A jewel box set within a leafy garden by architects Paul Cret and Jacques Gréber sets the stage for a dance of frozen human forms quietly watching over Philadelphia’s Rodin Museum. The tranquil site’s formal arrangement lavishes itself in greenery, only interrupted by the hubbub of traffic along the monumental Benjamin Franklin Parkway. It is here that The Thinker wonders through winter cold and summer heat, and it is against this scene that a proposed 120-unit residential tower is likely to rise, responding to the design of the museum itself. Continued on page 2.

On January 15, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), unveiled plans for the redevelopment of its 14-acre campus, which includes new buildings by Steven Holl Architects as well as Lake | Flato Architects of San Antonio. Holl is contributing a unifying master plan, a 164,000-square-foot gallery space for 20th and 21st century art, and a new 80,000-square-foot facility for the Glassell School of Art. Lake | Flato is designing a state-of-the-art conservation center, which is still in the concept phase. “This is the most important commission of my career,” said Holl at a press luncheon in New York where he presented the plans. “What you see here is the culmination of a 36-month design process.” The master plan seeks to integrate the new structures with MFAH’s current facilities, which represent nearly a century of building. They include a limestone Greek Revival edifice by Houston architect William Ward Watkin (1924, the oldest art museum in Texas), which is connected to a free-span steel and glass addition by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1958/74), his only museum work in the United States; a sculpture garden by Isamu Noguchi (1986); and a Rafael Moneo-designed building for the display of European art (2000). The plan also strives to improve the pedestrian experience across the campus, as well as... Continued on page 4.

The congested stretch of 41st Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue is less than a tenth of a mile long, but it could become a critical pedestrian link between Bryant Park, a privately owned public plaza, and the Broadway Boulevard if enough property owners chip in to spruce it up.

The plan, called Boulevard 41, comes from the Bryant Park Corporation (BPC) and involves covering curbside lanes with moveable seating and planters. Streetsblog reported that the plan, which was first unveiled two years ago, has been approved by the Department of Transportation, FDNY, and Community Board 5, but needs... Continued on page 8.

The story of Dumbo’s transformation from overlooked artist mecca to swanky loft-filled neighborhood is a familiar one, even in spite of crafty attempts years ago to slow down the tide of development. In the 1970s, artists moved into an industrial neighborhood near the Brooklyn side of the Manhattan Bridge and called it Dumbo (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) in hopes of throwing developers off the scent. Walk around Dumbo a few decades later and it is clear that the... Continued on page 7.
The contemporary notion that what is called “research” should be an important component of every architectural practice is one that deserves further examination. If we think of research as something done by scholars, academics, and social scientists then what takes place in most architecture offices is most often little more than public relations or simply the instrumental steps in the creation of a design for a building. It is often the case that architecture offices are developing new ideas of building production (like BIM, digital fabrication, 3D printing, etc.) but even these tend to be specific design projects with clients and therefore not concerned with general professional or goals of the discipline. There is one area however where architects are doing primary research: the development of materials and how they impact design and are themselves the subject of innovative forms making. In this issue number seven of the architecture fanzine P.E.A.R. (Paper for Emerging Architectural Research), which comes from a London group of academics, architects, and the Royal Academy of Arts, they call this type of practice “material research” and investigate new models in its evolution. Architects, Adrian Forty argues in his P.E.A.R. essay, have always cared about construction materials, even as he quotes William Morris, who wrote that architects were falsifying their use and meaning—making one thing seem to be another.

This is true, Forty goes on, even if they “make a show of not caring, as Peter Eisenman famously did with his ‘house series.’” In fact, Forty’s concise yet thorough makeup shows that there are no such things as a “pure material—all are the result of mixing human labor with substance “whether naturally-occurring or synthetic.” But his principle point and an important one for contemporary practice is that today digital fabrication has nearly eliminated human labor from the work of processing materials while making infinite variable possible. Architects now, he contends, can more fully concentrate on “what materials are used for—upon the end results.”

The leading edge in architecture ten to 15 years ago were those architects creating primarily in the digital field and staying there, as they were unable to build what they could imagine on the computer. But the students of these mostly academic practitioners have taken their ideas and are now developing them, applying them to new and old materials to create a dizzyingly array of spaces, installations, and built forms. Some of these young architects have left the design studio and opened fabrication shops (most with their own CNC milling machines) where, applying the skills they learned in school, they work directly on and with materials. These practices are doing some of the most interesting work in the architectural field. Further, some of these workshops are in fact hybrid studio/machine shops, and thus are able to dig deep into the meaning and use of materials to create new forms and ideas for installation proposals and/or buildings when approached by other architects.

We are, it seems, only at the beginning of this design phenomenon and for this reason The Architect’s Newspaper began three years ago its Facades+ conferences where we highlight the leading edge of new research and technological advancement in the field. The material that is most often considered in the Facades+ seminars is glass and its use in curtain walls. In fact, glass, both through industrial and professional research, is perhaps the single most developed material in the building world in the last 20 years, which may explain its ubiquity both in corporate and small scale design in every climatic condition from desert to alpine conditions. This week’s Facades+ conference in Los Angeles will feature James Carpenter, whose creative glass research, as a consultant to SOM, for the curtain wall of 7 World Trade Center in New York makes him one of the leading practitioners and glass researchers in the field. We will be reporting on Carpenter’s lecture in our next issue, along with other highlights from the conference and beyond. William Menking
Perkins Building, Riverdale Country School

Architecture Research Office (ARO) is bringing a modern addition to Riverdale Country School’s historic river campus. The planned 22,000-square-foot academic building will replace the school’s 1960s-era Perkins Building. The two-story structure attempts to negotiate a gradient change by tucking itself into a hillside while still allowing direct outdoor access for many of the classrooms. Aro worked with Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects to further connect the building to the landscape with appropriate plantings and paving materials. The structure’s base is clad in blue-toned, lightweight concrete panels. A vertical zinc-paneled rain screen wraps around its second story. On the building’s south side, the facade lifts up like a piece of fabric, revealing a curved expanse of glass that brings daylight into the cafeteria.

