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NYC Ponders Market for Plug-In Electric Cars

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The newest report continued on page 8

EMERGING VOICES 2010. SEE PAGE 13

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continued on page 5

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continued on page 6

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continued on page 3

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Sanctuary  
Pure form stirs the senses –  
USM harmonizes with your individual lifestyle.
It was quite the spectacle to watch Larry Silverstein publicly gash his teeth on 60 Minutes over the eight years of slow progress at the World Trade Center site, followed by Paul Goldberger lamenting that the Freedom Tower could have been a contender on the world stage, but instead won’t “look any different from an ordinary commercial building on a freeway in Houston.” Ouch!

Even in YouTube snippets, Silverstein’s February 21 outburst was an appalling display of hyperventilation being cynically presented as one man fighting the good fight, while 60 Minutes’ reporter Scott Pelley nodded in bobble-headed sympathy.

The idea behind going public was obviously a bid to sway opinion in the deadlocked arbitration over which party had dropped the ball most egregiously, the Port Authority or Silverstein Properties. About $2.75 billion is at stake, and so melodramatic displays (Silverstein called the affair a “national disgrace” and “a tragic waste of time”) were to be expected as the deadline for setting a new schedule this month fast approaches.

Big projects are daunting, but something apparently different has paralyzed the public’s will to carry on. Silverstein’s portrayal of doings at the pit are not inaccurate. All those who followed the project eagerly at the start as a form of therapeutic restoking of national confidence became quickly disillusioned by the consensus setbacks and backbiting. (This just in: Calatrava’s transportation hub is only 25 percent likely to meet its mid-2014 completion date. Add at least one more year, and remember it was originally scheduled to open in 2011.)

I don’t believe the inertia has to do with the tragic dimensions of the site. After all, from London in the wake of the Great Fire to post-Katrina New Orleans, the need to rebuild chunks of cities is often triggered by catastrophe. I think the real reason is a lack of education. We have forgotten how to make big plans (pace Daniel Burnham). The recent retrieval of urban planning classes from a subsection of traffic engineering to a desirable course of study is well under way in architecture schools, and yet it may not be happening fast enough to make a difference at ground zero. In a new book, Urban Design for an Urban Century (Wiley), there is a shout-out in the foreword by Marilyn Taylor, partner at SOM and dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, where she writes: “At last! Urbanism is in,” and properly notes that the defining quality of urbanism—unlike the go- to-50- year- active lifespan of most contemporary buildings—is that it shapes places for generations to come.

Architecture schools are responding to a serious need. The next step is to show the public that the design professions can and will engender the next generations of Hausmanns, Burnhams, and Wrens able to rise to any occasion. And with that, the Silversteins of the future will only have their own lack of judgement to bemoan on YouTube.

NEUTRA’S LAST STAND

I found Jason Hart’s piece on our Gettysburg Cyclorama building perceptive, imaginative, and touching (“Preservation is a Moving Target,” AN 02.02.2010). My father was most intrigued with the challenge to spend public monies on a project which, in the view of some Americans, “commemorated the fall of the confederacy,” and as such did not warrant being built in the first place. Our response was to kick the Battle of Gettysburg painting upstairs, so that those who preferred not to view it could enjoy the site visitation without mounting the ramp.

What then should be the main emphasis?

CLOSING THE CROSSROADS

continued from front page “Crossroads of the World,” while others complained about the new plaza’s cheap folding chairs. The experiment proved a hit with local businesses and pedestrians, though, and on February 11, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced that the plazas would become permanent. “The project gives a green light to pedestrians, to mobility, and to safety,” the mayor said at a Times Square press conference. “The new Broadway is here to stay.”

The city will also address the design shortcomings of the various plazas by putting out bids for short- and long-term improvements to them. In an interview, Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan said that her department hoped to have two RFPs ready by this month. One would be targeted at sprucing up the spaces with new paint, planters, and chairs, to be completed by this summer. “It can be very simple,” Sadik-Khan said. “I’ve seen amazing things done in the Netherlands with nothing but polka dots. And we did a lot already with nothing more than epoxy gravel.”

The other RFP will create a more permanent program for the plazas that includes public amenities as well as entertainment infrastructure in Times and Herald squares. Among other issues to be worked out, Sadik-Khan would not say how intensively designed the plazas will be. “That’s why we’re working with the best and brightest in the architecture and design fields,” she said. This RFP, however, will only be open to the eight “large firms” in the city’s Design & Construction Excellence program. While this could limit the range of opinions involved, it will greatly speed the process up, as the eight firms are prequalified for city work.

In addition to announcing the new plaza plans, Bloomberg and Sadik-Khan discussed a department study on the effects of shutting down parts of Broadway. In some respects, the results fell short of expectations: Travel speeds in western Midtown improved by seven percent, as opposed to the projected 17 percent when the plaza plan was announced last February. Sadik-Khan attributed the variance to changes made to the plan between modeling and implementation, such as a request by the Broadway League that traffic patterns be altered on 45th Street to accommodate theaters there.

Still, the mayor insisted that the plan worked, as not only did traffic flow improve, but so did safety and satisfaction in the area. Injuries to motorists declined 63 percent since Broadway was closed, while pedestrian injuries were down 35 percent, and 80 percent fewer pedestrians complained of having to walk in the streets.

DDEM NEUTRA

LOS ANGELES
Located in Ian Schrager’s Gramercy Park Hotel, Maialino is restaurateur Danny Meyer’s rendition of a Roman-style trattoria, reimagined for contemporary New York. The design, the first collaboration between Meyer and longtime restaurant designer David Rockwell, utilizes a rustic palette of wood plank floors, woven leather banquettes, and oak wainscoting reclaimed from a barn in New Jersey. Guests enter from the hotel lobby or a dedicated street entry, where a wine cellar also holds the Greenmarket produce used in the kitchen. A Pantone-inspired tile floor in hues of wine and mustard complements a long walnut bar in front with windows overlooking Gramercy Park. A portion of the kitchen is brought to the center of the dining room in the form of a *cucina*, where staff prepare traditional Roman fare (*maialino means “little pig”). All of the tables, chairs, and barstools are custom-designed, and Frette linens cover the checked tablecloths. A private dining area seats 22 at a long table flanked by wine cases, while commissioned paintings from artist Robert Kushner round out the dining-room decor.

JOHN LEIMBACH
Tom Outerbridge, general manager for Sims’ municipal recycling division, said the company wanted a marquee facility because of its prominence on the water—it is located on a pier at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, adjacent to 30th Street—and its importance to the city’s sustainability efforts. Sims selected Selldorf Architects because of what Outerbridge characterized as the firm’s “classic” aesthetic.

“There were a lot of very interesting ideas, but how’s that going to play 20 years from now?” Outerbridge said. “Selldorf’s approach is very simple and clean.”

Through a number of subtle yet creative maneuvers, the designers were able to achieve a unique, almost customized appearance for the project without straying far from the basic units they had been given to work with. “As far as the buildings go, we want to express the function of the buildings and let the forms speak for themselves,” said Sara Lopergolo, the principal-in-charge at Selldorf. “We edit selectively and push the detailing where we can.”

Organizing the 11.5-acre site was a challenge, since barges bring in most of the recyclables—with trucks serving parts of Brooklyn and Queens—while the processed materials are removed by trucks and, eventually, rail cars. The solution was a series of linked structures that begin with the so-called tipping building, where trucks and barges bring in materials under a roof that extends from the upland side out over the water. The processing building interlocks with the tipping building and links to a bale building, where recyclables are stored for removal. An adjacent administrative and educational building is connected to the main facility by a third-floor skybridge.

