

Today's News - Thursday, July 31, 2014

EDITOR'S NOTE: Just a reminder that we're on our summer schedule now, and not posting on Fridays and Mondays. We'll be back Tuesday, August 5.

- ANN Feature: Gutzmer's in-depth Q&A with Behnisch Architekten partners, who pull no punches in discussing the challenges of urban planning, the differences working in Europe and the U.S., architects' social and ethical responsibilities (Zaha included), and much more.
- We are saddened by the news of the passing of planning master Peter Hall.
- It seems fitting, then, that much of today's news is about urban planning and public spaces:
- Kimmelman calls for the Frick to re-think its expansion plans that would erase "a prized garden": "there are other options" to becoming yet another "outpost of civilization falling prey to the bigger-is-better paradigm."
- Science may be able to tell us "how cities grow and why they fail," but "no discussion of the health of cities can be complete without thinking about the role of art - public art."
- Not everyone is thrilled with Sydney's "ambitious \$9 million public art plan" that includes a "wacky" arch, an oversized milk crate, and 60 handmade bronze birds.
- Hogan, on the other hand, thinks "it's about time Sydney had an arch. Australia's cringe against public art" and "using public space for art that does not fit an existing national mythos has us backing away from public spending on public goods."
- Davies, meanwhile, ponders how Melbourne's Federation Square made a Top 10 list as "the sixth best public square in the world" without having the scale or historical, religious or political significance of the others: "its claim is it simply works extraordinarily well as a place for people to meet for the decidedly modest routines of daily life."
- AIA NY and the Center for Architecture are on a mission "of advancing the fraught debate over what constitutes and threatens public areas" (including bathrooms) "in ways that could provoke opposition."
- Dunlap reports on clashing visions for another "ghost rail bed" in NYC: bring back the trains, or make it a park - "just don't call it the High Line of Queens" (and a reason to check out "QueensWay Connection" proposals at the Center for Architecture).
- A look at what could be next for NYC's proposed subterranean Lowline park: it "could be a reality by 2018," but "reality will take more than technology - it will take cash."
- Hatherley rounds up "famous skyscrapers that flopped."
- Jones waxes poetic about the throngs who gathered to cheer the demolition of three cooling towers: it "reveals the truth - avant-garde structures are most popular when they fall...architecture is - at its worst - the most arrogant of the arts."
- Two Ukrainian photographers create "surreal landscapes in which art institutions, such as the Guggenheim and Pompidou Center, appear mired in very recent disasters."
- Turner, on a brighter note, visits Zumthor's zinc mine museum in Norway, and the man himself in his Swiss studio to find out why the project has taken so long: "His obsessive attention to detail even saw him create the recipe for the beef and vegetable soup that will be the only fare on offer" (oh - and knitwear, too).
- Weekend diversions:
- Heathcote x 2: "Lazar Khidekel, Suprematism and the Russian Avant-Garde" at the Pushkin House: he may be "barely known compared with his now-stellar contemporaries, yet in his fusing of art, architecture and urbanism, he remains arguably the most visionary of them all."
- He gives (mostly) thumbs-up to Louis Kahn show at London's Design Museum: "So can this exhibition convince the unenlightened? Despite the fact that it is quite a good show, I'd have to suggest that the answer is no" (Kahn's son got there first with "My Architect" - "perhaps the best film about architecture ever made").
- Bevan cheers the "first major survey of Kahn's splendid work in decades. He may never have built in London but the consequences of his influence are all around us."
- Turner turns the pages of Wilkinson's "Bricks & Mortals: Ten Great Buildings and the People They Made" that goes "beyond the 'kings and queens' version of architectural history."
- Flint is entranced by Cape Cod's Modernist legacy, "lovingly detailed" in McMahon and Cipriani's "Cape Cod Modern."

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ANN Feature: Sociologists Rather than Signature Architects: Q&A with Behnisch Architekten Partners: They pull no punches in discussing the challenges of urban planning, the differences working in Europe and the U.S., architects' social and ethical responsibilities, and what their dream projects would be. By Alexander Gutzmer - ArchNewsNow.com

Obituary: Planning profession mourns Sir Peter Hall: World-renowned planning academic and writer died this week at the age of 82: "His death is a massive blow to the profession and to academia, but above all to those who knew and loved him most".- PlanningResource (UK)

The Case Against a Mammoth Frick Collection Addition: NYC's Landmarks Preservation Commission would do well to turn down the Frick's proposed expansion, which imagines replacing a prized garden...with a clumsy addition...there are other options...becomes the latest front in a larger battle to prevent nonprofit outposts of civilization from falling prey to the bigger-is-better paradigm...Great public places and works of landscape architecture deserve to be treated like great buildings. By Michael Kimmelman -- Russell Page (1977); Charles Birnbaum/The Cultural Landscape Foundation; Davis Brody Bond; Carrère and Hastings; John Russell Pope - New York Times

When Cities Become Science, Where Does Art Fit In? It will be a science that tells us how cities grow and why they fail...to see the factors that make some neighborhoods healthy while others leave their inhabitants stuck in poverty...Cities clearly are more than a new kind of physics problem. They are also creations of the human imagination...That's why no discussion of the health of cities can be complete without thinking about the role of art - public art. -- WALLTHERAPY - National Public Radio (NPR)

Mayor Clover Moore unveils ambitious \$9m public art plan for CBD: A wacky \$3.5million arch towering 50m...is the centrepiece..."Cloud Arch" will act as a gateway to the new George St plaza with the light rail passing underneath it...also commissioned "Pavilion," a 13.7m high oversized milk crate in Belmore Park..."The Distance of Your Heart"...60 handmade bronze bird sculptures perching on poles, above doorways and awnings. Is Clover's public art splurge a waste of money? -- Junya Ishigami; Hany Armanious; Tracey Emin [images] - Daily Telegraph (Australia)

