

## Met Museum Considers Opening On Mondays

By CAROL VOGEL

Every Monday streams of would-be visitors climb the grand stairs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art only to discover that it is closed. Now the museum's director is proposing to open the doors on Mondays, starting next July, so that the Met would be open every day for the first time in more than 40 years.

"We turn away thousands of people every Monday," said the director, Thomas P. Campbell. "We're not really serving our audience."

The museum started closing on Mondays in 1971 to save money, and the proposal to reopen is partly driven by financial considerations as well. Mr. Campbell said rising tourism had brought so many new potential visitors that the economic balance might have changed. According to NYC & Company, the city's marketing and tourism organization, tourism to New York City has grown 16.2 percent in the last five years, to nearly 51 million visitors in 2011 from 43.8 million in 2006.

The Met's attendance has been rising too, to a record-breaking 6.3 million visitors in the fiscal year that ended in June, about 600,000 more than the year before. Met officials say they are calculating how many more staff members would be needed to open on Mondays, and at what cost, and how much revenue the increased traffic would bring in admissions charges (the suggested amount is \$25), retail sales and restaurant receipts.

"When you start drilling into it, it seems as though we'll be ahead," Mr. Campbell said. He said the proposal was being discussed this week at staff and board meetings, and that a decision was expected in the coming months.

The Met has been experimenting

*Continued on Page 4*



IWAN BAAH

An installation at the Venice Architecture Biennale about a vertical slum in an unfinished office building in Venezuela includes an arepas restaurant.

## Projects Without Architects Steal the Show

VENICE — Save for a few projects and pavilions, probably the less said, the better, about "Common Ground," the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale, organized by the fine British architect David Chipperfield.

With a sea change (partly generational, mostly philosophical) overtaking architecture, and attention turning from glamorous buildings and celebrated designers to broader issues like urban-

ism, public space, social responsibility and collaboration, "Common Ground" is well intended but, alas, a missed opportunity.

Its organizers nod toward some fresh agenda, with the biennale's president, Paolo Baratta, writing in the exhibition catalog about architects emerging "from the crisis of identity they are going through," and rediscovering "the irrevocable relationship between architecture, space and town planning." Mr. Chipperfield notes that architects, once again, are paying more attention

to cities, which are "created in collaboration with every citizen."

But the urbanist gloss notwithstanding, the show mostly just glides over issues like public housing and health (there's a paper-thin section on social housing), the environment, informal settlements, economic decline and protest. It pays almost no attention to the developing world, to designers from Africa or China, and precious little to female architects, aside from Zaha Hadid, who, like Peter Zumthor, Renzo Piano, Peter Eisenman, Bernard

Tschumi and a surprising number of the old boldface names, hogs much of the spotlight.

You might partly describe the "Common Ground" title as a bid to imply some curatorial shift from architecture's makers to users, but in the event that shift often becomes just another excuse for the usual hagiography.

So there is a room devoted to press clippings about Herzog & de Meuron's still-unbuilt Hamburg concert hall, as if

*Continued on Page 6*







TIZIANA FABI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

The United States pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale showcases 124 small, sometimes anonymous projects — guerrilla gardens, portable playgrounds — that aim to improve cities.

## Projects Without Architects Steal the Show at the Venice Biennale

From First Arts Page

to imply that the compelling but contentious and increasingly costly project has evolved in some collaborative and organic fashion, via news media coverage and public interaction.

A gallery devised by Norman Foster and others celebrating Mr. Foster's iconic HSBC Bank building in Hong Kong, a nearly 30-year-old office tower, presents drawings, photographs and videos about the architecture's reception and afterlife. It includes remarkable images of hundreds of Filipino women, domestic workers, who, in the absence of adequate public space at street level in Hong Kong, take over the bank's covered underbelly and the surrounding financial district on Sundays. That's fascinating stuff, and a rare glimpse here at real-world, spontaneous urbanism, but the whole display remains nonetheless a self-advertisement for the architect, by other means.

The exhibition still positions architects as producers of surplus value through aesthetic quality, less so as players at the decision-making table, organizing cities and communities. Cautious, dated, with too many cooks (Mr. Chipperfield farmed out many sections to friends like Mr. Foster), the show suggests above all an uncertainty about how to unpack, evaluate, present and tame the messy, multilayered social, political, economic and architectural processes that go into making good buildings and places today.

