

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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LPC WANTS HEIGHT CONCESSIONS ON 980 MADISON



PHOTO OF RENDERING BY MATT CHABAN

## Hold the Champagne

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Lord's Media Center (1994).



COURTESY FUTURE SYSTEMS

## JAN KAPLICKY, 1937–2009

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THINK AGAIN

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The brute fact is that—like the shot of adrenalin to Uma Thurman's character in *Pulp Fiction*—the \$825 billion stimulus package has to be delivered fast and straight to the heart of the problem: joblessness. Even fast-track architecture doesn't normally operate at that speed. Some advocacy groups, namely America 2050, a national coalition of regional planners, scholars, and policy-makers focusing on innovative ways to solve infrastructure, economic development, and environmental challenges, is warning that the money must not be spent all at once, but rather in phases that allow for strategic planning, job training, construction, and engineering evaluations.

And that's where architects can regain some ground. In a timely book about the relevance of architects, *Architecture Depends* (MIT, 2009), Jeremy Till, the dean of architecture and built environment at the University of Westminster in the UK, says that architects have to shelve the notion that they are in the business of solving problems where the answer is almost always new construction. For if architects are not part of first imaginings, he writes, they are already hopelessly out of the game: "It is normally assumed that the most creative part of design is concerned with the building as object, hence the fixation with formal innovation, but it may be argued that the most important and most creative part of the process is the formulation of the brief."

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**HARD TIMES** continued from front page

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"It's fair to say that so far, there have been two main parts to the meetings," said Suzanne Mecs, director of membership at the AIA—the practical and local issues like setting up a site for jobs and resumes, and the larger questions around advocacy and rethinking practice. "But the next step is to tease them apart more and focus the meetings." According to Abby Suckle, AIA chapter secretary and one of the series' organizers, this means that there will be a focus on portfolio review and resume building sessions, training in giving presentations, and review classes for the licensing exam.

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LETTERS

**NOT AN ALTERNATIVE**

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Your readers might also find it useful to know that the public testimony before the commission in support of the lenticular design

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AN IS THRILLED TO DELIVER THE EAVESDROP BATON—OH, DARE SAY CUDGEL, DOI—INTO THE DEXTROUS HANDS OF **SARA HART** WHO HAS LONG IMPRESSED MANY WITH HER WICKEDLY APROPOS SENSE OF HUMOR. WE COUNT ON YOU ALL TO SLIP HER INNUENDO-LOADED EMAILS, SECRET HANDSHAKES, AND ANY FLOATING INFO ACHING TO LAND IN PRINT.

## PENGUINS IN THE POOL ROOM

The Penguin Club lives! Seen at the Four Seasons on inauguration night was a reconvening of the so-called Penguin Club, the group of once-young avant-garde architects whom Philip Johnson had regularly hosted for all-male, black-tie dinners at the Century Club from the mid-1970s onward. The lineup of aging superstars included, among others, **Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, Harry Cobb, Jacquelin Robertson, Bob Stern, Steven Holl, Bernard Tschumi, and Jorge Silvetti.** Conspicuous by his absence was charter-member Penguin **Peter Eisenman**, but conspicuous by his presence was Graves, whose enormous motorized wheelchair necessitated the group's dining at a long table in the northeast corner of the Pool Room, rather than in the private space they had requested. According to Four Seasons co-owner **Alex von Bidder**, these events are an ongoing series, though they are not bankrolled, as had been widely speculated, by a bequest from Philip Johnson, whose entire estate along with the art-auction proceeds of his late longtime partner, David Whitney, went to the endowment for the Glass House.

## NEW BLOGS IN TOWN

A new architectural/design blog has arrived to entertain and inform you. Edited by design writers (and AN contributors) **Eva Hagberg** and **Ian Volner**, Edifical (edifical.com) is the latest addition to Breaking Media's stable of sharply written industry-specific blogs, which includes Above the Law, Fashionista, and Dealbreaker. The content will be gossipy, but it will also include back stories about projects, people, deal-making, and all kinds of design extranea. According to Hagberg, the editors plan to critique the critics and introduce new voices. "We'll present the up-close play-by-play and the long view," she said. "There will be roundups, link dumps, and essays. Edifical will be personal, political, and polemical." No doubt it will be all of those things and, if successful, make money for Breaking Media. Best of luck! Meanwhile, over in the serious and sober non-profit world, the Architectural League of New York went live with its own blog on January 5. Underwritten by the NYC Cultural Innovation Fund of the Rockefeller Foundation, Urban Omnibus (urbanomnibus.net) will feature "multimedia content to showcase design innovation, critical analysis, and local expertise" with the aim of encouraging "a more inclusive, more sustainable, more beautiful city that could be." Bring on the multimedia. We're parched!

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**HOLD THE CHAMPAGNE** continued from front page do with who the developer is, or who the architect is," commissioner Margery Perlmutter said, referring to developer Aby Rosen and architect Norman Foster, the team behind the project. "It's a good piece of architecture, and that should be encouraged in New York City."

But beyond Perlmutter's general approval and Commissioner Christopher Moore's prurient endorsement—"I wouldn't want to see a timid design," he said. "If you've got a great bottom, you should have a great top"—the commissioners once again agreed that the proposal was too tall.

It has been a long slog for Rosen and Foster, who first presented plans to add to the famed Parke-Bernet Building in 2006. The 22-story elliptical glass tower they sought to build atop the five-story, full-block masonry building caused quite a stir, attracting famous supporters and detractors before being voted down by the commission in January 2007.

The team then returned last July with a five-story addition designed to match the proportions of the building below, which was panned by a number of locals who testified against it. Fewer stars turned up on that occasion, though Tom Wolfe, who lives across the street from the proposed development, did make an appearance.

When the team returned last month, they presented essentially the same plan, except that the aluminum rods of the addition's sunscreen had been lightened from a terra cotta color to one that Brandon Haw, director of Foster + Partners New York office,

described as "champagne," and a parapet on the top floor had been set back, as opposed to being flush with the street wall as originally proposed.

Every commissioner applauded the considerable thought and detailing that went into the design. "It's very elegant, as we've seen before," said commissioner Stephen Byrnes. But, as most commissioners agreed, there was one major issue. "I think it has a real scale problem," Byrnes added. The major challenge facing the commission was that they wanted further concessions from Rosen at the same time they applaud his desire to restore the old gallery.

"The fact that this building has been so screwed up, with the addition of the third floor windows and the changing of the fourth and the awkward penthouse, that buys you a legitimate addition," Byrnes continued. "The question is, how much of an addition?" The consensus seemed to be two stories, with possible setbacks from there, but the special Madison Avenue zoning district presents a very tight zoning envelope, as Rosen's attorney pointed out.

"The question is, is it reconcilable with the landmarks law we are required to uphold as well as the precedents we set every week?" asked commission chair Robert Tierney. "I think this is achievable, but this is not yet it, and the issue remains one of scale." After the meeting adjourned, Rosen held a half-hour meeting with his team in a conference room off the hearing room. When he finally exited, he seemed flustered. Asked about the future of the project, he said simply, "We're studying that." **MATT CHABAN**

### > TRIGO RESTAURANT & BAR

268 West Broadway  
Tel: 212-925-1600  
Designer: Angel & Kunnos



FELIX DE VOSS

The newly constructed, 4,500-square-foot structure that houses Trigo was inspired by Tribeca's history as a brawny industrial district. Designed by Albert Angel and Elle Kunnos of Angel & Kunnos, this addition to the downtown dining scene packs plenty of grandeur yet conveys an inviting aura despite its size. With 20-foot floor-to-ceiling windows and materials like iron latticework, black-and-white stone tiles, steel-and-brass detailing, and antiqued mirrors—the space reflects the turn-of-the-century food markets that inspire Trigo's Mediterranean-infused cuisine. Working on a tight schedule—"The fact that the clients contracted us to design Trigo in five weeks, from schematic design to construction documents, is rather startling," Angel dryly told AN—the team divided the space into three areas. A casual meeting space welcomes guests as they arrive, with a brass bar decorated by a back-lit iron curtain. Next, a large antipasti table gives diners an up-close look at the restaurant's earth-stone hearth. Finally, the main dining area is illuminated by the glow of three custom-made, bare-bulb chandeliers—a bit of old Tribeca, grandly deconstructed. **DANIELLE RAGO**

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**PARADE'S END** continued from front page design would include locating large portions of the museum underground and "significantly downsizing" the entire project, which was conceived to be a work of contemporary architecture of the scale and stature of the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park by Herzog & de Meuron.

Last summer, the Presidio Trust, a federal corporation established to oversee the 1,491-acre national park, had recommended the Fishers' plan to build a \$150 million museum for their collections alongside a historic parade ground known as the Main Post, to be designed by New York's Gluckman Mayner Architects. A hodgepodge of historic buildings from five different eras now stand on the site, including brick barracks from the 1890s and a Mission-style officers' club. The Gluckman Mayner proposal was a two-story shifted glass box, designed to mirror the formal geometries of the Main Post and

echo the white-columned arcades of nearby barracks with vertical white mullions.

Following a prolonged and complicated environmental impact review and public concerns that the Trust had not fully addressed the potential impact of a new museum located within a National Historic Landmark District, the San Francisco Planning Commission wrote a letter to the city attorney's office arguing that "the design of the proposed contemporary art museum and the associated landscape plan is too stark of a contrast to the buildings and spaces that would flank it."

On December 5, Donald Fisher agreed to consider major alterations to the Gluckman Mayner design, including different materials, a reduced scale with some portions underground, and relocation to a site about 100 yards across the road. According to a spokesperson at Gluckman Mayner, "We worked with a large amount of flexibility. We were not

pig-headed, nor did we say that it had to be white masonry and glass." He added that the design was undertaken even as the Trust was still developing its design guidelines, further complicating the process.

"The Trust was a partner in finding the site that we designed for," the spokesperson said. "If we had all seen that a different site was a solution, we would have gone down that road." As for putting much of the museum underground, he said, "Don said from the start that he wanted to build a museum because he never wanted his collection to be stashed in basement storage." He added that it was "a bit of a surprise" to hear that WRNS, formerly the associate architects on the Gluckman Mayner scheme, was now redesigning the project. Calls to WRNS Studio had not been returned as of press time. Tourk said that a new scheme would be released in March.

**JULIE V. IOVINE AND ERIC LUM**

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Green architecture has long shed its reputation for stodgy looks, but the field still struggles with the perception that it is more expensive than traditional construction. Now comes Syracuse University, which has unveiled the winners of its design competition, "From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes": three housing schemes that marry design and sustainable strategies—and can be built for \$150,000. The three winning teams are New York-based ARO/Della Valle Bernheimer, Cook + Fox, and Philadelphia's Onion Flats, and the initial plan is to build one each of the winning designs on Syracuse's Near West Side.

The program is a partnership between the school of architecture, local not-for-profit housing group Home HeadQuarters, and the public-private Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems, and the latest in a series of initiatives that dean Mark Robbins hopes will strengthen the school's connection to its city ("Can Architecture Save Syracuse?" AN 07\_04.16.2008).

