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WINKA'S WORLD

The Dutch Architect Who Has Taken Manhattan and is Remaking Bogotá

BY ELLEN BERKOVITCH

BOGOTA Ideal City

BOGOTA
MY IDEAL CITY
Bottom Up Urbanism,
crowd sourcing & funding
to design the city of the
Future

ARCHITECTONICS TEAM:
Winka Dubbeldam, Principal
Fernando Herrera, Mithila Popper
Aina Tomars, Joe Alms, Shantel Houtan
Jang-Hee Cho, Helena Nam
Miguel Lantigua

DESIGN
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EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF BOGOTA
BOGOTA IS THE NEW BOGOTA

Latin America: Growth of Cities & Middle Class
Latin American cities have been and are experiencing a huge boom in the growing middle class, creating a new balance in society and mobility in cities. Currently, more than 75 percent of Latin America's 500 million inhabitants live in cities, a record for the developing world.

The trend is global - in 1950, just 70 million people lived in cities; by 2000, the figure had risen to over 1 billion. Bogota's urbanization rate of 5.5% per year is one of the highest urbanization rates of any Latin American nation. With that, we also have a booming Middle Class. For the first time in history, there are as many people in the middle class as there are in moderate poverty.

CROWD SOURCING
↓
CROWD FUNDING

face of
improve con
through bottom up
school children and city residents
opportunity for medium sized families
the culinary capitals in the world.

BOTTOM-UP URBANISM
The design of downtown Bogota requires a bottom up approach where we introduce certain attractors across the downtown area based on identified problems and the attractors lead to spin off effects which create various design scenarios.





Winka Dubbeldam arrives right on time for our Skype meeting from her laptop in Berlin. A dashing brunette wearing an open smile and carmine red lipstick, she signals thumbs up to the sequence of “Can you hear me now?”s.

As principal of the New York firm Archi-Tectonics, Dubbeldam, 47, works

as a leader in international architecture, pivoting between private patronage and innovative approaches to funding urban revitalizations.

Born and raised in Holland, Dubbeldam trained first in Rotterdam, then took her second Masters in Architecture at Columbia University in 1991. Formed three years later, her practice sends her globe-hopping, with recent work in Berlin, Bogotá, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, and Santa Fe. She’s also a full professor, who directs the post-professional program at PennDesign, training post-graduate architects who take a one-year Master’s in Architecture.

Dubbeldam defines architecture as the design of space. Theory underpins her approach. Just as in mathematics, where objects can “hover,” as she puts it, between fixed points, Dubbeldam’s architecture also is a shape-shifter—humanistic, to live in; futuristic, to encounter on the city street.

Hers is a continual interplay between

human-centered design and technologies changing architecture, from artificial intelligence to building systems that can effectively “think” on their own. Whereas the architectural icon of the 20th century was Howard Roark, the hero of Ayn Rand’s novel *The Fountainhead*, the new architect that Dubbeldam embodies is nimble, not static. Architecture, she contends, is “not form, but performative. Not aesthetics, but intelligence.”

A through-line threads through her work, an ethic that Dubbeldam refers to as “bottom-up.” Bottom-up in Winka’s world goes to the essence of the architectural task—to be inquisitive, to be able to shape complex arguments. Also, she says, “to use the computer as an intelligent tool, to learn to think with things rather than against things. The idea is that you cannot grow something bottom-up if you plan it top-down.”

Teaching bottom-up design might start





DOWNTOWN BOGOTÁ | MY IDEAL CITY

Client: Prodigy Networks, BD Promotores
Project: Bottom-up Urbanism to Design the City of the Future
Location: Bogotá, Colombia

Dubbeldam is adamant that intelligent architecture demands sustainable choices in heating, ventilating, cooling, and lighting. “It’s so basic it shouldn’t even be discussed at this point.” She can’t understand why, for instance, every New York apartment can’t have thermostats and every stairwell, dimmers—low-cost technology that affords short- and long-term benefits.

with her asking PennDesign students to consider the building an intelligent structure.

Bottom-up site planning involves engaging the public in an active inquiry about what’s intrinsic to that place.

When it succeeds, bottom-up architecture catalyzes effects in cities in which “what you create starts to activate other actions and other spaces.” (To begin with, people move back in. Then, ideally, the city regrows integrally.) Indeed, consider Dubbeldam a kind of architectural weathervane. She reads contemporary culture to see what’s coming and to shape possibilities.

