Twenty-three Caton Place is like countless other developments that have sprung up across the five boroughs during the recent real-estate boom. A mix of middlebrow architecture and high-end finishes built in Kensington, Brooklyn, the 107-unit complex was overleveraged and ill-timed. It now languishes half-built and in foreclosure, its developer in bankruptcy and some 140,000 square feet of concrete looming over the neighborhood.

But there is something special about 23 Caton that sets it apart from many of its sullen siblings: A neighborhood community group that... continued on page 6
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NO RESPECT

In your report on the slowest-paid profes-
sions (“The Check Is In the Mail,” AN 07_04.15.2009), AIA chief economist Kermit
Baker’s comment that delays of 90 to 120
days in payments of architects’ fees “have
become an industry standard” only serves
to legitimize this shameful reality and under-
scores the passive acceptance that has
unfortunately become the norm of our pro-
fession. Architects have all kinds of leverage,
if only we would use it. In this, the AIA should
gaggevishly lead the way. If the fact that
architects are among the slowest-paid of all
professions does not indicate, as Baker said, “a
lack of respect for the profession,” what
does it indicate?

KAREN ARRIGONI

NEW YORK

GOWANUS-GO-ROUND

The EPA recommendation of Superfund
status for the Gowanus Canal has developers
and local politicians crying foul, while home-
owners and environmentalists applaud the
move (“Superfunk,” AN 08_05.06.2009).

While we practically need a scorecard to keep
track of all the vested interests, deciding
how to proceed requires asking the right
questions about this urban resource’s future.

It is well known that the canal and the
ground abutting it remain severely polluted,
while the communities that surround the
canal have seen unprecedented increases in
residential real estate values. This begs the
question: What is the future of the Gowanus?

It appears that developers and politicians
objecting to the Superfund designation have
already answered this question. They aim to
develop selected brownfield sites without a
completed Environmental Impact Statement
or a plan for how the overtaxed infrastructure
of this neighborhood schools will accommodate
3,000 new families. The Toll Brothers plan,
alone, with 602,000 square feet of residential
space, has designated only 3,000 square feet for
commercial and community space. Their consensus seems to be that poorly designed,
intermingled brownfield remediation zones and newly constructed residential buildings, is a

Two other questions must be asked: Would
designation lead to federal funding? And
would that funding, along with monies allo-
ted by the city, be sufficient to complete nec-

esse remediation? A Superfund designation
would lead to more development, and would
initiate the process of rigorously studying the
channel, determining the level of pollution, and recom-
mending steps for remediation. It would also
give the city, community, and developers
time to develop an intelligent urban plan.

As architects and residents, we see that
the Gowanus has tremendous potential.

DAVID BRIGGS AND ANTHONY DEEN

BROOKLYN

CORRECTION

In our conversation with James Polshak
(“Whatever It Takes,” AN 07_04.15.2009), we
misidentified a former colleague, Jolote
Pogul, who once shared an office with the
architect Wafredo Toscarni, grandson of the
ducator Arduino Toscarni.
Greened Out

ARCHITECTS PARSE MAYOR’S RETROFIT PLAN FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

When city officials unveiled a plan on April 22 to transform the city’s building stock into some of the greenest on the planet, the environment was seen as a major benefactor, as was the local economy. “Everyone’s been talking about green jobs, but this is the program that will actually do it,” said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, noting that the plan is expected to create 19,000 jobs as it cuts the city’s carbon footprint by five percent over the next two decades.

But many out-of-work architects are wondering: Jobs for whom? “My understanding—and I’m not an engineer or architect—that it’s work that will principally involve engineers, auditors, building staff, and trades, but not architects,” said Russell Unger, executive director of the U.S. Green Building Council, New York chapter, in an interview. The first major piece of the program calls for benchmarking standards to track the annual energy usage of buildings of 50,000 square feet or more. Another initiative calls for renovations of buildings over 60,000 square feet to include the modernization of lighting systems, while a third will close a loophole so that minor renovations will be overseen by work, and many architects are prepared to fill the void.

Garvin’s colleague, Bob Fox, finds even greater possibilities to act at their own discretion. “These changes operators to act at their own discretion. “These changes will prompt many developers and architects.”

“I have recently followed behind a story with full media coverage!”

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER MAY 20, 2009

FOUNDRING FARMERS

1924 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.
Tel: 202-822-8783
Designer: CORE architecture + design

Green from its food to its design, Founding Farmers, a new restaurant located in the Pei Cobb Freed & Partners–designed International Monetary Fund Headquarters 2 in Washington, D.C., celebrates the journey of produce from farm to table as much as it does sustainable design. Owned and commissioned by the North Dakota Farmer’s Union, a collective of more than 40,000 family farmers, the restaurant is envisioned as a modern translation of the traditional farm. Designed by Washington, D.C.–based CORE architecture + design, the project incorporates materials traditional to an American farm, including wooden beams, white-washed barn wood, and standing-seam metal, according to founding principal and partner Peter Harstak. These classic materials are reinterpreted and reappropriated alongside familiar architectural forms like the silo-inspired booths inside. To make the design sustainable, wood flooring was reclaimed from an Atlanta textile mill, and furniture was made from wood harvested from Pennsylvania forests and manufactured in North Carolina, all within 900 miles of the job site. With an array of other energy- and waste-saving strategies—including kitchen recycling and composting areas—Founding Farmers has become the first LEED Gold restaurant in D.C., one of just 19 in the United States.

MATT CHABAN

OPEN> RESTAURANT

ON A ROLL continued from front page...

The Prada Transformer seen in two of its four possible orientations.

This is event architecture: a structure whose function is less important than its ability to re-stage, in form and in content, certain aspects of our visual culture. As a temporary object, it is probably the purest example of such. It is too bad that the participants couldn’t collectively roll the object around to change it into whatever they wanted. Instead, you had to buy into the Prada Transformer—literally, by buying a ticket, but also by subjecting yourself to the design team’s notion of what an event was and what your place should be in some- thing they staged for you. AARON BETSKY

YOU CAN’T FIRE ME, I QUIT!

Back in the present, another Eavesdrop source has been following behind Frank Gehry as he becomes the Joe Biden of architecture with his compulsive disclosures. First, there was his little slip that Forest City Ratner’s Atlantic Yards development in Brooklyn is dead. While not exactly breaking news, developers do not want their architects delivering bad news, so Ratner’s capes came down on the newly minted octogenarian like a ton of twisting, blue, metallic panels, then spun it by saying the architect was “just venting.”

