After winning the competition to redesign Governors Island in 2007, the team of West 8, Rogers Marvel, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Mathews Nielsen, and Urban Design+ toiled for continued on page 10

A FLASHIER FULTON MALL

While much of the New York real estate market may still be frozen, a bud of hope has sprouted on a troubled lot in Downtown Brooklyn. On April 7, the Public Design Commission approved a scheme by Cook + Fox Architects for a new, 50,000-square-foot retail building on the dilapidated Fulton Mall.

SETTING SAIL

After winning the competition to redesign Governors Island in 2007, the team of West 8, Rogers Marvel, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Mathews Nielsen, and Urban Design+ toiled for continued on page 10

City Takeover Primes First Phase of Governors Island

D.C. TROLLEY STATION SEeks New Life as Art Gallery

When Washington, D.C.–based architect Julian Hunt first started looking into the possibility of revitalizing the abandoned trolley station underneath D.C.’s Dupont Circle, he discovered that it was even more abandoned than it looked. Not only could no one tell him whose jurisdiction it fell under, the old station was no longer even on the city’s list of properties. “I couldn’t get a building permit for it because it had no registration number,” Hunt said.

The station had operated from 1949 until 1964, at which time it was turned into a Cold War fallout shelter, and was finally boarded up in 1975. Although proposals had surfaced to restore it over the following years, none were successful. Only one attempt got off the

COURTESY PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOC. COURTESY COOK + FOX ARCHITECTS

Concrete structures could draw scrutiny.

EPA fly-ash ban could stunt use of green materials

PAIN IN THE ASH

Over the past two decades, fly ash has become a staple of the sustainable building materials movement, but that could change if the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) goes ahead with rules proposed last fall that would designate fly ash and other coal...
AF NEW YORK PRESENTS AT ICFF

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NYC 2010
In early April, the design blog Dezeen started writing about the International Furniture Fair, the overflowing banquet of the newest of the new that takes place annually in Milan. Dezeen’s bloggers churned out some 80 posts, and were still going strong a week after the exhibition closed on April 18.

And all that in a year when economic difficulties made it impossible for the major Italian furniture companies to invest in costly research and development. So what was all the news about? There was Bertjan Pot’s sweater-upholstered chairs, Emeco’s chairs from recycled plastic Coca-Cola bottles, Sam Hecht’s CNC-milled Shaker-smooth chairs, not to mention the sponge lamp and the Japanese remote-controllable rinseless toilet. As always, it appears to have been a mix of solid design, high concept, and insane concept. One of the most talked-about presentations was a meta-meta-design: an iPhone app by Maarten Baas reprising his conceptual clock of last year. Mad random dash that it is, the Salone is still the best place for taking the pulse of design. (I regretted being unable to go, but was then relieved when scores of design colleagues were unable to get back thanks to ash from Eyjafjallajökull, a fine needle for a Milan chair if ever there one.)

In fact, the design pulse was rather slow this year, or possibly even moving elsewhere. In the International Herald Tribune, critic Alice Rawsthorn wrote in wary anticipation of the fair: “Does the world need another chair?” She went on to lament that the fair isn’t as interesting as it once was, because “design’s intellectual focus has swung away from producing tangible things, like furniture, toward the abstract process of applying design thinking to ethical issues, such as social, environmental, or humanitarian problems, and developing sexy new technologies, like data visualization.” Similarly, Bill Moggridge, the new director of the Cooper-Hewitt, talks with Chee Pearlman in an interview on page 38 of this issue about his goal to present design as a method for solving problems in the private, public, and political realms. The theme of the museum’s Design Triennial, opening on May 14, is “Why Design Now?”

Involvement in the issues of the day has been weighing on the minds of architects and engineers, too, with Rising Currents at the Museum of Modern Art an exemplary case study in how design can solve problems and make for memorable place-making, too. There is an opportunity to spread the mantra about design thinking, and everyone sees it. And yet a word of caution is in order. I am heading this week for a panel at the Center for Architecture on the state of the design media, where one of the questions on the slate asks if “sustainability or innovation detract from the conversation about architectural form?” I hope that going forward with design thinking, sustainability, data visualization, or any other innovation will never become divorced from architects making form. More than ever, we need to inhabit a both/and as opposed to an either/or world.

JULIE V. IVOINE

ARTS ON THE RISE continued from front page to help fund new and rehabilitated theaters, museums, galleries, and live/work spaces that enhance creative communities and social equity—with one Manhattan project already in the pipeline.

Known as Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces, the ten-year, nationwide effort dovetails with the foundation’s long-term mission to advance social justice. “We really looked at the way that the arts would integrate more meaningfully with the rest of the work that Ford does to improve people’s livelihoods and aspirations,” said Roberta Uno, program officer for the foundation.

The current initiative builds on a recent package of grants made to New York City arts spaces such as Chinatown’s Chen Dance Center, an expanded Pregones Theater in the South Bronx, and the recently renovated El Museo del Barrio. As part of the new program, competitive planning and predevelopment grants of up to $100,000 each are targeted at groups aiming to buy, build, renovate, or partner in the development of arts spaces that can serve as engines of social change.

The grants are administered through the group Leveraging for Creativity (LINC), with applications for the spring 2010 cycle due by May 28.

Helping to signal its emphasis on creative communities, Ford has awarded a $1 million predevelopment fund to Artspace Projects, a Minneapolis-based nonprofit that creates affordable housing for artists. The group, which owns and operates 24 projects across the country, has two New York projects under way: a 46-unit building under construction in the Long Island Village of Patchogue, and a plan to transform the abandoned P.S. 109 in East Harlem into 72 units of housing for artists.

The latter project, expected to break ground late this year with a budget of approximately $60 million, is a prime example of the group’s multi-layered approach. “We tend to have multiple agendas in each one of our specific projects, such as affordable housing, economic development, and cultural infrastructure, as well as historic rehabilitation and green, sustainable design,” said Shawn McLearen, project manager for Artspace. “It’s kind of a win-win when somebody can create a project that does all of those.” Artspace is working with El Barrio’s Operation Fightback, a community-based housing group, as co-developer for the project. Buffalo-based Hamilton Houston Lowline Architects will lead the restoration of the Charles B.J. Snyder–designed school, along with Brooklyn architect Victor Morales. As with many of the group’s developments, it is tapping a diverse array of funding sources, including low-income housing tax credits and New York State historic preservation tax credits, along with philanthropic and other funds.

Mindful of the gentrification that accompanies”。
Located in southeast Washington, D.C., the 22,000-square-foot Benning Library is the first to be completed among the D.C. Public Library’s $225 million series of nine new libraries and seven renovations. Designed by Davis Brody Bond Aedas (DBBA), which is also completing a second library for the system, the copper-clad structure is terraced into the terrain, allowing access on both upper and lower levels. Extensive clerestory windows and a glass wall along the grand staircase maximize daylighting, while under an exposed ceiling, 22 feet at its highest, patrons enjoy translucent book panels, red Eames LCW chairs, slabs of pastel-colored IceStone, and a colorful mural painted by children from the area. “We wanted this library to work with the landscape and bring the community together,” said DBBA principal Peter Cook, who worked with late partner Max Bond on the project. The $12 million facility is designed to achieve LEED Silver, incorporating a green roof, displacement air system, and extensive use of renewable materials. An equally noteworthy feature, however, is the structure’s copper shell, comprised of 355 panels that will become greener over time—just as the roof on top.

MAD AS HELL (AND HERE’S MY RESUME)

British architect Keith Tomlinson resigned his RIBA membership to protest low wages in the profession and RIBA’s lack of leadership, after a firm advertised architect jobs at below minimum wage. News of Tomlinson’s act of defiance would probably not have drifted across the pond had he not followed up with a move that strikes fear into the heart of any institution, corporation, or government perceived to be abusing its power: He launched Architects Against Low Pay on Facebook, spreading the word among the social network’s 400-million active users.

Despite the timid name (who’s for low pay?), Architects Against Low Pay has a following of 1,500 and counting. Eavesdrop’s first impression was that it’s a sad-sack collection of demoralized designers begging the question: Who actually is the oppressor? Our friends at London-based Building Design (BD) are covering the subplots. BD quotes UK architect Marco Goldschmied: “[RIBA] has an overarching ethical and moral position to take and it can’t just abstain, or if it does, it makes it look feeble and unprincipled. Perhaps it can’t physically force practices [to pay more] but that’s a pretty small-minded view.” BD reports that Goldschmied was adamant that the oversupply of architects was the root of the problem, and he has urged the RIBA to lobby the next government to tackle the matter at the university level. Really, Eavesdrop has a better idea: Term limits for stararchitects. Six leaky, over-hyped, over-budget projects and you’re out, making room for others to take a crack at the profession. We hope the AIA is paying attention.

SPREAMING OF CUPS RUNNING OVER

Meanwhile, Eavesdrop is paying more attention to college newspapers. They report on the lectures that stararchitects deliver to rapt audiences of not-yet-under-paid architecture students, when the mainstream media isn’t looking. Doctoral candidate and journalist Will Cordeiro attended a Rem Koolhaas lecture at Cornell in April and delivered his critical assessment to The Cornell Daily Sun. Cordeiro gleaned from the lecture, “While the embrace of paradoxes has made Koolhaas’ innovative theoretical raids on architectural complacency a salient point of departure for a whole generation of younger practitioners, his provocative paradoxes that once shook up thinking in the field now seem pasted together in a flippant force practices [to pay more] but that’s a pretty small-minded view.” Eavesdrop rest its case.

