

Today's News - Wednesday, January 13, 2016

- It's a Pritzker kind of day, and we've spent most of the morning poring over dozens of reports to come up with those that include actual commentary on and conversation with Alejandro Aravena - all are most excellent reads (with more to come, we're sure).
- Goldberger considers the "modest, practical, and exceptionally elegant" work by a Pritzker winner "you've probably never heard of."
- Heathcote hails Aravena's "half a house" that might not "seem enough to win a Pritzker Prize. Perhaps it's because that half a house is half of a very good house indeed" and "his offer of hope to a profession fearful of its own lack of engagement."
- Kamin cheers the choice as "the latest sign of a shift that has seen socially conscious buildings shove flashy museums and other iconic designs off of architecture's center stage."
- Pogrebin hears from the Chilean that "he does not worry about becoming rich and famous. 'Human life is so much richer than money,'" though "I guess from now on we don't have to prove anything to anybody."
- Wainwright says it's "a refreshing choice for the Pritzker, usually awarded to later-career architects whose portfolios brim with grand cultural monuments."
- Lange calls Aravena's work "easy on the eyes as well as comfort for the soul. He's only a surprise if you really thought more white male neo-modernists from the East Coast were going to be Pritzkered right now."
- Lamster takes a very different tack, focusing on "the very imperfect process of reporting" on a Pritzker winner who is "a relatively obscure figure" whose work most critics haven't actually seen in person.
- To other news (yes, there is more going on than just the Pritzker): Dunlap talks to some who are not thrilled with 5th iteration of grand plans for the (currently grotesque) Penn Station: "From 'Wow!' to 'Meh' in five easy steps" - the latest "renderings may be a brilliant use of reverse psychology - 'to galvanize the design community to say we can do something so much better.'"
- Kimmelman considers the current plan for Penn a missed opportunity, and "the equivalent of saying that New York can no longer achieve complicated tasks. We are better than this" - and move the equally grotesque Madison Square Garden, while you're at it.
- Lam lauds the decision to scuttle "the misguided plans for a Memorial to the Victims of Communism" in Ottawa and "restart the competition process on a new site"; it was "a hard won victory led by a coalition of design-sector individuals and organizations."
- King considers two major Bay Area museums opening soon, and ponders the question: "Who are they really for?" Dykers sayeth: "Is a museum a place for art with people in it, or a place for people with art in it?"
- Sernovitz queries three D.C. architects who weigh in on BIG being tapped to design "a new battlefield for Washington's NFL team" (to be left unnamed until renamed): "Right now, at the beginning, it's better to start with the guys who are going to dream."
- A look at the first high-rise in the U.S. made of wood - in enlightened Portland, Oregon (where else?).
- Green walks us through the new, interactive Surging Seas Risk Zone Map that "shows in startling detail" what rising seas "could look like, foot by foot - designed to help policymakers and planners better plan coastal resilience efforts" (scary stuff!).
- A great review of the hits (and misses) in Canadian architecture in 2015.
- Eye-fuls of AN's Best of Design Awards 2015 (great presentation - and not all the usual suspects).
- The winners in Toronto's 2016 Winter Stations Design Competition will "encourage locals to embrace the cold" and "explore transformed lifeguard stations along Lake Ontario."
- Call for entries: 2016 AAF Sustainable Cities Design Academy.

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Architecture's Biggest Prize Was Just Awarded to Someone You've Probably Never Heard Of: Alejandro Aravena of Chile, whose work is modest, practical, and exceptionally elegant, has been awarded the 2016 Pritzker Prize: He is more interested in...participatory architecture than any architect I know, and he has a more inventive notion of how to do it...suggests that the Pritzker jury is casting its lot with social responsibility over celebrity - although...these things do not have to be incompatible. By Paul Goldberger -- Elemental- Vanity Fair

Pritzker Prize 2016: Alejandro Aravena: Half a house. It doesn't seem enough to win a Pritzker Prize...So how has...a 48-year-old Chilean known for working with the poor and the dispossessed, been awarded the profession's leading honour? Perhaps it's because that half a house is half of a very good house indeed...his offer of hope to a profession fearful of its own lack of engagement. By Edwin Heathcote -- Elemental- Financial Times (UK)

Alejandro Aravena of Chile wins 2016 Pritzker Architecture Prize: ...the latest sign of a shift that has seen socially conscious buildings shove flashy museums and other iconic designs off of architecture's center stage...better housing "requires professional quality, not professional charity"...Elemental...he describes as a "do tank," as opposed to a think tank. By Balir Kamin [link to Q&A]- Chicago Tribune

Pritzker Prize for Architecture Is Awarded to Alejandro Aravena of Chile: ...has focused on low-cost social housing and reconstructing after natural disasters...[he] said he does not...worry about becoming rich and famous. "Human life is so much richer than money"...winning the Pritzker doesn't come with pressure to produce...it gives him the freedom to experiment. "I guess from now on we don't have to prove anything to anybody"... By Robin Pogrebin [images]- New York Times

Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena wins 2016 Pritzker prize: Social housing visionary, who engaged residents in designing their own homes, urges architects to address issues of poverty, pollution and segregation: ...radical Chilean architect...also the curator of this year's Venice Architecture Biennale...It is a refreshing choice for the Pritzker, usually awarded to later-career architects whose portfolios brim with grand cultural monuments. By Oliver Wainwright -- Elemental [images]- Guardian (UK)

