

Today's News - Tuesday, May 24, 2016

- ArcSpace brings us Haugh's take on H&deM's Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford that is "stunningly detailed" and "creates an unapologetically contemporary addition to the streetscape."
- Kimmelman turns in a most engaging report on his travels in Chile with Aravena visiting the Pritzker winner's projects: "I found him earnest, open, a little nerdy - and deadly serious" (a great read!).
- MoMA's Anderson considers "how architecture can redefine the refugee crisis. Architecture has become the litmus test of society's capacity for holistic and compassionate security" (another great read!).
- Wainwright is quite taken with H&deM's Switch House at the Tate Modern, a "power pyramid" that "will be a people-watching paradise," and "an unsettling presence that is at once seductive and forbidding."
- Bevan is also bedazzled by the "triumphant" Switch House, "one of the most spectacular buildings London has seen in decades - this is not pointless 'starchitecture.'" "Starchitecture" is a term used to describe architecture that is overly dramatic and self-indulgent.
- Shaw revisits the new Whitney and finds it an un-bedazzling "tourist trap - washed-out and soulless, without any of the Piano magic - the building has nothing to offer beyond its celebrity status" (ouch!).
- Q&A with Barry of Prague-based NGO reSITE re: whether Hadid's plan for a huge development will be the right fit for Prague: "We should pay close attention to how the designs develop - it is clear that it is early and they need work."
- Bausells delves into Barcelona's "radical new strategy" to "give streets back to residents" as "'citizen spaces' for culture, leisure and the community."
- Moore is impressed with OMA's luxury apartment block in London with "a public heart": it "achieves a degree of intelligence and public spirit almost unheard of in luxury residential developments" (though "fans of the Koolhaas universe" might be disappointed).
- A fascinating look at some of the surprisingly zingy, blingy architecture rising in North Korea, though if it "has its own Frank Gehry or Zaha Hadid, it's not saying - few of its buildings are credited to individual designers."
- There's an architecture boom in China's rural areas creating "a new paradise for Chinese architects" in forgotten villages, but they're vanishing rapidly, and saving them is a race against time.
- Campbell-Dollaghan parses whether timber skyscrapers can truly be an "Earth-saving" building type; some say yes, others say maybe not so much.
- Wainwright wanders the "nap pods and rooftop parks" of Silicon Valley that are "reinventing the office": "For all their talk of community and the commons, the dotcoms are proving to be some of the least civic-minded businesses around."
- Kamin cheers a new "sound proposal" for the old Chicago post office "after years of cockamamie plans for reviving the moribund hulk."
- Eye-fuls of Nouvel's 70-story Melbourne tower that will be "a friendly tower that likes and respects its neighbors" (green walls and FLW inspiration included).
- GMP beats out Nouvel, Hadid, and others for yet another (gigantic) opera house in China.
- Paris-based Studio KO reveals renderings for the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech in Morocco.
- Gole gets into the details re: the "challenges and solutions for heritage architects" in "re-identifying use and retaining the significance of heritage buildings."
- Gunts gets into the challenges of saving Philadelphia's architectural heritage: despite its World Heritage City designation, "more than a few describe the preservation scene as being in a state of crisis."
- Uncommon's Evans explains why, "If we're to build good places, architects and developers need to learn to trust each other."
- Hawthorne hails L.A.'s new Expo Line to Santa Monica that "marks a rare kind of progress in American cities" by "chipping away at the dominance of the car."
- Keskeys' Q&A with Snøhetta's Dykers re: studio life and advice for young architects looking to start a firm of their own (beer included).
- Our heartiest congrats to Lamster, awarded a Harvard GSD Loeb Fellowship for championing "progressive policies, preservation, and higher design standards for all citizens."
- Call for entries: Urban SOS: Fair Share international student competition to explore how the "sharing economy" can improve equity and the built environment.

