As a Chicago tourist attraction, the Skydeck at the 103rd floor of the Sears Tower stands second to Shedd Aquarium. “We haven’t been able to keep up,” explained Randy Stansik, the observation platform’s general manager. “Every time they add a new critter, they get people coming back, but what can we add?” Indeed, visitors come from all over the world to survey the tower’s unimpeded, panoramic views, but once these are taken in, there’s really nothing else to see. In mid-June, however, in a daring game of brinksmanship, the Skydeck is upping the ante on its rival by opening The Ledge, an addition that will add yet another vantage to its mix: straight down.

An unassuming storage shed on the IIT campus was for decades ignored until plans for its demolition and replacement by a new train station stirred controversy. Suddenly, preservationists determined it was an unrecognized work of Mies van der Rohe and well worth saving; others claimed that the station was more important for the public good and the Mies building a throwaway.

Whatever the merits of either argument, there are bigger preservation fights in the offing: namely, Walter Gropius’ Michael Reese Hospital campus. On June 1, the city took control of the 37-acre campus with its 28 buildings all either planned or designed by Gropius, buying it for $86 million as part of the hospital’s bankruptcy proceedings, with plans to bulldoze the site.

On the 100th anniversary of Daniel Burnham’s Plan of Chicago, two world-renowned architecture firms are erecting pavilions in Millennium Park to commemorate the Plan and express a vision for Chicago’s future. Zaha Hadid Architects and UNStudio were each chosen to design a pavilion honoring the 1909 Plan, which brought Beaux Arts beauty and openness to Chicago through a network of green spaces and wide, Paris-inspired boulevards. The pavilions will stand in view of each other in the park between Anish Kapoor’s Cloud Gate and Frank Gehry’s.

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Tina Brown said something in a recent profile of Si Newhouse in New York magazine that caught my attention: “I brought in the news gene,” she is quoted as saying. “Newhouse came to understand that news was key to connecting to the culture.” I often try and understand why our publication package is working so well. It is the local news? The insider details? The design? The smart focus of our reporting? Why do we get so many gracious notes and comments and even adoration from our readers when we are out and about? I think that’s it: all of the above—plus the gossips—and it just so happens that even though we call ourselves a newspaper, we are in fact a new kind of hybrid between a magazine, a newspaper, and a clubhouse that reaches a community by being relevant and also knowing what our readers care about. When it comes to local news, big events, and selected tidbits from all over, we connect our broad readership of professionals in the built environment to the culture of architecture.

Perhaps asking the question is what keeps the answer—and The Architectural Newspaper—so lively. We are just excited that it’s working and that we are having so much fun while we’re at it. So much so that we are hurrying on from launching our California issue in 2007 to testing the waters around Chicago. So here it is, folks, your first peek at the Midwest edition: premiering at NeCon this June, with follow-up issues as of January 2010. We hope you’ll soak them up, too.

DIANA DARLING, PUBLISHER

AN’s Midwest-themed issue comes at an important moment for the region. As it celebrates the centennial of the Burnham Plan, Chicago has seen the completion of a major new cultural building, the Renzo Piano–designed Modern Wing at the Art Institute, and is welcoming two of architecture’s major talents, Zaha Hadid and UNStudio’s Ben van Berkel, with commissions for temporary pavilions. Beyond these already major events, there is a sense that the city is in the midst of a homogenous architectural renaissance. Chicago architects are again gaining national and international attention, with large offices creating skyscrapers and campuses of note at home and abroad, and smaller firms designing innovative cultural, community, residential, and commercial projects. Many of the institutions that make the city’s architectural culture so rich have new leadership and an energized sense of purpose.

The region overall has been hit hard by the economic downturn, and architects, planners, and designers are working creatively to confront these new realities. There is much on which to report, from St. Louis to St. Paul. The Midwest edition is conceived as a truly regional paper, and this issue features stories from five states. As always at AN, we strove to showcase best practices, illuminate pertinent issues, and enliven the dialog on the future of the built environment. Midwestern readers, stay tuned. You will be hearing more from us soon.

DIANA DARLING, PUBLISHER

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER JUNE 17, 2009
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BUT IS THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE?

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regions competing for the

funding in critical need of

for speed. Sidebar: Architects
typically enjoy all the credit in

but Eavesdrop insists on

now.

ASYMPOTOTE’S BUILDABLE BLOB

Eavesdrop loved the “Build It Bigger” episode on Discovery’s Science Channel

featuring the Asymptote-designed Yas Marina Hotel under construction in Abu

Dhabi, which aired on June 1. Granted, every project in the UAE is the biggest,

best, only, and first, but the Yas Hotel is truly an amazing grid-shell-veiled,

buildable blob. Besides the building, the project’s second-most glamorous

featur

is the formula One Grand Prix raceway over which the hotel spans with

extraordinary finesse. The show revealed the complexity of both design and

engineering and the effort required to fast-track it into existence. As the sig-

nature component of the $36 billion Yas Marina development, it must open its
doors by October, making the raceway a literal reminder of the overall need

for speed.

Sidebar: Architects typically enjoy all the credit in the press, but

Eavesdrop insists on crediting the engineers: Arup, Dewan, Tille, Schlaich Bерgermann
und Partner, Waagner-Biro, Centraal Staal, Red, Taw, and Front, Inc.

SHOCKED ABOUT SAADIYAT

Speaking of speed, the program’s host, Danny Forster, casually mentioned that

50,000 workers are needed to

build a multi-speed construction for the entire region’s multimillion-dollar developments.

Now, that head count is big news: An

80-page report issued by the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) claims

“abuse and severe exploitation” of thousands of laborers at projects through-

out the UAE, particularly those on Saadiyat Island (cue eye-rolling: Saadiyat

is Arabic for “happiness”). HRW sent letters outlining the violations to Jean

Nouvel, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Tadao Ando, and other architects who are

building island happiness. The recipients issued instant denunciations: We’re

shocked! Who could’ve imagined that tens of thousands of migrant workers

from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan could be vulnerable to exploitation? Here

at Eavesdrop, we’re 100 percent not for it.

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FAST TRAINS MAY COME TO THE MIDWEST,

BUT IS THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE?

RATL READY?

Though it might not stretch

beyond the Midwest at

first, America seems ready

to build a high-speed rail

network. The Obama admin-

istration’s plan abandons

the idea of an Amtrak-like,

coast-to-coast system,

focusing instead on popu-

lous regions with congested

transportation systems. The

Midwest tops a short list of

regions competing for the

$8 billion in federal funds for

these projects.

What would this mean

for architecture? For starters,

“We’ll need to build railroad

stations across the country,”

said Rick Harnish of the

Midwest High Speed Rail

Association. If a high-speed

system comes to the area,

he claims, the already over-

crowded Union Station would

be busier than Chicago’s

Midway Airport. Harnish calls

for a new station, admonish-

ing the mayor’s office for

not making this a priority.

The potentially available

$8 billion “will not be nearly

enough,” Harnish added.

Money must come from

agencies at “every level of

government.” With Illinois

Governor Pat Quinn burdened

by a budget crisis, and

Mayor Daley focused on

the creation of a Midwest

high-speed rail czar to make

the region a more attractive

candidate for federal monies.

To generate ideas around the issue, Chicago

Architects Club’s Burnham

Prize competition asked

architects to reimagine

Union Station as a high-speed hub.

Lindsay Grote, a Chicago

architect whose proposal

took third prize, agrees with

Harnish that Union Station

will not be able to handle

the extra capacity. “Union

Station is already over-

crowded, and has no con-

nection to the El or the

Loop,” Grote said. Instead of

repurposing Union Station,

he suggests building a multi-

modal station on empty

land just south of the Loop.

Cheyne Owens, a Chicago

native who is currently a stu-

dent at Harvard’s Graduate

School of Design, thinks

that a high-speed rail hub

would need to be more than

just a train station. His sec-

ond-prize-winning proposal

keeps the existing Union

Station intact, while adding

several sculptural towers to

create a “cultural icon.”

If these efforts succeed,

Chicago will become

America’s first high-speed

hub. David Goodman,

architect and organizer of

the Burnham Prize competi-

tion, believes it would

positively impact the city:

“Rail is in Chicago’s DNA. It’s

part of why the city became

important in the first place.

A high-speed system would

have the potential to reassert

that importance for a new

century.”
LEADING ROLE

Tony Smith, renowned painter and sculptor, began his career as a Taliesin Fellow under Frank Lloyd Wright. One of his early houses, the 1940 Gunning House outside Columbus, Ohio, is now for sale, and a developer wants to buy the property to demolish the house for commercial use. Designed with Theodore van Fossen and Laurence Cuneo, the Gunning House sits on a 2.5-acre site overlooking a ravine and fronts a now busy thoroughfare. A later owner added a landscaped berm that conceals the house from the road.

The house, with its wood-paneled and stone interiors, and the property, which includes a three-story studio tower and a carport, are listed for $275,000, according to Bud Byrne, a real estate agent at Vannatta Brothers.

The house has been empty for three years and needs substantial work. “It’s going to take someone who gets it. As every moment ticks by, the work gets greater,” said Kathy Mast Kane, executive director of Columbus Landmarks, a preservation group that has been working to save the house. The Tony Smith Estate, and its daughters, the artists Kiki and Seton Smith, have visited the site and are working to bring attention to its plight.

“It’s his first house coming off his Wright apprenticeship,” said Sarah Auld, director of the Tony Smith Estate. “It’s all of a piece: the architecture, the sculpture, the painting.”

According to Mast Kane, the house is one of the first modern houses in the region and an important precursor to Rush Creek Village outside Columbus, a nationally recognized Wright-style community designed by van Fossen.

