MGM PUSHER TO RAZE FOSTER’S VEGAS TOWER

Norman Foster’s mottled blue tube tower, part of Las Vegas’ $9 billion star-studded CityCenter project developed by MGM Resorts International and Dubai World, will never join the ranks of glittering hot-spots on the Strip. Citing the potential for structural collapse, the Harmon hotel is now slated for demolition pending the settlement of a lawsuit claiming design flaws. continued on page 10

NEW BUILDING FOR CHELSEA CAMPUS NEEDS $52 MILLION IN LOCAL FUNDING

In a 2003 design competition, SHoP architects won over the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and the school’s Chelsea neighbors with a proposal for a slender glass building on 28th Street that contrasted with the brooding Brutalist buildings of the existing campus. The same year, the state (FIT is part of the SUNY system) allocated an additional $74 million toward the $148 million project, to be matched by local funding no later than March 2013. Since then, the proposal has fallen off the radar. continued on page 4

BAD HAND

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COMMUNITY ON EDGE AS NEW OWNER PLANS RENOVATION OF CHERISHED WRECK

After sightings of Andre Balazs and W Hotel executives slipping into the lobby, the Chelsea Hotel, that high church of poetry and punk, finally found a buyer in August for $80 million. The property landed in the vast portfolio of Joseph Chetrit, a stealth investor who bought Chicago’s Sears Tower with partners in 2004 and has somehow become a major New York real estate player while avoiding the spotlight. That may not be possible any longer. Everyone from Chelsea locals and Didi Ramone fans to lovers of raunch and Hart Crane’s poetry feel that a piece of quintessential New York is now on the line. The Chelsea’s ramshackle quality was always considered part of its charm. A dank basement odor permeated much of the building. Blackouts, pipe bursts and mice continued on page 9

PROJECT FUND WAYS

In a 2003 design competition, SHoP architects won over the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and the school’s Chelsea neighbors with a proposal for a slender glass building on 28th Street that contrasted with the brooding Brutalist buildings of the existing campus. The same year, the state (FIT is part of the SUNY system) allocated an additional $74 million toward the $148 million project, to be matched by local funding no later than March 2013. Since then, the proposal has fallen off the radar. continued on page 4

LAURETTA VINCIARELLI, 1943–2011

The word “incandescence” came to my linguistic orbit in 1999, when I was given the gift of Not Architecture But Evidence That It Exists. Published by Princeton Architectural Press in connection with an exhibition at Harvard Graduate School of Design, the book contains watercolors by Lauretta Vinciarelli, an architect who died at her home-studio on August 3, hours after her 68th birthday. Both an affirmation and a continued on page 7

CHICAGO’S TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

First published in November 2003 and now in offices three blocks away, the 9/11 Tenth Anniversary Issue looks at life in the years after the attacks on the World Trade Center site and also offers a timeline of the decade that followed before the road to rebuilding. See pages 18–21

THE SOUND OF CONSTRUCTION HERALS NEW BAM DISTRICT CURTAINS UP

The Brooklyn Academy of Music Cultural District, or “the Lincoln Center of Brooklyn” in Fort Greene, has been in the planning for over ten years, but construction has finally begun on one continued on page 6

TIME FLOWS LIKE WATER AT GROUND ZERO. SEE PAGE 18

continued on page 10
Holding Us Up?” (AN 06_04.07.2010; versus hard infrastructure, I came across SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE SPREADS Development leaders are concerned about the city’s drainage issues and roads, water, sewer. But even in the small basic hard infrastructure is often still needed: favors cities rather than rural areas where spectacular visions of between the plunging footprints. In fact, across the site, still bathed Bond) beneath ground. Not the ambitious memorial structure as vents, mechanical equipment, and staircase serving the The Snøhetta building is little more than a shed for the massive contact is the more effective security measure—and less expensive. in spite of a growing awareness that prevention and deterrence before far is compromised. One World Trade Center has been repeatedly had to be invented for installing the trees in their customized ground holes—it is hard to say. Certainly, the architecture built so obviously taken in construction and installation—special cranes in on the emerging results of those tumultuous years, recalling of how things get done in the city. Now as the tenth anniversary of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the agency at that time, the Freedom Tower—were not on Zero—had reached one of several nadirs: the architects of One tremendous exercise approaches, it seems that every pundit on the planet is weighing appropriate, or up to world-class standards was going to be rebuilt at the site. But that time seems past. After several visits from our offices— now just three blocks away from the World Trade Center site, thanks to the Empire State Development Action Plan assisting small businesses in the area—the feeling is very different. In the rank it proved to be a chastening, even stomach churning, exercise to relive even from a distance the sordid disagreements, the political posturing, and wretched disillusions as they revealed all too clearly a complete collapse of confidence that anything inspiring, appropriate, or up to world-class standards was going to be rebuilt at the site. Whether this is the result of design or the extreme care so obviously taken in construction and installation—special cranes had to be invented for installing the trees in their customized ground holes—it is hard to say. Certainly, the architecture built so far is compromised. One World Trade Center has been repeatedly assaulted with demands to make the base more bomb-resistant—in spite of a growing awareness that prevention and deterrence before contact is the more effective security measure—and less expensive. The Snøhetta building is little more than a shed for the massive vents, mechanical equipment, and staircase serving the, 800 square feet available in the basement. All three Center was designed in 2003 by Andrew add about 10 percent more space, helping ease the strain of hosting more than a thousand programs each year. Also included in the deal is a small garden space out back, which Bell hopes will be landscaped by the Horticulture Society of New York. The group currently uses space at the Center for occasional events and meetings. Bell jokingly compared the growing horizontal street presence of the AIA to that of Zabar’s on Broadway Uptown or J&R Music on Park Row Downtown, both of which eventually claimed all or most of their respective blocks. With extra sidewalk frontage notwithstanding, Bell said that the organization has no intention of moving into retail. “If Olympia (Kaz) were to get out of the business, maybe we’d reopen the discussion, but we don’t have plans for any,” he said, in his support of Van Alen’s recently opened architecture bookstore. This is not to say that the Center will eschew commercial endeavors altogether, quite the opposite. Bell said the newly “robust” conference center would be very attractive for corporate events just as much as it is for any other potential—rentals, as it has in the past. In fact, the Center has already hosted a wedding, although it has been rejected by at least one 13-year-old for a bat mitzvah.

Sincerely,

CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA

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JOY HAMPTON

AIANY TO EXPAND NEXT DOOR

ARCHITECT’S ROW

With all the NYU real estate hubbub going on around LaGuardia Place in Greenwich Village, it’s refreshing to hear of a quiet transaction between two locals. In late July, the AIANY signed the lease for 532 LaGuardia, an empty storefront across from an older magnum Guy Apicella just one door south of the AIANY’s current home, the Center for Architecture.

AIANY plans are already afoot to nail down design concepts for the additional space. “We’ll benefit from the best design advice in the city,” said AIANY executive director Rick Bell. Rogers Marvel has been hired as the architect and Mary Burke will head AIANY’s Previews Committee. The original Center was designed in 2003 by Andrew Berman Architect.

The floor plate of the new building is about 1,200 square feet, with another 800 square feet available in the basement. All three levels at the Center’s current space net about 12,000 square feet, so the extra 2,000 will add about 10 percent more space, helping make the strain of hosting more than a thousand programs each year. Also included in the deal is a small garden space out back, which Bell hopes will be landscaped by the Horticulture Society of New York. The group currently uses space at the Center for occasional events and meetings. But Bell jokingly compared the growing horizontal street presence of the AIA to that of Zabar’s on Broadway Uptown or J&R Music on Park Row Downtown, both of which eventually claimed all or most of their respective blocks. With extra sidewalk frontage notwithstanding, Bell said that the organization has no intention of moving into retail. “If Olympia (Kaz) were to get out of the business, maybe we’d reopen the discussion, but we don’t have plans for any,” he said, in his support of Van Alen’s recently opened architecture bookstore. This is not to say that the Center will eschew commercial endeavors altogether, quite the opposite. Bell said the newly “robust” conference center would be very attractive for corporate events—and just as good for any other potential—rentals, as it has in the past. In fact, the Center has already hosted a wedding, although it has been rejected by at least one 13-year-old for a bat mitzvah.

