet planted, there may be limits to the effectiveness of the rollout, at least thus far. A map developed by architect Linda Keane and her students at the Art Institute of Chicago shows how the roofs are scattered across the city, and how modest the area of green roof coverage is at the urban scale. The most extensive modeling of the urban-scale benefits of green roofs in the United States has been done in New York. A study by the Center for Climate Systems Research (CCSR) at Columbia University’s Earth Institute estimates that in New York, fully 50 percent of all roof space would need to be greened in order to have a significant impact on the city’s heat island. The multidisciplinary study group, which relied on data and expertise from Pennsylvania State, Michigan State, and Columbia University, settled on the 50 percent baseline after deciding that 76 percent coverage was an overly ambitious figure. Their modeling indicates that 50 percent coverage would shave 1.4 degrees off the city’s heat island, which ranges from 5 to 7 degrees. What accounts for the relatively small impact even at half coverage? Remarkably, in a city as densely built as New York, roof space is...
accounts for only 19 percent of the city’s total area (when seen from above as a single plane). While the difference between a 93- and a 94-degree day may not feel significant, it can have a massive impact on energy use. According to estimates by CCSR for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, every degree of temperature increase outdoors triggers demand for an additional 60 gigawatt hours of energy per day.

CCSR relied on a thermal map of the city produced by NASA, an aerial satellite image that shows hotspots in the city. Vivid in its coloring, the map includes some surprises. Midtown and Lower Manhattan, the most densely built areas of the city, are cooler than lower-scale parts of Queens and Brooklyn. “The tall buildings of Midtown and Lower Manhattan prevent solar penetration at street level,” said Stuart Gaffin, an associate research scientist for CCSR and one of the authors of the report. “They act like trees, at least in terms of shading. Parking lots, low-scale buildings, large expanses of roof space and roadways create hotspots.” Massive hotspots occur in industrial areas and at the airports, and cool spots are clearly legible in Central and Prospect parks. The map suggests that targeting certain hotspots for green roof development might be a faster way of tackling heat islands, rather than an ad hoc approach of scattering green across the city. “I believe targeting could be very effective, though I’m not sure how it could be implemented,” Gaffin said.

Balmori Associates has for some years advocated such an approach for Long Island City, one of the hotspots on the NASA map, which they estimate has a roof space area equal to half the size of Central Park. Working with business owners, they have completed two extensive green roof projects on industrial buildings in the neighborhood. “There are private benefits for building owners, as well as public benefits, but the public benefits are more difficult to quantify,” Gaffin said. PlaNYC’s Gaffin points out the incentive packages and a recent passage of a tax rebate example shows that incentives can dramatically increase square footage of green roofs built. Columbia’s modeling shows, however, that the living system of a green roof has a fine-grained impact in the urban landscape. Precise incentive packages and deeper study could increase their effectiveness within the greater organization of the city.

JEFF BYLES IS AN EDITOR AT AN.
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Altered States of Reality: An Exhibition of Analog and Digital Fine Art Photography and Metamorphosis
Agora Gallery
415 West Broadway
www.agoragallery.com

FRIDAY 21
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
The Black List Project:
Tomothy Greenfield-Sanders and Elvis Mitchell
Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Parkway,
Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org
Katia Santibáñez
Daneza
535 West 24th St.
www.daneza.com
M/M (Paris)
Just Like an Ant Walking on the Edge of the Visible
Drawing Room
40 Wooster St.
www.drawingcenter.org
Matt Mullican: A Drawing Translates the Way of Thinking
The Drawing Center
35 Wooster St.
www.drawingcenter.org
Notations:
The Closing Decade
Philadelphia Museum of Art
26th St. and the Benjamin Franklin Pkwy.
www.philamuseum.org
EVENT
Encore ‘90: Fountainbleau Fine Arts Re-Exposed
6:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.iaia.org

SATURDAY 22 SYMPOSIUM
Exploring Elegant Armor
Jannie Bennett,
iris eichenberg, et al.
11:00 a.m.
Museum of Arts and Design
2 Columbus Circle
www.mad.org

WITH THE KIDS
The Art of Collaboration
11:00 a.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

FRIDAY 28 EVENT
The New York City Museum of Complaint
6:30 p.m.
The Municipal Art Society of New York
457 Madison Ave.
www.mas.org

SATURDAY 29 LECTURE
Great Women Artists:
Feminist Art from the Permanent Collection
Neuberger Museum of Art
Purchase College, State University of New York
735 Anderson Hill Rd.,
Purchase
www.neuberger.org
WITH THE KIDS
Drawing Inspiration
10:00 p.m.
National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.,
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

MONDAY 24 LECTURE
Lower East Side Stories:
New York at the Holidays
6:30 p.m.
Lower East Side Tenement Museum
108 Orchard St.
www.tenement.org