"The university can provide seed capital to develop strategies in a way that the marketplace can't afford to," he explained. "If we make research and design a part of the curriculum, we are building capacity for the students and for the community." The jury included the Museum of Modern Art's Barry Bergdoll, David Lewis of Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis, Julie Eizenberg of Koning Eizenberg Architecture, Bethaida González of the Syracuse Common Council, Robbins, and local resident Carol Horan, among others.

**Top: Cook + Fox's *Live-Work Home*; Above: ARO/Della Valle Bernheimer's *R-House*.**

The initial rollout is modest, according to Robbins: Home HeadQuarters will build one of each design. "It feels as if we ought to be building 180, but we hope to move the conversation [about housing] forward," he said. The three winning designs will undoubtedly do that. ARO/Della Valle Bernheimer's *R-House* is a single-family, polycarbonate-and-aluminum gabled structure with an airtight envelope and a highly efficient heating system. Cook + Fox wanted its *Live-Work Home* to provide an alternative to the plethora of single-family housing in the area, and so developed a loft-like building with moveable partitions wrapped with a perforated sun-screen. Onion Flats' design is a 1,100-square-foot house that can also be modified into two duplex units, and uses active venting to dramatically reduce summer cooling costs. All three projects consider sustainability in the broadest sense of the word, and try to address the social networks and financial realities of the neighborhood.

"We look at the designs as a suite of possible solutions, rather than one single answer," said Robbins. "We are trying to model different approaches, and not just focus on new construction." He explained that students are also working on design-build renovation projects to combat the sense that it is generally cheaper to tear down an older structure. "We are really trying to develop a community design process. Over the course of the next two years, we plan to develop an array of tools." **AG**

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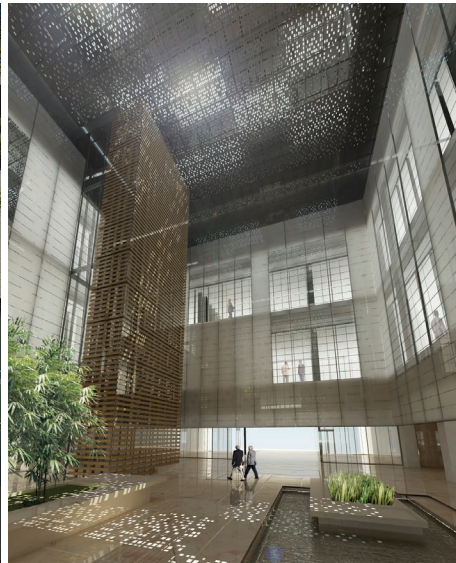


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RENDERINGS COURTESY HOK

In difficult economic times, large firms often have an advantage: A worldwide network of contacts and an agile business model can allow big firms to adapt to changing conditions. For HOK, which has 26 offices and roughly 1,800 designers worldwide, including 135 in its New York office, the firm tries to shift employees within the company as divisions grow or shrink according to changing economic conditions, rather than lay people off and rehire. “That saves us training times, as well as building up institutional and professional knowledge within the firm,” said Ken Drucker, design partner for the New York office. In the downturn, HOK has thus far had few layoffs due to the strength of its transportation and healthcare divisions, and like many firms they plan

to aggressively pursue public work. The firm was also an early entrant into the Saudi Arabian market, which like the United Arab Emirates before it, is trying to diversify its economy beyond petro-dollars. The Saudi development strategy can be seen in two of the firm’s largest current projects, a new science university in Thuwal and a new airport in Doha.

Unlike Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, which has multiple partners in each office (sometimes running distinct studios), HOK has only one design partner within each office. Still, the New York office, located on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the 20s, is not particularly hierarchical, and an informal atmosphere pervades. Collaborations across offices are common, particularly on large-scale

projects that engage different sectors.

Though they are one of the world’s largest architecture firms, Drucker believes HOK does not always receive proper recognition for the quality of their design. He is confident that this will change. The firm’s lucrative sports division HOK Sport recently and amicably split from the main company, which Drucker believes will help the company clarify its image as a leader in progressive, sustainable design. “We’re not just about historicist stadiums,” he said. The firm regularly competes with the other American three-letter firms, but also with major internationally renowned design firms like Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, Rafael Viñoly Architects, and Foster + Partners.

ALAN G. BRAKE

KING ABDULLAH UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
THUWAL, SAUDI ARABIA

For the new science university, part of the Kingdom’s efforts to build up their educational sector, HOK is providing complete services that include master planning, architectural, landscape, and interior design, as well as facilities and laboratory programming. The nearly 2500-acre site includes labs, classrooms, and a research park. Despite the harsh climate, HOK is designing a variety of indoor and outdoor meeting spaces, including a shaded “pedestrian spine.” The project relies on both passive and active sustainable features, including cooling towers and roof-mounted photovoltaics. Multiple HOK offices are designing the project, including New York.

BMW NORTH AMERICA  
WOODCLIFF LAKE, NEW JERSEY

This 220,000-square-foot facility serves as a center for technical training and engineering for the German luxury carmaker’s North American Division. The three-building complex surrounds a Great Lawn used for corporate events and as a display area for new products. A cafeteria building may be added later, filling out and animating the corporate campus. The site also includes a large parking garage, which helped preserve land on this ecologically sensitive site. Generous overhangs supported by thin columns allow for maximum day lighting while preventing heat gain.

BOSTON SEAPORT SQUARE  
BOSTON, MA

This two-tower, mixed-use development includes office, residential, hotel, retail, and educational uses. Set within a Kohn Pedersen Fox master-planned portion of the Boston Seaport Development, the project will become a major link between downtown and Boston Harbor, with sweeping views of both. HOK’s design—interlocking volumes on top of street level bases with roof gardens—breaks up the massing of each 162,000-square-foot building. A pedestrian road bisects the projects, creating a human-scaled public space, in contrast to the adjacent service roads.

HARLEM HOSPITAL  
NEW YORK

During an ongoing renovation and reorganization process, the hospital discovered a series of WPA murals depicting cultural life in the neighborhood that had been covered over in an earlier renovation. HOK suggested incorporating these images into the building’s new facades. The enlarged images will be printed on the building’s glass cladding, creating a new and highly recognizable identity for the complex. HOK’s healthcare division provided everything from medical planning to interior design for the project, which is set to open in 2010, rationalizing a jumble of buildings dating from the beginning of last century.

NEW SONGDO CITY  
SOUTH KOREA

This block of a massive new development features a 45- and a 50-story residential tower set atop three-story retail and commercial buildings with roof gardens. The towers’ twisted form is built around a strong concrete structural core, allowing for 20-foot column-free interior spans. The curved facades are also designed to reduce wind loads. The low-rise commercial buildings are shaded with metal mesh screens to reduce heat gain, and the designers will seek a LEED Gold designation for the block.



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BOSTON SEAPORT SQUARE



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## Q&amp;A: KENNETH LEVIEN



**With 32 years experience in the architecture business, Kenneth Levien has seen more than one recession come and go. In 1992, he founded Levien & Company, a real estate project management and owner's representation firm that has completed more than 300 projects for clients that range from nonprofits, such as independent schools and churches, to residential and hospitality developers, to private corporations, to city governments. He also serves on the Board of Governors of the New York Building Foundation, a branch of the New York Building Congress that promotes the industry through research, education, and philanthropy. Recently, *AN* sat down with the architect to get his perspective on the economic downturn and what to expect in the coming months.**

**It seems pretty much a foregone conclusion that times are tough all around, but how has it affected your business specifically?**

During past recessions, not-for-profits, which make up about 75 percent of our business, have proven to be somewhat immune to the ups and downs of real estate. They are generally able to collect money from Wall Street during the high times as well as the low. This recession is a bit different in that the bankers, as well as the industry, are screwed—it's a double whammy. The bankers have seen their net worth significantly reduced, and the credit market has dried up, so they're not as easy about donating money as they might normally be. Our institutional clients are worried, but they're not flat-out sunk because for the most part, they already have pledges in hand from before the market tanked. All of the not-for-profit work, our charter schools and churches, will continue to move forward.

**Are your not-for-profit clients making any cutbacks or concessions as to how they proceed with projects?**

Of course. But it depends where the project is in its schedule. The pre-construction process for a significant not-for-profit project takes from 18 months to three years before being ready to go. If a client has \$20 million

they raised before everything went to hell, it makes sense to continue the design and pre-construction process. We don't have a single not-for-profit project that has stopped in this phase of the work. Projects that are in the process of construction are acting very carefully. What we're doing generally is breaking the projects into smaller packages so that there are achievable goals. For example, if you're doing a renovation and adding a new wing, you might be able to do the wing now and hold off on the renovation until another time. You bifurcate the project. Some of the projects on our board have been broken up into as many as eight phases, which means they take longer to complete, but you have to adjust for these problems.

**What about other types of projects?**

What we are not seeing, what has more or less stopped altogether, is the commercial work. There are no new corporate interiors, no apartment buildings, no hospitality or retail work. Either they've been killed altogether or significantly scaled back, so much so that they barely resemble the originally proposed development. We were working on a hotel project that involved the conversion of a large older building with a new hotel tower coming out of it. Once the crisis hit, the lenders reviewed the situation and said you can have money to finish the renovation of the original building, but you can't do the tower.

**Do you think that construction prices will drop and offer any salvation?**

I think it's interesting that people have this perception that construction costs are going to drop precipitously, but it's a misunderstanding. With the drying up of the market, the commodity prices of materials like steel and concrete have come down ten percent or so, but they're not going to drop any lower than that. Manufacturers will close plants, lay off people, and generally reduce production to keep prices stable. Labor in itself will create some kind of accommodation in the next couple of months. Labor can be between 50 and 60 percent of project costs. There are 130,000 construction workers unemployed right now in New York City. That number is supposed to go down to 105,000 unemployed in 2010. The unions will make some pay cuts to keep people working, enough that you could knock maybe ten percent off your overall construction cost, but it's not going to plummet 30 or 40 percent. That hasn't happened in the past, and it's not going to happen now. The stimulus package will hopefully make a difference. A significant number of my projects have made requests, and some are ready to start construction this summer. **AARON SEWARD**

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**JAN KAPLICKÝ, 1937-2009**  
continued from front page

**EVA JIRICNA, ARCHITECT:** We met in 1961 when we were both students at university. It was a New Year's Eve party at a house somewhere out in the countryside in Czechoslovakia. There was lots of singing and dancing; it was a very swinging party, and he was so very tall. We ended up on the couch—talking about architecture. That was my first encounter with Jan. We were together again in London after we had both left Czechoslovakia—I left before the '68 invasion, and he left after—and we lived and worked together for years.

It was amazing to watch him work. He turned every thought upside down: There was nothing normal about him, either his designing or his personality. He created his own world and moved into it, but it was not something he could describe consciously. From the outside, his design looked like the image of something organic, a purely emotional way of reflecting nature that couldn't easily be called architecture. What it was, really, was Jan's uncontrolled, irrational answer to the reality in front

of him. For instance, when a client asked him for a fireplace, he put a hole in the ground with a flame coming out of it. And when he was first thinking about Lord's Media Center, he sketched a TV on three legs. He was a complete character on all levels; there was nothing ordinary about him.

