

In brief

USA

Critic pours cold water on "museum boom"

In a signed editorial *Architecture* notes that recent high-profile museums, such as Richard Meier's recently-opened Getty Center in Los Angeles (see WA63 page 25) and plans for expansion at New York's Museum of Modern Art, "upstage the art". "The viewing experience is sacrificed at the altar of the avant-garde."

The magazine calls on architects to resolve, "the inherent conflict between the active, populist spaces now demanded of contemporary museums and the introspective environments they still require".

ZGF lift-off in LA

After three years in construction, phase one of the California Museum of Science and Industry (CMSI) and Exposition Park in Los Angeles opened on 7 February.

Designed by local firm, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership (ZGF) the 22,760-square-metre California Science Center is the culmination of ten years work, and represents an investment of US\$130 million. The Center includes: interactive exhibits; a Science Court; a 3-D IMAX theatre; a conference centre; food and retail services and flexible exhibition space.

The CMSI occupies a 395-hectare site on the edge of the downtown district of LA. Consulting architect on phase one was RAW Architecture.

Phases two and three – housing an aquarium and exhibit expansion, and additional exhibition facilities respectively – are currently in planning. Funds to build are still being sought.



1997 saw bigger profits for small US firms

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) reports that more than half the member firms it surveyed expect double-digit profits from 1997. "Less than one in five firms expects profits to run under five percent on net billings," the AIA says.

Continuing a trend from 1996, smaller firms, with net billings under US\$1 million, expect to do better than larger firms. US architecture firms employ



US architects build big in the superpower of tomorrow

Marine Tower in Shanghai's Lujiazui district, designed by Los Angeles-based AC Martin Partners, has achieved full occupancy only months after completion. The 25-storey granite and glass tower is built in the plan configuration of a ship, reflecting the business of the building's owners, the China State Shipbuilding Corporation and the need to meet the corporate requirements of multi-national firms based in Shanghai, China's booming business capital.

On the other side of the river, Sydness Architects of New York,

have won the international competition for the five-star Hong Ta Hotel. The 38-storey, 385-room hotel is to be located in the Pudong district. The slender tower will be clad in red granite. The design features a 24-metre high "podium", for essential hotel facilities. Sydness won the commission ahead of Arquitectonica of Miami, and two firms from Hong Kong. Construction begins later this year, for a scheduled opening in 2000.

Elsewhere in the imposingly prolific superpower Minoru Yamasaki Associates, of Rochester Hills, Minnesota, has completed the

design for the Xiwang Building owned by Dalian Xiwang Building Co Ltd in Dalian, on the Yellow Sea coast. The 38-storey (170-metre tall), 90,000-square-metre mixed-use office tower will cost approximately US\$100 million to build. Already on site, completion is scheduled for December. **AM**

1: Marine Tower, Lujiazui, Shanghai by AC Martin Partners

2: Model of Hong Ta Hotel, Pudong, Shanghai by Sydness Architects

3: The Minoru Yamasaki Associates-designed Xiwang Building, Dalian City

India rejects Land Act

The Indian Union Cabinet has repealed the Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act of 1976, to facilitate the entry of vast tracts of vacant urban land into the property market.

As it stands, the Act has lost its relevance and serves only to put an artificial constraint on supply, thereby distorting the entire structure of the market. "Once the Act is repealed, over two million hectares of land lying vacant ... will be available for development in urban India. This will have a sobering effect on the property market as a whole," says Ashoke Kumar Assistant Vice President of property consultants Lloyds Brooke Hillier and Parker.

Though the Union government has decided to

The latest shopping mall of the future

Huge shopping malls and "big-box" retail stores are a staple of US suburbia. But *Building Design & Construction (BD&C)* reports a "hybrid" design that could herald a change. The Mall of Georgia, set to open in 1999 in an Atlanta suburb, "will feature aspects of an outdoor village, as well as those of a conventional enclosed mall," says the US weekly.

Designed by Atlanta, Georgia-based architect Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates, the plan calls for a crescent-shaped mall to embrace a "village" of small shops on landscaped paths.

Roadway improvements will provide links with three