ALAN J. BRAKE

BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH LINKS ARTS DISTRICTS AND GREENWAYS

INDY’S TRAIL BLAZERS

The revitalization of Central Indianapolis created several thriving “cultural districts” in the downtown area, anchored by institutions such as the Indiana Repertory Theatre and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. These districts are disconnected by distance and by gaps in the urban fabric, but the Central Indiana Community Foundation has developed a plan to fix that: the Indianapolis Cultural Trail. A unique urban loop linking the cultural districts together with fully segregated pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists, the trail is to be carved out of 18 to 36 feet of space on eight miles of downtown streets. Beyond pure functionality, the trail is intended to be the downtown hub of a linear park. The width is made possible by the city’s wide streets.

Central Indianapolis was laid out as the capital city by Alexander Ralston, a one-time assistant to Washington, D.C.’s famed planner Pierre L’Enfant. These wide streets meant “it’s his first house coming off his Wright apprenticeship,” said Sarah Auld, director of the Tony Smith Estate. “It’s all of a piece: the architecture, the sculpture, the painting.”

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ALAN J. BRAKE

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At 92 stories, with condominiums and a hotel, the SOM–designed Trump Chicago tower is the tallest building in the city since Sears. Recently, Joe Valerio, principal of Valerio Dewalt Train and designer of the tower’s restaurant, Sixteen, chatted with Ivanka Trump about Chicago, design, and the future of the Trump brand.

Joe Valerio: What were your expectations of Chicago, what surprised you? Ivanka Trump: It exceeded my expectations. I had an image of Chicago, but until I became involved in this project, I didn’t really understand what it was about. I was blown away by the quality of buildings from an aesthetic standpoint, the really beautiful architecture in a very clean city. One of the things that makes our project, particularly the restaurant, so unique is that there is a great play on the tops of these beautiful towers. You see the gothic architecture of the Tribune Building, the Wrigley Building and then you see out to the lake, so it’s an uninterrupted view decorated by these world-renowned buildings. Describe this new building.

Well, if you look at Trump Tower NYC, it’s emblematic of the Trump brand but still relevant today. We still achieve the highest numbers on the saleable real estate and attract the best retail tenants. We’re in a phenomenal location. As we speak, I’m sitting in my office on 57th and 5th. It was built in the early ’80s, but continues to be very relevant today. We hope that will be true of Trump Chicago.

Of course, Trump Chicago is a very different building. It’s a unique, mixed-use building, but the early accolades have been a validation of our collective vision. Would you like to comment on where design is going right now?

You know better than I do! I’m a student of architecture and interior design, so that’s going to make its mark on the future of the Trump brand. If you look at Trump Tower NYC, it’s a fantastic but could never come to fruition or be built by a person of sound mind, you wouldn’t be doing your job. The design has to be commercially reasonable, while incredibly luxurious.

You were the first person we met with in Chicago that got it and that allowed us to contribute to the thought process and own the design with you, while simultaneously having great conviction in what you thought needed to be created. Was the role of the client discussed in Chicago that got it and that allowed us to contribute to the thought process and own the design with you, while simultaneously having great conviction in what you thought needed to be created.

The sense of entrance, with the incredible deconstructed chandelier in the main dining room, I always find it with something overly complicated. The whole design intent was to maximize the space as opposed to dominate it with something overly complicated. It exceeded my expectations—meaning, they can define a fabulous vision that is buildable. At the end of the day, if what you designed was fantastic but could never come to fruition, it would be built by a person of sound mind, you wouldn’t be doing your job. The design has to be commercially reasonable, while incredibly luxurious.

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MOVE OVER, MOMA continued from front page

The Art Institute established its architecture department in 1982 to consolidate its impressive holdings of architectural drawings, plans, and artifacts that had been previously contained within other departments. “Design” was added to its name in 2005. Today, according to museum press materials, the 250,000 items in its collection represent the greatest number in all the museum’s curatorial departments. The museum points out that it is only one of four American art museums with an architecture department, and its 8,000 square feet of design galleries surpass MoMA in exhibition space.

During its first two decades, the architecture department made its reputation with work that spotlighted Chicago’s place as a mecca for architecture enthusiasts. With the arrival in 2005 of department director Joseph Rosa, previously at SFMOMA and the National Building Museum, the focus was no longer exposing Chicago to the world, but bringing the world to Chicago.

To achieve parity with other curatorial areas, Rosa and his staff had to sift through its collection to distinguish between art and archival items, a task that morphed into a treasure hunt. “We’d be going through the vault, and I’d see something,” said Rosa, “and I’d say ‘Wow! We have that?’”

The inaugural display of holdings, which will rotate every six months, offers a tantalizing glimpse into the department’s collection. Unlike the gallery spaces on the other side of the wing’s grand court, the A&D galleries do not redundantly circulate, so the visitor experiences the space through a single path. It begins with drawings and models that reflect the great legacy of Chicago—Sullivan, Wright, Mies—and continues with work from more local and international luminaries before segueing into the design section.

Since assuming the newly created post of design curator, British-born Zoë Ryan has overseen an acquisition spree, aiming to assemble a collection that she says reflects “new ways of making and thinking about design,” and that “speaks to us in emotive, conceptual ways.”

Among the acquisitions on view: furniture by the Campagna Brothers, Marcel Wanders, and Hella Jongerius; lighting from Ingo Maurer; tableware by architects Zaha Hadid and Greg Lynn; and graphic design from Bruce Mau. Included as well are industrial design objects like IDEO’s kidney transporter, and the One Laptop Per Child PC, from a collaborative including Yves Behar. Behar is also represented by Anima Torra, a LED light fixture/sculptural object commissioned by the department. Perhaps more than any item on display, it speaks to the nature of design object as art.

Rosa feels the department should offer exhibitions that give the visitor the elation of discovery that he felt looking through the department’s vault. “We want to map the culture,” he said, “showing pivotal works that illustrate the change in trajectory of design.”

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MASSIVE NEW PROJECT PLANNED FOR HISTORIC ST. LOUIS WARDS

THE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

A huge proposed redevelopment in North St. Louis, in the works for years behind closed doors, is going public as the developer starts meeting with residents and public officials. Conceived by McEagle Properties, the NorthSide would encompass much of one city ward and parts of four others in the blighted, historically black area. The company, which has already spent $46 million and purchased 900 properties, plans for the development to encompass 500 acres, with 4.5 million square feet of new office and retail space and 10,000 new homes.

Helmed by CEO and Chairman Paul McKee, McEagle is first tackling an explanation of its secretive process of property acquisition, under which it used several front companies to buy and leave numerous buildings without maintenance for years, causing angry residents to demand answers at a recent public meeting. One of the properties that has seen visible decay is the Clemens mansion, built in 1858 by a relative of famous Missouri son Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. “In order to make the project feasible, we had to buy property under the radar screen,” said Bill Laskowsky, chief development officer. “Economic development takes land.”

Close to downtown but with many vacant lots and abandoned buildings, the area is a clear candidate for redevelopment. Several concepts have been floated through the years, going back to the 1940s when a plan urged that huge areas be cleared. At that time, the city’s population was still on the rise, peaking at 856,000 in 1950. The census now puts the city at 355,663.

The 15-year McEagle plan wants to draw people and businesses back. In addition to rebuilding the decayed infrastructure with the help of tax increment financing, the company plans on a 40-story office tower and four “job centers,” essentially large corporate campuses.

“I think it’s a good vision, I don’t think I would call it a plan,” said Michael R. Allen, assistant director of the Landmarks Association. “We’re at the very starting point. We don’t have detailed drawings or even detailed site plans.” Allen moved to North St. Louis three years ago during the peak of the property acquisitions, and saw entire blocks go vacant. “What is disappointing is that neighborhood rehabilitation always involves displacement of existing populations,” he said.

Laskowsky said that with the new construction, keeping the architectural style, particularly for infill areas, “would be the order of the day.”

Allen said he thinks there is a lot to like about McEagle’s plan, but has serious concerns about the boarded-up properties.

“A lot of the buildings aren’t in good enough shape to last.” MIRIAM MOYNIHAN

GET VERTIGO!

continued from front page

Following such glass-bottomed North American predecessors as Toronto’s CN Tower and The Skywalk at the Grand Canyon, The Ledge is made of four glass boxes that cantilever out from the west face (the only elevation that features a sheer drop from parapet to sidewalk). Once installed, the stout-of-heart will be able to walk more than four feet “outside” of the building’s curtain wall and experience the sensation of floating 1,353 feet above Wacker Drive. “This is one view that hits you right between the eyes,” boasted Stansik.

Choosing an architect was a no-brainer for the Skydeck management. They went straight to the tower’s original design firm and structural engineer, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). “We’ve done this on a number of our classic projects,” said SOM design partner Ross Wimer. “We’ve had a chance to revisit and try to stay consistent with the aesthetic, but also do these updates.”

In designing The Ledge, however, SOM placed a greater value on creating a 21st-century transparency rather than mimicking the building’s 1970s vocabulary. The team did not even consider replicating the existing bronzed windows, and instead selected triple laminated water-white glass, which transmits 98 percent of light. There is no visible frame, either. The roughly one-inch thick structural glass panels, each made up of tempered lites with plastic interlayers, are joined by small, unobtrusive pinned connections. These pinned connections also join the ledges to steel frames concealed within the ceiling, which cantilever from beams at the 104th floor. The choice of material and minimal structure do not equate to frailty, though. Tested for wind and snow loading, the ten-foot-high by ten-foot-wide by four-foot-deep glass boxes are built to code for areas of public assembly, meaning they are capable of supporting live loads of 100 pounds per square foot. In addition to delivering a gut-wrenching experience while ensuring no one actually plummets to the ground, the designers had to contend with one other factor: the window washing system.

