

Today's News - Tuesday, May 26, 2015

- Padjen reports from the VAI/GSD's "The Design Competition Conference," and the very different takes on the competition conundrum: "The search for the best ideas 'is just an alibi that unfortunately continues to seduce too many of our best talents' - or it 'can be empowering."
- Wainwright weighs in on the 10,000-room "steroidal" megahotel and other developments in Mecca: "The holy city is fast becoming a Las Vegas for pilgrims" with designs "seemingly filtered through the eyes of a Disneyland imagineer" (it's turning into "Mecca-hattan").
- Horne and Nethercote report on research that finds current "requirements, borne out of original concerns with safety, are seemingly inadequate to the delicate task of ensuring quality while enabling innovation" (along with livability and affordability) in Australian cities.
- Finoki explains "how anti-homeless measures diminish a city's responsibility to its most vulnerable citizens. And the architectural surface often has to deliver the message" (with pix to prove it).
- Lindsay lauds the Mumbai-based "urbanologists" of URBZ, who have "spent the last six years working in the world's most infamous slum. They refuse to call it that, however, and so do its residents" ("think about Steve Jobs' garage next time you say the word 'slum'").
- Chattanooga's Glass House Collective "now has a strategy for the organization's next steps" to revitalize a neighborhood overlooked in the city's much-lauded "urban renaissance" by using a menu of "lighter, quicker, and cheaper solutions" to create a new, "safe and progressive business district."
- There's something "afoot in the backstreets" of Melbourne's "bohemian" Collingwood, where roads and parking lots are turning into parks, but "how do you plan for safe, durable places that don't kill the vibe?"
- Are we building too many museums? No, says Fun Palaces' Stella Duffy; Yes, says the V&A's Kieran Long.
- An impressive shortlist of six teams now vying for Ontario's Canadian Canoe Museum's new home (no pix yet).
- Nouvel talks philosophy, eroticism, the moral dilemmas of building in Abu Dhabi - his "aspirations" for MoMA's 53W53 "sound almost modest: 'It's going to try to be good enough for New York. Architecture is still an art, sometimes.'"
- A look at the British design collective Assemble (shortlisted for the Turner Prize), its methodology, and results that make it a stand-out in the profession: "None of us are actually licensed architects - we're not caught in architecture-speak"
- Carradine, a former VP at Disney Imagineering, remembers (oh so eloquently) Jon Jerde and his "unvarnished enthusiasm for Disneyland as successful and important urban design - a profound lesson that narrative placemaking was not just acceptable, but socially important and necessary."
- Perkovic's take on the architect who shaped Sydney Modernism: "The marriage of Seidler and Sydney was never truly harmonious," but his buildings "came to define the new, modern" city.
- Edwards offers the compelling story of Norma Merrick Sklarek, the "Rosa Parks of architecture."
- Eye-fuls of the 2015 North American Copper in Architecture Award winners (we do love copper!).
- Morpholio Project's Inside2015 Competition winners are "ambitious, exploratory, insightful, and full of promise - they question the status quo and remind us all to think more creatively."
- One we couldn't resist: eye-fuls of Vivid Sydney, "a magical festival of lights."
- Call for entries: 2015 Faith & Form/IFRAA International Awards Program for Religious Art & Architecture.

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Competitions: What's the Real Prize? "The Design Competition Conference"...The Cinderella tale, with its come-all-young-maidens ball at the prince's castle, is ultimately the story of an open competition...The search for the best ideas "is just an alibi that unfortunately continues to seduce too many of our best talents"...a refreshing attitude: that competitions can be empowering. By Elizabeth S. Padjen -- Jerold Kayden/Harvard Graduate School of Design/GSD; David van der Leer/Van Alen Institute; Craig Dykers/Snøhetta; Francine Houben/Mecanoo; Mohsen Mostafavi/GSD; Marshall Brown/IT; Gena Wirth/SCAPE; Grace La/LA DALLMAN; Reed Kroloff/jones|kroloff- Landscape Architecture Magazine

City in the sky: world's biggest hotel to open in Mecca: The holy city is fast becoming a Las Vegas for pilgrims, thanks to the new £2.3bn Abraj Kudai megahotel that has four helipads...and 10,000 bedrooms...Modelled on a "traditional desert fortress", seemingly filtered through the eyes of a Disneyland imagineer with classical pretensions, the steroidal scheme comprises 12 towers..."The city is turning into Mecca-hattan"... By Oliver Wainwright -- Dar Al-Handasah; Irfan Al-Alawi/Islamic Heritage Research Foundation [images]- Guardian (UK)

Life in a windowless box: the vertical slums of Melbourne: Researchers find current housing market and regulations are not delivering what families need, jeopardising the future liveability of Australian cities...requirements, borne out of original concerns with safety, are seemingly inadequate to the delicate task of ensuring quality while enabling innovation. By Ralph Horne and Megan Nethercote- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Architecture vs. the People: How anti-homeless measures diminish a city's responsibility to its most vulnerable citizens: If the city of the future can't better the lives of those most in need...then how do we measure its success? Despite many well-intended "quality of life" advancements made through urban design, separate infrastructures are put into place to explicitly degrade the lives of the city's already poorest. And the architectural surface often has to deliver the message. By Bryan Finoki [images]- Design Observer

