



## Pa. exhibit shows architecture as agent for change

By Joann Loviglio  
July 20, 2009

PHILADELPHIA - A new exhibit at the National Constitution Center encourages visitors to think about architecture not just as the creation of buildings and other structures but as a tool to generate social change and stronger communities.

The show, called "Into the Open," is a departure from the 6-year-old center's history-based exhibits focused on the U.S. Constitution, but its theme is similar to the center's own, president Linda Johnson said.

"The focus on civic engagement is a big part of what we do," she said, "and the things you'll see here are very relevant to that part of our mission."

The exhibition shows projects by eight architectural groups – in partnership with communities nationwide – to spark change at the grassroots level and encourage people to take active roles in issues related to housing, nutrition, poverty and environmental problems.

Each example stretches the boundaries of what architecture is, what it can accomplish and who can take part in the process.

Visitors will see the first two examples on the lawn outside the Constitution Center: the "Edible Schoolyard," a Berkeley, Calif., middle school garden established by chef Alice Waters to encourage healthy eating; and San Diego architect Teddy Cruz's 89-foot-long photograph of the U.S.-Mexico border fence, which references the conditions and conflicts on both sides.

The projects displayed indoors at the center, which is near the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, include a decommissioned barge repurposed as a popular seven-lane floating swimming pool docked at a park in the Bronx borough of New York and a block of vacant Detroit houses transformed into colorful works of art that have become a tourist attraction.

Organizations spotlighted in the exhibit include Auburn University's student-run Rural Studio, which has collaborated with rural Alabamians living in trailers or substandard housing to build 75 modern, efficient homes for just \$20,000 apiece.

Studio 804, based at the University of Kansas, also brings together students and communities blighted by economic or environmental catastrophe to design affordable and green architecture. The exhibit showcases their work with residents of the tornado-ravaged town of Greensburg, Kan.

Eight additional projects are on view at the nonprofit Slought Foundation, which debuted the 16-project "Into the Open" exhibit as the U.S. representative at last year's Venice Biennale architecture exhibition.

"We want this to be more than an exhibit," said Aaron Levy, executive director of Slought, located on the University of Pennsylvania campus. "We want to inspire people to go out into their communities and become citizen activists."

Discussions and workshops are planned for the duration of the exhibit, which runs through Sept. 7.

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On the Net:

National Constitution Center: <http://www.constitutioncenter.org>

Slought Foundation: <http://www.slought.org>

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