

Time Out

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COKE AND A TRIAL

Inside the biggest drug case
in Chicago history

JEANNE'S GANG

The Art Institute deconstructs Chicago's hottest architectural team

FEDER
Bob Greene,
ten years after

PRINCE
A Q&A
2 die 4

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a black sleeveless dress and black sandals, stands in the center of a large, arched wooden structure. The structure is made of many curved wooden planks that create a series of overlapping arches. In the background, a city skyline with several skyscrapers is visible under a clear blue sky. The ground is a flat, light-colored surface.

Building momentum

As a new Art Institute exhibit re-creates Jeanne Gang's studio, we tour the real thing—and try to figure out what makes the modest architect tick. By **Lauren Viera**
Photograph by **Michael Lewis**

THE SELF-DESIGNED offices of Studio Gang Architects consume the second floor of a sturdy commercial building overlooking the Division Street Blue Line stop. The reception nook resembles the waiting area of a casual family restaurant, with cozy wall-to-wall cushioned booth seating bolstered with cheery fabric. Pinned to the walls above are plans for a building at 56th Street and Cornell Avenue—the highly anticipated Solstice on the Park housing development, which has yet to break ground.

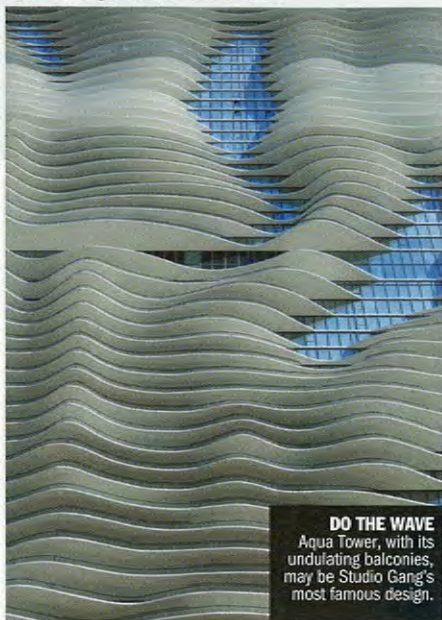
The reception desk, for the moment, is empty. The entire office looks empty, based on the half-dozen desks in view. But audible clues of a morning in progress—the pleasant whir of a coffee grinder, a spoon scraping up the last bite of cereal from the bottom of a bowl—drift from a communal area of the office that's tucked out of sight. The genius of the layout lies in its deception: There's much more going on here than meets the eye.

So, too, with the firm. Studio Gang principal Jeanne Gang, who one year ago this week was awarded a \$500,000 MacArthur Fellowship genius grant for exceptional merit in creative work, is best known as the architect behind Aqua, the award-winning 82-story skyscraper in Lakeshore East. But that building was completed two years ago, and Gang is busy with about 15 other projects. The biggest of these are what will shape the firm's 21st-century legacy.

Not yet two decades into its existence, Studio Gang has 40 employees, with Gang and her partner, managing-principal Mark Schendel, at the helm. Current projects, both under construction and on deck, range from a 10,000-square-foot center for social justice leadership at Michigan's Kalamazoo College to the reimagining of the mile-long Northerly Island. Handling projects of this scale is not the norm for firms of Studio Gang's age or size. Its success is an anomaly, which is the foundation for this month's exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, "Building: Inside Studio Gang Architects," opening Monday 24. This, too, is a rarity: The Art Institute hasn't hosted a solo show for a living architect since 2006.

"This is a very pivotal moment in their career," says Zoë Ryan, chair and curator of the Art Institute's department of architecture and design, who began exploring the idea of a

Studio Gang exhibition after introducing the architect at a lecture in 2010. Ryan says: "Mark and Jeanne and I got in a cab [after the lecture] and went to dinner, and she turned to me and said, 'Oh my God, I loved your introduction.' And I thought, There's a bond there. When you're doing an exhibition, you work so closely with people. In many ways, it's like working on a piece of architecture, and I remember thinking she'd be a perfect collaborator."



DO THE WAVE
Aqua Tower, with its undulating balconies, may be Studio Gang's most famous design.

