

Today's News - Tuesday, March 29, 2011

- This year's Pritzker Prize winner was to be under wraps until April 11, but a Spanish news source spilled the beans yesterday, so today Hawthorne, LaBarre, and Lifson offer their takes (Terry Riley chimes in, too).
- An interesting mix debate: The Incredible Shrinking City: Can empty urban lands be brought back to life?
- Hume cheers the trend of 21st-century architecture being about connectivity and community - a hard lesson for some architects "more inclined to stand out rather than fit in" to learn.
- Cheek on the "tyranny" of the right angle "making Seattle's streetscape tedious" and "a little nonlinear thinking by designers can go a long way" - though some "architects tend to come unhinged from reality and create shapes that would better be left on the planet Mongo."
- Hopes are high that fresh blood (and a future competition) will re-spark the "languishing" Houses at Sagaponac development on Long Island.
- De Monchaux is more than a bit disappointed in Gehry's Manhattan tower: "This skyscraper tops out like a decapitated bundle of celery" that sits "on a six-story reddish masonry base with the grace of an ecclesiastically-scaled candle landing on a cupcake" (ouch!).
- Carretero on the new home for the world's richest man's "mind-blowing" art collection: "it might almost be a coiled primeval creature straining to burst from the skin of a reptile...ethereal and otherworldly...a thrilling new treasure of modern architecture."
- Long cheers Leveté's V&A victory: "It is easy to see why she won...her project had the most conviction."
- King corners a few stories, including a San Francisco synagogue returning to its pre-quake neoclassical glory and "a shot of shameless self-promotion."
- A look at one of Philip Johnson's least-known works that may be his best: the 1963 Pavilion at Dumbarton Oaks.
- Groves on a mystery landowner's planned 85,000-square-foot "mega-mansion" in L.A. that some very tony neighbors claim "pushes the bounds of common sense and decency" + Mystery solved: owner is a Saudi prince (quelle surprise!).
- One we couldn't resist: a music video celebrates Mies van der Rohe (we kid you not!).

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Pritzker Prize jury keeps it minimalist with Eduardo Souto de Moura: The Portuguese architect's win marks three straight years of winners with a spare style...Taken on its own, the award seems most clearly to honor his unwavering commitment...to a tough, muscular brand of Minimalist architecture...the jury is sticking with architecture that aims for a certain timelessness and is stubbornly, expertly pared down to its essentials. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Peter Zumthor; Kazuyo Sejima/Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA; Paulo Mendes da Rocha; Oscar Niemeyer; Alvaro Siza- Los Angeles Times

Pritzker Prize, Architecture's Nobel, Goes to Obscure Portuguese: The winner of...architecture's very own Nobel, is 58-year-old Eduardo Souto de Moura. Wait... Who?!? ...[he] is a virtual nobody outside the rarefied world of haute architecture...We shouldn't be terribly surprised; this is just how the Pritzker committee rolls. By Suzanne LaBarre [images]- Fast Company

Eduardo Souto De Moura Wins Pritzker: ...a Portuguese architect who blends modernism with tradition and history...combines physical beauty with social concerns... By Edward Lifson -- Terence Riley [audio + slide show]- National Public Radio (NPR)

Debate: The Incredible Shrinking City: Places like Detroit are steadily losing people. Can empty urban lands be brought back to life? By Jennifer Bradley/Brookings Institution; Richard Florida; Toni L Griffin Toni L Griffin; Sam Staley; Terry Schwarz/Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative; Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson; Michael A. Pagano/University of Illinois, Chicago- New York Times

Open-concept architecture transforms city: Whether cultural, corporate, condo or commercial, 21st-century architecture just wants to be part of the community...it has been a hard lesson for architects to learn...they have been more inclined to compete than co-operate, to stand out rather than fit in. But in a world urbanizing so quickly, the architect's role is more one of supporting actor than star of the show. By Christopher Hume- Toronto Star

The tyranny of the right, architecturally speaking: The regimentation of the right angle is making Seattle's streetscape tedious. Curves may be more difficult and costly to build, but a little nonlinear thinking by designers can go a long way...You don't have to hire Calatrava. It's a slippery slope, though... By Lawrence W. Cheek -- Heliotrope; Miller Hull; NBBJ- Crosscut (Seattle)