Kim Yao, a principal at ARO, said the blue tones in the facade are intended to evoke the nearby Hudson River while the zinc panels were selected to complement the campus’ older brick buildings. The new space includes a multi-purpose theater, student center with a full-service kitchen and cafeteria, and classrooms. HENRY MELCHER

TAKING A NAME IN VAIN

5 Points, the Long Island City graffiti mecca, might not have been lucrative enough for developer G&M Realty to keep on its property, but it sure makes for a nifty marketing ploy to attract potential renters to its soon-to-be constructed pair of residential towers. Jerry and David Wolkoff, the father-and-son owners of G&M, filed an application last spring to trademark the name for the new development. The application has been denied twice, but the Wolkoffs are still determined to figure out a way to capitalize on the 5 Pointz name. The artists whose work once covered the walls of the demolished warehouse are none too pleased. 5 Pointz curator and artist Jonathan Cohen (a.k.a. MeresOne), has launched a petition on MoveOn.org, seeking to fight the trademark. According to real estate blog, 6sqft, the developers, who’ve pledged to dedicate 12,000 square feet to artist studios and exhibition space, are befuddled by the protests. Well, why would the artists take issue with the condo building using the beloved 5 Pointz name? All G&M did was surreptitiously whitewash the building in the middle of the night, erasing any trace of art.

Simple, clean ingredients are the focus of Chef Andrew Carmellini’s new farm-to-table restaurant located in the recently revamped Smyth hotel in Tribeca. And like the menu, crisp and straightforward design brings a relaxed elegance to the 85-seat eatery, thanks to New York City–based Gachot Studios, who was also tapped to overhaul the entire 14-story hotel. While inspired by the Carmellini’s “fresh and innovative” fare, said Christine Gachot, co-founder of Gachot Studios, the design needed to be in sync with the busy, day-to-day rhythm of the hotel. “When designing a restaurant that resides within a hotel we have to be mindful of the fact that it needs to be open from first thing in the morning until very late in the evening.” To achieve this, the firm used a “versatile lighting scheme” and a muted color palette, including a ceiling clad in whitewashed wood and a white marble mosaic tiled floor arranged by hand into a fan pattern. The 2,000-square-foot, L-shaped space consists of a bar area and dining room, and is furnished with oak tables, Josef Hoffmann–designed chairs, and leather banquettes with custom-woven textiles. Large windows allow for ample daylight. A Simon Shubuck painting hangs on one wall of the dining room, adding a burst of color and playfullness to the gracefully restrained interior. NICOLE ANDERSON

Design by sieger design

burst of color and playfullness to the gracefully restrained interior. A Simon Shubuck painting hangs on one wall of the dining room, adding a burst of color and playfullness to the gracefully restrained interior.
Texas Holl ‘E’M continued from front page

in Houston’s Museum District neighborhood as a whole, by moving 190,000 square feet of parking into two underground garages, which will make room for a series of new public spaces in addition to the new buildings.

Holl’s design for the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building for 20th and 21st century art is sited on the location of an existing surface parking lot at the northeast edge of the campus, across Bissonnet Street from the Mies and Moneo structures. The building, clad in etched glass tubes that allow in filtered daylight and emit a glow at night, is three stories tall. Seven vertical gardens are cut into the building perimeter with exterior reflecting pools at the ground level. In these vegetation-shaded sanctuaries, vision glass takes over from the translucent tubes. Inside, two levels of galleries—54,000 square feet in all—surround a top-lit, three-level rotunda. The upper level is sheltered under a “luminous canopy” roof, which has concave curves inspired by the billowing clouds of the big Texas sky. All of the gallery spaces feature natural light. Holl is working with New York–based lighting design firm L’Observatoire International on the project. In addition to galleries, the building contains a 202-seat theater, restaurant and café, and meeting rooms.

The new Glassell School of Art will replace its existing 35-year-old facility, which was designed by Houston architect S.I. Morris, who had a hand in the Astrodome. At 80,000 square feet, the new building has an L-shaped plan wrapping around a public plaza that opens onto the Noguchi sculpture garden. Clad in sandblasted precast concrete panels, it has a green roof that slopes up from the ground, which visitors and students can climb to catch a view over the trees and rooftops of Houston.

The museum also announced that it will select a landscape architect to work with Holl on fleshing out the master plan. Construction will begin later this year and is slated for completion in 2019.

Aaron Seward
Rethinking the Waterfront

Earlier this month Brooklyn Borough president Eric Adams announced the release of Stormwater Infrastructure Design Guidelines, which have the potential to generate exemplary landscape design and benefit all of New York City. The Design Guidelines propose to integrate green infrastructure techniques with a 14-mile continuous corridor for bicycles and pedestrians along the Brooklyn waterfront. The new plan, titled The Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway: An Agent for Green Infrastructure, Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency, illustrates how stormwater infrastructure would enhance the Greenway.

As a stand-alone project, the 14-mile Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway offers an exciting opportunity for pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy the waterfront. What is unique about the Borough President’s announcement is that the Greenway is being recognized as a project that also can offer context-sensitive design solutions to water-related problems facing the City, such as surges from powerful storms and stormwater runoff. “Here in Brooklyn, we don’t just ‘go with the flow’ when something isn’t working right. When it comes to our over-flow problem with our sewers, which are leading to damaging coastal floods and the release of raw sewage into our marine ecosystem, major changes are needed to protect residents, business and wildlife alike,” said Borough President Adams in a statement.

The plan for the Greenway contains a tool kit of green infrastructure, resiliency barrier typologies, and case studies on specific sites for design intervention, which are prime for implementation. The proposed green infrastructure techniques employ ecosystem services to help clean runoff and absorb storm surge. The forthcoming Greenway project is being used as an opportunity to make the waterfront function on many different levels. The Greenway is no longer seen as just a transportation infrastructure project, but it is also about environmental infrastructure. “Because 14 miles of streets will be reconstructed as the Greenway is built, this is an opportune time to install stormwater infrastructure on the most economical basis for the City,” said Milton Puryear, Co-founder of Brooklyn Greenway Initiative.

The Brooklyn Greenway Initiative (BGI) is the non-profit organization that is stewarding the development of the waterfront greenway. BGI developed the Design Guidelines in conjunction with a technical advisory committee comprised of city agencies, engineers, and landscape and urban designers. The plan is abundant with diagrams, maps, and sections accented with flowing watercolor that show what stormwater infrastructure can look like along the greenway. All the designs and graphics were produced by WE Design, with eDesign Dynamics as the consulting environmental engineer. From a designers’ perspective, these green infrastructure guidelines will enable projects along the Greenway to develop sustainable savvy design. Tricia Martin, owner and principal at WE Design, believes that greenways are an effective mechanism for building climate change adaptation strategies into our cities. “Greenways provide open space and recreation, but this study shows that greenways can be so much more,” Martin said. “Concerns about rising sea level, water quality and coastal habitat can and should be addressed when designing our greenways.”

Last we forget that the water is one of the most important features of a waterfront greenway, this plan is a reminder that landscape design can be functional and beautiful. Support for improving water quality in the waterways around New York City and building resiliency against storm surges needs to happen at many different levels in order for action to move forward, and Borough President Adams has just boosted this effort in the right direction.

