Neighboring Maki, Gehry, Aalto, Pei, and Holl, New York artist and architect Maya Lin will be the latest in a long line of world-class designers to build on MIT turf in Cambridge, MA. The new buildings won’t house further education offices or studios, however, but have been leased from the institution to create a new campus for biomedical continued on page 18

Nearly 165 years after opening to citywide fanfare, the High Bridge is one step closer to regaining its former prominence—though not, some say, its former beauty. In a public hearing on April 5, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) considered an application to rehabilitate and reopen the city’s oldest existing bridge, which was built in 1848 to extend the Old Croton Aqueduct across the Harlem River. The bridge was closed for decades as a vital link between the Bronx and Manhattan, and a picturesque symbol of the aqueduct’s role in bringing water to the city. Although declared a city landmark in 1970, the bridge quickly became a popular attraction for New York City residents who thronged to promenade across its scenic span. The bridge was closed for decades as a vital link between the Bronx and Manhattan, and a picturesque symbol of the aqueduct’s role in bringing water to the city. Although declared a city landmark in 1970, the bridge was closed to the public soon afterward and currently lies in disrepair behind locked doors and barbed wire. continued on page 10

A new proposal for Coney Island seeks to anchor the west end of the boardwalk with nearly 500,000 square feet of mixed-use development called Ocean Dreams. The three residential towers with over 400 market rate condos, range from 14 to 22 stories and rest atop 15,000 square feet of retail and 400 parking spaces. Dattner Architects joined Cooper Robertson in designing the project in 2007, but Dattner took the lead after Red Apple Real Estate became owner in 2008. Red Apple, led by Gristedes supermarket magnate John Catsimatidis, ramped up a 2006 plan that many thought dead in the water. continued on page 12

Wait Whitman wrote of New York ferries: “On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose.” But finally there are more recent eyes on the business of getting people across the river. Expanded East River Ferry service is set to launch in early June with a new ferry terminal hub designed by Kennedy & Violich planned for East 34th Street opening next year. Both are part of a New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) pilot program and a practical component to City Planning’s recently released Vision 2020 waterfront plan. But lost in the tide of initiatives announced on March 14, the NYCEDC’s Comprehensive Citywide Ferry continued on page 20

A VISIT TO VANNA VENTURI

TORD BOONTJE’S STITCHED COLLECTION AND MORE FROM MILAN. SEE PAGE 22

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MAYA LIN TO DESIGN BIOMED CAMPUS IN CAMBRIDGE

IN GOOD COMPANY

NEIGHBORING MAKI, GEHRY, AALTO, PEI, AND HOIJ, NEW YORK ARTIST AND ARCHITECT MAYA LIN WILL BE THE LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF WORLD-CLASS DESIGNERS TO BUILD ON MIT TURF IN CAMBRIDGE, MA. THE NEW BUILDINGS WON’T HOUSE FURTHER EDUCATION OFFICES OR STUDIOS, HOWEVER, BUT HAVE BEEN LEASED FROM THE INSTITUTION TO CREATE A NEW CAMPUS FOR BIOMEDICAL

NYCEDC REPORT ANALYZES FERRY SERVICE AROUND THE CITY

FUTURE FULL OF FERRIES

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PLANS TO REOPEN NYC’S OLDEST BRIDGE APPROVED

MIND THE GAP

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Tord Boontje’s Stitched Collection and More from Milan. See Page 22

As featured in The Architect's Newspaper
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The International Furniture Fair in Milan is a huge affair, attracting design talents, design makers, design dreamers, schemers, and trackers from all corners of the world who believe it is essential to their professions to be in know about the most current matters of design. Few American architects seem to attend, which is curious given what an inquisitive and competitive bunch they usually are. Even in a year when the slow economy has taken its toll on one of Italy’s largest and most profitable industries—furniture manufacturing is several times larger than the fashion business—innovations were on display. From the almost affordably engineerable (organic LEDs) to the fringe of discovery (proto-plastics from insect resin), the fair thrives on possibilities made relevant. Fair newcomers 3M Architectural Markets showed off their research in developing a new delivery system that collects natural light from rooftops and then channels it to the deepest interior spaces. Stay tuned. Italementi was there, too, touting a new formula for its smog-eating cement that’s even whiter than before—Richard Meier briefly appeared almost ecstatic.

There are always eye-opening things to see. And what’s equally impressive, the audience is whole-heartedly appreciative. Crowds throng the fairgrounds by the thousands to check out market-ready and prototype pieces. At outside events known for agenda-setting concepts, hundreds more seek out the chance to see, for instance, German designer Werner Aisslinger’s installation of “the first monochromatic chair made of natural fibers,” a sculpted throne of felt arranged alongside a ram chomping on hay. There was the great innovator Ingo Maurer’s towering moss and living coral chandelier for a client’s private chapel cum banquet hall and Shigeru Ban’s meticulously-wrought paper house, created to show the great innovator Ingo Maurer’s towering moss and living coral chandelier for a client’s private chapel cum banquet hall and Shigeru Ban’s meticulously-wrought paper house, created to show what an inquisitive and competitive bunch they usually are. Even in a year when the slow economy has taken its toll on one of Italy’s largest and most profitable industries—furniture manufacturing is several times larger than the fashion business—innovations were on display. From the almost affordably engineerable (organic LEDs) to the fringe of discovery (proto-plastics from insect resin), the fair thrives on possibilities made relevant. Fair newcomers 3M Architectural Markets showed off their research in developing a new delivery system that collects natural light from rooftops and then channels it to the deepest interior spaces. Stay tuned. Italementi was there, too, touting a new formula for its smog-eating cement that’s even whiter than before—Richard Meier briefly appeared almost ecstatic.

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No doubt about it, many Italian furnishings are a luxury and not likely to offer. If creativity, quality, and innovation matter to an architect, there’s no place better to find it in abundance. There was the great innovator Ingo Maurer’s towering moss and living coral chandelier for a client’s private chapel cum banquet hall and Shigeru Ban’s meticulously-wrought paper house, created to show off a new collection of determined-to-be classics from Hermès—with asserted Jean Michel Frank reproductions mixed in to guarantee the highest level.

Italy is enamored of good design and to spend a week there breathing in that devotion is a visceral reminder of how much design can do. There’s no need to assume that because the furniture may be too avant-garde for most practical purposes that the fair has nothing to offer. If creativity, quality, and innovation matter to an architect, there’s no place better to find it in abundance. 

**Westward Ho! for DS+R**

Diller Scofidio + Renfro has prevailed yet again. On Thursday, Stanford University announced that it had picked the firm to design a new 9,000-square-foot arts structure, the Burton and Deedee McMurtry Building. No designs were released. Jhaoel Eli, The firm’s director of business development, said in an email, “We’re at the very beginning of the process, in the programming phase.” The price tag has also not yet been finalized, though the building’s namesake has chipped in $50 million.