The glass boxes promised to be a real impediment to the facade-access baskets, which drop straight down the building’s face. In answer, SOM designed The Ledge’s modules to retract into the building. Linear chain drives in the ceiling can pull each box inside or push them out along tracks that function much like a sliding drawer’s mechanism. Pneumatic gasket systems around the boxes’ perimeters deflate when the assembly is in motion and inflate when in place to create a seal.

AARON SEWARD

PERMANENTLY MAD

Revised icon 2 Columbus Circle doubled gallery space for new owner Museum of Arts and Design’s (MAD) expanding collection of rotating exhibits. Yet what’s captivating visitors is a new permanent display: the cable-suspended ceremonial stool designed by Allied Works Architecture. Functional and beguiling, it floats on threadlike wires amidst ever-changing shows of celebrated sculpture, earning its place as another example of the museum’s commitment to contemporary handicraft.

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Architect: Allied Works Architecture
Photo: © Adam Friedberg

Click 251
Studio Visit: Vincent James Associates Architects

Vincent James Associates Architects (VJAA) speaks softly but carries a big stick—meticulous research. Based in an understated office in the Minneapolis Warehouse District, the 18-person firm creates pristine work that crops up in the most unexpected places—New Orleans, Beirut, penthouses in New York and Chicago, and a Benedictine abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Since principal Vincent James left Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, then hired Nathan Knutson out of University of Minnesota architecture school and was joined in 1997 by his London-educated wife Jennifer Yoo, the boutique firm has produced a string of sublime buildings that award jurors can’t resist; every completed project has won at least one accolade.

The largest project so far is the 200,000-square-foot Hostler Student Center at the American University in Beirut, a three-block landscape of simply shaped and beautifully detailed buildings and walkways that tumble down the hill from the original campus to the city’s corniche. VJAA won an invited international design competition after rejecting the competition brief of one large building and one large—and impossibly hot—plaza. Instead, the firm analyzed the city’s figure-ground relationships, the angle of the Mediterranean sun, and the flow of ocean breezes from day to night, and designed five separate buildings stitched together by passageways recalling the city’s narrow streets.

Like the expanded and renovated student union at Tulane University in New Orleans, the Hostler Center uses minimal air conditioning. Water walls, geothermal cooling using seawater, green roofs, and natural ventilation illustrate VJAA’s unusually deep sustainability savvy. The design process starts with micro- and macro-climatic analyses. “Integrating sustainable design early on ensures that it is part of the building’s form and concept, not an additional complexity,” said Yoo.

Cultural research also animates VJAA designs. The movement of an oar’s stroke inspired the graceful geometry of the roof of the Minneapolis Rowing Club boathouse on the Mississippi River. The principles of comfort and frugality in the Rule of St. Benedict were reflected in the minimalist but hospitable design of the guesthouse at St. John’s Abbey—a project VJAA inherited after Japanese architect Tadao Ando’s design exceeded the abbey’s budget.

A walk through the firm’s understated Warehouse District office illustrates the penchant for precision. A one-inch-to-one-foot model of a significant house stands next to a full-scale mock-up of one of its rooms, complete with an acoustically innovative ceiling and a simulated Cor-ten steel wall. “We’re working with a metallurgist to get the right finish on the Cor-ten. We want it to be like a Richard Serra sculpture,” Yoo said. “We tend to test everything that’s critical.”

For VJAA, that’s everything from the geography to the feel of a granite floor.

LINDA J. MACK
After being on hold, design has recommenced on a ten-story, 100,000-square-foot apartment building for an empty corner in redeveloping South Boston. The developer, Pappas Enterprises, called for LEED platinum certification—a challenge when the longest wall in the single-loaded building faces west. A “performative veil”—a screening system separate from the structure—will shield the wall from heat gain but allow light and air to flow into the apartments.

EXHIBIT WALLS, EERO SAARINEN: SHAPING THE FUTURE

Finnish architects Eliel and Eero Saarinen experimented with molded plywood throughout their careers. Given the soft forms found in the Saarinen-designed Christ Church Lutheran in south Minneapolis, VJAA developed exhibit walls used to display photographs of the church for a major exhibit in a similar manner. Sinuous panels were molded in a modern version of Charles Eames’ Kapsam machine, then digitally routed and tabbed together to create walls that support themselves. Site Assembly collaborated on the exploration of skin as structure.

PENTHOUSE APARTMENT MIDWEST

The newly completed, 5,500-square-foot flat occupies the top floor of a 60-story highrise in a major U.S. city. In typical VJAA fashion, a simple palette of materials is used in a sophisticated way to define space and modulate light. Walnut walls that turn into slatted ceilings create dining, living, and kitchen areas. Perforated aluminum screens and white walls bring light into deeper spaces and highlight the client’s Asian art. A rubber playroom includes a climbing wall.

BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL, ST. JOHN’S ABBEY CHURCH

A former pastor’s office next to Marcel Breuer’s 1961 Abbey Church, a landmark of exposed concrete construction, was reworked as an intimate meditation space. Wood panels create a modern reredos wall that both holds the Blessed Sacrament and allows diffused light into the serene space. Platinum leaf on the ceiling echoes Breuer’s subtle touches of gold, platinum, and copper in the church.

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MIES-ED OPPORTUNITY continued from front page so it can be redeveloped privately into an Olympic village as part of the city’s hopeful bid for the 2016 summer games. Preservationists are dismayed by what they feel is a callous attitude toward an historically important swath of Chicago’s urban fabric. The two proposals also suggest a deeper unease in Chicago, and across the nation, about the difficulty of overcoming public indifference to midcentury modern architecture. “As someone once told me, it’s old enough to deprecate, but it’s not old enough to appreciate,” said James Peters, president of Millennium Illinois. Peters listed a number of other architecturally significant but low-profile works that were recently demolished to further his point, including three separate hospital buildings designed by Bertrand Goldberg and a piece of the Great Lakes Naval Base designed by SOM.

Apparent, little or no thought was given to saving these architecturally significant sites. Representatives from both Metra and Chicago 2016 deferred to SOM, both the designer of the station and the master-planner for the Olympic bid. “This is the footprint we were given,” said Molly Sullivan, communications director for the city’s Department of Community Development, about plans for the Reese campus. “This was the decision of our designers.” SOM declined to comment.

On the Michael Reese campus, this means the demolition of 28 buildings, eight designed by Gropius, with signature ribbon windows and rectilinear brick massing, along with significant landscapes by Lester Collins, Hideo Sasaki, and Paul Novak. Many of the buildings have been abandoned for years, and the hospital, following its September bankruptcy, has begun stripping buildings for resale to help pay down its $100 million debt. “There are original Herman Miller chairs, significant fixtures, and sculptures, all lost or vandalized,” Peters said.

Critics suspect that the city needs to recoup the boom-time price it paid for the site, something that partial or wholesale preservation could compromise. To ensure a timely demolition—a contractor for the work was announced June 9—the city appears to be using the Olympics as a cudgel to forge ahead without due oversight.

“How can they even consider demolishing these important buildings before they know they’ve won the bid?” said Graham Balkany, founder of Gropius in Chicago Coalition, a group that is seeking to create a Bauhaus district around the campus.

Sullivan insists this is not the case: “There’s clearly a difference of opinion on adaptive reuse. The timeline is, we need to be ready when the bid comes in, which means demolishing the Reese site so it is ready for redevelopment. It’s a very strict timeline.” She also chastised preservationists for suggesting the city was in any way misusing the Olympics to demolish an important site. “This is not a land grab,” she said.

The city must also wait for a ruling from the Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board this summer, which must sign off on the closure of any hospital. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has indicated it may raise issues with the proposed demolition, but for now, it is withholding judgment.

As for the Mies building at IT, the preservation agency was less charitable. Ruling that it lacked significant historic fabric—“It had integrity issues,” Anthony Rubano, a Metra spokesman—SOM has asked for a new station not only for the school but also Cellular Field and burgeoning local development were seen to outweigh preservation.

It is a decision that has incensed preservationists because the station will not even occupy the site, but instead rise behind it, with a plaza where the building now stands. “There had been calls to reuse the building as a bike shed or bathrooms, but they fell on deaf ears,” Rubano said. “As usual, they made the expedient decision, they took the easy way out,” said Jonathan Fine, executive director for Preservation Chicago.

“Nobody gets it,” Fine added. “They see simple lines and brick boxes. Because it’s not dripping terra cotta, they figure, ‘Why save it?’ It’s our job to educate the public so they understand why.”

Arthur Erickson died on May 20, 2009, a few weeks before his 89th birthday. He was Canada’s greatest architect, our unofficial Architect Laureate. For those who knew him, the modest house and garden where he lived so comfortably in his native Vancouver will always stand as a symbol of his legacy; five decades of extraordinary buildings that have transformed cities and landscapes across Canada and around the world.

Professional recognition of his work included the RIBA’s Auguste Perret Award; gold medals from the AIA, Canada, and France; count- less design awards; and seven honorary doctorates, including one in 1975 from his alma mater McGill University, where he completed his architectural studies in 1950.

In the beginning, he wanted to be a painter; he recalled with warmth the soirées that he attended as a child. “It had integrity issues,” Anthony Rubano, a Metra spokesman. “As usual, they made the expedient decision, they took the easy way out,” said Jonathan Fine, executive director for Preservation Chicago. “Nobody gets it,” Fine added. “They see simple lines and brick boxes. Because it’s not dripping terra cotta, they figure, ‘Why save it?’ It’s our job to educate the public so they understand why.”

