

Today's News - Monday, December 14, 2015

- Davidson's take on Heatherwick and Diamond Schmitt being the latest to tackle Geffen Hall (a.k.a. Avery Fisher Hall) at Lincoln Center: "So here we are again, with a new team and an old task: Get it right this time" (it "will be like scooping out an egg and inserting a new one without cracking the shell").
- Kamin x 2: Hadid "stirs things up" at the Chicago Architectural Biennial - "taking aim at everything" ("I think it's a cute show," says she). "Are she and Schumacher the new wave or the old guard?"
- He makes his pick of the "best of 2015 Chicago architecture, beginning with Biennial" that offers "a vision for the future that pointed the field beyond 'look-at-me,' icon-wannabe design"; then on to the 606, Riverwalk, and much more.
- King has a few issues with the shortlisted proposals for Maybeck's 1915 Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco: "it's hard to escape the feeling that the ideal solution is one that we haven't yet seen."
- Southern is not all that taken by the Petersen Automotive Museum makeover: "it's got 'bling' in surplus," but it "does little to improve the museum's connection to the city beyond."
- Bad urban planning, not nature, should be blamed for the deadly floods in Chennai, India.
- Jewell explains why "Australia's secret vacancies are a national shame. The enormous amount investors can make in capital gains pales in comparison to what they can get out of rent" (it's not only Australia's problem!).
- Budds x 2: she is intrigued by NYC's first micro apartments: "the takeaways could be applied to other cities struggling with affordability and low vacancy rates," but are city dwellers ready to "say sayonara to space?"
- She brings us eyefuls of Lightspeed's new office in Montreal that "looks as though someone smashed a graphic design book into an old train station" (in a good way).
- Anderson offers a fascinating take on the future of nanotechnology in architecture: "What will it mean for human creativity when buildings can build themselves? We might put any fears we have about nanotechnology down to an age-old terror of the unseen - while technology changes, human nature remains the same."
- The BiotA lab at London's Bartlett School of Architecture sees moss and lichens in architecture's future, focusing on designing bioreceptive concrete - "it's controlled chaos."
- Davidson ponders the "the future of urban nature" being underground as plans for the Lowline inch forward: "Life as a mole person might not be that bad."
- Schiller agrees re: the Lowline: it offers "a model to underground places everywhere. If we can grow plants under Delancey Street, then why not in parking garages and subway stations everywhere?"
- Activists in Firenze "are trying to stall what they see as the rapid degradation of a jewel of civilization into a 'Disneyland' for the well-off."
- Activists in Barcelona are up in arms about turning an art school built in 1775 into a Woody Allen museum, saying the plan "would benefit tourists rather than residents" (sounds like a cringe-worthy plan to us, too).
- On a brighter place-making note, the Montréal Urban Ecology Centre has released a new online (and free) placemaking tool that "offers a thorough yet digestible outline of the participatory planning process."
- A good reason to be in Thailand at the end of the week: the Wonderfruit Festival, "Thailand's first globally conscious and eco-friendly festival."
- Winners all: Lord Rogers takes home the 2015 ULI J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development + DesignSingapore Council honors three "men of details" with the President's Design Award for being "firm believers in paying attention to little things" + Pelletier and de Fontenay win the 2015 Phyllis Lambert Grant for their study "Architectures de la nature captive"/"architectures of captive nature."

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Thomas Heatherwick Will Redo David Geffen Hall: The post-Avery Fisher era gets under way: After decades of cogitating, a few false starts, two renamings...So here we are again, with a new team and an old task: Get it right this time...will have to convince donors that \$500 million will finally do the trick...will be like scooping out an egg and inserting a new one without cracking the shell. By Justin Davidson -- Lincoln Center; Max Abramovitz (1962); Heatherwick Studio; Diamond Schmitt Architects - New York Magazine

Zaha Hadid stirs things up at Chicago Architectural Biennial: ...was subtly provocative, taking aim at everything from the planned Lucas Museum of Narrative Art to the Biennial..."I think it's a cute show...doesn't give me an idea of what to expect in the next 10 years"...encapsulating the tension between the field of architecture's socially conscious and digital design wings - and exploring a much-needed middle ground...Are she and Schumacher the new wave or the old guard? By Blair Kamin -- Ma Yansong/MAD Architects; Patrik Schumacher; Joseph Grima - Chicago Tribune

The best of 2015 Chicago architecture, beginning with Biennial: The inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial added a new jewel to the city's architectural crown and articulated a vision for the future that pointed the field beyond "look-at-me," icon-wannabe design...606, Riverwalk head public-space parade... By Blair Kamin -- Sarah Herda; Joseph Grima; Theaster Gates; Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates; Sasaki Associates; Ross Barney Architects; Hartshome Plunkard Architecture; Roman and Williams; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM); David Adjaye; Bertrand Goldberg; Michael Graves; Peter Schaudt; Seymour Persky [images] - Chicago Tribune

What should be done with Palace of Fine Arts? For starters, think big: Three contenders are in the running to restore and revive the century-old structure, but it's hard to escape the feeling that the ideal solution is one that we haven't yet seen. By John King -- Bernard Maybeck (1915) [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

Crit> Inspired by automotive styling and aerodynamics, the Petersen Automotive Museum stops traffic on Wilshire Boulevard: ...it's got "bling" in surplus...does little to improve the museum's connection to the city beyond...it's architecture and collection the vestige an urban idea that Los Angeles just doesn't need anymore. By John Southern/Urban Operations -- Welton Becket; Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF); House & Robertson Architects [images] - The Architect's Newspaper