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Herzog & de Meuron: Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford, U.K.: ...creates an unapologetically contemporary addition to the streetscape, holding its own against the neoclassical stone portico of Oxford University Press... Yet one traditional marker of scholarly life is missing: a library... The building's materiality is surprisingly traditional in appearance, though stunningly detailed. By Alice Haugh [images]

Alejandro Aravena, the Architect Rebuilding a Country: Good-looking, charming and a celebrity in his native Chile, the surprise winner of this year's Pritzker cares more about solving social problems than exercising his artistic chops: I found him earnest, open, a little nerdy - and deadly serious. By Michael Kimmelman -- Elemental [images]- New York Times T Magazine

How architecture can redefine the refugee crisis: Do designs for temporary shelter...provide a sustainable future? ...Can architecture begin to remedy these places of indeterminate waiting? Architecture has the capacity to lessen the trauma inflicted by displacement...Architecture has become the litmus test of society's capacity for holistic and compassionate security. By Sean Anderson/MoMA [images]- CNN Style

First look: inside the Switch House - Tate Modern's power pyramid: With its chainmail brickwork, vast spaces and panoramic views, the £260m ziggurat is a mesmerising twist on the existing art gallery...It will be a people-watching paradise...an unsettling presence that is at once seductive and forbidding, an appropriately challenging container for the work that lies within. By Oliver Wainwright -- Herzog & de Meuron [images]- Guardian (UK)

First look inside the Tate Modern's new extension: The long-anticipated extension...is triumphant - an adventurous structure that is one of the most spectacular buildings London has seen in decades: ...christened the Switch House...while the architecture is crowd-pleasingly dramatic, this is not pointless "starchitecture." By Robert Bevan -- Herzog & de Meuron [images]- Evening Standard (UK)

Renzo Piano's Whitney is an architectural "tourist trap": Because it is a tourist trap, it also doesn't need to inspire anyone to come back...[It] is all of the bad things about Piano's work: It is washed-out and soulless, without any of the Piano magic...it is all out of scale, sterile, and unengaging...the building has nothing to offer beyond its celebrity status. By Matt Shaw [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Will Zaha Hadid Architects' Latest Design Be the Right Fit for Prague? Q&A with Martin Barry, Chairman of Prague-based NGO reSITE: "We should pay close attention to how the designs develop...it is clear that it is early and they need work...Make sure that they are integrated into the fabric of the city; make sure the investor contributes to the quality of the public space and urban cultural life..." By Michaela Polakova [images]- ArchDaily

Superblocks to the rescue: Barcelona's plan to give streets back to residents: ...radical new strategy will restrict traffic to a number of big roads, drastically reducing pollution and turning secondary streets into 'citizen spaces' for culture, leisure and the community. By Marta Bausells - Guardian (UK)

Holland Green: private property with a public heart: In a rare British project, Rem Koolhaas's OMA have designed a luxury west London apartment block whose sale will partly fund the new Design Museum - the old Commonwealth Institute - next door. It was a tricky brief: ...achieves a degree of intelligence and public spirit almost unheard of in luxury residential developments. And there will be the museum. By Rowan Moore -- Reinier de Graaf; John Pawson [images] - Observer (UK)

North Korea is building something other than nukes: architecture with some zing: ...Kim Jong Un is giving Pyongyang a striking makeover that's flooding its once-drab streets with color...even adding a smidgen of whimsy, while offering...new opportunities for leisure, pleasure and consumption...If North Korea has its own Frank Gehry or Zaha Hadid, it's not saying - few of its buildings are credited to individual designers... By Julie Makinen -- Calvin Chua; Choson Exchange; Philipp Meuser; Cristiano Bianchi [images] - Los Angeles Times

Can architects bring hope to abandoned villages? An architecture design movement is booming in China's rural areas...a new paradise for Chinese architects...Their eye-catching and beautiful architecture in the rural areas coincidentally match the need of the forgotten villages: a revival in spirit...But given the vanishing speed of these villages, the preservation work will have to race against time. -- He Wei; Luo Deyin - CCTV/China Central Television

