A BANNER YEAR FOR THE ARCHITECT IN BROWN SUEDE SHOES

STERN GETS SCULLY PRIZE

Robert A.M. Stern, dean of the Yale School of Architecture and the head of an expansive New York practice, was recently awarded the tenth Vincent Scully Prize given by the National Building Museum (NBMI). The award was established in 1999 and recipients have included Jane Jacobs, the Prince of Wales, Phyllis Lambert, and the Aga Khan.

It has been a banner year for Stern: Along with the Scully Prize, he was recently chosen by President George W. Bush to design his presidential library; he won a rave profile in Vanity Fair for his luxe condo high rise 15 Central Park West; and he oversaw the rededication of Yale’s once-dilapidated continued on page 20

TOWERING OVER PHILLY

For nearly a century, City Hall, with William Penn atop it, stood as the tallest building in Philadelphia. Skyscrapers there flirted with the 548-foot height of the Absolute Proprietor but never surpassed him—part of a gentleman’s agreement, not a law, as commonly thought. In 1987, the 945-foot One Liberty Place broke the limit, but that tower may soon be dwarfed. Though still in development, the KPF-designed American Commerce Center will rise 1,510 feet.

Beyond its height, the scale of the project is immense, nearly 2.2 million square feet of office, hotel, and retail space rising from a relatively small 62,000-square-foot lot. This density of development has drawn the ire of many locals, but the unanimous passage of a rezoning of the lot on November 18 by the Philadelphia Planning Commission proves that in spirit, the city supports the project.

“It’s an aggressive proposal—aggressive in a good way,” said Alan Greenberger, executive director of the commission, after the vote. “They’re asking for a lot of density and that makes people nervous. The question is, is this the place for that density? I think today’s vote indicates that yes, it is.”

The City Council held a hearing on the rezoning on December 4 with a vote due by December 10; Greenberger said he expects the council to support it. The developer, Hill International of Marlton, New Jersey, then has one year to create a Plan of Development—which fleshes out the project in more detail and allows for more specific tweaks by the commission—before the rezoning’s sunset clause takes effect, though it is eligible for an extension.

Greenberger said the support for the project has been continued on page 10

LAST MINUTE DEALS FOR MAJOR REZONINGS AT WILLETS POINT AND HUNTER’S POINT

COUNCIL SCORES TWO POINTS

“If you add together Willets Point and Hunter’s Point South, this may be the biggest day for affordable housing in Queens history,” Eric Gioia, a Queens City Council representative, continued on page 7

NEON DREAMS FOR CONEY ISLAND. SEE PAGE 12

FIRMS GIRD FOR TOUGH ECONOMY FOR THE LONG HAUL

Whether their decisions are large or small—a shift in focus from Beijing to Riyadh, or cutting down on office supplies—design professionals of every size and stripe have been taking stock. Few are willing to openly acknowledge that layoffs are already underway: The going euphemism is “belt tightening.” Around Election Day, the ranks of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) lost 50 people, several sources confirmed; and one prestige firm took the continued on page 11

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IAN WALTERS

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 10, 2008

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LETTERS

THAT TOUCH OF INK
Abby Suckle’s review of Drafting Culture: A Social History of Architectural Graphic Standards (AV 19_11.19.2008) reminded me of an experience which made me aware of how important fine draftsmanship can be in the practice of our profession.

About 10 years ago, we were doing a small office in Rockefeller Center, and one of the occupants was Paul Volcker, late of the Federal Reserve. He had a drawing of his old office in the Fed in D.C., a building by Paul Cret in the 1930s. It was Cret’s own working drawing for the suite, dressing room, and private toilet—a 38-inch-by-49-inch, honest-to-good, hand-drawn construction drawing, which he framed and had in his new space. There was a plan at quarter-inch scale divided into quadrants, showing plans at two levels, floor pattern, and reflected ceiling plan (RCP); elevations of the four walls; elevations of the dressing room; and millwork details of built-in cabinetry in the dressing room; and millwork details for trim and doors. Aside from the titles, there were no more whit sheets in the set, and not one more whit pieces of it on a dozen different sheets in the set, and not one more whit.

“We will not be cutting any. I have already invested in the authority does not expect material costs or labor to fall by much, land acquisition should become more affordable. Daniel Heuberger, a principal at Dattner Architects who has designed a number of schools for the city, said that the authority should be applauded for its responsiveness to economic realities, both now and in the past.

“I will say that the last capital cycle for the SCA was a particularly ambivalent one,” he said. “So what may happen in the future is only a slowdown in relative terms.”

MATT CHABAN

SCHOOLS OUT

The latest edition of the AIA’s Handbook of Professional Practice includes, for the first time in its nearly two-year history, a section called “The Architect in the Political Process.” Featured in the book’s opening chapter on professional life, the new addition boldly states its intention in the first sentence: “Architecture, by its very nature, is political, and architects are often well suited to be effective participants in the political process.” The handbook describes why architects are uniquely qualified to make important professional contributions in the political arena: They are often in a position to influence public projects, their work is subject to intense public scrutiny, and they are often asked to be visionary by creating new concepts and translating them into reality.

The recognition that a political dimension exists in architectural practice is an important first step for the AIA, and I applaud them for including it in the handbook. For this view is clearly not universally shared by architects. The reviews of the recent Venice architecture biennale and the United States pavilion there make this quite clear. Almost all commentators suggested that the American pavilion featured designers who foreground political engagement, while work in other sections of the biennale focused on form and ignored societal concerns. These reviews, written by both journalists and practicing architects, paint a picture of two competing professional approaches, forgetting that all architecture is on some level political.

While certain architects continue to claim a stance above the fray, others choose to acknowledge and celebrate the political dimensions of architecture through varied approaches to collaboration.

The U.S. pavilion, for example, featured work that maintained a high level of design while also benefiting from a collaborative process. Projects by Rural Studio, Teddy Cruz, and Laura Kurgan’s Spatial Design Lab are only three obvious examples. Conversely, not all the work elsewhere in the biennale was blind to its social and political context. The sculptural project by Frank Gehry highlighted Italian craftsmen and the communal nature of construction by having those artisans on hand during the run of the biennale, continuously applying plaster to the structure. Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s video installation of gondolas navigating Venice’s canals featured the commentary of gondoliers, putting workaday life front and center. Such works were clearly stronger for their engagement with the outside world.

Even those designers who live exclusively inside digital space, where they believe they can determine all the variables and parameters of their world, must confront the social and political realities of practice. If they don’t, their work will remain only design and not architecture. WILLIAM MENKING

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* Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration
YES, THEY CAN!

So never mind all that about the economic slowdown because it would appear that a win for Barack Obama and Joe Biden is a win-win for all American architects! Not only does their platform address infrastructural improvements and green-tech upgrades, Obama and Biden have both expressed that if they had not become politicians, they would have wanted to be architects (which, we hope, elevates the Cooper-Hewitt’s National Design Awards to Academy Awards status). But Biden took his architectural aspirations a bit further, designing his own Wilmington, Delaware home! In 1997, Biden designed his family’s three-story Neo-Colonial-style home located on four lakeside acres. According to lore, there are even tales of him sketching plans during his daily Amtrak commutes to Washington.

