

> updates

Design Like You Give a Damn: Live! and AFH National Chapter Forum

Architecture for Humanity held its first ever Chapter Forum as part of Design Like You Give a Damn: LIVE! - a two-day forum that showcased innovative humanitarian design, panel discussions and one-on-one workshops. The event was held on October 15 and 16 at the Center for Architecture in New York.

On Friday, October 15, the 2010 Curry Stone Design Prize finalists presented their work. This prize is awarded annually in recognition of design that is focused on social good and is accessible to the under-represented sections of society. The 2010 winner was Sustainable Health Enterprises, which addresses women's and girls' needs by developing feminine hygiene products from locally-sourced banana fiber in Rwanda. The other two finalists were Maya Pedal, which makes machines from used bicycles that perform agricultural and household tasks without gas or electricity; and the Chilean design firm Elemental, for rethinking public housing in the developing world.

The Chapter Forum was held on the morning of Saturday, October 16th. This was a lively event with representation from AfH chapters as far away as Australia, Japan and Chile. The DC chapter was well-represented by Chapter Coordinator Joe Fuentes and four other members. The discussion,

moderated by AfH's Chapters Coordinator Frederika Zipp, opened with chapter members presenting the works of their respective chapters. This naturally opened the floor to an interactive session about chapter operations. Members shared their experiences on various matters from starting new chapters, to finding volunteers and design projects to innovative ways to handle chapter operations. Following this, AfH's Chief Financial Officer presented details on a new method which is to be used by chapters to handle finances. One important matter of interest to all chapter members, the subject of membership dues, was also discussed. Several members had sought reasons to justify the proposed annual membership fee of \$25. AfH's Kate Stohr explained that this is necessary for the organization to keep track of its many members in different parts of the country, since this is one of the requirements of the liability insurance cover that AfH pays for annually. The last part of the Chapter Forum was a presentation highlighting the salient features of the new streamlined web layout template that is to be adopted by all the chapters. Another key point that came up during the Forum was the possibility of a representative of the chapters on the board of AfH. There was widespread support for this idea, although we still need to iron out some details regarding how the chapters would get together to elect their representative.

The event was a big success and there is a lot of enthusiasm to make it an annual one.



AfH's Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr speaking at the finale
Photo courtesy Marcelo Bauza, Santiago chapter

Design Like You Give a Damn: Live!, an event open to the public, featured a Design Open Mic, where the presenters each had ten minutes to showcase their innovative and socially impactful projects. These were diverse in nature, ranging from designs to help disabled people move, to disaster relief housing, low-cost solar cookers, and mobile libraries to name a few. AfH-DC's own Dawn Hyman took the floor to present our latest project, the newly-constructed Parent Community Resource Center at Cardozo High School. This was one of the few works showcased that had actually been built. At the end of the event, a prize was awarded to the best of these projects. The Ota-Kwaku house by Lucas London, a type of housing unit designed specifically for a weavers' community in Ghana, was adjudged the winner. The judges especially appreciated the uniqueness of the design solution in terms of construction materials, consideration for the environment, and the specific needs of the community it serves.

Running concurrently with the Open Mic during the course of the afternoon were three panel discussions on key issues pertaining to humanitarian design. These were: Innovative Financing Models, Monitoring and Evaluation Practices, and Post-Disaster Rebuilding. The panelists represented many different walks of life and shared their experiences both during the panel discussions and during the breakout one-on-one sessions that took place subsequently. A lively cocktail reception concluded the weekend's events.

This was a great opportunity to meet and interact with other AfH chapter members, as well as to learn about the work of other designers engaged in using the power of design for the greater good. Watch this space for details of future events!

- Maya Srinivasan



Over 50 AfH members from 20 chapters attended the first ever chapter forum in NYC.
Photo courtesy Marcelo Bauza, Santiago chapter



Above: The cozy new lounge area at Cardozo Senior High's PCRC
Below: The central multi-use space now has acoustical panels to improve the quality of sound within

> project update

A job well done!

