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VAN ALEN REPORT MAY 2001 $2.50

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architecture + water

VAI International Exhibit Opens
Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis Talk
25 Signs of Life for NYC Design
Art + Technology
Airports and Ferry Landings
Olympic Cities: Barcelona, Athens, NYC?
20th Century Insights

Alsop Architects
Diller + Scofidio
Foreign Office Architects
Steven Holl Architects
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates
MVRDV

VAN ALEN INSTITUTE
PROJECTS IN PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE

Van Alen Institute is committed to improving the design of the public realm.

Our program of Projects in Public Architecture promotes education and action through design competitions, workshops, studies, forums, web sites, and publications including the **Van Alen Report.**

While the Institute grounds its work in New York City, we structure our projects to engage an interdisciplinary and international array of practitioners, policy-makers, students, educators, and community leaders.

VAN ALEN REPORT 9

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Hello Graphic Design

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.

Cover Image: Blackfriars Bridge Station, Alsop Architects

editor's letter

New Yorkers can finally breathe easily. Spring is here, and we can now get out and explore the city again. This issue of the Van Alen Report is about not taking it for granted. As the public sector promises to support major waterfront parks and cultural institutions, it is time to contemplate and shape what it could become.

This Van Alen Report is bigger and newly designed to meet the Institute's mission to foster dialogue on the design of the public realm. Like last fall's VAR 8: Designing Downsview Park, VAR 9 features a current exhibition, **ARCHITECTURE+WATER**. This time we've asked the curator-designers to give an in-depth explanation of their approach. In **NEWSFRONT** we report on public space, waterfront design, competitions, and the impact of information technology on public architecture. A new feature, **PUBLIC PROFILE**, brings to light a practice doing important public architecture, while **PLATFORM** continues to provoke an ongoing dialogue about the future of design in NYC. For this **PLATFORM** we looked for good news, asking design and architecture editors for "signs of life." And to emphasize, as with the Downsview and Architecture + Water exhibitions, significant progress in public architecture outside of New York, we get the low-down on two "Olympic" cities from the winner of our 2000 Dinkeloo Fellowship, in the new **LETTERS FROM ABROAD** column.

Finally, the **20TH CENTURY HISTORY** section looks at moments in "design culture," including the Institute's own 100-year history, which inform the future.

We want dialogue, and mean it. Contact us at: zryan@vanalen.org. **ZOË RYAN**

newsfront >

ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER STUYVESANT COVE

Kiss + Cathcart Architects are not interested only in green architecture, but ecological soundness is definitely a concern. So much so that their studio in Brooklyn is being reconfigured to isolate part of the office and make it self-sustaining with photovoltaic (solar power) panels on the roof. "As well as being better for the environment it enables us to lower our electricity bill," says Cathcart. Their most recent project to design an Environmental Center at Stuyvesant Cove has allowed them to explore further the possibilities of sustainable architecture.

The Center will be part of the park development at the East River from 18th to 23rd Street, across from FDR Drive. A master plan, still to be implemented, was developed by Carr, Lynch, Sandell, in the 1990s (exhibited at VAI in 1997). In 1997 the Economic Development Corporation put out an RFP for A New Plan for Stuyvesant Cove, which included an environmental center and a park. In 2000 the non-profit organization Community Environmental Center (CEC) Inc., was hired to conceive and manage the project as a service to the community, which had been actively campaigning for an environmental center and park. Landscape architect Donna Walcavage,

A sawtooth roof made from photovoltaic panels is the defining feature of a proposed Environmental Center for Stuyvesant Cove. KISS+CATHCART ARCHITECTS

whose design for the park will be completed in July of this year, explains that "the neighboring community has wanted a park since 1836. This park will be environmentally oriented, and be a complement to the educational center."

Apart from the marine biology monitoring station, the River Project, on Pier 26 on the Hudson River, this is the first environmental center in the City for 30 years. The Center aims to exhibit ways to achieve a healthier, more affordable and sustainable lifestyle. For example, at the north end of the second floor an "eco-apartment" will be constructed to illustrate the effects of environmentally friendly products and systems for the home.

Colin Cathcart and Gregory Kiss started their firm after graduating from Columbia's Master of Architecture program in 1983. The firm has completed building projects that involve photovoltaic power and continue to research improvements in solar technology. "This was a perfect project for us," says Cathcart. "It gave us the opportunity to design a new building in New York City and experiment with being resourceful in the City." The major feature of the design is a sawtooth roof that runs across the entire structure made up of photovoltaic panels and skylights. The panels convert the electro-magnetic radiation from the sun into electricity for the building.

Kiss + Cathcart are also doing research into tidal tanks in the river to generate additional electricity. Jonathan Cramer of CEC Inc. describes why they chose the firm, "They are able to realize building projects outside the standard building practices of New York City and they do not allow the design to take over the use of renewable resources and environmental preservation." The Center plans to be completed in 2003. Cathcart concludes, "It has to do with why we build this type of architecture. To be able to alter the human condition of this planet is a strong calling." ZOE RYAN

EYEBEAM ATELIER MUSEUM OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Among the thirteen firms selected to create a conceptual design for New York's new Museum of Art and Technology are Architecture Research Office, Asymptote, Diller + Scofidio, UN Studio, and Greg Lynn FORM — a short list that would be make any young institution envious.

From this new media-savvy roster, Eyebeam Atelier — a not-for-profit media arts organization founded by filmmaker John S. Johnson — hopes to arrive at a scheme worthy of its ambitious mission: to advance the discourse between contemporary art and technology. The new facility will be "not just a museum," explains Eyebeam's head of Special Projects, Angela Molenaar, "but an atelier where art production, education, and exhibition meet."

Unconvinced that one architect could have the answer to the myriad challenges presented by this new museum type, Eyebeam wanted many creative thinkers engaged in the project. How, for instance, do you keep the spaces adaptable to accommodate new media? And how do you transgress museum orthodoxy to demonstrate how art moves from the private sphere (the studio) to the public sphere (the exhibition space)?

Reflecting their equal care for process and product, Eyebeam chose to take the long way home. They began with thirty invited designers that by the end of the year will be reduced to three. Architects chosen in the second and final phases of the competition will receive a stipend for an undisclosed amount.

A disused warehouse on 21st Street in Manhattan awaits its 2001 temporary design and its 2003 transformation into a Museum of Art and Technology. EYEBEAM ATELIER

Eyebeam wanted creative input, but they also wanted control: the winner will not be selected by a jury, but by Johnson, who has gathered a diverse advisory committee of local innovators and neighborhood stakeholders to weigh in on the submissions. While this is an untraditional hybrid for a selection process, it clearly hasn't fazed the invited firms, who are all vying to design New York's first, and America's largest, new media art institution. Whoever is selected to receive the commission, what is imperative is that the museum, in both program and design, contributes to our understanding of how new information technology is impacting public space.

Relying on the competition's timely conclusion, construction for the 90,000 sq ft facility at 540-548 West 21st Street will begin in 2003, at an estimated cost of $40 million. In the meantime, the site, which is poised on the edge of Chelsea's waterfront cultural district, has been transformed by architects David Hotson and Craig Newick into an interim event/exhibition space. CLAIRE R. NELSON

VAN ALEN INSTITUTE IN PRINT

The Institute's mission and program, especially its waterfront design projects, are in new and upcoming publications. VAI director Raymond W. Gastil is authoring *New York City on the Verge: The New Architecture of the Waterfront* (Princeton Architectural Press, forthcoming), which incorporates aspects of the Institute's competitions, workshops, and exhibitions into the larger context of research and practice.

Alan Balfour's *New York* (John Wiley & Sons, Spring 2001) includes not only images of Reiser + Umemoto's VAI-sponsored East River Corridor project, but also Gastil's essay "Demanding Audiences: The Future of New York's Public Realm" including extended comments on the Institute's East River work.

And the 2001 version of Susanna Sirefman's *New York: A Guide to Recent Architecture* (Koeneman 2nd Edition) includes the Institute's award-winning gallery and offices.

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, BEACON, NY

Why is it that other city centers such as Paris and London are reusing former industrial buildings on the waterfront and adapting them into cultural institutions, yet the new Dia Center for the Arts, one of New York's most illustrious contemporary art galleries, is using a former factory 60 miles north of Manhattan in Beacon? It's simple. High real estate costs, insufficient size buildings to comfortably house large scale works such as Donald Judd's series of 5 x 5 x 3 ft plywood boxes, and the desire for an outpost for artists away from the stress of the New York art scene. Fair enough.

"This center will begin a cultural redevelopment on the waterfront of the Hudson River Valley," explains Lyn Rice from Open Office, the architectural team responsible for the design. (See further comments by Rice in PLATFORM, VAR 8). Redevelopment plans are already afoot. The non-profit group Scenic Hudson, which owns part of the adjacent 70 acres of waterfront property, has recently put out an RFP for the area called Beacon Landing.

The adjacent former International Paper Company building, soon to become the Dia Center, is conceived as a daylight-only museum relying on a roof made almost entirely from skylights. "Each time people go they will experience the artwork differently depending on seasonal conditions. It is all about the journey to get there, just as Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation is in Marfa, Texas," says Rice. Dia's Director of External Affairs and Assistant Director for Beacon, Amy S. Weisser agrees, "This site is perfect for us. There is a synergy here — after all this area is the birthplace of American painting." ZR

A 250,000 sq ft factory in Beacon, NY is being transformed by Open Office into a new Dia Center for the Arts.
DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, NEW YORK/MICHAEL GOVAN

NY JETS STADIUM

At a recent public forum to discuss future development on the West Side, Manhattan Borough President C.Virginia Fields referred to Hell's Kitchen as the "last frontier in the borough of Manhattan." Current plans for this stretch of New York's Hudson waterfront include the New York Jets organization's proposal for a 75,000-seat stadium over the West Side rail yards (preliminary design by Cooper, Robertson & Partners), which they describe as including "a public atrium, a 60,000 sq ft public plaza above 34th street, and a public promenade along its western rim which would include connections across Route 9A at 30th, 34th and 39th streets to the future Hudson River Park."