Can Timber Skyscrapers Really Help Save The Planet? Politicians, architects, and scientists increasingly herald timber as an Earth-saving building technology, but not everyone agrees: T3 [in Minneapolis] is a litmus test for whether a building technology...can find a market in the U.S...The one thing everyone agrees on? We need more data. By Kelsey Campbell-Dollaghan -- Michael Green Architecture; SHop Architects; LEVER Architecture; PLP Architecture/Smith & Wallwork [images] - Fast Company / Co.Design

Nap pods and rooftop parks: how Silicon Valley is reinventing the office; Google, Samsung and Facebook are in a race to create the most elaborate workplace environments: For all their talk of community and the commons, the dotcoms are proving to be some of the least civic-minded businesses around. By Oliver Wainwright -- NBBJ; Norman Foster/Foster + Partners; BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group/Thomas Heatherwick; Frank Gehry [images] - Guardian (UK)

New plan for old Chicago post office has better chance of delivering than past flops: After years of cockamamie plans for reviving the moribund hulk...a sound proposal finally has emerged to revive the building...There's good reason to think that 601W is up to the task... By Blair Kamin -- Graham, Anderson, Probst & White (1932); Gensler [images] - Chicago Tribune

Jean Nouvel's first Melbourne tower unveiled: ...70-storey, \$700 million mixed-use...will contain 488 residences and a 196-room hotel..."It is a friendly tower that likes and respects its neighbours..." Nouvel said. -- Architectus [images] - ArchitectureAU (Australia)

GMP beats Zaha Hadid and Jean Nouvel to Chinese opera house: German architect also triumphed over Aedas and Nikken Sekkei to land the 140,000sq m Urban Concert Hall project in Chengdu. -- Architekten von Gerkan, Marg und Partner [images] - BD/Building Design (UK)

Yves Saint Laurent Morocco Museum Plans by Studio KO Revealed: ...Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech (mYSLm)...has a provisional cost of €15 million, show a building of terracotta bricks made of Moroccan earth, concrete and an earthen colored terrazzo... [images] - Artinfo

Re-identifying use and retaining the significance of heritage buildings: Principal and Senior Heritage Architect of Conrad Gargett David Gole reflects on challenges and solutions for heritage architects. [images] - Architecture & Design (Australia)

The challenge of preserving architectural heritage in Philadelphia: ...World Heritage City designation doesn't offer any money to protect or promote historic buildings...could lull people into a false sense of security...More than a few describe the preservation scene as being in a state of crisis...preservation scene is a study in contrasts. By Edward Gunts - The Architect's Newspaper

If we're to build good places, architects and developers need to learn to trust each other: Get round a table and talk...But don't talk about buildings - talk about people...I want us, together, to be agents of social and economic change first, developers and architects second. By Martyn Evans/Uncommon - BD/Building Design (UK)

Why the Expo Line to Santa Monica marks a rare kind of progress in American cities: ...chipping away at the dominance of the car. But if you step back and take a longer historical view...the new rail routes begin to take on a different character. Their arrival is part of a larger restoration, an attempt to dust off and build on a long-buried transit history that makes up much of the basic DNA of L.A. urbanism. By Christopher Hawthorne - Los Angeles Times

"Open Your Mind, Take Risks": Snøhetta's Craig Dykers on Studio Life and Advice for Young Architects: Q&A re: life in the firm's New York studio, key projects on the drawing board and...advice for young architects looking to start a firm of their own...What aspects of your New York workspace do you feel help encourage creativity amongst your staff? "The beer tap?" By Paul Keskeys - Architizer

Architecture critic Mark Lamster awarded a Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design: GSD credits Lamster with championing "progressive policies, preservation, and higher design standards for all citizens." - Dallas Morning News

Call for entries: Urban SOS: Fair Share: A global student competition to explore how the principles of the "sharing economy" can be applied to support more equitable access to resources, improve the built environment and enrich the quality of life of urban residents; cash prizes; deadline: September 12 - Van Alen Institute /AECOM / 100 Resilient Cities

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