

Today's News - Monday, May 7, 2012

- ArcSpace brings us Holl's Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Saffron x 2 - weighing in on the new Barnes: it's a "ravishing building" with "many moments of breathtaking refinement - but "sadly - no, tragically," it's "a case where the star of the show has been sabotaged by the supporting cast, that unruly gang of vehicular amenities."
- She chronicles Williams and Tsien's "herculean assignment fraught with character-testing obstacles." (both part of a special Barnes section)
- Doig delves into the "the Whole Foods Effect" that "can give a neighborhood the escape velocity it needs to break free of its doldrums" (fingers are crossed in Detroit!).
- Hume doesn't dispute developers who say mixed use is the way to go in Toronto; he just wonders "why do so many of them do it so badly?"
- A Zambian architect calls for less focus on the concept of a "house" and building techniques, and more attention to assessing social-cultural needs (sometimes, it does take a village).
- With Malaysia ramping up a large mass-transit project, "a lot of importance is being placed on how it looks": the design "will not be confused with Dubai or Hong Kong."
- Heathcote cheers London's Olympic Park as "an eco-friendly triumph," but something still "niggles" him: "I yearned for something to remind me that this was a place of work."
- As the ArcelorMittal Orbit tower nears completion, a very interesting (and amusing) in-depth look at how Kapoor and Balmond "managed to stay sane and see this strange project through": "It was just an attempt to answer the question: how do you go up if not in straight lines?" says one; "Don't you think it's just amazing that they actually let us build this?" says the other.
- Davidson gives two green thumbs-ups to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's new visitor center: "the city's most extreme and subtlest fusion of building and bower" that should serve as a model for "a tight new bond between urban landscape and concrete jungle that can make the city a more civilized place."
- King reports on a stellar line-up of local and international architects who have been invited to vie for the job to make over "one of San Francisco's prime stretches of waterfront."
- Farrell comes up with a £25 million proposal for the Battersea Power Station (it would involve some demolition, but is less than the "£150m refurbishment cost of Rafael Viñoly's £5bn scheme."
- Kamin on Chicago preservationists' "victory" in landmarks law challenge - but it could be only temporary.
- NYC's Landmarks Preservation Commission is facing its own preservation vs. development battle.
- We don't cover a lot of residential work, but this is an amazing eyeful of stunning new homes that "will define the design of tomorrow."
- One we couldn't resist: six women architects "responsible for some of the world's most innovative designs" do a fashion shoot to show off their personal style.
- Call for entries: 9th Annual Light & Architecture/AL Design Awards honoring architectural lighting design.

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[Steven Holl Architects: Institute for Contemporary Art \(ICA\), Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia](#)

The Barnes: A ravishing building, but cut off from the city: ...comes as tantalizingly close to being a real work of art as anything Philadelphia has seen in decades...But while there are many moments of breathtaking refinement...the result is sadly - no, tragically - a long way from being a successful addition to the city...a case where the star of the show has been sabotaged by the supporting cast, that unruly gang of vehicular amenities. By Inga Saffron -- Tod Williams Billie Tsien; Olin; Paul Marantz [slide show]- Philadelphia Inquirer

Architects' zeal for detail matched founder's: Because of promises made during the lengthy court battle, designing the new Barnes was a herculean assignment fraught with character-testing obstacles...to succeed...the building had to be a serious work of architecture, not a pastiche...Many argued it was an assignment that simply couldn't be done well. By Inga Saffron -- Tod Williams Billie Tsien- Philadelphia Inquirer

Whole Foods is coming? Time to buy: Forget Starbucks: It's the gourmet grocer that lands just before neighborhoods really explode...a force unto itself that can give a neighborhood the escape velocity it needs to break free of its doldrums. Are they right?...the Whole Foods Effect isn't caused by the store itself, it's caused by the events it sets into motion. By Will Doig-Salon

Toronto in a golden age of growth, developers say: Listen to a room full of developers; you'd come away convinced mixed use is the saviour of the city. So why do so many of them do it so badly? Other than their own lack of imagination, the answer is that few have figured out how to do it. By Christopher Hume- Toronto Star