**DEYAN SUDJIC, CRITIC:** I used to meet with Jan over lunch to complain about the world. It was around 1983, about the time Jan had just been laid off in one of those periodic meltdowns at London architecture offices. I had just bought an apartment in Maida Vale ("Little Venice," to friends) in one of the big hulking houses there that had been cut up into apartments. And though it had high ceilings and large windows, it was quite sad and rundown and needed a transformation.

As I was just starting out as an architecture critic, I thought I should put my money where my mouth was and so asked Jan to design what turned out to be the first job for Future Systems. He was working with Eva Jiricna then, and using builders that were on much bigger jobs so they just

slipped this in between.

I didn't interfere at all; and what he designed was a spaceship indoors. There were aluminum floors at different heights that did not meet the walls; the kitchen was a culinary station made entirely of fiberglass (you couldn't put down anything hot without it going molten) and the doors were portholes. The difference between the tame building outside and what he did quite literally made people's jaw drop. It was Jan at his most turbo-charged high-tech. And he did it on the budget I had, who knows how.

Unfortunately, with a toddler on all fours crawling on the aluminum floors, it didn't really work, and I had to sell. I offered Jan the chance to buy it, but he didn't have the cash, and I couldn't sell it in that state; it had to be normalized. But it is well documented in photographs, and very well remembered.

**PAUL FINCH, EDITOR:** Kaplický represented a late reprise of the flux of émigré continental European architects who had made such an impact on British modernism in the 1930s, including Erich Mendelsohn, Serge Chermayeff, Berthold Lubetkin, and Erno Goldfinger. At a time when British high tech was emerging to challenge the tired architecture of the postwar period, Kaplický arrived as a fully formed standard bearer for technology, precision drawings, and the understanding of materials and structure that had characterized Czech modernism in its heyday. The result was a meeting of mind and context that propelled his professional trajectory into the rarefied atmosphere of true iconoclasm.

Additional tributes can be found at [www.archpaper.com/kaplickyobit](http://www.archpaper.com/kaplickyobit)

Left: House in Wales (1994); right: Selfridges in Birmingham, England (1999).



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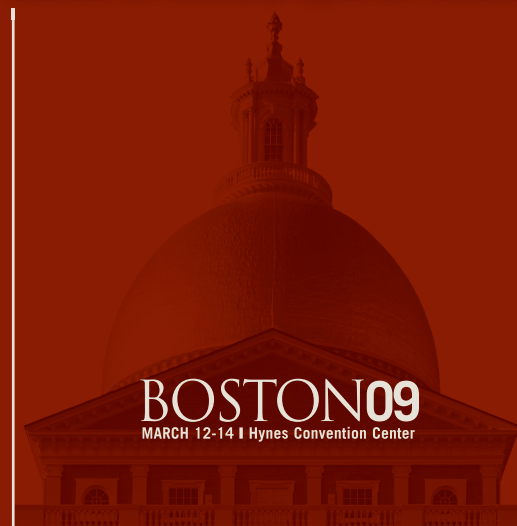
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## IN DETAIL: TONI STABILE STUDENT CENTER

MARBLE  
FAIRBANKS  
WITH  
FRONT

If Columbia University's prestigious Journalism School had everything important—Ivy League pedigree, premium tuition fees, famous and successful alumni, a gorgeous McKim, Meade & White-designed home—it didn't have one thing it very much needed: a casual student space and welcoming public area for visitors. Administrators decided to remedy this by expanding into a small, 1,000-square-foot interstice between its beaux-arts edifice and a neighboring dormitory of the same vintage.

All contemporary additions to historic structures face a similar challenge, how to build with the times while respecting the context. The solution these days is often to use minimalist steel and glass that seems to vanish. Such was architecture firm Marble Fairbanks' solution to the J-School's Toni Stabile Student Center. But in addition to satisfying Columbia's request to blend the pavilion—which houses a cafe and lounge—into the 19<sup>th</sup>-century surrounds, the architects also wanted to provide the flexibility of opening the space to the outside during clement weather. This meant that not only would the project need vast expanses of transparent, mullion-free glass, but also moving parts, a tall order that led Marble Fairbanks to call on facade consulting firm extraordinaire Front.

Together, the team designed a wall for the project composed primarily of two mammoth pieces of glass, each 8 feet tall by 19 feet wide, one of which can ascend behind the other to open the cafe to the campus, much like a double-hung window. Front sourced the glass from a manufacturer in China that was capable of producing such large pieces with low-e coatings. The panels—which are low iron for maximum

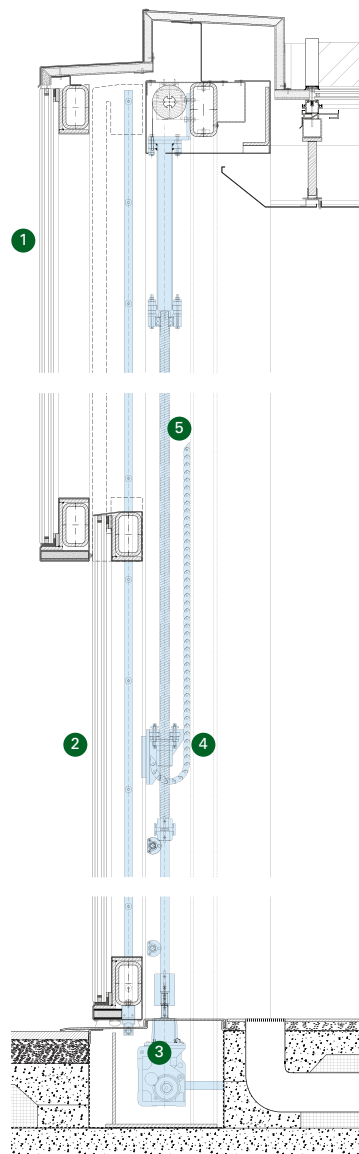
transparency, double-laminated, and heat-strengthened—were glazed to aluminum strips that were then welded to frames of 7-by-3½-by-½-inch structural tube steel and attached to columns of the same material and dimension.

Raising and lowering this hefty assembly—each panel weighs somewhere on the order of two tons—required mechanical assistance. For this, Front turned to Argentine metallic structure specialist Tisi, which developed a system for the project akin to the mechanisms that manipulate airplane hangar doors. Threaded connections at the edge of the moveable portion of the wall hook to stainless steel screw jacks, each 20 feet tall and one inch thick. The screw jacks connect to a horizontal axle powered by an electric motor embedded in the cafe's floor slab. When the motor turns the axle, the axle turns the screw jacks, and the panel raises or lowers.

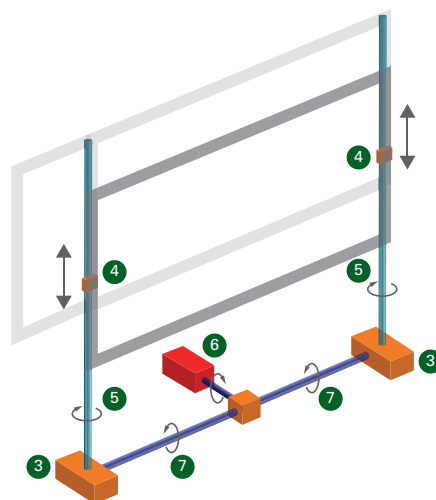
Marble Fairbanks was

conscientious about not putting too much of a strain on the energy grid with their moveable architecture, so the motor was kept small (it's rated at five horsepower), the inclination on the screw jacks was kept gradual, and it takes around four to five minutes to fully raise and lower the thing. If students are feeling guilty about the environment, or if there's an outage or malfunction, they can also raise and lower the panel with caloric power via a manual override crank, which, with its additional gears, ups the open/close time to about half an hour. Of course, there's no real need for a quick closing, unless one were trying to beat a fellow student to a scoop. But yellow journalism and its vicious tactics will not reappear at Columbia, at least on Marble Fairbanks' watch: Laser and pressure sensors ensure that no aspiring journalists will be flattened or maimed by the wall.

AARON SEWARD



EDUARD HUEBER/ARCH PHOTO, INC.



- 1 Fixed panel
- 2 Operable panel
- 3 Gear coupling
- 4 Ballscrew
- 5 Screwjack
- 6 Motor
- 7 Axle



NINE FIRMS ON SHORTLIST FOR NEW LONDON EMBASSY

# SOUTH BANK BOUND



COURTESY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Making good on plans to desert its storied Eero Saarinen building and raise a fortified compound in London's South Bank district, on January 2, the U.S. Department of State announced a shortlist of nine American architects to design a billion-dollar London embassy.

In hopes that the project might prove as distinguished as Saarinen's structure—itsself the product of a competition in 1955—the jury picked heavy-hitters. The full list includes Richard Meier & Partners; Kohn Pedersen Fox; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Pei Cobb Freed & Partners; Perkins + Will; Gwathmey Siegel & Associates; Kallmann McKinnell & Wood; Morphosis; and KieranTimberlake.

Having winnowed the field from 37, the jury, which included Frances Halsband, Richard Rogers, James Carpenter, Michael Pride, and Peter Rolland, will select up to five finalists to submit formal designs, and expects to name the winner by the end of August.

The competition aims for a building that reflects "the best of modern design, incorporates the latest in energy-efficient building techniques, and celebrates the values of freedom and democracy," officials said in a statement.

While plans for the move have long been in the making, it was only last October that Ambassador Robert Tuttle officially confirmed the South Bank scenario. "We looked at all our

options, including renovation of our current building on Grosvenor Square," he said in a statement. "In the end, we realized that the goal of a modern, secure, and environmentally sustainable embassy could best be met by constructing a new facility."

The State Department has signed a conditional agreement with developer Ballymore to acquire the five-acre South Bank site in Wandsworth. The project "is going to be the anchor to a redevelopment of the area," said Jonathan Blyth, chief of staff of the State Department's Bureau of Overseas Building Operations.

"The goal is that the American taxpayers will not pay for this embassy," Blyth said.

The project is to be funded with \$500 million already secured from the sale of an annex next to the existing embassy, plus proceeds expected from the sale of the Saarinen building.

The fate of that 1960 structure, which the State Department put on the block last year, is still unclear. Considered among the most significant examples of Saarinen's work in Europe, the building is expected to be razed to make way for apartments. Blyth told *AN* that purchase offers are under review and a decision is expected in the "very near future." A plea to list the building as historically significant has not yet been acted upon by English Heritage.

According to Cushman & Wakefield, which is advising on the property's disposition, what is technically being offered for sale is the State Department's leasehold interest in the Saarinen building. The lease, granted by the Grosvenor Estate in 1954, is for a term of 999 years, "with the rent fixed at one peppercorn per annum for the whole term." Considering that the property is thought to be worth several hundred million dollars, that's not a bad deal at all.

JB & DR

BSA APPROVES CONTROVERSIAL TOWER'S PLANS FOR 16 STORIES

# WILLIAMSBURG GETS HIGHER

The Finger Building will rise again! After a court-ordered halt on construction three years ago, the hulking and semi-enclosed ten-story frame at 133-41 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Williamsburg will resume its upward progress. In December, the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA), the New York City council that grants exceptions to the zoning laws, approved the developer's plan to build a total of 16 stories.