Appropriately, that was just the beginning. Farther south, Gehry is publicly complaining about Miami Beach’s handling of his design for a New World Symphony outpost with adjacent park and parking garage. When the city saw that the park and garage were going way over budget, it did the unthinkable: It asked the Symphony to ask the architect to reduce his fee, and if he refused, to fire him. But wait! The plot thickens. Gehry said his fee is a modest $1.9 million. The city claims it’s $4.6 million, a number that includes all the fees for the consultants needed to make the grass grow and the fountains spew. Execution is not Frank’s problem, however, and he isn’t budging. In a telephone interview with The Miami Herald, Gehry is quoted as saying, “I really find it insulting. I’m offended. If they keep messing with me, if I get insulted enough, I will withdraw completely.”

Eavesdrop is hoping instead for pistols at dawn, poolside at the Fontainebleau, with full media coverage!

SEND VINTAGE FLINTLOCKS AND DAGGERS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

EAVESDROP>SARA HART

Prada Transformer seen in two of its four possible orientations.
The Rotunda at the University of Virginia is arguably one of the most important buildings in early American architecture. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Latrobe, and Robert Mills, the architect of the Washington Monument, all contributed to the design of the structure, which was completed in 1828, two years after Jefferson’s death. Adding a significant twist to the Rotunda’s provenance, a fire in 1895 destroyed most of the building—including its timber Delorme dome—leaving only the outer shell. In the aftermath, the eminent Beaux Arts architect Stanford White rebuilt the Rotunda, retaining much of Jefferson’s exterior form, but changing the interior and adding a new north portico, reorienting the building to the campus.

Now the university is at work on a phased restoration of the Rotunda, exploring this unusual collaboration across time and hoping to reconcile the contributions of Jefferson, Latrobe, and White. “The building is representative of the works of two of America’s most significant architects,” said Clay Pallazio, a principal at John G. Waite Associates, the firm that has completed a 300-page report on the building and has been engaged in its restoration.

“As a piece within a collection, the Rotunda is Jefferson’s,” he said. “As a single building, it’s White’s.”

The university’s $60 million restoration will have to contend with still other historical layers. Following the fire, the Mills wing, added in the 1860s, was removed. And though White left his mark on the building, his renovation was unusually sensitive for the time, according to university architect David Neuman. “Jefferson’s architecture was not all that appreciated one hundred years ago,” he said. “White was, in a way, a preservationist. Everything he did was sympathetic but distinct. He suppressed his Beaux Arts exuberance.”

The building was last renovated in the 1970s, when much of White’s interior was removed in an effort to return it to Jefferson’s design. The structure of the building, including a masonry tile dome designed by White, remained. In replacing the timber dome with one made of masonry, however, White added eight inches to the thickness of the interior walls, so the 1970s renovation was an approximation of the original interior. On the exterior, a new turn-coated steel roof was added in place of the painted copper that White had specified.

With so many overlapping hands in the Rotunda’s design, there is unlikely to be a decisive resolution to the competing historical layers, and much of the scope of work has yet to be fully determined. So far, though, the restoration will include upgraded mechanical systems, a new roof, reset exterior masonry, and, in what may be the biggest change, a historically appropriate landscape design. “It will take a trained eye to see the changes on the exterior, but the landscape will likely be noticeably different,” Neuman said. “Right now, the landscape is neither Jefferson’s nor White’s. It’s just what grew up around the building,” he added. “Jefferson was a master at integrating landscape, site planning, and architecture.”

White’s thinking was much more formal and Beaux Arts-inflected, so the north side will retain that sensibility, according to Neuman, while the south side will likely follow Jefferson’s informal approach. Elsewhere, the plan will defer to White. “We have recommended a painted copper roof as specified by Stanford White,” Pallazo said. Replacing the roof may be a simple task, or, if water has damaged the tile dome, it could require a more complex reconstruction: “You really can’t tell for sure until you go into investigative mode,” said Pallazo.

Work is expected to begin in earnest in the fall, and a final project team for the restoration will be announced in the coming weeks. ALAN G. BRAKE
which began in Connecticut in August of last year, after they had broached the possibility of the bankruptcy filing, the offer was made, and that roughly 100 different approaches were suggested that it would sell if a reasonable price was offered. "There was a pathetic developer who will buy the property if they can find a buyer," said a senior architect at Polshek Partners. "What we need is a developer who will take the property as is and transform it into affordable housing."

The plan is still in an early phase—the first stakeholders’ meeting was held May 5—and the stakeholders are already hopeful that it could serve as a blueprint for the plague of similarly stalled developments sprinkled throughout the city. "Essentially, we are hoping to make lemonade out of lemons," Mandy Harris, founder of the neighborhood group Stable Brooklyn, wrote in an email. "The building is in serious financial trouble and it is a blight on the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood are generally pretty progressive-thinking, so we started daring to imagine what could be done with it that would actually benefit the community in the long term."

Having worked with Lander on a rezoning plan for the neighborhood in response to 23 Caton and two other major luxury developments that cropped up in the low-scale neighborhood, Harris and her group turned to him for advice. The idea is to find a sympathetic developer who will buy the property from its lender, Corus Bank, and redevelop it. "I am not optimistic that they will sell it," said Harris. "But we are very hopeful that it can be turned into something that the community can be proud of." The plan is to transform the Drill Hall into a public space that can be used for a variety of purposes, including housing, community events, and public art installations.

**SECOND LIFE**

ARTIST ERNESTO NETO BUILD S C R E A T U R E AT THE ARMORY

"A Tyrannosaurus rex might elicit awe at the Museum of Natural History, but across town at the Park Avenue Armory, an equally majestic beast has taken up residence. A creation of Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, anthropodino is an arched labyrinth constructed out of wooden “bones” towering several feet high, like the rib cage of some gargantuan prehistoric reptile. The art installation that opened on May 14 inaugurates the armory’s new annual program of commissioned artworks for the $5,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall."