TOM STOELKER
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“Woodworking, cooking with fire, chopping wood, these are all things that I associate with dads,” said Taavo Somer, the New York-based designer and restaurateur. Somer, who recently became a father himself, has channeled these paternal visions into his latest eatery Isa (“father” in Estonian). Situated on a remote corner in Williamsburg, the warm and decidedly woody restaurant occupies the ground floor of a three-story 19th century brick house. Somer, who is leasing the entire 5,000-square-foot building, gutted the space, adding a terracotta tile floor and tearing out interior walls to create a spacious dining room, visible to passersby through large windows framed by glossy black shutters. Most of the 41 seats inside have a view of the open kitchen—a marble and stainless steel stage crowned by an enormous hand-sculpted hood of white plaster cement. Triangular shapes articulated on the hood repeat throughout the restaurant: in patterns created by reclaimed beams in the ceiling, in the stacked bins of an interior wall that cradles chopped firewood, and on custom light fixtures that evoke geodesic domes. Indeed, Somer cites Buckminster Fuller as a source of inspiration for a look he labels “primitive modernism.” The ghost of George Nakashima is there too, in a long, smooth banquette made of ash, one of the many furnishings handcrafted in Somer’s neighboring woodworking shop. An advocate of designing through progress, allowing him to tinker and tweak in fine dad fashion.

CLAWS ARE OUT

Michael Graves, manicurist? That’s the word out of Las Vegas, where a line of “beauty tools” created by the Michael Graves Design Group debuted earlier this month at a Las Vegas tradeshow. The Graves-designed implements, including nail clippers (“great for use on acrylic tips,” notes the manufacturer, California-based Slice), tweezers, cuticle scissors, a ceramic nail file, and a cosmetic pencil sharpener, were two years in the making. “Our process begins with research—real, intensive engagement in how these objects are really used by people,” said Graves, who decided what people really wanted were eminently holdable objects based on the concept of river stones, if river stones were rubbery, brick red, and fitted with German blades.

WHO REALLY DESIGNED THE IPAD

“People can’t get enough of these silicon rods!” tested our London correspondent from the vodka-soaked opening night party for Ron Arad’s “Curtain Call” exhibition. And good thing, too, as the riots outside forced everyone to stay put till 2 a.m. The show featured 5,600 bendy strands of white silicon hung from the ceiling of the cavernous Roundhouse cultural center in Camden. Hanging from a ring 60 feet in diameter, the rods form a 365° curtain onto which films and animations by the likes of Greenaway & Greenaway, Hussein Chalayan, and Christian Marclay were projected. A profile-cum-review in The Guardian by critic Rowan Moore notes that a decade ago, Arad presented his idea for a touch-screen tablet to the electronics company LG. The device was, according to the designer, “pretty much the iPad, but they had no idea what we were talking about.” The city chooses its “value engineering,” allowed FIT treasurer Sherry Brabham. “The city chooses its ‘value engineering’ to the electronics company LG. The device was, according to the designer, “pretty much the iPad, but they had no idea what we were talking about.”

LONG AHEAD

The SHoP design promises to fill the empty lot with a 12-foot-wide “woven wall” that is suspended over an extra-wide sidewalk, with various stairs and halls jutting out like “shuttles in a loom.” A green roof and south-facing Helioptix glass wall on the ninth and tenth floors aid in an effort for LEED Gold. At street level, visitors can glimpse through glass panels onto machines in the Bill Blass Weaving Labs, and a runway situated directly behind plate glass windows offers a catwalk and display area to showcase student designs. Sharples said that the company’s SHoP Construction division, formed in 2007, got plenty of experience in value engineering at Barclays Center. “We just don’t throw it over to someone else and say you figure it out,” he said. “We feel we can do that without sacrificing the look and feel or programming.”

The building’s working title is C-Squared, as it connects to an older structure known as the “C-Building.” But naming rights could also help close the gap, the school says. Hopes are high that a high student lounge atrium at its heart. SHoPs William Sharples described the facade as a 12-foot-wide “woven wall” that is suspended over an extra-wide sidewalk, with various stairs and halls jutting out like “shuttles in a loom.” A green roof and south-facing Helioptix glass wall on the ninth and tenth floors aid in an effort for LEED Gold. At street level, visitors can glimpse through glass panels onto machines in the Bill Blass Weaving Labs, and a runway situated directly behind plate glass windows offers a catwalk and display area to showcase student designs. Sharples said that the company’s SHoP Construction division, formed in 2007, got plenty of experience in value engineering at Barclays Center. “We just don’t throw it over to someone else and say you figure it out,” he said. “We feel we can do that without sacrificing the look and feel or programming.”

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The new theatre will be the first theatre built for classic drama since the construction of the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center in 1965, and the first permanent space for TFANA, which has specialized in performing classic drama since the company’s founding in 1965. The first permanent home of the Theatre for a New Audience (TFANA) opened in 1965, and the first permanent space for TFANA, which has specialized in performing classic drama, was the first theatre built for classic drama since the construction of the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center in 1965.

TFANA will take the form of a glass box covered with reflective gun-metal grey tiles, cantilevered over a public plaza designed by landscape architect Ken Smith. The stage and lobby are on the second floor in a four-story space with a large glass-plate window offering an expansive view of the street.

Since the original design was unveiled in 2005, the project has seen several changes, including the departure of Frank Gehry from the team in 2008 and three moves to its final site on a parking lot at Ashland Place and Lafayette Avenue. The stage and lobby are on the second floor in a four-story space with a large glass-plate window offering an expansive view of the street. The city contributed $34 million of the theater’s $48 million price tag to promote the development of the BAM Cultural District. The new theatre will be adjacent to the Morris Dance House, and near 40 arts and cultural organizations in the area. The project, with an anticipated completion in spring 2013, marks one of the first major elements of the plan to break ground.

The glass box concept has remained the same, now only “cleaner,” Hardy said. “The interior’s rectangular configuration, fully trapped stage, and adjustable floor space were modeled after the Cottesloe Theatre of Britain’s Royal National. “The degree to which all aspects of the room come apart is really remarkable,” said Hardy. Stage levels and the auditorium floor can all be shifted, and the capacity can be adjusted from 180 to 299 seats, while the space behind the stage can be opened to increase stage depth or closed to allow rehearsal space.

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UNVEILED

1045 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS

Bryant Park is set to welcome a new tower of glass and steel courtesy of Houston-based developer Hines and the South Carolina-based textile company Pacolet Milliken Enterprises. The 28-story building will fill the block between West 39th and West 40th streets. Designed by Henry Cobb and Yvonne Szeto of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, 1045 Avenue of the Americas will offer 450,000 square feet of rentable space, much of it with sweeping views of Bryant Park.

The proximity to the Garment District is not by chance: the Pacolet Milliken company’s roots in the textile manufacturing industry go back to the mid-19th century. Arriving in New York City in 1868, Miliken & Company acquired the property at the corner of 40th Street and Sixth Avenue in the mid-1950s. The site’s original building, a white marble modernist block with recessed ground floor access, was demolished in 2009, two years after the company moved its headquarters to South Carolina, the location of its textile mills. In December 2010, Pacolet Milliken bought 65,085 square feet of transferrable air rights from the adjacent landmarked Springs Mills Building at 104 40th Street.

