

INTO
THE
OPEN



POSITIONING
PRACTICE

La Biennale di Venezia
11th International Architecture Exhibition

SEPTEMBER 14 – NOVEMBER 23, 2008
VENICE, ITALY

media kit

for immediate release

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Into the Open: Positioning Practice
September 14 through November 23, 2008

The U.S. Pavilion for La Biennale di Venezia
11th International Architecture Exhibition

The exhibition, **Into the Open: Positioning Practice**, the official U.S. representation at the 11th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, highlights the means by which architects reclaim a role in shaping community and the built environment, to expand understanding of American architectural practice and its relationship to civic participation. The exhibition has been organized by U.S. Commissioner William Menking, along with co-curators Aaron Levy, Executive Director and Senior Curator at Slought Foundation, and Andrew Sturm, Director of Architecture for the PARC Foundation. The exhibition is conceived in collaboration with architects Teddy Cruz and Deborah Gans.

Into the Open: Positioning Practice explores how architects, urban researchers, and community activists are meeting the challenges of creating new work in response to contemporary social conditions and addresses factors challenging traditional methods of architecture, such as shifting socio-cultural demographics, changing geo-political boundaries, uneven economic development, and the explosion of migration and urbanization. At the same time, it will advocate for an expanded conception of architectural practice and responsibility.

Into the Open: Positioning Practice is organized by PARC Foundation, Slought Foundation, and *The Architect's Newspaper* and presented by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. Generous support for the project has been received from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Robert Rubin and Stephane Samuel, and PARC Foundation.

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Changing populations, shifting borders, and uneven economic development—exacerbated by the explosion of migration and urbanization—have generated conflicts and conditions that question traditional architectural methods.

In a milieu characterized by territorial and institutional deadlock, architects, urban researchers, and community activists increasingly must intervene in situations by "going beyond building." This does not mean dispensing with the value of architecture per se, but rather acknowledging each situation's unique complexity. This exhibition explores the original ways that these actors are taking up the challenge of designing the conditions from which new architectures can emerge. They are becoming activists, developers, facilitators of a more inclusive urban policy, as well as producers of unique urban research.

These new practitioners are notable for the emphasis they place on inventive, interdisciplinary economics of development that reach creatively across institutions, agencies, and jurisdictions to negotiate hidden resources in the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

In the absence of large-scale public infrastructure projects in the United States, local initiatives are becoming newly empowered and dynamic arenas for the exploration and generation of new forms of sociability and activism. Through this expanded concept of architectural practice and its responsibilities, intractable problems can be addressed with an altered perspective.

We are also proposing that social, cultural and spatial boundaries be understood as a new framework defining architectural problems. Accordingly, we have identified a heterogeneous and dispersed series of practices that are empowered by the inventive ways they work and with whom they engage. The curatorial logic behind this project highlights the ways that architects, urban researchers, and activists reclaim the ability to shape community and the built environment. It is our hope that this taxonomy produces a new understanding of American architectural practice and potential forms of social participation.

We have selected sixteen diverse participants all of whom actively engage communities on various levels. To remain relevant, architecture must find ways to respond to the cultural fluidity, socio-economic challenges, and environmental rifts that define our times. In our exhibition, architecture is revealed as able to generate new forms of sociability and activism that move us beyond ideological polarization.

participating organizations

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The Center for Land Use Interpretation
<http://www.clui.org>

the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)
<http://anothercupdevelopment.org>

Estudio Teddy Cruz
<http://www.politicaequator.org>

Design Corps
<http://www.designcorps.org>

Detroit Collaborative Design Center
<http://architecture.udmercy.edu/dcdc.htm>

The Edible Schoolyard/Yale Sustainable Food Project
<http://www.edibleschoolyard.org>
<http://www.yale.edu/sustainablefood>

Gans Studio
<http://www.gans-studio.net>

The Heidelberg Project
<http://www.heidelberg.org>

International Center for Urban Ecology
<http://www.shrinkingcities.com>

Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates
<http://www.kirscharch.com>

Project Row Houses
<http://www.projectrowhouses.org>

Rebar
<http://www.rebargroup.org>

Rural Studio
<http://cadc.auburn.edu/soa/rural%2Dstudio>

Spatial Information Design Lab/Laura Kurgan
<http://www.spatialinformationdesignlab.org>

Studio 804
<http://www.studio804.com>

Smith and Others
(No website)

project description

The sixteen practitioners included, all of whom actively engage communities in their work, demonstrate multifaceted responses to social and environmental issues.

