

Today's News - Monday, March 31, 2014

- ArcSpace brings us Holden Platt's take on MAD's "thunderbolt-hued" China Wood Sculpture Museum; a Q&A with Melgaard re: the relationship between architecture and film; and a profile of Viñoly, whose "star status has been a little burnt" of late.
- Betsky explains why he thinks Ban deserved to win the Pritzker "for one reason above others: His work demonstrates that socially-responsible architecture can also be beautiful" (even though not everything he does is beautiful, and "some even seem banal").
- ljev argues against RIBA's "pointless actions" re: the Israeli Association of United Architects: "in its own twisted way, the institution's core intentions were probably well meaning. But nothing dilutes righteousness as systematically as hypocrisy" (comments warrant reading as well).
- Scruggs delves into "how gritty, crime-ridden Medellín became a model for 21st-century urbanism," though "there is still some discord over the process."
- London's tower debate rages on: Moore ponders: "Why the lack of consultation? ...new London tower design tends to go out of its way to be as assertive and architecturally antisocial as possible."
- Farrell explains "why the UK does not need a formal architecture policy: real change cannot happen unless the wider public starts to expect and demand more of their built environment."
- Waite lays out Farrell's wish-list in detail, which includes "a shake-up of architectural education and a revolutionary shift to 'proactive' planning."
- O'Sullivan weighs in on New London Architecture's survey that has developers "rubbing their hands with glee at the news," but "look more closely and you notice that this freshly announced enthusiasm is far from unbridled."
- Al Sabouni considers two Titanics of the desert in the UAE: "we have to ask what has gone so wrong that such buildings are getting recognition. On what level have these buildings succeeded?"
- Simpson considers public space design in Dubai and Rotterdam, where "the overwhelming motivation for construction appears to have been commerce and traffic control, not civic placemaking."
- Sydney's first new town center in a century includes plans for up to 10 major new buildings at Green Square, but Gehl raises "concerns about the density" and the crucial need for "extra good public spaces."
- While Australia may be "playing catch-up with America and Europe" when it comes to green roofs, here's a round-up of six that get it right.
- Hawthorne gives (mostly) thumbs-up to Mayne's "hulking new Hollywood campus" for Emerson College: "The first question is simply what to call the architectural box in which it comes packaged (think "alien popping out of Sigourney Weaver's stomach")."
- King finds some flaws in expansion plans for San Francisco's Moscone Convention Center, "but they're not fatal": while critics "have strong, valid points...this doesn't mean the expansion should be stopped in its tracks."
- Bernstein has a most interesting Q&A with Schumacher, who "discusses everything from his high-profile partner to the state of contemporary architecture, about which he has been posting furiously on Facebook."
- Moscow's chief architect wants Shukhov Tower to stay where it is - with the caveat: "I am offering my opinion as an architect and as an individual."
- Fast Company offers its World's Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in Architecture list for 2014 (not all the usual suspects, either!).
- Call for entries (deadlines loom!): 2014 Fuller Challenge + Call for Papers: 2014 AIBC Annual Conference: "Shifting Perspectives" + Midtown Viaducts Public Art + Light Project to transform the undersides of two Detroit viaducts (funding included for winning proposals!).

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-- MAD Architects: China Wood Sculpture Museum, Harbin, China: ...signals that even China's frozen northern periphery is beginning to be reshaped...behind the thunderbolt-hued building is China's leading experimental architect, Ma Yansong... By Kevin Holden Platt
-- Exhibition: Film and Architecture as the act of framing: Q&A with Morten Melgaard, who has been researching the relationship between architecture and film for several years.
-- Rafael Viñoly: Today he is a household name and ranks among the greatest living architects. Recently however, his star status has been a little burnt...

Good Design that Does Good: Shigeru Ban deserved to win the 2014 Pritzker Architecture Prize for one reason above others: His work demonstrates that socially-responsible architecture can also be beautiful...Not all of Ban's objects are beautiful, and some of them even seem banal, but he does seem to be able to coax both strong and delicate effects out of a limited palette. By Aaron Betsky - Architect Magazine

Palestine doesn't need the RIBA: The RIBA's pointless actions are sowing division and discord: ...in its own twisted way, the institution's core intentions were probably well meaning. But nothing dilutes righteousness as systematically as hypocrisy... By Ike ljev - BD/Building Design (UK)

Latin America's New Superstar: How Gritty, Crime-Ridden Medellín Became a Model for 21st-Century Urbanism: The significance of Medellín's transformation cannot be overstated...has become a best-practices case study for mayors and policymakers worldwide...While the architects of [its] turnaround emphasize their commitment to community participation...there is still some discord over the process. By Greg Scruggs -- Alejandro Echeverri; Sergio Fajardo; Clara Irazabal - Next City (formerly Next American City)

London is being transformed with 230 towers. Why the lack of consultation? ...80 public figures, shocked at the scale of the plans, are demanding a say in the way the city is reshaped...new London tower design tends to go out of its way to be as assertive and architecturally antisocial as possible. By Rowan Moore -- New London Architecture [+ interactive guide to future skyline] - Observer (UK)

