Coda Uses Skateboard Scrap to Construct a Party Wall for This Summer’s MoMA/PS1 Warm Up Series

Party Wall, the winning design for this year’s MoMA/PS1 Young Architects Program pavilion by Ithaca, New York-based CODA, is both monumental and delicate. Party Wall is the 14th project in the Young Architects Program. Its design, which aims to create a shade and cooling structure for the annual Warm Up performance series, uses a steel structure clad in a woven skin of waste wood. continued on page 3

Ada Louise Huxtable, 1921–2013

The first time I met Ada Louise Huxtable, she was snickering gently over the latest irony in her career. It was probably 1994, and we were both at an event at the Museum of Modern Art. Huxtable was being rounded up, with fellow critics Paul Goldberger and Herbert Muschamp, for an Augustinian age portrait of the New York Times’ architectural alums. Huxtable later would say that she was flattered but also amused that day: in her opinion, the paper had done everything possible to get her off the architecture criticism beat, where her frank appraisals of developer greed were causing problems up the line. She also later told me how she had wept with joy at the announcement of her win of a MacArthur “genius” grant in 1981, because it meant she could quit. We didn’t really start to communicate, however, until much later when Huxtable wrote to compliment me on an acid review in continued on page 9

Straightening Out Nouvel

When Michael Rosenfeld decided to relocate his eponymous gallery from 57th Street to Chelsea, he wanted to make sure he found just the right space for his gallery’s works and clientele. So he surveyed the neighbor­hood, and over a three-year period visited a variety of spaces, touring sites with architect Richard Gluck­man. His final choice: the ground-floor space in Jean Nouvel’s continued on page 7

Gov Proposes Increased Funds for Transportation

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has introduced a state budget proposal for fiscal 2014 that proposes a significant increase in funds dedicated to improving and expanding public transit, highways, and infrastructure. Patrick’s move follows an ambitious Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) plan to expand the state’s transportation infrastructure.

The new budget sheds some light on how the state will raise the revenue to address the needs outlined in MassDOT’s report, The Way Forward: A 21st Century Transportation Plan. In an effort to continued on page 7

Mass Transit

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 Advances in ceramic design have traditionally focused more on the design than the genetic make-up of the actual ceramic. At LAUFEN, creators of the idea of the bathroom as a living space, the focus is always both; good design and innovative technology are inherent in every LAUFEN product. So it is really not a surprise that they have just announced the first in a series of new products using SaphirKeramik, a revolutionary material years in the making. SaphirKeramik is considerably harder and has a greater flexural strength than traditional forms of ceramic. SaphirKeramik turns the old material into completely new shapes: closely defined radii and edges are possible with thin walls which until now have not been seen in sanitary ceramic.

LAUFEN named the material SaphirKeramik to reference the addition of the mineral corundum, which occurs in nature in different modifications as a component of sapphire. This mineral is also used in the watch industry to produce sapphire glass dials and its hardness is surpassed only by that of diamonds.

Until now, ceramic design was limited to vitreous china and fine fireclay; each which have advantages and certain disadvantages. Vitreous china excels because of its waterproof qualities but it cannot be used to manufacture large ceramic pieces. Fireclay has traditionally been used to manufacture pieces such as LAUFEN’s Tam Tam or Menhir, both large floor-standing vessels. With SaphirKeramik, the hardness of the material permits shapes which were previously not possible. A more delicate design language, more defined in shape and line, becomes possible – exactly matching the ideas behind contemporary architectural design.

What does this mean for architects and designers? It means even more precise edges are possible. It means sinks and vanities will be as thin as possible yet even more durable. Contemporary ceramic design will no longer be limited because of size or weight. Think of the possibilities.

Here are more benefits of SaphirKeramik:

- **Flexural strength** – the material is measured at an average of over 120 kp/mm² – which is comparable with steel and twice as high as that of vitreous china.
- **Thinner** – the greater hardness permits thinner walls and simplified structure of the ceramic parts, which in turn results in less material, lower weights and benefits in terms of sustainability: fewer raw materials are required and lower energy consumption in firing, production and transport.
- **Design possibilities** – given the incredibly thin radii of the products: 1.2-mm radii for edges and 2 mm radii for corners are technically feasible with SaphirKeramik. The state of the art for classic ceramics is radii from 7 to 8 mm.
- **Hygiene** – the material is insensitive to abrasive cleaners and mechanical abrasion.

Dr. Werner Fischer, Research Director of LAUFEN worked on the recipe to incorporate SaphirKeramik into ceramic processing and manufacturing for years, and while he will not reveal the exact components, he’s happy to share the benefits of this long-awaited innovation.

No matter what your bathroom design needs… LAUFEN has solutions.
New York City’s urban landscape is about to experience a new typology that will alter how we live, take pleasure in and participate in the city. The physical changes in the city since the 1970s, when gentrification moved through formerly abandoned row house neighborhoods and industrial loft quarters, has been widely chronicled in scores of essays, academic texts and real estate publications. The residential transformation of the Upper West Side oozing out from attractions created by Lincoln Center, the mallification of SoHo, and the theming of Times Square are only three of the popular tropes New Yorkers have come to know, debate, and live with. But perhaps because we have been blinded by the well tended new landscapes of the Bloomberg era—the High Line, dedicated bicycle lanes, creatively configured public spaces—we don’t see the more profound changes taking place the city. In front of our glazed eyes, huge zones of New York are becoming steel and glass corporate quarters in both elevation and plan. Manhattan of course has always been a commercial center (The 1811 Commissioners Grid plan took raw land and created “real estate”). The city at its best had wealthy zones like Fifth and Park Avenues a few short blocks from rent controlled tenements along Lexington and even Madison Avenues. What is new about the large corporate quarters now under construction is that they are all being planned and designed in a “whole cloth” fashion in a single glass and steel style for a single class of users and residents. The first of these zones—the World Trade Center Complex, Hudson Yards, Cornell’s Roosevelt Island technology campus, Atlantic Yards, and if the Mayors planning and real estate gurus had their way, the Sunnyside Yards in Queens—all have their precedents in exurban corporate campuses and districts across America.

But in New York these corporate landscapes have a unique profile—except for the Cornell campus—in that they are built on concrete pads above parking and transportation lines that link them to the surrounding city and boost their values as real estate. Like Battery Park City, which may be considered a precursor and a model for these developing quarters, they are purposely isolated and apart form the surrounding city like a suburban gated community. The World Trade Center is the first of these places to arise in New York, and though it has the powerful Michael Arad memorial at its center and humanly scaled Snøhetta museum, we won’t really understand this landscape until the scaffolding and chain link fence come down on its perimeter. Though its plan partially inserts the old Manhattan grid into the project, from the look it, it will be a monstrously scaled landscape of foreboding spaces, underground shopping and bland skyscrapers landing on bare concrete. The quality of the area is typified by Tower One, the 1776 foot-tall boring and bland middle finger to the rest of the city. This landscape represents a sad lost opportunity for what could have been a model of a mixed-use quarter that resembles the best part of this metropolis. But this type of attention was never devoted to that other corporate city on a concrete pad, Hudson Yards, which seems to be planned on the commercial district of Houston rather than New York. The High Line will of course meanander through this area and it will have at least one fascinating new urban type, Diller, Scofidio + Renfro’s Culture Shed, which will role along tracks just next to the elevated park. But from the looks of the shiny real estate presentation drawing of the area, it will likely be the most corporatized landscape this city has ever seen. Some may consider Hudson Yards a “planned” community but in truth it is the result of a process that only looks at the bottom line (and the Houston streetscape) not what this city has been at to best or might be at its best in the future.
The Alchemist
1111 Lincoln Road
Miami, FL
Tel: 305-531-4816
Architect: Rene Gonzales

Shop for your designer goods in style at the newest Alchemist boutique on Lincoln Road, the Fifth Avenue of Miami Beach. Rene Gonzales’ newest design for the Alchemist boutique, located within Herzog and de Meuron’s famous parking structure, ventures far from his original space for the retailer. However, it has drawn similar praise for being both luxurious and sleek.

