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Design Surge

MoMA commissions teams to tackle New York's rising waters



IN A STUDY BY GUY NORDENSON, CATHERINE SEAVITT, AND ADAM YARINSKY, PROPOSALS WERE MADE TO ADDRESS RISING SEAS IN NEW YORK HARBOR, INCLUDING AN ARTIFICIAL REEF MADE OF SUBWAY CARS.

COURTESY GUY NORDENSON ASSOCIATES, CATHERINE SEAVITT STUDIO, AND ARO

A new MoMA/P.S. 1 program called *Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront* pairs four teams of designers with four sites in New York and New Jersey's Upper Bay. The teams will develop designs for "soft infrastructure" to mitigate high storm surges, which are projected to intensify due to climate change-induced rising waters, leaving New York vulnerable to Katrina-style flooding.

The teams, which will be announced later today, are led by principals from Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis, nArchitects, Matthew Baird Architects, and SCAPE Studio. Each will be given a stipend and residency at P.S.1, and the designs will be exhibited at MoMA in late March 2010.

The teams will join ARO, who, with engineer Guy Nordenson, landscape designer Catherine Seavitt, initiated the project as independent research before joining forces with MoMA. Their soft infrastructure concept is meant to enhance the environmental health of the region while providing a buffer against storm waters. They estimate that water levels will rise by a foot in the next 50 years and two feet over the next century. "The experience of Katrina taught us the value of wetlands," Nordenson said. "We need to start thinking positively about what we can do to address these scenarios."

The research intrigued Barry Bergdoll, MoMA's chief curator of architecture and design, who believed it would make a good subject for an exhibition. Simultaneously, P.S.1 was developing a new residency program, which Bergdoll suggested could be used to support a handful of New York architecture offices in the



NORDENSON'S TEAM IMAGINES SLIPS CARVED OUT OF EXISTING STREETS IN SUNSET PARK.



LEWIS.TSURUMAKI.LEWIS WILL WORK ON SITE 1, MATTHEW BAIRD ARCHITECTS ON SITE 2, NARCHITECTS ON SITE 3, AND SCAPE STUDIO ON SITE 4.

downturn, in addition to fostering public debate about responding to climate change. "It's a rare time where we're commissioning something that hasn't yet been designed," Bergdoll told AN.

MoMA selected the four additional teams out of approximately 40 candidates nominated by a group of deans, journalists, curators, and professionals. In order to qualify, offices had to be in existence for ten years or less. The jury included architect David Adjaye, City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden, Nordenson, and Michael Oppenheimer, a professor of Geoscience at Princeton University.

Bergdoll expects each team to focus on an individual site, but a coordinated strategy between sites may emerge through the shared residency. "There should be cross-pollination, but each site should bear the stamp of the individual design teams," he said.



SOLUTIONS AS SIMPLE AS THE REINTRODUCTION OF WETLANDS, RENDERED HERE ON THE SHORES OF STATEN ISLAND, HAVE BEEN PROPOSED IN THE INITIAL STUDY.

Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis will focus on the Northwest Palisade Bay and Hudson River area of New Jersey, including Liberty Park/Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and surrounding waters. nArchitects will work on a zone including Eastern Staten Island, Bay Ridge, and Sunset Park. Matthew Baird Architects was given the Southwest Palisade Bay and Kill van Kull area, including Bayonne, Bayonne Piers, and northern Staten Island. SCAPE Studio was assigned the Northeast Palisade Bay and Buttermilk Channel, along with the Gowanus Canal area, including Governors Island and Red Hook.

Meanwhile, ARO will focus on Lower Manhattan.

Alan G. Brake