

Today's News - Tuesday, June 7, 2011

- Iovine on Ouroussoff "moving on" leaves us wondering if the NYT will replace him: "at least he was there writing about architecture for the general public, one of the last of a rare and rarer breed" (we wish him all good things).
- Gwathmey Siegel adds a third name with a new majority share holder (we're just glad they're keeping Charlie's name).
- Public spaces get public airings everywhere: High Line Part Deux opens today to cheers for being an "economic dynamo" for the city - its \$115 million investment spawned \$2 billion in private investment dubbed "Architects Row."
- On the other side of Manhattan Island, South Street Seaport goes back to the drawing board ("after 40 years of missteps"): "Any effective design must carefully balance retail space with public space for the community."
- Maya Lin redesigns Newport, RI's Queen Anne Square "to make the space more inviting to visitors after years of decline" and honor Doris Duke.
- But some think the "funereal, 'meditative' design is antithetical to the joyful, energetic spirit of this area" - and why turn to "a big outsider's name" instead of Rhode Island's local talent?
- Gruber has a gripe about Santa Monica Landmarks Commission wanting control over the design process of City Hall's front yard that "is inhospitable and boring" and "cries out for a re-design" (already in the works by Corner's team who assumed it had "a rather free hand").
- Waggonner & Ball tapped for New Orleans water management project that intends to "follow the lead of the Dutch" to "become a more resilient ecological city."
- Dvir digs deep into Oxman's attempts to "apply naturally occurring physical processes to the design of objects and buildings" (naïveté is a key ingredient).
- Kamin on the iffy future of Gang's Ford Calumet Environmental Center: "If you're at optimist, it's on hiatus. If you're a pessimist, it's just been given the kiss of death."
- Glancey finds "a seat near the deer" in the pop-up Garsington Opera house in the English countryside that "is one of the most thrilling venues in Britain" - "an astonishing creation" and "one of the most thrilling places in the country to hear live music."
- Kucharek finds the opera company's "dismountable home" the "product of a weird and wonderful collaboration."
- Hawthorne gives a qualified thumbs-up to Ojai Music Festival's new pavilion: "Is challenging music somehow less threatening than challenging architecture?"
- While the Museo Soumaya may be "a gorgeous object," it "rises pretentiously, with troubled construction techniques and flawed exhibition design" (great pix, though).
- McGuigan makes the case for why we should all head to a remote farm in Nova Scotia next week for MacKay-Lyons' Ghost Lab 13, intended "to counter the numbing effects of globalization and a design culture that seems to favor theory over craft and spectacle over place" (with an impressive line-up, we're game!).
- Ending on a glum - but not surprising - note: AIA survey finds 63% of architects report stalled projects caused primarily by lack of financing.

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No More Nicolai: New York Times architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff is "moving on" at the end of this month...his even-handed voice sometimes had us all missing the impassioned harangues of his predecessor, Herbert Muschamp, but at least he was there writing about architecture for the general public, one of the last of a rare and rarer breed. By Julie V. Iovine - The Architect's Newspaper

Architect Acquires Majority Share of Gwathmey Siegel: ...firm will become Gwathmey Siegel Kaufman & Associates. Kaufman's own firm will retain its name, Gene Kaufman Architect (GKA). - New York Times

The High Line Isn't Just a Sight to See; It's Also an Economic Dynamo: ...revitalized a swath of the city and generated \$2 billion in private investment surrounding the park...more than makes up for the \$115 million the city has spent on the park and the deals it has made to encourage developers to build along the High Line without blocking out the sun..."Architects Row"... -- Jean Nouvel; Annabelle Selldorf; Neil Denari; James Corner Field Operations; Diller Scofidio + Renfro [slide show] - New York Times

South Street Seaport Goes Back to the Drawing Board: After 40 years of missteps, the area can start preparing itself for yet another effort to develop one of New York's oldest neighborhoods...ultimate success will depend on its ability to unite the diverse community visions for the Seaport...Any effective design must carefully balance retail space with public space for the community - all while respecting the character... -- SHoP Architects - Gotham Gazette (NYC)

Maya Lin redesigns Newport's Queen Anne Square: ...called "The Meeting Room"... to make the space more inviting to visitors after years of decline...meant in part to honor Doris Duke, who founded the Newport Restoration Foundation in 1968 and gave the park a few years later... -- Edwina von Gal [AP] - Boston Globe