It's about time Sydney had an arch, even if it's not strictly an improvement: Australia's cringe against public art is more about economics than aesthetics...the notion of using public space for art that does not fit an existing national mythos has us backing away...But let's separate aesthetics from our increasing unwillingness to actually entertain public spending on public goods. By Liam Hogan -- "cloud arch" [images] - Guardian (UK)

Why is Federation Square such a success? The Landscape Architects Network says Melbourne's Federation Square is the sixth best public square in the world, tipping out the likes of Times Square. Why is it so successful? It doesn't have the scale of the others; and nor does it have the historical, religious or political significance of most of them...its claim is it simply works extraordinarily well as a place for people to meet for the decidedly modest routines of daily life in a rich city...its success is the high quality of its design. By Alan Davies -- Lab Architecture Studio; Bates Smart - Crikey (Australia)

AIA New York Chapter Leaders Preach Public Space: ...opened "Open to the Public: Civic Space Now" at the Center for Architecture...with the hope of advancing the fraught debate over what constitutes and threatens public areas...in ways that could provoke opposition...draws attention to the political and cultural significance of common, open areas...- Lance Jay

Brown; Rick Bell - Commercial Observer (NYC)

Clashing Visions for Old Rail Bed (Just Don't Call It the High Line of Queens): For years, the oddly marvelous asset of a ghost rail bed...has inspired very different visions of the future. One side imagines trains coursing again...The other side imagines strollers, runners, bicyclists, diners, gardeners, artists and performers. It is unclear how either vision would be financed, so they may remain just that..."QueensWay Connection: Elevating the Public Realm" at the Center for Architecture... By David W. Dunlap [images]- New York Times

Bottom-up Urbanism: What's next for the Lowline, Manhattan's subterranean park...the park could be a reality by 2018...reality will take more than technology—it will take cash, approximately \$50 million...directly adjacent to Essex Crossing, a 1.9-million-square-foot development...would significantly boost public space... -- James Ramsey; Dan Barasch; SHoP Architects [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

From the Gherkin to Krakow's Skeletor: famous skyscrapers that flopped: As Norman Foster's London curio goes on the market for £640m, here's a look at the close relationship between tall buildings and economic collapse. By Owen Hatherley- Guardian (UK)

So much architecture is monstrous – that's why we like to see it demolished: Locals who cheered when three cooling towers were destroyed at Didcot reveal the truth – avant-garde structures are most popular when they fall...architecture is – at its worst – the most arrogant of the arts...Living in the shadow of cooling towers is like being told that beauty and utopia are not for you. It's a looming banality... By Jonathan Jones - Guardian (UK)

These Surreal Photos Predict an Architectural Apocalypse: ...Ukrainian photographers Vitaliy and Elena Vasilieva create surreal landscapes in which art institutions, such as the Guggenheim and Pompidou Center, appear mired in very recent disasters. Instead of images of agony...photos focus on one particularly civilized aspect of our society: architecture and art. [images]- Architizer

Peter Zumthor: Zinc mine museum, Norway: For the past 12 years, [he] has been working on a cluster of museum buildings...Icon visited the construction site, and the architect's Swiss studio, to learn why the project has taken so long and how it's edging towards completion...His obsessive attention to detail even saw him create the recipe for the beef and vegetable soup that will be the only fare on offer... By Christopher Turner [images]- Icon (UK)

"Building Drawings, Drawing Buildings: Lazar Khidekel, Suprematism and the Russian Avant-Garde" at the Pushkin House, London: Little-known designer was responsible for some of the earliest translations of suprematist language into architectural form...barely known compared with his now-stellar contemporaries, yet in his fusing of art, architecture and urbanism, he remains arguably the most visionary of them all. By Edwin Heathcote - Financial Times (UK)

"Louis Kahn: The Power of Architecture" at London's Design Museum: The American architect's work is less well-known than that of his contemporaries but it has worn well...So can this exhibition convince the unenlightened? Despite the fact that it is quite a good show, I'd have to suggest that the answer is no...his son got there first. Nathaniel Kahn's "My Architect" is perhaps the best film about architecture ever made. By Edwin Heathcote -- Anne Tyng - Financial Times (UK)

"Louis Kahn: The Power of Architecture," Design Museum: This first major survey of Kahn's splendid work in decades...illuminate his enigmatic life and death: He may never have built in London but the consequences of his influence are all around us. By Robert Bevan - Evening Standard (UK)

"Bricks & Mortals: Ten Great Buildings and the People They Made" by Tom Wilkinson: From the Tower of Babel to Henry Ford's factory in Detroit, Turner explores how architecture can shape people's lives...going beyond the "kings and queens" version of architectural history. By Christopher Turner - Guardian (UK)

Discovering Cape Cod's Modernist Legacy: ...hidden in the woods and on remote bluffs...are streamlined, cantilevered, horizontal-windowed summer cottages, built by some of the leading modernists of the twentieth century...lovingly detailed in "Cape Cod Modern: Midcentury Architecture and Community on the Outer Cape" by McMahan and Christine Cipriani. By Anthony Flint [images]- Metropolis Magazine



7 Bridges You Ought to Cross: Making structures to overcome obstacles is inherent in human nature...modern bridge design and construction entails serious ingenuity...cross-disciplinary enterprise that requires the close collaboration of artists, architects, designers and engineers. -- Santiago Calatrava; Foster & Partners; Dominique Perrault; Zaha Hadid Architects; Cox Rayner; René van Zuuk Architekten [images]

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