

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

06_04.01.2009

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COURTESY ST. VINCENT'S

LPC APPROVES ST. VINCENT'S TOWER AMID LAST-DITCH LAWSUIT

LAST RITES

On March 10, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted in favor of a 286-foot hospital tower in the heart of Greenwich Village, bringing St. Vincent's Hospital that much closer to building a new home. While regulatory review of the project may still mean months of further scrutiny, the decision moved the long-debated plan across what commission chair Robert Tierney called "a threshold point."

Opponents of the hospital's plan, however, are not giving up. The day before, a coalition of preservationists and neighbors filed a lawsuit, seeking to overturn an earlier commission vote that had approved the razing of Albert Ledner's idiosyncratic O'Toole Building to make way for the new tower.

At the heart of the **continued on page 9**

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR ATLANTA MUSEUM AND JUSTICE CENTER



COURTESY CENTER FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

FIVE VIE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

For its new, \$125 million home in downtown Atlanta, the Center for Civil and Human Rights has announced a shortlist of five architecture teams for the design of a 90,000-square-foot center. These include Diller Scofidio + Renfro of New York with

Stanley Beaman & Sears of Atlanta; Freelon Group of Durham, NC, with HOK of Atlanta; Huff + Gooden Architects of New York with Hammel, Green and Abrahamson of Minneapolis; Moody•Nolan of Columbus, OH, with Antoine Predock Architect of Albuquerque, NM, and Goode Van Slyke Architecture of Atlanta; and Polshek Partnership Architects of New York with Cooper Carry and Stanley, Love-Stanley of Atlanta.

Launched in 2005 by Mayor Shirley Franklin, the center plans to open in 2012 on a 2.2-acre site on the edge of Centennial Olympic Park. Executive director Douglas Shipman told *AN*, **continued on page 9**

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POLS SEEK STIMULUS FUNDS FOR MINORITY AND WOMEN CONTRACTORS

Minority Report

In February, as the House and Senate were fighting over the contents of the federal stimulus package, so too were politicians and bureaucrats squaring off at City Hall. But instead of arguing **continued on page 10**



COURTESY MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

THE BEACON SHINES ON. SEE PAGE 8



The Nordic Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (1962).

SVERRE FEHN, 1924-2009

GUY FEHN

Though awarded the profession's highest honor—the Pritzker Prize—in 1997, Sverre Fehn, who died in Oslo on February 23 at age 84, was hardly a household name in architecture. The Norwegian architect practiced a poetic modernism in the Scandinavian tradition that was more expressive and less formally driven than Alvar Aalto or Poul Kjaerholm, but powerful in its evocative simplicity. His built works are

relatively few and almost all in Norway, but such buildings as the Glacier Museum (1991), the Hedmark Museum (1979), and the Nordic Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (1962) have been recognized as true achievements by academics and practitioners alike, from John Hejduk to Craig Dykers. Here, architect Steven Holl and artist Dan Graham offer their impressions.

Steven Holl, Steven Holl Architects
Sverre Fehn's architecture was tied deeply to roots, but always futuristic in spirit. His work expressed the power of the inventive, along with marvelous moments of experiential joy. Standing on the roof of his Glacier Museum in Fjaerland, Norway, I had the feeling he was raising man like a mountain, but then putting him in humble awe of the melting glacier in the distance. The inspirational space and light of his Nordic Pavilion in Venice merges thin, delicate concrete with undulating light shot through with the earth's counterpoint in piercing trees. This space is full of rhythm, asymmetrically unpredictable. Like a forked musical staff of bars in which notes are the existing trees, the silence is broken by a blasting through to the light.

Fehn's drawings had the **continued on page 3**

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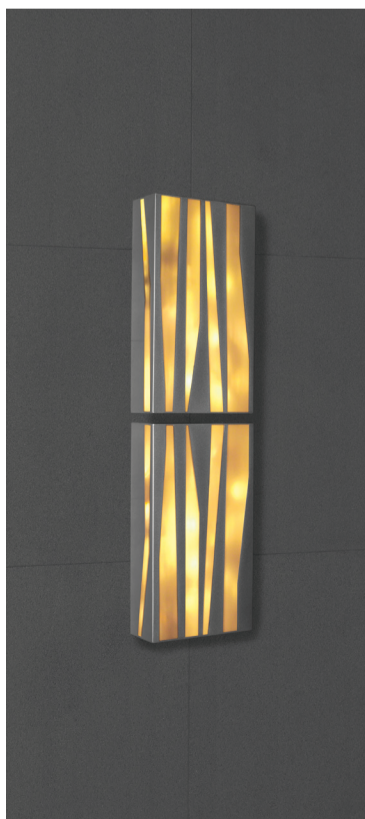
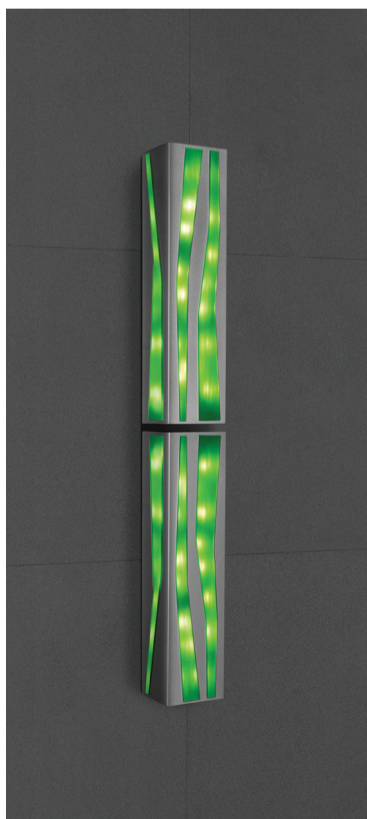
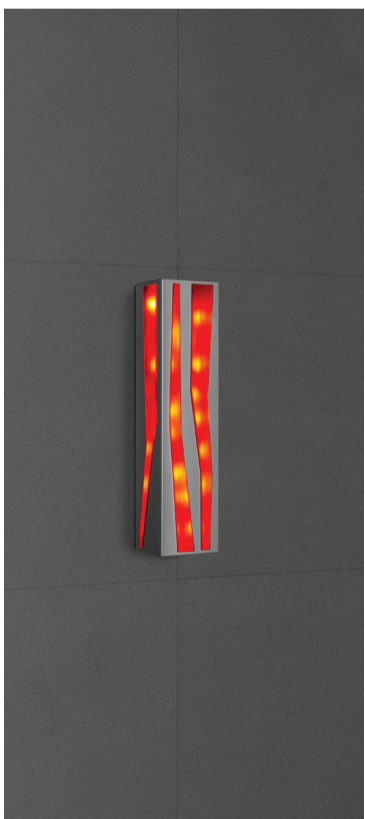
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VOLUME 07, ISSUE 6 APRIL 1, 2009. THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER (ISSN 1552-8081) IS PUBLISHED 20 TIMES A YEAR (SEMI-MONTHLY EXCEPT THE FOLLOWING: ONCE IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY AND NONE IN AUGUST) BY THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER, LLC, 21 MURRAY ST., 5TH FL., NEW YORK, NY 10007. PRESORT-STANDARD POSTAGE PAID IN NEW YORK, NY. POSTMASTER, SEND ADDRESS CHANGE TO: 21 MURRAY ST., 5TH FL., NEW YORK, NY 10007. FOR SUBSCRIBER SERVICE: CALL 212-966-0630. FAX 212-966-0633. \$3.95 A COPY, \$39.00 ONE YEAR, INTERNATIONAL \$160.00 ONE YEAR, INSTITUTIONAL \$149.00 ONE YEAR. ENTIRE CONTENTS COPYRIGHT 2006 BY THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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LEARNING FROM THE BRONX

The Bronx is not usually considered a borough of great architectural monuments. Sure, it has some outstanding works built over the years by the likes of McKim, Mead & White, Marcel Breuer, and Richard Meier. Most recently WXY Architecture has transformed the Bronx Charter School for the Arts into a model of how a 21st-century school should be organized. But these remain largely isolated projects in a vast urban landscape of undistinguished residential and commercial development.

Yet if one looks beneath the footprints of this body of nondescript structures, there is another design tradition, not often enough recognized, of extraordinary planning initiatives spanning two centuries. From the 19th-century park advocates who lobbied for open space—the Bronx has one-quarter more dedicated parkland than any other borough—to Robert Moses, who parlayed Bronx estuaries into Orchard Beach even as he sundered other neighborhoods to realize his grand vision; and from the planners of the Grand Concourse to the engineers of the Saw Mill, Bronx, and Hutchinson parkways, this borough has an urban infrastructure that should be the envy of New York.

The Grand Concourse is of course famous for the art deco buildings that line the boulevard as it sweeps its way through the central part of the borough. But what really distinguishes the Concourse is not simply these buildings, but their relationship to the broad, Haussmann-like scale of the boulevard. There are other streets in New York City that have similar ensembles of deco buildings and boulevards (Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn comes to mind) but they do not have the grandeur and elegance of the Bronx Concourse.

Likewise, Mosholu Parkway—one of the most underappreciated and majestic boulevards in the city—connects two great open spaces: the Bronx Park (home to the New York Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo) and the borough's largest open space, Van Cortlandt Park. Planned in 1888, it is not a street of great architecture—although Paul Rudolph's monumental Tracey Towers loom over it—but Mosholu Parkway is still a great landscaped space precisely because it was so carefully and thoughtfully developed in both design and execution.

Though these important urban planning prototypes seem to have been forgotten in recent years as the borough became increasingly suburbanized with the ranch-style homes of Charlotte Gardens, the two-family modular houses of Villa Maria, and the half-timbered Nehemiah housing project, the tide seems to be turning back to a development pattern based on the borough's more appropriate historical planning initiatives. The Grand Concourse is currently the focus of an ideas competition sponsored by the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the Design Trust for Public Space to modernize this great boulevard. And Melrose Commons, despite mayoral attempts to weaken its intent and impact over the years, still offers the best hope for a reenergized and repopulated central Bronx. Of course, great architecture would be the icing on the cake in this modernization effort, but only if it builds upon the borough's proud urban planning tradition.

