

Today's News - Thursday, December 10, 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tomorrow will be a no-newsletter day - we'll be back Monday, December 14.

- A look at initiatives that aim to help cities "tap into an underutilized resource: citizens with smart ideas."
- Wainwright asks architects whether RIBA is "a racist, sexist old boys' club": if you review its "equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, on paper at least, it's trying hard," but someone thinks "the whole thing keeps reinventing itself in another ghastly way over and over again."
- Hall Kaplan sees "the scramble among a select gaggle of professionals to be anointed as increasing insidious and insistent - no thanks in part to a celebrity obsessed media" (Goldberger's Gehry biography is a case in point - it reads more like Trump's "The Art of the Deal").
- Woodman and Higgins each offer great takes on Assemble's Turner Prize win: they're "caught in a tug-of-love between two disciplines" + artists aren't happy, but is the collective bothered? "No - they're too busy working out how to change the world over a few pints."
- Walker weighs in on an architectural style she calls "Wacky Packages" and why the Petersen Automotive Museum "is the ideal place for cars to go to die" ("dudes in Hawaiian shirts gawking at the Batmobile" included).
- Anderton and Brand discuss the Petersen's makeover: it "seems to be a 'love-it-or-hate it' kind of thing - maybe more at home on the Vegas strip than mid-Wilshire. But it's certainly created a lively conversation about architecture in LA."
- Miranda, meanwhile, minces no words about L.A.'s need "to rethink its role as a creative city as the real estate boom goes totally nuclear" in the Arts District, becoming unaffordable for actual creative types.
- There probably won't be a lot of artists moving in when the \$2.5 billion Century Plaza redevelopment project in L.A. is completed.
- Rosenblum x 2: he's quite taken by BIG's "beautifully contemporary plan" for Pittsburgh's Lower Hill, and hopes it will get built," but "we know, based on decades of experience, that this version will stop, at best, somewhere in the middle."
- He has a few issues with the LEED Platinum PNC Tower: "Running counter to broader sustainable practices, the building privatizes and deactivates the city."
- Paul reports on the sad saga of BNIM's efforts to stay in Kansas City, but it "has become collateral damage in the new civic battle over taxpayer-supported economic development."
- An in-depth look at prefab going high-end with tiny houses by big names - is it only "architectural jewelry" that is "mostly a collection of high-end follies, bits of architectural whimsy" for the wealthy, or can it be something more?
- TEN Arquitectos tapped to design a \$250 million mixed-use luxury resort in the Cayman Islands that some say will be the "coolest" and "boldest" hotel design in the Caribbean.
- Four shortlisted firms now vying for the multi-billion-pound revamp the Palace of Westminster.
- One we couldn't resist: Eyeful of a "Vatican light show that illuminates the pope's climate message. Let's just hope that diplomats in Paris will be swayed by his message - and maybe his crazy light show, too."
- Weekend diversions:
  - Petridis cheers "Radical Disco: Architecture and Nightlife in Italy, 1965-1975" at London's ICA that explores "a bizarre, fascinating phenomenon" that created "a new type of boogie wonderland."
  - Also in London, Lewis Bush's amazing photos in "Metropole" form "an architectural critique on the changing face of London" and how new buildings show a city "facing terminal decline."
  - "Episodic Urbanism: RMIT Urban Spaces Project, 1996-2015" tells "a story about how we might effect dramatic transformation without the dramatic rupture commonly associated with 'renewal.'"
  - Welton is wow'd by Brillhart's "Voyage Le Corbusier: Drawing on the Road" that is "meant to teach young architects how to see what they're looking at - who better to learn from than a young Le Corbusier?"
  - Moore picks the best architecture books of 2015: "A new warmth towards brutalism, handsome volumes on Charles and Ray Eames, Le Corbusier, and George Gilbert Scott's prodigious gothic output."
  - Green picks his Top 10 titles of the year that focus on a range of landscape issues.

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Can "co-creation" help cities find a new way to solve their problems? OrganiCity...aims to shift the focus of smart city initiatives toward experimentation...CitizenLab, a new civic engagement platform that any city can roll-out...With cities facing increasingly complex issues around affordable housing, public transit, gentrification and climate change, it seems likely that more of them will seek to tap into an underutilised resource: citizens with smart ideas. - CityMetric (UK)

Is RIBA a racist, sexist old boys' club? Following allegations of institutional racism, we ask architects whether the Royal Institute of British Architects really is an outmoded organisation with values from a bygone age: If you went through the RIBA's equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, you would see that, on paper at least, it's trying hard..."I think the whole thing keeps reinventing itself in another ghastly way over and over again." By Oliver Wainwright- Guardian (UK)

