

Today's News - Friday, February 24, 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for not posting the newsletter yesterday - the gods of the internets were apparently not happy with us (again).

- Weinstein is wowed by two new books "on design research and transformational ideas through architectural history" with "potent practical uses" that "you can't afford to bypass."
- The Chicago Housing Authority opts for a stellar team (instead of the wrecking ball) to find new life for a 1938 public housing complex.
- An eyeful of sociologist Schalliol's photos of "the dramatic transformation" of Chicago's South Side, from "the demolitions of the city's infamous public housing projects" to their replacements as mixed-income communities.
- Brussat ventures to Vegas and finds "a new concert hall that looked like a concert hall. Imagine that. It is architecture at the top of its game" (and lots of pix to prove it).
- Michael Graves's Portland Building still causing controversy after 30 years, "declared both an architectural atrocity and a brilliant piece of innovation; says the architect: "At least they're still talking about it."
- On the other side of the Big Pond, Wainwright wades into Bradford's new "puddle in the park," the UK's largest water feature (and probably among its most expensive); needless to say, it's causing lots of controversy.
- A stellar team from both sides of the pond tapped for Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park South.
- PRP heads to St. Petersburg, Russia, by winning a massive mixed-use project on Vasilevsky Island (lots of pix).
- McGuirk hops aboard Heatherwick's new Routemaster and likes what he sees: "the demonstrative return of good design to the capital's infrastructure" (great pix here, too).
- Kamin gives (mostly) thumbs-up to CTBUH's new skyscraper database: "I took a quick spin through the site and found it to work well, with some exceptions."
- Renfro ruminates on designing museums, "profound" rejection, and now being "firmly part of the architecture elite": "But we do like to work outside the system when we can."
- The "relentlessness of Maya Lin is something to be in awe of."
- Weekend diversions:
 - Lange lauds MoMA's "Foreclosure," but longs for a bit more meat: "these are not blueprints but visions" that "by and large, replace knee-jerk saltboxes with knee-jerk contemporaneity. It is more modern, but is it appealing?"
 - Campbell cheers three "fascinating" shows in Boston and Cambridge "all rooted in architecture" (though Preston Scott Cohen's "is strictly for the die-hard architecture groupies" - but "once you penetrate the blather, there's much to see").
 - Two amazing takes by Dillon and Poyner on the history of - and our love affair with - "ruin lust" (a.k.a. "ruin porn").
 - "Massimo Scolari" at Yale School of Architecture is "probably one of the best representations of that right brain-left brain synergy of artist and engineer that defines the best architects" (lots of pix).
 - Goldring gives (mostly) thumbs-up to the collection of essays in "Raimund Abraham and the Austrian Culture Forum New York": it is a "valuable record of the architect and this project while we await a comprehensive monograph on his life and work."

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Two Books to Accelerate the Translation of Ideas into Practical Forms: New books on design research and transformational ideas through architectural history have potent practical uses: "The Designer's Guide to Doing Research: Applying Knowledge to Inform Design" Sally Augustin and Cindy Coleman; and "100 Ideas That Changed Architecture" by Richard Weston. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow

Eyes on the Project: Top tier team to rethink, not raze, PWA [Public Works Administration] housing gem: Under its Plan for Transformation, the Chicago Housing Authority has systematically erased much of the landscape of public housing...Exceptions to this tabula rasa-approach are rare...CHA awarded a redevelopment contract...to re-imagine the Julie Lathrop Homes complex. -- Robert S. De Goyler/Hugh M. G. Garden/Thomas Tallmadge/Charles E. White/Hubert Burnham/Jens Jensen (1938); Studio Gang/Brininstool, Kerwin & Lynch/UrbanWorks/CDMWolff Landscape Architects/Farr Associates [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

A Method of Living: For several years sociologist David Schalliol has been documenting the dramatic transformation of the South Side of Chicago — the demolitions of the city's infamous public housing projects and their replacement with mixed-income communities. [slide show]- Places Journal

The concert hall as concert hall: Last week I saw a new concert hall that looked like a concert hall. Imagine that. And in Las Vegas...The Smith Center for the Performing Arts is a triumph. It is beautiful, inside and out. It is architecture at the top of its game. By David Brussat -- David M. Schwarz Architects [images]- Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

Portland Building still controversial after 30 years: ...has been declared both an architectural atrocity and a brilliant piece of innovation. Some people criticize its small windows and low ceilings, while others laud it as the spark that started the postmodernism architecture movement...As for the enduring controversy, Michael Graves doesn't seem to mind. "At least they're still talking about it." - Daily Journal of Commerce (Oregon)