To add character to the structures, designers peeled back the walls of the tipping building to expose the structure within, which was painted a glossy black. The same corrugated metal panels are used on the processing and baling buildings, but the ripples run vertically on the former and horizontally on the latter, communicating that the buildings have separate functions. The administrative building mirrors a 4-foot concrete band around the base of the main building, and uses the same corrugated metal above, along with translucent fiberglass panels.

Encircling all this is 3.5 acres of green space. This serves a practical purpose, because Sims hopes to expand operations at the facility some day on a plot east of the processing building. But Sims and the city, mindful of the symbolism of the recycling center, are also striving for a sustainable operation. Thus, hardy native plants will be used to help retain stormwater. “Basically, we’ve created a park and carved out a space for recycling,” Lopergolo said.

Sims also felt strongly about incorporating solar power into the project. To accommodate the rooftop panels, designers realized that by using 70-foot columns on the upland side of the tipping building, compared to the 50-foot columns on the water side, they could achieve the necessary pitch on the 6,000-square-foot roof for an ample solar array. The inclusion of a windmill is also under study, and there has even been talk of using goats to maintain lawns instead of mowers. Because the project is located on public land, it is subject to review by the Public Design Commission, which gave preliminary approval on February 1. Commissioners were impressed by how much care had been put into what could have been a standard industrial building. “The design is very elegant and restrained,” Guy Nordenson, an engineer who serves on the commission, wrote in an email. “That is testimony to Selldorf and her team’s design and detailing skill and also to the city’s strong support for design excellence across the board.”

Selldorf admits the project was a big step for her firm, particularly in these difficult times for the design industry. “We’ve always tried to do a wide range of projects, but this is really important to me,” she said. “Like anyone, we struggle, but I would have wanted this job under any circumstances because of what it means for the city.”

MODERNUS
CUSTOM MADE MODERN
Modernus offers the largest range of custom siding, hinged and flush doors on the US market. Recently recognized by Architectural Record as one of the best products of 2009, Modernus continues to develop unique and thoughtful design solutions for its commercial and residential clients.
It became obvious that the only real estate we could control was on top."

Offerings at the new black box, named the Claire Tow Theater, will be by young playwrights delivering to a young audience at cheap ticket prices. The rooftop site actually has some prominence, since the Diller Scofidio + Renfro masterplan removed the bridge across 65th Street and added a tilting lawn behind Avery Fisher Hall. "Finally you see the Beaumont from the north," Hardy said. "It used to be the backyard. Now, it’s the north front of Lincoln Center."

Hardy will be building atop a structure he knows very well. Out of college in the 1950s, Hardy became an assistant to famed set designer Jo Mielziner who was working on the most exciting shows then on Broadway, including Carousel, Death of a Salesman, and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, for which Mielziner boldly hung the bed, a key player, out over the orchestra. "Architecture in the ’50s was so boring," Hardy said, "while Broadway was the creative center of all the interesting things happening in the theater."

Mielziner knew Eero Saarinen from their days as camouflage specialists in the U.S. Air Force, and the two collaborated on the design of the building housing both the Beaumont and the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater. "I was the rum-runner between them," recalled Hardy, noting that the intuitive set designer and the analytical architect did not agree on much. "It was an enforced collaboration."

What Saarinen—a master of the hefty structure—designed was more than adequate to support a two-story, 23,000-square-foot rooftop addition. The lightweight steel structure of the new theater rises up from the same pier columns and uses the same fire stair. "It’s almost as if an addition had been imagined," Hardy said. "It fits so nicely." The facade will be a layering of large cross trusses and glass, wrapped in a shimmery veil of slender square aluminum tubes providing shade (as well as points toward making the project LEED Silver). The idea was to contrast with the stolidity of the travertine block below. A terrace spreading out over a green roof will offer the most envious views yet of a complex loaded with vantage points.

Construction is scheduled to begin in a few months on the 131-seat theater with a budget of $41 million (90 percent already raised by the Lincoln Center Theater’s board of directors) and is expected to be complete by early 2012. All ticket prices will be $20.

Hugh Hardy’s rooftop addition to the Vivian Beaumont Theater.
The Fire Department of New York is made up of many brave men and women, but none are as trained or motivated as the members of the city’s five rescue companies. Unlike engine and ladder crews, which go out whenever an alarm goes off, the rescue teams are only called by other firemen when a real emergency is underway. If a building collapses on you, or you are trapped on a ledge, or pinned beneath a car, or your helicopter sinks beneath the Hudson River, these are the guys who will saw, rappel, hoist, dive, or do whatever it takes to get you to safety. They are the special forces of the fire department and they have special tools to do their job, but until the completion this year of Rescue Company 3 in the Bronx—designed by Polshek Partnership—no one has ever built a facility tailored to their needs.

“This was our first firehouse, even the fire department had never done a building dedicated to a rescue company, so this was uncharted territory,” said Guy Maxwell, principal in charge for Polshek. As a result of this knowledge gap, department brass gave the architects unprecedented access to the firemen to ascertain a program. This proved to be a challenge. The FDNY is steeped in tradition, and its members are not big on change. Furthermore, the rescue companies have a make-do attitude developed over years of adapting cramped and antiquated spaces to fit their requirements. Maxwell explained that when he first visited Rescue 3 to ask the company what they wanted, one firefighter produced a sheaf of blueprints for their current 100-year-old firehouse. “Here’s what we want,” he said. “Build that.”

Through repeated visits and conversations, the architects developed a functional plan organized around an apparatus bay. Apparatus—not firetruck—is what firefighters call their vehicles, and a rescue team’s apparatus is a toolbox on wheels whose compartments are stocked with jaws of life, diamond-bladed saws, pneumatic jacks, climbing rigs, sharing implements, scuba gear, and more. Polshek extended this concept to the building, creating what Maxwell terms a “giant toolbox.” Around the bay are rooms for storing and maintaining the company’s various implements. There is also a training area, including a climbing wall for high-angle drills and a fake manhole for confined spaces exercises.

The first floor’s hard materials—bricks and concrete—reflect this “dirty” program. Warmer materials, mainly wood, take over upstairs, which houses the station chief’s office, kitchen, dormitory, bathrooms, and fitness center. The architects also placed windows throughout the interior and arranged the rooms to create views into the bay. Skylights flood the interior with natural light, while maintaining privacy.

Rescue 3 is one of nine projects that the Department of Design and Construction has completed for the FDNY since 2002. The agency currently has three EMS stations either in construction or about to break ground, and Norwegian firm Snøhetta won a commission to design a facility for Rescue 2 in Brooklyn, though that project has been put on hold due to budget constraints.

AARON SEWARD

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AARON SEWARD

When Diller Scofidio + Renfro collaborated with FXFOWLE and Arup to revitalize Lincoln Center’s celebrated Alice Tully Hall, it took their years of experience and the rapid pace of steel construction to ready the stage in just 15 months. Now that the curtain has gone up to reveal the new hall’s acoustic brilliance, it’s clear that the performance began when giant cantilevers were set in place to suspend newly revealed rehearsal spaces—successfully isolating them from the concert hall below, but not from public view or from standing audiences sure to fill the venue for seasons come.

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METAL-MORPHOSIS

Guitars like to be known as bad boys, but last fall’s federal raid on the Gibson Guitar plant in Nashville was one black mark too far. Executing a search warrant in late November, Fish and Wildlife agents were looking for hardwoods, often used in making the company’s signature instruments, which now are prohibited under a recent amendment to a century-old law called the Lacey Act.