At any given moment her firm is likely to have luxury Manhattan apartment buildings on its boards. Completed ones include the Brewster Carriage House in Little Italy, 33 Vestry Street, and 497 Greenwich in Tribeca. The real estate blog *Curbed NY* has featured her personal and professional real estate transactions eighteen times in

six years. Yet, despite being snarked in the blogosphere as often as she is flattered in the architectural press, Dubbeldam is not a big fan of what she calls “the pop star idea in architecture.” She adds, “I’d rather do good work and focus on that.”

Among her good works have been several pro bono projects: designing an orphanage/school in Monrovia, Liberia, and serving as one of 20 architects who customized the iconic “Jalk” chair—named after late Danish furniture designer Grete Jalk—for a breast cancer benefit auction. While Dubbeldam wears Belgian fashion and groovy haircuts, she drove an AMC Pacer for nine years—picture Winka, the social democrat, in the driver’s seat—and the car is still one of her 12 favorite objects, she told *Elle Decor* in a March 2011 interview.

For Dubbeldam, architecture in the art realm started in 2002, when art dealer Max Protetch asked her to participate in the exhibition *New World Trade Center: Design*





Winka Dubbeldam at PennDesign

Musician John Legend and photographer Ellen von Unwerth live in Winka-designed buildings with Winka-designed interiors. (As the blog *Curbed NY* would say, “Dubbel Trouble!”)

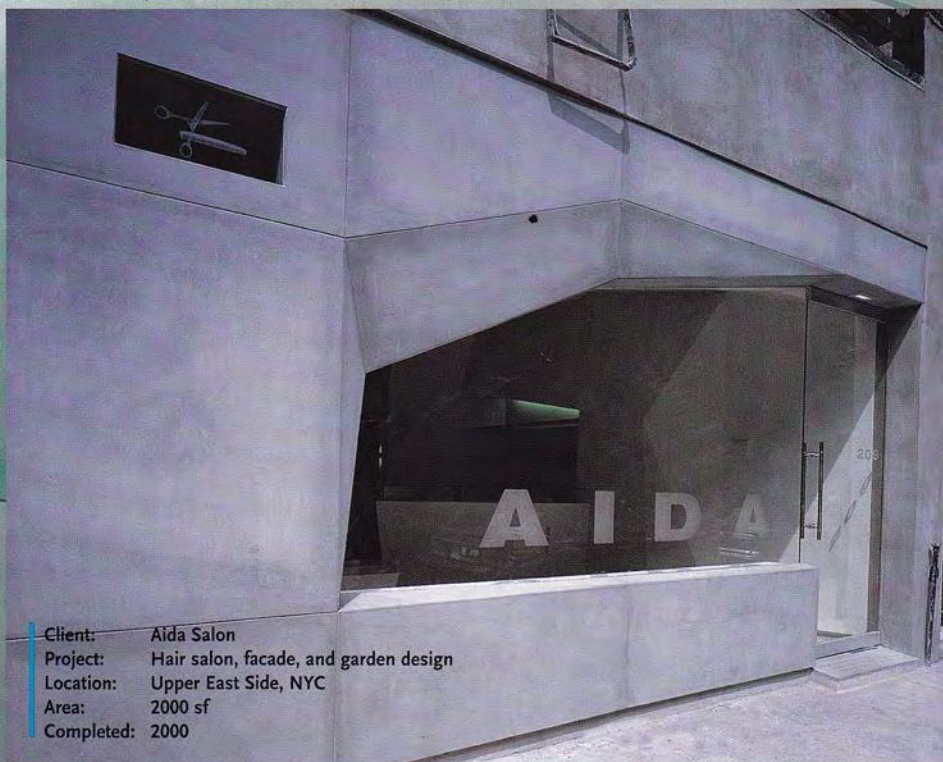
Proposals at his eponymous New York gallery. The project asked 60 architects to envision downtown New York in the wake of 9/11. Protetch, who now lives part-time in Santa Fe, first began exhibiting architecture as art at his original gallery in Washington, D.C., in 1978.

Speaking about the 9/11 project 11 years later, he and Dubbeldam independently agree that launching an art show to propose new designs so soon after the attacks came with huge responsibility. New Yorkers were still raw with fear. However, the show became a gathering place for its residents to embrace optimism by deeply engaging with materializations of what could be created anew. The gallery was jammed from the moment it opened to its closing, Protetch recalls.

Dubbeldam, then in her 30s, contributed to the exhibit a smart video game, in which players chose elements of a new downtown. A newly imagined lower Manhattan then shaped up, visibly, onscreen.

Remembers Protetch, “What I was hoping to get out of the World Trade Center show would be something like a peak experience. I would identify the most brilliant new project that would stand out like a gleaming beacon. I didn’t get that. I got a younger person’s newer approach to dealing with the project, rather than making an iconic structure.”