SEND WAGE-AND-HOUR ENFORCEMENT TROOPS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

NEW NEA DESIGN DIRECTOR TO BOOST CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The National Endowment for the Arts announced the appointment of Jason Schupbach as its new Director of Design on April 14. Schupbach’s portfolio includes a range of grantmaking and design initiatives, among them the Mayor’s Institute for City Design and the Governors’ Institute for Community Design, as well as traditional design grants. He will also develop a new program called Our Town, which will help communities develop and support arts districts. Schupbach currently serves as the Director for IT and Creative Industries for the Massachusetts Office of Business Development, a state agency. In that position, he has overseen the development of new industry groups for creative workers and initiated a statewide design excellence program to overhaul and improve procurement procedures. Prior to that, he was director of ArtistLink, where he managed a statewide artist space development initiative. He has also worked in capital projects for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Schupbach holds a masters degree in urban planning and design from MIT.

“My career has been at the nexus of creativity and economic development,” Schupbach said. “The Obama administration and Chairman [Rocco] Landesman are interested in expanding the creative economy and leveraging design thinking to improve communities.” NEA Chairman Landesman indicated that Schupbach will have significant authority to shape the design program. “Part of Jason’s job will be to help set that agenda. At the NEA, I expect our discipline directors to have strong points of view and senses of priorities,” he told AN via email. “I want Jason to tell me what our design agenda will be going forward. That’s a large part, the job.” Schupbach replaces Maurice Cox, an architecture professor at the University of Virginia appointed in 2007, who bolstered NEA grants to the design community and helped launch the Sustainable Communities Partnership. Schupbach added that he wants to build on the success of the Mayor’s Institute, while emphasizing “real, implementable results.” He takes over on May 10.

ALAN G. BRAKE

EAVESDROP > SARA HART

REBECCAA GORDAN

THE AGENDA

BOOST CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Development, a state agency. In that position, he will also develop a new Community Design, as well as traditional design grants. He will also develop a new range of grantmaking and design initiatives, among them the Mayor’s Institute for City Design and the Governors’ Institute for Community Design, as well as traditional design grants. He will also develop a new program called Our Town, which will help communities develop and support arts districts. Schupbach currently serves as the Director for IT and Creative Industries for the Massachusetts Office of Business Development, a state agency. In that position, he has overseen the development of new industry groups for creative workers and initiated a statewide design excellence program to overhaul and improve procurement procedures. Prior to that, he was director of ArtistLink, where he managed a statewide artist space development initiative. He has also worked in capital projects for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Schupbach holds a masters degree in urban planning and design from MIT.

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ALAN G. BRAKE
MAKING WAVES

It can be easy to forget that four out of New York City’s five boroughs are located on islands. But a spate of waterfront issues coming to the fore in recent years—from the rise of parks and luxury condominiums where warehouses once stood, to debates over climate change, commuter ferry service, and vanishing maritime industry—have highlighted the complex and often contradictory legacy of the city’s waterfront roots.

In the hope of better codifying the continued development of New York’s 578 miles of shoreline, in 2007 the Bloomberg administration launched the Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy, or WAVES, on April 12. “When history looks back at this moment, it will be a pivotal moment for New York, not only its relationship to the waterfront but the way the entire city functions, the way New Yorkers live their lives,” said Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. WAVES involves a two-pronged effort led by the Department of City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation. The former will lead the Waterfront Plan first passed in 1992 and not updated since. This revision will make recommendations on what should go where on the waterfront—condos versus container ports versus wetlands—recalibrating those uses based on the developments of the past two decades. The plan will also consider new factors not addressed in 1992, such as climate change and waterborne transportation.

The revision will be shaped in concert with public outreach sessions conducted throughout the year in each of the five boroughs, as well as a meeting to address the city’s maritime community and its needs. The relevant government agencies—there are more than a dozen, which is largely why waterfront planning is so complex—will also provide input. This is the first in what is expected to become a decennial process, since a law passed in 2008 requires City Planning to create a new waterfront plan every decade.

As the second part of the WAVES initiative, the Economic Development Corporation is undertaking a Waterfront Action Agenda, a package of specific goals that will help reshape the waterfront over the next three years. “Think of it as PlaNYC for the waterfront,” said Venetia Lannon, senior vice president of the agency’s maritime division, referring to Mayor Bloomberg’s 127-point environmental initiative released in 2007. Lannon said the idea takes a similar approach, making specific recommendations such as a wetland mitigation bank (think carbon credits for wetlands) or easier permitting processes for waterfront construction.

“There are no standards right now, no single streamlined process for anything on the waterfront,” Lannon said. “If we can create that, we’ll be going a long way toward making continued improvements to the waterfront that much easier.” Both the action plan and Vision 2020 are to be completed by the end of the year, along with the creation of a 12-member Waterfront Management Advisory Board appointed by the mayor from stakeholders across industries and advocacy groups. MATT CHABAN

A FLASHIER FULTON MALL continued from front page which the team purchased from Coney Island developer Joseph Sitt in 2004 for $126 million.

In 2007, when the city was still booming, Albee proposed a 1.5 million-square-foot mixed-use project for the pentagonal site, which is bounded by Albee Square, Willoughby Street, Flatbush Avenue, Fleet Street, and DeKalb Avenue. Called City Point, the former Albee Mall had been demolished by the developers in 2008, prior to the project’s hiatus. This left a gaping hole in the urban fabric of downtown Brooklyn, a wound the designers at Cook + Fox have worked diligently to mend.

“When the project became a phased project, we took a step back and designed a building that held the urban space on Albee Square and Fulton,” said Cook + Fox partner Rick Cook. “The goal was to create something that sits well between the Dime Savings Bank and an adjacent white terra-cotta building.”

In stories, the design steps down toward DeKalb and Fleet, opening up to remain contextual with the adjacent structures. The building’s white terra-cotta cladding also echoes these neighbors. A glazed corner maintains views to the Dime bank, while the large windows provide places for the commercial signage that once lent visual energy to the Albee Mall.

The commission’s support opens the way for construction to begin. Community Board 2 approved the project in February, and Travers expects the first phase to break ground in May. The second phase, which will include 500,000 square feet of retail and residential space, is expected to move ahead in the next 12 to 24 months.

AARON SEWARD

The Brooklyn Cruise Terminal and American Stevedoring on Red Hook’s waterfront. METAL MORPHOSIS

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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Associate Architect: Gruzen Samton
Structural Engineers: John A. Martin & Associates; Goldstein Associates
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A NEW CENTURY
SUKKAHS FOR
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COMPETITION TO REIMAGINE
ANCIENT JEWISH STRUCTURE
SUKKAHs FOR
A NEW CENTURY

A food court called Dupont Down Under opened in 1996, but folded in less than a year, leaving behind a trail of litigation, embarrassing the city, and scaring off potential developers. The shells of kiosks from that short-lived food court still litter the station’s tunnel system. Twenty feet below street level, the system consists of two 27-foot-wide, 500-foot-long curved station platforms connected by 18-foot-wide tunnels. Together they form a total circuit of slightly over a half-mile, all made of concrete, with tiled walls. Having just returned to D.C. after a decade of practicing architecture in Barcelona, Hunt was inspired by that city’s ambitious approach to public spaces and public art, and moved to reclaim what he dubbed the “failed space” of the trolley station. In 2008, he launched the Arts Coalition for Dupont Underground, a nonprofit devoted to turning the station into a vibrant public art gallery and event space that would also offer community services like a Media Lab and arts education for children.

Dupont Underground is proposing that the two wider platforms be turned into primary galleries that are finished, well-lit and ventilated, and possibly opened up to the surface to let in sunlight. The narrower connecting tunnels would be secondary galleries. “These would make beautiful linear galleries. It’s a difficult shape, but it’s really predisposed to linear presentations,” Hunt said. Although there are already exits to the surface from the platforms, building staircases from the tunnels up through the sidewalk would be trickier, Hunt acknowledged. In total, he estimates the build-out will require about $100 million.

Dupont Underground’s campaigning finally swayed the D.C. city government. On March 31, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development released a Request for Proposals to turn the station into “a great urban destination,” but cautioned that proposals could not rely on any public funding. Hunt is working with a team of about 20 lawyers, architects, and real estate brokers to maximize Dupont Underground’s chances of being awarded the RFP. To add weight to their proposal, Hunt has begun negotiating with institutions such as the Hirshhorn Museum, the Corcoran Museum of Art, and the Phillips Collection, discussing possible collaborations that could include offering underground gallery space for a museum-produced show, or drawing upon the museums’ curatorial expertise for an independent exhibition.

Although Dupont Underground will not find out if they won the RFP until after the June 3 deadline, even to have sparked the launch of the RFP is a major step. “There is enormous inertia acting against projects like this. It’s just easier to leave them buried,” he said. “It takes a lot of convincing over a long period of time so that people can see the potential of a site like this.”

Joshua Foer, a journalist and younger brother to novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, wants to bring back the harvest festival of Sukkot. It is a practice constructed in the fields in ancient times during the season of the harvest. Jews were commanded by Talmudic law to build sukkahs, the traditional shelters for a weeklong festival that is one of the most ancient and enduring Jewish holidays. “I think it’s a celebration of optimism, of practicing architecture in Barcelona, Hunt was inspired by that city’s ambitious approach to public spaces and public art, and moved to reclaim what he dubbed the “failed space” of the trolley station. In 2008, he launched the Arts Coalition for Dupont Underground, a nonprofit devoted to turning the station into a vibrant public art gallery and event space that would also offer community services like a Media Lab and arts education for children.