Although the Jets hope to push through their plan and have a stadium by 2009, in a letter to Governor Pataki (who will have an important role in any prospective public-private partnership to build the stadium), Hell's Kitchen's Community Board 4 writes that its members are "unalterably opposed to the construction of a stadium over the West Side rail yards." Their opposition hinges on three key factors. Firstly, they believe that a new stadium is a pretext to begin developing Midtown West, filling their low-rise neighborhood with high-density office buildings. Secondly, they see a stadium as an artifact whose built form turns its back on the community and whose program invites sporadic, transient activities.

The most important issue for the Community Board, however, and perhaps the one that will ultimately defeat the proposed stadium, is traffic. Hell's Kitchen already has serious traffic concerns. The neighborhood has a heavy transport infrastructure including the tendrils of the Lincoln Tunnel, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Route 9A. The Board contends that the stadium and expansion of the Javits Center would not only bring traffic in the area to a halt, but would also put children and the elderly at risk due to the fumes from idling traffic. Furthermore, the current plan to expand the Javits Center north would include de-mapping 39th street, which they consider a vital access point to the waterfront.

The Jets, on the other hand, argue that as one of Major League sport's most successful franchises (despite their record, try getting a season ticket) their fans deserve their own home field in New York (rather then playing in the Giants' stadium in New Jersey), especially because the Jets are willing to pay for it. The Jets, surely, are also interested in a stadium with more box seats to generate more revenue.

Traffic, the Jets say, will not be increased because games are played on weekends, when traffic is at its ebb, and a large portion of the spectators will come

A proposal for a new stadium for the New York Jets includes building over the West Side rail yards. COOPER, ROBERTSON & PARTNERS

by public transit, including ferries across the Hudson to the NY Waterway landing at 38th Street. In addition, the Jets have tied their new stadium proposal to New York's 2012 Olympic bid, articulating that a West Side stadium would be the "centerpiece" of such a bid. Overall, the Jets feel that the West Side is the most appropriate location because the space is available, public transport is within walking distance, and combining the Javits Center with a new stadium would create a "true multi-use facility... [which] when coupled with New York City's attractions should become the most sought after convention facility in the country."

Over the past decade sports teams have been willing to build stadiums in cities if the city provides the land and invests in stadium infrastructure, as well as more complex public-private partnerships. Stadiums are an expensive investment — the Denver Broncos' new stadium cost $400 million — and the Jets proposed site has potentially enormous infrastructure costs, as a platform over the West Side rail yards to support the stadium would cost in the $350 to $400 million range.

In the 1999 IFFCA Ideas Competition for the West Side, a program not mentioned in the Jets proposal, the Peter Eisenman-led team's winning scheme included a stadium with its own challenging infrastructure, radically sited out into the river. New York's baseball (the Yankees have looked at the same site), basketball, and hockey teams have been eyeing the district for a stadium or arena of their own, and the idea of a major sports facility will probably be on the boards for a while.

So what will happen to this last frontier? Stadium promoters feel that they have answers to the questions of costs, environmental impact, and benefits to the local community, all of which add up, they believe, to a touchdown. The local community board, however, is committed to making a goal line stand.

NATHANIEL H. BROOKS

VAI UPCOMING PROJECTS

The Institute will sponsor several forums in spring and fall 2001 focused on the new architecture of the waterfront and the designers and projects in the VAI Architecture + Water exhibition. Look for final forum topics and dates on line at www.vanalen.org.

The Van Alen Institute Dinkeloo Fellowship, offered biennially, is awarded on the basis of a focused portfolio. Final submissions for a residency at the American Academy in Rome in late 2001/early 2002 and related travel are due in May 2001. The fellowship is open to design students completing the final year of their professional program at the time of the submission date, and to recent graduates. Review the Institute's web site for exact information on eligibility, submission deadline, portfolio requirements, and this year's program theme and jury.

The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded a Creativity grant, in Design, to Van Alen Institute in support of the Institute and its community partners in developing a design proposal and selection process for the redesign and renovation of the plaza surrounding the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building (Ifill Johnson Hanchard, 1973). The vast plaza, a full third of a New York block, is at the northeast corner of 125 Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. The grant requires a 1:1 match. Look for progress reports in upcoming issues of the Van Alen Report.

An innovative art installation in JFK International Airport by Diller + Scofidio.
DILLER+SCOFIDIO

JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ART INSTALLATION

A drab, sterile corridor is a disappointing welcome after a lengthy flight. But in the rebuilt Terminal 4 at JFK International Airport innovative artworks have been commissioned to make the final haul through Customs and Passport Control more bearable.

An invited competition resulted in three teams being chosen, including the progressive design studio, Diller + Scofidio (see feature story p14). Their inventive approach takes as its premise the necessary feature of any traveler: his or her suitcase. The installation is made up of a series of lenticular screens (ribbed panels made from an extruded lens on which printed images appear to animate as the eye moves over them) depicting suitcases being x-rayed and their contents exposed.

The exhibition is a radical step for JFK Airport as it explicitly comments on the controversial subject of public privacy, while at the same time emphasizing the ever-present role of technology in our public life. However, as Deanne Simpson, the project manager for the project explains, it is not so much to shock the traveler as to "inadvertently engage them in a real time moving picture narrative in tiny installments. Particular contents materialize and trigger flashback images of their own travel experiences." ZR

FORDHAM RADIO TOWER

R9.8

Is there a way to resolve the six-year dispute between the New York Botanical Garden and Fordham University over the placement and height of Fordham's radio tower for its station, WFUV?

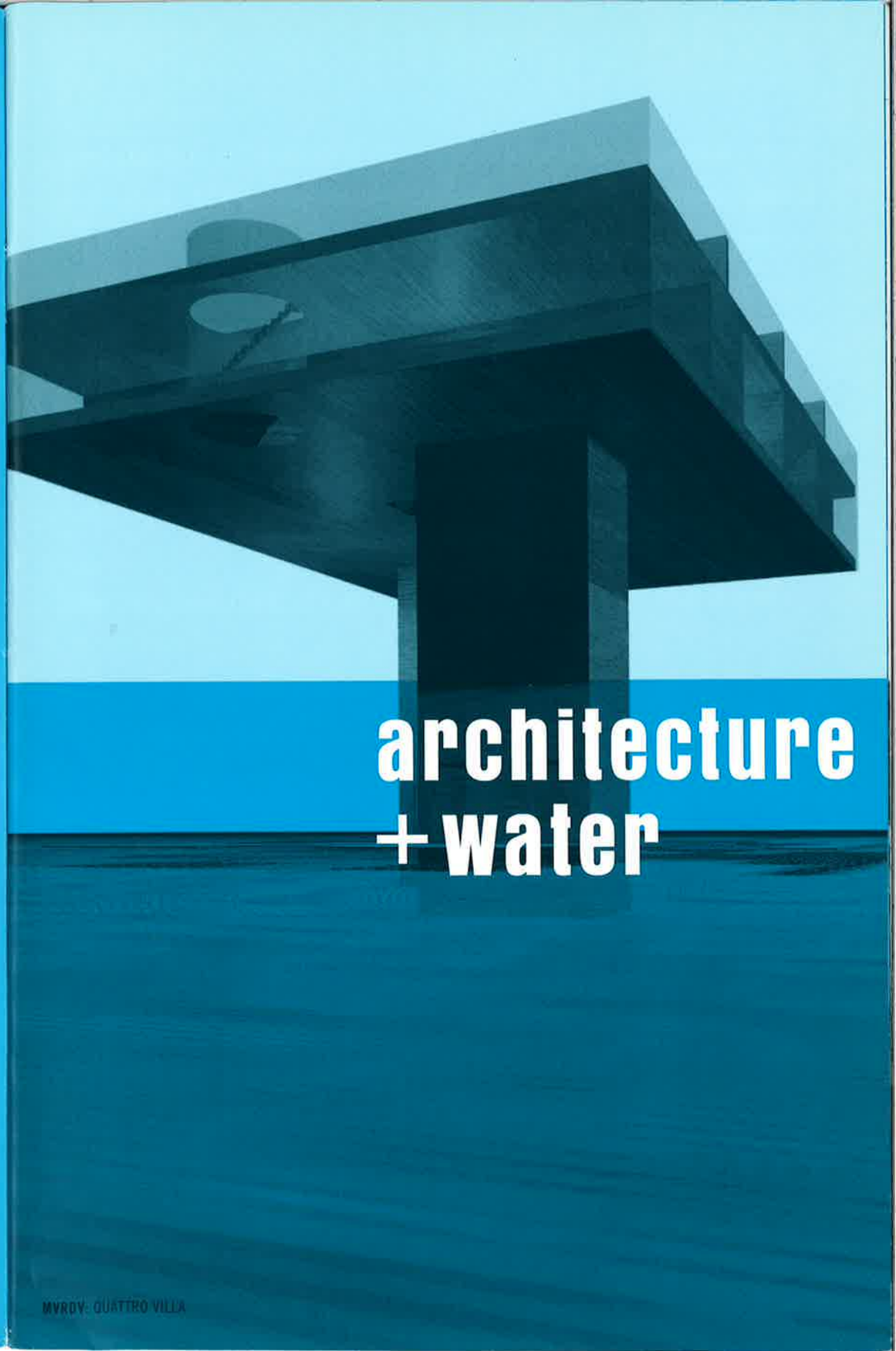
Currently the radio tower sits adjacent to Coffey field on Fordham's Bronx campus peering across Southern Boulevard at the New York Botanical Garden. Its height has been suspended at 260 ft, leaving the tower unfinished, due to an injunction brought by the Botanical Garden. Fordham has conducted an extensive search and feel they have found the most suitable site for the tower. The Botanical Garden, from which the tower is clearly visible, opposes the tower at this location largely because of its perceived aesthetic impact on the garden.