Designed to maximize the views across the park and of the historic New York Public Library, the new building is sculpted into an hourglass shape, with feature windows on every tenant floor. Its entrance on 40th Street curves inward. “The hourglass facade detail will be a lens through which building occupants can view the park with dramatic and alluring immediacy,” said Cobb. Suspended over the corner entrance at 40th Street, a 48-feet wide stainless steel disc will act as a canopy as well as a grand architectural feature.

Hines is considering the potential for the base of the building to become trading floors, an opportunity to apply much of its experience in build-to-suit projects for clients including Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, and UBS. The project will move ahead with construction starting in 2012 and should be ready for occupation in 2014.

ARCHITECT: Pei Cobb Freed & Partners

Developer: Hines with Pacolet Milliken Enterprises, Inc.

Completion: 2014

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THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER SEPTEMBER 7, 2011

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Mercury special project design: Ross Lovegrove
life. Yet, for those willing to study the one published document given us to contemplate, the body itself is disappearing. What was to be remembered about the ‘Texas’ of 1988—a sun-flooded serenity and abundance of deprivation arising from its surfaces—ceases to be a topic. Instead, incandescence, the name Vinciarelli first firmly gave in 1998 as the title of her exhibit at SFMoMA, speaks of the turn away from the conventional architectural bodily substance in which walls, enclosures, deliberately seductive symmetries have any purchase at all. Her solitary brush gradually retreats to ponder the dark plane, or rather a luminous one, where the ‘under’ disquietly meets the ‘on’ and the ‘above.’ Most spectacularly, it is the horizon that changes in that shift of attention, its presence becoming less reliant on a Renaissance memory and more alerted, maybe, to the flatness of our own ‘now.’ From those closer to her, I’ve learned that, some months before she died, Lauretta made sketches evoking what she might have understood to be an infrastructure of who we are, as humans. While this may well have been a personal conversation with one’s impending end—and an effect of the fact that, today, we can be ‘imaged’ to know how we look inside—it may also have carried an additional, incandescent message: when we are lowered to our finality, the classical and the organic become one and the same.

ALEXANDRA WAGNER IS A PRACTICING PSYCHOANALYST AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT THE NEW SCHOOL FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN NEW YORK CITY.

Transforming design into reality

Usually it’s what is inside a school that counts. But at Manhattan’s Learning Spring School, the exterior promotes learning as well. Established for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum, the school needed a facade that could limit the effects of external stimuli and help students focus on the lessons at hand. To meet this challenge in a way that would function both academically and architecturally, architect Platt Byard Dovell White wrapped the zinc and terra cotta facade with an aluminum and stainless steel sunscreen, creating a sheltered LEED for Schools-certified environment inside, and a new vision for learning in the heart of Gramercy.

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Publisher of Metals in Construction

Architect: Platt Byard Dovell
White Architects
Photo: Frederick Charles
design collective, Ornamo 100, features designer Jouni Leino, and design think tank OK Do’s Museum of the Near Future education practices a running theme system, making architectural and design trumpet Finland’s acclaimed education art studio. Design Week’s organizers into a library, bookstore, and public transforms an unused office building in the urban dweller and urban design.

To warm up for its turn as the 2012 World Design Capital, the city of Helsinki will host a week-long design festival in September. A variety of sites throughout the city will be pressed into service, from public plazas to the Old Customs Warehouse. Architects and designers plan explore the relationship between the urban dweller and urban design. The exhibit I Am the City by the art and design collective, Ornamo 100, features Helsinki Throne (above) by interior designer Joui Leino, and design think tank OK Do’s Museum of the Near Future transforms an unused office building into a library, bookstore, and public art studio. Design Week’s organizers trumpet Finland’s acclaimed education system, making architectural and design education practices a running theme throughout the week.

Beijing Design Week, now in its second year, aims to change the catchphrase “Made in China” to “Designed in China.” The festival will bring together 30 local and international design firms for packed roster of events focusing on urban design and including Dutch artist/architect Daan Roosegaarde’s experiments with LEDs (above). Design Week will take over the whole city, staging happenings everywhere from the trendy 798 art district to Tiananmen Square, whose neighboring historic district will host pop-up shops and street art installations, to the site of the China Millenium Monument, where Paul Cocksedge will unveil an installation on October 1. This year London was invited to be Beijing’s “guest city,” and emissaries from the London Design Festival will translate some of their most successful ideas and activities into a new context.

This year’s theme for the London Design Festival is “Design from all Angles.” Home base for the event will be the main exhibition hall at the Victoria and Albert Museum (where Oskar Zieta’s Blow and Roll appeared last year, above), but design projects will also be scattered at 160 sites throughout the city. A three-story red oak latticework spiral called Timber Wave will frame the V&A entrance; the installation is by Amanda Levete, who was recently commissioned to design the museum’s courtyard and expansion. Elsewhere: at St. Paul’s Cathedral, John Pawson creates an optical allusion that distorts distance and depth through lenses and mirrors; this year’s Size and Matter installation at the Royal Festival Hall, an annual event highlighting design and technology, is a collaboration between David Chipperfield and Arup, who are sandwiching reflective metal coated fabric mesh between glass to explore translucent and reflective properties.

The Institute of Urban Design’s open call netted 600 ideas across the city (map, far left, not including Staten Island) and from there, some 150 design teams chose locations (map, left) for focused ideas, including Loading Dock Theater by Gans Studio (above) proposing that even temporarily empty spaces can be scheduled for pop-up performing arts events and Blackboard by Max Carr (above right) who suggested that the unused backsidess of billboards could be used by local artists.

To go to www.urbandesignweek.org
The art-filled lobby.

**CHELSEA CHECKED OUT**

continued from front page

were common. Walls contain several generations worth of wires and pipes run naked along hallways. Fire escapes are only at the west end of the hotel. (Disclosure: I lived in the hotel for seven years.) The Bard family, who managed the hotel for much of the last century, seemed to take better care of the tenants than of the building. Artwork was often exchanged for rent.

Amidst the tumult of the last few years, many commercial tenants and several residents moved out. Those remaining will endure months of empty halls save for construction workers as the hotel has stopped accepting overnight guests to make way for a major renovation. Architect Gene Kaufman, who will oversee renovation. Architect Gene Kaufman, who will oversee the project, has worked with the Chetrit Organization before. Like Chetrit, Kaufman has quietly built a substantial portfolio of boutique hotels, while staying below the radar. He made a summertime splash when he purchased a majority stake in Gwathmey Siegel (Gwathmey Siegel Kaufman & Associates).

Outside of relocating the check-in counter to the old manager’s office, Kaufman didn’t divulge many design plans. He did say he’d like to keep a few time-worn elements. “The notion of shabby is nice but not if you have a spring poking through the seat,” he said. “There’s a fine line between that kind of feel and that which a hotel customer is willing to accept.” He added that the randomness of the various room layouts and assorted histories from Dylan Thomas to Jimi Hendrix would be emphasized. “I like that notion of individuality and paying respect to specific rooms. We’ve been talking about how to do that without a theme park approach.”

And then there is the art. Some, but not all, of the paintings and sculpture were included in the sale. From Larry Rivers to Barry Flanagan, the lobby’s collection was truly world class. But there was also a ton of art in the stairwell, the hallways, and in the basement. In some cases not even the artists know the status of their work. Joe Andoe isn’t sure if his traffic-stopping painting of a white horse in the lobby made it into the deal. Kaufman said “a major person in the art world” has been enlisted to help catalog the art and mount a show while the hotel is closed.

Kaufman has few memories of the dive apart from one snowbound night years ago watching the lobby sideshow. Though he doesn’t claim any rock’ n’ roll credentials, he does remember a New York in the 1970s that was a lot wilder. “Now the culture has transformed itself, but that was the norm at the time,” he said. Indeed, times have changed. When the guests return they’ll likely be more inclined to head to the High Line than to set a fire. Sid Vicious-style, in a closet.

