

# AROUND TOWN

## MUSEUMS

### Emerald city

The Museum of the City of New York imagines a green future for architecture **By Keith Mulvihill**

Ever since Kermit the Frog sang his famous lament "It's Not Easy Being Green," environmentalists, with their utopian vision of living in harmony with nature, have had an anthem on which to hang their recycled-fiber hats. For decades, eco-friendly ideas such as solar power, rainwater harvesting and ultra-energy-efficient materials have acquired the patina of pie-in-the-sky science fiction. But no more. At least that's the way you'll feel after visiting "Big and Green: Toward Sustainable Architecture in the 21st Century" at the Museum of the City of New York.

"There are two common misconceptions about green architecture," says coordinating curator Thomas Mellins as he strolls through the exhibit. "One is that it's too expensive and no one will build it; the other is that it's ugly." But after even a quick perusal, "Big and Green" dispels both of these notions. Eco-friendly buildings are being erected all over the world, and they're just as sleek and modernist as any Mies van der Rohe could have designed. What's more, Mellins claims the edifices are cost-effective. "Green architecture is not worth a lot if it is not economically viable," he says.

The handsome exhibit, largely constructed from recycled material, is divided into five sections: Energy; Light and Air; Greenery, Water and Waste; Construction; and Urbanism. Each of these areas greets on-lookers with beautiful models, pictures and, in some cases, videos. Those who delve into the text-heavy show are rewarded with a plethora of interesting facts about green architecture and design, such as how office workers at the Condé Nast Building at 4 Times Square—the city's first green skyscraper—are breathing at least 50 percent more fresh air than their counter-

parts toiling away in traditional glass-and-steel high-rises.

"Big and Green" debuted at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., in January 2003; the New York version (though scaled down in size) has added several local green-architecture projects. Among them is Coney Island's Stillwell Avenue subway hub, which, upon completion in



**GREEN DREAM** If completed, the proposed Jets Stadium could be one of the largest energy-producing buildings in the world.

2005, will generate 15 percent of its electricity by solar power.

While most of the projects on display have already been completed—including Battery Park City's Solaire, which is the nation's first eco-friendly residential high-rise—others are under construction and a few are proposals.

The new Jets Stadium, for instance, would include wind turbines and solar panels, making the sports complex one of

the largest energy-producing buildings in the world—even with a crummy team, the design is a winner. Similarly, the fabulously futuristic 3D-Garden, a high-rise designed by German firm MVRDV, features tree-laden platforms extending outward from the building—essentially enveloping

it—that may one day redefine our ideas about green space.

For New Yorkers, such a forward-thinking exhibit couldn't have arrived at a better moment. Possibly not since the inception of Central Park will the city undergo such dramatic changes, with huge multibillion-dollar redevelopment programs slated for lower Manhattan and others proposed for midtown's West Side, plus a makeover of Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, among additional projects.

Still, the intent of "Big and Green" isn't to make a preachy tree-hugger plea; rather, according to the show's curator, David Gissen, it's designed "to promote debate" and to give visitors a chance to see where architecture may be heading. "If you look at what's going on in lower Manhattan, I think these buildings provoke a discussion about what a tall building can do," says Gissen, an assistant professor of archi-

tecture at Pennsylvania State University. Gissen says that when someone built a tall building in the past, "the major public issues were what kind of shadow it would cast and would it be pretty?" But the buildings presented in "Big and Green" take those questions further: Does a building have to suck energy and water out of the city or can it reciprocate? Can skyscrapers create a healthy, even enjoyable, place for office workers?

"Hopefully, the show will arm the people who go see it with a greater set of ideas about how tall buildings should be discussed," Gissen says. "Green architecture is not about creating eco-yuppie enclaves. It should be about something more. If builders are going to use the language of public benefit, then the building should really provide that."

## Listings

### WE'VE MOVED!

Venues: Please send all correspondence to our new address, 475 Tenth Avenue, 12th floor, New York, NY 10018. Also note this section's new fax number, below.

### IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED

Submit information by mail, e-mail (aroundtown@timeoutny.com) or fax (646-432-3160) to Ayren Jackson.

Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest subways, telephone number and admission price, if any.

**Deadline is 6pm on Monday, ten days before publication date.**

Incomplete submissions will not be included, and listings information will not be accepted over the phone.

### HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

The following is a partial listing of major museums and institutions in the five boroughs. For more museums, see Art. Running exhibitions are included in most listings.

★=Recommended

◆=This week only

### American Bible Society

1865 Broadway at 61st St (212-408-1200; [www.americanbible.org](http://www.americanbible.org)). Subway: A, C, B, D, 1, 9 to 59th St-Columbus Circle. Mon-Wed, Fri 10am-6pm; Thu 10am-7pm; Sat 10am-5pm. **FREE** Through Wed 31: "Finding Faith: Folk Art of Peru from the Collection of Antonio Lulli." Drawn from the private collection of Peru's former ambassador to the U.S., this exhibition displays 66 works of a devotional nature, including brightly colored *retablos* (tabletop altars) and *santos* (wooden carvings of saints).

### American Folk Art Museum

45 W 53rd St between Fifth and Sixth Aves (212-265-1040; [www.folkartmuseum.org](http://www.folkartmuseum.org)). Subway: E, V to Fifth Ave-53rd St. Wed, Thu, Sat, Sun 10:30am-5:30pm; Fri 10:30am-7:30pm. \$9, students and seniors \$7, members and children under 12 free. Free admission Fri 5:30-7:30pm. Through Feb 1: "The Perfect Game: America Looks at Baseball." Trade figures, weather vanes, scorecards and other art objects illustrate the influence of baseball as America's national pastime. Ongoing: "Recent Gifts to the American Folk Art Museum: A Collection Sampler." Ever since the museum opened the doors of its new location in December 2001, several notable works have entered the permanent collection. To highlight the diversity of this ever-growing collection and to explore the traditional and unconventional facets of folk art, this exhibit features a selection of recent gifts dating back to the early 19th century. **Holiday hours:** Closed Thu 25 and Thu 1.

### American Museum of the Moving Image (AMMI)

35th Ave at 36th St, Astoria, Queens (718-784-0077; [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us)). Subway: V, G, R to Steinway St; N, W to Broadway. Wed-Thu 12-5pm, Fri 12-8pm, Sat-Sun 11am-6:30pm. \$10, students and seniors \$7.50, children 5-18 \$5, children under 4 and members free. Ongoing: The museum's core exhibit, "Behind the Screen," takes visitors through the steps involved in making, marketing and exhibiting moving images. Interactive displays allow you to try everything from animation to sound-effects editing. On display: "<ALT> DigitalMedia." This hands-on gallery space lets visitors get their paws on digital artworks, includ-

**"Big and Green: Toward Sustainable Architecture in the 21st Century"**  
Museum of the City of New York, through January 19