

Today's News - Friday, April 13, 2012

- Youngerman ponders the role "bad neighborhood design" might have played in the Sanford, FL, tragedy: "the subdivision is designed for driving, so something as human as walking is odd behavior. Suspicious even."
- Bwalya ponders whether there is such a thing as Zambian architecture: "The colonialists did not only pollute the Zambian tradition, they also influenced the town planning and architectural development to reflect the political setup of the day."
- Apartment building design in the Twin Cities seems to be stuck in a rut: "The exteriors play with color and materials but underneath the tricked-out finishes, the boxy, flat-roof shapes resemble, well, giant bricks of cheese" ("It always comes down to parking, stupid").
- For someone who "has avoided 'doing rich guys' houses' all his life, Gehry sure has changed his spots" with the Opus Hong Kong luxury tower.
- Q&A with the man himself re: why he dislikes design competitions and how he responds to requests for another Bilbao: "Well, they ask for it...I don't pay any attention to it."
- Now a London mayoral candidate, Livingstone says he was right to champion Piano's shard (and takes a swipe at Shuttleworth).
- Two starchitects and two up-and-comers are in the running to design the Menil Drawing Institute.
- Adjaye unveils his plans for a cultural campus in Frankfurt - his largest ever project in Europe.
- Carmody Groarke, the firm that has "made a career out of creating unconventional spaces in the most unexpected of places," gets the WSJ treatment (it's all good).
- A new U.K. library "is not immediately likeable. It's big and it's brash" (and it sparkles) from the outside, but "inside there is great warmth, liveliness and dignity."
- Rose has lots to review this week, including the Hive library with its "ostentatious gold cladding. Gold seems to be the current thing for jazzing up historic towns," and Ikea's neighborhood plans (and even he couldn't resist the architecture LOLcats!).
- Dvir gives (mostly) thumbs-up to Jerusalem's version of the High Line: "Even if the design isn't perfect, it's hard to argue with its success in developing green spaces and adding a new twist to the neighborhoods along its path."
- A new ASLA report is "a response to the need to further quantify the economic benefits of green infrastructure."
- Azure's AZ Awards lines up 60 finalists (there are some pleasant surprises).
- Deadline reminder: Call for entries for Core77 Design Awards in 17 categories.
- Weekend diversions:
 - SO - IL and the Guggenheim kick off the museum's third installment of "stillspotting nyc" this weekend with "Transhistoria" that will "explore how one finds calm and inner peace" in ever-bustling Jackson Heights, Queens.
 - The documentary "Surviving Progress" paints a bleak view of humanity's future, but could use "a good extra 30 minutes, at the very least, to provoke meaningful debate."
 - Kansas City, which has never had a World's Fair, gets a fitting tribute with a Nelson-Atkins exhibition offering "a splendid substitute" designed with a "you are there" feeling.
 - Meuser's "Architectural and Cultural Guide: Pyongyang" does not "criticize or reprimand" North Korea's totalitarian architecture.
 - Plummer's "Nordic Light" catalogs "elegant solutions" by contemporary Scandinavian architects "to keep the cold out while letting the light in."
- Happy Friday the 13th (always a lucky day for us)!

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Op-Ed: Did bad neighborhood design doom Trayvon Martin? ...behavior is not simply a matter of character; it is also a matter of setting...the subdivision where the killing took place is designed for driving, so something as human as walking is odd behavior. Suspicious even...Some environmental interpretations of the Martin-Zimmerman story lay blame on the gated community... By Zach Youngerman - Boston Globe

Is there Zambian architecture? Colonisation broke what may have been a natural development process by destroying or polluting cultures...an architect working in Zambia will be operating in a region without the kind of unbroken architectural tradition enjoyed by most developed countries...The colonialists did not only pollute the Zambian tradition they also influenced the town planning and architectural development to reflect the political setup of the day. By Dixon Bwalya/Zambia Institute of Architects - Copperbelt Chapter - Times of Zambia

Is apartment design stuck in a rut? Developers say parking concerns dictate layouts...The exteriors play with color and materials but underneath the tricked-out finishes, the boxy, flat-roof shapes resemble, well, giant bricks of cheese...how many more cookie-cutter rectangles will appear on the horizon? -- MacDonald and Mack Architects; Thomas Fisher; DJR Architecture - Finance & Commerce (Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota)

Gehry Luxury Tower Boasts Hong Kong's Priciest View: For someone who describes himself as "a lefty do-gooder" who has avoided "doing rich guys' houses" all his life, Frank Gehry sure has changed his spots...has lent his name to Opus Hong Kong, the most expensive piece of residential real estate ever built in the city. [images] - Bloomberg/BusinessWeek

Artist, Known: Frank Gehry talks about the DNA of his work, what he sees in Chinese art, why he dislikes design competitions and how he responds to requests for another Bilbao..."Well, they ask for it...don't pay any attention to it." - Wall Street Journal

I was right to champion the Shard, says Ken Livingstone; London mayoral candidate claims he was right to ignore opposition to Renzo Piano's tower...He also took a swipe at Make founder Ken Shuttleworth who predicted recently that the building would be torn down in a few years because developers would want to build something higher. - BD/Building Design (UK)