TORCHING T SQUARES

In the Great Hall at Cooper Union, the culminating lecture on current work by some of the world’s most frequent-flying architects was delivered by Coop Himmelb(l)au’s Wolf Prix. The flashy three-screen powerpoint had some in the audience recalling the yesteryears when Prix said he wanted to be the Jimi Hendrix of architecture. It was hardly a surprise then that the woolly Austrian reacted fiercely when asked by someone in the dark (or obscured by a figurative slit) how he would compare his work to that of Santiago Calatrava. Prix rejected the comparison, barking out that the dove-drawing Valencian architect’s work is “kitsch! Three-dimensional kitsch!”

CRITICAL CONDITION

Which New York architecture critic showed up at a luncheon with an arm in a sling? “No, it wasn’t a disgruntled architect,” quipped the critic when asked what happened. The Pulitzer Prize-winning scribe, whose name we won’t mention (it rhymes with “old burger”), had been startled by a man from behind on the street, and thinking for a moment that it could be a friend, turned around. “That before I knew it he had slipped off my watch.” If you have the watch—we hear it is a Casio CA53W-1 calculator and got a knock. Things happened so fast “that before I knew it he had slipped off my watch.” If you have the watch—we hear it is a Casio CA53W-1 calculator watch, very important to said writer for calculating the heights of tall buildings off my watch.”

EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

JULIE V. IOVINE

> DURAVIT NEW YORK

105 Madison Avenue
Tel: 212-677-0944
Designer: Schmutz & Partner

Duravit, the German manufacturer of bathroom furnishings, recently set up shop on Madison Avenue in an expansive, 4,000-square-foot showroom designed by Stuttgart-based architectural firm Schmutz & Partner. Guided by Duravit’s signature aesthetic—sleek, sophisticated products conceived by the likes of Philippe Starck—designers Eduard Schmutz and Matthias Mayer have fully embraced the company’s notion of “living bathrooms” as places for rest and regeneration. Naturally, the main design motif is inspired by water: A tranquil shade of blue wraps around the walls, ceiling, and floor of the open-plan space, complementing the company’s purist white ceramic forms. Large oval portals, painted white, are set in the ceiling with fixtures that softly illuminate the products below. The showroom is partitioned into a series of recessed “room fragments,” as the architects call them, that are furnished with materials and products from Duravit. Specially constructed anthracite oak benches, finished with a coated glass surface and fitted with a reflective blue light, function as both seating and display cases. According to the architects, “These are island-like elements that we’ve always regarded as a sort of driftwood”—in keeping with the room’s aquatic ambience.

DANIELLE RAGO

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO NEARS COMPLETION

Although the official opening is not until May 16, Renzo Piano’s addition to the Art Institute of Chicago is complete enough for curators to start showing off their new spaces, exquisitely detailed right down to the custom flying buttress-shaped railing brackets. The 264,000-square-foot structure is expansive enough to invite comparisons to Edward Durrell Stone’s Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and Mies van der Rohe’s Neo-Colonial-style home located on four lakeside acres. According to lore, there are even tales of him sketching plans during his daily Amtrak commutes to Washington.

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UNVEILED

CHOICE MARINA

Situated in the Indian state of Kerala, the seaport city of Cochin has a history that stretches back to the early spice trade. CetraRuddy took this history to heart for its first international commission in the city: a 138,000 square-foot, 13-story condominium called Choice Marina. The building's twin towers curve in elevation, imitating the profile of sailboats in the harbor.

Targeted at the ex-pat crowd, Choice Marina's 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom apartments combine elements from both Western and Indian domestic models. The bathrooms feature freestanding bathtubs and each apartment has two kitchens, one for the residents and one for the help. The orientation of the towers reduces solar heat gain and minimizes the impact of monsoons while maximizing views of the sea.

AARON SEWARD

Architect: CetraRuddy
Client: Choice Group
Location: Cochin, Kerala, India
Completion: 2010

BEHNISCH DOES BALTIMORE

A slice of Baltimore's frayed urban fabric will soon be turned into a new gateway with green credentials, courtesy of Behnisch Architekten. On November 17, the Stuttgart, Germany–based firm was named the winner of an international competition to design the $107 million John and Frances Angelos Law Center at the University of Baltimore. Partner Stefan Behnisch and colleagues bested rivals including Foster + Partners, Dominique Perrault Architecture, Moshe Safdie and Associates, and the D.C. office of SmithGroup to win the commission for the project, which is located on a prominent sliver of land near Pennsylvania Station and the Jones Falls Expressway.

"Stefan's ideas about sustainable design and his creativity in responding to the evolving needs of higher education place him in the forefront of 21st-century architecture," said UB President Robert Bogomolny in a statement.

The Behnisch team's winning design presents a series of interlocking volumes around the building's central vertical slice, which in turn connects to communal gathering spaces. "We wanted to avoid pancaking the program so you had a floor of offices, a floor of classrooms, and a floor of library," Behnisch partner Matt Noblett told AN, speaking from the firm's Boston office. "Instead, we think of these as more vertical volumes that activate the community space. That's one of the things that drove the whole design."

Known for its ecologically sensitive approach to projects such as the Genzyme Center in Cambridge and Toronto's Terrence Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research, Behnisch will bring green thinking to Baltimore as well. Noblett said that while the design is still in an early stage, the firm is considering "a fairly glassy building" with multiple planted roofs and other green features. "We see both the inside and the outside as extensively planted, so you have a real experience of the outdoors within the building." Behnisch will design the project in partnership with Baltimore's Ayers/Saint/Gross.

The university's decision, announced three days after the finalists presented their designs to a jury that included architects James Polshek and Frances Halsband, as well as critic Robert Campbell, was described as an arduous one. "Our deliberations were daunting," competition advisor Roger Lewis said in a statement.

In renderings, Behnisch's winning scheme is certainly not retiring. The 190,000-square-foot building rises boldly from what is now a parking lot at the corner of Charles Street and Mount Royal Avenue. With its stacked and staggered volumes, the structure makes a strong visual presence atop the sloping site, and should serve as a key node in the rejuvenation of the city's edge along the expressway. Completion is expected in 2012.

JEFF BYLES

AN_20_01_20_mp_FINAL_ag:AN_06_CLH_Mar25 12/3/08 10:51 AM Page 6
COUNCIL SCORES TWO POINTS continued from front page said at a press conference on November 13, just before the council passed both plans. Only 24 hours earlier, both projects remained in doubt, and it looked as though Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg might be dealt his first land-use defeat from the far side of City Hall.

By far, Willets Point was the more controversial of the two rezonings. It called for the relocation, possibly through eminent domain, of 260 businesses serving 3,000 workers in the storied Iron Triangle, a 61-acre, pothole-strewn neighborhood adjacent to Shea Stadium. In its place, the city envisioned a new mixed-use village of 5,500 apartments, office buildings, hotels, stores, and a signature mid-sized convention center.

Through his long-standing and vocal opposition, Hiram Monserrate, the local council member, nearly brought the project to its knees. He had the backing of 30 of his colleagues on the council, who sent a letter to the mayor forcefully condemning the project. Even with the support of the city’s powerful unions and promises of 20 percent on-site affordable housing and retaining for displaced workers, the Bloomberg administration could not sway Monserrate, who staged numerous protests with area business owners.