**Annie Bergelin**

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**Thick Skinned**

Weill Cornell Medical College wants its buildings to last a century, but not feel like they were built last century. So Ennead Architects enclosed the Belfer Research Building with a double-skin curtain wall to better regulate lab environments—increasing their efficiency and the school’s prestige within the research community. Read more about it in Metals in Construction online.

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INSIDE THE CLOSURE OF ARCHITECTURE FOR HUMANITY
GOOD INTENTIONS, BAD MANAGEMENT

The San Francisco-based nonprofit Architecture for Humanity (AFH), a 15-year-old organization dedicated to providing critical buildings in areas of need, shut down operations abruptly on January 1st of this year. The official announcement from the board of directors, which came nearly three weeks later, said that the organization was filing for bankruptcy because of “serious funding challenges… the deficit combined with budget overruns and an overall decrease in donations finally became an insurmountable situation.”

Coming at a time when the economy is doing well and an interest in bettering the world through design is pervasive, the closure was all the more surprising. The specifics about how the organization got itself into financial straits are still outstanding. But the overall arc indicates that the organization had trouble with the challenge that so many small businesses face—how to scale up in a sustainable way.

“Ultimately the story of AFH is of an organization that grew too fast,” said Eric Cesal, its last executive director, who started as a volunteer in 2006 and became the manager of the Haiti program in 2010. “Our programs and ambitions for doing good grew faster than our fundraising.”

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Dumbo in Demand
continued from front page
self-branding exercise did not go as planned. Like Tribeca across the river, Dumbo has morphed into a remarkably desirable area. The opening of Brooklyn Bridge Park in 2010 only increased its appeal.

Michael Van Valkenburgh’s celebrated waterfront park fueled Dumbo development in two main ways. One, it provided 85-acres of new open space. Two, the park is directly impacting Dumbo because its self-sustaining funding model is based on leasing off adjacent development sites, two of which are in the neighborhood, and then absorbing revenue from whatever gets built.

Now, with more than 50 percent of the park completed, the development plan is in full swing and will deliver new retail, offices, restaurants, and apartments to Dumbo over the next two years. During the same time, Brooklyn Bridge Park will be reaching further into the neighborhood. The most architecturally significant piece of the park-led development plan in Dumbo is the Empire Stores—a 19th century coffee warehouse that is being transformed into a 500,000-square-foot, mixed-use office space by the hand of STUDIO V. The firm has cut an open-air courtyard through the complex’s old schist walls, carved out space for trendy offices, and added a rooftop park. At ground level, just feet from the river, restaurants open out of the building’s original arched masonry doors. The project will be leaseable this fall and open to the public about a year after that.

Adjacent to the Empire Stores is the shell of a 19th Century tobacco warehouse that Marvel Architects is currently turning into the new home of St. Ann’s Warehouse, a theater company based in the neighborhood. For the new space, Marvel is fitting a glass, steel, and brick structure within and about one story above the warehouse’s brick walls. Next to the new addition, within the building’s original footprint, Michael Van Valkenburgh is planting an open-air courtyard called the Triangle Garden.

Just steps from these two projects, right at the waterfront’s edge, is 1 John Street, another Brooklyn Bridge development site that is being filled in with a luxury condominium building. The boxy, 12-story structure, designed and developed by Alloy Development and Monadnock Development, is clad in grey brick and has rows of punched window-panes that decrease in size as they rise up the tower. By the time this building is completed in 2016 it will be connected to Brooklyn Bridge Park’s main lawn through John Street Park and Main Street Park, both Michael Van Valkenburgh–designed spaces slated to open this summer.

As foundation work continues at 1 John Street, Alloy is wrapping up construction on five striking, modern townhouses only a few blocks away. That project is unattached to Brooklyn Bridge Park’s General Project Plan as is ODA’s warehouse-to-condo conversion at 51 Jay Street and Leeser Architecture and Ismael Leyva’s arresting glassy rental building at 60 Water Street.

On the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge, within Brooklyn Bridge Park itself, is the Pierhouse, a Marvel-designed condo and hotel complex, that will be another revenue generator for the park. The project is expected to reach no more than 100 feet, but recently topped out at 130 feet. This has angered local residents who have had some of their bridge views blocked. A petition called “Save the View Now” has been launched to stop construction and remove the additional height.

Facing growing criticism, in late January, the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation asked the Department of Buildings to confirm that the Pierhouse complying with the Brooklyn Heights Scenic View District. A partial stop work order was subsequently issued at the site. A park official told the website New York YIMBY that “the alteration of bulkheads or parapets are among the type of alterations that may be necessary to bring the structure into full compliance.”

As Dumbo, like so many parts of Brooklyn, continues to absorb new development, some older neighborhood standbys are being pushed out. At the end of last year, as construction hummed along in the neighborhood, Galapagos Art Space, a quirky performance venue that had been operating in the borough for nearly 20 years, seven in Dumbo, announced it was closing. The rent was too high, said the owners. But Galapagos will not be disappearing entirely. It is leaving Dumbo and moving to Detroit, where it will renovate a vacant high school in a deserted part of town. NM
A proposal from the Bryant Park Corporation would turn a block of 41st Street into a linear plaza.

Boulevard 41 includes 20 red chairs and silver planters made from Ciocchini’s signature laser-cut horizontal slats. Seating platforms are set between the planters and completed with railings, bistro tables, and IPE decking. Each platform also has a hatch for cleaning and access to utilities. To try to boost support with local property owners, the platforms and planters are spaced out to not block any useful freight entrances.

Two years after Boulevard 41 was first proposed, the BPC is sticking with its original plan to fund the $1.5 million project entirely with private money. But securing the necessary funds from adjacent buildings has proved difficult as those buildings keep changing hands. While Ciocchini currently puts the chance of Boulevard 41 being realized just under 50 percent, he is not giving up on it just yet. He is going back to the property owners, new and old, in hopes of convincing them that investing in the public realm is good both for the city and their own bottom line.

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**CUOMO PROPOSES LAGUARDIA AIRTRAIN**

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo wants to make it easier and quicker for people to get to and from LaGuardia Airport. He has proposed giving LaGuardia Airport its own AirTrain service, similar to what already exists at John F. Kennedy Airport and Newark Liberty. The elevated rail line would run from LaGuardia Airport, along the Grand Central Parkway to a new station near City Field, placed between an existing Long Island Rail Road station and a 7 line subway stop. While New Yorkers have been calling for better transportation to LaGuardia for decades, this plan was quickly criticized because it could possibly offer an even less reliable and slower ride to the airport than the existing public transit options. Transportation blog *The Transport Politic* crunched the numbers and confirmed this suspicion, finding that the trip to LaGuardia would indeed bump up travel time from nearly every borough, including downtown, Brooklyn; Midtown, Manhattan; Jamaica, Queens; and the South Bronx.

**DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS EAST NEW YORK REZONING**

The de Blasio Administration has unveiled new details for one of the most significant pieces of its ambitious affordable housing plan: the rezoning of Brooklyn’s East New York neighborhood. As New York YIMBY reported, the administration announced that it would “upzone” a stretch of Atlantic Avenue to create what it calls a “growth corridor” that could accommodate residential development up to 12 stories. Moderate density development for surrounding blocks is proposed to support “affordable and mixed-income housing, retail, businesses, and community facilities near transit.” On smaller-scale side streets, the administration hopes to preserve the neighborhood’s existing character by continuing to allow “low scale duplexes, single-family homes and rowhouses.”

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**Boulevard of Dreams continued from front page**

Private funding to move forward.

Industrial designer Ignacio Ciocchini, who has created some of New York City’s more interesting street furniture, designed the project in-house. “We really concentrated on very simple urban solutions that make a difference,” said Ciocchini. The goal, he explained, was to create an inviting environment that was not tied to any particular business. The result is a stretched-out version of the city’s popular public plaza.

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**THE SPORTS DESIGN SHUFFLE**

This January, international design firm HOK finalized its acquisition of 360 Architecture, a leader in the design of sports and mixed-use entertainment facilities worldwide. Now with Missouri’s largest architecture firm consisting of 2,000 employees and offices on three continents, HOK has added a Sports + Recreation + Entertainment practice to its mammoth portfolio of architectural projects spanning aviation, healthcare, hospitality, and residential, among other areas. A believer in the power of sporting facilities to gentrify urban areas, HOK’s president Bill Hellmuth sees the merger with 360 as a cross-fertilization of specialized expertise. He also believes it will be instrumental in extending the firm’s reach in Kansas City, San Francisco, and around the world. Aside from 360’s “demonstrated ability and reputation,” HOK had long eyeballed the 200-employee firm for a merger because of compatibility in both firms’ corporate culture and strategic vision. “Their desire aligned with our desire to become part of a larger entity and not be a standalone over in the corner, but to really leverage what HOK can bring to 360 as well as what 360 can bring to HOK, and really fully integrate these practices,” Hellmuth told AN. The two companies have gelled with respect to leadership (360’s co-founder and director, Brad Schrock, is now one of the directors of HOK’s new sports division) and the sharing of ongoing and upcoming design projects. On the firm’s plate, among numerous still-taking projects, is a feasibility study undertaken with the governor’s task force for a riverside football stadium in St. Louis, Missouri, for NFL franchise the Rams. “It’s obviously a big desire of the city to keep the team in St. Louis and this proposal hopefully will do that,” explained Schrock. “There’s no determination yet in terms of who would construct it, but the goal is to produce a really compelling vision for the St. Louis Rams.” Costing between $860 and $900 million, the project will bridge I-44 and connect the expanding Great Rivers Greenway network of forested walkways and the CityArchRiver development along the Mississippi River.

Other sporting facilities currently on the board include the Atlanta Falcons Stadium, opening in March 2017, and the new Roger’s Place arena for the NHL’s Edmonton Oilers, slated for completion in Fall 2016. HOK’s re-entry into the sports firmament coincides with its 60th anniversary. The firm previously unloaded its sports division in 2008 due to differences of opinion and diverging cultures between corporate and the division’s leadership. The former HOK division is now the unaffiliated sports architecture practice Populous.

HOK’s leadership team now occupies 360’s former offices in Kansas City, where the local professional sporting facilities are not well connected to the urban hub, said Schrock. “The Royals and the Chiefs are out off I-70, not near the core,” he said. “I think the thing that we would still like to see and that people are starting to propose is that the Royals at some point build an urban ballpark downtown in Kansas City.”

As frequent collaborators prior to the merger, HOK and 360 joined hands in the design of the Sprint Center, a groundbreaking sports and entertainment venue with a transparent glass exterior that opened in 2007. Hosting concerts, live theater and family events in addition to sporting events, the mixed-use arena revamped the face of Kansas City’s downtown district. The new Avaya Stadium opening this March in San Jose, California, hopes to achieve the same. “There are a lot of things to work on together and we’ve already formed new teams and worked to collaborate with a bunch of folks not only in the sports world but also across other disciplines,” said Schrock.

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**Betsky Takes On Taliesin**

In January the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation tapped Aaron Betsky to head its school of architecture, which is split between two campuses: Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. Betsky, the former director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, will move to Scottsdale in April. Though he assumes the role immediately, Betsky said his specific plans for the curriculum are still in progress.

As dean, Betsky faces a challenge beyond academic leadership. Last year the Higher Learning Commission changed its rules governing for-profit universities and schools that, like the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, are part of institutions whose “missions extend beyond academics.” To retain the school’s accreditation, the Foundation will spin off its academic entity. But to do so it said it must raise $82 million before the end of 2015, or it will lose its standing once the new rules take effect in 2017.

Chris Bentley: Why did you decide to take this position?

Aaron Betsky: I’ve been involved with architectural education for literally decades and I’ve always been a strong believer in the notion of experimental architecture, and an architectural education that doesn’t perpetuate the myth that architects just go out there and make the dumbest buildings possible. Architecture is a way you can come to an understanding of the human-made environment we’ve all created together and how you can make that better in a social sense, an environmental sense, and in a physical sense. So a chance to do that with a school that has such a great tradition of experimental architecture, that comes out of Frank Lloyd Wright’s engagement with everything from the notions of what makes a home, to what makes a workplace, to the nature of American suburbia and beyond.

What’s been your experience with or impression of the Frank Lloyd Wright School’s academic character? What would you like to change and what would you like to keep the same? It’s not a big school where people are doing fairly standard building design. It’s a place where people are really trying to figure out what architecture is. They do it not just on the drafting table and the computer but out in the desert itself, especially in Scottsdale building their own shelters. I think a lot of people still think about Taliesin as a place that might continue the forms of Frank Lloyd Wright. But if you look at the student work you can see that Victor [Sidy] and the people who have been there have really begun to think more about how he thought of architecture as very important for what he called democracy—how he saw it in the arts and crafts tradition and the tradition of American pragmatism.

What is Wright’s relevance to contemporary practice?

He addressed issues that are central to the American problem and the world problem, that include: How do you make a home, what is a home? How do you shelter it and yet make it open to its community? What is that community when it is no longer just a center city or out in the farm? What is suburbia and what kind of forms can we developer for suburbia? How can we make an architecture that works with the land instead of being built on it? How can you create work environments that are open and conducive to the kind of creativity and sharing that we now understand is central to work? How can you create places of leisure and play that are again open and that celebrate our achievements and allow us in a playful way to reimagine the American and the world environment?