"The coziest room in the school". This is how most attendees at the first PTSA Meeting see the New Parent Community Resource Center At Cardozo Senior High School. Gone were the cold blue walls, worn carpets and terrible echoes! In their place is a classroom beautifully transformed with warm golden walls, fresh new carpet tiles, sustainable acoustical panels and comfortable furniture that addressed multiple functions across the entire space.

The PTSA Chairs took advantage of the furniture's flexibility in setting up the room to accommodate the many people attending the meeting. Attendees looked comfortable and therefore were more attentive throughout the course of the meeting.

Not only does the new PCRC look and feel great, but it also sounds great! There is a tremendous difference in the room's sound quality thanks to the sustainable acoustical panels. Several conversations were held simultaneously and the sounds were well contained. Even though it's only been open two months, great things are already happening at the NEW PCRC. These include upcoming events hosted by the Hispanic Bar Association and the DC College Access Program and the development of a new website. 21CSF (21 Century School Fund) and SHAPPE (Senior Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators) are diligently working to secure staff for the NEW PCRC.

We were truly humbled by the enormous ovation AfH-DC received at the PTSA Meeting, but we know that the success of this project is largely due to a collaborative effort. The NEW PCRC is not only for the parents and the community, but it exists because of them and we (AfH-DC) are confident that the PCRC will be instrumental in achieving the goal to "strengthen the connection between a school and its community".

- Dawn Hyman

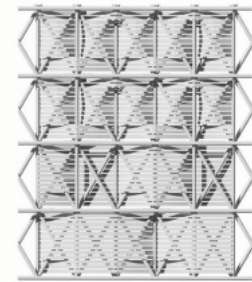
> in focus

Ota-Kwaku House

At the recent Design Like You Give a Damn: Live! Design Open Mic, I had the privilege of presenting the Ota-Kwaku House project, which was selected as a finalist for the 2010 OS-House competition (www.os-house.org). The intent of the competition is to address the need for sustainable housing for the emerging middle class in Ghana. Typical for this demographic, the house had to accommodate multiple generations and be easily expandable or modifiable as resources become available or the needs of the household change. The project not only satisfied the competition intent, but also created a true locally-embedded home.

While meeting the unique needs of the household and implementing sustainable design techniques such as using modular local materials and collecting rainwater were important, defining how this home would address the culture of the household was equally critical as part of a holistic design approach. Designing a home specifically for Ghanaians required a deeper understanding of Ghanaian culture, which revealed the richness of traditional *kente* cloth and the importance of the West African *Adinkra* symbols, often incorporated as decorative elements in vernacular architecture to convey messages of unity, spirituality and environmentalism. In designing the Ota-Kwaku house, the symbols' expressive value was considered as more than a graphic application on a façade, but as a way of informing architecture. The symbol of the compound house (*fihankra*) implied the overall arrangement of spaces around a central courtyard and is reflected in the form of the roof as a sun shade and stormwater collector. The symbol of *mframadan*, representing wind

resistance, suggested the importance of incorporating passive ventilation as a means of mitigating the hot and humid local climate. The symbol's composition, reminiscent of the local methods of weaving used in *kente* cloth and basket making, became the basis of a pervious wood slat façade that can be woven into different configurations, depending on the availability of resources and the evolving needs of the household. The construction of the wall would engage local craftsmen, weavers, and the family; using locally available knowledge and materials to reflect an important part of Ghana's tradition of representing traditional symbology in architecture.



Elevation detail, Ota-Kwaku house
Photo courtesy Lucas London

How should we as architects tackle the challenge of designing for a foreign culture?

Simply proposing a generic house design that addresses climate through a typical palette of sustainable design strategies feels incomplete as a way of designing to the needs of a unique culture. The Ota-Kwaku House draws from the spirit of local tradition to make culturally-specific humanitarian architecture, engaging the people for whom we are designing by embracing their culture and customs.

