

Today's News - Tuesday, August 23, 2011

- ArcSpace brings us eyefuls of Ai Weiwei's (pretty amazing) "Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads" at LACMA in Los Angeles.
- Peirce pierce's through some possibly incorrect numbers when it comes to keeping public infrastructure in shape: ASCE's "figures may be exaggerated, but the bottom line need isn't."
- Zandberg minces no words when it comes to a new law in Israel that "is meant to help real estate and not social causes and will lead to the elimination of open spaces...without resolving the housing crisis."
- Kotkin considers why Los Angeles has "lost its mojo" - if not careful, the city is "going to end up like a better-looking Detroit."
- An in-depth look at how NYC's public-private model for creating public spaces "is a godsend" (and a model for urban centers everywhere).
- Moore gives (mostly) thumbs-up to the renovation of a 1961 housing estate in Sheffield: "The question is whether whatever is important will remain after its doing-up, which is both drastic and pernickety...mostly, it's refreshing."
- Saffron is only somewhat sanguine about Curtis Institute's Lenfest Hall in Philly: it "exhibits all the familiar tropes" of a building by Venturi and Scott Brown, but as designed by two young partners, it is "a distillation of the firm's signature tics, and unfortunately reads more like a pastiche than a birth announcement."
- Ronan's new Poetry Foundation in Chicago is a "little gem of a building" that will "quietly, over the course of time, say good and useful things."
- Crosbie cheers a new addition to FLW's famed First Unitarian Society Meeting House in Madison, Wisconsin, that "looks as though it was always meant to be there, showing deference to Wright's opus yet asserting its own quiet identity."
- A Billings, Montana, architect found himself "in the middle of history" in designing the Interpretive Learning Center at the WWII Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming.
- The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial takes its place on the National Mall, adding "another chapter in the long-running debate over how many monuments should be permitted in the expanse known as America's Front Yard."
- An amusing conversation with de Botton re: Living Architecture's vacation homes: "he probably has most fun choosing soap"; the reason "more status-conscious intellectuals" tend to ridicule him? "Perhaps they simply don't want to accept the fact that this pale man is more interesting company than they are."
- St. Petersburg, FLA, whittles the shortlist for a new \$50 million pier down to three very familiar names (causing a bit of upset that none are local).
- Glancey's review of (last) week includes Belfast's Titanic visitor center: "the building is as unforgettable as the story of the Titanic itself. It broods..."; plans to replace a bridge over Venice's Grand Canal are met with anger; Ron Arad reinvents the wheel; a Titanic fate for Foster's Harmon tower in Las Vegas?
- A bit more detail on glass, steel and stone design that would replace Ponte del Accademia (shades of Calatrava's not-so-happy Venetian bridge adventure?).
- Troppo Architects' partner (and survivor) pays tribute to three talents: "If there is an emerging architecture of reconciliation, we may have just lost some of its brightest proponents."
- Alsop and Lawrie have a name for their post-RMJM adventure: ALL Design (it will be interesting to see how that fares in a Google search).
- We couldn't resist: bunches of images and "staggering" statistics of Apple's planned Foster-designed "spaceship" HQ + Eyefuls of a remarkable new hotel in Berlin that "offers all the charms of outdoor camping inside a former vacuum-cleaner factory" (we're game!).

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Exhibition: Ai Weiwei: Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads, LACMA, Los Angeles

Infrastructure Whistle-Blowing: ...there's no doubt — keeping public infrastructure in shape...is the essence of common sense. But which spending, and how? ...The engineers' figures may be exaggerated, but the bottom line need isn't. By Neal Peirce -- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE); Charles Marohn/Strong Towns; Complete Streets - Citiwire

A protest bigger than the space it occupies: It is no secret that Israel does not have a single 'city square' deserving of the title: Under the guise of supposedly reducing the bureaucracy, and without a housing policy, the law is meant to help real estate and not social causes and will lead to the elimination of open spaces, public and private, without resolving the housing crisis at the heart of the demonstrations...Technion has accepted the challenge...under the title "More for Less." The Israel Association of United Architects also awoke from its slumber. By Esther Zandberg- Ha'aretz (Israel)

Lost Angeles: The City of Angels goes to hell: Why has Los Angeles lost its mojo? A big reason is a decline in the power and mettle of the city's once-vibrant business community...remains one of the least hospitable places for business in the country...If the system doesn't change..."we're going to end up like a better-looking Detroit." By Joel Kotkin - City Journal/The Manhattan Institute

Parks and Re-creation: How private citizens saved New York's public spaces: The public-private model is a godsend...Can the model save parks without rich neighbors? ...public-private partnerships make parks "even more public." It's a model that all of the city's parks could try. -- Adrian Benepi; Elizabeth Barlow Rogers/Central Park Conservancy; Bette Midler/New York Restoration Project; Friends of the High Line; PlaNYC; Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy - City Journal/The Manhattan Institute

Park Hill estate, Sheffield: Urban Splash's renovation has won the approval of the estate's original architects...The power...lies in its unrepeatable, crazy-heroic size...combined with thoughtfulness and intimacy...The question is whether whatever is important...will remain after its doing-up, which is both drastic and pernickety...mostly, it's refreshing. By Rowan Moore -- Ivor Smith/Jack Lynn (1961); Hawkins/Brown; Egret West [images] - Guardian (UK)

