

# THE EAST ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER

## 06 04.04.2012

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PLANS FOR PIER 17 PROMISE MORE RETAIL, MORE VIEWS



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## SHOP'N THE SEAPORT

SHoP Architects' Gregg Pasquarelli presented plans for South Street Seaport's Pier 17 to Community Board 1 on March 8. Not surpris-

ingly, the reception was positive. The design is a huge departure from the desolate barn-like mall developed by the Rouse Company

in the 1980s, where nachos and tropical cocktails remained de rigueur. The new owner, the Howard Hughes Corporation, hopes to bring New Yorkers back to one of the most spectacular sites in town, while welcoming tourists without

**continued on page 9**

FIELD OPERATIONS WINS COMPETITION TO MAKE OVER CHICAGO'S NAVY PIER

## Pier into the Future



COURTESY JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS

The team led by James Corner Field Operations has been selected to redesign the public spaces at Chicago's Navy Pier. With a fine-grained proposal that mixes pragmatism with enough conceptual punch, the Corner team prevailed over competitors

AECOM/BIG, Aedas, Xavier Vendrell Studio, and !melk.

Visited by more than nine million people annually, Navy Pier is in many ways already highly successful. Nonprofit Navy Pier, Inc., organized the

**continued on page 2**

## TROUBLE STALKS CONEY ISLAND



COURTESY AN/STOELKER

## NO PLANKS?

Most Design Commission public hearings are staid affairs conducted in unabashed archi-speak. Eleven commissioners sit on one side of a table and an architect, artist, or designer presents plans on the other side. Just one row of chairs for the public lines the back wall.

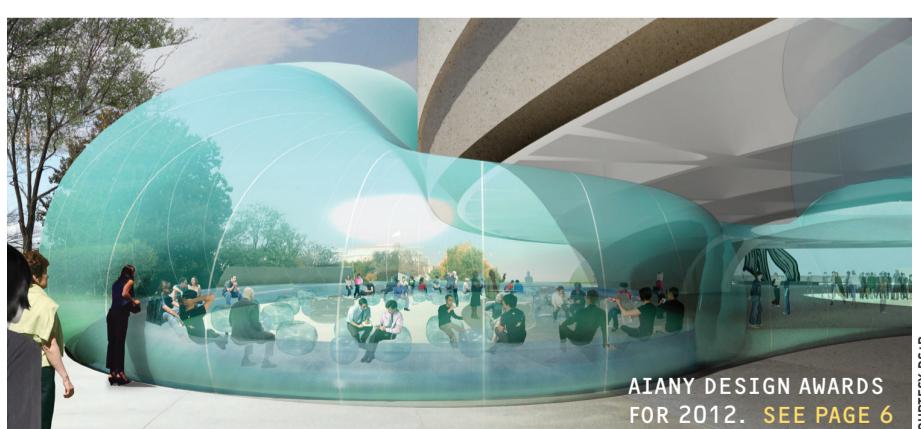
**continued on page 7**

NEW DIRECTOR TO REVIVE SOCIAL NETWORKING AT FABLED RETREAT

## Master Glass

On April 2, Henry Urbach began his tenure as the director of the Glass House, the former weekend home of architect Philip Johnson and now one of the handful of modernist properties overseen by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. After running an architecture-focused gallery in New York and a stint as chief architecture and

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AIANY DESIGN AWARDS FOR 2012. SEE PAGE 6

COURTESY THE GLASS HOUSE

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COURTESY DS+R

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**WILL THE CITY EVER LEARN?**

The Center for an Urban Future has more good news about the state of the design industry in New York. Last June the Manhattan-based think tank issued "Growth by Design," a white paper on the state of what it calls the "innovation economy" in the five boroughs. It pointed out that New York City has nearly twice as many designers (architecture, graphic, interior, fashion and industrial design) as Los Angeles, the nation's second largest design hub. There are for example 8,200 architects and 2,680 interior design firms compared to visual artists (805) and performing artists (1,048). The point of last year's study was to highlight the fact that designers and architects in this city do not really get the attention they deserve as members of the creative economy. Since then Christine Quinn has proposed some sort of design festival for next year, but the Bloomberg administration seems more focused on Cornell's new applied sciences campus on Roosevelt Island and the five new sound stages at Brooklyn's Steiner Studios as potential job generators than on our dynamic design industry.

In view of this official disregard, we pointed out in our June 22 editorial that the study also neglects to mention the number of non-profit institutions in the city that for years have supported and promoted design. The other vibrant design institutions the report neglected to mention were the many design schools in the city that feed graduates into the profession and community. Now the Center has just issued a report, "Designing New York's Future," that details local educational institutions with design schools and design departments. Here again, New York City is the clear leader in design education in the United States, if pure numbers are any indication of leadership in this field.

New York City graduates "more than twice as many students in design and architecture as any other city in the country." The report also claims "that the city's leading design schools—including Parsons The New School for Design, the Fashion Institute of Technology, Pratt Institute, and the School of Visual Arts—have become critical catalysts for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth." In short, New York City needs to recognize that no other city matches it in terms of education infrastructure in design and architecture. In 2010, New York City graduated 4,278 students in design and architecture, while the city with the second most, Los Angeles, graduated less than half as many (1,769). It also has two architecture schools in the country's top ten by the number of degrees awarded: Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation (#5) and Pratt (#8).

In addition, enrollment at New York's design universities has been growing at a faster rate than at other universities in the city: Between 2001 and 2010, full-time student enrollment at the city's 10 largest design and architecture schools increased by 34 percent, going from 18,002 students at the beginning of the decade to 24,065 students ten years later. During the same period, student enrollment at all institutions of higher education in New York City grew 27 percent.

These numbers however do not highlight the creative relationship the design institutions have with the profession, where junior designers have long supplemented their income with adjunct teaching assignments and faculty meet (and hire) the best design talents bringing them into the profession and community. It should be pointed out that this report studies only design schools in the five boroughs, but if we think of Princeton to our south and New Haven and Ithaca to our north as part of New York's orbit then the picture becomes even more impressive. Justifiably famous for their faculties, these schools employ—in addition to many New York-based architects—the most creative design historians, theoreticians, engineers, city planners, and urban designers. Further, the lectures, symposia, and colloquiums they continue to produce make this the most dynamic design environment on the planet, let alone in the United States. The New York design community seems to go from strength to strength, but it's not the utopia the numbers suggest. Speaker Quinn's design festival is a good if slightly frivolous start, but how about a city-financed incubator for young designers opening their first studio? That would make an actual difference, while also showing us that the city understands the rich potential of our industry to advance its own future. To see the full report, go to (<http://www.nycfuture.org/>).

WILLIAM MENKING

**DETAILS FOR SEWARD PARK MIXED-USE RENEWAL RELEASED****LES Gets More**

Plans to redevelop a seven-acre swath of surface-parking leftover from a Robert Moses clearance job on Manhattan's Lower East Side were detailed at a March 8 meeting of the Community Board 3 (CB3) Land Use Committee as the project prepares to enter its ULURP public approval process.

City plans show up to 1.65 million square feet on the nine parcels of the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area (SPURA), housed in groups of mid-to-high-rise towers designed to knit the

historic neighborhood fabric with adjacent Moses-era towers in the park. The program also calls for a mix of 900 housing units, up to 650,000 square feet of commercial and retail space, and 500 underground parking spaces. A 10,000-square-foot park is planned on pedestrian-scaled Broome Street, running through the center of the site. "We see Broome Street as an opportunity to create an active corridor and we would encourage a retail corridor," senior vice president of New York City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) David Quart said at the meeting. Officials also indicated their preference to relocate and expand the Essex Street Market for higher visibility to the corner of Essex and Delancey streets.

Officials from EDC presented the updated

plans more than a year after the community-established guidelines called for a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood that promoted an active and diverse street life.

While the city met most of the neighborhood's guidelines, several key concerns remain, including maximum size of retail and affordable housing. CB3 sought to cap retail size at 30,000 square feet, but the EDC insisted a larger anchor tenant such as a hotel, movie theater, or big-box store is needed for financial success of the project. The city's plan calls for 50 percent affordable housing over 60 years while the neighborhood hopes to make it permanent. These issues will likely play a large role in the public review process. "It is very important that we as a community advocate for permanent affordable



A floating pool at pier's end.  
**PIER INTO THE FUTURE** continued from front page competition to improve the public spaces to appeal to both local Chicagoans and tourists, as well as to generate new revenues and interest in the pier's large, historic exhibition hall.

The Field Operations proposal seeks to strengthen the pier's connection to the city and the lakefront, as well as to emphasize the experience of being out on the lake. A dramatic light installation by artist/designer Leo Villareal and an improved tunnel under Lake Shore Drive would make the pier more accessible at all hours. The park at the pier's entrance would be recast with new textured pavers and a changeable fountain/skating rink/splash pool. The pier itself would be divided into a series of programmatic rooms, including a renovated Crystal Garden with suspended planter pods that could be raised and lowered for events or to create varied visitor experiences. Beyond that, the amusement area would keep its iconic Ferris Wheel, swing ride, and carousel, while gaining biomorphic planting beds. Perhaps the most dramatic element would be a floating pool at the end of the pier. "It really extends the horizon and allows you to think about the scale of the lake in a new way," said Justine Heilner, development director at Field Operations.

Many of the competitors sought to extend the pier or remake its edge with zigzagging paths or constructed wetlands. The Corner team's scheme, however, retains the existing footprint of the pier. "We knew that once you start extending out into the water, you immediately involve the Army Corps of Engineers, and that slows things down and makes things very expensive, very quickly," Heilner said.

As in any competition, time will tell what survives from the original proposal. "All the teams put a tremendous amount of work into their designs," Heilner said. "So the client will have a lot of elements to pick and choose from."

**ALAN G. BRAKE**

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housing," Manhattan Borough president Scott Stringer said at the meeting. "I'm going to call on the City Council and the City Planning Commission and HPD to make sure [that happens]," he added.

As part of the ULURP process, the city will seek a rezoning for a commercial overlay allowing retail space in residential zones, and acquire special permits allowing building mass to be shuffled around to harmonize with the scale of the neighborhood. A public meeting on April 18 marks the beginning of the process and CB3 will vote on the project in May. A request for proposals from developers could be distributed in early 2013.

**BRANDEN KLAYKO**

**PUNKIN' DONUT**

At her February TED talk **Liz Diller** detailed DS+R's latest project, a temporary expansion for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. that will help to transform the **Gordon Bunshaft**-designed concrete donut—which Diller described as a “hulking, cloistered, and arrogant” structure—into a true public forum. How? A giant air bag, she explained. “We like to think of the structure as inhaling the democratic air of the Mall.”

**DEJA LU?**

The fact that **Lu Wenyu**, wife of 2012 Pritzker Prize-winner **Wang Shu**, was not named as a co-recipient of the award raised the eyebrows of those who recall Pritzker's 1991 diss of **Denise Scott-Brown**, whose partner and husband **Robert Venturi** received solo laurels that year. Lu Wenyu co-founded the firm **Amateur Architecture** with Wang Shu and has collaborated on all built projects, but the Pritzker committee said that they were also looking at Wang Shu's “teachings, writings, and other prizes.”