Biennales by their nature are sprawling, skin-deep omnibus festivals, contrived above all for tourism and congenitally awkward as a medium for architecture. But the tone of ambivalence here, with one foot in the past and the other gingerly testing the new, makes for uneven stagecraft and is certainly not as complex and elegant as Mr. Chip-

perfield's own architecture.

As for gems in the rubble: Anupama Kundoo, the Indian architect, has constructed a full-size model of part of her two-story Wall House in southern India. Handsome, made of brick, terra cotta and recycled bits and pieces by students and Indian craftsmen, it's a welcome mirage in the middle of the Arsenale, the former shipyard where much of the biennale always takes place.

Crimson Architectural Historians, from the Netherlands, explore the devolution of the once-progressive concept of "new towns," from postwar experiments in healthy cities devised by architects for the common good to gated communities and commercial developments for the few. And Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, led by Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu, presents a collectivist, bottom-up enterprise to enlist residents and municipal authorities in neighborhood improvements and urban agriculture in Colombes, outside Paris.

Having lived in Berlin for years, I was grateful for a meditation by Thomas Kupke, Philipp Oswald and others on the closing of the Tempelhof Airport, one of the glories of 1930s design, a relic of postwar glamour and civilized travel. The recent takeover of that windswept former airfield by citizens, who sometimes use it as a park, is proof that the thirst for public space has no limit, but as Mr. Foster is quoted saying about the airport's demise, an architectural landmark was recklessly sacrificed "on the altar of commercial development."

### ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Images from the Venice Architecture Biennale:  
[nytimes.com/design](http://nytimes.com/design)



ANDREAS DEFFNER

A view of Anupama Kundoo's full-scale re-creation of the Wall House built in southern India and made of terra cotta and recycled materials.

Elsewhere, a proposal in the exhibition by Jean Nouvel and Mia Hagg to remake a blighted tangle of highways spanning the water in the Slussen area of Stockholm envisions a diverse and lively series of pedestrian-friendly public spaces. The city has rejected the idea in favor of another proposal. I was glad to see the Nouvel-Hagg plan laid out here.

The show's coup de théâtre is by Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner of Urban-Think Tank, in concert with Justin McGuirk, the architecture critic for The Guardian newspaper in London, and the intrepid architectural photographer Iwan Baan. Their subject is the well-known but endlessly fascinating Torre de David in Caracas, an unfinished 45-story ruin from the early 1990s, built (as it happens, by a relative

of Mr. Brillembourg's, now dead) to be a bank headquarters, abandoned when a financial crisis hit Venezuela in 1993, and lately appropriated by squatters who have improvised apartments, shops, bodegas and gyms on 20-odd floors and who have in essence created a vertical slum.

Lacking elevators, exterior windows and walls, the building has electricity and a system of plumbing in which tenants take turns hauling water and manning tanks. Mr. Baan's photographs show the place thrumming. The tower is a rebuke to the authorities in oil-rich Venezuela, who continue to make empty promises about providing adequate housing for millions of poor and dispossessed residents of the sprawling slums that ring the city. (Those promises are repeated in the official Venezuelan pa-

vilion here.)

Meanwhile, the ramshackle ingenuity of tenants becomes a model for the cinder-block installation in the Arsenale, which includes a restaurant as community center, serving not-bad arepas and beer.

Among national pavilions, each organized independently, Spain, Russia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Britain and a few others have generated some buzz, but the United States deserves the last word.

Every city is a fixer-upper, as one architect puts it in a video running at the pavilion: that's the American message. "Spontaneous Interventions" is the title of the presentation, which highlights 124 small-scale, often anonymous, mostly collaborative projects to improve cities. They range from pop-up book-shares in disused phone booths to plug-in street furniture for food cart patrons; from portable playgrounds and guerrilla gardens that hijack newspaper-vending boxes for ready-made planters, to flea markets on abandoned lots.

Organized by Cathy Lang Ho, Ned Cramer and David van der Leer for the Institute for Urban Design, along with Michael Sorkin, the institute's chairman, and Anne Guiney, the show may not be the first but it is the latest and one of the most panoramic surveys of this sort of insurgent, unplanned, provisional, do-it-yourself micro-cultural citizen activism.

That many of the projects here skirt authority and don't involve architects suggests not that architects aren't important or that cities don't depend on top-down plans. It suggests that cities and architects still have a way to go to catch up with an increasingly restless public's appetite for better design and better living.

And that the public isn't waiting.