In its previous incarnations over the last nine decades, Henry Miller’s Theatre on West 43rd Street has been a Broadway mainstay, a discotheque, and a porn palace. Reaching back into the past was therefore something of a delicate matter for Cook + Fox Architects, which has resurrected the theater’s glory days in the base of the firm’s Bank of America tower that soars 55 stories above.

Fortunately, designers found a guiding spirit in the original theater’s namesake, the actor and producer Henry W. Miller. “This is a unique typology: a Broadway theater with a shallow balcony arch that keeps the audience close to the stage,” said partner Rick Cook, noting that the 1918 venue emphasized a direct relationship between audience and actors.

In September, the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) held a ceremonial groundbreaking to celebrate the creation of a DHS headquarters on the 172-acre west campus of St. Elizabeths—a National Historic Landmark and the first federally operated hospital for the insane. The groundbreaking also commemorated the awarding of a $435... continued on page 20

The Broadway Triangle looks like countless other stretches of North Brooklyn, a mix of machine shops, walk-ups, and vacant lots seeded among the bistros and luxury condos that have moved in over the last decade. The area, surrounded by communities of Latinos, African Americans, and Chasidic Jews has seen its fair share of conflict, but a new battle has broken out, some say more raucous than all those that have preceded it, and it is a battle over a rezoning. “It’s like the last open piece of Oklahoma Territory,”... continued on page 5

City Point, the mixed-use development replacing the Albee Square Mall in downtown Brooklyn, is one of New York’s first recipients of federal $20 million stimulus boost... continued on page 4

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As a dramatic addition to the city’s Sunset Park Vision Plan ("Sunrise for Sunset Park?" AN 14, 09.09.2009), we call your attention to the master plan created by AIA Brooklyn that looks at how Sunset Park and Red Hook along the Gowanus Expressway corridor could be revitalized if the elevated roadway were removed.

Our plan focuses on reorienting traffic, pollution, and blight along 3rd Avenue. We believe that with the removal of the highway, a revitalized avenue could become an active commercial thoroughfare, or, with its abundant width, could even be a tree-lined boulevard connecting neighborhoods with bike and sidewalk cafés, and other amenities.

We have reviewed the Department of Transportation’s alternatives for the repair or relocation of the roadway, and we are aware that many have advocated a scheme for burying the expressway in a tunnel. However, such schemes fail to address other issues such as neighborhood revitalization, housing, traffic, job opportunities, parks, engineering practicality, and safety. Our vision takes steps toward achieving these goals. It includes a concept endorsed by Rep. G. E. G. Smith and Mayor Bloomberg, and by the Gowanus Association’s Jerold Nadler for the construction of the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel. It includes design for a major shopping terminal, and, most notably, it replaces the Gowanus Expressway with a state-of-the-art, cable-suspended roadway high above 1st Avenue with connections and ramps strategically located to reduce local traffic.

We invite you to learn more about our plan, which includes links to waterfront parks, by visiting AIA Brooklyn’s Blueprint for America submission at www.aia150.org.

GLEN CUTRONA CHAIRMAN, AIA 150 COMMITTEE FRANK LOPRESTO PRESIDENT, AIA BROOKLYN

CORRECTIONS
An article about the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s LentsSpace project (“Block Party,” AN 15, 09.23.2009) implied that the space was launched by developer Trinity Real Estate. In fact, the project was conceived by the LMCC.


WHEN THE PARTY’S OVER

After three decades of dereliction, Philip Johnson’s New York State Pavilion in Flushing Meadows Corona Park got a recall from limbo on September 15, when state preservation officials unanimously voted to add it to the state and national registers of historic places. The listing will help secure sorely needed funds for rehabilitation, possibly paving the way to reopen the city’s most prominent midcentury ruin. Against the backdrop of the 2016 Olympics frenzy, however, this World’s Fair relic reminds us that long after the champagne corks and confetti are swept away, what’s left is often a legacy of boosterism and empty rhetoric rather than a viable urban future.

Completed in 1964 as one of the few architectural high points of the World’s Fair, Johnson’s pavilion was an undeniable hit: More than six million people passed through the ensemble, which centered upon the “Tent of Tomorrow,” a colorful plastic canopy pitched atop the world’s largest cable suspension roof. Below was the famous terrazzo map of New York State, based on a Texaco road atlas—now wrapped in chain-link and subject to advancing deterioration—while above soared three observation towers topping out at more than 200 feet and reached by “Sky Streak” elevators (now sadly inoperable). Then there was the Theaterama, the only part of the complex to have been reborn following a 1993 renovation and, this year, a $23 million expansion for the Queens Theatre in the Park. Upon the fair’s opening, no less than Ad A stylesheet Huxtable deemed the pavilion a “runaway success, day or night,” adding: “This is ‘carnival’ with class.” To its credit, the Parks Department, which owns the structure, supported the historic register listing to help rescue the pavilion. (The complex is also under review as a potential city landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, though no timeline has been set for a decision.) But three decades of neglect is plainly visible to millions roaring past on the Long Island Expressway. Indeed, state officials took the exceptional step of declaring the pavilion a “fragile and short-lived resource,” since it does not meet the standard listing criteria of being at least 50 years old.

Today’s Olympiad hopes pepper their bid books with talk of long-range planning and catalytic regeneration, but as the world gears up for another quadrennial extravaganza, consider those skeletal towers in Queens. In New York — whose own Olympic bid, of course, succumbed to rancorous debate over a white-elephant West Side stadium—we can’t even bother to fix up a work meant to celebrate, in the words of the fair’s theme, “Man’s achievement on a shrinking globe in an expanding universe.”

By turns pathetic and hopeful, the fate of Johnson’s monument rests now in the hands of citizen-preservationists. On October 24, Columbia University’s Preservation Alumni are sponsoring a volunteer workday to hack back invasive species that have colonized the pavilion, pitching in to save its former glory (call the Parks Department at 718-760-6677 for details). Under the Tent of Tomorrow, you too can help conservators collect fragments of the grand terrazzo map, bits of which vanish with every passing day. JEFF BYLES

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WE SMELL RATS
Really? The British tabloids (all of them) are reporting that architectural fistfighter and actor, Brad Pitt, has built a gerbil “Neverland” for his six children’s herd on his and Angelina’s estate in the South of France. If you believe what they’re reporting, Pitt paid somewhere between $50,000 and $80,000 on an “elaborate gerbil run (that) has a maze of tunnels, sunrooms, seasaws, and platforms for the pets to live in,” according to ever-present anonymous sources. Pets? Gerbils are rodents. Besides, what do gerbils know about architecture? Eavesdrop wants to see the Rodentia brief, renderings, reflected-ceiling and sprinkler plans, etc.

GATHERING STORM
continued from front page

As a local developer told AN during a contentious community board hearing in July, Bounded by Broadway, Union Avenue, and Flushing Avenue, the Broadway Triangle was 22 blocks of failing industrial uses that in 1983 was made an urban renewal area in an effort to revive it. That plan never took off, and now the Bloomberg administration wants to rezone a nine-block slice at its heart for housing.

The city’s plan, which is being developed by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, paves the way for 1,850 new apartments, 905 of which will be designated for affordable housing. Two city-owned sites will be wholly dedicated to affordable housing, while the rest of the rezoning is open for developers to bid higher in exchange for additional affordable housing in accordance with the inclusionary housing program. Low-rise, contextual zoning has been promised.

The plan has won begrudging support from the local community board and the borough president, as well as a thorough examination from the City Planning Commission at a September 9 hearing on the plan. (A final vote is expected on October 7. Check archpaper.com for a full report.) The main criticism of the plan has had less to do with the plan itself than with the way it was conceived unilaterally by the department. Who will develop the two city-owned sites is of particular concern. And a coalition of more than 40 local groups from across the neighborhood has formed to look into these matters.

“Neverland” could radiate into this already-sprawling neighborhood, and it may or may not succeed, it has highlighted deficiencies in the city’s plan that the community board now wants addressed, such as increased open space and the inclusion of residents from Bed-Stuy and some extant industrial businesses. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development also drew a lashing from the board for its handling of the planning process.

“HPD is always doing this, and it has to stop,” said Ward Dennis, chair of Community Board 1’s land-use committee. “It’s a good plan, a good contextual plan, the kind we’ve been advocating for. The problem is, the process stinks.”

There is still a remote possibility the plan could be overhauled or even fail, as a neighboring City Council representative opposes the project altogether. But for Rabbi David Needleman, head of the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg and the likely developer of the larger of the two city-owned sites, defeat would be untenable: “What it means if this project is derailed? How long will it take to recreate itself? Maybe never. 30 years ago we started this. Let’s not have to start over.”

