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INSIDE

NYC: Backwater or Fountainhead for Architecture?

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VAN ALEN REPORT

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Designing Downsview Park, Toronto

Cool New Plazas

Fresh Kills Competition

Brooklyn Bridge Park

Governors Island

Architecture + Water Exhibit

Downsview Design Talk

First Step Housing

Gowanus Expressway

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PROJECTS
IN PUBLIC
ARCHITECTURE

Van Alen Report focuses on fundamental challenges for improving the design of the public realm, combining visual and verbal essays, news, commentary and dialogue. We choose topics that cross the boundaries between design disciplines and broader public concerns. These challenges are at the core of the Institute's **Projects in Public Architecture**, integrating design competitions, workshops, websites, publications, exhibitions and forums.

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Van Alen Report is published seasonally. Subscriptions are a benefit of membership and are also independently available to libraries and universities. Individual issues can be purchased at our gallery and in bookstores. For more information, call 212.924.7000, x4.



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VAN ALEN REPORT 8

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Hello Design Consultants

Illustrations: Cityscape Institute;
Downsview Park International Design
Competition entrants; Chris J. Johns;
Parc Downsview Park Inc.

Cover: model, *Tree City*, winning entry,
Downsview Park International Design
Competition. Submitted by Rem
Koolhaas, Office for Metropolitan
Architecture; Bruce Mau Design;
Oleson Worland Architect; and
Inside/Outside.



IN 1858, NEW YORK HELD A DESIGN COMPETITION for Central Park, and the results established a new paradigm for public space in North America. In 2000, the Downsview Park International Design Competition, in Toronto, promises to do the same. The purpose of Central Park was bitterly debated, both before and after the design, but the winning "Greensward" proposal embodied purpose so powerfully that it has endured into this century. "TREE CITY," the winning comprehensive design concept in Toronto, is intent on demonstrating that the urban park, revisited, is alive with purpose and meaning. >

DOWNSVIEW PARK INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION, TORONTO, CANADA

Downsview Park is being created on 320 acres of a former military airbase. When the base was established in the 1940s it was located on the periphery of Toronto. Today it is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area. Downsview Park will be the Government of Canada's first national urban park, complementing an extensive system of national wilderness parks.

The objective of the design competition was to promote innovative design proposals that would respond to the social and natural histories of the site while developing its potential as a new landscape — one capable of supporting new ecologies and an evolving array of public uses and events, including ones of national distinction. The design was intended to inaugurate and structure the transformation of the site while remaining open to change and growth over time.

An international call for Expressions of Interests produced 179 submissions from twenty-two countries, many from multi-disciplinary teams. Of these, five teams were invited to participate in a limited design competition, which began in late November 1999 and concluded in early May 2000. The results, submitted by the teams listed on page 14, comprise the current exhibition. The submissions were evaluated anonymously, first by a group of technical consultants and then by a distinguished jury. The winning design, TREE CITY, was a submission from a team led by Rem Koolhaas of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, together with Bruce Mau Design, Oleson Worland Architect and Inside/Outside.

The site has been open to the public since 1996 and includes landscapes of the former airbase — open and rolling meadows punctuated by sports fields, trees, and occasional buildings no longer in active use. As well, the

design of the Park encompasses a precinct of industrial and military buildings, including an immense aircraft hanger, which are intended to be adapted for cultural, recreational and community uses. This precinct has been tentatively called the Cultural Campus. Beyond these areas, the overall site of the airbase includes another 320 acres of land that will be developed using long-term land leases in order to generate revenue for the Park. Of these 320 acres, 70 acres will be used for ongoing operational requirements by the military. These developable lands will remain in public ownership and it is intended that the park will grow in size over time. The site is surrounded by communities that date back to the 1950s and 1960s and is well served by public transit, local arterial roads and regional highways.

The design proposals were required to be conceived for a three-stage implementation process set over a fifteen-year period, in keeping with the anticipated revenue stream from the developable lands. The overall construction budget is \$145 million (CDN) with \$40 million (CDN) allocated for the initial phase. The Park is intended to be financially self-sustaining.

SPONSOR

Parc Downsview Park Inc. is a federal crown corporation whose mandate is to develop and manage Downsview Park. It is a subsidiary of Canada Lands Company Ltd., which reports to the Government of Canada through the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Van Alen Institute is exhibiting all five finalist projects in its gallery, and focusing this Van Alen Report on them, because we believe that the entries carry forward the debate on the urban park's purpose and form, and that competitions are an essential tool for making public space that matters now. And in New York, where some of the private realm may indeed be built out, the public realm is just getting started — there is much to learn from elsewhere, and a lot to remember from here.

Raymond Gastil Executive Director, Van Alen Institute

JURY REPORT—MAY 19, 2000

The Jury met for two days on site, visiting the Downsview area and examining the five entries individually and collectively. The jury had received all competition documents well in advance of the meeting, and it was briefed by experts in all major aspects about the technical implications of each proposal. The jury also met with representatives of the community to learn their opinions and concerns during discussion in front of the projects. All aspects of the jury's deliberations were exceptionally well organized and conducted in an amicable fashion.

It became immediately clear that the general level of quality attained by the five submissions was very high, and that a great deal of collaborative effort among landscape architects, ecologists, architects, and planners had been invested in their elaboration. Diverse and distinctive as these projects are, each proffering promising approaches and innovative strategies, the members of the jury were able to reach a unanimous decision. After several rounds of discussions in the course of two days, one project continued to stand out and gain in interest. The jury wishes to emphasize that the entry TREE CITY did not only emerge early and compellingly as every jury member's first choice, but that there were, in the views of jurors, no other projects of comparable vision and promise.

TREE CITY fully respects existing site conditions and indeed exceeds the requirements of the competition. Thanks to its strategy, the project creates a new rapport between contemporary urban experience and the value of nature, as both are actively transformed within the Downsview area. Achieving decisive changes with a minimum of intervention in the topography, the project anticipates a gradual, carefully orchestrated improvement of the Downsview lands. The degraded soil will be improved

by means of the right succession of natural plantings. The layout of a differentiated network of paths and the gradual introduction of various activities will engage the interest and energy of different community groups while securing a long-term future for the entire site.

TREE CITY emerges from a vision of landscape architecture for an urban park. It proposes a kind of hybrid state of park lands, tightly connected to the urban surroundings, yet clearly autonomous as a site of transformed nature where many individual and communal desires can be indulged. Lanes and paths cast a mesh of connections over the land, linking sites of special activities with the surrounding city. In its responsiveness to community interests and in its respect for individual experience, TREE CITY reflects the mix of randomness and choice that characterize current living conditions. As profoundly linked to the present as it is, the project promises nonetheless to give reality to the idea of an urban park fit for the 21st century. Conceived as a living entity, with all the indeterminacy of that condition, TREE CITY outlines a vision of future park lands as intriguing as a work of art, but also as malleable as communities of tomorrow could wish to find. The jurors consider TREE CITY to hold the greatest promise and propose the most convincing approach for the future of Downsview.