SUNDAY 23 EXHIBITION OPENING
Great Ideas:
Design that Changed the World
2:00 p.m.
Museum of American Finance
48 Wall Street
www.maf.org

SATURDAY 29 LECTURE
Kenneth Goldsmith
Andy Warhol
DilBeacon
3 Beekman St., Beacon
www.diabeacon.org

SUNDAY 50 LECTURE
Markello Simonetta
From Bortoluci to Bumarengi:
Medi Portraits and Anti-Medi Plots
2:00 p.m.
National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.,
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

EXHIBITION OPENING
Southern Exposure
30 Washington St., Brooklyn
www.dumbroartscenter.org

FRIDAY 28 LECTURE
Marc Chagall,
Modern Jewish Theater & the Russian Avant-Garde
11:30 a.m.
Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.jewishmuseum.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Don Porcaro
Julie Langsam
Fredericks Taylor Gallery
535 West 22nd St., 6th Fl.
www.frederickskaylorgallery.com
Amanda Ross-Ho,
Cady Roland,
et al.
Mitchell-Innes & Nash
534 West 26th St.
www.miiandn.com

WEDNESDAY 6 LECTURES
Hexa Stein
Banham in Buffalo
6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Bettis Auditorium, Princeton
www.princeton.edu/s-ssa

COURTESY SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES JAMES BLEECKER

COURTESY SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES JAMES BLEECKER
In his most recent volume, *Ten Canonical Buildings: 1950–2000*, Peter Eisenman observes, "Most of the diagrams discussed in this book whether they are iconic, symbolic, or indexical, secure their importance by displacing an original and preceding condition." The originals in this case are an eclectic assortment of ten projects, built and unbuilt, by Eisenman’s precursors and peers. They range from under-unbuilt, by Eisenman’s precursors assortment of ten projects, built and originals in this case are an eclectic importance by displacing an origi-
bolic, or indexical, secure their book whether they are iconic, sym-
chronies through the subjectivity of the author. The notion that observation and representation, transformation and translation are themselves modes of authorship animates Eisenman’s own written and built work, from his meditations on the works of Jacques Derriol and Walter Benjamin to his current run of major memorials, museums, and stadia. The intimate and intricate close reading of a single opus is a longstanding art-historical technique, epitomized in design by legendary architectural historian Colin Rowe, whose post-rationalizations of Palladian plans and suggestive interpolations between the material and formal conditions of early-modern facades provide a foundation for Eisenman’s approach. The joy of reading Rowe is in the powerful encounter between sensation and sense: in the sleuthy process of apprehen-
sion between visual observation and critical interoporation, and in the zest for buildings whose formal vocabulary rewards this approach. Especially in Moretti (who perhaps shared with Eisenman a post-
Terragni interest in incorporating suggestive cryptic manifestations of interior conditions in exterior compositions), there is a rewarding resonance between the original structure and its diagrammatic deconstruction. The particular pre-
cision of these diagrams’ captions achieves a poetry of the specific: “Columns 2D and 3D, 2E-F, and 3E-
H are each small square paired columns, except for the additional column beside 2D. In 2J and 3J there remains the slight trace of a column, provided by a slight articulation in what is other-
wise a seemingly solid wall.” At the heart of the book, and on its cover, is James Stirling’s 1959–1963 Leicester Engineering Building, that magnificently brutal essay in glass and concrete about the mannerisms of early-modernism, from Walter Gropius to Konstantin Melnikov. Stirling, who shared Rowe with Eisenman as tutor and mentor, has provided a building that is already its own axonometric diagram. Details like 45-degree-chamfered corners that appear willful and odd when encountered perspectivally and immersively, snap into startling and soothing alignment when viewed in axonometric projection. The 45-
degree rotations in plan between ceiling modules and floor modules, as between the skylights and columns of the building’s lab sec-
tion, speak to a structure in which three-dimensional geometric com-
plexity is a trace of two-dimensional axonometric order. Received notions of formal frontality have been superceded by the axono-
metric bias toward 45-degree rotation and 90-degree projection. The conventional relationship between original and diagram, referent and sign, has perhaps been reversed. The building becomes a notation of its own perfect continued on page 38

With the possible exception of prelab experimentation, single-family house design is not particularly fashion-
able at the moment: A local academic recently described the vogueish architectural words as “networked” and “dematerialized.” In that con-
text, what better place to test ideas about the house than Inner Mongolia? For most Westerners, Ordos, China, which is 400 miles outside of Beijing, could epitomize the dematerialized landscape as a remote place almost impos-
sible to comprehend. It is also the site for a new town whose houses will be designed by a sort of dream team of young architects. 13:100 | Thirteen New York Architects Design for Ordos, on view at the Architectural League of New York through November 26, exhibits some of the 100 vil-
las commissioned by the Chinese developer Cai Jiang for the new Mongolian town. Artist Ai Weiwei of FAKE Design in Beijing developed the masterplan for the Ordos site, and Herzog & de Meuron selected each of the partici-
pating firms from around the world. Ordos is a desert. (The exhibition catalog features a photograph of the group of architects on a site visit—

