

Today's News - Thursday, August 14, 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 19.

- Some of our fave critics (18!) "ponder the future of their profession" (Sorkin pens a poem; Kamin speaks of "shallow tweets and click-whore noise") - a must read!
- Wise slams a congressional hearing that slammed the State Department's embassy design excellence program: perhaps "the department may have some PR work to do" (though with this congress, it probably wouldn't do much good).
- Cramer responds to the congressional criticism: "good design and tight security are not mutually exclusive."
- Kamin bemoans the sad state of Chicago's Thompson Center, Jahn's 30-year-old "postmodern glitter palace": it has its faults, but "adown-on-the-heels state government building is like bad advertising. In the long run, it'll cost you."
- The golden façade of the 75-story Trump Tower Mumbai will sparkle plenty: "It has been my desire for many years to have the Trump name adorn Mumbai's beautiful skyline" (no indication from rendering if he means that figuratively or literally, a la Chicago's 20-foot-tall garish moniker).
- Wainwright x 2: he offers a masterful round-up of "killer towers" and "how architects are battling hazardous high-rises" - one, an "outlandish proposal that has all the elegance of strapping leg splints on a Dalek" in Leeds, and "a laser-shield for London's own laser death-ray building," the Walkie-Talkie. "These killer towers of doom are in good company."
- He parses plans for a lido in London with the best opening line we've read in a long, long time: "When you're floating in the river Thames, gliding on your back below soaring bridges, the chances are you're dead" (and a great round-up of other urban beaches/baths).
- Bevan, meanwhile, wonders whether a bigger plan, of which the Thames Baths would be a part, can transform Aldwych into "a glamorous district to rival the South Bank - the whiff of marketing hangs heavy."
- Kennicott talks to Gothic architecture expert Tallon, who is putting the Washington National Cathedral under the microscope to "measure the majesty and refinement of the landmark" - and to find out if Goodyear was "right about the inherent beauty of imperfection."
- Olcayto cheers Adjaye's admission that the Stephen Lawrence Centre is a failure in some respects: his "honesty is astounding and more than a little welcome" (and the "very existence of the center is cause enough for celebration").
- Crabapple eloquently pens and artfully illustrates her personal journey to Saadiyat Island and "the dark side of high art" being "built on the backs of men who are little more than indentured servants...they also - improbably - are fighting back" (an astounding read!).
- Dunlap delves into the multi-tasking new World Trade Center logo "packed with references to the area's past and present" (towers! tridents! memorial pools! oh my!).
- Weekend diversions:
 - The 6-part "Rebel Architecture" series profiles architects who are using design as a form of activism and resistance - turning away from elite 'starchitecture' to design for the majority" (great info, images) + Q&A with the series producer re: "what makes a rebel architect and the social and economic challenges they face."
 - Harper, though intrigued, raises some good points re: the V&A's examination of "ingenious designs of protest movements" in "Disobedient Objects": "Do romanticized notions of clever subversion serve to diminish the violent reality within which objects were originally forged?"
 - Betsky brazenly challenges the "Brooklynization of Manhattan" in the Museum of Arts and Design's "NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial": "A temple of good taste in the heart of the canyons of capitalism has been taken over by an unruly mob of makers and their stuff."
 - Kats finds some "misconceptions of space" in MoMA's "Conceptions of Space: Recent Acquisitions in Contemporary Architecture": "the thematic glue here doesn't offer an especially convincing argument for why these particular objects are being collected."
 - Moreau finds the Art Institute of Chicago's "Architecture to Scale: Stanley Tigerman and Zago Architecture" to be an "energetic exhibition" that "presents architecture brimming with curiosity and exploration."
 - Pearson parses Jacobson's "New Museums in China" that "brings a journalist's eye to the subject, acknowledging the odd and sometimes amusing aspects of China's newfound love of museums" that is giving "an emerging generation of Chinese architects the chance to cut their teeth with these jobs."

