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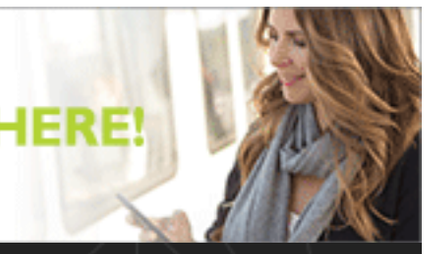

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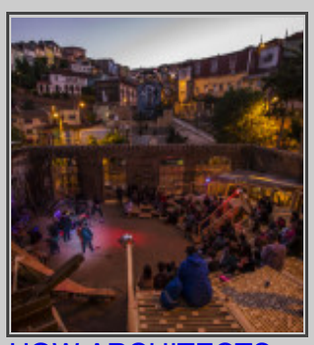

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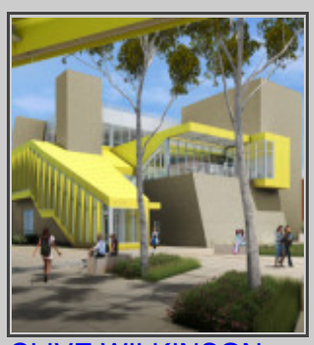

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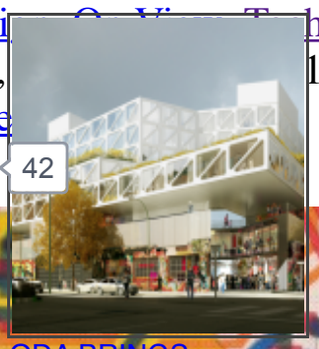

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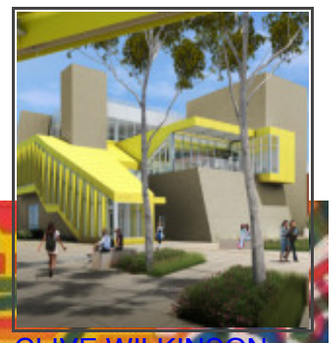

