EDITOR'S NOTE: Tomorrow is this week's "floating" no-newsletter day. We'll be back Friday, December 19.

- Call for entries: Gowanus by Design 3rd international design competition.
- One we couldn't resist: A "Hogwarts" castle is built for China's Heibei Academy of Fine Arts that "will be used by animation students, rather than to house young witches and wizards.'
- The AIA and 11 architectural schools sign a three-year partnership to "further explore the notion that building design, city planning and health should go hand in hand."
- Norfolk, Va., has a new downtown anchor with a new library that incorporates a landmark.
- Moore has a field day inside Second Home, a "workspace for 'creative nomads'" in London by Serpentine Pavilion winner SelgasCano: it has "lightness and grace as well as invention, and an awareness of when to stop - stopping the playfulness short of kitsch" (we wanna work there!).
- Snoonian Glenn cheers Bestor's Blackbirds development in L.A. that "hits the right notes for eco-conscious urbanites who are ready for a starter home and want to live in an area that offers a less car-dependent lifestyle."
- After 20 years of mostly "bog-standard steel-and-glass office blocks," a round-up of Russia's Top Six Best Buildings, where "architects have dared to differ and turned bold blueprints into bricks and mortar."
- No need to pity Ontario's "poor St. Catharines" anymore: Diamond Schmitt Architects "is putting an indelible mark on our downtown with its visions" that should "do away with any self-doubt the Garden City may ever have felt."
- The Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture launches a fundraising campaign it says "is the only opportunity to save the school."
- One we couldn't resist: A "Hogwarts" castle is built for China's Heibei Academy of Fine Arts that "will be used by animation students, rather than to house young witches and wizards."
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Inside Beijing's apocalyptic - a city made 'almost uninhabitable' by pollution: The 21 million inhabitants of China's capital appear to be engaged in a city-wide rehearsal for life on an inhospitable planet. Only it's not a rehearsal...The apocalyptic haze has arrived...The national 'armageddon' has spawned a host of other attempts to solve the problem, ranging from the miraculous to the madcap. By Oliver Wainwright - Guardian (UK)

Complacency rules as Queensland makes risky edict on sea-level rise: Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney's decision...to order a Brisbane council to remove future sea-level rise from its planning regulations seems a rather short-sighted thing to do...as certainty over future sea-level rise increases, planning protections are being wound back right across Australia. - The Conversation

St. Petersburg gets first look at pier proposals: After six years of discussions and the selection and contentious rejection of a much-revived design for a new pier, St. Petersburg is back for a second try. -- Mesh/FR-EE/Civitas; Alforno Architects; Yann Weymouth/HOK/Harvard Jolly/Wannemacher Jensen; VOA; ASD; Ross Barney Architects; W Architecture and Landscape Architecture; ahha! Design Group [images] - Tampa Bay Times (Florida)

3XN reveals competition-winning Olympic HQ scheme: ...on the shores of Lake Geneva in Lausanne, Switzerland...The 2.4 hectare project -- dubbed Olympic Unity House -- will bring together all of the IOC's 600 staff who are currently spread across five different sites. [images] - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Building the New Harvard Art Museums Was a Story of Many, Many Constraints: The long list of difficulties Renzo Piano faced with this renovation and expansion point to why many architects prefer greenfield builds to infill. being "urbanistically correct"...can be an expensive and incredibly challenging undertaking...there would be no messing with Le Corbusier, either. By Anthony Flint [Images] - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

In Berlin, a Shopping Mall's Flop Leads to Schadenfreude: A group of nightclub owners are now joking about turning the failing Mall of Berlin into a "techno temple." Here's why: Berlin's "grown-up" transformation is not going quite as planned...It's not that [the] government and developers don't have the guts to take on major projects to transform the city. It's just that they really suck at them. By Feargus O'Sullivan - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

A diamond in Niagara with a side of fried rice: Poor St. Catharines, the largest urban centre in Niagara Region and nothing to really hang its hat on. Until now...the fact that...Diamond Schmitt Architects is putting an indelible mark on our downtown with its visions those buildings should do away with any self-doubt the Garden City may ever have felt. By Tiffany Mayer [Images] - Eating Niagara

The Mexican Moment: The Rise of Architecture's Latest Design Capital: Decades have passed since Mexico last received architectural recognition prior to this current wave..."Me-Mo," short for Mexican-Moment...By Daniel Rayburn - ArchDaily [images] - ArchDaily

Russia's Best Buildings: Our Top Six: The last 20 years of architecture has added little but bog-standard steel-and-glass office blocks to the limited palate of the Russian cityscape...But lately some architects have dared to differ and turned bold blueprints into bricks and mortar. -- David Adajye; Toton Kuzembaev; Populous/Buro Happold; Sergey Skuratov - The Calvert Journal (UK)

In Los Angeles, Density Doesn't Overwhelm: With their new housing project, Blackbirds, an architect and developer strive for a sensitive way to build up a low-slung city...hits the right notes for eco-conscious urbanites who are ready for a starter home and want to live in an area that offers a less car-dependent lifestyle. By Deborah
Second Home: a good day at the office: This members-only workspace for 'creative nomads' succeeds thanks to the grace and invention of its architects, rising Spanish firm SelgasCano: It's a quasi-landscape of plants and diverse furniture...lightness and grace as well as invention, and an awareness of when to stop...stopping the playfulness short of kitsch, and engaging a multi-sensory awareness. By Rowan Moore

Newman Architects Designs Virginia Library to be a Downtown Anchor: The new complex will improve Norfolk, Va., community members' access to technology...took six years to complete. It involved restoring a 115-year-old former customs house...converted into a library in 2009, and building a seven-story glass-walled addition. -- Tymoff+Moss

Architects Aim to Make Us Healthier with "Irresistible Staircases" and Open Layouts: To build better and healthier spaces, architects are heeding evidence-based lessons: American Institute of Architects (AIA) announced...a three-year partnership among 11 architectural schools whose research programs will further explore the notion that building design, city planning and health should go hand in hand. -- Scientific American

Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture Launches Fundraising Campaign: The campaign is the only opportunity to save the school...A pending accreditation loss due to bylaw changes established by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in 2012 forced the school to consider its options for remaking the institution. -- Architect Magazine

Architectural Review/AR Awards for Emerging Architecture 2014 Winner: Shingo Masuda + Katsuhisa Otsubo Architects; runners-up: Atelier Deshaus; CC Arquitectos/Manuel Cervantes Cespedes; CHROFI

A' Design Award & Competition 2013 - 2014: Architecture, Building and Structure Design, Social Design Award, Futuristic Design Award, Landscape Planning and Garden Design Award, Urban Planning and Urban Design Award, etc. -- A' Design Award & Competition

Call for entries: Gowanus by Design 3rd international design competition: "Avis Civitas"; cash prizes; registration deadline: March 6, 2015 (submissions due May 15, 2015)-- Gowanus by Design

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