For some artists, the vast expanses of the Drill Hall space might have been almost too daunting, according to the armory’s consulting curator Tom Eccles, but Neto had already shown his flair for large-scale immersive works, with similarly scaled sensorial installations in Rome, Paris, and Malmö, Sweden. Neto grew up architecturally savvy. His father was a mechanical engineer and homebuilder, and as a boy, Neto often witnessed the construction process of his dad’s projects. Nowadays, the artist’s sensuous biomorphic installations, which blur the boundaries between art and architecture, are much in demand around the world. His Malmö Experience filled the entire Konsthall there with malleable Lyca environments shaped for visitors to tour and sit within. His latest—and largest—creation, anthropodino, reflects Neto’s fascination with two creatures that have each dominated the planet in their own time: dinosaurs and Homo sapiens. Dinosaurs represent awesome power, but in the end they were too weak to survive the vast transformations of their own habitat, Neto said. “This creature..." added. “But the fragility is a lot to do with all my work...and with the future of our own human civilization on Earth.” Like all of his installations, this one can be seen as “animal architecture,” he added. The curvature of the Drill Hall’s barrel-vaulted roof inspired the forms of the installation, which consists of two parts: a “labyrinth” with a central dome rising up from the floor, and a canopy with spice-filled tentacles, or “drops,” hanging down from the hall’s iron trusses. Conceived in a different design language, the hanging portion is “not exactly the anthropodino, but a voice of it, a thinking of it, a breath of it,” Neto said. The fabrication involved an eclectic high-tech mix. Long Island City fabricator Jan Mollet cut the many pieces of birch plywood frame using a CNC mill, according to project manager Richard Griggs. In Neto’s home base, Rio de Janeiro, workers used hundreds of yards of Lyca to hand-sew the skins of the tent-like, labyrinthine passageways and central dome, as well as the 190-foot-by-100-foot canopy. The cloth was then shipped to New York and fireproofed. Right before the month-long exhibit opened, Neto and a team of a dozen helpers worked several days to put the elaborate installation together with a military precision befitting the Drill Hall. First, the canopy had to be hung from hooks attached to the trusses, according to armory president and CEO Rebecca Robertson. The heavy, spice-filled drops were then hoisted into the air using 80-foot articulating boom lifts, and laced onto the canopy by hand. As for the labyrinth, the arches and central spine of the frame are slotted together by hand onsite, with no nails. The installation designed by a larger version of a toy dinosaur model, curator Eccles said. Next, the wood frame had to be covered with the Lyca skin. Outside the labyrinth are areas devoted to rest and tactile sensations, including a pool filled with 28,000 plastic balls, a soft pink carpet to lie on, and a giant beanbag mattress. Despite all the preparation, Neto’s installations have sometimes surprised him in the final forms they take. “He plans it meticulously, but it inevitably surprises us,” said David Eccles, who designed the model. “It’s weightless, and it’s stretchy, and it’s so tender, so soft, and it’s all 100 percent how it’s going to work,” Robertson remarked. “It’s a very alive, in a way.”

**CREATURE AT THE ARMORY**

**ARTIST ERNESTO NETO BUILDS A CREATURE AT THE ARMORY**

**UNDER THE SKIN**

**SECOND LIFE** continued from front page

opposed the project is trying, with the help of local politicians and former Pratt Center director Brad Lander, to buy the property and transform it into affordable housing.

The plan is still in an early phase—the first stakeholders’ meeting was held May 5—and could take years to resolve, but its backers are already hopeful that it could serve as a blueprint for the plague of similarly stalled developments sprinkled throughout the city. “Essentially, we are hoping to make lemonade out of lemons,” Mandy Harris, founder of the neighborhood group Stable Brooklyn, wrote in an email. “The building is in serious financial trouble and it is a blight on the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood are generally pretty progressive-thinking, so we started daring to imagine what could be done with it that would actually benefit the community in the long term.”

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**UNVEILED**

**NATIONAL CHILDREN’S MUSEUM**

Having operated “without walls” since 2004, the National Children’s Museum (formerly the Capital Children’s Museum) will provide a new home for the Maryland institution established in 1974 to provide educational exhibitions, programs, and activities to kids. Located in National Harbor—a $2 billion, 300-acre development on the banks of the Potomac—the Polli Clarke Pelli–designed building is intended as a physical embodiment of the museum’s mission to "inspire children to care about and improve the world.” The 150,000-square-foot, LEED-certified structure packs a range of sustainable components, including recycled steel and brick from demolished buildings, a sun reflector, living green wall, green roof, and wind turbine. "The most symbolic element of the National Children’s Museum building will be what we call ‘the wind tower,’” explained principal Cesar Pelli, noting that the tower will contain a sculpturally designed turbine whose energy output will illuminate parts of the museum. The entrance hall contains a series of sun reflectors to draw light into the darkest spaces of the interior, further cutting down on energy use. An open courtyard serves as the unifying element of the building, with an amphitheater for special events, a “waterpark,” and a nature walk to teach children about trees and other plant species.

The museum’s exhibits—designed by Armaize Design, Roto Studios, and Aldrich Pears—include ten permanent exhibitions, along with temporary exhibits on themes such as health and well-being, play, civic engagement, and the arts. The museum has about 300,000 visitors annually, the museum is geared as a gateway to the Washington region for kids and families, and will connect to a special slip on the Potomac River. A temporary preview center, called the NCM Launch Zone, recently opened at National Harbor, and allows visitors to give input about the new museum, from building materials to exhibits and programs. **Dr.**
Q&A: ED FEINER

After a four-year odyssey that took him to development projects around the world, Ed Feiner, former chief architect of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), has landed back in Washington, D.C. Effective May 11, he joined Perkins+Will as principal in charge of business development, design, and project delivery.

In over ten years as chief architect, Feiner, 62, brought distinction, attention, and even glory to the GSA. Under his leadership from 1996 to 2005, the administration and its Design Excellence initiative awarded commissions to the country’s most distinguished architects. Feiner went on to work as managing director of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s (SOM’s) Washington, D.C. office and then as chief architect at Las Vegas Sands Corporation.

A day after the announcement, Feiner chatted with AN about his experiences and expectations when it comes to government and good architecture.

Where have you been since leaving the GSA?

My last four years have been really unbelievable, like a magical mystery tour. After I graduated from government, I accepted a position with SOM as director of the Washington office, and I was there for three years. Then one day, out of the blue, I got a phone call from the chairman of the Sands Corporation. We’re doing these wonderful projects all over the world, and putting up storm windows. These projects will become real challenges for top designers. And that’s just at the GSA. The Defense Department has a huge infrastructure, and there’s the Veterans Administration and the State Department. All these organizations are going to start to redevelop their properties.

Support for GSA has varied under different administrations. When did Design Excellence get under way?

I started just three months after Reagan became president, and those years were the only ones in which the GSA did very little. When George H.W. Bush came on, there was a backlog of work, particularly for the courts, and then came Design Excellence. I really hate when it’s referred to as a program, because it was never envisioned as a design program but as a series of actions we could take to change the nature of design in government. It was all about process. When we started, I would get calls from people out in the field saying they didn’t have enough money to do a particular project and we would have to remove some of the “Design Excellence features” on the building! Design Excellence flourished under Clinton, and continued until the Iraq war strained the budget, and then it slowed down. That it commissioned some of the country’s really great buildings is what I am most proud of.

What do you think the Obama administration will do about architecture?