Two years later—an unusually short window for ushering in a major exhibition—Ryan and AIC assistant curator of architecture and design Karen Kice are seated in their offices, poring over a round table stacked with binder-clipped heaps of collateral for the exhibit. It resembles any number of projects pinned to the walls at Studio Gang, complete with plans and elevations and mock-ups galore. (The original idea for the exhibition was to move Studio Gang Architects' entire studio into the Modern Wing, but it quickly became clear that a for-profit business would have trouble operating in a nonprofit space. Still, Kice says, "I think the firm was excited about the 10:30 to 5 o'clock hours.")

"They're only 15 years old," Ryan says, "but have a career succession of really important buildings with many more on the horizon, and they have a career one might equate with an older firm because they've built a lot already, and they have a lot being built. At the same time, this is a very transitional moment, where the projects are getting larger and more complex. We're not sealing her career and legacy."

Northerly Island, for one, is a huge commission and long-term commitment for the firm. Spanning 91 acres of lakefront that currently lacks a real draw beyond Adler Planetarium and Charter One Pavilion, the manmade peninsula will transform under Studio Gang's watch to strike a balance between active and passive urban programming over a carefully designed ecosystem. When it's finished—the target date is 30 years out; construction on the first phase, due for completion in 2017, begins this year—there will be urban campsites, canoe portals and a 12,000- to 14,000-seat amphitheater replacing Charter One.

There are much smaller projects, too, such as Studio Gang's collaboration with Expo Chicago, which opens Thursday 20 (see "Win, lose or draw," page 18). For the contemporary art fair's inaugural year, Studio Gang designed an exhibition floor plan for Navy Pier's Festival Hall that will position galleries on a Chicago-inspired grid, diagonal streets and all.

Mid-morning in the Studio Gang offices, things are still quiet. There are more empty chairs than not, meaning people are out at project sites or other meetings. This is far from the frenetic work environment I imagined; things seem almost dull. But every few feet, there are signs that work is furiously happening somewhere: Plans for projects line the walls in one long show-and-tell, called a "charette." At Studio Gang, this means pinning everything on walls at the final stages of design, after you've been sleeplessly working for days and you're finally ready for the whole office to see—and critique—your plans.

Design-team member Claire Cahan, 28, chats as we walk through the halls, past more plans and a workshop where, later that day, architects will be busy building models. Studio Gang's employees are divvied up into teams managing



DOCKING STATION
Studio Gang's plans for Northerly Island will take years to be completed.



DESIGN DIALOGUE
Jeanne Gang, right, talks with employee Claire Cahan in the Studio Gang offices.



SHOWING US THE ROPES These rope barriers will divide the Art Institute's Studio Gang exhibition into different "rooms."



MOCK TRIAL Team members at Studio Gang mock up details of the Art Institute exhibition.

multiple projects, Cahan explains. She split the month of August working on the Art Institute exhibition and Northerly Island plans.

"It's amazing," Cahan says, "because in my day-to-day, when I'm overwhelmed, Jeanne is seeing five different projects going from this scale—" she gestures to the Kalamazoo project, for which the team is currently studying wood masonry for the building's exterior, "talking about bug issues in the wood, super zoomed-in, to Northerly Island and how we can plan for the next phases of it. [Jeanne and Mark] have a real ability, and they use that ability to see the different directions people are going in, and they bring that to all of their work."

Notable about Studio Gang, from a curator's standpoint, is the depth of research that's plainly pinned to their walls. "It's very inspiring when you go there," Ryan says of Studio Gang's HQ. "What's interesting about them is that Jeanne is less interested in formal solutions as she is in trying to find solutions that really open up projects to, perhaps, possibilities that aren't expected."

For museumgoers, Ryan and Kice grouped a selection of Studio Gang's work into four themes—nature, density, community and performance—to showcase similarities. That's the main room of

"Inside Studio Gang Architects," the traditionally curated side of the exhibit, showing off the firm's research, materials and studies as well as the requisite plans, models and renderings.