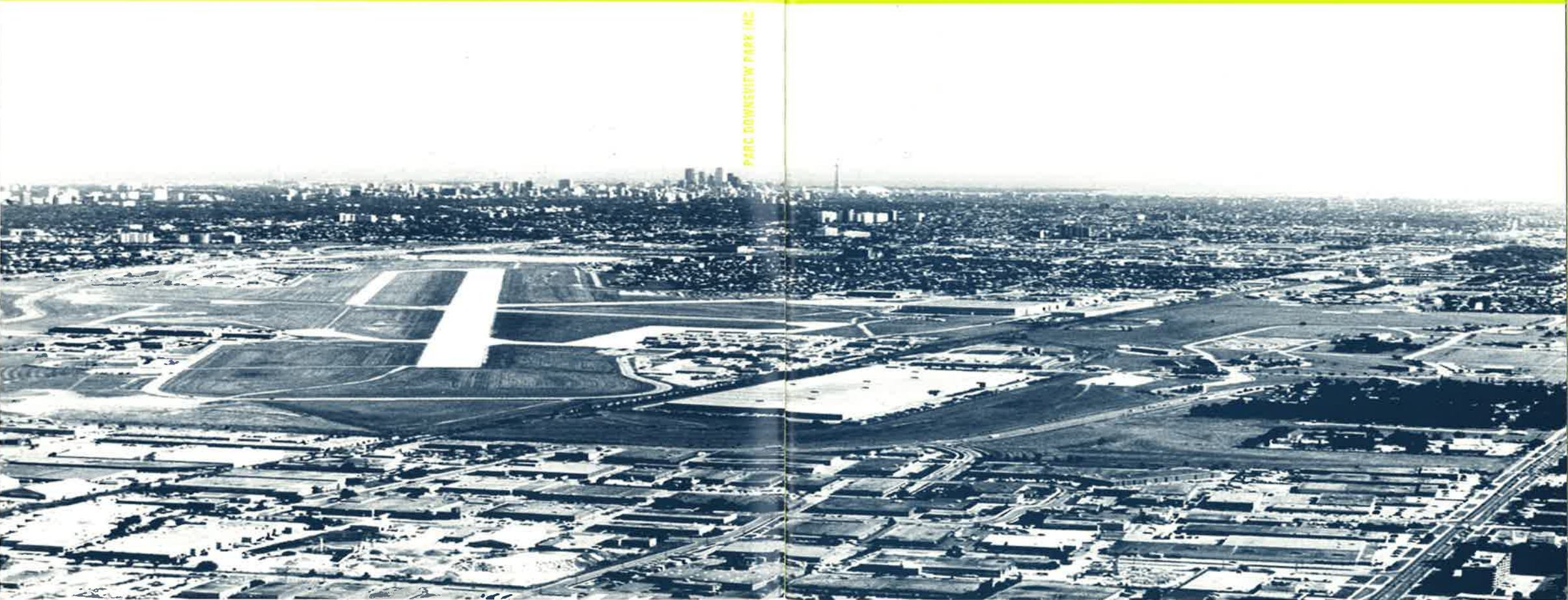
Kurt W. Forster, Chair of the Jury
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
Ydessa Hendeles,
Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto
Cornelia Hahn Oberlander,
Landscape Architect, Vancouver
Terence Riley,
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gerald Sheff,
Gluskin Sheff & Associates, Toronto

BY BAY BROWN

designing downsview park >

The winning design for Downsview Park – planned to be under construction by June 2001– is not your father's park. Nor is it Frederick Law Olmsted's Central Park. Nor is it Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette.

Submitted by Rem Koolhaas/Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Bruce Mau Design, Oleson Worland Architect and Inside/Outside, *Tree City* is an important contribution to landscape architecture and urbanism at large. The team proposes a radically flexible design for this 320-acre site on a former military airbase in Toronto, challenging traditional distinctions between landscape and architecture, and design and planning. >



"Tree City is the first expression of the complex contemporary relationship between the built and natural environment, the city and the wild, the individual and the group that aspires to a new paradigm in landscape design," says juror and Museum of Modern Art curator Terence Riley.

The winning entry was not alone in its attempt to desegregate city and park. To varying degrees, all five of the short-listed teams dispensed with the 19th-century notion of the park as a bucolic refuge. Furthermore, they put aside traditional notions of the discrete fields of architecture and landscape architecture, debunking distinctions between hard and soft. The "machine in the garden" dialectic has eroded.

Downsview Park begged for such an integrated approach. With an operating runway and mammoth aeronautical buildings commanding portions of the greater site — and with considerable commercial development to come — this was no *tabula rasa*, but had all the infrastructural design problems of a hybrid built environment.

For Anita Berrizbeitia, landscape architect and University of Pennsylvania professor, the distinctions the entrants make between design and strategy, or process, in their proposals underscore the fact that architects are coming to grips with an approach familiar to landscape architects. "All of the entries talk about open, fluid systems, strategy over design," says Berrizbeitia.

But the competition represents something greater than architects learning about strategy or process. The entries are very much part of the blurring of design disciplines — melding all creative fields for that matter — and a world teetering between old and new economies, and between new ideas of work and leisure. They break the box even further by looking to mathematical and scientific theory for models to support what has become the dissolution of the boundaries between nature and culture.

THE DIGITAL AND THE COYOTE

The project submitted by Bernard Tschumi Architects, Dereck Revington Studio and Sterling Finlayson Architects vividly evidences this changing of the ideological guard. When Tschumi proposed Parc de la

Villette in the 1980s, with its red events undulating through a relatively dense Paris urban park, it was put forth as a "a park of the 21st century." Now, years later, with the same directive, Tschumi expressly chose as his *parti* the exact opposite of his approach in Paris.

Tschumi's team set up polarities— Words that DO NOT describe Downsview/ Words that DO describe Downsview. Playing on that set of opposites, "oil and water" became the paradigm for the whole project.

"I was interested in how the digital could give new ways of reading landscapes," describes Tschumi, who sees the current digitization of our society as the appropriate opposition to the wild. His team conceived the idea of "viscous fingering," wherein liquid fingers metaphorically reach out to the periphery. The digital — the 21st-century version of the "urban" — permeates the wild. Tschumi divides and interlocks cultural and recreational components with the natural, the wild. The buildings that house the cultural and recreational facilities will be clad in digital screens with the ability to constantly morph, creating a soft edge, blurring landscape and architecture.

EMERGENT LANDSCAPES

Brown and Storey Architects' scheme took this hybridization as a given, looking not to the search for form, but looking more to process. James Brown describes it as a dynamic approach concerned more with setting in motion a system, which will evolve and co-evolve with the neighborhood.

The crux of *Emergent Landscapes* is creating community through this interconnected nodal network, and by linking infrastructures to capitalize on their intermodality, using a self-organizing system as a tool. For Brown, mathematician Stuart Kauffman's theories provide the minimal framework necessary for Downsview with its need for flexibility. The *parti* approach to designing a park gives way to a point/dot system. For Kauffman, a patchwork organization is preferable to the classical approach with its one big idea — one organizing principle — "a frozen lake" as it were. A self-organizing system of big and small patches is preferable. >



A NEW SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE

This project, submitted by Foreign Office Architects, Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects, and Tom Leader and James Haig Streeter of PWP Landscape Architects, creates a sculptural landform – ridges – that both serve an ecological purpose, while also creating terraces for extreme sports activities.

“We took a didactic approach. It is readable,” says Shirley Blumberg. “It is not like a natural landscape.

“For us the challenge was to synthesize all systems and orders that might influence the park of the future: the ecological, historical and recreational. In the 1960s, the collage created complexity and contradiction. So we wondered if you could create complexity through a consistent approach to all the systems that organize it.” Their organizing principle became a “circuit system.”

The team sought an even broader cultural input, inviting the participation of those from other creative fields including filmmaker Atom Egoyan. Egoyan was interested in one of the site’s existing structures and proposed that it be converted into a project that explored how the Internet could become a social and communal experience.