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Arthur Erickson is one of the most significant and renowned architects in Canadian history. His work has been recognized worldwide, and he has received numerous awards and honors for his contributions to architecture and design. Erickson was instrumental in shaping the modernist architectural movement in Canada and is widely regarded as one of the most influential and innovative architects of the 20th century.

In his extensive career, Erickson designed a wide range of buildings, including residential, commercial, and public structures. He is known for his use of natural materials, his integration of landscape and architecture, and his commitment to social and environmental issues. Erickson’s designs often incorporate elements of nature and the surrounding environment, creating harmonious and sustainable spaces. His work has had a profound impact on the architectural landscape of Canada and continues to influence contemporary design.

Erickson’s educational background and early career also played a significant role in his development as an architect. He graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1949 and began his career working for the distinguished architect Arthur Erickson, for whom he served as an apprentice. Erickson’s early experiences working for Erickson provided him with invaluable insights into the practice of architecture and a deep understanding of the importance of context and place.

Throughout his career, Erickson maintained a strong connection to his native Vancouver, designing projects that reflected the city’s unique cultural and environmental identity. His work was often characterized by a focus on sustainability, integrating innovative design solutions with practical considerations. Erickson’s approach to architecture was deeply rooted in the principles of the Bauhaus movement, which emphasized the integration of art, craft, and design.

Erickson’s most notable projects include the Royal Bank of Canada Building (1967), the Robson Square and Law Courts Complex (1980), and the Robson Square Terminal (1990). These projects showcase Erickson’s commitment to creating functional and aesthetically pleasing spaces that reflect the surrounding environment.

In addition to his architectural work, Erickson is recognized for his contributions to education and the preservation of architectural heritage. He served as a professor at the University of British Columbia and was a founding member of the Vancouver School of Architecture. Erickson’s legacy continues to inspire and influence architects and students around the world.

Conclusion

Arthur Erickson’s life and work have left an indelible mark on the architectural landscape of Canada and beyond. His innovative approach to design, his commitment to sustainability, and his dedication to the integration of art, craft, and architecture continue to inspire and influence architects and design professionals today. Erickson’s legacy serves as a reminder of the importance of integrating the built environment with the natural world to create harmonious and sustainable spaces that enhance the quality of life for all.
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When longtime Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) partner Adrian Smith left the famed firm’s Chicago office in October 2006, he wasted little time starting his own practice. By November, Smith, along with fellow SOM colleagues Gordon Gill and Robert Forest, founded Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture (ASGG) on the 23rd floor of the Harris Bank Building, designed by SOM, on 111 West Monroe Street in downtown Chicago.

“A truly unique space for a city site,” according to Smith, and one that meshed particularly well with the firm’s own design philosophy, which focuses on high-performance, energy-efficient, sustainable architecture. Built in 1958 for the executive offices of Harris Bank, the space features two 1,000-square-foot interior courtyards (made possible because of its side-core air conditioning system) with working fountains and greenery, as well as ten-foot-high clear glass walls that successfully integrate the natural and built environments.

Embracing the existing floor plan and structure, including its interior stainless steel columns and green marble surfacing, Smith and Gill transformed the former bank offices into an optimal work area centered around the two interior courtyards. With a firm approach that takes into consideration a building’s orientation, daylighting, generation of wind power, solar absorption, and a site’s geothermal properties, Smith told AN, “Our buildings need to be designed to reduce the amount of energy needed, to absorb as much natural energy around the building as possible, and to generate enough power to run the building.” In the ASGG offices, Smith and Gill demonstrate this principle clearly by removing interior walls to allow natural light to pour into the space, increasing the building’s energy efficiency, which is further improved by the use of dimmers and a radiant heating system, while the exterior areas are kept cool by overhangs that keep heat gain at a minimum. Courtyard doors open up into the interior space, providing natural ventilation and serving to reduce the floor’s overall air conditioning load.

Designed to maximize daylight and city views in all areas, flexible work spaces were established to create a fluid environment that can easily adapt to the changing needs of multidisciplinary teams of architects, interior designers, and urban planners. Sharp orthogonal lines and a primary red color palette pay aesthetic homage to 1960s modernism. Red paneling behind the sleek white workstations by Knoll and the ASGG–designed medium-density fiber reception desk with a high-gloss, red-painted finish dynamically contrast with the existing green marble walls of the building.

With more than 150 employees total, the firm recently acquired two floors in another building at 115 South LaSalle, within the SOM-designed complex. The two floors retain the same palette and furniture as the Monroe Street office, with slight modifications in color: The reception desk is silver and the Barcelona chairs are white. However, the space itself reflects more of a traditional central core office space, with a large 22-foot-by-5-foot conference room that can accommodate 50 people, for the needs of this rapidly expanding office.

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OUTTA THE PARK

In St. Louis' new Busch Stadium, centerfield was purposely placed adjacent to a parcel intended for the sparkling Ballpark Village mixed-use development, created by Design Collective. But since demolition of the old Busch Stadium, the Village has been repeatedly delayed, and the parcel, located where a corner of the old Busch Stadium stood, has become a seven-block mud pit. However, as the 2009 All-Star Game, scheduled to be played in St. Louis in mid-July, has drawn closer, the Cardinals organization is finally breaking ground on the site. The project: a regulation softball field. “The first two years of the ball park, the site looked pretty bad,” said Bill DeWitt Jr., chairman and president of the Cardinals. “It was just a hole in the ground, basically.” Developed by Cordish Co. in conjunction with the owners of the St. Louis Cardinals, the $600 million Ballpark Village seeks to create 325,000 square feet of office space; 250,000 square feet of retail space; and 1,200 parking spaces. As the new red brick Busch Stadium rose from 2004 to 2006, its footprint overlapped the old one so closely that walkways of the old ballpark were shorn off so work could continue. After the last bit of the stadium was hauled away, the downtown pit became a joke to locals. Last fall, the team decided to enhance the site. This involved removing pile caps, bringing in fill material, grading, and planting grass. Some parking was also added. “This spring, as we started contemplating the needs of the All-Star Game, one of the things the game required was a large, open space for the giant gai...t,” said DeWitt. “It became the perfect spot. Obviously, it’s a great location and there are opportunities to tie in some youth stuff.” It’s also a project that allows flexibility to start work on the big project when the financing is in place, explained Chase Martin, Cordish’s development director for Ballpark Village. He said they are working for state approval of subsidies, after which they will sell the needed bonds. He expects action around the end of the summer. “We’ll still build,” he said. “We’ll build all seven blocks.” Ballpark Village’s design is meant to complement the baseball stadium. “The first part is the ballpark, which in some ways isn’t complete until we get Ballpark Village done. Until then, it’s just open space and views of the downtown skyline,” DeWitt said. “We think it could be much better with a giant mixed-use project.”

DESIGN PROFESSIONALS RUSH FOR ACCREDITATION BEFORE EXAM STANDARDS ARE RAISED

LEED STAMPEDE

When Harris Ford, a designer at Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects in New Haven, Connecticut, registered for the LEED exam this spring, he was not alone. So many other would-be test takers were also trying to sign up on March 31—the last day to test under the old system, LEED version 2.2—that they crashed the registration website. “I beat the rush by about 48 hours,” Ford said. “At least 25 people in the office registered. Even the associates and partners were registering.” The stream of professionals looking to become LEED-accredited has become a flood, as a major overhaul of the exam, combined with a tough economy and buzz about “green collar” jobs, has made getting the credential seem increasingly necessary. “Approximately 109,000 people registered for the test between March and June,” said Beth Holst, vice president of credentialing at the Green Building Certification Institute, which administers the exam. “It’s unprecedented. Last year we tested 50,000 people total in the month of June alone.” The shift to LEED version 3.0 is a major overhaul that includes changes to the rating system, online project management tools, and the professional accreditation system. That system is now tiered, with three new credentials aimed at different segments of the design and building community. The middle tier approximates the current LEED AP credential, but adds additional require...nts: a second, specialty exam in one of five rating systems; experience on an actual LEED project; and continuing education courses. The changes are meant to address the shortcomings of the current exam, which many argue is a better measure of memorization skills than green design knowledge. “The test is so rote; I wish we were more concept based,” said Ford. However, he also conceded that the desire to avoid the new, often more rigorous requirements was a factor in his decision to get accredited. “It seemed like the new test would be more difficult and more involved,” he admitted. The motivation was to take the easier test now. “Less clear is whether LEED accreditation will be a boon for professionals in the job market. In a down economy, people may try to add something extra to their resume,” Holst said. “LEED is that ‘extra’ not just for architects and engineers, but also for people in real estate, finance, accounting, law, and a host of other industries.” But as LEED accreditation becomes ubiquitous, the credential didn’t help candidates stand out from the crowd. It will, however, have a more far-reaching effect by making green building the new “normal.” And that has been the goal of LEED’s creators, the U.S. Green Building Council, from the start. GABRIELLE BRAINARD