Estudio Teddy Cruz, based in San Diego, California, is engaged in an ongoing exploration of the dynamics of urban conflict engendered by conditions on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border, from the affluence north of San Diego to homelessness and neglect in Tijuana. Stretching across the entire 89 foot façade and courtyard of the U.S. Pavilion, Teddy Cruz's border fence becomes both a metaphorical and actual passageway for visitors to the exhibition. A photographic reproduction of the fence that spans the U.S. border with Mexico at San Diego, Mr. Cruz's "porous" border, together with its photographic montage illustrating the 60 miles north and south of the fence, is a graphic representation of the conditions and conflicts that have become a political and economic flashpoint.

The noted chef and restaurateur, Alice Waters, based in Berkeley, California, responded to the lack of nutritious food served in many public schools by developing the **Edible Schoolyard**, a project begun in a San Francisco Middle School, through which young students plant and tend a garden and use its produce to prepare their lunches and snacks. Through the project students learn about the origins of the foods they consume, principles of ecology and a healthy respect for living systems. Working in cooperation with the Yale Sustainable Food Project, the U.S. Pavilion has developed a model garden based upon principles of the Edible Schoolyard, complete with instructions and signage made by these young California students.

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The architect **Deborah Gans**, whose practice is in New York City, has responded to the need for temporary housing and the myriad circumstances—whether products of political upheaval, natural or man-made disasters or more—that produce these needs, by developing the Roll Out House. The Roll Out House, manufactured of lightweight, flexible materials, provides a physical and social infrastructure and a humane solution to the challenge of being uprooted from one's home. The Roll Out houses in the exhibition have been newly developed for portable applications on Native American reservations such as those in South Dakota.

The Heidelberg Project, in Detroit, responds to urban decay and abandonment by turning a derelict Detroit neighborhood into a work of art. Through the efforts of the artist Tyree Guyton, and teams of volunteers, the vacant buildings and houses of Heidelberg Street have become the canvasses for a massive public art project. The Heidelberg Project is a nonprofit organization, and to raise money to continue its activities, the project has a store that sells t-shirts, jewelry, posters and books. **Into the Open: Positioning Practice** brings the Project's online "store" to the U.S. Pavilion.

The Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC), and Project Row Houses, each confront issues of gentrification and urban decay through inventive social practice and community involvement. DCDC is exhibiting a set of conceptual models for collaborative actions on burnt out houses in their neighborhood project "FireBreak," which highlights their strategy of "Many People and Many Actions."

Project Row Houses demonstrates the proactive tenacity of Rick Lowe and his team of residents in the 3rd Ward neighborhood of Houston, Texas, as they fend off commercial development to save houses for adaptation into community cultural facilities.

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Laura Kurgan's **Spatial Information Design Lab** uses complex mapping and animation to illustrate the relationship between demographics and the penal system. Ms. Kurgan's project is a spatial analysis of the money spent on incarceration versus the investment in housing and neighborhood infrastructure in parts of New York City. Videos by the **Center for Land Use Interpretation** explore the path of waste in Los Angeles from curbside to landfill, and a double screen video program from the **International Center for Urban Ecology** follows the designer Kyong Park's journey along "The New Silk Road."

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), New York, deconstructs and diagrams the complex financial underpinnings and strategies of compromise that determine the construction of housing. A user-friendly interactive model illustrates the diversity of housing subsidies, while a dynamic rap video compilation explores the relationships between public housing and public perception. San Francisco-based **Rebar**, a design collaborative, provides an example of their community work with the Panhandle Bandshell, a community theater built with car hoods, plastic water bottles and other post-consumer materials.

Alternative housing designs feature in the work of **Design Corps**, **Studio 804** and the **Rural Studio** at Auburn University. These projects, represented through models and video presentations, exemplify some of the innovative approaches to building with communities in areas of extreme need that range from the rural poor in Hale County, Alabama, to migrant farmworkers in North Carolina, and tornado-affected residents of Greensburg, Kansas. The Floating Pool, a mobile swimming pool designed by **Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates**, adaptively reuses a decommissioned cargo barge to bring summertime recreation to underserved populations of New York City. Finally, the

work of **Smith and Others** in San Diego is represented through a special video interview and model that articulates the way architects can develop their own projects, re-shaping the way the city grows and changes by emphasizing quality of life for residents over maximum profit for developers.

The installation of **Into the Open: Positioning Practice** in the U.S. Pavilion is itself designed as a space of productive community interaction, a space of social critique, and as a space of instruction.

The traditional divided axial symmetry of the building's circulation is reorganized into a circular flow by the addition of a continuous elliptical conference table, at which each exhibiting practice has a seat, starting outdoors in the garden and running through each of the galleries. A continuous storyboard above this table displays "how to" implement techniques for the community transformations exhibited. Small groupings of comfortable seating provide relaxed conversation areas as well as settings to view the varied video programs and print material produced by the exhibited practices.