YOUNGER THAN SPRINGTIME
According to The Yale Daily News, Robert A. M. Stern, dean of the School of Architecture and urban planner, has announced that the school will be featuring younger lecturers. “We want to highlight the work of younger faculty on the ladder for promotion,” Stern said. “We would like to hear from the young ones.” What about the conventional wisdom that says, “Architecture is an older person’s profession”? Youngsters Hilary Sample, Mark Foster Gage, and Vikram Prakash are scheduled to lecture this fall.

EAVESDROP
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Designer: Berman Horn Studio

Twist brings Basque-country charm to a dreary strip mall on 9th Avenue and 25th Street. Designed and built on a tight budget in a challenging space, the architects, Maria Berman and Brad Horn of Berman Horn Studio, have nonetheless imbued it with appealing warmth and character. Walls and ceiling are clad with reclaimed 19th-century barn wood from New Haven, while custom-designed brass lamps complement the worn texture of the wood. “We wanted to add something historical without it being historicist,” Berman explained. Garage doors slide above the dropped wooden ceiling, leaving the storefront fully open, exposing custom-made tables and chairs from Ikea. Limestone wall panels create a horizontal datum where the eyes can rest, while the bar performs many space-defining functions at once. At its widest it serves as a countertop, then nearly disappears into the wall as it encircles the space, only to pop out above the tables as a wine shelf. The electric blue rear wall and vibrant red accents reflect Basque architectural traditions, while helping to enliven the space, which—along with plenty of Spanish wine—celebrates the tapas bar as a central Basque social construct.
A post-disaster trailer home can hardly be called a work of architecture. But Nikolaus Pevsner’s well-known aphorism about Lincoln Cathedral—a bicycle shed is a building, but the cathedral is a piece of architecture—might favorably apply to artist Paul Villinski’s reinvention of a FEMA-style trailer as a genuine piece of design.

In 2008, Villinski purchased a 30-foot Gulfstream Cavalier in an online General Services Administration auction, pulled out its toxic formaldehyde guts, carved away its fragile metal skin, and opened up its cagelike interior to create an appealing prototype of a live-work space that he calls Emergency Response Studio. The trailer features a nine-and-a-half-by-six-and-a-half-foot wall that folds out as a usable deck, plus a beautifully thin, six-millimeter polycarbonate geodesic skylight that nods to the trademark flimsy construction of mobile homes. The trailer is currently parked in front of the Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, along with an exhibition on view through November 8. The gallery itself features an installation curated by Nina Felshin that details Villinski’s design process through videos, drawings, collages, and a one-to-one skeletal mock-up of the original trailer, expressing the artist’s view of the cramped space as a jail-like cage. That original Gulfstream was virtually identical to the fifty thousand or so built for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which became notorious for the toxic materials that went into their construction and endure as a symbol of the agency’s inefficiency as it attempts to rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Villinski’s model sits amid the charming Wesleyan campus—surrounded by a perfectly scaled ensemble of concrete buildings designed by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates in 1973—sporting a mini-tower windmill and multiple solar panels, and at first approach, it may seem little more than a standard-issue trailer tarted up with green design. But the project, which developed out of Villinski’s desire for a temporary studio in post-Katrina New Orleans, succeeds in turning this mean habitation into a thrilling place to live. That is due in part to the sustainable materials Villinski deployed, such as recycled birch plywood used as walls, and Marmoleum, a natural linoleum made of linseed oil pressed from flax seeds, for the floors. But what is truly sustainable about this project is the way in which Villinski has created an easy and inexpensive model for how architectural process, thoughtful design, and a Skilsaw can turn a “bicycle shed” into architecture.

WILLIAM MENKING
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Monica Pidgeon, 1913–2009

In the 1960s, there were two British magazines with an international readership: Architectural Design and The Architectural Review. The latter was rather stuffy, promoting very English ideas of modern architecture set amid picturesque townscapes. AD, on the other hand, grew out of the energy of a generation of architects convinced that from the carnage of World War II they could create a better world, with modernism and international cooperation as their tools.

One of that movement’s essential figures was Monica Pidgeon, who edited AD for nearly three decades and, after having launched an ambitious multimedia archive, died on September 17 at the age of 96. I worked with Monica at AD from 1969 to 1974, and our professional lives have intertwined ever since.

Monica took over as editor of the magazine in 1946, and built up a huge network of correspondents around the world. She helped organize the founding meeting of the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA) in Lausanne in 1948; she attended all the meetings of the Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), and latterly the meetings of Team X. She met Bucky Fuller in 1962 and regularly published his work thereafter, inspired by Fuller’s ambitious World Design Science Decade effort to make better use of global resources. Internationalism was in her blood. Monica was born in Chile. Her father, Andre Lehman, was French, and her mother was from Scotland. At her mother’s insistence the family moved to England for Monica to properly complete her education. She studied interior design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, and worked as a furniture designer before joining AD as assistant to the editor.

She was a facilitator rather than a writer, and leaned heavily on her technical editors. These included Theo Crosby, the curator of the influential This Is Tomorrow exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery; Ken Frampton and Robin Middleton, who both went on to be professors at Columbia University; and myself. She was also a promoter rather than a critic; she believed that if a building was no good, it was better not to publish it at all than to write a critical piece.

The economic crisis of the early 1970s decimated advertising revenue, and the Standard Catalogue Company threatened to close the magazine. Monica convinced them to keep it running on a “book” economy, covering all costs from copy sales and giving up on advertising revenue, and that’s the way the magazine operates to this day. Survival was tough, however, and by 1975 Monica accepted an invitation to edit the RIBA Journal, staying until 1979, when I succeeded her. Monica then started Pidgeon Audio Visual to publish slides and audiotapes in which designers talked about their work. She added to the recordings until she was in her late eighties. She then asked me to take over the project, and in 2006 work started on the digitization of the Pidgeon archive, now almost complete at www.pidgeondigital.com.

Peter Murray is chairman of New London Architecture.
Q&A WITH ALLAN WEXLER

Artist, architect, and designer Allan Wexler has long brought the thinking and strategies of an artist to bear on the richness of architectural ideas. His works are frequently exhibited here and abroad, and his solo show Overlook is on view at the Ronald Feldman Gallery through October 24.

Could you talk about your background and what has most influenced the kind of work you do now?

I graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1971. Because of an economic recession, some architects began to work more theoretically and conceptually. I wouldn’t consider the work really anti-architecture; it was a type of meta-architecture. The strongest influence on me then was [Austrian architect] Raimund Abraham. As my teacher, he encouraged me to work on the edge. I enjoyed being a troublemaker. I wanted to become the Andy Warhol of architecture, pushing and redefining the definitions of architecture.

I work alone in my studio, where I can control the variables of a particular project. I reduce the complex issues of architecture to basic and primary ideas. Many pieces in my current exhibition at the Ronald Feldman Gallery look back at these basic principles. I feel I am reinventing and perhaps updating Vitruvius’ The Ten Books on Architecture and Alberti’s On the Art of Building in Ten Books. I title a series of manipulated digital prints/paintings/drawings On the Art of Building in Ten Books. Some of these basic issues explored ask how to excavate into the earth, how to float a horizontal plane or how to position a chair on a surface. I feel as if I am an architect trapped in an artist’s body.

Can you expand on that?

I love the actual making of physical objects and environments. I thrive on the smell of sawdust, the texture of stone; I love tools. I will buy a tool and invent a project in order to justify its purchase. I need to touch, smell, saw, drill, and chisel. I need to become physically exhausted at the same rate that I become intellectually exhausted.

Did you ever want to build buildings?

Yes, but I need to be able to physically construct them myself. Many of my early works were small pavilions, sheds, and gazebos. I believe that a little building can have as much impact as a large building. The conceptual and theoretical content can be the same as a big building. The luxury of working small is that there is less delay between idea and reality. Small buildings are inexpensive and I could take more risks. But even these relatively small buildings became cumbersome, so I began to explore the generic chair as a model for architectural ideas. I could work even more rapidly in an almost subconscious way. The chair has become an armature for many ideas over many years of work.

Have you always been drawn to construction?

In the ’70s, my wife and I rented a floor-thru on Abingdon Square in the West Village and removed some of the interior walls, as “loft living” was in vogue at the time. I stockpiled the two-by-fours and began to use them to build what I called then Temple Buildings. I never considered them to be models for larger structures, but they had that possibility. I established rules through which I would manipulate the materials to construct these “buildings.” A time limitation, a particular tool, size of lumber, an overall dimension. I was influenced by John Cage. I’ve always enjoyed exploring that line between the model and reality. You might look at the Temple Buildings and see them as proposals for buildings; at another glance, you would see them as small ritual objects.