EMERGENT ECOLOGIES

James Corner/Field Operations and Stan Allen Architects’ *Emergent Ecologies* – a resounding theme in this process-oriented competition – presents a 15-year framework comprised of two complementary organizing systems: circuit ecologies which can loosely be distilled to circulation, and through-flow ecologies that represent things like energy, matter, people and water.

A ridge and furrow system will provide drainage for the damaged soil while integrating sports. The earthwork or landform created by this reshaping of the land provides cyclists, for example, a surface to ride on, much as *A New Synthetic Landscape* did.

“Increasingly, architects today are looking at landscape as a model,” says Allen. “Landscape architecture is an art of surfaces and systems. Urbanistically, it is a valuable model for process.

It is successive, not final. It grows, changes over time.”

Like Tschumi, the team likewise sets up oppositions to clarify what their project is about. “Nature vs. culture” is rejected over “culture as nature.” In looking at the entries, Christian Hubert, architect and director of the Master of Architecture program at the University of Toronto, is struck by how the entries look outside the design disciplines in negotiating the melding of the natural and artificial.

To Hubert, the oppositions set up in both *The Digital and the Coyote* and Corner and Allen’s project are not dissimilar from those propounded by radical feminist and professor of the history of science Donna Haraway in her “Cyborg Manifesto” published in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991). In her manifesto, Haraway tries to reappropriate gender, through exploring cloning and other bio-tech practices that expose the way technological and natural processes come together.

TREE CITY

“It is a formula, not a design,” explains co-winner Bruce Mau, echoing his fellow entrants. “There is not a fixed outcome, but more of an algorithm, more like designing a vector or a tendency, and making perimeters that determine the vector. We set in motion an evolving process with a series of connected points and by inflecting those you control the outcome. It is a formula or recipe rather than a design.

“*Tree City* was a pragmatic response to an unknowable condition. We didn’t know enough about possible scenarios.”

Formally, *Tree City* will be comprised of a matrix of circular tree clusters on a quarter of the site, with meadows, playing fields and gardens occupying the balance. While initially the park will serve as a green destination within the city, the intention is that this “vegetal epicenter” will connect with the rest of Toronto’s green spaces, creating a park system laced throughout Greater Toronto.

For the winning team, the creation of the park presented a two-part Faustian deal. They sought >



to extend the park into the world through ecosystems, circulation, but also are willing to accept other forces coming in. "We want to blur the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the park," says Mau.

In addition to weaving the park into the city fabric, *Tree City* likewise brings the city's infrastructure into the park by serving as an intermodal transportation hub. The project proposes creating a tunnel to go under the runway to accommodate a major avenue.

As *Tree City* is presented, the team's irony and hyperbole make them provocative. They create slogans, invert common assumptions and use humor to make their point. In one of the renderings for the project we see a yoga class exercising with an ominous looking plane looming as if it might take them out, vividly underscoring the unusual mix of uses at Downsview. They talk about "manufacturing nature" to debunk the notion of the two realms being mutually exclusive, and they suggest building 1,000 pathways to underscore the need for circulation. It is this approach that draws from pop culture, with its tone once only under the purview of political activists, performance artists, and moreover, advertisers, that is their trademark.

In October, *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp placed Mau within the larger context of the design continuum. This summer the same publication immortalized Koolhaas in their Sunday magazine. Their Downsview project exemplifies why they are being canonized as both form-makers and idea-givers. Not only do they, too, dissolve traditional architecture and landscape distinctions, but open up design even wider. Mau explains that their Downsview team shared a "cultural methodology." He describes himself simply as a "designer," feeling any further descriptor would be confining. Trained as a graphic designer but with his hand in projects ranging from cinema to product design, Mau's holistic approach to design is betrayed by the title of his new book *Life Style*, published this fall by Phaidon.

"The graphic design in our project helped. It illustrated the advantages of the scheme," says Mau.

"We do a lot of identity work, visualizing business. It is so powerful a tool; it is super effective. We create a common language, and that is what we did for the park. We visualized the concept, and conceptualized the project."

Prior to the competition, Koolhaas led a studio at Harvard, investigating the culture of shopping. The research will directly yield the forthcoming *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* (Taschen 2001), and indirectly, informs OMA's designs for new stores and a website for Italian clothier Prada. This research is so revealing it is informing all of the projects the studio is working on, says OMA senior associate Dan Wood.

The potential transference of traditional commercial principles and practices to the civic realm is intriguing. The psychological and aesthetic appeal of Mau's big green dot — logo shorthand for *Tree City* — is a marketing tool that compels us. A line of inquiry is inevitable: *Is the power of the commercial shaping the civic, or simply sharing tools? Does a commercial application degrade the civic by bringing public space to the lowest common denominator of a mercenary commercialism focused on private gain? Is this something 20th-century Modernists would bridle at, or were they approaching design this way themselves?*

"Unbeknownst to the civic, it is in competition with the commercial," Mau laments. "It is difficult, because it can't compete with the commercial. The real dilemma is for the civic. It is a really pressing issue.

"In Rem's shopping project, shopping is almost exclusively the program for development in the world. This project [Downsview] is an investment in the civic." Downsview may use the tools of marketing and retail, but its content and purpose are different.

"There needs to be a more vigorous analysis of the civic, because they [the civic and the commercial] are not the same," Mau clarifies. "People say the shopping mall is today's town square — that is true only for a particular class of people. If you are interested in political discourse, they are not the same. It is really important for architects to be clear about the issue. The relationship between the retail and the civic >



A NEW SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE

is not a one-to-one relationship.”

With Prada, OMA sought to create new environments for their stores in the context of the virtual world. OMA sought to distinguish Prada by creating beautiful public spaces that would offer local benefits. In New York, the store at Broadway and Prince in the Guggenheim SoHo planned to open next year will offer a “public space,” a performance stage replete with seats for the audience. In theory, OMA inverts the commercial/civic relation above, in effect, making the commercial space a civic space, making Prada a good neighbor.

At Downsview, the winning team was not unique in its attempt to be alluring, nor was it the lone team in the competition using techniques that could be construed as marketing tools. Tschumi says he set out to “seduce”; Corner and Allen had graphic designers Tomato as consultants to help address issues of identity and communication; and the *Synthetic Landscape* team invited the ultimate image-maker for their team, a filmmaker, to the process of creating a hyperbolic yet didactic artificial condition.

With the first dazzling CAD rendering or the first pithy slogan, things may seem to have changed. But, in reality, form and content have never been mutually exclusive, and maybe it is time we embrace that. Perhaps the conception of a national park and the practice of “branding” are not at odds. In the end, it is not only the boundary between the natural and artificial breaking down, in the form of the park and the city broken down, but the civic and the commercial; form and content; and public and private architecture.

NYC?

Would *Tree City* work in New York? Mau gives a terse answer, the verbal parallel of his graphics. “New York, as a model, supercedes the project. It was a precedent,” says Mau. “It was a formula before a city, as Rem showed in *Delirious New York*. It was designed numerically, almost before it was conceived.

“An algorithm or formula or vector could be interesting in New York, not designing a design, but a direction. That’s what New York is. It is its own precedent.”

For that matter, can competition work as a tool as it did so successfully for Central Park long ago? For two decades, the municipal government in Toronto has routinely sponsored both open and invited competitions for the design of new public spaces, including parks, public gardens and squares. While Downsview is a federal and not a city project, this precedent was critical in the decision to sponsor a competition.