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What Is the State of Design Criticism? Leading architecture and design critics ponder the future of their profession. -- Oliver Wainwright; Sam Jacob; Steve Parnell; Michael Abrahamson; Kelsey Campbell-Dollaghan; Dan Hill; Justin Davidson; Michael Sorkin; Jonathan Glancey; Alexandra Lange; Thomas DeMonchoux; Allison Arieff; John King; Véronique Vienne; Alissa Walker; Jan Boelen; Alice Twemlow; Blair Kamin- Metropolis Magazine

Defending Diplomatic Design: A congressional hearing...slammed the State Department's embassy design program over cost and security concerns, suggesting that the department may have some PR work to do...Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) director Lydia Muniz and deputy director Casey Jones had scant chance to defend their approach. By Michael Z. Wise -- Moore Ruble Yudell Architects & Planners; Page Southerland Page; Tod Williams Billie Tsien; Morphosis Architects; KieranTimberlake; Jane Loeffler; Barbara A. Nadel [images]- Architect Magazine

Chocolate and Peanut Butter: Congress is questioning the State Department's Excellence in Diplomatic Facilities program, fearing that it prioritizes design over security. Why not have both? ...good design and tight security are not mutually exclusive. By Ned Cramer- Architect Magazine

Chicago's Thompson Center in sad state: Today's debilitating state budget crisis was on no one's radar when Helmut Jahn's postmodern glitter palace opened nearly 30 years ago...The real scandal, many would retort, was Jahn's fault-filled original design...symbols matter, particularly in public architecture...The point: A down-on-the-heels state government building is like bad advertising. In the long run, it'll cost you....The building has significant faults, but it's our fault if we continue to neglect it. By Blair Kamin- Chicago Tribune

Donald Trump launches plans for golden Trump Tower in Mumbai: The 75-storey residential tower will feature a crystal-glass inspired golden façade: "It has been my desire for many years to have the Trump name adorn Mumbai's beautiful skyline"... -- WOHA; HBA Singapore [image]- Architecture & Design (Australia)

'Killer towers': how architects are battling hazardous high-rises: As outlandish proposals to tame Leeds' lethal wind-tunnel [Bridgewater Place] tower are unveiled, we look at how architects have dealt with other epic fails: ...an unlikely superhero...has arrived to save the day. In a proposal that has all the elegance of strapping leg splints on a Dalek...follows the design of a laser-shield for London's own laser death-ray building. The Walkie-Talkie...These killer towers of doom are in good company. By Oliver Wainwright -- Aedas; Chetwoods; Rafael Viñoly; Foster + Partners; SANAA; Enric Miralles; Stephen Hodder [images]- Guardian (UK)

Wild swimming in the city: come on in, the river's cleaner! With David Walliams leading the way and plans for a floating lido on the Thames, the desire to plunge into our once dirtier urban waterways has never been greater...joining the make-believe fantasy land of Thomas Heatherwick's garden bridge -- both being things that might just happen, against all odds. By Oliver Wainwright -- Studio Octopi; Bjarke Ingels/Julien de Smedt; + POOL/Family New York/PlayLab/Arup; Ooze- Guardian (UK)

Cleaning up the Northbank: can Aldwych get its sparkle back? New plans are afoot to turn the area...into a glamorous district to rival the South Bank -- who will benefit from this slicker slice of city? ...hoping that the proposed Garden Bridge...will help transform the area's fortunes by pulling eight million visitors a year across the Thames...the whiff of marketing hangs heavy. By Robert Bevan -- Publica; Thomas Heatherwick; Studio Octopi- Evening Standard (UK)

Washington National Cathedral goes under the microscope: An expert of Gothic architecture attempts to measure the majesty and refinement of the District landmark...He is, he says, looking for "the smoking gun" that will demonstrate the influence of William H. Goodyear on the cathedral's design...was he in fact right about the inherent beauty of imperfection? By Philip Kennicott -- Andrew Tallon; Philip Hubert Frohman- [Washington Post](#)

Embrace failure like David Adjaye: Ever failed? No matter. Try again. Fail better: "It's better to fail but to have a strong position." Adjaye made his point while discussing the Stephen Lawrence Centre...plagued by vandals since it opened...[His] honesty is astounding and more than a little welcome...In many respects [it] is a resounding success: its very existence...is cause enough for celebration. It is astounding simply because architects rarely concede this kind of ground. By Rory Olcayto- [The Architects' Journal](#) (UK)

Slaves of Happiness Island: Abu Dhabi and the Dark Side of High Art: Saadiyat Island...will be home to branches of the Louvre, the Guggenheim, and New York University, alongside hotels, shopping, and luxurious homes...built on the backs of men who are little more than indentured servants...they also—improbably—are fighting back... "Artists around the world appreciate the human struggle for freedom. In the UAE, we are only buying the image." By Molly Crabapple- [Vice](#)

