

Today's News - Tuesday, August 23, 2016

- Giovanni starts us off with a no-holds-barred take re: the "real scandal" behind Zumthor's "amoebic pancake" and "recycled, low-grade avant-gardism" for LACMA, and the "dirty little secret of this sadly Napoleonic leap of conquest" for land it doesn't really need (never mind the environmental impact hearing "scheduled for a low-turnout" tomorrow - ouch!).
- Platin's take on LACMA's plans: it's "long on hype," but "short on context," as are "two other nearby museum projects" that "have already been abruptly plopped into place. Why is context so ignored?"
- O'Sullivan finds out why Gehl thinks his hometown of Copenhagen "needs more Jane Jacobs" as plans for "what could have been a vibrant quarter are being watered down to create an indifferent, developer-driven final product" that will end up being "a luxurious but life-lorn dormitory."
- Three reasons why Vienna is "one of the world's best places to live," and the "lessons cities around the world can learn from it."
- Berg x 2: residents of Las Vegas's once-vibrant historic Westside, now "a wasteland of urban disinvestment," are "skeptical about whether any new plans are just opening the doors to displacement and gentrification."
- On a brighter note, he cheers San Francisco's plan to bury a freeway under a park that reconnects the Presidio to the waterfront - "an appealing way to squeeze more public space into crowded cities."
- Lange on the Lowline: it "is not a park: And that's okay - as long as everyone understands the true nature of this \$60 million space" (at least she isn't mad at it anymore).
- There's a movement afoot in Honolulu to uncover a now-buried "vast irrigation system" and put it "back into the urban landscape" for lots of good reasons, but "adoption has been slow."
- Dokulil parses the recent 2016 Housing Futures conference that offered "insights, research and inspiring projects that collectively questioned the status quo. Now, we urgently need governments to get with the program."
- Sociology professor Torres finds some very disturbing statistics re: the senior homeless population: "Creating affordable housing for seniors is much cheaper than building expensive nursing homes" - and L.A. could lead the way.
- A pilot project in Australia is building "a tiny house village" for the homeless that "shies away from the 'twee and delightful' idea of a traditional tiny house."
- Brownlee finds Ikea's 2017 catalog offers a "terrifying glimpse into" the future of micro apartments: they might be "the utopian cure to cities' housing shortages," but "even Ikea couldn't make living in a pallet-sized studio for half your salary look anything less than nightmarish."
- Breathing a sigh of relief in the U.K. as developers' confidence seems to be "undimmed" by the Brexit vote: "Fears that Brexit would trigger the wholesale mothballing of building projects has failed to materialize so far" ("so far" being the operative word).
- Trudeau's "cure for Canada's slump": architects, and service exports, with Jack Diamond as "an unlikely poster child" for "the kind of business that the government sees as the wave of the future - brainy, urban and globally competitive."
- Shaw's Q&A with Schumacher re: the future for Zaha Hadid Architects, the impact of starchitecture ("We don't want to be stars"), and why parametricism is the "next modernism."
- An Iranian firm launches an open-source DIY kit for architects of a digital brick laying technique that takes a "lo-fi" approach to digital fabrication (parametrics involved).
- A great round-up of some of the up-and-coming Canadian designers to keep eye on (great profiles!).
- Ross reports on the potential demise of Thomas Mann's house in L.A.: "The threat of demolition has caused an outcry in Germany," with a call for the German government to buy it and turn it into a writers' retreat.
- A rather amusing look back at the few times FLW visited Milwaukee and gave the city "an earful": the county courthouse is "hardly worth blowing up" (and that's just the beginning).
- Call for entries: Fentress Global Challenge 2016: 5th Annual Airport of the Future International Architecture Student Competition.