Originally passed in 1900, Lacey is the United States’ oldest fish and wildlife protection statute. In May 2008 it was modified to include new requirements for the importation of certain plants and plant products, including exotic woods. Among other things, importers must now submit a declaration of origin at the time of importation. Though the law, which aims to combat widespread illegal logging, became effective on December 15, 2008, its enforcement is being phased in as quickly as regulating bodies can manage, leaving retailers and distributors to examine everything from furniture and flooring to recycled wood products and appliances with wood trim. Even items with paper instruction booklets and those coated with chemicals containing tree cellulose, fiber, or extract will be included.

According to the Lacey Act disallow an innocent-owner defense, meaning importers who were unaware they had purchased illegal items, but who didn’t perform due diligence, would still face penalties from up to $500,000 and prison sentences up to five years. In turn, building owners will seek reimbursement from these distributors for their confiscated materials. The flooring industry has been among the first to see enforcement, and furniture importers have until April to comply. Statistics from the nonprofit environmental organization Rainforest Alliance estimate that 13 to 15 percent of hardwood furniture and flooring imported to the U.S. comes from illegally logged timber.

At the Surfaces floor covering trade show last month, Don Finkell, CEO of national distributor Anderson Hardwood Floors, said his company recently implemented a third-party verification process with Rainforest Alliance.

According to Finkell, third-party verification is the best way for a retailer or distributor to show that they have met the Lacey Act’s due care standards. The National Wood Flooring Association is also working with U.S. Customs and the Department of Justice to develop the Responsible Wood Product Program (RPP), a third-party audit process intended to lead to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for companies that participate. Seeking to dispel myths surrounding the new legislation, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) recently released a document outlining the misconceptions and realities of the amend- ment. The report emphasizes that Lacey’s enforcement is fact-based rather than document-based, offering some words for everyone in the design and building industry to live by: “Checking out and trusting your suppliers and the wood they are providing is as important, if not more important, than proper paper-work.”

HOW MUCH WOOD WILL NEW LACEY LAW CHUCK?

The Cooper Union’s new academic building by Morphosis architect Thom Mayne is not only rekindling the school’s ability to inspire new generations of art, architecture and engineering students, its dynamic, shimmering form is igniting the imaginations of all who pass through Cooper Square as well. Much of this energy is owed to the unique transparency of the building’s steel-and-glass double skin wall system, reducing solar gain while bringing to light the ability of architects, and of ornamental metal, to transform design aspirations into reality.

Transforming design into reality

For help achieving the goals of your next project, contact the Ornamental Metal Institute of New York.

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Architect: Morphosis
Associate Architect: Ezen Samson
Structural Engineers: John A. Martin & Associates;
Doldstein Associates
Photo: © Joseph David

CHARGED UP? continued from front page
from the Mayor’s Office of Long-term Planning and Sustainability, Exploring Electric Vehicle Adoption in New York City, looks into the potential of electric vehicle usage, taking into account a variety of factors, including the availability of new models, habits of early adopters likely to purchase the vehicles first, and the availability of charging infrastructure. The results point to obvious environmental benefits, but also to consumer roadblocks that could hamper adoption of the cars.

According to PlaNYC, the mayor’s comprehensive sustainability plan, by 2030 the city must reduce transportation emissions by 44 percent from 2005 levels, and electric vehicles would seem a logical solution. The study, prepared with the help of the McKinsey & Company, notes that the production of the electricity used to charge batteries could increase greenhouse-gas emissions at power plants. However, it finds that the decrease in emissions from gas-consuming cars would outweigh that impact, making electric vehicles an energy-saving alternative.

More intriguing is the study’s look at the behavior patterns of likely early adopters. The study found a potentially large group who would be willing to make commitments to accommodate electric vehicles. The group is so large, in fact, that demand will likely quickly outstrip the available supply. Because of this central speed bump, the report focuses its recommendations on educating early adopters before engaging other consumer segments. On the all-important question of charging the vehicles, the report found that most potential electric-car drivers preferred to charge up at home—allowing the city to forgo establishing a dense public charging network—but stakeholders will need to simplify the complex and confusing process of setting up charging equipment in private or commercial garages.

Fortunately for the city, early adopters also understood the higher cost of electric vehicles, so much so that tax incentives, in any form, are not recommended. Ultimately, low-cost actions like educating potential consumers, aiding them in installing the equipment needed to refuel their vehicles, and acknowledging early adopters were found to create the greatest impact on future adoption in New York.

The report comes out at the same time that inspectors with the Mayor’s Office of Operations have been using a fleet of ten all-electric Mini Es to make their daily rounds, part of the BMW Group’s year-long field test of 500 vehicles in the U.S. Those cars, which travel about 100 miles on a single charge, are currently plugged in at Sanitation and Transportation facilities where special wall boxes have been installed to recharge a completely drained battery in about two-and-a-half hours.
Congress founded the United States Institute of Peace in 1984 as an independent, nonpartisan organization charged with helping to resolve conflicts overseas. More than just a think tank, the institute sends people into troubled areas—such as Iraq and Afghanistan—to mediate among antagonistic parties, promote the rule of law, aid in the drafting of constitutions, and carry out other outreach programs.

If you’ve never heard of it, you’re not alone. The institute, which began life with a staff of 15 or so, has intentionally kept a low profile, operating out of rented office space in downtown D.C. But after 1989, when the collapse of the Cold War gave rise to hundreds of suppressed conflicts, its mission grew. The institute now has over 300 employees, and its face is about to become more public with the completion of a new, 150,000-square-foot headquarters on the National Mall designed by Moshe Safdie and Associates.

With its prominent location across from the Lincoln and Vietnam memorials, Safdie saw the potential of this building to become a symbol of peace. The trick was how to evoke a sense of serenity without reverting to overt symbolism. The architect decided to accomplish this with a series of white-domed glass roofs—a reference to the Jefferson Memorial—that during the day flood the interior with natural light and at night become glowing beacons on the D.C. skyline. The roofs cover two atria—one containing a public education center, the other servicing the institute’s private offices—with spans of as much as 80 feet. While the concept fit the design goals nicely, it ran up against the challenge of a tight budget, and Safdie worked hard with the structural engineers at Buro Happold and German manufacturer Seele to find a cost-effective way to create the appearance of continuous smooth surfaces.

The glass panels clip into aluminum strips supported by a grid shell structure of 8-inch-by-4-inch hollow structural steel sections. Depending on the stress demands, the wall thickness of these members varies from as little as 1/8-inch thick to almost solid. In Germany, Seele shop-welded the grid shell’s toroidal forms of tube steel in sections capable of fitting into shipping containers. These sections were bolted together on site atop giant scaffolding erected within the atria. The base building’s structure is poured-in-place concrete, and Buro Happold had to design sliding connections between the concrete piers and the grid shell’s steel to account for differential movement.

To give the underside of the roof the same smooth, white appearance as the topside no matter the time of day or weather condition, the designers lined the interior of the grid shell with a membrane of white PTFE fabric, a product from Gore called Tenara. In addition to its aesthetic value, the fabric membrane increased the roof’s insulation by trapping 8 inches of air, and lent the predominantly marble- and glass-surfaced space its acoustic properties. At night, indirect fluorescent fixtures at the edges of the ceiling cast light along the membrane, turning the roof into a giant lamp.

During the day, the membrane captures available light and explodes it in the interior, while showing the faint outline of the underlying structure. The dome-like geometries of the roof capture both northern and southern light—both cool blue and warm yellow—blending them on the interior for a pleasant and soothing luminescence—an old trick that Safdie learned when designing factory skylights with his mentor, Louis Kahn. AS
HOLL BUILDS AGAIN AT FLOOD DAMAGED IOWA U.