Are you charged with separating the school from the foundation, the fundraising, or purely focused on the academics? Yes we need to raise money and I am already working with the school on that. We have a couple of galas. We’re working on some other ways that we’ll need to continue as an independent entity. It’s obviously a very big part of the job.

What is the fundraising situation so far? Are you on track to meet the goal? Yes I am confident we’ll meet it. Some funds have already been raised. I can’t tell you what the percentage is but there are substantial pledges as well as hard cash in the door. Look, I’ve spent the last 15 years of my life—if not longer—raising money. In Cincinnati I was able to raise about $80 million over the last eight years. Schools are more difficult in some ways than museums, but I’m confident we’ll be able to raise the money for this school with its great traditions and name recognition for an even better future.

Chris Bentley
The recently reopened Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York represents the combined work of no less than 13 design firms that came together to update the old Carnegie Mansion—which underwent renovations by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates in 1977 and Polshek Partnership in 2001—for 21st century visitors. Integral to that goal is a collection of site-specific, flexible, and modular display systems designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R) and produced in collaboration with Italian case-work manufacturer Goppion.

The primary goal for this project was longevity,” said Andreas Buettner, DS+R’s project leader on the casework. “We were told these cases are planned to accommodate rotating exhibitions for the next 10 years.” In addition to longevity, the display cases had to be flexible enough to accommodate the museum’s wide range of design artifacts—everything from textiles to silverware—as well as to look at home in the erstwhile mansion’s mix of traditional interiors and modern gallery spaces.

DS+R developed several case-work systems for the museum. One is a modular table with a kit of parts that can be locked together in a variety of configurations. Some of the parts have glass bonnets that can be sealed air-tightly to accommodate the preservation requirements of certain artifacts. The bonnets are set on hydraulic activators for easy opening. In some cases the glass is laminated with a PVB interlayer for security and a coating was added to reduce reflections. Other bonnets are made from acrylic as a cost saving measure. Some table parts cantilever off of the main frame, such as in the case of interpretive signage. The legs are made from flat bar stainless steel and are very heavy to keep the tables from tipping over when the bonnets are lifted or in case a visitor decides to use one as a seat. Even still, certain tables had to be equipped with wheels that swing down to transfer loads to the floor when the bonnets are open. The stainless steel legs are finished with a No. 4 grit sanding process done in a circular pattern to give it a soft appearance.

While the weight of the casework was important from a safety point of view—some cases are as much as 2,000 pounds—it had to be carefully managed to stay within the allowable live loads of the building’s floors. The Carnegie Mansion has a steel-framed structure, but it was not built as a museum. The larger cases have frames made from aluminum instead of steel to cut down on weight. One such case is found in the former billiards room. Throughout, DS+R worked with Goppion to minimize the detailing and to conceal the hardware as much as possible, but this was especially successful in this large case. Here, a five-sided glass bonnet rests in a black cuboid base of powder-coated steel panels. The base hides two scissor jacks connected to electric motors that lift the bonnet up for accessing and changing exhibition objects. When closed, it is almost impossible to tell how exhibitors work on the display. “It was important to make this case as elegant as possible, even when we have to support a great amount of glass and steel,” said Buettner. “We designed it to almost sit there effortlessly. Instead of a door, the whole top of case can lift up, close to ceiling, to access the objects in the case to clean, or rotate, or change them.”
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nanimarquina.com
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landporcelanico.com

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mutina.it

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As the Camera Flies

Photographer Vincent Laforet’s immersive aerials of New York City
New York City has been photographed from nearly every vantage point: sweeping panoramas, up close in detail, and from high above. But few images have captured the city’s density and sprawl, its tightly packed grid, its constellation of yellow and neon colored lights, and its changing skyline quite like Pulitzer Prize–winning photographer Vincent Laforet’s recent aerial series, *Night Over New York*. Commissioned by *Men’s Health* magazine for a piece on psychology, Laforet proposed chartering a helicopter and shooting the city from high altitude. “I always thought the streets of New York look like brain synapses,” said Laforet. As a native New Yorker, who grew up enthralled by the cityscape, this assignment also presented a unique opportunity to photograph his home from a different perspective, one that is “between a satellite view and street view.” Laforet, however, is not new to aerial photography. He has shot wildfires in California, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and beach scenes at Coney Island from high above.

Before soaring thousands of feet in the air, he needed clearance from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and air traffic control towers. Once he received the green light, he flew up in an open-door helicopter, 7,500 feet above the city, balancing 20 pounds of camera equipment. The images, explained Laforet, are the culmination of a perfect storm: a perfectly clear winter night, today’s advanced technology, and an intuitive sense for a visually compelling picture. “They are just photographs of the city but from a unique angle and it seems like the city takes on a different importance and you can almost feel the energy of the city,” said Laforet.

The 50-plus images provide a myriad of views that at once convey the expansive breadth of the city and the concentration and individual character of the buildings that populate Manhattan’s intricate network of streets and avenues. One of the more salient aspects of this series, from an architectural standpoint, is the shifting scale of the city, marked by new construction in the last few years. In one picture, as we look down from above Central Park toward downtown, we glimpse a cluster of new and old skyscrapers jutting up toward the sky between 57th Street and Herald Square; from there, the landscape flattens as the buildings and the streets get smaller and more compact, branching off from the grid in Lower Manhattan, and then narrowing at the very tip, punctuated by SOM’s towering One World Trade Center. Revealed in these photos is the tension between the transience of the city and our own illusive fixed image of the iconic skyline. Some new additions posed a challenge for Laforet, specifically Rafael Vinoly’s recently erected monolithic 432 Park Avenue. “It ruins the skyline and almost every aerial I shoot,” said Laforet.

This entire project was completed and posted in a short period, which didn’t allow time for retouching. Aside from sensors that pick up light, and adding some saturation and highlights, little was done to the photographs. Working off the momentum of this series, Laforet is embarking on a multi-city tour from San Francisco to Tokyo, to capture these metropolises at night. “These pictures speak to how big the city is, how massive it is, and how connected and small we are,” said Laforet.

