

Today's News - Monday, February 27, 2012

- ArcSpace brings us an eyeful of CCA's "Alturas de Macchu Picchu: Martín Chambi - Álvaro Siza at work," and UNStudio's Kutaisi Airport.
- De Monchaux draws some fascinating parallels between economic and architectural "austerity" (a.k.a. minimalism): we tend to forget that both contain hidden costs.
- Rochon delves into a controversial study that "has caused a serious rethink of the glassy skyscrapers": they may be "tall, thin, curvy, gorgeous" but many are "heating the winter sky."
- Schumacher reflects on MoMA's "Foreclosure" from her Milwaukee perch and ponders "what are the roles that museums and curators can play in addressing the issues of the day?"
- Doig x 2: there's "plenty of low-hanging fruit and low-tech fixes" that could attract boomer retirees to cities instead of suburbs that would help with upcoming "boomer retirement crisis."
- He looks into plans for a massive mall that "could overwhelm the artistic downtown" of Athens, Georgia, that has "the average Athenian talking more like an urban planner" in arguing that "scale and design can matter more than the name of the store" (how refreshing!).
- In Philadelphia, Saffron tackles the often contentious debate of what to do with the massive I-95 that cuts the city off from the waterfront + Steinberg has high hopes for the future of the "lower reaches of the Schuylkill River" that "have been nearly cut off from the city by a tourniquet of infrastructure."
- Heathcote weighs in on London's Olympic Village: "This is housing on the scale and density that architects and planners have been demanding for decades," but will it remain "a gated enclave, or perhaps it will grow into a piece of real London."
- Welton gives two thumbs-up to AIANC's new Center for Architecture and Design: it's "an embassy for architecture" that "behaves like the skilled diplomat it was designed to be...through careful example, coupled with bold action."
- Lewis gives (mostly) thumbs-up to Safdie's U.S. Institute of Peace: it's seeming "austerity gives way to perceived whimsy" (except for that "sharply pointed piece of roof" that looks "unwelcoming and menacing").
- Kennicott is taken by the new Mob Museum in Las Vegas, where the design plays "a delicate game, harvesting the lurid while sowing the seeds of learning" (most of the time, anyway).
- Q&A with OMA's Shigematsu re: Abramovic's Center for the Preservation of Performance Art in Hudson, NY (budget? What budget?).
- Rawsthorn cheers the reopening of Mies's Villa Tugendhat in Brno: "visitors will discover that, innovative though it is in style and structure, the house is deeply traditional in other respects."
- Rose reviews the week that includes a "closer look at a cutting-edge cafe in Japan may leave you spluttering into your coffee."
- One we couldn't resist: The Nine Eyes of Google Street View is a collection of "the strange and beautiful images Google wasn't expecting you to see."
- Tschumi receives the The Annual: 2012 National Academy Award for Excellence.
- Call for entries: Pinup2012: Student Competition in all design fields (caveat: if you're not an Apple-ite, you'll have to "borrow an iPhone or iPad for 20 minutes" which we find rather irksome).

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-- Exhibition: "Alturas de Macchu Picchu: Martín Chambi - Álvaro Siza at work," The Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal
-- UNStudio: Kutaisi Airport, Kutaisi, Georgia

Why Less Isn't Always More: Economically, austerity...can sound like a good idea...As an aesthetic category, it's strangely aspirational. It can become a mode of luxury, even excess...To look as if you left everything out, you have to sneak everything in. What seems spartan is usually, invisibly, baroque...As in architecture, so in public life...may discover, too, a hidden cost. By Thomas De Monchaux -- Mies van der Rohe; Adolf Loos; John Pawson- New York Times

Tall, thin, curvy, gorgeous -- and heating the winter sky: Glassy skyscrapers are at the centre of a new controversy: A recent attack on the "architectural pornography" of the Aqua Tower in Chicago...has caused a serious rethink of the glassy skyscrapers that now dominate cities like Vancouver and Toronto, where another 132 towers are currently in the process of being built. By Lisa Rochon -- Ted Kesik; Jeanne Gang/Studio Gang; 3XN; KPMB Architects/Transsolar [slide show]- Globe and Mail (Canada)

The Museum of Modern Art tackles the foreclosure crisis: "Foreclosed" project, at least from my Milwaukee perch, appears to have a good dose of pie-in-the-sky openness as well as real-world research and rootedness...How can Milwaukee build on the momentum of the "Remarkable Milwaukee" event and the dialogue that Historic Milwaukee started? Also, what are the roles that museums and curators can play in addressing the issues of the day? By Mary Louise Schumacher [links]- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

How to solve the boomer retirement crisis: If boomer retirees keep flooding suburbs, the cost of providing for them soars. Can we get them to cities, instead? There are two sides to the problem: one is policy, and the other is urban planning itself. On the planning side, there's plenty of low-hanging fruit...low-tech fixes, however, only get us so far...older people have more to offer cities than just their pensions... By Will Doig- Salon

