• Two we couldn’t resist: a small “garden” in Paris is an astounding optical illusion.
• HUD has $2.5 million for the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Fellowship Program.
• The new International Green Construction Code will be available next spring.
• A radio show out of Miami (and available via podcast) makes the case every week that place matters.
• Australia selects six practices for the 2012 Venice Biennale who will aim “to provoke debate about the changing role of architects.”
• Wainwright is not all that impressed with London’s Boxpark, and even less so by developer’s attempt to sue the container shopping mall in Christchurch (to house businesses devastated by the earthquake): “Might we politely point him to the largest shopping mall in Europe,” built in 1989 in Odessa and “home to 6,000 independent traders,” it is made entirely of shipping containers.
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• A Croatian firm wins competition to design Istanbul’s first Disaster Prevention & Education Center (with simulation systems to experience earthquakes, hurricanes, liquefaction, tsunamis - oh my!).
• Kamin cheers a new Chicago charter school that proves even “in economically austere times, we don’t have to build boring, unimaginative architecture” (though it’s not faultless).
• Big business plays at pop-ups in Shoreditch’s Boxpark: ...represents the latest step in the appropriation of the aesthetic of big business...the project is perhaps one of the least imaginative uses of the shipping containers announced to...focus instead on implementing better ways for citizens to recycle materials... Bjarke Ingels Group [images, links]- The Atlantic Cities
• Crystal Bridges Challenge: Molding Moše Safdie’s Arkitecture into Art-chitecture: Like the two other recent additions to Safdie’s American oeuvre [Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and the United States Institute of Peace], Crystal Bridges is a “wow” building from the outside. But it is something of a problematic puzzle on the inside. By Lee Rosenbaum [images, links]- ArtsJournal
• From Vacant to Vibrant: Developers have been purchasing closed auto plants, which have helped communities regain considerable tax revenue...the study could help communities with vacant plants understand which approaches had been successful... bringing in new users was not always feasible and the best use for some sites might ultimately be green space. - New York Times
• The Mod Squad: Will Bruce Ratner Transform the Way New York Builds, or Is Prefab Another Project Too Far?...a modular construction...may transform the way the entire city, even the world, builds...“It’s taken us a while to get there on the architectural front...If modular happens, it would be a miracle. But then again, so is the fact Atlantic Yards is being built in the first place.”
• Regeneration next: The time has come for an end to sprawling suburbs and for the renewal of existing neighborhoods...Movement for Israeli Urbanism’s wide-ranging activities...have yet to percolate into the planning and decision-making process...Whose fault is it? Ashkelon is a living laboratory embodying the MIU’s arguments...Complex, evolutionary planning doesn’t promise to be error-free, “but it at least prevents us from making large mistakes” By Esther Zandberg -- Irit Sozli; Dror Gershon; Hillel Schocken; Zaev Posner - Haaretz (Israel)
• From Vacant to Vibrant: Developers have been purchasing closed auto plants, which have helped communities regain considerable tax revenue...the study could help communities with vacant plants understand which approaches had been successful... bringing in new users was not always feasible and the best use for some sites might ultimately be green space. - New York Times
• Leonardo DiCaprio’s Zero Waste Hotel aims to prove that high-end hotel architecture needn’t cost the earth. For the 23-room, 40,000 square foot property, which will open in summer 2013, Studio B has used 50% fewer materials, 40% less energy, and 90% less water than comparable hotels...By Blair Kamin -- Juan Moreno; Ghafari Associates [images]
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• The shock to the system: Gage Park charter school is more than eye candy: Is this another over-the-top, “wow” building? Yes. Yet scratch beneath the surface...that the center will generate greater public awareness so that when the next earthquake strikes there will be fewer casualties. -- ThyssenKrupp Elevator Architecture 2011 International Design Competition; Radionika Arkitecture [images, links] - New York Observer
• From Vacant to Vibrant: Developers have been purchasing closed auto plants, which have helped communities regain considerable tax revenue...the study could help communities with vacant plants understand which approaches had been successful... bringing in new users was not always feasible and the best use for some sites might ultimately be green space. - New York Times
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Herman Hertzberger laments fading role of architect: RIBA Gold Medal winner says architects are "no longer as important as we once were...We're not buried next to the king anymore" - BD/Building Design (UK)

Place Matters: How One Radio Show Makes the Case Every Week: Katherine Loflin interviews a diverse group of people...about the importance of place...While placemaking is not a profession, it is certainly a practice that has spread across multiple disciplines, far beyond design and planning roots. By Charles R. Wolfe -- Project for Public Spaces (PPS) [links] - The Atlantic

New International Green Construction Code (IgCC) Development Complete: ...new 2012 Code will be available Spring 2012. - International Code Council

GMF Awarded $2.5 Million from HUD to Manage Strong Cities, Strong Communities Fellowship Program: Grant from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will be co-managed with Cleveland State University and Virginia Tech...As many as 30 fellows will be assigned to six cities...will work for 24 months...to supplement existing capacity in...economic revitalization efforts. - German Marshall Fund of the United States

Is a “Garden” the World’s Greatest New Artwork? ...a remarkable garden in Paris titled Who to Believe? by Francois Abelanel...We’re accustomed to the idea that paint can form an illusion. But it’s a bit startling to find this effect created with grass and trees...resembles a terrestrial globe...[brings] together two seemingly divergent artistic traditions—the French garden and Anamorphosis. [images, video] - Smithsonian magazine

Bruce Beresford to Direct Frank Lloyd Wright Biopic "Taliesin": "It doesn’t cover his whole life, just a small section of it, and it doesn’t whitewash him into some sort of saint"...Who would play the lead? "We have someone in mind, but I can’t tell you yet." - Hollywood Reporter

Call for entries: 21st Annual Inform Awards to recognize outstanding work in landscape architecture, interior design, and object design (entrants must have a business address in Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Washington, DC, or North Carolina); registration deadline: March 2, 2012 - Virginia Society AIA

INSIGHT: At the Intersection of Medicine, Technology, and Design: Hybrid Operating Rooms: Technology has enabled the transformation of classic operating rooms into dynamic, multi-purpose environments - requiring a new design approach for architects. By Ross A. Cole, BAM Architecture Studio - ArchNewsNow

Call for entries: ArchNewsNow / MOO Competition: If you could hand your business card to one person in the world, who would it be? (It’s fun!) - ArchNewsNow

Dominique Perrault: Arganzuela footbridge, Madrid, Spain