New Architects Enlisted for Languishing Houses at Sagaponac Development: "We are at a place where either this project dies and goes off, or it pivots to face a new reality." -- Tsao & McKown; Keenen/Riley; Shigeru Ban; Smith-Miller + Hawkinson; thread collective; Flying Elephant Studio; XTEN Architecture; Cook+Fox Architects; David Biagi Architect; Di Cicco Vinci Architects; HanrahanMeyers Architects; Leven Betts Architects; Morris Sato Studio; PLAid; Resolution: 4 Architecture; Tarantino Studio/Frank Lloyd Wright; Zung Design [slide show]- Architectural Record

Crit> 8 Spruce Street: New York by Gehry struggles to find its place among Manhattan skyscrapers...This skyscraper tops out like a decapitated bundle of celery. It meets the ground not at all, instead descending on a six-story reddish masonry base with the grace of an ecclesiastically-scaled candle landing on a cupcake...question of whether the building represents a failure or success by architect or city. By Thomas De Monchaux [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Move over, Mr Getty: Carlos Slim, the world's richest man, opens the Soumaya Museum in Mexico City, which will house his mind-blowing collection of art...With an immensity of scale and absence of discrete facades it might almost be a coiled primeval creature straining to burst from the skin of a reptile...ethereal and otherworldly...a thrilling new treasure of modern architecture -- that will hold its own around the world. By Juan Carretero -- Fernando Romero- Independent (UK)

V&A architect: It doesn't get better than this: Amanda Leveté...thrilled to have beaten international competition to redevelop "the home of art and architecture" in Britain. By Louise Jury + A winning design... now let's build it...It is easy to see why she won...There were options from the iconic to the laconic, and some looked a bit half-hearted. Leveté's project had the most conviction... By Kieren Long- Evening Standard (UK)

Historic Sherith Israel back to pre-quake glory: ...as part of an ongoing restoration of the synagogue, the Albert Pissis-designed redoubt has been stripped and washed and returned to its gray neoclassical glory + with regards to care for the architecturally aged, the AIA East Bay chapter has launched an Endangered Historic Places Program + a shot of shameless self-promotion: "Cityscapes: San Francisco and Its Buildings," words and photographs by yours truly. By John King -- ELS Architecture; David Baker + Partners- San Francisco Chronicle

In the Round: One of Philip Johnson's least-known works may be his best: For as much as [he] plowed through decades and styles...some sniffed that other than his 1949 Glass House...the emperor had no clothes. But there is at least one other building worth 50 or 60, and chances are you haven't heard of it: the Pre-Columbian Pavilion at Dumbarton Oaks (1963)...The noble beauty of the small structure is the tension between transparency and heft... [slide show]- Wall Street Journal

Benedict Canyon neighbors unite against mystery landowner's planned 'megamansion': They say his planned 85,000-square-foot family compound pushes the bounds of common sense and decency...owner of a pricey 5.2-acre property on Tower Lane is fast becoming persona non grata among an exclusive club of Los Angeles homeowners. - Los Angeles Times

Former property owner confirms Saudi prince purchased Benedict Canyon site: "I warned the prince that he was surrounded by very powerful neighbors and that he should be extremely careful in what he proposes to build." By Martha Groves -- Jarrett Hedborg; Richard Landry- Los Angeles Times

Happy Birthday, Mies! ...celebrate with a rather, well, unique tribute to the architect... [music video]- The Architect's Newspaper

Book Review: "Immaterial World: Transparency in Architecture": Marc Kristal crystallizes increasingly complex notions of transparency with a light touch...invites additional research, reflection, and architecture. By Norman Weinstein -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Alejandro Aravena; Toyo Ito; Christian de Portzamparc- ArchNewsNow.com

A Tale of Two Pools: Q&A with Paulett Taggart: It was the sunniest of pools, it was the foggiest of pools, but the architectural approach is similar: there is nothing unnecessary. -- Paulett Taggart Architects; Mark Cavagnero Associates [images]- ArchNewsNow



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