WILLIAM MENKING

SVERRE FEHN, 1924-2009 continued from front page delicate power of a scribble that could shape a city. His concept drawing for the Glacier Museum, for instance, is only a few lines, but it carries the immensity of the mountains holding the glacier, while conveying the fragility of the little work of architecture, a scribble on the ground plane. In this sketch, the poetic power of a thought is later concretized in the realized work.

While the greatest lessons are experienced in his built work, he was also an inspirational teacher at the Oslo School of Architecture. In Scandinavian architecture, his realized buildings, though not many, stand as a smiling argument for the modern power of material structure and light in rare poetic balance with natural forces.

Dan Graham, Artist

What I love about Fehn's work is that it doesn't fight nature, but works with it. At the Glacier Museum, the lichen grows in and out of the concrete walls. I never met him, but everyone I know who did remarked on how kind and gentle and nurturing he was. Brian Halton of the English architecture group NATO once told me that when everyone else was attacking their work, Fehn defended them. Fehn never let form overpower his sense of the integrity of nature. I really like his writings, too, because they deal in a typically modest Norwegian way with architecture in its relationship to nature.



The Nordic Pavilion in Venice.

FERRUZZI

LETTERS

GSA'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Design Excellence is alive, well, and just hitting its prime after 15 remarkable years at the U.S. General Services Administration ("Eavesdrop: Excellence No More," AN 04_03.04.2009). Any doubters need only look at the winners of GSA's 2008 biennial design, art, and construction awards. Each project embodies the agency's commitment to superior workplaces, creative solutions, and cost-effective acquisition services and management policies—all at best value to the federal government and the taxpayers.

The U.S. Land Port of Entry at Massena, NY, for instance, is an architectural marvel that is welcoming, functional, and secure. This 45-acre "front door" to the U.S. is one of 18 award-winning projects for 2008 that extended GSA's legacy of extraordinary federal

public architecture.

The Obama Administration has entrusted GSA with managing a \$5.55 billion investment in our nation's federal buildings. As we work to increase energy efficiency and help restore America to prosperity, GSA remains committed to Design Excellence and to civic spaces that symbolize the values that have made our nation great.

Naysayers should know the year ahead is even bolder. GSA is focused on improvements in energy conservation in our existing buildings and new facilities. We're pursuing new developments in building performance—in operations, in flexibility, and in productivity. We continue to refine our design and construction processes to bring all our projects in on-time and on-budget with the excellence in design that has become the hallmark of GSA.

We cherish our reputation as a leader in the design and construction industries. Maintaining that standing depends on using our successes as stepping stones to continuously higher levels of accomplishment. We look forward to a continued, collaborative relationship with the design and construction community to deliver the high-quality federal buildings the American public has come to expect from GSA.

LES SHEPHERD
CHIEF ARCHITECT
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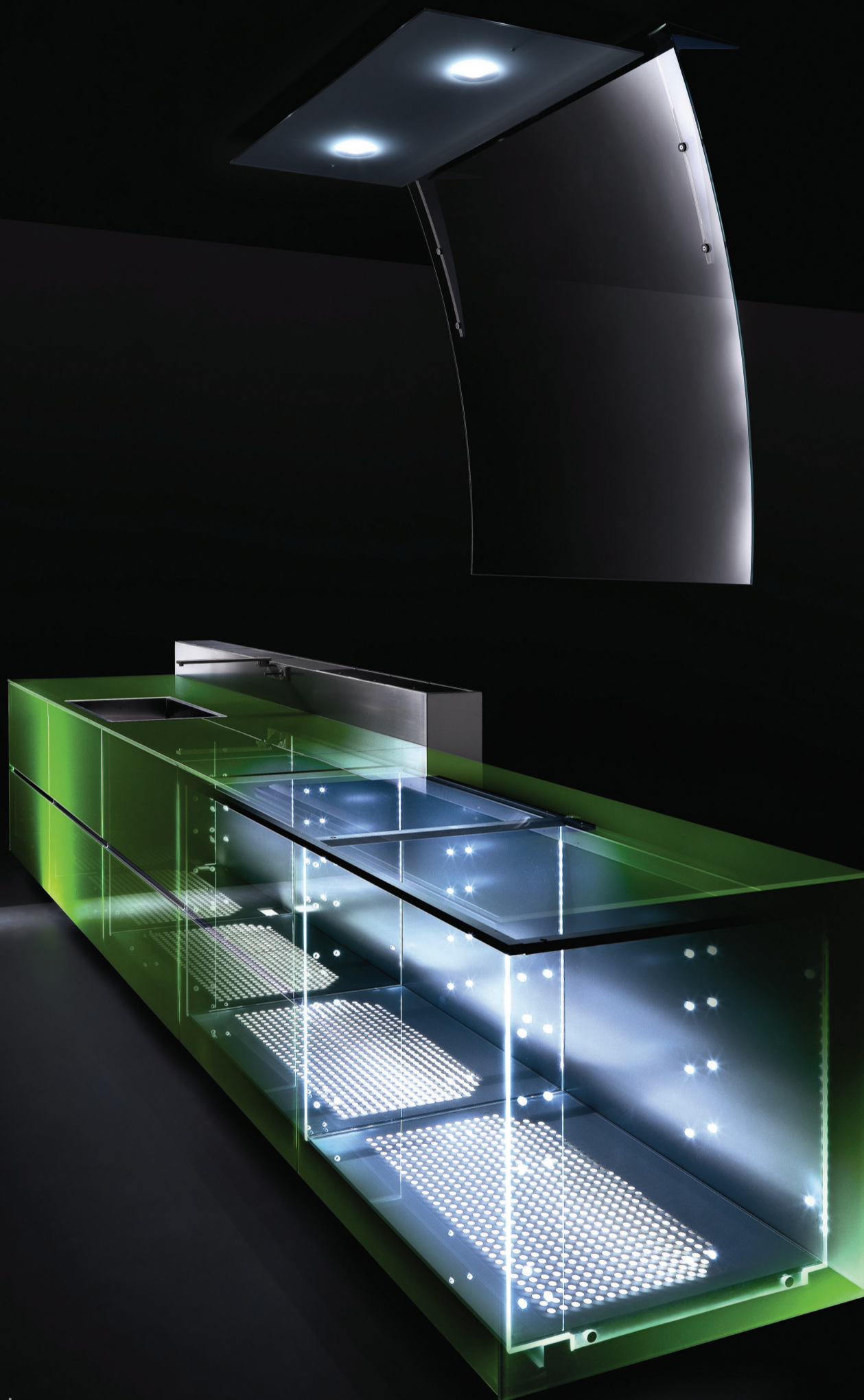
CORRECTIONS

Our feature on the Architectural League's Emerging Voices ("Emerging Voices 2009," AN 04_03.04.2009) misstated the name of one firm and its principal. He is Robert

Hutchison of Hutchison & Maul Architecture.

Because of an editing error, a report on architects in Iceland ("After the Gold Rush," AN 04_03.04.2009) misidentified a faculty member at the Icelandic Arts Academy. Sigrun Birgisdottir is a woman.

A caption for our feature on New York's Design and Construction Excellence Initiative ("The A-Lists," AN 05_03.18.2009) misidentified the architect and name of a project in Bushwick. The project, Engine Company 277, was designed by STV. The article also implied that architect Karen Bausman had relocated to New York from Washington, D.C., after serving as a General Services Administration peer-reviewer. In fact, she has been based in New York since 1982, and remains a GSA peer.



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EAVESDROP: SARA HART

THE COMPANY THEY KEEP

MIPIM, the annual global-real-estate gloat fest, wrapped up on Friday the 13th at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes. Following the money this year were three of architecture's most illustrious representatives: **Zaha Hadid**, **Thom Mayne**, and **Wolf Prix**. **Alex Gorlin**, the New York architect with a nose for nonsense, was among the 500 packed into La Salle Estérel in the Palais to witness the trio wax about architectural salvation in "the current economic climate" as if it were a passing thunderstorm.

Gob-smacked if not surprised, Gorlin reports: "Wolf Prix said, 'I don't want to sound like an American, but now is the time to think positive and not get discouraged. There is the danger that a new conservatism will arise with the lack of money, and we will be asked to do stupid forms again!'"

"Zaha fretted that with all this doom and gloom in the air, we risk backtracking to 20 years ago, when we couldn't build radical shapes. 'Remember,' she said, 'architectural space leads to enlightenment.' Thom Mayne was asked by a member of the audience what the present financial crisis meant for the profession. Mayne responded with inadvertent hauteur, 'We on this panel do not represent the architectural profession, we are like trial lawyers. We are specialists, so we may not be affected as much as others.' When pressed by the moderator, he conceded, 'Well, architects will be out of work for many years.'" Just not him.

Gorlin went on to report that lip service was duly paid to finding creative solutions for new problems, even as Hadid blurted out that "we certainly don't want to go back to designing sheds." Then Mayne offered without apparent irony (or short-term memory, for that matter), "Now that the Bush era is over, there is interest in new ideas."

But perhaps the most apropos statement about the age of easy money and expensive starchitecture was uttered by **Frank Gehry**, seated in the first row, to Wolf Prix as he left the stage, "You know, all you all talked about was yourselves." So we end with the pot calling the kettle black.