Some of your models are done on a computer now. Do you still make handmade models?

Even the digital photography in this show is manipulated with my hands. The photographs are made as a group of 8x8 prints and are glued together with the registration marks revealed. I let the glue ooze out between the individual panels, and I use graphite to draw into the image. I want them to be handmade, constructed images, so they are ambiguously digital and physical simultaneously. They are buffed, polished, and waxed, since the surface is as important to me as its photographic content. The scars and the glue stains are intentional.

How has your work changed in the 24 years you have shown at the Feldman Gallery?

I’ve used the chair, the table, and the archetypal peak-roofed building for many years as a reference and as an armature for attaching ideas. I think of it as a type of tofu. You can add content to the chair or “typical” building and it picks up that particular flavor. I’ve always been very interested in serials and transformation. Perhaps an early interest in pursuing a career in the sciences led me to the scientific method as a means to explore architectural ideas.

I was exposed to minimalist composers like Steve Reich and artists like Sol Lewitt, who both worked in serials. With the combination of axonometric drawings of chairs and peaked-roof buildings, I could add in series a line, another line, another line, a bend, a warp, a twist, a slice, a cut, a dissection, a rearrangement, a realignment. At the show, there’s a group of transformed axonometric drawings called 54 Studies for Chair Transformations. I am trying very hard to not introduce any new ideas to my work. I am trying to go deeper and deeper while keeping constant the same issues.
Recent surveys reveal that fifty percent of Americans do not believe in climate change or that it can have devastating effects on their lives. Indeed, of the many catastrophes that could come to pass in Manhattan, one of the most frightening visuals—rising water levels—has long since been co-opted by Hollywood disaster movies such as When Worlds Collide (1951) and its more recent remake Deep Impact (1998). Until Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, the probability of severe floods seemed more alien than extraterrestrials taking over the island.

Last month, at the H2O9 Forum at Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, that shortsightedness was a constant refrain, as was the North Sea Flood of 1953. The latter is surely the most apt historical example to illustrate how regions should not wait for actual disasters to happen before taking action. A tidal surge hit the southwest of the Netherlands—where thirty to forty percent of the ground surface is located at least twenty feet under sea level—and killed 1,875 people.

Today, the Dutch believe floods are more likely than getting killed in car accidents, though that is actually not the case. The 1953 disaster resulted in the Delta Plan, an elaborate series of dams, sluices, locks, dikes, and storm-surge barriers that protect the region against one-in-a-thousand-year floods. At the H2O9 forum, the Delta Plan and its revisions were compared with the systems approaches to flood protection in the Hudson Estuary Basin. Malcolm Bowman, of the State University of New York, chaired a panel with Piet Dircke of Arcadis, an international design consultancy with a focus on environmental infrastructure. Bowman explained that all five New York City boroughs “as well as the New Jersey coast are subject to mediocre flood threats.” But the region is barely equipped for calamities that can happen once in a hundred years—let alone the ten-thousand-year storms of Holland. (Katrina was a one-in-four-hundred-year storm.) “It’s time New York gets started on its own plan,” Bowman later told AN.

Although the systems put in place in Holland over the past 50 years protect the lowlands, they have also drastically changed some of its ecosystems. Dircke described how the Dutch are now preparing Delta Plan II, a new systems approach incorporating the water system of the whole region while taking the environmental impact of barrier systems into better consideration. The assumption is that the first wall of defenses will be breached by the end of the century, and a second wall with a moat between them might provide a better solution than an attempt at rebuilding the original walls.

The lessons the Dutch have learned over four centuries of experience with their own unique landscape have positioned them well in warning other places—namely New York—about the importance of planning ahead. Although climate change is often incremental or too small for us to experience on a day-to-day basis, scientists monitoring water systems in the area do see changes that beg for immediate action. According to Bowman, considering a more regional approach is a promising start: “Rather than put levees along the Hudson River for 300 miles, why not put a barrier at the Verrazzano Narrows,” he asked. "And it doesn’t have to be all dams and concrete. Building barrier beaches has worked well in the Netherlands, too.” Bowman concluded that the challenges faced by the Dutch now will be New York’s problems in less than 100 years. “And if we aren’t more prepared then, even a little 10-year storm will do devastating damage.”

DAVID VAN DER LEER
Downtown Washington, D.C., is the graveyard of great architects. Robert A.M. Stern; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Kevin Roche; even Mies: No matter how valiantly they try, in the end their buildings are literally decorated sheds. Thanks to the city’s oppressive height limitations and permissive street-wall regulations, clients push for maximum floor space and little to no accommodation for the public sphere. The results are there for all to see—or not, since downtown’s narrow canyon walls funnel the eye away from buildings. Abandon all hope, ye who design here.

Leave it to an outsider to crack the building code. Richard Rogers is well-known in the United States, but until recently he had completed just one minor project here, on an industrial site in Princeton. Having rejuvenated his practice as Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSHP), however, he has landed a series of projects in New York and Washington, the first of which, D.C.’s 300 New Jersey Avenue, opened earlier this year.

The full-block site is a doozy, with right angles at the western corners, then three acute angles on the eastern edge, where New Jersey and Louisiana avenues meet. The result is an irregular pentagon, whose eastern and western sides were already occupied by a 1936 office building running diagonally along the east side, and a 1975 addition along the west, with the rest of the space taken up by a parking garage and loading docks. Located just a few hundred feet from the Capitol and almost completely occupied by the law firm Jones Day, the block is a prime address long overlooked by the city’s herd-following lobbyists and lawyers, who huddle around K Street and Connecticut Avenue. Yet Jones Day split off from the pack a few years ago, moving some of its staff to the existing buildings; the firm liked its new digs so much that it decided to consolidate its entire D.C. operation. Hence the idea of expanding into the rest of the block. “They really took a risk in coming here, and that same spirit allowed us to take risks, too,” said Ivan Harbour, the project’s director.

The problem, RSHP quickly determined, was how to fill in the block without creating another fortresslike D.C. edifice. But what might have seemed risky at the time looks, in hindsight, like a gracefully self-evident solution. After tearing out the parking and loading spaces, the firm built a new wing of office space along the northern side of the block, forming a wide, serifed V-shape. Between the serifs they placed an enormous glass facade, which continues across the roof to create a greenhouse-like atrium. Atrium might be the wrong word. In downtown Washington, at least, typical atriums provide the bare minimum of light and air, just enough to charge higher rents, and they’re almost always hidden behind stone-and-brick walls. Intended as common space, they are enjoyed by no one. At 300 New Jersey Avenue, in contrast, the center of the building isn’t just open internally, but connected through the glass facade to public space outside, including the neglected Japanese-American Memorial pocket park across the street.

The central feature of RSHP’s atrium is a massive, yellow steel tower—a tree, really—that rises from floor to ceiling, branching off into bridges to the new and old wings and, at the top, spreading into roof-supporting limbs. An elevator and stairs climb through its trunk, while landings reach out dramatically, creating open-air meeting rooms. This isn’t the first time the firm has used treelike structural forms—they hold up the single-span roof at Heathrow’s Terminal 5, completed last year—but in this case they are more than just supports. The structure articulates movement through the building, while at the same time enlivening the ground floor of the atrium. Appropriately, the space below the tree is fit for picnics: Along part of the atrium’s western side runs the firm’s new cafeteria (where the mail room used to be), with seating that unfolds, cafe-style, into the central space. Taken as a
whole, the atrium is a playground for grownups. It’s the sort of office building one might expect for an ad agency or website headquarters. But a white-shoe law firm that bills by the quarter-hour? Naysayers will ask whether Jones Day can afford to let its employees meet randomly on a bridge, stepping aside for a few minutes’ chat, or hold informal meetings over coffee like philosopher-manqués at some Left Bank coffeehouse. “We’ve given them a blank canvas,” said Harbour. “Now they need to learn how to use it.” Creativity and spontaneity aren’t core values in the Washington legal world. To the naysayers, RSHP’s response is clear: Perhaps they should be.

CLAY RISEN
“We had the benefit of Henry Miller’s writing about what made a great theater, and we wanted to preserve that typology.”

Working for the civic-minded Durst Organization, which built the tower, known as One Bryant Park, designers also aspired to connect the performing arts to the broader urban experience. The most obvious link to both the past and the public was the neo-Georgian facade, a city landmark that remained in place throughout the process of construction. The design team also placed artifacts from the old theater on the walls, while salvaged bits of the original plaster proscenium adorn the stage. But a larger opportunity lay in the way the former space is knit into the tower complex. “Because it was part of a much larger project,” Cook said, “we wanted to make sure it would benefit from being part of One Bryant Park. We could have the midblock entrance and a really unique experience.” To that end, the midblock passage features a portrait of the rakish Miller in “kinetic sequins” that enliven the entry for bank employees and lawyers who daily pass through the space, according to Keith Helmetag, a principal of C&G Partners, which worked on signage and navigation plans from the corporate lobby and midblock loggia to the theater.

