

Today's News - Tuesday, February 2, 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE: All ye bearing the brunt of a brutal winter - take heart! According to the eminently knowledgeable groundhogs Punxsutawney Phil and Staten Island Chuck, we're going to have an early spring - yay!!! (We already have robins in the birdbath!)

- A look at why "controversy may dog Tokyo's Olympic stadium" long after the Games are over: "It's been an extraordinary mess," and Hadid didn't understand who actually runs the show, says Stewart; "It's a human comedy," says Maki.
- Gumusyan says Hadid fell victim to the "Japanese Architect's Club For Men" that killed two birds with one stone - "an architect who was both a foreigner and a woman" (but Kuma being "plucked out of architectural obscurity" - really?!?!?).
- A win for "fierce opposition": Piano will head back to drawing board to re-think his 72-story Paddington Place (a.k.a. "Paddington Shard" and "Paddington Pole" - and our fave: "Die Shard II").
- Datta scratches the surface of India's "experiment with smart cities" to tackle poverty to find a different picture emerging: "smart urbanization is being influenced by corporate interests" and "reforms have facilitated a private takeover of public space."
- Patrick cheers Detroit's rich architectural pedigree, and being named by UNESCO as the first American "City of Design," but bemoans the current spate of "banal, stark redevelopment of a city that deserves so much more."
- On a brighter note, d'Antonio explains how "Ljubljana turned itself into Europe's 'green capital,'" proving that "small cities can lead on urban sustainability."
- Moore questions the decision to basically eradicate "the beautifully designed 1960s Central Hill estate. Trouble is, there isn't very much wrong with it" (from his description, we'd live there!).
- In Lisbon, a group of architects "is fixing like-minded tenants up with vacant spaces, and the creative spirit is spilling out into the streets."
- Betsky parses Aravena's Pritzker win and two points of criticism: an amusing take on Schumacher's rant about it; and whether the jury should have waited a bit before making this pick: yes, but he's still "delighted" with the Chilean's win.
- Worrell is totally wow'd by MAD's Harbin Opera House: "the formal audacity of this striking and at times extraordinary building is likely to reinforce Ma Jansong's position as the most flamboyant of his generation of Chinese architects."
- Baltimore's architecture review panel is (mostly) excited about plans for a new waterfront park around the National Aquarium, but some wonder "whether there are 'too many things going on,'" and request a more "refined approach that won't potentially overwhelm patrons."
- Beanland is heartened by Brutalist buildings being "back in fashion," and "finding a fresh audience - they're solid and dependable - the opposite of so many of today's splutters on the skyline."
- Green parses the winning cities and states in HUD/ Rockefeller Foundation's \$1 billion National Disaster Resilience Competition.
- The Society of Nepalese Architects is chairing the South Asian Association of Architects this week: "the country is slowly waking up to the importance of traditional but resilient architecture in the context of disasters - stressing community-led reconstruction based on indigenous designs and using locally-available materials."
- Eye-fuls of the 37th Annual Interiors Awards winners (great presentations!).
- Eye-fuls of Mexico City-based Escobedo Solíz Studio's winning design for the 2016 MoMA/PS1 Young Architects Program (sand, water, and vibrant colors included).
- We cheer George Smart and his nonprofit North Carolina Modernist Houses - definitely deserving the AIA 2016 Collaborative Achievement Award "for taking public knowledge of modern architecture from a local to national level."
- Oxford University's St Hilda's College picks five finalists that "sparkle with enthusiasm and ideas" to design a new riverside block.
- Call for entries: European Commission offering up to €5 million for innovative urban ideas that have never been introduced in Europe.

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Despite new design, controversy may dog Tokyo's Olympic stadium long after last lap is run: ...prominent architects and academics warn that past blunders could continue to haunt the project even beyond the 2020 Tokyo Olympics...."It's been an extraordinary mess...She seems not to have realized that the general contractors are running the show" [said David B. Stewart]... "It's everybody's fault, but nobody wants to admit it," Fumihiko Maki said. "It's a human comedy." -- Zaha Hadid; Kengo Kuma - Japan Times

Zaha Hadid and the Japanese Architect's Club For Men: Quietly, in late December, the Japanese government plucked Kengo Kuma out of architectural obscurity to replace Hadid to design the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Stadium...There's a lesson for architects here, and for all those whose livelihoods rely on the purses of capricious men.....in their feudal misogyny...killed two wind-up birds at the same time, an architect who was both a foreigner and a woman. By Garo Gumusyan/GGA Architecture-Huffington Post

Paddington skyscraper scrapped after fierce opposition: Protests from Skyline and Historic England prompt developers to withdraw planning application for 72-storey tower...dubbed the "Paddington Shard"...also nicknamed the "skinny Shard" or the "Paddington Pole"... "We trust that the revised plans for Paddington Place will take the area's unique character into account." -- Renzo Piano - Guardian (UK)

Will India's experiment with smart cities tackle poverty - or make it worse? India's investment in smart cities seems to be a win-win situation for governments and citizens alike. But scratch the surface, and a different picture emerges...speculating and monetising on the commons...and transforming it into real estate...smart urbanisation is being influenced by corporate interests...Reforms...have facilitated a private takeover of public space. By Ayona Datta - The Conversation