THE PULSE OF PEI

The PULSE Contemporary Art Fair distinguishes itself from the Armory Show, which runs concurrently farther up the Hudson in early March, by promoting its art as "contemporary," in contrast to the other's "new" art. The distinction can be fuzzy, just as parody and parodied are sometimes indistinguishable. That's what we were pondering while crawling through the PULSE show, when suddenly we came upon a booth hyperbolically hawking The Centurion, a new condominium at 33 West 56th Street designed by the awkwardly named **Pei Partnership Architects** with **I.M. Pei Architect**. A giant photomural of Pei and his two sons, **Sandi** and **Didi**, beckoned visitors. Considering the context, we were inclined to view it as a conceptual art installation, satirizing the post-bubble demise of extravagant living in designer buildings. We were wrong. A real-estate agent on hand confirmed that this was New York Residence's third appearance at PULSE, and that they expected to attract the show's foreign visitors to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Another agent piled on by announcing that this was the nonagenarian architect's last building. When our expressions turned quizzical, he quickly clarified: "I mean, he's going to retire."

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THE CITY'S PLAN TO SAVE CONEY MIGHT SINK IT FOR GOOD

BARELY AFLOAT

"It's headed for disaster, it's headed off a cliff," said Jasper Goldman, senior policy analyst at the Municipal Art Society. He was speaking of the Bloomberg rezoning for Coney Island, which the City Planning Commission will vote on later this spring. The aim is to return the area to its former glory, but if recent events bear out, it could be the final shake in Coney's decades-long death rattle.

The city rezoning includes an amusement district, but also housing, shops, year-round "entertainment retail" (think Chuck E. Cheese), and parkland. Meanwhile, developer Joe Sitt has bought up much of the current amusement area, and plans a resort full of hotels and amusements. While Sitt's hotels would be on the Boardwalk (where the remaining amusements are now), the city would place them along Surf Avenue.

Earlier, the city proposed a land swap with the developer, but Sitt wouldn't budge.

While the two parties wrangle, amusement advocates fear that entertainment retailers will displace traditional rides and arcades.

"The plan kills the hen that laid the golden egg," said Juan Rivero of Save Coney Island, adding that without a sizeable amusement park—closer to 25,000 square feet, rather than the proposed 9,000—no one will come to shop or stay at the new Coney anyhow.

The local community board further complicated the city's gambit when it overwhelmingly voted in favor of the rezoning but added 20 stipulations, like increasing a retail cap from 2,500 square feet per store to 10,000, and forbidding eminent domain. Most points are seen as favorable to the developer, and were crafted by the area's City Council representative Dominic Recchia, viewed by some as a crony of Sitt.

If the plan gets to the council this summer, Recchia holds de facto veto power. And so to get its plans realized, the city will need to first remove Sitt from the equation. Goldman is skeptical about such a deal because of the dire state of the city's finances and the bad blood between both sides. "Then again," he said, "there's no better time to buy, given market conditions." **MATT CHABAN**

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IAN TONG


The Amsterdam-based design firm Droog has opened its first American retail space in a 5,000-square-foot, two-story Soho loft. Created in partnership with fellow Dutch designers Studio Makkink & Bey, the store makes a sophisticated blend of architecture, product design, and merchandizing. Droog asked its designers for an interior composed of elements that could be purchased, and the studio responded with an installation that acts variously as utilitarian product display, demonstration, and architectural folly. The main level is dominated by the House of Blue, a structure made of polyurethane foam with niches that display the store's witty collection of furnishings, kitchenware, and high-style bric-a-brac. But the foam also serves as a "blueprint" from which customers can order different parts of the house to be custom-fabricated in wood, porcelain, or other materials and produced in limited editions. The baroque-decorated main level contrasts with the more austere lower level, where a wall consists of flat-packed, CNC-milled pieces of furniture that can be assembled into benches, tables, and stools. Throughout, the space echoes the verve of Droog's products—wallpaper with circular cut-outs that reveal the surface underneath; a bathroom mat that doubles as slippers—and extends the firm's ethos of informality and reuse. **MARIANA RODRÍGUEZ ORTE**

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Designs on the Delaware

Like most cities, Philadelphia is scaling back services amid a budget crunch. But despite austere times, the city is moving ahead with long-brewing plans to redesign its Delaware River waterfront with new parks, promenades, and cultural, residential, and commercial uses. In early March, Mayor Michael Nutter and the William Penn Foundation announced a \$1 million commitment for planning, design, and construction of the new waterfront, a pledge that followed a \$1 million capital commitment from the city.

While the sum might seem trifling, it sets the stage for implementation of an action plan for the Central Delaware developed in 2007 by numerous civic groups, including PennPraxis, the clinical planning and design arm of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design. "In the scheme of things, a million dollars is a baby step, but it's a very important signal of commitment from the foundation community," said Harris Steinberg, executive director of PennPraxis. "It's meant to leverage other funds and eventually, to help catalyze the development community."

The most important elements of the public access masterplan, which will require approval by the City Council, include acqui-

sition of land for a 200-foot-wide trail and improving access to the waterfront, which is largely inaccessible due to I-95, vast parking lots, and gaps in the street grid. An open RFQ for the masterplan is due for release late this month.

While spurring plans for the entire seven-mile trail and surrounding urban fabric, the funding targets initial design and construction efforts on Pier 11, for which a second RFQ will soon be announced. The one-acre wooden pier, located adjacent to the Ben Franklin Bridge that connects the city to Camden, New Jersey, is envisioned as a demonstration project. "It will be a template for the kind of high-quality public space we're seeking for the entire waterfront," Steinberg said. In any event, it will need to be high quality on a budget. According to PennPraxis, the entire budget for the pier project with design fees is \$2.5 million. Of that money, more than \$1 million is slated for structural improvements to the pier.

Despite the modest budgets, both RFQs are expected to draw broad interest, and that suits Steinberg just fine. "We hope it will be the beginning of a number of spin-off projects," he said. "This is the first chapter in an ongoing story." **ALAN G. BRAKE**



With its opening on March 18, the Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion gives Frank Lloyd Wright's signature Prairie-style Darwin D. Martin House in Buffalo a sublimely modern twist. Designed by Toshiko Mori of New York-based Toshiko Mori Architect, the \$5 million visitor center reinterprets Wright's classic "organic principles," integrating

the surrounding landscape while meeting the programmatic needs of the complex, a site of architectural pilgrimage that is home to both the Darwin D. Martin House and the George F. Barton House, plus sundry outbuildings including a pergola, conservatory, and carriage house. Part of an ambitious, multi-year restoration and expansion

of the complex—Wright's largest residential ensemble—the 7,775-square-foot, glass-paneled pavilion contains interpretive exhibitions, interactive touch screen programs, and a visitor orientation film. The new structure, which sits across a courtyard from the main house, reflects Wright's overarching structural logic with its cantilevered hip roof and low, horizontal profile, while the dimensions of the glass-paneled exterior and floor plans derive from the proportions and scale of the 1905 Martin House. Mori carefully updates Wright's formal vocabulary with materials such as thin stainless-steel columns and high-performance glass, while also providing visitors with the most important benefit of all—uninterrupted views of Wright's masterpiece next door. **DANIELLE RAGO**

COURTESY PENNPRAXIS

GAS WELLS NEAR NEW YORK'S WATERSHED ALARM COUNTRY-DWELLING ARCHITECTS AND CONSERVATIONISTS



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DRILLING
FOR DOLLARS

In August 2008, Christopher Bianchi began receiving inquiries from energy company Lenape Resources of upstate New York, which expressed interest in prospecting for natural gas on Bianchi's 21 acres in Gilbertsville, New York, for \$100 per acre. About the same time, art critic Silvia Kolbowski and architecture scholar Kenneth Frampton, who spend their weekends at a home on 23 acres in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, fielded a similar query from Chesapeake Energy that offered 15 times that rate. Both properties sit atop the Marcellus Shale, a geological formation that extends from West Virginia and Ohio to the Southern Tier of New York, and contains as many as 516 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

New York State is already home to 13,000 gas wells, according to Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) spokesperson Yancey Roy, and some of those sites drill the Marcellus Shale. The state's most recent drilling applications, from the likes of Chesapeake Energy and Nornew, take fresh advantage of the Marcellus Shale's potential. The recent spike in energy prices and access to the Millennium Pipeline have inspired the latest wave of prospecting, and this time round, companies will deploy newer methods of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing to tap into the natural gas deposits.

Hydraulic fracturing is a controversial process. At least a million gallons of water mixed with sand and a proprietary chemical formulation—the details of which are exempted from the Clean Water Act—is injected into the drill site to rupture the rock and release the natural gas trapped in its pores. Although a 2004 study by the Environmental Protection Agency concluded that hydraulic fracturing was effectively safe, groundwater samples drawn from a natural gas field in Sublette County, Wyoming, last year proved that hydraulic fracturing had contaminated it with high levels of benzene and other carcinogens that threaten public health. The Sublette County incident was the first to be recorded by a federal agency; investigations by smaller groups have yielded many more examples of underground

contamination, as well as surface spills.

The drilling applications in question would put gas wells not far from one of New York City's largest drinking-water reservoirs. And while year-round residents of the Southern Tier and rural Pennsylvania might be ambivalent, weekenders from New York City are vocal in their call for more stringent environmental protection. "The question of our relationship to the land, particularly at a moment when the ecological aspects of buildings are at the top of an economic agenda, should not be left only to environmentalists," Frampton told *AN*. This constituency has further reason to protest drilling, due to concerns about contamination of New York City's watershed, the reservoirs of which currently support the population without filtration. City Council environmental committee chair James Gennaro has come out firmly against drilling within the watershed.

Falling energy prices have quieted activity for the moment: Chesapeake Energy recently rescinded its offer to Kolbowski and Frampton. In New York State, many companies are waiting on the DEC as it prepares an environmental impact statement concerning horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, mandated in a bill signed by Governor Paterson last July.

