

Today's News - Thursday, February 5, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tomorrow is this week's "floating" no-newsletter day - we'll be back Monday, February 9.

- Dunlap pays eloquent tribute to "rainmaker" Jordan Gruzen, whose passing "not only ended a father-son practice dating to the 1930s but also ruptured one of the longest design partnerships in New York."
- Saffron delves deep into "how big money and business elites are warping the way America's urban parks are funded," turning them "into playgrounds for the wealthy."
- Details of ULI's plan for turning the "beloved/neglected/hated" Houston Astrodome into a park, paid for by a public private partnership (perhaps with attention to Saffron's caveats?).
- King has a lively conversation with Gang re: skyscrapers, including the tower she's designing in San Francisco that will be "a ripple of angled bay windows, jagged and subtle at once," and others' designs around the world.
- Kent and Daley discuss their research into how "higher-density living can make us healthier," but warn there is "also the possibility of unintended consequences - we will need to watch carefully to know whether we are getting it right."
- Kennicott reports that the Mecanoo/Martinez + Johnson Architecture expansion plan for Mies's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in DC will be the smaller option.
- Gorlin issues "a call to arms" to get the World Monuments Fund to take action against the "misguided 'restoration'" of Chartres Cathedral : "To correct this travesty will require the world's attention."
- Bentley parses the 2014 Chicago Prize winners' designs for an Obama Library in Chicago that has "enlivened the conceptual debate swirling around a closely watched project already wrought with its own political complications."
- The inaugural Ada Louise Huxtable Prize goes to "visionary" client and architectural patron Jane Priestman: "She promoted good British design, and it is hard to imagine what would have happened without her."
- Ann Looper Pryor leaves ASLA to join TCLF as COO (our heartiest congrats to Ann, and condolences to ASLA).
- Call for entries: Take the Architectural Record / Van Alen Institute Design Competition Survey (full disclosure: yours truly is on the Survey Committee).
- Weekend diversions:
 - A composer hopes to "evoke" Gehry's Santa Monica home in "Frank's House," knowing "there's a chance that some listeners will find it as unpleasant" as his neighbors did in 1978 (percussionists crumpling paper included).
 - Kennicott pens a poetic review of "Architectural Image, 1920-1950," a "fascinating and potent exhibition of architectural and urban images" at the National Building Museum.
 - Menking marvels at "Sketch to Structure" in Pittsburgh: "The concept is so cogent and well thought out it's a wonder no other museum hasn't already staged such a show."
 - Kats explains why "Blueprint" at the Storefront for Art and Architecture is a "show that matters."
 - "Prison Obscura" at Parsons "explores an area of society that continues to exist in the shadows" and "sheds light on the prison industrial complex and those it confines."
 - In Brisbane, "How Did Architects Respond Immediately After 3/11 (The Great East Japan Earthquake)?" presents a wide range of projects launched by architects, from the quake's immediate aftermath to today.
 - In London, Neu Architects and Seán & Stephen's "Mind Maze" offers cryptic doorways to a Holmesian world.
 - Jacobs rediscovers Scheerbarth, a turn-of-the-century visionary who "could have been a precursor to Rem Koolhaas...he represents an alternative version of Modernism, a road not taken."
 - With "Hypernatural: Architecture's New Relationship with Nature," Brownell and Swackhamer hope "to provide a framework for discussing and advancing materials and methods in projects that are in constant collaboration with nature."

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Obituary: An Architect's Legacy of Solid Design and Optimism: The death of Jordan L. Gruzen...not only ended a father-son practice dating to the 1930s but also ruptured one of the longest design partnerships in New York...The rainmaker role suited Gruzen. By David W. Dunlap -- Gruzen & Partners; Gruzen Samton Steinglass; Gruzen Samton; IBI Group-Gruzen Samton [images]- New York Times

America's Billionaires Are Turning Public Parks Into Playgrounds for the Wealthy: ...the billionaire's island...Pier55, is the latest, most extreme example of how big money and business elites are warping the way America's urban parks are funded...Jerold Kayden says we've reached a point where philanthropists "can sculpt the city for themselves." By Inga Saffron -- Thomas Heatherwick- The New Republic

Here's the Urban Land Institute's plan for turning the Houston Astrodome into a park: Even though it has been an empty, rotting hulk for nearly a decade, Houston hasn't been able to decide whether to save or raze its beloved/neglected/hated Astrodome...To pay for it all, ULI recommended a public private partnership... [images, links]- The Architect's Newspaper

Chicago architect praises S.F.'s architecture 'ecosystem': In the turbocharged world of skyscraper design, San Francisco is palookaville...But in the view of Jeanne Gang - an architect who actually might loosen things up a bit around here - we're doing just fine...It's refreshing when developers see an upside in hiring creative firms to craft major buildings. By John King -- Studio Gang Architects; Ateliers Jean Nouvel; MAD Architects; Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners/Lippmann Partnership; Christian Wiese Architects; Zaha Hadid Architects; Office for Metropolitan Architecture/OMA [images]- San Francisco Chronicle

Higher-density living can make us healthier, but not on its own: It takes many factors to create a "walkable neighbourhood"...Our research concludes that the effect of density on active living is incredibly complex...There are potential health benefits on offer from urban densification, but also the possibility of unintended consequences that can quickly undermine them...we will need to watch carefully to know whether we are getting it right. By Jennifer Kent/University of Sydney and Michelle Daley/National Heart Foundation of Australia- The Conversation