Walmart threatens the town R.E.M. made famous: A massive mall could overwhelm the artistic downtown of Athens, Ga. Is a town's cool culture worth protecting? ...your average Athenian was talking...more like an urban planner, using phrases like "site permeability" and "transportation mode share"...an argument that rarely gets enunciated in these sorts of fights: that in urban development, scale and design can matter more than the name of the store. By Will Doig [links]- Salon

I-95: Where's the Data? Mayor Nutter's point person on transportation...identified four main reasons why altering I-95's current configuration won't work...why they sound more like excuses than real analysis...making I-95 less of an intrusive presence could give the city an economic boost, too...enable Philadelphia to develop a new, tax-generating neighborhood. By Inga Saffron- Philadelphia Inquirer

Philadelphia's promising land along its hidden river: ...the lower reaches of the Schuylkill have been nearly cut off from the city by a tourniquet of infrastructure...But things are poised to change...The Lower Schuylkill is the locus of that burgeoning economic future...has the potential to become a clean, green, urban machine that will power the economic engine of Philadelphia well through the 21st century. By Harris M. Steinberg/PennPraxis- Philadelphia Inquirer

Good intentions: Perhaps the Olympic Village will retain its current feel of a gated enclave, or perhaps it will grow into a piece of real London: This is housing on the scale and density that architects and planners have been demanding for decades...Some inhabit the dull end of the commercial spectrum, others look serious and interesting. By Edwin Heathcote -- Fletcher Priest; Arup; West 8; Niall McLaughlin; Eric Parry; DSDHA; CF Møller; dRMM- Financial Times (UK)

An embassy for architecture: The city that's given this state some of its most innovative lessons in architecture...now offers a new icon for a new era...dedicated to sustainable design...in downtown Raleigh, where the American Institute of Architects N.C. Chapter has opened its new Center for Architecture and Design...behaves like the skilled diplomat it was designed to be...through careful example, coupled with bold action. By J. Michael Welton -- Frank Harmon [images] - News & Observer (North Carolina)

At U.S. Institute of Peace, building's provocative design doesn't entirely succeed: At first glance, the building looks austere...But austerity gives way to perceived whimsy...Clearly, the architect has created a provocative composition by juxtaposing starkly contrasting forms...The visual play and aesthetic exploitation of light — and its practical use — are the institute's strongest design attributes. By Roger K. Lewis -- Moshe Safdie - Washington Post

Mob Museum opens in Las Vegas: The line between the experiential museum...and the theme park...is an increasingly thin one...the surprise turns out to be the relatively dense educational material woven into the exhibition space...The designers are playing a delicate game, harvesting the lurid while sowing the seeds of learning. It doesn't always work. By Philip Kennicott -- Westlake Reed Leskosky; Gallagher & Associates; Barrie Projects; Chattel Architecture; Carpenter Sellers Associates [slide show] - Washington Post

"It Reflects Her Obsession": OMA's Shohei Shigematsu on Building Marina Abramovic's Center for the Preservation of Performance Art: ...could well act as that catalyst that truly transforms the upstate New York town into a first-rank art destination...we talked to the man at the helm of the Hudson project...and the mysterious OMA-Abramovic collaboration still to come in Serbia. -- Rem Koolhaas/Office of Metropolitan Architecture - Artinfo

Reopening a Mies Modernist Landmark: Villa Tugendhat, a Ludwig Mies van der Rohe modernist landmark in Brno, Czech Republic...visitors will discover that, innovative though it is in style and structure, the house is deeply traditional in other respects...a product of what Barry Bergdoll calls "the miracle period" of Mies's prewar career... By Alice Rawsthorn -- Lilly Reich - New York Times

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: A closer look at a cutting-edge cafe in Japan may leave you spluttering into your coffee, Lego aims for the high notes and eggs from outer space land for Fabergé's Big Egg Hunt. By Steve Rose -- Kengo Kuma; Jorn Utzon; Zaha Hadid; Wilkinson Eyre; fourfoursixsix; Rogers Stirk Harbour; Nicholas Grimshaw; John Pawson [images, links] - Guardian (UK)

The street views Google wasn't expecting you to see: Artist Jon Rafman's photo project The Nine Eyes of Google Street View...collects the strange and beautiful images they capture by accident from around the world. [slide show] - Guardian (UK)

The Annual: 2012 - Artists David Diao, Lois Dodd, NA and architect, Bernard Tschumi receive the National Academy Award for Excellence: Architectural projects include work by Peter Gluck, Thomas Phifer, Robert A. M. Stern, Bernard Tschumi, Billie Tsien, Rafael Viñoly, and others. - National Academy

Call for entries: Pinup2012: Student Competition: open to under- and post-graduate students in all design fields; deadline: April 9- The Morpholio Project

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

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

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