Dubbeldam’s perspective emerged from her own trauma, in having witnessed the planes hitting the buildings from her weekly Tuesday 8:00 a.m. meeting at the 497 Greenwich construction site. The experience vulcanized her belief that new architecture must leave the hero epoch behind. Instead, she stressed that being in harmony with the emotional situation of New York post-9/11 meant



Client: Aida Salon
 Project: Hair salon, facade, and garden design
 Location: Upper East Side, NYC
 Area: 2000 sf
 Completed: 2000

PETER SCHEIN

Client: Peter Schein
Project: Residential Loft
Location: West Soho, NYC
Area: 3200 sf



inquiring of the collective to inform and shape new architecture. She didn't see this as inconsistent with making daring spaces that employ green design.

Protetch kept track of the young architect and today lauds her sublimity. He particularly praises one of her houses, located near New York State's Croton reservoir. The dwelling sits on plinths constructed in place over the landscape's natural boulders, evoking a musical interplay between raw nature outside, and the stylized interiors.

"She's a great architect," Protetch says, "a good example of the intellectual bent in architecture and art."

A Future Bogotá

Contemplating Dubbeldam's work, one is reminded of the line by Archimedes, "Give me a lever long enough . . . and I shall move the world." She knows she won't do it alone, however.

For a project called *Downtown Bogotá: My Ideal City*, she has been tapped as lead architect and team-builder on

a crowdfunding project to revive urban Bogotá, Colombia. The work derives from a Colombian developer's recent success in sourcing \$200 million from 3200 donors for a new downtown high-rise. The money raised would seem to reflect residents' furious appetite to play a part as citizens in reshaping their city.

To begin work, Dubbeldam drew in the New York media consultancy and "bespoke event" marketing firm PSFK (pronounced "piece of K"). The firm asked Bogotá residents to answer 3000 questions about their preferences on the website miciudadideal.com/en. As of August 2013, nearly 3500 suggestions had already been submitted.

After speaking about *My Ideal City* at TEDGlobal on June 10 in Edinburgh, Scotland, Dubbeldam traveled to Berlin to mount representations of the project at the Architecture Forum Aedes. Conceptually, the project circles around certain "attractors" designed to make Bogotá a more livable city, which for Dubbeldam again returns to "bottom-up."

"What I'm thinking is not very normal," she allows. "You have to imagine downtown Bogotá as a version of downtown Los Angeles before SCI-Arc [the Southern California Institute of Architecture] moved in, but worse." There are 33 colleges or universities in Bogotá, so the student population is expected to be at the front line of its downtown renewal, much in the way that SCI-Arc students helped revitalize their Los Angeles neighborhood.