District Library Opts for Smaller Main Branch: One proposal unveiled by Mecanoo and Martinez + Johnson Architecture called for a three-floor expansion with residential units on top to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. That isn't going to happen. By Philip Kennicott -- Mies van der Rohe (1972) [images]- Washington Post

Amnesia at Chartres: A misguided "restoration"...is erasing the patina of age...To correct this travesty will require the world's attention. Critics such as Adrien Goetz and Martin Filler...have pointed this out...Though Chartres is a Unesco World Heritage site, to get...the World Monuments Fund to take action, you have to nominate the monument to its watch list of endangered cultural heritage sites. So let's do it! This is a call to arms. By Alexander Gorlin- Architectural Record

Obama library as drone aviary? 2014 Chicago Prize winners speculate on president's legacy: Peace signs, notions of community ownership, and even drones enlivened the conceptual debate swirling around a closely watched

project already wrought with its own political complications. By Chris Bentley -- Chicago Architectural Club; Chicago Architecture Foundation; Zhu Wenyi/Fu Junsheng/Liang Yang; Craig Reschke/Ann Lui; Aras Burak Sen; Drew Cowdrey/Trey Kirk; Dániel Palotai [images, links to full presentations]- The Architect's Newspaper

'Visionary' pioneer Jane Priestman wins inaugural Ada Louise Huxtable Prize: ...'visionary' client and architectural patron...commissioned Norman Foster's Stansted airport terminal [and] Grimshaw to work on Waterloo International station..."She promoted good British design, and it is hard to imagine what would have happened without her. She set a benchmark." - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Ann Looper Pryor Joins The Cultural Landscape Foundation as Chief Operating Office: Pryor comes to TCLF from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)- The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)

Call for entries: Take the Architectural Record / Van Alen Institute Design Competition Survey: help develop new models and innovative approaches to the design competition and be entered to win prizes; deadline: March 2- Architectural Record / Van Alen Institute

Composer Andrew Norman tries to evoke Gehry home in "Frank's House": ...rhapsodizing over Frank Gehry's house in Santa Monica...acknowledges, there's a chance that some listeners will find it as unpleasant as those neighbors in 1978 found Frank's house...The score specifies that the percussionists' duty, at one point, is to "take a piece of newspaper and crumple it..." By Mike Boehm - Los Angeles Times

"Architectural Image, 1920-1950": ...a fascinating and potent exhibition of architectural and urban images at the National Building Museum...drawn from the collection of David M. Schwarz...leaves you with the sense that the city then had more presence, more vitality and, in some cases, more danger than its diluted image today. By Philip Kennicott - Washington Post

Pittsburgh's Heinz Architectural Center tackles architecture from "Sketch to Structure": The concept and visual...is so cogent and well thought out it's a wonder no other museum hasn't already staged such a show. By William Menking -- Winold Reiss; Lorcan O'Herlihy; James Wines; Jakob + MacFarlane - The Architect's Newspaper

Shows That Matter: "Blueprint" at the Storefront for Art and Architecture: Construction drawings don't mean much to the uninitiated viewer, but this exhibition offers a metaphorical treatment of its subject matter. By Anna Kats -- Florian Idenburg/Sebastian Bremer/Jing Liu/SO-IL; 51N4E; Resier Umemoto; MOS; Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen; J. Mayer H. - Artinfo

"Prison Obscura": ...explores an area of society that...continues to exist in the shadows: the country's prisons and jails. Presenting rarely seen vernacular, surveillance, evidentiary, and prisoner-made photographs, the exhibition sheds light on the prison industrial complex and those it confines; at the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center at Parsons, NYC - Parsons The New School for Design (NYC)

Architects responding to natural disasters: Japan shows how it's done: "How Did Architects Respond Immediately After 3/11 (The Great East Japan Earthquake)?" sets out to introduce the world to the diverse range of projects launched by architects throughout the region; at the The School of Design, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane - Architecture & Design (Australia)

Uncovered: Neu Architects and Seán & Stephen's new Sherlock Holmes installation at the Museum of London..."Mind Maze" features brightly coloured doorway structures, each representing the detective's famous doorway at 221B Baker Street. Cryptic symbols and motifs...contain hidden clues about a theme, character or object from different Sherlock Holmes stories. [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Rediscovering the Glass-Inspired Modernism of Paul Scheerbar: The turn-of-the-century visionary...could have been a precursor to Rem Koolhaas...What I find most fascinating about...a man Bruno Taut anointed as "the only poet of architecture," is that he represents an alternative version of Modernism, a road not taken. "Glass! Love!! Perpetual Motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbar Reader" edited by Josiah McElheny and Christine Burgin. By Karrie Jacobs [images]- Architect Magazine

"Hypernatural: Architecture's New Relationship with Nature": Materials experts Blaine Brownell and Marc Swackhamer explore natural processes as building technology...In a design world driven by advances in the digital, the pair hopes to provide a framework for discussing and advancing materials and methods in projects that are in constant collaboration with nature.- Architect Magazine

Inexhaustible Nostalgia, Inexhaustible Shocks of the New: How to Navigate Through a Fake Controversy: A path to avoid the quagmire of architecture's style wars...During my proposed "time out" to retire the word "style" - let's dive into the depths of the word "cost." And I'm not just talking about money. By Norman Weinstein - ArchNewsNow.com



-- Steven Holl: Watercolors: ...an important reminder of just how much you can do with the simplest of means. Holl's watercolors has become his signature...

-- Tezuka Architects: Fuji Kindergarten, Tokyo [image library]

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