

## NEWS RELEASE

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### PARSONS PRESENTS “INTO THE OPEN: POSITIONING PRACTICE”

**U.S. Pavilion for La Biennale di Venezia, 11<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition  
Comes to New York Showcasing a New Wave of American Architect-Activists**



Estudio Teddy Cruz, La Biennale di Venezia, 2008

**On View at the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center  
Parsons The New School for Design  
March 4 – May 1, 2009  
Opening Reception: Wednesday, March 4, 6–8 pm  
Symposium: Friday, April 24, 5–9 pm**

NEW YORK, January 29, 2009 – Parsons The New School for Design will present *Into the Open: Positioning Practice*, the official U.S. pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia, the 11<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition, from March 4 through May 1, 2009 at the Sheila C. Johnson Design

Center. The exhibition focuses on the increasing interest in civic engagement in American architectural practice, and examines the means by which a new generation of architects is reclaiming a role in shaping community and the built environment.

*Into the Open: Positioning Practice* features 16 architectural groups who actively engage communities, responding to social and environmental issues, including shifting demographics, changing geo-political boundaries, uneven economic development, and the explosion of urban migration. These intellectually entrepreneurial actors are designing the conditions from which new architectures can emerge—becoming activists, developers, facilitators of inclusive urban policies, as well as innovative urban researchers. Reaching creatively across institutions, agencies, and jurisdictions, they’re negotiating hidden resources in the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

"Parsons is thrilled to be able to present this compelling exhibition, a highlight of the recent Biennale in Venice, to audiences here in New York," said Tim Marshall, the dean of Parsons The New School for Design. "Civic engagement is at the heart of the educational process at The New School, and particularly the architecture program’s signature studio, The Design Workshop, a design-build program with similarities to the Rural Studio at Auburn University in Alabama—one of the projects featured in the exhibition—yet with a distinctly urban focus."

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Among the projects on view in the exhibition is the work of Estudio Teddy Cruz of San Diego, whose spectacular fence installation explores the dynamics of urban conflict on either side of the U.S. and Mexico border, from San Diego's affluence to homelessness in Tijuana. *The Edible Schoolyard* is a project conceived by the noted chef and restaurateur Alice Waters in response to the lack of nutritious food served in many public schools. Young students plant and tend a garden and use its produce to prepare their lunches and snacks. Working in cooperation with the Yale Sustainable Food Project, exhibition organizers have developed a model, growing garden within the gallery featuring local and seasonal vegetables and flowers that reflect the cultural diversity of New York City, from artichokes, fava beans and lettuces to Hakurai turnips and Osaka purple mustard greens. Another featured project is *Roll Out House* by New York-based architect Deborah Gans, a humane housing solution for displaced populations that is manufactured of lightweight, flexible materials and provides both a physical and social infrastructure.

"We like to label this exhibition the first architectural endeavor of the Obama presidency. It is a call to arms for architects across the country to seek out new forms of practice and to recognize that traditional methods of architecture need to adapt to meet contemporary life," says William Menking, founder of *The Architect's Newspaper*, who organized the exhibition along with co-curators Aaron Levy, Executive Director of Slought Foundation, and Andrew Sturm, Director of Architecture for the PARC Foundation.

In addition to Deborah Gans, other New York-based activists and projects include The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), New York, whose founder Damon Rich teaches at Parsons. CUP deconstructs the complex financial underpinnings of housing construction through an interactive model illustrates the diversity of housing subsidies in the United States. Laura Kurgan's Spatial Information Design Lab employs complex mapping and animation to illustrate the relationship between demographics and the penal system, analyzing the money spent on incarceration versus the investment in housing and neighborhood infrastructure in parts of New York City. In addition, Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates' *Floating Pool*, nominated for a Cooper-Hewitt People's Design Award, adaptively reuses a decommissioned barge to bring summertime recreation to underserved populations of New York City.