**UNVEILED**

CREATE @ HARLEM GREEN

The New York City Economic Development Corporation announced in July that the former Taystee Bakery on Amsterdam Avenue in Harlem will be redeveloped into a green, mixed-use project featuring light manufacturing, artist and not-for-profit spaces, a local bank, an ice skating rink, and a local brewery. Project developers Janus Partners and Monadnock Construction asked LevenBetts Architecture to create a design that merges the eclectic elements into a program that acts as an economic and social center for the neighborhood. Called CREATE @ Harlem Green, the new building will incorporate masonry walls from the Taystee Bakery with a new modern structure floating above. “We’re rethinking the industrial building,” said David Leven, partner at LevenBetts and director of graduate studies at Parsons. “What’s left are big, heavy, dark buildings that have been abandoned or disused for some time. We’re preserving that but opening the facades up to the street.”

Plans call for 100,000 square feet of retail, and 10,000 of community facility space, in total estimated to cost $100 million.

While plans continue to be fleshed out, Leven said the new structure features a perforated-metal and mediates the scales of surrounding buildings by stepping down its height along 126th Street. A continuous sawtooth band expresses a structural truss across the top of the facade. Green walls and roofs abound, including a wall along 125th Street covered in plants to be harvested by the Harlem Brewing Company, which will operate in the building.

Before construction can begin, the project will be reviewed next spring by the EDC. Developers must also finish assembling their team and evaluating conditions on the site in order to begin foundation design.

**BRANDEN KLAYKO**

Architect: LevenBetts
Client: Janus Partners and Monadnock Construction
Location: New York
Completion: 2014

Fordham University cares about the student experience, both in and out of the classroom. When it had architect Sasaki Associates undertake a master plan for the university’s Rose Hill campus, it envisioned a **Student Life Facility** at its core. Now, newly completed Campbell and Salice & Conley residence halls form that hub of campus life, embodying the rich educational environment that cultivates intellectual curiosity. The design team knew that only a steel structural system could deliver the long-span, column-free spaces essential for the kind of community gatherings that enhance student life. They also knew that only with the speed characteristic of steel construction could the complex be ready for the fall semester without compromising quality.

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Architect: Sasaki Associates
Structural Engineer: LeMessurier Consultants
Photographer: Robert Benson Photography
BAD HAND continued from front page

The Harmon was to anchor a prominent corner, adjacent to The Crystals, a massive 500,000-square-foot retail and entertainment mall by Daniel Libeskind and Rockwell Group. Following structural problems with rebar installation on floors six through 20 and a resulting lawsuit, the Harmon Building was first cut in half—from 49 to 27 floors—and now owner MGM has submitted an engineer’s report that finds the building could fail in a strong earthquake.

After discovering deficient steel reinforcing in early 2008, MGM left the shortened tower an unfinished shell but is now moving to implode the structure, citing safety concerns. Alan Feldman, senior vice president of public affairs at MGM, said the company had submitted an engineering recommendation and demolition action plan to Clark County, Nevada detailing the structural shortcomings of the Harmon. “The city asked us to respond to the engineer’s report to determine the best way forward,” said Feldman. “We decided the best move is to take the building down.” Feldman noted that this engineer’s recommendation is not a permit request. A demolition plan prepared by LVI Environmental Services called for approximately six months of site preparation followed by four to six months of cleanup and reclamation after the implosion. First, the Harmon’s low-rise podium will be mostly razed to physically separate the structure from The Crystals. According to LVI, existing structure elements and infrastructure specified to remain “will be strategically used to act as structural barriers against the effects of the planned implosion.”

Before a permit can be sought, MGM must first resolve a court-ordered stay of demolition that is part of a lawsuit with the building’s general contractor Perini Building Company, who allege that the structural problems were caused by design flaws. Perini claims that MGM owes the company and its subcontractors over $200 million in payments for work at CityCenter. When contacted, the office of Foster + Partners said they were unable to comment on the Harmon Building’s design. “The lawsuit is about [financial] damages,” Feldman said. “Demolition can go forward while the lawsuit is pending.” That’s if MGM can convince a judge to lift the stay put in place since the Harmon is essentially a piece of evidence in the lawsuit. Still to be determined, Feldman said, is what went wrong during construction. “That’s at the heart of the lawsuit. The steel is not installed to code, that much is clear.” Perini maintains that the Harmon is structurally sound and construction errors can be fixed. Citing an independent report commissioned by Clark County, Perini responded to MGM’s planned demolition in a statement, “MGM is seeking to implode the building to hide the fact that the Harmon is not a threat to public safety and to avoid having the repairs made that Perini and its third-party structural engineers have offered to do.” The company said it believes MGM seeks to tear down the building “to avoid adding the Harmon as additional glitz to its other vacant properties in CityCenter.” MGM has no plans for the site once the Harmon Building is removed, and the vision remains only a desert mirage.

For the fifth straight month the Architecture Billings Index (ABI) has posted negative figures, with the only positive number on the chart coming from billing inquiries. The overall number dropped from 46.3 in June to 45.1 in July (any ABI number below 50 is considered negative). AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker once again pointed to the larger economy as the source of industry woes. “The stuff that’s going on with the national level is consistent with what we’re experiencing,” said Baker, adding that given the current political situation he didn’t think another stimulus package would make it through Congress. “The politics of that is going to be tough; there’s a problem with increased spending,” he said. Even if another stimulus package passed, the last one didn’t really trickle down to the industry. “I have a hunch if there’s a chance it would go through, it would look a lot like the last stimulus, and architects didn’t get a lot from that,” he said.

MOD-EST PROPOSAL

By filing the necessary paperwork with the city in late August, developer Bruce Ratner got the ball rolling on the residential component of Atlantic Yards project. Ratner’s initial proposal ruffled union feathers last winter when he revealed that SHoP architects would design modular units to be assembled offsite. Union leaders and locals balked, saying the offsite production would cut jobs that were promised for the area. Now The Brooklyn Paper reports that two designs, one prefab and another conventional, will be completed in the coming weeks and reviewed by the developer.

RAIL PREVAILS

Much to the chagrin of New Jersey’s mass transit-averse Republican leadership, in late August Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood made it official: $745 million would go toward track improvements along the Northeast Corridor from Washington to Boston. The windfall came when Florida Governor Rick Scott rejected more than $2 billion in Federal financing for a high-speed rail planned for his state. The governor predicted cost overruns that would leave Florida footing the bill. With almost $450 million of the $750 million going to New Jersey, New Jersey’s US Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen shared Scott’s Tea Party-influenced concerns and tried divert the money toward Midwest flood relief and away from high-speed rail. But NJ Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez were having none of it and lobbied LaHood hard, thereby snaring a good portion of the cash to support track repairs and help Amtrak’s Acela trains eventually attain speeds of 186 miles per hour. Preconstruction work on the tracks between Trenton and New York City will begin this fall.

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As the 2008 economic recession descended over the United States, most of the nation’s architecture firms found their domestic work drying up with nothing new to speak of coming in the door. Such was the case at KPF, but turn things around, the firm—which is widely known for its multi-use mega projects in Asia and high-end commercial for its multi-use mega projects in the States, most of the nation’s architecture firms found their domestic work drying up with nothing new to speak of coming in the door. So the architects set about the task of peeling away what was worthless, preserving the bones, and adding elements to both increase the usable space to 110,000 square feet and imbue the edifice with enough architectural value to make it a suitable gateway to the future development.

The first thing to go was the poorly performing envelope. Beneath, the team discovered a steel structure in need of reinforcement to bring it up to current code. DeSimone Consulting Engineers worked with the architects to transform the existing moment frame into a braced frame structure. The team added an elevator and a stairwell but were able to preserve 45 percent of the building core, including all of the mechanical ducting. The basement also offered the opportunity to add 20,000 square feet of office space in what was previously a mere storage area. The underground level had impressive 20-foot ceiling heights that made it suitable for Class A space. All it needed was access to daylight. In answer, the team cut out sections of the surrounding landscape to create sunken gardens acting as light wells.