A Homecoming for Holl

The 2008 flood of the Iowa River heavily damaged the campus of the University of Iowa, including the school’s art building, which dates from 1936. When campus officials decided not to reoccupy the flood-prone building, they turned to Steven Holl Architects (SHA), the designers of a successful 2006 arts expansion building known as the Art Building West.

“It’s exciting for us to make a new building next to one of the campus buildings we’re most proud of,” said Chris McVoy, senior designer with SHA. “We’ll also get to shape a piece of the campus between the two buildings. The space shaped by the building is as important as the building itself.”

Before settling on SHA, the university also considered Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Carlos Jimenez, and Polshek Partnership. Funded primarily through FEMA recovery money, the new 110,000-square-foot building will include a variety of studios and foundries, as well as classroom spaces. The department includes both art history and studio art curricula, exciting, in the 2006 project, the architects tried to integrate through a “porous design,” according to McVoy, with interconnected spaces as well as connections to the landscape. A large section of the building is cantilevered over a lagoon.

In the new building, SHA also plans to use a porous strategy, but where that is experienced horizontally in the planar 2006 building, they want the porosity to read vertically in the new project. This will be achieved through skylights or atrium spaces cutting between floors. “It will be complementary but contrasting,” McVoy said. “Each project is a new beginning.”

The porous design connects interior spaces, while also linking to the campus.
BLAST FROM THE PAST
continued from front page

A cultural campus that is expected to draw 750,000 visitors to the Lehigh Valley each year. Called SteelStacks, the project is a result of years of planning by local group ArtsQuest and public broadcaster PBS 39 following the plant’s closure in 1995 and its partial conversion into the Sands Casino, open last year.

Philadelphia-based firm Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) will design the centerpiece of the public-private venture, a three-block area called the 21st Century Town Square. “It has to function as a very flexible space,” said Ignacio Bunster, the WRT principal in charge of the project. The square will be used for farmers’ markets, celebrations, and ArtsQuest programming, and will face an outdoor stage sponsored by the Leavitt Foundation for the Performing Arts.

The firm had its first workshop with stakeholders in February, and plans to deliver final proposals by late spring. WRT is working with a team that includes L’Observatoire International Lighting and artist Ned Kahn to round out a scheme of public seating, park space, and interactive educational features. Bunster said the project is advancing quickly, so that portions can be complete in time for the 65,000-square-foot ArtsQuest Performing Arts Center opening in 2011. The adjacent PBS 39 Broadcast Center is scheduled to break ground in June.

Paramount in the design process is a respect for the site’s industrial heritage. “We are keenly aware of the visual impact of the steel stacks,” said Bunster. “We don’t want to do anything to upset the views of them. Anything like lights or a pavilion for performances won’t be obstructing the original structure.”

Though the stacks won’t be altered, the plan includes proposals for the adaptive reuse of several Bethlehem buildings. The Performing Arts Center, designed by architect-of-record Spillman Farmer Architects, will use the factory’s 4,000-square-foot former blast furnace room as a multipurpose community space and a two-screen cinema. The city plans to transform the 8,000-square-foot, stone-and-brick industrial stock house, constructed in 1863, into its new visitors center. Phase Two of the campus plans would include a new ArtsQuest Festival Center located in the factory’s former turn-and-grind shop.

With a recent $250,000 grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, the project is attracting big-name benefactors. And as SteelStacks begins a public campaign for donations to finance the $42 million undertaking, more are likely to come on board. The site has made a powerful impact on the design team, too. “We do work all over the country on similar public space projects,” said Bunster. “There’s really nothing out there that has this history and setting.”

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Sculpture: Gyre, Thomas H. Sayre, N.C. Museum of Art
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The rite of passage for architects known as EMERGING VOICES has for 27 years told us whom to watch. The Architectural League-sponsored lecture series has been dependably prescient in its selection of talent on the rise, whether it was Morphosis in 1983, Toshiko Mori in 1992, or Teddy Cruz in 2006. Probably of even greater fascination is the map of interests that the series plots from year to year. The lines are not hard-drawn, but over time and retrospectively, they become clear indicators of the profession’s concerns and direction.

Last year, Anne Rieselbach, program director at the League, wondered if 2010 would produce more theoretical thinking and speculative projects. Intriguingly, that has not been the case. Instead, readers will find not only a broad geographical diversity in firms hailing from Vancouver to Milwaukee to Mexico City, but also that their commissions are spread all over the globe, from Anchorage to Beirut to China. Firm size is clearly no longer a bar to innovative ideas finding expression abroad. While intensity is the likely hallmark of these ambitious firms, an even more encouraging sign is the consistent commitment to finding ways to get involved from within the system—be it bureaucratic, academic, or social—in order to change not only buildings themselves but how the world is built.
With two projects under construction in downtown Beirut, the New York-based practice L.E.FT has found fertile ground for exploring spatial politics, along with a creative freedom that can be hard to come by in the United States. “Lebanon is much more forgiving, bureaucratically speaking,” partner Ziad Jamaleddine explained. “Even though it is a very traditional culture in certain respects, there is still more room to experiment.”

The firm’s three Lebanon-born partners—Jamaleddine, Makram el Kadi, and Naji Moujaes—have used that freedom to probe shifting social boundaries, whether at the scale of the block or the international border. The Beirut Exhibition Hall, now under construction, is designed as a placeholder amid a stretch of reclaimed waterfront destined for redevelopment. To reflect the potential of its surroundings, the firm is cladding the exterior in a custom corrugated, mirrored aluminum. “We're playing with the border between an uncertain interior and an uncertain exterior,” Jamaleddine said. “It will become an indicator of the urban growth around it.”

At the other end of the spectrum, L.E.FT proposed an evacuation plan for the entire Lebanese population using a fleet of barges that, once they have entered international waters, double as refugees with social freedoms typically barred on land.

The three partners studied at the American University of Beirut before embarking on graduate training in the U.S. El Kadi and Jamaleddine then worked at Steven Holl Architects for five years before launching L.E.FT in 2005. Having completed several New York interiors and a series of boutiques for the Intermix apparel line, the three-person office is now collaborating with Holl on the Beirut Marina as part of the war-torn city’s ongoing reconstruction. The mixed-use complex is a set of sweeping, low-lying platforms that extend the existing corniche as an “urban beach.” A landscape-driven logic informs the Baabdat Residence, scheduled to begin construction in Lebanon this year, with a spectacular rooftop roundabout that echoes the region’s agricultural terraces.

It is not in Lebanon but Norway where the firm has most inventively melded site and social program. Commissioned by the town of Holmestrand to connect its historic village with a cliff top addition, the architects proposed an urban armature along an existing pedestrian path up the hillside. Designed with Oslo-based Studio hp Landskap, the plan’s focal point is an exterior (no glass was needed, as the climate is so mild) in 107,000-square-foot building mimics the shape of its central element, the stage, surrounded by tight rings of bench seating. Bilbao then wrapped the brick form with photovoltaic film on the fifth floor made of tubes—representing a different sustainable system essential to the whole.