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“We’re really hoping for a radicalized reaction to each of the constraints,” said de Monchaux. The 30 or so constraints, each of which has thousands of historical variations and interpretations, both rabbinical and architectural, can be found at sukkahcity.com, where entrants can find out if they won the RFP until after the July 1 deadline, with decisions due a month later. The jury is impressive, including London designer Ron Arad, ARO’s Adam Yarinsky, ’81/’11 memorial designer Michael Arad, critic Paul Goldberger, and artist Maira Kalman. Reboot, an organization that seeks to reinvigorate Judaism through fusing ancient and modern practices, is providing logistical and financial support for the competition that will launch in Union Square and then move to Flushing Meadows. “It’s so deeply weird, to build something that has no real reason for being anymore,” Foer said. “And it’s precisely this weirdness that makes it so compelling and why it needs to be brought back.”

Succah City this coming Sukkot. From September 19–21, a dozen experimental sukkahs will be constructed in Union Square Park, created by what Foer anticipates will be a mix of the world’s foremost architects and artists, though the competition is open to anyone, goyim included. “My hope is that the ancient nature of this design and the bizarre design constraints and the ephemeral time frame are going to provoke vital experimentation and lead people to reconsider it, both in terms of design and spirituality,” Foer said.

For millennia, sukkahs have looked about the same. Three walls of specific dimensions and a roof made of organic matter—palm fronds, sugarcane, or cornhusks are among the common foliage—with more sky visible than wall. A place of hospitality and reflection, it exists for just eight days. And it is within these relatively strict yet open-ended constraints that Foer and his partner on the project, critic Thomas de Monchaux, hope entrants will explore. “We’re really hoping for a radicalized reaction to each of the constraints,” said de Monchaux. The 30 or so constraints, each of which has thousands of historical variations and interpretations, both rabbinical and architectural, can be found at sukkahcity.com, where entrants can register before the July 1 deadline, with decisions due a month later. The jury is impressive, including London designer Ron Arad, ARO’s Adam Yarinsky, ’81/’11 memorial designer Michael Arad, critic Paul Goldberger, and artist Maira Kalman. Reboot, an organization that seeks to reinvigorate Judaism through fusing ancient and modern practices, is providing logistical and financial support for the competition that will launch in Union Square and then move to Flushing Meadows. “It’s so deeply weird, to build something that has no real reason for being anymore,” Foer said. “And it’s precisely this weirdness that makes it so compelling and why it needs to be brought back.”

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SETTING SAIL continued from front page

more than a year to craft a park and public space masterplan for roughly half of the 172-acre island off the tip of Manhattan. Then last spring, just as designers were putting finishing touches on their scheme, the project came to a halt while the Bloomberg and Paterson administrations wrangled over control of the island.

Those languishing designs finally emerged from limbo on April 11, when the mayor and governor made a hasty announcement that control had been ceded to the city. The deal came so quickly that Adriaan Geuze, the West 8 principal in charge of the project, could not make it over from Holland in time for the press conference that Sunday. “Like all deals, it was at 99 percent for a while and then suddenly it went to 100,” said Leslie Koch, president of the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation.

The agreement frees up $41.5 million in city capital funds that should cover most of the first phase of the park plan. The focus is on improving open space and infrastructure within the 92-acre northern half of the island, which predates the 80-acre southern section built in the early 20th century from subway landfill. And despite the delays of the past year, it did offer an opportunity to observe park visitors last summer. “We spent a lot of time watching people on the island, and it was nice because it validated a lot of what we’d developed,” Koch said.

In addition to transforming swaths of asphalt into grassy knolls and a two-lane road into a waterfront promenade, the city will continue its efforts to reoccupy the northern section’s 52 historic buildings. That work will be handled through a set of RFPs separate from the park plan. Work on the open space is expected to begin in 2012, with the project staged to keep Governors Island open throughout the process.

“We’re focusing on creating an inviting entrance and preserving the historic buildings of what was a military base, and thus not the most inviting place,” Geuze said. With a few exceptions, such as a Rogers Marvel–designed information kiosk, the first phase takes a relatively modest approach to rethinking the island’s form.

The bulk of the new design work comes next, in phase two. “The southern island really needs a hands-on approach,” Geuze said. “There, a new identity will be forged. We’re working with nearly a blank slate.” For the southern sector, designers will create a new topography of rolling hills, some several stories high, that will protect the island from flooding while affording views of the harbor. Among other flourishes, Diller Scofidio + Renfro are creating a pavilion on the island’s southwestern edge that houses a cafe and amphitheater.

Within the southern part of the island are two lobes comprising 33 acres that will be given over to some form of development. (NYU has expressed interest in the larger zone facing Brooklyn.) It is possible that this development, which is not part of the current planning effort, could help fund the second phase of the park, expected to cost upwards of $230 million. Other funding mechanisms include city capital funds and other sources, though those have yet to be determined. The ultimate goal is to create a self-sustaining island through rent paid by the development parcels and the 52 historic buildings.

Some critics have called for parkland on the entire 172 acres, but Koch insisted such a plan has never been on the table. “This is not a park, it’s a development project, and it has always been envisioned as a development project with a mix of funding sources,” she said.

So far, the plan has satisfied major advocacy groups. “What we don’t want to see is a gated community, but that’s not what I think we’re going to get,” said Rob Pirani, executive director of the Governors Island Alliance, adding that the group’s main concern is protecting open space by making it publicly administered parkland.

“I think it’s clear the mayor wants this to be a major part of his legacy, so I really think we’re going to see a lot of energy and leadership over the next three years,” Pirani said. “It really is going to be a great thing for the island.”

The masterplan includes two development zones on the island’s southern portion:

Below: The new ferry terminal at Soissons Landing.
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LIGHTWEIGHT HYBRID SPANS ARE BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

BEAMED UP

At a recent awards ceremony, structural engineer John Hillman joked that the first Google result for the acronym HCB is “Holy cow, Batman.” But that may not be the case for long. Hillman’s invention, the hybrid composite beam (HCB), aims to change the way short structural spans are built, offering new possibilities for civil and marine infrastructure.

The 2,000-pound HCBs span up to 70 feet, are light enough to be installed with a large backhoe, yet strong enough to support a loaded freight train. The beams work like prestressed concrete or steel beams, but are made of a self-consolidating concrete arch and steel strands surrounded by a fiberglass reinforced polymer shell, which makes the beam waterproof and protects it from corrosion. After 14 years of research and development, Hillman, whose day job is with Chicago-based Teng & Associates, has installed his first permanent spans in Long Creek, IL, and on Route 23 in Cedar Grove, NJ. Innovative Bridge Research and Development (IBRD) program grants from the Federal Highway Administration funded both projects. Now the beams are about to be used in the longest structure thus far, the 540-foot-long, eight-span Knickerbocker Bridge in Boothbay, ME, a $5.5 million project to be completed in 2012.

“The state of Maine has been very supportive,” Hillman said. Initiatives by Governor John Baldacci have increased funding to the University of Maine’s Advanced Structures and Composites Center, where Hillman worked with researchers to test HCB prototypes. The only license for U.S. manufacture is held by Maine-based Harbor Technologies.

Hillman said gaining this type of regional acceptance is key to helping the technology take root. “We wanted to get a foothold in the U.S. and work through any manufacturing bugs,” he said. The HCB technology already has a manufacturing licensee for Canada and the European Union, with patents pending around the world. The Knickerbocker Bridge and future projects are expected to have an upfront cost on par with traditional structures, but lower installation costs. An anticipated 100-year lifetime would increase long-term savings.

Though the lightweight beams could change the way countless structures are built, HCB designs don’t differ significantly from standard structures. “We always understood that our new technology has to be compatible with existing technology,” said Hillman. This potential, coupled with the beams’ easy installation, could make them practical for use in developing countries, as well as a viable solution to the estimated 160,000 aging bridges in the U.S.

Among other new uses for HCBs, Hillman is now advancing them as green roof technology. For a major Chicago project, he hopes to replace the building’s roof using HCBs for the same cost as a traditional replacement, but with 20 times the load-carrying capacity and built-in waterproofing.

“Our industry is slow to adapt to change,” he said. “It’s common knowledge that it takes about 18 years to adopt a new technology. I’ve been at it about 14 years, so it’s almost time to succeed.”

JENNIFER K. GORSCH

UNVEILED

MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

The Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec occupies a prime Québec City site: a stretch of greenery between the St. Lawrence River and a lively promenade known as the Grande Allée. The museum campus, however, is a somewhat haphazard collection that includes a neoclassical building, a former city prison; and a glassy, 1991 pavilion. The goal for a 130,000-square-foot expansion was to unify this eclectic ensemble while engaging the urban fabric.

The competition-winning design by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) aims to create what partner-in-charge Shohei Shigematsu called “a dramatic new presence for the city, while maintaining a respectful, even stealthy approach to the museum’s neighbors.” Cascading gallery volumes step up from the Parc des Champs-de-Bataille, weaving together museum, park, and streetscape while extending each zone into the other. A glass-walled Grand Hall, set beneath a 65-foot cantilever, fronts on the Grande Allée to form a campus gateway, while foyers, bridges, and gardens further activate the perimeter. As gallery volumes step out, they frame an adjoining church cloister, and a below-grade passage-way connects to other museum structures without marring the streetscape—gestures in keeping with the design’s dynamic yet deferential spirit.