Pennel Whitney, a Bronx resident, and a fan of both institutions who considers them vital to the Bronx, believes that holding a competition to redesign the tower might pave the road to harmony between the two entities while simultaneously delivering a significant design. They are reviewing her proposal. Ultimately, a federal agency, the Federal Communications Commission, will authorize the tower's location and height.

A design competition for a radio tower is an intriguing solution with some notable precedents, including the Collserola Communications Tower and the Montjuïc Communications Tower in the hills above Barcelona (erected as a symbol of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics), both results of competitions, won by Norman Foster and Santiago Calatrava, respectively.

Whitney's immediate inspiration, however, derived from artist Siah Armajani's footbridge at the Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis, named in memory of her mother Irene Hixon Whitney. The footbridge is inscribed with a poem by John Ashbery, "I cannot remember how I would have had it. It is not a conduit (confluence?) but a place. Here it is. Steel and air, a mottled presence, small panacea and lucky for us." Perhaps Whitney has found a way to create a "small panacea" for Bronx residents. NIB

A view of the Fordham radio tower from the New York Botanical Garden.
NATHANIEL H. BROOKS

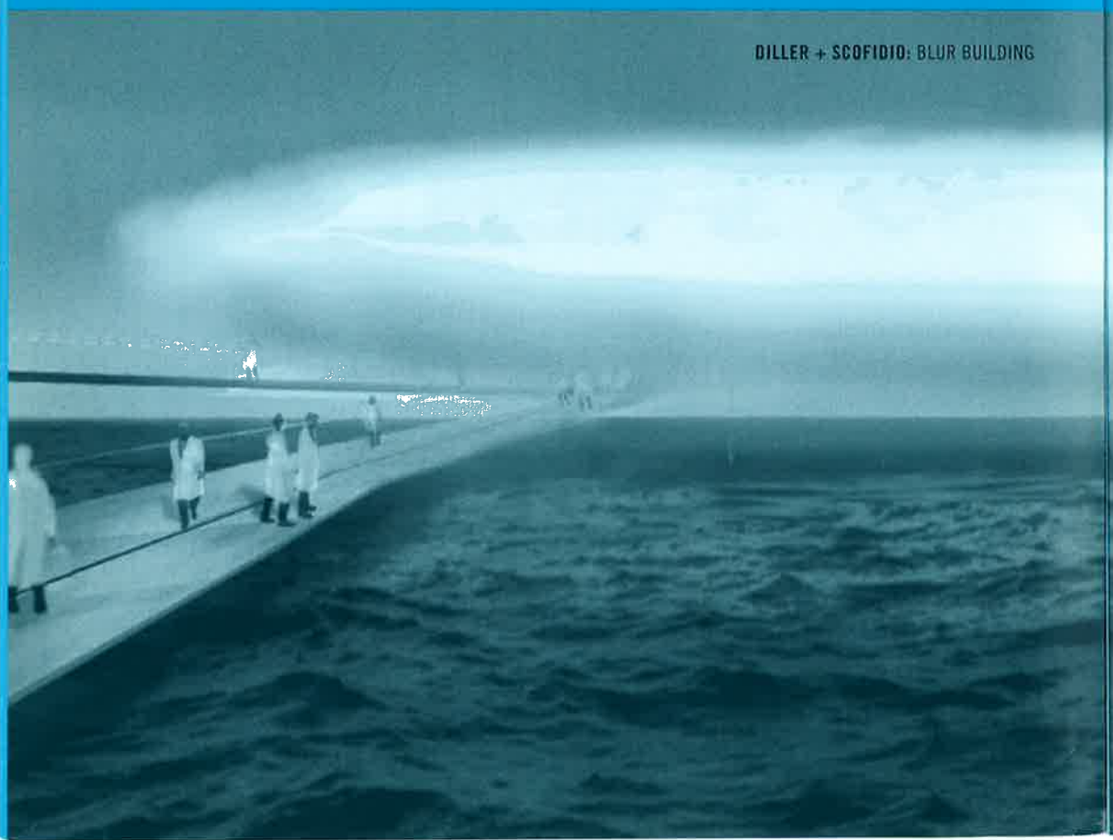


INTRODUCTION

When Van Alen Institute approached Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis about an exhibit on the new architecture of the waterfront, we explained that we had a problem. Many designers had waterfront fatigue, across the disciplines of the built environment. The studios, competitions, forums, and studies had been worthwhile, but when and where would they see inspiring design go forward on the waterfront? They had a point. In seminars and forums about the waterfront, we found that we had to hedge about the design merits of most projects, and focus on their success as planning.

We asked LTL to curate and design an exhibition that would renew confidence in the waterfront as a site for design that matters — design that sustains its integrity as it reckons with our contemporary social and physical ecology. They have responded ambitiously and successfully, first by identifying the issue at its most elemental as Architecture + Water, and second by identifying projects of the highest design caliber, from lakes, rivers, and harbors on three continents.

Architecture + Water is designed to provoke debate and inspire action. It makes the case loud and clear that even as New York lays down planning strategies for Brooklyn Bridge Park and, soon, Governors Island, and as other cities throughout North America do the same, the new architecture of the waterfront deserves the time, resources, and talents of serious design, not only in the planning stages, but as it is designed and built. **RAYMOND W. GASTIL**



DILLER + SCOFIDIO: BLUR BUILDING

VAN ALEN INSTITUTE 2001 EXHIBITION BY ZOË RYAN

Architecture + Water, currently on exhibition at the Van Alen Institute through September 28, 2001 presents five thought-provoking examples of architecture from around the world. These buildings radically rethink the possible interrelations between architecture and water and portray a diverse range of architectural types that are situated at different water conditions, including marshland, the ocean and a river. They illustrate that the dynamics of water can invoke compelling architecture that reinvents conventional typologies.

The curators, Paul Lewis, David Lewis, and Marc Tsurumaki of Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis, describe the buildings as "exceptional examples of architectural invention that illustrate how the relationship between two apparently opposite properties can produce something extraordinary that rethinks architectural conventions." Recent accolades for LTL include participating in the year 2000 National Design Triennial at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and being selected by Architectural Record (December 2000) as one of ten vanguard firms.

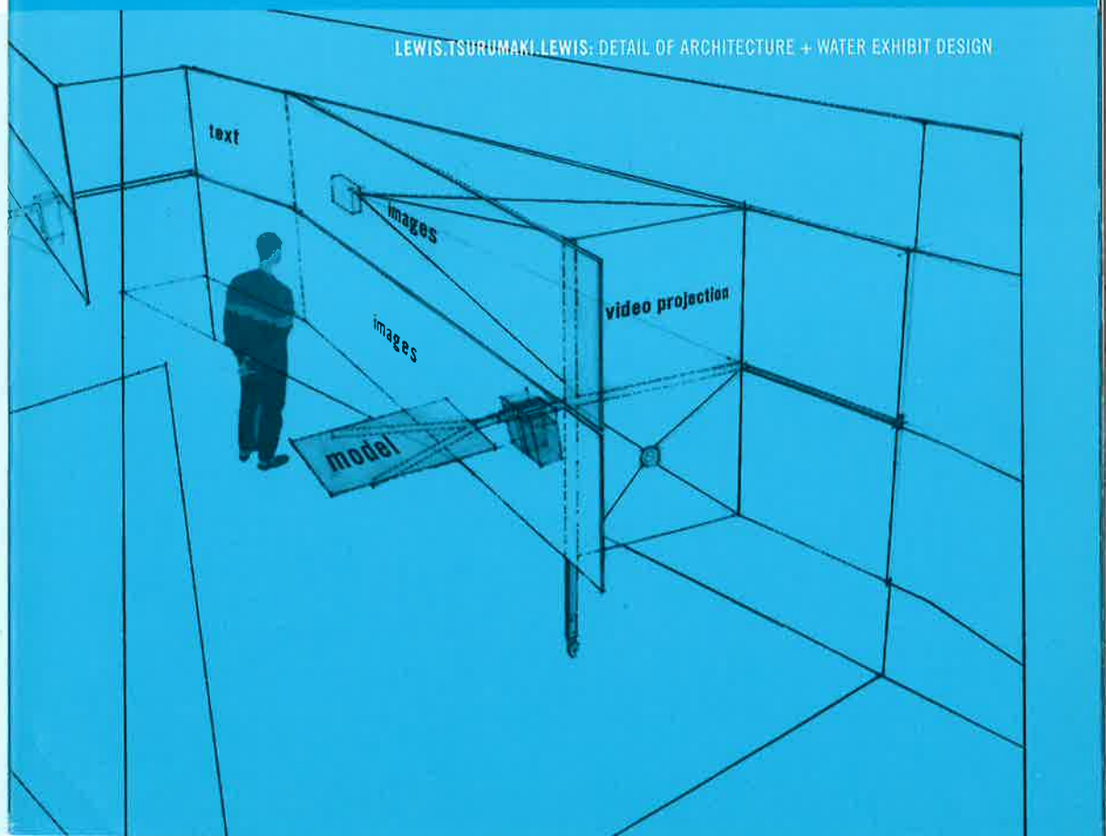
YOKOHAMA INTERNATIONAL PORT TERMINAL, JAPAN

In 1995 the city of Yokohama held a competition to design the Yokohama International Port Terminal. From a field of over 700 entries Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo of Foreign Office Architects were declared the winners by an international jury. Both Harvard graduates, Moussavi and Zaera-Polo worked at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture for three years before establishing their own firm in 1992. The Yokohama International Port Terminal is a work in progress and the $100 million project is due to be completed in 2002.

The terminal is being built on the Osanbashi pier, an 8-acre site on Yokohama Bay situated off a peninsula facing the western coast of Tokyo Bay. It sits between Yamashita Park, Akarenga Park and Yokohama Stadium. FOA decided to exploit the high level of public activity and create a terminal that encouraged participation and was as much an extension of the adjacent Yamashita Park as a working port. "It is a very innovative design that is abstract while at the same time analyzes the forms of nature," explains Minoru Ogasawara, manager of the terminal.