The inevitable rebound in prices, though, continues to fuel debate surrounding gas drilling, and currently both sides are staking claims in the fight. In February, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of a municipality's right to use zoning to determine drilling locations. Yet also last month, the Environmental Working Group revealed that New York's DEC has not conducted tests of surface or underground water for contamination by hydraulic fracturing. And according to Joe Levine of New York-based Bone/Levine Architects and co-founder of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, drilling has just begun at the so-called Robson Well in Wayne County; the Delaware River Basin Commission is deferring jurisdiction on the effort, since the drilling is not technically tapping into the Marcellus Shale. **DAVID SOKOL**

TRADING

UP



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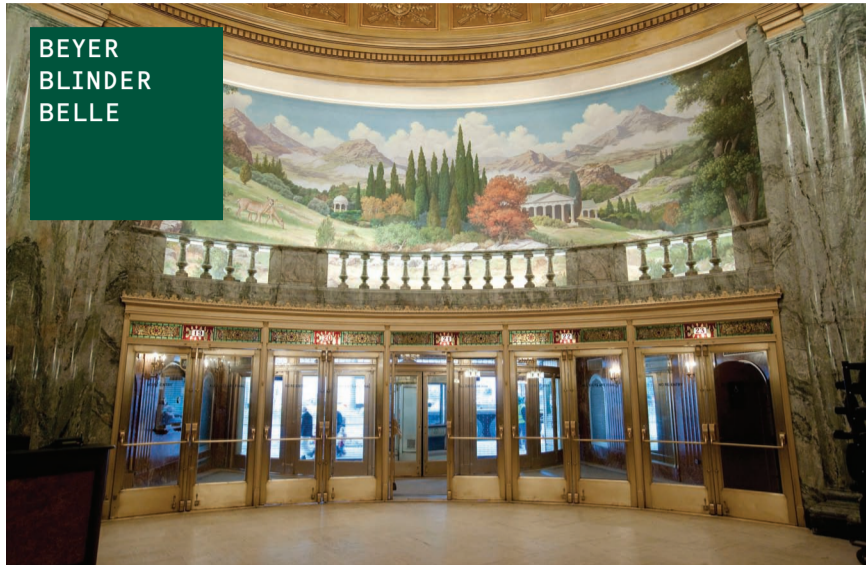
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Gensler
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IN DETAIL: BEACON THEATRE



BEYER BLINDER BELLE

They don't build 'em like this anymore. When celebrated silent film and vaudeville impresario Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel commissioned architect Walter Ahlschlager to design a new theater on Broadway and 74th Street in 1927, he asked for something more than a black box. Godfather to such famed movie palaces as the Strand, Rialto, Rivoli, Capitol, his eponymous Roxy Theatre, and, of course, Radio City Music Hall, Rothafel wanted

to offer people a fantasy escape. In other words, when the beleaguered urban dweller came in from the hustle and bustle of Broadway, he would be buying a ticket not just to see a flick, but to embark on a magical journey into exotic lands. Ahlschlager fulfilled this promise through a careful manipulation of scale, rich materials and surface treatments, gaudy adornments and amenities, and a profusion of architectural styles that spanned eras from the

ancient grandeur of Greek and Rome, through the Renaissance and Rococo periods, all the way to a spice trader's tent on the Arabian Desert. The final product, known as Roxy's Midway, was a 2,800-seat cocoon, as opulent as any an escapist could wish for, but it was also ill timed. The silent film era was in its twilight, and Roxy had to bow out. In 1929, Warner Brothers purchased the space, renovated it slightly for the talkies, and renamed it the Beacon Theatre.

Left: A mural buried beneath another image was uncovered; Right: plasterwork was restored, while the carpet pattern was copied from old photographs.

In the ensuing decades, little was done to maintain the original aspect of the theater. The interior was landmarked in 1979. And for the past 20 years or so, it has served as a venue for rock-and-roll concerts. In 2006, Madison Square Garden acquired the theater and finally restored it to its 1929 splendor. To this end, they hired Beyer Blinder Belle (BBB), and dedicated \$16 million to renovation costs.

As the architects set to work, they found that no matter who operated the Beacon over the years, they all took more or less the same approach to maintenance: They just rolled over the prior tenant's paint with whatever was fashionable or cheap at the time. When the molding cracked, or the spears of the giant Amazon warriors flanking the stage broke, or the golden bird sitting on the knee of the allegorical girl above the exit fell off, they left it that way.

And when the crystal ball on the chandelier in the lobby rotunda came down, it was reattached with a bit of wire and a coffee tin—painted gold, of course.

When people smoked, that smoke coated the walls, burying in grime the murals of Arcadian pastures.

To uncover the original Beacon, BBB explored two main avenues: archival research and an almost archeological technique known as an exposure window. The archival research included trips to the New York Historical Society, where they studied photos of the theater in advertisements from when it first opened and read up on old newspaper articles. The black-and-white photos didn't reveal much in the way of color, but gave some idea of textures and tones and, in a blowup, revealed a portion of the carpet pattern. The articles painted a picture with a similarly broad brush, describing the Beacon as a "gilded palace," leading the architects to assume there had been a lot of gold about. The real detail, however, came through exposure



COURTESY MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

windows, a process by which a technician tapes off a square on a wall and carefully strips away layer after layer of paint until only the original remains. This revealed an incredible variety of treatments and colors throughout the space.

Almost every surface and every molding had its own color or application. Once these were determined, BBB unleashed an army of 1,000 craftsmen on the Beacon: master plaster workers and fine art painters, marble masons and scagliola workers. The first performer to play the reincarnated Beacon was, poetically enough, Leonard Cohen. **AARON SEWARD**

Madison Avenue (Doll) House: Design by REX Architecture. Structure by MKA. Fabrication by Situ Studio
photo: © 2008 James Lattanzio

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FIVE VIE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS continued from front page "We will be located next to two more entertainment-oriented institutions—the World of Coca-Cola and the Georgia Aquarium. We asked the teams to create a space that will help visitors transition to a more contemplative state."

After issuing an RFQ in November 2008, the center and its design jury narrowed the list to twenty. They then asked the firms to submit a "design narrative" and complete team roster. "We didn't want them to draw anything," Shipman explained. "We wanted them to demonstrate their way of working." That group was then winnowed to five teams, who were given a small design stipend and a detailed exhibition design program.

The finalists have responded in strikingly different ways. The team of Diller, Scofidio + Renfro and Stanley Beaman & Sears created a layered design, with much of the exhibition space below grade and a thin, cantilevered roof hanging over an outdoor garden. Freelon and HOK designed a pair of interlocking, L-shaped volumes topped with green roofs. Huff + Gooden and Hammel, Green and Abrahamson presented the most austere scheme: a low-slung horizontal volume with wide expanses of glass, which hangs over the sloping site and is supported by a massive truss. The team of Moody•Nolan, Predock, and Goode Van Slyke engaged directly with the park-side setting, with a building-as-landscape design and a glazed entrance carved out of the middle. Finally, the team of Polshek, Cooper Carry, and Stanley, Love-Stanley called for a collection of glazed, flat-roofed wings with projection screens, accented by a tall, thin, concrete entrance portal.

In addition to evaluating how each design meets aesthetic and programmatic goals, the jury will also consider the environmental sensitivity of the projects, and participation by women- and minority-owned firms. The jury of 13—including civil rights leader Juanita Abernathy, Chelsea Piers founder Tom Bernstein, filmmaker George Wolfe, and architects Alan Balfour, Deborah Berke, and Craig VanDevere—will make its recommendation in late March. The project is expected to break ground late this year. **AGB**



Moody•Nolan, Predock, and Goode Van Slyke.



Huff + Gooden and Hammel, Green and Abrahamson.



Polshek, Cooper Carry, and Stanley, Love-Stanley.



Diller, Scofidio + Renfro and Stanley Beaman & Sears.

COURTESY CENTER FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

LAST RITES continued from front page lawsuit is whether or not St. Vincent's met the appropriate standards for its hardship application, which the hospital filed after the commission initially voted down its plans last May. That vote denied St. Vincent's request to demolish the O'Toole Building as part of its bid to build the new tower, along with new condominiums on the current hospital site across 7th Avenue—all of which the commission found historically inappropriate.

The hardship application does not deal with the appropriateness of the designs, but with St. Vincent's ability to carry out its charitable mission. The hospital argued it could not do so without demolishing the O'Toole Building, and in October, the commission voted in favor of this argument.

The petition, filed by Preserve the Village Historic District and a number of allies, argues primarily that the O'Toole Building still functions as a serviceable building within the hospital complex. But the lawsuit's

chances of success may be slim, several land-use attorneys told AN, because the court usually defers to the governing agency's decision. "It's difficult to meet the standard," one attorney said, "and the commission is sure to dot all its 'i's.'"

While agreeing that such challenges are difficult, Al Butz, counsel for the preservationists, argued that the legal standard in question dates to the Penn Central suit that saved Grand Central Terminal, a building preserved for the same reasons he said O'Toole should be. "The building can still be used," he said. "This hardship is self-created by St. Vincent's."

Meanwhile, the commission's approval of the hospital tower—which included concessions by architects Pei Cobb Freed & Partners to reduce the structure's height, add terra cotta louvers, and activate the ground floor—paved the way for a hearing on the condominiums across the street, plans for which developer Bill Rudin expects to present in the coming months. **MC**

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 1, 2009

EERO DYNAMIC



Once an icon of air travel's future, Eero Saarinen's Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy International Airport was in danger of becoming a relic—until JetBlue hired Gensler to bring the building into the 21st century. A structural steel design afforded JetBlue the flexibility to revive the historic Flight Center and keep pace with a rapidly changing airline industry. Easily adaptable to everything from the latest aircraft designs to new security regulations, the terminal is cleared for takeoff.

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Architect: Gensler
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MINORITY REPORT

continued from front page
over "pork" and tax cuts, a handful of City Council members were wrangling with the Bloomberg and Paterson administrations over the inequitable distribution of stimulus funds, and how best to give women- and minority-owned construction firms a greater share of stimulus projects headed for New York.

