In July, an undulating aluminum canopy threaded through the trees will open on the lawn of London’s Serpentine Gallery. Designed by Tokyo-based SANAA, the pavilion is the latest addition to the gallery’s high-profile roster of temporary structures by prominent designers. Also opening this summer in London, the Art Fund Pavilion, from a competition-winning design by the young Brooklyn-based firm Tina Manis Associates, will serve as an annual seasonal gallery for the Lightbox in Woking, a contemporary art center founded in 1993, which opened its current home in 2007. The 2009 Serpentine design is continued on page 24.

The Chicago-based Hyatt Foundation has named the revered Swiss architect Peter Zumthor the 2009 Pritzker Prize Laureate. Zumthor, 65, will receive the medal and a $100,000 prize at a ceremony on May 29 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works in the Swiss village of Haldenstein. With an office of approximately 20, Zumthor is known to be selective about the commissions he accepts. His most recognized project remains the Thermal Bath in Vals, Switzerland, completed in 1996. Other prominent recent projects include a field chapel at Wachendorf, Germany and the Kolumba Art Museum built atop the ruins.


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ZUMTHOR AT THE ZENITH

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NRDC PAVES WAY FOR MAYOR’S ENERGY-SAVING RETROFITS

Leasing Green

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s block-buster Earth Day announcement of a plan to retrofit the city’s building stock won plaudits from sustainable-building advocates, labor unions, and other stakeholders. But as green boosters celebrated at the press conference atop Rockefeller Center, one key interest group remained notably quiet: commercial landlords.

The plan’s measures—four laws introduced in the City Council and two provisions in the mayor’s PlaNYC program—for buildings in the range of 50,000 square feet and up to undergo an energy audit every 10 years. Any buildings that fail to meet efficiency standards would be required to continue on page 4.

Walk This (Arch) Way

Long barred to the public, a stone-covered archway beneath the Manhattan Bridge in Dumbo is being reopened for public access this summer, revealing for the first time in decades the elegant public space designed by renowned Beaux Arts firm Carrère and Hastings, which created both approaches. Thanks to the advocacy of the Dumbo Improvement District, the archway is also expected to serve as a stage for a variety of public programming, as well as a temporary summer site for a public marketplace known as the New Amsterdam Market.

Much of the new programming, including the market, has yet to be formally announced pending city approvals, according to the district, which emphasizes that discussions with public officials are ongoing. “The Dumbo Improvement District is working closely with the Department of Transportation and the City of New York to readapt and unveil The Archway,” the district said in a statement. “Plans are in the continued on page 6.
THE WORLD WITHOUT US
Fred Bernstein provides pertinent insights regarding the plight of the U.S. national pavilion for the Shanghai 2010 World Expo (“Worlds Away,” AN_07_04_15.09).

The private group authorized by the State Department to develop the pavilion remains grossly underfunded, and the pavilion is built. The reasons given by the group, comprising lawyer Eliosof, film-industry executive Nick Winslow, and former Bush trade official Frank Lavin, are that U.S. law prohibits government spending on Expo, and it’s tough raising private money in a down economy.

It’s always tough raising money, but the law’s the not to blame. The 1991 law in question doesn’t prohibit spending on Expo, only the way the spending is done. In fact, it gives the Secretary of Commerce (not State responsibility for organizing agencies’ support of Expo activities. The decision not to publicly fund the pavilion was made by the Bush administration, and accepted by the Eliosof-Winslow group.

There’s more to the story. In 2006, the State Department issued an RFP for a privately-funded pavilion. A volunteer association of Expo veterans—to which I belonged—was the “finalist.” But our funding scheme, a for-profit corporation, was too radical for the State Department, which preferred corporate philanthropy; and we wouldn’t disclose details of our design with the government’s usual promise of confidentiality, which was not forthcoming.

When the RFP expired in 2008, the State Department privately authorized the Eliosof-Winslow group to create the U.S. Pavilion. Without a solid prior critique, the program and pavilion were uninspiring. The group resigned from the job last October—but was apparently resurrected by the Shanghai Consulate with Chinese money. It encountered the same resistance as before. Now the U.S. has missed the Expo’s deadline for participation.

Today, 233 nations and NGOs have committed to the Shanghai Expo. Only three remain uncommitted—the U.S., Colombia, and Andorra. The Obama administration still can and should arrange for funding, but not for the Eliosof-Winslow scheme. Our nation needs a 21st-century pavilion that is sustainable and expressive of America’s willingness to play its part as a responsible world leader—which we have designed.

ROBERT JACOBSON
BHSL GROUP
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

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It’s an awkward time for design. And that’s a very good thing. At the Milan furniture fair, the list of the recent past for limited-edition design objects—those sets of 6 or 12 exotic items made with Fabergé-egg exactness and often unusable except as acquisitions—has been redirected.

Recycling is the mantra now, but so are durability, quality, and beauty. The limited-edition craze made a lot of money for a few people, and even turned Miami into a seasonal mecca for something other than winter sunburn. But it made others uncomfortable with its exclusivity and preciousness, and what appeared to be a blunt rebuttal of modernism’s core values of productivity and access. Critics used expressions like “bulimia” to describe how the hunger for luxury stuff had overwhelmed a healthier appetite for everyday essentials. Yet the scads of money in play proved irresistible.

Designers, and even some architects, wanted in, and it wasn’t always easy to comprehend why a resin-molded table might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars apart from the name starting with “Z.”

But then Karim Rashid, who launched his career sexing up “artist’s proofs” and another Lockheed—there were four at that port of Expo activities. The decision not to fund the Eliasoph-Winslow pavilion. Our funding...