The big design gesture came with the addition to the fourth floor. Here, KPF saw the possibility of turning the L-shaped plan into a rectangle by adding another L that would add 10,000 square feet of open-plan office space and create a sheltered plaza below, delivering that sense of arrival that was so lacking in the existing scheme. The drama of this jutting volume also gave the team the chance to develop an expressive sculptural column that would both support the addition and become an icon for the building. The “tree” column that they developed featured a sturdy “trunk” and three heavy “branch-es” that jut out to cradle the “trunk” and three heavy “branch-es” that jut out to cradle the addition. This column was prefabricated in four sections out of 1-inch-thick plate steel. Inside, it features 300,000 steel studs. The sections were welded together onsite and then injected with concrete. The addition itself is made up of full-floor trusses that span 120 feet. The trusses’ cords were modified to interact formally with the organic form of the column, which supports the entire weight of the addition.

To win the job, KPF sent its top-tier design talent to Middlesex County, where it saw the opportunity to flex its well-developed arsenal of urban design strategies and bring them to bear on the sleepy ex-urban surrounds. The condition it found there was lackluster, to put it mildly: an L-shaped, strip-windowed box—with no clearly demarcated entry or ceremonial sense of arrival—beached beside a dreary asphalt sea of parking. However, the existing building did possess some value and the prospect of recycling the structure cut enough room in the budget (some $4.5 million in savings) to allow for big gestures elsewhere. So the architects set about the task of peeling away what was worthless, preserving the bones, and adding elements to both increase the usable space to 110,000 square feet and imbue the edifice with enough architectural value to make it a suitable gateway to the future development.

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Tishman Construction (another big player that agreed to work on this small-fry project due to the recessionary crunch) originally planned to erect the column first and then lower the addition on top of it. However, delays in the shop fabrication of the column disrupted that idea. In order to keep the project moving on schedule, the contractor erected the addition first on false-work towers, then placed the column underneath it once it became available. DeSimone had to redraw the connections between trusses and branches to make this possible.

To cap things off, KPF re-skinned the building in a high-performance curtain wall of floor-to-ceiling glass. To keep the building on track for a Gold LEED rating, the firm clad the first three floors in black glass and the fourth floor in low-ion white fritted glass. The higher performance characteristics of the lower levels generated enough energy savings through insulation values to make room for a crystal-clear upper level that brings yet more drama to the project and an increased desirability to the sun-drenched top floor. That’s not to say that the lower floors are dark and dreary. The Viracon glass is of such a quality that when viewed from inside there is little difference between black and white in the perception of the world outside.

AARON SEWARD

KPF brought new life to this aging suburban office building by re-cladding the structure in a high-performance curtain wall, cutting wells in the earth to bring daylight to the basement, and expanding the fourth floor, adding square footage and creating a sheltered entry plaza.

RESOURCES:
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From the Empire State Building to the Freedom Tower, New York’s modern history is founded on a deep connection with structural steel. This connection remains as robust and interdependent as ever, as evidenced by the slate of New York projects in recent years receiving AISC IDEAS Awards for excellence in steel-frame building design.

On SteelDay, celebrate the Big Apple’s ongoing passion for structural steel with a complimentary networking luncheon in Midtown Manhattan on September 23. Then join movers and shakers in New York construction in an overview of some of these award-winning projects and a lively discussion of trends impacting the city’s building market as the industry moves toward recovery.

**SteelDay: September 23**

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Lunch: 11:00 a.m.
Panel discussion: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Who should attend: Developers, Construction Managers, Architects, Engineers, Students

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Family and PlayLab, two young Brooklyn-based design firms, share work as well as a design ethos. Their current collaboration, Plus Pool, is a floating x-shaped swimming pool designed to filter river water and create a safe, clean swimming arena on the Hudson. Worms, another joint project, was the winning entry in a competition for a street tent design to be used in New York’s Festival of Ideas last May. Both projects epitomize the individual firms’ shared desire to make publicly engaged design.

“Our audience is the world,” said Archie Lee Coates, a partner at PlayLab. Coates, Jeffrey Scott Franklin, and Dong-Ping Wong have known each other since 2007. Franklin and Wong cut their teeth at REX architects in New York, Wong recently graduated from Virginia Tech, where both he and Coates studied. In 2008, at the peak of the economic downturn, Wong left REX, establishing Family to pursue his own architectural work with an ecological agenda. Meanwhile Coates had established PlayLab, initially as a platform for simply designing things he liked, such as record sleeves and art installations, and in 2009 Franklin left REX to join him.

Currently, PlayLab is designing a 350-square-foot summerhouse for a friend and an art gallery installation in Stockholm, and Family has been entering architecture competitions for cultural institutions and residential schemes. And though they traverse different trajectories—PlayLab is interested in the strategy side of design projects as well as producing installations, while Family is more traditional in its approach to architecture—this makes the two studios natural collaborators.

Their joint work to date is defined by engagement and interaction not just in terms of end-use but also process. In the case of Worms, PlayLab went to Family with multiple ideas for re-envisioning the outdoor tent, and Wong picked the one he liked. For Plus Pool, Family approached PlayLab to act as broadcaster of the idea, producing a book, poster, and graphic identity to communicate the project to the public, while Family focused on specific architectural challenges.

It’s a complementary coupling: Wong’s more formalized approach to design starts from an overarching concept and then scales down to the details—“I’m more comfortable with large scale,” he said—while Franklin and Coates’ broad scope encompasses graphic design, branding, and bringing far-out ideas to life. “Our direction is every direction, we don’t want to be pigeon holed,” said Franklin. Keen to move on to larger scale work and energized by bounces of ideas one another, Family and PlayLab are committed to realizing Plus Pool and maintaining an ongoing collaboration.©

PLAN FOR THE PROJECT, ORIGINALLY INITIATED BY FAMILY, SHOT AHEAD LAST YEAR DUE TO AN UNEXPECTEDLY ENTHUSIASTIC PUBLIC RECEPTION. THE POSITIVE REACTION TO THE FLOATING “GIANT STRAINER” HAS LED TO TALKS WITH THE CITY ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THE DESIGN—A NEAT FIT WITH THE 2030 RIVER-FRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN. “I WANTED TO SEE HOW FAR YOU COULD TAKE A STREET TENT DESIGN TO BE USED IN NEW YORK’S FESTIVAL OF IDEAS LAST MAY.”

PLAYLAB APPROACHED FAMILY WITH MULTIPLE IDEAS FOR THE NEW MUSEUM AND STOREFRONT FOR ARCHITECTURE’S COMPETITION TO RE-ENVISION THE OUTDOOR TENT. TRUE TO THEIR AD HOC SPIRIT, FAMILY AND PLAYLAB’S ENTRY WAS PUT TOGETHER IN A HURRIED 12 HOURS. THEIR WINNING DESIGN, 10 BY 20 FEET TENTS MADE FROM FABRIC NYLON TRADITIONALLY USED FOR PARACHUTES AND STEEL TUBE FRAMEWORK—PLAYED ON THE AGILITY OF A TENT TO CREATE A VARIETY OF SPACES FOR DIFFERENT USES, FROM ENGAGING IN STOREFRONTS TO WRAPPING AROUND TREES. PARTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION TOOK PLACE IN FAMILY’S OFFICE AND THE TEAM INSTALLED MUCH OF WORMS THEMSELVES ON-SITE.