In his first design, Gonzales exposed shop merchandise from the outside, using a 90-degree transparent glass facade. His new design pocketed these contents along angled, saw-tooth shelves that jet out from the shop’s perimeter, concealing clothing racks from street view. “The first store is meant to incorporate the environment and capture light and the Miami skyline,” Gonzales said. “Here, it’s the opposite. This store allows you to envision yourself in another place.”

The Alchemist boutique, located within Herzog and de Meuron’s famous Lincoln Road, the Fifth Avenue of Miami Beach. Rene Gonzales’ newest design for the Alchemist boutique, located within Herzog and de Meuron’s famous parking structure, ventures far from his original space for the retailer. However, it has drawn similar praise for being both luxurious and sleek.

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FOSTER TO REWORK FIFTH AVENUE LANDMARK

CORNERS STORE

By the summer of 2014, a Flatiron neighbor-
hood fixture will have a new identity. The
Commodore Criterion building at 202 Fifth
Avenue is best known for ceramic statuettes
of Christmas carolers perched above its
entrance and window displays featuring Santa
and his elves. But in 2012 the building was
purchased for $40 million by Porcelanosa, a
manufacturer of tile and bathroom fixtures. The
Spanish company, which has 18 showrooms
throughout the United States, has gutted the
interiors and plans to convert the six-story land-
marked building into a swanky Fifth Avenue
flagship designed by Norman Foster.

“The design will restore historic aspects of
the exterior and create a new interior experi-
ence of large-volume showroom spaces—all
within the context of a sustainable agenda,”
Foster said in a statement. The exterior will be
largely preserved, he said; and any proposed
changes will be presented for approval to
the Landmarks Commission.

For now, renderings of the 18,000-square-
foot interior show a sleek, multi-level show-
room connected to the street with large, open
windows. The top floor will house a tile and
stone materials library that will be open to
architects and designers. Santiago Mament,
Porcelanosa’s U.S. director of
sales and marketing, said that because
of the structure’s location on an open plaza,
just across from the iconic Flatiron Building,
202 Fifth represents an enormous branding
opportunity. “We want the building to
be a meeting point and a place for events
conferences,” he said.

Originally designed by architects Ely
Jacques Kahn and Alan Buchman, and
completed in 1918, 202 Fifth was once home
to Commodore Manufacturing Corp. and
Criterion Bell & Specialty Co., Brooklyn-based
companies producing Christmas ornaments.
The prominent “Commodore Criterion” name
atop the building will be replaced by that of
Porcelanosa. And the Dickensian Christmas
carolers? They will most likely be retired,
said Mament.

Porcelanosa’s new store will have a
prominent place in a neighborhood that
has undergone a renaissance in the last
five years. Boutique hotels like the Ace and
NoMad just to the north have brought a new
cachet, while emporiums like Eataly have
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AIA HONOR AWARDS IN ARCHITECTURE
Mason Lane Farm Operations Facility (4)
De Leon & Primmer Architecture Workshop
Goshen, Kentucky

Art Stable
Olson Kundig Architects
Seattle, Washington

The Barnes Foundation
Ted Williams Billie Tsien Architects
Philadelphia

Boat Pavilion for Long Dock Park (1)
Architecture Research Office (ARO)
Beacon, New York

Centre Metropark
Kohn Pedersen Fox
Ithaca, New York

Clemson University,
Lee Hall College of Architecture (2)
Thomas Phifer and Partners
Clemson, South Carolina

Milstein Hall, Cornell University (3)
OMA and KHA Architects
ithaca, New York

Morse and Ezra Stiles Colleges, Yale University
KieranTimberlake
New Haven, Connecticut

The New York Public Library
Exterior Restoration
Wiss, Janney, Elstiner Associates
New York

Saint Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church
Marlon Blackwall Architects
Springdale, Arkansas

Vancouver Convention Centre West
LMN Architects; Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership; DA Architects + Planners
Vancouver, Canada

INTERIOR DESIGN
Todd Bolender Center for Dance and Creativity
BMN
Kansas City, Missouri

PACCAR Hall, University of Washington
LMN Architects
Seattle, Washington

McAllen Main Library
Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle
McAllen, Texas

Lamar Advertising Corporate Headquarters
Eskew+Dumace-Ripple
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dom Magic
RA-DA
Torrance, California

Chicago Apartment
VJAA
Chicago

Charles Smith Wines Tasting Room
and World Headquarters
Olson Kundig Architects
Walla Walla, Washington

BNM Iowa
BNM
Des Moines

Blessed Sacrament Chapel and Abbey Church Pavilion
VJAA
Collegeville, Minnesota

URBAN DESIGN
SUPERKILEN
BIG | Bjarke Ingels Group
Copenhagen, Denmark

Rock Street Poulet Housing
University of Arkansas
Community Design Center
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Parkmerced Vision Plan
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
San Francisco

National September 11 Memorial
Handel Architects
New York City

Nanhu New Country Village Master Plan
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Jiaxing, China

The Great Lakes Century – a 100-year Vision
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Great Lakes Region

Coal Harbour Convention District
LMN Architects; Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership; DA Architects & Planners
Vancouver, Canada

Burnham Place at Union Station
Shalom Baranes Associates; HOK
Washington, D.C.

AIA HONOR AWARDS IN INTERIOR DESIGN

Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle
McAllen Main Library
McAllen, Texas

VJAA
Blessed Sacrament Chapel and Abbey Church Pavilion
Collegeville, Minnesota

Burnham Place at Union Station
Shalom Baranes Associates; HOK
Washington, D.C.

URBAN DESIGN

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Copenhagen, Denmark

Brookfield breaks ground on Manhattan West

The Hudson Yards District.
Construction has begun on a $680 million prefabricated deck spanning Amtrak’s West Side rail yards leading to Penn Station, which will support a new 1.5-acre plaza by James Corner Field Operations; the plaza will be flanked by three SOM-designed skyscrapers. “From Battery Park to Riverside Park, it’s just amazing how much development there has been all along the West Side,” Mayor Michael Bloomberg said at the January 15 ground-breaking. The Mayor attributed the success of the West Side to a 2005 rezoning of the Hudson Yards district and to the city-funded 7-line subway extension. Over $6 billion has been invested in the area since 2005, Bloomberg said.