FOA blur the boundaries between ground and building so that the terminal looks like an extension of the urban ground. Renderings and construction photos begin to show how the pier will resemble a landscape with traceable contour lines. The terminal has the usual departure lounges, check-in desks, and car parks on the lower levels, yet has additional facilities such as an exhibition space and public plaza on the upper deck.

FOA's ambitious plan is made possible by an inventive structural framework. Instead of replicating a traditional pier based on horizontal, parallel levels, their design incorporates a heterogeneous network of routes based on circulation diagrams that weave passengers and visitors through the building in different ways depending on their final destination. FOA's ultimate goal is "to make the



LEWIS.TSURUMAKI.LEWIS: DETAIL OF ARCHITECTURE + WATER EXHIBIT DESIGN

FOREIGN OFFICE ARCHITECTS: YOKOHAMA INTERNATIONAL PORT TERMINAL, AERIAL VIEW

ground devoid of its traditional determination as datum, by turning it into an ungrounded surface, an envelope." The framework of 12 x 2.4 meter interlocking steel sheets has an inner core of thicker steel plates folded like corrugated cardboard, strengthening the structure and enabling it to withstand earthquake stresses.

FOA's design has an ostensibly seamless integration of structure and programming. FOA see themselves as not so much interested in the expressive characteristics of architecture as they are in the performative nature of the building: the surfaces of the terminal appear to register the inherent information of the building, most importantly the structure and the flows of people. FOA are intensely focused on the fabrication of their building, and while they recognize that their design will evolve to meet the exigencies of the building and programming process, they assert, "We are less interested in practice purely to provide service, and more in turning the act of providing service into research that opens up hidden possibilities of common practice."

BLUR BUILDING, YVERDON-LES-BAINS, SWITZERLAND

"Unlike entering a building," explain Diller + Scofidio, "Blur will be like entering a habitable medium – one that is featureless, depthless, scaleless, massless, surfaceless, and contextless." From the renderings of the design the Blur Building looks like a cloud floating above Lake Neuchâtel, just north of Lake Geneva in Switzerland. The building is for EXPO 2002 in Switzerland. It is an experiment that defies traditional ideas about the skin and structure of a building.

Previous work by Diller + Scofidio, a New York based design studio, has been predominantly explorative visual art pieces, including "Refresh," a web project for the Dia Art Foundation, and a current installation for JFK International Airport (see p8). Building projects include the redesign of the Brasserie Restaurant at the Seagram Building, completed last year. They were the first architectural partnership to be awarded the MacArthur "Genius" award.

Diller + Scofidio won the two-stage competition hosted by Swiss EXPO in 1998. The EXPO will feature five thematic exhibition sites situated on five waterfront sites around Switzerland. In response to the subject of the exhibition site at Yverdon-les-Bains, "Universe and I," the designers took a giant leap of faith and presented an inhabitable artificial cloud produced by 12,500 high-pressure water nozzles attached to a steel framework, 100m wide x 65m deep x 20m high. "We were interested in using the indigenous material of the site, lake water, to produce an immaterial building of mist that hovers above the lake. Blur uses the inherent ambiguity of the fog to foil the conventions of heroic EXPO or World's Fair architecture, to engage substance without form, and to create a slow event," they explain.

Unaware at first that they can go inside, on closer inspection visitors will find that they can enter from a ramp that traverses the structure, connected to the boardwalk. Diller + Scofidio describe the initial sensation inside as an overwhelming experience of sounds, sights and smells of the atomized lake water. Donning the obligatory raincoats, guests will be able to move through the building on concrete ramps that rise up through the mist.

A built-in high-tech weather system reads the shifting climate conditions of temperature, humidity, wind, speed and direction. This data is transferred by a centralized computer to various sections of the building causing the nozzles to generate more or less fog as needed to cover the building. The result is a design that has a constant play between architecture and water, even as it challenges this duality.

LAKE WHITNEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Few water treatment facilities are worth a visit. Yet the Hamden Regional Water Authority has invited architect Steven Holl and landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh to design a facility that engages the public. Valkenburgh is currently working on designs for the 12-acre park. Construction is planned to begin at the end of 2001 and to be completed in 2004.

Holl's work has integrated water before, but the focus on an environmental system is new. His recent projects include the Sarphatistraat office pavilion on DeSingel Canal in Amsterdam (2000), the *Story of Water* Passage at the Cranbrook Institute of Science, Michigan (1999), and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland (1998).

"We are entrusted with making a new kind of water treatment plant," explains Holl, "Water gardens will be constantly replenished by the plant's run-off water system, forming a natural filtration process in the park."

The building is a total of 140,000 sq ft, on three floors. The main feature of the design is a stainless steel tunnel connecting all the areas of the plant. This tunnel will also be the starting point for tours. Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis describe it as "an extruded water droplet running the length of the building."

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' design divides the landscape into two areas: an upper quiet zone, which is nearest to the immediate neighborhood of Hamden for reading, kite flying and walking, and a more active zone near the Eli Whitney Museum.

Van Valkenburgh has directed the design and construction of more than 300 landscapes worldwide, including a celebrated exploration of architecture and water – the installation of three arcing walls of ice in Radcliffe Yard, Cambridge, in 1988.

STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS AND MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES: LAKE WHITNEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, MODEL

Correlations between the design of the treatment facility and the landscape are apparent throughout. Both the architecture and landscape designs are inspired by the six stages of water filtration: rapid mix, flocculation, dissolved air flotation, ozonation, deep bed GAF filtration and clear water storage. As the firm says, "The project becomes an opportunity to engage in a dance with nature, the choreography of which is designed, but the final outcome of the performance will be revealed over time."

QUATTRO VILLA, YPENBURG, THE NETHERLANDS

Quattro Villa is a response by MVRDV to urbanization in the Netherlands. MVRDV states, "The borders of Dutch lakes are privatized by villas. Quattro Villa is an interesting project because it tries to combine a public border with private usage. By stacking a private villa on top of 12m high stilts both aims can be achieved."

Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries established MVRDV in 1991. After graduating from the Technical University of Delft they worked for the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, UN Studio, and Mecanoo Architects, respectively. In 1998 they published *FARMAX: An Excursion in Density. FARMAX*, meaning the maximum floor area ratio, is a book full of seemingly random data, yet MVRDV works to make design and programming decisions based on their data research. Most recently they designed the Dutch Pavilion for EXPO 2000 in Hannover, a six level pavilion where each floor represented a landscape: a windmill studded polder on the roof, a forest on the floor below and a field of flowers on the second floor.

Quattro Villa is four villas suspended on pilings driven into marshland in Ypenburg, near The Hague. Rather than balancing one house on multiple stilts, this plan renders two concrete

STEVEN HOLL ARCHITECTS AND MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES: LAKE WHITNEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, AERIAL VIEW

columns 40 ft wide, enough to hold the four villas' infrastructural services and serve as entry, elevator shaft, and structure. The first level of the villas is 12 meters above the marsh and accommodates living areas, bedrooms, bathrooms and the kitchen. The upper level has a sun deck and patio. At water level a wooden deck is big enough to park cars and serves as a public or semi-public area for recreation.

MVRDV aim for "three-dimensional city planning [to] replace two-dimensional planning in order to generate a real densification [to] safeguard the rustic landscape from total, continuous urbanization."

BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE STATION, LONDON, ENGLAND

Historically the South Bank was the underbelly of London. More recently it was a Victorian relic characterized by a slew of abandoned 19th century warehouses and grimy docklands. Not anymore! The old buildings are being dusted off and resurrected into cultural institutions such as the Tate Modern, the Globe Theatre and the London Eye Ferris Wheel. This is in large part thanks to funds from the National Lottery set up in 1994, which allocates a quarter of its revenue for the arts and education.

In conjunction with redevelopment along the Thames, Railtrack, the national train company has responded with Thameslink 2000. The £800 million scheme aims to transform services across the South East of England, with completion in 2006. Integral to this proposal is the redesign of the existing Blackfriars Bridge Station, designed by London-based Alsop Architects.

The firm, previously Alsop & Störmer Architects, started in 1979. In 2000, the firm won the Stirling Prize, the UK's most prestigious architectural competition, for the design of a new Media Centre and Library in Peckham, London. In November, they were announced as the design architect to renew and design new facilities for The Ontario College of Art & Design in Toronto. Past waterfront projects include the Hamburg Ferry Terminal and Cardiff Bay Visitors Centre.

Will Alsop was interested in the Blackfriars Bridge project because "it is a rare example of infrastructure following changes in perception of the existing city fabric." The Thames is the raison d'être for London becoming the central hub of industry for the UK in the 19th century. The design proposes a new platform bridge structure on the redundant sections of the existing Blackfriars Bridge piers.

The positioning of a station on a bridge in the middle of the Thames presents technical and planning challenges, but works. Visitors "will know where they are and the station will act as a symbolic representation of the heart of a vastly expanded city," explains Alsop.

Alsop takes reference from the great train sheds of stations such as Victoria and Paddington. The design incorporates an intricate roof of twisted aluminum and carbon fiber panels with glazed openings that stretch the entire length of the bridge. Alsop asserts that, "The North Bank of the Thames is the center of finance, pin-striped suits and bowler hats, although those of course are no longer here. In the late 20th century the south side of the River has absorbed and promoted a range of cultural facilities. These have been a catalyst for change. Our project is a response to this change."

THE ARCHITECTURE + WATER EXHIBIT WILL BE ON VIEW FROM MARCH 28 TO SEPTEMBER 28, 2001 AT VAN ALEN INSTITUTE.

INTERVIEW WITH LEWIS.TSURUMAKI.LEWIS>

VAR Editor Zoë Ryan grabbed some time with Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis on the eve of the installation of their exhibition and asked them about the five projects and their design philosophy.

