

**J. CREW'S STRONG QUARTER/2 BARKIN'S RARE JEWELS/11**

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# WWD FRIDAY

**Beauty**



# Eyeing the Good Life in Public Spaces

With urbanites working longer days and taking shorter vacations, the idea of taking a breather on a stretch of grass or at an outdoor art space is appealing.

Keeping that in mind, New York City's Van Alen Institute is putting the finishing touches on "The Good Life: New Public Spaces for Recreation," an exhibition highlighting how existing and proposed public spaces are being redefined for the 21st century. Images of 70 projects from around the globe, designed by an array of architects, landscape architects and multidisciplinary artists, will be on view Sept. 8 to Oct. 1 at Hudson River Park's Pier 40.

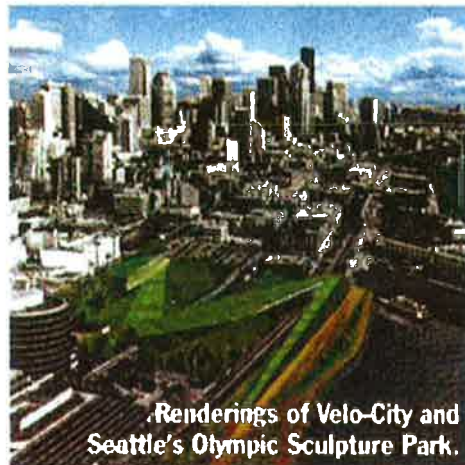
The show has five areas — the Fun City, the Healthy City, the Cultured City, the Connected City and the 24-Hour City — illustrating how each improves city dwellers' quality of life on a daily basis and promotes urban regeneration. Even the exhibition space underlines the need for flexibility in public places. Amale Andraos and Dan Wood of WORK created the wiggle, a band of fabric that will be manipulated to create openings, windows for video screens and areas to gather.

Visitors will see renderings or photos of Chris Hardwicke's proposed Velo-City, a tubular bicycle "highway" for environmentally conscious commuters in Toronto, and the Soweto Mountain of Hope, a garbage dump-turned-community art project in South Africa. There will be renderings of things to come — a floating park in Seoul, an artificial forest in London and a 24/7 sculpture garden in Seattle.

Planning public space where people can reflect or unwind might sound easy, but it's not, according to VAI senior curator Zoe Ryan.

"It's misidentified as a simple idea. New York is a perfect example as to how difficult it is to build an engaging space when so many people need to be part of the process for permits," she said.

Some of the projects grow more complex. Mandla Mentoor's initial concept for the Soweto Mountain of Hope was to have a local youth group clean up a former garbage dump and use some of the objects found there to make art. It was such a hit that Cambridge, England, architect Katy Marks got involved and a nearby water tower was converted into an art/community center. "The idea of tapping into local resources enables you to make a space active," Ryan explained.



Renderings of Velo-City and Seattle's Olympic Sculpture Park.

Another place highlighted is the three-unit Idea Store located in ethnically diverse London neighborhoods. Designed by Adjaye/Associates, these libraries/community centers are housed in glass buildings in heavily trafficked areas to make them more accessible to passersby. Each has a lending library and areas for yoga classes and meetings for mother groups.

Visitors to the exhibition will also get to check out the plan for Seattle's Olympic Sculpture Park, an 8.5-acre park scheduled to open in late October offering art as well as musical and theatrical performances. Even more intriguing is the proposed Park and Jog in Manchester, England, where designated lanes for walking, jogging, cycling, rollerblading, swimming, canoeing and horseback riding would be set up to get people in and out of the city. A Suit Park would be built to give them a place to shower and change.

Other engaging places to be featured are architect Jorge Mario Jauregui's mile-long Metropolitan Park, which is pending approval in Rio de Janeiro, and the Contemporary Music Center in Taichung, Taiwan. The latter would provide a venue to promote Asian pop music, and studios, workshops and amphitheaters for aspiring musicians.

Ryan said, "These places are used for much more than relaxation and sports. They are for social and cultural activities. It's much more about broadening our horizons, particularly in the economic and political situation we are in at the moment. It's very timely and relevant. These spaces provide an opportunity to meet one another and come together."

— R.F.