NEW YORK, August 26, 2010—Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement, organized by The Museum of Modern Art, explores contemporary architecture as a powerful means for improving social conditions, focusing on 11 noteworthy built or under-construction projects in underserved communities around the world. The exhibition is on view from October 3, 2010, through January 3, 2011. Concentrating on a group of architects who confront inequality using the tools of design, Small Scale, Big Change examines the ways these architects engage with social, economic, and political circumstances to develop positive architectural interventions that begin with an understanding of and deference to a community.


Without sacrificing aesthetics, the 11 projects—situated in the United States, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, France, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Bangladesh, and Lebanon—reveal a specificity of place, with architectural solutions emerging from sustained research into local conditions and close collaboration with communities. These radically pragmatic projects, which include schools, community centers, housing, and infrastructural interventions, signal a change in the longstanding dialogue between architecture and its environs, wherein the architect’s roles, methods, and responsibilities are dramatically reconsidered. The exhibition presents a selection of materials on each project including models, drawings, videos, large-scale photographs, and sketchbooks. Additionally, three Internet-based networks—The 1%, Open Architecture Network, and urbaninform—extend the exhibition’s scope beyond individual projects to include stakeholders in various areas of practice around the world. These networks act as forums in which community leaders, architects, and non-governmental organizations share information and experience.
**Diébédo Francis Kéré: Primary School, Gando, Burkina Faso, 1999–2001**

While studying architecture at the Technische Universität Berlin, Diébédo Francis Kéré learned that the small primary school in his hometown of Gando, Burkina Faso—a village of around 2,500 inhabitants—was in disrepair. Inspired to design and build a better school, Kéré hoped that by using what he had learned about ecological building techniques he might provide a model for future building in Burkina Faso. The high cost of industrialized materials such as concrete and steel, along with the remote access to Gando, led Kéré to revive the practice of traditional brick making from unbaked mud, while improving the process by introducing a manpowered machine to compress the bricks. Kéré also designed a large roof to protect the walls against rain and heat, leaving space between the ceiling and roof to increase air circulation and create a pleasant interior climate more broadly. The building became a training facility for the whole community, who worked together to finish it. Attendance at the school has been extremely high since it opened in 2001, with applications far outnumbering available spots. As a result of the broad international recognition for this remote school, Kéré has been able to expand the concept and build an annex for the school and houses for the teachers, with plans to erect a library and a women’s center in the immediate future.

**Anna Heringer and Eike Roswag: METI – Handmade School, Rudrapur, Bangladesh, 2004–06**

In 2002 architecture student Anna Heringer and several of her classmates at Kunstuniversität Linz conducted a comprehensive analysis of the civic and economic framework of the Bangladeshi village of Rudrapur. After identifying a lack of educational opportunities for villagers, Heringer designed the Handmade School, her master’s thesis, in response. Following a year of planning and fundraising, ground was broken on the project in 2005, under the guidance of Heringer, with architect Eike Roswag as the construction manager. The structure is made primarily of earth, a traditional building material in the region, to which Heringer added local clay, sand, and straw for increased durability. A number of improvements upon local building traditions were introduced, such as a brick foundation to strengthen the structure and a plastic moisture barrier between the foundation and the walls. Resident unskilled laborers were trained in the building technique and performed almost all of the construction. In the completed school, thick, earthen walls enclose three ground-floor classrooms along with a system of caves in which students can play. The second story has an earthen floor and walls of light, airy bamboo latticework. With its innovative approach to traditional methods and materials, Handmade School sets new regional standards for acceptable architectural functionality and provides a model for ecologically and socially sustainable building.
Michael Maltzan Architecture: Inner-City Arts, Los Angeles, California, 1993–2008

Inner-City Arts, located in an impoverished Los Angeles neighborhood, offers a creative refuge to at-risk and disadvantaged children who may not otherwise have access to the arts. After several years in small, temporary spaces, the organization teamed up with Michael Maltzan and his then newly formed firm in 1993 to retrofit and repurpose an abandoned garage in the city’s dangerous Skid Row neighborhood. The finished aggregate one-acre campus, built in three phases, employs a restrained and unified architectural language of simple, abstracted geometries, in which student creativity takes center stage. Maltzan’s design articulates flexible interior and exterior spaces that are intimate yet airy arenas for children. The main courtyard is a comfortable environment in which to gather, play, and explore, a haven in the midst of a neighborhood whose outdoor space is often unsafe. In painting the exterior stucco walls bright white—a color that immediately betrays neglect—the organization communicates its commitment to maintenance and upkeep. Through his decade-and-a-half commitment to the project, Maltzan demonstrates the potential of architecture to inspire creativity and realize promise.