Nicole AndersoN

VINCENT LAFORET/PHOTO REX/NEWSCOM

Laforet took these aerial photographs on a clear winter’s night from a helicopter hovering at 7,500 feet. With the exception of some added saturation and highlights, the images are untouched.
HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PLAN

LONG NOTORIOUS FOR ITS LACK OF ZONING AND SPRAWLING, DEVELOPER-DRIVEN, LEAPFROG GROWTH PATTERNS, AMERICA’S FOURTH LARGEST CITY IS ON THE CUSP OF ADOPTING ITS FIRST GENERAL PLAN. FLORENCE TANG SPEAKS WITH THE ADVOCATES, PLANNERS, AND POLITICIANS WHO ARE SEEKING TO MAKE HOUSTON A SUSTAINABLE METROPOLIS WHERE ANYONE CAN PROSPER AND FEEL AT HOME.

Houston is famously, or notoriously, known as the largest city in America without zoning. It covers roughly 630 square miles. To put that in perspective, Houston could accommodate within its limits Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Denver, Miami, and San Francisco combined. As of the 2010 census, the city had a population of about 2.1 million with a metro area totaling 5.95 million. In the next 20 years, a million more residents are expected to call the Bayou City home.

In the past, Houston has managed such projected growth by expanding its hub-and-spoke freeway system and sprawling out across the vast coastal plain on which it sits. Now, however, a convergence of political forces, an urban planner from Harvard, a newly installed city planning director, the united voices of citizens, leaders, and groups across jurisdictional lines, and a tenacious campaign lasting more than a decade from one non-profit board is producing a road map for sustainable growth and development.

In September 2014, Mayor Annise Parker directed the planning commission to create Houston’s first General Plan. “Houston is constantly changing and growing. We have to have a better way to plan for that growth,” said Parker in a statement. “A general plan will allow us to better coordinate our resources, create opportunities for innovative partnerships, and provide a path to achieving our goals.”

BLUEPRINT HOUSTON AND THE GENERAL PLAN

Mayor Parker’s announcement marked a major milestone in the decade-long journey that Blueprint Houston, a nonprofit organization formed in 2002, has spent advocating for a plan. “We have tried to be the squeaky wheel in the face of mayors,” said Joe Webb, an architect and chairman of Blueprint since 2010. “Too much development, too much traffic—that comes with growth and change,” said Park. “There are changing patterns of Americans moving back into area. He worked with city staff to define the scope of the plan and what it should accomplish.

“It’s a big change from what Houston has been in the past, and while Houston does not have zoning, there are a lot of regulations. They have regulations that cities with zoning are getting rid of,” said Park. “Houston has been going along without a plan, and people ask, ‘Why do you need a plan?’ but the past approaches of building highways and annexing is not a growth pattern and won’t serve the city in the long run.”

This historic approach of meeting challenges as they come has created a reactive state and Park believes it is not a viable approach. “How can you have a broader conversation of coordinating growth and policy and vision so that you can optimize the development of the city over time? There are a lot of project plans, and services, and MUDs, and mechanisms, but no overall vision about what’s the big idea,” continued Park.

Park explained that there are myriad reasons to have plans and, for Houston, the relationship between development and transportation needs to be addressed—not just cars and future traffic, but also the relationships between development and various types of transportation beyond the automobile. “Too much development, too much traffic—that comes with growth and change,” said Park.

Among other efforts, Blueprint raised $120,000 to hire an experienced planner to advise the city in how to develop the plan, scopes, budgets, and timelines. “The city, having never done this before, had no concept of resources,” said Webb. The City of Houston pitched in $10,000 to hire the consultant. Blueprint also held three citizens’ congresses in the years to collect visions of what citizens wanted their city to be. “We compiled all that and gave it to Peter Park,” said Martha Murphree, Blueprint’s executive director.

THE URBAN Planner

Park initiated the exploratory steps for the plan to spur the discussion about viable strategies critical to the growth of a major metropolitan area. He worked with city staff to define the scope of the plan and what it should accomplish.

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the city and wanting a walkable urban city. It hasn’t been a priority. [Walkable areas are] not going to be everywhere, but it ought to be easier to do in Houston and the next generation of people who inherit the city are interested in these urban walkable places. Where people go and want to be there is a high priority on the human scale and activities for people. American cities prioritize the automobile at the expense of other things: freeways cut through underrepresented neighborhoods or high parking requirements result in objects in a big surface parking lot. High parking requirements and wider roads have not made it easy to create walkable urban areas but I think that is changing.”

Park cited Houston’s Complete Streets policy as a plan to make streets safer and more accessible, that Mayor Parker issued an executive order for in 2013) as one of the major initiatives that would fall under this broader umbrella vision for the city to grow, protect established neighborhoods, and find ways to direct growth and investment where it is most beneficial.

He also spoke about Houston’s light rail system, MetroRail. The system opened its first line in 2004 and has five new lines in different stages of planning and construction. “I have heard people criticize the light rail and it’s ridiculous,” said Park. “The corridors are going to become enormously successful and will be able to demonstrate to other cities what capitalized transit investment looks like.”

Park also addressed the city’s tradition of freewheeling, speculative development. With good planning in place, he said, the risks associated with this type of uncontrolled urban growth can be mitigated. “More clarity can be broadcast from the city as a signal to the investment community,” he said. “[Planning can] coordinate major tax breaks, increase jobs, and distribute density in a smart way to concentrate it on the transit corridors.” He added that smart planning is also about adding density, more affordability, and greater mobility without more and more cars on the road.

“It’s the nature of success that brings people together,” said Park. “If you aspire to make great places, people will want to experience them.”

THE PLANNING DIRECTOR
In March 2014, Mayor Parker and City Council installed Pat Walsh as Houston’s top planning and development official. Walsh is a trained civil engineer from Carnegie Mellon and the University of Texas, Austin, and former director of transportation and long-range planning for the City of Sugar Land. “We have made great progress in developing the plan,” said Walsh. “We are wrapping up the vision and goal statement and then we will add more meat to the bone.”

He also pointed to a planning and coordination tool, an interactive map available online, with layers of project information on it from various groups such as Buffalo Bayou Partnership, METRO, TxDOT, management districts, TIRZ (a Texas version of tax-increment financing), and the parks department. The city has been asking for voluntary participation from these organizations. The map will be on the city website and powered by its geographic information system.

The plan, as Walsh described it, is being created in a compressed timeline of 10 months. It will be at a higher level as a planning document and is an opportunity to assess whether or not the city has the right tools and if it is using them in an efficient and right way. “We have to do a better job of coordinating with the amazing numbers of entities who do planning in the city, and we have got to work in a more strategic way to work with our development community to utilize our land in the most effective way possible,” said Walsh. “We want our development community to be successful and we want to support them. And we know there are ways we can work together to mutually benefit. Houston is very successful in many ways without zoning. But we regulate development with subdivisions, landscape ordinances, dedication of right of way, drainage, and parking. We do have a lot of deed restriction-like zoning protections. We do not expect zoning to be an outcome of this. This is about making sure we are effective as possible at creating and enhancing the city.”