**ORDOS OR ARDOR**


**OMA’s Jussieu library, 4th floor (1992).**

In the period between the two world wars, a cultural exchange blossomed between the Old World and New. It played out as a trans-Atlantic romance of sorts, a public affair much chronicled in the popular media as influence shifted back and forth between the two capitals. Paris/New York: Design Fashion Culture 1925–1940, at the Museum of the City of New York through February 22, is a small but powerful chronicle of this critical relationship, smartly organized by the museum’s curator of architecture and design, Donald Albrecht.

The show’s timeline begins with the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris (whence the term “art deco”) and ends at the 1939–40 New York World’s Fair. While the U.S. did not have any official entries at the French expo, thousands of American tourists visited, and it was heavily covered in the newspapers. An official delegation of more than 80 was sent by then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover as a scouting party for ideas that would literally transform the landscape of upstart New York. A photomontage of the SS Normandie, the famously elegant cruise ship that landed in New York in 1935, sitting in the middle of Times Square, nicely represents the effect.

Sections are divided into broad strokes like “Parisian Art Deco Comes To New York,” the exhibition’s first. A 1932 photo of 42nd Street and the Chrysler Building is flanked by one of the Au Bon Marché pavilions at the Paris Expo and a detail of a deco grille at the Squibb building. Nearby, “Beaux Arts New York” celebrates Rockefeller Center, most dramatically with a large plaster mock-up of a detail, later executed in bronze relief, from La Maison Française by Alfred Auguste Janniot, circa 1930. It is entitled Le rencontre des continents américains et européens (The Meeting of the American and European Continents). Here, too, we get the first glimpse of U.S. ingenuity in action, a theme touched on throughout the exhibit. A tailored, angular 1929 drawing table and bench bought at Lord and Taylor is next to a photo-graph of the Leon Jallot work that inspired it, the former in lower-cost lacquer and glass; as stand-ins for the original—and pricey—shagreen, otherwise known as shark skin.

Across the aisle, and across the Atlantic, “Paris’s Love Affair with the New York Skyscraper” informs us, “the French widely considered the skyscraper to be a challenging emblem of modernity and the ideal channel for their mix of disdain and envy towards all things American.” Indeed, no skyscrapers were built in Paris during the period, but photomontages show tall buildings placed in the Place de la Concorde and near the Arc de Triomphe. A 1925 drawing by Le Corbusier imagined a central Paris of very tall cruciform buildings in the International Style. Monsieur, we are told, thought our versions were too small.

“France Afloat”: S. S. Normandie opens with a 1936 photo of an exhausted-looking Salvador Dalí on deck. The ship, whose sumptuous interiors are depicted in a series of watercolors, included the first ocean-going movie theater and a shopping promenade inspired by Rockefeller Center. Silver grill by Buchman & Kahn, Times Square. Radiator A 1935 photomontage of the S.S. Normandie in Times Square. Radiator grill by Buchman & Kahn, 1930 (right).

The ten theoretical and actual houses (named with Roman numerals plus the El-Even-Odd house as a bonus), that he produced in the decade between 1968 and 1978—notably House II (1969) in Hardwick, Vermont, and House X (1975), in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. These ten buildings paralleled an epic sequence of drawings: axonometric and orthographic diagrams suggesting an intricate but seamless translation between the documentation of a set of rotational and notational propositions, and the generation of unprecedented new formal conditions. Details of any house constructed along the way, sometimes controver-sially, were subjected to the requirements of the drawing sequence, leaving occasional ally split beds and stairs to nowhere. The result was an object that was simultaneously a building and—through incident and incise details and displacements—a commentary on the act of being a building: a critical architecture. It’s a perhaps perpetually unfinished idea, but it speaks to the cumulative effect of the diagrams in Ten Canonical Buildings when Eisenman refers to “another kind of dia-gram, one that has no originary condition, [but an] internal logic” (that) renders it possible to produce diagrams that refer to an external transcendental signified, but to their own operations.” That notion suggests an architecture whose effect is neither solipsism nor mere transcendence, but a kind of immanence. The reader may await an imaginary sequel to Ten Canonical Buildings in which its thousands of axonomic fragments, freed from their former representational origins, flock together into something we can’t foresee.

Christoffe serving pieces from the first-class dining room are on display, as are ads for a Stetsion Normandie ladies’ hat and a bottle of eponymous perfume from Jean Patou. The fun lasted only about four years, until the outbreak of World War II. The ship was eventually seized and put into military service; it ultimately caught fire and sank.