-Lucas London

The Ota-Kwaku House by Lucas London and Jade Zheng was adjudged the best project of those presented during the Design Open Mic at Design Like You Give A Damn: Live!



Exterior rendering, Ota-Kwaku House
Photo courtesy Lucas London

> project update

Expanding Portobelo: A trip to Panama

In early September, I, Josef Fuentes and Saba Tekeste made a site visit to Portobelo, Panama. During the visit we met with local architects, designers, artists, historians, teachers, community leaders, a mayor and Ministry of Education officials. These contacts helped build a more clear understanding of architectural practices in Panama, local procedures, and educational challenges. The first visit to the school property was organized by Raquel Macias, the Director of the Jacoba Urriola Solis School in Portobelo. A large community meeting was held with attendees including Ministry of Education Architect Sixto Rosales, Engineer Eleazar del Cid, several teachers, community leaders, the AfH-DC team and an interpreter. The School's needs were established, and most of the project's scope was determined. The goal of the visit was to collect enough information to conclude the Pre-Design phase of the project and progress to Schematic Design.

Project Description: AfH-DC will be collaborating with the community of Portobelo to improve the campus of their secondary school. The current deteriorating physical conditions and an overcrowded school population necessitate the school's expansion. The current secondary school is 3 years old and shares facilities with the primary school campus. The secondary school has two primary areas of focus, agriculture and tourism, these vocational specialties accommodate economically important areas in Panama's job market. The classrooms are held in a remodeled one story dormitory, where the bathrooms were also transformed into classrooms. There are approximately 400 students in the secondary school, all of whom share 15 computers. The facilities of the secondary school also have problems related to the climate, and the tropical demands of a rainy season. When it rains, the sound on the tin non-insulated rooftops are so loud that students can barely hear their teachers, and all outside physical education needs are naturally delayed. These fundamental concerns have lead to the three primary project goals.

- Create 8 new classrooms
- Build a gymnasium
- Create a Media Center, or Computer Room

Future Goals and Milestones:

The project team is wrapping up the pre-design phase and the next major phase will be to develop sketches and blocking plans. This will require the lead designer to establish the design needs and if any additional volunteers are necessary. Once sketches and plans are drafted, the plans will be shared with the client for approval before progressing to the next phase. By the conclusion of the schematic design phase it will be essential to kick off fundraising efforts.



Top: The Portobelo team
 Above left: The school facilities are badly in need of refurbishment
 Above right: Exterior view of the school

- The main Project Goals are as follows:
- To design, construct, and fundraise a secondary school that responds to the overcrowded conditions of the current school.
 - To develop a strategy that ensures the construction of the secondary school.
 - To design a high quality school that is environmentally and socially self sustaining.
 - To create a design that includes environmentally and friendly methods.
 - To design a school with heavy community participation.
 - To assist with current renovation needs.
 - To raise the funds to support the project.

- Project Plans
- 8 classrooms
 - Media Center
 - Gymnasium

All of the project goals and milestones have been documented and signed in a Memorandum of Understanding by the Community Representative, Project Manager, Lead Designer, and Chapter Coordinator. Our current estimates suggest that this project could take 3 years to complete if everything proceeds on schedule.