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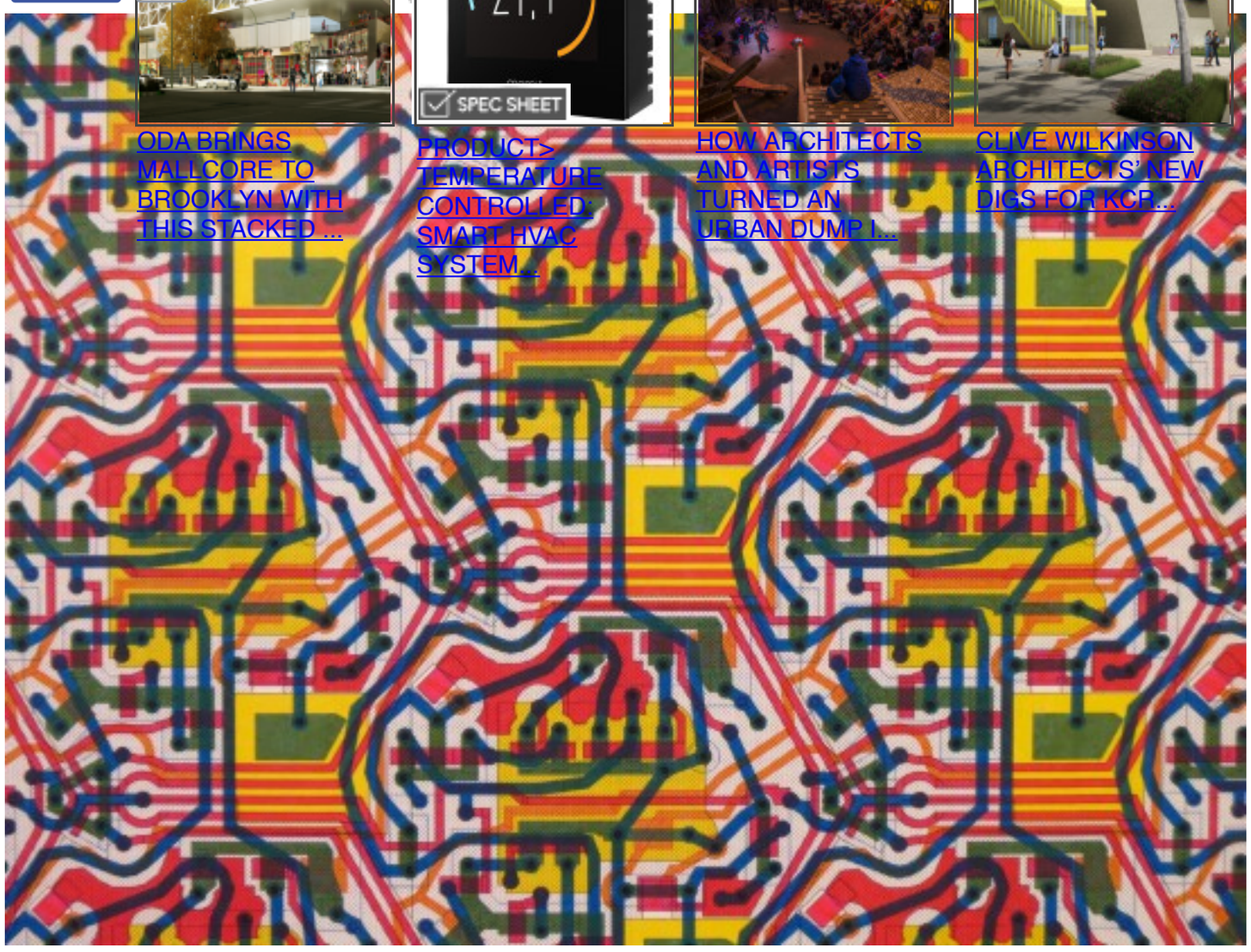
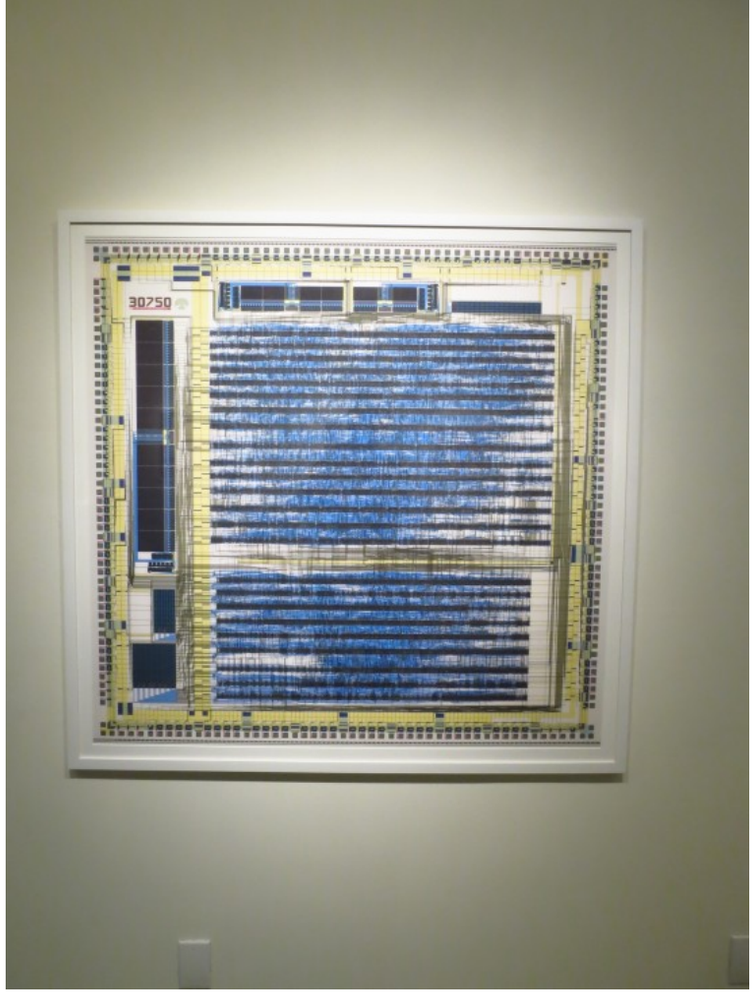


SYNAPTICS, INC., DIAGRAM FOR NEURAL NET (1990) DETAIL (COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY)

If the adage is true that "God is in the details," then the current exhibition at Christopher W. Mount Gallery in West Hollywood might grant the venue some status as a holy site.