**LAYING GOLDEN EGGS**

As part of Faberge's Big Egg Hunt in London, thirty specially designed eggs were harvested for a charity auction at Sotheby's, including one by **Zaha Hadid** that she describes as “a structured composition of fluidity that reinvents the equilibrium between solid and void.” That fetched £45,000 (about \$72,000, at current exchange), bested only by an egg signed by **Prince Charles** and **Camilla**.

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**MASTER GLASS** continued from front page design curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Urbach is settling into the more pastoral surroundings of New Canaan, Connecticut. He'll be the first director to live on the Glass House property, moving into Calluna Farms, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse that was the residence of Johnson's partner David Whitney. And following in the footsteps of the very social Johnson and Whitney, as director Urbach plans to bring the party to New Canaan.

**The Architect's Newspaper:** Before being appointed director, what was your relationship to the Glass House?

**Henry Urbach:** I first went to the Glass House in 2001 at Philip's invitation. A mutual friend, Hilary Lewis, introduced us, and Philip was eager to know about the gallery I was running at the time. He was always curious about what “the kids” were up to. I spent a beautiful morning with him on the property. It was really a special day.

Then, a few years ago, I started to explore a new

project about the Glass House as a curatorial laboratory, a complement to Johnson's work as founding curator of modern architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. Curatorial practice in architecture lacks a sense of its own genealogy. I'd become interested in Johnson's work at the Glass House—in particular, the architecture, art, and people he collected and displayed there. So I went back to New Canaan for a visit last year and, while there, was given a tour by a staff member who mentioned the search for a new director.

**How does that project idea relate to your goals as the new director?**

My ambition for the Glass House is to reanimate it as something not so different from what it was during Philip's lifetime. Currently, it's operating as a house museum, and we will continue with that public mission. But we also want to develop an intimate, vibrant center for contemporary culture that will host changing exhibitions, performances, and other events, with fellows and writers-in-residence. The Glass House is an ideal facility for producing a new conversation on culture, thanks to its proximity to—and distance from—New York as well as research institutions in the area, including Columbia, Yale, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. It is also an ideal stage for culture because of its extraordinary setting, with structures and landscape that can support a range of activities. I feel this is the best way to honor the legacy that Philip and David Whitney left to us.

**That's an ambitious, not to mention lively, vision for a National Trust property. Are the powers that be supportive?**

Very much so. As part of a very thorough interview process, I was asked to state my “vision” for the Glass House, and I submitted a 12-page document outlining the idea of the Glass House as a house/museum/cultural center, a kind of 21<sup>st</sup>-century salon. I foresee a multidisciplinary approach to the projects I'm hoping to foster on-site. It's an extension of something I've been working on for quite some time—an expanded notion of architecture as it reaches toward culture.

**When it opened in 2007, the first few seasons of tours at the site were sold out. But over the years that level of demand may prove impossible to sustain. In terms of fund raising, what do you see as the next chapter for the Glass House?**

There was a pent-up demand early on from people who hadn't had the opportunity to visit. That demand has softened, and the challenge now is to give people a reason to come back and experience the site in new ways. There has been a recent change of leadership at the National Trust, and there's genuine support for innovative approaches to historic preservation. It's not just the physical elements and “look” of the site that we aim to preserve, but also the spirit of the place, its DNA. In my view, that means the Glass House should remain a site of cultural production, a place of innovation and discovery.

**MOLLY HEINTZ**

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COURTESY STUDIOS GO

Now serving drinks and light fare to South Bronxites, the Clock aims to provide the up-and-coming but underserved neighborhood with a space to hang out. Designer Gregory Okshteyn of Studios GO explains his task was to make the back of house as efficient as possible, leaving the rest of the room open to socializing. Before its transformation into a cocktail bar, the 1,100-square-foot space was a hat factory's warehouse. Gregory said, “I knew there had to be some amazing things behind the Sheetrock. This project was all about demolition.” Indeed, behind the rubble lay many features worth saving, including brick walls, ducts, and structural columns. Gregory explains the choice to keep these elements: “We work very hard to be authentic in our hospitality work—here, the existing character told the story.” Aged ducts and pipes wind their way through the room, while an array of chandeliers, pendant lights, and scattered bulbs hanging from cords bounce light across the exposed brick. The bar and serving area, clad in slats of reclaimed wood, balance the high ceilings with a horizontality that wraps around the space. **MICHAEL LAWLER**



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**LAWSUIT MAY BE FINAL BLOW FOR PROBLEMATIC WILLIAMSBURG SITE****DOMINO FALLS DOWN**

As the development story of Brooklyn's Domino Sugar refinery continues to unfold, it appears to have all the flawed heroes, hubris, and possibly catharsis of a real urban drama. The project's lead, Community Preservation Corporation Resources (CPCR), has lost a top-level leader, defaulted on major loans, and now is being accused of betrayal by a former partner: The Katan Group, CPCR's development collaborator at Domino, has filed a lawsuit amid reports that CPCR was looking to sell part or all of the 11-acre property without Katan's knowledge.

CPCR is the for-profit arm of Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), a nonprofit consortium of banks established in 1974 to help fund affordable housing projects in the New York area. Its counterpart, CPCR, was founded in 1992 so that the group could act as a proactive developer as

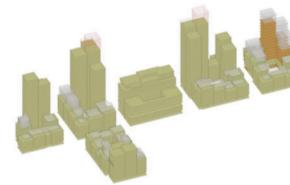
well as an investor. Other affordable housing developers, such as Enterprise Community Partners, operate simultaneously as both nonprofit and for-profit; however, one big difference, said sources familiar with the corporate structure, is that at CPC-CPCR, both its nonprofit and for-profit branches are directed by the same person. Until last November, that was Michael Lappin, who abruptly retired after 31 years with CPC. In January, Lappin's post was filled by Rafael Cesterio, former commissioner of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Cesterio will be responsible for addressing Domino's future as well as the bigger question of whether, given its mission, CPC-CPCR should have been involved with such a project in the first place. Domino's sheer scale—the plan includes 2,200 units, with 660 set aside for affordable housing—was unprecedented for CPC-CPCR and the aspect of the project that the local community objected to the most. A design by architect Rafael Viñoly and a mandate to work around newly landmarked factory buildings exponentially increased the price tag, and, following the

financial crisis, the project simply ran out of cash. Katan Group is now suing CPCR, stating in a March 5 court filing that the lead developer "has effectively depleted all of the refinery's available capital, while virtually no construction work has been performed."

But this drawn-out development saga could still have a happy ending, according to Williamsburg Independent People (WIP), a community group with an alternative vision for the site. WIP is seeking financial backing for a plan that creates a mixed-use arts development and promises affordable housing as well as new jobs. Meanwhile, every twist and turn of the development drama has been captured by a documentary team. Megan Sperry, one of the filmmakers of the forthcoming *The Domino Effect*, said "CPCR has been looking for investors for two years, and now they're getting desperate."

MH

**Domino's six-block breakdown.**

COURTESY CITY PLANNING



COURTESY DEBORAH BERKE

**UNVEILED****ROCKEFELLER ARTS CENTER EXPANSION**

The campus of SUNY Fredonia in western New York boasts a collection of austere modern buildings designed by I. M. Pei in the late 1960s. Deborah Berke & Partners Architects has been engaged to expand the Rockefeller Arts Center, home to the visual and performing arts departments, in a manner sympathetic to, but not mimicking, Pei's work. "If Pei's buildings were primarily concrete with glass and steel appointments, in our addition we've inverted the formula, designing primarily in glass and steel with concrete appointments," said Maitland Jones, a partner with the firm. The 60,000-square-foot addition includes three new

dance studios, sculpture and ceramics facilities, new media labs, and a new public entrance. "The Pei building really privileged access from the campus, and didn't anticipate the public role of the building," he said. "We're seeking to bring that into balance, creating an entrance for people who are less familiar with the place." As the original 160,000-square-foot building became overcrowded, many in-between spaces became overly programmed. The architects hope the expansion will allow the hallways, staircases, and lobbies to return to their more spontaneous, un-programmed condition, where creative interactions can happen organically. AGB

**Architect:** Deborah Berke & Partners Architects  
**Location:** Fredonia, New York  
**Completion:** 2015

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## KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

**David McCullough—Thursday, May 17**

Award-winning historian and author of *The Greater Journey*

**Hon. Shaun Donovan—Friday, May 18**

Architect and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Architects of Healing—Saturday, May 19**

Join us in honoring the architects involved in the rebuilding and memorials at Ground Zero, the Pentagon, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. They sought to help our nation when we all needed their unique gifts. Now, it's your opportunity to say "thank you."

In addition to the inspiring stories of the rebuilding and memorial at the Pentagon and the Flight 93 National Memorial, six architects who offered their experience to help rebuild and memorialize Ground Zero will share emotions and anecdotes, including Daniel Libeskind, FAIA; David Childs, FAIA; Michael Arad, AIA; Craig Dykers, AIA; Steve Davis, FAIA; and Santiago Calatrava, FAIA.

Add your applause as they receive a specially-cast medal and express your heartfelt thanks directly to the honorees at the reception immediately following.

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## HONORS: 2012 AIANY DESIGN AWARDS



Springtime is awards season at the New York Chapter of the AIA. The annual Design Awards are open to architects and designers practicing in New York and firms from elsewhere who have completed projects in the city. The 2012 winners were announced at the AIANY headquarters at the Center for Architecture on Monday, March 5, and included New York-based architecture firms Interboro Partners, SO-IL, and Diller Scofidio + Renfro (whose Inflatable Pavilion for the Hirshhorn Museum won an Unbuilt Work Award, see page 1). After the ceremony, critic and journalist Alexandra Lange moderated a panel discussion among the 12 jurors. The competition received almost four hundred entries, across four categories, of which 36 projects were chosen for the awards. The Honor Award is the highest distinction from the AIA, followed by the Merit Award.

A diverse array of projects were on

display, from a completed Master Plan for the Central Delaware River in Philadelphia by Cooper, Robertson & Partners and Kieran Timberlake in collaboration with landscape architects OLIN to unbuilt conceptual explorations of domestic architecture in fiction such as Bernheimer Architecture, Leven Betts Studio, and Guy Nordenson Associates' project, The House on Chicken Feet: Fairy Tale Architecture.

The expert juries for each category consisted of practitioners, scholars, and critics from across the field. They made their selections based on a combination of design quality, program resolution, innovation, thoughtfulness, and technique. All of the winners will be shown in the Design Awards Exhibition at the Center for Architecture opening April 19 and on view through May 31.