Finally, in the Pavilion's Rotunda visitors to the exhibition are invited to join the project's blog at <http://positioningpractice.us/>, to add their comments on the exhibition and their own views on the social, economic and political issues that **Into the Open: Positioning Practice** explores.

The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI)

CLUI takes a broadly interdisciplinary approach to the investigation of land use and our complex formation and denigration of land through development. Their practice draws on the natural sciences, sociology, art, architecture, and history.

the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)

CUP brings together art and design professionals with community-based advocates and researchers to create projects ranging from high school curricula to educational exhibitions. Their public programs mix design, research, politics, and entertainment to connect people who are usually kept far apart.

Estudio Teddy Cruz (ETC)

The work of Estudio Teddy Cruz is situated at the border between San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, and emerges out of the particularities of this cross-cultural territory. The practice focuses on housing and its relationship to alternative land use policies, modes of sociability, and economic processes.

Design Corps

Design Corps creates positive change in communities by providing architecture and planning services. Recent architecture and planning graduates provide design and technical assistance to small rural communities composed of low-income families, allowing communities to shape their physical environment.

Detroit Collaborative Design Center

DCDC fosters community collaborations that create inspired and sustainable neighborhoods and spaces by providing advice, design and consultation to urban neighborhoods. Their practice goes beyond the usual paths of community-based design to create new forms of property development and urban action.

The Edible Schoolyard/Yale Sustainable Food Project

The Edible Schoolyard, begun by Alice Waters, integrates gardening and cooking into the daily activities of the King Middle School in Berkeley, CA. Across the country at Yale University in New Haven, CT, the Yale Sustainable Food Project directs a sustainable dining program, manages an organic farm on campus, and supports academic inquiry around food and agriculture.

Gans Studio

Gans Studio is devoted to rethinking how architecture can participate in the emergence of social forms. It focuses on extreme situations that also foretell the general. It has designed housing and infrastructure for populations displaced by environmental and political disaster in Kosovo, New Orleans, and New York City.

The Heidelberg Project

The Heidelberg Project in Detroit, Michigan, a non-profit founded by Tyree Guyton, is an outdoor art environment in the heart of an urban community. Residents and stakeholders come together through art-based activities and programs to rebuild the structure and fabric of their under-resourced community, creating a way of living that is economically viable and inclusive.

International Center for Urban Ecology (ICUE)

ICUE is a nomadic laboratory for future cities. Projects have examined the phenomena of depopulation, development, and change in developed cities around the world. The practice is one that engages the city at the intimate level of the pedestrian as a way to obtain an alternative reading of how cities are shaped.

Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates

Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates is dedicated to accommodating underserved populations of New York City through cultural and social services. Over the past twenty years they have built urban housing, childcare centers, and recreation facilities, acting not just as designers but as advocates and developers.

Project Row Houses

Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas, develops housing, public space, facilities and programs for low to moderate income residents to preserve and protect the historic character of the Third Ward. Unprecedented development in Houston has resulted in the demolition of blocks of single-family bungalows and the displacement of residents.

Rebar

Rebar is a collaborative group of creators, designers, and activists based in San Francisco situated in the domains of environmental installation and urbanism. Rebar's projects engage social, ecological and cultural processes as they unfold materially in space and time.

Rural Studio

Rural Studio at Auburn University contributes to the development of rural Alabama by providing dignified, community-based housing and municipal structures that mitigate the effects of a poverty-stricken region. Students are taught an ethic of service and engagement, and work closely with the client and local welfare agencies.

Spatial Information Design Lab/Laura Kurgan

The Spatial Information Design Lab is an interdisciplinary research unit that specializes in the visual display of spatial information about contemporary cities and events. The lab and Laura Kurgan's work focuses on linking social data with geography to help researchers and advocates communicate information about our world clearly, responsibly, and provocatively.

Studio 804

Studio 804 is a design/build program that provides students with the opportunity to design and develop affordable and sustainable prefabricated buildings. Students explore architectural solutions that reclaim forgotten, blighted, and environmentally challenged neighborhoods in Kansas.

Smith and Others

Smith and Others has helped to transform the city of San Diego into an epicenter of alternative housing prototypes produced by collaborative groups of architects acting as developer-builders. They are committed to producing alternative densities, inclusive of diverse economies and types of dwelling.

