

Today's News - Monday, November 18, 2013

- ArcSpace brings us Siza's housing complex in Porto, Portugal; a funeral home in Barcelona; and a profile of Kurokawa, "one of the most radical and productive thinkers in recent Japanese architecture."
- It's a grumpy lot today: Lamster laments that, after 50 years, "Dallas still hasn't figured out an appropriate way to memorialize JFK" - its newest marker - a plaque "the size of a large door."
- London's skyline under yet another towering "threat"; a legal challenge "is likely to raise questions about the credibility of the government's planning policy."
- Wainwright visits the newest mega-building in "Manhattan on the Maas," Koolhaas's De Rotterdam, that "looks like someone has sliced up the drawings but not put the pieces back together quite right" (Rem drops him at the front door: "That's all you need to see. The rest is just a cheap office building").
- Hawthorne sees a larger lesson in the sad future facing Houston's Astrodome: it's "a test case for the health of the preservationist movement."
- Groves x 2: a new NTHP report shows "hundreds of landmarks on U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs properties are at risk of being permanently abandoned or demolished."
- On a smaller scale, but brighter note, she reports that a 1940 Paul R. Williams-designed house will most likely be saved from the wrecking ball (thanks to some very influential neighbors).
- A 1953 Durell Stone house in Connecticut (great pix!) that "marks a pivotal turn in his architectural career" could "make way for a developer's vision: a neocolonial pastiche home" (doesn't that sound just divine).
- King x 2: a new casino in Sonoma County "plays a dull hand" with lots of fake greenery (and lots of parking): "Instead of giddy Vegas flash or a hedonistic homage to its setting," it's just "another big suburban box" (though with some good points inside).
- He delves further into why George Lucas's proposal for the Presidio is out of place: "It's a generic box gussied up with arches and domes, with no more depth than a street on a Hollywood lot."
- Davidson and Saltz tour the renovated Queens Museum: "it troubles me that the shorthand for a renovation is to slap a layer of glass on the side facing the road and call it new," but "at least it broadcasts, 'Hey, come here. We're big and new and shiny. This could be fun.'"
- Now for some good news: Rinaldi cheers that "the box is back in museum design. Programmatically smart, yet never plain."
- Bernstein gives thumbs-up to the Piano Pavilion at the Kimbell Art Museum: it "defers but doesn't genuflect. Wisely, the Kimbell let Piano do what he does best" (lots of pix, too!).
- Moore is more than impressed with Caruso St John's alterations to Tate Britain: "their rejection of conventional ideas of what it is to be modern are all qualities that British architecture badly needs."
- PPS offers an in-depth look at how "the DIY ethos that grew out of Detroit's struggles has prepared it for its role as a hotbed of Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC) civic innovation today."
- Kimmelman cheers Selldorf's Brooklyn recycling plant: it's "an architectural keeper" that "makes a good case for the social and economic benefits of design."
- Downey's TEDTalk re: "how a blind architect would re-build his city" will make your day!
- NYIT architecture students hope to make their design to turn plastic bottles into disaster relief shelters a reality.
- HUD makes its pick of the final 10 in the Rebuild By Design competition (great presentation).

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-- Álvaro Siza: Bouça Housing Complex (2004), Porto, Portugal
-- Kisho Kurokawa (1934-2007): one of the most radical and productive thinkers in recent Japanese architecture...a founder of the Metabolist Movement
-- Battle i Roig Arquitectes: Funeral Home, Sant Joan Despí, Barcelona, Spain

Markers of JFK tragedy fail to impress: It's been 50 years, and Dallas still hasn't figured out an appropriate way to memorialize John F. Kennedy...With a bit of the ambition on which Dallas so prides itself, this killing field might have been remade into a true public amenity...Instead we have a plaque. By Mark Lamster -- Good Fulton & Farrell; Philip Johnson [images]- Dallas Morning News

Parliament's world heritage status is 'at risk' after ministers allow [Elizabeth House] development: Legal challenge will question why £800m skyscrapers were greenlit without consultation, despite threat to London skyline...Unesco...has placed the area surrounding parliament on its "endangered list"...The case is likely to raise questions about the credibility of the government's planning policy. -- David Chipperfield Architects- Observer (UK)

Rem Koolhaas's De Rotterdam: cut and paste architecture: Like one skyline perched on another, the latest mega-building...towers over the starchitect playground...looks like someone has sliced up the drawings...but not put the pieces back together quite right...is it anything more than an optical trick, a game of dancing facades best viewed from a distance? "That's all you need to see. The rest is just a cheap office building"... By Oliver Wainwright -- Office for Metropolitan Architecture/OMA [images]- Guardian (UK)