MATT SHAW

**1. ARCHITECTURE HONOR AWARD**  
Allied Works Architecture  
Clyfford Still Museum  
Denver, CO

**2. INTERIORS HONOR AWARD**  
Formactiv and SO-IL  
Logan  
New York, NY

**3. UNBUILT WORK HONOR AWARD**  
NADAA, Inc.  
Dortoir Familial  
Ramatuelle, France

**4. URBAN DESIGN HONOR AWARD**  
Frederic SCHWARTZ Architects and Ken Smith Landscape Architect  
Santa Fe Railyard and Plaza  
Santa Fe, NM

In addition to the 10 Honor Award winners, there were 26 Merit Award winners, including the following (for a full list of recipients, please visit [aiany.org](http://aiany.org)):

**ARCHITECTURE MERIT AWARD**  
Pencil Office and ARYA Architects  
A Simple Factory Building  
Singapore

**INTERIORS MERIT AWARD**  
Brian Gillen and de-spec  
Xocolatti  
New York, NY

**UNBUILT WORK MERIT AWARD**  
SLCE with BIG Bjarke Ingels Group  
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**COMPETITION SEEKS IDEAS FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS OF PARKS**

## LAND UNLOCKED

The last century has seen our national population triple and suburbs sprawl. But one institution has remained true to its original creed to preserve the American landscape: the National Parks Service (NPS). Just four years shy of its centennial, the NPS has teamed up with eight diverse organizations devoted to reconsidering the potential of design to sustain public parks. The result is Parks for the People, a national student competition that challenges nine academic studios to create a vision for the future of America's national parks.

Presented by New York-based Van Alen Institute with the NPS, Parks for the People seeks to reveal and propose solutions to contemporary issues of preservation. In 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson created the agency, its goals were to conserve nature, beauty, wildlife, and recreation. However, after nearly a century and an acquisition of over 80 million acres of managed parkland, the additional challenge of scale has forced NPS to

reshape its approach. Van Alen's brief challenged teams "to creatively rethink our National Parks' connections to people and their role as revered natural, social, and cultural destinations."

In a statement following the announcement of the first-round competition winners, National Parks Service director Jonathan B. Jarvis promoted cooperation: "Now [the teams] must collaborate with the parks to find ways to promote sustainability, inspire stewardship, empower youth, and foster dynamic connections among parks, communities, and natural systems." The nine schools have one semester to work toward their final submission on May 15.

The University of Washington team is focusing on the San Juan Island National Historical Park, just north of Seattle. The students are working to "re-frame the image, narratives, and processes of SJI-NHP." The diverse site, which encompasses over 2,000 acres, requires a diverse approach. The group has isolated four integral focal points—site, structure, technology, and identity—and is working collaboratively toward an ecologically responsible resolution.

The City College of New York's landscape architecture students have been researching the small settlement of Nicodemus, Kansas, the sole remaining all-African-American town west of the Mississippi River. In proposing solutions for this site, City College must take into consideration the social legacy that binds this historic community. One student acknowledged the challenge that Nicodemus has "a dwindling population of direct descendants, so we have to respect their sense of ownership."

The second-round winners will be announced this summer.

**TYLER B. SILVESTRO**

### NO PLANKS? continued from front page

But at a meeting on March 12, the chairs were filled, a raucous crowd overflowed the room, and at least a half-dozen television cameras rolled. The cause for concern was the Parks Department's \$7.5 million plan to replace the wood on five blocks of the Coney Island Boardwalk with plastic planks and a 12-foot-wide concrete path.

The 2.5-mile boardwalk is in need of repair. Some sections long ago ceased to serve their traditional function of keeping the sand at bay. During the Giuliani administration, the phrase "under the boardwalk" became less associated with summertime lovers than with the homeless who took shelter there. Beach replenishment brought sand too close to boardwalk level and the area beneath was partly filled in. With separation between planks jammed, sand, snow, and rain do not always flow through the cracks. Many of the speakers at the public hearing said that the concrete section in particular would only exacerbate the problem and that plastic planks would become slippery. Todd Dobrin, president of Friends of the Boardwalk, questioned the durability of concrete. "How much is it going to cost to replace after the snow?" he asked.

For many, the main issue was less function than aesthetics, with one speaker comparing the change to asking Central Park residents to look out onto concrete. Another speaker didn't preclude the use of plastic and concrete, proposing it as the basis for a new under-structure with wood planks fastened on top. But Blaze O'Brien, who spoke on behalf of several preservation groups, including the Historic Districts Council, said that changing any aspect of the materials could compromise the boardwalk's eligibility for the National

Register of Historic Places. He also tied the boardwalk to two New York City historic landmarks, Child's Restaurant and the Parachute Jump. "The proposed change in materials would alter the visual setting and the context for both iconic landmarks sited on the boardwalk," he said. Though the section lies several blocks east of the historic amusement area at Coney Island Avenue in Brighton, the project is considered a pilot for repaving most of the boardwalk outside of the amusement area.

The area does not fall within an historic district, and the landmarking is for the structures, not the setting. As such, the Design Commission is the decider of the boardwalk's aesthetic fate, and they decided in favor of the Parks' plan—with conditions. The Commission urged Parks to explore reducing the concrete section from 12 feet to 10 feet. They also suggested that final design place the concrete path farther inland, away from the beach. Finally, they asked the agency to further explore domestic hardwoods, even though Parks officials said that the wood is hard to come by and is not cost-effective. After the backlash over the use of ipe, a Brazilian hardwood, at the High Line, the Bloomberg administration gave in to pressure from Rainforest Relief and stopped using tropical hardwoods in New York City parks.

The yes vote with conditions for the boardwalk was not necessarily a unique outcome, although the public hearing is usually the end of a three-step process for commission approval. Normally, a public hearing vote follows preliminary and final reviews by the Design Commission. Given the intense public scrutiny of the proposal, it remains to be seen if and when another public hearing will be held for a final vote. **TOM STOELKER**

## GATE EXPECTATIONS



Technology-based "smart classrooms" need smart buildings to be effective. **Westchester Community College's Gateway Center**, designed by **Ennead Architects**, meets the challenge. Erected on the college's Valhalla campus to aid new Americans in gaining essential skills for the technologically sophisticated workplace, its long-span steel trusses enable an array of spaces programmed for the dynamic exchange of ideas. More than an inspirational entryway for students preparing for 21st century careers, the **LEED Gold-certified building** is a demonstration of the college's commitment to sustainability—a symbol that the campus is investing in the future in more ways than one.

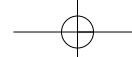
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COURTESY RESPECTIVE MANUFACTURERS

# CONTROL GROUP

NEW BATH INTERFACES DIAL UP THE OPTIONS FOR CUSTOMIZATION. BY JENNIFER K. GORSCHE

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The Horizontal Shower is the latest application for Dornbracht's Ambience Tuning Technique (ATT). The control adjusts water flow with eTool, a program that manages small electronic valves behind each of the shower's six WaterBar sprays. [www.dornbracht.com](http://www.dornbracht.com)

## 2 AQUA SENSE GRAFF

Graff's new Aqua Sense is a programmable digital touch-screen shower system with MP3 or iPod capability, ceiling-mounted speaker options, and Cascade and Rainfall showerheads with a concealed RGB LED light system. [www.graff-faucets.com](http://www.graff-faucets.com)

## 3 RAINBRAIN HANSGROHE

RainBrain, an electronic computer system for the shower, is programmable for up to four users. The touch-screen system controls options for water cascade, water temperature, and music selection via Bluetooth, while protecting users from accidental scalding. [www.hansgrohe-usa.com](http://www.hansgrohe-usa.com)

## 4 VEDANA BAINULTRA

BainUltra's new Vedana system is a residential spa unit that incorporates light, heat, music, and an essential oil nebulizer to create a range of mix-and-match therapies that can be customized for each user. [www.bainultra.com](http://www.bainultra.com)

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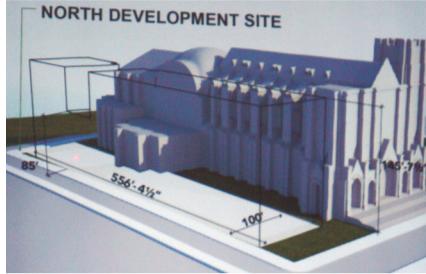
Designed by Philippe Starck, the SenoWash shower-toilet wireless remote control has memory for two individual settings. Function keys automatically illuminate in low light and control wash type, water temperature and velocity, air drier functions, and lid and seat movement. [www.senowash.us](http://www.senowash.us)

## 6 SIGNATURE SERIES THERMASOL

ThermaSol has introduced new control and steam head styles for the coming year. With all-metal construction and PVD plating, the control is designed to complement modern baths and increase a user's control over steam functions. [www.thermasol.com](http://www.thermasol.com)

## 7 LUXURY SHOWER SYSTEM WATERMARK DESIGNS

Brooklyn-based Watermark Designs has released a smart Luxury Shower System with a full-color digital touch screen. A thermostatic valve controls up to four shower outlets, lights, music, and nine individual shower programs. Its Green Statistics program can also track water usage. [www.watermark-designs.com](http://www.watermark-designs.com)



COURTESY HANDEL ARCHITECTS

## ST. JOHN THE DIVINE UNVEILS LATEST DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL BUILDING UP CLOSE

In the 120 years since its cornerstone was laid, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine has gained repute for not only its exemplary Gothic Revival architecture but also its perpetual state of incompleteness. Now the development of the cathedral grounds, called the "close," continues the cathedral's association with construction. A deal with the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2003, which led the City Council to overturn the cathedral's landmark designation, allowed St. John to lease sites on the north and southeast perimeters of the close to developers. A 20-story residential building on the southeast site, at 110<sup>th</sup> Street and Morningside Drive, opened in 2008 amid criticism of its size and aesthetic. Plans are progressing to break ground in 2013 on the north site, along 113<sup>th</sup> Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Drive, for a controversial second residential tower.

At a recent public forum, the cathedral unveiled initial massing studies to over 60 community members. Cathedral dean James Kowalski explained that, despite fund-raising

### Massing plan for the north site along 113th Street.

and efforts to contain administrative costs, the cathedral operates at a 10 percent deficit. With ongoing financial obligations, including repairs to the church building, Kowalski asserted that development was necessary to "preserve the economic future of the cathedral."

George Kruse from developer Equity Residential addressed community concerns about including subsidized housing, involving local businesses, and facilitating local residents' labor union membership. In particular, he noted that of the 400 units in the planned building, 20 percent will be reserved for affordable housing. Gary Handel of Handel Architects presented the firm's massing studies; further details of the building's design remain in progress.

Several attendees praised efforts to minimize the building's bulk and use the site, which currently houses stonemasonry sheds from the 1980s, to integrate the close with the surrounding community. Still, many residents of Morningside Heights expressed such concerns as the building's potential to increase neighborhood crowding and the environmental impact on traffic, noise, and light. Michael Henry Adams spoke on behalf of state senator Bill Perkins, who opposes the construction proposal, and expressed his own conviction that the cathedral merits more respect as a world-class landmark. "If we were in Paris, at Notre Dame, would someone propose this?" he said. "The answer, of course, is no."