INSTALLATION VIEW OF MAPPING THE INFORMATION AGE ON VIEW AT CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY. (COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY)



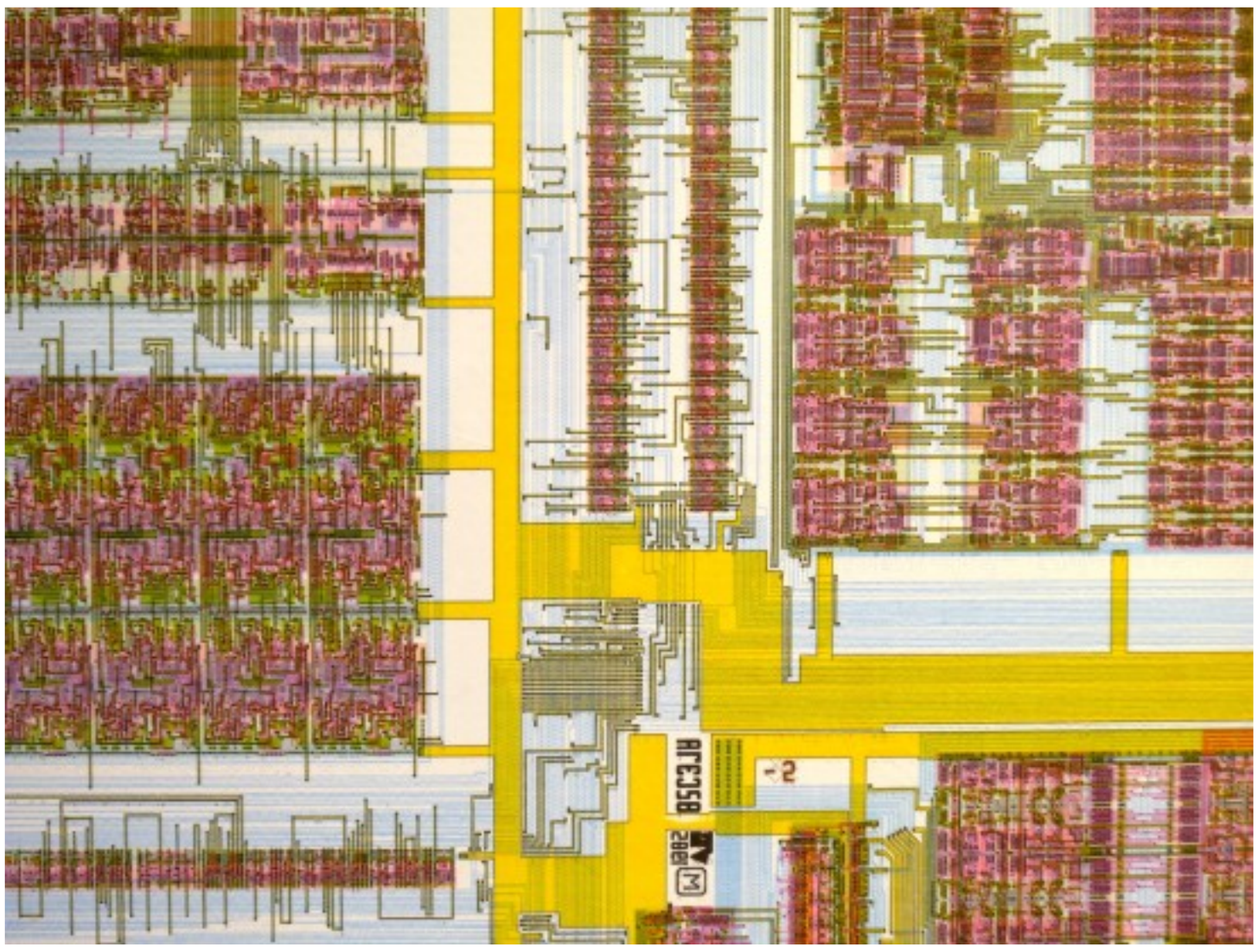
(COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY)

On view through January 20, 2016, in the second floor space of the Pacific Design Center's "Blue Whale" and entitled *Mapping the Information Age*, the exhibition is comprised of a collection of thirteen large, intricately detailed and color-coded microchip circuitry diagrams, framed and accompanied by a projected slideshow of historic imagery from the companies that produced many of the prints, such as Intel Corporation, Synaptics, Inc., and Hewlett-Packard, among others.