Frédéric Druot, Anne Lacaton, and Jean Philippe Vassal: Transformation of Tour Bois-le-Prêtre, Paris, France, 2006–11

The midcentury modernist housing development has long been the subject of criticism. In particular, low-income, high-rise apartment blocks, generally clustered closely together, have been accused of being anonymous, nonfunctional containers in which inhabitants are isolated from one another; and in an effort to ameliorate social problems among the residents, many have been torn down. Frédéric Druot, Anne Lacaton, and Jean Philippe Vassal are among the increasing number of architects who reject calls for the demolition of modernist housing projects, preferring instead to retrofit existing structures. In 2005 the architects won a competition sponsored by the City of Paris to remodel a public-housing high-rise along the ring road in Paris. Deciding to focus on expanding living spaces and increasing natural light in each apartment, the proposal calls for the addition of a floor slab, which would increase the footprint of each apartment by roughly 15%, along with a new exterior structure, a shell that would completely envelop the existing building and break up the monotony of the facade. For the interiors, the team developed a series of alternative and more individualized floor plans suited to contemporary living styles. Work on the project is being done in two parallel phases: as the prefabricated, modular facade structure takes shape, the interior floor plans are being modified and new openings are being created in the old exterior walls. By adapting existing structures to the present-day needs of its users, Druot, Lacaton, and Vassal are giving a new life to a problematic and oft-criticized low-income housing type, with wide-reaching implications to cities beyond Paris.

Tyre, an ancient coastal city south of Beirut, has long struggled to maintain a viable infrastructure amid seemingly constant chaos and combat. A weak economy and decades of tumult have debilitated the maritime city, and the area’s fishermen—many of whom earn as little as $15 per day—have been particularly hard hit. In 1984 the city was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, a designation that brought with it strict regulations on new building along the coastline, where the fishermen traditionally lived. In response, the fishermen formed a housing cooperative, then convinced the Greek Orthodox Church to donate a parcel of land outside the city center. With the help of an NGO, they partnered with architect Hashim Sarkis, whose practice and teaching had long been focused on the Islamic world. In a decade-long collaboration, Sarkis developed a vibrant, modern housing system that would not only accommodate the fishermen’s ambitious program and small budget, but also foster a rich sense of community, with balanced private and public space in keeping with their traditional lifestyle. A composite of nine residential blocks, the building turns inward on itself like a rectilinear nautilus, creating a protected interior courtyard. Fusing architecture, landscape, and urban planning, Sarkis’s collaborative approach to design has resulted in a residential complex that exemplifies the power of architecture to offset and improve chaotic conditions.

Urban-Think Tank: Metro Cable, Caracas, Venezuela 2007–10

The mountains surrounding the city center of Caracas have long been the site of informal settlements or barrios, populated by the steady influx of poor, rural migrants. It is estimated that about 60% of the city’s five million inhabitants live in such improvised communities, but due to their unrecognized status these areas have never been formally connected with public transit or other civic services. The result is a seemingly inexorable social divide between the two parts of the city. In 2003 architects Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner, founding partners of Urban-Think Tank, proposed building a cable car system to link two barrios with the city’s metro system. Urban-Think Tank’s proposal was based on community workshops and fieldwork, and supported by a multi-layer system of interventions around the cable car stations and within the barrio itself. The idea was a radical departure from the official planning strategy, which sought to gradually link the barrios to the rest of the city by creating new surface streets. While the construction of roadways in the barrios would entail the loss of many dwellings, a cable car system intrudes minimally and selectively into the existing fabric. President Hugo Chávez embraced the concept and set up a joint venture in May 2006 with an Austrian gondola engineer to begin implementing cable car systems throughout the city. The first completed line was built for the barrio San Agustín, with five stations connecting the barrio to the city’s public transportation. Regular service started in January 2010.

Set up in 1902 and designated for occupation by black workers, Red Location is one of the oldest townships in South Africa. Beginning in 1948 Red Location developed into one of the centers of the antiapartheid movement and was the source of a number of historic protest actions. Following the abolition of apartheid in 1994, the city of Port Elizabeth—which incorporates Red Location—decided to locate a museum memorializing the apartheid era right in the township, where the site of resistance could be an integral part of the experience, and the museum could be a central element in a large urban redevelopment project. In 1998 Noero Wolff Architects won a national competition for a Red Location master plan, including the new museum. From the outset the main issue in the planning of the museum was the future acceptance of the institution in its immediate community, which has generally been skeptical of outside attempts to introduce structural change. As the museum was being built, a community-based committee assembled weekly to ensure that the needs of Red Location citizens were being met. Unskilled workers from the neighborhood were hired for construction, providing training and employment while integrating the community into the project. The museum building, which is constructed out of ordinary materials, mainly concrete and steel, has a functional, utilitarian appearance that engages harmoniously with its industrial surroundings. Inside the museum a series of multipurpose “memory boxes”—galleries constructed of the rusty corrugated iron that gave the township its name—house a rotating variety of small installations that visitors are encouraged to explore on their own. Noero Wolff’s overall plan for Red Location, including housing, a library, city archive, and other communal spaces, reverses the segregation that so long characterized the site. The goal is that the township, formerly cut off from public amenities, will become a center for new urban development, infrastructure, and culture.

