

Today's News - Tuesday, March 9, 2010

- We lose two masters of the skyscraper: Kamin pays tribute to Graham, "the Burnham of his generation" (SOM office credo: "If you disagree with Graham, shut up"; and Williams, "not a doctrinaire modernist."
- Australia's former prime minister minces no words in speaking to developers in Sydney: "ice-cube tray" high-rises and "gormless" apartment blocks display "an absence of civic conscientiousness."
- Many California cities are adopting design guidelines that eliminate a lot of ugly buildings, but do they also eliminate creativity? "Manipulating the look and feel of a city is a weird science."
- Rochon on Vancouver's "state of architectural transition": Vancouver Art Gallery should not even consider moving from its "slice of compressed urban magic"; the new roof for BC Place Stadium "is something to get excited about"; and housing atop Woodward's "feels exactly right."
- Critics claim moving the VAG makes no sense from a city-building perspective: "We have a small number of people on an ego trip, wanting to do a Bilbao," says Bing Thom.
- Lindsay on Detroit: can it "really shrink its way back to greatness (or at least stop the bleeding)?" Maybe, maybe not - it's "always had a weakness for urban renewal fads."
- Meanwhile, the city debates the future of its "most iconic ruin," the grand Michigan Central Station (grand slide show, too).
- While Detroit may ponder urban farms, Cleveland's Gardens Under Glass is an "urban eco village" in (drum roll, please) a mall.
- King on the "sea of contention" facing proposals for San Francisco's Embarcadero, in "a fractious district where obstruction has been refined to an art."
- Plans to "respectfully rehabilitate" the National Mall to make it more sustainable and accessible move forward (public comment period open until March 18).
- Calatrava's Liège-Guillémains railway station: "Nothing about the lofty structure, which appears to change shape at every angle, is static" (terrific slide show).
- Campbell coos over Emerson College's restoration of its Art Deco Paramount Center: "one of the triumphs of recent Boston architecture and urbanism" (topped by dorm rooms for 262 future students).
- Maki muses on his new MIT Media Lab: it's "one of the best buildings we ever produced in my long career."
- Cheek cheers a deal to save an old Seattle sanctuary, but the new church is "ultimately, just a big, tall box...while that's an altogether honest architectural expression for an urban site, it's not a space that seems likely to trigger a spiritual rush."
- Fetell ponders what kind of architecture works best for places of worship (researchers studying awe have some answers).
- Hess cheers a high school auditorium that's so much more than that: it's "an instant civic monument...one of the most joyous, rhythmic, lively and uplifting spaces added to our area in recent decades."
- Q&A with Harrington of the Architects Council of Europe re: the role of women in architecture today; what it still means to be a European architect: "We don't fear for our architecture; we just need a bit more nourishment."
- An 11th-hour rescue for Yamasaki archives (shredders were prepped).
- Memphis launches the Paul R. Williams Project to put a spotlight on the "architect to the stars."
- 2010 ULI Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition picks four finalists for \$50,000 grand prize.

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Obituary: Bruce Graham, architect of Willis Tower and John Hancock Center, dies at age 84: "He was the Burnham of his generation"...as forceful as a steamroller..."To my mind, American architecture, born in the Middle West, is an architecture born of people who know how to make things"... By Blair Kamin -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM); Graham and Graham [images]- Chicago Tribune

Obituary: Frank Williams, Architect of Skyscrapers, 73: "'One of Frank's strengths was that he was not a doctrinaire modernist"...persuaded major developers to build skyscrapers "of a higher quality than the white-brick shoe boxes...so prevalent in the 1960s..." -- Michael J. Crosbie; Suzanne Stephens- New York Times

Paul Keating takes apart Sydney's 'ice-cube tray' high-rise living: "...gormless" apartment blocks...are depressing the city's residents and defacing the Harbour..."[The community does] not need instruction in architecture or design to know what is mediocre or bad, they know it instantly..."an absence of civic conscientiousness" that has led to "urban incoherence" -- Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)- Daily Telegraph (Australia)

Leftovers from City Hall: A bland decade comes to an end: A developer I know said cities for the last 20 years have...gotten into the architecture business. Fearing ugly buildings or chaotic development, municipalities all over Southern California have adopted design guidelines. While the rules eliminated a lot of ugly buildings, I think they also eliminated creativity...Manipulating the look and feel of a city is a weird science. - San Gabriel Valley Tribune (California)

Getting its houses in order: For culture, sports and the homeless, Vancouver is in a state of architectural transition...Vancouver Art Gallery...How can you compare that slice of compressed urban magic to a new gallery that would be built on one of two parking lots...new \$458-million roof for BC Place Stadium is something to get excited about...Portland Hotel Society...atop...the Woodward's...When a house feels exactly right, enough to be called a home, that's when there's music and not a single note is forced. By Lisa Rochon -- Francis Rattenbury (1905); Arthur Erickson (1980s); Stantec Architecture; Gregory Henriquez [images]- Globe and Mail (Canada)