In the last month, the mayor and his aides began vigorously lobbying the council and negotiating with property owners, pushing the amount of city-owned land from 12 to 51 percent. One day before the plan was due for a vote, Monserrate announced that he had gotten significant additional concessions and could now support the project. These included a new 850-seat school and a promise that 35 percent of the units would be affordable.

“Today we stand together in support of a plan that puts people first, the people of Queens,” Monserrate said at a press conference on November 12. “This new and improved plan reflects the true potential of large-scale development projects. It proves that we can include the best long-term planning and the smartest allocation of resources while keeping our moral responsibility to the families and workers affected.”

Not all of his colleagues were pleased, however—two voted against it because it did not prohibit the use of eminent domain. “The reason I will be voting against it is not because I am anti-development, but because we cannot allow the threat of eminent domain to continue to be used in this city,” said Brooklyn representative Charles Barron. It was this threat that also led a third member, Letitia James, to abstain from voting because her district includes the controversial Atlantic Yards project, which also seeks to use eminent domain.

Hunter’s Point South was the city hopes Willets Point will become a new mixed-income neighborhood with a convention center across from CitiField. A far less contentious project, but like Monserrate, Gioia did not support it until the end because it, too, lacked affordable housing, at least of a certain type.

Envisioned as a middle-class haven, of the project’s 5,000 units, 60 percent would be made affordable to families earning between $60,000 and $125,000 per year. But a number of affordable housing advocates argued this was an unreasonable standard given that a majority of Queens residents do not earn that much.

Gioia convinced the city to set aside 200 of the affordable housing units for low-income seniors, a small victory. The real one, and a first that could be mimicked in future deals, was a survey performed by the city to identify additional development sites in the immediate neighborhood and surrounding community that could be leveraged to create new affordable housing.

The study identified the potential for 500 new units in Long Island City and another 1,500 beyond. “Our job is to not let the perfect become the enemy of the good,” Gioia said. “This project may not be perfect, but it has given us the opportunity, by bringing deeper affordability to the surrounding neighborhood, to make a community that is perfect.”

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

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Rampant sprawl. Rusting infrastructure. Rising tides. Such is the legacy of federal policy gone MIA from urban areas. “The absence of policy over the last eight years, when you take a step back, is just shocking,” said Thomas Wright, executive director of the Regional Plan Association. “Policy has been an innocent bystander.”

So as President-elect Obama assembles his staff, no position has been more anticipated among architects and planners than the White House director of urban policy. This new post, reporting directly to the president, will take charge of all federal urban programs. And it is widely expected to champion urban initiatives long hobbled by Washington dysfunction.

“Each of the various departments, whether it’s Energy or Transportation or Housing, often ends up being siloed and unintentionally working at cross-purposes,” said Maureen McAvey, executive vice president of the Urban Land Institute’s initiatives group. “If this office can have a really integrated policy—particularly between housing and transportation and climate change and energy use—that would be really helpful.”

Such a strategy could encourage homeownership near transit hubs, Wright points out, by providing incentives such as location-efficient mortgages, or loans that factor in transportation costs. It could combat climate change by creating federal programs to encourage pedestrian-friendly streets. In the context of global warming, it could rethink funding formulas that dole out far greater federal subsidies for building roads than for mass transit.
Public Outcry

Polshek Partnership has designed a new exterior entrance staircase, canopy, signage, and lighting scheme for the Public Theater on Lafayette Street in the Noho historic district. The plan also includes widening the sidewalk into the street in order to accommodate the staircase. On November 13, the firm gave a highly detailed and polished presentation to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), which must approve the design, garnering praise from the commissioner and ire from several community groups.

The new staircase would free up space in the Public’s lobby that is currently filled by an interior stair, which compromises circulation in the theater on busy evenings.

The proposal also calls for additional banners and street-level poster boxes, LED architectural lighting, and a steel and fritted glass canopy. Perhaps the most significant change though is to Lafayette Street. The proposal calls for a nine-and-a-half foot extension of the sidewalk into the street to accommodate the new staircase, creating an unusual mid-block bump out. That change has already received approval from the Department of Transportation, apparently without a public hearing, and LPC declared the sidewalk and street change outside their jurisdiction.

The merits of the Polshek design were closely parsed. The team argued that an exterior staircase that was original to the building—a portion of which dates to the 1850s and served as the Astor Library, the city’s first public library—was a precedent for the new design.

The new design, with low black granite risers, is clearly minimalist design vocabulary. The commissioners’ recommendations were nearly unanimous, calling for three banners instead of five, smaller or fewer poster boxes, and a more neutral material for the staircase.

The Public Theater wants to build a new exterior staircase and entrance canopy, which would require extending the sidewalk into Lafayette Street. Designed to accommodate larger crowds. Chairperson Robert Tierney praised the team for its carefully researched proposal and “minimalist” design vocabulary. Commissioner Fred Bland emphasized that the proposed changes are reversible, and reflect contemporary thinking on making a clear delineation between old and new.

The Public has the qualified support of the community board and councilwoman Rosie Mendez, but preservation groups, including the Historic District Council (HDC), the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Society for the Architecture of the City, all vocally opposed the measure. The speaker from HDC warned that the building would be “smothered” under the new signage and lighting, while the Landmarks Conservancy called Polshek’s stair “cold” and unrelated to the building’s many curvilinear forms.

The commissioners’ recommendations were nearly unanimous, calling for three banners instead of five, smaller or fewer poster boxes, and a more neutral material for the staircase.

The stair was removed in the middle of the last century, was significantly shallower than the one proposed by Polshek. The new design, with low black granite risers, is clearly minimalist design vocabulary. The commissioners’ recommendations were nearly unanimous, calling for three banners instead of five, smaller or fewer poster boxes, and a more neutral material for the staircase.

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PORT AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR FEDERAL APPROVALS, MONE
ACCELERATING THE ARC

On November 7 at a symposium held at St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, Port Authority chair Anthony Coscia called on the federal government to fast track the Access to the Region’s Core (ARC) rail tunnel project. Coscia asked the feds to expedite approvals for the project, which would include a new rail tunnel linking New Jersey with Midtown Manhattan, and to include it in the economic stimulus package currently before congress.

“The Port Authority is doing whatever we can to help the region through these challenging times,” Coscia said. “But in order to maximize our capital spending—and do the most good for the region’s economy—we also need a strong partner at the federal level.”

His remarks followed an October hearing of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, in which business executives and labor unions petitioned Congress to provide $300 billion for new infrastructure projects. At the hearing, New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine told the committee to “turn this period of adversity into a time of opportunity. The nation’s construction industry is on its back, our infrastructure is deteriorating, and in too many cases, compromised. Let’s put people to work, build roads, bridges, tunnels, schools, wastewater treatment systems.”

Critics of the stimulus plan claim that infrastructure projects do not result in a quick increase in jobs because they take so long to plan and execute. But many public works projects have been in the works long enough that they are ready to go. According to a report in The New York Times, 3,000 highway projects totaling $19 billion could get rolling within 50 to 90 days, while $8 billion in mass transit projects could launch within 90 days.