After sending out an RFG last summer, Stanford chose the architects from a shortlist of 16 firms, which was narrowed down to two: DS+R and Ennead Architects. “Diller Scofidio + Renfro see themselves as artists, and that is particularly important at this moment on this campus,” said Nancy Troy, chair of the department of art and art history.

The new building will house the university’s art and art history department, including programs in studio art, film and media studies, and documentary film, which are currently dispersed in various buildings across campus. The architects of record will be Boora Architects of Portland, OR.

“Of the important goals was to bring in a few of the programs together but also to make sure that we had the very best faculty that we could provide to move the arts forward on campus,” said Matthew Tiews, executive director of arts programs at Stanford. The building is part of the Stanford Arts Initiative, a broader campaign to raise the university’s profile in the arts. The initiative has raised $250 million to date to bring in new faculty, programming, and buildings—including the Bing Concert Hall by Ennead Architects, currently under construction near Stanford’s Graduate School of Business.

DS+R comes to the project after receiving positive reviews for Brown University’s Creative Arts Center, a performing arts building with a 200-seat recital hall, which opened in February. In California DS+R was recently selected to design a new home for the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives and was on the shortlist for SFMOMA’s expansion. They are also designing The Broad, Eli Broad’s new contemporary art museum in downtown Los Angeles.

The new building will be located in back of the Cantor Art Center, Stanford’s art museum, and not far from the university’s most prominent work of modern architecture, the James H. Clark Center by Foster and Partners, completed in 2003. Groundbreaking for the DS+R building is expected to take place in 2012.
RAISING CAPITAL

BRINGING ARCHITECTURE TO D.C.

Arts and his work in New York and Mexico City. For the Brooklyn Public Library for the Performing Arts and the proposed fire station building will have five stories, a two-story parking lot, and 174 residential units, while the library will accommodate retail space, a coffee shop, a children’s area, and have simple box footprints. The library will incorporate an Exxon Mobil station into a luxury development at the former convention center, and the Ritz-Carlton and 22West, a development that incorporates an Exxon Mobil station into a luxury condominium, just to the east of the library. Both the library and the fire station parcels have been on the firm’s radar for a decade. Citing the neighborhood’s proximity to downtown and Georgetown, Mottershead said, “We envision it as a mixed-use area with office buildings and hotels. It’s at a tipping balance that allows it to be a really nice residential area, too.”

EAVESDROP

ISADORA MULLION

NO LOVE LOST

Frank Gehry appeared in a recent 60 Minutes segment about Eli Broad, staying just long enough to call the venture philanthropist “a control freak.” The piece reviewed the duo’s checkered client-architect relationship: before hiring, firing, and rehiring Gehry to design Disney Hall, Broad asked Gehry to design his house, then fired him for taking too long. “I didn’t want to do it,” said Gehry. “I just told him I didn’t like him. He said, ‘You’ll learn to like me.’” Nope.

PRICE OF A TAG

Meanwhile, the new Zaha Hadid museum Broad is bankrolling on the campus of Michigan State University has been tagged. “A circular face with two red, wavy lines coming from its sides” was painted in five locations around the construction site and will cost $1,000 to remove, reports Michigan’s State News. Maybe it’s just a Midwest graffiti artist trying to get the money bag’s attention: the philanthropist sponsored Art in the Streets at LA’s Museum of Contemporary Art.

DUBIOUS Distinction

A Federal grant of $1 million that would have gone to LA’s most blighted downtown neighborhoods has been directed instead to the LA office of Gensler. According to an irate LA Weekly, the so-called federal community-development block grant will be spent by the 2,800-strong architectural firm “to create a hip, new atmosphere for its relocated employees at the ‘jewel box,’ a three-story building” near City National Plaza. Mayor Villaraigosa argues that the money deposited with Gensler will be well spent on job creation. At last, a mayor who sees architects as candidates for the neediest care.

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TEN ARQUITECTOS JOINS FOSTER IN BRINGING ARCHITECTURE TO D.C.

Frank Gehry’s West End project joins Norman Foster’s CityCenterDC, a ten-acre mixed-use development at the former convention center, as one of two new developments in the city by internationally-known architects. “Compared to New York or London, [name brand architecture] hasn’t been key,” remarked Sonnet, describing that DC’s height restrictions can limit creativity, not to mention the city’s prevailing practical sense. Updated plans for the library reflect feedback from 60 community meetings. Though community members originally expressed concern about the library’s height, Mary Mottershead, vice president at Eastbanc, explained that the main change addressed the placement of the bays, in response to immediate neighbors concerned about their distance from the projections. Community members also prioritized public access to the library, and larger condo units to attract long-term residents, rather than nearby, possibly party-prone Georgetown students. Eastbanc is no stranger either to the West End or to creative mixed-use, having developed the Ritz-Carlton and 22West, a development that incorporates an Exxon Mobil station into a luxury condominium, just to the east of the library. Both the library and the fire station parcels have been on the firm’s radar for a decade. Citing the neighborhood’s proximity to downtown and Georgetown, Mottershead said, “We envision it as a mixed-use area with office buildings and hotels. It’s at a tipping balance that allows it to be a really nice residential area, too.”

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SVA INTRODUCES TWO NEW DEGREES
GET WITH THE PROGRAM

Good design can be a catalyst for change. Or at least that is the message of two new graduate programs—Products of Design and Design for Social Innovation—at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Both are two-year MFA programs that aim to educate designers about how they function in and relate to the world in which they practice.

“We know that we can’t keep making stuff the way we’re making it, so we can’t keep teaching design students the way we’ve been teaching them,” said Allan Chochinov, chair of the Products of Design program.

Products of Design will focus on exploring the meaning and the role of objects in contemporary culture and finding new approaches to antiquated methods of design. Chochinov said the program will “sensitize designers to the power that they have,” by training them to be strategic agents of change who have the capacity and tools to challenge people’s assumptions about what design is. “Design is not all about problem-solving, it is also the business of creating value,” said Chochinov, adding that “not all design situations call for a design answer.”

The curriculum is still in development, but Chochinov wants students not only to gain project experience through hands-on learning but also to cultivate a professional point of view. In addition to Chochinov, who is also the founder the website Core 77, other faculty includes author Rob Walker, curator Paola Antonelli, and Bill Moggridge, director of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

In Design for Social Innovation, SVA’s second new MFA program, students will explore how industrial design can make the world a better and more sustainable place. The curriculum addresses design in the context of broad social issues like poverty, health and aging, women’s rights, agriculture, social justice, community development, sustainability, education, and fair trade.