One of the ordinances to be examined relates to parking. Walsh said the city would revisit its parking policies to encourage vibrant walkable areas where people can visit their local restaurants and shops by foot, on a bike, or using transit. “Or it could be thinking more systematically about parking,” he said. “There are opposing interests with parking, there is a balance to be struck.”

One of Walsh’s goals is to gain a maximum degree of community support for the plan by engaging with the amazing numbers of entities who do planning in the city. He said. “There are opposing interests with parking, there is a balance to be struck.”

That is a sentiment echoed by Park. “If a plan reflects what people wanted then it’s more likely to be adopted and taken,” he said.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN
On January 8, Jennifer Ostlind, division manager of Houston’s planning commission presented the draft vision statement for the General Plan. “Houston offers opportunity for all. We celebrate our diversity of people, ideas, economy, culture, and place. We promote healthy and resilient communities through smart civic investments, dynamic partnerships, education, and innovation. Houston is the place where anyone can prosper and feel at home.”

The plan is uniting major stakeholders from METRO, the Texas Medical Center, Greater Houston Partnership, Greater Houston Builders Association, Urban Land Institute, Houston Independent School District, The Kinder Foundation, TxDOT, and Harris County to churches, neighborhoods, management groups, and professional groups to coordinate, collaborate, and focus their efforts on strategies to deal with a host of future growth and investment issues: infrastructure maintenance, growing the tax base, efficient spending of tax dollars by City Council decisions, and streamlining the planning and permitting procedures.

“It’s a business plan,” said Webb, “A set of guiding principles and strategies based on what the citizens said about goals and priorities.”

The city will inform and engage the public in the coming months by conducting a series of outreach strategies before the framework plan is presented publicly to City Council for adoption in late summer/early fall 2015. If successful, the General Plan could transform Houston from a model of automobile-enabled urban sprawl into a paradigm for how post-war American cities might reinvent themselves in the 21st century.

FLORENCE TANG IS A DESIGN PROFESSIONAL AND JOURNALIST BASED IN HOUSTON.
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LECTURE
The High Line as an Urban Accelerator: A Conversation
5:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW
washington.d.c.

SATURDAY 7
EVENTS
The Cloisters: Medieval Manhattan
9:30 a.m.
The Cloisters
1100 Jefferson Drive, SW
Washington, D.C.
si.edu

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Dust, Dialogue and Uncertainty: Slow Knowledge in Design Thinking and Practice
Pratt Manhattan Gallery
144 West 14th St.
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MONDAY 9
LECTURE
Transforming Arch Practice 2015 #1 TECHNOLOGY
6:00 p.m.
The Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
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TUESDAY 10
LECTURE
Alan Karchmer: Photographs of Château La Coste
6:00 p.m.
The Center for Architecture
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FRIDAY 13
LECTURE
Kolkata Metro East-West Corridor: Linking Transportation and Culture
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SATURDAY 14
EXHIBITION OPENING
This is for Everyone: Design Experiments for the Common Good
Modern Museum of Art
11 West 53rd St.
moma.org

THURSDAY 19
EXHIBITION OPENING
New York’s Underground Art Museum: MTA’s Arts & Design
6:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 Fifth Ave.
mcy.org

FRIDAY 13
LECTURE
Brutal! Paul Rudolph’s Post-war New York Interiors: A Conversation with Timothy M. Rohan and Donald Albrecht
6:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of New York
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WEDNESDAY 25
EVENT
Tour: Mount Vernon Triangle’s Brilliant Facades
10:00 am.
650 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C.
aiadc.com

TIMES SQUARE, 1984: THE POSTMODERN MOMENT
The Skyscraper Museum
39 Battery Place, New York
Through February 15

Once a seedy, crime-ridden corridor, Times Square has since been transformed into a vibrant and safe, neon-lit entertainment hub for theatergoers. But in 1984, the future of The Great White Way was uncertain. A proposal to erect a set of four skyscrapers and demolish the 1904 Times Tower jumpstarted a debate between urban renewal advocates and preservation-minded urbanists, and gave way to an “ideas competition” for the site, organized by the Municipal Art Society and National Endowment for the Arts. The Skyscraper Museum’s Times Square, 1984: The Postmodern Moment highlights 20 drawings from the juried competition, showcasing a real assortment of ideas, ranging from passionate declarations to more eccentric architectural proposals.
Can we look forward to the era when architecture in “Latin America” will begin to disappear? I hope so, and also other colonialist constructions, such as “the seven continents” or Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s “two continents of this hemisphere” (only the canals dug in Panama or Egypt make semi-true). I agree with Jorge Francisco Liernur in his forward that geography is good place to start for a discussion on architecture in “Latin America.” He argues for a “building that expresses the region” and gives a brief outline of the necessity of a chronological system that serves as a sub-structure for a diverse group of works that tell diverse narratives. He cites a brief bibliography that goes from Francisco Bullrich (1) to Roberto Segre (2) and Edward Said (3) toward a view that denies any cultural unity.

This book is a didactic textbook in a standard format that will serve English speaking students of architecture very well throughout the world. The texts are concise and informative even as the chapter headings are long and explicative such as, “1922: In an attempt to create a building expressive of the “cosmic race” Jose Vasconcellos inaugurates in Mexico City the headquarters of the secretaria of educacion publica and formalizes the muralist project.”

In the last chapter, “Provocations for a conclusion: Islands no more,” the authors write “a history from a Latin American perspective... regions that have always been islands (of Solitude).” I would agree that a Latin American perspective can only exist from the outside and not within its territory that was transformed by the 19th century independence wars and today is rapidly evolving, such as the current normalization of Cuba-U.S.A. relations. We return to geography and maybe now we can see the world made up of many oceans and four large islands: Antarctica, Australia, Euro-Asia, Africa, and America.

In the chapter 1976, the authors write while the “hypochromaticism of Barragan was the prominent style, a more North American type of postmodernism did emerge in Mexico... that was equally devoid of any theoretical armature.” Could (Mexican) post-modern architecture ever be a historical system that criticizes the limits of the... continued on page 23
Architecture Beyond Borders continued from page 22.

Modern movement? Two books lay the theoretical foundation for the post-modern in architecture: Complexity and Contradiction by Robert Venturi (1966) and L’Architettura della città (1966) by Aldo Rossi. The authors also cite Learning from Las Vegas by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steve Izenour as a source of the theory of the post-modern in architecture. I would say that none of these three books had a historical system in mind and that they are very different kinds of texts. The first is a chronology of mannerist architecture with some works by the author as a post-script, the second an important attempt at establishing a theory of architecture through the analysis of the history of a few European examples, and the third a studio project at Yale University.