This is the first administration that I have heard using language I relate to in terms of infrastructure, design, sustainability, and planning. Our profession travels all over the world. We’re doing these wonderful projects in China, India, the Middle East, even Canada. The nature of what’s going up all around is incredible, and then you look here. There is so much to be done to make us competitive again. The reality is that we have to rebuild our country. I don’t think the government is going to be there to tell people what to do, but it can be a facilitator with a vision. And I am very excited about the new vision. I hope it’s infectious.

In terms of business development, where do you think the profession is headed right now?

Publicly funded projects are going to be in vogue again. Not just the federal government work that will be in the pipeline at first. That will filter into state and city governments, so that once they get past this first phase of “shovel-ready” work, there will be a much bigger opportunity for the architectural community.

At the GSA, they’ll basically be retrofitting a huge stock of buildings from the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s. When you go back and have to improve performance in terms of energy and sustainable design, you’re engaging these buildings in more than painting and putting up storm windows. These projects will become real challenges for top designers. And that’s just at the GSA. The Defense Department has a huge infrastructure, and there’s the Veterans Administration and the State Department. All these organizations are going to start to redevelop their properties.

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IN DETAIL> GAOYANG INTERNATIONAL CRUISE TERMINAL

Frank Repas Architecture with Weidlinger Associates

Taking a page from New Urbanists and their commitment to density and transit, the city of Shanghai, China, recently built a passenger ship terminal in the Hongku district, adjacent to the historic Bund neighborhood in downtown. Part of a larger project to build a network of parks on both banks of the Huangpu River, the Gaoyang International Cruise Terminal makes a bold civic statement, delivering passengers directly to the center of the city rather than to the outskirts, as is the case with most facilities of this type. It also presented a key urban design problem: How does one build such a large facility, capable of receiving three 80,000-ton luxury liners at one time, without disrupting access to the waterfront?

Shanghai's answer: Build it underground. In essence, then, the structure is underwater, a factor that raised obvious concerns about leakage. The project's environmental engineer, Arup, turned this complication into a boon, however. Rather than worry about making the terminal watertight, the engineers allowed water to penetrate the outer concrete wall, where it pools in a cavity space. Intake air is then directed over the water in the cavity to pre-cool it before running it through the building's air conditioning system, thus making the HVAC system more efficient.

Much in the way that magma expresses itself in the form of volcanoes, the terminal reveals itself to the city through deformations in the park's surface. Most of these deformations are sky-lights that open up the first level to daylight. The grandest of them forms a bridge, modeled after the traditional Chinese bridge in the garden, which spans 312 feet over the main waiting area and merges with two massive sky-lights (see page 1). While the public is not invited to picnic atop the skylights, those glass expanses were engineered to take massive loads, just in case. In the words of Repas, you could drive an 18-wheeler full of bowling balls over them without any trouble.

This level of glass engineering was matched, if not exceeded, in the irregular ellipsoid form of the floating observation bubble. Perched 30 feet above the park atop ten steel HSS columns that increase in diameter from 21 inches to 31 inches, as well as its stair and elevator core, the bubble is a steel platform structure made up of wide flange and HSS members that were primarily joined on site via welded moment connections.

Repas and Weidlinger worked closely with facade consultant RFR of Paris and Stuttgart to develop a weather-tight glass skin for the structure. The cladding had to be made of flat panels for cost reasons, and piecing these together in a way that retained the feeling of a smooth, rounded bubble required very close attention to detail. In the end, no two of the panels are the same size or shape. They are all four-sided quadrilaterals ranging from approximately eight-by-eight feet to narrow slivers about a foot wide. The glass panels themselves are highly insulated, made up of triple-layered, laminated low-e glass lites separated by air spaces.

In an unusual arrangement for an American firm working in China, the city of Shanghai asked Weidlinger to develop construction drawings for the project. Not only is the geometry of great complexity, but the facade assembly fits together with less than a quarter inch of tolerance.

FRANK REPAS ARCHITECTURE WITH WEIDLINGER ASSOCIATES

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Shanghai's answer: Build it underground. In essence, then, the structure is underwater, a factor that raised obvious concerns about leakage. The project's environmental engineer, Arup, turned this complication into a boon, however. Rather than worry about making the terminal watertight, the engineers allowed water to penetrate the outer concrete wall, where it pools in a cavity space. Intake air is then directed over the water in the cavity to pre-cool it before running it through the building's air conditioning system, thus making the HVAC system more efficient.

Much in the way that magma expresses itself in the form of volcanoes, the terminal reveals itself to the city through deformations in the park's surface. Most of these deformations are sky-lights that open up the first level to daylight. The grandest of them forms a bridge, modeled after the traditional Chinese bridge in the garden, which spans 312 feet over the main waiting area and merges with two massive sky-lights (see page 1). While the public is not invited to picnic atop the skylights, those glass expanses were engineered to take massive loads, just in case. In the words of Repas, you could drive an 18-wheeler full of bowling balls over them without any trouble.

This level of glass engineering was matched, if not exceeded, in the irregular ellipsoid form of the floating observation bubble. Perched 30 feet above the park atop ten steel HSS columns that increase in diameter from 21 inches to 31 inches, as well as its stair and elevator core, the bubble is a steel platform structure made up of wide flange and HSS members that were primarily joined on site via welded moment connections.

Repas and Weidlinger worked closely with facade consultant RFR of Paris and Stuttgart to develop a weather-tight glass skin for the structure. The cladding had to be made of flat panels for cost reasons, and piecing these together in a way that retained the feeling of a smooth, rounded bubble required very close attention to detail. In the end, no two of the panels are the same size or shape. They are all four-sided quadrilaterals ranging from approximately eight-by-eight feet to narrow slivers about a foot wide. The glass panels themselves are highly insulated, made up of triple-layered, laminated low-e glass lites separated by air spaces.

In an unusual arrangement for an American firm working in China, the city of Shanghai asked Weidlinger to develop construction drawings for the project. Not only is the geometry of great complexity, but the facade assembly fits together with less than a quarter inch of tolerance.

AARON SEWARD

AN_09_01_11_FINAL:AN_06_CLH_Mar25  5/11/09  4:54 PM  Page 8
Arquitectes.

Senior Citizens’ Centre in Barcelona by RCR

by Atelier Marc Barani; and a Library and

Centre and Nice Tramway in Nice, France,

Italy, by Grafton Architects; the Multimodal

Fuksas; Luigi Bocconi University in Milan,

Music Hall in Strasbourg, France, by Studio

shortlist of finalists that included the Zenith

ative image for the new part of the city,”

and are a vital tool for establishing a posi-

the city, with its plazas and outdoor areas,

of the roof create a new place in

Lundevall added. “The horizontal and slop-

al building in contemporary Norway,

roofscape, the building is the largest cultur-

tect for Snøhetta, told AN. With its marble

and Ballet,” Tarald Lundevall, project archi-

the prize for the Norwegian National Opera

Fialová, and Slovenian architect Vasa Perovic.