Sustainable features, the hallmark of One Bryant Park, also extend to the 1,055-seat theater’s public and private spaces. “This was an opportunity for a Broadway theater to benefit from technologies developed for a larger project—stormwater capture, and energy that’s about three times as efficient as the grid,” Cook said. “People will feel a much higher quality of air, with 95 percent particulate filtration.” In a nod to Douglas Durst’s fidelity to green demonstrations, the project, which aims for LEED Gold status, will also include carbon-dioxide sensors and what Helmetag described as a “green clock” in the midblock space charting the energy savings in the tower and other sustainability-tuned buildings around the world. And then there are the bathrooms. Behind the angled mezzanine seats facing the stage, and via a broad winding staircase, red-walled restrooms dominate the middle level. These are said to be the most capacious restrooms in the industry (boasting 22 fixtures in the women’s room), with a bar placed one level below to avoid cramping space. Designers also moved the dressing room under the seats, and placed the orchestra pit directly under the stage, where it sits more or less alongside ice storage. Among other benefits, these moves help the circulation plan provide for ample entrances from stage left and right. These strategies get their first test on October 15, when John Stamos and Gina Gershon stride onto the stage, confront sloping rows of bright-red seats, and tear through Bye Bye Birdie as the kickoff for the Roundabout Theatre Company’s 20-year lease of the space.

ALEC APPELBAUM
We may have crossed paths at MIT earlier, but I know Joan Goody and I met in 1970 at an extraordinary gathering, the first of its kind in Boston, for Women in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Planning (formerly dubbed WALAP). Joan was then a young partner in the firm Goody Clancy and Associates, and together with Sally Harkness at The Architects Collaborative, they were the only principals in a room of over 150 women. For those of us who dreamed about creating a practice of architecture, Goody was tangible evidence it could be done. Her participation in WALAP was no surprise, because Joan was nurtured in an environment of political activism. I recall her saying that growing up, there was always talk of The Movement—in the ‘50s it was the labor movement, in the ‘60s it was the civil rights movement, and in the ‘70s it was, naturally, the women’s movement. Through the years since that meeting, she generously shared her experiences, joys, and frustrations with many of us.

Joan began her practice in Boston in partnership with her husband Marvin Goody, who had formed a small firm with colleague John Clancy. From the outset, their commitment to design for the public sector and particularly urban housing gained regional and national attention. When Marvin died in 1980, Joan became the firm’s most visible presence, and it grew dramatically under her leadership. Joan’s values, shaped by her earliest experiences in New York’s Ethical Culture School and later at Cornell and Harvard Graduate School of Design, permeated her architecture. The social benefit of architecture was always uppermost in her mind, and she was famously skeptical of design that celebrated itself more than its users. While the work of her firm expanded with projects of many types around the country, her contribution to Boston was most significant. Her affordable housing projects for Boston’s Tent City and Harbor Point restored a livable urbanism to damaged parts of the city. Her Student Center for Emmanuel College and Graduate Center for Simmons College were both inviting student and academic spaces, and critical elements in the campus ensemble. She excelled in historic restoration in three notable buildings by H. H. Richardson: Austin Hall and Sever Hall at Harvard, and Trinity Church. For her contributions to the profession and the city, she received the Award of Honor for lifetime achievement in 2005 from the Boston Society of Architects.

As a cultural and civic leader, Joan was well known for her breadth of knowledge, her forthrightness, and her eloquence. She served for many years as the mayoral appointee and chair of the Boston Civic Design Commission, reviewing every major building project undertaken in the city with consistent and persistent concern for the quality of life and design each would contribute. When she stepped down and recommended me for “her seat,” she cautioned me to accept only if I would speak my mind with candor as she had done. She was one of the leaders in the current effort to save Boston’s City Hall, a modern landmark designed by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, slated for demolition or redevelopment by Boston’s mayor. She was a great reader—I never could read the newspaper early enough to be ready for her morning question: “Did you see... in the Times/Globe today?”—and belonged to several discussion groups including the Saturday Club and the Tavern Club, where she led conversations both serious and light-hearted.

She was dedicated to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she taught briefly in the 1970s, close to her classmates who included Tom Payette and Henry Wood, and served on its Visiting Committee for many years. She was always ready with suggestions for improvements large and small, including most recently the wish for the school’s lecture and exhibition posters to be more graphically legible. Joan was an elegant woman who bore a frequently mentioned resemblance to Mary Tyler Moore. She favored Italian sportswear, artisan jewelry, and shopping at Saks. She preferred public transportation to driving. She loved her homes in Maine and Gloucester, and she traveled widely. Her favorite city abroad was Paris, and she spoke French well. In 1984, she married the poet and editor Peter Davison, and became close to his children and grandchildren; they were together until his death in 2004.

The community of Boston architects is stunned and saddened by her death. She chose not to tell most of her friends and colleagues about her short and devastating illness, so that she might enjoy her life as normally as possible until its end. Not long ago, she told me that she really couldn’t imagine retirement, and indeed she has not needed to. I will always remember her as a person of strong convictions, sparkling intelligence, great humor, and enormous kindness. She began as a generous colleague and wise advisor and became an enduring friend.

Andrea Leers is a principal at Leers Weinzapfel Associates in Boston.
1 LEAFY RIBBED MODULE
CONFIGUR-8
Variable surface modules from LA-based designer and Configur-8 owner Charles Austin are digitally designed to create a super-smooth finish. Made of recycled content concrete developed by tile manufacturer OniStone, the modules absorb sound waves and can be configured several ways. Tiles are produced in OniStone colors and in 6- and 12-inch-square sizes, but custom colors and larger formats are available. www.configur-8.com

2 SOUNDWAVE VILLAGE
OFFECCT
Swedish architecture and design firm Claesson Koivisto Rune created Offecct’s new acoustic panels, the latest in a line of panels by designers including Karim Rashid, Marre Moser, and Teppo Aaskan. Soundwave Village is a lightweight sound absorber (500 Hz and above) made of recyclable molded polyester fiber that reduces distracting environmental sounds like voices, computers, and telephones. www.modobjects.net

3 MONTANA MESH
W.S. TYLER
Recently used in 41 Cooper Square’s Rose Auditorium, Montana Mesh from W.S. Tyler consists of two wire-mesh layers. One is formed into a crinkled, three-dimensional shape that can absorb more sound waves than a flat system, while the backing layer provides support. The mesh elements are available in a range of colors and can be used for sound absorption systems when equipped with acoustical mats. www.wstyler.com

4 TUNEFLECTOR
JOCAVI
Portuguese sound panel manufacturer Jocavi has released a new system based on the theory that diffusers manufactured with a complex structure are more effective in creating optimal music characteristics than those with identical repetitions. The new model’s design includes abrupt joints and planes that are always different. Ideal for walls and ceilings in audition and performance rooms, the panels are available in 13 colors. www.acousticarea.com

5 BONNETTE WOOD CEILING
ARCHITECTURAL SYSTEMS
Solid wood ceiling elements from Architectural Systems have a hot-bonded, stretched acoustic glass fabric with a 0.7 coefficient of absorption. The ceiling can be tiled in 2 by 2-, 2 by 4-, and 4 by 4-foot flat and curved sections. A range of acoustic material colors and wood stains and finishes are available, in addition to nine wood types that include PEFC-certified species that can contribute to LEED credits. www.archsystems.com
LISTEN UP

Glancing up from poems in the library of the Poets House new space in Battery Park City, a reader can gaze through an expanse of large windows to see the rhythm of daily life in the city: workers, families, dogs, and travelers stroll by on the sidewalk below, with the green swath of Nelson Rockefeller Park and the glistening Hudson just beyond. Passersby sometimes peer back curiously, too, taking in the long row of brightly colored books on the shelves, and perhaps the reader.

This lively spirit of connection is one aspect of architect Louise Braverman’s plan to create a space that’s inviting to visitors from the surrounding neighborhood and beyond. The appearance of openness and transparency conveys the message: “Come on in. Poetry can be part of your life,” Braverman said, a notion in keeping with the institution’s inclusive philosophy. Poets House is a 24-year-old library and literacy center intended as a home for all those who read and write poetry, regardless of their aesthetic leanings or background, and its services are free and open to the public. The name says a lot: Exchanging an apostrophe expresses the ideal of poetry as something to be shared, never owned.

