

Transcript of Remarks by Colombia Barrosse
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Press Conference to Open the U.S. Pavilion
11th International Architectural Exhibition
Giardini del Castello, Venice, Italy
September 12, 2008, 11:00 a.m.

On behalf of the United States Government, and in particular the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State, I would like to express our pleasure in being a part of this momentous event.

There is occasionally the perception abroad that because the U.S. does not have a Ministry of Culture, its government is not involved in supporting the arts. Nothing could be further from the truth – there are a number of key institutions (NEH, NEA) that regularly support and encourage the advancement of the arts and humanities in our country. Through the Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Department of State is also a key player, though our mandate is focused on the international arena.

Our approach differs from that of other countries, for we work in partnership with the private sector to provide much of our support. In this case, for example, we join efforts with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection to ensure the U.S. representation at each Venice biennale. It is thanks to their generosity that we are here today.

Likewise, when a decision is made regarding who will represent the United States at a biennale, we understand that the curators and artists and those associated with them will be able to count upon the generosity of private donors or contributors order to address all the needs of the exhibition.

This approach is in keeping with our view of our society and how individual citizen participation in the democratic process provides the balance, independence, diversity, and creativity that might be missing were our projects directed entirely by the government.

This philosophy is clearly reflected in this year's U.S. exhibit "Into the Open. Positioning Practice", which takes a close look at how architecture can provide responses to the challenges faced by our modern societies. In doing so, it underscores the importance of activism to a successful democratic society and shows how this private, independent action stimulates and challenges our governments to take positive action.

As always, we are grateful to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection and particularly to its director, Philip Rylands, for their support and assistance to the American exhibition, and for being the public face of the United States here in Venice. Without them, there would be no American Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and the dynamic American cultural life would be sorely underrepresented. We appreciate all you do to give the Italian and international public a positive image of the United States.

Our thanks also go to this year's exhibitors, U.S. Commissioner William Menking and the other co-curators who had a prominent role in the exhibition: Aaron Levy, Executive Director and Senior Curator at Slought Foundation, and Andrew Sturm, Director of Architecture for the PARC Foundation, and to architects Teddy Cruz and Deborah Gans, who helped to conceive the exhibition.

And thanks to the Venetian people, who continue to be exceptional hosts and whose generosity of spirit helps strengthen the friendship between the U.S. and Italy.

Thank you.