

Today's News - Monday, September 14, 2015

- Heathcote takes a long, fascinating look at how starchitects are changing NYC's skyline with "a catwalk of anorexic skinnyscrapers" and the "turbocharged" development along the High Line: "The question is what these starry names are able to contribute to the cityscape - beyond marketing and profit."
- Betsky ponders the future of this year's Carbuncle Cup winner, and "how wonderful it would be if" the U.S. had a similar award - showing what is truly bad gives you a chance to talk about what is good" (and "a little nip and tuck" for the Walkie-Talkie might be in order).
- Environmental psychologist and neuroscientist Ellard presents studies that show why boring streetscapes "are exerting a measurable effect on our behavior, and likely our brains," proving "the prudent design of city streets and buildings is a matter of public health."
- Galan-Diaz and Martens explain why "architecture's brief love affair" with environmental psychology in the '70s should be revived: "If 21st-century buildings are to be fit for purpose, psychologists need consulted much more often" - otherwise we'll end up "pulling down today's new buildings in much the same way as we are pulling down many of our post-war developments now."
- Davidson pens an ode to the artisans restoring St. Patrick's Cathedral: builders of luxury towers complain "that it's too expensive or impractical to revive the craftsmanship of yore" - it's "so much more efficient to order curtain walls from China," but "projects like this one give the lie to that self-serving shrug."
- A great profile of David Waggonner: "the urban and environmental architect who wants New Orleans to come to terms with the fact it is a delta city" (and should look more like Amsterdam).
- Zacks takes a long look at "how a band of 'dirty little artists'" landed on "the front lines of urban renewal," sparking "a vexed discourse about race, economic disparity, and neighborhood change that resonates today" (bolt cutters and a black trench coat included).
- Ulam offers an in-depth look at "an era of urban renewal" in the South Bronx, "still recovering from the dark days of the 1970s."
- Hagberg previews the ideas on housing to be presented at the Chicago Architecture Biennial: "These projects are all 'capital-A Architecture' - each of these architects is trying to figure out what people need emotionally, intuitively, and physically, and then provide that in built form."
- Kamin cheers Chicago's new Chinatown library by SOM: it "is everything its banal, prototype predecessors are not" - it is "a memorable design" that "used common, off-the-shelf materials to achieve uncommon results."
- Gehry is making his mark in L.A.'s Watts with a pro-bono design for the Children's Institute Inc.: "It's simple, it's direct, it has a nice humanity about it," he says ("shining metal roofs at Gehry-esque angles" included).
- Bernstein gets a sneak peek at DS+R's McMurtry Building for the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University: "a grab-bag program led to a joyful explosion of formal invention" (with scouting shots by Iwan Baan, no less).
- Maltzan takes on a new public plaza for the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, CA, along with a new Center for Dance and Innovation, creating "a revamped model for civic engagement."
- Hume hails Cormier's new Berczy Park in Toronto that "will let fun flow" with "something for everyone" (including dogs!).
- King picks his favorite in the batch of "top-notch events" during this month's Architecture and the City Festival in San Francisco: "Play: Design in Action.' Which means, well, pretty much anything in this age of work = play = live."
- Good reason to head to Denmark and Montreal this week: RISING Architecture Week: "Growing Cities" + 2nd Circuit Index-Design Montréal.
- Eye-fuls of winners in the 6th annual Cocktail Napkin Sketch Contest (cool time-lapse video included).
- One we couldn't resist: 2 round-up's of stunning images from Burning Man ("a few gorgeous snaps from Bjarke Ingels are just the start").
- Call for entries: Design Trust's Call for Fellows in Urban Design, Green Infrastructure, and Lighting + San Juan Cruise Hub international architectural competition for students and young architects.