Op-Ed: Block Maya Lin's cold design in Newport: What Queen Anne Square...really needs is improved lighting and plentiful, comfortable seating...The funereal, "meditative" design...is antithetical to the joyful, energetic spirit of this area...It's unfair and sad...that the Newport Restoration Foundation feels it needs to promote the project with a big outsider's name, instead of opening up a competition that could use local Rhode Island talent. By Mary Shepard - Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

The Dead Hand of the Present: Santa Monica Landmarks Commission turned the nondescript plaza in front of City Hall into the equivalent of a landmark...the designers were thought to have a rather free hand...gives the commission control over the design process...City Hall's front yard is inhospitable and boring...The place cries out for a re-design. By Frank Gruber -- James Corner Field Operations - The Lookout News (Santa Monica, CA)

Waggonner & Ball Tapped for New Orleans Water Management Project: ...goal is to encourage his city to follow the lead of the Dutch, who use water-control strategies that emulate natural systems rather than relying solely on dikes and barriers. "We in New Orleans have the opportunity to become a more resilient ecological city"... [image] - Architectural Record

"Nature is a brilliant engineer": In her cutting-edge research at MIT, Israeli-born architect Neri Oxman aims to apply naturally occurring physical processes to the design of objects and buildings..."You have to have a large degree of naivete to invest in research of my kind. I can't live without naivete; it gives me the freedom to imagine." By Noam Dvir -- Paola Antonelli/MoMA; Eran Neuman/Tel Aviv University; Zaha Hadid; Frank Gehry- Ha'aretz (Israel)

Jeanne Gang's Ford Calumet Environmental Center is either a) on hold; or b) dead: Consider this a Rorschach test: If you're an optimist, the Ford center is on hiatus. If you're a pessimist, it's just been given the kiss of death. By Blair Kamin -- Studio Gang Architects - Chicago Tribune

Garsington Opera: A seat near the deer, please: This pop-up opera house in the heart of the English countryside is one of the most thrilling venues in Britain...an astonishing creation...delightful marriage of architecture and landscape as one of the most thrilling places in the country to hear live music. By Jonathan Glancey -- Robin Snell/Snell Architects - Guardian (UK)

Wandering minstrel: Scene changer: Designing an opera pavilion that can be trucked off to Northampton for the winter demanded a flexible approach...Garsington Opera's handsome new £1.8m demountable home...pavilion is the product of a weird and wonderful collaboration...it took a lot of concentrated thought and work for a building that will only exist for three months a year. By Jan-Carlos Kucharek -- Snell Associates; Space Sound Consultants [images] - RIBA Journal (UK)

David Bury's new Libbey Bowl: ...Ojai Music Festival's...restrained look of its \$4-million new home flows more from practical than aesthetic concerns...the design raises a couple of fascinating - and in the end probably unanswerable - questions...Is challenging music somehow less threatening than challenging architecture? When there is a gulf between musical and civic values...the civic ones usually win out. By Christopher Hawthorne [images] - Los Angeles Times

Crit> Museo Soumaya, Mexico City: Is Fernando Romero's museum more than an iconic sculpture? ...while a gorgeous object, rises pretentiously, with troubled construction techniques and flawed exhibition design...while it possesses a strong formality on the exterior, the same cannot be said about the interior. By Luis Othón Villegas -- Fernando Romero Enterprise/FREE [images] - The Architect's Newspaper

Ghost Lab 13, June 14-17: Plotting a New Course for Architecture; A conference organized by Brian MacKay-Lyons aims to push locavore design to the forefront...to counter the numbing effects of globalization and a design culture that seems to favor theory over craft and spectacle over place...can a small summer conference...tucked up in Nova Scotia, really make waves? "We're all boonies architects. But I think when we come together as a group, there is a strength in numbers." By Cathleen McGuigan - Architectural Record

63% of Architects Surveyed Report Stalled Projects: Lack of Financing Cited as Primary Cause...the average value of each project was almost \$50 million per firm. - American Institute of Architects (AIA)

Book Review: Diving into Architecture from Every New Angle: Reading Guillevic's "Geometries": Why an obscure book of French poetry in a flashy translation goes to the heart of every architectural practice. By Norman Weinstein - ArchNewsNow

INSIGHT: Collaboration and Compromise: A Misunderstood Aspect of the Design Process: True collaboration is a symbiosis between the architect's design ideas, a project's setting, and the intentions of its users. By Peter Gisolfi, AIA, ASLA, LEED AP - ArchNewsNow



-- Steven Holl Architects: Nanjing Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China
-- Olafur Eliasson: Your rainbow panorama, ARoS Art Museum, Aarhus, Denmark

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