Institute director Ole Bouman, Spanish

jury included Netherlands Architecture

ation of its urban tissue.” The six-member

SNØHETTA SINGS continued from front page

doing planes of the roof create a new place in

of the city, and is emblematic of the regener-

ating planes of the roof create a new place in

the city, with its plazas and outdoor areas,

and are a vital tool for establishing a posi-

ive image for the new part of the city,”

Lundevall said.

The opera house was selected from a

shortlist of finalists that included the Zenith

Music Hall in Strasbourg, France, by Studio

Fukas; Luigi Bocconi University in Milan,

Italy, by Grafton Architects; the Multimodal

Centre and Nice Tramway in Nice, France,

by Atelier Marc Barani; and a Library and

Senior Citizens’ Centre in Barcelona by RCR

Arquitectes.

Along with Snøhetta’s prize, the jury

awarded a special mention for emerging

architects to the Zagreb, Croatia–based firm

Studio Up and their Gymnasium 46º09’N/

16º50E in Koprivnica, Croatia. The firm’s

principals Lea Pelivan and Toma Plejić,

who both received architecture diplomas

from the University of Zagreb in 2001, have

gained notice through their Frameworks

project, a site-specific work for the 2004

Venice Biennale, and the P10 Mixed-Use

Building in Split, Croatia.

For the gymnasium, a mixed-use project

that includes a sports hall and high school,

the architects designed a spacious interior-

street and cantilevered, top-floor classrooms,

incorporating a shutter and duct system

during the summer months. Like Snøhetta’s

opera house, the gymnasium has helped

transform its neighborhood, creating a new

social center and landmark on the town’s

suburban fringe.

“We wanted to create a dynamic spatial

experience as a contrast to the surrounding

flat landscape,” principal Toma Plejić told AN.

“During the day, because of the polycarbon-

ate sheets, the building reflects its surround-

ings, while at night it radiates the interior

events outward to the neighborhood.”

CAST-IRON COLLAPSE

Early on the morning of April 30, the streets of Tribeca shook as half of a 17th-

century, cast-iron store and loft building collapsed. A number of complaints

about the building, at 71 Reade Street, had been filed with the Department

of Buildings in the days leading up to the collapse, citing visible cracks in the

structure and a quaking beneath the street. The department had issued an

order to put emergency shoring in place, but the call was not heeded by the

building owner in time to prevent the collapse. Due to structural concerns after

the event, the other half of the building was demolished. There had been plans

to turn the 1856 structure and its neighbor, 69 Reade Street, into a boutique

hotel, although those were abandoned following the downturn in the economy.

A STERN SUIT

Given his success on such high-profile projects as 15 Central Park West

and the Comcast Center in Philadelphia, Robert A.M. Stern should have no

problem getting paid. But the recession knows no bounds, and the architect

was forced to file a lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court on April 24

to claim nearly $500,000 in unpaid fees for an unbuilt project on East 80th

Street. According to court papers, Stern’s firm had received two partial pay-

ments totaling $93,000, but was still owed an additional $497,429.

MAKING NYCHA NICE

It is a sad fact that many housing-related projects in New York City have been

shovel-ready for years, if not decades. Now, thanks to the federal stimulus

package, some of them will finally get their funding. On April 26, the mayor

and HUD secretary (and former HPD commissioner) Shaun Donovan announced

$423 million in funding for some 70 public housing-related projects, including

repairs to elevator systems that have posed notorious dangers to residents.
FUTURE FIBERS
JAPAN’S TEXTILE INDUSTRY IS MORE TECHNOLOGY ADVANCED AND IMAGINATIVE THAN JUST ABOUT ANY OTHER IN THE WORLD. THAT MUCH WAS EVIDENT AT THE ‘09 SENSEWARE EXHIBITION AT THE TRIENNALE DESIGN MUSEUM IN MILAN LAST MONTH. SPONSORED BY THE JAPAN CHEMICAL FIBER ASSOCIATION, THE SHOW WOVED A CAPACITY CROWD WITH SUCH NEW-WORLD WONDERS AS MOSS-CRADLING FABRICS AND TENT TEXTILES THAT TRANSLATE WATER DROPS INTO WORDS. HERE, WE PRESENT A SELECTION FROM THE SHOW OF FIVE TRANSFORMATIVE FIBERS WITH THE POWER TO CHANGE TOMORROW’S ARCHITECTURE.

BY JULIE V. IOVINE

1 BIODEGRADABLE MOSS PLANTER
MAKOTO AZUMA
UNITIKA

Patented Terramac fibers are woven into a mat deep enough to grow moss and groundcover planted by Tokyo-based florist Makoto Azuma. The mat material from Unitika is a plant-derived polylactic acid and fully biodegradable, and as easy as fabric to cut and shape to any size or setting.

www.unitika.co.jp

2 LIGHT-PENETRABLE CONCRETE
KENGO KUMA
MITSUBISHI RAYON COMPANY

Architect Kengo Kuma contributes to the development of a long-dreamed-of material: semi-transparent, light-transmitting concrete. By embedding concrete with sliced, continuous strands of carbon fiber, a translucent building block appears to emit light while revealing the shadow movements of figures passing by on the other side.

www.mrc.co.jp

3 LIGHT-RESPONSIVE BENCH
GWENAEL NICOLAS
MITSUBISHI RAYON COMPANY

Plastic optical fibers are loosely woven into a bench that emits light in waves corresponding to human movement. Designed by Gwenael Nicolas of the Japanese design firm Curiosity in collaboration with Reiko Sudo, the avant-garde textile designer at Nuno Corporation, this is a light sculpture with practical applications.

www.mrc.co.jp

4 WATER LOGO
HARA DESIGN INSTITUTE, NDC + ATELIER OMOYA
UNITIKA

This material called Monert features nano-sized, water-repellent fibers that cause water droplets to adhere in graphic patterns—in this case, letterforms. When the water droplets reach a saturation point, they roll away and the word disappears.

www.unitika.co.jp

5 THIN BEAM CANTILEVER LIGHT
JUN ACKI
TORAY INDUSTRIES

Architect Jun Aoki, known for his sophisticated material experiments at Louis Vuitton stores in Tokyo, Hong Kong, and New York, used a patented carbon fiber called Torayca to create an ultra-long LED light fixture so lightweight and tensile that it can extend the distance over five chairs.

www.toray.com
FARAWAY FAUCET
DESIGNED BY L + R PALOMBA
PRODUCED BY ZUCCHETTI, ITALY

ZUCCHETTI.
The Gatekeepers
Little known to the public and a mystery even to many architects, the Public Design Commission holds considerable sway over the city’s urban fabric. From multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects down to tot lots, lampposts, and bike racks, this powerful group helps shape much of New York’s public face. Ian Volner pays a visit.