New York is a city largely devoid of this tradition of government-sponsored competitions. At three times the size of Central Park and eight times the size of Downsview, could Fresh Kills Landfill – the site of a design competition to be launched next year – be our Downsview? (see NEWSFRONT)

Terence Riley sees competition as a critical mechanism in the face of other power structures in this city. “Competitions seem to be the only tool that architects and other advocates for public space have in a city completely controlled by developers,” says Riley. “New York developers are more or less against architecture and design as a tool as it tends to cut into their private profits. Where else in the world does a city let lawyers make design decisions?” ■

The exhibit of entries at the Institute will be open from the November 13 opening to December 15. MoMA will be hosting a forum on Downsview on November 14. Corner and Allen will present their project at the Institute on December 6. Design Exchange in Toronto will exhibit the entries from January 5 to January 21, 2001.

COMPETITORS

EMERGENT LANDSCAPES

Brown and Storey Architects, Toronto
with
Heiko Sieker, Berlin
KMK Consultants, Brampton
iTrans, Richmond Hill
Urban Forest Associates, Toronto
John Mighton, Toronto
Dr. Harold Schroeter, Guelph
ReK Productions, Toronto
Yolles Partnership, Toronto
Heiko Sieker, Berlin
Nasser Design, Brookline

EMERGENT ECOLOGIES

James Corner/Field Operations, Philadelphia
Stan Allen, Stan Allen Architect, New York
with
Michael Horsham, Tomato, London
Craig Schwitter, Buro Happold, New York
Herve Descottes, L’Observatoire International
Tom Cahill and Michelle Adams, Tom Cahill Associates, West Chester
Chris Zlocki, HLW Strategies, New York
Chris Graham, Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington
Marc Mayer, The Powerplant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto
Edward Relph, University of Toronto
Nina-Marie Lister, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto
PENN PRAXIS, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

A NEW SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE

Foreign Office Architects, Tokyo
Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects, Toronto
Tom Leader and James Haig Streeter of PWP Landscape Architects, Berkeley
with
Cochrane Brook, Toronto
Atom Egoyan, Toronto
MBTW Group, Toronto
Dillon Consulting, Toronto
Habitat Works, Toronto
Allen Kani Associates, Toronto
Kirk Biggar & Associates, Toronto
Helyar & Associates, Toronto
Marjory Jacobson, Boston
Gerry Shikatani, Toronto
Yolles Partnership, Toronto
RWDI, Guelph
Hahn Smith Design, Toronto
Aercoustics Engineering Ltd., Toronto

TREE CITY

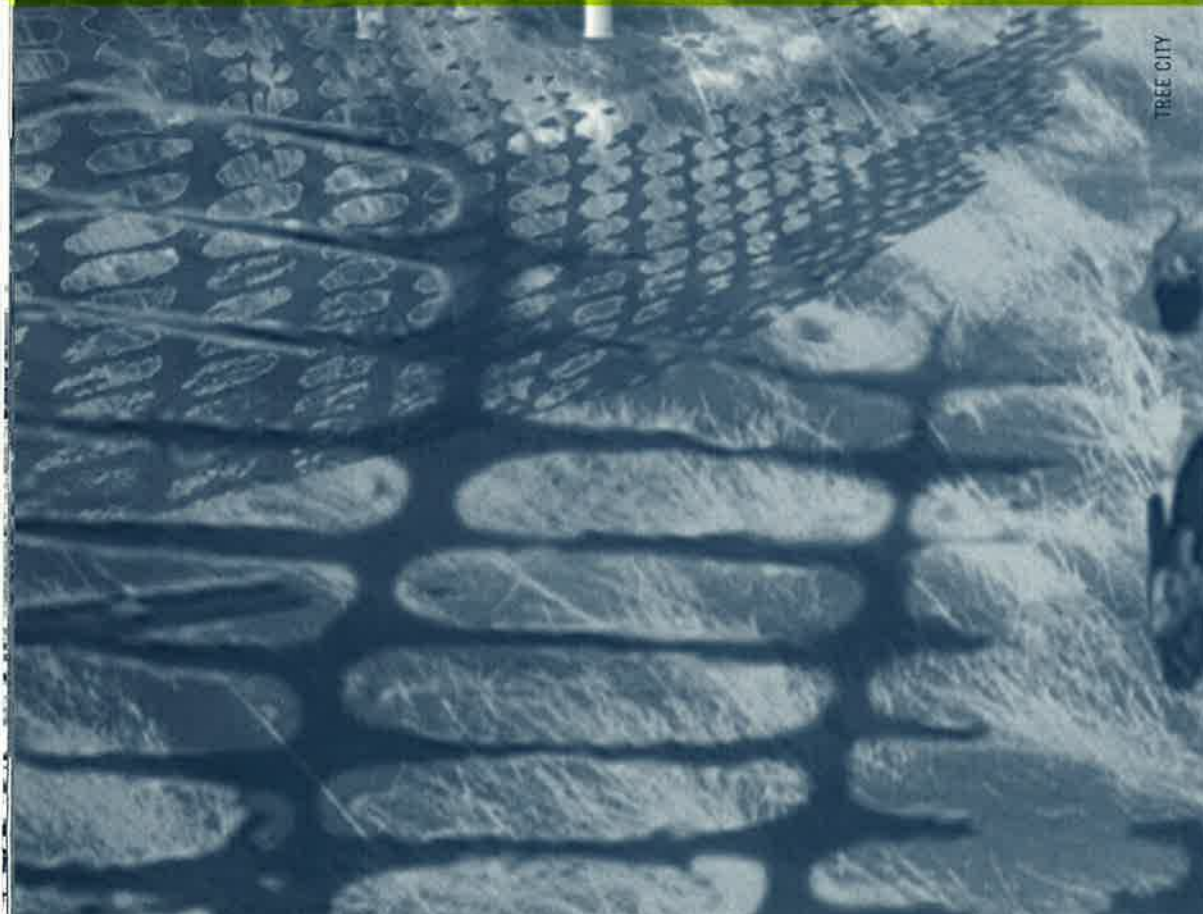
Rem Koolhaas, Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rotterdam
Bruce Mau Design, Toronto
Oleson Worland Architect, Toronto
Inside/Outside, Amsterdam
with
Ove Arup & Partners, New York/ London
Arup Environmental, New York/ London
RWDI, Guelph
BA Consulting, Toronto
Moonstone Landscape, Coldwater
Noel Harding, Toronto
Helyar & Associates, Toronto

THE DIGITAL AND THE COYOTE

Bernard Tschumi Architects, New York
Dereck Revington Studio, Toronto
Sterling Finlayson Architects, Toronto
with
Gunta Mackars, Landscape Architect, Toronto
Ove Arup & Partners, New York/ London
Read Voorhees, Toronto
Stephan Murphy, Waterloo
W. Andrew Kenney, Toronto
Dan Euser, Toronto
Eric Haldenby, Waterloo
Helyar & Associates, Toronto