What the Houston Astrodome can teach us: The muscular work of late-modern architecture...makes a test case for the health of the preservationist movement...What is it about late-modern designs that has left them so vulnerable in recent years? ...Buildings, it turns out, experience their own version of a midlife crisis...the battle to save them will run uphill...So how can preservationists adapt? By Christopher Hawthorne -- Bertrand Goldberg; Paul Rudolph; McKim, Mead & White; Irving Gill; Edward Durell Stone; Minoru Yamasaki; William Pereira [slide show]- Los Angeles Times

VA neglects historic properties, study finds: Two crumbling structures in West L.A. are among the VA's historic buildings that are at risk as the agency opts for construction over preservation...Hundreds of landmarks on U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs properties are at risk of being permanently abandoned or demolished... By Martha Groves and Alan Zarembo -- National Trust for Historic Preservation [slide show]- Los Angeles Times

Disney's Iger helps stop demolition of Paul R. Williams-designed house: ...was built in 1940 and is a relatively rare example of a smaller home by Williams, the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects. By Martha Groves - Los Angeles Times

Edward Durell Stone House in Darien, Connecticut Under Threat: ...to make way for a developer's vision: a neocolonial pastiche home...Designed in 1953, the house marks a pivotal turn in Stone's architectural career. ..."This is one of the last of father's rustic vernacular homes that emulates the work of Frank Lloyd Wright," his son, Hicks Stone... [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Graton Resort & Casino design plays dull hand: ...strives for a natural look, although much of the landscape greenery is fake...Instead of giddy Vegas flash or a hedonistic homage to its Sonoma County setting, the casino...[is] another big suburban box... By John King -- Friedmutter Group; Hatch Design Group [images]- San Francisco Chronicle

George Lucas proposal out of place in Presidio: ...the wrong building for the site...has no real connection to the remarkable landscape around it. It's a generic box gussied up with arches and domes, with no more depth than a street on a Hollywood lot. By John King -- WRNS Studio; EHDD; Urban Design Group - San Francisco Chronicle

A First Look at the Queens Museum's World of Tomorrow: ...a sometime stepchild of New York's cultural life, has just reopened after a \$69 million renovation...It was never a wonderful building, but it troubles me that the shorthand for a renovation is to slap a layer of glass on the side facing the road and call it new. By Justin Davidson and Jerry Saltz -- Grimshaw - New York Magazine

Across the U.S., the box is back in museum design: Architecture in the 2000s was a lot like hair in the 1980s, wild fun at the time but a little bit puzzling just a few years later...Bangs are back, and so is the box...Programmatically smart, yet never plain. By Ray Mark Rinaldi -- Frank Gehry; Daniel Libeskind; Santiago Calatrava; David Chipperfield; Renzo Piano; Shigeru Ban; Thom Mayne and Zaha Hadid; Tod Williams Billie Tsien; Brad Cleopfil [images]- Denver Post

Between Earth and Sky: The Piano Pavilion: ...addition to the Kimbell Art Museum, Louis I. Kahn's 1972 masterpiece, to which his new structure defers but doesn't genuflect...Wisely, the Kimbell let Piano do what he does best. By Fred A. Bernstein -- Renzo Piano [images]- World-Architects.com

Tate Britain's £45m alterations and the staircase that spans the centuries: Caruso St John...say they like keeping one foot in the past – and flying close to vulgarity...their ability to keep on inventing and their rejection of conventional ideas of what it is to be modern are all qualities that British architecture badly needs. By Rowan Moore [slide show]- Observer (UK)

Detroiters Work: The Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Regeneration of a Great American City: ...necessity is the mother of all invention, and the DIY ethos that grew out of the city's struggles has prepared it for its role as a hotbed of LQC civic innovation today. [images, links]- Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

A Grace Note for a Gritty Business: ...Sims Municipal Recycling Facility...at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal in Sunset Park...Did I mention that it's an architectural keeper? ...makes a good case for the social and economic benefits of design — and for old-fashioned industrial waterfront development as an abiding urban virtue. By Michael Kimmelman -- Selldorf Architects [slide show]- New York Times

How a blind architect would re-build his city: Chris Downey: Design with the blind in mind: ...he contrasts life in his beloved San Francisco before and after - and shows how the thoughtful designs that enhance his life now might actually make everyone's life better, sighted or not. [video]- TEDTalks / TEDCity2.0

NYIT Students Turn Plastic Bottles Into Disaster Relief: The New York Institute of Technology's School of Architecture...came up with a solution: SodaBIB, a new type of shipping pallet that would allow commonly used plastic bottles to be used for shelter. [images]- ArchDaily

Rebuild By Design: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has selected 10 projects in competition's next and final stage. -- HR&A Advisors./Cooper, Robertson & Partners; Sasaki/Rutgers/Arup; WXY/West 8; MIT CAU + ZUS + URBANISTEN; Interboro Team; OMA; BIG TEAM; SCAPE/Landscape Architecture; PennDesign/OLIN; unabridged Coastal Collective [links to images, info]- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

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