At the time, Kowalski could not confirm whether the cathedral intends to hold additional community forums, as he expects a short time frame for the design process. "Could it be started in six months or a year? I would hope so," he said. **TATUM TAYLOR**

### SHOP'N THE SEAPORT continued from front page

quarantining them to a thematic trap. Nevertheless, retail-centric programming remains. The new pier will contain four stories of shops leading up to a green roof with two pavilions, one for music and the other for a restaurant. The rooftop amenities are intended to lure shoppers through the retail shops, with two yet-to-be-determined anchor tenants taking over the top two floors. In an email, Community Board 1 chair Julie Menin told AN that the retail should respond to the reality that the area has the fastest-growing residential neighborhood in the city. "Currently, the retail is largely geared to tourists," she said. "The anchor tenant should be a use that meets the needs of the residential population as well."

Exposed steel frames the complex. The landscape, designed by James Corner Field Operations, includes the rooftop, a large deck to the north overlooking the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges, and a renovated plaza to the south. The first two stories of the pier include two-story-high glass doors that will slide open vertically, overlapping the glass of the second and third stories. Shops on the first two stories are set in, creating a perimeter arcade that the architects are calling "The Village."

The storefronts are composed of a series of shifting volumes clad in wood, textured aluminum, and zinc. A large east-west opening runs through the pier, forming an extension to the mainland grid, while two diagonal cuts also run through the space to open-view corridors to the Brooklyn Bridge.

On the East River side of the building, two metal mesh gangplank stairs ascend to the glass-enclosed third floor. The glass

wrapping the third and fourth floors plays with pixilated impressions. With support columns being 20 feet apart, five vertical sections, each 4 feet wide, set back a foot and half then return, set back then return—lapping to and fro like East River ripples. A combination of channel glass and vision glass heightens the effect. "We didn't want it to be a taut glass box," said Angelica Trevino, SHoP's project manager with Thorsten Kiefer. "We wanted it to have some articulation, to break up the mass and resemble some of the waterfront tectonics."

Inspired by the open-air concert hall at Tanglewood, a rooftop glass enclosure (60 feet by 120 feet) will hold an audience of up to six hundred. In warm months, the pavilion doors will open so that music can spill onto the rooftop lawn and toward the restaurant pavilion.

To the north of the pier, a plaza by Field Operations called the "North Porch" will provide an icon-full view of the city, with Brooklyn Bridge and Manhattan Bridge in the very near foreground. More pixilated patterns will fall underfoot in wood, saw-cut cobblestone, and solar pavers that absorb light in the day and give off light at night. On the south side, Fulton Plaza will be transformed with wood reclaimed from the old pier. **TS**



COURTESY SHO

# SPIRAL BONDING



A staircase creates a community in a building that needs one. That's the philosophy behind the ornamental stair designed by **Mitchell | Giurgola Architects** for NYU's newly renovated **School of Continuing and Professional Studies**. Rising through a triple-height space that links classrooms and lounges, the inviting series of elliptically shaped treads and landings promotes a collaborative environment that lets students looking to learn and grow connect with mentors. Coupled with its new high-performance curtain wall enclosure, it has helped **7 East 12th Street** become a light-filled vertical campus within this prestigious university, encouraging students to climb to new heights with each step.

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Architect: Mitchell | Giurgola Architects  
Photographer: Jeff Goldberg/Esto

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 4, 2012



A sidewalk bioswale.

green infrastructure. It is now an official green light for the groundbreaking NYC Green Infrastructure Plan," said New York City DEP commissioner Carter Strickland in a statement. "This multi-pronged approach strikes the perfect balance to meeting the goal of improving the water quality of New York Harbor: gray infrastructure where it is still cost effective and cutting-edge green technologies that not only absorb the water where it lands, but enhance the local quality of life by providing shade and beautifying the city." The city estimates that by substituting cheaper green infrastructure for gray, DEP will save \$1.4 billion in construction costs. Pilot green infrastructure projects will be built around Newtown Creek and the Bronx River over the next three years and monitored for their effectiveness in capturing runoff. The total plan is expected to be built out by 2030.

"This agreement is truly a breakthrough," said landscape architect Susannah Drake, principal at dLand Studio. Her firm has been working with DEP for years on the development of the Gowanus Sponge, the first phase of which will break ground this fall (its construction was funded through a grant from City Council). She points out that New York is one of more than 700 U.S. cities with combined sewage systems, so the green/gray infrastructure combination could serve as a model for improving water usage in hundreds of municipalities. "This could open up a lot of opportunities for designers," she said. **AGB**

## BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE COMING TO NYC

### SPONGE CITY

In late March, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reached an agreement that should improve water quality in New York Harbor and make the city greener overall. The agreement calls for \$2.4 billion in "green infrastructure" investments to reduce stormwater runoff, and thus the amount of combined sewage overflows into New York's waterways, including new green roofs, bioswales, and permeable pavement. The plan also calls for \$1.4 billion in "gray infrastructure" construction, including storage tunnels and holding tanks.

Project investments will be targeted toward runoff corridors surrounding two of the city's most polluted waterways, the Bronx River and Newtown Creek.

"The city projects that 1.5 billion gallons of runoff will be captured annually through

### AT DEADLINE

## PRINCETON CALLING ZAERA-POLO

Just one year after closing the fifteen-year-old Foreign Office Architects and opening AZPA in London and Barcelona, Alejandro Zaera-Polo will be heading off to Princeton as the new dean at the School of Architecture. With his former partner in life and work, Farshid Moussavi, Zaera-Polo created some of his most celebrated works, including the Yokohama International Cruise Terminal in Japan and Madrid's Bamboo Building. By merging architecture and urban design with his theoretical writing, he forged a place for himself in academia as dean at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam, as a member of the London School of Economics Urban Age Project, and as a visiting professor at Yale and Princeton. Stan Allen is stepping down after ten years as dean.

## WTC PERFORMING ARTS IN THE WINGS?

With the state-run Port Authority blaming the city-run September 11 Memorial and Museum for being responsible for more than \$150 million in overruns, the World Trade Center's Performing Arts Center got lost in the high stakes infighting. Add to that the tussle with families who don't want human remains to be placed at the site, and the lively arts have understandably taken a back seat. But the recent announcement that Maggie Boepple, former president of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and a senior advisor to London's Commissioner of Transport, would become Senior Adviser for the center's board has ignited hopes that at least one component of the site will be set aside for activities that will bring street life to the WTC that are not related to memorializing, commuting, shopping, or working.

## WATERFRONT MAKING WAVES

With plenty of fanfare and a mayoral ferry ride, the Vision 2020 plan for the city's waterfront revitalization burst onto the scene last year and then quietly drifted off the horizon. With the exception of the City Planning announcement that Michael Marrella was promoted to the position of director of Waterfront and Open Space Planning, all seemed pretty quiet on the beachfront. Perhaps Planning was strategizing how to get the massive proposal through the public review process, which began on March 26.

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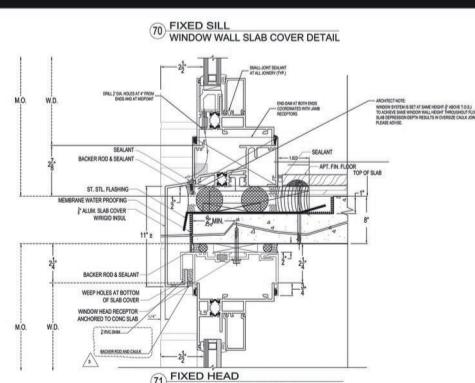
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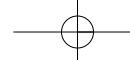
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# WEST SIDE, HO!

After years of politics and planning, community building, false starts, and new beginnings, the transformation of the far West Side in the 30s is underway, but details are only now coming into focus. AN examines three aspects of ongoing development that have the potential to make all the difference—the Jacob J.avits Convention Center; Section 3 of the High Line; and the Hudson Park and Boulevard.



Governor Andrew Cuomo's January 4 State of the State message included welcome news for West Siders who dream of a day when the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center no longer dominates their neighborhood. A proposal to replace the 1986-vintage, 1.37-million-square-foot hall with a 3.8-million-square-foot facility in Queens wasn't buried in the details of Cuomo's address: It was front and center, the first item in his economic blueprint, promising jobs, tourist dollars, and, for the West Side, \$2 billion in potential private-sector development along the Battery Park City model—minus the Javits.

It all sounded grand, except that it echoes the same expectations that gave rise to the convention center in the first place when it was expected to generate 16,000 permanent jobs, \$38 million in city taxes, and some \$832 million in revenues to the city. And while, two years after opening, it brought in \$988 million, according to a report published in *The New York Times*, it remained a crystalline white elephant blocking integrated urban development on the far West Side.

The Javits was conceived by Governor Hugh Carey's administration with the highest hopes and with the best talent brought to bear. James Ingo Freed of I. M. Pei & Partners (later Pei Cobb Freed & Partners) envisioned it as a 20<sup>th</sup>-century crystal palace where, according to firm descriptions, "the

play of solidity and transparency in which the vast interior, flooded with natural light, combines indoor and outdoor views" makes the space, with its glass vestibule soaring as high as 150 feet, "a covered city square" rather than the industry-standard remote, windowless mega-box.

A vision of connecting to the waterfront with a retail and restaurant-lined galleria running from east to west and engaging the local population was never realized. Shortly before it opened, Paul Goldberger wrote in the *Times* of its contradictory nature, describing the exterior glass as forbidding and the use of concrete within as excessively heavy. "It seems to call at once for a Boeing 747 and for a string quartet," he wrote.

Apart from political penny-pinching and neglected maintenance, Freed's design was also a victim of bad timing in several respects. In the 1980s, the waterfront was in an apparently irreversible state of dereliction, prompting the architects to turn the building's back on the river. It faced limited material choices, too, according to FXFOWLE principal Bruce Fowle, whose firm is now partnering with Chicago convention specialists Epstein and an all-star engineering team on the convention center's current \$463 million renovation. Pei & Partners initially specified a reflective glass (also used in Boston's Hancock Tower), which would have bright-

ened the appearance. "When that suddenly went off the market, they had to change it to the best-performing glass they could find, which was dark bronze with a very reflective coating," Fowle recalled. "Any hope of transparency in the building from outside was lost." Since 1980s' glass was less flat than today's, he added, "each pane was pillow'd, in effect, so you don't really see a very pure reflection; it's a quilted look."

Inside, leaks were a problem, necessitating tarpaulin "diapers" with hoses hung from the ceiling to direct rainwater into barrels. Keeping the glass clean was also a challenge: Fowle noted that the "interior system of gantries and elevators [was] abandoned at least 20 years ago."

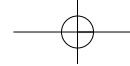
However, Freed's futuristic space frame is surprisingly well preserved, said Tian-Fang Jing, a principal of Weidlinger Associates (structural engineers on both the original job and the renovation). Fast-track scheduling left the original supplier of the casting nodes unable to maintain quality control, but cracked ones were later replaced by Japanese forged-steel nodes, which remain sound.

