

Today's News - Friday, May 8, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: Just as we were about to post, good news came in about two good friends: the NYC Dept. of Design + Construction announced that Margaret Castillo has been named DDC Chief Architect, and Rick Bell named Executive Director of Design & Construction Excellence. What a great way to end the week!

- Rosenbaum roams the new Whitney and likes what she sees on the walls, "but the design isn't perfect - four floors of sweeping, open-plan galleries bear an unfortunate resemblance to art-fair architecture."
- Stone offers a (sometimes amusing) take on plans for the BIG/Heatherwick Googleplex: "The vision is mind-boggling - a titanic human terrarium," with one pundit chiming in: the "results could be spectacular. Or it could be a train wreck" (also amusingly parsed: Apple and Facebook's new HQs).
- But not so fast: the powers-that-be just gave a "David vs. Goliath victory" to LinkedIn over Google in their Silicon Valley HQ plans ("modesty was part of the pitch" that won).
- Dittmar reports on his U.S. travels and cheers the "grass-roots, small developer revival" in smaller cities, and ponders whether this "organic approach to urban revival could take hold in Britain."
- Fallows follows Fresno's plan to revive its downtown by ripping up its landmark pedestrian mall and returning it to traffic - could this be a model for other struggling downtowns?
- Reports of Times Square having to remove its billboards are nowhere near the reality (though there is some governmental absurdity about the National Highway System adding hundreds of thousands of miles of roads, now "eligible for federal dollars, but without raising the actual dollars."
- Russell digs deep into the eternal question of whether bigger is always better when it comes to mergers and acquisitions: "Is the megafirm the future of architecture? No, it turns out" - especially with so many large firms led by non-designers who really only care about shareholder value.
- SANAA's Grace Farms in Connecticut will open in October with site-specific work by Eliasson and others.
- Spain's Barozzi/Veiga takes home the €60,000 2015 Mies van der Rohe Award for its Szczecin Philharmonic Hall in Poland (not mentioned, so we will here: the Catalan studio ARQUITECTURA-G won the Emerging Architect Prize).
- Eye-fuls of the 5 finalists who will pitch their Pitching the City 2015 entries as part of the New Museum's IDEAS CITY Festival at the end of May.
- The NEA awards over \$74 million in grants to nonprofit arts organizations - 55 in the Design category.
- Weekend diversions:
 - Lange finds much to like in MoMA's "Latin America in Construction," though the "exhaustive survey leaves plenty of questions unanswered. For a sense of what's missing," check out "a small but exquisite" show at the Americas Society on Park Ave.
 - Hanley cheers "Lina Bo Bardi: Together" at the Graham Foundation in Chicago: "An idiosyncratic show that evokes a designer's inclusive architecture," and "revises one of the great oversights of 20th-century design history."
 - Christiansen cheers the Design Museum's "Designs of the Year 2015": "this year's selection of inventions is a tonic and a delight - as well as welcome respite from all the talk and no trousers peddled by our wretched politicians."
 - "Drawing Ambience: Alvin Boyarksy and the Architectural Association" at RISD is flush with drawings by still-starry-eyed architects (now starchitects) of imagined "buildings of the future, laying down a challenge that still resonates."
 - Jacob takes in "Mackintosh Architecture" at RIBA: it looks "at his work as distinct from biography, to understand him as a significant and serious architect."
 - "Archiving Seasons of Light" at the University of Sydney's Tin Sheds Gallery presents New York-based architectural photographer Attali's exhibition of projects by Kuma.
 - Short essays by some of our faves from Green's "Designed for the Future: 80 Practical Ideas for a Sustainable World."
 - A fascinating (image-filled) essay by Will Self from "The Future of the Skyscraper," edited by Philip Nobel.

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"America Is Hard to See": Old Favorites in Provocative New Company: The new Whitney has more room...but the design isn't perfect...four floors of sweeping, open-plan galleries bear an unfortunate resemblance to art-fair architecture, with cavernous spaces subdivided by a succession of temporary walls, to be torn down, not reused, for each new installation. By Lee Rosenbaum -- Renzo Piano- Wall Street Journal

Big and Weird: The Architectural Genius of Bjarke Ingels and Thomas Heatherwick: The next Googleplex...a future-proof microclimate...The vision...is mind-boggling...a titanic human terrarium..."results could be spectacular. Or it could be a train wreck"...The true skeptics, really, are other designers, and they're not hard to find. By Brad Stone -- BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group; Heatherwick Studio; Foster + Partners; Frank Gehry- Bloomberg News

Google Loses to LinkedIn in Silicon Valley Headquarters Pitch: ...it was a David vs. Goliath victory that was the result of several savvy moves and a project that was ambitious but not too ambitious...modesty was part of the pitch...LinkedIn also made the savvy move of partnering with an affordable housing developer... -- Heatherwick Studio; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group- New York Times

Riding the railroad to revival: Hank Dittmar explores how the US's organic approach to urban revival could take hold in Britain's regions: Miami, Dallas and Oklahoma City - in different stages of a building boom...grass-roots, small developer revival is happening in...smaller US cities...Quality of life and quality of place, affordability...seem to be drivers of this trend which results in both reuse of older buildings and in funky and authentic new buildings fitting into the urban grain. -- Urban Land Institute; Congress for the New Urbanism- BD/Building Design (UK)