Design of Curtis Institute's Lenfest Hall has strong points but lacks spark: ...exhibits all the familiar tropes of a building by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown...Yet, technically speaking, [it] is not...the design is the first major project built under the brand of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates that did not include the participation of the two great Philadelphia architects...transferring their storied firm to two young partners, Daniel McCoubrey and Nancy Trainer. By Inga Saffron [images] - Philadelphia Inquirer

Poetry's New Palace: Chicago's Poetry Foundation is making good use of a \$200 million bequest: ...some trustees argued that poetry doesn't need a "Taj Mahal." But John Ronan's engaging structure couldn't be less flamboyant. Like good poetry, it reveals itself slowly...the little gem of a building...will quietly, over the course of time, say good and useful things. [image] - Wall Street Journal

Adding to Wright: A landmark religious building grows in harmony with a master: Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic First Unitarian Society Meeting House in Madison, Wisconsin, completed in 1951...The addition...looks as though it was always meant to be there, showing deference to Wright's opus yet

asserting its own quiet identity. By Michael J. Crosbie -- The Kubala Washatko Architects [slide show]- Faith & Form Magazine

"A light to show the way forward": Interpretive center opens at former internment camp: ...during World War II, more than 10,000 Japanese-Americans were interned here at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming + Billings architect "in the middle of history" -- Allen Rapacz/Schutz Foss Architects [slide show, links]- Billings Gazette (Montana)

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial joins an evolving National Mall: It's another chapter in the long-running debate over how many monuments should be permitted in the expanse known as America's Front Yard. [slide show]- Los Angeles Times

Vacation Homes for a New Britain: Alain de Botton wants to revolutionize Britain's long-held tastes in housing, design and architecture, and thus change the entire outlook of people in this rather traditionally-minded country..."From an architectural standpoint, Prince Charles rules the land." ...he probably has most fun choosing soap...It's sentences like these that cause more status-conscious intellectuals to ridicule de Botton. But perhaps they simply don't want to accept the fact that this pale man is more interesting company than they are. -- Living Architecture; MVRDV; Jarmund/Vignsnæs AS Arkitekter; NORDB; Hopkins; Peter Zumthor [images]- Der Spiegel (Germany)

Panel selects three finalists to design new Pier: Dali architects not among them...HOK was not one of three firms selected to submit designs for a new \$50 million Pier...Another early favorite also was cut: James Corner Field Operations... -- BIG/Bjarke Ingels Group/Clemmons Architecture; Michael Maltzan Architecture; West 8 - St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: Belfast's Titanic visitor centre prepares for launch, while Venice rebuilds its bridges and Ron Arad reinvents the wheel...The Titanic's tragic fate -- or something like it -- is about to befall the 26-storey Harmon Building in Las Vegas...plans to replace...Ponte dell'Accademia across the Grand canal have been met with anger... By Jonathan Glancey -- Todd Architects; Schiavani; Foster + Partners [images, links]- Guardian (UK)

Architects' Venice bridge plans divide city: Schiavina's glass, steel and stone design would replace Ponte del Accademia: Built in the 1930s as a temporary structure...spans what is considered one of the most picturesque corners of Venice. City authorities have been accused of rushing to replace the current bridge without proper public consultation. [images]- BD/Building Design (UK)

Architecture sector mourns a trio of its finest: What were we all doing that morning? ...discussing the prospect of a competition for a new sustainable tropical city on the mangrove forest edge of Darwin harbour...we lost three people...closest to bridging a gap in the national psyche. If there is an emerging architecture of reconciliation, we may have just lost some of its brightest proponents. By Phil Harris -- Greg McNamara/Lena Yali/Troppo Architects; Kevin Taylor/Taylor Cullity Lethlean landscape architects - The Australian

Will Alsop's new practice will be called ALL Design: ...takes projects with him from RMJM - despite claims he brought nothing in...He and partner Scott Lawrie plan to create a design-led studio working at all scales from products to entire cities. - BD/Building Design (UK)

Apple's spaceship campus revealed: The statistics of the proposed building are staggering...Cupertino's Mayor Gilbert Wong remarked, "there is no chance we are saying no!" -- Foster + Partners; Arup [images]- Gizmag (Australia)

The Great Indoors: Love camping but hate the winter cold? Well, now your problem is solved. A new hotel in Berlin offers all the charms of outdoor camping inside a former vacuum-cleaner factory...Hüttenpalast ("Hut Palace") - a recent addition to Berlin's trendy Kreuzkölln neighborhood...the "rooms" consist of trailers and rustic wooden huts from the former East Germany. -- Silke Lorenzen/Sarah Vollmer [slide show]- Der Spiegel (Germany)

Book Review: "One Million Acres & No Zoning": Lars Lerup's Outrageous Encomium to Houston Instructs and Infuriates: This isn't some dryly academic reconfiguration of trendy urban planning theory. I recommend it for the intrepid. By Norman Weinstein - ArchNewsNow

One-on-One: Architecture of Emotion and Place: Interview with Bartholomew Voorsanger, FAIA, MAIBC: The architect's aspiration to create expressive, dynamic spaces is absolutely the key to his work. By Vladimir Belogolovsky [images]- ArchNewsNow

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