

Today's News - Wednesday, July 2, 2014

- Baillieu minces no words about why she thinks RIBA is being "sidetracked by fighting the wrong battles - it's not just how the world will look in 10 or 20 years' time...but how architects can still be part of it. Now that really is worth fighting for" ("there are bigger issues than Israel").
- Brake makes the case that Detroit might want to put apply some brakes to its blight-removal plan, "breathtaking in its speed, scale, and cost," that "runs the risk of demolishing its identity and the foundation of its revival."
- Hall Kaplan opines: "Whither planning in Los Angeles?" charging it "has become an ambiguous paper-pushing, in-and-out basket exercise. At least, according to a frustrated gaggle of practitioners trading candor for anonymity."
- Flint finds fodder to ponder "who really owns public space" in "Open to the Public" at AIA's Center for Architecture: "public space is central to civic health," and attention now being paid to its design and character is "quite welcome, but there are all kinds of thorny questions marbled in."
- Kennicott digs deep into the "increasing awareness among city leaders, planners, architects, landscape architects - and the public - "about the degree to which urban design affects health," and "the interrelated issues of sustainability and healthy design."
- Hough cheers NYC's former parks commissioner Benepe's leadership in establishing "a culture of sustainability" that has become a model for cities everywhere - and his well-deserved ASLA 2014 Olmsted Medal.
- Pittsburgh's Mellon Square, "an icon of mid-century Modern design" (and the first plaza to be built over a subterranean parking garage), had seen better days - now, it is "a showcase for urban revitalization through historic preservation" (we remember it from the 70s - yikes!).
- Birnbaum balks at part of the Frick Collection's expansion plan that would eradicate "an important part of the collection - an exquisite garden" by noted British landscape architect Russell Page - "deemed insignificant" and hardly mentioned in most reports.
- Hume fumes about a city councillor's "bottom-feeder mentality" about Toronto's Sugar Beach, when, in fact, "it is hugely successful, socially and economically."
- City Beach NYC launches a crowdfunding campaign to bring a portable floating beach to the Hudson River (sand sans swimming).
- Lange offers a most thoughtful take on civic crowdfunding: "Can Kickstarter urbanism mature? Existing modes of civic crowdfunding need to stop disappearing projects that don't succeed."
- Arup engineers explain how The Living's mushroom tower sprouted atop MoMA PS1 for the summer, and why "mushrooms might not replace steel and concrete soon, but Hy-Fi shows that they do have a place in today's construction market."
- Gadanho is (mostly) optimistic as he contemplates the future of European architecture: "a strongly educated generation of young architects offers the signs that the profession is reviewing its priorities," and "European architecture may have already accumulated just enough cultural capital to become enduringly resilient."
- Kruger parses the newly established National Archives of Modern Architecture in Tokyo's Kyu-Iwasaki-Tei Gardens: "it is well worth visiting both."
- On a sadder note - but not without hope - Dominion Modern!, "dedicated to the promotion and preservation of modern Canadian design and architecture," announced it is closing (but maybe not). - Iconic Albert Kahn & Associates, the "119-year-old firm that defined Detroit's golden era of opulent buildings and groundbreaking factories is fighting to find its role in the 21st century" (and just might win!).
- We cheer Architectural Review rounding up its complete coverage of the Venice Biennale, by the likes of Jencks, Fior, Woodman, Finch, Wilson, and others, on to one page.

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There are bigger issues for architects than Israel: RIBA is sidetracked by fighting the wrong battles: ...why does it seem to lurch from one crisis to another? Is it simply a clash of egos, or the fact that because architects are no longer bound together by a common purpose, RIBA has lost its role? ...it's not just how the world will look in 10 or 20 years' time that is the question but how architects can still be part of it. Now that really is worth fighting for. By Amanda Baillieu - BD/Building Design (UK)

Editorial> Motoring Toward Destruction? Alan Brake questions the wisdom of Detroit Blight Removal Task Force's plan: ...breathtaking in its speed, scale, and cost...in its panic to save itself...runs the risk of demolishing its identity and the foundation of its revival...inventory could also be used as an open call for ideas and development proposals, not just a map of destruction...Let's hope the city has the nerve to seek answers other than the wrecking ball. - The Architect's Newspaper

Sam Hall Kaplan Opines on LA Public Dissatisfaction with Community Planning: Whither planning in Los Angeles? Charged with providing a guide to a more livable, sustainable, and egalitarian city, planning...has become an ambiguous paper-pushing, in-and-out basket exercise...At least, according to a frustrated gaggle of practitioners trading candor for anonymity. - The Planning Report

Who Really Owns Public Spaces? "Open to the Public: Civic Space Now" at the AIA New York Center for Architecture examines the changing function of parks and other open urban centers: ...public space is central to civic health. All of this new attention to the design and character of public space is thus quite welcome, but there are all kinds of thorny questions marbled in... By Anthony Flint - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

City planners are increasingly aware of health benefits of clean, living landscapes: The 11th Street Bridge park is part of an increasing awareness among city leaders nationwide about the degree to which urban design affects health...[it] may be a crisis in the aesthetics of contemporary architecture that is driving more firms to think about the interrelated issues of sustainability and healthy design. By Philip Kennicott -- Active Design Guidelines; Mary Fitch/AIADC; Rick Bell/AIANY; FitCity; Carl Elefante/Quinn Evans Architects; Peter Vieira/Payette - Washington Post