In 2004, she opened a private research studio, MXDF (collaborating with artist Ai Wei Wei, both with elemental forms), to continue exploring issues about innovative approaches to urban development. Work in her own practice soon attracted attention (the second floor made of tubes circulating with water—represent a different sustainable system essential to the whole. At the Inrapato Music Hall and Sports Center in Guanajuato, Mexico work, even traveling to B C with artist Gabriel Orozco and2009 Emerging Voice Derek Dellekamp and this year’s Michel Rojkind), to bilbao then wrapped the brick form with photovoltaic film on the fifth floor made, micas the shape of its central element, the stage, surrounded by tight rings of bench seating. Bilbao said, “I wanted to add spontaneous uses to the programmatic ones, so it would become a place people can really use.”

**TATIANA BILBAO**

**JULIE V. IOVINE**
Slade Architecture aims to convince clients that high concept doesn’t have to undermine function. Whether it’s a stair wall made entirely of plastic cells for hundreds of Barbie dolls, or another of magnet-friendly metal for the founder of Ricky’s drug stores, Slade manipulates perception and scale to make meaningful connections for both public and private users of a space. And the approach is working in projects from Coney Island to Inner Mongolia for husband-and-wife team James and Haynes Slade. “There’s always that relationship between the occupant and the artifact of the building, and that relationship is always at the heart of what we’re trying to investigate,” said James. Founded in 2002, the firm has completed a wide range of projects and, since its inception in 2004, has been selected for New York City’s DDC Design and Construction Excellence program. Their first project with the DDC, the renovation of a library at the Montessori Progressive Learning Center in Queens, went beyond the initial goal of book storage to include an assembly area for students. Overseas, Slade has applied their connection-centered design to Matta’s House of Barbie in Shanghai. “It’s a mix of cultures and times,” said Haynes of the six-story, 35,000-square-foot flagship prototype. “Barbie has a long history and many associations, but she’d never had a space to represent who she is.” Using architecture to anchor Barbie to fashion and design, the space aims to speak to females of all ages by folding historical references into a head-spinning contemporary aesthetic. In the cafe, acrylic chairs are screen-printed with the silhouettes of more classic seating, while the mosaic tile floor riff s on the koi scales of the original doll’s bathing suit. The emporium is, of course, permeated by a heavy dose of pink that seeps through to drench the lighting of the glass facade, as well. Selected to design a home for the Ordos 100 development in China, Slade opted to elevate locally ubiquitous brick through a simple geometric mechanism that, when repeated, creates a pattern and texture that constantly changes as light strikes over the course of a day. The volumes of the home are arranged to look longer or shorter from different points of view, using perspective and angularity to give simple architecture a more complex sculptural quality. Currently, the firm is working on two cultural projects in New York City: a building for a new shark tank at the New York Aquarium, and a masterplan for the Staten Island Zoo. In the design for the shark exhibit, Slade’s penchant for interactivity and boundary-stretching plays out in the form of an immersive landscape that will also serve as the entrance marker for the Aquarium on the Coney Island boardwalk. “It’s one thing to understand the goals and obviously requirements,” said James, “but we really want to take it as far as we can beyond that.” J ohn Lienbach

SLADE ARCHITECTURE

NEW YORK

BELOW, TOP: SHARE EXHIBIT BUILDING
CONEY ISLAND, NEW YORK

BELOW, CENTER: ORODOS 100 STACK HOUSE
INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA

STUDIO SUMO

NEW YORK

BELOW, TOP: JOSAI UNIVERSITY
JAPAN

BELOW, CENTER: ITAN HOUSING
HONOLULU, HI

The name “SUMO” is a portmanteau of the first name (Sunil) and nickname (Momo) of Studio SUMO’s two principals, Sunil Bald and Yolande Daniels. But it became unexpectedly appropriate when the New York–based firm started designing university buildings for Josai University’s many campuses in Japan. Included in an array of built and pending designs for Josai is a museum, dormitory, and school of management whose buildings are connected to each other and the larger campus. “Most Japanese universities are composed of these very inward-looking buildings and segregated departments,” Bald said. “Part of the reason we’ve been asked to do work there is that our interventions allow the university to rethink themselves urbanistically.” If SUMO’s 15-year practice is unusual for its Japan-U.S. split, it’s also unusual for its trajectory. Most firms graduate from residential projects to institutional and artistic work; SUMO took the opposite tack. Daniels and Bald started collaborating in the mid-1990s, drawing on academic work (Daniels teaches at Columbia, Bald at Parsons and Yale) to win competitions, starting with the MTA Arts for Transit in 1995, and were asked to design the Architectural League’s New New York exhibition in 2000. Their short but high-profile record put them in the sights of Bernard Tschumi in 2000, who invited them to help with a competition entry for a temporary new home for the Museum for African Art (MfAA) in Queens, which built their design in 2001. Several years later, they were invited to design the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporic Art in Brooklyn, completed in 2006. Lofts and apartment buildings are now a large part of the firm’s repertoire. A Harlem duplex features a trick they first deployed in the MfAA, in which they disguised doors by embedding them in wall recesses. Lessons from an art installation that SUMO created on the history of the shotgun apartment came in handy in 2007, when they were asked to design an apartment block in Miami’s Little Haiti. Seeking to create something that would be both attentive to the West Indian culture as well as affordable, Daniels and Bald designed a series of blocks made up of shotgun and Creole manor–style apartments. “Every apartment has a front door and back door that open to the outside,” Bald said, to make it feel more like a stand-alone Creole house and provide cross-ventilation. With an expanding residential practice, two teaching loads, and the possibility of opening a Tokyo office, Daniels and Bald have a full plate, but they haven’t abandoned their artistic roots. A series of exhibits, installations, and museum designs—from a sculptural folly for a Baltimore museum to a high-tech educational gallery in the MfAA—to keep SUMO busy and planting the seeds for future inspiration.

JULIA GAFF

STUDIOSUMO
For ten years before starting his own architecture firm, Michel Rojkind was a drummer for Akka Syntex y la Gente Normal, a Mexican rock band that signed with Virgin records and cut four albums. “Because I had been a musician, it took a while before they started taking us seriously in Mexico,” he said. Luckily for Rojkind, who co-founded Adria+Brid+Rojkind in 1998 and his current firm Rojkind Arquitectos in 2002, other countries saw value in his rockstar status, and more importantly, in his architecture. Now Rojkind has built award-winning designs all over the world, but the ones in his home country remain closest to his heart. “That is the thing about living in Mexico City,” he said. “It’s constant chaos, so you’re constantly inspired to improve things.”

Living in a city of nearly 22 million people also tends to lead to collaborations. Last year, Rojkind won a competition with Copenhagen firm BIG to design the new Tamayo Contemporary Art Museum extension just outside of Mexico City. For his new Tori Tori restaurant in the city’s Polanco neighborhood, Rojkind is working with industrial designer Hector Ersawa to create a new home for the popular Japanese eatery. The scheme weaves a double-layer steel lattice over an existing house, one of many being transformed into restaurants or shops in the recently rezoned area.

Responding to Mexico’s traditions and history while planning for its economic and cultural future is a large part of Rojkind’s work in his home country. The Tamayo expansion will point its cruciform shape toward Mexico City, presenting sweeping views from its rooftop while creating ample space and ideal environmental performance for educational and cultural programming below. A similar balance is reached by the architect’s design of the Nastlé Application Group research building in Querétaro. Because the site is protected by UNESCO, the new structure had to incorporate a portico with arches. Initially, Rojkind was not very interested in such strictures, but putting programmatic requirements before design work is the firm’s paramount goal. He created a group of domed ceilings with semi-spherical interiors that cut through exterior walls, revealing the saffron-walled laboratories below. (An earlier Nastlé project, the sculpturally folded Chocolate Museum, is pictured on the front page.)