As for the back room, Ryan explains, "It really will be just like you've been given the keys to Studio Gang's office and are allowed to look through top-secret information." Raw building materials, iPads loaded with imagery, formal presentation documents used for clients—it's all there to touch, read, study. In the center of the room is a giant round table at which a series of lectures called "archi-salons" will be staged throughout the duration of the exhibition, led by local architects, free and open to museumgoers. "Jeanne, of course, will be there," Ryan says.

Meanwhile, Gang declined an interview for this story, instead issuing a statement via e-mail explaining that the whole team, not just Gang, is valuable. "Good design is only possible when talented people are involved in every niche of the process," she explains. The 48-year-old architect has actively removed herself from the media of late, perhaps in hopes of letting her firm's work speak for itself. But some suspect her hesitance is due, at least partially, to the way she has been portrayed in national media, which tends to highlight Gang as the token female ambassador

to an otherwise male-dominated trade. Every other article seems to point out the fact that she is a "female" or "woman" architect while similar coverage of male-run firms dubs them, simply, architects. Questions directed to her lately have gone beyond buildings; lifestyle magazines have queried the office for Gang's beauty regimen.

Also, as Studio Gang residential client David Hernandez observes, her reticence comes naturally: "[Jeanne and Mark] are every bit as modest and humble and straightforward now as when we met them back in 2004." Hernandez and wife Tereasa Surratt hired Studio Gang Architects to redesign their West Town home, better known as Brick Weave House, which was completed in 2008 to critical acclaim. "They're the antithesis of the stereotypical elite architecture firm," Hernandez says. "She's wonderfully soft-spoken and modest and Midwestern. She's a small-town Illinois girl, basically."

Gang's statement speaks only of the task at hand: her firm's ever-expanding portfolio. "At this point, our office is leading work on a variety of building types, scales and geographical contexts," the e-mail reads. "We are working with ideas that are specific to the particulars of each project while also refining the more general set of principles that applies to our overall body of work. There is great energy in the office right now and it feels like we are hitting our stride."

That energy may have come at a slow burn on the morning of my visit. But things are humming by 11am, and probably well past the 5 o'clock hour. Ideally, Cahan says, Gang and Schendel operate on the periphery of their colleagues' teams, plugging in for updates as needed. "We all attend a lot of meetings and try to use our time really wisely," Cahan explains—but by the nature of their work, meetings don't end until everyone understands the big picture. There's no time to go back and rehash once a project is moving forward, she says: "Things move too fast."

Elmhurst Art Museum

150 Cottage Hill Ave, Elmhurst (630-834-0202, elmhurstartmuseum.org). Tue–Thu 10am–5pm, Fri 10am–8pm, Sat 10am–5pm. \$7, seniors and students \$5, kids under 12 free. Fridays free.

"No Rules: Contemporary Clay."

Taking a variety of forms, from large and small-scale sculpture to community-based walks to performance, video and photography, the work in this exhibition underscores artists' enduring relationship with clay and its adaptability to contemporary concerns. Through Jan 5.

The Field Museum

1400 S Lake Shore Dr (312-922-9410, fieldmuseum.org). Daily 9am–5pm. No entry after 4pm. \$15, seniors and students \$12, kids ages 3–11 \$10. Discounts for Chicago residents.

"Nature's Toolbox: Biodiversity, Art, and Invention." You are more likely to find dinosaur bones than contemporary art at the Field Museum. But in this show of compelling artworks and installations, you'll find international artists riffing on themes of biodiversity, climate change, mass extinction and pollution of air and water. Despite its share of disheartening facts and images about species decline, it's refreshing to see Isabella Rossellini and other artists lighten up the science-based exhibition with a dash of humor and sex. Through Dec 2.—*Jennifer Swann*

The Garfield Park Conservatory

300 N Central Park Ave (773-638-1766, ext 33, garfieldconservatory.org).

"Chicago's Twelve." As an exhibition space, the Garfield Park Conservatory presents unique possibilities and challenges. This exhibition of sustainable art, curated by Sergio Gomez, features a dozen local artists presenting works made of everything from traffic cones to dead trees to baling wire. The pieces vary in how successfully they work within the various greenhouses. Works that more subtly announce their presence have greater impact; there's enough quiet, abstract beauty in this show to counterbalance the more obtrusive works. Through Dec 9.—*Laura Pearson*

Graham Foundation

FREE 4 W Burton Pl (312-787-4071, grahamfoundation.org). Wed–Sat 11am–5pm.