For nearly 35 years, Paul Broches of Mitchell/Giurgola Architects has been working to make Louis Kahn’s Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island a reality. On a recent Monday, he unrolled his drawings in a low-ceilinged City Hall annex before one of the least known but most influential deliberative bodies in New York: the Public Design Commission (PDC). On this afternoon, the engineer Guy Nordenson, one of 11 commissioners, took a typically conscientious line of questioning: “Will the park be high enough above the East River waterline,” he asked, “to endure rising sea levels due to global warming?” You bet it will, said Broches, who counted the hearings, where official submissions are made and approval granted or withheld, have recently ranged from newstands on Madison Avenue to the reconstruction of East Fordham Road in the Bronx.

The PDC’s bailiwick has remained largely unchanged since the Art Commission’s creation in 1898. As called for in the charter of the then newly consolidated City of New York, the commission’s first members were appointed for three-year, unpaid terms at the recommendation of the Fine Arts Federation, an independent cultural consortium. The federation nominated one architect, one painter, a sculptor, and three “lay members.” Three additional commissioners were selected by the most prominent cultural institutions of the day: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New York Public Library. Today, the PDC’s membership breaks down in precisely the same way, chosen by the same process, with one more lay member appointed at the mayor’s discretion and a landscape architect rounding out the group.

The commission’s review powers are much as they were over a hundred years ago. In developing any public works project, every branch of the city’s vast bureaucracy must prepare a series of presentations for the commission. Usually the work of the consulting architect, these presentations follow a three-step process: conceptual, preliminary, and final. The first two take place during public hearings in the commission’s offices, attended by members of the agencies involved (invariably) and by concerned members of the public (infrequently). The presenter outlines the project’s objectives and design strategies, while the commissioners make suggestions and take a casual thumbs-up, thumbs-down vote. The final stage entails only a submission of project documents. The result is fair and reasonable, according to veterans of the process. “I’ve presented to the PDC many, many times,” Broches said. “Even though the character of the commission changes as the commissioners change, I’ve always found them to be smart, serious-minded, and amicable.”

Some civic construction escapes the commission’s purview: Federal and state buildings fall outside their mandate, and some city buildings
are the province of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The PDC also passes judgment on a surpris- ing volume of construction beyond the city limits, like the entire Croton Aqueduct system, with its head- houses, gatehouses, and signposts scattered throughout Westchester County. Other projects submitted for review aren’t actually being reviewed at all. “Courtesy” reviews are commonplace, delivered by non-city agencies in an effort to garner broad political support. As it turned out, the presenters of Four Freedoms Park, which is to be built on state-owned land, were perform- ing one such courtesy call. “The Design Commission is involved with so many projects on public land in New York, it just seemed eminently reasonable to get their opinion,” said Sally Minard, who has helped spearhead the project. The commission strives to avoid unexpected—and expensive—design revamps as much as is practical. As Snyder explained, “We usually try to have people come in earlier, so that it’s easier and less expensive for agencies to change designs.” But clearly, the committee isn’t just applying a rubber stamp. At a recent hear- ing, Department of Transportation (DOT) personnel milled around the PDC’s waiting room, having just finished their “second or third preliminary” for a Bronx highway improvement. More anodyne proj- ects—a public toilet for Prospect Park, for example—are sometimes fast-tracked, given final approval at their preliminary hearing.

So what is the PDC’s yardstick for successful design? “Our goal is not to turn people into clones of us, but to make their project the best it can be,” said Signe Nielsen, principal of environmental planners Mathews Nielsen and the commission’s current landscape architect. The “us” of the moment constitutes a fair cross-section of influential New Yorkers: Other commissioners include architect James Polshek, Paula Scher of Pentagram, and a former director of Forest City Ratner, James Stukney. “Whether we are wealthy patrons or scruffy academics, professionals or artists,” Nordenson said in an interview, “we share the belief that we can build a discourse about what is good design or not and cut through the bureaucratic yadda yadda.” At times, New York’s small design world can cause complications. At a recent hearing, Nielsen recused herself for one session as Anne Trumble of Mathews Nielsen gave the preliminary proposal for the firm’s DOT-sponsored redesign of West 125th Street just landward of the Hudson River. The renovation includes moving and resurfacing crosswalks to coincide with Columbia University’s planned satellite campus for the neighbor- hood. At the advice of the PDC, benches with rounded armrests will be scattered around the site, echoing the looped arches of the Riverside Drive viaduct above.

And the commission has had its share of contention. An uproar over the Parks Department’s Washington Square renovation brought crowds to commission meetings in 2005. (To little avail: The project moved forward.) Another episode, described in former commissioner Michele Helene Bogart’s illuminating book about the commission The Politics of Urban Beauty, involved former Parks Commissioner Henry Stern, whose enthusiasm for “yardarm” flagpoles and animal motifs led him to circumvent the Art Commission on a number of occasions. This prompted a law- suit, eventually settled, from Commission President Reba White Williams.

More typically, though, the PDC expressly avoids confrontation. “If the person running the meeting senses there’s a mixed opinion, we table the project,” said Nielsen. These rare differences are ironed out at executive sessions that are closed to the public, and where, according to Bogart, members discuss projects candidly. “When the politics around a project are particularly sensitive, it’s better to have an executive session,” Bogart explained.

Politics do occasionally intrude. Former Commission President Jean Phifer of architecture firm Thomas Phifer & Partners described an attempt in the late 1990s to abolish the commission outright, spurred on by a Staten Island councilman. Mayor Giuliani interceded on the commission’s behalf, but Giuliani was otherwise less supportive of the commission than Mayor Bloomberg has been. “The differ- ence between now and then is that the commission under Giuliani had no clout,” Bogart said. Mayor Bloomberg’s support of the PDC and of urban design generally has helped bolster the commission’s efforts, as evidenced by his creation, with the PDC’s input, of the Design and Construction Excellence program. One more change under Mayor Bloomberg has been the reassessment of PDC review power in the case of private leases on public land, a move that has helped extend the commission’s reach.