I highly recommend Modern Architecture in Latin America, which will likely open up “a can of worms” or Pandora’s box, in a discussion that is a little less superficial about the complexities and contradictions inherent in a dialogue that goes East, West, and South.

Carlos Brillembourg is the architecture editor for Bomb magazine.
MARKETPLACE

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER FEBRUARY 4, 2015

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Anton Grassl Photographs Architecture
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital / Perkins + Will
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The National Significance of the Frick's Page Garden

This decade has seen numerous museum expansions and expansion plans, most of them program-driven justifications for more space, some have been sensitively executed, others not. Nearly five years ago The Architect's Newspaper asked me to write an opinion piece that ultimately ran with the provocative title: “Museum Stomping Grounds: Charles Birnbaum believes there is no reason our cultural landmarks cannot also protect our historic landscapes.” That piece asserted that stewardship solutions in 21st-century museum design recognize that there is “an opportunity for expansion-minded institutions to engage in a more holistic reevaluation of their proposed building and site expansion programs, one that would result in built work in which curatorial values previously placed solely on architecture and collections would be extended to include landscape, and both the physical and historical context for the museum would be given weight in planning and design decision making.” It focused on Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (which destroyed its rare villa landscape that included an Italianate carriage house), its neighbor, the Museum of Fine Arts (which successfully reestablished its historic relationship with the Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.-designed park system called the Emerald Necklace), and the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, (which destroyed a Modernist landscape design by George Patton and Harriet Pattison), and posed several questions: What do we value? What is the context for guiding change? How do we measure success?

Those questions are circulating again, prompted in June 2014 when officials at the venerable Frick Collection in New York City announced their intent to add about 60,000 square feet of space to the institution, including about 40,000 square feet of new construction. In doing so, they would destroy their exquisite Russell Page-designed viewing garden on East 70th Street, which, according to a Frick press release in 1977, was created as a “permanent garden.” Today the garden has become a focal point of opposition, which is probably a great surprise to Frick officials because it was barely mentioned (and treated dismissively) when the expansion plans were first announced.

Since then, they’ve spent months auditioning various flawed talking points, including a museological Manifest Destiny, in hopes of tamping down the opprobrium, only to see opposition grow (aided by the efforts of advocacy organization Unite to Save the Frick). Surprisingly, in a December 2014 article Wall Street Journal critic Julie Lovine advocated for the expansion, went so far as to suggest that the garden—a permanent, site-specific work of art—be “transplanted to a site in nearby Harlem—where gardens are truly scarce and people might actually be allowed to sit in it” (the Frick praised the article on Twitter, so I guess they support the idea.)

The good news is that today there is a higher degree of critical understanding of the designed landscape’s value that was all but absent even a few years ago. Robert A.M. Stern, influential architect and dean of the Yale School of Architecture, recently stated, “Gardens are works of art”; and Michael Kimmelman, the New York Times architecture critic weighed in, writing “Great public places and works of landscape architecture deserve to be treated like great buildings.”

In 2015 all eyes will be on the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, which will decide whether or not the Frick can proceed. Referencing the 50th anniversary of the passage of the law that created the Commission, the New York Landmarks Conservancy recently wrote: “Since [its creation], the Landmarks Preservation Commission has granted landmark protection status to almost 1,400 individual landmarks, 117 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 112 historic districts, and 20 historic district extensions located throughout all five boroughs.”

“The Landmarks Law is one of the strongest in the nation, and has served as a model for cities and towns across the country and around the world.”

In the past 50 years we have seen an expansion and professionalization of the landscape preservation movement, and with this maturation we have seen a valuing for holistic stewardship—one that no longer excludes the historic designed landscape. Will these advances factor into the Commission’s decisions about the Frick?

Discussing preservation is tricky and can get into mind-numbing minutiae, so let’s deal with some of the highlights.

Overarching standards and guidelines, which help inform state and local statutes, are issued by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and are part of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. A significant change occurred in 1995 when the title—the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings—was updated and renamed Historic Properties, putting “buildings, structures, sites, objects, districts, and landscapes” on equal footing. This subtext of changes has great consequences and implications for all sites on the National Register of Historic Places, which includes the Frick. Regarding the Standards, another thing to consider is the period of significance, which identifies the “span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most properties have a clearly definable period of significance.” This is treated as a cut-off point for deciding what is and is not subject to protection and preservation, and it’s a significant talking point for Frick officials. The mansion was built between 1912 and 1914 as a private home designed by Carrère and Hastings, expanded upon by John Russell Pope, and opened to the public as a museum in 1935. Frick officials assert that, because the Page garden was constructed in 1977, it lies outside the period of significance. However, part of the 1995 update to the Standards noted above includes the following: “Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.”

Significantly, in 1996 a document was published that provided technical guidance on how to apply the Standards to landscapes. The Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, which I authored during my tenure at the helm of the National Park Service’s Historic Landscape Initiative, note that “assessing a landscape as a continuum through history is critical in assessing cultural and historic value.”

The museum was designated an Individual Landmark by the Commission in 1973—a local designation. That was updated in 1974 to include an additional three lots owned by the museum on East 70th Street specifically stipulating, “a garden will be developed on these lots.” Those lots had originally been acquired for a possible expansion, but those plans were abandoned, hence the language of the 1974 update. In 2008, the Frick was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior—a national appointment that places the institution among an elite group of sites. While the period of significance is listed as 1912–1935, the language of the designation describes the 1970s architectural additions made by John Barrington Bayley and mentions the Page garden. The narrative also states:

“Mark Alan Hewitt [an architect, preservationist and architectural historian] commented on the stringent stewardship of the building by the institution, in particular Bayley’s addition:

“The trustees...have guarded Hastings’ design contribution zealously through the decades, preventing the defacement by modernist additions that have beset other institutions in the city. John Barrington Bayley’s 1977 entry vestibule and shoal [the Russell Page] garden were well matched to the Hastings and Pope building...”

Best practices suggest that the Landmarks Preservation Commission re-examine the 1973-74 designations. Back then, the Page garden had not yet been realized and Page was still alive and in active practice. With Page’s death in 1985 his career can now be assessed and the import of his extant work, such as his garden at the Frick—which the New York Times called one of his “most important projects”—can be determined. The Commission should examine whether the garden has “acquired historic significance” in its own right, as the updated Secretary’s Standards have outlined and the National Historic Landmark designation suggests.

If the Commission re-examines the designation and if they find that the garden is significant, then it would follow that the physical and historical context would be given equal weight in design decision-making, and holistic expansion plans would acknowledge the invaluable and irreplaceable landscape that is at stake.
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