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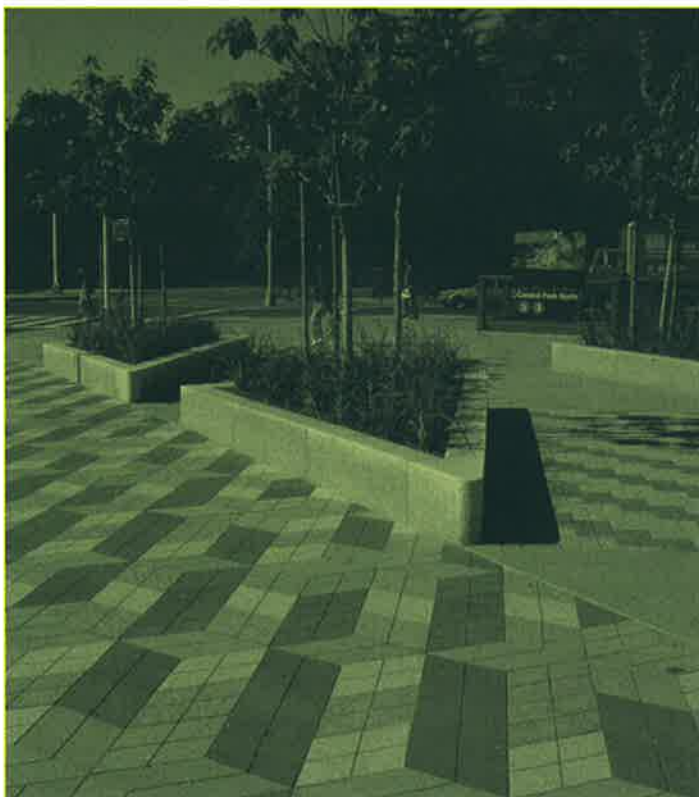
TREE CITY

There are signs of life for the **NEW YORK PLAZA**. There are "space doc-tors" who will tell us, and tell us again, exactly what is and isn't good public space, and while their confidence is admirable, many struggle with why, where and how to make public space today. The Institute's program has taken this on from the "Is Public Space Dead?" forums of Fall 1999 to the "Future of the Plaza in the Americas" talks in Spring 2000. Fortunately for New Yorkers, we can get out of the lecture hall and into the city to see boldly designed new plazas, and into the gallery and online to see some extraordinary proposals.

In Harlem, the combined forces of the Cityscape Institute, City Council Member Bill Perkins, and the NYC Department of Design and Construction led a drive to see that Malcolm X Plaza would be more than an after-thought to a winding-down project of

improving Malcolm X Boulevard. The plaza powerfully connects to its site in the city and to its namesake in a design by Ken Smith Landscape Architect and J-P Design Group. Opened in August with an X of black balloons released to the blue sky above the green park, it lays out an Islamic inspired ground of multi-colored parallelogram pavers, overlaid by planted triangles that define the urban intersections of the site with 110th Street and Central Park to the south, Malcolm X Boulevard to the east, and St. Nicholas Avenue running diagonally to the northwest, all angling above the subway station below. The designers have determined that in the 21st-century sitting will continue to be an activity for a public plaza, but until the benches are put in standing will prevail. Benches will be installed in the spring pending review.

A juror for the 1999-2000 TKTS2K

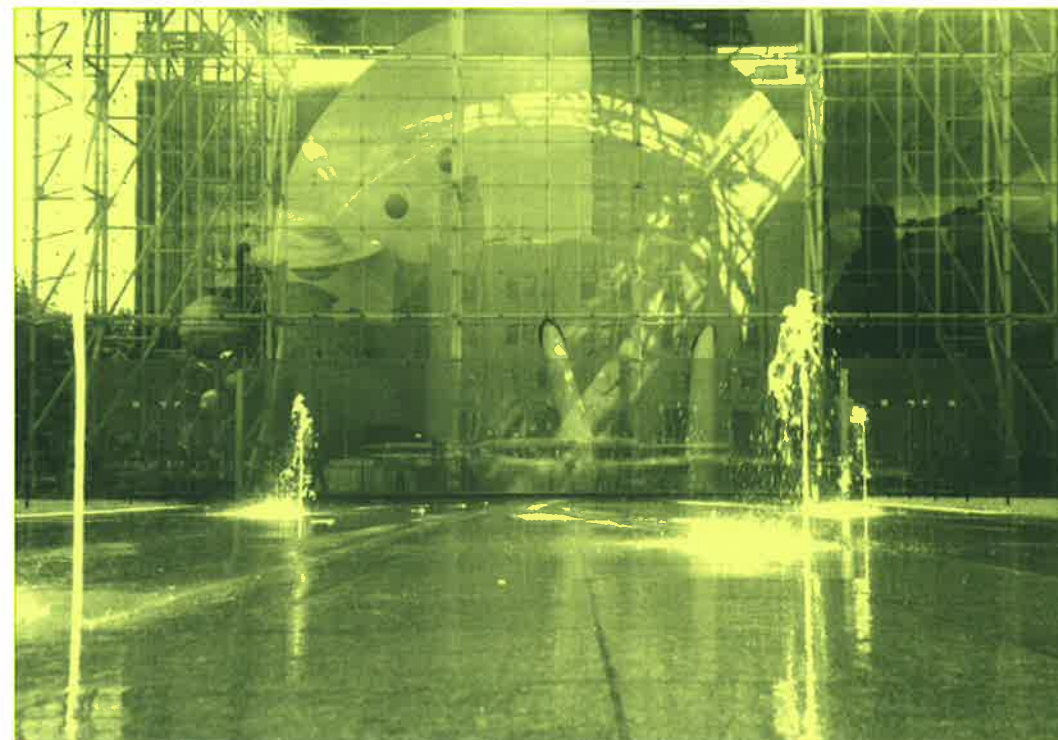


With a paving pattern inspired by Islamic art, The Malcolm X Plaza defines an urban intersection at a pivotal crossroads on Central Park North. CITYSCAPE INSTITUTE

competition for Times Square, landscape designer Kathryn Gustafson, together with landscape architects Anderson & Ray and Polshek Partnership Architects, designed the just-opened Arthur Ross Terrace at the American Museum of Natural History. Adjacent to the Rose Center for Earth and Space, also designed by Polshek, the terrace is tightly framed on three sides by AMNH, yet is open to the north, and to the general public. It provides a remarkably ordered, geometric public space in contrast to the curves and hollows of Central Park next door. Its ordering form is a gently inclined granite plane, with jets of water rising from it at irregular intervals, yielding a skidding gleam of water running down to the great, glazed ball in a box of the Rose Center.

An invited design competition led to the proposed garden on Fifth Avenue, between the offices of the Cultural Services division of the French Embassy and the New York Institute of Fine Arts. The garden, which will be open to public view along its heavily trafficked block (78th-79th streets), is the design of Stan Allen and James Corner. Allen and Corner placed first in a field of French and American designers, evaluated by a jury that included architect Bernard Tschumi, architectural and urban scholar Jean-Louis Cohen and NYC Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern. Their design proposes a "media grove" at the street, and as the metal plane tilts up from Fifth Avenue, a "performance zone" to accommodate events, and finally yields the "strange zone," beyond the view of the street, where the metal platform's superstructural character is revealed.

Finally, for those who would rather fight than switch, there is experience, analysis and advocacy for the 503 existing public spaces sited on private property but open to the public. 320 commercial and residential buildings in this city have carved out such spaces, created by their private developers in



An impressive new public space, the Arthur Ross Terrace at the American Museum of Natural History was designed by a team led by TKTS2K juror Kathryn Gustafson.

exchange for permission to increase their Floor Area Ratio, generally meaning higher buildings with more square feet to lease or sell. As it turns out, this exchange, chartered by the still current 1961 Zoning Law, was sometimes a very bad deal for the public, as documented by attorney and Harvard planning professor Jerold Kayden in *Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience* (John Wiley & Sons, 2000). For many, however, this doesn't invalidate the concept (and conversely, doesn't validate the new Unified Bulk Proposal that wants to eliminate the "exchange"). Instead, it is an opportunity for reform: make the plazas we have work better through enforcement and design, and make sure the same mistakes aren't made in the future. The published result of an exhaustive study done collaboratively by Kayden, NYC Department of City Planning and the Municipal Art Society, is energizing in its commitment to facts on the ground. R6

Will New York have its own Downsview Park? With the closing of Staten Island's **FRESH KILLS** – the world's largest garbage dump – in December 2001 the city will have a good chunk of land available for development. The possible use of the site will be the subject of a "concept" competition to be launched early next year.