Don't blame nature for Chennai floods - blame bad urban planning: ...the city has long failed to confront illegal construction in areas that were once canals, river basins and wetlands. Another complaint is that city officials have largely "abandoned" storm water drains...Unfettered development on low-lying land also is cited as a factor. - Citiscope.org

Australia's secret vacancies are a national shame: As a housing affordability crisis pushes people onto the street, a new report finds close to 20% of investor-owned property in Melbourne is empty...The enormous amount investors can make in capital gains pales in comparison to what they can get out of rent or have to spend on holding charges...lessening the attraction to rent out a premise. By Cameron Jewell - The Fifth Estate (Australia)

Micro Apartments: Utopia or Dystopia? New York City just completed its first micro-unit development. Is the future of urban living too tight a squeeze? Carmel Place (formerly known as MyMicro)...Like CitySpaces SOMA, in San Francisco, and Cubix, in Seattle...portends the migration of micro units into American cities...the takeaways could be applied to other cities struggling with affordability and low vacancy rates...Will all city dwellers say sayonara to space? By Diana Budds -- Eric Bunge/Mimi Hoang/nARCHITECTS [images] - Fast Company / Co.Design

The Most Beautiful Tech Office Of The Year: Lightspeed's new office in Montreal looks as though someone smashed a graphic design book into an old train station. By Diana Budds -- ACDF Architecture [images] - Fast Company / Co.Design

The buildings of the future will keep rearranging themselves: What will it mean for human creativity when buildings can build

themselves? Challenging ideas might simply be those whose time has not yet come...vision of the city as a biological or ecological manifestation is...We might put any fears we have about nanotechnology down to an age-old terror of the unseen...The problem, as ever, is that, while technology changes, human nature remains the same. By Darran Anderson -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Sean Lally/Weathers; John Johansen; William Katavolos; Rachel Armstrong - Aeon Magazine (UK)

The Future of Architecture: Moss, Not Mirrors: Plants and lichens on a concrete wall used to be a sign of decay, but soon they might be a sign of sophistication: Instead of developing surfaces resistant to moss and lichen, the BiotA lab wants to build facades that are "bioreceptive"...based in University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture...Right now, they're particularly focused on designing a type of bioreceptive concrete..."it only allows certain species to grow." It's controlled chaos. - The Atlantic

Because Life As a Mole Person Might Not Be That Bad: The Lowline asks us to...descend below ground for pleasure, simply because it's nice down there: ...the future of urban nature...There's something vaguely postapocalyptic about porting sunlight into a cave...If plants can be fooled into thinking they're outdoors, perhaps the human body can too. By Justin Davidson -- James Ramsey/Raad Studio - New York Magazine

The Lowline, New York's First Underground Park, Is Taking Shape (Slowly): Inspired by the iconic High Line, there's now a new park in New York's future, in an abandoned trolley station. What once was a concept is slowly becoming reality: It could also offer a model to underground places everywhere. If we can grow plants under Delancey Street, then why not in parking garages and subway stations everywhere? By Ben Schiller -- James Ramsey/Raad Studio; Arup; Lorne Whitehead [images]- Fast Company / Co.Exist

Florence seeks a better class of tourist to share its besieged medieval treasures: Unesco has joined critics in voicing concerns about the lack of a strategy for the future: Faced with the proposed sale of the Rotonda del Brunelleschi, the transformation of a former military barracks into a five-star hotel and spa...activists are trying to stall what they see as the rapid degradation of a jewel of civilisation into a "Disneyland" for the well-off. - Guardian (UK)

Unions fight plan to turn Picasso art school into Woody Allen museum: ...say plan to alter art school in Barcelona's Gothic quarter would benefit tourists rather than residents: Escola d'Arts i Oficis de Barcelona...has stood empty since 2009...group campaigning for the former school to remain what it has been since it was built in 1775; an educational establishment. - Guardian (UK)

Montréal Urban Ecology Centre Releases New Placemaking Tool: "Participatory Urban Planning: Planning the city with and for its citizens" offers a thorough yet digestible outline of the participatory planning process, as well as practical advice for communities looking to activate these projects and processes for themselves...guide is available for free online in English and French... - Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

Wonderfruit - Thailand's First Globally Conscious and Eco-Friendly Festival: ...to nurture collaborative, creative cultures and inspire celebration of the arts and the adventure of sustainable living; December 17-20 - Wonderfruit Festival

Lord Richard Rogers is the 2015 Recipient of the ULI J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development: ...being recognized for his career-long focus on creating sustainable communities that thrive by providing a high quality of life for all citizens. -- Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners - Urban Land Institute (ULI)

Winners of President's Design Award are 'men of details': ...firm believers in paying attention to little things...prize is given to Singaporeans or permanent residents...given out by the DesignSingapore Council of the Ministry of Communications and Information and the Urban Redevelopment Authority. -- Colin K. Okashimo; Franklin Po/Tierra Design; Siew Man Kok/MKPL Architects - The Straits Times (Singapore)

2015 Phyllis Lambert Grant: Hubert Pelletier and Yves de Fontenay, laureates: "Architectures de la nature captive"/"architectures of captive nature" will be central to the winners' study project...carried out in four cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, i.e. Berlin, Hanover, Mannheim and Heidelberg. -- Pelletier de Fontenay [images]- Design Montréal / Ville de Montréal

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