Now that the materials and technologies are available to complete what Freed and Pei started, Fowle believes that the building's strengths outweigh its acknowledged limitations. The new Javits has a higher-performing curtain wall of flat, transparent, bird-safe

FXFOWLE'S rendering of the renovated Javits transformed, transparent, and integrated into the West Side.

fritted glass (Viracon VNE1-63) in 5-by-10-foot modules, not 5-by-5-foot ones (meaning less metal and a more open feel), with scaffolding and rolling gantries to ease maintenance. It will also be 26 percent more energy efficient, with a 6.75-acre green roof and high-performance rooftop HVAC units. Improved waterproofing using perforated acoustic decking to reduce corrosion, plus stormwater absorption by the green roof, a light variety with regional succulents planted in 1½-inch soil (easily supported by reserve load-bearing capacity, Jing said, since the frame's design was more conservative than the code specified), ensures that the reborn Javits should be diaper-free. "This building's already been standing there for more than 25 years" despite rampant water damage, Jing concluded, "so another 25 years shouldn't [be] any problem."

Given the position that the casino developer Genting is taking on guarantees connected to the proposed convention center in Queens, replacing the Javits may well take a quarter of a century. In the meantime, advocates of its removal are wringing their hands in anticipation. The Regional Plan Association (RPA), the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 4, 2012

(HKNA), members of Community Board 4, and others have bruited various plans that sell off or demolish the Javits superblock. A 1999 proposal by the Design Trust for Public Space and HKNA, published in 2002 as *Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies*, envisioned a relatively small-scale neighborhood with waterfront access, a repurposed multi-use Pier 76, and an expanded Hudson River Park. Take the Javits out of the mix, suggested HKNA-affiliated architect Meta Brunzema, and "there's an opportunity to create a really great open-space network that will tie into the High Line."

"It's fairly clear that the highest and best use for the land Javits sits upon is not Javits," observed Vishaan Chakrabarti, director of Columbia's real estate development program and partner at SHoP Architects. A new mixed-use neighborhood restoring the street grid and waterfront access "would transform not just the Javits site but some 60 or 70 blocks of west Midtown," perhaps breaking the logjam of Hudson Yards, Moynihan Station, and other projects. An outer-borough convention center is a separate riddle, contingent on high-speed rail access.

"To be fair to all of the businesses and hoteliers that have come to rely on the business that flows from the Javits, you need to have some sort of smaller but significant conferencing facility in Manhattan," Chakrabarti added, noting that the RPA's suggested site, Farley Annex, is plausible. "None of these ideas are going to happen tomorrow, and money is needed to be spent at Javits to simply maintain the facility and keep it operating, so the mid-to long-term planning exercise of where our convention center belongs shouldn't get tied up with the short-term needs of fixing the existing facility. But at the end of the day, it's simply no longer the right spot for a convention center. The land is simply too important, not just in terms of economic value but social value."

As its neighborhood sprouts new attractions, the era of an isolated, pedestrian-unfriendly Javits may be ending; a reevaluation may be in order. "People still think it's the old Darth Vader building," Fowle said. "That's a mindset that they have, and until people see it, it's not going to change."

**FREQUENT AN CONTRIBUTOR WILLIAM MILLARD LAST WROTE ABOUT CONSTRUCTING THE NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM.**

**Below:** New glass panels have larger dimensions allowing for less metal and no pillowing.



COURTESY FXFOWLE



COURTESY FRIENDS OF THE HIGHLINE

While unveiling the latest High Line designs by James Corner Field Operations with Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R) to the community on March 13, principal James Corner plucked a phrase from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, calling the latest venture a "brave new world." Unlike the last two sections, which are surrounded by multiple property owners, Section 3 wraps around one massive project, Related Properties' Hudson Yards. With a hint of anticipation at the stakes of the public/private partnership, Propero's quote concludes, "Gentle breath of yours my sail must fill, or else my project fails."

While plans for Section 3 keep operations, design, and ownership separate from

Related's project, the new section still resembles something of a public/private lovechild in that the private developer is ponying up about a third of the funds needed to develop the public park. "We never wanted High Line to become part of the Hudson Yards opens space," admitted Friends of the High Line co-founder Robert Hammond. "We wanted it to maintain a separate identity."

The Hudson Yards site stretches from 30<sup>th</sup> to 33<sup>rd</sup> streets and from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the West Side Highway. Related will build a platform and lease the space above the MTA-owned yard where the LIRR runs. Eleventh Avenue divides the site into the Eastern Rail Yard (EYR) and the Western

**Top:** One of three options for the 10th Avenue Spur entails hydraulic platforms and benches that can flatten to create a maneuverable event space.

**Above:** The High Line cuts through a 60-foot-high opening in the KPF-designed Coach building, providing a public balcony for Related's private development.

**Right:** An interim walkway will run over the last stretch of a self-seeding High Line overlooking the Western Rail Yard.

Rail Yard. The west yard was zoned with the High Line view corridors in mind, but EYR was zoned in pre-High Line 2005. On March 14, City Planning held a public

hearing for a text amendment to rezone the EYR, pegging financing and maintenance for the park to Related's project and integrating their open-space bonus requirements traded for height increases in two towers ranging from 56 to 68 stories.

For the northeast corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> streets, DS+R are also designing an 800-foot-tall residential tower for Related. The firm is already working on a city-owned performance space called the Culture Shed next door. At the junction where the southern section of the High Line meets Section 3, steps will lead up to a large privately-owned public plaza (one of five large POPS) that will open onto the EYR. Related has yet to announce the plaza's designer.

The High Line junction casts an offshoot forking a half a block farther to the east. There, the park will cut through the Kohn Pederson Fox-designed Coach building (named for its anchor tenant). A 60-foot-high opening in the building will span the High Line, due to a zoning amendment not available to new construction along the southern section. "It's a careful act to allow the High Line to run through that building," Corner said. "We worked quite hard to keep them separate; [the High Line] never bleeds seamlessly into any building." While different from anything on the southern section, this stretch acts, Corner said, "almost like an edge or a balcony" to the Related project, rather than a path cutting through fabric."

The east-running branch dead ends in an oddly shaped platform floating above the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 30<sup>th</sup> Street, called the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Spur. There, the designers have presented three options: a covered pavilion, a theater in the round, or hydraulic platforms/benches that can flatten to create a maneuverable event space. Likewise, the Coach tower overhang area features wheeled lounges that can be rolled out of the way for parties.

While the deal allows Related to fulfill its open-space obligations, the High Line remains city-owned, to be maintained by Friends of the High Line with financial support from Related. Related's overall open space commitment to the EYR will be more than 313,000 square feet on the 570,000-square-foot site—with the section along the EYR fulfilling 11 percent of its total requirements. If Related chooses to kick in an additional \$7.4 million toward the Spur, its open space percentage coverage bumps up to 14 percent. Related is already committed to paying \$27.5 million toward rehabbing and landscaping the EYR section of the High Line.

The Friends of the High Line are seeking to raise \$65 million toward Section 3, the Spur, and an interim walkway spanning the self-seeded Western Rail Yard section to be developed later. But raising capital from parties that don't have a direct stake may prove a challenge (a gift of \$20 million from the Diller-Von Furstenberg Foundation notwithstanding). Hammond pointed to the Brookfield's yet-to-be-realized Manhattan West, the ever-unrealized Moynihan Station, and the limbo-prone Javits Center as potential alliances to explore. **TOM STOELKER**



COURTESY FRIENDS OF THE HIGHLINE



COURTESY GOOGLE MAPS



**Above:** Aerial view of the West Side, today, with undeveloped Hudson Yards at bottom, Javits center at left, and spaghetti strands of the Lincoln Tunnel access roads to the right.

**Left:** Hudson Yards development scheme mapped out by Related in two phases, including the Hudson Park and Boulevard designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates with a terminal for the No. 7 subway by Dattner Architects.

Center, the Hudson Yards, and Related Companies' future commercial and residential buildings.

"Circulation drove the design, and circulation flows were the most important aspect of the design," said Urbanski, explaining that "desire lines" to neighboring destinations create diagonal paths through the landscape, linking the station to corners and sidewalks.

For cars, the site may prove even trickier to access. Carefully planned traffic circulation by Hudson Yards Development Corporation is intended to ensure low traffic levels and relative pedestrian safety. Due to the sloping design of Hudson Yards, cars will enter the complex from the north along 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a ramped driveway extending from the newly created Hudson Boulevard to reach 32<sup>nd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> streets, dead-ending in cul-de-sacs with access to street-level amenities. This will possibly reduce the speed of traffic along those streets, while through traffic to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue will continue along 30<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> streets. From the south, 10<sup>th</sup> avenue will slope up to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, while pedestrians arriving along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue will climb to the High Line from intermittent street entrances.

Thrown into the transit mélange are the bike paths zipping up Hudson River Park, the bus routes scheduled along 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> avenues and 34<sup>th</sup> street, and the snarl of onramps to the Lincoln Tunnel.

**CAITLIN BLANCHFIELD IS A BROOKLYN-BASED WRITER AND EDITOR INTERESTED IN CULTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT.**

Hudson Yards promises to be a node of unusually complex variability straddling an active rail yard and woven into the urban fabric by subway, the High Line, bike paths, an urban park, and city streets, all flanked by projects that will invite a large influx of diverse visitors to the corridor.

Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) has developed the master plan extending from 33<sup>rd</sup> Street at the north to 30<sup>th</sup> Street on the south and between 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> avenues, sloping up from the northern street level to an elevation over the Long Island Rail Road tracks. FXFOWLE is currently renovating the four blocks holding the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. And Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates (MVVA) are at work on the Hudson Park and Boulevard, an arm of snaking green space stretching from 36<sup>th</sup> to 33<sup>rd</sup> streets that will house the terminal station of the No. 7 subway line. And then there is the final phase of the High Line. The question is, how will commuters, residents, and convention goers navigate

these new public spaces as they aim to dynamically activate the area?

The challenge of the Hudson Yards, Marianne Kwok, the project director working with Bill Pedersen at KPF, explained, is to knit the complex into the existing surroundings. "The main thing we tried to do was to make Hudson Yards as seamlessly connected to the rest of the city as possible—to stitch together the surrounding urban fabric: Chelsea to the south, Hell's Kitchen and the new Hudson Boulevard neighborhood to the north, and midtown to the east," Kwok said.