Chaired by Cheryl Heller, a communications designer who has concentrated on working with social entrepreneurs, the program’s diverse faculty includes ethnographer Marc Rettig, anthropologist Tracy Brandenburg, and conservation biologist Mary Corliss Pearl, among others.

Both programs will begin in the fall of 2012.

BUFFALO MAKES A COMEBACK AS DESTINATION

Waterfront Shuffle

Buffalo’s historic inner harbor waterfront has changed radically over the past century. The terminus of the legendary Erie Canal was buried, the site filled in, and the Buffalo Memorial Auditorium built on top. A soaring 75-foot tall highway sliced the city off from the water. Now, Buffalo is poised to remake its waterfront with newly approved plans to restore the canal to a 12-acre, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood.

In 2005, the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) was formed to jumpstart multiple developments on the waterfront. Preliminary groundwork began on the site bound by Main Street, Marine Drive, Pearl Street, and Lower Terrace following the demolition of the auditorium in 2008. After a series of public events and workshops, the ECHDC approved plans on April 12 to restore the original street grid and canal alignment with construction of the canal ready to begin this fall. “We’ve done so much work already,” said Erich Weyant, communications director for the ECHDC. “The block is stabilized and shovel ready.”

“The canal project is part of a trend of reclaiming waterfronts across the country,” said Hilary Bertsch of EE&K, a Perkins Eastman company, who is overseeing the design. “We’re pulling the waterfront into the city and celebrating the canal.”

Situated on a complex, layered site with fifteen feet of grade change, plans call for the canal’s original layout to be restored as a two-foot-deep pool above the massive, buried sewer. The new canal ranges in width from 60- to 100-feet and will be spanned by a series of pedestrian bridges. In fair weather, small boats will have access to the water and a large ice-skating rink will be set up in the winter.

Once the canal infrastructure is complete at the end of 2012, future phases will rebuild the street grid and build up the surrounding land. These cobbled streets will form the framework for a mix of public and private development including a market, hotel, retail space, a visitors center, and a transit hub, although the development concept is still evolving.

Rendering shows a dense mix of traditional styles that echo the architecture of the lost mid-19th century neighborhood. “We’re still looking at this as an early concept,” said Bertsch. “Paying tribute to the city’s history is important, but we can’t lose sight of today’s realities.” While the canal design is complete, the architecture that surrounds it is evolving and could offer a more modern aesthetic.

Funding for the project’s infrastructure is already in place, said Bertsch. “We’re hoping this is going to roll right along and not sit long between phases. Buffalo started with a boom—with the Erie Canal and Olmsted parkways. If we rebuild the infrastructure, development will come.”

BRANDEK KLAYKO
URBACH EXITS

On April 5 SFMOMA Curator of Architecture and Design Henry Urbach announced that he would end his nearly five-year tenure at the museum. In an interview Urbach expressed gratitude for the opportunity but indicated that he was ready to move on.

“I feel with this suite of shows, and the almost 450 objects that I’ve been able to bring into the collection, this chapter has come to a timely and graceful close,” he said. “At this point what I’m really excited about is drawing upon what I’ve learned here and taking my project—which is to try and develop fresh, compelling ways for people to encounter architecture and design—into a new context that offers a different set of opportunities and constraints. Many opportunities have come my way that I have not been able to explore because of my very full-time work.”

SFMOMA was the first museum on the West Coast to establish a department of architecture and design, in 1983. Before taking over from Joseph Rosa in 2006, Urbach ran his own gallery in Manhattan for nine years, Henry Urbach Architecture, which was known for edgy architectural and art exhibitions. Arriving at SFMOMA, he started with an Olafur Eliasson exhibit in 2008, which featured an ice-encased car kept frozen in a special gallery. Other Urbach exhibits include Cut: Revealing the Section, which explored the section cut through historical survey, retrospective, and other familiar forms of museum experience, said Cary Bernstein, a San Francisco architect and chair of SFMOMA’s Architecture + Design Forum. “It is never just about the ‘stuff’ in the gallery for him, but the deliberate engagement with the ‘stuff’ that is equally important to unlock its meaning.”

“I have tremendous respect for what he accomplished, in particular his inventive attitude about how museum spaces themselves can become immersive architectural experiences—he used the language of architecture and design to exhibit architecture and design,” said David Meckel, Director of Research and Planning at San Francisco’s California College of the Arts. Urbach had not been a particularly visible figure in San Francisco. Said one insider, “People generally thought he was an improvement over his predecessor, but I’m not sure he did such a good job at bringing culture and arts events to come together, enlivening pedestrian paths while adding valuable public space. The team’s unique solution was an elegant parabolic-roofed pavilion that grows out of the Center’s plaza, creating a lawn for those who wish to lounge, and a canopy for those who wish to lunch. Steel’s slender, lightweight profile made the project possible by enabling the structure to bear on existing foundations, a new stage among many that give the performing arts center its life.

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GIVE AND GET

As with much of the industry, 2009 was a slow year for Robin Key Landscape Architecture, but an email from the volunteer organization desigNYC piqued the designers’ interest. Established in 2009 to bring communities, non-profits, and city agencies into closer connection with good design, desigNYC was seeking pro bono designers for an “intergenerational garden” for senior residents at a new affordable housing development called Serviam Gardens, which sits beside Mt. Saint Ursula, an all-girl Catholic high school in the Fordham Bedford section of the Bronx. “We wanted to make good use of our time,” said Key, and so rather than twiddling thumbs, the staff of four took on the project.

The firm held meetings with the community to assess the desires of residents, whose diverse backgrounds ranged from the Virgin Islands to the Korean peninsula; gardening was familiar at least half. “When we came on board the residents were fairly new,” recalled Key. “They really hadn’t had an opportunity to meet each other, and this really opened up a conversation. It brought out a lot of stories of where they come from.”

As with the apartment building, designed by OCV Architects, the garden includes several community “rooms.” “There are lots of nooks and crannies where you can spend the day. We wanted to create gathering spaces where students and residents could garden together,” said Key. Twenty thousand square feet make up the garden, with 7,000 feet set aside for a rooftop garden. OCV principal, John Coogan donated several hours to make the rooftop garden a reality.

The cost, about $1 million, was absorbed by a host of foundations, lenders, and equity investors, including the Home Depot Foundation and Enterprise Community Partners. The city kicked in funds through several housing organizations.

Rosanna Vierra, senior project manager for the developer, the Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation, foresees volunteer opportunities for the Ursula students, such as spring planting and fall harvesting. She’s also exploring the possibility of engaging the New York Botanical Garden to provide gardening lessons. Asked if she’d do volunteer her services again for a project of this size, Key hesitated. “It was a really big project for pro bono, maybe bigger than any of us realized,” she admitted. But as a small firm with four people, if we were competing, we may not have gotten it. Now we can show that we can compete, so we have gotten as much as we’ve given.”

