

## SECOND WIND

Early conversations surrounding the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial indicate that the second iteration of the exposition will be looking to more regional sources for content. With the **Lucas Museum of Narrative Art** likely moving out (see front page), and **Choose Chicago**, the city's tourism marketing organization, running into major economic issues, Chicago is looking to make a big statement to maintain its reputation as a contemporary architecture destination.

## STAND UP GUY

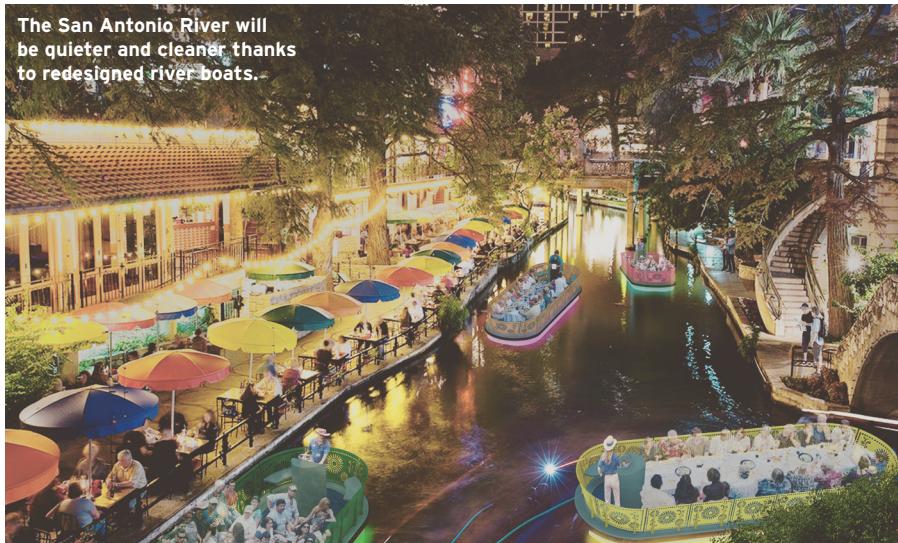
Former mayor **Michael Bloomberg** was honored with the medal at the recent black-tie Architectural League of New York President's Medal Dinner at the Metropolitan Club. He gave a spirited acceptance speech, including a few zingers. "The only way to express my gratitude is to tell you the one architect joke I know: Two beavers were swimming in the water below the Hoover Dam. And one beaver turned to the other and asked: 'Did you build that?' and the other one said, 'No, but it's based on my design.'"

## MOORE MOORE!

According to *AN*'s sources, the Charles Moore Foundation had just completed an agreement to preserve Charles Moore's Los Angeles condo. It is still in sound shape, with steep stairs, Piranesi views, vertiginous overhangs, and precarious drawbridges. The latest owner recently passed and, in a "complicated" arrangement, the foundation is populating the space with Moore's folk art. It will attempt to fill the shelves with his entire library by posting an online catalogue and letting enthusiasts ship copies to the site. Hopefully, Moore's former residence will be open for tours one day.

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The San Antonio River will be quieter and cleaner thanks to redesigned river boats.



COURTESY METALAB

HOUSTON-BASED METALAB CREATES A NEW FLEET OF RIVER BARGES FOR SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

## LARGE, BARGE, AND IN CHARGE

In early April, the city of San Antonio and the local AIA San Antonio chapter announced the winners and runners-up for the second phase of their river barge design competition to replace the city's current aging barge system. Their top pick: a proposal by the Houston-based interdisciplinary design firm METALAB for its multipurpose electric barges that could serve both leisure-oriented activities as well as a variety of programs on the San Antonio River.

The barges could host dinner events, sightseeing tours, and parades, as well as provide local transportation. Much of this will be accomplished through a modular decking system of flexible components that can be adapted for a wide range of proposed functions and programs. METALAB's design features a single deck for easier wheelchair accessibility. The thin railings—taking design cues from *papel picado* (A Mexican folk art in which colored paper is cut into decorative designs)—lean out to make the

barges feel more spacious.

