

Today's News - Tuesday, July 19, 2016

- A grumpy sort of news day: Moore weighs in on the Stirling Prize shortlist: it's "a shortlist of second-bests - the prize has a knack for recognizing the good-but-not-great" (and bemoans "at least two outstanding works" that didn't make it).
- Ben Willis bemoans how the architecture of "brandcentric" national chains "is destroying our sense of place" - it's "a sad irony that as the diversity of the American population is increasing, the diversity of our built environment is decreasing."
- Sorkin takes a New York-centric view about the city's "architectural renaissance" as "gaming the system" for the 1% that produces "works of both genius and horror - the deck continues to be stacked against the public."
- Elsea tackles the conundrum of perfecting an architectural language "that the 99% can understand. How many really know what we're talking about when we go on about placemaking, mixed use or fenestrations?"
- Piano cuts 54 stories off his Paddington Pole, instead proposing an 18-story "floating" glass Paddington Cube (the Skyline Campaign cheers!).
- Jenkins minces no words about what he thinks of the "squashed down" Paddington Cube: "So what of the box itself? The answer is, it is awful - a huge 18-floor glass box flown in from somewhere in Dubai" (and then some - ouch!).
- Kadri, the "man who designed some of Mumbai's most iconic post-Independence architecture," talks about "his love and recent hate for the city," and "explains what led to its disastrous growth."
- Davidson attempts to find a few good things to say about NYC's new 53rd Street Library - "a sleek but shrunken pit" with "a smattering" of books: "Neither architects nor librarians shaped this branch; a real-estate deal did," resulting in "a basement instead of a building."
- Moore, on a brighter note, cheers a "notorious" London housing estate transformed into "some of the best housing in the neighborhood. What Ely Court achieves is not rocket science, but it is still too rare to see it done well."
- Byrnes has a great Q&A with Leslie Koch re: "how Governors Island became New York's best new public space" (we couldn't agree more!): "We were picking a team, not a rendering."
- Chaban cheers the Lowline, a "mole-man-style park," getting a thumbs-up from NYC's powers-that-be - as long as it hits certain benchmarks, "like proving that their gonzo light-movers can effectively sustain an acre of vegetation underground."
- Morgan marvels at "one of the best examples of Modern architecture" - a former livestock pavilion in Raleigh, NC, "an engineering marvel" that "bears positive comparison with some of the magnificent grand spaces of history" (with pix to prove it!).
- UNESCO adds 17 Corbu sites to its World Heritage List.
- It also warns that the Liverpool waterfront could lose its heritage site status if it doesn't comply with a two-year moratorium on new development; the mayor says no way.
- Walker walks us through how Pokémon Go "actually turns the whole urban planning concept of placemaking on its head" with cities "already looking at ways to capitalize on this phenomenon" (no mention of walking off cliffs or into traffic, however).
- Harkening back to olden days, Yoo looks at SimCity's legacy, and how "gamification" has become "a powerful tool" for architects and planners "in the smart city era."
- Sydney architect Thalís gets political, joining Mayor Clover Moore's team in her bid for re-election, bringing "influence and expertise to the chambers on planning decisions."
- Diller takes home the 2016 ACADIA Lifetime Achievement Award for her "pioneering work at the intersections of architecture, art, technology and philosophy."
- Call for entries: Call for Papers: UrbanPromo 2016 International Conference "A New Cycle of Urban Planning between Tactics and Strategy," in Milan this November.

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RIBA Stirling prize: a shortlist of second-bests: ...has again failed to identify some of the UK's most outstanding new buildings...the prize has a knack for recognising the good-but-not-great...favouring everyone's second favourite...There is no outstandingly obvious winner. By Rowan Moore -- FAT/Grayson Perry; Caruso St John; Herzog & de Meuron; dRMM; Michael Laird Architects/Reiach and Hall Architects; Loyn and Co; Wilkinson Eyre; Caruso St John [images]- Observer (UK)

How Brandcentric Architecture is Destroying Our Sense of Place: National...chains have become the new, de facto "International Style" of the 21st century...we have a responsibility to ask whether the buildings that we encounter daily have a positive impact on our community, and if they don't, how we might improve them...It is a sad irony that as the diversity of the American population is increasing, the diversity of our built environment is decreasing. By Ben Willis/Union Studio Architecture & Community Design - Common Edge

A New New York, The Same Old Story: While it has brought with it a fair share of good buildings, New York's architectural renaissance has presided over a general dissolution of urban mix: Gaming the system...continues to produce works of both genius and horror. Our urbanism...is exactly one of negotiation...between public and private interests...The deck continues to be stacked against the public, and the sum is never zero. By Michael Sorkin [images]- Metropolis Magazine

Perfecting a language of architecture that the 99% can understand: I sense that this propensity to put architecture on its own pedestal has a lot to do with a field that has over-professionalised itself, and in so doing does sometimes take itself too seriously...How many...really know what we're talking about when we go on about placemaking, mixed use or fenestrations? By Daniel Elsea/Allies and Morrison - BD/Building Design (UK)

