

Today's News - Wednesday, October 16, 2013

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to technical difficulties we were unable to post yesterday (stuff happens - can we blame it on Congress this time?).

- While we're on the edge of an(other) economic meltdown, let's get the grumpy news over with:
- SPUR's Metcalf explains how San Francisco became the least affordable American city, and what can be done to fix it: the "byzantine planning process" has "protected" the city from change - "but in so doing, we put out fire with gasoline."
- L.A. powers-that-be have "rejected calls to make a list of concrete buildings at risk of collapsing in a major earthquake," so the L.A. Times has come up with its own list (1,000+!) + New Zealand's Christchurch quake is resulting in aggressive regulations.
- BOMA offers tips for commercial property owners to share with tenants re: "earthquake preparedness in advance of the Great ShakeOut."
- Wainwright reports on the continuing and "relentless transformation of Mecca into a luxury pay-per-prayer resort" (pix are so depressing).
- Architects slam Holyrood's new "clumsy" high-security entrance - but "it could have been worse."
- Palin says there seems to be a "deliberate shying away from artistry and beauty" in King's Cross Station's new public space.
- Hill ponders plans to restore London's Crystal Palace, and whether the "gloomy ghosts" of its past will "have the last, hollow laugh" (+ amazing 1936 newsreel of the ill-fated landmark ablaze).
- A Dublin councillor wants a new corporate HQ to restore a long-lost Georgian streetscape, but the project's architect argues: "you can restore the essence of a historic fabric in a contemporary way."
- On to some brighter(!) news: Rick Mather Architects is tapped to helm the design the contested Southbank skate park project under Hungerford Bridge.
- Q&A with Dixon re: lessons learned from recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina and Sandy.
- Speck's oh-so-lively TEDTalk re: how to make walkable cities and "free ourselves from dependence on the car - which he calls 'a gas-belching, time-wasting, life-threatening prosthetic device.'"
- Gardner seems enthralled with SOM's design for the massive twin-tower Manhattan West project: it seems to "have a self-effacing humility - invoking the Deconstructivist idiom responsibly to achieve a unique identity, but not at the cost of harmony or functionality."
- A tiny Austrian village puts itself on the design map by commissioning international architects to design local bus stops (a Pritzker winner + pix included).
- Highlights of the 2013 Architecture & Design Film Festival, opening today in NYC: the "lineup of films, panels, and programs, framed around vital urban issues, feels especially compelling - and essential."
- Eyefuls of "the next wave of burgeoning talent" selected by 10 design leaders who used "not just a sharp eye but also a gut instinct for sniffing out the future."
- Eyefuls of the Solar Decathlon 2013 winners (great presentations!).
- Tagliabue lands 2013 RIBA Jencks Award for her "major international contribution to both the theory and practice of architecture."
- Ending the day with some eye candy with two we couldn't resist: eyefuls of Hadid's super-yacht designed with "fluid dynamics and underwater ecosystems" in mind + Her design for a wine bottle for an Austrian vintner (no mention if she also did the cool box it comes in!).

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The San Francisco Exodus: How S.F. became the least affordable city in America, and what we can do about it now: ...the city did not allow its housing supply to keep up with demand...was down-zoned...created the most byzantine planning process of any major city in the country...Unfortunately, it worked: the city was largely "protected" from change. But in so doing, we put out fire with gasoline. By Gabriel Metcalf/SPUR - The Atlantic Cities

Concrete Risks: Los Angeles has rejected calls to make a list of concrete buildings at risk of collapsing in a major earthquake, but a Times analysis finds there could be more than 1,000 + How a New Zealand earthquake led to building reforms: After the deadly collapse of two concrete office buildings in the 2011 Christchurch quake, officials launched a sweeping seismic review and are drafting aggressive regulations. [images, links] - Los Angeles Times

BOMA International Offers Tips for Earthquake Preparedness in Advance of the Great ShakeOut: To help ensure commercial real estate properties are prepared...a list of essential tips...that property professionals can share with tenants and personnel in conjunction with an earthquake drill. - Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA)

As the Hajj begins, the destruction of Mecca's heritage continues: "They have already bulldozed the house of Muhammad's wife, his grandson and his companion - and now they are coming for his birthplace. And for what? Yet more seven-star hotels" ...the relentless transformation of Mecca into a luxury pay-per-prayer resort. By Oliver Wainwright [images] - Guardian (UK)

Architects pan Holyrood's 'clumsy' security extension: The controversial and newly-completed high-security entrance to Enric Miralles' iconic Scottish Parliament has been slammed by architects of the original scheme...failed to "improve the security of the public one iota"... "It could have been worse." -- Miralles Tagliabue EMBT; RMJM [images] - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Why the all-new King's Cross doesn't square up: As a new public space takes shape in front of King's Cross Station, Will Palin asks: Where is the love? The basic problem here is one of disconnect - a sort of deliberate shying away from artistry and beauty. -- Lewis Cubitt (1852); John McAslan & Partners; Stanton Williams - BD/Building Design (UK)