Adapting studio designs and materials, not to mention timelines, to fit his Mexican projects is another challenge. For the Nestlé project, Rojkind had local workers fabricate the domed ceilings with simple steel parts instead of employing more complex manufacturing techniques. “I joke with my Swiss architect friends that I wouldn’t know how to work in Switzerland, where everything is perfect,” he said. “You have to figure out ways to make things happen here, and it inspires me.”

JENNIFER K. GORSCH

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“Discovered there were a lot of underutilized, leftover spaces that can really be given a new life,” La said. One that piqued their attention was a 700-foot-long steel viaduct which had been constructed in 1925 to support trolley cars passing over the Milwaukee River, and which now carries cars traveling at highway speeds. “We thought if we could make a pedestrian connection across this river, all sorts of things might be able to happen—like renewed retail and commercial activity on both sides, or possibilities for alternative transportation,” the architect said.

Working with a community group, they won grants to develop a plan for a footbridge hanging from the cathedral-like underside of the viaduct, which earned the nickname “Marsupial Bridge” for the way it resembles a marsupial baby clinging to its mother’s belly. The footbridge terminates in a public space outfitted with internally-lit, concrete-and-acrylic benches, where local groups have started holding film festivals and beer gardens. Without an indication on any map of its existence, the footbridge has nevertheless begun to attract a groundswell of public attention and was recently voted one of the hippest spots in Milwaukee. “We know we had made it into the consciousness of Milwaukee when we started to see it on the album covers of local bands,” La said.

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**Wisconsin’s lake vistas and Rust Belt downtowns catalyzed the creative vision of East Coast transplant La Dallman. Husband-and-wife team Grace La and James Dallman met at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design and began their partnership in Boston, but resettled in Milwaukee when La was invited to join the faculty of the University of Wisconsin in 1999. “Milwaukee is this very post-industrial city, yet it has the fertile specificity of being on the Great Lakes,” she said. “Since we’re here, we’ve been trying to tap into it and make things that we couldn’t make before.”

The 2008 Levy House, for example. A private residence just outside of Milwaukee, the house is located on one of the steep ravines that drain water into Lake Michigan. La Dallman responded to the site with a striking massing in which a second-story bedroom is cantilevered out over the first-floor living room. “The idea of the massing was to thrust oneself toward that view as much as possible,” La said. Since the first story is made up largely of (non-load-bearing) glass to maximize views, the architects employed a structural post-tension concrete system to support the entire second floor on a single column in the living room. A custom-designed Corten steel cladding shows off the natural coloration of rust, blending the house into its surroundings and giving the lake vistas top billing.

Milwaukee’s particular urban conditions have also proven fertile ground for inspiration.
the Nebutas’ washi paper shells and flexible wood-and-erina forms. After launching their softwall and softblock space dividers, they moved on to make variations of the collapsible, modular shapes for lighting and seating. They recently added LED lighting to their original concept of movable paper walls.

In the spirit of traditional shoji screens and the contemporary cardboard structures of Shigeru Ban, the studio continues a long history of finding strength in inherently weak materials. For the softwall and softsoating products, the paper erodes nicely, developing a patina like the pages of a love-worn book. But for other experiments like the softhouse, which was the first “soft” concept, proposed as a solution for homelessness, the designers said they still are trying to find an appropriately durable material.

Last winter, Forsythe and MacAllen built an outdoor public room of snow as part of the outdoor FREEZE exhibition in Anchorage, Alaska. The 84-foot Northern Sky Circle proved to be a favorite gathering place for attendees, who kept a fire going there around the clock. As their textile softwall goes on display this year at MoMA, the studio continues its research into finding innovative uses for commonplace materials, but without losing sight of the long-term value of temporary things.

Sarah Dunn and Martin Felsen moved to Chicago “sort of accidentally on purpose,” said Dunn, having graduated from the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in New York. The Windy City afforded them the better chance, the couple decided “to build and build earlier,” along with more opportunities to get involved in urban policy and put their ideas to the test.

They established UrbanLab in 2000 as an architecture and urban design firm equally dedicated to the practicalities of construction and to research into the postindustrial issues of cities like Chicago.

That city’s sprawl, its traditions, and its political system dovetailed with the way Dunn and Felsen work. “We wanted to create a multiscale practice,” said Dunn, “and there’s a history of doing that: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies, and Burnham are only the most famous. People here can do both.” They established UrbanLab in 2000 as an architecture and urban design firm equally dedicated to the practicalities of construction and to research into the postindustrial issues of cities like Chicago.

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At the smaller scale, the architects have designed over a dozen residences. While most are in the Chicago area, the Echo Park house is in Los Angeles and has a dual personality. An upper section of private spaces expresses all the cantilevering drama of a Case Study project, while an indoor-outdoor living room melds into the ground like “a landscaped object.” (The project is currently in permit review.) Through design and research, teaching and political activism, Felsen and Dunn want to show that architecture can shape the world not only from the ground up, but also from inside the system and out.

Through design and research, teaching and political activism, Felsen and Dunn want to show that architecture can shape the world not only from the ground up, but also from inside the system and out. In an office that’s six-committed-people strong (plus the couple’s toddler, who has been assigned her own job number), UrbanLab has followed through on projects large and small. Currently one of the most challenging is Growing Water, an investigation (funded by both the mayor’s office and a 2009 Latrobe Prize) into ways to channel street runoff back into the Great Lakes while threading a skein of linear parks throughout the city. “We want to use the grid to get off the grid,” said Dunn. For a competition in South Korea called Central Open Space, the designers generated a plug-and-expand approach involving some 50 different programs that can expand and adapt to fill a space eight times the size of New York’s Central Park.

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Through design and research, teaching and political activism, Felsen and Dunn want to show that architecture can shape the world not only from the ground up, but also from inside the system and out.

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Steven H. Hall
The Real Estate CEO
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Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

MARCH 4

ANNIVERSARY

MARCH 5

FRIDAY 5
LECTURE
Glenn Dixon
Black Box
Phoebe Greengrab
12:30 p.m.
New Museum
Independence Ave. and 7th St., Washington, D.C.
www.newmuseum.org

MARCH 6

SATURDAY 6
EXHIBITION OPENING
Moya Davey, LaToya Ruby Frazier, and A.L. Steiner
Through Other Lenses
6:30 p.m.
The Fales Library
70 Washington Square South
www.nyu.edu

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

MARCH 7
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Otto Dix
New Gallery New York
1048 5th Ave.
www.neugalerie.com

New Museum
6:30 p.m.
Independence Ave. and Hirshhorn Museum
12:30 p.m.
Philadelphia
www.philamuseum.org

Ivan Chermayeff
Kobe 1956
Cohen Amador Gallery
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MARCH 8
EXHIBITION OPENINGS

MARCH 9
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MARCH 30
EXHIBITION OPENINGS

MARCH 31
EXHIBITION OPENINGS

ARCHITECTURE WITH AND WITHOUT LE CORBUSIER

JOSÉ OUBRERIE

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Two exceptional works by French architect José Oubrerie, the last remaining disciple and protégé of Le Corbusier, are currently on exhibit at City College’s Spatzler School of Architecture. Oubrerie worked in Le Corbusier’s office from 1957 to 1965, and collaborated most notably on the Eglise Saint-Pierre in Firminy, France (above). Begun in the 1960s, the church was to be the fourth in a suite of projects as part of a progressive civic plan to transform the town. After Le Corbusier’s death in 1965, the young apprentice continued the design and, after lengthy interruptions, completed the extraordinary space in 2006. Working independently, Oubrerie also designed the Miller House, a surpassing example of modernist architecture realized between 1988 and 1992 on the northeast side of Lexington, Kentucky. A recent visiting professor at City College, Oubrerie designed the exhibition himself, including original models, drawings, photographs, and videos of the two architectural milestones.