The deck that will span Amtrak’s rail yards will consist of 16 prefabricated, post-tensioned concrete bridge structures covering 60 percent of the five-acre Manhattan West site. “Initially we planned a platform that involved a very elaborate system of structural steel down at the track level,” Brookfield CEO Dennis Friedrich said. “We challenged our engineering teams, and they came up with a new plan called a ‘segmental precast bridge system’ designed to minimize disruptions to track levels, reduce costs, and speed up construction time. ’“Twelve office towers will anchor the corners of the site, each containing 2 million square feet of office space. “The vision for the office towers is a polished piece of metal,” said Gary Haney, design partner at SOM. “We’re bending the edges and curving the façade as a reinterpretation of Brancusi’s Bird in Space.” He noted that the subtle curves of the towers will give them an uplifting feeling of flight. “We saw the two towers as a pair,” Haney added. “They’re very much a gateway to lead you through to the new West Side.”

The 900-foot-tall north tower will be built first, with a core anchored in bedrock to the side of the platform, and cantilevered floors hanging over the rail yards, allowing for smaller columns at the perimeter. The south tower could stand up to 1,200 feet tall, with a more complex structure built over the rail yards. On 31st Street, an 800-unit residential tower built on solid ground will have its own visual identity. “We wanted to make the residential tower feel like it belongs in the world of the High Line,” Haney said. “We didn’t want it to look like a smaller office building.” The design is still under development, but the 850-foot-tall tower could be clad in handmade zinc tiles. Altogether, the campus will contain a total of 5.4 million square feet of space. An existing 16-story tower already spanning the yards is also being redeveloped by Brooklyn-based firm REX, which includes a new skin for the Brutalist structure originally designed by Davis, Brody & Associates, in 1970.

Field Operations’ 100-foot-wide swath of new public space is imagined as a recreated 32nd Street forming a pedestrian link with Hudson Yards and park amenities farther west. Haney said the public spaces will form a series of five distinct parks, all with different qualities, including a new elevated arcade carved into the south facade of 450 West 33rd Street that could one day connect to the High Line. A massive mechanical “launcher” that will set the platform pieces in place is currently being fabricated off-site. Platform construction is expected to be complete by late 2014, at which time Brookfield can begin building the first office tower, with the first tenants arriving on site as early as 2016.

Branden Klayko

Yard Party

Manhattan’s far West Side, one of the nation’s busiest construction sites, got even busier on January 15, when Brookfield Properties officially added its $4.5 billion Manhattan West project at 9th Avenue and West 33rd Street to the roster of mega-developments rising in the Hudson Yards District.
Rosenfeld’s gallery focuses on 20th Gluckman said his task was to “quiet the windows and a harsh northwest exposure. Included Nouvel’s collage pattern of and Eleventh Avenue. Other challenges particularly for a gallery. The raw interior included massive slab-like structural columns and a curved facade at the corner of 19th Street and Eleventh Avenue. Other challenges included Nouvel’s collage pattern of windows and a harsh northwest exposure. Gluckman said his task was to “quiet the space down” and “straighten it out a bit,” while tailoring it to the needs of the gallery. Rosenfeld’s gallery focuses on 20th-century works, allowing for more intimate gallery spaces than contemporary works usually require. “There’s something ‘residential’ about the scale,” Gluckman said of the space. Though that space is 19 feet high, the gallery being housed there needed a mezzanine level for conservation, storage, and meeting areas. This level now fills roughly two-thirds of the space, while a large open gallery at the end of the L-shaped gallery uses the remaining double-height space, creating a contrast between intimate and grand areas for viewing art. Gluckman also placed the reception desk in front of the curved wall, and floated freestanding facade in front of the glass walls to manage the light, which was further mitigated by translucent Lutron shades. Drawing on various midcentury modern precedents for residences and corporate lobbies, Gluckman chose a cool white terrazzo floor. “We chose a nondirectional floor so that we would not compete with the varied geometries,” the architect said. The private offices and library have a luxurious but understated atmosphere, rounded out with plenty of classic modern furniture, including Saarinen tulip chairs and Eames aluminum group seating. The build-out of the space unfortunately coincided with Hurricane Sandy, and though the space is three feet above street level, the basement flooded, and the ground floor took on two inches of water. “I think every architect, client, and builder is rethinking if and how to use spaces,” Gluckman said of that experience. According to gallery director Harrisburg, the basement is too valuable not to use, though it cannot be used for art storage. Instead, the gallery will store its files and archives there, and put all file cabinets onto wheels to ease their evacuation in advance of future storms. One unresolved area for the gallery is the concrete entry court, just behind Nouvel’s metal and glass facade. “The courtyard is ripe for exploitation,” Gluckman said. Rosenfeld and Gluckman said they hope to make that area more inviting but will need permission from the building first.

A state-of-the-art arena with unparalleled sightlines and an interior environment as dynamic as its sculptural exterior, Barclays Center is New York’s first major new entertainment venue in nearly a half century. But while the arena’s unique steel paneled facade may stop traffic outside, it’s the elegant long span steel roof structure inside that enables crowds to enjoy column-free views of show-stopping performances. Architects SHoP and AECOM with structural engineer Thornton Tomasetti made sure that, long after its first sold out performance, Brooklyn would have a new living room where every seat is always the best seat in the house.

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Paul Aferiat and Peter Stamberg met each other at the opening night of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum at its current 5th Avenue location on Oct 8, 1976. The Museum launched with a landmark exhibition, Man Transforms/Aspects of Design. Created by chief of exhibitions Dorothy Globus and curated by Paolo Portoghesi, the exhibit reintroduced the public to “the mundane and the ordinary in unexpected and cogent contexts that surprise, charm, amuse, and illuminate,” according to the museum. In fact, this description could also describe the architecture and design work of Stamberg Aferiat since they began their practice in 1980.

In the exhibition, Meier (along with Buckminster Fuller, Arata Isozaki, Ettore Sottsass, and OM Ungers) was given a room to design and Aferiat was working on the installation. Stamberg had recently graduated from the AA in London, where he studied with Charles Jencks, and had opened Ettore Sottsass, and OM Ungers) was given a room to design and Aferiat was working on the installation. Stamberg had recently graduated from the AA in London, where he studied with Charles Jencks, and had opened their practice in 1980.

“Aferiat knew from his time working with Meier. They added boldly to the existing residence—this become a signature of their architecture even today—overlaying a Matisse-inspired color palette on Meier’s pristine white walls. These colors they say, “reflected the animated personalities of the clients.” Like all their projects, however, the approach is based on Newtonian observations on how phenomena are perceived.

This concern for color began with a desire to overcome the 1970s modernist debate between the Grays and the Whites and an interest in reception based on phenomenology and semiotics. The architects often base their designs on the “Anti perspective” ideas of their friend David Hockney, but it is color that they introduce into every project. There is certainly no other architecture office practicing today who use such hues and contrasting colors in such a bold manner.

**STUDIO VISIT> STAMBERG AFERIAT**

**GEMINI G.E.L.**

**NEW YORK**

Gemini, one of the foremost print lithographers in the world, asked the architects to create both an exhibition space and offices in a small space. Stamberg and Aferiat utilized, as they do in many of their projects, free floating partitions. Here they create the two programmatic spaces. Further, a mixture of colorful full-height partitions provides the flexibility for both large and small scale installations in the 2,500-square-foot gallery.