"Zak Kyes: Working With..." Kyes, art director of the Architectural Association in London, presents his collaborations in graphic design with Andrew Blauvelt, Joseph Grigely and several other architects, artists, designers and curators. Through Sept 22.

Hyde Park Art Center

FREE 5020 S Cornell Ave (773-324-5520, hydeparkart.org). Mon–Thu 10am–8pm; Fri, Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm.

"Ground Floor." Spotlighting the most promising artists coming out of Chicago's top-level M.F.A. programs, this biennial exhibition brings the work of new Chicago artists together in one show. Through Nov 11.

"Two Histories of the World." This exhibition features the sculptural, multimedia and installation works of five artists who transform used materials and explore the qualities of found objects as they circulate in contemporary culture. Through Jan 26.

"Youth Art Board: Dreams & Nightmares." Teen artists conceptualized, curated and executed this exhibition featuring their own artwork portraying literal depictions of dreams and nightmares, as well as related concepts. Through Nov 21.

"Wattie White: The Chicago Project." Omaha-based artist White incorporates snippets of conversations with his subjects

Critics' picks**1 Expo Chicago Navy Pier**

Chicago's new international art fair brings more than 100 galleries from around the world to Navy Pier's Festival Hall (See Events).

► **Thu 20–Sun 23**

2 "Building: Inside Studio Gang Architects" Art Institute of Chicago

Get a look behind the scenes at architect Jeanne Gang's studio of talented designers in this retrospective of the firm's work (See Museums & Institutions).

► **Opens Mon 24**

**3 "De-Natured: German Art from Joseph Beuys to Martin Kippenberger" Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art**

Experience the best of postwar German art on Northwestern's gorgeous lakefront campus (see Museums & Institutions).

► **Opens Fri 21**

FREE**4 Gallery Weekend Chicago Various locations**

Fifteen of Chicago's contemporary art galleries join forces to provide four days of free events to the general public (see Events).

► **Thu 20–Sun 23**

FREE**5 "Ground Floor" Hyde Park Art Center**

See the best of Chicago's young and up-and-coming artists in this juried biennial exhibition of recent M.F.A. grads (see Museums & Institutions) ► **Through Nov 11**

FREE

into his almost billboard-size vinyl portraits derived from prints. He will add pictures of two Hyde Park residents during the show's run. Through Oct 21.

Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

◆ 756 N Milwaukee Ave (312-243-9088, art.org). Tue, Wed 11am–5pm; Thu 11am–7:30pm; Fri, Sat 11am–5pm. \$5, kids under 12 free.

"Ex-Static: George Kagan's Radios." Over the past 14 years, self-taught Chicago artist Kagan has created a striking assemblage of hand-built radios and design drawings. The exhibition features more than 50 of Kagan's works. Through Jan 5.

Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art

FREE Northwestern University, 40 Arts Circle Dr, Evanston (847-491-4000, blockmuseum.northwestern.edu). Tue–Sun 10am–5pm.

"De-Natured: German Art from Joseph Beuys to Martin Kippenberger." The exhibition presents the work of ten of the best-known contemporary German artists active from the 1960s to today. While diverse, the work of these artists has been informed by a fracturing and questioning of authenticity and representation provoked by 20th-century German history. Opens Fri 21. Through Dec 9.

"Joseph Beuys: Sand Paintings." Joseph Beuys professed that art should be a way of life. In 1974, the artist and

photographer Charles Wilp traveled to a Kenyan beach and documented Beuys creating his distinctive motifs in the sand. Featuring the entire portfolio later compiled from Wilp's photographs, this exhibition provides a poetic insight into Beuys's spiritual and aesthetic connection to nature. Opens Fri 21. Through Dec 9.