OMA’s New York office will collaborate with Provencher Roy+Associés of Montréal, as well as New York-based engineers Buro Happold. 

ARCHITECT: OMA
CLIENT: Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec
LOCATION: Québec City, Canada
COMPLETION: 2013
On April 14, the AIA New York chapter celebrated the 2010 Design Awards with a now customary lunchtime fete at Cipriani Wall Street. Among this year’s 34 winners, seven were lauded with Honor Awards by architecture jury members Stanley Saitowitz, Gilles Saucier, and Julie Snow, including 41 Cooper Square by Morphosis and Gruzen Samton, and the East Harlem School by Peter Gluck and Partners, which makes a striking neighborhood addition with its Trespa-paneled facade. The jury also handed out six Merit Awards, including one to Stan Allen Architect for the Salim Publishing House in Paju Book City, Korea. Located in an urban wetland that’s also a vast office park for the publishing industry, the project draws on the bookshelf as a simple typology that preserves view corridors while standing out with a colorful double-skinned curtain wall. Among six interior projects recognized by jury members Brian MacKay Lyons, Glenn Pushelberg, and Brigitte Shim were the Trinity School’s Johnson Chapel by Butler Rogers Baskett and The New School Welcome Center by Lyn Rice Architects, the latter an inventive campus information hub with banks of LCD screens and a light-box wall that projects a bold presence on the street. The much-lauded High Line scored another laurel for its railbed, as urban design jury members Maurice Cox, Teddy Cruz, and Julie Eizenberg recognized James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro with an Honor Award. In the same category, dlandstudio’s BQE Trench: Reconnection Strategies for Brooklyn won a Merit Award for its sustainable approach to knitting together the neighborhoods of Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, and Red Hook with a green armature that wraps the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Check out all the winning projects at the Design Awards exhibition on view through July 3 at the Center for Architecture, with public programs on May 8 (architecture and interiors), May 10 (unbuilt work), and June 17 (urban design).
PAIN IN THE ASH continued from front page

...combustion byproducts as hazardous waste.

Contribution industry groups and environmental watchdogs see the change could jeopardize any industry that uses materials with recycled fly ash—namely wallboard, bricks, and concrete, in which fly ash can replace up to 25 percent of cement content in some bridge and foundation applications, in turn cutting millions of tons of carbon emissions created during cement’s production.

The proposal was sparked by a 2008 accident at the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Kingston, TN, coal plant that spilled non-concrete-grade fly ash sludge over 300 acres of land, and put pressure on federal officials to add new regulations about handling waste from coal-fired power plants. In response, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has been deliberating over the changes since EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson submitted them last September.

Currently, 43 percent, or about 430 million tons, of fly ash is recycled each year, a number that is expected to grow unless the EPA’s changes hamper the material’s use. And that prospect has caused strife within the Obama administration, which has made sustainability a top priority.

“We believe that the Obama administration and Lisa Jackson’s office are committed to seeing the growth of recycling of fly ash,” said Luke Pustejovsky, vice president of business development and product marketing for CalStar Products, a Newark, CA-based fly ash brick startup that has been among the firms invited to numerous meetings that the White House and the EPA have held on the subject. “They have even asked us what they can do to make it clear to architects, engineers, building contractors, and building owners that this is an absolutely safe product,” Pustejovsky added. “At the same time, they are in a difficult position because they have to balance several interests.”

The crux of the matter, according to Andy O’Hare, vice president of regulatory affairs for the Portland Cement Association, is that the nation’s patchwork of solid waste disposal laws has hamstrung the EPA. “Solid waste disposal is largely a purview of states,” he said. “The only way for the EPA to have any sort of federal oversight is to classify something as hazardous waste. Therein lies the rub.”

Though the spirit of the law may be to prevent more toxic spills, stakeholders worry that the letter of the law could turn fly ash into a material with the same reputation as asbestos or lead paint, leading corporations and other potential clients to shun it. “Corporate counsel tends to be very risk-averse,” said O’Hare. “There are some corporate counsel that will certainly recommend staying away.” The change could also affect the LEED rating system for fly ash and force states to rewrite some building codes. Circumstances would be much different if the EPA works with states to implement recommended programs for coal byproduct storage and disposal. Under that model, new regulations could be a catalyst for expanding solid waste recycling rather than hindering it. One potential model is in Wisconsin, where CalStar’s manufacturing plant is based and where the cost of fly ash disposal is high, encouraging plants to recycle as much waste as possible. “They look closely at ash preservation in their electricity generation,” said Pustejovsky. “There is a way to do it that doesn’t sacrifice the quality of the ash, so that it can then be used by cement makers and brick makers. They’ve looked at it as an environmental mandate.”

BOSTON MASTERPLAN TO GUIDE DEVELOPMENT ALONG NEW PARK

SEEDING THE GREENWAY

BOSTON MASTERPLAN TO GUIDE DEVELOPMENT ALONG NEW PARK

When Boston tore down the Central Artery and replaced it with the Rose Kennedy Greenway—the culmination of decades of work on the notorious Big Dig—it transformed downtown in innumerable ways. With the unnerving overpass gone, the city was once again connected with its waterfront and the attractions thereon. People and buildings that had long turned their back on this mile-long stretch in the heart of Boston discovered a new vantage, but also a void, one that the city seemed ill-equipped to fill.

Now hoping to reverse the fate of faltering cultural projects in the area, out-of-scale new development, and a park that remains relatively empty, the Boston Redevelopment Authority has just completed an exhaustive Greenway District Planning Study that makes recommendations for the future development of parcels along the greenway, with an emphasis on regulating building heights and density.

In many ways, it is an unusual effort for Boston, where development tends to take place in a piecemeal fashion, with each project being negotiated on its own merits directly with the redevelopment authority and the local community. But the greenway has proven to be a special case.

“There was so much political capital spent on getting the greenway built, I think there was a real sense that we could not proceed with business as usual, that this demanded a real plan with a real vision,” said Tim Love, a principal at UTILE, the local design and planning firm charged with developing the study.

The plan was effectively finalized at an April 29 public meeting, though its details were first unveiled in March when final height limits were set for roughly two dozen potential development sites. They range from four- and five-story buildings bordering historic districts like Chinatown and Quincy Market to 600-foot towers nearer to the Financial District.

But the design process involved much more than matching cornice lines. UTILE undertook a detailed study of microclimates with a heavy focus on shadows cast on the greenway to determine the best densities for each site. “Could you have your cake and eat it too? That was the gist of it,” said principal Matthew Littell. “How do you maintain the greenway and the value of the parcels around the greenway? How do you create that value without not so much that you’re chasing your own tail?”

Tail-chasing may have been inevitable, though, as the development community has come out in opposition to the plan, particularly on the harbor side of the greenway, where development has been capped at 200 feet. This flies in the face of one project in particular, the Boston Arch, a pair of towers proposed by developer Don Chiofaro and designed by KPF. Chiofaro’s original project called for a 40- and 90-story tower planned by a skyline at 710 feet. Chiofaro has already agreed to reduce his project to 400 feet, matching a neighboring 1960s apartment complex by I.M. Pei, but he has said he can shrink it no further, in part because of the $155 million he paid for the parking garage he hopes to replace. “It’s a critical parcel, that I won’t deny,” said Kairosh Shen, Boston’s chief planner. “I think everyone would like to see that as something beyond a garage, but not at the cost of the entire greenway.”

Still, it appears most of the city is pleased with the new plan, including Richard Garver, a retired planner at the Boston Redevelopment Authority who directed its greenway work.

“You don’t often find people saying, ‘Wow, that BRA is good,’” Garver said. “But this time, talking to the people who have been involved, I’ve heard so much praise for this plan. And that’s a man-bites-dog story right there.”

AT DEADLINE

THAT SETTLES IT

It has been more than three years since MIT took legal action against Frank Gehry for what a lawsuit contends were design deficiencies that led to leaks, cracks, and mold throughout the Stata Center, which opened in 2004. The suit, which also targeted construction managers at Beacon Skanska Construction and NER Construction Management, was quietly settled in March, and largely missed by the architectural press until an item turned up on Chicago Tribune architecture critic Blair Kamin’s blog in mid-April. A Skanska attorney told the MIT student newspaper that most of the issues had been resolved and that they were “primarily of design as opposed to construction.”

Kamin reached out to Gehry, who told him no money changed hands as part of the agreement, but divulged nothing more as to the terms of the deal. According to the student paper, The Tech, the suit was officially dismissed by the Massachusetts Superior Court on March 8.

PLATINUM GOLDSTEIN

Speaking of deals, Daniel Goldstein, head of Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn and the public face of Atlantic Yards opposition, found himself on the receiving end of one on April 22. That was the day when a routine meeting in court over a pending eviction from his Dean Street home turned into a $3 million offer for a 59-story tower joined by a skyframe at 770 feet. A day earlier, developer Forest City Ratner had reached agreements with seven remaining holdouts, making Goldstein the sole man standing before the bulldozers. Citing the needs of his family and the fact that the state already had the title to his property, Goldstein accepted the offer. It was a good fight while it lasted.

