

Today's News - Friday, February 3, 2012

- Holl is "the chosen one" (over Snøhetta and Morphosis) to design Museum of Fine Arts, Houston expansion.
- Mays marvels at a new residential development in Toronto's Little Portugal that "is no bully, but makes no bones about the fact that it's different" - it's helping to "shape the image of the city in fresh, bracing ways."
- Of minarets and domes: is this really "a bad time for Islamic architecture" in America, or because good design comes up with modern forms?
- Lewis finds Gehry's design for Eisenhower memorial is "creatively unconventional, innovative in form and use of materials, monumental in scale - and the wrong thing to build."
- Foes of Christo's "Over the River" take a final stand and "unleashed their final barrage."
- Birnbaum is a bit bewildered by Boston's "grass ceiling" when it comes to funding the city's Emerald Necklace: "Where are the Boston equivalents of major philanthropists who donated \$35 million to New York's High Line?"
- Joy joins Holl in Princeton University project.
- An emerging British talent laments that small firms will always lose out to the "big boys" when it comes large-scale projects.
- Rose offers a most amusing take on the week in review (most of it good news, too).
- Bernstein looks into P+W's free online database of hazardous building materials.
- Weekend diversions:
 - Kamin cheers Tigerman's show at the Graham Foundation that "encapsulates the work and wit of Chicago's design provocateur": it's "well worth seeing, even if you're already familiar with his eclectic opus and wisecracking ways."
 - L.A.'s Chinese American Museum presents four Chinese-American architects who helped shape the city "as modernist architectural visionaries."
 - Searle is stirred by Thomas Demand's photos of Lautner's "bent and battered models" with "chewed corners and dinked, friable edges": they "show what happens when modernity gets old."
 - "Migrating Landscapes" migrates to Toronto, exploring "the influence of migration and immigration on Canadian architects and designers"; we'll soon know which firms make Team Canada at this year's Venice Biennale.
 - Schwarzer sizes up Rosenfeld's "Building After Auschwitz": it's a "grandly ambitious book," but "evaluating Jewish-American architects for the Jewishness of their built works feels like a forced and, given the book's lack of evidence to the contrary, futile exercise."
 - Kraus gives (mostly) thumbs-up to Ascher's "The Heights: Anatomy of a Skyscraper": it's successful on one level, but skirts some important topics (like the "complex layers of society, culture, and politics").
 - Welton is wowed by "Windfall," a documentary that's not tilting at windmills: it "delivers a profound message: Look before you leap into wind power."
 - We couldn't resist: the Strandbeest, a kinetic sculpture by a Dutch artist and physicist, takes Melbourne, making "even the most stolid of Melburnians nervous" (so worth looking up video of this creature, too!).

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The chosen one: Steven Holl Architects picked to design Museum of Fine Arts, Houston expansion: "Everyone gave truly compelling presentations. It was exciting to see three quite different notions of how the project could be developed." -- Snøhetta; Morphosis - CultureMap Houston

In Toronto's Little Portugal, a mix of building scale and a taste of what's to come: Abacus Lofts is no bully, but...It makes no bones about the fact that it's different...We can hope that the other designers called on to create Toronto's next generation of mid-rise facades will follow Witt's lead...architects of our mid-rise future can help shape the image of the city in fresh, bracing ways. By John Bentley Mays -- Richard Witt/RAW Design - Globe and Mail (Canada)

Muslim America moves away from the minaret: In post 9/11 America the construction of new mosques in the US has sometimes sparked controversy and even confrontation. Is that why some new Muslim houses of worship are being built without the most recognisable features of Islamic architecture - minarets and domes? "It's a bad time for Islamic architecture"... -- Maryam Eskandari - BBC Magazine

Gehry's design for Eisenhower memorial misses the mark: ...creatively unconventional, innovative in form and use of materials, monumental in scale — and the wrong thing to build...aesthetic flaws stem primarily from urban design missteps: bloated size and proportions; and unwarranted, inappropriate transformation of an urban open space into a quasi-enclosed precinct. By Roger K. Lewis -- Frank Gehry - Washington Post

Foes of Christo's plan to drape over river make final stand: ...hundreds of opponents of the artist's plan to drape their beloved Arkansas River in shimmering fabric unleashed their final barrage. Amid an increasingly vocal chorus of support...\$50 million "Over the River" project — all paid for by the artist — has received the go-ahead from the Bureau of Land Management... - Denver Post

City Shaping V: Can Philanthropy for Boston's Parks Break Through the Grass Ceiling? Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. considered the Emerald Necklace the most important work of his career...Where are the Boston equivalents of major philanthropists...who donated \$35 million to New York's High Line? By Charles A. Birnbaum/The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLP) [images, links] - Huffington Post