When developer Mendel Brach and architect Robert Scarano rushed its foundations into the ground to beat zoning changes that would limit the tower to ten stories, the project became a poster child for the fight against out-of-scale development in Brooklyn. But it wasn't neighborhood activists who halted the Finger in its tracks; it was a lawsuit filed in 2005 by competing real

estate mogul Scott Spector, whose adjacent property was encroached upon by the too-big-for-its-block condo ("Stubbed Finger," *AN* 08\_05.09.2007).

That lawsuit recently went up in smoke, when HSBC Bank bought out both Brach and Spector. All that remained in the project's way was an application put before the BSA by the community groups Neighbors Allied for Good Growth and People's Firehouse. The application challenged the legality of the DOB-issued building permit, alleging that at the time construction began, Brach had not secured Spector's approval to use his rooftops as open space for the Finger's tenants—a key requirement for the project's height. The BSA overturned the application, stating that Brach had provided the DOB with all

necessary documentation, and even if the permissions to use neighboring roofs were forged (as Spector alleged in his suit), it was not the DOB's obligation to vet their authenticity. The open space issue remains, however, though it won't slow construction: The BSA has stated that before the DOB would issue a certificate of occupancy, tenant access to open space must be proven. **AS**



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# TRADING UP



Creating the appearance of effortless takes precision. In the built environment, this means inspired design and craftsmanship. In the business environment, it means streamlining operations to rise above the rest. That's why Bank of America challenged **Gensler** to design a staircase uniting its new trading floors at **One Bryant Park**. Fabricated by A-Val Architectural Metal Corporation and erected by Empire City Iron Works, its illuminated steel and glass construction is more than ornament. It represents the free flow of ideas. It represents mobility and agility. It represents how to get to the top.

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## DUMBO TOWER GETS CB2 NOD AMID BATTLE OVER BRIDGE VIEWS



COURTESY TWO TREES

## DOCK STREET DUSTUP

For five years now, developers David and Jed Walentas have been at loggerheads with community groups over their last undeveloped parcel in Dumbo: a site of nearly an acre near Brooklyn's historic waterfront. On one side stands the Walentas family and their plans for a mixed-use building with Dumbo's first affordable apartments and a 300-student public middle school. In the opposing camp are residents who fear that the project's 18-story tower would wreck majestic views of the Brooklyn Bridge.

On January 14, the Walentas family and their firm Two Trees Management claimed a victory when Brooklyn Community Board 2 approved the plan in a 30-7 vote. But the board's decision also rallied opponents, who call the 184-foot tower an intrusion upon a national treasure. "This building would dramatically change the view forever," said Sheryl Buchholz, president of the Dumbo Neighborhood Association. "Once it's gone, it's gone."

Known as Dock Street Dumbo, the \$200 million project is designed by long-

time Walentas collaborators Beyer Blinder Belle, and is a revamped version of the family's previous proposal for the site, which was shelved amid community protest in 2004. That plan placed the building's high-rise wing almost parallel with the bridge, and just 70 feet away, owing to the tightly constricted site. "That meant we were very limited in how we could mass the building above," said Laura Cheng, an architect at Two Trees. "What resulted was more substantial view blockage both from and of the bridge."

Since that time, the developer acquired an adjacent property that added more than 12,000 square feet to the site, creating an almost square footprint bounded by Water Street, Dock Street, and Front Street. That, in turn, allowed designers to rotate the structure 90 degrees. Now, with 325 rental units (65 of them affordable), the highrise wing is to be 100 feet from the bridge, while frontage directly facing the roadway has been reduced from 200 to 45 feet. The structure, which steps down toward the bridge's main span, also reflects the early-

20<sup>th</sup>-century concrete warehouses that give Dumbo its industrial character. "We're using massing, proportions, materials, and detailing that speak to those buildings," said Cheng.

But some neighbors aren't buying it, and council member David Yassky has jumped into the fray to demand a lower-scale structure on the site, likening the building to the former Verizon tower at 375 Pearl Street that dominates the bridge's Manhattan approach. (In a letter to Community Board 2, Jed Walentas called the comparison "outrageous," noting that the Verizon tower is three times as tall as the planned Dock Street building. He also told the board that lower density on the site "makes the project economically infeasible.") Cheng added that Two Trees had extensively studied view corridors through a series of physical models and a 3-D animation that shows multiple perspectives from the bridge. "We're very cognizant of how important that relationship is," she said.

Plans for the site, which must be rezoned for residential use, were scheduled to make their next stop at a hearing before Borough President Marty Markowitz on January 27. As the debate moves through the land-use review process, opponents have vowed to broaden their front. "It's not even a community fight and it's not even a New York fight anymore," said Buchholz. "The Brooklyn Bridge is one of the most revered landmarks in this country. This wouldn't be going on next to the Eiffel Tower." **JEFF BYLES**

## AT DEADLINE

## GHOST OF LIBERTY STREET

The former Deutsche Bank Building at 130 Liberty Street has haunted Ground Zero for years now, its abatement mired in fiascos, among them a blaze that claimed the lives of two firefighters. On December 23, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau handed down a scathing report on the fire and other shortcomings that led to the indictment of three contractors at the site for their negligence, followed days later by the indictment of another for bilking more than \$1 million from the project. Though it was considered a possibility, the city escaped being charged for its failure to properly inspect the site. The city did apologize for its failings, however, which could leave it open to civil suits. The Bloomberg administration also agreed to create a new inspection unit for highrise demolitions within the fire department. The good news: The contractor promised to have the building dismantled by the end of October.

## IVY LEAGUES ON ICE

Just as the country's top universities posted huge endowment returns—and losses—over the past few years, they also released sizable development plans. From Princeton's new residential college to NYU's foray into Abu Dhabi, the work was notable, but perhaps nowhere more so than at Yale, where projects by Norman Foster, Pelli Clarke Pelli, and architecture school dean Robert A.M. Stern were all in the works. But after the school lost 25 percent of its endowment, falling to \$17 million from \$22.9 million, it has put all projects on hold, as well as a host of major renovations, according to a letter from the president to students, faculty, and alumni. The school declined to comment further.





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## 2 HM55 HITCH MYLIUS

With hm55, London architects Olaf Kneer and Marianne Mueller developed a transformable product to mix, match, and reshape as needed. As a seat unit with or without arms, a pouffe, or a mini side-table, the elements can be combined in many ways and covered in a wide choice of fabrics. Frame construction is of FSC-accredited hardwood and plywood, with elastic seat suspension. The unit is upholstered in graded CMHR foams with polyester fleece. [www.hitchmylius.co.uk](http://www.hitchmylius.co.uk)

## 3 ASTON CHAIR ARPER

French designer and student of the renowned "Les Ateliers," Jean Marie Massaud is the author of the Aston conference chair, manufactured by the Italian firm Arper, as part of an homonymous line of lounge, office, and conference components. The four-legged version of the chair (pictured) comes with a polished or painted aluminum structure and in a variety of fabrics or leather, as well as with an optional automatic seat positioning mechanism. [www.arper.it](http://www.arper.it)

## 4 TROPICALIA OUTDOOR BED MOROSO

The Tropicalia outdoor bed is part of an indoor/outdoor collection by the Milan-based designer Patricia Urquiola. Using weaving techniques that could have been borrowed from a gypsy camp, each piece in the collection takes on a different personality depending on the material and color used. A tubular steel structure in geometrical shapes in stainless or varnished steel supports a mesh of threads that alternates solids and voids in a specific pattern. It comes in a variety of materials, with thermoplastic polymer multi-colored threads free of heavy metal and recyclable, as well as leather or HT polyester double-plaited cords in either one or two colors. [www.moroso.it](http://www.moroso.it)

## 5 LOOP CHAIR DAVIS FURNITURE

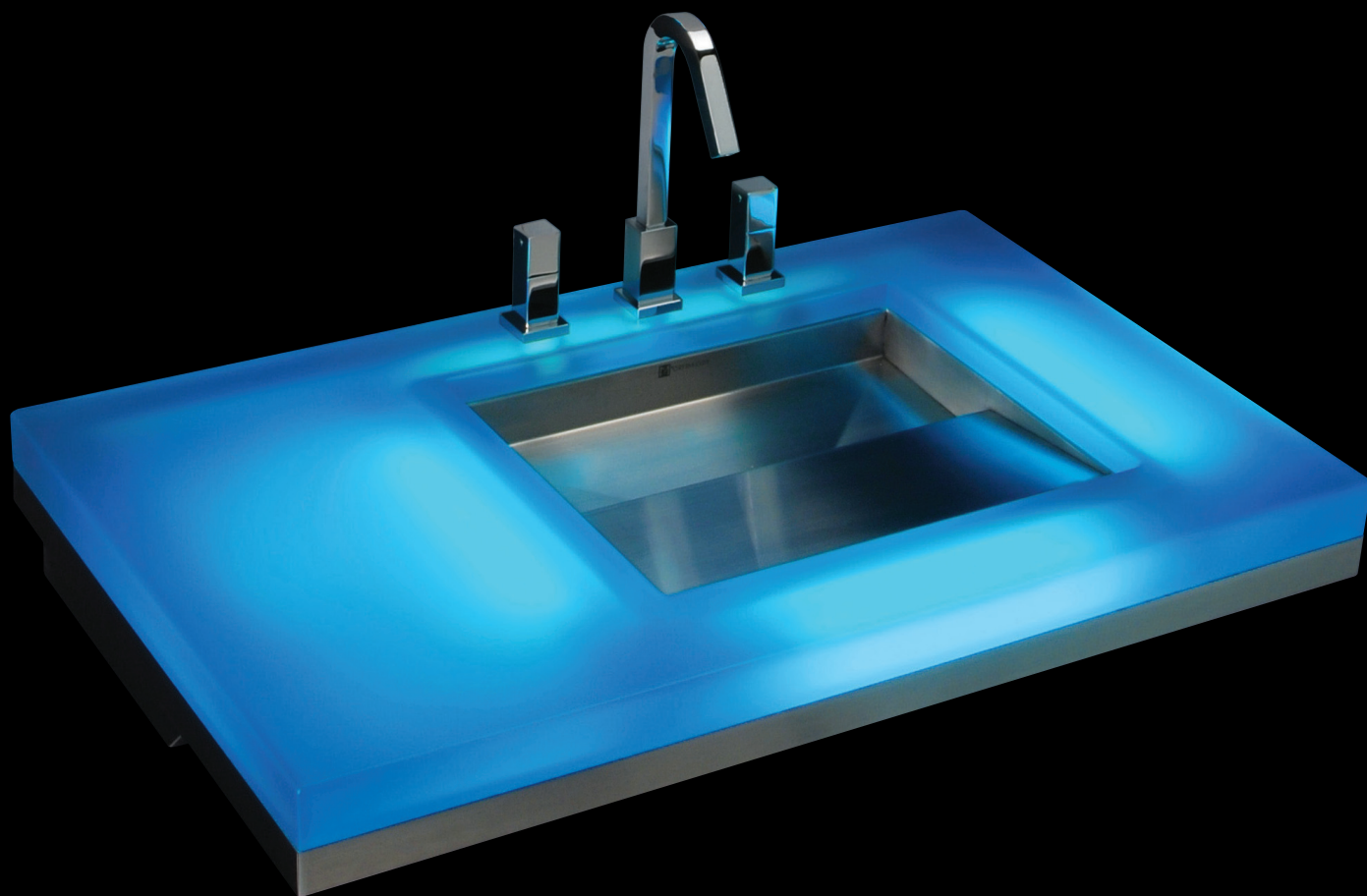
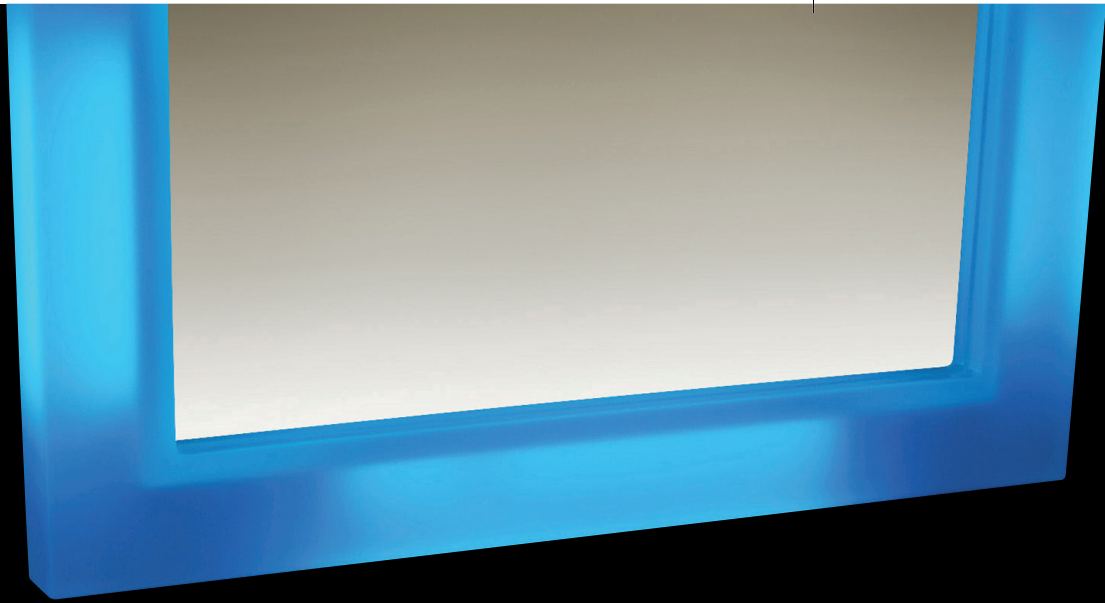
Made by Davis Furniture and created by German designer Burkhard Vogtherr, the LOOP chair uses injection mold manufacturing technology to create a polypropylene one-piece shell that seamlessly flows to form a flexible back and rigid arms. The 100-percent-recyclable shell sits on a steel base and is offered in eight powder-coated colors: paper white, coal, flame red, persimmon, buttercup, aloe, sky (pictured), and mist. Custom colors will be available in the near future, and the seat can also be upholstered in any kind of textile or leather. [www.davisfurniture.com](http://www.davisfurniture.com)