**SHELTER ISLAND HOUSE**

**MOUNT KISCO, NEW YORK**

This house, which the architects designed for themselves, sits in a small clearing above Coecles Harbor on Shelter Island. The island is not known for its modern architecture, though there are several houses by Norman Jaffe, Morris/Sato, and William Pederson. A small shingled pomo bungalow designed by William Pederson is more typical of the suburban landscape of the island sits next door. This house could not be more notable on the island because of its colors. The architects claim that “one of the most difficult decisions of our career was whether to paint the Shelter Island house or not.” Before it was painted it had “an ethereal quality when it was natural aluminum that we really loved and we were concerned that paint would take some of the magic from the house. But we also knew that we would never have any credibility with anyone if we didn’t use color on our own house.”

**THE SAGUARO PALM SPRINGS**

**PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA**

If ever there was a perfect location for a Stamberg Aferiat building it would be Palm Springs. The bright clear desert air of the spa and its history of lively free-for-all architecture makes it just right for a splash of bright color. The building has been an aging Holiday Inn on the outer limits of Palm Canyon Drive, and it surely needed some oomph! The architects’ color palette brightened and updated the tried structure very simply. It opened in time for last year’s Modernism week and this member of the AIA staff stayed at the hotel and thoroughly enjoyed the cheery colors set against the blue San Jacinto Mountains.

**SELBY/VAIL HOUSE**

**BARNES HOUSE ADDITION AND RENOVATION**

**MOUNT KISCO, NEW YORK**

The firm was asked by new owners to renovate and propose a 6,000 square foot addition to Edward Larrabee Barns’s personal residence in Mount Kisco, New York. They wanted the house doubled in size without diminishing the strength of the original. The architects designed a large triangular corrugated metal screen wall, inspired by Barns, that acts as a backdrop to the original design and diminishes the scale of the new addition by subtly reflecting the sky and the surrounding property. “Finally a limited palette of materials and utilized light, view, form, and fine detailing create a variety of intimate and grand spaces suited to the client’s needs,” the architects said.

**Chairs, Couches, Beds, Desks, and Storage Systems.** They met their first client, Lucy Suarez, walking through the Union Square Market. She commissioned them to renovate her 1977 Richard Meier apartment, which Aferiat knew from his time working with Meier. They added boldly to the existing residence—and this become a signature of their architecture even today—overlaying a Matisse-inspired color palette on Meier’s pristine white walls. These colors they say, “reflected the animated personalities of the clients.” Like all their projects, however, the approach is based on Newtonian observations on how phenomena are perceived. This concern for color began with a desire to overcome the 1970s modernist debate between the Grays and the Whites and an interest in reception based on phenomenology and semiotics. The architects often base their designs on the “Anti perspective” ideas of their friend David Hockney, but it is color that they introduce into every project. There is certainly no other architecture office practicing today who use such hues and contrasting colors in such a bold manner.

**WILLIAM MENKING**
ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE, 1921–2013
continued from front page
The Architect’s Newspaper of an exhibition of Santiago Calatrava’s strangely saccharine sculptures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her nose for pretentious posturing was sharply honed, but her reporter instincts were even more precise. She wanted to know everything that was going on everywhere in New York.

It wasn’t that she had no interest in the wider world of architecture; after all she served on the Pritzker Prize jury for years, but her inclination was to focus on what needed attention in the here and now across all five boroughs. This city alone contained enough concentrated wealth, power plays, civic ambition, and glorious opportunity to mirror all the world.

We met for tea and gossip at her mini-penthouse on Park Avenue, an exquisitely beige aerie blending New York intellectual with Italian rationalism, which is to say books and beige marble. I prepared to take mental notes on every anecdote she might relate about every historic moment in architecture she had experienced. But I soon quit as her interests mainly centered around plumbing current events. She was also up to date, tracking the architecture blogs and emailing in the middle of the night with a far-flung circle of friends, to offer and receive the inside dope on this or that latest development.

We would later work together, teaming up stories for the Wall Street Journal. Huxtable’s pattern was to write whatever story mattered most to her, and delegate to me those she couldn’t visit personally. She did so via her beloved editor, Eric Gibson, who made sure that she had an easy time getting to anything she did want to see. As a deadline writer myself, I could only marvel at the depth and breadth of her research; she never fell back on opinion alone. She tracked down every official description, back-room back story, engineering plan, and planning department waiver before she even began to think or set fingers to keyboard. Criticism without informed reporting annoyed her.

The personalities and doings of architects were not all that interesting to her, either, except when they wrote her wounded letters with aggressive undertones. Those provided for hilarious anecdotes. But more and more often, she spoke of Garth, her husband, who had died in 1989, and was the true love and ballast of her life. She recalled with unfaded delight how she came home one day with a Pulitzer Prize, the first ever given for distinguished criticism, and how Garth handed her the trash to take out because that was her job.

JULIE V. IOVINE IS THE FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER AND CURRENTLY WRITES A COLUMN ON ARCHITECTURE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Hudson Square to Soar to New Heights
The New York Department of City Planning just approved a rezoning plan of Hudson Square that could likely change the scale of the neighborhood.

Developers and landlords can now raise the building height to 290 feet along wide streets, which will make Hudson Square, an 18-block area located west of Soho and south of South Village, more suitable for residential and mixed-use development. Curbed reported that preservationists advocated for landmark designation for South Village to prevent any large-scale development from spilling over into the neighborhood, but a historic district was absent from the zoning amendments. Developer Trinity Real Estate, which owns 40 percent of Hudson Square’s property, initially proposed the rezoning and has committed to making neighborhood improvements.

Exterior Changes
The Landmarks Preservation Commission approved Foster + Partners’ application for changes to the New York Public Library’s Beaux-Arts exterior in a six-to-two vote. The $300 million renovation calls for removing seven floors of stacks beneath the famous Rose Main Reading Room to accommodate a large workspace and the collections from the Mid-Manhattan and the Innovative Science, Industry, and Business Libraries.

Cornell Closes in on New Campus
The stars are aligning for Cornell’s proposed technology campus on Roosevelt Island. The proposal has successfully made its way through New York City’s Uniform Land Use Review Procedures, and recently won the support of Manhattan Community Board 8 and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. Two remaining review processes are left, and if all goes well, Cornell will have the green light to start construction by 2014.

Check in with Richardson, Olmsted, and Berke in Buffalo
The sprawling Richardson Olmsted Complex will soon be home to a boutique hotel, conference center, and the Buffalo Architecture Center. The former site of the Buffalo State Asylum has just received a boost from Governor Cuomo and the state to redevelop the 143-year old campus consisting of several Romanesque revival style buildings designed by H.H. Richardson and with grounds by Frederick Law Olmsted. Buffalo-based Flynn Battaglia Architects will oversee the renovation along with Deborah Berke Partners and Goody Clancy. The $56.4 million project is expected to take three years to complete.

Growing Governors
Development on Governors Island isn’t slowing down any time soon. With construction of the new park by West 8 well underway, the Trust for Governor’s Island has moved on to the next project: the south part of the island. The organization just issued a Request for Expressions of Interest for development of 33 acres. The organization is inviting developers, non-profits, and institutions to submit ideas ranging from commercial and educational to cultural.