Arts and Transit plan being prepared for Planning Board review; station architect named: Rick Joy...will also collaborate with Steven Holl Architects, the firm that is designing the projects academic buildings, on the design of the project's public plaza spaces. - Princeton University News

Comment: Small will always lose out to big: Michael Casey of emerging practice CaseyFierro talks about the disappointment of losing out to the big boys on a huge east London scheme, and why small practices will always struggle to win large-scale projects. - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: Camelot comes to Cockfosters (maybe), Frank Gehry's Signature Theatre opens and the World Trade Centre site struggles with a design flaw...a loading bay problem..."The Stone" could just be a speculative publicity stunt by some under-employed designers — in which case, well done. It worked...A good week also for Zaha Hadid...most cheering news...must be the restoration and reopening of Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat... By Steve Rose -- Rák Arkitektur - Guardian (UK)

To Help Make Sure Your Home Is Healthy, an Ingredients List: An architect and an interior designer have created an online database of hazardous building materials...Intended for architects and designers, the database can also be used by nonprofessionals... By Fred A. Bernstein -- Peter Syrett/Chris Youssef/Perkins+Will - New York Times

Tigerman retains bite; exhibit encapsulates work, wit of Chicago's design provocateur: "Ceci n'est pas une rêverie: The Architecture of Stanley Tigerman" at the Graham Foundation in Chicago well worth seeing, even if you're already familiar with his eclectic opus and wisecracking ways...revealing how he helped architecture break free from the iron grip of steel-and-glass modernism. By Blair Kamin [images] - Chicago Tribune

How four Chinese American architects helped shape Los Angeles: "Breaking Ground: Chinese American Architects in Los Angeles"

Angeles (1945-1980)," includes original drawings, models and a series of photographs by the legendary Julius Shulman that firmly establish these four as modernist architectural visionaries. [Chinese American Museum, L.A.] -- Eugene Choy; Gilbert Leong; Helen Liu Fong; Gin Wong- Ventura County Star (California)

"Thomas Demand: Model Studies": John Lautner's models have lost their plainness, and somehow gained character and history. Demand's photographs of them are, as much as anything, records of shadows and dust, and time's havoc, as they are of the architect's vision...They show what happens when modernity gets old. [at Nottingham Contemporary] By Adrian Searle- Guardian (UK)

"Migrating Landscapes" architecture competition and exhibition series...exploring the influence of migration and immigration on Canadian architects and designers...a high-profile national jury...will select the architectural 'Team Canada'...at the 13th annual Venice Biennale in Architecture...in Toronto Feb. 6 - 24. -- 5468796 Architecture + Jae-Sung Chon- Daily Commercial News (Canada)

"Building After Auschwitz: Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust" by Gavriel Rosenfeld: ...grandly ambitious book...I am troubled by his assessment that the choice for modern Jewish architects has been either assimilation or alienation...evaluating Jewish American architects for the Jewishness of their built works feels like a forced and, given the book's lack of evidence to the contrary, futile exercise. By Mitchell Schwarzer -- Stanley Tigerman; Percival Goodman; Erich Mendelsohn; Marcel Breuer; Gordon Bunshaft; Louis Kahn; Peter Eisenman; Frank Gehry; Daniel Libeskind; etc. [images]- Places Journal

Book Review: Kate Ascher's "The Heights: Anatomy of a Skyscraper": ...intended to be a graphic investigation of the inner workings of our urban environment, and as such, it is a success...No matter how tall or how green they become, skyscrapers exist within complex layers of society, culture, and politics; topics that Ascher skirts. By Mercedes Kraus- Urban Omnibus

A Cautionary Tale About Wind Power: Filmmaker Laura Israel isn't tilting at windmills - but she does want to cast a critical eye in their direction. And she's done that with "Windfall" - her first documentary film, art-directed within an inch of its life - and one that delivers a profound message: Look before you leap into wind power. By J. Michael Welton- Huffington Post

Peculiar fusion of art, physics and motion: enough to make even the most stolid of Melburnians nervous: a 12m-long, 4m-high fossil-like behemoth wandering across Federation Square...The Strandbeest, Animaris Umerus, Dutch artist and physicist Theo Jansen's kinetic sculpture modelled on the nervous system...made from recycled rigid plastic bottles... [image]- The Australian

Book Review: How to be a Useful Architectural Critic: Alexandra Lange's Perspicacious Primer Points the Way: "Writing about Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings and Cities" - use it often and you'll never think of the word "critic" pejoratively again. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow.com



Winning Design: Michael Maltzan Architecture/Tom Leader Studio: "The Lens," St. Petersburg Pier, Florida

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