Today's News - Thursday, January 19, 2012

• Chipperfield pens his agenda (in English and Italian) for the Venice Biennale: "I am interested in the things that architects share in common."

• Hansoms gives thumbs-up (and down) to Obama's urban agenda: while agencies are shifting "away from subsidizing suburban sprawl" and there are "smart-growthers and new urbanists in key positions," there is also "a tale that might make you tear your hair out."

• CTBUH releases its annual tall-building trends report: more skyscrapers "were completed in 2011 than in any year previous," and a "global dip is no longer expected. The effect this will have on the skylines of the world will be tremendous."

• Chaban discovers the real reason there are no skyscrapers in the middle of Manhattan: "Like cavemen following mammoth across the Bering Strait, early developers were following their prey" (so much for the "Manhattan bedrock myth").

• A group of Perth architects, urban planners, and historians has launched a campaign against the city's waterfront plans; its designer dismisses the criticism as "1970s claptrap" (with links to several detailed news stories).

• A much more positive response to a proposal for Cairns, Australia's waterfront.

• Trump threatens to dump his golf resort plans in Aberdeen, Scotland, if a proposed offshore wind farm goes forward, but some say the government should call bluff the billionaire: "not an altogether convincing performance...how ironic it would be if the blowhard's grand vision was undone by a wind farm" (second is a most amusing read).

• Hotel architecture is "undergoing a transformation" - unless you're a contrarian: with the exception of some high-profile, 5-star properties, what's being designed is "mere drops in an ocean of mediocrity."

• Brussat brings us a tale of two respirations in Dresden: "I would ask which aesthetic calls us more effectively to peace."

• Q&A with P+W's Syrett re: the development and applications of the firm's free online database of building materials that contain substances known or suspected to be harmful to health.

• Good news x 2 from AIA: it signs an MOU with Public Architecture and The 1% to advance pro bono service "as a fundamental component of practice" + AIA ABI goes "a quick list of some of the more notable things [he] has done for cities, followed by a tale that might make you tear your hair out."

• In the U.K., Design Council Cabe appoints a town planner and urban designer as its new director.

• We just couldn't resist the power of bird-song: a California town piping bird calls over a streetscape says it's reducing crime; skeptics are all aflutter (it does sound beautiful).

• Call for entries: National and University Library NJUK II in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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AIA and Public Architecture partner to advance pro bono service: "...will encourage AIA members to pledge to The 1%, a nationwide program...a portal on The 1% website to launch later this year that will support and track AIA members’ service contributions to communities in need..."until now the profession has never institutionalized pro bono service as a fundamental component of practice..."- American Institute of Architects (AIA)

Architecture Billings Index Positive for Second Straight Month: All regions except for the West showing improved demand for design services..."It’s too early to be sure that we are in a full recovery mode...Nevertheless, this is very good news...and it’s entirely possible conditions will slowly continue to improve as the year progresses."- American Institute of Architects (AIA)

Design Council Cabe appoints new director: Diane Haigh’s replacement has worked for Prince Charles and the Mayor of London...Nahid Majid OBE trained as a town planner and urban designer and spent 17 years working in the public sector...before moving to the private sector.- BD/Building Design (UK)

A California City Is Into Tweeting - Chirping, Actually - in a Big Way: Lancaster Mayor Thinks Piped-In Bird Song Reduces Crime: The chirps subconsciously discourage criminality..."Everybody is now in a better mood, a better place...It has just been astonishing to us how the community has changed as a result of a one-half-mile stretch." Some people are skeptical. [sound]- Wall Street Journal

Call for entries: National and University Library NUK II in Ljubljana, Slovenia; open to citizens of the Republic of Slovenia or other EU member states and/or competitors who have a place of business in either; cash prizes; deadline: March 23 [in English and Slovene]- Chamber of Architecture and Spatial Planning of Slovenia (ZAPS)

-- MAD: Ordos Museum, Kang Ba Shi City, Inner Mongolia, China -- Ma Yansong

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