Never Built New York

Sep 17 2017
Feb 18 2018

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@QueensMuseum #NeverBuiltNY


Never Built New York is made possible with support from Delta Air Lines, the National Endowment for the Arts, Capalino+Company, Fisher Brothers, New York Building Foundation, and RXR Realty. Additional support is provided by Martha and John Lubell, The Durst Organization, GRIMSHAW, NBBJ, Silvercup Properties, Helen and Peter Warwick, Martha and Leon Goldin, Anita Steinberg, George S. Kaufman, MetLife, Martha and John Lubell, The Durst Organization, GRIMSHAW, RXR Realty. Additional support is provided by Capalino+Company, Fisher Brothers, New York Building Foundation, and RXR Realty.

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Very special thanks to the Queens Museum’s partners at the Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York New Practice Award. Wassmann develops designs influenced by art, geometry, and the cosmos. In 2010, Wassmann received the Swiss Art Award in architecture, and in 2012 the studio won the AIA New York New Practice Award. Joshua Jordan, Director of the Fabrication Lab at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, led students in designing and producing the Never Built city on the Panorama of the City of New York. Shimahara Illustration created the Panorama’s virtual reality renderings.

Hidden behind New York City’s iconic skyscrapers, meandering subway system and famous public parks is the ghost of a city that could have been—a parallel metropolis where you might land on a floating airport, catch a football game in Manhattan, or live in an apartment building that doubles as the tower of a bridge. This ghost city has an obelisk at one end of Manhattan, a dome over the middle, and a cluster of 100-story silo-like dwellings in Harlem.

These alternate dimensions are the varying landscapes of Never Built New York. As a chronicle of ambitious architectural and urban schemes that never made it past the drawing board, this exhibition explores possibilities: visionary dreams and urban prescriptions, mad adventures and painful propositions. Each Never Built allows you to experience the startling power of images to convey urban ideas, and represents solutions that, despite their initial failures, often refused to die. All shed light on the mountainous obstacles facing urban creation, and reveal how close the city we know came to becoming wildly different.

The exhibition is organized in three parts. In the long, tapering Rubin Gallery, whose shape resembles that of Manhattan, items are organized geographically from downtown to uptown, and rise high on the walls to mimic the height and density of New York. On the Panorama of the City of New York, more than forty Never Built projects are installed in their originally-intended locations, supplemented in select cases by virtual reality renderings. Plans and drawings intended specifically for Flushing Meadows Corona Park surround the Museum’s central Skylight Gallery, where a “bouncy castle” version of Eliot Noyes’ Westinghouse Pavilion, originally intended for the 1964 World’s Fair, invites you in.

The drawings, models, blueprints, installations, and virtual renderings on display invite us to re-imagine our sprawling metropolis and consider its future possibilities. They give us the freedom to engage the city of tomorrow through the dreams of yesterday.

Co-Curator Sam Lubell is a Contributing Editor at The Architect’s Newspaper and has written seven books about architecture. He co-curated the A+D Architecture + Design Museum > Los Angeles exhibitions Never Built Los Angeles and Shelter: Rethinking How We Live in Los Angeles. Co-Curator Greg Goldin was the architecture critic at Los Angeles Magazine from 1999 to 2011. He co-curated the A+D Architecture + Design Museum > Los Angeles’ Never Built Los Angeles and the Getty Museum’s No Further West. Exhibition designer Christian Wassmann develops designs influenced by art, geometry, and the cosmos. In 2010, Wassmann received the Swiss Art Award in architecture, and in 2012 the studio won the AIA New York New Practice Award. Joshua Jordan, Director of the Fabrication Lab at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, led students in designing and producing the Never Built city on the Panorama of the City of New York. Shimahara Illustration created the Panorama’s virtual reality renderings.