BOLLOCKS FOR YANKS

A new set of rules in Britain could make it nearly impossible for architects from outside the EU to land work visas in Britain, as the minimum salary for top-tier visas has moved from about $60,000 to $115,000. “This is a very high salary for most architects, and really restricts visas to the associate or director level in London,” former RIBA president George Fergusson told Building Design. American-born Rick Mather pointed out that he would not have made it over in the 1960s were such rules in place at the time, though the Home Office insists on sticking to the new restrictions amid concerns over immigration and job stagnation.
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Pity the architect who can do a good house. Ever since Le Corbusier dubbed it a machine, and Robert Venturi built one for his mother, the house has been the premier venue for the intimate encounter between architectural theory and the drama of everyday life. And yet designers as diverse as Breuer and Gehry have struggled to translate domestic success into work of equivalent power at the scale of skyline and landscape.

Such might have been the fate of Tom Phifer, a former design partner of Richard Meier’s whose own relatively young practice has been celebrated for a series of remarkably well-realized (and publicized) houses, especially prominent along the bucolic Taghkanic-Sagaponack axis of New York’s weekending periphery. In those buildings, expressive twists on technically performative elements like rainscreens and sunshades revealed the surprising material complexity of glass and metal, and the productive tension between a monolithic volume and a light surface. A recent campus pavilion at Rice University elaborated these strategies somewhat more grandly.

There are other smart effects: That peripheral facade, whose dull gray appearance first suggests monolithic concrete, is actually another Phiferian rainscreen—an off-kilter assembly of anodized aluminum panels, tilting in as they rise to the facade’s 26-foot height, and overlapping like shingles in plan. Within each tapering shingle-overlap is a mirror-shiny stainless steel surface; thus when viewed obliquely and especially in motion, the museum optically scintillates against its adjacent park and parking area. Secondly, and more soberly, the interior’s ceiling features an array of deep Rhino-modeled fiber-glass coffers whose rectangular bases define the 27-by-7-foot module of the gallery spaces, and whose tops resolve into not-quite-avoid oculi. Their winsome geometry served as the basis for Pentagram’s custom museum typeface. Featherweight fabric screens of varying opacities precisely modulate the interior daylighting below these skylights. But their main effect is one of uncannily indeterminate and shadowless depth: a moody and shapeshifting overhead landscape.

A more polemical or self-reflexive building might have tried to steer these elements and effects toward each other in search of a big idea. This one mostly defers to the art—whose highlights include a sturdy modern ensemble of Motherwells, Frankenthalers, and Diebenkorns; a pride of Rodins; and a Judaica collection of sublim magnificence. Thus it may be only over the curated lifetime of the building that one can deduce whether or how it accumulates more than the sum of its effects. But the greatest effect relates to more than the sum of its parts. In those buildings, expressive twists on technically performative elements like rainscreens and sunshades revealed the surprising material complexity of glass and metal, and the productive tension between a monolithic volume and a light surface. A recent campus pavilion at Rice University elaborated these strategies somewhat more grandly.

The feeling of free movement between natural and architectural landscapes is reinforced by an interior that operates essentially as one big room, with freestanding walls—many of them terminating a few feet below the ceiling—suggested but never fully encasing a series of galleries. In a graceful gesture, the usual control-point information desk is shifted far to the side of the main entrance, so the immediate encounter of the visitor is with art. The ceiling-mounted, casino-type surveillance eyes that presumably enable such operational fluidity are perhaps the only blots on an interior otherwise remarkably free of visual clutter. But it’s a small price for something almost priceless: the architecturally-conveyed message that the museum’s primary occupants are not its artifacts, but its visitors, and that when you arrive, you belong. It’s a feeling characteristic of public institutions at their best: perhaps not of every house, but certainly of a home.

THOMAS DE MONCHAUX

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In the early 2000s, when LEED was just becoming the official certification standard for green buildings, New York City put together a series of sustainable pilot projects to be overseen by the Department of Design and Construction’s (DDC) Office of Sustainable Design. Among this first batch was the Queens Botanical Garden by BKS, the Brooklyn Children’s Museum by Rafael Viñoly, and the much less flashy but nonetheless remarkable Sunrise Yard, a Department of Transportation (DOT) maintenance facility in Ozone Park, Queens. Meanwhile, local architecture firm Gruzen Samton had just finished researching the blue papers that became the DDC’s High Performance Building Guidelines. The firm seemed a perfect fit for the DOT job, which involved replacing two 1950s red-brick boxes with one facility that would consolidate under a single convenient roof all of the engineers and tradesmen who maintain the agency’s buildings. DDC wanted the project to achieve LEED Silver. Looking over its notes, Gruzen Samton thought they could do one better and win Gold. Today, this unassuming project, awaiting occupancy in a sleepy, working-class residential district, is in the running for Platinum, the highest designation offered by the U.S. Green Building Council. The architects achieved that result through a well-considered blend of old-fashioned industrial design techniques, 21st-century materials and technology, and the clever arrangement of programmatic elements. The roughly 27,000-square-foot, $26.8 million building accommodates three distinct functions, which Gruzen Samton broke up into three approximately 9,000-square-foot volumes: one contains offices for the engineers as well as locker rooms and a kitchen; one encompasses workshops for the carpenters, plumbers, and electricians that make up the maintenance staff; and the final volume is storage space for the various materials the trades need on hand, as well as space for certain vehicles that must be parked indoors. This balkanization of functions allowed the architects to tailor sustainable strategies that optimally meet the needs of each space. Daylighting lies at the center of Sunrise Yard’s green approach, and Gruzen Samton was able to almost completely reduce electric illumination by falling back on an architectural trope that is nearly as old as the industrial revolution. A sawtooth roof with north-facing skylights shelters the entire facility, allowing indirect daylight to flood almost every workspace. Beneath this luminous umbrella, the architects placed the program blocks in their most ideal orientation to the sun. The office area, which was the most tolerant of direct sunlight, was arranged into a rectangle along the south of the site. The workshops, where plenty of light was needed but glare was a concern, make up another rectangle along the western edge of the site, forming an L with the office space. The storage area, which could handle any amount of light and glare, was arranged into a square that fits into the crook of the L and abuts the facility’s parking area, making it handy for vehicular access. All of the glazing is made up of low-e-coated, insulated glass units, while glare-reducing treatments were applied on the workshop’s windows and control systems automatically adjust electric lighting levels in response to daylight. The building’s three-part organization also allowed the architects to customize the most efficient HVAC solutions for each space. The office section is the only area that is fully air-conditioned. The rest of the facility makes ample use of natural ventilation with high-efficiency fans. In addition, the shop and storage area have under-floor heating systems, which will lose less temperature, and recover more quickly, when the bay doors are opened during the winter. Altogether, Sunrise Yard boasts impressive performance. It saves roughly 65 percent of the energy of an equivalent building designed to ASHRAE 90.1-2001 standards. The daylighting alone delivers an almost 90 percent savings over standard 90.1. But that is not the only way the project has garnered LEED points. The size of the building was calibrated to avoid the requirement of cementitious fireproofing on the steel structure. A demolition audit was conducted, and a good portion of the previous buildings’ bricks and stone were used in the creation of a screen wall along the street designed by artist Samm Kunce, which represents the geological strata beneath Queens. Sunrise Yard’s Platinum hopes now lie in the placement of photovoltaic panels on the south-facing ridges of the sawtooth roof. The initial budget did not include funding for this energy-producing feature, but the Department of Citywide Administrative Services has stepped in to lend its support, ensuring that this little building in Ozone Park won’t do any unwanted damage to the ozone layer.
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The Original. The Best.
The founders of Situ Studio had plenty of practice getting their hands dirty before they opened their doors in 2005. Partners Sigfus Breidjord, Basar Girit, Aleksey Lukyanov-Cherny, Westley Rozen, and Bradley Samuels learned their way around a shop during their years as students together at Cooper Union’s fabrication-intensive School of Architecture. Now the five partners and their two employees move back and forth throughout the day between their adjoining drafting studio and shop in Brooklyn, often sitting down to tweak a digital model on their computers while still wearing their dust masks.

Situ’s conceptually-rich digital fabrication first found a wider audience in 2006 with the solar pavilions they created for the Scope Art Fair in Miami. For that project, along with the second and third pavilions they exhibited at the fair in 2007 and 2008, Situ experimented with the design of a “universal connector” that would allow a set of component parts to be joined in myriad combinations depending on location and program. Since debuting at Miami, each pavilion has been recreated in multiple locations, and they turn out differently every time. “The plan gets figured out on the back of a napkin or scratched in the dirt on the day of the event,” Samuels said.

In recent months, Situ’s balance between design and fabrication has been leaning more and more toward the former. But fabrication will always be an important part of their practice. A strong feedback loop exists between the two parts of the firm, with each informing the other. “We’re trying to erase the line between building and drawing,” Samuels said.

After seeing Situ’s solar pavilions in Miami, Brooklyn Museum of Art director Arnold Lehman invited the firm to design an installation for his museum’s 25-foot-high Hall of the Americas. Situ’s design, scheduled to open in early 2011 and stay up for a year, will break the colossal hall into an assortment of human-sized spaces. Stretched fabric will protrude from each of the hall’s 16 columns, creating asymmetrical discs that extend and distort the columns’ Beaux Arts ornamentation. “The hall needs some asymmetry. It’s a very symmetrical space,” Samuels said. The columns’ bases will be encircled with round benches and tables, turning the hall into a place to gather, not just a passageway.