Jorge Mario Jáuregui/Metrópolis Proyectos Urbanos: Manguinhos Complex, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2005–10

Rio de Janeiro’s Manguinhos district, a large urban area in the north of the city, is the site of around ten favelas (informal settlements) in which some 28,000 people live in close proximity to industrial factories. The inhabitants suffer from a very high crime rate along with a lack of public space and community facilities. Jorge Mario Jáuregui is a pioneer and advocate in the field of slum upgrading, and in 1993 he started working with the Favela-Bairro program in Rio, which has reached out to hundreds of thousands of favela dwellers through small interventions. In 2005 the city commissioned Jáuregui to undertake an urban study of Manguinhos. The result is a plan for the elevation of a major rail line adjacent to the district’s main road to create a long public park beneath it. Raising the rail line will remove a physical and psychological barrier between Manguinhos and the rest of the city, and create a new public amenity equipped with scenic walkways, bicycle paths, and athletic fields. The architects have limited the number of people who
will need to be relocated during construction and have incorporated replacement housing into the
design. The project is currently underway.

**Elemental: Quinta Monroy Housing, Iquique, Chile, 2003–05**

In 2003 the Chilean government commissioned Elemental—a group of architects, engineers, social
workers, and contractors led by architect Alejandro Aravena and supported by the oil company
Copec and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile—to create housing for a community of
nearly 100 low-income households on a 1.25-acre site in central Iquique, a desert city of 200,000
people in northern Chile. The budget included only $7,500 per unit for land, infrastructure, and
building. Elemental developed a variation of the traditional row house, in which each unit consists
of one built segment flanked by an empty area of equal size—a building type that can be inhabited
immediately and also incorporate significant change over time. Over a period of nine months, 93
basic reinforced-concrete units were built. Each was stabilized for seismic durability and equipped
with the barest of basics: plumbing but no fittings for kitchen and bathroom, an access stair, and
openings for doorways. Once the modular outlines were completed, residents moved in and began
finishing their spaces at their own expense and at a pace that their income allowed, adding color,
texture, and vitality. Living space in completed Quinta Monroy Housing units is more than
double—roughly 750 square feet—what the original tiny budget could fund. With Quinta Monroy as
its starting point, Elemental has since erected well over 1,000 expandable units in Latin America
and beyond and has an additional 1,000 units in development. The group hopes that this model,
in which customization and appreciation is achieved through gradual investment and sweat equity,
could be a lasting solution for social housing.

**Estudio Teddy Cruz, Casa Familiar: Living Rooms at the Border and Senior Housing with
Childcare, San Ysidro, California, 2001–present**

The back-and-forth movement of materials, people, and ideas across the national border between
San Diego and Tijuana has long been an important focus of Teddy Cruz’s practice. In 2001 Cruz
began working with the community-based nongovernmental organization Casa Familiar to develop
a pilot housing project for San Ysidro, an American city located just north of the border. According
to Casa Familiar—which advocates for and assists the community in such areas as immigration
services, education, and job placement—some two-thirds of San Ysidro’s homes are multifamily;
the median income for residents is 60% lower than it is in the rest of San Diego County. In
addition to the initial goal of providing affordable housing, the team sought to stimulate the
neighborhood overall through political, economic, and social transformation. Cruz observed a
variety of ad hoc uses of land in this formerly homogenous suburban area, and with Casa Familiar
sought to create a complex system of housing, with integrated shared space, that would
acknowledge and exploit the dense, multiuse, and often illegal development that has been
common in the area. This decade-long undertaking has resulted in the incorporation of alternative
zoning categories in San Ysidro, appropriate to the city’s density and its citizens’ income levels, and the designs for two small-scale projects to be constructed on abandoned or underutilized lots beginning in 2011: Living Rooms at the Border and Senior Housing with Childcare. Connected by pedestrian promenades, the two projects will integrate affordable apartments with highly flexible multiuse indoor and outdoor space. Through a radically pragmatic approach to architecture, Cruz has sought to understand the fabric of the immigrant neighborhood and create a project that institutionalizes it.