"The complexity is appealing," said gallery director Christopher Mount, as he discussed the strong impression conveyed through the diagrams. "There's rigor here, even if we don't understand it."

The diagrams, upwards of four to six feet wide, were used by microchip engineers and designers if something went wrong in the development process.

"If you were designing a chip and it just wasn't working, you'd bring these out," said Mount. "Somebody would make sure that the memory was connected in the right way. You would spend days with them."



TEXAS INSTRUMENTS, DIAGRAM FOR A MICROCHIP (CA. 1990) DETAIL
(COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY)

Mount, who has curated exhibitions at MOCA and LACMA, and held directorial positions at the Pasadena Museum of California Art and Parsons, first became interested in the prints while working on an exhibition at MoMA in 1990 that was organized by Cara McCarty, titled *Information Art: Diagramming Microchips*. The prints currently on view at Mount's gallery were culled from that show.

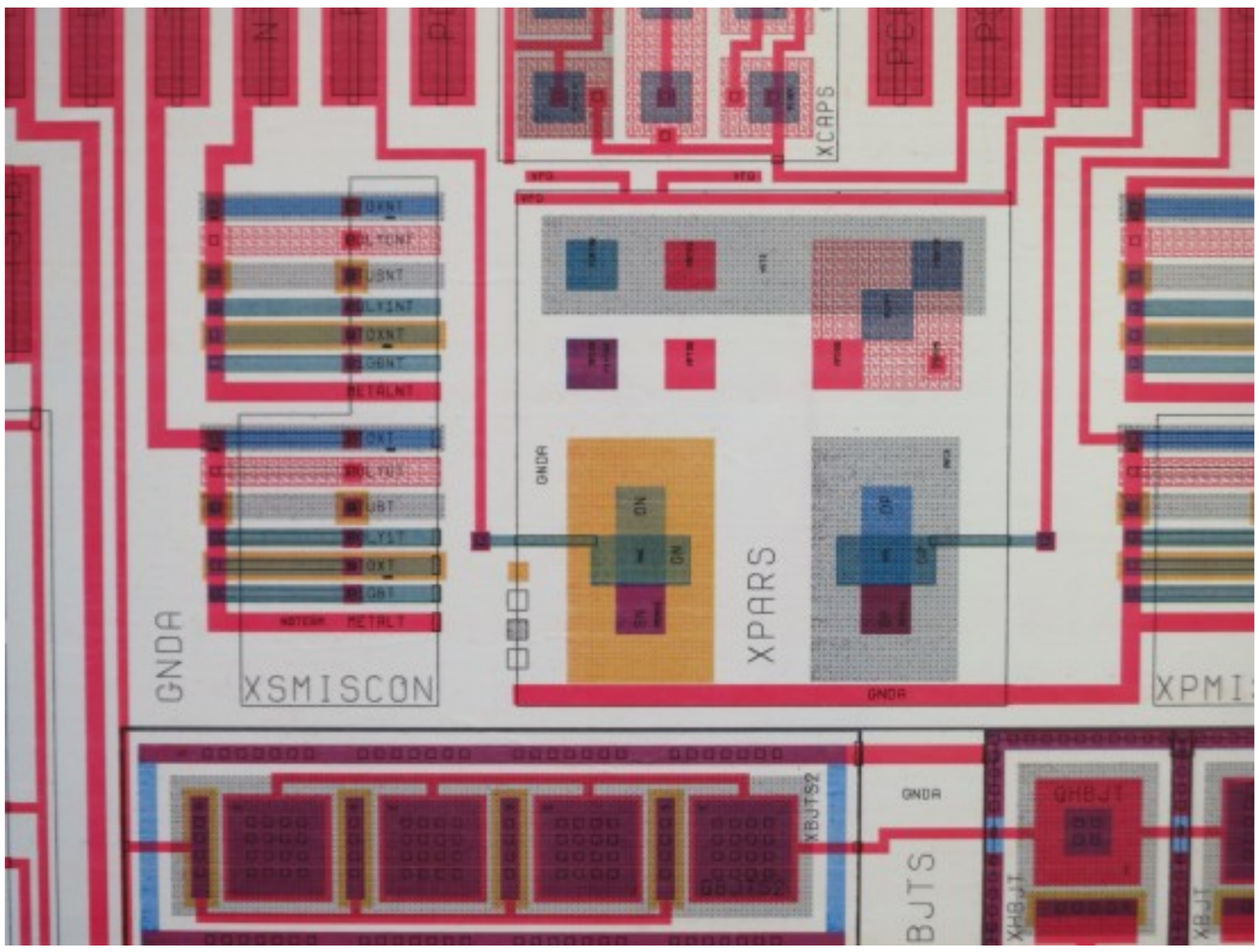
The collection engages with a discussion about the status of the drawing in contemporary design practices. The idea that such visually substantial

prints, which are well suited to the gallery context, are the outcome of technological troubleshooting or routine "debugging" processes on the part of the microchip makers, raises questions about the expectations that we generally have of drawings.