For the Guggenheim Museum’s Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward exhibition last summer, Situ was tapped to create six models of Wright’s projects. Working solely from the architect’s plans, they designed each model to reflect the concepts each project represented for Wright. Because the Gordon Strong Planetarium was situated at the top of Maryland’s Sugarloaf Mountain as a destination for the then-new automobile, Situ’s model showcases the long approach leading up to the building. Situ kept the Guggenheim’s architecture in mind as they designed, embedding one model in a museum wall, and building another with a curving edge to fit neatly against the central space’s ramps.
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USM Modular Furniture
Few companies express an enthusiasm for architecture and design with the flair of manufacturer Vitra. Founded in 1950 as a furniture shop in Basel, Switzerland, Vitra turned into a furniture manufacturer and obtained production rights to the estates of Charles and Ray Eames and George Nelson—followed by arrangements with the estates of Jean Prouvé, Alexander Girard, Verner Panton, among others—quickly becoming a force to reckon with in the world of office furnishings. When Rolf Fehlbaum, son of founder Willi Fehlbaum and
now chairman of the board of
directors, became a leading
collector of chairs (well over
a thousand and counting) in the
1980s, it seemed the perfect time
to add a museum to the factory
site. Frank Gehry’s Vitra Museum
was a breakthrough building,
firmly establishing Gehry as an
architect with astonishing sculptural
insights. Then with Zaha Hadid’s
firehouse, her first completed
structure, the campus began
to emerge as an unparalleled
assemblage of globally significant
architecture. By now, there are
building facilities by Tadao Ando and
Nicholas Grimshaw, a Buckminster
Fuller dome, Jean Prouvé gas
station, and a new factory by
SANAA nearing completion.
Against this backdrop of interna-
tional talent, Vitra looked closer to
home for designers of a showroom
for the Home Collection and selected
the Swiss team of Herzog & de
Meuron, based in nearby Basel
but certainly no less significant in
reputation than the others. “This
is one of our most perfect buildings
since Prada Tokyo,” said Jacques
Herzog in a phone interview. “They
share a level of craftsmanship
that is it only possible to get in
Switzerland and Japan.”
The Home Collection launched
in 2004 includes both classics by the
likes of the Eameses, Nelson, Prouvé,
Panton, and Isamu Noguchi,
and also contemporary pieces
by Maarten Van Severen, the
Bouroullec brothers, Hella
Jongerius, and Jasper Morrison. At
the Milan Furniture Fair last month,
Vitra presented to considerable
acclaim a simple strap (borrowed
from Ayoreo Indians of Paraguay)
by designer Alejandro Aravena,
to be used as a minimalist seating
device when wrapped about one’s
knees and back. On a more practical
note, Vitra also reintroduced the
Charles and Ray Eames 1956
lounge, resized for modern physiques
that are at least four inches taller
and a lot bulkier than the measure-
ments of midcentury loungers.
Herzog & de Meuron’s VitraHaus
is not only meant to be a container
for these diverse collections, but a
welcoming destination positioned
at the entrance to the Vitra com-
pound in Weil am Rhein. Starting
with the most basic line-drawn
house shape, the architects trans-
formed an ideogram for domesticity
into an intriguing abstraction by
multiplying and stacking five
extruded “houses” atop each other
like children’s Lincoln logs, with the
“house” on the bottom seeming to
buckle from the weight. “The form
was also chosen to break down a
big building into smaller pieces,”
Herzog said. The charcoal-gray
stuccoed stack makes for surpris-
ingly intricate but well-integrated
and intimately proportioned spatial
arrangements both outside, where a
shared wooden platform becomes
a plaza, and inside where the five
extruded houses cantilever as much
as 16 feet outward, framing carefully
calibrated views of the Black Forest,
Rhine River, and city skyline.
The role of VitraHaus is to be
both showroom and public labora-
tory where people can come, as the
materials say, “to explore, define,
and refine” their decorating chops.
But Herzog, who admits to no
special interest in chairs on display,
said his aim was to create a
demanding space in order to
challenge people “to see new quali-
ties” about even the most familiar
products. What more of an invitation
does a design pilgrim need?

**FROM MILAN TO MANHATTAN,**
OUR GUIDE TO THE INSIDER SOURCES
FOR GREAT DESIGN.
For design cognoscenti, the center of the universe in Milan resides in a 27,000-square-foot repurposed tie factory just off Corso Magenta. Here, eight years ago, former knitwear designer Rossana Orlandi opened the doors to an irresistibly quirky emporium and design studio filled with cutting-edge wares. In this place, even the most jaded discover what is truly new, and who will be the next rising design star.

This year, for her presentation during the International Furniture Fair in April, the work of some 50 companies fill the labyrinthine nooks and crannies of the sprawling outer buildings and spread out into a charming cobblestone courtyard overflowing with a riot of greenery. Although the products are the dernier cri, the look is disarmingly slap-dash and hodgepodge—the antithesis of stores like Moss. It is the highly personal look of an extremely stylish woman.

“I worked in fashion, when fashion was really fashion,” said Orlandi, explaining her decision to change careers, “but I always loved design.” A diminutive figure, she is immediately recognizable by her enormous white eyeglasses that cover most of her heart-shaped face. “I have a big love story with this one pair of glasses,” she explains. “I wear them as much as I can.” Her vision is unimpaired when it comes to spotting talent. She was an early champion of Spanish designer Nacho Carbonell, for whom she organized a separate show this year at Palazzo Ferre. “I like things in which I believe, and I believe predominantly in the designer, not necessarily the object.” As to her talent scouting, “Sometimes they find me or I find them. It’s always a good relationship,” she said.

This year, as always, the mix is broad, ranging from totally unknown newcomers—lighting by Naked City and American lighting designer Marcus Tremonto are especially strong standouts—to new products by Artek, the Finnish furniture company who introduced a shelving system by Japanese designer Naoto Fukasawa and a do-it-yourself pine chair by Italian maestro Enzo Mari. “I love what they do,” said Orlandi, explaining Artek’s presence amid so much that is avant-garde. “It’s a huge pleasure to have them.”

Surprises abound: A fabric-covered VW Beetle upholstered in Middle Eastern fabrics by Boka design is parked in the courtyard. It’s to be auctioned off on eBay to benefit a Milan charity. (Paulette Cole, president of ABC Home, is there negotiating to get another one from Boka for the New York store.) The heart of the permanent store, however, is up a winding staircase in the main factory building. There, an artful chaos reigns. Walls are lined from floor to ceiling with old tie storage cases, which provide a wonderful backdrop for the eclectic range of wares that include resin trays by Gaetano Pesce, chairs by Brazilian Pritzker-prize winner Mendes da Rocha, and Richard Ginori dinnerware by Paola Navone, who also designed the chic but tiny restaurant that adjoins the space.

Will there be more Rossana Orlandi stores in the future? Who knows, said the singular designer herself, “I am only a short-term planner.”

ARLENE HIRST IS A NEW YORK DESIGN WRITER AND BLOGGER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES T MAGAZINE.
Gio Ponti is one of the few architects who lived and worked according to the famous dictum that design encompassed everything from the city to the spoon. Soon, New Yorkers will have a new spot to go where that philosophy is the guiding spirit, and they will be able to take in an architecture or design exhibition, grab an espresso, and buy the latest copy of Domus or even a set of elegant flatware. The New York branch of the famed Triennale di Milano, opening this month in time for ICFF on 53rd Street across from MoMA, seeks to showcase the best in Italian material culture through exhibitions, a retail shop, and a bookstore. Naturally, there will be a cafe/restaurant, too. Even more apropos, the Italians will inaugurate their space with an exhibition on the prolific and versatile Ponti. The New York space is the latest in a string of Triennale outposts, which stretch from Shanghai to Korea, with plans in the works for Brazil and Japan. The original is in the 1933 Palazzo dell’Arte in Milan. Clearly, the Italians see their design expertise as a globally exportable commodity. “We are locating in world cities. The choice to be in New York allows us the chance to offer the best of Italian culture and commerce to people from around the world,” Davide Rampello, president of the Triennale di Milano, told AN through a translator. In a space formerly home to the Museum of Arts and Design on 53rd Street, redesigned by the noted Italian architects Pierluigi Cerri, Michele De Lucchi, and Alessandro Colombo, the approximately 21,000-square-foot venue is spread over three levels, with the restaurant/cafe at street level, the book and design shop below, and the galleries filling the remaining 11,000 square feet of space. Open stairs and thin white metal balustrades will keep the three crisp spaces connected visually, helping to draw the casual coffee drinker into exhibition programs. Following Ponti, shows are planned on the textiles and designs of Fortuny, the ceramics of Lucio Fontana, and the architecture of the not-so Italian Frank Gehry. “It’s the only show on the work of Gehry from the last ten years,” Rampello said.

In addition to ambitious shows and seductive objects, perhaps the Triennale di Milano New York’s best asset will be offering a quiet alternative to the ever-thronged MoMA. “We know what MoMA is—it’s fantastic,” Rampello said. “We couldn’t miss that opportunity to be here.” Rampello wants the space to offer direct contact with the pleasures of Italian life by engaging the mind, the eye, and the culinary palate. “It will be a great place to have a good coffee or a good dinner and take in an exhibition.” Unlike its neighbor across the street, the Triennale di Milano New York, the newest addition to the city’s cultural landscape, will stay open until 8 p.m.
TALENT TO KNOW

Tracking four young designers who want to make a difference.
JENNIFER K. GORSCHIE IS AN’S SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR.

JESSICA CARNEVALE
LONDON

During her third year at the Rhode Island School of Design, American designer Jessica Carnevale was chosen for the school’s 2003 European Honors Program, allowing her to study for a year in Rome. There she interned at the studio of American designer Kevin Watz, and also worked for a traditional upholsterer and woodworker. The resulting collection showed at Rome’s Palazzo Cenci and included a carved wooden chair called the Pomodoro, squat and low-backed with a tomato-red upholstered seat. She was launched.