In October, an RFP for a professional advisor was announced for the competition. A Request For Qualifications for entrants is anticipated to be issued in March 2001.

"The Fresh Kills Landfill is a crucial opportunity to plan for by far the largest open tract of land in the City and to develop a beautiful landscape with uses that will benefit New Yorkers for generations to come," Chairman of the City Planning Commission Joseph Rose said earlier this year.

That said, there will be no prescribed program, as entrants will propose use and design options for the 2,200-acre site, which includes



Fresh Kills landfill – the largest landfill in the world – will be the site of a design competition next year. CHRIS J. JOHNS

non-landfill territories as well. It is the intent of the competition sponsors that the winner will have an opportunity to be hired as a master plan consultant.

The competition is sponsored by the Department of City Planning in association with fellow city agencies, including the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Staten Island Borough President's Office and the Municipal Art Society. Financial support is being received from the NY State Department of State and through the New Public Works initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts. **BB**

Soon you may not have to be watching a car ad or an MTV video to enjoy the views of the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline seen from the Brooklyn waterfront. This summer the City of New York endorsed the

creation of the **BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK** with \$63.5 million in funding. The City Council, with the support of Mayor Giuliani, committed \$50 million of capital funds over the next four years toward construction of the park. Borough President Howard Golden's office also made a four-year commitment of \$13.5 million to the design and construction of the park.

The goal now is to persuade Governor Pataki and the state to commit \$75 million to park development, which, together with city funds, would cover most of its \$150 million construction cost.

The nearly 70-acre park is planned to stretch from Jay Street, north of the Manhattan Bridge, to Atlantic Avenue, completely transforming the underutilized downtown Brooklyn waterfront. Five Port Authority piers, south of the Brooklyn Bridge, will be joined to historic Fulton Landing and the existing

Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park and underused city-owned lots to the north, creating a new, unified park space. There will be open areas of green, varied recreational and cultural facilities and commercial venues, which will serve to make the park partially self-sufficient.

Brooklyn native Ken Greenberg of Urban Strategies, a Toronto-based planning and urban design firm, will lead the design team. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, will oversee the design of the new park.

"We are hopeful that the Governor will commit in the next few months," says Marianna Koval of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition. The final master plan was delivered to him at the end of September. Supporters hope that construction may begin in the fall of 2002. (www.bbpd.org; www.brooklynbridgepark.org) **BB**

At press time, supporters of the **GOVERNORS ISLAND PRESERVATION ACT OF 2000** were hopeful that Congress would pass the legislation, establishing a National Monument in the Island's National Historic District. The legislation would also ensure the transfer of the remainder of the property to New York State for park-compatible uses as outlined in the plan endorsed last winter with the founding of the Empire State Development subsidiary, the Governors Island Redevelopment Corporation.

Under this plan, the 172-acre former Coast Guard base will be developed into a major civic, cultural and educational destination for New York under the joint auspices of the City and State. The island's historic northern portion will be preserved with a cultural center featuring museums anchored at the 18th- and 19th-century fortifications. The northern portion will also include a major conference center, hotels, a health and wellness center, dining, retail shops, office space and an academic facility. The southern portion will include a large park. The redevelopment will also include a museum exploring the local ecology, military and commercial histories of the area, a family entertainment center similar to Colonial Williamsburg, as well as university facilities.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as well as a coalition of New York civic groups led by Regional Plan Association, have been leaders in developing this plan. In 1996, Van Alen worked to stimulate ideas for the use and design of the island through an international design competition.

The next step for the project is to initiate an Environmental Impact Statement and with the coast clear, a Request For Proposals will start the redevelopment project slated for 2002. **BB**

When the Van Alen exhibition, **ARCHITECTURE + WATER**, opens in the Spring of 2001, it will be New York's first exhibit to focus on building projects of extraordinary design caliber that integrate architecture, landscape and infrastructure to fully engage today's urban waterfront. Five examples from around the world will be shown in depth, using models, drawings and additional media to powerfully convey how designers can respond to the new programs and new expectations of 21st-century waterfront cities. In addition, these projects will be put in the context of historic precedents and a full range of recent and ongoing designs. The final list of projects will be posted online in November.

The curators, the award-winning design and research practice of Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis, have reviewed hundreds of projects to cull work that is not only important architecture that happens to be by the waterfront, but also design that embodies a rethinking of the character and form of, for example, a ferry terminal, a pier pavilion, or housing elevated above a restored marsh. "The focus of the exhibition will be on buildings which exploit their relationship to the water as the primary catalyst for architectural invention and uncommon speculation," state Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis.

Following its series of waterfront-related design competitions, forums, websites, studios and exhibitions (fully documented at www.vanalen.org), the Institute determined that it was critical to approach this waterfront exhibit from a distinctly architectural perspective. The Architecture + Water exhibit has received support from the Architecture, Planning and Design program of the New York State Council on the Arts and additional funders. The exhibit will be accompanied by a conference, with support from The Stephen A. and Diana L. Goldberg Foundation, and will be featured in a special edition of the Van Alen Report. **RG**

Last spring, Van Alen Institute hosted a forum entitled “NEW YORK: BACKWATER OR FOUNTAINHEAD FOR NEW WORLD ARCHITECTURE?” SOM’s David Childs praised a number of new buildings in the city, New York-based Dutch architect Winka Dubbeldam wondered if there is even a culture that values architecture in this city, while *Architecture* magazine editor-in-chief Reed Kroloff pointed to smaller cities like Phoenix as models for raising the bar in New York.

Now, with the model of Downsview Park in front of us and with the explosion of “good” design (new buildings, projects underway and competitions) in other smaller cities like Seattle with its barrage of new buildings and patronage, the question of whether New York is up to snuff continues to arise.

Is new architecture elsewhere leading the way, leaving NYC behind to wallow in mediocrity? Furthermore, is NYC’s recent landscape architecture falling short? What are the factors that set New York back, or conversely, what are we doing right in this city?

I THINK NYC HAS BECOMEN an architectural back-office, not backwater, since some of the best architects in the country work here. They just don’t get to build much here. So NYC is exporting good design to other places, while its residents live with the architectural equivalent of generic office space (and, indeed, the reality of generic office space). Helsinki gets the Kiasma Museum and Seattle gets that wonderful chapel at the University of Washington, even though Steven Holl is based here. Phoenix and, hell, even Islip, Long Island get courthouses by Richard Meier. Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Tokyo get fantastic arts centers by Rafael Vinoly, while Manhattan gets nothing. Cyberspace gets all those great creations from Asymptote, even though Hani Rashid and Lise-Anne Couture live and work in the real world of SoHo.