Open since late September, the 11,000-square-foot space at 10 River Terrace replaces the institution’s old home on Spring Street in Soho, which was half the size. When the rent there became unmanageable, Poets House began discussions with Battery Park City Authority in 2003 to relocate to its current two-story space at the base of Riverhouse, a condo building by Polshek Partnership. The following year, BPCA designated Poets House for the space, to be offered rent-free through 2069 on the condition that the organization pay for its own construction, which needed to meet the LEED Gold standard of the larger building.

Braverman, who had designed the earlier Poets House, was commissioned to design the new one, which includes ecofriendly features such as insulation made of old blue jeans, floors of beeswax from a sustainably managed local forest, a lighting system equipped with motion and daylight sensors, and countertops made of recycled metal chips. Polshek’s design includes a glass facade with a high degree of UV protection; Braverman capitalized on its transparency by placing frequently occupied spaces—a 50,000+ volume library, a lobby, an auditorium—nearby to provide plentiful daylighting and advertise the institution’s services to the outside world.

One of Braverman’s most striking gestures is a polygonal glass exhibition space that echoes the transparency of the nearby facade. Nicknamed “the egg,” it cantilevers over the lobby, seeming to float in its surroundings, especially when illuminated at night.

Having once designed a poetry installation for bustling Grand Central Terminal, Braverman was keenly aware that she needed to counterbalance the transparency of Poets House with elements that foster a sense of intimacy. “The poetic environment, I think, has to be a kind of place where you can feel the stillness of the moment,” she explained. “You can become immersed in the space, and hopefully it will have some kind of a transformative effect on you.”

Inspired by the lighting in Istanbul mosques, she included an array of delicate raindrop-shaped LED lights hanging down from the underside of the exhibition room, to help bring a human scale to the lofty double-height entry space and a children’s room beyond. A gently curved stairway leads up in a “slow procession” to the upper floor, where visitors encounter the exhibition space, a small reading room, and the narrow library, which is the length of a city block.

Even before the new space opened, it drew curious attention from passersby, proving its potential as a place where people could “bump into poetry,” said Poets House spokesperson Suzanne Wise. This intense sense of connection to the wider community is bound to increase even further when Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates’ adjacent Teardrop Park South is ready for use in spring 2010, expanding the borders of an indoor auditorium space by providing a rocky outdoor amphitheater where poets’ words can project out beyond the borders of the Poets House walls. LISA DELGADO

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some reference to this seedy past. The Sperone Westwater Gallery is the latest of these perfumed dandies parading in hobo clothing. Now rising one block north of the New Museum, this contemporary art dealership—which got its start on Greene Street in the early 1970s before moving to the Meatpacking District—will feature a “tough” canopy of blackened steel with expressed columns of the same material along the elevation. All ruggedness ends there. Designed by Foster + Partners with structural and mechanical engineering by Buro Happold and construction management by Sciame, the gallery’s new home is entirely high-design, concealing the intricate workings of a Swiss watch behind a burly exterior and pristine, white-box galleries. The root of the project’s complexity is its site. Resting on a narrow plot 26 feet wide and 110 feet deep, the building fully exploits the parcel’s zoning, fitting nine stories within its 140-foot height. Under current building code, the structure is considered a highrise and thus required to include the same security contingencies of any tall building designed in the post-9/11 era, such as two hardened egress stairs, emergency power generation, and a fire-resistant structure. Combine these with a museum-quality climate-control system and the other guts of the building, and you might wonder how any room is left over for functional space. The first step was selecting a concrete structure, which saved space by obviating the need for additional fireproofing. Still, the designers had to fight for every inch, packing the building’s vitals into as small an envelope as possible. To help coordinate the process, Sciame ran drawings through a clash-detection software called Zigurat, which catches conflicts between the building’s systems before construction begins.

Foster used these constraints as a guide around which to arrange programmatic elements. For example, zoning requires a setback after 85 feet, creating two clearly demarcated volumes along the elevation. In the first volume, the architects arranged five floors of galleries, the first three open to the public and the top two by invitation only. The upper volume houses three floors of support spaces, including administrative offices, dedicated offices for the owners—Gian Enzo Sperone and Angela Westwater—and a library. The ninth floor is a mechanical penthouse. In the plan of the gallery floors, the architects pushed the vertical circulation elements, including the two stairs and an elevator, as well as the mechanical shaft, to the front and back of the site, opening up a large central space approximately 20 by 30 feet for the display of artwork. Galleries are generally wide open spaces on one floor. Sperone Westwater, however, more like the city’s art institutions, is a vertical gallery, with the problem of creating easy circulation through all of the public floors. Foster solved this dilemma with what the firm calls the “moving hall,” a gallery room that both displays art and serves as an elevator ferrying passengers between the second and fifth floors. In addition to moving people, it can also be parked at a given floor to provide extra space for a large exhibition. At 14 by 22 feet, it is one big lift. City code sets elevator capacity standards per square foot, and the moving hall had to be built to carry 30,000 pounds, the combined weight of three full-grown male elephants. Located at the street facade, it rises and falls slowly on two stainless-steel hydraulic pistons, creating a shifting ceiling for the entry lobby that can be as little as 16 feet high or as many as 60. Since they are exposed, the shaft, pistons, and elevator undercarriage were all given the same amount of attention to detail as you would give a fine-finish interior. Foster took full advantage of the potential of this floating room to animate the facade, coloring it Ferrari red and setting it behind a curtain wall of milled glass that will give the elevator a frosty, distorted look. The glass, which comes from a Canadian company called Barber, was fabricated into a panelized system by Permasteelisa, laminated to a tempered piece of glass and then set in thin frames that will be bolted to a stainless-steel support system. The wall’s vertical mullions are expressed with stainless-steel fins, while the horizontal framing ties into a steel plate within the shaft that offers lateral stabilisation against wind loads. At night, white LEDs at the top and bottom of the elevator will help to track its movement, making one thing perfectly clear: The Bowery’s newest building is anything but a flip house.
Welcome Homeport

Staten Island is not exactly known as New York City’s most sustainable borough, but the largest development in the island’s history will soon get underway, replacing part of a former naval base with the first project in the city to take part in the U.S. Green Building Council’s new LEED for Neighborhoods program.

On September 16, city officials announced a deal with New Jersey developer Ironstate Development to create a seven-acre, 800-unit housing complex at the former Homeport Naval Base on Staten Island’s north shore. As the latest step in more than a decade of slowly churning redevelopment plans for the area, the project aims at reconnecting locals with the waterfront and encouraging smart growth in an area not known for it.

“We often refer to the north shore of Staten Island as the Gold Coast,” State Senator Diane Savino said at a press conference announcing the deal. “If that’s the case, then Homeport is the crown jewel.”

Once home to Cornelius Vanderbilt’s first ferry service, the north shore neighborhood of Stapleton fell by the wayside after the opening of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge in the 1960s, which cut it off from much of the rest of the island. President Ronald Reagan tried to reverse the trend by proposing the Homeport Naval Base, a complex with one 1,410-foot pier, to serve a small number of naval ships. Homeport opened in 1960, but was closed four years later by the Clinton administration. In 1995, ownership reverted to the city, which has grappled with plans for the site ever since.

The Bloomberg administration launched a task force in 2004 charged with reviving the area, after Giuliani-era efforts had stalled, which led to a 2006 rezoning. The following year, the city’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC) released three RFPs, one each for residential, hotel, and recreational complexes. Officials said there had been healthy interest in the 35-acre area as recently as last year, with projects pending up until the financial markets collapsed. “That’s the problem with these rezonings, they take time,” Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said at the press conference. “But now we’re ready to move forward with a great developer.”

Meanwhile, the EDC has worked with WRT, Marpillero Pollak Architects, and Leni Schwendinger Light Projects on waterfront open space and infrastructure improvements for the redevelopment area. Along with the announcement of Ironstate’s involvement, the agency announced a $33 million commitment to the first phase of those improvements. (These aspects of the project had first been announced in 2004, with a budget of $66 million, but due to the staged nature of the development and budget constraints, the improvements in 1995, but was will be completed in phases.)

Ironstate president David Barry said he intends to break ground on the firm’s $150 million development by 2011, after necessary infrastructure work and the relocation of some of Homeport’s current tenants, including parking and storage for city agencies and some county courts. The Hoboken-based developer has numerous projects in Hoboken as well as in Jersey City, Bayonne, and on the Jersey Shore, many of which reuse industrial sites not unlike Homeport, the developer’s first New York City project.