Vancouver Art Gallery should stay put, advocates say: ...moving the VAG makes no sense from a city-building perspective...would empty out the heart of the city, make no economic sense..."we have a small number of people on an ego trip, wanting to do a Bilbao"...should concentrate on improving its collection, not building an expensive box designed by an expensive international architect. -- Bing Thom - Globe and Mail (Canada)

Demolishing Density in Detroit: Can Farming Save the Motor City? Can Detroit really shrink its way back to greatness (or at least stop the bleeding)? ...plans must sound like a model city for locavores, urban farmsteaders...and anyone concerned about the fate of sprawl in the era of peak oil...has always had a weakness for urban renewal fads... By Greg Lindsay/"Aerotropolis"- Fast Company

Seeking a Future for a Symbol of a Grander Past: Detroit has become

embroiled in an urgent debate over how to save what is perhaps its most iconic ruin...Michigan Central Station, closed for more than 20 years..."It's the quintessential example of urban decay in Detroit...To see redevelopment of that station would have a major impact on morale"... - New York Times

Galleria Mall is giant greenhouse, raising organic crops in Cleveland: ...Gardens Under Glass...an "urban eco village"...meant to be a bold statement about sustainability as well as a novel way to attract more people -- and their money -- to the mall.- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Embarcadero proposal faces sea of contention: ...a set of proposals...for developing the inland side of the street...detailed and dutiful - but it's hard to see how they'll sway opinions in a fractious district where obstruction has been refined to an art...planners are trying to balance two civic visions...So far there's little or no evidence of progress...With luck, planners and skeptics will genuinely seek common ground - rather than start firing yet again. By John King- San Francisco Chronicle

Plan to "Respectfully Rehabilitate" National Mall Moves Forward: ...with critical, postponed maintenance work (up to \$400 million worth) and future enhancements designed to make the Mall both more sustainable and accessible...public comments accepted until March 18 [links to reports]- The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

Liège-Guillemins TGV Railway Station: Santiago Calatrava's out-of-this-world high-speed-train station puts an ancient city back on the map...Nothing about the lofty structure, which appears to change shape at every angle, is static. [slide show]- Architectural Record

A perfect marriage of old, new: Emerson College unveils striking Paramount Center...one of the triumphs of recent Boston architecture and urbanism...embodies the wonderful urban paradox in which memory meets invention...up above everything where the views are, a top hat of dorm rooms for 262 future students. By Robert Campbell -- Elkus Manfredi; Sussman/Prejza- Boston Globe

Where ideas can flow: MIT's Media Lab moves into \$90 million building...Fumihiko Maki called it "one of the best buildings we ever produced in my long career" [slide show]- Boston Globe

In modern church architecture, the magic of sacredness is rare: A deal saved the old downtown sanctuary and allowed First United Methodist to build a new church near Seattle Center...ultimately, it's just a big, tall box. And while that's an altogether honest architectural expression for an urban site, it's not a space that seems likely to trigger a spiritual rush. By Lawrence W. Cheek -- Bassetti Architects [images]- Crosscut (Seattle)

What Architecture or Design Works Best for Places of Worship? People seek many different things in a spiritual experience...Can design help us do this? In short, yes...Researchers studying awe, an emotional state closely linked to transcendence, believe that a key trigger is a sense of vastness. By Ingrid Fetell/"Aesthetics of Joy"- Science + Religion Today

Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center stands head and shoulders above other relatively recent additions to our area: You don't expect to find high architecture in a high school auditorium...upsets all expectations...an instant civic monument, a luminous and intimate theater and a top-quality teaching tool all in one...one of the most joyous, rhythmic, lively and uplifting spaces added to our area in recent decades... By Alan Hess -- Hodgetts+Fung; Fisher Dachs Associates; Paul Scarbrough- Mercury News (California)

Architecture in Europe: Q&A with Selma Harrington/Architects Council of Europe...the role of women in architecture today, what it still means to be a European architect and how the profession is coming out of the economic crisis... - New Europe

Yamasaki Associates Architectural Records Saved at Last Minute: ...rescued from shredding at the 11th hour...State Historic Preservation Office in Michigan...assembled a crew to drive a truck from Lansing to Troy, with one day's notice, to save the archive from being shredded.- New York Times

Memphis puts spotlight on L.A.'s 'Architect to the Stars': Roots here, but pioneering work shaped California style: The Art Museum at the University of Memphis and AIA Memphis are leading a collaboration to create the Paul R. Williams Project...The pioneering black architect has roots here. - Commercial Appeal (Memphis)

The Final Four: Teams from Harvard, Maryland, NC State/UNC, and Penn are Finalists in 2010 ULI Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition: Students Craft Plans to Revitalize San Diego Site; \$50,000 Top Prize Goes to Winner [links to images]- Urban Land Institute (ULI)

Book Review: "Design through Dialogue: A Guide for Clients and Architects," by Karen A. Franck and Teresa von Sommaruga Howard: A helpful communications primer offers...but as useful as this book proves, it leaves some uncomfortable questions about communication unaddressed. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow

Zaha Hadid Architects: King Abdullah II House of Culture & Art, Amman,

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