The "Urbanologists" Who Want You to Think About Steve Jobs' Garage Next Time You Say the Word "Slum": ...the Mumbai-based "urbanologists" of URBZ...spent the last six years working in Dharavi, the world's most infamous slum. They refuse to call it that, however, and so do its residents. By Greg Lindsay -- Matias Echanove; Rahul Srivastava; Ensemble Studio/MIT-POPlab- Next City (formerly Next American City)

We Put 31 Artists, 25 Architects and 18 Urban Planners in a Room. Guess What Happens Next: Chattanooga is often celebrated as an urban revitalization success story...this urban renaissance has stopped short of East Chattanooga...the Glass Street of the future could be a safe and progressive business district...Lighter, quicker, and cheaper solutions were the goal...Glass House Collective now has a strategy for their organization's next steps. -- Next City Vanguard; The Next Big Thing Urbanism- Next City (formerly Next American City)

Converting roads to parks: The challenge of creating new open space where none exists requires lateral thinking: Something's afoot in the backstreets of Collingwood [in Melbourne]...The neighbourhood has a bohemian, eclectic feel...how can you provide new green areas where no spare space exists? And how do you plan for safe, durable places that don't kill the vibe? -- Thompson Berrill Landscape Design; Environment and Land Management; Urban Initiatives; City of Yarra; Leanne O'Shea Landscape Architecture and Urban Design; Hansen Partnership [images]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Are we building too many museums? Would building more museums help to improve society or be a wasteful luxury? No: theatre-maker Stella Duffy; Yes: V&A curator Kieran Long- RA Magazine (Royal Academy of Arts)

Canadian Canoe Museum selects shortlist of architects: ...taking another step towards relocating to the Parks Canada Peterborough Lift Lock National Historic Site on the Trent-Severn Waterway... -- Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); Heneghan Peng Architects; Bing Thom Architects/Lett Architects; Provencher_Roy/NORR; Patkau Architects/Brook McIlroy; 5468796 Architecture- Canadian Architect magazine

Jean Nouvel: 'Architecture is still an art, sometimes': ...building an extension to MoMA, which will be as tall as the Empire State building. He talks about philosophy, eroticism and the moral dilemmas of building in Abu Dhabi...aspirations for 53W53...sound almost modest: "It's going to try to be good enough for New York." By Amelia Stein- Guardian (UK)

Simple Rules for Revolutionizing Architecture From British Design Collective Assemble: ...dig into their methodology and results, and you'll see a forward-thinking, human-centered design process that stands out in their profession..."None of us are actually licensed architects...we're not caught in architecture-speak." [images]- Curbed

Obit> Jon Jerde, 1940-2015: Christopher Carradine remembers the revolutionary architect and Disney Imagineer: Jon's unvarnished enthusiasm for Disneyland was a revelation. The first "real world" architect to recognize Disneyland as successful and important urban design, a compelling counterpoint to obtuse modernist architects - a profound lesson that narrative placemaking was not just acceptable, but socially important and necessary. - The Architect's Newspaper

Harry Seidler, The Architect Who Shaped Sydney Modernism: The architect who would, in many ways, coax Australian architectural design out of Victorian and Art Deco replicas into a mature, self-reflective modernism was, paradoxically, never interested in national architecture...The marriage of Seidler and Sydney was never truly harmonious...Nonetheless, his buildings came to define the new, modern Sydney. By Jana Perkovic- Artinfo

Honoring the Legacy of Norma Merrick Sklarek: The 'Rosa Parks of Architecture': In 1954, she became the first Black woman to receive an architecture license in the United States...In 1980, she was the first Black woman to receive a fellowship by the American Institute of Architects. By Chérmelle D. Edwards -- Gruen Associates; Welton Becket Associates; Siegel, Sklarek, Diamond [images]- Atlanta Blackstar

12 Projects Win 2015 North American Copper in Architecture Awards -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM); Cunningham | Quill Architects; Kennedy & Volich Architecture; Studio Hillier; Leers Weinzapfel Associates; Wheeler Kearns Architects; McLaughlin & Associates; Ivan Brice Architecture; Leo A Daly; Perry and Radford Architects; Treanor Architects [images]- ArchDaily

Inside2015 Competition Winners: "ambitious, exploratory, insightful, and full of promise"..."The projects question the status quo and remind us all to think more creatively." [images]- Morpholio Project

In pictures: a magical festival of lights: Vivid Sydney, the annual light show in the spectacular Australian city has lit up some iconic landmarks in spectacular style- Telegraph (UK)

Call for entries: 2015 Faith & Form/IFRAA International Awards Program for Religious Art & Architecture (international): Religious Architecture, Liturgical/Interior Design, Sacred Landscape, Religious Arts, and Unbuilt Work; deadline: June 30- Faith & Form Magazine / Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture (IFRAA)

INSIGHT: A Focus on Local: Structure and Design of the Columbus Museum of Art Expansion: How DesignGroup worked with the museum to become more visible, relevant, and connected to the community as a meeting point between art, the public, and the physical city. By Michael Bongiorno, AIA, LEED AP BD+C [images]- ArchNewsNow.com

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