While the warring parties in Washington managed to reach a compromise on the stimulus, there's been no such luck for councilmembers like Letitia James of Brooklyn, who desperately want some percentage of stimulus funds set aside for minority groups. "Congressmembers keep telling me it's in the bill, while industry heads keep telling me it's not," James said in a recent interview. "There's a lot of confusion."

At the heart of the debate are longstanding construction practices that, according to critics, continue to exclude minority- and women-owned business enterprises, or MWBEs, in favor of well-established and often politically connected firms. "There's a lasting institutional bias," said John Liu, a Queens representative and the council's only Asian

member.

Councilmembers supporting equity measures within state and city stimulus projects were hoping the additional influx of work might also mean an influx of opportunity for their constituents, particularly in high-paying construction-related jobs. But just as architects and planners have been disappointed by the stimulus bill's relatively modest scope, MWBE supporters have found that the urge to correct decades of economic exclusion has run up against the federal government's aim to salvage the sputtering economy.

State and city officials claim there's not enough time to tweak the standard formulas used to determine contracts on capital and other infrastructure projects. Essentially, these rules call for government agencies to take the lowest bid when authorizing contracts. Councilmembers James, Liu, and others have repeatedly tried to set aside a certain portion of those contracts for minority businesses. The hope was that under the special circumstances of the stimulus, this time they would succeed.

So far, it's not been the case. A spokesperson for Governor David Paterson

said that the first priority is "getting the shovels in the ground, which will benefit all New Yorkers, regardless of race or gender."

Not everyone is so sanguine. "I do not believe a rising tide raises all boats—it certainly hasn't in New York," said Queens councilmember James Sanders, Jr., at a February hearing on MWBE involvement in the stimulus. "Sometimes it floods over here, while there's a drought over there." Sanders pointed to the World Trade Center reconstruction as a prime example of a major government project where minority contractors have been all but shut out by their mainstream rivals.

Now, with the stimulus bill passed and reports trickling in of projects in motion, James feels it may be too late to secure work for women- and minority-owned firms. "Projects are already getting underway because there are time constraints, and yet there is still no consensus on whether or not there's an MWBE requirement or component," she said. "The moment may have passed. The concern, it seems, is with the overall economy, not the minority community within the overall economy." **MC**

AT DEADLINE

CAN OBAMA CARRIÓN?

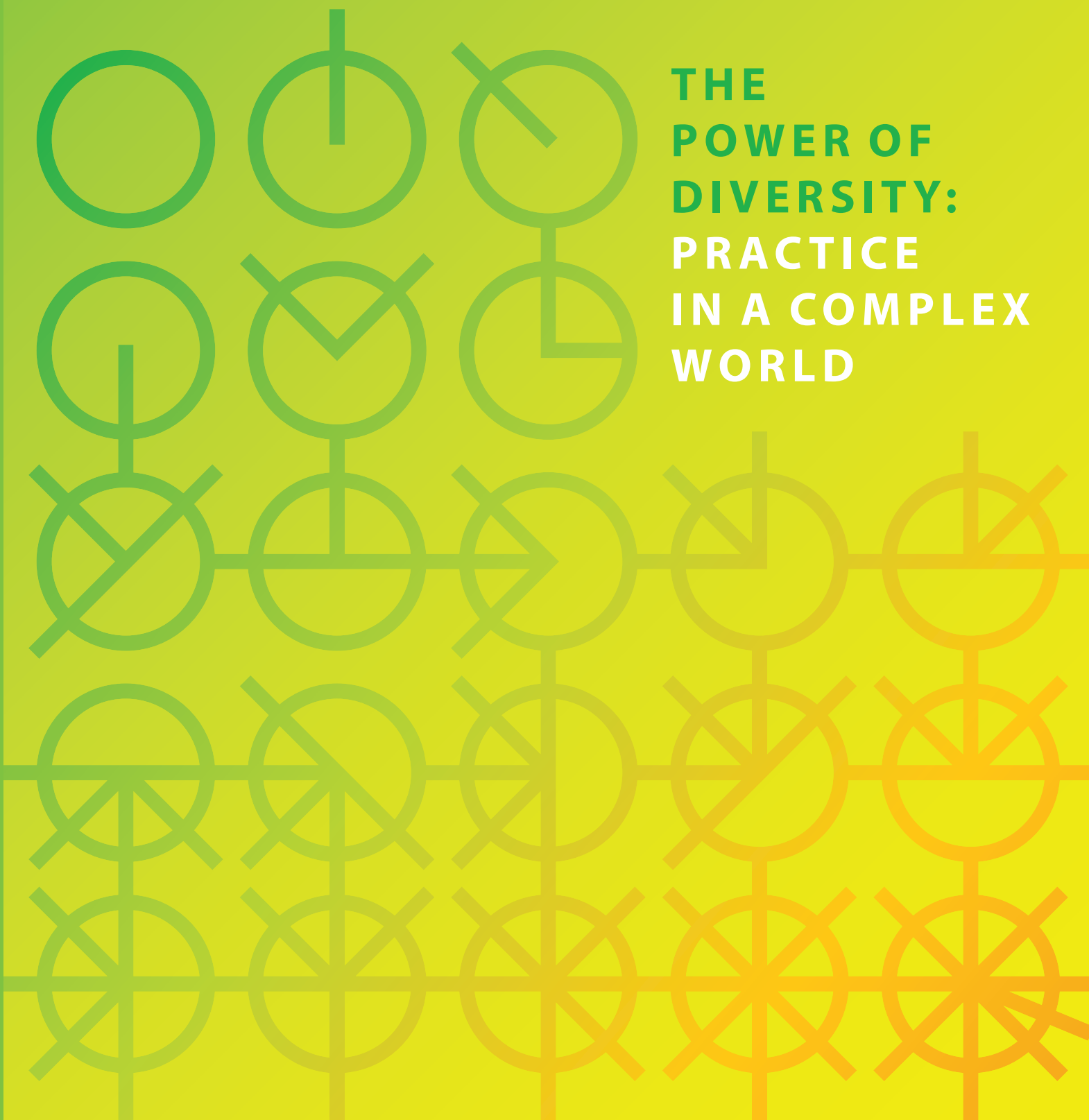
First Tom Daschle, now Adolfo Carrión. As if President Barack Obama's Cabinet picks have not caused him enough problems already, the *Daily News* reported on March 9 that the former Bronx borough president and newly appointed Director of Urban Affairs did not pay fees to an architect who added a porch and balcony to his home on City Island. The matter might have gone unnoticed had Carrión not also signed off, during public review, on three other projects by the architect, Hugo Subotovsky, who has done dozens of projects in the borough. It remains to be seen whether there were any ethical breaches—Carrión said the work, which was completed in 2007, still required a final review prior to payment—but the Bronx district attorney announced an investigation into the matter on March 12.

NEW SCHOOL'S OUT

It can be hard proposing the tallest building for a neighborhood, but in Greenwich Village, it is nearly impossible, as the New School recently learned. At a private meeting with elected officials on February 27—details of which were later made public by the Village Residents Alliance, a major opponent of the project—New School representatives admitted that they would not pursue a 350-foot-tall "campus in the sky" designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Locals objected not only to the structure's massive scale, but also to its red-and-blue glass facade, which was seen as out of character for the Village. It was not neighborhood opposition, however, but the economic climate that the university blamed for the collapse of the project. SOM has now been charged with designing a smaller, as-of-right educational building for the site, located at 5th Avenue and 14th Street.

TOLLING THE GOWANUS

Even a few years ago, it would have been hard to imagine anyone living on the Gowanus Canal, the once-and-still heavily industrial, heavily polluted rivulet in South Brooklyn. But even in post-bubble New York, such dreams still soar, like Toll Brothers' plans for a 577-unit mixed-use complex, which also happens to be located on a city-owned brownfield. The proposal, which was opposed by some neighborhood residents because of its scale and perceived threat to local manufacturers, won approval from the City Council on March 12.



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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 1, 2009



HYPERPECTURE FOR STEPHEN YABLON ARCHITECT

BRONX RENAISSANCE

When the new Yankee Stadium opens this month, it will mark a milestone in the Bronx's long-running resurrection. But in the shadow of such supersized bids for the borough's rebirth, architects at work on more modest, community-driven developments are finding a range of creative tactics to cultivate a greener, socially sustainable future.

By Angela Starita and Malachi Connolly

Not so long ago, if Neapolitans wanted to describe a place in ruins, they'd reach across the Atlantic for just the right simile: *E' come u Bronx*—like the Bronx. That it came to represent urban chaos in Naples, a city renowned for the same, speaks volumes about the Bronx's stubborn reputation, cast in the 1970s and fixed in pop-cultural memory for decades after.

Today, with the Bloomberg administration raining billions of public-private investment on the borough—a result of the South Bronx Initiative, an interagency effort launched in 2006 to encourage more housing, retail, and local jobs—there is no shortage of big-budget, star-quality projects. The new Yankee Stadium, a revamped Hunts Point Market, and the Gateway Center on the site of the former Bronx Terminal Market are all poised to make a dramatic impact on Bronx fortunes.

At the other end of the spectrum, smaller projects in the borough—receiving less media coverage and funding—have arguably undergirded much of this restoration, with impact far beyond their modest budgets. Be they green-roof entrepreneurs, supportive-housing visionaries, or boxing-gym designers, architects are transforming the borough one vacant lot or storefront at a time. Working alongside established architects such as Richard Dattner, whose 323-unit Courtlandt Corners is among the city's larger affordable housing developments, they have made the range and reach of community-driven Bronx development more vibrant than ever. And by engaging Bronx residents, they're connecting the dots between social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

Few grassroots groups understand the synergy between design and community goals as well as Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx). Miquela Craytor, the group's director, said that the Bronx has become a magnet for green technology because so much of the borough's negative press centered on its severe pollution and decay. As one of many efforts to reinvent the borough through green

design, the group has collaborated with Columbia University's GSAPP to explore turning Oak Point's industrial waterfront—where the city had planned to site a new jail—into an eco-industrial park. In 2003, taking matters into its own hands, SSBx started a program to train students to build and maintain green roofs, and four years later founded its own green-roof company, SmartRoofs. That has opened the door to real architectural opportunities.