The ghosts of Crystal Palace past: Boris Johnson and his Chinese developer ally are upbeat about their plans to restore the lost London landmark and improve the surrounding park, but there are discouraging historical omens...ZhongRong Group's sales brochure is a handsome thing. But will the palace's gloomy ghosts have the last, hollow laugh? By Dave Hill [links, 1936 newsreel] - Guardian (UK)

Do not reinstate Georgian facade on ESB offices, says architect: Councillor says organisation owes it to Dublin to restore street..."you can restore the essence of a historic fabric...in a contemporary way." -- Stephenson Gibney & Associates (1965); Yvonne Farrell/Grafton Architects; O'Mahony Pike Architects - Irish Times

Rick Mather Architects appointed to helm Southbank skatepark scheme: Masterplanner will assist SNE Architects...to design the contested project under Hungerford Bridge. -- Arup; West 8; Feilden Clegg Bradley - BD/Building Design (UK)

Q+A: Learning From Recovery: From the bureaucracy to the grass roots to "hard resilience," David Dixon compares the profession's recovery efforts from after Hurricane Katrina to after Hurricane Sandy: ...helped to shape the AIA's response to Hurricane Katrina and to prepare New Orleans' post-Katrina Master Plan... -- Goody Clancy; David Waggoner/Dutch Dialogues/ Angela O'Byrne/City-Works - Architect Magazine

Jeff Speck: The walkable city: How do we solve the problem of the suburbs? Urbanist Speck shows how we can free ourselves from dependence on the car - which he calls "a gas-belching, time-wasting, life-threatening prosthetic device" - by making our cities more walkable and more pleasant for more people. - TEDTalks / TEDCity2.0

SOM's Manhattan West channels medieval towers - in a good way: At more than 60 stories each...resemble nothing so much as the famous Two Towers of Bologna...promise to exert an equally powerful sense of personality...have a self-effacing humility...project looks very promising, invoking the Deconstructivist idiom responsibly to achieve a unique identity, but not at the cost of harmony or functionality. By James Gardner -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill [image]- The Real Deal (NYC)

Sitting Pretty: Austrian Bus Stops Get High-Design Makeover: ...tiny village of Krumbach has put itself on the design map by commissioning international architects to create local bus stops. The sophisticated structures are proving popular with locals...Austrian architect Dietmar Steiner...as curator... "No starchitects, just small offices with sculptural interest." -- Alexander Brodsky, Russia; RintalaEggertsson Architects, Norway; Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu, Belgium; Ensemble Studio/Antón García-Abril/Débora Mesa, Spain; Smiljan Radic, Chile; Amateur Architecture Studio/Wang Shu/Ly Wenyu, China [slide show]- Der Spiegel (Germany)

Highlights of the 2013 Architecture & Design Film Festival: The 25 films in this year's festival focus on urbanism and the legacy of Modernism... this year's lineup of films, panels, and programs, framed around vital urban issues, feels especially compelling—and essential; October 16-20- Architectural Record

The Select Ten: Design's leading voices help us identify the next wave of burgeoning talent: All 10 experts have displayed not just a sharp eye but also a gut instinct for sniffing out the future...helped us assemble an impressive group of new talent. -- Pernilla Ohrstedt; A Practice for Everyday Life; New Friends; Ball-Nogues; Elliott Hedman; Egg Collective; PEG Office of Landscape + Architecture; Dirk Winkel; David Korin; Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg [images]- Metropolis Magazine

Solar Decathlon 2013: ...winner is Team Austria/Vienna University of Technology edged out the University of Nevada Las Vegas...the closest finish to the sustainable house design competition since it started 11 years ago...Czech Technical University placed third... [images, info]- Los Angeles Times

Benedetta Tagliabue lands 2013 RIBA Jencks Award: ...given to an individual or practice that has recently made a major international contribution to both the theory and practice of architecture. + Charles Jencks' citation -- EMBT Miralles Tagliabue [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

In pictures: Zaha Hadid designs super-yacht: ...has collaborated with Hamburg-based shipbuilders Blohm+Voss...The prototype yacht will be 128m long with a form based around 'fluid dynamics and underwater ecosystems'. [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Zaha Hadid designs bottle for Austria's Icon Hill: Austrian wine producer Leo Hillinger has released the first edition of his Icon Hill project... "I actually wanted to design a water bottle...that would look quite elegant..." [images]- Harpers Wine & Spirit Trade Review

Op-Ed: Which "Past" Should Architects Embrace and Why? Posing Alternatives to Architectural Nostalgia: Witold Rybczynski's "How Architecture Works: A Humanist's Toolkit" might be his most urbanely written and sensibly organized - but his traditional definition of architecture's past might be passé. By Norman Weinstein- ArchNewsNow



-- Kazuyo Sejima & Associates: House in a Plum Grove (2003), Tokyo, Japan
-- The Camera: CphCph is a tribute to Copenhagen. To the buildings, the underground, the nights, the secret places, the empty spaces.
-- Travel Guide: Stockholm
-- Morphosis: Architecture surprisingly free of traditional presuppositions and classical lingo -- Thom Mayne

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