NURSERY SCHOOL
With 10,000 species of plants, century-old Brooklyn Botanic Garden needed a visitor center to teach its more than 1 million visitors each year about horticulture. As green as its mission, the center’s undulating glass curtain wall delivers high performance, minimizing heat gain while maximizing natural illumination. Skillfully integrated with park surroundings by architects Weiss/Manfredi, its organic transparency offers inviting respite between a busy city and a garden that has a lot of growing—and teaching—to do.

Transforming design into reality
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211 E 43 St | NY, NY 10017 | 212-497-5554 | www.ominy.org

Architect: Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism
Photographer: Albert Volorka
If, as Louis Kahn said, a brick wants to be part of an arch, what does a biopolymer molecule, a block of aerogel, or a slab of metallic foam want to be? The empirical basis for inferring bricks’ intentions is well established, comprising building traditions that have evolved over millennia. For newer materials, the chance of moving from laboratories to construction sites can be a crapshoot. The successful ones not only capture markets but transform behavior.

The most promising approaches, materials specialists agree, emphasize integration rather than isolation. “We don’t just create materials or products; we create information systems,” says architect/author Blaine Brownell, who co-directs the MS in Sustainable Design program at the University of Minnesota and whose most recent book, Material Strategies: Innovative Applications in Architecture (Princeton Architectural Press, 2012), links innovations in minerals, concrete, wood, metal, glass, and plastics to prominent case studies. Using the term hypermaterial to denote the convergence of materials and information processing, Brownell looks to the management of light, energy, and data as the leading edge of materials research.

Jason O. Vollen, associate director of the Center for Architecture Science and Ecology (CASE), a joint project of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and SOM, heralds “a fundamental paradigm shift from moving energy mechanically, which is how we do it now, to moving energy materially.” Instead of multiple layers of a structure performing different functions, Vollen says, as in Mike Davies’ concept of the polyvalent wall, “We think one layer should do multiple things; we think a potential solution is the multivalent material. That’s not so far off; it’s speculative fiction rather than science fiction.” Citing the “holy grail” of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory’s Stephen Selkowitz—a material optimizing both daylight and insulation—Vollen says “what exists now won’t do that, but what exists around the corner might.” Nano-technology, where categories blend and “metals can become more like glasses, glasses become more like ceramics,” he continues, is yielding unprecedented control over properties such as heat flow and daylight transmittance. With high-performance ceramics in particular offering properties that answer climate-change-driven imperatives, he is convinced, “the industry is poised for a revolution.”

Materials research is often a matter of systematic biomimicry, invoking a parallel understanding of natural processes occurring over time on multiple scales, from the nanoscale to the visible to the ecosystem. “It’s not about translating shape, or a static image of a biological behavior,” says Jenny E. Sabin, assistant professor of architecture at Cornell and a founding member of Cecil Balmond’s Nonlinear Systems Organization. As the architectural member of the National Science Foundation-sponsored ESKin interdisciplinary team, which also includes a materials scientist, a cell biologist, and a systems engineer, Sabin investigates homologies in materials, geometries, and forms. She describes her challenge as “thinking about how those properties could work across scales” and replicating them in “highly engineered, sustainable materials that have very sophisticated responses to environmental cues.” Generative models based on cellular activity inform her “Branching Morphogenesis” installation at Linz, Austria’s 2008 Ars Electronica (comprising 75,000 cable zip ties in tension, organized according to microscale cellular forces and her all-knitted myThread Pavilion for Nike’s Flyknit Collective, produced with New Jersey-based fabricator Shima Seiki USA. “It’s not just that we can produce complex organic form,” she continues, but that designers can “directly interact with manufacturing technologies...Working with soft textile-based materials at a large scale is only possible through really cutting-edge fabrication technologies.” Strategies that arise from these investigations include “embedding a more nonlinear lifespan” into a material, so that products pass usefully through multiple life cycles; porosity, allowing lightness...
and transmissibility as well as strength; geometries that repel or absorb water, a high priority in materials that must endure sea-level rise; and self-organizing properties on nano-to-macro scales.

The technological transition suggested by business consultant David Morris, vice president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance— replacing the hydrocarbon-based economy, with all its externalities, costly extractive processes, and resource-availability constraints, with an older, cleaner system, “the once and future carbohydrate economy”—calls for more use of lifelike materials, Brownell suggests: those derived from agriculture and those deriving knowledge from living systems. A brick may want to be thick, but contemporary materials want to be smart.

**Resource maximizers, beginning with light**

Andrew H. Dent, PhD, vice president of library and materials research at Material ConneXion, sees two broad questions driving research in the field: what does Earth have in abundance, and what are we running out of? To the extent that materials and processes based on ample, readily available resources (from sunlight to silicon) replace those with sources in short supply (petroleum, gold, copper, clean air, and water), materials research represents a critical adaptation to emergent conditions.

Much of this work is economic optimization rather than new discovery, Dent adds. Methods of developing biopolymers from a wide range of plants harvested in different regions and conditions (corn, castor, switch grass, sugar cane, potatoes, and others) are already known. “The issue is how to beat out oil,” he says, which “even at a high price is still significantly cheaper.” Tradeoffs of this sort are inevitable. A material may be lightweight enough that its production and transport save energy and yield an admirable overall ecological footprint, but its components pose toxicity concerns, as with ethylene tetrafluoro-ethylene (ETFE, the transparent insulating “pillow” material seen in the 2008 Olympic Water Cube and other buildings worldwide). Biopolymers for construction, consumer products, or fuel, likewise involve edible crops and thus compete with food production. “Back in 2006 and early ’07,” Brownell recalls, “when there was so much excitement about biofuels and ethanol...states like Iowa were promising all kinds of fuel-making capacity without taking a hard look at how a lot of this corn that we make goes to developing countries in order to feed the world.”

In this regard, viewing solar energy as the ultimate free resource, Brownell is particularly enthusiastic about products that harvest and manipulate light, such as Sensitile’s light-piping panels, embedding optical channels in concrete and resin substrates, or a recent breakthrough at Duke University’s Pratt School of Engineering, scattering silver nanocubes on a gold film to “help the substrate absorb virtually all the light...so incredibly efficiently that nothing leaves the surface” and improving the efficiency of sensors.