CHICAGO'S OLYMPIC BID EMPHASIZES PRACTICALITY OVER DESIGN

While many know that architect and planner Daniel Burnham made no little plans, fewer may realize that his Plan of Chicago was done for free. So it should be no surprise that virtually all of the architectural drawings done thus far for Chicago’s bid for the 2016 Olympics have been done for free and with no guarantee that the volunteers will get the work if Chicago gets the nod, according to Zurich Esposito, the AIA’s Chicago chapter executive vice president. Chicago is competing against Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, and Madrid. Two years ago, two separate teams rendered preliminary sketches for the event’s biggest architectural set pieces, the Olympic Stadium and Olympic Village. The stadium, proposed for Washington Park on Chicago’s South Side, is nowhere near as dramatic as the Calatrava redo of Athens’ existing stadium for the 2004 Olympics, to say nothing of the iconic National Stadium in Beijing by Herzog and de Meuron. The asymmetrical design for the proposed Chicago Olympic Stadium is only hinted at in the city’s official bid package to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The drawings are by the Ben Wood Studio Shanghai and Chicago’s Goettsch Partners, both of whom also collaborated on the masterplan for the 2003 renovation of Chicago’s Soldier Field. But neither has a lock on any of Chicago’s Olympic venues. Herzog and de Meuron didn’t get the Beijing project until well after that city was chosen by the IOC to host the 2008 Olympics. Chicago’s current stadium concept is to give it a sculpted exterior of fiber or vinyl. But what’s most exciting about the 80,000-seat structure is that it largely disappears after the Olympics end, leaving a small terraced amphitheater seating fewer than 3,500. Besides the need to save money in a country that doesn’t nationally underwrite the Olympics as China did (reportedly to the tune of some $40 billion), the Chicago 2016 Committee also confronts skepticism to intimate Washington Park neighbors who want the park to remain an “open meadow,” as originally conceived in 1871 by its designer, Frederick Law Olmsted. Bid backers hope that this novel plan will alleviate neighborhood opposition and not deter the IOC from awarding the games to Chicago. It was the political imperative concerning the location of the Olympic Stadium that many believe led the IOC to nix New York’s bid for the 2012 Games in favor of London. Assuming that the IOC takes notice of the world’s current economic crisis, it should be especially interested in the current plan to recycle materials from Chicago’s dismantled stadium so that they might be repurposed elsewhere for university or high school stadia, or even future Olympic games, according to Goettsch partner Joe Dillarin. Plans for the Olympic Village are both further along and more difficult to access. Private developers have long eyed the site of the failing Michael Reese Hospital along Chicago’s South Lake Shore Drive as the city’s next big housing development. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s Ross Wimer and Phil Enquist led the way in developing a masterplan for the site as the Olympic Village, and the city has acquired the property. Notoriously close-mouthed, spokespeople at SOM would not comment. Some critics are concerned that a small coterie of architects have been involved in the process and that the bid, overall, lacks architectural ambition. Local architects—Stanley Tigerman and Jeanne Gang were among the select few who worked with SOM on “visioning” how the proposed mixed-use complex could best accommodate the games. While the need for formal designs is still far off, plenty of design thinking is well underway. “There’s not a lot of architectural detail in our formal bid,” said Chicago 2016 spokesman Patrick Sandusky, “because it largely a response to the IOC’s very specific RFP.” Much of the three-volume bid involves financial, geographical, and environmental data, as well as plans for legacy uses for the venues. “One of the biggest tasks was finding the sites for the venues, making sure the city could represent to the IOC that we had enough land, and that the Games would be held in a relatively compact area of the city, with excellent transportation among the venues and the Village. We even plan for athletes to be able to walk from the Village to some of their competition sites,” said Gang. Now, all await October 2, when the IOC will announce the winner. JOEL HENNING
CELEBRATING BURNHAM continued from front page

The city’s strict grid with airy boulevards and office. Just as the Burnham plan softened in a phone interview from his Amsterdam said the firm’s co-founder Ben van Berkel is a reference to Chicago’s transformation, the pavilion’s colors as people enter and exit. A platform at night, lighting up and changing will respond to visitors’ presence on the platform. LED fixtures flat roof leads downward into three curving supports that rest on a platform. LED fixtures will respond to visitors’ presence on the platform at night, lighting up and changing with its colors as people enter and exit. The shape of the UNStudio pavilion’s roof is a reference to Chicago’s transformation, said the firm’s co-founder Ben van Berkel in a phone interview from his Amsterdam office. Just as the Burnham plan softened the city’s strict grid with airy boulevards and greenery, the pavilion’s rectangular roof is softened by the curves and folds within its frame. Those folds also create three apertures that bracket views of Chicago’s iconic architecture. “At the end of Millennium Park, there’s a beautiful collection of skyscrapers,” said van Berkel, “and if you stand in the pavilion you can look through and see them.”

The organization coordinating the celebration, the Burnham Plan Centennial (BPC), praised the two firms’ “bold” and “visionary” designs as being in the spirit of Burnham himself, who is most famously quoted as saying, “Make no small plans.” Despite some grumbling from the public that a Chicago-oriented celebration should feature Chicago-based architects, the BPC’s executive director, Emily Harris, explained that they had intentionally sought out architects who had never designed in the city before: “The idea was to get a fresh perspective,” she said.

Both pavilions will be dismantled after October, but may yet see new life. With its fabric skin and lightweight aluminum frame, Hadid’s pavilion can be stored and reassembled with relative ease; the BPC hopes to auction it off so that it can be installed in another location. And UNStudio has hired a “deconstruction contractor” who will both take apart the pavilion and distribute the resulting fragments to Chicago artists for incorporation in their work.

GEHRY’D AWAY

After months of speculation, Frank Gehry has finally been removed as lead designer of the new Nets Arena at Forest City Ratner’s Atlantic Yards project. On June 1, the developer announced that Kansas City-based Ellerbe Becket would replace the Santa Monica architect, and that Gehry Partners would be reduced to the role of master planner. A spokesperson for Ratner suggested that Gehry himself, who is most famously quoted as saying, “Make no small plans.” Despite some grumbling from the public that a Chicago-oriented celebration should feature Chicago-based architects, the BPC’s executive director, Emily Harris, explained that they had intentionally sought out architects who had never designed in the city before: “The idea was to get a fresh perspective,” she said.

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LANDMARK LIFELINE

After the Illinois Appellate Court declared Chicago’s 41-year-old landmarks law unconstitutionally vague in January, local preservation groups hoped the state supreme court would reverse the decision. Instead, on May 28, the state’s highest court declined to hear the case, sending it back to the lower court, where a judge is expected to uphold the prior decision. The case could lead to the decimation of landmarks laws nationwide, as many are based on similar criteria. Indeed, developers in Seattle and elsewhere have already begun using the January decision to challenge other local laws.
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Renzo Piano’s new addition to the Art Institute of Chicago is a monument to one of the country’s great art collections and a city’s striving for design excellence. By Edward Lifson
Even if you've been to every Renzo Piano–designed museum of the last ten years, you may be surprised at how much there is to admire in his new Modern Wing at the Art Institute of Chicago. Though not without flaws, the addition is Piano's best museum in America since the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas of 2003, and the best building in downtown Chicago since the John Hancock opened in 1970.

The Modern Wing, like the soaring Hancock, shows Chicago's ambition. Conceived more than ten years ago, it ended up costing $294 million, and is likely to be the last great museum addition of its kind in America for some time. Its 264,000 square feet enlarge the Art Institute by a third and make it the second largest art museum in the United States. Chicago, no longer really even the "Second City," is competing with New York again—at least in its mind, and that's a good thing.

The addition allows the Art Institute to show off its encyclopedic collection, which includes its modern and contemporary art, such pieces as a suite of color panels by Gerhard Richter; two rooms for the gown, tissue box, and other odd objects and wallpapers by Robert Gober; and a gallery for the newly-acquired Hinoki by Charles Ray, a trunk of an oak tree on its side, hand-carved out of cypress. You can no longer think of the institute as a limestone building full of French Impressionist works. The wing is a game-changer.

Ten years ago, the Art Institute hired Pritzker Prize–winner Renzo Piano to design a smaller addition on the south side of the building. When Mayor Daley's plans for Millennium Park, which was to cover over rail yards and parking lots downtown, grew to become Chicago's most important project since the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the Art Institute shifted its new addition to the north to face it. Accordingly, the Modern
For the Modern Wing, the design team devised uncommon mechanical and structural systems to support the architect’s aesthetic goals of pristine lightness and transparency. By Aaron Seward

Since its first permanent structure, the Allerton Building, opened in 1893—and through each of its subsequent expansions—the Art Institute of Chicago has displayed a strong dedication to exhibiting its collection under diffused natural light. The institution’s latest addition, the 264,000-square-foot Modern Wing designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, is perhaps the most thorough exploration of that commitment yet. While every previous structure in the complex—from the original Beaux Arts palace to the 1988 Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Building—has been constructed in limestone, Piano’s contribution is an ode to steel and glass, serving as a link to the city’s legacy of modernist highrises as well as an embodiment of ethereal lightness.

To achieve this razor-thinness and transparency, the design team from Piano’s office, along with associate architect Interactive Design and engineers at Arup London, relied on a composite structure containing both reinforced concrete and steel sections. The eastern pavilion of the building that houses an education center and galleries is the most interestingly configured. The first two floors are framed in a combination of poured-in-place concrete and pre-cast concrete T-sections, which create 54-foot clear spans for the galleries. The choice of this material also allowed extremely narrow floor profiles, which were trimmed even further by omitting any horizontal HVAC ducting within the space. All of the ventilation flues, as well as the concrete T-sections, were run vertically within a series of north-to-south running double walls, each measuring six-feet-nine-inches thick. Air is moved through slim vents running at the tops of the walls, and the only mechanicals left to clutter the ceiling were the sprinkler and smoke detection systems. Nonetheless, the building’s spandrels were kept to an attenuated ten inches.