The ARC Tunnel project itself was launched in 1995, when it was picked out of 137 alternatives identified by the ARC Major Investment Study. ARC includes the construction of two new tracks in the Meadowlands, two new single-track tunnels under the Hudson River, and an expansion of Penn Station. The project will increase trans-Hudson commuter capacity, which is currently near its limit, and improve security by creating a redundant system to accompany the existing trans-Hudson tunnel, which the Pennsylvania Railroad completed in 1908. ARC is advancing through the environmental review and early engineering phase. The Port Authority, NJ Transit, and the state of New Jersey have already earmarked $5.75 billion for the project, roughly two-thirds the estimated cost. With federal assistance, Coscia said, the ARC Tunnel could begin construction as early as 2009.

TOWERING OVER PHILLY continued from front page

Evenly split between businesses and younger residents in favor, while neighbors and preservationists tend to oppose it. Back in July, the commission heard three hours of testimony to this effect, but at the most recent meeting, opposition was more muted. The project’s strongest critics, residents of a co-op across the street, did, however, give an impassioned presentation denouncing it as an overbuilt behemoth.

“It’s the same old story—the developer says they want the biggest in the world, or at least the city, and we are forced to wrap our arms around it,” said Joseph Beller, the attorney for the residents. “This is a wonderful building,” he said, in the wrong location. Indeed, nothing on this scale has ever been built in the city, which was part of the need for the rezoning from a classification of C4, with a special height limit of 125 feet, to C5. The latter allows for 12 FAR with a bonus of 8 for a public plaza consisting of 30 percent of the site. (The cutout at the center of the project not only divides the office from the hotel but also accounts for 22 percent of this public space in an elevated courtyard.) The developer is then seeking an additional bonus of 4 FAR through standard public amenities like off-street parking and public restrooms.

Under the current code, the project could not get larger, but because of sustainable features like a regional rail link, the developer hopes to secure an additional 3.5 FAR to reach an unprecedented density of 27.8. The commission said it was not opposed, though it would seek to codify it for general use instead of simply conferring it on a single developer. “Our zoning code has actually created more obstacles to large-scale development,” commissioner Natalia Olson de Savycký said.

The bigger concern amid the economic downturn is whether the project can actually get built. “Everyone’s wondering, ‘Is it real?’” Greenberger said. He also noted that the developer pushed for the rezoning because without it, Hill could not reasonably attract financing or tenants. “Would we be spending this kind of money putting this project before the commission and the City Council,” asked the developer’s attorney, Peter Kelso, “if we didn’t believe it was coming to fruition?”
FOR THE LONG HAUL continued from front page
not-so-elegant step of laying off 20 people who had all been gathered into one room.
But in interviews with over a dozen firms, including landscape architects and engineers, 
AIA found that the economic strategizing that many New York offices started a year or two ago has paid off. At the very least, 
the process of planning for a downturn has helped mitigate jitters about what lies ahead.
Perkins Eastman has grown from a staff of 
50 in the early 1990s to 800 in 13 global offices today, and in the past few years, the 
firm has focused on what principal Aaron Schwarz called “value-added service areas” 
including healthcare, education, senior 
living, and municipal developments. That 
has put it in a good position to pick up on a 
convergence phenomenon in building pro-
grams, such as education wellness centers 
and hospitality healthcare. “We started look-
ing two or three years ago at how to position 
ourselves,” he said. “We feel we are in 
as good if not a better place than many.” 
Schwarz added that Perkins Eastman is still 
hiring, though more slowly than a year ago.
In June 2007, the partners at Gruzen 
Samton noticed that they were no longer 
seeing zoning and feasibility studies come 
into the office at the same rate as before. 
They, too, had a meeting and decided to 
focus even more on senior living facilities 
and educational infrastructure. But an even 
smarter move turned out to be the decision 
to seek a call-on contract with the General 
Services Administration (GSA). Under the 
auspices of the GSA’s Design Excellence 
Program, Gruzen Samton was selected to 
be one of four or five firms pre-qualified for 
any work put out by Homeland Security’s 
Port of Entry from North Dakota to Maine, 
for up to five years. “We’re very proud 
of our work on the Port of Entry,” said 
firm managing director Peter Rogers. 
Over the last decade, the kingdom had 
proceeded more conservatively than its 
neighbors, and so hasn’t been as affected 
by the economic crisis.
At 85 people, Rogers Marvel Architects 
is no giant, but a year ago they hired a 
managing director to help the firm plan 
ahead. “We followed that with a lot of sit-
downs to try and prepare,” said Rob Rogers, 
and so far all desks are still full. One of the 
firm’s strategies is to sign on for “curb-and-
gutter jobs” if there’s even a modicum of 
creativity involved. Noting how designing 
streetscapes at Battery Park City led first to 
streetscape security for the New York Stock 
Exchange and then to a masterplan for the 
Pentagon, Rogers said, “We launched in 
the 1990s at a tough time when we had to 
have good habits, and we’ve stayed aggres-
sive and less picky.”
Several weeks ago, Lewis.Tsurumaki.
Lewis had the inevitable meeting about cut-
ting back on office supplies. The firm knows 
how to keep it lean with a staff of 12 
and a handful of academic projects, which so 
far have all been reconfirmed. Fee negotia-
tions, however, have become more circum-
spect, said Marc Tsurumaki, estimating 
that the going rate is off about 25 percent 
from last year. While all three partners in 
the firm are already teaching, they will 
probably start entering competitions—at 
least the ones rooted in reality. Like many, 
Tsurumaki is trying to figure out the bright 
side: “We see it as a good opportunity to 
reconsider things and even re-conceptual-
ize the firm,” he said. “We’re wondering 
if there are even more inventive ways to get 
back into design-build.” At 42, Tsurumaki 
 Experienced the last downturn in 1991, 
when he was just out of school and working 
for Joel Sanders. “He’d be off teaching and 
I would be the only person in the office 
when these 40-year-old architects came 
by to drop off their resumes,” he recalled. 
“I just sat there hoping I would never be one 
of those guys.”

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

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Architect: Payette
Structural Engineer: Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates
Photo © Robert Baumgarten Photography

In its 13 years, the AIA 
Architecture Billings 
Index has not seen one as 
tumultuous as 2008. After 
collapsing in the spring, 
billings rose through the 
summer, auguring a tem-
porary decline. But billings 
fell again in August and 
reached a record low in 
October. Housing work 
suffered most but the 
collapse of the institu-
tional sector, which tends 
to remain strong during the 
weak times, as well as 
inquiries for new work, 
suggest that the down-
turn could prove long and 
painful. For AIA’s com-
plete coverage, visit arch-
paper.com/thenumbers.
IDEAS CHARRETTE FOR CONEY ISLAND’S FUTURE YIELDS VISION OF YEAR-ROUND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

TIMES SQUARE BY THE SEA?

If the Municipal Art Society (MAS) and the Department of City Planning don’t see eye to eye on Coney Island’s future, both agree action is urgent. “If we wait much longer,” warned MAS president Kent Barwick, “we could lose Coney Island forever.”