The best evidence of the commis- sion’s scope and vision is in the city’s public works over the past decade. Hudson River Park, the Fulton Street Transit Center, the Van Cortlandt Park filtration plant— if these can be taken together as signal projects, what sort of design preferences emerge? A clarity of visual language; a clean, muscular sense of materiality; an emphasis on environmental sensitivity. Struggling to sum it up, Nielsen simply said, “I could say it in fancy archi-speak, but it boils down to this: Will I want to look at it in 20 years?”
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MAY

WEDNESDAY 20
LECTURE
Stephanie M. Saldy
Michael Taylor, Interior Designer
6:30 p.m.
Library at the General Society
20 West 44th St.
www.classicist.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Francois Bacon:
A Centenary Retrospective
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

Parsons School of
Computing Environments
Thesis Exhibition
Parsons The New
School for Design
25 East 13th St.
www.parsons.edu

Josh Greene & Renée Gertler
That’s My Side
Artists Space
38 Greene St., 3rd Fl.
www.artistsspace.org

THURSDAY 21
LECTURE
Cristina Gobena and
Urut Grau, Pho Hoang,
Sung Goo Yang
2000 Young Architect’s
Forum: Foresight
6:30 p.m.
Architectural League
457 Madison Ave.
www.architecturaleague.org

SYMPOSIUM
19th-20th century: Sustaining the Lasting Value of American Planning
Eugenie Birch,
Robert Fishman, et al.
Through May 22
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW,
Washington, D.C.
www.nbm.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Conrad Shawcross
Control
Location One
26 Greene St.
www.locationone.org

Patty Chang
Mary Boone Gallery
745 5th Ave.
www.maryboonegallery.com

Michael Alan
How We Push Time
Art29
525 West 25th St.
art29gallery@gmail.com

FRIDAY 22
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theater and Opera
The Morgan Library and Museum
225 Madison Ave.
www.themorgan.org

Mel Bochner,
Adrian Piper, et al.
Photoconceptualism,
1986-1973
Whitney Museum of
American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org

Ayad Alkadhi,
Zofikha Doubellah,
Adriana Czernin,
Katrina Daschner, et al.
The Seen and The Hidden:
Recovering The Void
Austrian Cultural Forum
11 East 52nd St.
www.acfny.org

SATURDAY 23
EXHIBITION OPENING
Jacob Hashimoto
Mary Boone Gallery
541 West 24th St.
www.maryboonegallery.com

EVENT
New to Brooklyn Heights Tour
11:00 a.m.
Clark & Harney Sts.
Municipal Art Society
www.mas.org

WITH THE KIDS
Where are We?
Places and Spaces
10:20 a.m.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

SUNDAY 24
LECTURE
Tom Klinkovstein,
Joan Ribas
12:00 p.m.
Museum of Arts and Design
2 Columbus Circle
www.mad.org

EVENT
The Party in the Garden
7:00 p.m.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

WEDNESDAY 27
LECTURES
Rogan Gregory,
Scott Hahn, Leslie Hoffman,
and Julie Gillhart
Sustainable Fashion Panel
6:30 p.m.
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design
Museum
2 East 91st St.
www.cooperhewitt.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Gustav Eiffel
Feast of the Rye
Whitney Museum of
American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org


SATURDAY 30
LECTURES
Arjun Appadurai
Architecture and Amnesia in
Indian Modernity
7:00 p.m.
The Great Hall of The Coop er Union
7 East 7th St.
www.archlab.coop

Ethan Zuckermand
Faral Chideya
Y2K: Networking Technology:
Technology and Access
3:00 p.m.
New Museum
235 Bowery
www.newmuseum.org

EVENT
Survivor: An Artist’s
Opportunity Workshop
Through June 1
Dumbo Arts Center
30 Washington St.,
Brooklyn
www.dumboartscenter.org

WITH THE KIDS
Earth Approved Design Day
1:30 p.m.
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design
Museum
2 East 91st St.
www.cooperhewitt.org

SUNDAY 31
EXHIBITION OPENING
Red Line Housing Crisis
Learning Center
Queens Museum of Art
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park,
Queens
www.queensmuseum.org

EVENT
Survivor: An Artist's
Opportunity Workshop
Through June 1
Dumbo Arts Center
30 Washington St.,
Brooklyn
www.dumboartscenter.org

JUNE

MONDAY 1
LECTURE
Deborah Berke
Spotlight On Design
6:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW,
Washington, D.C.
www.nbm.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Gustav Eiffel
Feast of the Rye
Whitney Museum of
American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org

Portraits, Pastels, Prints:
Whistler in The Frick
Collection
The Frick Collection
1 East 70th St.
www.frick.org

VISIT WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM FOR
COMPETITION LISTINGS

EXHIBITION OPENING
A.A. Rucci
Alfalfa Midnight Sun
Mixed Greens
537 West 26th St.
www.mixedgreens.com

EVENT
Gary Simmons in
Conversation with Henry
Louis Gates, Jr.
7:00 p.m.
Whitney Museum of
American Art
945 Madison Ave.
www.whitney.org

FILM
The Grand Tour
6:30 p.m.
American Museum of
Natural History
79th St. & Central Park West
www.amnh.org

WEDNESDAY 3
LECTURE
Dunwell
The Hudson: America’s River
6:00 p.m.
Museum of the City of
New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

SYMPOSIUM
Design Awards Symposium:
Project Winners
6:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
136 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

FILM
Steel Homes
Eva Weber, 2008,
10 min.
7:00 p.m.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd St.
www.moma.org

EVENT
City Futures Gala
Angel Orensanz Foundation
172 Norfolk St.
www.citylimits.org

THURSDAY 4
LECTURE
Scott Muldavin,
Ron Dembo,
Michael Levi
Zero Net Energy Buildings:
Financial Incentives and
Valuation
6:00 p.m.
The New York Academy of
Sciences
7 World Trade Center
250 Greenwich St., 40th Fl.
www.nyas.org/financial

FRIDAY 5
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Patricia Cronin
“Harriet Hosmer,
Lost and Found”
Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.
www.brooklynmuseum.org

New Practices San Francisco
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

SATURDAY 6
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Skyscrapers:
Drawings, Drawings,
and Photographs of the Early
Twentieth Century
Philadelphia Museum of Art
26th St. and the Benjamin
Franklin Parkway,
Philadelphia
www.philamuseum.org

SUNDAY 7
FILM
Reclaiming the City on Film
Alfred Hitchcock,
Busby Berkeley,
William Klein, et al.
2:00 p.m.
Museum of the City of
New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

FROM THE GROUND UP:
INNOVATIVE GREEN HOMES
Van Alen Institute
30 West 22nd Street, 6th Floor
Through June 26

Featuring finalists from the Syracuse University School of Architecture-sponsored competition for the single-family house, From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes promotes creative thinking about design, sustainability, and cost-effective building practices. The competition seeks a new model for revitalizing urban neighborhoods throughout the United States, including the Near Westside, one of Syracuse’s earliest residential enclaves. Comprised of 550 acres of industrial, residential, and commercial properties adjacent to the city center, the neighborhood is saddled with condemned buildings and empty lots, a result of the city’s “spread without growth.” Van Alen Institute presents models and renderings from the three winning teams—APD and Delta Valle Bermeheiro of New York; Cook Fox/Terrain Bright Green of New York and Washington, D.C.; and Onion Flats of Philadelphia—and from the four finalist teams: AdjayeAssociates of London; Office 4A and Architecture Studio Himma of Boston and Seattle (abow); do-it-together.org of New York and Kansas City; and Envy Mckhery Architecture and Stenson-Building + Furniture Design of Philadelphia and Syracuse. Also on view will be work from 52 other teams who submitted ideas.