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How celebrity architects are transforming New York's skyline: 'Starchitects' are beginning to dominate the city, but what is being lost in the rush to build? ...post-9/11 future was the privatisation of the sky...the visual manifestation of the 0.1%...a catwalk of anorexic skinnyscrapers...The real turbocharge came with the High Line...There is almost no major global architect who is not represented in the area...The question...is what these starry names are able to contribute to the cityscape - beyond marketing and profit...does an endless parade of competing global superstars, each with an eye on the other's latest building, dilute the city's identity? By Edwin Heathcote -- Shreve, Lamb & Harmon; William Van Alen; Rosario Candela; Rafael Viñoly; Frank Gehry; Richard Meier; Herzog & de Meuron; Jean Nouvel; Shigeru Ban; Zaha Hadid; Rem Koolhaas/OMA; Renzo Piano- Financial Times (UK)

Can the Walkie-Talkie Cast Off its Carbuncle Crown? ...2015 Carbuncle Cup...how wonderful it would be if we had a similar award in this country...showing what is truly bad gives you a chance to talk about what is good, and what we could do better...a skin-deep renovation...perhaps a little nip and tuck might lighten that visual load on London...if we change our mind 10 or 20 years from now, we can always restore this carbuncle to its original sharp and curvy luster. By Aaron Betsky -- Rafael Viñoly [images]- Architect Magazine

Streets with no game: Boring cityscapes increase sadness, addiction and disease-related stress. Is urban design a matter of public health? ...sterile, homogeneous environments are exerting a measurable effect on our behaviour, and likely our brains...Given this, the prudent design of city streets and buildings is a matter of public health. By Colin Ellard- Aeon Magazine (UK)

Architecture's brief love affair with psychology is overdue a revival : ...the 1970s...spawned the whole field of environmental psychology, dedicated to understanding how people interact with the buildings and spaces around them. After a few years...designers lost interest...If 21st-century buildings are to be fit for purpose, psychologists need consulted much more often. Otherwise it will not be long before we are pulling down today's new buildings in much the same way as we are pulling down many of our post-war developments now. By Carlos Galan-Diaz and Dörte Martens - The Conversation

What We Can Learn From the Restoration of St. Patrick's Cathedral: The result is so conspicuously glorious that it makes Rockefeller Center look suddenly shabby...Today's builders of deluxe towers often justify glass boxes, prefabricated modules, and cracked concrete floors with the complaint that it's too expensive or impractical to revive the craftsmanship of yore...So much more efficient to order curtain walls from China...projects like this one give the lie to that self-serving shrug. If artisans can make old stone buildings look young again, surely some can apply their skills to new designs and provide the city some new grain, some textured alternative to the grim uniformity of gloss. By Justin Davidson -- Murphy Burnham & Buttrick - New York Magazine

Why Doesn't New Orleans Look More Like Amsterdam? Meet David Waggonner: the urban and environmental architect who wants New Orleans to come to terms with the fact it is a delta city...carries on his shoulders the heavy burden of what could go wrong with New Orleans if change doesn't happen soon. By Lorena O'Neil -- Waggonner & Ball - The Atlantic

Where Can We Be? The Occupation of 123 Delancey Street: How a band of "dirty little artists" liberated a vacant public building on the front lines of urban renewal: ...the [1979-80] "Real Estate Show" was an early instance in the formation of a vexed discourse about race, economic disparity, and neighborhood change that resonates today. By Stephen Zacks (adapted from "A Beautiful Ruin: The Generation that Transformed New York, 1960-1990") [images]- Places Journal

Affordable South Bronx: Capping an era of urban renewal: ...a place more commonly known as "the Hub"...still recovering from the dark days of the 1970s, when the South Bronx became the most notorious symbol of urban blight in the country...Much of

the new City-subsidized development...is targeted toward alleviating poverty. By Alex Ulam -- FXFOWLE; MHG Architects; Future Green Studio; Magnusson Architecture and Planning; Dattner Architects; Grimshaw Architects [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Full scale: preview the inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial's ideas on housing: These projects are all 'capital-A Architecture'...each of these architects is trying to figure out what people need emotionally, intuitively, and physically, and then provide that in built form - the ultimate architectural move. The three are paired because they provide context for each other... By Eva Hagberg -- Sarah Herda; Joseph Grima; Hilary Sample/Michael Meredith/MOS Architects; Hidetoshi SawaVo Trong Nghia Architects/VTN; Tatiana Bilbao [images]- Wallpaper*