TOM STOELKER

SMALL FIRM GETS BUSY DESIGNING PRO BONO GARDEN IN BRONX

The rehabilitation design stems from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation’s 2006 announcement that the High Bridge would reopen as part of the PlaNYC initiative. At the LPC hearing, members of the design team offered a history of the structure as the context for their proposal. As Meisha Hunter, a senior preservationist at Li/Saltzman Architects, emphasized, “This bridge has been inextricably linked with a history of modification and change,” most notably the 1928 replacement of five of its masonry arches with a single steel arch to facilitate navigation of the Harlem River. It will also join two other recent and well-received elevated walkways in the area—New York’s High Line and Walkway Over Hudson in Poughkeepsie.

Plans for the new project, due for completion in 2013, include a physical restoration and the installation of access ramps, viewing platforms, and lighting. For many community members, the major point of contention is an eight-foot cable mesh fence that would run the bridge’s span. The design team defended the fence as necessary for public safety and crime prevention, primarily by preventing people from jumping or throwing objects from the bridge. However, opponents believe this addition would be unnecessarily tall, and fear it would alter the bridge’s historic appearance and spoil its river views.

Several community representatives attending the hearing spoke against this element of the design, which Ebenezer Smith, district manager of Community Board 12, declared “insulting.” Rather than preventing misconduct, he said, the fence would alienate tourists by inadvertently suggesting the presence of criminal activity. Charlotte Fahn, a member of Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct (FOCA), agreed. “The best way to have security on this bridge is to draw more people,” noting that the best way to draw more people “is to have great unimpeded views,” she testified.

While several commissioners expressed similar concerns, the general consensus of the LPC was that the fence’s potential reversibility makes up for any perceived shortcomings, and the priority should be reopening the bridge as soon as possible. Ultimately, the LPC approved the plans with a vote of seven to one.

For Robert Kornfeld, an architect who testified on behalf of FOCA and the Historic Districts Council for the High Bridge plans, the decision was bittersweet. “We’re a hundred percent for this project. No one’s trying to bog it down,” he said, but he was “surprised” that the LPC was not willing to consider tweaking the fence design for the sake of preserving the views that once drew crowds to the bridge. “After all the work we’ve done to advocate, it’d really be a shame to see it desecrated in order to make it accessible.”

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NYU & YOU

Inspired by the memory of Soho’s vibrant gallery-loft scene, architect James Sanders has designed NYU Open House, a new public space for New York University on La Guardia Place. Situated just two doors down from the AIA’s Center for Architecture, the space occupies a 3,000-square-foot former bookstore, where an open plan functions as a rotating gallery and a 72-seat event space.

As its name implies, community outreach was at the heart of the project. NYU Open House is “a place for civic engagement, and a means of opening a dialogue between an academic institution and its urban setting,” explained Sanders. Along one wall of the space is a 2x4-designed permanent exhibition called A University of the City: NYU in NYC, 1831–2007 dedicated to the university’s controversial expansion plans.

“We’re trying to get better at creating community,” said Lynne Brown, a senior vice president at the university. “We’re making a concerted effort to make our spaces more open and contribute to the streetscape.” The space became available when NYU’s Stern bookstore relocated with a year left on its lease. NYU Open House officially opened last October, and Brown said it will remain open through the fall.

Because of the temporary nature of the space, the project was executed on a modest budget. “We didn’t have enough money for architecture,” joked Sanders. “Instead, we emphasized the art installations.” For the facade, he framed the large plate glass windows in blue-gray paint, setting off the warm white walls visible within. Cast-iron columns bisect the fifty-foot-wide space and establish a rhythm and armature for organizing the floor plan. Around the perimeter, large angled panels recalling artist easels are attached to the painted brick walls, offering a more intimate scale to the gallery’s soaring ceilings. Rows of aluminum light fixtures with wooden valences provide indirect lighting.

“We were trying to find a consistency of language so the space doesn’t feel like a million different pieces,” said Sanders. To help differentiate the space for different programmatic requirements, Sanders installed free-standing panels that pivot on aluminum poles, offering the ability to define a variety of flexible spaces. Sanders says the kinetic nature of the panels allows the space to have a sense of choreography.

With the interior spaces complete, Sanders said one more thing needed to be done. “We wanted something to push out into the public realm,” he said. Sanders’ finishing touch was a horizontal teak canopy that hovers over the sidewalk entrance and glows at night with uplighting. “It really creates a zone of warmth on the sidewalk,” he said.

RIDING HIGH continued from front page

The site sits between the bright lights of the entertainment district and Sea Gate, a quiet gated community at the end of the island, and across from several rent-subsidized towers, ranging from 14 to 19 stories.

For years, school buses parked at the two oceanfront lots between West 34th and West 36th Street, Surf Avenue and the boardwalk. As plans for the heart of the island exploded, the sleepy western end didn’t get much attention. That began to change in 2005 when City Planning agreed to rezone the area then owned by Ocean Dreams LLC. Instead of a 40 foot height limit with an FAR of 1.25, new zoning allowed for a 70 foot limit and an FAR of 3.0. More than 300 apartments were planned for two seven-story buildings with 88 parking spaces and no retail.

Now Red Apple is seeking to change the zoning once again. In the new plan, the smallest tower, which houses an enclosed parking garage, would rise to 142 feet.

“The design has more of a residential and urban quality that is a mix of masonry brick and masonry wall,” said William Stein, a principle at Dattner and lead architect for the project. “We’re far enough away to not have to address the downtown honky tonk.” Lee Weintraub Landscape Architects will unify the two plots by adding winding ramps among a dune-like landscape that merges the boardwalk with the ends of 36th and 37th Streets. The landscaping will buffer the smaller building from the boardwalk but will stop short of wrapping around the larger plot in order to make room for retail. “We’ve really tried to develop a very site specific project,” said Nick Hockens of Greenberg Traurig, the attorneys representing Red Apple. “For sure there’s a potential for retail on the boardwalk. One of the things from a planning perspective is it provides another anchor, but at the other end [of the island].” The new plan calls for the condos to be sold at market rate, and a commercial overlay allows for retail—including a supermarket—to line Surf Avenue. Details of projected costs for the project and for the market rate condos have yet to be released, but in 2005 City Planning documents show pre-crash estimates for the condos at $350,000 to $600,000.