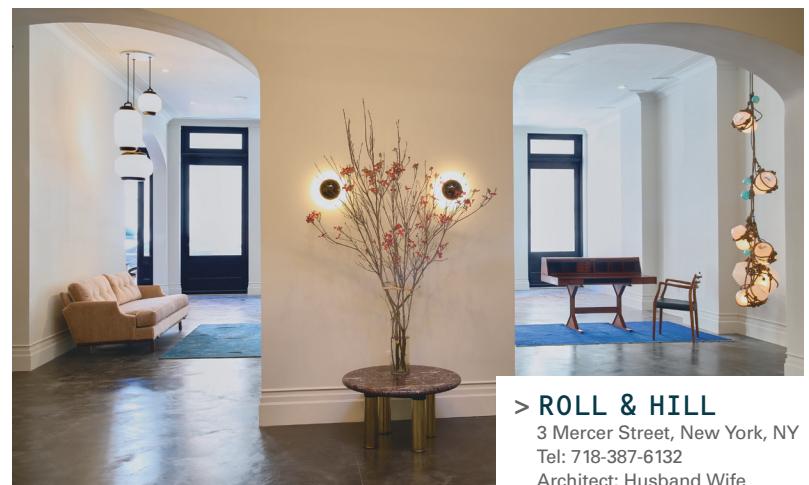
METALAB principals Andrew Vrana and Joe Meppelink spotted the competition post on the AIA website this past December. They approached the design as a "financial and ergonomic problem," said Meppelink, taking on the mind-set of an airplane-cabin designer. A major goal was to maximize seating and rethink the claustrophobic seat arrangement in the current river barges. METALAB's ergonomic, pill-shaped design—good for moving around corners—is 9 feet wide by 27 feet long and can fit up to 44 people.

The barges will run on electricity, with propulsion batteries charged via canopies with solar panels, said Vrana. They will be silent, a big change from the noisy barges today. The batteries, produced by German company Torqeedo, will be part of an integrated system with GPS and a connected app. But it is not without trade-offs. "The electric propulsion puts pressure on the project to be affordable," Vrana said.

The barges will move at three miles per hour and weigh 4,500 pounds. Meppelink and Vrana expect the barges will have a life span of at least 20 years—the batteries will need to be replaced every four to five years.

METALAB's concept will replace all of the existing 45 barges. "The current river barge design was created **continued on page 17**

## OPEN> SHOWROOM



JEFFREY SCHAD

### > ROLL & HILL

3 Mercer Street, New York, NY  
Tel: 718-387-6132  
Architect: Husband Wife

Brooklyn lighting company Roll & Hill is opening its first-ever showroom in Manhattan's Soho district May 14. Together with architecture firm Husband Wife, with which the company previously partnered for its Euroluce stand in Milan, Roll & Hill created a space that reflected its boutique offerings. Founder Jason Miller established the company in 2010 to offer high-quality local craftsmanship (the factory is located in Sunset Park) to a mass audience—working with independent designers such as Lindsey Adelman, Fort Standard, Philippe Malouin, and Formafantasma. The showroom is meant to be a reflection of its luxury wares: "I think lighting often acts as a counterpoint to architecture. I have heard it described as 'jewelry for the home,' and I wanted to create an environment that would allow the lights to do just that," said Miller.

To achieve this effect, the building was completely gutted and elegantly redone in white open spaces punctuated by simple fluted columns, oblong archways, delicate staircases, and gently curving walls. The 4,000-square-foot, four-story showroom opens with a first floor that functions like a traditional gallery ("Without the stuffiness," Miller clarified), while the second floor is viewed as the "library floor" and the third floor "has a sexy '70s vibe," both with plush carpets and wood paneling, accompanied by exclusively designed furniture by Miller, Malouin, and Finn Juhl. "I was looking for a place...that felt intimate. I think it does exactly what I was hoping." **OLIVIA MARTIN**

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