Chicago's Chinatown Library Breaks Cookie-Cutter Mold: ...[it] is everything its banal, prototype predecessors are not...Public buildings can be as innovative and memorable...And they don't have to break the bank...While the need to hold down costs compromised certain details, the overall plan...was strong enough to survive these flaws...upgrading the cityscape with a memorable design...used common, off-the-shelf materials to achieve uncommon results. By Blair Kamin -- Brian Lee/Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM); Wight & Co. [images]- Chicago Tribune

Watts made its mark on Frank Gehry, now the architect is returning the favor: ...pro-bono design for the new campus of Children's Institute Inc., an L.A.-based social services organization..."It's simple, it's direct, it has a nice humanity about it," Gehry says of the design, which consists of boxy, two-story forms united by shining metal roofs at Gehry-esque angles. By Carolina A. Miranda [image]- Los Angeles Times

First Look: McMurtry Building for the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University: ...a need for a gathering place, which the latest addition to the arts district...is prepared to fill...a grab-bag program led to a joyful explosion of formal invention. By Fred A. Bernstein -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Boora Architects [images]- World-Architects.com

Michael Maltzan Architecture Designs New Public Plaza for California's Segerstrom Center for the Arts: ...part of The Next Act, a three-phase, \$68 million campaign created to better meet the needs of locals...will also include a new Center for Dance and Innovation designed by Maltzan and a revamped model for civic engagement. [images]- Contract magazine

New park and fountain will let fun flow: The story of Berczy Park is the story of Toronto. It starts with a small downtown space carved out of a neglected site left over from the 1800s and ends with a 21st-century facility that forms the centre of a diverse high-rise community...will have a something for everyone - well, almost. By Christopher Hume -- Claude Cormier - Toronto Star

Architecture festival features dozens of top-notch events: Like everything else, architecture has seasons. And the coming month promises to be a doozy. Topping the marquee is the Architecture and the City Festival..."Play: Design in Action." Which means, well, pretty much anything in this age of work = play = live. Among my favorites in the batch... By John King -- AIA San Francisco [images]- San Francisco Chronicle

RISING Architecture Week: "Growing Cities" takes place throughout Copenhagen and Aarhus in Denmark from September 15 - 18: ... a week with more than 50 various events and happenings hosted by practitioners... - Rising Architecture Week

2nd Circuit Index-Design Montréal: ...an enriching series of conferences, activities across the city; free registration; September 16-17 - Index-Design

Cocktail Napkin Sketch Contest - 2015: See the top entries from Architectural Record's 6th annual competition - including a time-lapse video of one being made. -- Samuel Ringman/Ringman Design + Illustration; Subhjit Sinha/Callison RTKL; Gensler; etc. [images]- Architectural Record

All the Greatest Pop-Up Architecture from Burning Man 2015: Call it fun, profound, or insufferably hipster, but this year, drawing some 70,000 attendees overall, the event sure gave rise to some incredible design and architecture - a few gorgeous snaps from Bjarke Ingels are just the start. - Curbed

10 beautiful views of pop-up architecture (and Bjarke Ingels) from the 2015 Burning Man Festival [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Call for entries: Call for Fellows: Urban Design, Green Infrastructure, and Lighting: ...three fellowships to work on a pilot project; applicants must have the legal ability to work in the U.S. and must be located in the New York City area for participating in meetings and events; deadline: October 2- Design Trust for Public Space

Call for entries: San Juan Cruise Hub international architectural competition for students and young architects; cash prizes; earlybird registration (ssave money!): October 4 (submissions due December 6)- ArchMedium

Being Frank Gehry: Paul Goldberger's account of the architect's rise is also a tale of things not going Gehry's way: "Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry" is a compelling biography of perhaps the world's most famous architect. And yet it is also, to a great extent, a list of Gehry's disappointments. By Fred A. Bernstein - ArchNewsNow.com



Colorful Condensations: Mikkel Frost's CEBRA Toons: Can a single drawing sum up the complexity of a sizable built project? ...hand-drawn Toons...amalgamates various drawing techniques into playful architectural sonnets...communicate the insistence on a room for optimism, playfulness, and vigor in contemporary architecture. [images]

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