## 6 MAGNUM CHAIR WOOD TEAM 7

Austrian manufacturer Team 7 has been designing sustainable furnishings with a traditional bent for 30 years. Their latest, by Martin Ballendat, is ergonomically designed wood shaped to contour to the body. Available with or without armrests, it is constructed of plywood from sustainably managed European forests and treated only with natural oils and waxes. Material choices include maple, walnut, cherry, oak, beech, core beech and alder, as well as Strick-TeX and leather. [www.team7usa.com](http://www.team7usa.com)

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**Two new boutique hotels aim to engage the energy of the Meatpacking District and the East Village with ambitious architectural statements on the street level, not just in the bar and bathtub. Julie V. lovine and Alan G. Brake scored reservations.**

## Standard Hotel



Swinging off the broad shoulders of 14<sup>th</sup> Street onto narrow, cobbled Washington Street in Manhattan's Meatpacking District still feels like slipping behind a magic curtain. As much as it has changed, you still might catch an unstaged glimpse of white-smocked butchers hoisting prime cuts of beef alongside long-haunched

models posing for photo shoots. Life here throngs with urban street theater, a quality irresistible to hotel impresario André Balazs, past master of public exposure, whose latest hotel venture has set necks craning and tongues wagging.

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The Standard has the slim profile of a mid-century slab. The bifurcated lobby (right, top) features screens by Erwin Hauer, while the rooms (right, below) are efficiently contemporary.

complete Standard Hotel at 848 Washington Street. A crooked plaza and Lamborghini-yellow doors barely hint that an 18-story broken slab straddles the High Line, the elevated-track-turned-promenade, on sturdily sculpted concrete legs. The structural brazenness of the tower astride the elevated park has already

been likened to an architectural lap-dance. “The conventional approach would have been to build out a huge box and put all available square footage on the ground, where it’s cheapest to build,” said Balazs during a tour of the hotel, where about 40 percent of the rooms are now open. “But we wanted to make big public spaces. Other than Paley Park, we have more actively-programmed outdoor square footage than just about anywhere else in the city.”

The site was already a standout with a 360-degree sculptural aspect that is rare in Manhattan. That Balazs took that high visibility in the air and translated it into public accessibility at the ground makes the Standard more noteworthy. Hotels have long had an important role in the public realm, and some of the city’s great rooms are hotel lobbies and bars, so the idea is not a new one. But Balazs knew he had to make his building appeal to locals to succeed. A 2004 plan from another developer, a 32-story corrugated steel condo tower designed by Jean Nouvel, had the neighborhood up in arms and was shot down.

Balazs took over the site and promised to be a better neighbor. “A good hotel is an anchor of its community. Unless the community is on board, it won’t work,” he told *The New York Times*. More recently he told *AN*, “The goal was to stay away from any regulatory process and anything requiring approvals.”

“It was very important to me to work with someone local,” he added. “As a developer, I couldn’t sustain the political pressure of working with someone who couldn’t run over here and deal with problems.” He hired Polshek Partnership, whose principal Todd Schliemann he had known from their school days at Cornell. “André is very thoughtful about the making of space,” said Schliemann. “While he was thinking how it should feel from the inside out, we were imagining the bulk and wondering how to connect to the High Line.”

At that early stage, however, the High Line as promenade was just an idea. The abandoned track was still owned by rail company CSX, and this allowed Schliemann a free hand in designing how the building would relate to the viaduct. (The Parks

Department began to draw up public access regulations after it became city property in November 2005.) “In fact, we were the ones defining all the issues,” he said. “You could hear this great sucking sound behind us as everyone tried to keep up.” While two other warehouses are also over the High Line, the Standard is and will remain the only new construction to straddle it.

For the architects, the main challenge was to make a building that wouldn’t be overwhelmed by the High Line. “We wanted a building to exist separately and not be subservient,” said Schliemann. “So we lifted it up to be a little more heroic.” Structurally a hybrid, the building has over five-foot-thick concrete feet and steel piloti that support two massive trusses and a steel plate 38 feet over the High Line. The rest of the structure is a concrete slab slipped diagonally into a rectilinear zoning envelope. At 20 stories, it could have been taller and still within permissible limits; its 50-foot depth was dictated by the size of the rooms off a corridor. Its distinctive crank came about when the architects and Balazs realized they could capture better views looking north; it also will help to preserve those views in the face of future development. Positioned just where the island of Manhattan cinches in, the hotel presents incomparable views through water-white glass walls in two directions: north, toward the Empire State Building, and south, out over the river to the Statue of Liberty.

There’s a toughness to the structure, reinforced by the choice of materials. Money was spared: Although it’s the first to be built ground up, this is the fourth Standard in the chain that Balazs developed as an economy-class hotel operation. “Because it had to be mid-priced,” Schliemann said, “there would be no architectural concrete, just board concrete. But the rougher material complements the cobblestones; it’s tough but sophisticated, and we thought that was completely right for this Standard in Manhattan.”

The work of Morris Lapidus—particularly his 1960 Sheraton Motor Inn, now the Chinese Consulate on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street—was an inspiration for both the shape of the building



NIKOLAS KOENIG

and its interior finishes, which are equal parts retro, seductive, and trend-setting. “I like to use modernist pieces, but ones that have been around,” Balazs said. “Even if you don’t know exactly what they are, there’s a familiarity that feels comfortable. It’s very different from a Herzog & de Meuron approach, where it’s like, ‘This is a new vocabulary, get used to it’.” In some cases, the vaguely familiar bits are quite specific take-offs, including a glass facade straight from Arne Jacobsen’s SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen; upside-down champagne flute light fixtures à la Warren Platner; and an assortment of sleek moves from 1960s-era buildings in Brazil. Balazs worked on the interiors with designer Shawn Hausman, with whom he frequently collaborates, and New York-based Roman & Williams. They developed a three-volume look book for the job loaded with vintage 1960s images of work by Lapidus, Arne Jacobsen, Eero Saarinen, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, and Edwin Hauer.

The rooms themselves, though intentionally small at 250 to 460 square feet, feel capacious enough thanks to the distractions of the view and a simple palette:

unadorned white walls, upholstered booth-style seating, and honey-toned lacquered wood trim. While some rooms on most floors are now open, the rest of the hotel, including restaurants and a rooftop bar (guaranteed to be so rocking that the floor will be raised on springs to insulate it from the rooms below) won’t be completed until June. Another more publicly accessible bar is suspended alongside the High Line. Balazs is negotiating with the city to connect both this bar and a fire-escape stair directly to the promenade, perhaps with drawbridges. At street level, a steakhouse and an outdoor beer garden right under the High Line will be open to the public directly from Washington Street when they open in June.

Hospitality lore says that design trends in the hotel business shift about every seven years, compared with every two years for cars and every season for fashion. In that case, and if the Standard achieves its promise of opening up to the neighborhood, then perhaps the age of the intimate boutique hotel is about to give way to the more generous charms of the public hotel.

**JULIE V. IOVINE IS EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF AN.**





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and its interior finishes, which are equal parts retro, seductive, and trend-setting. “I like to use modernist pieces, but ones that have been around,” Balazs said. “Even if you don’t know exactly what they are, there’s a familiarity that feels comfortable. It’s very different from a Herzog & de Meuron approach, where it’s like, ‘This is a new vocabulary, get used to it’.” In some cases, the vaguely familiar bits are quite specific take-offs, including a glass facade straight from Arne Jacobsen’s SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen; upside-down champagne flute light fixtures à la Warren Platner; and an assortment of sleek moves from 1960s-era buildings in Brazil. Balazs worked on the interiors with designer Shawn Hausman, with whom he frequently collaborates, and New York-based Roman & Williams. They developed a three-volume look book for the job loaded with vintage 1960s images of work by Lapidus, Arne Jacobsen, Eero Saarinen, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, and Erwin Hauer.

The rooms themselves, though intentionally small at 250 to 460 square feet, feel capacious enough thanks to the distractions of the view and a simple palette:

unadorned white walls, upholstered booth-style seating, and honey-toned lacquered wood trim. While some rooms on most floors are now open, the rest of the hotel, including restaurants and a rooftop bar (guaranteed to be so rocking that the floor will be raised on springs to insulate it from the rooms below) won’t be completed until June. Another more publicly accessible bar is suspended alongside the High Line. Balazs is negotiating with the city to connect both this bar and a fire-escape stair directly to the promenade, perhaps with drawbridges. At street level, a steakhouse and an outdoor beer garden right under the High Line will be open to the public directly from Washington Street when they open in June.

