

Today's News - Monday, March 2, 2015

- Blackson makes the case for why it's time to "stop talking about density and start talking about place," and to start using "place-based codes" or "form-based codes" to replace outdated zoning codes.
- Buchanan minces no words about starchitecture's demise: "The flaws in all this stuff, and its utter irrelevance to the urgent problems of our times, are so obvious future generations will be aghast it was ever taken seriously, let alone mistaken for heralds of the future."
- Meanwhile, Harper and Jackson parse the problems with the "tainted brand" of "young architecture" that is "perilously close to becoming shorthand for a privileged clique purveying minor and pop-up buildings."
- King offers a thoughtful - and amusing - take on architectural renderings, past and present, that "have always set out to seduce us"; the problem today is that "every adult who matters looks as if he or she arrived on a Google bus," no one wears a tie, and bicycle helmets are not required.
- Heathcote, speaking of Google, offers his take on its BIG/ Heatherwick-designed HQ in CA: "In spite of the rhetoric of openness, innovation and nature, these are enclosed environments in a curiously sterile landscape that evokes a paradise as seen through the lens of an ultimately dystopian science fiction" (crabots included).
- Wainwright x 2: he weighs in, too: "A Silicon Valley Truman Show entirely calibrated and controlled by Google's optimization analytics. What could possibly go wrong?" (ya gotta watch the video!).
- He cheers "a fascinating attempt to chronicle the forgotten masterpieces of African modernism" and its "astonishingly avant-garde architecture" (great pix!).
- Perhaps a vintage piece of starchitecture might be of interest: the University of St. Thomas is putting Gehry's 1987 Winton Guest House on the auction block (you'll have to move it, but, hey, it's been done before).
- Kamin gives (mostly) thumbs-up to the new Loew's Chicago tower: "while hardly original," it is a "carefully composed, city-enhancing high-rise" (though sometimes the interior decor "descends to the level of ghastly parody").
- The Milwaukee Bucks announces the design team for a new downtown arena that "bodes well for a very exciting building."
- Schumacher isn't quite so sure, fearing a "disaster" of "postmodern schlock that visually riffs on our 19th-century beer halls. We don't want banal homages to great originals."
- Saffron swings into playground designs that promote "loose play" instead of "factory-made, cookie-cutter climbing frames" that reflect "our culture's fear of risk as worse than the occasional scraped knee or broken bone" (great pix - we wanna go play!).
- Szenasy queries SCAD President Wallace re: "how historic contexts and local cultures enrich modern design education."
- Woodman wends his way through Mackintosh's "extraordinary story."
- A great round-up of reports from the just-concluded Design Indaba 2015 conference and expo in Cape Town.
- Call for entries: 2015 Spark Product Design Awards (earlybird registration deadline looms!) + Bauhaus Museum Dessau open international competition + U.K.'s Preston Bus Station open international competition.

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Density is just a number: Stop talking about density and start talking about place: ...focusing on density alone skews the market for building homes we know we need...does not make for better development...doesn't tell us anything about context...We need better tools to discuss how we build anything new..."place-based codes" or "form-based codes" to replace the outdated zoning codes we use today. By Howard Blackson/Michael Baker International- Better! Cities & Towns (formerly New Urban News)

Empty gestures: Starchitecture's Swan Song: The flaws in all this stuff, Parametricist and Postmodern alike, and its utter irrelevance to the urgent problems of our times, are so obvious future generations will be aghast it was ever taken seriously, let alone mistaken for heralds of the future...Architecture...has become reduced to superfluous spectacle. By Peter Buchanan -- Frank Gehry; Zaha Hadid; Rem Koolhaas/OMA; Peter Eisenman [images]- Architectural Review (UK)

The problem with 'Young Architecture': Emerging practices led by millennials risk commodification at the hands of a culture unwilling to reward the very youth it fetishises: ...a tainted brand...perilously close to becoming shorthand for a privileged clique purveying minor and pop-up buildings, instantly and uncritically published in a sycophantic hype...Architecture has finally become fast enough to simulate the frivolity of throw-away fashion. By Phineas Harper, Phil Pawlett Jackson- Architectural Review (UK)

Architectural renderings reveal narrow vision of the future: In tomorrow's San Francisco, every adult who matters looks as if he or she arrived on a Google bus...Renderings released for public consumption have always set out to seduce us...The difference now is the narrowness of the vision conveyed...Innovative? Disruptive? A little creepy? You be the judge. By John King -- Foster + Partners/Heller-Manus; Snøhetta/EHDD; BIG- Bjarke Ingels Group; TEN Arquitectos; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)/Mark Cavagnero Associates; Mai Arbegast (1972); Garrett Eckbo; Henry Meyers (1920s); Vernon DeMars; Olin [images]- San Francisco Chronicle