Final designs by Central Jersey-based Minno & Wasko are still being developed, but the roughly 800 rental apartments will rise in two contextual blocks no taller than the currently allowed 60 feet. There will be 30,000 feet of ground-floor retail, aimed at creating a more urban feel and capitalizing on the waterfront appeal. In addition to LEED for Neighborhoods, the buildings themselves will pursue green standards. With rental stock on Staten Island limited, the developers hope to attract younger tenants and retain those who have fled the island in the past. One of the key selling points is a nearby subway station only three stops from the Staten Island ferry.

mc
MENTAL STATE continued from front page

million design-build contract to HOK and
Clark Design Build for the first phase of
construction on the site of a new 1.18 million-
square-foot Coast Guard headquarters
designed by Perkins + Will. The overall
project, which will include 6.2 million square
feet of historic preservation and adaptive
reuse as well as new building, has been a
cause of concern for preservationists who
feel that Homeland Security’s particular
needs will destroy the landmark.

Sited on a bluff in Anacostia overlooking
central D.C., St. Elizabeths was established
by Congress in 1852. Though it once housed
as many as 7,000 patients, including inmates
such as Ezra Pound and John Hinckley, Jr.,
the facility’s relevancy diminished along
with the decline in popularity of large men-
tals institutions. By 2002, the hospital had
moved its remaining residents to its smaller
east campus, and the National Trust for
Historic Preservation (NTHP) put the site with
its extensive ornamental landscape on its list
of 11 most endangered places. In 2004 the
GSA took control of the west campus, invest-
ed $15 million for emergency repairs to save
the historic buildings from demolition due
to neglect, and began looking for an appro-
priate tenant. Homeland Security, then look-
ing for a location to house 14,000 workers
currently spread throughout 33 offices in the
area, seemed to fit the bill. Not only did the
site, the largest federally owned tract of land in D.C., promise enough space for its vast
operations, but the campus already provided
the 100-foot setbacks required by post-9/11
mandates for high-security agencies.

“We couldn’t find any other federal need
for St. Elizabeths,” explained Les Shepherd,
head architect of the GSA. He also pointed
out that no private developer would touch
the site because of the massive scale of
its revitalization needs, which could cost
as much as $3 billion, combined with the
constraints of working within an historic
landmark.

But not everyone feels that DHS and St.
Elizabeths are a perfect match, and in spite of
a three-year review process that has seen
many adjustments to appease preservation-
ists, concerns persist. “They started with
6.2 million square feet and they’re still at
that number,” said Rebecca Miller, executive
director of the D.C. Preservation League.

The Center Building (1852) at St. Elizabeths,
designed by Architect of the Capitol Thomas U. Walter.

“The Coast Guard building will disrupt the monumental
urban development plan of 1901. “The Coast
Guard building will disrupt the monumental
setting of the center of the city,” said Ziehl, referring to the ambitious
urban development plan of 1901. “The Coast
Guard building will disrupt the monumental
setting of the center of the city.”

The Commission of Fine Arts approved
the Coast Guard headquarters and DHS
consolidation in 2008, but the project has
yet to clear every hurdle that stands between
it and the commencement of construction.

To handle the expected increase in traffic,
the GSA wants to add a new access road off
of Interstate 295, a passage that will take it
to the National Park Service land. “The
Parks Service has prevented them from seiz-
ing the parkland,” said Ziehl. “We understand
that DHS and GSA and the Federal Highway
Administration and Parks have all been
having meetings to work out a compromise,
but the National Planning Commission
has made it clear: The project cannot move
forward unless the access road issue is
resolved.”

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Look for the RED button
**Centrifugal House**

Left: A shade pavilion attached to the pool house made entirely of cedar garden lattice reinforces the idea of each building's integrity as an object.

Right, top: Board and batten siding plus gables respond to the client's demand for a sense of the vernacular, but their articulation is sleekly modern.

Right, middle: A porch carved out of the facade is angled toward views of a neighboring agricultural reserve.

Right, bottom: An exaggerated roof and gables in matching cedar minimize the impact of the 8,000-square-foot house.

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**Home Range**

Freely adapting from the languages of vernacular, art, and modernism, three new houses achieve a contemporary sophistication, where visual stimulation and creature comforts both settle in with ease.

By Alexandra Lange
Context is not always fixed, and not always what you expect. A West Village carriage house that’s had the same view since the Civil War may get ultra-2009 neighbors in the space of a year. Shelter Island, often thought of as an enclave of traditional architecture, has waterfront streets where some houses were built in 1970, not 1870. And the Hamptons? Shingle Style is open to a wealth of interpretations.

These three houses, all completed within the last year, and all by up-and-coming New York City partnerships, treat their respective contexts with respect but preserve a questing spirit. There’s no blank-slate modernism—Christoff:Finio hoped to save the historic back facade of the burnt-out carriage house before adjacent construction did it in—but also no maintaining-propert-value historicism. None of the architects want to admit a regard for the vernacular, but it creeps through in more abstract ways. There’s a utilitarian aspect to the carriage house befitting its historic supporting role. Both East End mansions have the square footage and wood siding of the typical spec house. But their plans twist and turn to make the most of their physical context, the landscape.

“They told us, ‘We want you to work in the vernacular language of houses in Southampton, the Shingle Style, maybe Shaker architecture,’” Pablo Castro of OBRA Architects said of his Centrifugal House clients: an investment banker and a film editor. “It was an uncomfortable moment for us. We’re always trying to run away from the idea of style.” The architects were given a program that kept growing and a budget that was static. While the clients had started small, they soon realized that for resale, the house had to maximize the potential of its five-acre lot. They ended up with seven bedrooms, a four-car garage, and 9,000 total square feet. Castro and partner Jennifer Lee turned to an early idea they had for the site, “the excluded middle,” a court between house and guest house that would channel views toward a neighboring agricultural reserve. They mashed this up with the narrow gabled communal houses of the Shakers and the oversize shingles of a Robert A.M. Stern, cranking the bar into the shape of “a donut somebody had taken a bite out of,” said Castro. “We still liked the idea of a vacant place where anything can happen. The house surrounds a void and spins out”—the centrifugal force—“toward the view.”

The clients liked everything but the curve, so the donut became faceted, with oversize dormers breaking the difficult geometries of the roof (and, to my eye, referring to the “vernacular” of the Venturis). Because of the budget, interiors had to be kept simple, but you catch a glimpse of the Shaker in the play of light on the white walls of the long, turning hall upstairs. The odd angles and extra planes created by the insertion of the dormers increase the possibilities for such effects, and the corridor, which hides the next door or window around each turn, is full of surprises rather than a long march. The house also has three custom soapstone fireplaces, hearths that add another geometry and focus to rooms that stray from the rectilinear.

Outside, OBRA Architects returned to shingles in search of a single material for roof and cladding (copper was their dream, but too expensive). “We wanted one material, one surface to give it integrity as an object,” Castro said. They ultimately chose cedar, board, and batten for the vertical walls, and shingles for the roof. Cedar was also used for the pool house, a double set of right-angle barn-like buildings, one solid, one roofed and sided in off-the-shelf garden lattice. Castro jokes that it is a “freckle machine,” but it’s also another twist on the requested traditional Hamptons architecture.

While suburban style has become fairly common on Shelter Island, you can tell from the street that the one thing the YN-13 House (pictured on pages 28 and 29) is not is a cookie-cutter, shingles-on-strofulds McMansion. If that’s context, Michael Morris and Yoshiko Sato of Morris Sato Studio want nothing to do with it. The houses across the street from their two-acre Shelter Island site are the ambitious architecture of an earlier era—Norman Jaffe’s 1972 three-house development, in which one is Corbusian, one Wrightian, and one has the overscaled shingle roof that came to be Jaffe’s own calling card. “That’s the one we like the best,” Morris said. For their own site, on which they are constructing two 6,000-square-foot spec houses, “we decided to make contemporary forms of our choosing, and to have them fuse into the local ecology by being part of that fabric.”

Boulders unearthed on the site will become retaining walls, and the windows that pop and pock the bleached cedar siding are oriented toward particular points of view and times of day. “In the center, we have a large cut in the volume, so what would be the darkest part of the house has direct sunlight coming in,” Sato explained. The four corners of the main floor all have doors that slide open (an oblique reference to Japanese shoji screens), allowing the landscape in and natural convection to cool the house. “That is a reference to vernacular buildings. There are systems that are useful to understand from the past, rather than stylistic ideas,” Morris said. The floors, made of Kota Brown limestone, will also retain and radiate heat, with their cloth surface suggesting a rougher natural terrain and a certain 1970s au naturel aesthetic. Like the sliding doors, the vernacular Morris and Sato reference is Japanese. The exterior siding is an adaptation of the shitami-bari used on traditional urban houses in Kyoto and Kanazawa, which Sato translates as “downward-facing boards.” The horizontal cladding combines with vertical strips, allowing Morris and Sato to integrate the module on the house’s facade with that of the standing seams on the turncoat stainless steel roof. Rather than looking like a gable, the pitched roof folds down into the house on some sides, creating the illusion of Cubist-inspired flattening. YN-13’s closest neighbor will be their so-called Soula House, which serves as a gateway in the way they have developed the land, bringing the houses closer together and leaving the rest of the site untouched.

