architecture + water

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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 this 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.

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 Downview 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 Downview 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 Dinkelsbuhl 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. ZOE RYAN
newsfront>

ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
STUYVESANT COVE

Kiss + Cartmell 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 have our electricity bill," says Cartmell. 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 14th to 23rd Street, across from 20th Street. A master plan, still to be implemented, was developed by Cam, Lynch, Sandell, in the 1990's (completed at UIA 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 not-for-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 a park. Landscape architect Davina Wallschlag, whose design for the park will be completed in July of this year, explains that "the neighborhood community has wanted a park since 1860. 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 22 on the Hudson River, this is the first environmental center in the City for 35 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 Cartmell and Gregory Kiss sketched their firm after graduating from Columbia's Master of Architecture program in 1983. The firm has completed building projects that invoke photovoltaic power and continue to research its promise in solar technology. "This was a perfect project for us," says Cartmell.

"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 electromagnetic radiation from the sun into electricity for the building.

Kiss + Cartmell are also doing research into solar terms in the plan to generate additional electricity. Jonathan Cramer of C2C 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. Cartmell 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."

EYEBEAM ATELIER
MUSEUM OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Among the dozen firms selected to create a conceptual design for New York's new Museum of Art and Technology are Architecture Research Office, Arquitectura, Devine + Scodell, UN Studio, and Greg Lynn. Forth - a short list that would make any young architect envious.

From this new media-sawy roster, Eyebeam Atelier - a not-for-profit media arts organization founded by film makers John B. 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 Muller. "It is an atelier where art, production, education, and exhibition meet."

Unconstrained 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 transcend 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 un undisclosed amount.

Eyebeam wanted creative input, but they also wanted control: the winner will be 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 unusual hybrid for a selection process, it certainly hasn't lacked the invited firms, who are all vying to design New York's first, and America's largest, new media as institution. Whoever is selected to receive the commission, what is impressive 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 COMPETITORS' LATEST CONCEPTIONS, construction for the 190,000 sf facility at 540-548 West 21st Street will begin in 2003, at an estimated cost of $45 million. In the meantime, the site, which is poised on the edge of Chelsea's waterfront cultural district, has been transformed by architects David Adjaye and Craig McNick into an Internet exhibition space for the "Van Aalen Institute in Print.""
DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, BEACON, NY

Why is it that other city centers such as Paris and London are reuseing 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 5 miles north of Manhattan in Beacon?) It’s simple. High real estate costs, insufficient site-building space to comfortably house large scale works such as Donald Judd’s series of 5 x 5 x 5 ft. plywood boxes, and the desire for an outdoor space away from the streets of the New York art scene. Fair enough.

“This center will begin a cultural reawakening on the waterfront of the Hudson River Valley,” explains Lyn Rice from Open Office, the architectural firm responsible for the design. (For further comments by Rice in PLATFIRM, Vt. 28. Redevelopment plans are already afoot. The nonprofit group Scenic Hudson, which owns part of the adjacent 10 acres of waterfront property. has recently cut off the site to 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 residing 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. Kaiser agrees. “This site is perfect for us. There is a spring there, there is an area in the background of American painting.”

NY JETS STADIUM

At a recent public forum to discuss further development on the West Side, Manhattan Borough President Virgil E. Fiore referred to Hell’s Kitchen as the “last frontier in the borough of Manhattan.” Current plans for the development of New York’s Hudson waterfront include the New York Jets organization’s proposal for a $760 million stadium over the West Side rail yards, preliminary design by Cesar Pelli & Partners, which they describe as including “a public atrium, a 60,000 sq. ft. public plaza above the atrium, and a public pedestrian promenade along the western rim which would include connections across Route 9A at 37th, 43rd and 50th streets to the future Hudson River Park.”

Although the Jets hope to secure their lease plan and have a stadium by 2010, 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 “unequivocally opposed to the construction of a large stadium over the West Side Yards.” Their opposition hinges on three key factors. Firstly, they believe that a new stadium is a pretext to begin developing Midtown West, selling their low-rise neighborhoods with high-density office buildings. Secondly, they see a stadium as an artifact whose built form forms its back on the community and whose program invites spastic, transient activities. The most important issue for the Community Board, however, and perhaps the one that will ultimately defeat the proposed stadium, in traffic. Hell’s Kitchen already has serious traffic concerns. The neighborhood has a heavy transport infrastructure including the bands 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 Jets’ 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 Jets Center north would include de-mapping 95th 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 (other than playing in the Giants’ stadium in New Jersey, especially because the Jets are willing to play 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 by public transit, including ferries across the Hudson to the NY Waterway landing at 43rd Street. In addition, the Jets have said 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 building stadiums in cities if the city provides the land and invests in stadium infrastructure, as well as more complex public-private partnerships. Stadiums are expensive investments — the Denver Broncos’ new stadium cost $400 million — and the Jets proposed site has potentially enormous infrastructure costs, a platform over the West Side yards to support the stadium would cost in the $350 to $400 million range.