ZOË RYAN> in your written work, for example, *Situation Normal*, you clearly challenge contemporary architectural practice for its endless search for new styles and argue instead that the greatest potential for architecture is the imagination.

PAUL LEWIS> Exactly, what got us particularly interested in the relationships between architecture and water were the ways in which water could act as a catalyst for architectural invention. We wanted to shift away from water as a feature, an aesthetic benefit for architecture, and rethink the dynamics of the intersection of architecture and water.

ZR> Although you talk about the interrelationship between architecture and water the title of the show suggests that architecture and water are in opposition.

MARC TSURUMAKI> Although the title appears to imply an opposition, what we are precisely interested in is the mutual interaction between architecture and water. These two terms are normally conceived as opposites — architecture is seen as fixed and stable versus water, which is seen as fluid and dynamic. We are interested in how these ostensibly contradictory properties might engage and inflect one another.

PL> One of the criteria we used to select the projects was that if they could be removed from the water and placed into another environment such as a meadow or a landlocked city then water was determined to not have an intrinsic role. All five projects chosen are based on a fundamental, dynamic and complex intersection with water.

ZR> Each project is an exceptional example of public or public/private patronage. Given that, however, how do you think they will inspire less uniquely funded projects?

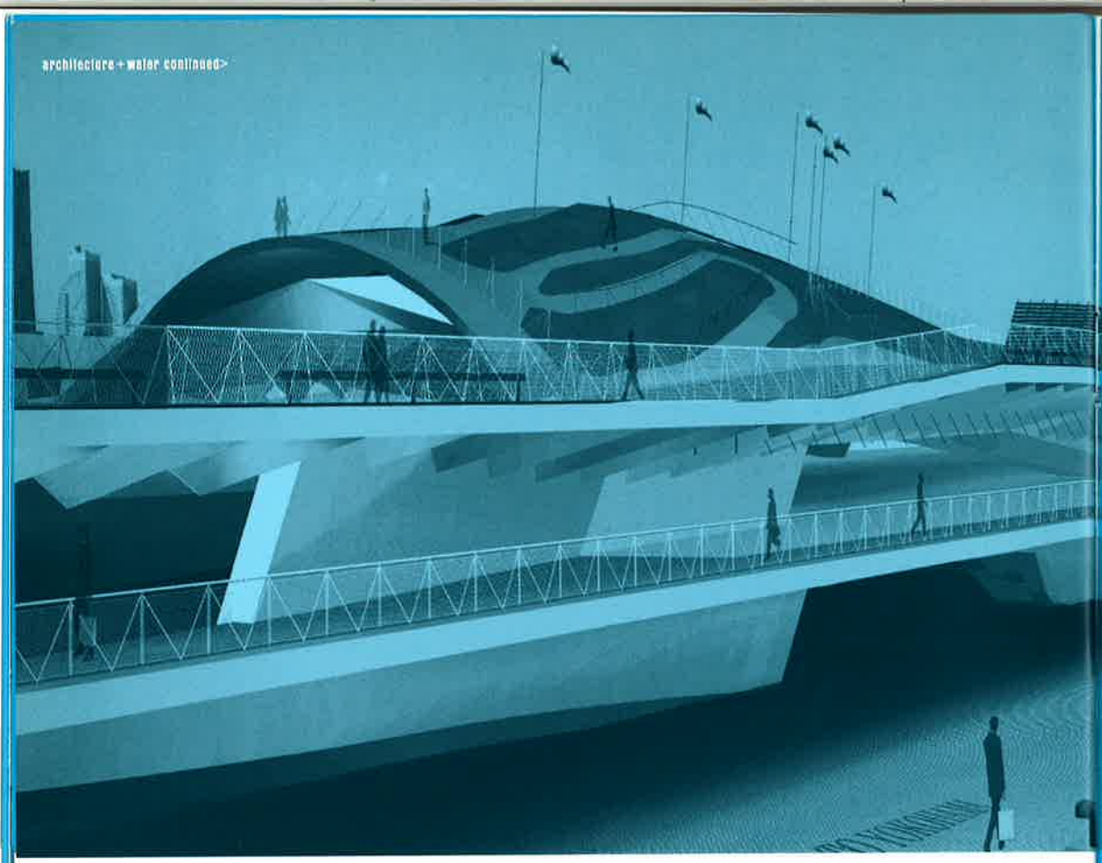
DAVID LEWIS> Our hope is that the exhibition argues for a more active role of water, that water can be more than a benign and passive feature in architecture, but can indeed produce fantastic architectural inventions. It shouldn't be a rare occurrence to have amazing architecture on the waterfront. The five projects together are compelling evidence of different creative engagements.

ZR> Two of the five projects exhibited, the Blur Building and the Yokohama Ferry Terminal, were chosen through a competition. Is this a way to get projects that are progressive and inventive?

PL> Certainly the competition process can serve to foreground the role of speculative ideas. But other processes can be instrumental in advancing invention. For example in the Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant the architect Steven Holl and landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh were engaged at the beginning of the process, not just to provide an aesthetic veil to a pre-existing engineering solution. Their design was in fact accepted before and became a generative challenge to the building's infrastructural engineering. So whether the projects were chosen through a competition, or by other means, the question of architecture was given relevance within the way the projects were framed.

ZR> The exhibition focuses on the five projects in detail. How are you going to place them within a contemporary and historical setting?

DL> We have researched the history of inventive intersections between architecture and water.



FOREIGN OFFICE ARCHITECTS: YOKOHAMA INTERNATIONAL PORT TERMINAL

The findings of this research are composed as part of the exhibition, forming a visual line of photographs and drawings. However, this research will not be organized according to traditional categories of architectural history — time, date, location, function, use, or architect. Rather, the collected body of work will be arranged according to a sequence of associations and values derived from a series of conceptual lines forming an interpretive matrix. In particular, each project will be identified according to three axes: 1) a pole that moves from earth to water; 2) a pole that moves from solid (ice) to liquid (water) and into gas (steam); 3) a pole that moves from water in architecture to architecture in water. The combination of these three conceptual poles will help identify and elucidate the diverse body of architectural works that explicitly couple architecture and water. The intention of this research is to extend the implications of the five projects beyond simply a recent preoccupation of a select number of well-known architects.

ZR> How does the exhibition design reflect the different properties of architecture and water?

MT> We are interested in the paradoxical nature of water in relation to architecture. For example, a pure horizontal in buildings is often established using water or liquid as a leveling device. This ability of water to invert its apparent property as unstable and become the very source of stability is integrated into the exhibit in the form of a continuous horizontal datum line that splits the gallery in half. Each component of the show from drawings, to models, to projections is then organized relative to this datum, which acts as a water level for the exhibition.

ZR> What makes the Blur Building so extraordinary? Why is it interesting for people to see a building that disappears?

PL> It is fantastic that this building will exist as a cloud. In this exhibition pavilion, what is being exhibited is the dematerialization of a building. Distinctions between the exhibition and the architecture, water and architecture and between the visible and invisible and the stable and unstable are blurred. The building is the media event. The "(b)raincoats" that visitors will wear are digitally coded with personal preferences. Proximity in the cloud to like-minded raincoats will produce blush-like responses in the coats. This is one of a number of means by which the architects are experimenting with oscillations between the haptic, the optic and the digital.

MT> This is the first building to operate in this manner. In the 18th century notion of the sublime there was always the juxtaposition of the geometric precision of the building and the atmospheric surrounds. In the 20th century renderings of Hugh Ferris, the precise forms of the architecture were eroded by the atmospherics of the drawing itself. What is interesting here is that this idea is taken to an extreme so that the building itself dissolves or dematerializes as a recognizable physical form.

ZR> What are the structural and mechanical engineering challenges?

PL> The technology used is well-known (mist machines, tensegrity structures, LEDs) but the assembly is unprecedented, resulting in a complex array of challenges, many of which could only be solved through empirical, on-site tests. In addition, unforeseeable logistical paradoxes resulted. For example fire sprinklers may, ironically, be necessary, as the mist would have to be turned off to allow for ease of evacuation.

MT> What is extraordinary is how the building adjusts to changing weather conditions. The building acts as a registration of the temperature, the direction and intensity of the wind, and other mete-

orological effects. All buildings respond to their environment, but this response is typically undesired and repressed. Here this essential aspect of architecture is productively amplified.

ZR> The Quattro Villa occupies land not traditionally inhabited. Is this a serious proposition?

PL> Yes, this is a proposition for a re-naturalized polder on land once mechanically drained which is being brought back to water level. We chose this project because it was sufficiently small and dealt with housing which, in terms of quantity, is dominant in American construction.

MT> The normal strategy of elevating a habitable space on pilings to avoid the fluctuations of the water is taken to a productive excess. The villas are raised on their elevator cores to produce a double effect: the pleasures of elevated living and the liberation of the water level. This "ground" level then becomes a kind of synthetic marsh, where water and occupiable surface, cars and boats can commingle.

PL> The expectations of where parts of a house should be positioned are changed: for example the front door is under the building, the backyard is on the roof. The underside of the Villa is its façade. One can equally park in the "driveway" by boat or car.

ZR> Why did you include the Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant in the exhibition?

MT> As a programmatic type a water treatment plant is normally relegated to the realm of engineering. Here the project's catalyst is the architectural design. For example, the designers have integrated the public sequence of movement through the building with the movement of the water through the treatment process.

ZR> How does this water treatment plant engage its surroundings?

PL> There is a connection between the six gardens or landscapes that have been developed and the six stages of the filtration process. Each of the landscapes correlates to a different stage of water treatment. Characteristics of those landscapes become analogically representative of the water treatment processes.

MT> In addition, the flow of surface water through the various gardens is orchestrated through the manipulation of the ground in a way that parallels the flow of water through the facility below. This process becomes a recognizable component of the landscape – perceivable by the public accessing these spaces.