“There’s a critique of individual houses centered on one-acre lots,” Morris said. “We imagine the site as a proto-urban thing, the buildings working together.”

Christoff:Finio’s carriage house is another exemplary object within its landscape, though a minimum urban dwelling with a footprint of 20 feet by 20 feet and two floors.
The architects even shaved a little more off that miniscule square footage to create an "urban garage," a sliver of space behind a screen of flat steel ribs, each twisted 90 degrees, to provide a useful landing strip for bikes, bags, and garbage, and also a zone of privacy for a front door that originally opened directly onto Charles Lane.

The carriage house is owned by photographer Jan Stoller, who lives and works in an 1860 townhouse on Charles Street that now neighbors Richard Meier's third glassy residential tower and Asymptote's first. Christoff:Finio had designed a penthouse and terrace for Stoller to preserve his view once the Meier building was underway, so when the carriage house was gutted by fire, Stoller asked them to build a two-bedroom rental unit between the existing party walls. As he now had a terrace, he no longer needed the 12-foot sliver of backyard, which was turned into part of the architects' brief for the rental.

"What was fun for us was designing this tiny little house, but making it feel bigger," said Martin Finio. "We took the terrazzo-ground concrete on the first floor and extended it out into the yard." The wall-mounted kitchen also runs seamlessly from indoors to out, with teak cabinets and stainless-steel countertops. The windows are
YN-13 House

Shelter Island
Morris Sato Studio

Above: The architects wanted to give a sense of density to the buildings on the site, allowing most of it to remain open.

Below: Windows pop and all four corners of the house have doors that slide open like Japanese shoji screens.

Facing page, left and right: The bleached cedar siding of the house “fuses into the local ecology,” which includes a 1972 house by Norman Jaffe, while deep cuts bring light and breezes into the interior.
big, but for the sake of privacy (as much for landlord as for tenants), they start at the floor and extend up only four feet. The back wall is covered in unusually long slate shingles (more typically used for roofing), three feet by eight feet, which turn into operable louvers for the upstairs bedroom windows. The wall is really only visible from Stoller’s townhouse, and Christoff-Finio wanted to give him something interesting to look at, as well as refer to the clapboard siding more typical on a small house.

“When you get direct sun on it, the cleft edge picks up light like a line drawing,” Finio said. Since it was to be a rental, the interiors are sturdily generic: white walls, white bathroom, gray tile.

“What’s the vernacular of New York City?” Finio asked. “It’s always frothing and rebuilding. When we started building this project, we had this large glass opening on the front facade at the second level looking out at a brick warehouse. That came down, and Asymptote’s glass started up.”

In other words, neighborhoods can change, tastes can change, and so can architectural context. Curtains are forever.

ALEXANDRA LANGE IS A JOURNALIST, ARCHITECTURE HISTORIAN, AND TEACHER BASED IN BROOKLYN.
THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 7, 2009

SUNDAY 16 EXHIBITION OPENING
Bartosz Kurek, Yayo Kuwama, Eva Potthoff, and Mindy Shapiro
Marianne Boesky Gallery
535 West 22nd St.
www.marianneboeskygallery.com

THURSDAY 15 LECTURE
Johnathan Conlin, Marygine Daniels, and Peggy Parsons
Celebrating “Civilization” 12:30 p.m.
National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

EVENTS
Printmaking
2:00 p.m.
ADC Gallery
106 West 29th St.
www.adcglobal.org

Exhibition Openings
House of Cars: Innovation and the Parking Garage
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW
Washington, D.C.
www.rbm.org

Martin Puryear, Lee Mingwei,
OCTOBER 2010

ADIA MILLETT
THE BIRTH OF BARD
Misad Greens
531 West 26th Street
October 8 through November 7

Meaning lurks just out of reach in Birth of Bard, Adia Millett’s third solo show at Misad Greens. Photographs of previous installations and Millett’s debut film, from which this surreal show takes its name, use found objects to depict scenes ranging from the atmospheric (barred windows, shadowy cornices) to the disturbing (an ax embedded in a wall, a hand emerging seamlessly from the earth). Millett’s visual language is cryptic, but peppered with familiar symbols like rings, chains, stairs, and coffins. Alongside the provocative imagery is a site-specific installation called Sending Love (2009, above) that invites viewers to enter a faniful tableau in which a lamp’s light morphs into a painted field against the walls, while illuminating a flock of model airplanes that hover overhead.

THE BIRTH OF BARDO
ADIA MILLETT

Serizawa Keisuke
Serizawa: Master of Japanese Textile Design
Japan Society
333 East 47th St.
www.japansociety.org

OCTOBER 2010

EVENTS
Mark Making
2:00 p.m.
ADC Gallery
106 West 29th St.
www.adcglobal.org

WITH THE KIDS
Festival of the Building Arts
10:00 a.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW
Washington, D.C.
www.rbm.org

THURSDAY 15 LECTURE
Loretta Hall
Building for the 21st Century: Conserving Energy by Using the Earth Itself 12:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW
Washington, D.C.
www.rbm.org

Ellen Dunham-Jones
Retrofitting Suburbia 6:00 p.m.
University of Pennsylvania School of Design
B1 Meyerson Hall
Philadelphia
www.design.upenn.edu

Vishaka Desai
The Role of Museums in 21st-Century Asia 6:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Justine Kurland
This Train is Bound for Glory
Mitchell-Innes & Nash
534 West 26th St.
www.miandn.com

Barbara Sandler
Shooting Stars
2:00 p.m.
The Manding Project
533 West 23rd St.
www.pavelzoubok.com

Program of Everyday Life, 1765–1915
EXHIBITION OPENING
www.archleague.org
457 Madison Avenue
7:00 p.m.
Amphibious Architecture
Natalie Jeremijenko,
David Benjamin,
and Andy Harper
www.archleague.org
6:30 p.m.
MillionTreesNYC
www.archleague.org
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
6:30 p.m.
Ecogram II: Invisible Cities—Crisis, 1987–1993
Christian Werthmann
Hubert Klumpner, Margaret
Alfredo Brillembourg,
and Tradesmen
www.generalsociety.org
20 West 44th St.
6:00 p.m.
Chine & Read
547 West 25th St.
www.chineandread.com

FRIYDAY 9 LECTURE
Jee Yoon Paek and David Jinson
Happy Hour Project Presentation: Too Smart City 7:00 p.m.
The Urban Center
457 Madison Ave.
www.archleague.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Serizawa Keisuke
Serizawa: Master of Japanese Textile Design
Japan Society
333 East 47th St.
www.japansociety.org

Joel Meyerowitz
Legacy: The Preservation of Wilderness in New York City Parks
Museum of the City of New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

Kiti Kraus
Interval
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
1071 5th Avenue
www.guggenheim.org

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Jonathan Conlin, Maygene
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6:00 p.m.
177 7th St.
www.archleague.org

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ADC Gallery
106 West 29th St.
www.adcglobal.org

2nd Annual Saturday Night Party: Underground Up 8:00 p.m.
Art in General
87 Lafayette St.
www.artingeneral.org

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Mindy Shapiro
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National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

EVENTS
Printmaking
2:00 p.m.
ADC Gallery
106 West 29th St.
www.adcglobal.org

2nd Annual Saturday Night Party: Underground Up 8:00 p.m.
Art in General
87 Lafayette St.
www.artingeneral.org

WITH THE KIDS
Sixteenth Annual Family Party
American Museum of Natural History
Central Park West and 79th St.
www.amnh.org

MAPPING NEW YORK’S SHORELINE, 1609–2009
New York Public Library
5th Avenue and 42nd Street
Through June 26, 2010

Four hundred years ago, Henry Hudson discovered the river that would bear his name, venturing north almost to what is now Albany. Maps from his explorations of rivers and harbors are on display in Mapping New York’s Shoreline, 1609–2009, among other rarely viewed atlases, journals, city plans, and an animation that overlays modern buildings on the former landscape. Beyond their visual appeal, these documents tell a story of New York’s evolving identity and preoccupations, from the first maps, created to exploit trading and strategic advantages, to 19th-century documents charting unfolding urbanization (like the 1817 Plan of the City of New-York, above) and recent ecological surveys.
Projection is an exhaustive analysis of its own questions on ubiquitous computing and critical participation. Too Smart City is an assortment of street furniture that trip over themselves trying to be hyper-responsive: A street sign rotates to flash schizophrenic piktograms at you; a bench tilts you off if you try to lie down on it; and a trashcan throws unauthorized garbage right back at you. Breakout! is a Twitter feed and website that directs freelancers to temporary pop-up locations in the city where printers, wi-fi, and office furniture have been set up, so that people can have the camaraderie of work without the confines of a coffee shop. Natural Fuse takes the idea of carbon offsets and shrinks it to tabletop scale, with a grid of houseplants hooked up to a lamp. The amount of CO2 that the plants can process determines how long you are able to keep the lamp on. Use too much electricity, and the plant is killed by vinegar injection. Amphibious Architecture is a series of floating sensors in the East and Bronx Rivers that measure water quality and convey the information via different colors of light. The sensors brighten when fish swim by, and also allow text messages to be conveyed to the fish underwater. Finally, Trash Track adds RFID tags to over 3,000 items of garbage, and tracks them using cellphone towers. It visualizes the often-circuitous route of everyday waste, making the chain of disposal transparent. All the works have fascinating websites, but only the completely contained in the gallery is Too Smart City; the others are mostly installed off-site.

