We welcome ArcSpace back after a holiday hiatus. The gloves are really starting to come off regarding WTC plans, from group therapy to the emperor's new clothes, with a lot of hope and pessimism thrown in for good measure. Gehry's take? "...I found it demeaning that the agency paid only $40,000 for all that work." Add to the mix Olympics 2012. Government and land planning - an oxymoron in Israel? Oaxaca, Mexico, seems to be doing things right. St. Petersburg pleas for preservation - and sends Eric Owen Moss back to the drawing boards for another competition round. There's more than just Disney Hall on Grand Avenue. An art lover takes on museum designs around the world, and a new home for art in the Italian hills. Bridging the gap between architectural education and reality. Take a break and read some (seriously) fun fiction inspired by architecture.

Competition winner: Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA): Central Chinese Television (CCTV) Headquarters, Beijing, China
Opera design: Zaha Hadid: "Desire" at Helmut List-Halle, Graz, Austria
Under construction: Michael Maltzan Architecture: Kidspace Children's Museum, Pasadena, California
Books: Samuel Mockbee; Santiago Calatrava

Op-Ed: Group Therapy at Ground Zero: As the gallant architects themselves would be the first to concede, it's literally a dream assignment. New York Times

Opinion: Is Inspiration Enough? What the WTC plans accomplished and what they're up against. By James S. Russell, AIA- Architectural Record

Soaring Plans, Somewhere Over Rainbow: occasionally the city has one of those the-emperor's-got-no-clothes moments...The naked ones in this instance are the nine architectural plans-- New York Times

Nine Lofty Ideals: But one WTC plan best meets the needs of New Yorkers- NY Newsday

Decision Time Approaching: Public and private input to shape plan: skepticism about whether the latest plans will find their way into the internal planning... NY Newsday

Towerling Visions: Questions for Frank Gehry- New York Times

Olympics 2012 And NYC: will the games stimulate the economy and fund an array of needed projects, or will it destroy neighborhoods and leave a lasting debt?- Gotham Gazette

First the Prime Minister's Office takes the land, now the planning: [planners and environmentalists] are concerned that the restructuring will be a serious blow to the independence and professionalism... Ha'aretz (Israel)

McDonald's loses a round to Oaxacan [Mexico] cultural pride: illustrates a principle that many U.S. cities have failed to grasp.- Los Angeles Times

Imperial, Imposing, Imperiled. St. Petersburg Marks 300 Years With Pride -- and a Plea for Preservation. By Linda Hales - Eric Owen Moss- Washington Post

Downtown's Disney Hall-abaloo: The Concert Hall Is Great, But in 2003, Keep an Eye on Grand Avenue. By Sam Hall Kaplan - Los Angeles Downtown News

Art Houses: Why a white shoebox in Munich succeeds as a museum. ...many new museums win praise without demonstrating comparable solicitude for their contents. - Stephan Braunfels- The New Yorker

In Italian hills, a new home for art: Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Rovereto and Trento...a remarkable building and contents - Mario Botta- International Herald Tribune

The Space Between: The gap between architectural education and architectural practice is huge. By Joy Kohnlauch (via ArchVoices)- DesignIntelligence

The Fiction Issue: Eight short stories inspired by architecture [images]- Metropolis Magazine

INSIGHT: Hunkering Down While Gearing Up for the New Year- ArchNewsNow