Google's new HQ misses a trick with latest 'Glass': There is little surprising about proposed Googleplex's retro-futurism: ...look oddly like a vision of the future from somewhere in the past...evoke a mash-up of mall, biosphere and leisure park...In spite of the rhetoric of openness, innovation and nature, these are enclosed environments in a curiously sterile landscape...that evokes a paradise as seen through the lens of an ultimately dystopian science fiction. By Edwin Heathcote -- Thomas Heatherwick; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group [images, video]- Financial Times (UK)

Google's new headquarters: an upgradable, futuristic greenhouse: ...glass domes set in a supercharged pastoral dream -- with WiFi: ...the whole sweep-it-under-one-big-roof idea has a decidedly retro air...A Silicon Valley Truman Show, entirely calibrated and controlled by

Google's optimisation analytics. What could possibly go wrong? By Oliver Wainwright -- BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Thomas Heatherwick [images, video]- Guardian (UK)

The forgotten masterpieces of African modernism: In the 1960s and 70s, countries across Africa celebrated their independence with astonishingly avant-garde architecture. Oliver Wainwright reports on a fascinating attempt to chronicle this forgotten history. -- Manuel Herz/ETH University; Iwan Baan; Jean-François Lamoureux/Jean-Louis Marin; Karl Henrik Nøstvik; Rinaldo Olivieri; James Cubitt; Heinz Fenchel/Thomas Leitersdorf; Julian Elliott [images]- Guardian (UK)

St. Thomas Will Sell Gehry-Designed Winton Guest House [1987]: ...moved several years ago to the university's Daniel C. Gainey Conference Center in Owatonna...plans to place the house on auction May 19 in Chicago after an exhibition during Art Week in New York City. - University of St. Thomas (Minnesota)

Loews' new Chicago tower is an effective urban design: ...carefully composed, city-enhancing high-rise deals skillfully with a complex array of functions and a challenging site....architecture, while hardly original, is well proportioned, nicely detailed and expressive of its interior functions...[interior] decor has its moments but sometimes descends to the level of ghastly parody. By Blair Kamin -- Solomon Cordwell Buenz; Simeone Deary Design Group [images]- Chicago Tribune

Milwaukee Bucks owners announce design team for downtown arena: "This is a very good mix of national and local expertise. It bodes well for a very exciting building." -- Populous; HNTB; Eppstein Uhen- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Architectural excellence should be a given for new Milwaukee Bucks arena: ..."we don't need it to look like a glass spaceship"...could be code for disaster: postmodern schlock, architecture that visually riffs on our 19th-century beer halls. The misadventures of the past...should prove useful here...failed architecturally because they wallowed in nostalgia...An aversion to the architecture of our time and a desire to fit in often leads to bland historicism, faux arches and scrolled gables. We don't want banal homages to great originals. By Mary Louise Schumacher- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Redesigning playgrounds to promote "loose play" - think pop-up play spaces: ...psychologists and designers are starting to question the value of what they call "the playground in a box," the factory-made, cookie-cutter climbing frames that dominate schoolyards and parks...All see our culture's fear of risk as worse than the occasional scraped knee or broken bone... By Inga Saffron -- Susan G. Solomon; Robin Moore/Natural Learning Initiative; Studio/Bryan Hanes; Tezuka Architects; 2012Architecten (now Superuse Studios); Concrete Architects/Dijk & Co./Carve; Erect Architecture/LUC [images]- Philadelphia Inquirer

Q&A: SCAD President Paula Wallace: The co-founder of the Savannah College of Art and Design on how historic contexts and local cultures enrich modern design education. By Susan S. Szenasy- Metropolis Magazine

Charles Rennie Mackintosh: 'Glasgow's very own architectural genius': The outpouring of grief at the fire that ravaged the Glasgow School of Art last year confirmed the passion that his work now inspires. With a new show dedicated to the architect now at RIBA, Ellis Woodman traces his extraordinary story. - Telegraph (UK)

Design Indaba 2015 a triumph: Conference highlights: Pentagram partner, Indaba MC and presenter Michael Bierut tweeted "I go to several conferences all over the world. I guarantee you this is the best conference in the world." - Bizcommunity.com (South Africa)

Call for entries: 2015 Spark Product Design Awards; earlybird registration deadline (save money!): March 15; standard registration deadline: May 15 (submissions due June 15)- Spark Awards

Call for entries: Bauhaus Museum Dessau: Open international competition in two phases; cash prizes; Phase 1 deadline: April 13 (Phase 2 submissions due July 31)- Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau

Call for entries: Preston Bus Station, U.K. open international competition; Phase 1 Design Proposals deadline: April 21 (Phase 2 submissions due July 7; cash prizes)- RIBA Competitions

INSIGHT: Speaking with a Quiet Voice: Some notes on designing the Huntington Education and Visitor Center, San Marino, California. By Stephen J. Farneth, FAIA, LEED AP [images]- ArchNewsNow



COBE + Transform: Porsgrunn Maritime Museum, Porsgrunn, Norway: The new saw-toothed museum manages to fit into its surroundings, by mirroring the shapes of the town's characteristic gabled roofs, while at the same time appearing contemporary with its

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