Another promising use of multiwall carbon nanotubes, he says, is field-induced polymer electroluminescent (FIEL) technology, which generates a warm, nonflicker- ing wavelength resembling sunlight—“that spectrum that clearly influences human behavior and productivity in workplaces and learning places.” These flat lighting panels offer a distinct improvement over harsh compact fluorescents and heat-inefficient incandescents, with efficiency approaching that of LEDs. Developed at Wake Forest University and licensed for commercial development to CeeLite Technologies, the panels can be integrated with flexible substrates and incorporated into windows or even textiles. Brownell also cites the engineer/designer Akira Wakita’s work with “conductive threads to make thermochromic and photochromic textiles that can act as computer monitors.” The importance of lighting in the developing world, he emphasizes, makes it a promising field for leapfrogging technologies that address “the good but tough 99 percent question” about new materials’ relevance to global
detect a surface; this feature re-
same strength as the surrounding
into cracks; it then cures to the
“microbial glue” when it is injected
to create calcium carbonate and a
Bacillus subtilis strain
another high-performance concrete
altogether. Lafarge’s Ductal is
stretches the category’s definition
fiber-reinforced, bendable concrete
at the University of Michigan with
superplasticizers, ground quartz,
concretes that use silica fume,
tension. For example, it is hard to
invention and commercialization.
Dent hails Gorilla Glass, the ultra-strong, scratch-resistant
surface that allows durability and
interactivity in smartphones, as a
transformational material that could also be useful in the space shuttle, ship architecture. Yet
cornings have developed the similar
Chemcor glass in the early 1960s, it
molded the product after about a
decade, only to revive the idea
on request from Apple in the mid-
2000s. Serendipity and a suitable
niche among related technologies
appear essential for promising
ideas to move from laboratory
R&D to the Sweets catalog or the
textile designs. One of nature’s recurrent
strategies for economizing
on material bulk—porous forms—
characterizes several materials
whose properties have drawn
attention. Metallic foams, often
aluminum or zinc, combine
strength with lightness and thermal
resistance; one such product, an
aluminum foam marketed by the
Canadian firm Cymat as Smart
Shield, was originally developed as a
blast barrier on the undersides
of military vehicles that encounter
radiation bombs. “An individual
at Cymat who had an architectural
background recognized that, in
addition to having the extreme
technical properties, the material
was aesthetically interesting,”
reports Kelly Thomas, spokesperson
for its distributor, Stone Source.
Slightly altered in cell structure
and slab thickness, rebranded as
Alusion, the foam (80 percent air
by volume) is now available to
serve as walls, partitions, deforma-
tive fixtures, acoustic drop ceilings,
or exterior cladding. Currently a
specialty material, Alusion could
conceivably gain increased promi-
nence after the opening of the 9/11
Museum, where it will appear on the
undersides of the twin fountains.
A class of even more ethereal
materials, aerogels, has existed
since the 1930s: they are
exceptionally light (often called
“frozen smoke”) and highly rated
as thermal insulators; Brittleness
limits their practical uses, though
one aerogel, Kalwall+ Lumira,
has found use as a translucent wall
and skylight material. Recent work
at NASA’s Glenn Research Center
(GRC) in Cleveland, however, has
generated proof that aerogels robust
ean as much as twice as much energy as
rubber. The GRC’s Polyimide Aerogel,
which has a density of about 0.007
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CAALENDAR

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2013

WEDNESDAY 6
EVENT
Principles of Ecological Landscape Design
7:00 p.m.
Van Alen Books
30 West 22nd St.
New York
vanalenbooks.org

MONDAY 11
LECTURE
Transgress: Blurring Boundaries in Architecture
6:00 p.m.
Meyer Nixon

WEDNESDAY 13
EXHIBITION OPENING
Micro-Housing Units by What’s In
6:00 p.m.
Van Alen Books
30 West 22nd St.
New York
vanalenbooks.org

FOR MORE LISTINGS VISIT DIARY.ARCHPAPER.COM

MARCH
SUNDAY 3
EVENT
NYC’s Post-Sandy Recovery: How’re We Doin’?
6:00 p.m.
The Center For Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
New York
CFA.AIANY.ORG

THURSDAY 21
EVENT
Metamorphosis: Infrastructure to Civic Spaces
6:30 p.m.
District Architecture Center
421 Seventh St. NW
Washington, D.C.
AIA DC.COM

LECTURE
Clive Wilkinson Architects
6:30 p.m.
Cooper Hewitt Design Center
2 East 91st St.
New York
cooperhewitt.org

CONTEMPORARY CARTOGRAPHIES
Lehman College Art Gallery
250 Bedford Park Blvd., Bronx, NY
Through May 11

Lehman College’s Contemporary Cartographies exhibition, curated by Susan Hrostowski and Yuneikys Villalonga, showcases a group of contemporary artists working with and displaying maps in a variety of mediums and forms. Some artists have adapted existing maps to create new objects or displays while others have created either traditional or abstract maps out of unique materials. The maps in this exhibition may describe or expand on geographic forms or accepted boarders, while others narrate imagined or conceptual landscapes.
Bio Design: Nature + Science + Creativity
Jennifer Watts
The Museum of Modern Art, $50

Would you wear a jacket grown from bacteria? Get a tattoo digitally printed on your skin using stem cell technology? How about sipping on a plastic cup made possible by the electrochemical wonders of human waste? This futuristic, faintly unsettling collision of biology and design is the subject of William Myers’ Bio Design: Nature + Science + Creativity, a lush, 288-page tome that works as both high-minded eye candy and environmental battle cry. If Bio Design has a fault, though, it’s that the book is all too sanguine about the prospects of a marriage between biology and design, and about the latter’s ability to tame the former to suit its needs.

Myers is a New York-based freelance writer (and contributor to this newspaper). His premise in Bio Design is that designers and architects have drawn inspiration from biology since the days of Lalique and Mucha. Only recently, though, have advances in biotechnology—advances that the late Steve Jobs called “the biggest innovations of the twenty-first century,” as the back of his book helpfully notes—given designers the tools to fold real live organisms into their work. It is now theoretically possible to cross trees with glow-in-the-dark jellyfish genes, creating organic street lamps. It’s possible to use sand and bacteria to grow a Great Wall-style bulwark against the spread of the Sahara desert, and to transform E. coli into the digital data stores of tomorrow. It’s even possible to whip up a mood-enhancing mousse from a diner’s own blood.

These sorts of things aren’t just the lofty ideas of a few designers-turned-mad scientists. In Myers’ telling, they’re key to righting centuries of environmental wrongs. “The 20th century did not demand as dramatic a transformation as that which the 21st century appears to require,” he writes. “Building with bacteria and other organisms is simultaneously becoming a technological possibility and a necessity.”

As a consequence, he compiles an impressive kaleidoscope of projects, each lusciously—almost pornographically—illustrated. Many of these images will be familiar to readers who feast regularly on design blogs, but that doesn’t detract from the power of seeing them all in one place, a vibrant petri dish of our bio-connected future.

Myers is adept, often-thoughtful guide. He has an unobtrusive writing style that eschews the “gee whiz!” response that biology and design typify in the layman’s mind. He also acknowledges that biodesign faces significant economic and political hurdles and must be accompanied by new regulations and financial incentives to reach its potential. But there’s a question he does not address, except in passing: Is biodesign good design?

If it’s as urgent as Myers suggests, it damn well better be. Maybe it’s too soon to say. A lot of the featured projects are in the conceptual or prototype phase. Others occupy the looser precincts of art and thus don’t hew to the usual design standard. Could’ve liked some consideration of the projects’ individual merits beyond the boilerplate I can find on Designboom. Are they functional? Do they all bode well for the future? Your earth-saving credentials of biodesign won’t matter a jot if it doesn’t meet these, and other, criteria.

Take the Baubotanik Tower, a 29-foot-tall green building that architects at the University of Stuttgart engineered out of living trees. But the plants require a (not very green) steel tube scaffold to grow. And it will be five to 10 years before the design is, in Myers’ words, “fully functional.” I have no idea whether that means it will be habitable or merely stable enough to not collapse. The project is an intriguing demonstration of our potential to integrate the natural world into the built environment. But is it the future?