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In the Dead of Late August . . . Peter Zumthor's LACMA Folly Continues: Never mind that the environmental impact hearing...is scheduled for a low-turnout Wednesday [tomorrow]...The real scandal about the amoebic pancake...is that the meeting is being held at all...The dirty little secret of this sadly Napoleonic leap of conquest is that there is enough land available right where the old wings now stand...This ain't no Rialto Bridge. It's recycled, low-grade avant-gardism...Why are we even seriously considering this misguided proposition? By Joseph Giovanni - Los Angeles Review of Books

LACMA's Controversial Expansion Plan: Long on Hype, Short on Context: ...two other nearby museum projects have already been abruptly plopped into place. Like Zumthor's edgy design, they, too, are totally disconnected from the surrounding mid-Wilshire area...with or without Zumthor's inkblot, this area's many rough edges require far-reaching up-grades...Why is context so ignored? By Dick Platin - CityWatch LA (Los Angeles)

Copenhagen Needs More Jane Jacobs, Says Jan Gehl: When it comes to new construction in his hometown, the veteran urbanist is not impressed: ...Denmark's capital has taken a wrong turn....new development plans for the city's South Harbor are being watered down to create an indifferent, developer-driven final product...negative tweaks risk turning what could have been a vibrant quarter into a luxurious but life-lorn dormitory. By Feargus O'Sullivan - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

Vienna ranks high on almost every urban quality-of-life list. Here's why: A deep focus on social equity, civic participation and green spaces has made Austria's capital one of the world's best places to live...lessons cities around the world can learn from it. By Saransh Sehgal - Citiscope.org

Wary of Change: As Las Vegas's historic Westside faces change, residents ask, who benefits? ...was once the healthy heart of the city's African American community. Today the area is largely vacant, a wasteland of urban disinvestment...many...remain skeptical about...whether any new plans are just opening the doors to displacement and gentrification. By Nate Berg -- Steven Clarke/UNLV Downtown Design Center; Stanton Southwick/Southwick Landscape Architects [images] - Landscape Architecture Magazine

San Francisco's Plan to Bury a Freeway: The city is transforming an old, major road into a new public park: Putting parkland over roads is an appealing way to squeeze more public space into crowded cities...plants will create habitats for the diverse bird, butterfly, and insect populations of the Presidio, as well as a natural refuge for the city's residents and visitors. By Nate Berg -- James Corner Field Operations [images] - The Atlantic

The Lowline is not a park: And that's okay - as long as everyone understands the true nature of this \$60 million space...being built in a disused subterranean trolley terminal...There is something undeniably dystopian about the idea...The closest I can come to a definition is a mouthful: a high-tech eco-tainment crossed with multi-purpose community center with a science and gardening focus. By Alexandra Lange -- Dan Barasch; James Ramsey [images] - Curbed New York

Uncovering the Potential of Honolulu's Hidden Streams: Centuries after Native Hawaiians built a vast irrigation system, sustainability advocates are working to put them back into the urban landscape...a vital opportunity to improve the health of the island's freshwater and saltwater resources...potentially protecting communities from flooding and sea level rise...adoption has been slow... By Timothy A. Schuler -- Race Randle/Howard Hughes Corporation; Sean Connelly/Hawaii Futures; Ala Wai Watershed Partnership [images] - Next City (formerly Next American City)

2016 Housing Futures: ...exploring a range of solutions, from social, multigenerational, suburban and retirement housing to student residences and new co-housing scenarios for shared living...insights, research and inspiring projects collectively

questioned the status quo...Now, we urgently need governments...to get with the program. By Heidi Dokull -- Jo McCafferty/Levitt Bernstein; Christopher Kelly/Architecture Workshop; Melinda Payne/Government Architect; Suzanne Benn/UTS Sustainable Enterprise; Graham Burrows/Jackson Clements Burrows; Stephen Pimbley/Spark Architects; Jean-Christophe Masson/Harmonic + Masson and Associés; Kerry Clare/Clare Design [images]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Op-Ed: As Los Angeles Gets Younger, Skid Row Gets Older: Creating affordable housing for seniors is much cheaper than building expensive nursing homes: Nationwide, people 50 and older make up 31% of the homeless population, an increase of 20% since 2004...Los Angeles has the opportunity to pioneer solutions to the pressing issues municipalities across the country face as their residents age. By Stacy Marlana Torres - Next City (formerly Next American City)