He was addressing a standing-room-only crowd at the BAMcafe on November 17, which had gathered to see the results of “Imagine Coney,” the MAS’s recent series of public brainstorming charrettes for the neighborhood, whose future has been in flux for the last several years. Excitement in the crowd ran high, buoyed by that day’s news that developer Joe Sitt had agreed to sell his 10.5 acres at the heart of Coney Island to the city instead of turning it into an entertainment and shopping complex.

Of course, just because the city might soon own more of Coney Island doesn’t mean they will follow the MAS’s recommendations. As Barwick readily acknowledged, “We’re not the ones with the power here.” But the purpose of their “Imagine Coney” campaign was to convince the city that Coney Island can regain its former glory, given the right strategy and initial investment—and that such a feat will eventually you reach a point where it’s poetry.”

The public may not be persuaded, judging from the audience members who lamented what they found to be a lack of Coney Island’s historic spirit in the renderings. Though they never said so explicitly, the charrette team seemed to be looking at Times Square not just for economic inspiration, but aesthetic as well. Malmuth envisioned the park attracting “significant signage and sponsorship.” And just as Times Square revels in its flashy signs, the team didn’t seem to view them as a liability. “We’re not the ones with the power here.”

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Rogers Marvel Architects’ new headquarters for St. John’s Bread and Life, Brooklyn’s largest soup kitchen and food pantry, is housed in an old Bed-Stuy print shop reimagined in a way that supports the organization’s basic service principle. It tries to make a visitor’s first meal a first step toward help.

In spring of 2006, Bread and Life asked Rogers Marvel to figure out how to encourage visitors to avail themselves of on-site job counseling, benefit assistance, and legal help. The organization served more than 200,000 meals last year, so there was plenty of traffic, but the cramped office on Lewis Avenue discouraged longer visits.

“They wanted to take advantage of the fact that people were coming for food, to get them to do things that would be harder to ask for, like apply for a job, or get food stamps or legal aid,” said associate Guido Hartray. “One of the goals was to design for easy access to food services and provide impetus for people to stay.” After interviewing staff and clients, the design team concluded that the existing space was too small.

This did not surprise executive director Anthony Butler, who had been eyeing a former warehouse nearby. “I knew we would never fit into the old space, but I had to get the board to reject the idea of staying. That led to a lot of talk about how we work, and Rogers Marvel subsequently took that conversation about how we work into this building.” After Bread and Life bought the 22,000-square-foot building, the architects quickly settled on a plan to create interior courtyards. “You wanted people to move through in an efficient way and provide opportunities to stop,” Hartray told AN, “so we organized around two courts. The outer lobby is a court you move through into the dining hall.”

There is also a chapel, a classroom, a demonstration kitchen, and a library. The library, said Hartray, has proved especially popular.

Butler said use patterns have shifted since the new facility opened in June, and he credits both the design and the worsening economy. “Our numbers are up 28 percent in visits but 31 percent in social services,” he told AN. “The 79 percent increase in time people spend with our social service people—from about 15 to 27 minutes—is a direct result of being more comfortable waiting and knowing that they can talk in a private cubicle.” The design also includes six second-floor cubicles that volunteer lawyers, accountants, or other professionals can use for a few hours.

The Robin Hood Foundation contributed funding for the renovation, which may itself help Butler raise money for operating costs. He told the architects to think of other constituencies, too, beyond daily clients: “I told them that this building is what I’ve got to fundraise around.” ALEC APPELBAUM

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Located in East Chelsea on the ground floor of a 1920s loft building, Lion Brand Yarn Studio’s design aesthetic artfully contrasts with the neighborhood’s industrial past. To create the first retail venture of Lion Brand’s 130-year-old history as a wholesaler, architect David Gauld has threaded the 1,700-square-foot studio together with a painted blue wall, shaped like a sine curve, that divides the space into four zones for different activities: yarn browsing, sampling, purchasing, and researching. The opposite wall features a series of giant display cases for Lion Brand’s 49 yarn lines, with 600 colors in an array of wools, wool blends, cottons, and recycled and organic materials. Made of a translucent polycarbonate typically used for skylights or railings, the cases’ panels are partially cut and fastened together to create diagonal spaces for product display, and are lit from behind and above to highlight the subtle differences in the yarns’ color and texture. From a sampling wall, customers can unwind a few yards of featured yarns and experiment, while a “learning bar” offers space for knitting and crocheting demonstrations. Recycled and renewable materials are used throughout, including bamboo flooring, recycled glass countertops and floor tiles, and cabinet panels made from reclaimed sorghum plant stalks.

The Department of City Planning has introduced new zoning language that would require secure bicycle parking in all new commercial, multifamily residential, and institutional buildings. The zoning change will go through public review before being voted on by the City Council. “It’s one of a series of incremental changes that we hope will lead to a snowball effect,” said Rachaele Raynoff, press secretary for Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden. “It’s about changing the culture to make biking a fun, easy, and safe mode of transportation.”

The requirements are modest. New residential buildings with more than ten units will require one space for every two units. Office buildings must provide one space for every 7,500 square feet of space. Retail and most commercial and community uses would be required to have one space for every 10,000 square feet.

Bicycling advocates hailed the move as a significant step forward. “It’s major. It’s one of the big three, along with bike sharing and dedicated lanes, necessary to make New York a great biking city,” said Wiley Norvell, communications director for Transportation Alternatives (TAdot). Still, TA believes requirements need to be adopted for existing buildings, which make up the vast majority of the city’s building stock. The change goes against the wishes of some in the real estate industry. In a letter to members, Real Estate Board of New York president Steve Spinola encouraged voluntary inclusion of indoor bicycle parking, but wrote, “We have strongly urged the city not to consider requiring office buildings to provide bicycle parking and we will continue to do so.”

In another step toward upgrading cycling conditions in New York, the Department of Transportation and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum announced that Copenhagen-based Maarten De Greeve and Ian Mahaffy’s circular design is the winner of the CityRacks Design Competition. “Mahaffy and DeGreeve have created a bike rack that works beautifully in a variety of contexts,” said outgoing Cooper-Hewitt Director Paul Warwick Thompson in a statement. In addition to the accolades and a $10,000 prize, De Greeve and Mahaffy could see up to 5,000 of their bike racks affixed to sidewalks across the city over the next three years. Harry Dobbie and Andrew Lang of London were named second place finalists and awarded $3,000, and New York–based designer Ignacio Ciocchini placed third with a $2,000 award. The competition attracted over 200 entries from around the world.
The LEED rating system for green buildings helped kick-start sustainable design and brought daylighting to the masses, among other justly lauded achievements. But it does have one shortcoming: Its most widely used standards don’t apply to much of what forms the fabric of a city—streetscapes, parking lots, open space, and roadways. “So much of each community is its connective tissue,” said Nancy Somerville, chief executive of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

“From building envelope to building envelope, all of that has a major effect on the quality of the urban environment.”

On November 10, the ASLA moved to plug that gap by releasing its first draft benchmarks for Sustainable Sites, the landscape profession’s answer to LEED. Developed with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden, the program’s 59 prerequisites and credits take a decidedly holistic view of how landscapes can promote ecological and personal health.