Renzo Piano slashes height of controversial Paddington skyscraper: ...has cut 54 storeys from his stalled Paddington Pole skyscraper to create a new proposal for a "floating" glass cube...18-storey building, redubbed the Paddington Cube..."We never in our wildest dreams thought they would drop it to the extent that they've dropped it, so that is a huge result for the Skyline Campaign." [images]- Dezeen

Simon Jenkins: Paddington Pole may be dead but the vanity of architects lives on: The outcry...last winter was successful...72 floors are squashed down to 18...it would be wrong now to approve a bad proposal just because a far worse one has been withdrawn...So what of the box itself? The answer is, it is awful. It is just that, a huge 18-floor glass box flown in from somewhere in Dubai. -- Renzo Piano [image]- Evening Standard (UK)

Mumbai is in worst shape: Architect IM Kadri speaks of his love and recent hate for the city: The man who designed some of Mumbai's most iconic post-Independence architecture explains what led to the city's disastrous growth. [images]- Scroll (India)

The New 53rd Street Library Is Nice, Unless You Like to Read Books: ...53rd Street has its library back - if that's the right word for a sleek but shrunken pit fitted out with bleachers, bar stools, and a megascreen, plus a smattering of circulating volumes...Neither architects nor librarians shaped this branch; a real-estate deal did...a basement instead of a building...The vibe mixes the slovenly with the dictatorial. By Justin Davidson -- TEN Arquitectos [images]- New York Magazine

South Kilburn estate: homes that are streets ahead: Thanks to the enlightened thinking of Brent council and Alison Brooks Architects, a notorious London estate...is now the site of some of the best housing in the neighbourhood...this success story is endangered both by the government's Housing and Planning Act...and by the recessionary squeeze that might follow Brexit...What Ely Court achieves is not rocket science, but it is still too rare to see it done well. By Rowan Moore [images]- Observer (UK)

How Governors Island Became New York's Best New Public Space: An interview with Leslie Koch, who has overseen the island's transformation from a military base into a local attraction...a playful, serene design that reuses a 1900s sea wall and

debris from demolished Coast Guard buildings and gives users a public space that can't be matched in New York..."We were picking a team, not a rendering." By Mark Byrnes -- Adriaan Geuze/West 8 [images]- CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

The Lowline Just Got a Thumbs-up From City Hall: ...[it] is one of the most intriguing urban propositions to come along in some time...a mole-man-style park under Delancey Street...so long as they can meet certain...benchmarks, like proving that their gonzo light-movers can effectively sustain an acre of vegetation underground, year-round. By Matt A.V. Chaban -- James Ramsey/Raad Studio; Daniel Barasch - New York Magazine

One of the Best Examples of Modern Architecture Is a Former Livestock Pavilion in Raleigh, North Carolina: ...Dorton Arena...like much bold modern architecture, the arena is an engineering marvel...being inside is as exciting as experiencing some of the most notable Olympics structures...bears positive comparison with some of the magnificent grand spaces of history. By William Morgan -- Matthew Nowicki (1952) [images]- Slate

Le Corbusier's Work Added to Heritage List: Unesco has singled out 17 of this Modernist architect's sites to its World Heritage List, calling them a "testimonial to the invention of a new architectural language that made a break with the past." By Robin Pogrebin - New York Times

Liverpool waterfront heritage status at risk as mayor rejects UN plea: Unesco urges two-year moratorium on new development at world heritage site but Joe Anderson says it would stifle development...could lose its heritage site status if it fails to comply. - Guardian (UK)

How Pokémon Go is improving your city: Millions of new eyes - and feet - on the street: ...represent the kind of civic engagement that cities have previously tried to achieve with well-funded improvements. But the notable thing...is that this all has happened with no public health initiative, no marketing campaign, no infrastructural changes...City leaders are already looking at ways to capitalize on this phenomenon...this actually turns the whole urban planning concept of placemaking on its head. By Alissa Walker - Curbed

SimCity legacy: smarter cities when urban planners play for keeps: Architects and planners brought up on SimCity are using the principles of gaming to encourage sustainability; ...gamification...a powerful tool in the smart city era because...the new breed of urban and building designers need to be adept at multiple disciplines, or at least be able to communicate with experts from different fields. By Tony Yoo/CRN -- Matthias Haessler; Tygron; Block'hood - Guardian (UK)

Architect Philip Thalys joins Clover Moore for City of Sydney election: ...will run as an independent candidate in September... While [he] would no doubt bring influence and expertise to the chambers on planning decisions, his influence and the power of the city on important planning decisions are restricted. -- Hill Thalys Architecture and Urban Projects - Architecture & Design (Australia)

Liz Diller awarded 2016 ACADIA Lifetime Achievement Award: The Association for Computer Aided Design in Architecture award...was last given in 2014 to the late Zaha Hadid...cited Diller's "pioneering work at the intersections of architecture, art, technology and philosophy." -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro - The Architect's Newspaper

Call for entries: Call for Papers: UrbanPromo 2016 International Conference "A New Cycle of Urban Planning between Tactics and Strategy" in Milan, November 8-11; deadline: September 10 - INU / Urbit / Urbanistica / Planum. The Journal of Urbanism

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