Architecture As A Social Art Subsumed by the Architect As A Social Animal: ...I see the scramble among a select gaggle of professionals to be anointed as increasing insidious and insistent...This is no thanks in part to a celebrity obsessed media...And so we have tomes such as Paul Goldberger's "Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry," reading more like "The Art of the Deal" by Donald Trump... By Sam Hall Kaplan- City Observed

Assemble caught in a tug-of-love between two disciplines: Turner Prize win raises questions about the appropriate boundaries between art and architecture: The value of an integrated arts education is...not that it blurs boundaries between disciplines but that it teaches what is particular to each...members of Assemble understand those distinctions well...they surely deserve to be seen as architects...I do hope that their recent anointment as artists doesn't steer them from their course. By Ellis Woodman- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Turner Prize winners Assemble: 'Art? We're more interested in plumbing': It's been declared the death of the Turner prize: a bunch of radical young architects winning instead of an artist. Are Assemble bothered? No - they're too busy working out how to change the world over a few pints. By Charlotte Higgins- Guardian (UK)

LA's Revamped Petersen Automotive Museum Is The Ideal Place for Cars to Go to Die:...has become LA's most contentious piece of urban design...It's part of a trend in recent years...an architectural style let's call Wacky Packages...looks less like mobility-in-motion and more like an ambiguously unspooled Diet Coke can. By Alissa Walker -- Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); The Scenic Route [images]- Gizmodo

DnA/Frances Anderton: Petersen Automotive Museum Stops Critics in Their Tracks: The new makeover...has its fans...has also been greeted with zingers like "insane," "tasteless" and "a different kind of hideous." The wavy silver and red exterior seems to be a "love-it-or-hate it" kind of thing - maybe more at home on the Vegas strip than mid-Wilshire. But it's certainly created a lively conversation about architecture in LA. -- Madeleine Brand; Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); Scenic Route [images]- KCRW (Los Angeles)

Now that artists can't afford the Arts District, L.A. needs to rethink its role as a creative city: As the real estate boom goes totally nuclear, the neighborhood's boundaries keep informally expanding...if L.A. is going to remain a creative capital...We

need solid ideas - and the execution of these - to keep Los Angeles a great place to be an artist...What does it matter if a studio-loft has 1,000 square feet of live-work space if it is totally unaffordable? By Carolina A. Miranda- Los Angeles Times

\$2.5 Billion Century Plaza Development to Get Underway: ...featuring two 46-story luxury residential towers, restaurants, retail shops and a newly designed 400 room 5-star hotel...historic hotel with its iconic crescent shape, designed by Minoru Yamasaki, will be meticulously restored... -- Pei Cobb Freed; Gensler; Harley Ellis Devereaux; Marmol Radziner; Rios Clementi Hale Studios [image]- BusinessWire

Are new plans for the Lower Hill for building, or for show? BIG Architects might be a bad lover, but it's an awesome prom date: ...plan for 1,200 units of housing and one million square feet of commercial space...It's a beautifully contemporary plan...much as I hope something like BIG's exciting renderings will get built...we know quite clearly, based on decades of experience, that this version...will stop, at best, somewhere in the middle... By Charles Rosenblum -- BIG - Bjarke Ingles Group; Atelier 10; West 8; UDA Architects - Pittsburgh City Paper

PNC's new office tower is green - but just how green? ...you shouldn't really call yourself a Main Street Bank...if you are going to tear down a street full of traditional merchant spaces to build a monolithic glass atrium in their place...Indeed, it's odd to call this building "the Tower at PNC Plaza," when its street-level plaza is probably the project's least-considered element...Running counter to broader sustainable practices, the building privatizes and deactivates the city. By Charles Rosenblum -- Gensler; Buro Happold; Paladino Environmental Consultants - Pittsburgh City Paper

Kansas City development battle puts an unfortunate squeeze on BNIM: ...has become collateral damage in the new civic battle over taxpayer-supported economic development...Steve McDowell has deep roots in the area. But business is business...The best outcome for BNIM and Kansas City is to make this project work out for everyone involved - in the urban core. By Steve Paul- Kansas City Star

Big Names, Tiny Homes: ..."bespoke, architectural collectibles"...Revolution Precrafted Properties aims to deliver limited editions of small houses and pavilions designed by big names..."Architectural jewelry"...a foundation will be created to "support homegrown C.S.R." - corporate social responsibility...a proposition that doesn't quite make sense to a few observers...mostly a collection...of high-end follies, bits of architectural whimsy... By Penelope Green -- Zaha Hadid; Daniel Libeskind; Marcel Wanders; Tom Dixon; Marmol Radziner; David Salle/Aldo Andreoli/AA Studio; SelgasCano; Fernando and Humberto Campana; Sou Fujimoto; Gluckman Tang; Ron Arad; Cocoon9; Linda;Turkel Design; etc. [images]- New York Times

