

Today's News - Tuesday, August 19, 2014

- We lose MacMillan, a "post-war architecture great" and the man many credit with putting the Mackintosh School of Architecture on the map, and Hinkin, a rising star of eco-architecture.
- Russell takes on the "stupid starchitect debate": Celebrity architects don't create "enervating cityscapes. Dull architects" do because "clients won't commit to better, and communities accept the junkscapes they are handed."
- Betsky says starchitects are "not the real problem," and calls out Deamer for doing "exactly what she claims to want to avoid: make a few architects the problem, rather than focusing on how many bad - by which I mean wasteful, socially, and environmentally isolated and isolating, and just plain ugly - buildings are being constructed."
- Hancox minces no words in calling out "slum porn" and calling for an end to the "fetishization of poverty architecture" as "fundamentally parasitical, feeding off the toil, risk and enterprise of Torre de David's thousands of slum-dwellers - and devoicing them, to boot."
- Fraser finds fault with "'bland' Edinburgh designs," and blames "'nitpicking' within the planning department," making architects "more frightened and less ambitious," leading to a "'miserable compromise' that pleases no-one."
- King comes up with his own "Top 10 travesties" of Bay Area buildings that are "squandered opportunities, out-of-scale abominations, wardrobe malfunctions of the architectural kind."
- Speaking of star power, Gehry and Selldorf have grand plans for "derelict buildings and rubble strewn delivery yards" in Arles, now "on the brink of a Lazarus-like reincarnation" to put the French city on the cultural map.
- Eyefuls of Calatrava's Florida Polytechnic University and the "lofty plans for future development."
- The Aspen Art Museum "displays Ban's gift for blending craftsmanship and architecture," in a city where "even an art museum needs to connect to nature. And that's what the museum does, brilliantly" (lots of pix, too).
- Kennicott gives thumbs-up - and down - to Foster's "shiny, sleek" CityCenterDC: "All that's missing is CityHeartDC. Its clean lines and shiny surfaces could be anywhere in the world" - but it does have "one feature that is decidedly un-Washington in all the right ways."
- Kamin cheers new life for the exquisite Art Deco Chicago Motor Club Building, thanks to federal historic preservation tax credits - now under threat by Congress (it figures): the project is "a poster child for retaining the credit."
- Glancey takes a gander at what's happening to some "disused airports" now that "new terminals are cropping up all over the world at a stratospheric rate" - are the old ones "doomed to be demolished, or can new uses be found for them?"
- Two German palaces, one leveled by the East Berlin regime in 1950, the other in Hanover demolished in WW II, are rising from the ashes (not without controversy).
- Hume has never been more humorous re: claims that Toronto's new BMX park is too much of a distraction for "the city's beleaguered drivers. In the name of driver safety, planners should insist that space surrounding new buildings be set aside as designated zones of emptiness, inactivity, blandness."
- Davies doesn't see a proposed elevated Melbourne Veloway as "a smart way to advance cycling - the objective should be to reduce car use, not accommodate it."
- Meanwhile, "famously cycle-friendly" Copenhagen "has just outdone itself with a cool elevated roadway" (though it's only 721 feet long).
- Sitting pretty in NYC's Battery Park City: the finalists in the Take a Seat for Battery Chair Competition are ready for the public to test out at Castle Clinton.

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Obituary: Andy MacMillan: "Post-war architecture great," 85: "...head of the Mackintosh School of Architecture in 1973 - 1994. His teaching at the school with Isi Metzstein...has been heralded as making the school 'the best in the world'...RIAS president, Iain Connelly, said his contribution to post-war architecture in Scotland was 'among the most significant of any architect'... -- Gillespie Kidd & Coia; Alan Dunlop; Tom Inns; etc. [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Obituary: Paul Hinkin (1965 - 2014): Eco-architect and founder of Black Architecture has died, aged 49: "...had been campaigning for the listing of the 2000 Stirling Prize-shortlisted Sainsbury's supermarket in Greenwich, which he designed whilst working for Chetwoods Architects. - The Architects' Journal (UK)

The Stupid Starchitect Debate: Celebrity architects did not create these enervating cityscapes. Dull architects did them because clients won't commit to better, and communities accept the junkscapes they are handed...Celebrity architecture is not a franchise...but branding. Branding is repellently ubiquitous, and it is pure romanticism to think architecture can escape a trend that so powerfully guides spending. By James S. Russell -- Beverly Willis; Peggy Deamer; Witold Rybczynski-jamesrussell.net

Starchitects: Not the Real Problem: Let's redirect our discussions from architects' egos to freeing architecture from bad design: Peggy Deamer has done the discipline a great disservice...By blaming the likes of Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, and Daniel Libeskind, she has done exactly what she claims to want to avoid: make a few architects...the problem, rather than focusing on the larger issue of how many bad—by which I mean wasteful, socially, and environmentally isolated and isolating, and just plain ugly—buildings are being constructed. By Aaron Betsky - Architect Magazine

Enough Slum Porn: The Global North's Fetishisation of Poverty Architecture must End: Heralded as interesting architects and creative urbanists, the desperation-driven inhabitants of slums have lost their voice amid Western 'benevolence'...With Torre de David eviction, a strange dream appears to have died. Leading the mourning is...Urban-Think Tank...it's hard not to see this practice as fundamentally parasitical, feeding off the toil, risk and enterprise of the building's thousands of slum-dwellers -- and devoicing them, to boot. By Dan Hancox - Architectural Review (UK)

