



***SpontaneousInterventions: Design Actions for the Common Good***  
**United States Pavilion**  
**13th International Architecture Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia**

(Venice, Italy – August 2012) — The U.S. Pavilion at the 13th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, organized by the Institute for Urban Design on behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is devoted to the theme *SpontaneousInterventions: Design Actions for the Common Good*. The exhibit features 124 urban interventions initiated by architects, designers, planners, artists, and everyday citizens that bring positive change to their neighborhoods and cities. The selection was narrowed down after a search process that included an open call for projects realized in U.S. cities in recent years, which yielded over 450 submissions.

*SpontaneousInterventions* captures one of the most compelling contemporary urban trends, wherein individuals are taking it upon themselves to create projects that expand the amenities, comfort, functionality, inclusiveness, safety, and sustainability of cities. From parklets to community farms, guerrilla bike lanes to urban repair squads, outdoor living rooms to pop-up markets, sharing networks, and temporary architecture, Spontaneous Interventions highlights viable citizen-led alternatives to traditional top-down urban revitalization tactics. Together, these projects offer an opportunity to examine the history of the American city, painting a critical and dynamic portrait of its most pressing issues today and a vision of its future. At heart, *SpontaneousInterventions* is a reflection of country's complex attitudes towards civic participation, social justice, and the built environment.

*SpontaneousInterventions*—curated by Cathy Lang Ho (Commissioner and Curator), David van der Leer, and Ned Cramer (co-curators)—resonates on many levels with the overall theme of the Biennale, conceived by director David Chipperfield, *Common Ground*. The projects featured in Spontaneous Interventions are characterized by their interest in collaboration, in serving the collective needs of a community, and in improving the literal *common ground*— public space. The exhibition examines how urban actions that originated as radical ideas have moved ever closer to the center, evolving from subversive tactic to increasingly accepted urban strategy.

**Curatorial Advisors:** Michael Sorkin, Anne Guiney, Paola Antonelli, Zoe Ryan, and Erik Adigard. **Project managers:** Gordon Douglas and Mimi Zeiger.

### EXHIBITION FEATURES

For the first time, the U.S. Pavilion will feature an installation rather than a conventional exhibition of projects. Brooklyn design studio **Freecell**, founded by Lauren Crahan and John Hartmann, conceived of a lively system of banners to present an archive of 124 actionable tactics aimed at bringing immediate improvements to the urban public realm.

Sausalito-based communication design studio **M-A-D**, led by Erik Adigard and Patricia McShane, designed a graphic system for each project that evokes the iconography of city flags and a supergraphic floor pattern, which is an installation in itself. The intention was to create an enveloping environment that places the projects of Spontaneous Interventions in a broader historical and cultural context of the evolution of cities, in the United States in particular. Adigard is this year's recipient of the Rome Prize in Design.

In a video installation by filmmaker **Kelly Loudenberg**, a cross section of exhibition participants share their hopes, dreams, and concerns for the future of the American city. Attuned to the fact that it is an election year in the U.S., participants were asked to speak as if they are running for office or advising their elected officials.

Brooklyn-based studio **Interboro**, winner of last year's MoMA/PS1's Young Architects Program, has designed an "outdoor living room" that will serve as the pavilion's hangout and workshop space. The space, dubbed CommonPlace, will feature movable components that allow it to be easily reconfigured to accommodate various functions (informal conversations, lectures, workshops, and play space). During the three months of the Biennale, the Pavilion will host a lively series of programs. (For details, see the separate release on programming.)

The Imagination Playground, designed by the New York-based **Rockwell Group** and featured in *SpontaneousInterventions*, will also appear in *A Better World*, a collateral Biennale event organized by Microclima and Alfred von Escher/Studio427 at the Serra dei Giardini, a 19th century greenhouse recently renovated into a café, garden nursery, and community space operated by the cooperative Nonsoloverde. *A Better World* is an installation and a series of talks, shows, and workshops curated by Raffaella Guidobono with Michela Intra and Paolo Rossa. The Rockwell Group is donating the playground to the Serra dei Giardini for the community to enjoy.

### **Institute for Urban Design**

Since 1979, the New York-based Institute for Urban Design has served as a central platform for debate among architects, planners, policy-makers, developers, academics, journalists, and urbanists. The Institute—directed by Anne Guiney—operates as a think tank and advocacy group, drawing on the collected experience and knowledge of its large fellowship to bring important issues into wider public debate through lectures, events, and publications.

### **U.S. Representation at the Venice Biennale**

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs supports and manages official U.S. participation at the Venice Architecture Biennale. The selection of the Institute for Urban Design resulted from an open competition and followed the recommendation of the Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions (FACIE), convened by the National Endowment for the Arts. U.S. representation at this global event ensures that the excellence, vitality, diversity, and innovation of architecture in the United States are effectively showcased abroad, and provides an opportunity to engage foreign audiences to increase mutual understanding.

### **Media Partner**

*Architect* magazine is the official media partner of the U.S. Pavilion. The August issue of *Architect* magazine will be a special monograph devoted to *SpontaneousInterventions*, featuring essays by Tom Angotti, Douglas Burnham, John Cary, Brendan Crain, Margaret Crawford, Gordon Douglas, Toni Griffin, Cathy Lang Ho, Richard Ingersoll, Liane Lefavre, Jason Roberts, Grahame Shane, Mark Shepard, Michael Sorkin, Nato Thompson, David van der Leer, and Mimi Zeiger.

### **Press Images**

For high-res images, please go to [www.spontaneousinterventions.org/press](http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/press)

User name: U.S. Pavilion

Password: venicebiennale2012

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