4 vying to design Menil Drawing Institute: Two are architecture-world stars, well established in the firmament. And two are up-and-comers. For any of the four firms, the building would count as a prized commission. In part, that's because the architect and the building will be in heady company. -- David Chipperfield Architects; SANAA; Tatiana Bilbao; Johnston Marklee [images] - Houston Chronicle

David Adjaye reveals Frankfurt campus: ...his largest ever project in Europe, a cultural campus that will be home to nine arts institutions...marks the first major public commission for Adjaye's Berlin office...the rest is proposed for a mix of offices, retail and residential. [images] - BD/Building Design (UK)

Standing Tall Against the Odds: ...Carmody Groarke, one of London's most exciting young architecture firms...have made a career out of creating unconventional spaces in the most unexpected of places...redesign of the Windermere Steamboat Museum...is their biggest project to date. It also may be the ultimate proof that their method of taking on hugely varied projects that frequently challenge the conventional definition of what an architect... [images] - Wall Street Journal

Creating the buzz: The shiny golden roofs of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studio's new library, the Hive, don't just bring sparkle to a formerly run-down end of Worcester, they house some complex engineering in a PFI scheme that works hard for its readers...From the outside the building is not immediately likeable. It's big and it's brash...inside there is great warmth, liveliness and dignity. By Eleanor Young -- Grant Associates; Max Fordham [images] - RIBA Journal (UK)

Constructive criticism: the week in architecture: Ikea brings Stockholm-style living to Stratford [Strand East], a beehive library lands in Worcester and architecture finally meets LOLcats...Regent Street has invited nine up-and-coming architects to do up its shop windows..Hive...a library, in case that wasn't obvious from either the name, the jaunty roofline, or the

ostentatious gold cladding. Gold seems to be the current thing for jazzing up historic towns... By Steve Rose -- Arc-ML architects; Arup; Buro Happold; Fielden Clegg Bradley; Ushida Findlay; Delvendahl Martin Architects; Bradley Van Der Straeten [images, links]- Guardian (UK)

Jerusalem's new park turns old train tracks into an urban oasis: The local version of New York's High Line is an important link in the ring of parks going up around the capital...Unfortunately, it appears Train Track Park's design potential has not been entirely fulfilled...Even if...design isn't perfect, it's hard to argue with its success in developing green spaces and adding a new twist to the neighborhoods along its path. By Noam Dvir -- Yair Avigdor Architecture & Urban Design; Shlomi Zeevi Landscape Architects - Ha'aretz (Israel)

Banking on Green: A new report "Banking on Green: How Green Infrastructure Saves Municipalities Money and Provides Economic Benefits Community-wide," is a response to the need to further quantify the economic benefits of green infrastructure. [link to report]- The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

60 designers and architects chosen as finalists of Azure's second annual AZ Awards: winners will be revealed on June 7 -- Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg (KPMB); Menkès Shooner Dagenais Le Tourneux Architectes; RUFproject; Teeple Architects; ZGF Architects; Bunker Arquitectura; Johnsen Schmalig Architects; Rojkind Arquitectos + Esrawe Studio; Claude Cormier + Associés; Straub Thurmayer CSLA/Landschaftsarchitekten; etc. [link to images]- Azure magazine (Canada)

Call for entries: Core77 Design Awards: 17 categories include Interiors & Exhibitions, Visual Communication, Social Impact, Educational Initiatives, Speculative Proposals, Writing & Commentary; deadline: April 24- Core77

Transhistoria by SO – IL (Solid Objectives – Idenburg Liu): Third Edition in Off-Site Exhibition Series Exploring Stillness and Quiet in the Urban Environment:...a two-year multidisciplinary project that takes the Guggenheim Museum's programming out into the streets.- Guggenheim Museum

Exhibit pays fitting tribute to Worlds Fairs: In a city that has never had a world's fair, "Inventing the Modern World: Decorative Arts at the World's Fairs, 1851-1939" at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art offers a splendid substitute...a parade of greatest hits from almost a century's worth of fairs, presented in an environment designed to give a "you are there" feeling...opens April 14. [video]- Kansas City Star

"Surviving Progress" paints a bleak view of humanity's future: The film, based on the book "A Short History of Progress" by Ronald Wright, is framed around the existential question: What is progress? ...issues such as "progress traps"...pillaging of earth's natural resources...needs a good extra 30 minutes, at the very least, to provoke meaningful debate. And if ever a documentary deserved a few extra minutes, it's this one.- Architectural Record

Totalitarian Architecture: Do Dictators Have a Style? ...while there is a heavy focus on the capitalist architecture of the world...little information has been garnered from...North Korea...Philipp Meuser...sharing his five-trip findings in a two-volume "Architectural and Cultural Guide: Pyongyang"...Exploring the architecture of totalitarian countries...is not undertaken in order to criticise or reprimand. [images]- DesignBuild Source (Australia)

Photo-Op: Planking: In more than 500 photographs, "Nordic Light" by Henry Plummer catalogs the range of elegant solutions that contemporary architects in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland have deployed to keep the cold out while letting the light in.- Wall Street Journal

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