Village Concept Playing Part in Modern Housing: A number of publications on African traditional architecture have concerned themselves mainly with the study of the forms, construction materials and building techniques...centered on the concept of a house...Little, if any, attempt is made to...assess the level of psychological satisfaction offered by such structures in response to social-cultural needs. By Dixon Bwalya/Zambia Institute of Architects - Copperbelt Chapter- Times of Zambia

Architecture for the commute: The upcoming Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (KVMRT) infrastructure promises to be a unique Malaysian endeavour...As this 51km rail infrastructure will form a permanent part of the citiscape, a lot of importance is being placed on how it looks..."The design will not be confused with Dubai or Hong Kong." -- Serina Hijjas/Hijjas Kasturi Associates [images]- The Star (Malaysia)

It's a cover-up: London's Olympic Park is an eco-friendly triumph. But did it have to erase its industrial past so completely? The Lower Lea Valley...seemed a place incapable of gentrification...What were once inaccessible industrial badlands are now its inaccessible, security-obsessed Olympic Park...one issue that niggles me...I yearned for something to remind me that this was a place of work... By Edwin Heathcote -- George Hargreaves; LDA Design; Sarah Price; James Corner Field Operations- Financial Times (UK)

Anish Kapoor's ArcelorMittal Orbit tower: the mother of all helter-skelters: ...I went to talk to Balmond and Kapoor...about how they managed to stay sane and see this strange project through..."It was just an attempt to answer the question: how do you go up if not in straight lines?"..."Don't you think it's just amazing that they actually let us build this?"...the more you look at it, the more you agree.- Guardian (UK)

When the House Is the Yard: At the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, landscape architecture mingles with the steel-and-glass kind...lovely new visitor center...a border station between city and garden in which architecture and landscape merge...the city's most extreme and subtlest fusion of building and bower. By Justin Davidson -- Weiss/Manfredi; Mathews Nielsen- New York Magazine

Fort Mason Center contest calls on top designers: Some of the world's most in-demand architects are being asked to focus their talents on one of San Francisco's prime stretches of waterfront...20 firms on four continents... By John King -- Hood Studio; EHDD Architecture; Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects; Conger Moss Guillard; SWA; James Corner Field Operations; SANAA; Studio Gang Architects; Bjarke Ingels Group/BIG- San Francisco Chronicle

Sir Terry Farrell woos Battersea Power Station developers with £25m proposal: ...would see parts of building demolished but retain distinctive four chimneys...it compares with the £150m refurbishment cost of Rafael Viñoly's £5bn scheme of homes, offices and shops - Guardian (UK)

Judge rebuffs challenge to city's landmarks law: Historic preservationists have won a victory, but only a temporary one, in their closely-watched battle to protect Chicago's landmarks law from a legal assault. By Blair Kamin- Chicago Tribune

Battle Landmarkia: New York City Council seeks to revamp business as usual at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. A sudden flurry of bills...deal primarily with procedural issues, a sentence in one zeroes in on the essence of the preservation versus development battle. - The Architect's Newspaper

The New Icons: Progressive, innovative and stunning, these are the homes which will define the design of tomorrow. -- David Hertz Architects; Stanley Saitowitz/Natoma Architects; Daly Genik Architects; XTEN Architecture; Olson Kundig Architects; Edmonds + Lee Architects; Shubin + Donaldson; Zack/de Vito; Feldman Architecture [slide shows]- Huffington Post

Architects of Style: These women are responsible for some of the world's most innovative designs—work that has included everything from a planetarium to skyscrapers. Their personal style is just as innovative. -- Galia Solomonoff/Solomonoff Architecture Studio; Ada Tolla/LOT-EK; Lauren Rottet; Mimi Hoang; Lise Anne Couture/Asymptote; Mabel O. Wilson/KW: a and Studio 6Ten [slide show]- MORE magazine

Call for entries: 9th Annual Light & Architecture/AL Design Awards honoring outstanding and innovative projects in the field of architectural lighting design (international); deadline: May 25- Architectural Lighting magazine

Imperfect Health: Probing the Porous Interface between Architecture and Health: A new book and website linked to the recent Canadian Centre for Architecture exhibition "Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture" offer a healthy tonic countering academically anemic architectural education. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow

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