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TECHNOLOGY AND THE CITY
CHATTANOOGA AUSTIN DETROIT SAN FRANCISCO

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



TECHNOLOGY AND THE CITY

10 2013

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[NEWSMAKER]

Winka Dubbeldam

BY LAURA RASKIN

THE START of the school year marks Winka Dubbeldam's first fall semester as chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design. But the principal of New York firm Archi-tectonics has hardly been on summer vacation. She has been traveling the globe to discuss MyIdealCity, a crowd-sourced, bottom-up urban planning project for downtown Bogotá, Colombia, that she and her office helped develop. ("I love working there. I might be a closet Latin American," says the Dutch-born architect.) The project is propelled by an English-Spanish website on which more than 3,000 urban planning and lifestyle questions have been asked since it



Dubbeldam presenting *MyIdealCity* at the TEDGlobal conference in Edinburgh.

launched this spring. Dubbeldam and her team are drawing trends from the answers and feeding the information into an ongoing set of proposals for the city. The project and research was the subject of an exhibition at Architecture Forum Aedes in Berlin this summer. RECORD spoke to Dubbeldam about MyIdealCity's innovations.

How did you get involved?

Rodrigo Nino [president of real estate marketing company Prodigy Network and the creator of MyIdealCity] asked the most perfect question I ever got from a client, which was: "Would you like to be the lead architect for a bottom-up proposal for downtown Bogotá? Put a team together, organize exhibits and academic events and TED talks, and run the whole

thing." For me it really combined what I've been doing academically for years and what I've been doing in my practice. I was more than thrilled. I put a team together with urbanist Gary Hack [former dean of Penn's School of Design] and James Corner.

How is it different from top-down planning?

A top-down plan typically comes from city planning and the mayor. A bottom-up plan looks not only at the integration of people, but also the intrinsic qualities in downtown Bogotá, the economy, politics. And it's much more geared to putting acupuncture-like effects in the site and then instigating spin-off effects. And there's no government involved.

How did this project come about?

Over 3,200 people invested in a project called BD Bacatá. It's the first skyscraper in years in downtown Bogotá. They raised over \$200 million. But there is essentially no one living in downtown Bogotá, and there is a growing middle class and urbanization. But a whopping 1.7 million commute daily to downtown. One million of those commuters are students coming to over 33 universities there. We started thinking about micro and student housing, as well as how to instigate creation of supermarkets, laundries, Internet cafés, post offices. This would reduce traffic and pollution. One of our initiatives is working with local artists to create a new arts district.

Is the city government involved?

No. They are doing things, though. They just launched a plan by OMA for their government buildings. It's very top-down [laughs]. I really love Rem so if anyone can do that, he can. But it was hilarious. Talk about top-down!

The \$200 million was raised for BD Bacatá?

Yes, and essentially they raised too much. And they realized that just plopping a tower into the downtown wasn't the way to go. You need to talk to the people, get them behind it, to get the whole area going. So I thought it was extremely enlightened for my clients to understand and focus on that.

Did the excess money raised go into funding MyIdealCity?

Yes, to give back the investment to the people and to downtown. We hope that it informs the next step. ■

Firm Named for New Sandy Hook School

Sviglas + Partners was chosen to design and engineer a new Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Voters will decide this month whether or not to demolish the current school building where 20 children and 6 educators were shot to death on December 14, 2012.

Curators Chosen for U.S. Pavilion at Venice Biennale

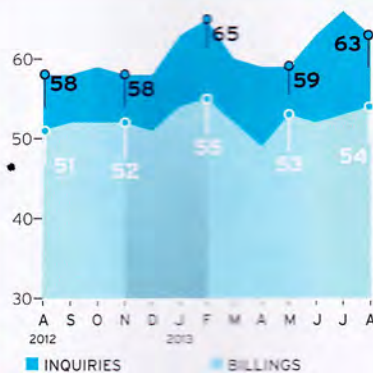
Curators from New York's Storefront for Art and Architecture and Boston-based PRAXIS Journal will organize the U.S. pavilion at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale. Calling their proposal *Entitled OfficeUS: Criticism by Re-making*, the project will reimagine the pavilion as an active architectural practice.

Designers Shortlisted for U.S. Embassy in Beirut

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Building Operations has chosen Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Mack Scogin Merrill Elam with AECOM, and Morphosis Architects to advance to the third stage of evaluations to design a new U.S. embassy in Beirut.

Architecture for Humanity Leaders to Take on New Roles

Architecture for Humanity cofounders Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr have announced that, after 15 years at the helm of their nonprofit, they will leave their roles. Stohr will return to her career in television and web production; Sinclair will help launch a fund to support the growth of Architecture for Humanity.

**Design Professions in Recovery**

The Architecture Billings Index (ABI) continues to show that design activity is growing nationally, with an August score of 53.8, up from a mark of 52.7 in July. The sector breakdown was: mixed practice (60.1), commercial/industrial (54.8), multifamily residential (52.1), institutional (50.8). The project inquiries index was 63.