ZR> What makes Blackfriars Bridge Station particularly interesting?

PL> This bridge over the Thames is not the means to access the station, but is the actual station. This project reinvents the bridge as destination, terminus and point of departure.

DL> The station reuses an existing bridge, reformatting an existing piece of urban infrastructure. It cleverly exploits the proximity of the adjacent disused piers of the redundant London, Chatham and Dover railway to expand the width of the station platform. The west platform, therefore, actually extends over the edge of the bridge and is supported by a new line of steel arches built on the innermost line of the disused piers and echoing the structural system of the existing bridge.

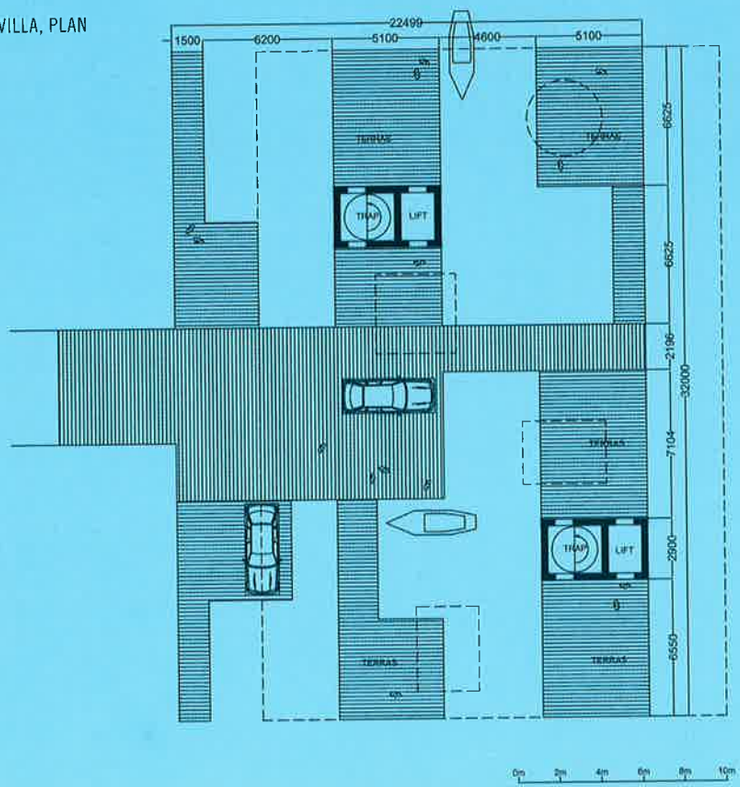
ZR> Isn't the main design feature of the station the roof?

DL> The station is enclosed by an undulating roof of aluminum monocoque panels with glazed openings and glazed platform edge screens. These transparent sections give access to views in both directions of the river – providing both orientation and the visual pleasures of an urban panorama.

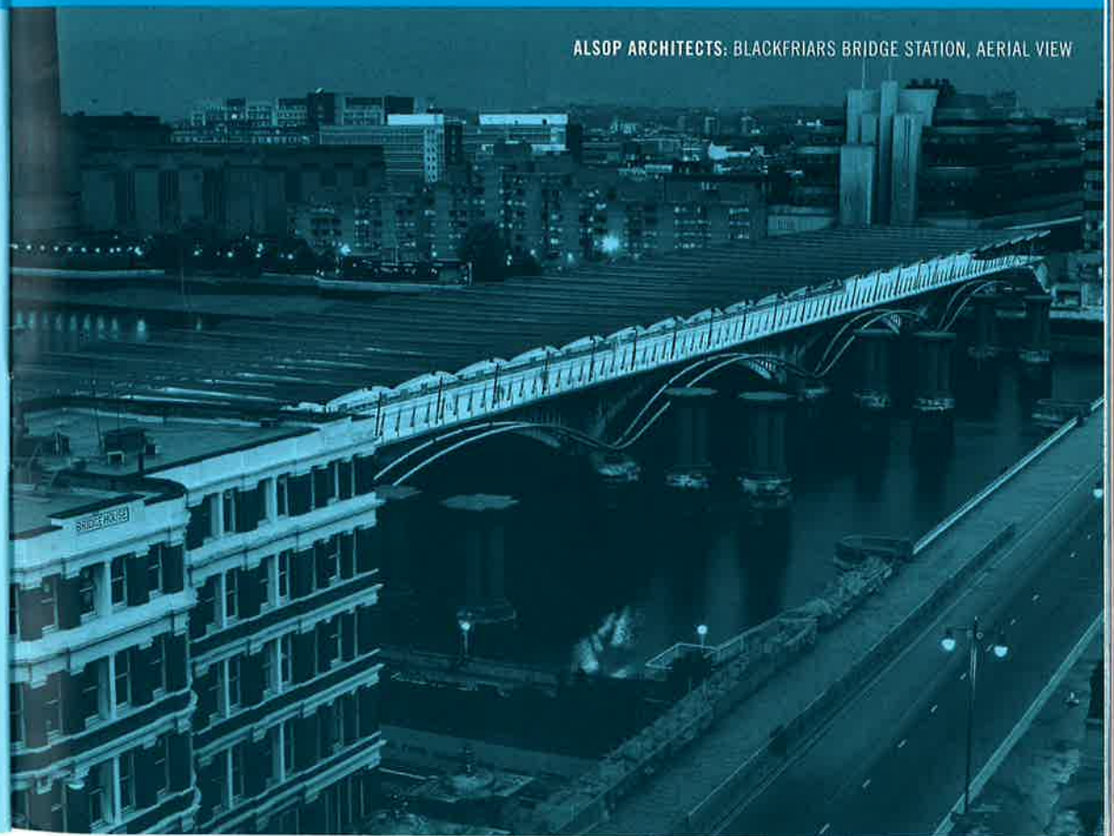
ZR> How does the Yokohama International Ferry Terminal rethink the idea of a port terminal?

MT> It is one of the most complex and challenging buildings of the turn of the century. Obviously

MVRDV: QUATTRO VILLA, PLAN



ALSOP ARCHITECTS: BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE STATION, AERIAL VIEW



it is a reinvention of a typology, the pier as a building condition. The unique invention is how this single folding surface of steel plates can accommodate multiple programs without resorting to the architectural commonplace of compartmentalizing space.

ZR> The enormity of the project brings up the question of scale. What does it mean to build such enormous buildings?

MT> It has a profound effect on the way we conventionally understand how architecture functions. When a space becomes this large it is no longer comprehensible in the conventional terms of inside and outside, form and program. It really does exist at the scale of a landscape and resists the kinds of perceptual logics that we apply to a normative object building. One of the fascinating things that will emerge out of this is to begin to see how a proposition that works at this massive scale becomes articulated at the level of materiality and specificity of detail.

ZR> What do you expect a New York audience to get out of the exhibition?

PL> Part of the reason we intentionally excluded New York projects was that the messiness associated with projects in New York – from excessive bureaucracy to financial issues – often causes the architectural questions to be relegated to the background. We wanted to bring design back into the discussion not just on an aesthetic level but on a conceptual and social level as well.

ZR> What do you expect the audience to learn from the exhibition?

MT> One of the hopes is that through combining different media such as animations, graphics and models, people will be able to explore the projects in greater depth and apprehend the complexities of the design process.

PL> Our desire is to produce an exhibition that inspires at many levels: content, design, conceptual basis, details. The exhibition should match the invention of the projects exhibited.

MARC TSURUMAKI, PAUL LEWIS AND ZOË RYAN DISCUSS PLANS OF THE EXHIBIT DESIGN. NATHANIEL H. BROOKS

"The goal is to promote intelligent transportation systems throughout the city and stimulate the use of the waterway as an alternative commuter route." SHEILA KENNEDY

KENNEDY & VIOLICH ARCHITECTURE

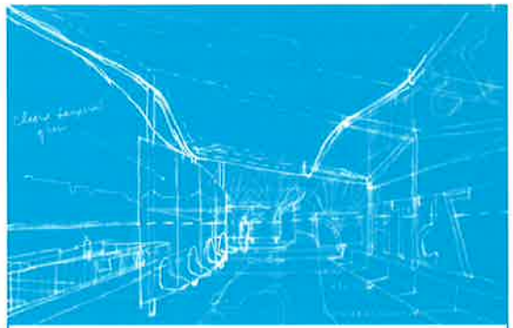
public profile

A new feature of the Van Alen Report is Public Profile, a section devoted to individuals and companies working on significant public architecture and design. This issue we have chosen Kennedy & Violich Architecture, an interdisciplinary design studio dedicated to new possibilities for architecture and urbanism in the public realm. Their most recent project is to build and upgrade ferry landings at seven locations along the East River and the Harlem River.

The project was initiated by the New York City Economic Development Corporation, in coordination with the New York City Department of Transportation, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Currently work is being focused on developing design concepts for the sheltered waiting areas and making landscape improvements to two temporary ferry terminals at 34th Street and 62nd Street. These will be adapted for permanent use when designs are finalized for additional sites at the Battery Maritime Building, Slip 5 or 6, East 62nd Street, East 75th Street, East 90th Street and Yankee Stadium over the next year and a half. Opening this summer, the terminals will serve ferries coming from LaGuardia, Pier 11, New Jersey, and Yankee Stadium. The permanent structures will be completed at the end of 2002.

The firm has worked on numerous public architecture projects, including The Gallery for Contemporary Art in Western Massachusetts (1998), and Shady Hill School Library in Cambridge (2000). Kennedy & Violich state that, "Today, materials, building components, and even programs arrive preformed as products to the building site. Our role as architects is not so much to form these entities as it is to deform them from their standard applications and to invent for them new possibilities and uses." The terminal shelters will be made from steel with a corrugated metal barrel roof. Photovoltaic panels will generate electricity for the buildings and operate the lighting systems outside. In addition, the architects have devised a system of 3mm thin solid state lighting diodes or LEDS embedded into the benches and bollards outside. These will absorb light, recycling it so that the luminous pigments trapped in the benches and bollards will glow at dusk. "The furniture becomes a part of the landscape," explains Kennedy. In addition, Ken Smith, the landscape architect for the project, is considering concrete barriers typically used on highways covered in reflective strips, to help guide ferries into the landing. "We are taking the language of the marine industry together with that of pop culture and giving the terminals a distinct graphic identity," describes Kennedy of the overall design.