Carnevale’s new collection, which debuted last month at the Milan furniture fair’s Satellite hall for newcomers, bears little resemblance to her earlier work. “Essentially, I wanted to bring some of the exuberance of the fashion world into my designs,” she said. Inspired by young Scottish clothing designer Christopher Kane, Carnevale set about envisioning the Stretch collection in her Brooklyn workshop in 2007. “I experimented with a lot of pretty unusual materials before settling on latex, bungee, and rope,” she said. She learned about heat bending to fabricate the metal frames, then wove the coordinating cords in basket-weave patterns to create tensile seats and backs. One with a white frame has an open checkerboard pattern of white rope; the other two, one green and one neon pink, have circular weaves.

The response to the new collection has been positive, quickly landing photographs of the chairs on design blogs across the globe. “I have been talking to a number of different producers and retailers at the fair and I hope to expand this collection,” said Carnevale from New York.

Carnevale’s trajectory to this point hints at what is yet to come. Upon graduation from RISD in 2004, she became a junior designer at Martha Stewart Living, working on the Everyday Living line of clocks, tableware, and ready-to-assemble furniture. From there, she moved to projects with West Elm, hotel designer Alexandra Champalimaud, and Brocade Home. In 2008, she became a designer for Marcel Wanders Studio and moved to Amsterdam, working on projects for Philips and Baccarat, and leading the designer’s 2009 holiday collection project for Target, which included more than 50 decorative and tabletop items.

Most recently, Carnevale worked under Wanders’ direction on the Sparkling Chair for Magis, the Tulip Armchair for Cappellini, and pieces for the production store Skitsch and for XO, all of which debuted in Milan in April. With that under her belt, Carnevale is now relocating to London to open a studio of her own that will concentrate on furniture and product design. But mass-market projects are behind her, she said, and she will likely treat it as a learning experience in preparation for even more thoughtful designs in the future. “My philosophy, if I dare to call it that, is that the material comes first. I love experimenting with new materials and new combinations and techniques,” she said, adding, “a sense of fun, though, I suppose is central as well.”

KARL ZAHN
BROOKLYN

Like a lot of socially responsible young designers these days, Brooklyn-based Karl Zahn is trying to walk the line between cottage industry and making himself a household name. Over the past few years he has gone from building furniture and product prototypes on his own to working with large manufacturers—it’s a leap that most designers dream of making, but one that also requires a different mindset.

“Most of the products I previously designed were actually made by myself and I had complete control over every aspect of it,” said Zahn. “For mass-market products, there is no way to have the same amount of control, and you have to be comfortable with that.”

So far, giving up a little control has only worked to his advantage. This year, Brazilian company Vulto YoYo will release his low-cost, high-performance yo-yo for entry-level players, and McSweeney’s will release an interactive wooden case he designed in 2008 for the publisher’s new children’s book collection. In its fall 2009 and spring/summer 2010 collections, LA-based design company Arterecnica released the designer’s Phrena pendant and table lamps with flat-packed Tyvek shades that unfold into flowerlike forms inspired by globe amaranths. A native of rural Vermont, Zahn said in an interview that he sees his lifelong fondness for plants and animals emerging in his work.

“I have grown more comfortable designing things that I appreciate, rather than what I think other people will want,” he said, although increasingly he’s doing both. Take Wall Cleat, an outlet plate with brackets (pictured on front page) for looping extra lengths of electrical cord that are universally annoying. This newfound confidence will likely be seen in several soon-to-be-revealed collaborations with New York-based manufacturer Areaware, including Zahn’s Hakomon wooden animal containers, which should launch this year. In the same vein, the designer recently completed a set of carved stacking whales and is working on a series of birds and lighting design for Future Perfect’s Lift Hold Roll show at this year’s ICFF. A new *precious pendant light,* named Heavy, will debut at the ICFF’s show *Uncomfortable Conversations.* The pieces reflect Zahn’s continued interest in fabrication, which he traces back to his father’s woodworking shop. He followed the interest while concentrating in fabrication and manufacturing at Rhode Island School of Design from 1999 to 2003, and during his subsequent time in Copenhagen studying Danish furniture design.

Last year, Zahn’s Vladimir Pallet Mirror won Best in Show for sustainability at Design Within Reach’s M+D+F competition. Framed with reclaimed shipping pallets made of exotic woods from their countries of origin, the mirror references French Victorian style, but its roughness and commission-only availability attest to Zahn’s goals of environmental sensitivity coupled with traditional craftsmanship.

“I suppose it would be easier if I were only interested in designing cars or chairs, but I would rather experiment with as many products and materials and techniques as possible,” he said. For now, the difficulty of getting things made in the U.S. is part of the reason he builds his own prototypes. “But I would much rather work closely with a craftsman,” he said. “In my dreams I draw a sketch on a napkin and a little factory makes me prototypes.” And that’s a craftsman with ambitions. JKG
Kristen Wentrcek came to design by way of a somewhat uncharted path. A native of El Paso, Texas, she was studying communications at New York University in the mid-2000s when she landed a summer job working for developer Stanley Perelman. That soon translated into a full-time position as the developer’s liaison overseeing the Enrique Norten–designed One York condo in Tribeca. While slogging through the requisitions and punch lists that filled her workdays, Wentrcek found welcome respite in a trip to the Corian factory. There, in the midst of a lecture on how an idea becomes a countertop, her life changed forever. “Oh,” she remembers thinking, “I can quit my job and do something like this.”

At approximately the same time, Wentrcek bought her first apartment, a two-bedroom, 500-square-foot walkup on the Lower East Side, which she gutted and converted into a studio. Everything went smoothly enough until it came time to furnish the place. “I couldn’t find good quality furniture at mid-range prices, so I decided that there was a void in the market,” explained Wentrcek. “What I couldn’t find I thought up and designed.”

In 2009, the ever entrepreneurial Wentrcek quit her job, rented a workspace in Bushwick, enlisted the help of a few college buddies, and founded Wintercheck Factory. After prototyping about ten designs in plywood, she refined the list down by more than $100 per item, the help of a few college buddies, and founded Wintercheck Factory. After prototyping about ten designs in plywood, she refined the list down by more than $100 per item, in plywood, she refined the list down by more than $100 per item, with the threads both as function and ornament. The customizable assembly will be launched at ICFF as a part of Matter’s MatterMade collection no. 1, consisting of 20 new pieces informed by early American craft and design. Produced entirely in the Americas, the works are made by both established and emerging designers. Takagi’s two pieces will be his first in production.

His father is an architect, and inspired him as a child to draw floor plans and build models. But after graduating from Rhode Island School of Design in 2002, Takagi spent years touring and recording as a guitarist and bass player for several indie rock bands. Still, he used his spare time crafting, molding, and casting design pieces in the corner of a friend’s stage set shop. He founded Atelier Takagi in 2005, but it was only a little more than a year ago when he decided to give his designs an honest chance. The idea of a five-legged table, later named American Gothic, became the starting point. A handsome fusion that recalls Windsor chairs and Japanese lacquer art, the gracious piece was chosen for ICFF Studio 2009. Takagi sees his design process primarily as organic. “The way I work is often very hands-on, trying to see what I can do with a given material.”

His goal is to create furniture that feels both familiar and new, pieces that “people will give to their children,” he said. With an idiom that evokes the playfulness and minimalism of Japanese design within an American context, the Takagi world offers a fresh take on the two traditions. After ICFF 2010, the young designer hopes to display his work at the Designers Week in Tokyo, his father’s home. “That is something I always dreamed about,” Takagi said. “Then things would come full circle.”

Aaron Seward is an editorial intern at AN.
a woman’s place is in the home

www.TruthInArchitecture.com
THE RISE OF WALL STREET

**THEATRE**

**THE BLUET EFFET**

*Okan Safitari, 2010*

8:00 p.m.

Center for Architecture

536 LaGuardia Pl.

*cfai.ainy.org*

**THURSDAY 13**

**LECTURE**

James Corner and Lisa Switkin

**Designing the High Line**

8:00 p.m.

National Arts Club

15 Gramercy Park South

*www.thenationalartsclub.org*

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

**Bespoke:**

*The Handbuilt Bicycle Museum of Arts and Design*

2 Columbus Circle

*www.madmusuem.org*

**EVENT**

**Atelier in Traditional Architectural Wash Rendering**

5:00 p.m.

Institute of Classical Architecture and Classical America

20 West 44th St.

*www.icff.com*

**IDA Leaders Breakfast**

Majora Carter, Bill Moggridge, Yves Behar, et al.

7:30 a.m.

Gotham Hall

1356 Broadway

*www.idai.org*

**New York Building Congress Anniversary Leadership Awards Luncheon**

11:30 a.m.

Hilton New York

1335 Ave. of the Americas

*www.buildingcongress.org*

**FRIDAY 14**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

**Julie Maltrout**

Grey Area

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

1071 5th Ave.

*www.guggenheim.org*

**National Design Triennal: Why Design Now?**

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

2 East 91st St.

*www.cooperhewitt.org*

**EVENT**

**Arca Design Centre**

*Grand Opening*

6:00 p.m.

Trepa Design Centre

62 Greene St.

*www.trespaa.com*

**SATURDAY 15**

**LECTURES**

Cal Snyder

**Icons of American War Remembrance**

11:00 a.m.