On the plus side, New York City is beginning to reclaim its waterfront along the Hudson and East rivers. But this is happening very, very slowly. A few big projects — such as moving Penn Station to the Farley Building — also look promising, but are still years away from completion. With all the construction going on in Manhattan, the number of architecturally significant buildings is remarkably small. And while the current economic boom has certainly helped clean up the streets and neighborhoods of the city,

it is also making New York much less affordable for many people to live here. As a result, the city’s famous diversity is beginning to disappear in a cloud of cappuccino steam.

— CLIFF PEARSON
Senior Editor, Architectural Record

PERHAPS THE ISSUE OF MEDIOCRITY in New York is part of an American cultural identification crisis. We are in a phase today where the “everyday” is eulogized. However, all too often this “everyday” is non-urban, “non-ethnic,” mediocre, or banal — very different than for example, “the practice of the everyday” of Michel de Certeau. Having been more out of New York for the last two years than in (teaching at the University of Michigan), it is apparent that the renewed attention to design extending from culture in general has begun to affect the urban landscape of (Greater) New York. To accurately describe the urban landscape of New York now one needs to travel into the outer boroughs, where I can think of neighborhoods that are blossoming bars, boutiques, and *Wallpaper* aesthetics.

The new/renewed attention to design registers most strongly at the scale of living — notably in interiors. Interiors have been the repository of so much design energy and innovation for the last twenty years in New York. So, it is the investment in interiors

modified by the new attention to lifestyle (mine at the expense of yours) that strikes me. Returning to New York, everyone appears richer (how much is due to credit cards, I don’t know). There are a lot more coolly lit boxes, translucent spaces and facades, and sleek interiors — a slight paradigm shift away from the gilt and glassy.

The new/renewed investment in design has traces of both the romanticized and the uncanny. Specifically, in the interiority of contemporary productivity — optimism and security in relation to the interiority of post-war productivity, optimism and security — past and present yearnings intersect and slip by each other. The canonization through design of the housewife/modernized suburban home, corporation man/urban skyscraper, or martinis, mules, and lounge music when renewed as a global aesthetic — is as much an example of the romantic and the uncanny as are the modern industrial landscapes espoused by Le Corbusier turned into grey fields and renewed as needed public parks. Can we deny that the nature of urbanity is truly surrealist now?

I was in Japan in July and Sydney during the Olympic makeover and the congruence between design and culture in both places was strikingly different. In Japan one breathes aesthetics in the ancient, the contemporary and the popular — from the “bento” or Japanese lunchbox, to the bullet train, to architecture such as Renzo Piano’s Kansai airport, Nexus World housing in Fukuoka, or the new Diller + Scofidio housing in Gifu. I traveled to out of the way places in search of architecture — little towns without bullet train service that had perhaps only one piece of fantastic or aspiring architecture. The equivalent here — taking Amtrak to Scranton to see a great work of architecture does not really exist. But perhaps the problem is also one of centers, as the architecture in Tokyo is subsumed by Tokyo as architecture, as Reed Kroloff said about New York.

The structure of New York is very 19th century. It is sluggish. It is isolationist in the manner that the “center” need not respond to the “periphery” — the center (New York) to the periphery (the U.S.), and/or the center (the U.S.) to the periphery (the World). American and world cities that are younger, and European or Asian cities that have aged in reverse due to cataclysms such as wars, have by necessity reevaluated, rethought and redesigned the design of infrastructure, architecture, urbanity and the environment.

— J. YOLANDE DANIELS
Partner, studioSUMO; visiting assistant professor, GSAPP, Columbia University; assistant professor, CAUP, University of Michigan.

THE HUDSON RIVER PARK on Manhattan’s West Side presented an unparalleled opportunity to create an innovative park for the 21st century. The concept design for Hudson River Park was done in a modern language, but it appears that the actual build-out will harken back to the 19th-century models of the Brooklyn Heights Promenade and Central Park.

HRP had an opportunity to do something innovative as was done by the designers of the waterfront park at Queens West. They used industrial metals in contemporary forms for railings, undulating seating and their signature blue lamps. Should HRP decide to go back to historicist furniture and lamp posts it would be a shame.

The recently approved Brooklyn Bridge Park now has an opportunity to merge old and new as has already been done at the Fulton Street Pier just below the Brooklyn Bridge. Here pier railings mimic the cables of the bridge, giving the pier a modern interpretation, but one that nods to its context. I hope they will continue this sort of treatment in the new Brooklyn Bridge Park and not simply copy what has been done in the past.

While seemingly a mundane issue, the difficulty of maintaining materials other than the traditional green or black-painted cast iron is a valid concern. Apparently, the metal rails at Queens West have already become pitted from salt water corrosion. But such concerns should not deter this city — and its powerful community boards — from building designs appropriate to potentially seminal projects in this international capital.

— ANN BUTTENWIESER
President, The Parks Council

THERE ARE ONLY TWO MOMENTS when a city will seek out great architecture. These moments are the turning points immediately before great growth or immediately before great loss. The in-between times when nothing moves foster comfortable mediocrity, such as we have today and have had for a generation.

Our Sartrian hell would be the indefinite extension of our present entropy. The only way out is growth — the kind of scale-jumping, power-of-ten growth that frightens grandmothers and professional planners.

— ALEXANDROS E. WASHBURN
www.nextmoveonline.com

IN TERMS OF OUR VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE.

the day-to-day construction that comprises the bulk of what is being built, I think New York is inferior to what is being constructed elsewhere. In Chicago, the quality is higher because there is substantial competition in the real estate industry. Until recently, New York City was still feeling the reverberations of the recession, so we weren't building as much housing.

The everyday houses in Queens and Staten Island just aren't being designed to the same level that they are elsewhere in the country. In this city we build very little housing, and what we do build is inferior and overpriced. It has been years since we have built a good apartment building of any kind. The best recent example of a better level of design is The Sienna at 75th Street off Third Avenue by Hugh Hardy. Chicago routinely builds interesting apartment houses.

The situation is very different when it comes to showcase commercial architecture. The Columbus Circle Coliseum will stand up to the best of what is being built in the rest of the country. But there are few projects like this. It is a mixed-use complex with a jazz concert hall, offices, apartments and restaurants. It will be pretty terrific. There is another project of David Childs I admire, the new Bear Stearns building. It is as good as any office building being built anywhere.

The sequence of retail stores from 59th to 79th streets on Madison Avenue stands as a model for the rest of the country. The consultants NYCS 2012 have chosen to do preliminary designs for the bid to host the Olympics create an impressive list of designers: Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, Rafael Vinoly, Hugh Hardy, Cesar Pelli, Weiss/Manfredi and Peterson/Littenberg.

In terms of landscape projects in the city, Tom Balsley is doing interesting things. Gantry Park at Queens West is a pioneering project in waterfront design. The landscape in Battery Park City esplanade by Laurie Olin is very special, Bryant Park is an example being copied around the country, and the Parks Department's "Greenstreets" program is doing a great job at greening small, interstitial spaces.

So, other than vernacular building and housing, New York's recent architectural record is quite good.

— ALEXANDER GARVIN

City Planning Commissioner; Professor of Urban Planning and Management, Yale University

I DEFINITELY AGREE WITH WINKA DUBBELDAM.

Her perspective is very "warped" by being from Holland though. Holland is definitely a country where architecture and design thrive by being intensely supported.

America is different and NY is its wildest and most complex child. The moments in history in which New York has been at the forefront of the architectural debate/production have been moments in which the architecture world was in sync with the corporate world. We all know that in the US public competitions/commissions do not rule... they almost do not exist. This is not Europe and certainly not Northern Europe. There's nothing intrinsically bad about that. Europe has other problems and limits that this country doesn't have. And of course we cannot go into that right now. One thing is for sure, the potentials here are very high, unparalleled.