In the 1992 NYSCA Sites 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 radar 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.

VIAJ UPCOMING PROJECTS

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

The Van Alen Institute Director Fellowship, offered annually, 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. The Institute's Web site for more 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 (5th Avenue and 148th Street).

The Van Alen Institute is an independent, non-profit, national organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in urban communities through the intelligent and creative use of architecture and design. Van Alen is a leader in identifying and helping to implement the strategies needed to advance great design solutions. Van Alen Institute's program of fellowships, public forums, exhibitions, and design competitions furthers its commitment to public education and the advancement of design thinking.
FORDHAM RADIO TOWER
Is there a way to resolve the 40-year dispute between the New York Botanical Garden and Fordham University over the placement and height of Fordham’s radio tower for its station, WFIG? 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 250 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.

Pamela 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 Coliseum Communications Tower and the Montjuic Communications Tower in the hills above Barcelona (selected 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 Sarah 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 felt it. It is not a conduit (confluence?) but a place. Here it is. Steel and air, a mottled presence, small panneser and lucky for us. Perhaps Whitney has found a way to create a “small panneser” for Bronx residents.

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 p.14). 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 tiltsolar screens (glass 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 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 “incidentally engage them in a real time moving picture narrative in tiny installments. Particular contents materialize and trigger flashbacks images of their own travel experiences.”
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. BASTIL
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.
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 performance is not only about the building, it’s about the people, the space and the context. The building is an extension of the everyday life in the city,” they explain. "We are less interested in providing service to people, 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 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 in nature. Their 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 12,000 high-pressure water nozzles attached to a steel framework, 300m wide x 65m deep x 220m high. "We were interested in using the indigenous material of the site, the 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. Denying 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.
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 DAF 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, YENBURG, 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 stilts driven into marshland in Yenbur, near The Hague. Rather than balancing one house on multiple stilts, this plan renders two concrete
INTERVIEW WITH LEWIS.TSURUMAKI.LEWIS>

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

ZOE RYAN> in your earlier work, for example, Situation Normal, you openly challenge conventional architectural clichés. What is the architectural equivalent of a mindless search for new styles and argue instead that design should question the status quo and explore new possibilities. The theoretical basis for architecture is imagination.

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

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 interact 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 sand-trapped 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 art for London's cultural diversity. Given their unique, they bring an invaluable contribution to the city of London.

DAVID LEWIS> Our hope is that the exhibition will help to push the role of water in architecture to the forefront of architectural thinking.

PL> Certainty, the competitive process can serve to highlight the role of speculative ideas. But other processes can be instrumental in advancing invention.

DL> We have researched the history of inventive intersections between architecture and water.
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—in fact, location, function, use, or architecture. 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 interpretative 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 (tree to liquid (water) and soft (flesh)), and 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.

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

We are interested in the paradoxical nature of water as a relation to architecture. For example, a pure horizontal in buildings is often established using water or liquid as a levelling 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, liquid, horizontal line that splits the gallery in half. Each component of the show from drawings, to models, to projections is thus organized relative to this datum, which acts as a water level for the exhibition.

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

The Blur Building's rapid adaptation will exist as a cloud. In this exhibition, what is being explored is the dynamic relationship between the building and the architecture, space and architecture and between the visible and invisible and the visible and invisible as network. The building is a media device. The "blur space" that visitors will move through is designed with personal preferences. It is an actualization of the cloud in this medium. This medium will produce both into expressions in the cloud. This is one of a number of maps by which the architecture are superimposing onto each other between the logic, the scale and the digital.

The new building is a response to the opening of the 21st century. The exhibition is designed with the interaction of the geodecic power attached to the architecture and the atmosphere of the building itself. This is an interesting form in that this idea is taken in an extreme so that the building itself disappears or dissolves into an unrecognizable physical form.