On a recent afternoon, Craytor and Jesusa Ludan, SmartRoofs' director, visited a new client's property: the Olympic Theater in the Longwood neighborhood. Once a cinema for Spanish-language films, the Olympic was bought by Abundant Life Tabernacle and will be remodeled as the church's new home by architect Ana Maria Torres. Torres, principal of at architects, suggested incorporating more than 12,000 square feet of green roofs into the design, a boon for a neighborhood sorely lacking open space. "This is ambitious, yes, but we're going to make it," Torres said as she showed off the project. "The economy is more difficult, so we need to be creative." She aims to complete the job for \$2 million, a budget made possible through so many donations—both of money and labor—from church members.

Adaptive reuse was similarly successful in Mott Haven, a neighborhood south of the theater, where the New York City Housing Authority converted a basketball gym, once a warehouse, into the Betances Community Center and Boxing Gym. The bold design by Stephen Yablon Architect has garnered numerous awards, including a 2009 Merit Award from the AIA New York chapter. Set to open in May, the center consists of the first floor of a housing tower connected to the former warehouse space through an arcade. The central attraction is the ring itself, where children and teenagers are taught the art of boxing in what Yablon called a "glass-enclosed cube": a triple-height space lined with clerestory windows. Adapting the building involved raising the roof

and installing an underground drainage system, but in Yablon's hands the complex job, as he put it, seems "almost childlike in its simplicity."

Other architects have literally roamed the gritty streets in search of opportunity. In the early 1990s, Jonathan Kirschenfeld, known for designing New York's floating swimming pool, decided that the best way to secure commissions for publicly-funded housing was to find sites on his own, study their zoning parameters, and then approach nonprofit groups. "I did a lot of feasibility studies," he said.

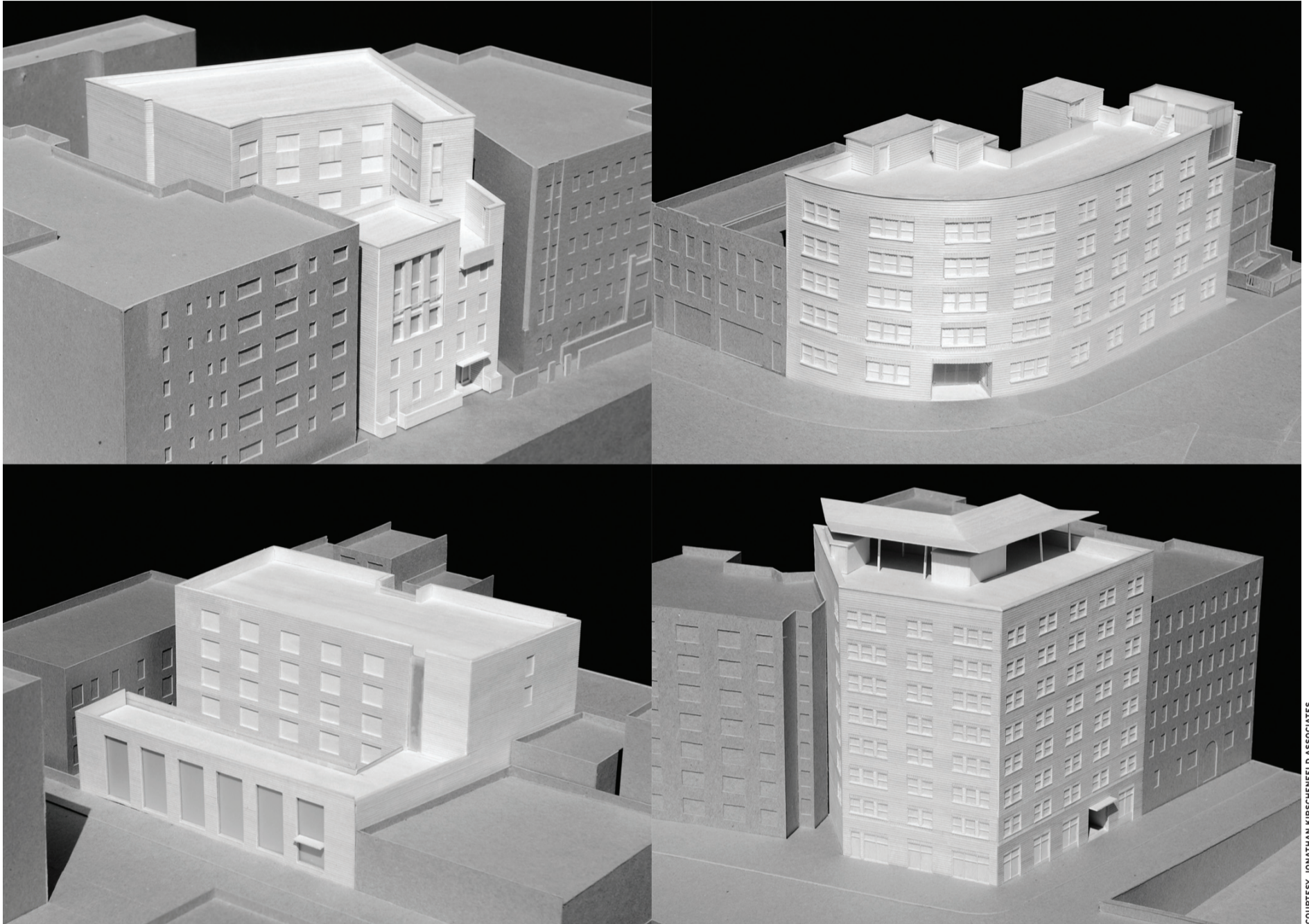
"Ultimately, I got to understand who was looking for sites." With so few parcels remaining, those available are often irregularly shaped and frustrating to work with. But the key, he said, "is to solve the public spaces first." His project for Bronx Park East, for instance, looks to be a row house from the street, with a double-height common space and adjoining roof terrace. But it's connected to a seven-story unit set back at an angle, creating a central courtyard between the large and small volumes.

The project's almost sly jump in scale is part of Kirschenfeld's effort to counter what he called "a lack of faith in urbanism" that marked much of the 1980s housing solutions, including Charlotte Gardens, the 90 single-family houses that make many architects livid. "It kills me, looking for sites in R7 and R8 [medium- to high-density zones] and passing vinyl-sided, one-family houses with wrought-iron fences," he said.

Kirschenfeld now has company in his quest to urbanize the Bronx's low-density pockets. The Women's Housing & Economic Development Corporation was granted a triangular site at Intervale Avenue to build a 127-unit building, with a third of its apartments set aside for formerly homeless families. Dubbed Intervale Green, the building sits just a block away from Charlotte Street, where a 1977 visit from President Jimmy Carter brought worldwide attention to burned-out buildings and rampant crime. Constructed on a former brownfield, Intervale Green's three



In Mott Haven, a warehouse was transformed into the Betances Community Center and Boxing Gym (facing page) by architect Stephen Yablon. On a former brown-field site, Intervale Green (above) in Crotona Park East was developed by the Women's Housing & Economic Development Corporation and includes apartments set aside for formerly homeless families.



COURTESY, JONATHAN KIRSCHENFELD ASSOCIATES



COURTESY AT ARCHITECTS

Architect Jonathan Kirschenfeld has multiple housing projects (models, above) underway in the Bronx that he co-developed with such groups as the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health after scouting sites on his own. A new home for the Abundant Life Tabernacle (left) is being carved out of an abandoned theater in Longwood by architect Ana Maria Torres, with the former fly space transformed into community rooms, and an extensive green-roof installation.



The Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market (left, top and middle) features mid-block piazzas and a historic market preserved along River Avenue. Boricua Village (left, bottom) is a new mixed-use project near Melrose Commons. Sustainable South Bronx worked with Columbia architecture students to envision plans (right, top and middle) for an eco-industrial park for Oak Point, including promenades and greenhouses. The 323-unit Courtlandt Corners (right, bottom) was developed by the nonprofit Phipps Houses Group and designed by Dattner Architects.

COURTESY BBG

COURTESY HUGO S. SUBOTOVSKY

green roofs and two courtyards have already proven a hit. New resident Carolina Beltre plans to share her one-bedroom apartment with her ten-year-old son, whom she left in the Dominican Republic five years ago in search of better work. "It's a new beginning for this area," she said. "Everybody needs to know what's happening in the South Bronx."

Even some of the largest Bronx developments are taking cues from their smaller siblings. Though the neighborhood around Yankee Stadium has rarely shared its team's success, planners are applying a whopping injection of urban acupuncture to the area: The new stadium will be followed by a big-box shopping mall called the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market. Just down River Avenue from the stadium, the center juggles multiple roles as it links the neighborhood to a planned Harlem River park across the Major Deegan Expressway. "The project was conceived to accommodate two vastly different scales of experience," explained Gregory Cranford, partner at BBG Architects. "You have the highway scale—as the building would be experienced from the

Major Deegan—and then the pedestrian scale." Though community groups criticized the project for displacing two-dozen wholesale produce merchants, the architects strove to knit what could have been another blank box into the neighborhood. The mass is broken into urban blocks, with two pedestrian passageways leading toward the river, and incorporates a historic market structure. "[City Planning Director] Amanda Burden was adamant about the pedestrian nature of this development," Cranford explained. "We worked closely to really anchor the pedestrian experience."