Designers and architects often use drawings to present idyllic possibilities, usually before the constraints of reality have come to bear on the design. The visually intricate microchip diagrams, however, are themselves the outcome of an error, a means to visualize and correct a problem.

"These were not intended as art," Mount noted. "But as functional design drawings."

For Mount, the question of authorship is another complicating factor: "People walk in here all the time and say, 'So, who's the artist?' And I have to explain: 'Well, it's Hewlett-Packard, or it's Intel, or it's Rockwell Technologies.'"



(COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MOUNT GALLERY)

The visual abstractions captured in the diagrams suggest a number of interesting and alternative readings. Mount recalled that some visitors see patterns for textiles, others see architectural plans.

"They look like cityscapes, or any kind of urban complex." he said. "They have the spirit of Corbusier."

In the precisely ordered, nanoscale grid of the plans, the viewer can read systems and interactions at a scale that is more relatable to everyday life; imagining some processor components as parking garages, others as apartments, and the green spaces in-between as parks.

"The colors are all particular to the companies," he explained, but are generally used to convey the visual depth and order of how the components would be stacked. "The lightest colors go deeper, the darker colors are higher up on the chip."

The diagrams might also reveal a sense of collective anxiety about how little we actually understand about computational processes. As smart devices occupy more of our time and attention, how important are the inner workings that these "black boxes" obscure?

"We all use a computer every day, but you forget that this is the thing inside," Mount said of the processor components. "People forget that in 1990 these were brand new." Because desktop computers and microchip processors were less common twenty-five years ago, there tended to be a greater appreciation for the efforts and outcomes in the development of computer hardware."Now, I think everybody comes in and recognizes them as microprocessors."

The computational complexity seems to be taken for granted, which means viewers are more interested in the formal qualities of the diagrams.

Perhaps the shift from technological wizardry to mundane ubiquity is the neglected aspect of the information age that demands a more detailed mapping. As such, the diagrams on display might also reveal something about how we relate to designed objects more broadly.

"I think everyday things aren't appreciated," said Mount of the objects that we often take for granted. "I've always been a real advocate for design.I like the fact that it's available to everyone. I like the idea of a calculator that's wonderful to look at and makes you happy, and can sit on your desk for twenty-five dollars."

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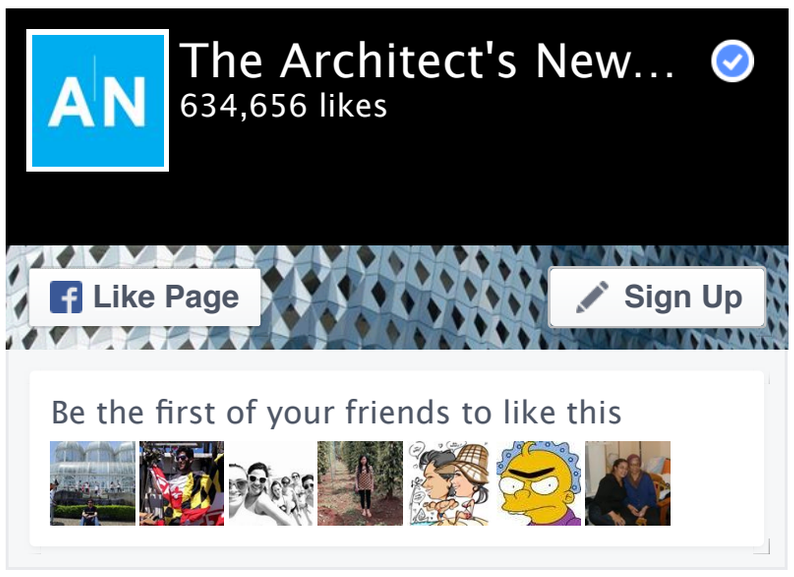

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