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ON THE SPOT

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not stirred:
007 style**

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forward
with square
competition**

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tradition
redefined**

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chapel finds
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Gather round the fire in Norway

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ON THE SPOT

News and observations

Making an entry

AMSTERDAM (NL) — A new, transparent entrance building for Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum, for which Japanese office Kisho Kurokawa Architects & Associates made the first sketch, is now in progress. Hans van Heeswijk architecten, specializing in alterations to museums, worked out the idea and plans for the construction, which will comprise 650 m² of glass. ▶





The Van Gogh Museum is one of the city's most popular tourist attractions. Often there are so many visitors standing in the queue that the area around the museum is blocked, which can cause hazardous traffic situations. By shifting the entrance to the other side of the building, the museum hopes to ensure a better flow of the 1.5 million people who visit each year. With this new entrance, the Van Gogh Museum opens onto Museum Square, like its neighbours the Stedelijk Museum and the Rijksmuseum. It is centrally located between the two, and added to an existing elliptical exhibition wing (by Kisho Kurokawa), which was completed in 1999. The double-curved roof is mirrored, however, allowing for a clear separation from the existing part. Visitors will enter the museum through its new entrance beginning in summer 2015. (KIM HOEFNAGELS)



↑ Users of the social network can search, browse and identify unused land or vacant buildings.

Social strategy for unoccupied properties

ROME (IT) — Throughout Southern Europe, the economic crisis has left many cities with crumbling institutions and dissolving social welfare. In Rome, one-sided, developer-friendly crisis measures failed to heal the construction industry. To provide solutions for social needs or help balance the city budget, citizens' organizations and young architecture offices engaged in restoring social and cultural services.

Paradoxically, while Rome has one of the most expensive real estate markets in Europe, the city counts innumerable empty properties, both in very central locations and at the peripheries. These properties represent great opportunities for initiatives searching for workspaces, exhibition halls and event venues. This is the underlying idea of the City-Hound platform.

City-Hound is a social network developed by the young architecture firm T SPOON, designed to connect owners of properties that have been without leasers for a long time with people in need of space to test new ideas for social, cultural and creative projects. The platform allows users to search, browse and identify unused land, vacant buildings or leftover infrastructure, helping create an active community and a collection of ideas, expertise and capacities.

City-Hound also assists larger-scale development programmes: within the context of the EU-funded project Temporary Use as a Tool for Urban Regeneration, City-Hound serves as a pilot platform to map abandoned properties within a Rome neighbourhood. In this district, the platform hosts information about over 70 abandoned properties, including schools, industrial premises, shops, infrastructure and green spaces, some of which have become test sites for the municipality's temporary use programme. (LEVENTE POLYAK, DANIELA PATTI)

Info www.city-hound.com

Contested waterfront

BELGRADE (RS) — In an attempt to boost the country's economy in a time of crisis, the government of Serbia and the Belgrade city council have offered an enormous area on the city's waterfront for development projects that are supposed to not only have a beneficial effect on the country's economy, but also transform the face of the city. So far, this seems fair. Under closer scrutiny, however, some questions and doubts arise.

The sheer scope of the project, which is supposed to cover an area along the river Sava of approximately 80 hectares with about 1.8 million m² of offices, retails, hotels and luxury apartments for an estimated cost of roughly 2.4 billion euros, all within a period of less than ten years, sounds rather overwhelming. Also, there is the issue of the transparency of the process. The investor, Eagle Hills, a company associated with the name of Emirati businessman Mohamed Alabbar, and which seems to have been established especially for this occasion, as well as the master plan, along with the designs of the future buildings, have seemingly been chosen without any public bid, competition or tender, and with local institutions and professionals having no word in it. Furthermore, there have been some hasty modifications to the current General Urban Plan of Belgrade

and the regulation plans for the area, in order to allow for the desired building parameters. Naturally, all this was followed by both professional and general public protests, which have mostly been quietly and lightly dismissed by the authorities.

Since the mid-1970s, local institutions and professionals have introduced a number of plans with the goal of creating a lively civic area on the banks of the Sava in the centre of the city, fully integrating New Belgrade with the historic city. As part of this effort, a study for a modern metropolitan railway was conducted and the construction of a new railway station and metropolitan ring road commenced. Following the economic crises of the 1980s and the later Yugoslav Wars, work has been on hold, but the project has, under different names, been frequently used and misused, mainly for the acting regime's rhetoric. That is probably why a significant portion of the public believes that this is yet another such cycle.

Meanwhile, the old rails are being removed, one historic building was reconstructed as a promotional stunt, and a single expo pavilion is being built. The politicians are full of praise while authorities give full support, but the professional public and private citizens desperately protest and fear that when (and if) it gets built, Belgrade Waterfront, with its forest of luxurious sky-high corporate architecture, will rob them of both their city and its river. (MIODRAG NINIC)

↓ Hasty modifications to Belgrade's urban plan cast doubt on the project investor.



↓ Architects and ordinary citizens alike are expressing their misgivings about the mega-project.