Presenting Organizations

PARC Foundation (<http://theparcfoundation.org>) initiates the development of contemporary architecture through collaboration and community engagement. Specifically we work with established community organizers, community development agencies, and design professionals to help identify and introduce contemporary, innovative, community-based architecture that can instigate change within a neighborhood or region in need. It is our intention that through this work we can help establish the validity of contemporary design for this purpose and create models that can be then used by others to replicate our successes.

Slought Foundation (<http://slought.org>) is a Philadelphia-based cultural organization that highlights inventive and interdisciplinary practice by collaborating with leading artists and architects in an intimate and participatory environment. Slought encourages new forms of sociability and activism through public programs that are purposely critical and provocative, and invites audiences to consider criticality itself as a source of dynamism and enjoyment. Situated at the forefront of curatorial innovation in North America, Slought has presented hundreds of exhibitions, events, performances, and trade publications, as well as maintaining a significant internet presence with extensive audio recordings of past programs.

Media Partner

The Architect's Newspaper (<http://www.archpaper.com>) emerged from the desire, expressed by most architects we know, for a publication that speaks directly to them. We hear, constantly, that architects feel underserved or underwhelmed by existing design publications. They want something that reflects their interests and practices. No rah-rah, no puffery. Just useful information. Insightful, readable criticism. Diverse voices. Open dialogue. Combining timeliness with authority, *The Architect's Newspaper* is the most comprehensive source of information on the latest projects and commissions, unfolding politics and debate, current events and cultural developments related to architecture, with an emphasis on the tri-state region.

Curatorial Team

William Menking is Editor-in-Chief of *The Architect's Newspaper* and a professor of architecture at Pratt Institute. He has organized international exhibitions on the British visionary architects Archigram, post-war experimental architecture, the Italian radical architects Superstudio, and contemporary English design.

Aaron Levy is Executive Director and a Senior Curator at Slought Foundation, and lecturer in English at the University of Pennsylvania. Publications edited include *Cities Without Citizens*; Helene Cixous' *Ex-Cities*; and a new series of DVD publications with Alain Badiou, Dennis Oppenheim, Vito Acconci, and Werner Herzog.

Andrew Sturm is the Director of Architecture for the PARC Foundation in collaboration with designer Teddy Cruz. He has designed a variety of projects from affordable housing prototypes to urban art installations, and has taught design at Harvard's GSD and the University of Detroit Mercy.

Exhibition Consultant: Leanne Mella

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Exhibition Designer: Alan Bruton, Architect

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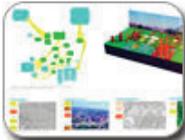
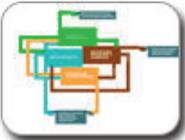
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The Center for Land Use Interpretation
Post Consumed: The Landscape of Waste in Los Angeles, 2008 (left)
Highway 62 Field Trip and Tour, 2007 (right)



Estudio Teddy Cruz
60 linear mile section, San Diego/Tijuana, 2008 (left)
Expanded model of architectural practice and research, 2008 (right)



the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)
CUP Process Diagram, 2003 (left)
The Subsidized Landscape, 2003-2005 (right)
Design: Damon Rich
Brooklyn, New York



Detroit Collaborative Design Center
Hay House, Detroit, Michigan, 2001 (left)
House Wrap, Detroit, Michigan, 2004 (right)



Design Corps
Migrant Bath House Prototype, Sampson County, North Carolina, 2003 (left)
Migrant Farmworker Housing, Adams County, Pennsylvania, 2003 (right)



**The Edible Schoolyard/
Yale Sustainable Food Project**
King Middle School in Berkeley, California (left)
Model schoolyard garden, Washington DC National Mall, 2006 (right)



Gans Studio
House with Roll Out Core (left)
Camp Plan (right)
2008



The Heidelberg Project
Detroit, Michigan, 1987-present



International Center for Urban Ecology
The New Silk Road (courtesy of Kyong Park), 2008



Jonathan Kirschenfeld Associates
The Floating Pool, Opening Reception, Brooklyn, July 2007 (left)
The Floating Pool, Opening Reception, Bronx, June 2008 (right)



Rebar
Panhandle Bandshell Flyout
San Francisco, California, 2008



Project Row Houses
Houston, Texas, 2003-Present



Rural Studio at Auburn University
Hale County Animal Shelter (left image courtesy of Timothy Hursley), Alabama, 2006



Smith and Others
The Essex (left)
The Essex, reconfigurable development tool (right)
San Diego, 2002



**Spatial Information Design Lab/
Laura Kurgan**
Prisoner Migration Patterns (left)
Community Planning Session (right)
Brooklyn, New York, 2003



Studio 804
Sustainable Prototype Arts Center
Greensburg, Kansas, 2008