

## LETTER

Aug. 2, 2014

### To the Editor:

Several high-profile architects in the media recently perpetuate an image of architects as ethically insensitive, competitively destructive and socially tone-deaf.

Among the recent examples: Santiago Calatrava for his overdue and overbudget World Trade Center transportation hub; Zaha Hadid for her dismissive comments about construction deaths at her Qatar soccer stadium; Diller Scofidio + Renfro for its American Folk Art Museum-eating Museum of Modern Art expansion; and SHoP Architects for its Domino Sugar Factory 55-story development extravaganza in Brooklyn.

Frank Gehry once said that if we didn't have starchitects, architects (and architecture) wouldn't be in the media at all. But this kind of coverage, even when positive, we don't need. It perpetuates a Howard Roarkian image that makes most of us architects cringe — not the least because of the uber-capitalist, Ayn Rand alignment — and also deflates a more productive optimism within the profession that sees these arrogant acts as old school.

It is not only the public that is fed up with this idea of The Architect, but also the profession itself. Having watched ourselves increasingly backed into the corner of aesthetic elitism, we are now more interested in models of practice that do away with the egos and the glamorous buildings they are associated with.

A version of this article appears in print on Aug. 4, 2014, on Page A20 of the New York edition with the headline: Invitation to a Dialogue: Less Ego in Architects

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