From the third floor to the roof, steel takes over for a smooth transition to Piano’s daylight-diffusing system, the “flying carpet.” Tapered tubular columns, on average 14 inches in diameter, rise from the concrete floor to meet, in exposed pinned connections, the grid of aluminum and glass that shelters the building. The flying carpet is composed of pre-mounted casettes of aluminum blades running east and west. Aluminum “dorsal fins” run perpendicular to the blades at greater intervals to maintain the diffusion of light throughout the day. The grouping of blades was also varied depending on what space they cover. Above the modern collection galleries, the blades are grouped more closely to better break up the light, an effect that is doubled by a layer of vellum that stretches across the top of the gallery. Above Griffin Court, the blades were spaced to allow greater light into this public gathering space.

The building also features two double-glass curtain walls on the north and south facades. Featuring two-and-a-half-foot-deep cavities, these walls increase the wing’s insulation values while maintaining its transparency. Again, thinness was key. The stick-built system was hung from above rather than supported from below, because when a structure is in tension, the profiles of its framing members can be kept slimmer than when it’s in compression. Even so, since some of the spans supporting the mullions reach as much as 35 feet, the fabricator, Gartner, specified both steel and aluminum members. The panels of glass themselves—laminated, low iron units with UV filtering properties and high color-retention films—are also slim, as little as two-feet-three-inches wide by 19 feet long. All of the glass had to be fired in Europe, as there are no domestic kilns capable of producing such sizes.

AARON SEWARD IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT AN.
entirely daylit.

The third floor galleries, devoted to the Art Institute—say, Seurat’s A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—and brought it to life. Other works like Matisses’s large Bathers by a River gain in juxtaposition with the colorful gardens and water elements of the park outside. Constantin Brancusi’s reflective forms by the window engage with Anish Kapoor’s shiny, bean-shaped Cloud Gate outside, one of the great crowd-pleasing pieces of public art in the park. The south wall overlooking a new garden is also glass, covered with integrated thin scrim when it’s not overcast. All Renzo Piano museum wings are similar but are not created equal. One may wonder why Chicago did so well. Years ago, I walked through the New National Gallery in Berlin with Piano. He was in awe of the place. It has minimal amounts of glass, steel, and stone, but is elegant, refined, and uplifting to the spirit. It was designed, of course, by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, a German living in Chicago. Piano brings some of that back to the Windy City. His exterior is boxy, glassy, and symmetrical like a temple, in the same way that Mies’ was. His slender, white-steel, tapering columns hold up a wafer-like flat white roof that extends out over the galleries; Piano calls it a “flying carpet,” and it’s part of his renowned system of getting natural light into galleries. The roof is Miesian, yet its horizontal thrust also recalls local hero Frank Lloyd Wright’s prairie style. The platonically linear gallery windows; outside, Gehry steel reflects in the Modern Wing. While the main building contains Millennium Park, and his Art Institute’s beloved 1893 Beaux Arts entrance on Michigan Avenue, which makes Chicagoans feel like they’re going home when they go in, and that makes them feel like part-owners of the collection. Still, many will take Piano’s entrance to the north, which has a more commercial feel. It’s a large space: light-filled, double height, mall-like. Will this change the connection that the next generation feels to the place? Thankfully, the gift shop and cafe in this arcade are not front and foremost.

The Modern Wing is a large intrusion into the “sacred” lakefront parks of Chicago; all the more reason to give back new lake views. A 620-foot-long pedestrian bridge designed by Piano also mars the project. It blocks the facade, also seems tucked on, and is not well resolved where it meets the adjacent park. The bridge would not be necessary if city authorities had seen the wisdom of closing Monroe Street between the park and the museum, which would also help usher families into the museum. Piano’s bridge again engages in a dialogue with Gehry, whose bridge in Millennium Park is left and right like a river. Piano’s is a straight shot up from the park to a third floor sculpture terrace, free to the public, another stroke of civic generosity.

The Art Institute still straddles working train tracks. Part of Piano’s design was to open windows in the existing hall connecting the two parts. He wanted even larger windows, which would have been an improvement. The museum is rightfully proud of its dignified yet intimate Beaux Arts entrance on Michigan Avenue, which makes Chicagoans feel like they’re going home when they go in, and that makes them feel like part-owners of the collection. Still, many will take Piano’s entrance to the north, which has a more commercial feel. It’s a large space: light-filled, double height, mall-like. Will this change the connection that the next generation feels to the place? Thankfully, the gift shop and cafe in this arcade are not front and foremost.

The Art Institute is seeking LEED Silver certification for the Modern Wing. For a city and a mayor that seek to be the “greenest” in America, a higher level of sustainability could have been achieved.

In theory, though, the Modern Wing is a triumph, with a civilizing presence. Piano has resolved the tension between what he calls a “beautiful fragility” and the need for strength. Power brokers in Chicago felt the city deserved an art museum worthy of the world’s best contemporary architecture, and they got one.

EDWARD LIFSON IS AN ARCHITECTURE CRITIC AND A FELLOW AT THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN.

READ LIFSON’S INTERVIEW WITH RENZO PIANO ABOUT THE NEW WING AT WWW.ARCHEPAPER.COM/LIFSON.
A pedestrian bridge connects the museum to Millennium Park and allows park visitors free access to a rooftop sculpture court and cafe.

The flying carpet creates a dramatic horizontal element on the skyline while allowing daylight—and cutting energy usage—to the museum.
The commercial furnishing and finishes industries have not been immune to the economic downturn, but most companies have plans that anticipate contract market fluctuations, according to Mark Falanga, a senior vice president at Merchandise Mart Properties (MMP), the company which produces NeoCon. “The companies that plan ahead and invest in innovation are the ones that are best positioned to benefit when things turn around,” he said.

According to the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA), $11.16 billion were spent on contract furnishing in 2008. Estimates for 2009 predict that spending will fall to approximately $9 billion. “There’s still a large market out there. There’s still business being done,” Falanga said. BIFMA indicates a large uptick in federal spending on furnishings, which they estimate will lessen what would have been an even larger decline. Companies with products approved by the General Services Administration will especially benefit from this spending.

Attendance numbers at NeoCon are also expected to be down by 20 percent, but MMP is working to bridge some of that difference by increasing student attendance and offering networking opportunities for designers. They estimate that the total number of firms who attend the show will match last year, even as firms send fewer employees. “If you’re in the design business, you have to be aware of the new products. It gives you a competitive advantage in the marketplace,” he said. “There’s still a lot of optimism in the industry.”

### NeoCon Preview

The contract design market is down but far from out. We survey the economic picture and offer our picks to look out for at this year’s NeoCon World’s Trade Fair.

Compiled by Alan G. Brake and Danielle Rago

#### 1. Casper
Allermuir

A distinctive monoshell stacking chair available on a wire skid base, four-legged frame, or beam, Casper is part of Allermuir’s new occasional chair collection. Ideal for both corporate and commercial markets, the chair is available in a variety of shades including red, beige, yellow, green, white, and blue. [www.allermuir.com](http://www.allermuir.com)

#### 2. Intent Furniture
Herman Miller

Herman Miller’s latest office furniture system, Intent Furniture, is a flexible workstation designed by J.Ruiter + Studio. With the ability to be configured from a basic single- or double-pedestal desk to a full casegoods solution with desks, returns, credenzas, and storage, this furniture system suits a maximum variety of office settings. [www.hermanmiller.com](http://www.hermanmiller.com)

#### 3. Genya
Sedia Systems

Sedia Systems’ new Genya auditorium chair is a tip-up seat with arms that fold into a flat, streamlined surface. A cushioned gas device retracts the arms and seat when unoccupied, and the chairs can be used on flat-, sloped-, or tiered-floored venues. Genya can be finished in leather or fabric upholstery, with the backrest panel in leather, marble, or wood. [www.sediasystems.com](http://www.sediasystems.com)

#### 4. Picknik
JANUS et Cie

JANUS et Cie’s Picknik is an integrated bench and table constructed from a single plate of thick aluminum and molded into a cantilevered design. Suitable for indoors as well as outdoors, it comes in a variety of colored, powder-coated finishes. [www.janusetcie.com](http://www.janusetcie.com)

#### 5. Jaks
Allermuir

Taking soft seating to a whole new level, contemporary furniture manufacturer Allermuir launched Jaks, a colorful and playful seating system designed by John Coleman. Bold and graphic in appearance, Jaks is a cross shape that can work alone or with other shapes interlocked to form a modular seating system. [www.allermuir.com](http://www.allermuir.com)

#### 6. Elitra Chair
Sedia Systems

Ergonomically designed by Italian architects Lucci & Orlandini, the Elitra Chair by Sedia Systems provides maximum comfort as well as good design. Chairs easily adapt to different positions through an advanced system of elastic nylon panels that allows for synchronized movement of the seat and backrest. [www.sediasystems.com](http://www.sediasystems.com)
With the proven flexibility of access flooring and the visual appeal of high-end tile, Steelcase’s new access floor system, nesso, allows designers to create more connected and harder working spaces while maintaining a polished look and feel.

www.steelcase.com

In Panelite’s newest panels, the Bonded Series, PETG, polycarbonate, or acrylic facings are bonded to a tubular polycarbonate core using a UV-stabilized liquid adhesive to create a directionally transparent panel with clear viewing angles. In a wide range of colors and two different finishes—transparent or satin—the Bonded Series can be customized in diameter.

www.e-panelite.com

Part of Capri cork’s Mediterra Cork Collection, Pick-up Strips Light is one of the newest cork patterns to be added to the line of eco-friendly flooring. Composed of thin strips of natural, durable, renewable-resource materials, Capri cork is a versatile product that contributes to LEED credits.

www.capricork.com

Chinese-based office furniture retailer Artland’s Database Pedestal combines smart design with high technical performance. Made of 108 standard parts with the ability to auto-lock and unlock, the pedestal is constructed of welded steel bars, insuring strength and durability.