Can Cars Save Downtown? Fresno, California prepares to rip up its landmark pedestrian mall and replace it with a street...Now-struggling downtowns may need more accommodation for cars, not less, in order to revive. By James Fallows- The Atlantic

No, the Feds Are Not Requiring Times Square to Remove Its Billboards: But why are Broadway and 7th Avenue now classified as national highways? ...adding hundreds of thousands of miles to roads to the National Highway System...raises the number of roads eligible for federal dollars, but without raising the actual dollars. - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

Is Bigger Better? Architects worry that design takes a back seat when firms merge and expand: Is the megafirm the future of architecture? No, it turns out...With many large firms led by nondesigners whose role is to create shareholder value, can big firms speak design's language and lead these conversations with giant and influential public and private clients? That will be the true test of M&As [mergers and acquisitions]. By James S. Russell- Architectural Record

Olafur Eliasson + SANAA: Grace Farms Opening Announced: ...October 9 opening...in New Canaan, CT....a textile work by Eliasson, an outdoor sound installation by Susan Philipsz; photographs of Grace Farms models by Thomas Demand; and a mural by Teresita Fernandez. - The Architect's Newspaper

Szczecin Philharmonic Hall wins 2015 EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture -- Mies van der Rohe Award: Spanish studio Barozzi/Veiga to win the €60,000 (£45,000) [Catalan studio ARQUITECTURA-G awarded the Emerging Architect Prize] [images]- Dezeen

Presenting the 5 Finalists for Pitching the City 2015: ...high-octane live pitch event is brought to you by Architizer and the

Municipal Art Society (MAS) as part of the New Museum's IDEAS CITY Festival and will be held on Friday, May 29th... "Miami Underline," "Open Lobby," "East River Skyway," "Melbourne Docklands Surf Park," and "NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative" [images]- Architizer

\$74 Million Funds Hundreds of Community-based Art Projects: ...1,023 awards totaling \$74,326,900 to nonprofit arts organizations...55 grants in Design category.- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

MoMA's Latin American Mea Culpa: "Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955–1980": ...exhaustive survey...leaves plenty of questions unanswered...It is a remarkable collection of everything you could possibly call Modernism...For a sense of what's missing, head up...to the Americas Society...the small but exquisite "Moderno: Design for Living in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela, 1940–1978"... By Alexandra Lange [images]- Architect Magazine

"Lina Bo Bardi: Together": An idiosyncratic show in Chicago evokes a designer's inclusive architecture...revises one of the great oversights of 20th-century design history... By William Hanley -- Graham Foundation; Noemi Blager; Assemble [images]- Architectural Record

Designs of the Year 2015: a welcome respite from our wretched politicians: The exhibits on show at the Design Museum remind us who makes the real material difference to our lives...this year's selection of inventions, little and large, both useful and elegant, is a tonic and a delight – as well as welcome respite from all the talk and no trousers peddled by our wretched politicians. By Rupert Christiansen [images]- Telegraph (UK)

"Drawing Ambience: Alvin Boyarksy and the Architectural Association," Rhode Island School of Design Museum: Under his tutelage, a group of young architects including Daniel Libeskind and Zaha Hadid imagined the buildings of the future, laying down a challenge that still resonates. By Amelia Stein [images]- Guardian (UK)

Son of Glasgow: exhibition devoted to Charles Rennie Mackintosh offers an objective appraisal...Maybe some serious academic rigor can help us look at his work as distinct from biography, to understand him as a significant and serious architect who helped frame the world from which Modernism would later spring. By Sam Jacob -- "Mackintosh Architecture" at RIBA- Metropolis Magazine

"Archiving Seasons of Light: Erieta Attali on Kengo Kuma": New York-based architectural photographer Attali presents a photographic exhibition of projects by Kuma at the University of Sydney's Tin Sheds Gallery.- Australian Design Review

6 Projects That Make a Sustainable Future Seem Possible: From an algae-powered building to a playground of recycled steel drums, these spots give designers, urban planners and others hope...excerpts from "Designed for the Future: 80 Practical Ideas for a Sustainable World" by Jared Green -- Christopher Hume; Mikyoung Kim; Blaine Brownell; Paul Farmer; Timothy Beatley; Helle Lis Søholt/Gehl Architects- Smithsonian magazine

Will Self on the meaning of skyscrapers – from the Tower of Babel to the Shard: Skyscrapers are all too evidently phallic symbols, monuments to capitalism and icons of hubris. Yet Self can't help but love them. He explores their significance – from JG Ballard to Mad Men, and from London to Dubai. [excerpt from "The Future of the Skyscraper, edited by Philip Nobel]- Guardian (UK)



Travel guide: Oslo: ...a unique mixture of breathtaking landscapes and architectural highlights. By Ulf Meyer -- Snøhetta; Jensen & Skodvin; Arnstein Arneberg and Magnus Poulsson; Renzo Piano; a-lab; Arch Uno; Reiulf Ramstad; Element Arkitekter; Julien de Smedt; MVRDV; Arne Korsmo; Sverre Fehn; LPO arkitekter; NBBJ/Pran arkitekter/Bambus Arkitekter; Aviaplan; Kristin Jarmund; etc. [images]

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