"Shimon Attie: The Neighbor Next Door." Attie creates immersive multimedia art that reflects the relationships between place, memory and identity. In this film installation the artist creates a feeling of confinement using archival film footage taken clandestinely by citizens in Amsterdam who were forced into seclusion by the Nazis. Opens Fri 21. Through Dec 9.

Millwaukee Art Museum

700 N Ari Museum Dr, Milwaukee, WI (414-224-3200, mam.org). Mon–Wed 10am–5pm; Thu 10am–8pm; Fri–Sun 10am–5pm. \$15, seniors and students \$12, kids under 12 free.

"Grete Marks: When Modern Was Degenerate." Famous for her sleek tableware, Bauhaus designer Marks (1899–1990) lived the utopian idea that thoughtful art would improve modern society. Yet because of the political circumstances of her time, she was considered guilty of being artistically vanguard, politically left-leaning and Jewish. Discover how the Nazi regime derided her bright career, deriding her progressive designs as "degenerate." Through Jan 1.

"Currents 35: Tara Donovan." Donovan takes multiples of everyday objects—like drinking straws, pushpins and Mylar sheets—and creates

installations that transform these mundane materials into amazing works of art. The MAM exhibition includes a monumental sculptural wall relief fabricated from thousands of plastic drinking straws—not to be missed. Through Oct 7.

Museum of Contemporary Art

220 E Chicago Ave (312-280-2660, mcachicago.org). Tue 10am–8pm; Wed–Sun 10am–5pm. \$12 suggested admission, seniors and students \$7, kids under 12 free. Tuesdays free for Illinois residents.

"Chicago Works: Heidi Norton." Curated by the MCA's Karsten Lund, Chicago artist Heidi Norton's first solo museum exhibition explores the commonalities and contrasts between sculpture and photography. Known for working with common household items, Norton often captures botanical material into glass, resin and wax, emphasizing changing colors and life cycles. Through Oct 23.

"Jimmy Robert Vis-à-vis." This is the first major solo exhibition of Jimmy Robert in the United States and will include photography, sculpture, film, video and collaborative performances, all threaded together by a concern for the body. Robert's work is inspired by cultural figures of the recent past—writers, filmmakers, visual artists—who were pioneers in their respective art forms. Through Nov 25.

► **"MCA DNA: John Cage."** The latest installment of the MCA DNA series looks at the productive, 25-year relationship between celebrated avant-garde composer/artist John Cage and the MCA through works in the collection as well as archival materials. Through Mar 2.

"MCA DNA: William Kentridge." Curated by Lynne Warren, this exhibition of Kentridge's drawings is part of an ongoing series featuring iconic works from the MCA's permanent collection. Although best known for his short animated films, Kentridge considers drawing the basis of his work. The drawings featured in this exhibition were used to make his film *History of the Main Complaint* (1996). Through Mar 17.

"Skyscraper: Art and Architecture Against Gravity." Curator Michael Darling says the MCA's skyscraper exhibition was "inspired by Chicago, its skyline, and the notion of Chicago as the birthplace of the skyscraper." He and cocurator Joanna Szupinska include a diversity of artists and mediums in this sprawling, thrilling exhibition. Included are works by Andy Warhol, Roger Brown, Jennifer Bolland and Vito Acconci. Through Sept 23.—*FM*

Museum of Contemporary Photography

FREE Columbia College, 600 S Michigan Ave (312-663-5554, mccp.org). Mon–Wed 10am–5pm; Thu 10am–8pm; Fri–Sun 10am–5pm.

"Peripheral Views: States of America." "Peripheral Views" questions the existence of the mythical "real America" and takes on the challenge of "picturing America in our time." As the title implies, the exhibition doesn't focus on obvious road-trip subjects, but more elusive realities: the landscapes of the American psyche. The most entertaining—and provocative—piece is Liz Magic Laser's *I Feel Your Pain* (2011). The video is a fitting, fun ending to a road trip that's more head trip. Through Sept 30.—*FM*

National Museum of Mexican Art

FREE 1852 W 19th St (312-738-1503, nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org). Tue–Sun 10am–5pm.