Why the UK does not need a formal architecture policy: My review of the UK's architecture and built environment has found that a little collaboration and co-ordination will go a long way -- with the government as enablers not autocrats: ...real change cannot happen unless the wider public starts to expect and demand more of their built environment... By Terry Farrell - Guardian (UK)

Terry Farrell Review: in detail: Wish list for government includes new chief architect, 'urban rooms' in every city, a new 'Place Leadership Council', a shake-up of architectural education and a revolutionary shift to 'proactive' planning. By Richard Waite - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Londoners Like High Rises, But They Don't Want to Live in Them: Luckily, most couldn't afford the rent anyway: A poll released [by] New London Architecture showed 45% agreeing (against 25% disagreeing) that tall buildings...had improved the city's skyline. Developers will be rubbing their hands with glee at the news...Look more closely, however, and you notice

that this freshly announced enthusiasm is far from unbridled. By Feargus O'Sullivan - The Atlantic Cities

Titanic of the desert: Architecture of records: In UAE, words such as world's biggest, tallest, most expensive...have replaced what generally was referred to as most effective, or most suitable...when one looks at a building such as Sheikh Zayed mosque in Abu Dhabi or Khalifa tower in Dubai we have to ask what has gone so wrong that such buildings are getting recognition. On what level have these buildings succeeded? By Marwa Al Sabouni [images] - RIBA Journal (UK)

Public space design in Dubai and Rotterdam - a tale of two cities: A city without proper public space is a city without a soul. But there's more to it than fountains and piazzas: ...the overwhelming motivation for construction...appears to have been commerce and traffic control, not civic placemaking. By Veronica Simpson [images] - FX Magazine / DesignCurial

Tower design by Koichi Takada Architects unveiled for first Sydney town centre in a century: Construction of up to 10 major new buildings at Green Square...is expected to begin by Christmas this year...City of Sydney is seeking advice from Jan Gehl...[who] has raised concerns about the density...saying that it was crucial to have "extra good public spaces" if dense, narrow streets were to be built. [images] - Architecture & Design (Australia)

Getting green roofs right in Australia – 6 of the best: Although we are still playing catch up with America and Europe, incorporating green roofs in our buildings is not a new concept for Australia. -- Neeson Murcutt Architects/Sue Barnsley Design; Atlantis Design; Nettleton Tribe Architects; Secret Gardens; Edaw Gillespies Melbourne; ASPECT Studios [images] - Architecture & Design (Australia)

Thom Mayne frames Emerson College with towering sense of self: ...make the most of a blank slate...A frame, an arch, a studio stage set, a proscenium: The first question about...hulking new Hollywood campus on Sunset Boulevard...is simply what to call the architectural box in which it comes packaged...gives me at least a modest amount of hope for future architectural experiments in Los Angeles... By Christopher Hawthorne -- Morphosis [images] - Los Angeles Times

Moscone Center expansion has flaws, but they're not fatal: ...critics - call them the loyal opposition - have strong, valid points...this doesn't mean the expansion should be stopped in its tracks...Yerba Buena is shaped and strained by competing interests. Yet like the city at large, it maintains its distinct appeal...Get the details right this time, and the odd pairing will flourish until the next expansion plan starts the fight all over again. By John King -- Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM); Mark Cavagnero Associates; CMG Landscape Architecture [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

Patrik Schumacher: The sole principal at Zaha Hadid Architects other than Hadid herself discusses everything from his high-profile partner to the state of contemporary architecture, about which he has been posting furiously on Facebook. By Fred A. Bernstein - Architectural Record

Sergey Kuznetsov: Shukhov Tower must remain at the same location: The chief architect of Moscow shared his view on saving the famous tower by architect Vladimir Shukhov with "RBK Real Estate"... "I am offering my opinion as an architect and as an individual"... - Architectural Council of Moscow / Archcouncil of Moscow

The World's Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in Architecture: Bold designs, innovative business models, and risky projects define the best in architecture this year. By Shaunacy Ferro -- SHoP Architects; Zaha Hadid Architects; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; NBBJ; NL Architects; Amanda Levete/AL_A; GLUCK+; David Rockwell/Rockwell Group; Clive Wilkinson; MVRDV - Fast Company

Call for entries: 2014 Fuller Challenge: innovative solutions to some of humanity's most pressing problems; \$100,000 prize to support the development and implementation of one outstanding strategy; deadline: April 11 - Buckminster Fuller Institute

Call for entries: Call For Papers: 2014 AIBC Annual Conference: "Shifting Perspectives," Vancouver, October 8-10; deadline: April 15 - Architectural Institute of British Columbia (AIBC)

Call for entries: Midtown Viaducts Public Art + Light Project: transform the undersides of two viaducts located in Midtown Detroit's TechTown district with public art and light; accepted proposals will be funded up to \$75,000 per viaduct; deadline: April 30 - Midtown Detroit, Inc. / New Economy Initiative

Opening a New Chapter on Designing Public Libraries: Why Robert Dawson's photographic essay on the public library plays it safe by looking back when architects need to scan an emerging horizon. By Norman Weinstein - ArchNewsNow

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