

Today's News - Friday, October 18, 2013

- Some really great reads today! Davis posits that it isn't artists - or preppies - who are to blame for gentrification, "but a symptom of dysfunctional urban policy."
- Saffron weighs in on efforts to make over Philly's Fabric Row, now "morphing into something new. Of course, it's how change gets managed that matters."
- Hume blames the failure of Toronto's planning process for the city's "countless, near-identical glass towers": in a city "terrified of change, awash in NIMBYism, planners are always nervous. Too frightened to be imaginative, let alone bold."
- Q&A with Williamson re: the future of the 'burbs: there are "challenges that good design should have a role in redressing - suburbia represents an opportunity we can't afford to squander."
- Wood warns that "we need to take a huge pinch of salt with any "net-zero energy"-skyscraper claims. We are a long way from achieving that Holy Grail."
- Quirk reports that perhaps a "secret" Google project has come up with an answer that "could transform the construction industry as well as architecture itself, especially for skyscrapers and large buildings."
- Jaffe talks to some neuroscientists who are studying why we love "curvy architecture": turns out our "affection for curves isn't just a matter of personal taste; it's hard-wired into the brain."
- Maybe that's why we can imagine never getting out of a bed designed by Hadid for her new Dubai hotel.
- Olcayto on why "architecture is a magical act" even if it's "hard to see under the weight of PQQs, PFIs, red tape, and any manner of the other black arts that seem designed to neutralize your role."
- Sperber calls for a revision in our ideas about "gender and genius - at a time when we are exploring how and where" women should "lean in."
- Weekend diversions (and case in point):
- Lange and Wisniewski parse MoMA's "Designing Modern Women": it "creates a sisterhood of many wonderful objects," but much of the "chronology is the same old story, with the same heroes, only now they have female collaborators" + "all my best friends are here - and they've all brought their boyfriends."
- Cooke's "Her Brilliant Career" spotlights "10 women who led inspirational lives in the 1950s"; here, an excerpt devoted to Alison Smithson ("She was a one-off," said Peter).
- "Archeology of the Digital" at the CCA and as a book by Lynn look to preserve "artifacts from the formative years of digital architecture - his voice is especially important today, as much of the early work is stored in increasingly inaccessible files."
- A spotlight on 10 of the trends featured in "Participatory City: 100 Urban Trends from the BMW Guggenheim Lab": "Density! Hacking! Micro-Units!"
- The Cooper Union shows off "a variety of beautifully original, informative and radical" ideas from a competition in "DYNAMX REDUX: Crowd-sourcing a new projection map for the Buckminster Fuller Institute."
- The Dallas Center for Architecture spotlights "creative and innovative marquee design projects that local architects are doing for clients internationally."
- Schmertz is taken by Ryan's "White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes": "it has much to teach" and "attention should be paid."
- de Monchaux gives (mostly) thumbs-up to a new Utzon monograph: he was "our sage Kenobi, our renegade Solo, our heroic Skywalker...an architect out of central casting - as tall as Koolhaas, as beautiful as Herzog, as Danish as Ingels."
- Bakewell basks in Campbell's "precise and enlightening" "The Library: A World History": libraries "must be efficient machines but the best ones are a little crazy, too. Long may they stay that way."
- FAT's Jacob enjoys Shephard's "How To Like Everything: A Utopia" that "tears up the familiar maps of architectural theory - with hardly a mention of disciplinary architecture," making it "all the more valuable."

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Are Artists to Blame for Gentrification? Or would SoHo, Chelsea, and Williamsburg have gentrified without them? ...the special emphasis placed on art as a cause is misleading...Until there's some understanding that gentrification isn't just about people's individual lifestyle choices—of artists, or preppies—but a symptom of dysfunctional urban policy, everyone is going to continue to get herded in front of rising rents every few years. Like sheep. By Ben Davis [links]- Slate

Proposed makeover would celebrate Fabric Row: Like so many distinctive commercial districts in Philadelphia, it is morphing into something new...evolution isn't much different from what is happening now to the city's other distinctive enclaves...Of course, it's how change gets managed that matters...recommendations follow many of the familiar approaches for treating ailing commercial corridors... By Inga Saffron -- Design Collaborative- Philadelphia Inquirer

How Toronto planners ensure mediocrity: Countless, near-identical glass towers provide a window into the failure of the city's planning process: As long as a building isn't too tall, too dense, or too good, the department is happy to give its approval...in a city terrified of change...awash in NIMBYism, planners are always nervous. Too frightened to be imaginative, let alone bold... By Christopher Hume-Toronto Star

Q&A with June Williamson, Author of "Designing Suburban Futures: New Models from Build a Better Burb": "Long Island is a bellwether for the types of challenges that other North American suburban regions may face...challenges that good design should have a role in redressing...suburbia represents an opportunity we can't afford to squander. It may be that the greatest gains in urban resiliency are to be made in suburbs." -- Long Island Index- Build a Better Burb

Op-Ed: The Shortfall of Tall: Is the net zero energy skyscraper really achievable? ...we need to take a huge pinch of salt with any "net-zero energy"-skyscraper claims. We are a long way from achieving that holy grail...The key to resolving the negative issues...is to tie the building into its location on every level: physical, philosophical, cultural, and environmental. By Antony Wood/Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH)- GreenSource

Secret Google Project Could Transform Construction Industry: ...as well as architecture itself..."Genie"... potential to transform the conservative construction industry...by making it more efficient and environmentally friendly at the level of design, construction, and maintenance...suggests the invention could save 30-50% in construction costs and 30-50% of the time spent between planning and market... By Vanessa Quirk- ArchDaily