Myers in general seems complacent about the uncertainties of biodesign, as if they were somehow external to the endeavor of imbuing the lifesless with life. He insists that the benefits outweigh the “unintended consequences”—a pat conclusion that isn’t borne out by even recent attempts at bringing biology to heel.

Recently, Scientific American ran an article about a woman in her late 60s who went to the doctor complaining of swelling and an odd clicking sound in her eye. Turns out she had bone fragments growing in her face. She’d forked over $20,000 for an untested


courtesy magnus larsson studio

Aspirational Eyes

Maynard L. Parker: Modern Photography and the American Dream
Jennifer Watts
Yale University Press, $85

Ezra Stoller Photographer, Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller
Yale University Press, $85

Judge Anderson Residences photographed by Parker in 1963.

From the late 1930s through the early ’60s, few photographers documented the changing residential lifestyles of the nuclear family as extensively as Maynard L. Parker. Crisscrossing the nation, primarily for shelter magazines, it was about promoting the US dream of a single family unit. Parker was the go-to photographer for shooting the interiors of homes owned by Hollywood stars and the growing number of wealthy entertainment executives. As much as Shulman glamorized the Hollywood “house on the hill,” his aim and foremost was about photographing the architecture itself. Parker and the shelter magazines, it was about promoting a style and lifestyle that readers could aspire to or at least live vicariously.

While Shulman was winning commissions from architects such as Pierre Koenig, Richard Neutra, and Raphael Soriano, Parker was left with shooting, for the likes of Quincy Jones, Leo Blackman, and Cliff May, housing developments, along with department store interior design service installations. Although Watts has put together a book that shows Maynard Parker at his best, sadly this is not mising a lot. A through House Beautiful Parker photographed a number of Frank Lloyd Wright projects and some of Edward Durell Stone’s work. But even the most avid Wright fan would be hard pressed to conjure up a single one of these images. Maynard Parker was clearly a hard-working, prolific, successful and very good, graphic composer, just not a great one.

The three pillars of midcentury architectural photography were Ken Hedrick in Chicago, Julius Shulman in Los Angeles, and Ezra Stoller working out of New York. They are not equal, though. It is no exaggeration to say Ezra Stoller is the father of modern architectural photography. Stoller’s compositional aesthetic and technical mastery place him in the 20th century photographic pantheon with the likes of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston—this despite his being an editorial photographer who never aspired to be a fine art photographer.

Ezra Stoller Photographer, edited by Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller, the photographer’s daughter and the owner of the Esto Photographics agency and archive, is a beautiful compilation of one iconic image after another that Ezra Stoller created during a 40-year career. Stoller photographed most of the midcentury architectural masterpieces and created truly memorable images. When we think of either Saarinen’s TWA terminal, 1940s styling and the Guggenheim Museum, Philip Johnson’s Glass House, or Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute, we invariably think of these buildings as an Ezra Stoller image.

And for many great buildings, Stoller’s images are all that is left, thereby becoming the last word. Examples include Wright’s Johnson Wax Tower and headquarters, Morris Lapidus’ Americana Hotel, and the New York State pavilion from the 1964 World’s Fair. Stoller’s photographic style of simple, clean, graphic compositional perfection to complement the continued on page 15
cosmetic procedure in which the doctor isolated adult stem cells from her abdominal fat and injected them into her face, with a dermal filler, making the stem cells ossify. You could call the result an anomaly—one of those “unintended consequences” Myers warns about. But you could also say that it was perfectly natural. The history of humans bending biology to their whims is a history of unintended consequences. In the 1970s, biologists tried to control a weed out West by importing an enemy insect. But the insect didn’t do its job and instead caused an unexpected surge in the population of deer mice, which carry hantavirus, a disease that can kill people. Clearly, biology is not always well understood. It’s wildly unpredictable. And just because something is, or derives from, life, doesn’t guarantee that it will protect the environment—or us. One of the most impressive innovations described in the book is a brick made by combining sand, bacteria, and a solution of calcium chloride and urea to create a toxic byproduct and “a considerable obstacle,” as Myers himself admits. It is not a stretch to say that some of the projects Stoller photographed are considered great architecture merely from the credibility Stoller’s images bestowed upon them. The Parking Garage in Miami, by Robert Law Weed, is a good example, showing each car carefully positioned without hindering the graceful floating effect of the stacked decking. This was truly “form following function.” Still, the structure was also just a parking garage. Yet Stoller’s image forces the viewer to appreciate it as a functional work of art. It is no surprise that Stoller accumulated a client list of the best modernist practices and firms throughout the country. In addition to those already named, Stoller shot extensively for Skidmore Owings and Merrill, Mies van der Rohe, Paul Rudolph, Marcel Breuer, and I.M. Pei. Erica Stoller gives us just enough background detail about her father’s education (NYU architecture and industrial design), unlimited energy, and thoroughness in understanding his subject that we can better appreciate the creative source of the images. She shares how her father would not only scout a building for the best time of day to shoot but sometimes hold off until the right time of year. She then steps aside and lets the images speak for themselves. Nina Rappaport, meanwhile, writes extensively about Stoller’s under-appreciated industrial images. Fortunately, many pages are dedicated to showing off his great catalogue of, once again, beautifully composed and technically near-perfect images. Stoller’s industrial images are the hidden treasure of his vast career catalogue. In his industrial imagery, as in his architectural images, the Stoller style is ever-present. Simple compositions are often dramatically lit, but not overly lit, to bring out the beauty of the subject, be it a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, paper plant, or hydroelectric dam. It is some of these detailed images that have the fine art quality of an Edward Weston photo. Overall, Stoller’s work was a perfect blend of compositional artistry, technical know-how, and patience. For someone who was simply documenting others’ work, Stoller blurred the line between the architect’s art and his own.

WHITNEY COX IS A NEW YORK-BASED PHOTOGRAPHER.

ASPIRATIONAL EYES continued from front page clean-lined and unadorned simplicity of modern architecture. Oft times Stoller could summarize a building in one shot encompassing all its essential elements. It is not a stretch to say that some of the projects Stoller photographed are considered great architecture merely from the credibility Stoller’s images bestowed upon them. The Parking Garage in Miami, by Robert Law Weed, is a good example, showing each car carefully positioned without hindering the graceful floating effect of the stacked decking. This was truly “form following function.” Still, the structure was also just a parking garage. Yet Stoller’s image forces the viewer to appreciate it as a functional work of art. It is no surprise that Stoller accumulated a client list of the best modernist practices and firms throughout the country. In addition to those already named, Stoller shot extensively for Skidmore Owings and Merrill, Mies van der Rohe, Paul Rudolph, Marcel Breuer, and I.M. Pei. Erica Stoller gives us just enough background detail about her father’s education (NYU architecture and industrial design), unlimited energy, and thoroughness in understanding his subject that we can better appreciate the creative source of the images. She shares how her father would not only scout a building for the best time of day to shoot but sometimes hold off until the right time of year. She then steps aside and lets the images speak for themselves. Nina Rappaport, meanwhile, writes extensively about Stoller’s under-appreciated industrial images. Fortunately, many pages are dedicated to showing off his great catalogue of, once again, beautifully composed and technically near-perfect images. Stoller’s industrial images are the hidden treasure of his vast career catalogue. In his industrial imagery, as in his architectural images, the Stoller style is ever-present. Simple compositions are often dramatically lit, but not overly lit, to bring out the beauty of the subject, be it a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, paper plant, or hydroelectric dam. It is some of these detailed images that have the fine art quality of an Edward Weston photo. Overall, Stoller’s work was a perfect blend of compositional artistry, technical know-how, and patience. For someone who was simply documenting others’ work, Stoller blurred the line between the architect’s art and his own.