MARCEL BREUER: DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design
224 Benefit Street, Providence, RI
Through July 19

A master of modernism, and Bauhaus teacher as well as student, the Hungarian-born Marcel Breuer produced design at many scales, from chairs to single-family houses, from offices to major religious, cultural, and civic institutions. Developed by the Vitra Design Museum in Germany, Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture, currently on view at the RISD Museum of Art, takes a critical and comprehen- sive look at all aspects of Breuer’s extensive oeuvre. The exhibition explores the designer’s work through a variety of themes that include materials, houses, spaces, and volumes. Beginning with the materials that Breuer preferred, including wood, aluminum, plywood, and steel, which he used to create his popular tubular steel furniture in the early 1920s, the show features more than 50 original pieces, such as the Wassily Chair (1929) and Cesca 532 Chairs (1928), as well as drawings and photographs of his designs. Twelve mod- els commissioned for this exhibition help document the residential work and the large-scale institutional buildings he designed, among them the University Complex in Collegeville, Minnesota (1934-36).
The show’s central premise is that in recent decades, the notion of landscape has taken on an expanded definition in architecture. “In the first half of the twentieth century,” the introductory wall text notes, “the architectural avant-garde celebrated autonomy from nature, and architects devised utopian schemes for creating urban realms ex novo, with little consideration for their surroundings.” MoMA, of course, played a greater role in defining the parameters and members of the architectural avant-garde than any other institution. The text, again without comment, continues to point out that more recently, environmental challenges and rapidly expanding cities have pushed architects to revise their understanding of landscape: “Harmony between the spatial, social, and environmental aspects of human life has become a priority in political thought, and this has had profound reverberations in both architecture and landscape design.” In Situ does not offer up specifically what this new understanding of landscape may be. Instead, it presents drawings, models, and a single video with minimal commentary, leaving the viewer to fill in the gaps and draw his or her own conclusions. Some of these works are beautiful, and mine the subject of landscape deeply, while others seem only tangentially engaged with the subject. Indeed the vast majority of the projects, which include houses, parks, cemeteries, and visionary urban schemes, are by architects. These include large models of classics like Fallingwater, which is so well known for its innovative site planning that its inclusion in this context looks more literally groundbreaking. Remarkably, a work as blunt and hard-edged as Superstudio’s Continuous Expanding Architecture as blunt and hard-edged as Superstudio’s Continuous seems simply too easy, yet observers have located the details—in which shrewdly the polemics are mutually reinforcing. Expanding Architecture alternates between polemical essays that articulate the need for design activism to straightforward accounts of design/research projects. In general, the polemics are the least satisfying, with authors too often lapsing into generalized rhetoric. In an Architecture of Change,” Jose L.S. Gamez and Susan Rogers call for “infiltrating and dismantling academies” to bring about a “radical transformation in education... a new school for a new school of thought.” But they leave this large challenge dangling, with no specifics as to how academies, so resistant to even incremental change, would be dismantled, or what the new schools would teach, how they would be structured, etc. Absent the details—in which shrewdly observers have located both god and the devil—this sort of revolutionary stance seems simply too easy, yet another vision of a better, fairer day that’s somehow always tomorrow. In another chapter, Kathleen Dorgan and Deane Evans deplore the undeniable fact that low-income housing is often badly designed and argue knowledgeably that funders, developers, and architects could do better, at no extra...
structure, from ongoing programs with paid
bigger, with more pretentious appliances).
(though the ugly expensive houses are much
badly designed as most low-income housing
that most market-rate U.S. housing is just as
production homebuilders, and it's clear
the book. Click on the website of any of the
not to mention the projects documented in
Baker, Rob Wellington Quigley, and so on,
like Pugh + Scarpa, Koning Eizenberg, David
not only due to exemplary projects by offices
and market-rate housing has narrowed, and
"workforce," to use the latest euphemism)
years, the design gap between affordable (or
fortably on polarities that feel dated. In recent
design literacy. Yet the essay relies too com-
informed by higher aspirations and greater
cost, if at every stage the process were
PUBLIC PRACTICE continued from page 17
cost, if at every stage the process were
informed by higher aspirations and greater
design literacy. Yet the essay relies too com-
fortably on polarities that feel dated. In recent
years, the design gap between affordable (or
workforce," to use the latest euphemism) and market-rate housing has narrowed, and
not only due to exemplary projects by offices
The design initiatives range in scale and
dimensionality, for innovative urban action.
In this sense, Expanding Architecture
redevelopment.
but the problem," its anti-tax and
zealots, its market fundamentalists, we no
longer expect strong and coordinated action
from our impoverished public agencies, with
their embattled mandates and diminished
staffs, working with vintage databases on
craky computers. We no longer look to our
public planning agencies for powerful design
thinking, for innovative urban action.

What is missing from this volume on pub-
lic interest architecture is any presence of the
public sector. I emphasize that this absence is
not an oversight, and it is unsurprising.
Three decades into the Reagan Revolution,
with its rallying cry of "government is not the
solution but the problem," its anti-tax and
property-rights advocates, its deregulatory
zealots, its market fundamentalists, we no
longer expect strong and coordinated action
from our impoverished public agencies, with
their embattled mandates and diminished
staffs, working with vintage databases on
craky computers. We no longer look to our
public planning agencies for powerful design
thinking, for innovative urban action.

In this sense, Expanding Architecture
can be read as an unselfconscious reflection
of the privatization of our culture, of the
to which we depend on private non-
profits—often fragile, surviving on grants,
dependent on the sweat equity of students
and practitioners—to confront the challenges
of equitable housing, sustainable communi-
ties, new energy economies, and green
development.

But now, as polar ice shelves crack and
countries deflate, and as our major
banks and car manufacturers plead for public
money, it's high time to rethink the dynamics
of public and private.

NANCY LEVINSON IS DIRECTOR OF THE PHOENIX
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