The architects are concerned not only with the design of the ferry landings, but are also interested in improving passenger links between the terminals and bus routes, and are even considering having bike parks at the terminals where people can leave their bikes overnight. "If something isn't done to introduce logical alternatives for commuter travel over the next ten years," she notes, New York commuting "is going to become fairly intolerable." **ZR**



Sketch of East 75th St. ferry terminal. KENNEDY & VIOLICH ARCHITECTURE

platform>

ARE THERE SIGNS OF LIFE FOR THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, AND DESIGN IN NEW YORK?

In the last issue of the Van Alen Report, we asked leading architects, landscape architects, editors, and others what they thought about the state of architecture in New York. Most of them were frankly pessimistic. A lot of our readers don't agree, they see many examples and opportunities for significant design – whether of public spaces, infrastructure, or new or renovated buildings.

We asked five architecture and design editors to give us their opinion.

1 One significant sign of life is the impending **ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**; the cheaper the rent, the more accessible the city is to the educated, creative poor that are its lifeblood.
2 The **IMMINENT RESIGNATION OF MAYOR GIULIANI,** who seems to be rushing to commemorate his mayorship in built form, with infrastructural projects such as the proposed Hudson River stadium, after years of almost no interest.
3 The **GROWING NUMBER OF MUSEUM VENUES FOR ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN**: the partnership between the Whitney, the Canadian Center for Architecture and the MoMA, and Guggenheim director Thomas Krens' ongoing love affair with Frank Gehry.
4 The **UNPRECEDENTED VOLUME OF BUILDING ACTIVITY IN AND AROUND TIMES SQUARE.**
5 And then there are the **DESIGNERS THEMSELVES** — who show no signs of letting up.

NED CRAMER *Senior Editor,* Architecture Magazine

1 The **PENN STATION REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT** for symbolically righting the wrongs of past urban renewal and for bestowing a celebratory gesture upon mass transit, the circulatory system that makes a city live.
2 The **NEW 42ND STREET THEATER** for being the first to make the simple but completely overlooked point that the excitement of Times Square lies not in the content of commercial billboards but in their scale, color, and movement.
3 The **ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE** for an aesthetic of awe that conveys the idea of matching a building to its program in a way easily appreciated by its audience.
4 **PLANS FOR A NEW GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**, for daring to imagine that a re-enlivened urban waterfront will not come from empty expanses of park or vast suburban recreational facilities but from extending to the city's edges those elements that make it vibrant — density, activity, and multiple uses.
5 The **NEW TKTS BOOTH** by John Choi and Tai Ropiha for providing New Yorkers and their visitors with free stadium seating to the city's best show.
6 The proposed **BROOKLYN WATERFRONT PARK,** which is an opportunity to rethink the Brooklyn shoreline.

SUSAN S. SZENASY *Editor-in-Chief,* Metropolis

1 The **EYEBEAM ATELIER COMPETITION** for a new Museum of Art and Technology in Chelsea.
2 SHoP's building for the **MUSEUM OF SEX** and an upcoming apartment building in New York City.
3 Tod Williams and Billie Tsien's **MUSEUM OF FOLK ART.**
4 Polshek Partnership's **SCANDINAVIA HOUSE.**
5 The recent purchase, stewardship and restoration of a handful of **NEW YORK'S MODERN ICONS**, including: Paul Rudolph's House on Beekman Place; the Lever House; Seagram Building and the Philip Johnson-designed former MoMA Guest House.

Note: I would like to acknowledge that five years ago as a writer on architecture I felt that there was little of interest to praise in New York, but now there are numerous young firms that are exploring innovative materials, systems and buildings at a small scale, which is where it all begins.

NINA RAPPAPORT *Editor,* Constructs, the magazine of the Yale School of Architecture

1 The Housing Authority under design director David Burney is opening three **EXEMPLARY COMMUNITY CENTERS** attached to public housing in New York. They are Melrose in the Bronx by Agrest and Gandelsonas, the Red Hook Community Arts Center in Brooklyn by Victoria Meyers and Tom Hanrahan, and the Van Dyke houses in Brooklyn by Mark Dubois of Ohlhausen and Dubois.
2 The City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development told me it's seeking a much higher level of design for the next round of its **AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**
3 The Economic Development Corporation has a mixed record: There's the devolution of the Manhattan-side Staten Island Ferry Terminal by Venturi Scott Brown and Associates with Anderson/Schwartz. Thanks to petty city politics, Venturi Scott Brown resigned though Fred Schwartz has valiantly soldiered on. However, **PIER 11** by Smith-Miller + Hawkinson is a very modest but nice addition to the waterfront — marred only by an chain-link gate and guardhouse that the City ordered up as an afterthought.
4 SOM's **TERMINAL 4 AT JFK** International Airport may prove to be great as may be the new Continental Terminal at Newark Airport (also by SOM). It is at least a major cut above some of the Port Authority's major mistakes, especially embarrassments like the Delta/Northwest Terminal at LaGuardia Airport and the depressing Port Authority Bus Terminal.
5 I admire **MoMA'S NEW DESIGN** by Yoshio Taniguchi and am excited about the prospect of a new Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Gehry. In addition, Lincoln Center has the potential to be truly great, but it's not clear that greatness will survive the politics.

Note: We must, however, lambaste the city's real estate development community, which continues to put up office buildings of utter mediocrity, while collecting stratospheric rents. It ain't world class, it's bush-league. And as for so-called "luxury" housing, there's not one that's not a cheaply built eyesore.

JAMES S. RUSSELL, AIA *Editor-at-Large,* Architectural Record

1 To find encouraging signs of life, you have to look between the buildings or around the city's edges. Come out of the subway at **TIMES SQUARE** after dark, and it looks like daytime, especially since the Condé Nast Building turned up the wattage on the Great White Way. It isn't building masses you see, but the chaos of people and motion that has always been the essence of Times Square. The street is more alive than it has been in decades. That is no mean feat.
2 The inspiring example set by the Battery Park City esplanade parks has combined to make **WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT** seem viable — even necessary — again. Plans for the Hudson River Park system are finally in place. The Battery Park City Ferry Terminal is being replaced by a bigger, more light-filled, permanent dock; Smith-Miller+Hawkinson's handsome new Pier 11 on the east side of Wall Street is ready.
3 During the last two decades, throughout Manhattan, the **SPACES BETWEEN BUILDINGS** have bloomed in ways that would have been unimaginable when the effort began. First Central Park, then Union Square, Bryant Park, Tompkins Square, Greeley and Herald Squares, and now Madison Square is being replanted, refurnished, and reprogrammed by the people who have suddenly reappeared.
4 Though it's disappointing that so much of the best architectural design in New York recently has been done inside existing buildings, the fact that the buildings and their scale remain certainly has an upside. It's hard not to wax nostalgic in **GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL** and also to love the fact that the **SEAGRAM BUILDING BRASSERIE**, by Diller + Scofidio, is even better the second time around.
5 The impact of the art world in New York – which is still going strong as the international center after fifty years – is entering a more expressionistic phase, exemplified by Gluckman Mayner Architects' latest **MARY BOONE GALLERY** on West 24th Street and LOT/EK's **SARAH MELTZER GALLERY** on West 20th. They proffer a new homegrown Baroque that isn't simply the result of the Bilbao effect or a product of the latest software.

JAYNE MERKEL *Editor,* Oculus

letter(s) from abroad

As New York prepares its bid to host the 2012 Olympics (and as New Yorkers take sides on the issue), we decided to report on two waterfront "Olympic Cities," Barcelona (1992), and Athens (2004). Nicholas de Monchaux, winner of the 2000 Van Alen Institute John Dinkeloo Fellowship, gives his perspective.

FROM ATHENS/BARCELONA
February 14, 2001

It's 10:30 PM and the latest pack of cell-phone toting, global culture friends have added their voices to the crowd in the restaurant, drowning out the pulse of electronic music, and straining the kitchen to produce even more elegant seafood entrées. For a moment, it's easy to see how you could be in either Barcelona or Athens, both expressive, maritime cities with nocturnal habits and a gregarious urban culture.

Yet when it comes to urban image, and that epitome of global public relations - the modern Olympics - Barcelona (1992) and Athens (2004) are currently being used to tell very different stories. In February, British Prime Minister Tony Blair encouraged regional UK cities to follow the 'Barcelona Model' of urban public development. That same week a BBC news reporter explained that the field he was standing in, on the outskirts of Athens, was to be the site of the **2004 Olympic village**. It's expected to house 17,300 athletes at a cost of $305 million, for which a builder has not yet been hired.

Although I saw this report from my hotel room in Barcelona, I had been in Athens for two weeks previously. Traveling from a pre-Olympic to a post-Olympic urbanism presents an opportunity to examine relationships between city and event, between image and reality.

Wherever you are reading this, you probably have an image of Barcelona, **city of Modernista and fashionista**, where you don't have to trade vibrant culture for super-reliable public transport and deliberate city planning. You'd probably like to be there right now. That's because one of the city's major achievements of the last 20 years – with the Olympics as an important instrument – has been to create and control its own image, moving from a ready-made punch line on British television to a vaunted destination of design, culture, and sport (one of the reasons Tony Blair talks to Britons about the **'Barcelona Model'** is that some 1 in 12 of them has been there).