Architect hits out at 'bland' Edinburgh designs: "...box-ticking developers are fuelling an architectural crisis in the Capital...Malcolm Fraser has called for an overhaul of the planning system...claims "nitpicking" within the planning department makes architects "more frightened and less ambitious" and leads to a "miserable compromise" that pleases no-one...Malcolm Infamous Five + Five of the Best- Edinburgh Evening News

10 Bay Area buildings we'd be better off without: "...the mundane landscape of structures summoned to life with no aspiration beyond the bottom line...To illustrate this sorry truth, here's my subjective Top 10 travesties that still bring a shudder...squandered opportunities, out-of-scale abominations, wardrobe malfunctions of the architectural kind. By John King [slide show]- San Francisco Chronicle

Frank Gehry project to breathe new life into Arles, France: "...derelict buildings and rubble strewn delivery yards are on the brink of a Lazarus-like reincarnation that could see Arles becoming a major landmark on France's cultural map...LUMA Arles Arts Campus is no smug developer's vanity project... -- Bas Smets; Annabelle Selldorf/Selldorf Architects; Hans Ulrich Obrist [images]- DesignCurial / Blueprint Magazine (UK)

Santiago Calatrava's Florida Polytechnic University Opens: The 170-acre campus in Lakeland, Fla. features a linear lake, a signature Calatrava building, and lofty plans for future development. [images], video]- Architect Magazine

Woven into Place: Aspen Art Museum: Shigeru Ban's first U.S. building since winning the Pritzker Prize adds a landmark to a city's downtown while looking out to its Rocky Mountain setting: "...displays Ban's gift for blending craftsmanship and architecture....Aspen is all about the out of doors. Here, even an art museum...needs to connect to nature. And that's what the museum does, brilliantly. By David Hill [images]- Architectural Record

All that's missing from shiny, sleek CityCenterDC is CityHeartDC: Its clean lines and shiny surfaces could be anywhere in the world: The master planning...has led to one feature that is decidedly un-Washington in all the right ways. The central public plaza...The real test, however, will be what happens here...Will they always feel manicured, programmed and under surveillance? Does that matter? It depends on one's definition of urbanity and authenticity. By Philip Kennicott -- Foster + Partners; Gustafson Guthrie Nichol; Herzog & de Meuron - Washington Post

Chicago Motor Club Building to become hotel: ...boosted by the prospect of federal historic preservation tax credits...a Chicago developer has started turning the slender, 15-story high rise at 68 E. Wacker Place into a 143-room hotel that will be a standout in the cookie-cutter Hampton chain...There's a catch, of course — not for this project, but for future ones like it...a poster child for retaining the credit. By Blair Kamin -- Holabird & Root (1928); MacRostie Historic Advisors; Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture; Gettys One - Chicago Tribune

What should we do with disused airports? New terminals are cropping up all over the world at a stratospheric rate – but what happens to the ones that are no longer useful? Are they doomed to be demolished...or can new uses be found for them? Much, it appears, turns on just how big they are. By Jonathan Glancey -- Eero Saarinen (1962); I.M. Pei (1969); Gensler; Karoly David Jr. (1939/1950); Ernst Sagebiel (1941) - BBC (UK)

Re-creating the Baroque Glory of a Berlin Palace: After years of controversy over rebuilding Hohenzollern Palace, a part-modern, part-baroque edifice rises from the ashes...the jewel in the city's crown until the East Berlin regime leveled the building in 1950, has begun rising again. -- Humboldt Forum; Francesco Stella [slide show, video] - Wall Street Journal

Schloss Herrenhausen: Jastrzembki Kotulla Architekten rebuilds a palace lost during World War II, restoring the centerpiece of Germany's most important Baroque garden [Grosser Garten, Hanover]...now a conference center and museum, with contemporary spaces secreted behind the pediments and pilasters... By Katie Gerfen -- Martin Charbonnier (1714); Georg Ludwig Friedrich Laves (1819); Hager Partner [images] - Architect Magazine

Urban living distracts us from driving: The city's new BMX park shouldn't be beside a highway, and maybe nothing else should be either...the last thing the city's beleaguered drivers need is a biker park within view. Perhaps it's time city planners insist that invisibility be enshrined as a guiding principle for all future development...In the name of driver safety, planners should insist that space surrounding new buildings be set aside as designated zones of emptiness, inactivity, blandness... By Christopher Hume - Toronto Star

Would a Melbourne Veloway be a smart way to advance cycling? A proposed elevated bicycle "freeway" ...would separate cyclists from traffic, but it's not necessary and the implicit philosophy could undermine the legitimacy of cycling...the priority for funding in Australian cities should go to lower cost at-grade solutions. That applies especially in the CBD, where the objective should be to reduce car use, not accommodate it. By Alan Davies - Crikey (Australia)

Copenhagen's New Bike Skyway Makes Commuting Look Fun: The famously cycle-friendly city has just outdone itself with a cool elevated roadway...Cykelslagen/Cycle Snake adds just 721 feet of length to the city's 220 miles of bicycle paths, but it relieves congestion by taking riders over instead of through a waterfront shopping area. -- Copenhagenize Design Company [images] - Wired

Finalists Take a Seat for Battery Chair Competition: The winning chair will go into fabrication for use in the new Battery Green...Chairs will be on display at Castle Clinton through September for the public to test out. [images] - Contract magazine



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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