Bradford's new 'puddle in the park' [Mirror Pool] reflects burst of Yorkshire pride: UK's largest water feature cost £24.4m and caused lots of controversy but could now bring city estimated £80m a year...Attention now turns to attracting new businesses to finance a cluster of proposed office blocks beside the pool...Sceptics remain... By Martin Wainwright -- Gillespies [image]- Guardian (UK)

Groundbreaking to deliver events for London Olympics 2012: ...winners of the competition to create public space that will welcome millions of visitors to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park South... -- James Corner Field Operations; Arup; Make Architects; Tomato; Piet Oudolf; L'Observatoire International; Playlink [images]- Place North West (UK)

PRP Architects wins massive Russian theatre project: ...a multi-purpose complex on Vasilevsky Island, St Petersburg, featuring four residential towers...incudes 800 serviced apartments, a five star, 200-bedroom hotel with roof top 'sky bar' and 150,000m² of office and retail space...and the 'Alla Pugacheva Theatre'... [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

The Routemaster's triumphant return to London: Justin McGuirk hops on board for a first look at Thomas Heatherwick's state-of-the-art redesign of the classic bus: ...the demonstrative return of good design to the capital's infrastructure. [images]- Guardian (UK)

A new global skyscraper database from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat: "The Skyscraper Center," an interactive global database...I took a quick spin through the site and found it to work well, with some exceptions. By Blair Kamin- Chicago Tribune

Charles Renfro on Designing Museums, 'Profound' Rejection: Once avant-garde outsiders, the firm's partners are firmly part of the architecture elite..."But we do like to work outside the system when we can." -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro- New York Observer

Vietnam memorial designer says the Earth has lessons to teach us: The relentlessness of Maya Lin is something to be in

awe of...has gradually moved away from architecture toward art and sculpture, and has decided against maintaining the kind of large studio that architecture requires. Architecture, she observed, is like writing a novel; art is more like poetry. She didn't leave much doubt about which she prefers. - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Reassembling the American Dream: MoMA's "Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream" asks what people really like about suburban living...these are not blueprints but visions. But the visions on display, by and large, replace knee-jerk saltboxes with knee-jerk contemporaneity. It is more modern, but is it appealing? By Alexandra Lange -- Michael Bell/Eunjeong Seong/Visible Weather; WORK Architecture Company/WORKac; Studio Gang; Zago Architecture; MOS [images, links] - Design Observer

Examining structures, and creating them, with digital tools: Three fascinating exhibitions, all rooted in architecture...photographer David Pendery ["The Covered Arcades of Paris"], artist Daniel Feldman ["This Side Up"], and architect Preston Scott Cohen ["Lightfall"]. As a trio, they're proof that architecture can mean very different things to different people. By Robert Campbell - Boston Globe

Ruin lust: our love affair with decaying buildings: ...Brian Dillon charts the history of a literary and artistic obsession with ruins, from Marlowe to The Waste Land to Tacita Dean...The great interest in the remarkable images of decayed Detroit [in "Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre: The Ruins of Detroit"] is easily understandable but seems oddly detached from analyses of the political forces that brought the city to its present sorry pass. It may be that as a cultural touchstone the idea of ruin needs to slump into the undergrowth again. [slide show] - Guardian (UK)

The Unspeakable Pleasure of Ruins: It's extraordinary, to someone who doesn't live in Detroit...how contentious the widely publicized pictures of urban devastation in the city have become. They are the prime, disreputable exhibits of so-called "ruin porn"...a corrosively repeatable meme that makes any photograph of ruins seem suspect. This reductive tag ignores the cultural history of the ruin. By Rick Poyner -- Yves Marchand; Romain Meffre [images] - Design Observer

Architect as artist - "Massimo Scolari: The Representation of Architecture, 1967-2012" at Yale School of Architecture: ...probably one of the best representations of that right brain-left brain synergy of artist and engineer that defines the best architects. [images] - New Haven Register (Connecticut)

First Measure: "Raimund Abraham and the Austrian Culture Forum New York" edited by Andreas Stadler and Andreas Lepik: ...essays and interviews cobbled together—each of interest, yet never melding into a whole. Nonetheless, one can commend the impulse and the ambition...proves a valuable record of the architect and this project while we await a comprehensive monograph on his life and work. By Nancy Goldring -- Gerald Matt; Lebbeus Woods; Kenneth Frampton - The Architect's Newspaper

The Big Chill: Leers Weinzapfel Associates' Chiller Plants Reinvent the Art of Infrastructure Work: Thoughtful analysis, ingenuity, and the ability to envision design opportunities create a unique exercise in urban design to "make something of beauty." By Charles Linn, FAIA [images] - ArchNewsNow



[FREE Fernando Romero: Soumaya Museum, Mexico City, Mexico](#)

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