What is the structural and mechanical engineering challenges?

The building, which is self-sustaining, suspended, and levelling, is a complex array of challenges. The system must not only be able to hold up the building, but also be able to absorb the building. In addition, the invisible, logical, and non-visible invisibility is maintained. For example, the building may be necessary, as the interface, to become the interface, to be an interface, to allow the system to be a system.
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.

MT> In addition, the flow of 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?

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...
"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 Ludlow, Pier 11, New Jersey, and Yankee Stadium. The permanent structures will be completed at the end of 2002.
ARE THERE SIGNS OF LIFE FOR THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, AND DESIGN IN NEW YORK?

In the latest 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, infrastructures, or new or renovated buildings.

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

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 lifeline.

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.

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.

The unprecedented volumes of building activity in and around Times Square. And then there are the designers themselves—who show no signs of letting up.

NEIL CRAWFORD Senior Editor, Architecture Magazine

The PENN STATION REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT symbolically dwarfing the wriggles of post urban renewal and for booting a celebratory gesture upon mass transit, the circulatory system that makes a city live.

The NEW 42ND STREET THEATER for having 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.

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.

PLANS FOR A NEW GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, for daring to imagine that a re-envisioned 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.

The NEW TDKS BOOTH by John Chao and Tai Ropsha for providing New Yorkers and their visitors with live seating to the city’s best show.

The proposed BROOKLYN WATERFRONT PARK, which is an opportunity to inhabit the Brooklyn shoreline.

SUSAN S. SZENASY Editor-in-Chief, Metropolis

The EYEBRAWL ATELIER COMPETITION for a new Museum of Art and Technology in Chelsea.

STAD’s building for the MUSEUM OF SEX and an upcoming apartment building in New York City.

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien’s MUSEUM OF FOLK ART.

Polish Partnership’s SCANDINAVIAN HOUSE.

The recent purchase, stewardship and restoration of a handful of NEW YORK’S MODERN ICONS, including: Paul Rudolph’s House on Beach 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 on a small scale, which is where it all begins.

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

The Housing Authority under design director David Burney is opening three EXEMPLARY COMMUNITY CENTERS attached to public housing in New York. They are Mecca in the Bronx by Agust and Sandelesa, the Red Hook Community Arts Center in Brooklyn by Victoria Meyers and Tom Harrah, and the Van Dyke houses in Brooklyn by Mark Dubois of Ohihausen and Dubois.

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.

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 Andretti/ 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—excited only by an chain link gate and guardhouse that the City ordered up as an afterthought.

SDM’S TERMINAL 4 AT JFK International Airport may prove to be as great as may be the new Continental Terminal at Newark Airport (also by SDM). It is at least a major cut above some of the Port Authority’s major mistakes, especially embarrasions like the Delta/Northwest Terminal at LaGuardia Airport and the depressing Port Authority Bus Terminal.

I admire MoMA’s NEW DESIGN by Yutaka Tamura 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 collect- ing stratospheric rents. It’s not 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

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.

The inspiring example set by the Battery Park City exploratory 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.

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.

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 the GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL and also to lose the fact that the SEAGRAM BUILDING BRASSERIE, by Diller + Scadoff, is even better the second time around.

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 expressive phase, exemplified by Guggenheim-Mayor Architects’ latest MARY BOONE GALLERY on West 24th Street and LOT/EK’S SARAH MELTZER GALLERY on West 20th.

They proffer a new homogenous Baroque that isn’t simple the result of the Bilbao effect or a product of the latest software.

JAYNE MIRKEL Editor, Oculus
In 1980, Barcelona was a city with a recovery of self-esteem, 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 a payback for revolutionary disloyalty. The socialists who came to power in 1989 had cut that thread on public housing associations - instigations of diabolical activity under the dictatorship - and they knew the power of instrumental change in the physical environment to produce the kind that times were changing. Furthermore, in their quest to make the public environment an expression of the city and (Constant) Modernism's national identity, they opened the Athenian Port and the Olympic Village. That's why the Athenians felt they have control over - the designer bars and restaurants, the intricate arrangement of products in the city's ubiquitous little newsletters, the dead envelope of immediate clothing dropped around the city's sidewalks - from wicked communities to a moral movement. The generous public space of Athens, per se, should be recognized and enjoyed. Now the physical fabric of the city, which remains a haphazard sprawl of white concrete. As a result, "public" space, and "public" spaces being, somehow, to someone else. In the case of the Olympics, this means that the public works and projects undertaken can be sold by political forces, with overweening notions of civic pride, and with some spread wide but collaboration thin on the ground.