OILAF ELIASSEN:
MULTIPLE SHADOW HOUSE

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery
521 West 21st Street
Through March 20

The Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson made a New York splash during the summer of 2008 with his freestanding East River waterfalls. The four aqua-follies embodied the artist’s frequent preoccupation with the intersection of nature and technology, along with our subjective perception of space. This month, Eliasson returns with another work at the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery that explores how we perceive the world. The installation Multiple shadow house (2010, above) consists of a simple wooden framework, with projection screens that receive steady streams of light from a projector bank along the opposite floor. When a visitor enters the space, multicolored shadows are cast upon the screens, shifting hues as figures move within the space. In a second work on display, Abstract afterimage star (2008), six spotlight project geometrical forms in blue, yellow, magenta, green, and turquoise onto the wall like a Constructivist abstraction, leaving afterimages in viewers’ retinas to complete Eliasson’s work.
There’s a moment about halfway through The Art of the Steal, Don Argott’s polemical documentary about the saga of the Barnes Foundation, when we meet Ed Rendell, the Pennsylvania governor chiefly responsible for wresting control of that institution and moving its paintings, despite considerable opposition, to a site in downtown Philadelphia. As Argott would have it, Rendell is a villain, the orchestrator of a vast conspiracy to abscond with an art collection valued at $25 billion. The Art of the Steal, however, is so imbalanced a film that Rendell emerges as a figure of admirably rational thinking, never mind the veracity of Argott’s charge. Like so many dogmatic visionaries—Frank Lloyd Wright and Ayn Rand come to mind—Albert C. Barnes had always had his share of ardent acolytes. A son of working-class Philadelphia, he put himself through medical school and made a fortune in pharmaceuticals. Barnes was a progressive in all things, at least by Philadelphia standards: He ran an integrated factory and collected Impressionist and Post-Impressionist French paintings. Before his 1951 death in a car accident, he amassed a trove that includes 181 Renoirs, 69 Cezannes, 69 Matisses, and 46 Picassos. (His interest in modernism seemed to halt with Cubism.)

In 1923, Barnes exhibited his collection at the Institute of Fine Arts, expecting a hero’s reception. Instead, he was derided, in the press and in Main Line drawing rooms, as a purveyor of tasteless degeneracy. Barnes was not the type to mollify his critics. He turned up his nose at the Philadelphia Philistines and took his toys to suburban Merion. His foundation, chartered a year earlier, would be devoted solely to art education. Even minimal public viewing hours—two days a week—were not instituted until the 1960s.

Having witnessed the Philadelphia Museum of Art absorbing the Old Masters collection of his friend John G. Johnson after his death—despite Johnson’s specific injunction—Barnes took extreme measures to keep his own collection from The Establishment. He had his lawyers draw up an ironclad will ensuring that it would absolutely, positively be held intact in the building Philip Cret designed for it, never to be lent, sold, or moved.

Barnes died without heirs, but his vision was upheld through the directorship of his amanuensis, Violette de Mazia (the film is vague as to the precise nature of their relationship). It was with her death, in 1988, that things started to go awry. Control of the institution was left to Lincoln University, a historically black college, and thereafter fell into the hands of Richard Glanton, a Lincoln appointee with grand aspirations. Glanton was the first to violate the Barnes trust, sending the collection on a blockbuster around-the-world tour, culminating at the hated Philadelphia Museum of Art. As Argott would have it, this was a travesty, but exactly why anyone should be upset, beyond the fact that it would have outraged the long-dead Barnes, is left unsaid. Glanton also engaged in a largely frivolous and financially draining lawsuit with the neighbors, who were displeased with the increased traffic to the previously dormant institution. It didn’t take any great visionary to see that the Barnes, with its priceless collection, weak governance, and shrinking balance sheet, was a sitting duck. In a deal apparently brokered by Rendell, Lincoln was bought off (with a $50 million new student center), and a coalition of Philadelphia nonprofits took over its board. In 2006, the remade Barnes announced it would be moving its collection to a $150 million new building on Benjamin Franklin Parkway, now under construction, designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien.

The merits of that new building are not addressed in The Art of the Steal—Williams and Tsien are not even mentioned in the film. More significantly, Argott fails to engage or even acknowledge the two central questions the Barnes controversy (and his film) raises. First, why should reasonable people be forced to live with the insinquent intentions of a man who’s been dead for half a century? And second, might the Barnes collection actually be better off in a purpose-built museum in downtown Philadelphia, where it will be far more accessible to the general public, and a boon to that city’s teetering economy?

What happens to artworks when their owners die? There is no subject that is more charged in the arts world as seen in the heated debates over the status of the Elgin Marbles and the restitution of artworks looted by the Nazis. The Barnes is a particularly trying case. There are, of course, good reasons for upholding the original Barnes intent, beyond a sense of legal rectitude. There is historical value to seeing Barnes’ works in their original context, and in a rarefied place off the well-trodden tourist path. But...
there can be no denying the public benefit, both for the city of Philadelphia and the general public, of opening the collection to a wider audience.

Argott’s film, while skirting these issues, frequently under-mines its own argument. In attacking the Philadelphia Museum of Art for its acquisition of the Johnson collection, for instance, Argott gives us a view of Rogier van der Weyden’s glorious Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John, as it was once exhibited in Johnson’s somewhat claustrophobic mansion. What we don’t see is its present display at the museum, surely one of the most dramatic Old Master installations in the United States. In the end, The Art of the Steal manages to elicit sympathy not so much for Argott’s argument, as for some of the dedicated Barnesians—teachers, critics, and friends of the institution as it was—who see themselves, with some justification, fighting the good fight against forces whose power far eclipsed their own. Perhaps this is not the legacy they wanted, but they could do worse. Soon enough, they’ll have a new museum. They might even like it.

ATTENTION MUST BE PAID continued from page 20
the elements of the prospective designs that ultimately didn’t work so well, and that led to their eventual abandonment. Dispensing with jargon, Ford demonstrates in lucid, engaging fashion the ways that well-formed architectural theory can be applied to actual design practice, for better and worse. Too often, especially in contemporary practice, the marriage of theory and construction can seem hollow or gimmicky, universe, and extends beyond its core subject to treading thoughtfully on issues of materiality and scale, rendering it all the more enjoyable as a general introduction to architecture for the lay reader or beginning student.

Ford's previous explorations, bringing elements of standardized elevations, perspectives, and illustrations of his proposed designs in a series of turned experiments to a purportedly cohesive whole.

Ford's arguments about maintaining the sure-footedness present in Ford's writing. Nevertheless, Five Houses, Ten Details succeeds on multiple levels. Ford has crafted a new vision for urban design! The OLIVIO offers Dark-Sky approved solutions for a range of applications, from architectural accent and floodlighting to roadway lighting.

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Left: Detail of steel-to-steel joints, House 4.
Right: Detail of steel beams and chimney, House 1.

In explaining the circumstances that led to his arrival in Virginia and the design of the first house (which is explicitly concerned with referencing the regional built vernacular), he invokes literary sources as diverse as Walker Percy's The Moviegoer and Robert Frost. Additionally, the book is illustrated with wide-ranging examples of the use of detailing in the history of architecture, and extends beyond its core subject to touch thoughtfully on issues of materiality and scale, rendering it all the more enjoyable as a general introduction to architecture for the lay reader or beginning student.