www.artland.cn

Japanese contract furniture company Itoki Design’s BA Table is a sleek and simple side table made from powder-coated, bent steel. Available in a number of color configurations including black/white, black/chrome, white/chrome, red, and green, the top is offered in aluminum or wood.

www.itokidesign.com

Designed by Italian architect Antonio Citterio, Vitra’s ACE workstation is an expansion of his 2008 rounded workdesk, with a new sideboard communicating relaxed elegance. Made of a solid-polymer-bonded mineral material and elegant, Y-shaped polished-aluminum legs, ACE radiates a sense of lightness and transparency.

www.vitra.com
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EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Michelle "Mike" Ozhinsky: A Retrospective
Third Degree Gallery
5200 Dolmar Blvd., St. Louis
www.stonehollowstudio.com

RED, Group Exhibition
33 Collective Gallery
1029 West 35th St., Chicago
33collective.com

EVENT
The Burnham Pavilion in Millennium Park
Millennium Park, Chase Promenade South
10:00 a.m.
www.millenniumpark.org
burnhamplan100.uchicago.edu

SATURDAY 20
LECTURE
Marty Gradolf
Cultural Heroes
12:00 p.m.
ElS lor Museum
500 W. Washington St., Indianapolis
www.elslor.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
FAST X 3
4568 Manchester Ave., St. Louis
www.whitestar.org

EVENT
Midsummer Celebration
Erlander Home Museum
Swedish Historical Society of Rockford
404 South 3rd St., Rockford
www.swedishhistorical.org

WITH THE KIDS
Burnham Week: Building the City
10:00 a.m.
Millennium Park
101 Monroe Center, Chicago
www.millenniumpark.org

SUNDAY 21
SYMPOSIUM
Calder Symposium: La Grande Vitesse
2:00 p.m.
Grand Rapids Art Museum
101 Monroe Center, Grand Rapids
www.artmuseum.org

MONDAY 22
EVENT
Paris by the Lake: A gala celebrating Rodin: In His Own Words—Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation and Paris-Chicago:
The Photograph of Jean-Claude Ballot
6:30 p.m.
Loyola University Museum of Art
51 East Pearson St., Chicago
www.luc.edu/luma/

TUESDAY 23
EXHIBITION OPENING
The Soul of Bronzeville: The Regal, DuSable, and The Blues
740 East 55th Pl., Chicago
www.dusablemuseum.org

EVENT
theWit Hotel Tour and Reception
5:30 p.m.
theWit Hotel
201 North State St., Chicago
www.architecture.org

WEDNESDAY 24
LECTURE
Grahm Balkany
Walter Gropius in Chicago: The Forgotten Legacy
12:15 p.m.
The John Buck Company
Lecture Hall Gallery
224 South Michigan Ave., Chicago
www.architecture.org

THURSDAY 25
LECTURE
Lau Chihang
The Big World
Recent Art from China
12:15 p.m.
Chicago Cultural Center
78 East Washington St., Exhibit Hall, Chicago
www.cityofchicago.org

EVENT
workshop in Chicago: A Workshop Designed to Help Reposition Careers & Restore Optimism
6:30 a.m.
Mohawk Industries Inc. 222 Merchandise Mart, Chicago
www.mohawkgroup.com

FRIDAY 26
LECTURE
Gretchen Minnehar
Architecture's Influence on Art
7:00 p.m.
Grand Rapids Art Museum
101 Monroe Center, Grand Rapids
www.artmuseum.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Beyond Golden Gate: Japanese Screens from the Art Institute of Chicago and the St. Louis Art Museum
The Art Institute of Chicago, Regenstein Hall
111 South Michigan Ave., Chicago
www.artic.edu/aic/

EVENT
Go Green Expo
Through June 28
Cobb Gallery Center
Two Galleria Pkwy., Atlanta
www.gogreenexpo.com

SATURDAY 27
EVENTS
Summer Open House & Resident Artists’ Talk
Lilliart Art Center
4401 North Ravenswood Ave., Chicago
www.lilliart.org

TRIYON FARM: A Unique Conservation Community in LaPorte County, Indiana
10:30 a.m.
Triyon Farm, Michigan City, IN
www.architecture.org

FRIDAY 3
SYMPOSIUM
What’s Modern about American Art, 1900–1930
2:00 p.m.
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
224 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago
www.aiachicago.org

WEDNESDAY 5
LECTURE
Andy Platts
Uptown: Portrait of a Place
12:15 p.m.
The John Buck Company
Lecture Hall Gallery
224 South Michigan Ave., Chicago
www.architecture.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
The Front Room:
Sam Moran, Lesley Vanoe, Stan VanDerBeek
Contemporary Art Museum
St. Louis
3750 Washington Blvd., St. Louis
www.contemporarystl.org

THURSDAY 6
EXHIBITION OPENING
Tom Torlumenci
After-Glow
Chicago Cultural Center, Michigan Ave. Galleries
78 East Washington St., Chicago
www.ccag.org

EVENT
The Exchange
6:00 p.m.
Hyde Park Art Center
5502 South Cornell Ave., Chicago
www.hydeparkart.org

FRIDAY 7
EXHIBITION OPENING
This is 606: Ray Pride
The Architrouve
1433 West Chicago Ave., Chicago
thearchitrouve.com

TUESDAY 7
EVENT
Young Architects Forum
5:30 p.m.
Rock Bottom Brewery
1 West Grand Ave., Chicago
www.mesup.com/

WEDNESDAY 8
LECTURE
Rachel Crowel
Outside In: fs Studio inc.
12:15 p.m.
The John Buck Company
Lecture Hall Gallery
224 South Michigan Ave., Chicago
www.architecture.org

WITH THE KIDS
Art Afternoon:
Photo Portraits
12:00 p.m.
Smart Museum of Art
5550 South Greenwood Ave., Chicago
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu

THURSDAY 9
EVENT
Working with an Architect
7:00 p.m.
Wilmotta Public Library
3426 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, IL
www.aiachicago.org

FRIDAY 10
EXHIBITION OPENING
Catherine Yass: Descent
Saint Louis Art Museum
First Arts Drive, Forest Park, St. Louis
www.slam.org

CHICAGO MODEL CITY
Chicago Architecture Foundation
224 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago
Through November 20

The city of Chicago appears in many different guises in Chicago Model City, a new exhibition at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. The show, which is part of the city’s celebration of the 100th anniversary of Daniel Burnham’s transformative Plan of Chicago, looks at how planners—both historic and contemporary—have envisioned reshaping the city. The diverse plans attempt to answer such questions about urbanization in Chicago as “How should we think about increasing density?” and “How can we conserve the region’s natural resources?” Photographs, maps, videos, and digital visualizations reveal a fascinating trajectory over the years in the city’s approach to planning, including some ideologies that have since been discounted, such as urban renewal’s faith that erasing old development could cure social ills, and others that have only become more crucial in recent years, such as the impact of the city’s organization on the health of its citizens and environment. Particularly compelling is the exhibit’s centerpiece: a large-scale model of Chicago’s Loop, the first model of its kind created in the U.S. using rapid prototyping technology.

TOMAS SARACENO: LIGHTER THAN AIR
Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis
Through August 30

Argentine artist Tomas Saraceno’s imagination runs free in a new exhibition at the Walker Art Center. Equal parts science, technological innovation, and fantasy, Saraceno’s installations, sculptures, and photographs span the last six years and propose a variety of ideas for re-shaping our societies to make them more sustainable. With a big picture exuberance and optimism that recalls the spirit of visionaries like Buckminster Fuller, Saraceno conceives of the exhibition as a single organism, connecting different pieces to each other with networks of cords or ropes. These spill into the venue’s staircases and hallways, crossing over from indoor to outdoor spaces. In iridescent Planet, a solar-powered balloon harnesses energy from the Walker’s terrace and channels it into other places, feeding the grass in the greenhouse; in Inflatable Cloud (325W), a solar-powered exoskeleton is filled with air and suspended in the upper galleries. These are but a few of Saraceno’s installations, most of which are one-of-a-kind creations, built by the artist on-site with his team of assistants and friends. A reminder of the interconnectedness of the world’s natural and built ecosystems and the comprehensiveness of Saraceno’s vision.

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Behind the Facades
Peter Sulzer
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The recent publication of the fourth and final volume of Peter Sulzer’s catalogue raisonné of the work of Jean Prouvé (1901–84) concludes a quarter-century effort to bring order to the remarkable output of a man who, though neither architect nor engineer, is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential figures in modern architecture. Jean Prouvé: Œuvre complète/Complete Works, Volume 4: 1954–1984 covers the period of Prouvé’s life from his departing the factory he founded at Maxéville, near Nancy, France, to his death at age 83. Prouvé began his career after World War I as an architectural metalworker. He made building elements like lighting fixtures, elevator cages, operating rooms, and sanitary furnishings. His first complete building in folded sheet metal, a bus station for Citroën, was completed in 1933. For the rest of his career, he was preoccupied by industrial building systems. After World War II, his Maxéville factory produced both the furniture so sought after by collectors today and the iconic Tropical Houses (1950–51). In 1953, Prouvé lost control of his factory to his major shareholder, a French aluminum monopoly. Sulzer’s portrait of the final decades of Prouvé’s life is more nuanced than the various non-academic biographies published to date. These tend to assume that Prouvé in some sense “died” the day he lost his factory, and with it the ability to make architecture using his own means of production and a closed system of Prouvé-designed elements. It is true that some of the massive housing projects to which Prouvé contributed his curtain wall know-how as a consultant were of questionable social merit. But Prouvé readily admitted that he took this work when he had to—often to create jobs for friends and associates—and regretted it. When he could, he focused on projects like the House for Better Days (1956), a prototype for low-cost housing for the homeless erected on the banks of the Seine by the Abbé Pierre, a cleric and activist. A famously modest man, Prouvé embraced the collective aspects of building, often carrying water for architects by default. His modesty and good will toward architecture was not always reciprocated by practitioners who, in the words of Reynier Banham, were content to “leave the facades to Prouvé.” Among the highlights of Volume 4 is Prouvé’s own house at Nancy, built of elements scavenged from his factory in the days leading up to his ouster. Prouvé’s house is a steeply pitched plot of land deemed unbuildable by the Nancy bourgeoisie. It is a model of resourcefulness, a design operation, demonstrating Prouvé’s ability to work with an economy of materials and means. It is not a prototype; rather, it signals the end of an era. Prouvé’s uncertain position in the industry reflected a growing bureaucratization of architecture and engineering as professions during his lifetime. There was simply no comfortable place in the system for an anti-entrepreneur. Still, the projects that Sulzer catalogs comprise an essential reference work for an impressive and quietly influential footprint that stretches over three decades.