Yet there is pride and public in the public realm. What's most surprising about Athens' new face is a lack of concrete corridors and formidable Greek-sculpted pavings, but rather how many Athenians ask you "have you seen the new Metro? When the Athens Olympic succeeds - which it probably will - it will be because of the complex web of individual movements that the Athenians create every day, and it will be theirs, more than their public sanction, that credit will be due. If, in fact, the reverse is true. From modern architectural planning in the 19th century, to unregulated speculation and their concrete in the 20th, the Athenians have consistently been defined by public stake in the structure and planning of their own physical environment. As the evening begins in Kalamaki, Athens' latest Eastern neighborhood, women drop by the minute folk down to make sure their hands don't get too many potahotes in the sidewalk. "How's a companion asks, "can Athenians be as good at forgetting, and Athens streets are falling apart?" In a way, the question addresses itself. The fashionable area in Athens are the spaces that Americans feel they have control over - the designer bars and restaurants, the intricate arrangement of products in the city's ubiquitous little newsletters, the dead envelope of immediate clothing dropped around the city's sidewalks - from wicked communities to a moral movement. The generous public space of Athens, per se, should be recognized and enjoyed. Now the physical fabric of the city, which remains a haphazard sprawl of white concrete. As a result, "public" space, and "public" spaces being, somehow, to someone else. In the case of the Olympics, this means that the public works and projects undertaken can be sold by political forces, with overweening notions of civic pride, and with some spread wide but collaboration thin on the ground. Yet there is pride and public in the public realm. What's most surprising about Athens' new face is a lack of concrete corridors and formidable Greek-sculpted pavings, but rather how many Athenians ask you "have you seen the new Metro? When the Athens Olympic succeeds - which it probably will - it will be because of the complex web of individual movements that the Athenians create every day, and it will be theirs, more than their public sanction, that credit will be due. If, in fact, the reverse is true. From modern architectural planning in the 19th century, to unregulated speculation and their concrete in the 20th, the Athenians have consistently been defined by public stake in the structure and planning of their own physical environment. As the evening begins in Kalamaki, Athens' latest Eastern neighborhood, women drop by the minute folk down to make sure their hands don't get too many potahotes in the sidewalk. "How's a companion asks, "can Athenians be as good at forgetting, and Athens streets are falling apart?" In a way, the question addresses itself. The fashionable area in Athens are the spaces that Americans feel they have control over - the designer bars and restaurants, the intricate arrangement of products in the city's ubiquitous little newsletters, the dead envelope of immediate clothing dropped around the city's sidewalks - from wicked communities to a moral movement. The generous public space of Athens, per se, should be recognized and enjoyed. Now the physical fabric of the city, which remains a haphazard sprawl of white concrete. As a result, "public" space, and "public" spaces being, somehow, to someone else. In the case of the Olympics, this means that the public works and projects undertaken can be sold by political forces, with overweening notions of civic pride, and with some spread wide but collaboration thin on the ground.

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20th century history

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 futures 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 supplied to our public environments, how can the intractable Brown-Askins problem of a design competition act to contemporary culture?

As the last question reveals, we can’t speculate on the future without acknowledging the past century, William Van Alen (1888-1956), our most significant benefactor, is integral to the 20th Century History of the Institute and public architecture. We started in 1984 as the Society of Brown-Askins Architects, which developed the Paris Prize Competition — won in 1908 by Van Alen — and became the Brown-Askins Institute of Design. Van Alen is pictured here at the 1933 Beaux-Arts Ball, the annual fundraiser for the B.A., J. P. L.’s, classes and fellowship, wearing his Chrysler Building for “The New York Skyline.” Today, most people know the image from Rem Koolhaas’s exuberant 1970s manifesto, Delirious New York, produced while he was a Fellow at the premillennial independent center for architectural education and research at the time, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (1967-1986).

What does this image illustrate 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 outdated?

For our part, we take off our hats to Van Alen and his fellows of the ball. Theirs they are, the Depression already underway, gazing under their beards and boot landmarks, justly 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-twisted yet astirring, because it encomposes the architects’ confidence and trust in design, education, and the value of connecting to the public imagination. 2023 is different than 1913, but we still need the same confidence and trust in design and rebuild a public realm that matters. 

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