New York Society for Ethical Culture

2 West 64th St.

*www.nyhistory.org*

Patricia Urquiola with Fast Company

2:00 p.m.

ICFF

*www.icff.com*

**SUNDAY 16**

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

**Sustainable Design:**

*Defining Beauty*

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Ave.

*www.morganlibrary.org*

**EVENT**

**Designers’ Passion**

6:30 p.m.

Alaia

130 Greene St.

*www.bdetonline.com*

**TUESDAY 17**

**CONFERENCE**

**Fit City 5**

*Promoting Physical Activity Through Design*

10:00 a.m.

Center for Architecture

536 LaGuardia Pl.

*www.icff.com*

**SYMPOSIUM**

**Cuban Architecture:**

*A Historical Legacy*

8:00 a.m.

Center for Union

41 Cooper Sq.

*www.cubanculturalcenter.org*

**EVENTS**

**Discover Classical New York:**

**Old Westbury Gardens**

12:30 p.m.

Institute of Classical Architecture and Classical America

20 West 44th St.

*www.classicalist.org*

**ICFF Opening Night Party**

7:00 p.m.

Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53rd St.

*www.icff.com*

**WITH THE KIDS**

**MAD Saturday**

11:00 a.m.

Museum of Arts and Design

2 Columbus Circle

*www.madmusuem.org*

**EVENT**

**New York City Building Congress Anniversary Leadership Awards Luncheon**

11:30 a.m.

Hilton New York

1335 Ave. of the Americas

*www.buildingcongress.org*

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I doubt Dutch designer Marcel Wanders could work for a sturdy manufacturer like Knoll. His accent pieces—frilly, blobby, crocheted, or dripped-on items intended to comment on your ordinary furniture. In context, against works of more minimalist Dutch peers, his magical take on Italian brethren or more political work juxtaposed with minimalist or with the rougher-edged contemporaries at Droog. The contrast makes those flowers and ruffles seem subversive, but here they just seem pretty, even a little tacky. Some of the pieces seem minutes away from being knocked off by Urban Outfitters. I thought this particularly of the Wallflower lamps (2009), glass blossoms with changing hues, arranged in a circle on the wall. With a blacklight and a shag rug, your tween would be all set.

My favorite items in the show were the black ones, which practicaly melted into the walls. By the door (curtained with a dark panel showing a solarized photo of Wanders with clown nose), three chairs from his New Antiques series for Cappellini (2005)—light and elegant, with turned spindles made new by virtue of their blackness. In a stack to their right, the Carbon chairs designed with Bertjan Pot for Moooi (2004) are his bid for museum café ubiquity. Short and simple, these chairs combine the friendly curves of the Eames fibreglass series with a seat and back made of carbon fiber, which looks as if it has been wrapped around the frame at random. It is tremendously light, but you wouldn’t know that from them. You could barely see the edges.

The impractical design on the Carbon chair seats was also a relief from the ironic prettiness. Tord Bøontje has also played with crystal, but at least he reworked the elaborate chandelier form into something more organic. With his Big Ben Bianco Bell (2007), Wanders seems to be saying we should witness the chandelier because he is using it. What is missing from Daydreams is another voice or voices, either curatorial or those of other contemporary designers working in the key of kitsch. Without that friction, Wanders’ work looks weak. What he didn’t leave behind, however, was a body of documents; his widow discarded them. Pennoyer and Walker, perhaps muting a disappointment bordering on outrage, attribute this decision discreetly to Astelle Atterbury’s “strong proprietary feeling... she sent all of Atterbury’s plans and oil paintings to a dump so that they would not and could not be underappreciated by strangers.”

Despite the documented record, Pennoyer and Walker have uncovered enough secondary materials to reconstruct the course of Atterbury’s life. With ample photographs, a scrupulous index, and a useful catalogue raisonne, this volume ensures that a rediscovery of Atterbury rests on broad and firm evidence. He looked east to Europe and stressed continuity with its tradi- tions, not westward to Japan or forward into a conjectural future; his was an organism of fine stone, half-timbered, and lammie brick, not formal originality or visionary declarations. But it subtracts nothing from the discourse of modernity to note that Atterbury investigated and implemented ideas for community design that may ultimately prove more replicable, practical, and sustainable than the forms that have descended from Broadacre City. It may be inevitable that the recovery of his reputation is framed within the rhetorical battles between modernism and neotraditionalism, but he deserves to be spared the injustice of being viewed in that light alone.

Atterbury designed many houses for the wealthy in the Hamptons, Manhattan, and elsewhere, and this chronicle places hefty empha- sis on the rarefied social circles in which he moved. But he was too inclusive and driven for the damning term “society architect.” Pennoyer and Walker make a strong case for him as a Progressive Era idealist whose thinking about density, circulation, and community cohesion were at least as far ahead of his time as his technical innovations. The New Urbanists and like-minded movements are in many ways retracing the path that Atterbury charted in his life; the rediscovery of Atterbury could not be underappreciated.
During the last century and a half, more than 250 psychiatric institutions rose across the American landscape, sprawling worlds within worlds that by 1948 were home to a million souls. Over a six-year journey chronicled in his book Asylum: Inside the Closed World of Mental Hospitals (MIT Press, 2009), the photographer Christopher Payne visited 70 of these sites in 30 states, documenting what is effectively the end of an era in public health. A sea of order among landscapes of decay. As in his earlier project documenting old substations, where he highlighted the formal elegance of rotary converters and high-tension switches that once powered the New York City subways, Payne frames gorgeous compositions. In the present series, such exquisite camerawork can seem at odds with the emotionally charged aura that pervades these spaces.

Despite the progressive ideals that pervades these spaces, the present series, such exquisite camerawork can seem at odds with the emotionally charged aura that pervades these spaces. Despite the progressive ideals that pervades these spaces. Despite the progressive ideals that pervades these spaces. Despite the progressive ideals that pervades these spaces.
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Click on our Red Dot Product Finder, and you can easily search by number to get free information about the latest products, design professionals, business services, and more.
Three weeks into his tenure as the new director of the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Bill Moggridge sat down with design consultant Chee Pearlman to discuss his plan for transforming the local landmark museum into a national force in the service of design. As co-founder (with David Kelley and Mike Nuttall) of IDEO, the radical innovation consultancy, Moggridge brings to the job a different expertise than previous directors at a time when the institution is undergoing a major renovation that will close the Carnegie Mansion for up to two years while an overall restoration and addition of a new 7,000-square-foot gallery is completed.

Chee Pearlman: You are a guru of design and famous interaction pioneer who designed Grid Compass, the first laptop computer, in 1979. Why do you think you were the one chosen to be director of the Cooper-Hewitt?

Bill Moggridge: For me, it seemed a natural step. And it’s all thanks to David Kelley, whose idea it was to bring in Tim Brown as CEO of IDEO so that all the founders, including myself, could follow our own individual desires and interests. David did Stanford d.school; Mike [Nuttall] became a long-distance runner, and I started telling more stories about design. And once I got really involved in communication and trying to explain design to a broad audience, the notion of moving from an IDEO platform to a national platform was immediately very exciting to me.

What was the mandate of the job that the Smithsonian presented and what is it that you want to accomplish? The interesting thing is how the search committee expanded on their strategic mandate from the initial description of the director’s role that was presented to me. Of course, the priority was the museum itself and putting on exhibitions both physically and virtually, but they also expressed a desire to develop the Cooper-Hewitt into a national design resource and to see it become an international design authority. Those two things fit very closely to my own ambition to tell stories.

And to tell stories well, you need both the physical presence of exhibitions and the ability to illustrate by drawing from collections both past and current and perhaps future. Storytelling in terms of trying to help education, to help professionals, and to help the leadership of the country understand more about design—that’s what being a national design resource is about. And that’s all exciting stuff.

That seems to go way beyond the bricks and mortar life of a museum like the Cooper-Hewitt. Much of that mission is already underway. Caroline [Baumann, deputy director] and Paul [Thompson, former director] have been developing the virtual version of the museum for a while. They advanced the National Design Awards, now in its second decade, and developed education very broadly across the country. So there’s been a strong movement in that direction long before I came into the picture.

Is there a role model among museums or institutions that has been an inspiration to you? The strange difference between the USA and other countries is that there’s only one national organization for design. If you look at the UK, for example, they have the Design Museum, of course, and the V&A, the Design Council, the Design Business Association, the Royal Society of Arts, and it goes on and on. It’s the same with new cultures like Korea where they have Design Research Association and the Korean Development Institute. All these are activities about promoting and supporting design at a national level. Whereas here, it’s just us. So for us to fulfill a broader mission like that is a great opportunity.

Do you think there should be a design czar in Washington D.C., or a national platform for design at the Cooper-Hewitt in New York? And what about architecture and design organizations like the AIA or AIGA? Things like AIA and AIGA are associations that represent designers in particular disciplines, but there isn’t a body to help and support all of them. Just by being part of the Smithsonian, that moves Cooper-Hewitt in that direction. Still, it’s surprising how many people are not fully aware that the Cooper-Hewitt is part of the Smithsonian. And, of course, they think of the Smithsonian as a place to see animals or space things on the Mall in Washington, but we can correct that impression. If you think about how to reach people around the country—the child or businessman in the Midwest, somewhere like that—they haven’t heard of the Cooper-Hewitt but they have definitely heard of the Smithsonian. Emphasizing a bit more our Smithsonian connection could be a very valuable thing.

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