Why Our Brains Love Curvy Architecture: People are far more likely to call a room beautiful when its design is round instead of linear. Recently neuroscientists have shown that this affection for curves isn't just a matter of personal taste; it's hard-wired into the brain...Roundness seems to be a universal human pleasure. By Eric Jaffe [images]- Fast Company

Zaha Hadid to Design ME Dubai: ...Mélia Dubai hotel...in the impressive Opus Tower. The 100-room property...marks the first hotel project in which Hadid is responsible for both the interiors and exteriors of the building. [slide show]- Artinfo

There's still magic in architecture - we just need to find it: Magic isn't Derren Brown; it's more Carlo Scarpa or Charles Rennie Mackintosh. So cast your own spell: Making a building is like pulling a rabbit from a hat – only very, very slowly. In the end, you get something from nothing...It can be hard

to see the magic today, under the weight of PQQs, PFIs, red tape...But the magic you felt when you first began your studies? It's still there. Somewhere. By Rory Olcayto- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Revising Our Ideas about Collective Inspiration: Gender and genius: I have gotten accustomed to people assuming that my male employees...are the lead architects...My invisibility annoyed me...Denise Scott Brown's story gives us a vantage point from which to consider the place of women...at a time when we are exploring how and where to "Lean in"...The centrality of collaboration in architecture is often overlooked...However, there are some who know better. By Esther Sperber/Studio ST Architects - Lilith Magazine

MoMA's Modern Women: "Designing Modern Women, 1890-1990": ...women have always been in design history...often uncredited or under-recognized...creates a sisterhood of many wonderful objects...Much of the large-scale chronology is the same old story, with the same heroes, only now they have female collaborators...we should not replace the male heroic narrative with a female one, but I felt a little sad that option was not entertained ... at least for this show...is an honorable start, but there are many routes from here. By Alexandra Lange [images]- Design Observer

A Room Of Their Own: MoMA's First Exhibit On Women In Architecture And Design: ...all my best friends are here ... and they've all brought their boyfriends...Yes, even in an exhibition called "Designing Modern Women"...women share physical space with the men who made their work palatable to a larger consumer society...orbits around those objects women were allowed to design... By Katherine Wisniewski -- Lily Reich/Mies Van der Rohe; Charlotte Perriand/Le Corbusier; Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, Ray and Charles Eames, Lella and Massimo Vignelli; etc. [images]- Architizer

"Her Brilliant Career: Ten Extraordinary Women of the Fifties": Rachel Cooke's new book tells the stories of 10 women who led inspirational lives in the 1950s. Here we present an extract from the chapter devoted to Alison Smithson. - BD/Building Design (UK)

Preserving the Work of Architecture's Digital Pioneers: How Gehry, Eisenman, Hoberman, and Yoh helped their profession transition into the 21st century: Artifacts from the formative years of digital architecture...at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. "Archeology of the Digital" curated by Greg Lynn...his voice is especially important today, as digital platforms update, and much of the early work is stored in increasingly inaccessible files. [images]- Metropolis Magazine

Density! Hacking! Micro-Units! How The BMW Guggenheim Lab Identified 100 Urban Trends: ...the Atelier Bow Wow-designed Lab has closed shop, and the initiative has unveiled its findings..."Participatory City: 100 Urban Trends from the BMW Guggenheim Lab"...10 of the trends featured in the exhibit. [images, links]- Architizer

"DYMAX REDUX: Crowd-sourcing a new projection map for the Buckminster Fuller Institute": finalists in the crowdsourcing design competition offer a variety of beautifully original, informative and radical projections onto Fuller's original work; at Cooper Union, October 22 – November 27- Cooper Union

"Architecture Abroad": Dallas Center for Architecture spotlights 22 creative and innovative marquee design projects that local architects are doing for clients internationally. -- 5G Studio; Beck; HDR; HKS; Jacobs; RTKL; SHW - Dallas Center for Architecture

Museums Expand Their Habitats: "White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes" by Raymond Ryan...present six art museums expanding over time that are distinguished by genuinely innovative architecture and landscape...it has much to teach...The clients...create new collaborations of architects and landscape architects...They have raised the bar high but attention should be paid. By Mildred F. Schmertz -- Weiss/Manfredi; Erwin Heerich; Tadao Ando; Raimund Abraham; Alvaro Siza Viera; Hiroshi Sambuichi; Kazuyo Sejima; Ryue Nishizawa; Iwan Baan [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

The First Forty: The Sydney Opera House's 40th anniversary coincides with a new monograph on Utzon, whose epic accomplishment is rivaled only by his tragic tale...our sage Kenobi, our renegade Solo, our heroic Skywalker...an architect out of central casting in the Gary-Cooper-as-Howard-Roark mould, as tall as Rem Koolhaas, as beautiful as Jacques Herzog, as Danish as Bjarke Ingels..." Jørn Utzon, Drawings and Buildings" by Michael Asgaard Andersen...is sanguine: meticulous in its accounts and assembly of original materials... By Thomas de Monchaux- Architect Magazine

"The Library: A World History" by James Campbell: ...with spectacular photographs by Will Pryce...showing how book technology, readers' needs and architectural solutions have co-evolved (or, occasionally, been at loggerheads)...is precise and enlightening in his descriptions but extremely gentle in his judgments...They must be efficient machines but the best ones are a little crazy, too. Long may they stay that way. By Sarah Bakewell [images]- Financial Times (UK)

"How To Like Everything: A Utopia" by Paul Shephard: Sam Jacob enjoys a book that tears up the familiar maps of architectural theory: ...a book that is part novel, part memoir, part philosophical essay. With hardly a mention of disciplinary architecture...And it's all the more valuable for this. - BD/Building Design (UK)



-- 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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