Key to achieving this connection will be the ability of the Hudson Park and Boulevard to serve as a pedestrian spine, reducing vehicular traffic by creating landscaped public spaces and providing easy access to public transportation. Station entrances in the northern and southern blocks of the three-block park and boulevard will issue commuters into a landscape that MVVA principal Matthew Urbanski calls, "a machine for lunching," that then facilitates their flow to the Javits

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 4, 2012

APRIL 2012

**APRIL****WEDNESDAY 4****LECTURES**

**Jochen Gerz**  
**Art, Design, and the Public Domain Lecture Series**  
 12:00 p.m.  
 Gund Hall  
 Harvard Graduate School of Design  
 48 Quincy St.  
 Cambridge, MA  
 gsd.harvard.edu

**Alexandra Lange**  
**Writing about Architecture**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 The Center for Architecture  
 536 LaGuardia Pl.  
 cfa.aiany.org

**Ben van Berkel**  
**What Happened to Architectural Objectivity?**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Wood Auditorium  
 Avery Hall  
 Columbia GSAPP  
 1172 Amsterdam Ave.  
 arch.columbia.edu

**TRADE SHOW**  
**Check-In to 200 Lex**  
 3:00 p.m.  
 New York Design Center  
 200 Lexington Ave.  
 nydc.com

**THURSDAY 5**

**LECTURES**

**Neil Smith**  
**Toxic Capitalism: Neoliberalism, City Building and Crisis**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Hastings Hall  
 Yale School of Architecture  
 180 York St.  
 New Haven, CT  
 architecture.yale.edu

**Janette Sadik-Khan**  
**Mumford Lecture: It's Not Impossible to Change a City**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 The Great Hall  
 Shepard Hall  
 City College of New York  
 160 Covert Ave.  
 ccny.cuny.org

**SYMPORIUM**  
**Glass, Light, and Public Space**  
**William Menking, Sarah Archer, James Carpenter, et al.**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 Lecture Hall 213  
 Pratt Manhattan  
 144 West 14th St.  
 pratt.edu

**FRIDAY 6**

**EVENT**

**Book Launch: Empowering Architecture**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Van Alen Books  
 30 West 22nd St.  
 vanalen.org

**SATURDAY 7**

**EVENT**

**Brooklyn Navy Yards Tours**  
 1:00 and 2:30  
 Ongoing Every Saturday and Sunday  
 BLDG 92  
 Brooklyn Navy Yard  
 63 Flushing Ave.  
 Brooklyn, NY  
 urbanoyer.com

**MONDAY 9****LECTURES**

**Tina Manis**  
**In Search of Beauty: Synchronizing Domestic Space**  
 5:45 p.m.  
 Weston Lecture Hall  
 New Jersey Institute of Technology  
 154 Summit St.  
 Newark, NJ  
 design.njit.edu

**Barry Bergdoll, Steven Holl, George Ranalli, Mark Wigley, and Lebbeus Woods**  
**How to Reflect**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Altschul Auditorium  
 Columbia School of International and Public Affairs  
 420 West 118th St.  
 arch.columbia.edu

**TUESDAY 10****LECTURES**

**Michael Meredith**  
**Playful Experimentation and Criticism**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 D-Crit Department  
 School of Visual Arts  
 136 West 21st St.  
 dcrit.sva.edu

**Global Issues in Design and Visuality in the 21st Century: Culture - "Public Space and Public Life in Cuba"**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 Parsons  
 The New School for Design  
 65 West 11th St.  
 newschool.edu/parsons

**Chantal Mouffe**  
**Democratic Politics and Agonistic Public Spaces**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Gund Hall  
 Harvard Graduate School of Design  
 48 Quincy St.  
 Cambridge, MA  
 gsd.harvard.edu

**Lee Gray**  
**The 1875 New York Tribune Building: The Tall Tower of Whitelaw Reid**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 The Skyscraper Museum  
 39 Battery Pl.  
 skyscraper.org

**Philippe Rahm****Architecture Lecture**

6:30 p.m.  
 Meyerson Hall  
 Penn School of Design  
 210 South 34th St.  
 Philadelphia, PA

**WEDNESDAY 11****LECTURES**

**Nader Tehrani**  
**DA DA A NADAAA**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Gund Hall  
 Harvard Graduate School of Design  
 48 Quincy St.  
 Cambridge, MA  
 gsd.harvard.edu

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**Cristina Diaz Moreno & Efren Garcia Grinda and Laurent Staider**  
**Constructed Atmospheres**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 Betts Auditorium  
 S-110 Architecture Building  
 Princeton University  
 soa.princeton.edu

**THURSDAY 12**

**LECTURES**

**Sanjeev Vidyarthi**  
**Spectacular Subversion or Unique Urbanism**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 Sheila C. Johnson Design Center  
 Parsons The New School for Design  
 66 Fifth Ave.  
 newschool.edu/parsons

**Judy Bing****Travels to the East**

6:30 p.m.  
 Mandell Theater  
 Drexel University  
 3141 Chestnut St.  
 Philadelphia, PA  
 drexel.edu/westphal

**Joan Ockman**  
**Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Van Alen Books  
 30 West 22nd St.  
 vanalen.org

**SYMPOSIUM**

**Local Behavior: What Makes An American Designer?**  
**Claire Warner, Sam Vinz, Alex Mustonen, et al.**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Museum of Art and Design

**Events**

**Conversation:**  
**Frank Gehry and Paul Goldberger**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Hastings Hall  
 Yale School of Architecture  
 180 York St.  
 New Haven, CT  
 architecture.yale.edu

**Urbanized:****Film Screening and Conversation**

**Gary Hustwit, Ricky Burdett, and James Corner**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 Meyerson Hall  
 Penn School of Design  
 210 South 34th St.  
 Philadelphia, PA

**NYC20 Art and Design Fair**

11:00 a.m.  
 The Tent at Lincoln Center  
 10 Lincoln Center Plz.  
 dolphinfairs.com/nyc20

**FRIDAY 13****LECTURE**

**David Yassky**  
**The Five Borough Taxi Plan**  
 8:00 a.m.  
 Center for Architecture  
 536 LaGuardia Pl.  
 aiany.org

**SYMPOSIA**

**Why Mumford?**  
**Moderated by Casey Nelson Blake and Reinhold Martin**  
 10:00 a.m.  
 Buell Hall

**East Gallery**  
 Columbia GSAPP  
 515 West 116th St.  
 arch.columbia.edu

**Service Learning in Design and Planning: Educating at the Boundaries**

**Tom Angotti, Cheryl Doble, Paula Horrigan, et al.**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Van Alen Books  
 30 West 22nd St.  
 vanalen.org

**Panel Discussion: Repositioning Asian Cities: Designing and Planning Competitive Global Cities**

**Aric Chen, Jung-seok Choi, et al.**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Gund Hall  
 Harvard Graduate School of Design  
 48 Quincy St.  
 Cambridge, MA  
 gsd.harvard.edu

**SATURDAY 14****EXHIBITION OPENING**

**Invisible Cities**  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Mass MOCA  
 1040 Mass MOCA Way  
 North Adams, MA  
 massmoca.org

**WITH THE KIDS**

**Family Day at the Center: New Architecture in the Middle East**  
 11:00 a.m.  
 Center for Architecture  
 536 LaGuardia Pl.  
 aiany.org

**MONDAY 16****LECTURE**

**Michael Kimmelman**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Hastings Hall  
 Yale School of Architecture  
 180 York St., New Haven, CT  
 architecture.yale.edu

**EVENT**

**Small and Smart: Contemporary Slovene Architecture Revealed through Film**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 The Center for Architecture  
 536 LaGuardia Pl.  
 cfa.aiany.org

**TUESDAY 17****LECTURE**

**Damon Rich**  
**Working the System**  
 6:00 p.m.  
 D-Crit, School of Visual Arts  
 136 West 21st St.  
 dcrit.sva.edu

**TUESDAY 18****LECTURE**

**Suzanne Frank, Frederieke Taylor, Suzanne Stephens Julie Iovine, moderator**  
**The Institute as the Women Saw It**  
 7:00 p.m.  
 Van Alen Books  
 30 West 22nd St.  
 vanalen.org



COURTESY HEATHER HART

**HEATHER HART****THE EASTERN ORACLE**

**Brooklyn Museum**  
 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY  
 April 13–June 24

For the fourth exhibition in its *Raw/Cooked* series displaying the work of budding Brooklyn artists, the Brooklyn Museum presents an installation by Heather Hart. Occupying the museum's fifth-floor rotunda, the installation will consist of a single rooftop that lies flat on the ground, without walls and outside its original context. As Hart describes it: "A rooftop can refer to home, stability, or shelter, but in this context, it is also an action of reclaiming power." The roof makes specific reference to the oldest architecture in the museum's period room collection—the Jan Martense Schenck House, built in 1676, the second-oldest Dutch-American building in Brooklyn. Visitors are encouraged to physically interact with the structure, fulfilling Hart's intention to create a place of self-reflection and self-empowerment.

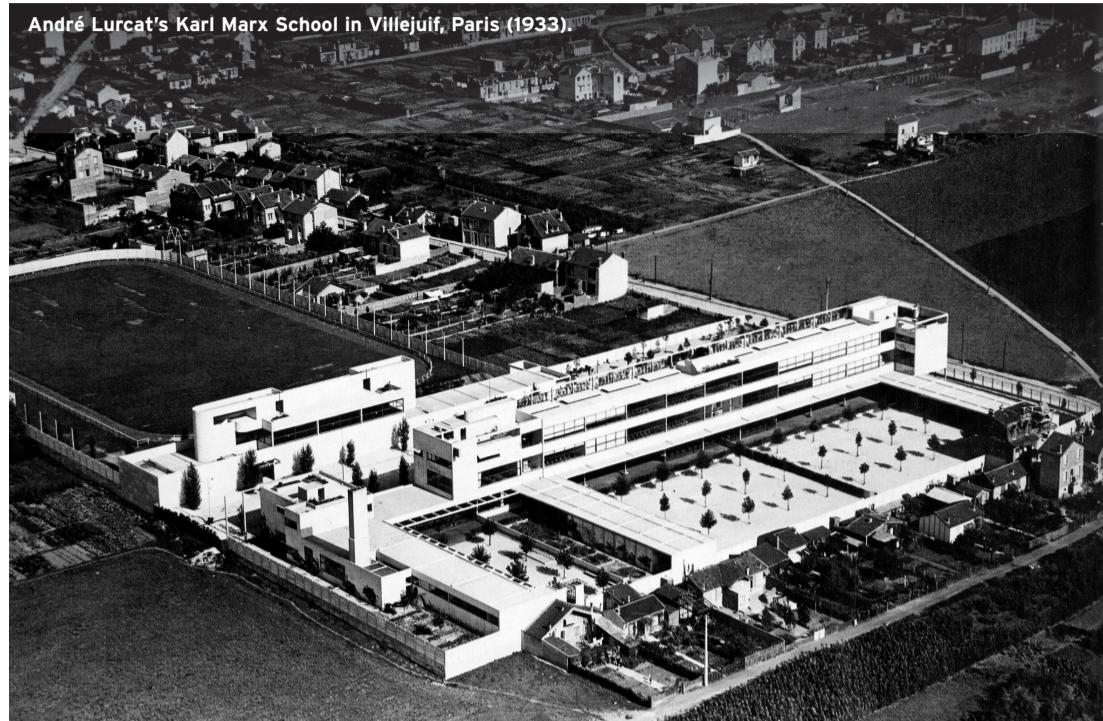


MATTHIAS ERNSTBERGER

**STEFAN SAGMEISTER****THE HAPPY SHOW**

**Institute of Contemporary Art**  
 University of Pennsylvania  
 118 South 36th St., Philadelphia, PA  
 Through August 12

While Stefan Sagmeister is known as a graphic designer, his work often subverts the boundary between design and art. For his first museum exhibition in the United States, Sagmeister will present a vision of his journey to find happiness, taking over the second-floor galleries and ramp in addition to interstices throughout the museum. The narrative of the exhibition is structured using personal maxims as expressed through typographic investigations. Alongside these maxims appears social data from psychologists, anthropologists, and historians, contextualizing Sagmeister's experience within the larger factors of age, gender, race, and economics. "I am usually rather bored with definitions," Sagmeister explains. "Happiness, however, is just such a big subject that it might be worth a try to pin it down."