Olmsted Redux: Adrian Benepe...recipient of the ASLA 2014 Olmsted Medal. Like it or not, the well-deserved and appropriate recognition is one more in the seemingly endless list of honors for the transformation of New York's urban parks...[he] established a culture of sustainability...helped to convey the critical reality that even the densest cities are, in fact, functioning components of broader landscape systems. By Mark Hough -- Trust for Public Land [images] - PLANetizen

Pittsburgh's Mellon Square Is Restored to Its Modern Glory: ...an icon of mid-century Modern design has been finally restored...A precursor to today's trendy green roof movement, the plaza was the first in the nation built over a subterranean parking garage...a showcase for urban revitalization through historic preservation, with a contemporary sensibility and the latest technologies. -- Mitchell & Ritchey; Simonds & Simonds (1955); Heritage Landscapes; Pfaffmann + Associates Architects [images, video] - The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

Here's What's Missing in the Debate Over the Frick Collection's Proposed Expansion: ...if implemented, it would forever destroy an important part of the collection - an exquisite garden by...British landscape architect Russell Page...mention of Page has been absent and the garden has been deemed insignificant...depicted as under utilized, or worse - in an era when just about everything is monetized - under performing. By Charles A. Birnbaum/The Cultural Landscape Foundation [images] - Huffington Post

Sugar Beach a sweet deal for the city: Despite councillor's claims, Toronto's urban beach is new waterfront's first unqualified success...the money was exceptionally, perhaps uniquely, well spent...people are flocking to live in parts of the city they once drove through without noticing...bottom-feeder mentality...comfortable settling for second-rate...In fact, Sugar Beach...is hugely successful, socially and economically. By Christopher Hume - Toronto Star

City Beach NYC aims to bring a portable floating beach to the Hudson River: Blayne Ross has unveiled a new concept...a

reclaimed barge topped with sand...features retail spaces, restaurants, and sunbathing spots...with changing rooms and a marine science exhibit...plans to launch a crowdfunding campaign... -- workshop/apd; Craft Engineering Studio [images, links]- Gizmag

Making something big happen at an urban scale is more than a popularity contest: For civic crowdfunding to grow, it needs to engage, robustly and transparently, with questions of governance, equity and feasibility...Can Kickstarter urbanism mature? ...civic projects are among the most successful at meeting their goals...existing modes of civic crowdfunding need to stop disappearing projects that don't succeed, and make it easier to access data about location, participation, and follow-through. By Alexandra Lange- Dezeen

How Arup Engineered The Living's Mushroom Tower: The firm explains what it took to build this year's MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program/YAP pavilion..The resulting structure is heroic...Mushrooms might not replace steel and concrete soon, but Hy-Fi shows that they do have a place in today's construction market. By Matt Clark and Shaina Saporta -- David Benjamin; Ecovative [images]- Metropolis Magazine

The EU Mies van der Rohe Award and The Future of European Architecture: ..EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture...at a crossroads...Europe itself seems to be facing a pivotal, if transient moment...a strongly educated generation of young architects offers the signs that the profession is reviewing its priorities...European architecture may have already accumulated just enough cultural capital to become durably resilient. By Pedro Gadanho- ArchDaily

From the Vaults: The newly established National Archives of Modern Architecture, located on the grounds of the Kyu-Iwasaki-Tei Gardens in Yushima, central Tokyo, aims to promote public appreciation for works of modern architecture...it is well worth visiting both...."Towards an Architectural Archive"...a selection of works by three Japanese architects all interrelated, directly or indirectly, through their association with Le Corbusier... By Nicolai Kruger/Pelli Clarke Pelli -- Junzo Sakakura; Takamasa Yoshizaka; Kunio Maekawa; Masato Otaka [images]- Artscape Japan

Save Dominion Modern! Due to the overwhelming response to DOMO's recent news about its closure, organizers are reconsidering...was a unique museum dedicated to the promotion and preservation of modern Canadian design and architecture. - Canadian Architect

Albert Kahn & Associates rebuilding foundations of iconic firm: ...119-year-old firm that defined Detroit's golden era of opulent buildings and groundbreaking factories is fighting to find its role in the 21st century..."We've been a mid-size player since the late '90s, and ever since the recession, the trend has been toward mega-firms or small, niche players"...Work has been on a recent upswing. - Detroit News

Venice Architecture Biennale 2014: The AR's Complete Coverage: From Charles Jencks to Liza Fior, Ellis Woodman, Paul Finch, Rob Wilson, and others, critics' take on every element of the 2014 Biennale- Architectural Review (UK)

ANN Feature: Notes from the Giardini - La Biennale di Venezia 2014: "Fundamentals" is certainly not the typical way one would think of displaying architecture. By Terri Peters -- Rem Koolhaas - ArchNewsNow



-- 7 Spectacular Pools to Cool Off In: ...will leave you chilled and stunned. -- PTW; Moshe Safdie; Kengo Kuma & Associates; Sadar Vuga Arhitekti; Álvaro Siza; PLOT; Michael Graves

-- The 2014 FIFA World Cup Stadiums, Brazil. By Ulf Meyer -- Schultz Architects; Eduardo and Vicente Castro Mello; Coutinho, Diegues, Cordeiro Arquitetos (DDG)/Werner Sobek; GCP Arquitetos; gmp Architekten; Populous; Daniel Fernandes

-- 8 Things to See in Toronto & Montreal -- Daniel Libeskind; Diamond Schmitt Architects; Gehry Partners; Alsop Architects; Provencher Roy + Associés; Saucier + Perrotte; Tétrault Dubuc Saia et associés

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