“Subsidized housing surrounds the site, that’s why we think this kind of density and bulk is appropriate,” said Stein. “A lot of nearby buildings are towers in the park, so we’re trying to create an urban presence.” The land review process began in late March, and the plan goes before Community Board 13’s Land Use Committee on April 27. Members of the community have yet to review the proposal, but if all approvals go through, shovels could be in the sand early next year.
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Richard Meier has been tapped to design two new W hotels in Mexico, with a couple of office towers thrown in. The W Santa Fe is located in Mexico City, part of a complex of three Meier-designed towers. The W Retreat Kenai is the centerpiece of a resort on a pristine beach-front site on the Riviera Maya.

Both Starwood projects were co-developed with locals ALHEL and GIM Desarrollos, and are the Pritzker-prize winner’s first projects in Latin America. The W Santa Fe is part of The Liberty Plaza development that overlooks a nature preserve on the periphery of the city. It will be one of the first LEED certified projects in Mexico City. The entire complex will also include two interconnected office buildings, bridged by a conference center. The towers will be clad in ultra clear glass with a white metal screen on the southern side. “The screen will make the building appear more white, more solid,” said Dukho Yeon, an associate partner with Richard Meier & Partners.

Together the three buildings follow the curved contour of the street, creating a faceted street wall. The north office building is notched out at the top to create a large, inset multi-story porch. W Santa Fe, located in the southern-most building, is highly articulated at street level, with an extended cantilevered entrance portico, and a large conference center suspended over the double height lobby. Outdoor areas overlooking the wildlife refuge are also notched into the building, which will most likely include a VIP bar. “We wanted to create an urban approach to the building, something that relates at street level,” said Guillermo Murcia, an associate at Meier.

The W Kenai is a complex composition of floating planes and meandering paths set in a lush landscape of low mangroves. The project, which includes 180 rooms, a nightclub, fitness center, restaurant, and beach club, is scattered across the site. The various buildings and interconnecting paths will rest on stilts or small manmade islands to preserve water-flow across the marshy site. “We were thinking about the infinite horizon,” Yeon said. “The architectural object punctures the horizon line. There’s a tension between the natural and the manmade.” Visitors will enter the hotel after proceeding down a straight path with a linear fountain. A free-form wall beyond the path encloses the conference center and creates a kind of private garden. Through a living wall, visitors will enter the open-air lobby with views out to the pool and the beach beyond. Rooms face the ocean, either straight on or at a 45-degree angle and feature large outdoor porches. “The idea is a kind of floating city,” Murcia said.

The combination of hard, pure architectural geometries with looser, more picturesque landscape paths and features is unusual for Meier. “The site requires something very special,” Duhko said. The firm expects the project to open in 2014. ALAN G. BRAKE

FLYING DOWN TO MEXICO

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RICHARD MEIER'S FIRST PROJECTS IN LATIN AMERICA FOR W HOTELS

Guests approach Meier’s W Retreat Kenai on a path lined with a linear fountain. The right: W Santa Fe’s cantilevered entrance portico and suspended conference center; Right: The W Santa Fe is part of a three-building complex.

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Springtime means awards season for architects and designers. In March, the American Academy of Arts and Letters honored several architects, including partners Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam, William E. Massie, Julie VandenBerg Snow, Sylvia Lavin, and Anthony Vidler. Meanwhile, the Architectural League Prize celebrated the young talents (within ten years of graduation) in design and architecture under this year’s theme, “It’s Different.” And the AIA New York Chapter added an exciting twist to its annual Design Awards this year: a “Best in Show” honor from among all the winners.

Open to New York City projects or projects designed by New York-based architects, the AIANY’s awards attracted over 400 entries, from which the diligent jury chose 38 honor or merit winners. “Best in Show” honor from among all projects designed by New York-based architects, the AIANY’s awards attracted over 400 entries, from which the diligent jury chose 38 honor or merit winners.

The Lincoln Center projects will be part of a special Best in Show exhibition in the Center for Architecture’s Helfand Spotlight gallery through early May. The full AIANY 2011 Design Awards Exhibition will remain on view through June 25. Here’s a sampling of the winners.

1. DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO, FIXFOGLE ARCHITECTS, AND BIEYER BLENDER BELLE ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
Urban Design Honor Award
Lincoln Center Public Spaces
New York, NY

2. SAA / STAN ALLEN ARCHITECT, W.B. HUANG ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
Architecture Merit Award
Taichung InfoBox
Taichung, Taiwan

3. ARCHITECT: JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS
Urban Design Honor Award
Project: Qianhai Water City Location: Shenzhen, China

4. STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS, CCDI - CHINA CONSTRUCTION DESIGN INTERNATIONAL
Architecture Honor Award
Horizon Skyscraper: Vanke Center Shenzhen, China

5. DEAN/WOLF ARCHITECTS
Interiors Honor Award
Inverted Warehouse/Townhouse
New York, NY

6. JOEL SANDERS ARCHITECT
Unbuilt Work Merit Award
Taichung InfoBox
Taichung, Taiwan

7. WXY ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN
Urban Design Merit Award
Project: Gaihai Water City Location: Shenzhen, China

8. PHILIP LEE WORKSHOP
Unbuilt Work Merit Award
Just Add Water: A Proposal for the NYC Shaft Siles
New York, NY

In Good Company continued from front page

The east campus, which sits directly opposite Novartis’ existing Cambridge headquarters, is currently awaiting planning permission from the Cambridge city council. Though welldesigned at a planning presen-
tation earlier this year, it is not yet clear whether the proposal will get a green light, since the design requires two zoning laws to be changed: one to permit an increase in maximum height from 120 feet to 140 feet, and another to increase the gross floor area from 415,250 square feet to 528,500 square feet. “We are optimistic to complete the process at the end of 2011,” said Jeff Lockwood, Executive Director of Communications at Novartis. The proposed campus, which includes two new research and lab buildings and the renovation of MIT’s N24 block, will wrap around the corner plot just north of MIT and dip from 140 ft at the north end to 80 ft on the southern edge. “Lin will design the first building and really set the overall look and feel of the rest of the site,” said Lockwood. A second architect, yet to be appointed, will design the second building, “so it won’t be one hand,” Lin said in a recent presentation. Though not the company’s first such foray into excellent design—it recently completed Basel site rivals MIT’s own campus with a who’s who list of famous architects—the choice of Lin, who gained fame in 1981 for her design of the Vietnam Memorial in D.C. while still a graduate at Yale, is an enlightened decision by Novartis. Her elegant and considered work, focusing on ecological design and sculpture, sets her apart from many architects and designers currently peppering the surrounding MIT campus. Thomas Sieniewicz of Chan Krieger NB2’s Harvard Square office, who is collaborating with Lin, spoke of her as “incredibly sensitive to site and place.”