COURTESY RIBA LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION

## BACKING INTO THE FUTURE

*The Future of Architecture since 1889: A Worldwide History*  
Jean-Louis Cohen, Phaidon, \$75

Given the provocative ambiguity of the title, one is tempted to see the author as standing in for Walter Benjamin's angel of history, who, driven backwards into the future

by the storm of progress, sees the wreckage of the past pile up ever higher at his feet. Unlike many other accounts of modern architecture culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,

Cohen regards the ever-escalating process of modernization as a techno-economic apocalypse that transforms everything in its wake. Against this never-ending surge

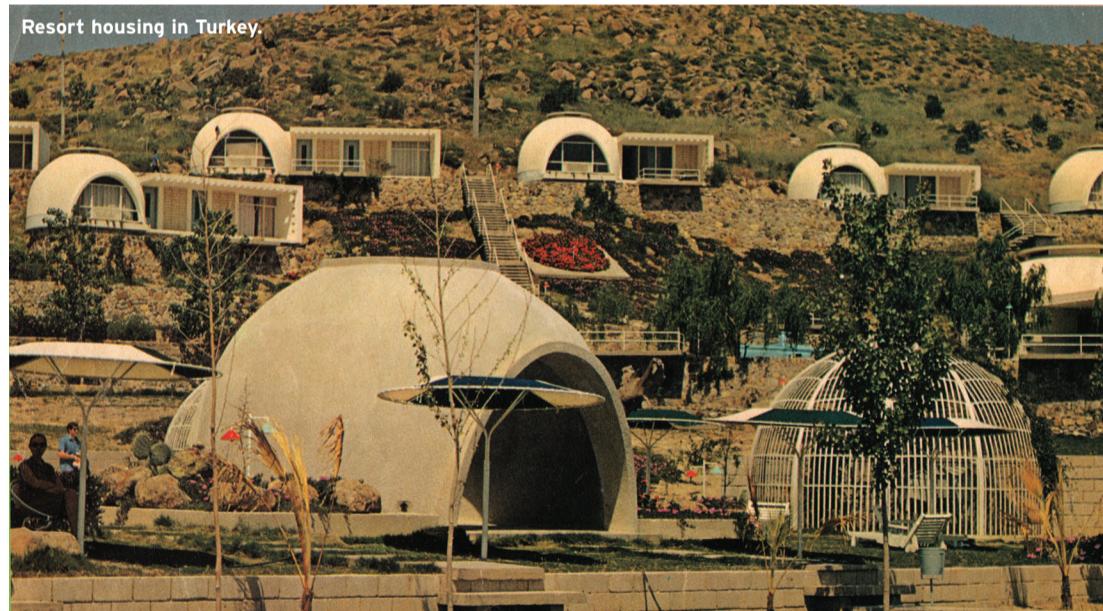
of creation and destruction, the practice and theory of contemporary architecture is seen as a series of quixotic episodes of varying intensity and effect; at times individually based and highly aesthetic; at other times collectively committed to social reform and political revolution. In his re-reading of this messianic trajectory, Cohen assumes the role of the materialist historian who here, as elsewhere, has been able to eschew the various tendentious accounts of modern architecture to which we have been subjected in the past. Since he was directly touched by the violent political turmoil that Europe suffered between 1914 and 1945, the author's knowing demeanor carries the narrative forward, like the voice-over to a kinetic documentary.

This effect is to some extent produced by the way in which the book has been illustrated; one has the sense of a critical sensibility at work recasting the rhythmic impulse of history so that by way of panoramic double spreads and full-page images, certain works are highlighted as being of greater seminal consequence than others. In this way Benjamin Baker's Firth of Forth Bridge of 1889, Tony Garnier's Cité Industrielle of 1904, Eugene Freyssinet's airship hangars at Orly of 1916–23, and Max Berg's Jahrhunderthalle, Breslau, of 1915 seem to presage by way of the

demiurge both Bruno Taut's *Alpine Architektur* of 1919 and Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum, Dornach, of 1925. One could perhaps account for these often surprising emphases as being nothing more than the superimpositions of the publisher, combined with the indifference to content commonly displayed by contemporary graphic designers, since there is often no necessary correspondence between the line assumed by the text and the sequence and size of the accompanying images. André Lurcat's Hotel Nord-Sud in Calvi of 1930 is a case in point in as much as it is given a double spread, whereas the more dynamic and politically consequential Karl Marx School in Villejuif, Paris, of 1933 by the same architect, appears to merit no more than half a page.

Understandably, given Cohen's nationality, the French Modern movement is adequately covered in this account, extending from Henri Sauvage's rue Vavin stepped apartment block of 1912 to the canonical De Stijl exhibition staged in Paris in 1923. The next Parisian decade is fleshed out with exemplary works by Auguste Perret, Eileen Gray, Robert Mallet-Stevens, Michel Roux-Spitz, and finally Beaudoin and Lods for their Maison du Peuple at Clichy designed in collaboration with Jean Prouvé. For once, recognition is also

**continued on page 18**



COURTESY PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS

## BUBBLE PIPE DREAMS

*No Nails, No Lumber: The Bubble Houses of Wallace Neff*  
Jeffrey Head, Princeton Architectural Press, \$25

One of the most fascinating things about Jeffrey Head's *No Nails, No Lumber* is that it posits a future that never happened. Imagine bubble suburbs and people filling up at bubble gas-stations, shopping at bubble stores, attending bubble schools. Rather than viewing these as curious blips in architectural

history, we could all be living in a gunite bubble world and not thinking twice about it.

Wallace Neff died in 1982, having never realized his ultimate dream of the world embracing his prototypical and efficient design. He is certainly not the only architect to occupy this position, and he will not be the last.

This is partly the game of architecture, often at odds with the way things are and trying to bend forces to achieve something different. In this regard, it is amazing that Neff got any of his bubbles built at all. Even more amazing that a few of them are still standing and being lived in.

In the midst of Head's admittedly

incomplete catalog of Neff's bubble houses—including a few that Neff himself did not know had been built—is the phantom of disappointment and a romanticism for this lost corner of modernism. The author is not the only one with this feeling; I sensed it in myself almost immediately. This nostalgia for what never was. It is all the more poignant because now our landscapes are, for the most part, dominated by the monotonous expanses of stick dwellings. Here, embodied in Neff's bubbles, was the possibility of difference, perhaps a sort of spatial playfulness that is largely lost in the uniformity of our cities and neighborhoods.

The bubble, or "airform construction" as Neff called it, never caught on. In Head's telling, this was largely the result of poor business dealings and Neff's overconfidence in his partners. What ultimately sunk Neff's Airform International Construction Corporation was one Adolf Waterval, the European regional director of the company that was supposed to take bubble construction global.

Waterval's questionable business dealings make him an appealing scapegoat, but what is most apparent in Head's recounting of this failure is the cultural gulf between an architectural vision and the general public. People simply weren't ready to embrace airform construction on a large-enough scale to make it anything but a novelty.

The story that Head does not tell about Neff is that his ambition to create a form of architecture that could have utterly changed the game of housing on a global scale may have arisen from his childhood. Head alludes to Neff's early childhood as the foundation of his desire to become an architect, but this is the standard archetype of architectural pre-determinism.

What seems to have influenced Neff's direction had less to do with drawing buildings at a young age than with his exposure to the family business. His mother was the daughter of Andrew McNally, founder of the Rand McNally publishing empire.

Wallace Neff grew up in a Queen Anne Victorian mansion in a tony part of Altadena, California, known as "Millionaire's Row." Head suggests this house and the surrounding mansions of various styles were instrumental in forming Neff's ambitions and aesthetics. After all, Neff was well-known for his Spanish Revivalist homes—he designed the estates of Judy Garland, Groucho Marx, and Douglas Fairbanks Jr., to name a few. But this in no way explains why he was so passionate about the potential of the bubble form. Clients interested in estates were not keen to live in modest bubbles.

What *No Nails, No Lumber* unintentionally lays out, then, is a story of an

**continued on page 18**

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER APRIL 4, 2012



Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology Alumni Memorial Hall site, Chicago, 1945-46.

Even with regard to his post-World War II career, given under the rubric of "Le Corbusier reinvented and reinterpreted," Cohen elects to show us a hitherto unseen child-like *esquisse* from the archives rather than the more familiar images of Le Corbusier's latter-day communal dwelling realized as the Unité d'Habitation Marseille in 1952.

Written in French, translated into English, and impeccably edited by Joan Ockman, this is an exceptional, erudite text, wherein the learning, worn lightly but richly detailed, conjures up for the reader the poignancy and vitality of the various creative moments, irrespective of their fleeting duration. Thus one learns that the short-lived Austrian Jugendstil movement of 1898, known as Vers Sacrum, took its title from a poem by Ludwig Uhland, or that Theo van Doesburg's ineffable but acerbic cinema/dance hall in the Café L'Aubette of 1928 was literally constructed, hands on, by Oscar Nitzchke and Denis Honegger, both star pupils of Auguste Perret's atelier, such was the collegiality of Paris in *les années vingt*. Nothing could have been more rebelliously ironic on the part of the students, since Perret, unlike Le Corbusier, rejected Neoplasticism out of hand.

The tenor of this magisterial overview, hinted at in the author's play with Rosalind Kraus's metaphor of the "expanded field," is much indebted to the Annales approach of Fernand Braudel, who, in his overarching *longue durée* account of Mediterranean culture, employed the tectonic concept of layered planes with which, to quote Cohen, he accounted for "fleeting temporalities, in which concepts and ideals, appear and disappear only to resurface a few decades

later also to play their part." This constant rising and falling makes up much of this highly detailed, historical trajectory, which Cohen is reluctant to call a movement, despite Otto Wagner's coinage of the term *Bewegung* well before World War I. He is equally loath to have anything to do with Hitchcock and Johnson's catchall rubric of the International Style. Instead he recognizes that, as he puts it, "resurgences of classicism and the occasionally subversive eruption of the vernacular are part of this bigger picture. Indeed far from being a rigid category and even less a sterile one, tradition—though sometimes wholly fabricated—has consistently served as an intellectual stimulant."

Be this as it may, tradition until recently surely served as a mediating referent that maintained the ship of modernity on its course, that is to say, up until the last three decades or so, when the "vanishing points" of the mediatic present started to deconstruct the *raison d'être* of architecture from within. Thus amid the onslaught of the rampant urbanization that is now taking place on a vast global scale, architects no longer seem to have the capacity, neither politically nor conceptually, to provide any kind of viable solution to the ever worsening condition of the universal housing crisis. Hence we enter upon a totally dystopian state of affairs in which, as Cohen puts it, what still deserves to be called architecture would seem "to amount to little more than a handful of diamonds amid the rubble of the planet."