THE RESULT OF A 2009 COMPETITION TO BUILD A 600-PERSON, HIGH-DENSITY, ZERO-ENERGY RESIDENTIAL BLOCK IN DOWNTOWN DALLAS, THE PEAKS BECAME THE CLEAREST DEFINITION OF FAMILY’S DRIVING PRINCIPLE: ECLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE. THE STEPPED TRIANGULAR TOWERS DOTTED WITH SMALL, LOW-NOISE EMITTING WIND TURBINES WERE ARRANGED TO INCREASE THE SURFACE AREA AND CAPTURE FUNNELED WIND AS WELL AS SOLAR POWER. WORKING WITH AN ENERGY CONSULTANT SPECIALIZING IN WIND TURBINES, FAMILY’S TOWERS WANT BEYOND THE BRIDGE TO GENERATE SURPLUS ENERGY, WHICH COULD THEN BE SOLD BACK TO THE CITY GRID FOR A PROFIT AND FUND THE BUILDING’S MAINTENANCE.

This project was an exercise in “designing a way to get people to interact,” according to Franklin. Based in a house donated to a non-profit in Greensboro and rented out at $1 per year, the Pie Lab became an incubator for dispelling racial tensions in the surrounding areas. Resisting the classic shop culture and discouraging take-out, PlayLab would knock on people’s doors and invite them over for pie and a conversation. To encourage social interaction, they designed a square table and brand signage that invited curiosity. The project won a series of grants and Pie Lab bought a building on downtown’s main street, which is run by locals and acts as a small business incubator.

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A new highly-reflective light shelf system from Hunter Douglas, the BrightShelf features a patented ogee curve designed to catch varying sunlight angles throughout the year and diffuse light further into interiors, creating more even daylighting. In addition to reducing energy costs, the 100 percent recyclable shelf requires less installation and maintenance time due to its rotational bracket system.

Ply Gem’s new Contractor Series 2000 replacement windows are a low-priced option for a range of applications, with a low-profile construction designed to match that of higher priced wood options. The series was created to accommodate an R-5 triple-pane insulated window design in response to the U.S. DOE’s R-5 Windows and Low-E Storm Windows Volume Purchase Program, launched to expand the market of high efficiency window products.

Aluminum extrusion company Tubelite has released its aLuminate light shelf, designed to comply with LEED criteria for daylighting, energy performance, and recycled content. Created for new construction or retrofits with aluminum curtain wall or storefront systems, the shelf’s wave shape diffuses light and reflects it evenly into interiors. Shelves are available in 18-, 24-, 30-, and 36-inch depths with horizontal spans up to 60 inches.

New Tilt & Turn custom windows from Jeld-Wen are suited for residential and commercial remodeling projects with the inward-swinging functionality of a casement window and the ventilation of a bottom-hinged hopper window. Offered in sustainably certified or AuraLast rot-, termite-, and water-resistant woods, the windows are available in 41 colors and several custom options.

As part of its new Ready to Go line of prepackaged, bundle-priced products, 3form has introduced the Insert Lightbox. The LED-illuminated lightbox can be inset into a wall or applied as a corner wrap and could replace an existing interior window or opening to add an artistic interior element. In a range of colors, textures, and patterns, the system is available with a three-week leadtime.

Developed in collaboration with Ennead Architects for the curtain wall and terra cotta rainscreen of The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, Shildan has now released three new terra cotta shapes including rounded corner panels, scalloped pieces, and curved baguettes (pictured). The baguettes are a sunscreen element with a 90-degree curve that allows both views and shading even at a curtain wall’s corners.
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MAKING MEANING

Drawn largely from stories in our own pages, this selective timeline recalls key design moments, revisions, and decisions leading up to the tenth anniversary opening of the 9/11 Memorial. The Editors

November
Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) established.

December
A viewing platform overlooking ground zero designed by Diller & Scofidio, David Rockwell, and Kevin Kennon opens to large crowds.

January 17
The exhibition, “A New World Trade Center - Design Proposals,” 58 submissions by celebrated architects, draws long lines to Max Protetch Gallery in Chelsea.

April
LMDC releases Blueprint for the Future of Lower Manhattan with 15 points outlining the need for transportation, culture, commerce, memorial space, and a reestablished connection to the city grid.

July
Beyer Blinder Belle present planning studies at the Javits Center, plus two New Urbanism-inspired plans by Peterson Littenberg. All are widely reviled by the public and in the media.

August
LMDC announces Innovative Design Study, a call for qualifications. That it is not a competition is disregarded by all parties.

September
Teams are announced: THINK led by Frederick Schwartz and Rafael Viñoly; Peter Eisenman, Richard Meier, Steven Holl, and Charles Gwathmey; Foster & Partners; United Architects; SOM; and Studio Daniel Libeskind.

December
The six designs are presented in the Winter Garden starting with Studio Daniel Libeskind’s “Memory Foundations,” the cheapest proposal at $330 million.

February 24
On the eve of LMDC’s selection, Schwartz, Viñoly, and Libeskind appear on Oprah Winfrey Show.

February 26
The New York Times announces on page one that LMDC has chosen the THINK scheme.

February 27
Governor George Pataki officially selects the Libeskind plan.

April
An open competition for the memorial is announced.
The Federal Transit Administration announces that Santiago Calatrava will design the WTC transportation hub (05). Libeskind’s Wedge of Light concept (06) is displaced by and then absorbed into the transit hub.

Michael Arad’s “Reflecting Absence,” now a collaborative work with landscape designer Peter Walker is selected for the memorial (07). The design does not include several Libeskind ideas, including the sunken bathtub and ramps. The focus on the tower footprints includes the names of those who died viewed through waterfalls.

Libeskind floats a 59-page treatment for a memoir: “The Foundations of Optimism: My Journey from Communist Poland to Rebuilding the World Trade Center” that will ultimately be published as Breaking Ground: An Immigrant’s Journey from Poland to Ground Zero (Riverhead Trade) in October 2005.

Eight finalists for the memorial competition are announced.

By deadline, 5,201 proposals for the memorial are submitted.

After it is reported that developer Larry Silverstein’s architect David Childs from SOM and masterplan architect Libeskind cannot be left alone in the same room, LMDC announces that Childs and Libeskind are official collaborators on the $1.2 billion office, now named the Freedom Tower by Governor Pataki.

By deadline, the Design Competition has received 5,201 proposals for the memorial.

The shortlist is released.

The shortlist for the Performing Arts Complex includes ten firms: Bing Thom Architects with Meyer/Gifford/Jones architects, Gehry Partners; Moshe Safdie and Associates; OMA and MNN; Polshek Partnership; Rafael Véliz; Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen; Studio Daniel Libeskind; Ten Arquitectos and H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture; and Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects.

The shortlist of six firms for the Memorial Complex is released, including Moshe Safdie and Associates; Pei Cobb Freed and Partners; Polshek Partnership; Robert M. Stern Architects; Shigeru Ban Architect + Frei Otto with Dake Math Architects; and Snøhetta.

The shortlist of six firms for the Memorial Complex is released, including Moshe Safdie and Associates; Pei Cobb Freed and Partners; Polshek Partnership; Robert M. Stern Architects; Shigeru Ban Architect + Frei Otto with Dake Math Architects; and Snøhetta.

Snøhetta is selected to design the Memorial Complex, largely comprised of the International Freedom Center; Frank Gehry is to design the performing arts complex for the Joyce and the Signature theaters.

Governor Pataki attends the ceremonial laying of a 20-ton block of granite as cornerstone of the Freedom Tower (08) that will be removed again in June 2006.

“Surely, we can afford to make Ground Zero a place of peaceable assembly for everyone. Indeed, if terror demands a civic reply, what better than a solemn memorial to those lost and a space for the most fundamental exercise of democracy in space, the freedom to gather in a place that is our own.”

-Michael Sorkin, Architect
"The first and most difficult problem is so obvious that it is amazing that none of the brilliant architects assembled in the design competition dealt with the issue. The site of Ground Zero slopes down 30 feet from Broadway to West Street and the Hudson. This means that the site must be dealt with as a series of platforms from east to west and that north-south cross streets like Church and Greenwich must act as a series of steps across the site.