Tiny houses helping homeless: ...a tiny house village on the NSW Central Coast...pilot project...developed by the Tiny Homes Foundation will comprise four tiny houses, a common laundry and workshop and community vegetable gardens...to fill a gap in housing provision for the homeless...shies away from the "twee and delightful" idea of a traditional tiny house. -- NBRSArchitecture [images]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Ikea's 2017 Catalog Is A Terrifying Glimpse Into The Tiny Apartments Of The Future: Micro apartments. They're all the rage...But the jury is still out on whether [they] are going to be the utopian cure to cities' housing shortages...My feelings on micro apartments after checking out Ikea's 2017 furniture catalog? Dystopia, all the way down...Even Ikea couldn't make living in a pallet-sized studio for half your salary look anything less than nightmarish. By John Brownlee [images]- Fast Company / Co.Design

Developers' confidence undimmed by Brexit vote: No reduction in number of planning applications submitted since referendum: Fears that Brexit would trigger the wholesale mothballing of building projects has failed to materialise so far...- BD/Building Design (UK)

Trudeau's Cure for Canada's Slump? Architects and Accountants: Service exports a bright spot amid general economic gloom: Jack Diamond...an unlikely poster child for Canada's new economy. But the founder of Diamond Schmitt Architects has built exactly the kind of business that the government sees as the wave of the future - brainy, urban and globally competitive. - Bloomberg News

Patrik Schumacher on starchitecture: "It's just not helpful...We don't want to be stars"; Q&A re: what the future holds for Zaha Hadid Architects, the impact of starchitecture, progressive urbanism..."Our work is not meant to be a spectacle...it can very easily become a target for icon and star bashing. This is incredibly unhelpful because it's no longer talking about the merit and demerit of the work...but rather its superficial celebrity status. By Matt Shaw- The Architect's Newspaper

Open-source parametric brick wall "hacks the digital" in Iran: Sstudiomm...founded by Hossein Naghavi, has developed a digital brick laying technique and an open-source DIY kit for architects..."Negative Precision" challenges a "surplus precision" of digital fabrication, which typically drives up project cost...prioritized economy over precision, embracing a "lo-fi" approach to digital fabrication... [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Emerging Talent: ...a growing cohort of architects hang out their shingle and head out to find clients...From coast to coast, here are some of the up-and-coming designers we're keeping our eye on. -- Marianne Amodio Architecture Studio; Platform Architecture + Design; MoDa; 2Architecture; Work/Shop; Kilogram Studio; UUfie; Architects Luc Bouliane; Angela Tsementzis Architect; Microclimat Architecture; T B A; APPAREIL Architecture; Pelletier de Fontenay; Abbott Brown Architects [images]- Canadian Architect

Will Thomas Mann's House Be Demolished? ...[he] called the building project a "reckless and self-willed prank...consulted with...Richard Neutra, but eventually he turned to J. R. Davidson...The result was...almost an architectural mirror of Mann's writing...The threat of demolition has caused an outcry in Germany...Jürgen Kaumkötter, a curator of persecuted art, has proposed that the German government buy the house and fund it as a writers' retreat. By Alex Ross - New Yorker

When Frank Lloyd Wright gave Milwaukee an earful: [He] ...made sure the city listened. The Milwaukee County Courthouse...is "hardly worth blowing up"...That building will set Milwaukee back at least 50 years from any cultural standpoint"...This is the most perverse town," Wright [said] in the 1938 story. "Bring in anything artistic and it's at the peril of your own liberty." Perhaps that perspective is why Wright kept mum during his 1956 visit about his work on the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church project. [images]- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Call for entries: Fentress Global Challenge 2016: 5th Annual Airport of the Future International Architecture Student Competition: re-envision the airport terminal building of the future; cash prizes + internship; deadline: October 1- Fentress Architects



Architecture for Fashionistas: When top profiles of both worlds join forces, lines between architecture and advertisement blur...surreal settings are created, and magical spaces occur. -- Frank Gehry/Gehry Partners; Olafur Eliasson; Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas; Rem Koolhaas/OMA; Gluckman Mayner Architects; William Russell/Pentagram; Legoretta + Legoretta; Kumiko Inui; Toyo Ito; Peter Marino; Renzo Piano; Jun Aoki [images]

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