2016 Pritzker Prize Goes to Alejandro Aravena, Chilean Architect Behind Innovative Affordable Housing: The work is easy on the eyes as well as comfort for the soul...he typically sports the wrinkled, rolled-sleeve linen shirt of pragmatism...He's only a surprise if you really thought more white male neo-modernists from the East Coast were going to be Pritzkered right now. By Alexandra Lange -- ELEMENTAL [images]- Curbed

What you're not reading about the Pritzker Prize: ...the very imperfect process of reporting this award. Critics were actually informed that Alejandro Aravena had won the award a week ago...the problem...what happens when you have...a relatively obscure figure whose built work is mostly to be found in Chile? ...take what you read today about [him] with a grain or two of salt, and be patient. Now that he has a Pritzker, he's likely to be building a good deal more, and in more accessible places, at least for an American. By Mark Lamster -- ELEMENTAL - Dallas Morning News

Penn Station's 5th Redesign Fails to Charm Some Critics: "From 'Wow!' to 'Meh' in five easy steps"...the latest Farley renderings may be a brilliant use of reverse psychology - "to galvanize the design community to say we can do something so much better." By David W. Dunlap -- McKim, Mead & White (1910); Skidmore, Owings & Merrill/SOM; Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum/HOK; James Carpenter Design Associates [images]- New York Times

How to Transform Penn Station: Move the Garden: ...while it was encouraging that the governor championed Penn's cause...only to come up with what sounded like glassy new lobbies and shopping malls...He passed on the really big idea...Skeptics will argue that moving Madison Square Garden was tried before and that the plan failed, so we shouldn't let the best get in the way of the good. This is the equivalent of saying that New York can no longer achieve complicated tasks...We

are better than this. By Michael Kimmelman - New York Times

Editorial: Looking behind the controversy: ...the misguided plans for a Memorial to the Victims of Communism...have happily changed...government...will relocate the Memorial from its contentious site, and restart the competition process on a new site...a hard won victory led by a coalition of design-sector individuals and organizations...efforts set an inspirational road map, showing how by engaging in public policy, architects and civic organizations have the capacity to influence government decisions and public opinion. Elsa Lam/Canadian Architect -- ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture - Canadian Architect magazine

Redesigned museums pose question: Who are they really for? When two major Bay Area museums reopen...we'll hear plenty about the art on the walls and the architecture within which that art resides...pay attention to...how they balance the quest for communal spectacle and the desire to encounter the sublime, one on one..."Is a museum a place for art with people in it, or a place for people with art in it?" By John King -- Craig Dykers/Snøhetta; Diller Scofidio + Renfro - San Francisco Chronicle

D.C. architects weigh in on Dan Snyder's pick to design his new stadium: BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group...appears to be setting its sights on changing the paradigm for stadium design...a new battlefield for Washington's NFL team...All three architects I called said Snyder is clearly going for the wow factor...No experience? No problem..."Right now, at the beginning, I think it's better to start with the guys who are going to dream"... By Daniel J. Sernovitz -- Gavin Daniels/Wingate Hughes Architects; Lewis Goetz/Baskerville; Ryan Sickman/Gensler - Washington Post

America's First Wood High-Rise Building to Debut in Portland: Get a look at the plans for this innovative 12-story structure [Framework] made out of domestically sourced lumber. -- Lever Architecture [images] - Architectural Digest

New Map Shows the Impact of Future Sea Level Rise: In a new report, Climate Central finds that Asia...will be hardest hit...U.S. could experience huge impacts, too, with land for 25 million underwater...The Surging Seas Risk Zone Map...shows in startling detail what that flooding could look like, foot by foot...designed to help policymakers and planners better plan coastal resilience efforts. By Jared Green [images] - The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

2015 in Canadian architecture: Canada is coming out at the forefront of tall wood buildings... -- Michael Green Architecture,; Acton Ostry Architects; Lemay+CHA; Herzog & de Meuron; ABSTRAKT Studio Architecture; PARTISANS; Fowler Bauld & Mitchell/schmidt hammer lassen; Snøhetta/Zeidler Partnership Architects; Paul Laurendeau/Francois Beauchesne; 5468796 Architecture/Moriyama & Teshima Architects; PUBLIC WORK; etc. [images] - Canadian Architect magazine

Best of Design Awards 2015: AN's third annual design award program celebrates some of the most exciting and innovative American architecture: ...21 categories -- Renzo Piano Building Workshop/Cooper, Robertson & Partners; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)/Wight & Company; SmithGroupJJR; Trahan Architects; Marvel Architects; Koning Eizenberg; Thoughtbarn; First Office; Buro Koray Duman; etc. [images] - The Architect's Newspaper

Toronto's 2016 Winter Stations Design Competition Encourages Locals to Embrace the Cold: Four winning submissions and three student designs will transform seven lifeguard stations along Lake Ontario into temporary art installations. -- Team Secret (Calvin Fung and Victor Huynh); MJDO (Elodie Doukhan and Nicolas Mussche); Caitlind R.C. Brown/Wayne Garrett/Lane Shordee; FFLO (Claire Furnley and James Fox); etc. [images] - Architect Magazine

Call for entries: 2016 AAF Sustainable Cities Design Academy (SCDA): encourages public-private partnership project teams to apply. Successful applicants will join AAF for a design workshop in Washington, DC, August 3-5, 2016; deadline: January 28 - American Architectural Foundation (AAF)



Coop Himmelb(l)au: Dalian International Conference Center, Dalian, China: A multi-functional "small city within a city" with conference and event rooms for 7,000 visitors. A landmark for the prospering harbor city. By Kirsten Kiser -- Wolf D. Prix

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