World Trade Center Logo Captures Site's Destruction and Rebirth: ...a new symbol for the 16-acre site — a stylized W packed with references to the area's past and present...Can you see a trident...(You are excused if you missed the fact that the slope across the upper bars is at a 17.76-degree angle...) "You could never get more meaning in five little bars. The problem is that people may not bother to find out what the meanings are." By David W. Dunlap -- Landor Associates [image]- [New York Times](#)

"Rebel Architecture": a six-part series profiling architects who are using design as a form of activism and resistance to tackle the world's urban, environmental and social crises....turning away from elite "starchitecture" to design for the majority. -- Santiago Cirugeda; Yasmeen Lari; Eyal Weizman; Vo Trong Nghia; Kunle Adeyemi; Ricardo de Oliveira [debuts Aug. 18 - links to details, images]- [Al Jazeera](#)

Interview: what makes a rebel architect? Dan Davies, series producer of "Rebel Architecture," on what makes a rebel architect and the social and economic challenges they face: "The main thing they do is shockingly simple – they use architecture to fulfil a real social need. Something that gets lost in the aesthetics debate is the question: 'Why is this building needed?'" -- Santiago Cirugeda; Yasmeen Lari; Eyal Weizman; Vo Trong Nghia; Kunle Adeyemi; Ricardo de Oliveira [6-part documentary debuts Aug. 18 on Al Jazeera - link to site for details, images]- [The Architects' Journal](#) (UK)

"Disobedient Objects": Exhibition at the V&A examines the ingenious designs of protest movements...Do romanticised notions of clever subversion serve to diminish the violent reality within which objects were originally forged? By Phineas Harper [slide show]- [Uncube magazine](#) (Germany)

The Brooklynization of Manhattan: How is the Brooklyn aesthetic influencing design and planning? The Museum of Arts and Design's inaugural exhibit "NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial" celebrates the design reach of Brooklyn's aesthetic influence, which defies good taste...A temple of good taste in the heart of the canyons of capitalism has been taken over by an unruly mob of makers and their stuff. By Aaron Betsky [images]- [Architect Magazine](#)

Misconceptions of Space at MoMA: "Conceptions of Space: Recent Acquisitions in Contemporary Architecture"...relies on various current trends in architectural design that are only vaguely connected...the thematic glue here doesn't offer an especially convincing argument for why these particular objects are being collected...devotes more attention to nomenclature than to the objects on view. By Anna Kats -- Pedro Gadanho- [Artinfo](#)

Pomo Show: Kristen Moreau visits Art Institute of Chicago exhibit "Architecture to Scale: Stanley Tigerman and Zago Architecture": ...juxtaposes behind-the-scenes research strategies of two groundbreaking firms...energetic exhibition...exposes two divergent approaches...and contrasts guiding principles from site to form...presents architecture brimming with curiosity and exploration... [images]- [The Architect's Newspaper](#)

Cultural Revolution: "New Museums in China" by Clare Jacobson: ...brings a journalist's eye to the subject, acknowledging the odd and sometimes amusing aspects of China's newfound love of museums...an emerging generation of Chinese architects are getting the chance to cut their teeth with these jobs... By Clifford A. Pearson -- Wang Shu; Pei Zhu; Ma Yansong/MAD Architects/ Hua Li/Trace Architecture Office; Liu Jiakun/Xu Tiantian/DnA Design and Architecture; Lyndon Neri/Rossana Hu; Urbanus Architecture & Design; Foster + Partners; Steven Holl Architects; MVRDV; Sutherland Hussey Architects/Pansolution International Design; Shin Takamatsu Architect & Associates [slide show]- [Architectural Record](#)

Call for entries: 2014 Young Architect of the Year Award: recognizes the most promising new architectural practice in the European Union; open to fully qualified architects who have been practising for 12 years or less; no fee; deadline: September 12- [BD/Building Design](#) (UK)



10 Libraries Worth Visiting: The library is fighting for its survival...Luckily, a number of contemporary projects seem determined in wanting to ensure the continued relevance of the library as an institution and societal focal point. -- OMA; Sou Fujimoto Architects; Snøhetta; Toyo Ito & Associates; Renzo Piano; schmidt hammer lassen architects; COBE + Transform; Dominique Perrault; Gehry Partners

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