Envisioned, like LEED, as a voluntary certification system, Sustainable Sites tackles practical matters like controlling invasive species and restoring riparian buffers. But it also targets less tangible modes of sustainability, such as providing outdoor spaces for mental restoration, or abating sensory stress by avoiding noxious odors and noise. Other guidelines call on designers to save prime farmland and restore lost streams and coastal habitats. These broader goals contrast with the more performance-based aspects of LEED.

“Water conservation, energy efficiency, and a minimal impact on the environment have always been a fundamental core of LEED, but Sustainable Sites takes it a step further,” said David Yocca, principal planner at ecological-design firm Conservation Design Forum, and an adviser to the new initiative. “It’s not just drawing a line in the sand and saying, we’re not going to do worse. It’s looking at how to restore or improve ecological functions.”

The draft guidelines are open for public comment until January 20, 2009, with a full rating system expected in 2011. And far from being a LEED competitor, the initiative has been created in collaboration with the U.S. Green Building Council, which intends to incorporate its benchmarks into a future LEED update. (The LEED program for neighborhood development, now in a pilot phase, addresses landscape design, but is geared toward very large-scale sites.) Pilot projects will be launched in 2010 to refine the guidelines, which still need tweaking to adapt to diverse local geographies.

“That is probably one of the biggest challenges,” said Yocca, who noted that the guidelines, for example, call for curtailing surface-water runoff. “In places like Colorado where there are water rights, it’s not legal to harvest the water from one’s roof,” he said. “That’s still part of the work in progress, and one of the things we hope to get a lot of feedback on.”

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For the principals of Hariri & Hariri Architecture, sisters Gisue Hariri and Mojgan Hariri, the professional and the personal are deeply intertwined. A strong familial bond and a shared design philosophy have been essential in the growth of their practice, and have helped garner increased recognition for the firm, including a 2005 American Academy of Arts & Letters Award in Architecture and high-profile projects such as a competition-winning design for a mixed-use development in Salzburg.

Sharing a sculptural design aesthetic, the Iranian-born principals founded their New York–based firm in 1986, after coming to the U.S. to study at Cornell (Mojgan also studied at RISD). Now ten members strong, Hariri & Hariri has tackled a range of residential, commercial, and institutional projects, as well as designing products and artworks. A keen eye for contextuality and a love of elegant lines and bold geometries pervades their architecture, from craggy contours to sinuous curves. Experimentation also fuels their practice, and one of their most beloved early projects was a bit ahead of its time—the Digital House, a foray into now ubiquitous computing that appeared in MoMA’s 1999 exhibition The Un-Private House. (Gisue remains hopeful that its day will come.)

Especially in their early years, being female meant it was harder to get respect, but it also “gives us, in a way, an advantage of being different, and being different gives you a new point of view,” Gisue said. LISA DELGADO
A few years after the firm designed one of the Houses at Sagaponac, the owner asked the architects to design a new painting studio on the same property. The process of choosing a location morphed into a larger focus on creating a structure that’s highly attuned to its context along various facades. The西北 side facing the main house and pool focuses on water, with walls of aqua tile and travertine forming an outdoor shower area. The layers of materials also evoke the flat canvases used by a painter. The northeast facade adjacent to a tennis court features a built-in bench for watching matches, and the southeast side facing away from the house focuses on the natural surroundings, with a terrace where the painter can gaze out at the woods.

For a practice that prides itself on its experimental nature, working for a relatively conservative financial company caused the sisters some trepidation. But in fact, the client embraced Hariri & Hariri’s office renovation design, which focuses on sustainability, boosting collaboration, and maximizing views. The architects raised the floor of the 10,000-square-foot space and placed the cooling and heating systems underneath, reducing materials by using the cavity between the slab and the raised floor as ducts, as well as improving flexibility for future rewiring. The system also gives workers greater control of the temperature in their immediate work area, through manually controlled diffusers. Raising the floor and nearly eliminating the knee wall also allowed for impressive views through huge windows in the 24th-floor office, giving a feeling of “flying and hovering over Madison Avenue,” Gisue said.

Dallas is known for its love of the large, but Hariri & Hariri is bringing a striking low-scale building to the city’s Arts District. Adjoining a mixed-use tower, the curved building of lofts was designed to relate to the plaza on the ground plane, unlike its neighbor. “We designed this building almost as a piece of sculpture, which peels away from the [tower] and becomes its own entity,” Gisue said. Landscape architects MESA Design Group proposed an undulating ribbon of greenery in the plaza that complements the building’s geometry. Hariri & Hariri also designed interiors of the tower’s top-floor condos, as well as its lobby, which features gentle curves joining the ceiling and walls, imparting a fluid feel to a space that will be used to display art.

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Riverhouse’s double glass curtain wall is more insulating than a traditional masonry wall, a factor that allowed the architects to contravene Battery Park City’s 60-to-40 masonry-to-glass ratio and open up unimpeded views to the harbor.

The Battery Park City Authority has long been ahead of the curve in terms of its commitment to environmentally friendly development. It implemented its own set of sustainable building guidelines three years before 7 World Trade and the Hearst Tower hit the scene. Since the Solaire, the authority has opened two other eco-friendly residential towers (TriBeCa Green and the Verdesian) and has four others in various stages of development and construction.

Riverhouse, a 32-story, 264-unit condo currently nearing completion, managed to circumvent the authority’s conservative design leanings by appealing to its green heart: Set to receive a LEED Platinum rating, the project boasts the first double curtain wall on a residential building in the United States. Polshek Partnership Architects, which was responsible for the exterior of the building (Ishmael Leyva Architects laid out the residential units and Rockwell Group chose finishes), proposed the double-glass system to take advantage of the site’s unobstructed views of the harbor.

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The selection reflects an effort on the part of the Driehaus Jury to “broaden the definition of classicism,” according to Lykoudis. “One of the purposes of the prize is to show what classicism means in the modern world, how it links time and place,” he said. For Lykoudis, classicism does not refer to any specific style, but rather, “the highest architecture aspirations of any given culture over time.”

All the previous winners have been American or European. The jury for the prize includes Driehaus and Lykoudis along with Paul Goldberger, architecture critic of the New Yorker; Adele Chatfield-Taylor, president of the American Academy in Rome; Robert Davis, founder of Seaside, Florida; and the architects Leon Krier and David M. Schwartz.

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El-Wakil began his career as a modernist but soon became a disciple of Hassan Fathy, the Egyptian architect known for his engagement with vernacular building techniques and the author of the canonical book Architecture for the Poor. In that spirit, El-Wakil, working with local laborers, built the Halawa House in the traditional Egyptian courtyard manner. He received an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1980. Other major projects include Quba Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in England.

“His work has dealt with very modest budgets, even no budget, as well as high architecture,” said Michael Lykoudis, dean of architecture at Notre Dame.

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The award is also something of a vindication for Stern, who came to his New Haven deanship a decade ago amid griping that he would, like his immediate predecessors Thomas Beeby and Fred Koetter, sacrifice his academic role for the lucrative returns garnered by his firm, Robert A.M. Stern Architects, which had cornered the market in crowd-pleasing, historicist design.

"Nobody who would be appointed to a job like dean of the Yale School of Architecture would be above some criticism," Stern said in an interview a few days after the award ceremony. That said, he added, "I do feel people have responded amazingly well to what I have been able to accomplish."