A similar debate over an influx of new retail has played out in the east side of the borough, where the Bloomberg administration aims to make the Third Avenue corridor an economic catalyst, anchored on the north by Boricua Village, the mixed-use project built around a vertical campus for Boricua College. The area is also home to Melrose Commons, a housing development that galvanized the neighborhood in 1992 when local residents deemed the initial plans unresponsive to their needs. This resulted

in the community group Nos Quedamos (We Stay), formed to counter the shortcomings of the Melrose project—whose finished form is now seen as a model of cooperative design. The city aims to attract more name retailers to the area, a goal that Yolanda Gonzalez, executive director of Nos Quedamos, said is reasonable, but not at the expense of what she called the mama-and-papa stores that have long been neighborhood mainstays.

The most successful projects, Gonzalez stressed, are those that give community groups a strong voice in the design process. That's what has made the borough's smallest new developments its most exuberant, a lesson planners would do well to heed as the Bronx continues to rebound. "There hasn't been a lot of sit-down and get-together, and that is an issue," Gonzalez said about the city's Third Avenue plans. "It should be a collaboration that creates cohesiveness. It's important."

ANGELA STARITA WRITES FREQUENTLY ON URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE. MALACHI CONNOLLY IS AN ARCHITECT AT RKT&B IN NEW YORK.



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Henning Kaland
Detour: Code arkitektur
7:00 p.m.
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THURSDAY 2

LECTURES

Billie Tsien
Women's Work Is Never Done
6:30 p.m.
Cooper Union
Great Hall
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Kenneth T. Jackson, Nicholas Bloom, et al.
The Resilient City: New York Facing Adversity
6:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
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SYMPOSIUM

Exploring the Dynamic Relationship Between Health and the Environment
George Amato, Felicity Arengo, Michael J. Balick, et al.
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American Museum of Natural History
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EVENT

Young Architects Program
5:00 p.m.
AIA Connecticut
370 James St., New Haven
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FRIDAY 3

SYMPOSIUM

Aftertaste 3
James Auger, Robert Israel, Kent Kleinman, et al.
Through April 4
Parsons The New School for Design
Sheila C. Johnson Design Center
66 5th Ave.
www.parsons.edu

Personal Structures: Time | Space | Existence
Peter Lodermeyer, Rene Rietmeyer, et al.
Through April 4
New Museum of Contemporary Art
235 Bowery
www.newmuseum.org

Ecological Urbanism: Alternative and Sustainable Cities of the Future
Michelle Addington, Stefano Boeri, Lizabeth Cohen, et al.
Through April 5
Harvard Graduate School of Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge
www.gsd.harvard.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

Drawing Out: Student Artwork from Drawing Connections
Drawing Room
35 Wooster St.
www.drawingcenter.org

SATURDAY 4
WITH THE KIDS

Little Sprouts
11:30 a.m.
Brooklyn Children's Museum
145 Brooklyn Ave., Brooklyn
www.brooklynkids.org

SUNDAY 5
LECTURE

Carolee Schneemann
Mysteries and Iconographies
2:00 p.m.
Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

JJ Peet
The TV Show
On Stellar Rays
133 Orchard St.
www.onstellarrays.com

WITH THE KIDS

My Green Heaven
1:00 p.m.
Wave Hill
West 249th St. and Independence Ave., Bronx
www.wavehill.org

MONDAY 6
LECTURES

Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray
James Stirling Memorial Lecture on the City
5:30 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

Fred Fisher
Artspace

6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Betts Auditorium, Princeton
www.princeton.edu/~soa

TUESDAY 7
EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Mark Amerika
Immobilité
Chelsea Art Museum
556 West 22nd St.
www.chelseartmuseum.org

Tazuko Fujii
OiSawa
Viridian Gallery
530 West 25th St.
www.viridianartists.com

WEDNESDAY 8
LECTURES

Mario Santana-Quintero
International Preservation in Abu Dhabi?
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Buell Center
114 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

Samuel C. Morse
Reflections on Japanese Style - Sherman E. Lee and the Collecting of Japanese Art
7:00 p.m.
Asia Society
725 Park Ave.
www.asiasociety.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

The Generational: Younger Than Jesus
New Museum of Contemporary Art
235 Bowery
www.newmuseum.org

THURSDAY 9
LECTURE

Jennifer Gray
From Thonet to Prouvé: Modern Industrial Design, 1880-1945
1:30 p.m.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

Abbey Williams
Bellwether Gallery
134 10th Ave.
www.bellwethergallery.com

SATURDAY 11
LECTURE

Charles Gehring, Jaap Jacobs
Making New Netherland History
2:00 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

SUNDAY 12

WITH THE KIDS

Family Affair—Buildings, People & Pets
1:00 p.m.
Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx
www.bronxmuseum.org

Make It Work: Engineering Experiments
1:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

MONDAY 13
LECTURES

John Palmieri
Housing and Community Development Policy in the Post-Bush Era
1:00 p.m.
Harvard Graduate School of Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA
www.gsd.harvard.edu

Michael Maltzan, Shohei Shigematsu, Marion Weiss
Frank Lloyd Wright in the 21st Century: Being Versus Seeming?
6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
113 Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

Simon Starling
Subjective Histories of Sculpture III
6:30 p.m.
Parsons the New School for Design
Theresa Lang Center
55 West 13th St., 2nd Fl.
www.parsons.edu

TUESDAY 14
LECTURE

Gaetano Pesce
5:45 p.m.
Fashion Institute of Technology
Great Hall
West 27th St. and 7th Ave.
www.aiany.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

Open Space Project: Creative Migration
Austrian Cultural Forum
11 East 52nd St.
www.acfny.org

WEDNESDAY 15
LECTURES

Toyo Ito
Generative Order
6:00 p.m.
Princeton School of Architecture
Betts Auditorium, Princeton
www.princeton.edu/~soa

Dan Doctoroff, Hilary Ballon, Thomas Bender
PlaNYC: Innovations and Legacy
6:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

EVENT

Small Firms Roundtable
4:00 p.m.
AIA Connecticut
370 James St., New Haven
www.aiact.org

THURSDAY 16
LECTURE

Jean Phifer, Brian Tolle, et al.
City of Art: New York's Hidden Treasures Revealed
6:30 p.m.
Urban Center
457 Madison Ave.
www.mas.org

**FRIDAY 17
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
FAX**
Drawing Room
35 Wooster St.
www.drawingcenter.org

modern modern
Chelsea Art Museum
556 West 22nd St.
www.chelseartmuseum.org

**TRADE SHOW
Go Green Expo**
Through April 19
The Hilton New York
1335 Avenue of the Americas
www.gogreenexpo.com

**SATURDAY 18
WITH THE KIDS
Green Kids Grow in Brooklyn**
11:00 a.m.
Brooklyn Children's Museum
145 Brooklyn Ave., Brooklyn
www.brooklynkids.org



PETER CUYPERS

FASHIONING FELT

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
2 East 91st Street
Through September 7

Highlighting the multifarious roles that felt plays in contemporary design, the latest exhibition on view at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum features 70 felt works from a variety of fields, including fashion, architecture, product design, and home furnishings. Moving from the material's ancient origins—it is believed to be among the first man-made textiles—to its contemporary status as chic interior cladding, the exhibition explores the enduring allure of matted wool. In one standout project, the experimental Central Public Library in Amsterdam (2007, detail above), architect Jo Coenen & Co. employed hand-felter Claudy Jongstra to design felt walls made of wool and silk, providing texture and intrigue to the library's entrance hall. Elsewhere in the exhibition are site-specific installations by Jongstra, who creates wraparound felt enclosures, and Washington State-based fiber artist Janice Arnold, who presents a yurt made out of Merino wool, silk and metal fibers, and sheer fabrics, remaking the circular tent dwelling as a space of celebration. The exhibit includes plenty of touch samples, as well as a selection of wools made from recycled materials, showing that the recent popularity of felt owes something to both its tactile and sustainable appeal.



COURTESY ROBERT MILLER GALLERY

JEM COHEN: NEW YORK, STILL AND MOVING

Robert Miller Gallery
524 West 26th Street
Through April 18

Brooklyn-based filmmaker and artist Jem Cohen depicts a city "revealed more through its corners than its icons" in his latest show *New York, Still and Moving* on view at Robert Miller Gallery. Originating in Cohen's fascination with analog formats such as Polaroid film, the show presents New York City through images of disappearance, in particular the city's ever-shifting landscape. In his work *Untitled (4th Ave. Brooklyn, Construction)* (2007, above), he photographs a rising tower at an early stage, documenting the intricate steel superstructure while at the same time underscoring the suburbanization of New York—one of the artist's preoccupations. Featuring primarily color prints consisting of single-image blowups and composite images that capture buildings and people in transition, the show's blurred views and strange saturations often seem more 1970s than present-day. But as he assembles his offhanded views, Cohen captures the haunting moment when the present fades into the past. Also included here are three short films shot on 16mm and Super 8 film: *Little Flags* (2000), *NYC Weights and Measures* (2006), and *Night Scene New York* (2009), all of which probe the way that politics can be excavated—or buried—by the architecture of Lower Manhattan.



Bridging Teahouse, Jinhua, China (2007).

COURTESY CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

READY TO LAUNCH

Laboratory of Architecture/Fernando Romero
Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art
4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh
Through June 7

Thirty-eight-year-old Fernando Romero has ascended to international prominence in architecture with uncommon speed. In three years of work for Rem Koolhaas and OMA, the Mexico City native was project manager for the Casa da Musica in Portugal, whose design is notably based on the scheme for an unrealized Rotterdam villa, enlarged five times and functionally repurposed. In 1999, one year before leaving OMA, Romero opened his own Mexico City-based firm, now called LAR, Laboratory

of Architecture.