I remember reading that Mies was hired to design the Seagram Building over some totally uninteresting firm thanks to the insistence of the client's daughter! My question to Van Alen would be can an institution act in anyway like that daughter? Both in the corporate and the public realm? Can an institution push corporations and government agencies alike to "consider" hiring architects that are part of the contemporary debate/scene? Or sometimes hiring architects altogether?

As far as the public realm goes, I often wonder things like: Who's designing the Hudson River Park? Who's putting fin-de-siecle (that means two centuries ago now!) lamp posts along the most important urban intervention in the year 2000?

Things seem to be changing. A lot of architects that up until a few years ago snubbed the "real world" to be totally isolated in cerebral academic circles, and were completely ignored by any possible client, are building quite a bit. But not that much here in the states, and definitely very little here in New York, especially if you consider the actual potentials of this place in every sense.

So, again, how can an institution seize the situation and propel decision makers to get in sync with contemporary architecture? Are corporations and government alike any worse now than they were when the Seagram Building went up?

On another note, my partner, Ada Tolla, and I have always wondered why architecture is the only "creative field" that does not have any form of representation. No agents, no dealers, no reps, nothing.

What would the entertainment world be without agents? Or the contemporary art world without dealers?

Who would push the new? The contemporary? Can word of mouth and unpopular/uninteresting media be the only vehicle to bring work to new architects in a sophisticated society such as ours? What and/or who is going to make contemporary architecture a necessity?

It might be time for architecture to learn from the other "arts" and connect with the "laws" of the contemporary market. America, and New York in particular, has taught the entire world how to "sell" anything creative. Isn't it time this spilled over into the architecture world as well?

— GIUSEPPE LIGNANO

Principal, LOT/EK

THE APOLOGISTS FOR OUR CURRENT mediocre culture of architecture in New York City often argue that it is more important to reinforce street walls and public places with matchy-matchy contextualism and themed historicism than to foster original and distinctive architecture and innovative landscape spaces. They say it is not worth the risk of trying new and untried ideas.

Until recently our city's tradition of urbanism had been a long embrace of original and startling new architectural ideas, technologies and styles. Just think of the daring skyscrapers of the 1920S or the great modern buildings and public spaces of the mid-20th century. Or how about the engineering innovation of the city's infrastructure of bridges, tunnels, aqueducts, subways and airports. Even our beloved Central Park was radical in conception, provocative in its scale of intervention and a pioneer in grade separation of functional uses.

Other old cities do not seem to have a problem building new alongside the old. One immediately thinks of Barcelona, where decidedly contemporary public spaces contribute to the urbanism of the traditional city. Or Paris, where the French have been on a 15-year contemporary park building program. Starting with the much-publicized Parc de la Villette in the mid-1980's, recent contemporary park projects include Parc André-Citreön, Parc Bercy, Parc Diderot, and Boulevard des Plantes.

What is striking about new Parisian parks or major public-works projects like the reconstruction of the Champs Elysée is how resolutely contemporary they are, while at the same time so unmistakably a product of French tradition. What the French prove is that new parks and public spaces can be daring and

original and at the same time rooted in cultural context. By contrast, here in New York City our parks and public spaces are a pallid simulacrum of a generalized historical past.

We need to overthrow the tired old Postmodernist ideology that has so bogged us down in Neo-traditionalism and bland historicism. This living-in-the-past ideological death grip threatens our standing as a cultural capital. It's time to jettison the Postmodern baggage and begin producing startling new, fresh and original works of architecture and landscape architecture in our city. Great urbanism is a product of architectural diversity, chance situations, and the unexpected juxtapositions and stylistic clashes of new and old that occur with growth and change over time.

— KEN SMITH

Ken Smith Landscape Architect

THE NEED OF SMALLER CITIES to receive international recognition may exceed their desire to sponsor experimental work. These cities (Bilbao, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Phoenix, Seattle, Toronto, included) believe in the architect's heroic ability to offer a global identity through a cultural implant. The ironic result of this inflated confidence in architecture is that these cities are getting interesting projects built. New York has a different set of desires and produces projects (many academically) that break new ground on a different scale and timetable. Rather than lamenting the mediocre or engaging in revolutionary rhetoric, we should be investigating themes of resistance and of incremental transgression. Collaborative efforts here between architects, artists, and other disciplines challenge known ways of working and have the potential to resonate elsewhere.

— LYN RICE

Partner, Open Office

UPDATE

12.00>

"I know that the guys in the flophouse will think these are a great improvement," said David Isay, co-author of *Flophouse: Life on the Bowery*, responding to the First Step Housing prototype designed by Marguerite McGoldrick Architect and Gans & Jelacic, which was on display at the Institute this fall.

Not meant to be a permanent resolution, **FIRST STEP HOUSING** represent prototype lodging, short-stay transitional homes for individuals. The singular cubicles are designed so they can be installed alongside each other in large open lofts, replacing previous flophouse accommodation. "We are trying to get people started," explained Rosanne Haggerty, executive director of Common Ground, who initiated the project, at the Next Step Housing Forum held on October 16 at the Institute.

Concerns at the forum surrounded the 27-consecutive-day maximum stay. The rule is imposed to encourage people to seek assistance finding permanent residence.

"This model of housing is not an end into itself, but fills a gap that has been left by the lack of housing in the city," Haggerty said.

"People come here to rest their heads and get out of the rain," the voice of Ned, a resident of one of the remaining flophouses on the Bowery, explained. The soundbyte was from a National Public Radio segment — co-produced by David Isay — replayed at the forum.

"It is exciting to see the ingenuity of the way flophouses work and the comfort they give," confirmed respondent Gwendolyn Wright, professor of architecture at Columbia University.

"I tried to find poetry in places you wouldn't expect and shine a light on those dark corners of society," concluded Isay.

The **DOWNSVIEW DESIGN TALK**

on Wednesday, December 6, 6:30 PM, will feature James Corner, landscape architect and chair of landscape architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, presenting his entry in the *Downsview* Competition along with teammate architect and professor of architecture at Columbia University Stan Allen. The team will discuss their approach to other urban projects as well. At the Institute.

There is a growing concern in Southwest Brooklyn about the rebuilding of the elevated **GOWANUS EXPRESSWAY** running along Third Avenue. The viaduct has divided the traditional connections between residential and industrial communities rupturing what was once a seam between the two, while simultaneously cutting of residential neighborhoods from the urban waterfront, as well as creating noise and air pollution. Further there have been significant environmental and health implications related to the expressway.

It was in this context that the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation organized the "Sunset Park: Beyond the Gowanus Expressway" design competition. According to Bill Shockney of SWBIDC, there has been a groundswell of support for tunnel construction. One of the goals of the competition was to generate excitement through images about redevelopment opportunities, both among local residents and businesses and a wider audience of policy makers, and architecture and design professionals. Shockney hopes the competition will encourage a working relationship between the industrial and residential communities of Sunset Park on the issue.

The Institute hosted both an exhibit of selected and winning entries from the competition and a forum featuring both entrants and jurors.

Competition winner Bruce Silverberg proposed moving the expressway offshore and transforming Third Avenue into a traffic-caimed "zipper" to reintegrate the neighborhood with the waterfront. The audience and panel vigorously debated whether waterfront industry and residential life and recreational activities could successfully coexist, with, or without the expressway overhead.

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