**KENNETH FRAMPTON IS WARE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & PRESERVATION, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.**

**BUBBLE PIPE DREAMS** continued from page 17 architect's capitalist ambition. In the appendix, one can find a total of 12 patents Neff developed to protect the bubble designs and pneumatic construction methodologies he fine-tuned throughout his career. He was more interested in the potential of architecture to be prototyped—not prefabricated—and made available to consumers in a mass market. Perhaps this is the valuable lesson he learned from his grandfather, the publishing tycoon.

But it would be too simplistic to reduce Neff to the influence of his formative experiences. As an architect, he was wrestling with the pressing problems of his age, the most paramount being the need to rebuild Europe after the destruction of World War II, and the demand for efficient and affordable housing throughout the decolonizing developing world. There was also the postwar demand for housing in the United States that had to be attended to. He embraced airform construction as the best way to tackle these problems. One bubble house could be built in less than eighteen hours. The shape of the home was itself the structure. They could be put up almost anywhere and suited any climate. Though thousands were eventually built internationally, only one bubble house remains. As Head notes, this last house, in Pasadena, California, was Neff's own, where he lived for a time with his brother. This was also the very first bubble house ever built and a reminder of a future that never quite was.

**GUY HORTON IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN AND OTHER DESIGN PUBLICATIONS.**

**BACKING INTO THE FUTURE** continued from page 17 given here to the relatively unsung high density "skyscraper" housing scheme, known as the Villeurbanne, built to the designs of Môrce Leroux in 1934.

The Franco-Suisse genius that is somewhat underplayed in this account is unquestionably Le Corbusier, to whom the book displays a certain ambivalence, so much so that the finest civic work of his Purist period, namely, his Centrosoyuz, realized in Moscow in 1936, is represented by a small unflattering shot which, coupled with the exclusion of his brilliant entries for the seminal international competitions that he designed with Pierre Jeanneret—his Société des Nations of 1927 and his Palais des Soviets of 1931—seems to sell his overall achievement rather short.

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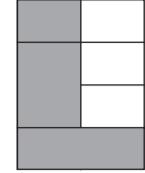
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The 1959 AMS Headquarters in Ohio includes an extraordinary double-dome by Buckminster Fuller. Recently renovated by The Chesler Group, the project has been photographed by Jeff Goldberg.  
Photo © Jeff Goldberg/Esto

PHOTO: ROY WRIGHT

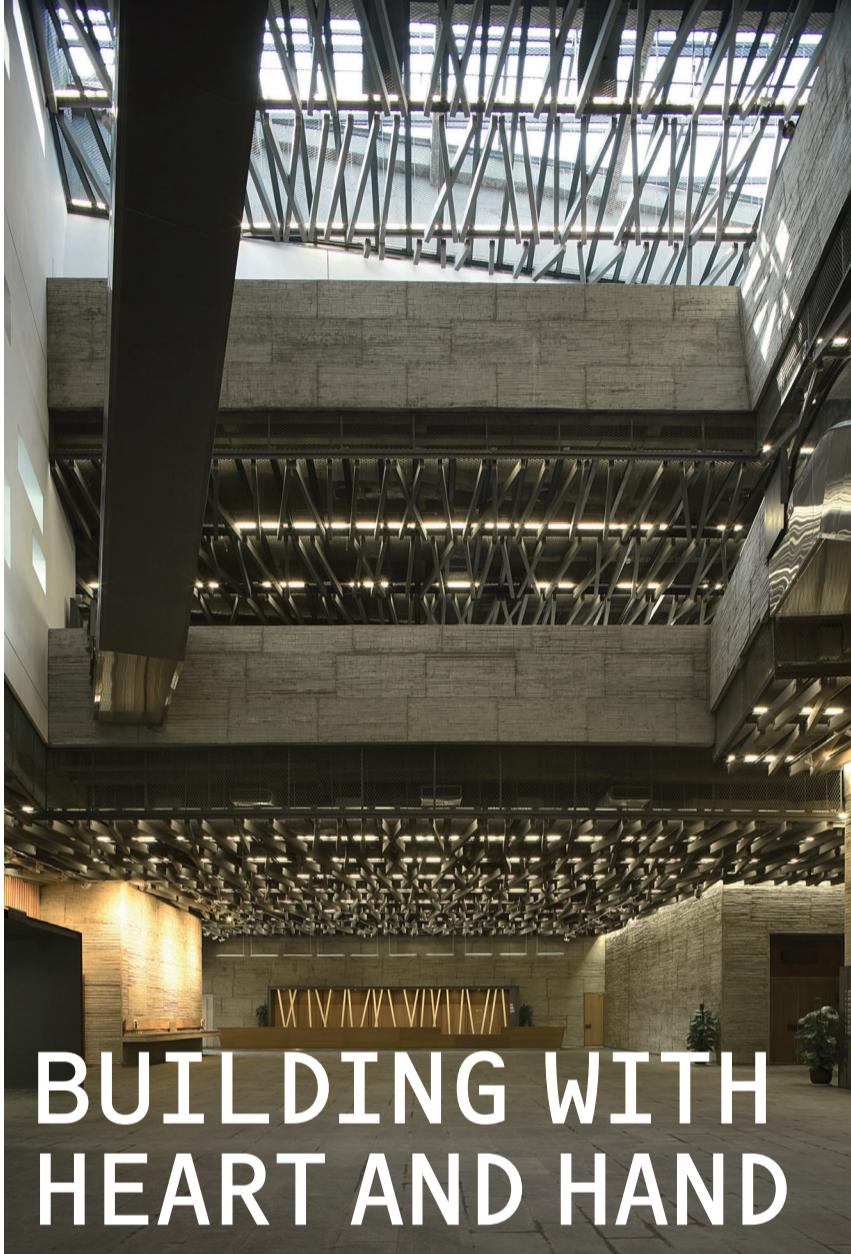
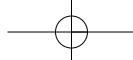
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## BUILDING WITH HEART AND HAND

A few hours before he was officially announced the 2012 Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate and the first China-based architect to be so acknowledged, Wang Shu, 48, was just another architect professor on the schedule to give a lecture to the department of architecture and urban design at UCLA. Describing himself as an artist as well as an architect, Shu sat down with AN contributor **Jonathan Louie** to discuss his "way" of design.

Wang Shu lives and practices in Hangzhou, China, where he established Amateur Architecture Studio with his wife Lu Wenyu in 1997. In contrast to the globe-trotting Chinese "avant-garde," Wang Shu explores the rich legacy of China's intellectual, sculptural, and architectural history, and ties his research closely to a simple formal language that emphasizes regional culture and astonishingly beautiful but imperfect craftsmanship.

**The Architect's Newspaper:** As an architect you've cast yourself as someone who prefers to practice in the region in which you live. Was there a turning point or event in your career that influenced that decision and your perception of architecture?

**Wang Shu:** For Chinese architects, the question is, how can we make a Chinese modern architecture? Not just a modern architecture, but China's modern architecture. It's an interesting question,

because we do have a Chinese architecture. It's a learned and copied modern architecture from the Western world, but there is no relation to our local life.

In school, I did some independent work very early on. For example, as a student, I worked on my first building, which was finished in 1985, and I designed my first independent project in 1989 [a youth center for a small town in Hainan]. In this way, I received professional architectural experience. Although I could do good architecture, it wasn't really what I wanted. I realized that it's not just about good architecture but about the best way to design and to construct. It was a more basic question.

So the 1990s were a very important time. It was a turning point. I completely took myself out of the professional system and took time with workers, questioning materials together with them. I did a lot of renovation work for old buildings. It was a rich experience, because any time you design something in this field, it's important to see that there are some things that have existed before you. It's not just designing on an empty piece of paper or on an empty site. You have to wonder how you can create something that takes the past and turns it into the future.

When you do a renovation for a building you have to touch the materials. It's not just the materials, but it's the way the materials change with time, the weather,



LV HENG HONG

or with people's lives. You have to design new things that can coexist. So now when I design a new building, even on an empty site, my way is very similar to a renovation. **An important aspect of your work is the emphasis on authenticity, recycled materials, and craft. Can you talk about those interests of yours in relationship to the slick mass-produced high-rise construction in China today?**

Usually I like to talk about real things and realities. I prefer to talk about natural materials that aren't artificial. It's not just about an interest in recycled materials. But if you think you are a modern architect or a contemporary architect, you should be critiquing reality. Maybe in the next ten years I'll use other kinds of materials. But in the past ten years, I felt there was too much demolition and I wanted to propose an answer to that. Of course, this is about attitude. On the other side, using this material has led to an architectural way—the craftsman's skills.

**Is this a critique of the state of architecture in China?**

Yes. In China I think architecture is important because in modern times it plays a big role. Architects design so many buildings at such a large scale. The size means that it can totally change people's lifestyles. Who gave you this power? How do you think about how you can control and handle this power? What is the meaning to you? Those are very important things. If you just think that you are an engineer and you're going to create a surface for people without thinking about how the surface can change people's lives, it could really destroy their lives.

Only once did I design a high-rise building. I wanted to approach the design as a high-rise building that used many small buildings collected together.

**You're talking about the Vertical Courtyard Project in Hangzhou?**

Yes. It's a simple idea. I wanted even those people living 100 feet high to still feel as if they were living in a small house where they could live around a small courtyard and plant their own trees. From below they can tell people on the ground that "those are my trees and that's my house." It provides an identity for people to feel as if it's their own house. It's more than just blank windows in apartment buildings that can't separate neighborhoods. It's a basic right for people.

**Your design process seems similar to Chinese landscape painting. For example,**

**Left: Interior of the Ningbo History Museum, Ningbo, China; above: exterior of the museum made from reclaimed rubble; on page one: the Five Scattered Houses, also in Ningbo.**

**when you drew the Xiangshan Campus in Hangzhou, you drew the project all at once. Is this a typical approach?**

It's not just an abstract concept to talk about the countryside. In fact the countryside includes many things for me. I spent a long time researching traditional landscape painting. It means that you can control a large-scale landscape in a spatial way. The Hangzhou campus was my test project. It was very successful, but for another project, there may be another way to do it. Every time I like performing different experiments.

It's not enough to say that I have a good education and I know how to design. You should talk about it not as designing something, but instead asking, "How should I design?" It's a more basic question. How do you ask the question? The way is more important than the design itself. It's my way, and it's very simple.

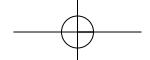
**What does the Pritzker Prize mean for you and for architects in China?**

Especially for young architects, this prize encourages them to do more experimental work—because the fact is, it's not easy. In China we have many projects, but only a few good projects. Good architecture is not just design, but I think it's closer to a struggle. It'll give them more self-confidence.

For me, it has another importance. Originally, I wanted to stop for two years, to have time with my wife and time to raise our son together. I worked too much over the past ten years. My son is 10 years old now, but now with the prize, maybe this means I have to do more things and more design. But I still want to spend more time with my son.

If you keep the feeling in your heart pure, people will like your building. If you really do good design, you will find that your building will smile. Because the building comes from your heart, and it really gets a good feeling from life, and people can feel it. If you just work hard, and worry because you want a good building, people can feel that the building is a little nervous. So it's very important to keep your heart in the right way.

**JONATHAN LOUIE IS AN ARCHITECT AND CURATOR IN LOS ANGELES.**



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