Op-Ed: Detroit needs diverse, contemporary design to thrive in the 21st century: UNESCO recently designated Detroit as the first American "City of Design." Home to buildings built by the 20th century's most influential architects...The chances it once took are now the foundation on which it will grow. Or will it? ...as I witness the banal, stark redevelopment of a city that deserves so much more. By John Patrick/Above the Fold -- Albert Kahn; Mies van der Rohe; Minoru Yamasaki; Frank Lloyd Wright - Crain's Detroit Business

How Ljubljana turned itself into Europe's 'green capital': With a car-free center and ambitious 'zero waste' plans, Slovenia's capital shows that small cities can lead on urban sustainability. By Simone d'Antonio - Citiscope.org

Housing estates: if they aren't broken...: Lambeth council in south London wants to knock down the beautifully designed 1960s Central Hill estate. Trouble is, there isn't very much wrong with it: Central Hill is accused of failings it doesn't have because it is of a type to which these failings are usually ascribed. By Rowan Moore -- Rosemary Stjernstedt (1974); PRP [images]-Observer (UK)

Misericórdia, Lisbon: A group of architects in the Portuguese capital is fixing like-minded tenants up with vacant spaces, and the creative spirit is spilling out into the streets. By Syma Tariq -- Margarida Marques; Mariana Paisana; Marta Pavão; Sara Brandão; Rés do Chão ("ground floor"); André Rodrigues Costa [images]- Icon (UK)

Alejandro Aravena and the 2016 Pritzker Architecture Prize: ...criticism, that Aravena is "just" an activist and not a "real" architect ignores a body of work...and his activities arguing for a renewed focus on architecture as a catalyst not just for better living conditions, but for social change...should the Pritzker have waited a year or two before making this selection? In my opinion, yes...I still remain delighted with Aravena's win. By Aaron Betsky -- Elemental; Patrik Schumacher - Architect Magazine

Harbin Opera House: The urban strategy is an improbable but ambitious one...Despite a remote position on the desolate northern edge of a city in an exotic fringe of his country, the formal audacity of this striking and at times extraordinary building is likely to reinforce Ma Jansong's position as the most flamboyant of his generation of Chinese architects. By Julian Worrell -- MAD; Turenscape [images]- Icon (UK)

National Aquarium plan to create \$14M waterfront park excites city architecture panel: ...the compact park's features...were perhaps too much for the small space, with one UDARP member asking whether there are "too many things going on." They urged Jonathan Ceci to return with a refined approach that won't potentially overwhelm patrons. -- Ayers Saint Gross Architects - Baltimore Business Journal

A concrete future: Brutalist buildings are back in fashion, and local authorities are realising their potential: In an era of wavering faith in capitalism, brutalism's robust statements are finding a fresh audience...they're solid and dependable - the opposite of so many of today's splutters on the skyline...Brutalist buildings are everywhere, waiting for some attention. They deserve it. By Christopher Beanland - Observer (UK)

U.S. Invests \$1 Billion to Boost Resilience: Five cities, both large and small, and eight states were winners of the first-ever National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC), which was organized by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Rockefeller Foundation. By Jared Green - The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

Nepal to chair South Asian Association of Architects: ...the country is slowly waking up to the importance of architecture in construction...will deliberate on traditional but resilient architecture in the context of disasters...architects do not have to stay unemployed these days...the organisation...has been stressing on community-led reconstruction based on indigenous designs and using locally-available materials. -- Kishore Thapa; Suman Meher Shrestha; Society of Nepalese Architects (Sona)- Kathmandu Post (Nepal)

37th Annual Interiors Awards: ...14 categories, a Designer of the Year, and two Design Legends... -- Todd Heiser/Gensler; Stanley Felderman/Nancy Keatinge/Felderman Keatinge & Associates; 3XN Architects; Henning Larsen Architects; One Plus Partnership; Arch Studio; NBBJ; Beyer Blinder Belle; Rockwell Group; Perkins+Will; Clive Wilkinson Architects; Renzo Piano/Cooper Robertson; Chu Chih-Kang Space Design; Dace Suna; Richård+Bauer Architecture - Contract magazine

Escobedo Soliz Studio wins 2016 MoMA/PS1 Young Architects Program: ..."Weaving the Courtyard"..."The Mexico City-based team will work on a colorful, celebratory intervention...creating an urban beach of sand, water, and vibrant colors." [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

AIA Announces the 2016 Collaborative Achievement Award: ...George Smart, architectural historian and founder of nonprofit organization North Carolina Modernist Houses [formerly known as Triangle Modernist Houses], for taking public knowledge of modern architecture from a local to national level. - Architect Magazine

Revealed: designs by finalists in contest to design a new riverside block for St Hilda's College at Oxford University: "The submissions sparkle with enthusiasm and ideas, which are passionately argued and beautifully presented." -- DRDH; 6a Architects; Gort Scott; Tim Ronalds Architects; Hall McKnight [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Call for entries: European Commission offering up to €5 million for innovative urban ideas: Proposals are limited to concepts that have never been introduced in Europe, according to the sponsor, Urban Innovative Actions; deadline: March 31 - Citiscope.org



Pattersons Associates: Len Lye Centre, New Plymouth, New Zealand: The building's design, with its sculptural steel exterior and subtle kinetic interior light shifts, embodies and personifies Len Lye and his body of work. By Kirsten Kiser [images]

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