Minoru Yamasaki’s World Trade Center design for the PA completely ignored the island’s topography.”

- D. Grahame Shane, Professor
Over the past two years, the tower has gradually been stripped of its best attributes. The final blow was delivered earlier this summer by the New York Police Department, which forced a total redesign when it demanded a greater setback from the street and a heavy barricade to resist potential bombs. Now, just after the fourth anniversary of 9/11, the Freedom Tower has become a bland prism with a forbidding 200-foot-high concrete base.”
- Jonathan Massey, Historian

AN 16_10.05.2005

To read and comment on the complete text of the essays quoted above, and more WTC coverage from AN, go to archpaper.com/WTC
1500+ architects

700 projects displayed in the festival gallery including projects from:
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- Nikken Sekkei
- Woods Bagot
- RAA-Emre Arolat Architects
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- Sanjay Puri Architects
- Zaha Hadid Architects
- Turfescape
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- Populous
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250+ live crit presentations

70 countries

1500+ architects

69 international jurors including:
- Sir Peter Cook
- Kim Herforth Nielsen
- James Grose
- Bjarne Hammer
- Akihiko Hamada
- Carme Pigem
- Isay Weinfeld

5 super jury members:
- Michael Sorkin
- Ben van Berkel
- Odile Decq
- Professor Kongjian Yu
- Jo Noero

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250+ live crit presentations

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Working my way around Talk To Me (TTM), the Museum of Modern Art’s latest design show, I definitely exceeded 140 characters. Pouring over maps that tracked 3:00 a.m. surges in complaints to 311 about sewage maintenance, listening to Japanese pop videos about menstruating boys, following Avatar, a video game character, along London’s South Bank, and taunting Talking Carl, I worked the room as if I were at a cocktail party thrown by the Mario Brothers. The unusual suspects are here.

I met a cast of variously pixilated oddballs, each fragments of the most imaginative imaginations, each representing a chapter in MoMA’s latest account of the story of interaction design. The headline: There’s barely a keyboard in sight. Technology is dissolving into our everyday experience.

Before the exhibit opened, I’d been rooting for this show to take a definitive look at what interaction design promises—and threatens—now and next; anything to articulate a new definition of ‘design’ in an uncertain time. It began to seem like filtered war coverage. Does that make this design? I buy that this show advances the objects on display—"data viz" and the Elastic Mind in 2008, I described it, is both panoramic and attenuated, my appetite for more is always more. What’s a portion size here? For a hundred bright ideas, cheeky conceits, grand narratives, it might seem incidental to interaction design, there’s plenty here you’ve already seen on blogs, YouTube, Twitter, at graduate shows. That’s a reason to see it, not to skip it.

Intangible work conceived for co-creation and distribution over a network are not natural candidates for a museum’s blockbuster exhibit. But while there is no convention, no equivalent to a specimen cabinet, it’s worth seeing the profusion of ideas here, trapped like butterflies for temporary display for at the show. They will thrive, released and dispersed on the placeless network, long after it closes. All the while, is the “me” in Talk To Me the machine or the person using it? You decide, all on your unmediated own.

HELLO WORLD! A QR LANDSCAPE BY BERNHARD HOPFENGÄRTNER.

Otherwise, where’s the likes of a Nike+ of Twitter’s coverage of the VH1 awards in all this? Actually it’s not entirely clear what standard was applied for selecting some work but not others. TTM is organized into five slightly jumbled sections, from self-explanatory to plain enigmatic: Objects, City, Life, Worlds, Double Entendre, “I’m Talking to You.”

The information architect in me thinks “apples and oranges,” a traditional curatorial lens that the work, as new interpretations of content, doesn’t quite fit. Mostly that’s okay. An established format brings the uninstructed along to introduce them to new stories.

But it might make more sense to classify clusters by the scale of experience: from one to many. solo interactions, dialogues, small groups, communities to crowds? Or what about by the scale of display screens used for viewing content: a foot from your face (handheld screens, printed info graphics), two feet from your face (browser-based), ten feet (TV and gaming, maps), a hundred feet (billboards - buildings)?

And there’s already so much to absorb. But I was slowly to adopt the stop and click-for-more info “QR codes” on every title card. Chomping through my now-daily diet of snack-sized content—texts, Tweets, instant messages, news feeds—has expanded, rather than attenuated, my appetite for more substantial morsels of a full story, and, increasingly, I’m thirsting for analog. But the portion size here is a little out of control. No demo left behind, this “snapshot” of where interactive media is today, as the catalog describes it, is both panoramic and a little out of focus. As an enormous show-and-tell, like its Paola Antonelli-curated MoMA predecessors Safe in 2005 and Design and the Elastic Mind in 2008, I came away a little browser-beaten. There’s a lot here, a hazzle of a hundred bright ideas, cheeky presentations, snappy concepts, clever conceits, grand narratives, imagined worlds, and funny looking objects each demanding my in-depth engagement. At the same time, it was strange to take in piece after piece that mediates someone else’s experiences. It began to seem like filtered reportage at best, at worst, dispassionate, disengaged, depoliticized, dystopian. In contrast, one floor below, pieces in an exhibit of prints from South Africa are recognizable, memorable, shudder-inducing. That proximity and veracity seems relegated, muted at TTM, where the fantasmatical future is controllable, possible worlds, game spaces, whole universes between the fictional and the real seem preferable, or at least prevail.
Constructing the Ineffable, edited by Karla Cavarra Britton, is a wonderful collection of intelligent essays about sacred space. For any architect who may be contemplating, or has been commissioned to design, a sacred space, this book is required reading.

Britton, who conceived and edited the book and is a lecturer in architectural history and urbanism at the Yale School of Architecture, begins the book with an intelligent introductory essay, where she raises the point that, “whereas the early twentieth century was a time when very little attention was paid to religion, the early twenty-first century has seen an enormous increase in the role and the importance of religion in every day life.” She lays the ground for her book in her prologue with Le Corbusier’s statement. “I am the inventor of the phrase ‘inexplicable space,’” from an interview at La Tourette in 1961. Ms. Britton uses the introduction to pose the question answered by each of the contributors, “Is it possible to speak coherently of constructing the inexplicable?”

The book is divided into three parts. Part one encompasses a series of essays starting with “The Earth, the Temple and Today” by Vincent Scully. Scully, emeritus professor in the History of Art at Yale, points out how the rise of aggressive fundamentalism in all religions has made investigations of sacred space complex and even dangerous. Karsten Harries writes a provocative piece pointing to Johnson and Burgee’s Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California as a building that is no more sacred in detail, materiality, or place than a big box store. Miroslav Volf, the Yale Center for Faith and Culture director, addresses notions of the sacred from the perspective of memory. Mark Taylor, the chair of Department of Religion at Columbia, challenges us to understand what we see as sacred, and to distinguish this from the religious. Emille Townes, professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale, lists and discusses provocatively named places of worship, including the “One Way Deliverance Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God,” for example.

Part two deals with precedents, and includes essays by architect Thomas Beeby discussing Rudolf Schwarz’s book The Church in Its Environment, the Catholic Reform movement in Germany, and its influence on the works of Mies. Columbia architectural historian Kenneth Frampton discusses spirituality in the work of Tadao Ando and its dialogue with geometry and landscape. Harvard professor of Religion Diana Eck discusses her work investigating temples in India and the meaning of sacred space, beginning with the city of Banaras. Finally, Jaime Lara, a History of Art lecturer at Yale, contributed the essay, “Visionaries or Lunatics? Architects of Sacred Space, even in Outer Space,” which traces a history of visionary architecture starting with the works of Boullée, the writings of Jules Verne, the Futurists, the works of Oscar Niemeyer, and ending with the Doman Moon Chapel from 1967.