At the conclusion of each section of Five Houses, Ten Details, Ford presents simple out and the reader is left wishing the final house announced itself with the clarity and boldness that marked the aborted designs, or at least with the sure-footedness present in Ford’s writing.

Nevertheless, Five Houses, Ten Details succeeds on multiple levels. Ford has crafted a fine study not only of an indispensable element of architectural practice, but also an illuminating look into the maturation of an individual designer’s process, and the elements of personal history that led him to approach design the way that he does.

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For modernist icon William Krisel, the last few months have been good ones. The 85-year-old architect, who has built over 40,000 housing units and countless other buildings in Southern California (most with his business partner Dan Palmeri), was honored in October with both the AIA California Council’s and the AIA Los Angeles’ Lifetime Achievement Awards. On February 14, a new film about his career, William Krisel, Architect (directed by Jake Gorst), premiered at Palm Springs’ Camelot Theater as part of the city’s Modernism Week. Krisel talked to AN’s Sam Lubell about these recent accolades and his latest ventures, as well as how today’s architects measure up to his own generation and—his biggest concern—the state of the profession.

The Architect’s Newspaper: You are known for being outspoken about the profession of architecture. Where do you think things are going now?

William Krisel: I’m 85 years old and I’ve been an architect since 1950, so I can really look back at the road that architects have traveled down and how they’ve taken the wrong forks and ended up in a ditch. My general feeling is that architects in the old days were the captains of the team. That meant that any building venture where the architect was involved, he was the captain. He picked the team, he picked the players, and he guided the team to its conclusion. I like to think that the architect is like the conductor and the composer. We can’t have the situation that exists today, where all the various consultants are trying to do their own shit. You have to have a common purpose, a common goal, and a common direction, and you can’t have everyone doing his own thing. When the architect is not the head of the team, all these consultants feel they want to get their part of the job the way they want it. So there is no real master concept that an architect contributes. With everyone doing his own thing, you get a mishmash.

Architects have put themselves in this position. They’re not the captains of the team; they’re often not even players and sometimes they’re not even on the bench or invited to play. And the reason this happened was that they abdicated their role as captain. Historically, whenever a void is created, somebody fills that void. Today, the self-anointed “designers” have made themselves the captains of the team. A lot of architects are finding they need to say they are an architect and designer. My feeling is the public now thinks the architect is someone who just does blueprints.

How did this happen? When did architects begin to lose their dominant role? I would say in the late 1970s. Part of it came because of litigation and architects got scared of having too much responsibility. The truth is, the responsibility is shared with the consultants. If he recommends the consultant to the client and the client signs a separate agreement, then the architect is not liable for the consultant’s performance. The basic reason we abdicated those rules is that we said “I’m not sticking my neck out for those guys.” They didn’t know there was a way you could both. They were given incorrect advice.

How would you fix that? By architects proving their value and showing they can perform this role, which they used to. The problem is they’ve gotten away from it for such a long time that it’s going to be tough to go back. I think the AIA needs to start a public campaign to educate the public about the true role of the architect. It doesn’t mean other players need to disappear from the face of the earth. We need to use engineers and landscape architects. All of them play a role. But they can’t all go their own way. The only way to do that is to put the architect at the head. That means the architect needs to educate himself in all those areas, and know enough about those fields so that he’ll know what they’re talking about and be able to take their information and his design experience and meld them together. It’s a combination of architects and consultants putting pieces together to come up with the right design.

You’ve had great success working with developers, such as with Robert Alexander on the famous Alexander Tract. How did it work? Do you have advice for today’s architects on that front?

An architect has to first show a builder that there’s value. My key is that I told them I could give them good design but do it for less than they were spending. The only way to do that was to be knowledgeable about construction and construction costs. I built things on my own. I talked to builders and tried to convince them to use me. I found out how much a chimney costs, how much a door costs, how much a corner costs. When I was in college, I did a presentation on that and found I liked tract housing as a challenge. It was right after World War II and Southern California was extremely fertile. There were thousands of houses being built by non-architects. I saw it as a great opportunity.

Some of my friends were from builder families. I was able to convince one builder to go to his father and say we ought to try some of these. He thought we were nuts. He thought he’d teach us a lesson and gave his son ten lots and said, “Do your thing.” It was a big success and that opened the eyes of his father. This was Gordon Palmer. Once that was a success, all builders are like sheep; if the competitor is making money they say, “I want to do what he’s doing” and they came to me. At one time, of the ten largest homebuilders in the U.S., seven were my clients. I kept it going. I gave talks and slide shows, talked at building conventions. Builders all over the U.S. wanted what I did. I had to adjust the type of construction to fit the area. In Florida, I had to do concrete block. In Texas, they only wanted stucco over concrete block.

I always thought of myself as an architect who believed in what I was doing. After all these years, people have told me I was also a great salesman. Another problem is that schools have not prepared architects for the real world. I can’t tell you how many people I’ve employed who’ve asked, “Why don’t they teach this in school?” I’ve always appreciated USC for my education in architecture. Even though they were criticized about it at the time, they stressed presentation.

What is your opinion of today’s homebuilders and their designs?

Contemporary design has also abdicated its leading role. They allowed what we used to call Cinderella houses to come into favor. The great push forward of today’s homebuilders and the Case Study houses got overrun by some cute little houses. It’s amazing to me that the style of today is so far behind what they were in the ‘50s. They can’t even design a decent floor plan. The exteriors are awful. They’ve gotten bigger and bigger and uglier and uglier.

Is it true that a builder is re-creating your houses? A lot of them from Canada, Max Livingstone, rented one of my houses for his family in Palm Springs. They came to the conclusion that this was a pretty clever house. Then they started looking at Palm Springs and saw more of my houses and wondered why was what being built today so bad. They thought it was time for my house to come back. They contacted me and we made a deal where I licensed them to build my houses. I helped bring the house up to present codes. And we built the first model house. They wanted to build a tract but the land costs were too high. On the first day, they had an offer to buy the model at full price. They sold it, and then they sold four more. We’ve built a total of six so far, even in this economy when no one is building anything new. The designs are based on my Alexander houses. They originally wanted to prefab it, but the cost of shipping was too high.

Do you think prefab will be the future of housing?

I don’t think prefab will ever be (that), because I think components can be done better. I don’t think complete prefab houses make sense, and they can’t compete with stick-built houses. You can’t get the variety of models and you can’t build a tract of all one component. They look like container boxes with holes built into them for windows. I don’t consider Ray Kapp’s new (LivingHomes) prefab but custom houses. I think the future for tract housing is prefab components. You can come out with prefab variations on kitchens and baths that will allow you enough flexibility in floor plans and exterior designs so it won’t look like it’s a prefab house.

What else can architects do to cope in this economy?

I think it’s the period when architects should do exploration. If I were young, I’d be doing components and designing hypothetical tracts to take to builders and meetings and sell my wares. When everything is moving very quickly, most people don’t want to be innovative. They just do what they’re doing with the same twist.

Can you tell us about your new movie?

It’s an 88-minute documentary. PBS will air it. I’ve seen the rough cut and I’m very pleased with it. Some people were interviewed in the film, mixed in with pictures of my work. Jake Gorst is the filmmaker. He regarded me as an architect. He is extremely interested in architecture.
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- Reduce electric lighting load by up to 60% by integrating with Lutron’s Quantum Total Light Management to control both shades and lights

**Save energy with Lutron**

Explore the online demo of Hyperion and Quantum Total Light Management at [www.lutron.com/quantum](http://www.lutron.com/quantum) or call 1.888.LUTRON1

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