**Rural Studio, Auburn University: $20K House VIII (Dave’s House), Newbern, Alabama, 2009**

Rural Studio, founded in 1993, is a satellite school of Auburn University, Alabama, whose mission is to educate the “citizen architect”—to teach architecture students the ethical and social responsibilities of the profession along with design and building skills. To date, Rural Studio has completed about 120 private and public projects. Among these is the $20K House, a research project that aims to address the dearth of affordable housing in Hale County (in western Alabama) and represents a broadening of the school’s scope and potential impact. Forty percent of the region’s nearly 6,500 residents are eligible for federal housing loans, but few can manage loans over $20,000; many, often elderly or disabled, live in trailers, whose value and quality depreciate precipitously. In an attempt to ameliorate this situation, every year since 2005 a new group of Rural Studio students has designed a house that can be built for $20,000 and be used as a model for low-income rural housing. So far nine designs have been drafted (one per year, except in 2007–08, when four were developed in tandem) and built by the students and their instructors. Informed by their predecessors, the 2008–09 team has come closest to creating a viable prototype. After nearly a year of design development, client presentations, and critiques, the house was distilled to the most elemental details, while minimizing cost and accelerating construction time. Set on a pier foundation, the 600-square-foot house—built for Hale County resident David Thornton—is open inside except for a core that neatly encloses the bathroom and separates the bedroom from the rest of the space. Dave’s House was the first $20K House built by a local contractor in real time, the first step toward formalizing a repeatable model and a new paradigm for low-income rural housing.

**SPONSORSHIP:**
The exhibition is supported in part by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. Research and travel support was provided by the Patricia Cisneros Travel Fund for Latin America.

**PUBLICATION:**
The accompanying publication *Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement* focuses on the 11 recently built or under-construction works featured in the exhibition. Each project is presented through photographs, plans, renderings, and drawings, and is accompanied by a detailed description. Introductory essays by Barry Bergdoll, Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at MoMA, and Andres Lepik, Curator of Architecture and Design at MoMA, explore the shift
in the long-standing dialogue between architecture and society, as the architect’s roles, methods, approaches, and responsibilities are dramatically reevaluated. *Small Scale, Big Change* is published by The Museum of Modern Art and available at the MoMA stores and online at MoMAstore.org. It is distributed to the trade by D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers in the United States and Canada, and through Birkhäuser outside North America. 8 x 10 in.; 140 pages; 167 illustrations. Paperback: $37.50.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

**From the Earth Up: Architecture as a Social Catalyst**

Thursday, November 11, 2010, 6:00 p.m., Theater 3

Architect Francis Kéré’s design for a school in Gando, Burkina Faso, and artist Harun Farocki’s documentary film *In Comparison* (2009), are featured in the exhibition *Small Scale, Big Change*. Both projects address traditions of brick production. In this evening’s program, Kéré and Farocki discuss the social issues surrounding the construction—with local materials and human labor—of Kéré’s school and a Burkina Faso-based clinic that Farocki filmed. Moderated by Toshiko Mori, Principal, Toshiko Mori Architect PLLC, and Robert P. Hubbard Professor in the Practice of Architecture, Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Tickets ($10; members $8; students, seniors, and staff of other museums $5) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, the film desk, or online at MoMA.org/talks.

**Brown Bag Lunch Lectures**

October 18 and 21, 2010, 12:30 p.m., Classroom B

*Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement*

This lecture provides an overview of *Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement*. Margot Weller, a curatorial assistant in the Department of Architecture and Design, will conduct the lectures. Participants may bring their own lunch. An induction loop sound-amplification system is available for all sessions. Tickets ($5; members, students, seniors, and staff of other museums $3) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, at the film desk, in the Education and Research Building lobby, and online at moma.org/talks.

**AUDIO GUIDE:**

The accompanying audio guide features original interviews and commentaries by 10 of the architects featured within the exhibition. MoMA Audio is available for download at MoMA.org, MoMA.org/wifi, and as a podcast on iTunes. MoMA Audio is available free of charge courtesy of Bloomberg.

**WEBSITE:**

The exhibition will be accompanied by an original interactive website that enables visitors to explore the 11 architectural projects included in the exhibition, together with audio from the MoMA Audio tour, video, images, and interpretive texts. Information about the various projects can also be shared through Facebook or Twitter. The site will launch on October 3, 2010, at MoMA.org/smallscalebigchange.

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**For downloadable high-resolution images, register at www.moma.org/press.**

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Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Closed Tuesday
**Museum Admission:** $20 adults; $16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; $12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

**Film Admission:** $10 adults; $8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. $6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)