Things were not always so rosy. In 1998, at the urging of Scully, a legendary architectural historian and Stern’s former mentor, Yale President Richard Levin chose Stern as dean after a selection committee had rejected him, only to meet with at times outright derision from many corners of the architectural community. Reed Kroloff, then editor of Architecture, dismissed Stern as a “suede-loafered sultan of suburban retrostructure, Disney party boy, and notorious academic curmudgeon.”

Indeed, while Stern had developed a national reputation as an academic and a practicing architect, if he was famous he was also infamous, and increasingly pigeon-holed: as a narrow-minded historicist, as a political reactionary, as a corporate architect who enjoyed the art of the deal more than the art of building. He sat on the board of directors at Disney, even as he criticized architects he thought too enthralled with trendy styles and ideas.

“There were many on the faculty who wondered wasn’t Bob a little too strong-minded to be dean,” admitted Levin at the Scully Prize gala dinner, held in the NBM’s cavernous central hall in Washington, D.C., on November 13.

Onlookers feared that he would refashion Yale in his image at precisely the moment when the school was in desperate need of renovation—suffering from a B-grade faculty, an inferior physical plant, and an ignorance of computer-assisted design. Ten years later, Yale has made a comeback, an achievement even his erstwhile detractors credit to Stern. "Bob has done an extraordinary job at Yale," said Kroloff, now director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum. "He is among the very best deans in the entire country. He will probably be remembered as the best dean in Yale’s history."

Stern did a particularly good job importing full-time and visiting faculty who clashed with his own conservative views on architecture, including Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, and Greg Lynn. "He made it clear that a school of architecture cannot be a dean’s studio," said Levin.

He has managed to do all of this without sacrificing his practice. He has nearly doubled his firm’s headcount to some 300 and completed a series of blockbuster projects, including Philadelphia’s Comcast Center and 15 Central Park West, with another Manhattan tower, 99 Church Street, in process. He was also recently picked to design two new residential colleges at Yale, the university’s first since the 1960s.

Stern is still not without detractors in the architectural world, though few are willing to go on the record, even anonymously, a reflection of the enormous influence he wields. While some of the criticism is aimed at his ability and aesthetic opinions as an architect—writing in New York, Justin Davidson called Stern “an architect who specializes in the best nostalgia that money can buy”—much of it is political.

Stern is careful to define his conservatism as an aesthetic choice, but he has nonetheless been embraced by the Right; the webzine Frontpage.com boasted that “America’s greatest architect is a conservative.” Few were surprised, then, when President George W. Bush chose Stern to design his library. Nevertheless, Stern’s defenders—and there are many, inside and out of the profession—use his refreshing turn as dean as a newfound defense. Said longtime friend and former Disney CEO Michael Eisner, “Ten years from now, I’m sure he will do the Obama library as well.”

CR
An architect from Quebec, Luc enjoys playing golf and barbequing—though not simultaneously. He also enjoys working with Vectorworks Architect, where 2D drafting and 3D modeling can occur at the same time. Luc and his firm, King & King Architects, depend on Architect for this flexibility, especially as they strive for platinum LEED certification in their office renovations of an old warehouse in downtown Syracuse.

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Luc Lefebvre, Team Leader–CAD Coordinator/Instructor, King & King Architects, LLP
If the level of conversation about sustainability in architecture were a reasonable indicator of how green building practices are today, there would be every reason to feel confident that we are making a dent in the amount of energy our houses, offices, and schools consume each day. Architects and developers seeking LEED certification for a project have many more options—both material and technological—to draw on, and the standards themselves are getting more refined and nuanced. Being green isn’t enough to make news anymore, and for many, that’s real progress. Familiarity can breed complacency, though, and for the architect and research scientist Anna Dyson, now is not the time to get comfortable.

“If you accept the idea that we have ten or 15 years to turn around climate change before the effects become irreversible, then we’ve got to rethink everything about the way we build, including the idea of sustainability.” To that end, Dyson is leading the Center for Architecture Science and Ecology (CASE), a new venture of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The program’s goal is to develop a new generation of building systems and materials that can dramatically change a building’s performance. “To make a real difference, we need a paradigm shift. All bioclimatic resources, like wind load or solar gain, are just that—resources, not problems to be mitigated.” Dyson, her colleagues, and students believe that these forces can and should be captured and transformed in a way that makes them useable on the scale of an individual building. This approach sidesteps the problems currently faced by proposals for large wind farms in the West. Sure, you can harness the energy of wind in the Dakotas, but how do you get the electricity it generates to Chicago or Los Angeles where the demand is?

Several of the projects underway at CASE address this problem by looking at building enclosures, and ways that they can be exploited to capture and transform solar energy. One project uses small glass lenses and tiny PV cells within standard curtain wall assembly, while another is based on the idea that a fritted glass wall would be much more useful if the frit pattern could shift in density and design to accommodate changing environmental conditions. (Both are profiled in the following pages.)

The genesis of CASE was a desire to fully embed research into practice so that the architect’s practical experience could inform the kinds of questions that the researchers were asking, and vice versa. RPI did have a program in built ecology, but Dyson and the school wanted to push it further. In SOM’s Carl Galioto, they found a receptive ear. Galioto is the partner in charge of the firm’s technical group, which focuses on building science, digital design, and materials research, as well as construction documents and administration. He explained that his group is always looking for emerging applications—they were early supporters of Andrew Marsh, for example, whose analytical software was recently purchased by Autodesk and is now on the market as EcoTect—and that the collaboration is a natural one. “We don’t want to wait for the market to provide new solutions, or to work on a project-by-project basis,” he said. “We are also interested in things that aren’t yet products.” In CASE, SOM can help influence the development of these new technologies, and bring a distinctly architectural sensibility to the process. “One of the things we bring is the perspective of regular practice, and the aspirations of designers.” This squares with what Dyson and her colleague Jason Vollen believe, that if the material or product is too expensive or tough to install and maintain, it will never fly. “We want to ask questions from an architectural standpoint, not just a technical one,” said Dyson. Vollen added, “Some of these issues could be just material science problems, but they should be architectural ones, too.”

The research underway at CASE is varied in scope and level of development, but it all shares a dual desire to be firmly grounded in the realities of building while trying to push beyond the model of incremental mitigation. Dyson described three rough categories, ranging from a 5-to-10-year time frame from conception to application, all the way to the “science fiction” projects, which aren’t based on getting new products to market. Some, like the dynamic display facade system, are advanced enough that the research team has applied for preliminary patents and are working to incorporate prototypes into real projects.
Scientists have been capturing solar energy for hundreds of years, and solar panels have been around for decades. With the advent of semiconductors and the development of photovoltaic (PV) cells, which transform captured solar energy into electricity, the race has been on to find ways to control solar energy at every level. Today, PV and Building Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV) technologies are applied to provide electrical power, thermal energy, enhanced daylighting, and reduced solar gain technology. CASE researchers are working on a technology that will increase daylighting in a building’s interior while simultaneously reducing unwanted solar gain.