Part three presents essays from eight architects who have designed religious buildings: Stanley Tigerman, Richard Meier, Rafael Moneo, Fariborz Sahba, Steven Holl, Moshe Safdie, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, and Moshe Safdie. Safdie, in whose essay we have the words of a master paying attention to the small details, sets forth basic dilemmas: how the architect thinks about the site and how he/she understands the materials of the local region. Safdie relays a discussion about the Friday Mosque in Esfahan, Iran, beginning with a friend’s comment that the dome represents the Islamic vision of cosmic wholeness. To the contrary, Safdie points out: “The dome’s evolution is really a result of the fact that here, in Iran’s desert, there is no wood to make beams or trusses, only brick and stones to span. When you have no wood, you create arches, domes and vaults.” This point, seemingly obvious once stated, is striking in its intelligence, logic, and simplicity. An impressive final epilogue by Paul Goldberger zips up the book and caps an engaging read. Mr. Goldberger takes us through a final architectural tour and history, touching on unremarked, favorite works of architecture: the Friends Meeting House in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania; Picencë’s Church of the Sacred Heart in Prague; Fay Jones’ Thorncrown in Eureka Springs, Arkansas; and Nicholas Hawksmoor’s Christ Church Spitalfields in London. Perhaps it’s my undergraduate art history background speaking, but for me the book was a joy in revealing new interpretations of favorite works of architecture, discussed incisively by intelligent and insightful historians and theologians, with contemporary architects to provide a counter-point to the heavy lifting of the academics.

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**GOING TO THE CHAPEL**

Constructing the Ineffable, edited by Karla Cavarra Britton, Yale School of Architecture/Yale University Press, $50.00.

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In the field of architecture, the understanding and contemplation of sacred space have gained significant attention. Karla Cavarra Britton, a renowned architect and author, has compiled "Constructing the Ineffable," a collection of intelligent essays on sacred space, aimed at any architect or scholar interested in the topic. This book serves as a vital resource for those seeking to explore the complexities and nuances of sacred architecture.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one features essays by architects such as Tadao Ando, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, Rafael Moneo, Fariborz Sahba, Steven Holl, Moshe Safdie, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, and Moshe Safdie. Each essay delves into the thought processes and design philosophies of these prominent architects, providing valuable insights into their approach to sacred architecture.

Part two explores precedents and historical examples, including buildings such as Stanley Tigerman, Richard Meier, Moshe Safdie, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, and Moshe Safdie. These essays trace the evolution of sacred architecture, highlighting significant historical figures and their contributions to the field.

Part three presents a comprehensive analysis of sacred architecture, with contributions from distinguished scholars such as Mark Taylor, Professor of Religion Diana Eck, and Kenneth Frampton. These essays provide a deeper understanding of the philosophical and spiritual implications of sacred space, addressing questions such as the nature of sacred architecture and the role of architecture in shaping human experience.

Joining the esteemed architects and scholars is Steven Holl, whose Chapel of Saint Ignatius in California exemplifies his commitment to sacred architecture. Holl's work is characterized by a blend of modernist and traditional elements, reflecting a deep understanding of the cultural and spiritual significance of sacred spaces.


"Constructing the Ineffable" is not just a collection of essays but a thought-provoking exploration of the nature of sacred space, inviting readers to deepen their understanding of this complex and integral aspect of architectural practice.
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MEMORIAL MOMENT

Just weeks before the shattering act of domestic terrorism in Oslo and on the island of Utøya, Norwegians commemorated an earlier tragedy with the opening of a compelling memorial by Peter Zumthor and the late New York artist Louise Bourgeois. Steilneset, as the memorial is called, acknowledges and mourns the death of 91 people, mostly women, during a spate of witchcraft persecutions throughout the 17th century. Most of the victims were burned at the stake or drowned offshore of the site, located just outside the town of Vardo in the Arctic Circle. Visitors reach the memorial by rounding a slight hill, over which sits a tiny village church and its postcard-worthy graveyard. Beyond, the memorial hugs the shoreline, appearing tiny and fragile along the horizon. It is comprised of two structures: a long, thin timber frame holding a suspended fabric enclosure, and a black glass pavilion, housing Bourgeois’ installation. Visitors enter the memorial via two long ramps, which emphasize the slope down to the shoreline and the surprising height of the 26-foot-tall memorial. The tensile structure, made from a stiffened fiberglass textile, looks like sailcloth pulled taught by cables. The detailing, which includes hand-sewn seams, is beautiful, especially at the ends where the cables pull the fabric into tapering conical forms, reminiscent of the body of an eel. During a tour of the project, Zumthor said his use of fabric was meant to recall “women’s work,” which he said was appropriate given that a disproportionate number of the victims were women. The structure’s simple frame, 4 by 4 posts with a simple corrugated roof, references the outdoor fish-drying racks that are common in the region. In addition to a door at either end, 91 windows puncture the structure, one for each victim, each illuminated by a single, naked Edison bulb (leaving a light on in the window is another local tradition, a meaningful gesture in a region where daylight is scarce for much of the year). The use of fabric may also be a nod to Bourgeois, who worked with textiles for decades. But the strangeness of the form, the taught surfaces, and the puckered void openings, also recall the work of another female artist, Lee Bontecou, whose work often includes structured voids that evoke terror and the infinite. Inside the enclosure, the interior is dark and narrow, every surface painted black. Visitors walk down a narrow catwalk, as the fabric walls shake in the wind. The bulbs, suspended from black cords, which are elegantly draped along the ceiling, also sway, giving the space an eerie, disconcerting feel. Unusual for the period, complete court records exist for the trials—so much is known about the lives and deaths of the victims, making the interpretive aspect greater than at many memorials. Given the passage of time since the trials, this greater contextualization is helpful, underscoring the individuality of the long dead victims. Simple text panels, made of the same material as the structure, hang next to each window and bulb and feature excerpts of the court records (the texts are in Norwegian only, but tiny guidebooks in English are available at the entrances). The abstract architectural language and the inclusion of individual names draws from the now standard vocabulary of Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial, but Zumthor inverts such conventions in significant ways. While most memorials cling to their sites in, frankly, a grave-like way, and seek to project permanence and the eternal, Zumthor’s tensile structure—moving with the wind, without climate control—emphasizes temporality, the fragility of individual lives. This experience is dramatized by Bourgeois’ installation housed in the adjacent glass pavilion. Following the procession through the court records, visitors enter the pavilion and encounter a concrete ring, surrounded by seven giant mirrors hung from metal armatures. Inside the ring, sits a simple metal chair—reminiscent of a schoolhouse chair—with flames jetting out of the seat. Like the tensile structure, the glass pavilion is also permeable to the elements. Wind passes through gaps in the giant charcoal gray glass panels causing the fire to whirl around and snap in the constant breeze. The pavilion has no lighting, so at night the flames become more visible through the dark glass. Indeed, the building itself seems to change from opaque to translucent throughout the day, depending on light conditions. On its own, the Bourgeois piece might feel heavy-handed, even kitschy, but in combination it’s a powerful gesture. Following Zumthor’s meditation on the fragility of human life and the horrors that individual victims faced, Bourgeois’ visceral piece helps to make more immediate how acts of brutality recur throughout history. While the recent violence the country faced was perpetrated by an individual against the collective, Zumthor and Bourgeois remind us that we should never be comfortable relegating collective violence against individuals to the history books.
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Zumthor’s witch trial memorial hugs the shoreline where many of the victims were killed. The structure is a simple wooden frame with a stiffened fabric enclosure suspended within. Above: An adjacent dark glass pavilion houses an installation by Louise Bourgeois.

The bulbs, suspended from black cords, which are elegantly draped along the ceiling, also sway, giving the space an eerie, disconcerting feel. Unusual for the period, complete court records exist for the trials—so much is known about the lives and deaths of the victims, making the interpretive aspect greater than at many memorials. Given the passage of time since the trials, this greater contextualization is helpful, underscoring the individuality of the long dead victims.

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