Hospitality lore says that design trends in the hotel business shift about every seven years, compared with every two years for cars and every season for fashion. In that case, and if the Standard achieves its promise of opening up to the neighborhood, then perhaps the age of the intimate boutique hotel is about to give way to the more generous charms of the public hotel.

**JULIE V. IOVINE IS EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF AN.**



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER FEBRUARY 4, 2009

## Cooper Square Hotel

A paneled library-lounge offers homey comfort at this urbane hotel. The tower (below left) has a corporate flavor distinct from the tenements at its base. The spare guestrooms offer sweeping views of the neighborhood (below right).



Buildings by well-known architects are transforming the shaggy edges of Cooper Square and Astor Place, once the domain of college students, homeless people, and Cube-spinning hangers-on. The latest addition, the Cooper Square Hotel, is a striking juxtaposition of old and new, with 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements incorporated into its base and a curving, contemporary tower above. The building, designed by New York-based architect Carlos Zapata with interiors by famed Italian designer Antonio Citterio, engages with its context but makes a few clean breaks, as well.

"We wanted to create an architecturally significant building to reflect the changes in Cooper Square," said Klaus Ortlieb, managing partner for the hotel, referring to the architecturally ambitious new buildings associated with Cooper Union. A new academic building by Morphosis is rising next door to the hotel, and the curves of Gwathmey Siegel's condominium building at adjacent Astor Place are visible from its rooms. A new mixed-use project designed by Fumihiko Maki is also planned just two blocks away on the site of the school's engineering building.

Unlike the developers of those buildings, however, Ortlieb and his partners chose not to clear the site. After initially planning to demolish three tenement buildings, one of which includes protected artists' apartments, they reversed course and asked Zapata to redesign the building, incorporating the tenements into the new building's base and creating a contemporary form above. Two apartments, one of which is home to a well-known poet, remain, and are now accessed through the hotel's main entrance. In retaining these buildings, the developers avoided a messy public fight, which could have tainted the hotel's relationship with the famously cantankerous neighborhood. (Zapata is no stranger to controversial additions to historic buildings: His most famous project remains the renovation of Chicago's Soldier Field, designed with former business partner Benjamin Wood.) The hotel's sleek glass tower, built by Sciamé, is narrow where it joins the base and swells in the middle before tapering again at the penthouse level. This Miami-meets-McSorley's relationship between old and new is interesting and somewhat jarring, but could

be read as another iteration of the clashing of styles and repurposing of found objects that has long defined East Village aesthetics. The planned landscape design by Nathan Browning, which will include a large dining garden wrapping around the rear and side of the hotel, may help to bring these opposing sensibilities into greater harmony.

Inside, Zapata has woven a complex and layered sequence of public and private spaces into the narrow site. Bar and restaurant patrons can enter just to the left of the main hotel entrance. The bar area has a curved ceiling covered in black subway tile that forms the underside of a 20-person stadium-seating screening room. Behind the bar and restaurant, bordering on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the outdoor garden and dining area will be accessible to both guests of the hotel and restaurant and bar patrons. In the back of the garden, a stair and catwalk lead to an elevated outdoor bar built over the base of the building.

On the interior, Citterio used natural materials such as slate flooring, with pieces hand-broken in Italy and shipped to the site, and warm walnut panels in the lobby and the lounge-like

library, which is carved out of space from one of the tenements. There is no reception desk, but attendants hover close by and will instantly know your name and preferences. Patterned glass with an abstracted leaf motif lines the elevator core. Citterio designed almost all of the furniture, which was then produced by B&B Italia in a palette of black leather, wood, and steel (a few other pieces, such as seating from Herman Miller and Poliform, are interspersed). The library and the guest rooms are stocked with used books provided by the Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, which are for sale with all proceeds benefiting the nonprofit service provider. A Persian rug in the lobby

and subtle floor and side lamps round out these chic but comfortable spaces. "We wanted it to have a residential feel," Ortlieb said.

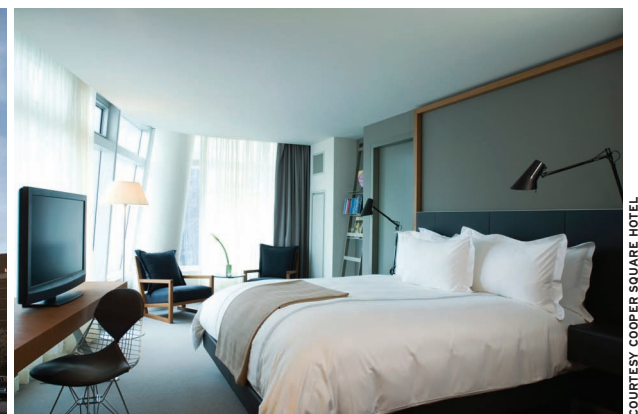
The rooms have an even quieter appearance, and here all of Zapata's glass and the location really pay off. Set on the square on one side, where the Bowery and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue meet, with the mostly low-rise East Village on the other, the rooms have spectacular views both on the lower levels and upward. On the lower levels, the church steeples, rear yards, and rooftop gardens of the neighborhood provide endless fascination for the eye, while on the upper floors, the entire city, including the outer boroughs and the banks of New Jersey, open up to view. Inside, Citterio's

pieces have clean lines, and the bathrooms have large windows with fritted glass and no curtains, offering both views and privacy. "The bathrooms are very important," Ortlieb said. "You spend most of your waking hours in a hotel in the bathroom."

While the rooms—145 in total, ranging from small, 225-square-foot rooms to junior and full suites—are luxurious without being flashy, none will compare with the two-bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom 21<sup>st</sup>-floor penthouse suite, currently under construction. With 360-degree panoramic views and a wide terrace on three sides, the space will surely be one of the most desirable in the city for private events and late-night debauchery.

It is a difficult time to launch a new hotel that caters to "global creatives" in the art, fashion, and entertainment industries. Ortlieb, who worked for both Ian Schrager and André Balazs before becoming a developer himself, remains confident. "Not everyone looks only at prices," he said. "Especially in New York, there will always be people looking for something a bit more unique. I opened the Mercer [with Balazs] when the market wasn't strong. Things come around." He's confident enough to be planning two additional hotels with Zapata, one in Chicago and one more in New York, though he plans to work with different interior designers on each of these upcoming projects. He does not necessarily think his concept of small, architecturally ambitious hotels will be copied. "These are not inexpensive buildings to build," he said. "I hope it's my direction, not the new direction."

**ALAN G. BRAKE IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT AN.**



COURTESY COOPER SQUARE HOTEL



**Because a quirk in the 1961 zoning code treats hotels the same way it does factories, some hoteliers are plumping pillows where metalworkers once stamped tin.**

## Room service in Gowanus?



At Williamsburg's Hotel Le Jolie, rates for a night can hit \$300, but they come with a BQE view.

AARON SEWARD

New York is a hotel town. Glamorous haunts like the Plaza and the Carlyle are etched into the city's lore, while boutique newcomers—the Mercers, Maritimes, and Grands—have transformed its social life. The newest category to make its mark is not doing so through cachet, however. More likely to overlook scrapyards and warehouses than Broadway theaters and four-star restaurants, these hotels are the strange progeny of a boom economy and an anomaly in the zoning code. They are, to coin a phrase, the industrial hotels.

"Here's what you're looking at—Manhattan Mini-Storage on one side, the Holland Tunnel on the other, and a waste transfer station over there," said Sean Sweeney, director of the Soho Alliance, expressing his dismay over the most famous such hotel, the Trump Soho, now nearing completion at 246 Spring Street.

Trump and his partners at the Bayrock/Sapir Organization could just as easily have built to the east of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Soho proper. But then they would not have been able to create what at 44 stories will be the tallest building between 34<sup>th</sup> Street and the World Trade Center when it opens this fall. The area, known as Hudson Square, is zoned for high-density light manufacturing, and is full of the mid-rise loft buildings that were once at the heart of the city's printing industry. But like manufacturing districts citywide, it allows developments such as Trump's, thanks to a quirk in the 1961 Zoning Resolution that permits hotel construction as of right.

Both industrial buildings and hotels require high-density sites, though for precisely opposite reasons. A manufacturer typically builds out to the edge of the lot to get wide-open floors conducive to machinery and storage. An hotelier, on the other hand, is more likely to choose a taller building with a narrow floor plate so that each room has a window. Any given warehouse and hotel may have identical floor area ratios, but their form and the kinds of jobs they provide could not be further apart.

But beyond the physical advantages of developing hotels in manufacturing districts, there is also substantial demand. According to NYC & Co., the city's tourism arm, lodgings in the five boroughs averaged an 86 percent occupancy rate since 2004, while the average room rate rose from \$210 to \$312. And as the city continues to rezone industrial areas like Dutch Kills in Queens, which saw more than a dozen hotels built within an eight-block area in three years, it's best to get in while land is still cheap.

"We've been losing manufacturing at an alarming rate," said Eve Baron, director of the Planning Center at the Municipal Art Society (MAS). In 2001, she completed an inventory of the city's manufacturing zones with the New York Industrial Retention Network (NYIRN) and the Pratt Center for Community Development. While the resulting study found a number of development pressures threatening industrial areas, Barron said that hotels never came up. But now they are a serious issue, she argues,

because unlike big-box retailers or illegal conversions, hotels tend to be physically out of scale with the buildings in manufacturing areas: "It changes the character of a neighborhood."

Look no further than Hotel Le Bleu. Opened in November 2007 during the peak of the hotel boom, it briefly charged more than \$300 a night, despite being within a block of the famously polluted Gowanus Canal. And yet it's the first of eight hotels going up nearby. Like its Williamsburg sister Hotel Le Jolie, which charges similar rates for views of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, Le Bleu's style is more Best Western than Biltmore. Still, next to its low-slung neighbors, the eight-story Le Bleu has unrivaled views, albeit of the canal, but also of Manhattan off in the distance.

Despite cries from manufacturers and groups like MAS and NYIRN, the city sees no problem. "Transient hotels are compatible with commercial and light industrial businesses, and important to the overall economic health of the city," said Jennifer Torres, spokesperson for the Department of City Planning. "Hotels need to be able to locate where business is conducted, as well as where they can serve demand generated by nearby residential neighborhoods."

Adam Friedman, director of NYIRN, did acknowledge the Bloomberg administration's work on industrial retention with the creation in 2005 of Industrial Business Zones (IBZ) that provide protections to companies located therein. But they do not preclude hotels.

Friedman points to one NYIRN study that found that of the 23 hotels built in manufacturing districts in the last five years, 12 were built in IBZs.

He would like to see the creation of Industrial Employment Centers, which would require any non-manufacturing use to go through environmental review and approval by the City Planning Commission and the City Council. The council voted in support of such a measure in 2006, but has taken no action since.