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Ezra Stoller
Beyond Architecture
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Before six years leading the renowned Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi), Ole Bouman recently stepped down to pursue independent projects, following a government-mandated reorganization. William Menking sat down with Bouman to discuss the role of the Institute, its evolving mission, and the future of the discipline of architecture.

William Menking: You recently left the Netherlands Architecture Institute. But why did it appeal to you to begin with?

Ole Bouman: Because it crystallizes more than a century of faith in the power of architecture. It combines the national architecture archive, a well-equipped museum and an active debate center. Together, it does not defend the interest of architects but cultivates the timeless role of architecture as a cultural discipline and as a contribution to society.

From an American point of view, The Netherlands seems to have a highly sophisticated architecture culture. Is that the reason why the NAi was created in the 1980s, or did the NAi kind of help create that?

There was already a very strong internationally acknowledged architectural culture if you think about famous names like Van Doesburg, Van Eyck, Habraken, and Koolhaas. There was also a strong tradition among politicians and some enlightened clients to translate their social objectives into architecture. But in the 1980s a new phenomenon emerged, seeing architecture as a kind of vehicle for political and institutional profiling, and as an instrument to create economic value. These new energies helped to make the case for an architecture institute to foster broad awareness to help people understand that architecture could make the difference.

Did the NAi encourage that kind of thinking?

It always tried, but it was not necessarily successful. The ingredients were all there. There was the great collection; there was a podium to discuss ideas in architecture; and there was a place to exhibit both. This was its wealth, but also its problem. Because how do visitors relate to all of them in some way?

How to profile an institution if you have so many different characters working there, for different audiences, if you have all these different interests to address? When I was invited to this job I came with one unifying proposition: reconnect architecture to urgent issues that most people will acknowledge as such; either in terms of preservation, or in terms of ordinary daily concerns of citizens. Or as an agenda for the future of our society. We called this approach an “Architecture of Consequence.” First meeting some tough criticism as it went beyond the professional discourse and leaving some professional defense mechanisms shattered, now it is a widely accepted new direction in architecture that picks up more and more momentum.

What do you think are the highlights of directing the NAi for six years?

First of all, the renovation of the building to make it much more a civic space. It used to be a pretty solid bastion across a pond, which many people not even dared to enter. Now it provides a public experience to many more visitors. It has the best of the collection permanently on display for the hardcore architecture lovers, while it offers a variety of programs to kids and families to enjoy making things.

This public character of architecture also translated into the Architecture of Consequence agenda, relentlessly producing evidence that architecture can help resolve big issues. With the NAi building itself, but also for instance by way of matchmaking projects, directly connecting the potential of design talent with the urgencies of our time and the key decision makers. I’m proud of the way we worked with housing corporations helping them to rely more on architects in their tough choices. Finally, I will always remember how I could end my serving term with the celebration of the love for architecture, showing the major exhibition on Louis Kahn.

What about your work at the Venice Biennale?

Another very rewarding experience. The Dutch pavilion designed by Gerrit Rietveld is a perfect place to demonstrate the power of architecture in so many ways. That’s what’s what I tried to do in the last three installments. The first time in 2008 we asked big questions about the future of this discipline in the wake of the terrifying fire that destroyed the Faculty of Architecture in Delft. We asked ourselves the question what a faculty of architecture actually is, how architecture should be taught and how in our time it should be represented in a building. Two years later we presented Vacant NI, an abysmal image of the scale of abandoned architecture in a country that is so famous for it. It became radically clear that traditional architecture increasingly is an answer to questions that are no longer asked. Last year we completed the trilogy by showing how architecture still could be powerful and resources breathing new air into the old foundations of existing buildings with very few means. One moving curtain designed by Petra Blaisse multiplied the building many times and enhanced its experiences profoundly—pure value creation.

Why did the government make the decision to change the structure of the NAi, if it has been such a success?

Good question, with no single answer. First of all architecture is no longer as popular among politicians as it used to be. They now have different bets, topics like creative industry or design thinking. We have been through a re-appraisal of terminology. Also the meaning of words became much less precise. Where architecture became a name for more or less any spatial practice even beyond building, also design lost its meaning as “making things look nice” and becoming more about the organization of life and its processes. So these concepts have an increasing overlap. Designers are dealing with issues that until recently used to be called architectural. Vice versa architects have no problem to enter the design world.

Has architecture been submerged under this rubric of design?

Yes, also because of its economical weakness. It’s a survival technique. For many it begins to sound more viable to be a designer than to be an architect. Many architects are pretty okay for instance with defending themselves as being part of the creative industries because then they belong to a growing sector rather than one in decline.

What do you think about letting the market decide over the destiny of architecture?

Well I think in general it is a very sound principle: not just to let the market but to let society decide where culture should go and to escape the bubble in which civil servants and culture managers decide where the culture should go. Nobody should be against that kind of stress test. It’s not related to a budget cut, it’s based on a principle. However, you have to get suspicious when a budget cut is defended with the reality check. Government is smart enough to know that just by taking money from culture is a very unpopular move but if you do that by claiming that this is more culture it sounds much better. In the case of the NAi one also can ask the question how much reality we can find in an enforced merger that government wants for ideological reasons.

How is the merger going to work?

I don’t know yet. There is a risk and there’s a potential. What I have done the last year is to minimize the first and to minimize the second. The government said you no longer can count on any support if only you decide to remain as the NAi. It’s like saying I kill you, but maybe you can survive as a different guy with a different mission, which is to become a support office for the creative industries. But there was some space to maneuver and to invent a new intrinsic motivation.

For me that was the Bauhaus potential, to develop an institute that could play a similar role in culture, rallying some diverse disciplines behind a heartfelt purpose: to preserve, explore, and deploy design for the good cause. To glorify creativity as an indispensable dimension of social agency. I am happy that I was able to leave that idea as a solid legacy.

The Council of Culture even sanctioned this new idea with a positive report.

Will all of those things happen in this new organization?

It’s up to the new director to decide. The most important is that he can present a strong vision based on the overlap between the disciplines involved. But you will also need the government to give it some time and space to maneuver and build up something for some time, instead of another major intervention as happened two years ago, when it stated in a way that it didn’t want us to be fully dedicated to architecture anymore. That’s also why for me this implied the end of my term, because I signed for being committed to architecture out of free will.

So what are you going to do now?

Doing architecture in some way, of course, and creating value with it. I will continue to work in terms of identifying the issues that matter, and applying the potentials of design to them, in any way I can: by designing, funding, moderating, writing, curating, teaching, imagining, and other forms of creative leadership. I think I may be able to contribute to the honor of architecture because there is so much where architecture can make the difference. I’m talking about the self-esteem of a discipline, which is not the same as egomaniac.

I don’t know yet to which extent I will do this in response to clients, or of unsolicited action, but undoubtedly I will do it with the spirit of a volunteer.
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