Athens, on the other hand, has had almost too much image already. From a backwater of 6,000 in 1821, to a city of 6 million today, the world's dealings with Athens have been fueled, not by an image of the city as it is, or might be, but rather by an image of the city as it was, or might have been. Whether it's the invention by the Great Powers of a capital there, or shady manipulations of the Cold War, or Coubertin's Modern Olympics of 1896, it is the **Athens of Pericles and Socrates** that captures our global imagination, and not the lively and exasperating Athens of traffic nightmares, air pollution, and half-finished construction.

The essence of the distinction between these cities and their Olympic images comes down to how the abundant energy of each place is channeled into, or against the city's fabric; a factor which belies each of the easy simplifications we might foist on them, and their Olympic stages.

In Barcelona, it's the curbstones that get you. Wherever you go in the city, stone panels or decorated concrete tiles click your footsteps back at you.

Monumental, chamfered blocks of granite mark curb cuts and driveways. And I don't mean just in rich neighborhoods or down the touristy Passeig de Gracia. In 1980, the Town Council made a public commitment to renovate every sidewalk in the city, and bring every curb up to a single, high standard – even if it had to go into debt (which it did) to do so.

In 1980, Barcelona was a city with a memory of self-expression, with traces of past glory still in its fabric. But during the Franco era the city's maintenance and development had been deliberately undermined by the central government, as payback for revolutionary disloyalty. The socialists who came to power in 1980 had cut their teeth on public housing associations – islands of democratic activity under the dictatorship – and they knew the power of instrumental changes in the physical environment to convince the public that times were changing. Furthermore, in their quest to make the public environment an expression of civic and (Catalan) national identity, they opened every intervention, no matter how small, to a process of public competition, developing a new generation of Catalan architects – Miralles, Busquets, Sola-Morales, Bohigas – whose names are now well-known.

But all this is not so different from Athens – at least in historical terms. Like Barcelona and its Eixample, administered from Madrid, **Athens' urban design was a 19th century Bavarian invention**. Like Spain, Greece suffered in the twentieth century through upheaval and dictatorship. Despite a continuing gap between haves and have-nots, Athens, like Barcelona, has in the last two decades seen a reinvigoration of its urban culture, its staging of itself, its street life. Unlike the Barcinos of Barcelona, however, the Athenians have not yet had the opportunity to render their city into a material expression of their identity. In fact, the reverse is true. From German monumental planning in the 19th century, to unregulated speculators and their concrete in the 20th, Athenians have consistently been denied any public stake in the structure and planning of their own physical environment.

As the evening begins in Kolonaki, Athens' ritziest downtown neighborhood, women dressed to the nines look down to make sure their heels don't hit the many potholes in the sidewalk. **"How" a companion asks, "can Athenians be so well put together, and Athens streets are falling apart?"** In a way, the question answers itself: the beautiful spaces in Athens are the spaces that Athenians feel they have control of – the designer bars and restaurants, the intricate arrangement of products in the ubiquitous tiny newsstands, the thin envelope of immaculate clothing draped around the city's shoulders – from 8 AM commuters to 4 AM revelers. The gorgeous public space of Athens, perversely, flows through and around the physical fabric of the city, which remains a haphazard sprawl of white concrete. As a result, "public" space, and "public" projects belong, somehow, to someone else. In the case of the Olympics, this means that the public projects and expenditures can be batted around by political factions, with overblown historicist rhetoric, and with blame spread wide but collaboration thin on the ground.

Yet there is pride and identification in the public realm. What's most surprising about Athens' new Metro is not its bare concrete corridors and fastidious Greek-scroll paving, but rather how many Athenians ask you: "have you seen the new Metro?" When the Athens Olympics succeeds – which it probably will – it will be because of the complex web of individual miracles that the Athenians create every day, and it will be to them, more than their public servants, that credit will be due. If the world could do Athens a favor, it would be to embrace the populist adaptability and contingent urbanity to be found in the city today, and not hold it responsible for our image of its history.

And Barcelona? Because the seafood restaurant in question is in the Raval, an immigrant neighborhood in the old town, I'm able to walk out, on stone-tile sidewalks, into **a city still under construction**. Around the corner, in shocking disagreement with my 2000 Michelin Map, six blocks have been cut out of the neighborhood to create a new Ramblas or public avenue, which the previous night had held a free flamenco concert for 3,000 people. The public works of Barcelona run much deeper and wider than the Olympic stream. Barcelona has even scheduled its own event for 2004, the 'Universal Forum of Cultures' – a cross between a World's Fair, UNESCO conference, and forum on sustainability that will be used to redevelop one of the last rough spots in Barcelona's shining grid. Sound ambitious? In a city that has defined itself by its continuing redefinition, this can only be par for the course.

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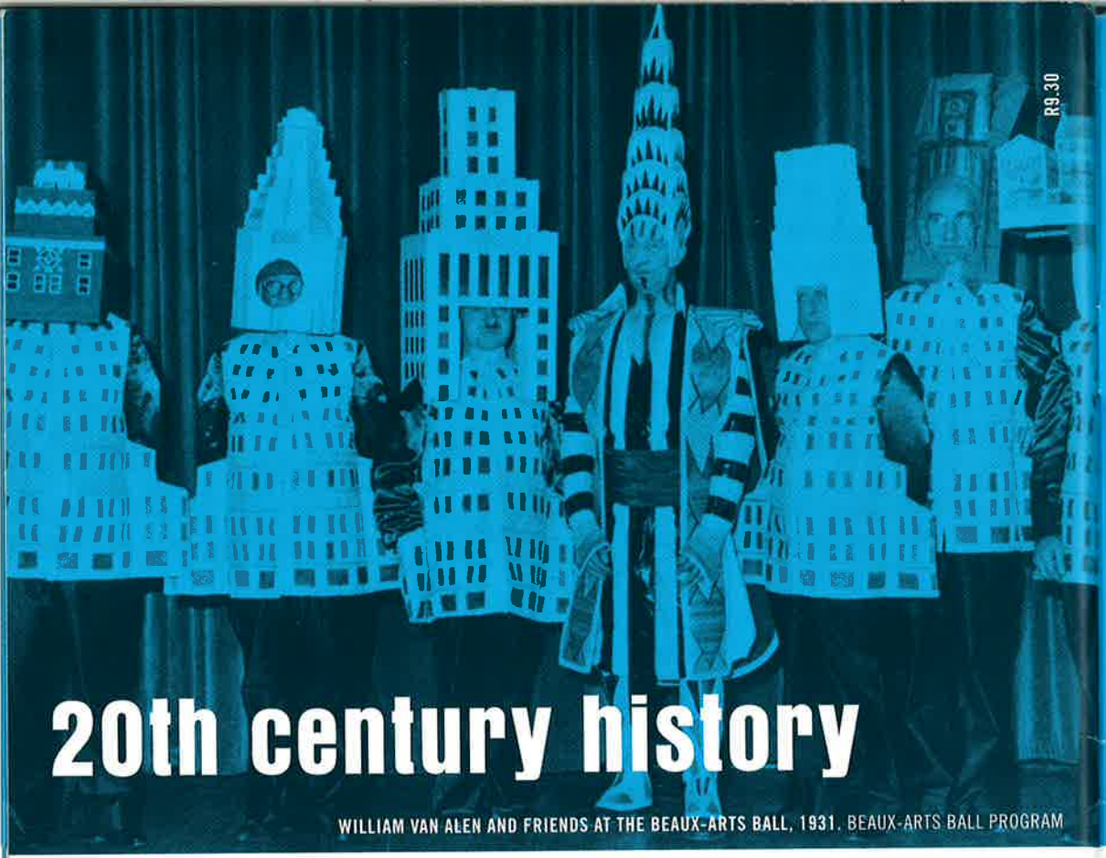

20th century history

WILLIAM VAN ALEN AND FRIENDS AT THE BEAUX-ARTS BALL, 1931. BEAUX-ARTS BALL PROGRAM

At Van Alen Institute, we invest our energy in the future, directing projects that clarify and strengthen the vital role of design in shaping the future of the public realm. We ask and strive to answer questions for the next ten years and even the next hundred. If we are still going to have, say, plazas, what "public" will they really be for, and how will they interact with information technology? If we believe in great talent being applied to our public environments, how can the inescapably Beaux-Arts formula of a design competition adapt to contemporary culture?

As the last question reveals, we can't speculate on the future without acknowledging the past century. William Van Alen (1882-1954), our most significant benefactor, is integral to the 20th Century History of the Institute and public architecture. We started in 1894 as the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects, which developed the Paris Prize Competition — won in 1908 by Van Alen — and became the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. Van Alen is pictured here at the 1931 Beaux-Arts Ball, the annual fundraiser for the B.A.I.D.'s classes and fellowships, wearing his Chrysler Building for "The New York Skyline." Today, most people know the image from Rem Koolhaas's exuberant 1978 manifesto, Delirious New York, produced while he was a Fellow at the preeminent independent center for architectural education and research at the time, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (1967-1986).

What does this image illuminate today? It shows how commercial buildings, as they become icons in the public imagination, have to be reconceived as part of the public realm. Can we say the same for commercial projects now underway? If not, is it up to civic and public sector projects to create equally powerful icons, or is the very idea of an icon outmoded?

For our part, we take off our hats to Van Alen and his fellows at the ball. There they are, the Depression already underway, grinning under their boom and bust landmarks, justifiably proud and ridiculous all at once. They are also determined to demonstrate, at the first "modern"-themed Beaux-Arts Ball, their connection to and optimism in the future. The image is light-hearted yet arresting, because it encompasses the architects' confidence and trust in design, education, and the value of connecting to the public imagination. 2001 is different than 1931, but we still need the same confidence and trust to design and rebuild a public realm that matters. RWG

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The Architecture + Water exhibition is made possible in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, and the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

Printed on Recycled Paper

THE INSTITUTE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES ITS MAJOR SUPPORTERS:

GRANTORS: The National Endowment for the Arts, The New York State Council on the Arts, The Stephen A. and Diana L. Goldberg Foundation, The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Parc Downsview Park, Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, The New York Times Company Foundation.

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