This is the Caribbean's Coolest New Hotel Project: It just might be the boldest Caribbean hotel design we've ever seen...TEN Arquitectos' new design for a \$250 million mixed-use luxury resort that Beach Bay Land Limited is building at St James Point in Grand Cayman...will be working with local Cayman architect of record Andrew Gibb. [image]- Caribbean Journal

Foster + Partners among four chasing huge Parliament revamp: Cheapest option to revamp building will cost £3.5 billion: Foster, HOK, BDP and Allies and Morrison...in the race to carry out work to revamp the Palace of Westminster. - BD/Building Design (UK)

Crazy Vatican light show illuminates the pope's climate message: Connect4Climate put on a large-scale public art installation to project images of life on Earth onto the façade of St. Peter's Basilica..."Fiat Lux: Illuminating our Common Home," is a prettier addition to Pope Francis' landmark encyclical...which called for swift action on climate change...Let's just hope that diplomats in Paris will be swayed by his message - and maybe his crazy light show, too. [images, video]- Grist Magazine

Build, baby, build: when radical architects did disco: Vegetable gardens, flying carpets and Scrooge McDuck: in the late 60s, young Italian architects ripped up the traditional nightclub and designed a new type of boogie wonderland...a movement called Radical Design. It was a bizarre, fascinating phenomenon...which is explored..."Radical Disco: Architecture and Nightlife in Italy, 1965-1975" at London's ICA By Alexis Petridis -- Titti Maschietto/Gruppo UFO; Gruppo 9999; Pietro Derossi/Gruppo Strum [images]- Guardian (UK)

How London's new buildings show how the city is facing terminal decline: Ahead of a new exhibition, Lewis Bush reveals the thinking behind his series "Metropole," an architectural critique on the changing face of London, a city undoing many of the things that once made it unique; on view at London Metropolitan University Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design [images]- British Journal of Photography

"Episodic Urbanism: RMT Urban Spaces Project, 1996-2015" by Peter Elliott Architecture + Urban Design: ...tells a story about how we might effect dramatic transformation...without the dramatic rupture commonly associated with 'renewal'. It is an essential publication for those with an interest in how we can shape our cities for the better, not through erasure and homogenisation but with an appreciative eye to their history, diversity and vitality. - Urban Melbourne

Retracing Le Corbusier's Travels: To express the importance of drawing by hand, architect Jake Brillhart followed in Le Corbusier's footsteps. Literally..."Voyage Le Corbusier: Drawing on the Road" features 175 drawings from Corb's early sketchbooks...meant to teach young architects how to see what they're looking at...who better to learn from than a young Le Corbusier? By J. Michael Welton [images]- Huffington Post

The best architecture books of 2015: A new warmth towards brutalism, handsome volumes on Charles and Ray Eames, Le Corbusier, and George Gilbert Scott's prodigious gothic output. By Rowan Moore -- "Space, Hope and Brutalism" by Elaine Harwood; "Landscapes of Communism " by Owen Hatherley; "White City, Black City" by Sharon Rotbard; "Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms" by William Curtis; "The World of Charles and Ray Eames"; "Latin America in Construction"; "Gothic for the Steam Age" by Gavin Stamp; "From the Shadows" by Owen Hopkins; "Melancholy and Architecture" by Diogo Seixas Lopes; "Making Do and Getting By" by Richard Wentworth- Observer (UK)

Top 10 books of 2015. By Jared Green -- "30:30 Landscape Architecture"; "The Age of Sustainable Development" by Jeffrey Sachs; "Artful Rainwater Design: Creative Ways to Manage Stormwater" by Stuart Echols and Eliza Pennypacker; "The Authentic Garden: Naturalistic and Contemporary Landscape Design"; "Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space" by Keller Easterling; "Frederick Law Olmsted: Plans and Views of Public Parks" by Charles Eliot Beveridge, Lauren Meier, and Irene Mills; "The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World" by Andrea Wolf; "The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design" by Thaisa Way; "Phyto: Principles and Resources for Site Remediation and Landscape Design" by Niall Kirkwood and Kate Kennen; "Planting in a Post-Wild World" by Thomas Rainer and Claudia West- The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)



Gehry Partners: Dr Chau Chak Wing Building, Sydney, Australia: ...has generated a healthy mix of anticipation, admiration and disappointment...also a savvy marketing tool [for] the University of Technology Sydney's progressive agendas. It is iconic, instantly recognizable and intentionally controversial...the joyful experience of walking around the building's warped, wacky and wonderful façade never quite translates to the interior, where the spaces come undone. -- Daryl Jackson Robin Dyke [images]

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