The Integrated Concentrating (IC) Solar Facade System is a completely new model with several advantages over existing daylighting systems, which have been unable to capture solar energy viably while providing diffuse daylight for interior spaces. By transferring the IC technology to a daylighting system within a “double-skin” facade, the system will remove unwanted solar gain from the building envelope before it is transmitted to the interior. The major technological advance that underlies the idea is the miniaturization of PV modules into what they call solar-cell concentrators, which are the modules that make up an IC Solar Facade System. The modules are placed within a glass facade or atrium roof and mounted on an accurate, but inexpensive, tracking mechanism. Because the cells are so much smaller, they must track the sun’s path; therefore, they are embedded with Fresnel-type lenses, which direct and concentrate sunlight onto a smaller PV cell. Furthermore, the system is compatible with existing structural components, encasements, and maintenance procedures.

CASE’s tracking IC Solar Facade System has been demonstrated in several “proof of concept” lab-scale prototypes with multiple cell types. Phase I of this project will include testing a full-scale prototype at a new building at the Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems in Syracuse. Post-occupancy testing of this prototype will provide critical data for assessing operating constraints and developing the future transfer into distributed building systems.
Scientists study the strategies that flora and fauna have developed to flourish in specific—and often dramatic—climatic conditions in an effort to glean information that might inform how we can better adapt to our own climates. After studying the active and passive thermal controls of barrel cacti and termite mounds, a group of CASE researchers led by Jason Vollen hope to use their findings as models for masonry-wall construction. Their proposition is that the structure of barrel cacti and the thermodynamic design of termite mounds offer models for climatically responsive building technology.

The barrel cactus of southern Arizona has one of the highest thermal tolerances of all plants and is capable of regulating its core temperature despite high diurnal temperature fluctuations. These desert succulents store water and operate as living cisterns. Stored water delivers nutrients and serves as a heat sink, absorbing and distributing thermal load. Furthermore, the barrel cactus also has an exterior layer with self-shading spines, a high surface area to circumference ratio, and a liquid thermal mass. Density, location, and the color of the spines also play a significant role in maintaining its thermal equilibrium.

Termites are not capable of regulating their internal temperatures, but they require an environment of 86º F and 80 percent humidity in order to thrive. They achieve this by building shelters, either cathedrals or dome mounds, depending on where they’re located. Cathedral mounds use convective cooling and heating in hot climates. In forests, where radiant heating is not a problem, termites build dome mounds with a thicker wall mass. Of particular interest is their ability to change mound shapes, if environmental circumstances change.

RPI researchers are developing high-performance masonry units that respond to climatic fluctuations in the same way that cacti and termite mounds do. For instance, in one case study, masonry tiles with articulated surfaces can be precisely formed for a given location so that they provide summer shade and allow winter solar gain in the same way that cactus spines do. In another study, tiles vary in thickness depending on where they’re located on the building’s exterior. Like the cathedral mounds, tiles exposed to the summer sun are thin, enabling the masonry to absorb and release heat quickly. In the dome mounds, the tile’s cone is thicker and serves as a heat sink. Preliminary results suggest that the modulation of form, surface geometry, glazing, ventilation, and evaporative cooling can combine to maintain consistent interior temperatures.
ELECTROPOLYMERIC DYNAMIC DAYLIGHTING SYSTEM (EDDS) FOR WINDOWS

Glazing technology has come a long way since uninsulated, single-paned windows barely blocked the elements. Today, curtain-wall systems, especially those with glazing that is electrochromic, or responsive to an electric charge, operate with much greater energy efficiency. A limitation has always been that these systems are either on or off. Researchers at CASE are about to demonstrate how new energy display technology will provide opportunities to achieve even higher levels of geometric and spectral selectivity through Electropolymeric Dynamic Daylighting Systems (EDDS), the next generation of switchable daylighting. In short, imagine glazing in which the frit pattern can grow denser or lighter, or move to follow the angle of the sun.

The research team believes the best way to commercialize EDDS is to build a prototype multilayered, variably translucent, insulated glazing unit (IGU), which would be applicable for residential and commercial use. Prototype testing will determine to what degree the optimization of daylighting on a building’s interior will eliminate glare, reduce electricity use, and ultimately increase energy savings. With regard to glare, existing shading devices generally can’t respond to constantly changing daylight conditions: Even though conventional louvers reduce glare, they also reduce daylight and thus increase the need for electric lighting. EDDS will provide a high level of user control over glare, while simultaneously offering up to 16 transparency options within a triple-glazed window unit. Sensors would control the level of transparency on different surfaces within the IGU, bringing a flood of diffuse sunlight into interiors, while intercepting the direct rays.

An equally important issue is heat gain. In an EDDS-based triple-glazed IGU, sensors could switch among the layers, allowing it to either shed heat gain or retain it passively. In the summer months, for instance, one polymeric layer could switch on to block infrared rays while maintaining visibility. In colder months, another layer would trap infrared rays in the window cavity to provide passive solar heating, while blocking glare.

Because the EDDS system creates a pattern that can continuously respond to stimulus like sunlight (left, top and bottom) it presents an option for glazing that is both dynamic (top) and can be highly attuned to its environment (center). A triple-glazed unit would contain several polymeric layers that would selectively filter or trap heat as needed (above).
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Model City: Buildings and Projects by Paul Rudolph for Yale and New Haven
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Through February 6, 2009

“A Vision” of the future,” said The New York Times, “now an eyesore.” That was the headline of a 1979 article about a decrepit and 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 themes: Critiquing Modernism, Monumental Urbanism, Prefabrication, and Denouement, are complemented by a lively archive of documents and ephemera, and 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?

The housing project featured in the Times and reconstructed in the show bore the irresistible name of Oriental Masonic Gardens. Those adjectives precisely evoke the exotic, hermetic, fantastic, and cryptic affect of Rudolph’s work when viewed through present-day eyes. Like his 1960s contemporaries Eero Saarinen, John Lautner, Minoru Yamasaki, and others, Rudolph translated the modernist orthodoxies of the International Style into a personal vision at once rigorous and mannered, relying on the impact of deeply modeled ferroconcrete juxtaposed with sleek glass and steel filigree (and the occasional dash of orange leather). Unlike those men, he was in close contact with the architects who would dethrone him and establish the pop-historicist style that came to be known... continued on page 31

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 research... continued on page 30

Suitaloon (1967)
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. Converted to Head Start centers, senior care facilities, indoor go-kart tracks, and libraries.

or and exterior architects of that project. We are accustomed to reuse in the city—former sweatshops housing fashion labels and lofts for printing presses sheltering ad agencies—but pay less attention to reuse elsewhere. Still, it is there. Perhaps you have to be a certain age to recognize the many former Howard Johnson’s restaurants or A&P grocery stores that now vend dinette sets or carpet remnants. Not far from my home in New Jersey, the steep blue roof of an erstwhile International House of Pancakes sells iPhones as an AT&T store. Reuse along the highway will increasingly become a fact of life as more big boxes become available in the current economy. As I write this, the Circuit City has just announced bankruptcy and plans to close more than a hundred stores. And Christensen’s case studies raise more general questions she doesn’t answer: How durable are these buildings? What is the responsibility of the big chains? What can law or planning do to make big box reuse easier, perhaps by studying the modular mode of malls? (Pull out a Gap, plug it in a Delia’s as fashions change.)

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, L.A.D., AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.


SHUNI BOSE IS AN INTERN AT A.N.
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 adja-cent 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.

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