Fittingly for one of the last Architectural League exhibits to be shown in the august salons of the Villard Houses, Toward the Sentient City has the lively feel of a studio in the days before the final crit. Surrounded by whirring objects, video projections, diagrams, and people with laptops, wandering through the gallery feels like stumbling backstage at a performance—which it is, in a way. Because most of the five installations are located in the city at large, the gallery acts more like a centrifuge than center stage, introducing us to the projects and then spinning us outside to find them. The installations offer different visions of an imminent future where computers are embedded into everyday objects, making the environment capable of monitoring our behavior, responding to it, and even directing it. By taking the emergence of the sentient city for granted, the projects challenge us to decide how we will perform when we finally find ourselves within it. Each of the five projects raises its own questions and puts them on a wall in the Stonborough House. This sounds simple enough. The first part of the book cautions us not to be seduced by the conceptual purity (like the Villa Rotonda). The two don’t mix. What results are things like L-shaped radiators stuck into corners, mysterious wall niches, and metal curtains on pulleys that disappear into the basement through slits in the floor.

This is not a terribly unusual situation in architecture, and Turnovsky provides examples of designers who, for various reasons, privileged one over the other. Adolf Loos centered his window on the interior of the Duschnitz and Mandle Houses, while in contrast Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach chose to preserve the symmetrical austerity of the façades in his Belvedere project. For Wittgenstein, however, who was so obsessed with proportions that he demolished the freshly plastered ceiling of a room to raise it three centimeters, a compromise was out of the question. To alleviate his angst, he centered the window on the exterior, and designed the wall projection (or “WP,” as Turnovsky affectionately calls it) to augment the proportions of the interior wall so that the window appeared symmetrical on the inside. This is simple enough. The problem is that every attempt to restore equilibrium on one wall of the house led to instability in others. This is in part because the house’s plan (which Wittgenstein inherited from the architect Paul Engelmann, who started the project was located on a traditional Viennese mansion, with asymmetrically displaced rooms surrounding a central entrance hall. This resulted in walls with irregularly positioned openings, which made it next to impossible to create interior elevations that obeyed the laws of symmetry. The Stonborough House is what you get when you try to force the interior of something empirically driven (like a British country house) toward conceptual purity (like the Villa Rotonda). The two don’t mix. What results are things like L-shaped radiators stuck into corners, mysterious wall niches, and metal curtains on pulleys that disappear into the basement through slits in the floor.

Through this, we get a rare glimpse into fin-de-siècle Vienna, which Wittgenstein shared with figures like Karl Kraus, Sigmund Freud, and Loos; for whom words, thoughts, and objects were signs of the tension between the surface of things and the deeper truths lurking just beneath it.

BRADLEY HORN is DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM AT THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK.
Shulman’s Joy

Visual Acoustics: The Modernism of Julius Shulman
Cinema Village
22 East 12th St.
Open: October 9

For anyone who was never graced by the presence and persona of Julius Shulman, Eric Bricker’s documentary film Visual Acoustics gives a precious and intimate entry into the life, work, and philosophy of one of the greatest photographers of modern architecture, who died this summer at the age of 98.

The film, which opens at Cinema Village on October 9, will certainly stir up fond memories for those who knew “Uncle Julius.” It reveals him as a master of the art of living, radiating a lightness of being and appreciation for the people and environment around him. It also reveals him as a stubborn and demanding artist who as a young man “took corrections” from Neutra and Schindler and was capable of giving just as harsh corrections to novices encountered on his projects or even on the filmmakers’ own shoot.

Visual Acoustics tells several stories in parallel—of Julius Shulman the humanist, artist, activist, and image-maker, and of the modern movement and Shulman’s major place in that history. The film cycles through the chapters of his life, from his youth on a Connecticut farm to his growing up, camera in hand, at the same time as the city of Los Angeles. It chronicles Shulman finding his calling with the making of a photo of an early Neutra house, and the world of collaborations to follow.

Shulman’s chronology is interwoven with that of the history and ambition of the European modern movement and the rise of California modernism through animated “visual symphonies,” designed by New York motion graphics specialists Trollback + Company. Incorporating Shulman’s images, historical photos, and text, the animation work is subtle in its attempt to formally weave structure of both image and architecture.

This subtle play is jarringly interrupted with a brief series of Monty Python-esque collages used to wittily present historical facts about the movement and the volume of images produced over his career. Here we are given insight into the quality of space in which he worked, the personal relationships with all those around him—his daughter, gallerists, and work associates—and the volume of images produced over his career. The man and his glass treasure-trove of images impressed Bricker at their first meeting, and in his film we see this archive being prepared for its future life in the Getty Foundation Archives. But most of all, it is this last-minute glimpse of Shulman’s joie de vivre that is the ultimate strength and value of Bricker’s film.

BETH WEINSTEIN IS FOUNDER OF THE NEW YORK-BASED DESIGN STUDIO ARCHITECTURE AGENCY.
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When the Norwegian Opera House opened in 2008, it stood in island-like isolation on the Oslo waterfront. The building-as-landscape created a new image of the country for people around the world, in much the same way that Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House announced Australia’s modernity. If Snøhetta’s building does not quite match Utzon’s in visual drama, it better it as an urban strategy, and as an impetus for a local change.

Snøhetta’s ingenious building is the first major piece of a complex plan to redevelop Oslo’s formerly gritty waterfront, known as Bjørvika—a plan that marries ambitious architecture with layered urbanism, all guided by a strong public temperamentally modest face is changing. For Norwegians, the redevelopment planning seems to meet in the U.S. Oslo, a city of roughly 500,000 people, is small compared to Stockholm or Copenhagen. Yet the tables have turned in the region, with an ascendant Norway largely insulated from the global economic downturn by its vast mineral wealth, while cosmopolitan Sweden and Denmark ride the waves with the marketplace. As Norway’s presence on the global stage grows, its capital city’s most public face is changing. For temperamentally modest Norwegians, the redevelopment of Bjørvika signals something of an arrival. For the rest of us, it shows how to keep urban momentum moving after the press has flown off to the next icon.

Clockwise from top left:
The plan for Bjørvika with the Norwegian Opera House sited at top; the opera house exterior; Snøhetta’s building-as-landscape; rendering of a new office by MVRDV, located near the train station; Herreros Arquitectos’ Munch Museum.

right: One Sunday last month, thousands of people strolled through the dimly lit concrete tube, a perfect place for a weekend walk, and another way to experience Oslo’s waterfront with fresh eyes. The old highway will be replaced with a landscaped boulevard, easing pedestrian access and reconnecting the city with the water and its emerging cultural hub. Behind the Opera House and across a narrow river channel, the new Edvard Munch Museum will rise, housing the country’s other great icon, The Scream. Designed by Spain’s Herreros Arquitectos, the muted building will also make the most of the area’s dramatic views. A new city square is planned for an adjacent site, so the collection of cultural buildings will mix day and nighttime uses, and tourists with locals.

The historic central train station adjacent to Bjørvika, a new office district, known as the “bar code,” features a block of buildings that are notched, punched, and eroded, including a new financial services headquarters by MVRDV, currently under construction. Nearby, new housing and retail will ring the fjord, but shipping and transportation have not been banished. A cruise-ship launch has been retained, and a major container shipping facility is being moved south, striking a balance between a working waterfront and recreational uses. Oslo’s integrated urban strategy seems so logical and simple. And yet one need only look at Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s Institute for Contemporary Art building in Boston, another waterfront cultural attraction meant to revive a port area, which sits largely alone, surrounded by stalled private development, to see how rarely good architecture and sound redevelopment planning seem to meet in the U.S.
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