ROBERT N. RUBIN IS CO-AUTHOR, WITH OLIVIER CINQUALBRE, OF TROPICAL HOUSE, RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRE POMPIDOU.
The current show at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, The Edge of Intent, attempts to reveal disconnects between utopian ideals endemic to urban design and the social, physical, and environmental realities of urban life. Ten artists exhibit work ranging from digitally manipulated urban interiors to aerial photography to mixed media cartographic collages. In the year that Chicago celebrates the centennial of the Burnham Plan, The Edge of Intent is a reproach to architects and urban designers who aspire to think big without considering underrepresented constituencies, local contingencies, or temporal variability of the cities in which they operate.

Too often, the curators have positioned work in The Edge of Intent to illustrate the inadequacies of design as a tool for shaping and managing cities. The result is an unmitigated and passive criticality—a call for inaction when the economic, environmental, and social conditions of our cities beckon designers and architects to radically rethink our urban future. Simon Menner’s photographs, for example, document the way the homeless occupy the marginal spaces of formally conceived cities like Chicago and Paris. One striking image portrays a nighttime scene on the Seine. The river shimmers in the foreground, framed by stately Haussmann-era facades and reflecting the city lights, while Notre Dame Cathedral is gently lit in the background. The viewer will likely scan the image for a protracted second before noticing a group of homeless people huddled in niches in the masonry wall of the river. The homeless and their contingent dwellings starkly juxtapose the designed elegance of the surrounding city. The implication is that the architectural expression of the city is beholden to the rich while marginalizing the poor. The point of the piece, consistent with the curatorial intent of the show, is valid. But it is not subtle or shocking. The viewer has not been manipulated or compelled to rethink their assumptions of urban vitality, suggesting that we reappropriate the aesthetically sublime monuments that are produced by dying cities. Similarly, a series of photographs by Joel Sternfeld documents the spaces of Manhattan’s High Line, an abandoned train line that until recently was overgrown and in disrepair. Far from simply juxtaposing the tall grass and weeds of the elevated rail platform to the surrounding city, the photographs suggest the potential of the abandoned train platform to provide public space that blurs traditional distinctions between the artificial and the natural. Famously, the viaduct’s potential has now been appreciated in the form of a public park by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Field Operations. Finally, Andrew Harrison has a series of pieces in the show that collages maps of New Jersey into the shapes of historic utopian urban plans such as Brasilia and The Radiant City. Far from a simple ironic criticism of utopian plans, Harrison’s work suggests a playful relationship between idealization and local contingencies embedded in the maps.

For architects and urban designers, work in The Edge of Intent offers food for thought, if one escapes the stifling framing and overtly anti-design mentality of its curators.

McLain Clutter is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan.
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Getting Fuller

The work and ideas of Buckminster Fuller have been an important touchstone for many of today’s architects, designers, and artists. In her essay for the Whitney Museum’s publication that accompanied the recent Fuller exhibition, Elizabeth Smith, chief curator at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), traced these influences on a current generation, including Danish-born artist Olafur Eliasson. With major exhibitions on both Fuller and Eliasson now on view at the MCA, AN asked Smith to discuss Fuller’s continued relevance, interest, and significance with Eliasson.

Elizabeth Smith: You’ve been thinking about Fuller for a long time. What is it about his work in relationship to your own that you find productive?

Olafur Eliasson: With Fuller’s work, there’s experimentation on so many levels, and of course I have been inspired over the years again and again, beginning with one of my very first pieces titled 8900054. Principally, it was a Fuller dome, and that was the first time I worked with a mathematician and geometrized called Einar Thorstein who was a friend of Fuller. My idea was to make a work almost like a Fuller ready-made. At that time, in ’96, he was not at all exposed in the architectural frame of reference, so people reacted to him as a utopian and a person who was very hard to map within the context of spatial thinking. What is exciting and interesting is that in the last 15 years, he’s been integrated into architectural or spatial history in a much more productive and progressive way.

Tell me more about Einar Thorstein and your collaboration with him.

Well, there is so much to be said about him but most importantly, he was educated in the late 1960s at Frei Otto’s office in Stuttgart, and he was involved as a student with the erection of the Munich Stadium that became so famous with the tensile suspended roof structures. Einar then went back to Iceland. In 1973, he founded Constructions Lab and although involved with architecture, he moved on into different types of mathematical and geometrical research. He also invited Fuller, whom he had first met in ’66, to come to Iceland. Einar had done a handful of dome houses where people are actually living to this day in Iceland. On top of that, Einar is an artist himself and is developing a number of different projects on his own terms. He has worked in my studio for more than ten years now, and when I say work, I mean that he is deeply involved as a collaborator, and sometimes solves pragmatic challenges with me. Coming from Frei Otto and Fuller, through crystallographic and spatial pattern principles that typically derive from non-modern or non-Euclidian languages, Einar is of course a great resource and of much inspiration to me. I myself have looked into both Fuller and Frei Otto but also into people like Paolo Soleri and Felix Candela and others, who have had these utopian approaches. The inspiration is not necessarily a formal one, based on the language they created; I do think that one of the most striking things about these people and Fuller especially is their conviction in the worth of what they were doing. They would link social aspects with engineering and environmental questions. They would not compartmentalize things like one sees in the general architectural practice of today; they would challenge everything at the same time in a very productive way.

Do you think it was easier for an artist like yourself to recuperate the ideas of Fuller?

Well, as an artist, I look for languages where I can examine and challenge ideas about singularity—about the person in the world—and about plurality—about collectivity in the world. Fuller successfully created a language that sustains a clear notion of what individuality potentially could be and the sense of responsibility that an individual has. On the other hand, within that language, within that same question, he also has a specific idea about collectivity and its consequences and what kind of responsibility that requires. If you think about it, there are not so many types of spatial practice that would sustain both an explicit idea of individuality and an explicit idea of collectivity. You could say that typically, you have either collective kinds of spaces or spaces that are very much based on individuality. And today I find that we have to take up the great challenge in society to embrace collectivity and individuality rather than polarizing the two, which is the case on the political scene, for instance.

Was agency of the individual as important an idea for Fuller as it is for you?

I’m not saying that he was not a utopian thinker who to a great extent externalized fundamental values into a kind of a dot on the horizon where we would want to be heading, I think he was, as were his contemporaries, utopian in the sense that he implicitly worked with this idea of, “Once we get there, we will be fine.” Where clearly now, both as an artist but also as a participant on Spaceship Earth, I say we have to be fine while we go along, and it doesn’t work to externalize our values into a certain goal; the process with which we move along needs to perform the values by which we live. So one could say that there has been an internalization of Fuller’s values in terms of his utopian tendencies. The struggle we see in architecture today is: To what extent can one embody the environmental movement, the green movement? In architecture there is that little bit of struggle now whether we should be modern and claim a goal and then create a green movement, or whether we should try to mobilize, create an architecture based on our individual sense of responsibility. One could split those two kinds of architecture into a normative architecture, which is the modern one that tries to create a generalized idea of how we sustain ecological architectural principles, and this is something that Fuller in a sense initiated, and a more non-normative movement that we individually define because this also allows for a different kind of emotional involvement.

To me it seems that Fuller’s approach is as much about setting a goal and pragmatically reaching it as it is about living one’s life in a way that significantly demonstrates ethical values.

Looking at Fuller’s work, the question is also, what does an exhibition like this do? I think there is an incredible potential in Fuller, but how are his theory, his arguments, values, and tools reintroduced to a contemporary spatial practice? How does one see the tools in today’s context rather than as historical tools? I’m very interested in that question: Are we looking at new drawings by Fuller that happened to be made 50 years ago, or are we looking at 50-year-old drawings today? I think it’s incredibly important to consider his contribution contemporary. I think we need to adopt a contemporary view as we walk into the museum and we have to imagine that Fuller is a 23-year-old architecture student. That activates or introduces a certain performative aspect to an exhibition like the one at the MCA, which I think can be strikingly convincing. I find it productive because clearly, the effort in the show has been to describe the legacy of Fuller, and he in every way deserves that and it hasn’t been done so far. But we also have to acknowledge that this can be slightly stigmatizing because you suddenly see the tools in a vitrine rather than in your hands. And as an artist I believe that one of the great challenges, and one of the great things about art, is that it insists on being in your hands rather than in a vitrine. So I think the greatest potential of a show like this becomes apparent if we consider it a fully contemporary exhibition.
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