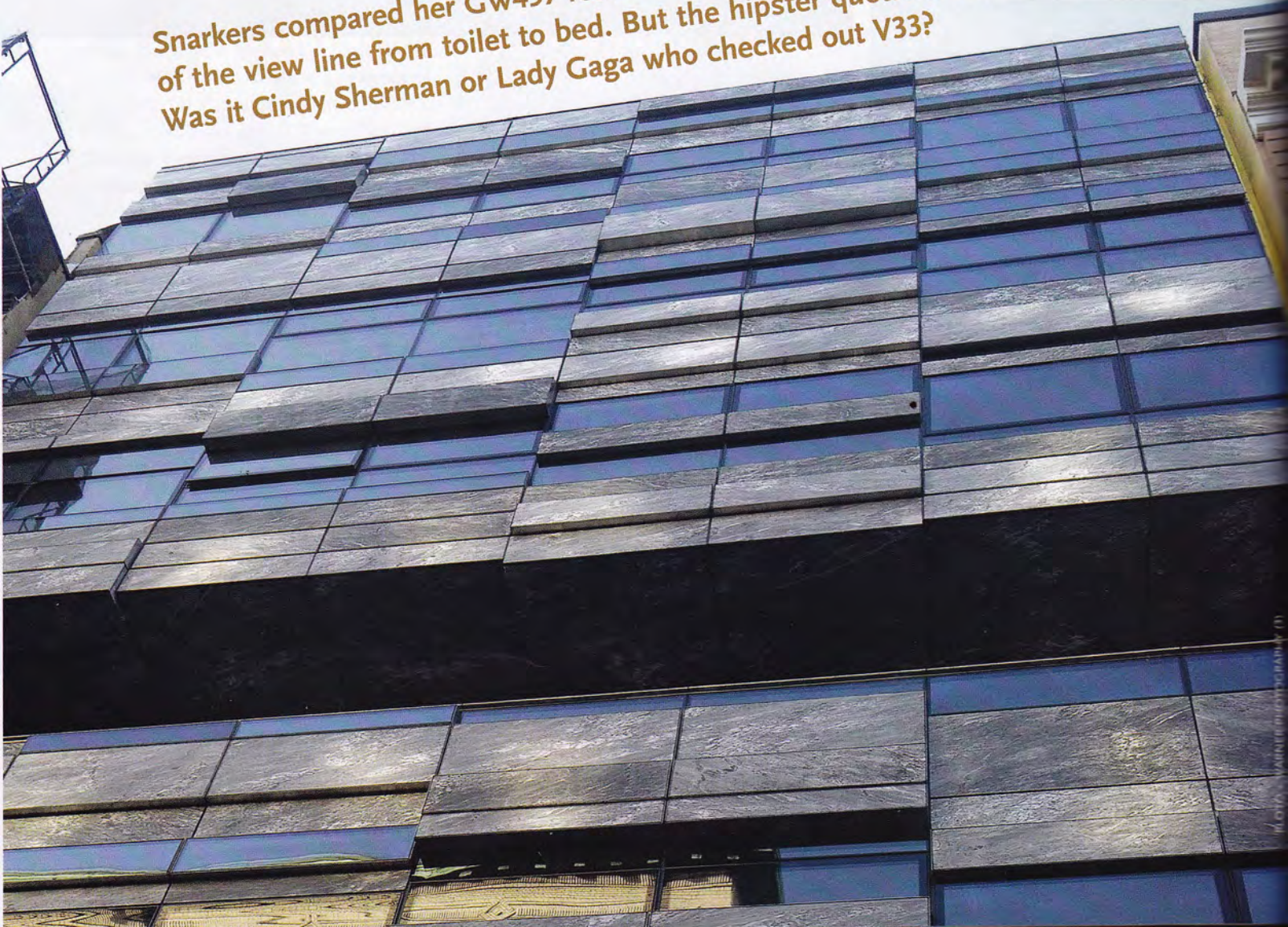
Some 1.7 million Colombians commute downtown on weekdays, but only 250,000 live there. In Latin America, the architect stresses, unstable currencies have engendered stable real estate markets, unlike in the United States, where so many bad mortgages burst the housing bubble.

"Traditionally, the West thought it would save the Third World, but Latin America is fast growing a middle class that is educated and ready to build cities," Dubbeldam says. "Attractors" are spark plugs for change that reveal the intrinsic site qualities that, if remediated or built upon, are generative—i.e., cause spin-off reactions. >



V33 RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
Client: Vestry Acquisitions, LLC
Project: Vestry Street
9 residential units,
7 units with underground
parking, including two
3-story townhouses
and one 2-story penthouse
Location: Tribeca, NYC
Area: 32,364 sf

Snarkers compared her GW497 residence to a “super-luxe prison cell” because of the view line from toilet to bed. But the hipster quotient doesn’t mind: Was it Cindy Sherman or Lady Gaga who checked out V33?





GW497
Client: Take One, LLC
Project: New 11-story addition to existing warehouse: 25 residential lofts, art gallery, retail and gym/pool
Location: West Soho, NYC
Area: 77,000 sf
Completion: 2004





She cites redirecting the Bogotá River from a concrete bed to a more natural sluiceway. Using the dilapidated galerias (interior shopping corridors) of the historic La Candelaria neighborhood to envision new shopping squares absent any global big-box brands is another attractor in progress. Artists also live and work there. Twenty of them already inhabit houses that a Colombian art collector has purchased. They pay rent in art, and the public comes downtown for events that constellate around the budding colony.

One doesn't have to scratch deep to detect roots in architect Rem Koolhaas, an architect who has made the practice of architecture synonymous with the design of cities, and for whom Dubbeldam once worked.

And if city planning comes with a big overlay of theory, so does Dubbeldam's approach to code and regulations.

Tradition's New Rules

"It's not that easy to fold a building," Dubbeldam told a Syracuse University audience, remarking on the Tribeca project, with its wavy glass facade. Designing it forced her to examine the "essence" of what is known in architecture as the

"curtain wall," usually a nonstructural south-facing section of glass designed to facilitate a passive solar effect. Discussions with the contractor about the curtain wall standard led her to the view that "restrictions are rules. Every rule is a game. And every game has rules you can break. The moment you don't standardize [a curtain wall], but just call it a glass wall, there are all kinds of opportunities."

The 497 Greenwich project was, in Dubbeldam's design, an 11-story building wrapped around a preexisting six-story warehouse on the same site, the curtain wall reenvisioned to recreate a more dynamic relationship between inside and out—again, architecture transcending boundaries to create a performative experience.