Pittsburgh's Heinz Architectural Center is presenting what they describe as the first monographic exhibition of Romero's work, with both well-published and lesser-known works documenting his continuing trajectory and evolution. Curator Raymund Ryan divides the show into four categories—orthogonal, non-orthogonal, organic, and communal—with nearly transparent scrims reshaping some of the otherwise-rectilinear galleries to harmonize with non-orthogonally

and organically shaped projects.

Meanwhile, communal projects are displayed in HAC's long gallery, which Ryan has wryly dubbed the "research corridor." A few small architectural projects fit this category, but the section focuses on *ZMVM*, his study of the greater Mexico City region, and *Hyperborder*, his recent investigation of the U.S./Mexico border. Both projects recall Koolhaas' well-known data- and image-intensive studies.

In this gallery setting, Romero's

narratives and diagrams are mounted as grafts of wallpaper over the HAC's insistently postmodern gallery walls. The approach suits the saturating nature of the Information Age, but doesn't make the Koolhaasian explosion of data, images, and text particularly digestible for the typically brief attention span of the museum visitor.

Most other projects in the show, though, suffer a shortage of information. In comparison to *Hyperborder*, the model-only representation of

the *Museum Bridge Mexico/USA* project seems reticent. Brief text is available in the gallery guide, but documentary drawings are absent, as are the frenetic programming studies that one might expect from an OMA alumnus. The serene, tapered span over the contentious border between El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, seems incongruous as a result.

Similarly, the Soumaya Museum in Mexico City has scant documentation. The project houses a collection of **continued on page 18**

BARBS FROM THE BEYOND

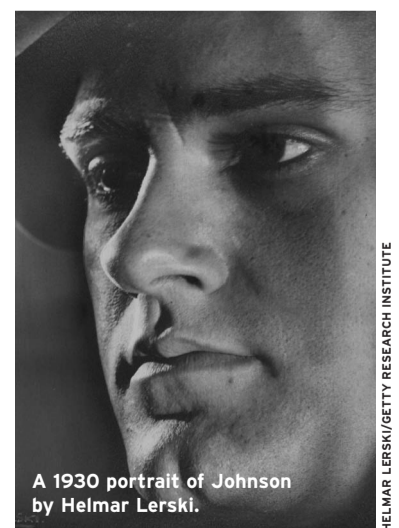
The Philip Johnson Tapes
Interviews by Robert A.M. Stern
Edited by Kazys Varnelis
Monacelli Press, \$40.00

The Philip Johnson Tapes: Interviews by Robert A.M. Stern is a curious time capsule from 1985. Ronald Reagan was president, Communism had yet to collapse, Madonna was on her first "Virgin" world tour, and Robert A.M. Stern was just a callow youth. Stern had built little, and was perhaps best known for his outrageous postmodern Llewellyn Park pool house with its chrome palm trees. Philip Johnson, on the other hand, at age 79 was considered by many to be at

the end of his career. He had completed the now-derided Pittsburgh Plate Glass Building, as well as the AT&T Building and the faux-Dutch Republic Bank in Houston, in complete apostasy from his high-modern Miesian period of the 1950s, when he produced his best work. Of course, Johnson surprised everyone and lived lived another 20 more years, in that time sponsoring yet another about-face in his *Deconstructivist Architecture* show at MoMA of 1988. That these

interviews were recorded with the understanding they would be published posthumously accounts for their often outrageous and unrestrained character. Since his death in 2005 at the age of 98, Johnson has largely disappeared from the contemporary dialogue on architecture, except among those who, like Stern, personally knew or benefited from his largesse. He is remembered more for his influence as a critic and curator through his platform at MoMA (personally fund-

ing the Architecture Department and early exhibitions) and for his connections among the movers and shakers of architectural patronage. This book does little to bolster his reputation; it tends to confirm Johnson as a shallow stylist who used great wealth and charm to maneuver in and out of numerous "nervous breakdowns," to finance extended European sex tours in the steps of Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, and to **continued on page 18**



A 1930 portrait of Johnson by Helmar Lerski.

HELMAR LERSKI/GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Bridging Teahouse, Jinhua, China (2007).

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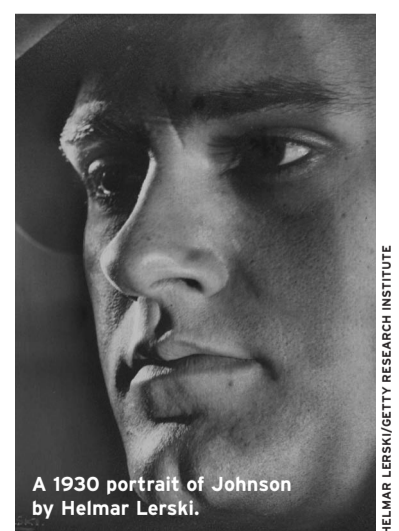
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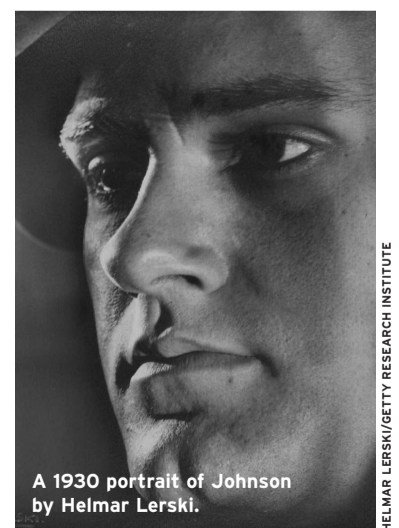
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HELMAR LERSKI/GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 1, 2009

READY TO LAUNCH continued from page 17

European Old Masters and Mexican modernists in a multistory building, whose free-form conic structure recalls both steamships and cooling towers. Displayed as one of the show's largest models in a position of special prominence, it is also accompanied by a gaggle of study models. Romero states that he wanted the design to "translate the diversity of the collection by creating a diversity of architectural plans" through the tower's changing shape. Yet the models explore nuances of form that came after some of the more fundamental and potentially exciting issues of program and massing were decided. Production is apparent where more deliberation would have been desirable.

Romero's work does have notable episodes of subtlety and nuance. His chapel for the Colonia Cultura Maya in Mexico City combines architecture and landscape, construction and excavation in a reassuringly communal and decidedly organic design. Add the ground plane to his list of evocative borders. Also, the Up Pavilion, completed in 2008 for the Shenzhen Biennale, is a particularly humane translation of population data into a habitable landscape of stacked hexagonal tiles.

For that matter, a project such as the Villa S in the Las Lomas district of Mexico City, with its faceted, gem-like form, is both aesthetically compelling and tectonically adventurous for its use of digital design, built by traditional craftsmen who executed the project from models rather than drawings. The welded skeleton model on display, though, is only comprehensible with material from Romero's monograph and lectures.

With such a profusion of work in such a short time, Romero seems an architect in a hurry. This exhibition seems to be a bit rushed as well.

CHARLES ROSENBLUM IS A PITTSBURGH-BASED ART AND DESIGN CRITIC.

Johnson atop the Kirstein Tower at his New Canaan estate in 1985.



NORMAN MCGRATH

BARBS FROM THE

BEYOND continued from page 17 secure his own private architectural commissions. The conversations revolve around whom Johnson knew and how he got this or that job, and allude to his public embrace of Fascist politics of the 1930s, with Johnson mentioning Hitler a number of times in not unflattering

terms. Stern lets these references mostly go unchallenged, raising the question of whether Stern wanted Johnson to hang himself, or if he was being polite.

Apart from marquee names, as with Dante one needs a glossary to tell Ugalino from Oud, so the publisher has included footnotes to help the uninitiated distinguish who's who in

this opaque world of the past. What is more remarkable than any single statement by Johnson is the realization that he functions here as a kind of grizzled griot—an African storyteller who is keeper of an oral tradition. Johnson was so old that he was a literal connection to the founding fathers of modernism, and was one himself through his *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* of 1932 at MoMA. He was a colleague to Mies, Wright, Le Corbusier, and Gropius.

On the other hand, Stern, who admits he is a longtime friend of Johnson when these interviews take place, appears both bewitched and beguiled by the subject of his interview. Stern engages him in a non-confrontational, Larry King-style interview, more of a conversation, and rarely questions any of Johnson's dubious statements. Johnson so often contradicts himself, even in the same

sentence, that by the middle of the book it is hard to believe much that he says. Knowing Johnson's sly and Machiavellian nature, one attributes this not to age but to his belief that history belongs to the conquerors, as most of his barbs are aimed at the dead.

He seems to have hated almost every architectural contemporary, with the exception of Mies, and above all was fascinated by those with great wealth. Of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, he says: "She was a woman of position and power at birth, so I was in awe." His antagonisms create some ridiculous pronouncements, such as, "Eero and I were very, very peculiar friends. We both respected each other enormously throughout our lives, but neither of us thought very much of the other's work. I guess we were both right." As it happens, Saarinen's star has steadily risen, while estimation of Johnson's built work

has severely declined. On Paul Rudolph: "He's apparently gone completely to seed now and become grossly fat, with terribly blotchy skin... And so he's sort of disappeared now." Stern does not dispute this. Of course, history has reversed itself and Stern, as dean at Yale, has overseen the restoration of Rudolph's once reviled Art and Architecture Building. As to the vitriol in these sessions, we really shouldn't be surprised. After all, this is the man who once said of Frank Lloyd Wright: "I know he is still alive and I thought, therefore, that this in a sense is the right time to speak out, because were he dead, that old maxim of 'nothing about the dead, but the good' would tie my mouth—and I don't want to wait until that time and have to make only pleasant statements."

ALEXANDER GORLIN IS AN ARCHITECT AND FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.

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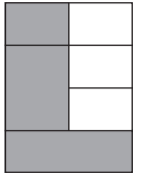
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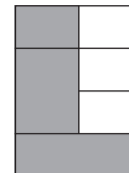
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