“New York Designers On Their Own” illustrates the declaration of independence from the luxury of French art deco and a move toward greater simplicity, comfort, and affordability. Of particular note is a 1941 boomerang-shaped Paideio series table by Gilbert Rohde, the director of Herman Miller from 1930 until 1944, placed in front of a photo of Helena Rubenstein’s fussy neoclas-sical apartment. Across the way, women’s dresses represent another shift, taking ideas from Paris couture and reworking them in less lavish fabrics and on a mass production scale. In 1938, Vogue produced its first “Americana” issue that made a somewhat scandalous claim: New York was now the fashion capital of the world.

The show ends with a depiction of the World’s Fair in Flushing, heralding America as the new cultural voice and poised as the prime visionary of the future in drawings and memorabilia. A second piece by Rohde, shown in the American Designers gallery at the Fair, is as visionary as it gets. His curved stainless and Plexiglas chair, sitting alone on a pedestal, is perhaps less audacious now than it was then, but only because it’s something we know well. It’s a near dead ringer for the “Fantastic Plastic Elastic” chair introduced by Kartell in 1997.

NEW YORK-BASED WRITER STEPHEN TREFENGER WRITES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, DOMINO, AND INTERIOR DESIGN.
When my wife and I visited Lebanon in 1998, we rented a little Renault and spent a couple days on the road, and saw or working traffic light the whole time. The streets of Beirut were packed with a chaotic tangle of aggressive, pushy cars, and I was sure we'd hear steel shrieking on steel the moment we rolled over. But nothing. The safety of the city, and while driv- on the winding, two-lane Damascus Road in the foothills of the Chouf mountains, we found ourselves driving next to each other, and going at a good clip. Just then, a third car roared between us, making its own lane. I realized at that point on Lebanon's roads, all bets were off. And yet, for the rest of our vis- it, I became more and more convinced that this was one of the safest places I've ever driven: It was predictably unpredictable. The time many of us spend getting from one place to another comprises most of our interac- tions with fellow citizens; it is as much a social experience as anything else. Since time in the car shapes our impressions of each other and of our cities, it might explain the appeal of Tom Vanderbilt's Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us)." Vanderbilt's book vividly navigates a mountain of findings and opin- ions from traffic engineers, econ- omists, psychologists, and even entomologists. Like an excited and precocious teenager, he par- enthetically mentions one psych- ological study while describing another, “Dodging” male on that later. But far from being over- whelmed, the reader is swept up in his enthusiasm. Traffic is the latest in a series of books like Freakonomics and The Tipping Point that draw on diverse and sometimes arcane academic fields to create a coher- ent narrative for the lay audience. But I hope Vanderbilt will reach beyond the more casual reader: Planners, architects, and policy- makers would do well to read his book. Perhaps Traffic can best be summed up by one of its innu- merable takeaways: You don't drive as well as you think you do. And if you knew this, you'd drive better. But we don't even know what we don't know. That Rumsfeldian gap alone sums up so much about how we behave on the road that the aware- ness of it on our part would make us safer as motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Also, awareness of a hazard is a key to the way people design our roads and set trans- portation policy could change our cities for the better. Traffic engi- neers—who, for the most part, do not appear to be familiar with many of the psychological stud- ies cited in Traffic—to try to make our roads safer with more sign- age, wider lanes, shoulders, and gentler curves. But a growing number of dissidents are point- ing out that a safe environment, surprisingly, is one that appears to be dangerous, because it forces us to be more attentive. The idea that the perception of danger is good for us runs count- er to standard reasoning in road design, which argues that since people will make mistakes, the road should provide a comfort- able margin of error. This is gen- erally thought to have worked well on highways and arterials, but in cities and towns wherein different types of users vie for a share of the same space, design- ers warn: “A margin of error into a road for the benefit of motorists is dangerous.” They'll just typically drive faster around that turn, and they'll be less attentive in that wider lane. To paraphrase the late Hans Monderman, a Dutch traffic engineer whom Vanderbilt interviews, when you treat peo- ple like idiots, they behave like idiots. Monderman also features prominently in David Engwicht's Mental Speed Bumps: The Smarter Way to Tame Traffic. As Shoup argues, parking not only meets demand, it fuels it. Traffic, Mental Speed Bumps, and The High Cost of Free Parking are all testaments to the complex- ity and centrality of social interac- tions and behavioral economics to our public lives and the fabrics of our cities. Drawing primarily from observations about psy- chology and economics, these authors show us what that charac- terizes our cities is much more than an aesthetic experience, traffic flow, or standard land-use metrics. The best urban thinking is done by those who truly observe and understand how we behave. NICK PETERSON IS A VICE-PRESIDENT AT ALEX GARVIN & ASSOCIATES AND COMMUTES BY BIKE.
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