As just one of many leases by MIT’s extensive real estate office, MIT Investment Management Company (MITIM), it also positions the project in a favorable light with the city council. Although nothing has been confirmed about the planned green courtyard space, its community-driven approach speaks directly to the Cambridge city council, which has recently taken umbrage with MIT’s plan to revitalize Kendall Square. Quoted in the Tech, MIT’s newspaper, councilmember Kenneth Reeves said: “We’re being developed by entities whose bottom line is profit, not people or ease of access.” However, Steve Marsh, MITIM’s managing director believes that “the big motivation behind this is growing the innovation culture in Cambridge.” Indeed, this sentiment is reflected in the number of research-based companies, which have made the city their home and where Novartis intends to encourage an “innovation ecosystem.” Good design is a great start.
A FUTURE FOR FERRIES continued from front page

Study slipped under the radar.

The study takes a hard look at the viability of ferry services throughout the New York region and attempts to make sense of the various routes already in existence, which, if mapped one atop the other, look like a platter of spaghetti. Besides the 21 million annual Staten Island ferry riders, there are more than 10 million traveling back and forth from New Jersey alone. The report attempts to sift through the “plethora of agencies overseeing various aspects of the ferry service,” including the Port Authority, the DOT (both NYC’s and New Jersey’s), the FTA, the Coast Guard, and the Army Corps of Engineers, to name a few. Pros and cons for several governance approaches get play, such as centralized control on the order of the Port Authority, the MTA, or the DOT. A local ferry district akin to a BID is one suggestion, but doing nothing at all gets equal play.

Julie Wood, a spokesperson for NYCEDC, said that the pilot program and the report stand apart. “There’s a common sense link,” she said. “But there’s no formal connection.” The report’s goal is to be comprehensive not visionary. It delves into neighborhoods far beyond the East River. But along the way, the wheat separates from the chaff. A ferry going from Coney Island to Midtown, it notes, takes 10 to 20 minutes longer than the subway, but a Greenpoint commuter going to Lower Manhattan saves 15 to 20 minutes by ferry. Not surprisingly, the report finds the East River corridor “most promising” for establishing regular routes. At $5.50 one way, the trip costs about the same as commuter express buses. The route connects East 34th Street and Wall Street in Manhattan to Long Island City, then Greenpoint, North and South Williamsburg, DUMBO, and Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. The inclusion of a Friday jaunt to Governor’s Island during the warmer months conjures an interesting proposition found in the study that deals with integrating commuter service with recreational uses. The report suggests diverging tour boats during rush hour to serve the commuter needs, then bumping up traffic to destinations like Governors Island and Brooklyn Bridge Park during weekends. The merging of programmatic uses could fall into other categories as well, such as emergency evacuation.

Mayor Bloomberg and Council Speaker Quinn have shown significant support for the pilot program, but it will be up to the next mayor and Transport might also make sense. To be sure, many outside the administration will continue to push for a focus on coordinated service. “I absolutely think it’s viable,” said Roland Lewis, a speaker to determine the fate of the program. The study that deals with integrating commuter service with recreational uses. The report suggests diverging tour boats during rush hour to serve the commuter needs, then bumping up traffic to destinations like Governors Island and Brooklyn Bridge Park during weekends. The merging of programmatic uses could fall into other categories as well, such as emergency evacuation.

Mayor Bloomberg and Council Speaker Quinn have shown significant support for the pilot program, but it will be up to the next mayor and speaker to determine the fate of the program. Some wonder if a Commissioner of Water Transportation might also make sense. To be sure, many outside the administration will continue to push for a focus on coordinated service. “I absolutely think it’s viable,” said Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. “The operating subsidies are reasonable. Plus, the track and the repair work on the Hudson and East River are minimal.”

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OUR PICK OF THE MOST USEFULLY INTRIGUING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE FAIR IN MILAN.
I Saloni, the annual orgy of furnishings, celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. And along with the expected round-up of avant-garde teasers, sumptuous stunners, and thoughtfully recyclable ingenuities, there was a full spectrum of highly-sophisticated lighting designs that transformed LED solutions from dreary requisites to exciting options.

With over 2,500 exhibitors, every one of the 321,320 visitors who pile into the swoopy 2.2 million-square-foot exhibition...
hall—or track down the hundreds of other displays sequestered in fresco-flaking palazzi, chic courtyards, retooled factories, and drafty warehouses around the city—can find their own selection of favorites. We decided to spotlight a solid 50, basing our choice on our own quixotic standards: technical interest, elegance without fuss, knowing wit, and ecological smarts. We tore through the halls and pounded the pavement until our heels broke in hopes of bringing back some lasting winners.
When curatorial consultants Jill Singer and Monica Khemsurov of Sight Unseen set out to create a satellite ICFF event in 2009, NoHo struck the pair as the perfect destination. The neighborhood was home to emerging talent, legendary artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, Frank Stella, and Chuck Close, and such architectural highlights as Herzog and deMeuron’s Bond St. condo. Inspired by the Meatpacking District Initiative, the former I.D. editors along with Maria Cristina Rueda from Uhuru Design collaborated with local businesses to create a four-day festival of pop-up shops, exhibitions, talks, parties and performances. Now in its second year, the NoHo Design District promises new venues and more blocks. Sight Unseen will present McMasterpieces, an exhibition that invites designers to create a new object constructed with parts from the McMaster-Carr catalog, an under-the-desk resource used almost universally by American designers to create prototypes. In line with the event’s mission of incubating emerging talent, showroom Relative Space on Bond will present a show of young Berlin designers, and the American Design Club will present “Use Me: Functional Designs for the New America,” a show of products with the ability to do one thing extremely well, designed by promising young designers from all over. Sight Unseen will also host NoHo Next, its annual showcase of young designers which will include the latest furniture collections from Iacoli & McAllister, Jonah Takagi, ROLU, Brendan Ravenhill, Fort Standard, and four designers from RISD’s furniture design program. 

WantedDesign NYC
WantedDesign brings designers, craftsmen, and editors together to showcase and discuss design in Chelsea’s historic Terminal Warehouse Building. The three-day event, sponsored by Dwell magazine, promises conversations with movers and shakers in design and architecture, along with crafts demonstrations, the launch of a new furniture label, and products from established companies. In a live collaboration, crafters LMC, Gohard Gilding, Ateliers JeanJoseph, Santo and Jean Ya will join designers Marc Thorpe and Brooks Atwood in re-working traditional materials to make one-of-a-kind pieces that will be unveiled on May 16 at the closing party. On May 14, there will be talks led by Cooper Hewitt’s Matilda McQuaid with designers about the synergies between architecture and furniture. And on May 15, Sam Grawe, the editor-in-chief of Dwell, and Rama Chorpash, head of product design at Parsons, discuss design education and making the transition from designer to entrepreneur. On May 16, six designers examine the role of design in Mexico, New Zealand, France, Italy, and the United States.