Other featured projects include work by the Center for Land Use Interpretation in Culver City, California, which explores the path of waste in Los Angeles; Smith and Others Architects, based in San Diego, who empower architects to be their own developers; the San Francisco-based design collaborative Rebar, whose Panhandle Bandshell is made of post-consumer waste; The Heidelberg Project and the Detroit Collaborative Design Center, both based in Detroit, whose work addresses issues of urban decay; Project Row Houses of Houston, which fends off urban development in the city's Third Ward; nomadic designer Kyong Park and his International Center for Urban Ecology, who examines "The New Silk Road"; and, in addition to Rural Studio, the design-build programs Studio 804 at the University of Kansas, and Design Corps, a nonprofit organization based in Raleigh, North Carolina. For more information, visit [www.labiennale.us](http://www.labiennale.us).

"We hope this preliminary selection of America's alternative architectural practices encourages a new spirit of inclusiveness and participation beyond our own imagination. To remain relevant, architecture must find ways to respond to the challenges and crises that define our times," said Aaron Levy.

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### **Related Programming**

In conjunction with the exhibition, Parsons will present a symposium on Friday, April 24, from 5–9 pm at the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Auditorium at the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center, featuring several of the participating designers and organizations, including Teddy Cruz, Deborah Gans and Laura Kurgan as well as Rick Lowe, the founder of Project Row Houses in Houston. In addition, Parsons will organize a series of charrettes conducted with Parsons faculty and students, with special guest speakers, as well as curatorial and docent tours of the exhibition. More information will be available at [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).

### **Exhibition Credits**

*Into the Open: Positioning Practice* is presented by Parsons The New School for Design, in collaboration with Slought Foundation and PARC Foundation, with media partner *The Architect's Newspaper*. The exhibition and related public programs are coordinated by Laetitia Wolff of futureflair, and director of strategic alliances at Parsons, with exhibition and graphic design by Saylor+Sirola and Project Projects.

Generous support for the project has been received from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Robert Rubin and Stephane Samuel, and PARC Foundation. Additional support for the exhibition has been provided by Duggal Visual Solutions, Oldcastle Glass, inSite San Diego/Tijuana, Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, Thornton Tomasetti, FXFOWLE Architects, Gwathmey Siegel and Associates Architects, Abe and Pat Levy, Perkins Eastman, the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Samuel S. Fels Fund, Larry Levy, Weidlinger Associates, Kartell, Jack Stern, Jack and Bea Morton, the Bernice Gersh Foundation, Pilkington and Leggett, the Shimkin Foundation, Michèle Richman, and Deborah Levy.

### **About the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center at Parsons**

The Sheila C. Johnson Design Center is a new campus center for Parsons The New School for Design that combines learning and public program spaces with exhibition galleries to provide an important new downtown destination for art and design programming. The center was made possible in part by a \$7 million gift from New School Trustee and Parsons Board of Governors Chair Sheila C. Johnson. The design by Lyn Rice Architects, whose principal Lyn Rice was part of the team behind Dia:Beacon, combines the ground level of four historic buildings to form an innovative, contemporary “urban quad.” The center is the recipient of numerous awards, including a 2008 AIA Honor Award for Interior Architecture. For more information, please visit [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).

### **About Parsons The New School for Design**

Parsons The New School for Design is one of the most prestigious and comprehensive institutions of art and design in the world. Located in New York City, Parsons prepares students to creatively and critically address the complex conditions of contemporary global society. Combining rigorous craft with cutting-edge theory and research methods, Parsons encourages collaborative and individual approaches that cut across a wide array of disciplines. For more information, please visit [www.parsons.newschool.edu](http://www.parsons.newschool.edu).

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### **Sheila C. Johnson Design Center, Parsons The New School for Design**

#### **General Information:**

**Location:** 66 Fifth Avenue at 13th Street, New York

**Gallery hours:** M-F, 10 AM-8 PM; S-S, Noon-6 PM, closed all major holidays and holiday eves.

**Admission:** Free

**Info:** Please contact 212.229.8919 or visit [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).