Some might argue that with the recession in full swing, the market will move away from such development. According to NYC & Co.'s numbers, occupancy since October has fallen an average of eight percent despite a record-breaking August, when it was at 92.4 percent.

But according to numbers from hotel consultancy PKF, the city has enjoyed 80-plus percent occupancy rates since the late 1970s, meaning the recent boom in hotels is not a fad but the new reality, at least once the city climbs back out of the current recession. In essence, it is the entire city that is encroaching on its few remaining manufacturing zones, and the hotels were just first to get there.

"Of course they'll be back," Friedman admitted. "Within a year or two, the market will be strong again, and the underlying issues will still be there—how do you have a manufacturing district like Long Island City so close to somewhere like Midtown Manhattan?"

**MATT CHABAN IS AN ASSISTANT EDITOR AT AN.**



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FEBRUARY

**WEDNESDAY 4**  
**LECTURES**  
**Hillary Brown,**  
**Kate Orff, Ashok Raiji**  
**Eco-Cities: Building**  
**Green on a City Scale**  
6:30 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

**Thomas Leeson**  
**Conflicts**  
6:30 p.m.  
Columbia GSAPP  
Wood Auditorium  
113 Avery Hall  
www.arch.columbia.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**a shimmer of possibility.**  
**Photographs by Paul Graham**  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**Masterpieces from the**  
**Permanent Collection**  
National Academy of Design  
Museum  
1083 5th Ave.  
www.nationalacademy.org

**THURSDAY 5**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Gail Albert Halaban**  
**Out My Window**  
Robert Mann Gallery  
210 11th Ave.  
www.robertmann.com

**Mark Ruwedel**  
**Westward the**  
**Course of Empire**  
Yossi Milo Gallery  
525 West 25th St.  
www.yossimilo.com

**Milton Avery, Paintings from**  
**the Collection of the**  
**Neuberger Museum of Art,**  
**Purchase College, State**  
**University of New York**  
UBS Art Gallery  
1825 Avenue of the Americas  
www.ubs.com

**FILM**  
**Peter Eisenman: University of**  
**Phoenix Stadium for the**  
**Arizona Cardinals**  
(Tom Piper, 2008), 30 min.  
6:30 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**FRIDAY 6**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Patron and Painter: Situ**  
**Panchen and the Revival of**  
**the Encampment Style**  
Rubin Museum of Art  
150 West 17th St.  
www.rmanyc.org

**Shepard Fairey:**  
**Supply & Demand**  
Institute of Contemporary Art  
100 Northern Ave., Boston  
www.icaboston.org

**SATURDAY 7**  
**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Made in the USA:**  
**Materials and Process**  
10:30 a.m.  
Whitney Museum of  
American Art  
945 Madison Ave.  
www.whitney.org

**SUNDAY 8**  
**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Damaged Romanticism:**  
**A Mirror of Modern Emotion**  
Parrish Art Museum  
25 Job's Ln., Southampton  
www.parrishart.org

**MONDAY 9**  
**LECTURE**  
**David Gariff**  
**Italian Futurism and the**  
**Legacy of the Milanese**  
**Scapigliatura**  
12:10 p.m.  
National Gallery of Art  
National Mall and 3rd St.,  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nga.gov

**TUESDAY 10**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Jack Bolen**  
**Dreams in Stone**  
Viridian Gallery  
530 West 25th St.  
www.viridianartists.com

**Masterpieces of European**  
**Painting from the Norton**  
**Simon Museum**  
The Frick Collection  
1 East 70th St.  
www.frick.org

**EVENT**  
**ISCP Salons**  
6:00 p.m.  
ISCP Gallery  
1040 Metropolitan Ave.,  
3rd Fl., Brooklyn  
www.iscp-nyc.org

**WEDNESDAY 11**  
**LECTURES**  
**Carsten W. Glaeser**  
**Urban Trees, Urban Forests:**  
**Coexisting with Large Trees**  
**in Urban Landscapes**  
6:00 p.m.  
Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Pl.  
www.aiany.org

**Richard A. Cook and**  
**Robert F. Fox, Jr.**  
**A Revolution in Green**  
**Building in America:**  
**The Bank of America Tower**  
6:30 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Jeremy Deller: It Is What It Is:**  
**Conversations About Iraq**  
**Urban China: Informal Cities**  
New Museum of  
Contemporary Art  
235 Bowery  
www.newmuseum.org

**Kick My Heart's Ass:**  
**Short Films About Love**  
apexart  
291 Church St.  
www.apexart.org

**Words in Freedom:**  
**Futurism at 100**  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd St.  
www.moma.org

**THURSDAY 12**  
**LECTURE**  
**AIA New Practices NY:**  
**David Wallace Architects**  
6:00 p.m.  
Häfele New York Showroom  
25 East 26th St.  
www.hafele.com

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Hank Willis Thomas:**  
**Pitch Blackness**  
**John Bankston:**  
**The Fabulist's Colored Life**  
Jack Shainman Gallery  
513 West 20th St.  
www.jackshainman.com

**Walter Niedermayr**  
Robert Miller Gallery  
524 West 26th St.  
www.robertmillergallery.com

**FRIDAY 13**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Larry Poons**  
Danese  
535 West 24th St.  
www.danese.com

**Unearthing the Truth: Egypt's**  
**Pagan and Coptic Sculpture**  
Brooklyn Museum of Art  
200 Eastern Parkway,  
Brooklyn  
www.brooklynmuseum.org

**SATURDAY 14**  
**LECTURE**  
**Jiang Jun**  
**Urban China**  
3:00 p.m.  
New Museum of  
Contemporary Art  
235 Bowery  
www.newmuseum.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Josh Smith**  
Luhring Augustine  
531 West 24th St.  
www.luhringaugustine.com

**Valentina: American Couture**  
**and the Cult of Celebrity**  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

**SUNDAY 15**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Andy Warhol: Pop Politics**  
**Andy Warhol: Snapshots**  
Neuberger Museum of Art  
Purchase College, State  
University of New York  
735 Anderson Hill Rd.,  
Purchase  
www.neuberger.org

**TUESDAY 17**  
**LECTURE**  
**Majora Carter**  
**The Rebirth of**  
**the South Bronx**  
6:30 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Anne Deleporte,**  
**Michel de Broin, et al.**  
**This-Has-Been**  
On Stellar Rays  
133 Orchard St.  
www.onstellarrays.com

**WEDNESDAY 18**  
**LECTURES**  
**Jeff Mendoza,**  
**Sydney Carvin Milliken, et al.**  
**Sharing the Dirt on**  
**Container Gardening:**  
**Window Boxes to Rooftops**  
6:00 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church  
12 West 12th St.  
www.gvshp.org

**Ed Mazria,**  
**John Podesta**  
**For the Greener Good:**  
**A Green World Is a**  
**Safer One**  
6:30 p.m.  
National Building Museum  
401 F St. NW,  
Washington, D.C.  
www.nbm.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**What is Sculpture?**  
**Akari from the**  
**1986 Venice Biennale**  
Noguchi Museum  
9-01 33rd Rd., Queens  
www.noguchi.org

**THURSDAY 19**  
**LECTURES**  
**James Wines**  
**From Hand to Mouse**  
6:00 p.m.  
City College  
Shepard Hall  
Convent Ave. and 138th St.  
www.ccny.cuny.edu

**Slenderness:**  
**New York | Hong Kong**  
6:30 p.m.  
Steelcase Showroom  
4 Columbus Circle  
www.skyscraper.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Sites**  
Whitney Museum of  
American Art  
945 Madison Ave.  
www.whitney.org

**Susan Rothenberg**  
Sperone Westwater  
415 West 13th St.  
www.speronewestwater.com

**William Pope.L**  
**Corbu Pops**  
Carpenter Center for  
the Visual Arts  
24 Quincy St.,  
Cambridge, MA  
www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/  
ccva.html

**FRIDAY 20**  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Adel Abdessemed**  
David Zwirner Gallery  
525 West 19th St.  
www.davidzwirner.com

**Simon Evans**  
**Island Time**  
James Cohan Gallery  
533 West 26th St.  
www.jamescohan.com

**Sun Xun: Shock of Time**  
Drawing Room  
40 Wooster St.  
www.drawingcenter.org

**Susan Collis, Michaela**  
**Fruhworth, et al.**  
**Apparently Invisible:**  
**Selections Spring 2009**  
The Drawing Center  
35 Wooster St.  
www.drawingcenter.org

**SATURDAY 21**  
**SYMPOSIUM**  
**Home Design in New York**  
**Donald Albrecht**  
1:00 p.m.  
Museum of the City of  
New York  
1220 5th Ave.  
www.mcny.org

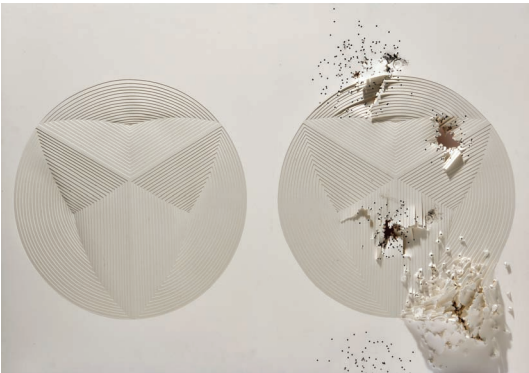


COURTESY JUNK JET

**A FEW ZINES:**  
**DISPATCHES FROM THE EDGE OF**  
**ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION**

Studio-X  
180 Varick Street  
Through February 28

Picking up where Storefront for Art and Architecture's *Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines* exhibition left off, this show explores the culture of architectural print publication from the 1990s to the present day. On view at Studio-X, Columbia University's downtown experimental design studio, the exhibit presents complete runs of some of the best "little magazines" of the '90s, as well as more recent DIY projects such as *Pin-Up*, *Sumoscraper*, and *Thumb*. Curated by Mimi Zeiger, editor and publisher of fellow architectural zine *loud paper*, the show explores the complex and convoluted relationship between the built environment and art, music, politics, and pop culture. As a case in point, *Junk Jet* (above) was launched by Stuttgart-based design researchers Mona Mahall and Asli Servest as "a rag and bone man of post-digital times," providing a free-ranging forum for works of electronic media, aesthetics, and architecture. Over 50 issues of the era's zines are on view, ranging from one-issue wonders such as *Monorail* to some two dozen editions of *Dodge City Journal*. After its run in New York, the exhibit travels to pinkcomma gallery in Boston, and is expected to move to California later this year.



KEVIN SWEENEY

**ELIZABETH GREGORY-GRUEN**  
**CUT-WORK**

Ivy Brown Gallery  
675 Hudson Street, #4N  
Through February 19

Wielding tools not traditionally associated with art, such as a surgeon's scalpel and a 12-gauge shotgun, Chicago-born artist Elizabeth Gregory-Gruen makes compositions from carefully cut layers of paper. Emerging with little premeditation—or, as Gregory-Gruen told *AN*, "straight from the gut"—the pieces in her latest exhibition are paradoxical works of unity and disintegration. Created with no guides or measurements besides a quick compass outline, the *Cut-Work* series features organic forms that are delicately scored to create plays of light and shadow. Inspired in part by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, these studies in symmetry and balance have taken a startling turn in the artist's new *Shotgun* series. In *single in double* (2008, above), gentle contours are violently transformed in what Gregory-Gruen likens to an almost natural process of decomposition. The haphazardly aimed shotgun blasts introduce a note of chance to her work, like random eruptions of nature. For Gregory-Gruen, a third-generation artist who has had a parallel career in the fashion world and currently designs for New York-based label Michael Kors, the creatively destructive acts of cutting and shredding are ends in themselves. As she herself described the work's entropic appeal: "I love the duality of something so perfect shot to hell."