ExpoTENtial
Through installations located around downtown, ExpoTENtial seeks to harness the power of design to better the urban experience, whether bus stop shelters or sunken plazas. The event will feature a series of ten labs in which curators and design teams work with non-profits and city agencies like the Parks Department and the Department of Information Technology to produce ideas for innovative design in New York that could influence city policy. The labs, produced by curators Julie Lasky, Anna Cosentino, and Shonquis Moreno and designers Tucker Viemeister, Jennifer Kinon and Smart Design, will address climate change, transportation, energy efficiency, and recycling. In NoHo, the Urban Alchemy Lab, a projection series produced with the NoHo Design District, will seek to change people’s perception of the cityscape, while the Par Corps Lab will feature a video collage that examines ways in which design can promote social interaction. On May 15, event co-founder Laetitia Wolff, who’s known for interdisciplinary projects like Value Meal: Design and (Over)eating, will talk about urban design interventions and how they can revitalize New York at Chelsea’s Terminal Warehouse.

Clockwise from top: Typographic furniture from Tabisso at WantedDesign; the WantedDesign exhibition space in Chelsea’s Terminal Warehouse; French designer Olivier Dolle and his Bibliobookshelf; The Lantern by 718 Made in Brooklyn; Vivian Chiu’s Chair Within Chair Within Chair; Table by Fort Standard in NoHo Design District; ExpoTENtial celebrates “city moments.”
A new show at the Rhode Island School of Design’s museum explores how architecture can be the most basic building block of a piece of art through the eyes of a range of contemporary artists including R. Buckminster Fuller, Sol LeWitt, Christian Marclay, Ron Nagle, Jan Schoonhoven, Mimi Smith, Sarah Sze, and Shirley Tse. Some of the works here are actual buildings, while others look more indirectly at the relationship between spaces, shapes, and volumes.
**RESITING EAMES**

The Story of Eames Furniture
Mari夜 Neuhaus
Die Gestalten Verlag, $199

Designer writer Mari夜 Neuhaus’s The Story of Eames Furniture, a weighty 800-page, two-volume work with more than 2,500 illustrations, recently joined the many publications that document the canonical work produced by Charles and Ray Eames from 1941 to 1978. The book is an exhaustive account of the Eameses’ groundbreaking furniture designs in molded plywood, bent and welded wire, fiberglass, cast aluminum, and other materials—from their home experiments in molded plywood to the mass-produced furniture manufactured by Evans Products, and since 1948, by Herman Miller (Vitra manufactures Eames designs in Europe). The first half of volume one, The Early Years, is devoted to biographical material about Charles and Ray, their staff, and key colleagues (Eero Saarinen and John Entenza) who were influential in the evolution of their design practice. The remaining sections focus on the Eameses’ design work from 1941 through 1947. Volume two, The Age of Herman Miller, picks up the story at the moment when Herman Miller became the manufacturer of Eames furniture. Every Eames design was introduced by Herman Miller from 1948 to 1978—seating, storage, and tables—is presented.

Apart from being a comprehensive catalogue of Eames furniture, Neuhaus primarily intends her work as a corrective to what she claims has been the mythologizing and “deification” of the couple’s professional and personal lives. Charles Eames is shown alone on the slip-case, a clear signal that The Story of Eames Furniture is his story, not a tale of collaboration between Charles and Ray Eames, as other authors have argued. In what had originally been a portrait of the couple, Ray’s image has literally been erased, an apt metaphor for the tone and messages of this book. (Remarkably, only the pre-marriage material about Ray Kaiser is referenced in the index; there is no entry for Ray Eames.) The Eameses’ interest in furniture was predicated on designing for mass production, a process that requires many hands and minds to transform a prototype into an industrially produced object. In addition to compiling a chronology of furniture, the author has made it her mission to give credit to those on the Eameses’ staff who contributed to this process—credit that was largely absent when the work was underway. Her account aims to deflate the “myth” of Charles as the primary design force behind the furniture, and relegates Ray’s role to little more than flower-arranger, hostess, and sometime color consultant. Among the employees of the Eameses, Don Albinson and Harry Bertoia receive the greatest credit for the design of signature Eames seating products. Don Albinson is identified as the lead designer of the Sofa Compact, the wire mesh chair, the Eames lounge chair, and the cast aluminum Group chair, among others. To underscore the view of former Eames Office employee Parke Meek (presumably shared by Neuhaus), that “Without Don Albinson there would never have been a Charles Eames,” the author designates nearly 150 pages as “Eames Furniture: The Albinson Years.” Bertoia—as reported to Neuhaus by Albinson, and staff member Fred Usher—is credited with designing the form and structural system of the molded plywood chair.

The author makes it clear that her narrative is that of an insider’s account, unencumbered by the scholar’s reliance on “second- and third-hand sources” and relegates Ray Eames’s key role to “Eames Furniture: The Albinson Years.” The author posits that the “avant-garde of creativity.” Frank Black repeats, “I am un chien andalou.” Years after first hearing it, I cued his screaming to that iconic surrealism film with “slicing up eyeballs.” This catchy melody, the pop song’s texture and tempo leave rational comprehension behind for a romp in the now. In the newly released book, The Filming of Modern Life, Malcolm Turvey explores several avant-garde films that, like the Pixies, defy simple categorization.

Standard debates pit the avant-garde as a reaction against bourgeois agendas of rationality, utilitarianism, and conservative society. Turvey, who teaches film history at Sarah Lawrence College, finds this view overly simplistic. He sees the avant-garde united in exploiting alternative social and aesthetic practices but simply unable to agree how to execute their radical societal transformation. Citing wide-ranging scholarship, Turvey posits that the “avant-garde cinema Obscura”—filmmaking of perception in modernity and the inherent beauty of objects. Turvey calls Entr’acte (1924) Dada’s “great work of negative destruction.” Francis Picabia and René Clair’s collaboration superimposing extreme angles and shifts in scale, blatantly, or as Turvey maintains, antagonistically, confounds viewers. Turvey reveals that Clair consciously avoided regurgitating literary art on film in order to exploit the medium’s inherently movement-driven possibilities. In this, the film is not entirely destructive but a harbinger of creativity. Salvador Dalí’s and Luis Buñuel’s Un Chien andalou (1929), with its iconic straight razor and eyeball, leads the narrative surge of Turvey’s selection of avant-garde films. While Léger’s jump cuts and close-ups may inflect a mechanical quality, Turvey argues that the rhythmic focus on the plastic properties of everyday objects and people does not dehumanize but reveals an intrinsic sense of beauty. Even through frenetic montage, Turvey establishes a balance between the “fragmentation of perception in modernity” and the inherent beauty of objects. Turvey calls Entr’acte (1924) Dada’s “great work of negative destruction.” Francis Picabia and René Clair’s collaboration superimposing extreme angles and shifts in scale, blatantly, or as Turvey maintains, antagonistically, confounds viewers. Turvey reveals that Clair consciously avoided regurgitating literary art on film in order to exploit the medium’s inherently movement-driven possibilities. In this, the film is not entirely destructive but a harbinger of creativity.
factory production. Interspersed with these details are many anecdotes, often sharply critical of Charles and Ray, with plenty of gossip detail. The author warns readers that they will learn intimate, “painful” details of Charles and Ray’s life, as she whitewashes their formerly heroic stature down to human-size proportions. For this reader, the relentless criticism of the Eameses’ lifestyle and character is a distraction from the story of Eames furniture. It seems there’s always room for a new jab at Ray’s quirks and shortcomings. Why tell us how long Ray took to get dressed? Or how many affairs Charles allegedly had? Do these stories add to our understanding of historically important furniture design?