It stands to reason that Winka Dubbeldam is assertively not a contextualist; instead she hovers between a fixed point in the past and the new dynamic she's creating for the present and future. For 33 Vestry Street, she envisioned the seven-unit building as a series of "stacked villas." There, the relationship between private interior and public street magnetized. Dubbeldam used the front as a site of complex physical intersection between the lines of



the neighboring buildings that she "pulled over" the facade, and the south-facing back as the spot where cantilevered floor slabs are heated by, yes, a curtain wall that overlooks lush planted gardens.

At the Greenwich building, Dubbeldam notes that residents can sit in their living rooms and be inside of rainstorms without getting wet. At Vestry Street, lying in bed, the "street sees you."

Sure, such upscale buildings elicit the NYC pun brigade: "Dubbel Dam! Floor-Plan Porn!" Then comes the recitation of features: "Dornbracht faucets! iPod in-wall docking stations! Gas fireplaces in every unit!" And while every building has a LEED certification, Dubbeldam holds that

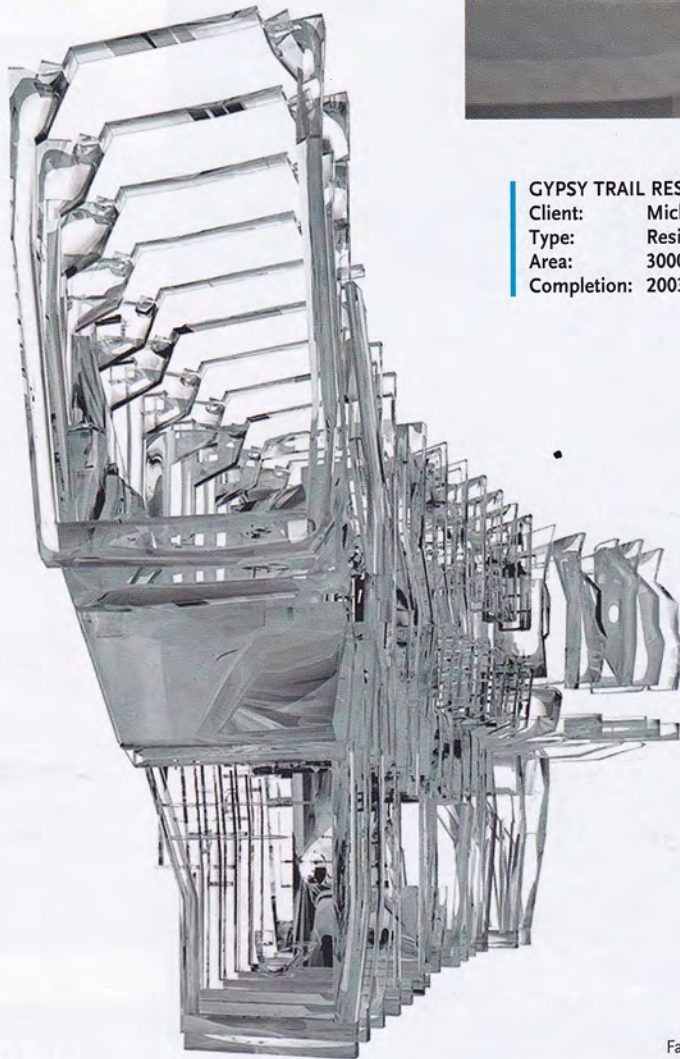


green design should be so elementary it doesn't even need discussing. Thermostats in every New York apartment, dimmers in every stairwell, she urges.

She allows that her work, as described in New York media, tends to evoke the inventory of luxury product catalogs. "I joke, 'my architecture was just reduced to a bathtub,'" she says. "But architecture is not a floor plan or a finish. Architecture is space. To me it doesn't make a difference whether people have money or not. I treat the project just the same. I expend the same effort on creating spatial experiences."

That she is bringing her aesthetic to a building in Santa Fe County has been confirmed. However, the project, for a digital film company, is in the early fundraising stage, and hence still hush-hush. But no matter where she works, her mindset and aesthetic remain the same, what French philosopher Gilles Deleuze described as articulating the need for the "right" problems.

"Architects have to rethink urban issues, sustainable issues, architectural issues," she asserts. "All the while we have to be great designers. For me that combination is really important. It's our job to instigate things and get things moving." *



GYPSEY TRAIL RESIDENCE
 Client: Michael H. Spain
 Type: Residence, Kent, NY
 Area: 3000 sf
 Completion: 2003