## WHAT LIES BENEATH

**Cecil Balmond: Solid Void**  
Graham Foundation Madlener House  
4 West Burton Place, Chicago  
Through June 20



MICHELLE LITVIN

Beneath the dense and multidimensional appearances of our world lies an endless cascade of numbers, an irrigating flood of numerical updates, cross-references, algorithmic feeds, averages, and distributions; they do not interact with one another through the predictable linear protocols of classical geometry, but behave more like the mysterious webs and catalytic reactions of chemistry. That is the cosmological premise of *The Matrix*, the 1999 film whose depiction of an unending tide of numbers suggested that physical reality, far from being the brute guarantor and foundation of all other realities, is itself the result of a complex set of mirages provided by the hydraulic pressure of num-

bers surging and organizing behind it. The lived world is fragile, magical, and unstable, but most of all, the movie showed it to be a secondary effect contingent on a relentless calculus of relations. Individual numbers may well be pure abstractions—false or “misplaced concreteness,” as the philosopher-mathematician Alfred North Whitehead once declared them—but their interactions within moving streams are entirely real.

The current exhibition of work by Cecil Balmond at the Graham Foundation in Chicago provides just this kind of improbable excursion into the metaphysics of numbers, as well as into the invisible but intensely active plenum that is space. But most of all,

it is about the art of making buildings stand up in entirely new ways. *Solid Void* is primarily an installation: a three-dimensional metallic filigree “sprouted” on a simple isotropic (eight-inch or so) grid that propagates itself like a repeating digital flora—hence its name *H\_edge*—throughout the ground floor of the Graham Foundation. The work is intended to invoke digital modalities of assembly, patterns of biological propagation and variation, as well as the more architecturally familiar mechanical-tectonic principles and especially their limits. Balmond’s *H\_edge* is at once marvelous to look at, to press on, and to contemplate, and it concisely and clearly sums up Balmond’s entire project

within a simple, almost homemade structure—a notable feat given that he inhabits the rarefied stratosphere of magician-engineers. *H\_edge* demonstrates to all who visit it that a building does not have to “stand up” in order to maintain its erect dignity and stability; it can snatch its structure elsewhere than from the clichés of gravity and its classical counterpoint, the post and lintel. *H\_edge* posits the idea that tension and compression are present like a foam in space, hidden by nature and disposition within every point and molecule, waiting only to be harvested by some ingenious trick. With astounding simplicity, *H\_edge* transposes the compression members into tension ones and vice versa: The “matrix” of cut aluminum plates flexes against the limits of the chain link’s potential for expansion along its length and converts the chain into a taut and scalable column, like in the famous Indian rope trick to which Balmond refers in his commentary on the work. More accurately, *H\_edge* abolishes the compressive column entirely by showing that counterpoint is discoverable everywhere, and can be tapped to hang one’s coat on anywhere one wishes. It is, of course, not magic at all, as every one of his demonstrably stable structures clearly proves. Void is solid; solid is a type of matter or “materiality”; and matter is rife with counter-forces that need only be selected and put at the service of global structure. Sailors, for example, know that sailing close to the wind delivers more efficiency than sailing downwind. Balmond is the first to have brought this counterintuitive insight into the world of solids as well.

The second floor of the Graham manse provides an extended documentary storyboard of Balmond’s intellectual trajectory, a kind of Natural History Museum of the history of numbers and forms that is no less imaginative than the great metafictional displays of the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles. The display is saturated with exquisite demonstrations and concrete architectural details, models, video clips, animations, algebraic demonstrations, and speculations on the **continued on page 23**

## See You Next Year

*The Skira Yearbook of World Architecture 2007-2008*  
Edited by Luca Molinari  
Rizzoli International, \$89.00

Globalization, climate change, politics, the war in Iraq, unrest in the Middle East, terrorism, the mortgage crisis, technological developments, the millions who benefit from them and the millions who do not: These are the overarching issues that occupy us right now. We often experience architecture as a separate sphere, especially when we know it via magazines and the internet, which can further rarefy it and separate buildings from the world they occupy. As Luca Molinari, editor-in-chief of *The Skira Yearbook of World Architecture*

*2007–2008*, writes in his prologue, “all the architecture magazines closely resemble one another, sailing the same waters, and drawing, with greater or lesser originality, on the same sources in order to fuel a glut of protagonists and works prepackaged for showbiz.” Molinari’s yearbook is nonetheless a compilation of projects selected from the very magazines of which he is skeptical, although he states that his editorial team considered projects in their social, environmental, political, economic, and design contexts.

The yearbook opens with

a chronological outline of the disasters and celebrations in the world of architecture over the calendar year. From the 35-W bridge collapse in Minneapolis to the New Orleans Make It Right project, this chronicle points to a mixed record of loss and success.

Over 30 projects are then presented in thematic sections ranging from “Into the Wild,” a compilation of residential projects that connect with nature, to “White Box Light Box,” the latest in museum design, to “Green New York,” taking urbanization to a sustainable level, to “Generous Building,” including projects that enhance the ever-growing public sphere. Each is presented with a short descriptive text, photographs, floor plans, and information about the architect, project team, client, location, cost, and

dimensions. At the end of each section, Molinari makes good on his desire to set the yearbook apart with more context: Interviews with architects, essays, and book reviews offer opinions and ideas about where the field stands today, and explorations of how architects imagine their role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nicola Rusi interviews OMA partner Reinier de Graaf about their assignment to create a new city in Ras al-Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates from scratch. “You can use this density to make the city feel that it is built for humans, rather than for cars,” de Graaf says. In an essay “Skycar City,” Winy Maas of MVRDV imagines what futuristic cities could become if our daily transportation was elevated from the ground to the sky.

Until personal transporta-

tion can take flight, most of the essays included the call for a change in design today. “Down from the Stand: Arguments in Favor of a Non-Anthropized Urban Ethics,” an essay by *Abitare*’s editor Stefano Boeri, argues that globalization demands an architecture that “places mankind *within* the context of geography, and not simply as the only available reference point.” Michael Sorkin closes the yearbook with a polemical essay “Next,” in which he states that architects must think on a global scale if we are to progress, and uses Detroit and the auto industry as an example to avoid: “The American automobile industry has become virtually psychotic, pursuing an agenda that isn’t simply completely inimical to planetary health, but which defies the most basic logic of competition.” He calls upon the

architecture community to remember “we must ask of every project we undertake not simply whether it makes life better for those who occupy it, but whether those improvements come at the unwilling expense of others.”

Sorkin’s call has proved prescient, while others seem less relevant to a world that has already changed mightily. This yearbook presents a varied and interesting portrait of architecture in a specific moment.

**REBECCA WARD HAS WRITTEN FOR AN AND ARCHITECTURAL RECORD.**



SNØHETTA





COURTESY PAP

A mud oven for making charcoal in Chile, 1999.

Ronald Reagan, at Rancho del Cielo, and Chairman Mao lived in mud brick buildings.

Rael investigates works of architecture that employ “the ancient technology of earth” but are informed by issues of contemporary society. He begins with the role of earthen architecture in the theories of Vitruvius, Semper, Loos, and Speer, and with the French builder François Cointeraux, whose “new way of thinking about rammed-earth architecture” influenced both Boulée and Ledoux. Le Corbusier is featured for his system of rammed-earth and compressed-earth blocks at the Murondin project, where the mechanical services in these mud-huts were so sophisticated they impressed even Reyner Banham.

Rael also discusses Egyptian Hassan Fathy on modern perceptions of earthen structures, and how rammed-earth architecture influenced the non-earthen structures of early modernist architects Antoni Gaudi, Rudolf Schindler, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Contemporary earthen

projects (47 of them) are divided into four categories: structures of rammed earth, mud brick, compressed-earth block, and molded-earth projects. We find the usual array of southwest adobe McMansions, wineries, modern residences using earthen materials by Will Bruder, Marwan Al-Sayed, and Antoine Predock, and a surprising number of projects in far-northern climates like Germany and Sweden. But the best projects are the low-cost ones, like a modular prototype for a peat bog house by the Irish architects N3, and a spectacular sculpture mimicking the circular Chilean mud ovens used to make charcoal by traditional charcoal-makers. Adobe Alliance’s Simone Swan, who learned her trade from Fathy, keeps his philosophy of earthen construction alive with self-built vaulted mud structures near Presidio, Texas.

*Earth Architecture* is a satisfying survey both for the professional “mudder” and for those who want a quick, scholarly survey of earthen buildings from all over.

**WILLIAM MENKING IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF AN.**

#### WHAT LIES BENEATH

continued from page 22

nature and future of form. It also contains the room-filling quasi-crystal structure *Danzer*, in which every glyptic facet connects with, and participates in, the articulation of every other in an unstoppable, but this time imploding, fractal cascade. But Balmond’s world is not exclusive, and while his deepest current inclinations tend toward dissymmetry and disequilibrium (extreme architectural performance), he does not shy from including loyal reflections on classical proportion and balance, or even on the numerological curiosities of quasi-science (which, to be fair, did not frighten Newton either). Balmond is one of those rare engineers with a license to speculate, to experiment and invent, and not only to solve. His emerging specialty is the architectural “thought experiment”: As director of the Advanced Geometry Unit at Britain’s Arup engineering firm and now as an independent designer himself, he is a collaborator on high-profile “hypothe-

ses” such as the Libeskind, Koolhaas, Ito, and Siza pavilions for London’s Serpentine Gallery, and he designed the Coimbra pedestrian bridge in Portugal, his first solo project. While his business is numbers, his vocation is form. And he knows that the relationship between the two is where the openness of life and nature reside. His exhibition is a form of scientific autobiography for the generation of designers—curiously, mostly in advanced phases of their careers—that is just beginning to emerge revolutionized and reborn. Young computer-based designers ought to take a long, soul-searching look here to be reminded of what density of insight they may be forsaking in the name of the hastily-conceived radicality they have proclaimed for themselves, which may not be all it’s cracked up to be.

**SANFORD KWINTER IS A VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN AT HARVARD, AND THE AUTHOR, MOST RECENTLY, OF *FAR FROM EQUILIBRIUM: ESSAYS ON TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN CULTURE*.**

## MUD SLINGING

*Earth Architecture*  
Ronald Rael  
Princeton Architectural Press, \$45.00

Could the United States really be the largest consumer of mud bricks in the industrialized world? Ronald Rael makes this claim in his introduction to *Earth Architecture*, then shows that the building material, despite perceptions

that it’s only used by and for the poor, is popular with every economic and social class in the world. In China, for example, 100 million people live in earthen homes, as does 15 percent of the rural population in France. Even

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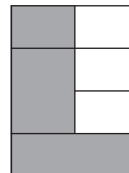
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