-Rachel Schmidt, Project Co-ordinator

> upcoming events

- *Wed. Nov. 10th 12:30 - 1:30 pm* **Building in the 21st Century:Sustainability: Beyond LEED**
- *Thurs. Nov. 11th 7:00 pm* **Albus Cavus Volunteer Orientation** The Fridge Gallery, 516 8th Street SE
- *Fri. Nov. 12th 12:30 - 1:30 pm* **Lunch n' Learn: LEED Credential Maintenance** http://www.usgbcncr.org/_events/details/296
- *Tues. Nov. 16th 12:30 - 1:30 pm* **National Building Museum Smart Growth Series: Planning for Rising Tides**
- *Thurs. Nov. 18th 7:00 - 10:00 pm* **Creative Black Tie Gala** District Design Society <http://creativeblacktie2010.blogspot.com/>
- *Tues. Dec. 7th 6:00 - 9:00 pm* **Green Tie Affair** Networking event for Sustainable design professionals http://www.usgbcncr.org/_events/details/299
- *Thurs. Dec. 16th* **Fall 2010 CityVision Final Presentation** National Building Museum
- *Mon. Jan. 10th*, **Intelligent Cities: Makeshift Metropolis** Witold Rybczynski discusses his latest book *Makeshift Metropolis*, exploring the history of city planning, the kind of cities we want and the kind of cities we need. National Building Museum \$20

> ideas?

We're pleased to bring you this bi-monthly newsletter. The hope is this will serve as a way to disseminate more immediate and current news of happenings within AfH-DC and be an outlet for sharing information and amongst members that share similar interests and goals.

We welcome ideas and contributions!
send to: newsletter@afh-dc.org

The Capital Ideas Newsletter Team is:
Maya Srinivasan, Julia Siple, Shurid Rahman.

Thank you to everyone else who helped and contributed!

> opportunities



SYNOPSIS

Reflecting the current state of architecture, urbanism, and landscape discourse, **Architecture for Humanity - Chicago**, **School of the Art Institute Chicago**, and the **Village of Igarai** are proud to announce, **REAL HOUSING: communities + designers**, a call for ideas. In an effort to advance the territory between top-down and bottom-up planning, for all types of interim, emergency, public and affordable housing design, **REAL HOUSING** seeks to create a design platform that utilizes advanced sustainable architectural design solutions, together with local knowledge of materials, methods and systems to produce a new form of cooperative culture.

Residents living in informal urban settlements are being relocated to formal mass produced housing prototypes outside city centers. These prototypes for public housing have been largely unsuccessful for a complex number of reasons, including undesirable living environments for families. Displaced people face compounded obstacles to success, with issues such as lack of infrastructure, transportation and public amenities leaving individuals feeling powerless to impact their own lives. Building upon the premise of barn raising or quilt making, this call utilizes social networking as the foundation for a virtual, integrated, pluralist design process, that seeks a middle ground between top-down and bottom-up systems. **REAL HOUSING** aims to better utilize the collective intelligence of designers, makers and users to design creative interventions and customizable retrofits for 1) private, 2) shared and 3) public spaces with/by/for residents who currently live in a "formal" housing development in Igarai, Brazil.

REAL HOUSING will use Facebook and Open Architecture Network (OAN) to create a design research platform, to collectively gather/exchange/update/research on the project, communicate with users, enable peer-to-peer critique of projects, and discuss critical issues, and social design pedagogy.

This call for ideas is open to architects, students, designers, artists, visionaries and citizens of the world who believe that design and collaboration are tools to transform cities and a way to co-create healthy, viable and livable communities. Participation is **FREE** and all proposals will be submitted digitally. Selected proposals will be part of the **Igarai Catalog** and implemented in the Summer of 2011. For more information, visit: www.afh-chicago.org



Get involved with a new project!

Community Container Concept Development

AfH-DC is joining forces with the local non-profit organization Albus Cavus to develop a concept to for creative adaptive reuse of shipping containers. The idea is to modify containers to accommodate certain tools and services which communities currently lack. The tools and services required by specific communities will be determined using a participatory design process.

There have been several conversations on this project but AfH-DC and Albus Cavus now would like to open the discussion to the members and public to develop the concept so it can become a reality. How can a shipping container effectively respond to the needs of the community it serves? What strategies can and/or should be implemented? Who should be involved in determining the needs along with the community? How can the project be environmentally and operationally sustainable? These are just a few example questions that can be brought up in the discussion.

Are you interested in participating? We are in the process of finalizing a date and location; for now, we aim to kick this off in mid-November or early December.