The author over privileges her own interviews over many existing writings and interviews, disregarding, in text and bibliography, most relevant work published since 1995. For example, she excludes the Library of Congress/Vitra Design Museum exhibition catalogue, The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention (Abrams, 1997), Eames Demetrios’ ‘An Eames Primer’ (University, 2001), Pat Kirkham’s Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century (MIT, 1995), and recent monographs and exhibition catalogues on others who figure prominently in her narrative, including Gregory Ain, Gilbert Rohde, and Eero Saarinen. Neuhart’s interest is clearly in story, not history.

The second volume, The Age of Herman Miller, in addition to its comprehensive entries for each piece of Eames furniture produced by the company, also provides extended biographies of Herman Miller executives, as well as designer-colleagues George Nelson and Alexander Girard, who also produced work for Herman Miller. It was, therefore, perplexing to realize there were no photo credits listed for Herman Miller, and to read the author’s note that for this volume she had no access to the company’s archive. The company provided the explanation: “Ultimately this latest book should be considered on its merits—we believe there is little value to be found for serious students or practitioners of design.” It appears that once company officials understood Neuhart’s agenda—to significantly discredit the Eameses’ design authorship, ascribing it instead to their staff—they withheld rights to publish photos from their corporate archive.

Those who care about scholarship and accuracy will be disappointed and frustrated by the many errors and general carelessness evident throughout. To locate Frank Lloyd Wright’s “renowned” Fallingwater in Wisconsin—as Neuhart has—is merely one example of misinformation that casts doubt on the author’s reliability. While the book obviously encompasses a vast amount of detail about the Eameses, their colleagues and associates, and about modernism’s most celebrated furniture, the cumulative effect is an unsatisfying experience. The author’s agenda precludes an objective exposition of Charles and Ray’s real role in the design process and a cogent understanding of their design philosophy.

DESIGN HISTORIAN PHYLLIS ROSS IS AUTHOR OF GILBERT ROHDE: MODERN DESIGN FOR MODERN LIVING (YALE, 2009).

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CINEMA OBSCURA continued from page 28 machinic rationalism, as devoid of “artistic pretensions,” with the workings of “internal mental processes” to document the artist’s reality. However, one wonders how far Dali’s reality veers. Turvey applauds the conventional use of “continuities of action, character, and mise-en-scene” to ground viewers, only to “frustrate those expectations” through spatial and emotional discontinuity. Man with a Movie Camera (1929) heads Turvey’s fifth genre—“innovative documentaries about cities,” or “city symphonies.” Dziga Vertov filmed scenes of everyday life—domestic, work, street life, and leisure activities—and mixed them with mechanical gears, train wheels, and engines. Frequently juxtaposing a camera lens with a human eye, Vertov makes no ambiguity about the conflation of man and machine while clearly championing industrial efficiency. Turvey notes Vertov is “working with the machine rather than becoming one,” as in Ballet mécanique, because Vertov’s machinic operation is not enough to link “the perceptual experience of film and modern environments.” Turvey summarizes each film and provides a number of stills to provide a basis from which to follow his argument. Even by his account they barely capture the essence of the films. The films certainly break from convention and explore the medium’s possibilities without recourse to previous narrative forms, so much that they are, at times, nearly incomprehensible.

Ultimately, the best thing about Filming of Modern Life is that it encouraged me to watch the films again.

JAMES WAY WRITES FREQUENTLY FOR AN.

EXPOTENTIAL is a multi-dimensional, trans-disciplinary, curated platform, which seeks to foster NYC design community’s engagement with the city. The “Hug a Worm” lab launches Saturday May 7, 2011, tent#99 11am-7pm on the Bowery, as part of the New Museum Festival of Ideas for the New City.

Two more labs will launch in May during ICFF: for complete and ongoing program, please visit www.expotentialinfo.com

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Amid the grand chateaux and stately villas of Chestnut Hill rests the unassuming Vanna Venturi House. On an early spring afternoon, two visitors cautiously crept past melting mounds of snow to have a look. It’s a sight all too familiar to the current owner Agatha Hughes, whose parents purchased the house from Robert Venturi in 1973. Interlopers are as much a part of the landscape as the arc of crabapple trees bordering one side of the property.

Hughes’ father was a historian of modern technology at the University of Pennsylvania, and her mother was an editor and ceramicist. Together the couple wrote Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual. The family’s decorating taste leaned toward cozy academic clutter. And so it has remained. In the bedroom, her father’s box set of Robert Musil’s The Man Without Qualities still sits on the bedside table, while in the living room an old oil portrait of a family ancestor stares down his nose at a Lebbeus Woods drawing and a three-panel color illustration by Rem Koolhaas.

But the primary work of art remains the house itself, and careful maintenance is an ongoing mission. Hughes is currently on the hunt for the small metal clasps that fasten the drawstrings on the canvas shades. For every need, like replacing the large plate glass window at the center of the portico, she calls Venturi.

Having the architect’s advice has its benefits and its drawbacks. When Venturi told Hughes that the house was beginning to show its age and advised a new paint color, she had five large swatches painted onto the front. The architect picked a color and the painters got to work. With the paint purchased and the facade partly done, the architect sped up the driveway to say it was all wrong. Venturi had spent a considerable amount of time determining the color of a lentil, and the gray with a tinge of green took on a cooler hue.

Hughes says that the architect rarely looks at the house without having minor regrets about technical issues. Such perfectionsm prompted her to invite Venturi and his wife Denise Scott Brown to enjoy the house with a bit more distance. It was five o’clock on a summer evening, and she set up a little café on the front drive and poured glasses of wine. Soon Venturi began to reminisce about the years he once lived there. “And after a while,” Hughes recalled, “he began to say ‘It’s all right, maybe it’s not so bad.’”

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