

Emergency Architecture

Shigeru Ban - Samuel Mockbee & Rural Studio - Michael Rakowitz
14 April through 2 June 2002

The concept behind this project is architecture with a social rather than a purely esthetic concern. It is not a mere facade, with a representative function. It targets its primary application: sheltering people, especially the most disadvantaged ones, disaster victims, and/or rehabilitating a downtrodden social class. Economy and efficacy are its common denominators.

Samuel Mockbee, who passed away last December the 30th at the age of 57, taught architecture at the university of Auburn in Alabama. With his students of the **Rural Studio**, founded by him and D.K. Ruth in 1993, he designed and built lodgings for the disadvantaged families of County Hale, one of the poorest counties in the poorest US state. The Rural Studio has set itself the goal of creating well-designed and beautiful houses for everyone – not just for those who can afford them. For almost ten years, Samuel Mockbee and his architecture students have been designing and building striking houses and community buildings for impoverished residents of Hale County. Using salvaged lumber and bricks, discarded tires, hay and waste cardboard bales, concrete rubble, colored bottles, and old license plates, they create inexpensive buildings in a style Mockbee describes as “contemporary modernism grounded in Southern culture.” In a time when architectural attention focuses on large, glossy urban projects and palatial homes, the Rural Studio provides an alternative of substance. In addition to being a social welfare venture, the Rural Studio is also an educational experiment and a prod to the architectural profession to act on its best instincts. By giving students hands-on experience in designing and building something real, it extends their education beyond paper architecture. And in scavenging and reusing a variety of unusual materials, it is a model of sustainable architecture. The work of the Rural Studio has struck such a chord –both architecturally and socially- that it has been featured on *CBC News*, as well as in *Time* and *People* magazines.

Mockbee's work is currently being presented at the Whitney Museum's first architectural Biennale. He is rapidly gaining great recognition. [Rural Studio: www.arch.auburn.edu]

Shigeru Ban (1957) lives and works in Tokyo. This Japanese architect has already made a considerable international reputation for himself, mainly thanks to his villas, which are always based on a theme: “The Forest”, “9 Rooms”, “The wall curtain house”. His reputation in Europe is grounded on the work he did for the Japanese Pavillion at the Universal Exhibition in Hannover in 2000, at which he demonstrated that it is possible to build a house with a cardboard tube structure. He invented this technique several years ago, designing emergency shelters for the victims of the earthquake in Kobé. These were later adapted for use in Rwanda by the United Nations. These constructions take the potential of constructive invention and project thinking to their outermost limits: the use of “poor” or sophisticated technologies and materials, solutions adapted to ultimate environmental or practical constraints. Fri-Art will present the Paper Loghouse and one of the Paper Refugee Shelters. Shigeru Ban's work will be shown in the next Documenta XI in Kassel. (Website: www.dnp.co.jp/millennium/SB)

Michael Rakowitz (1973) is a young New York artist who designs inflatable shelters for the homeless, which he calls *paraSITES*. These simple structures make use of exhaust hot air coming from air ducts in apartment blocks. One of these shelters, belonging to a previous New-Yorker homeless, is exhibited at Fri-Art. At the Continuous Connection exhibition, organised by the Unesco and Felissimo in Paris, Rakowitz was awarded the Grand Prix Design 21 for this inflatable shelter.

Cette exposition a reçu le soutien de la Commission Culturelle Intercommunale, du Canton et de la Ville de Fribourg, de la Loterie Romande, de l'Office Fédéral de la Culture, de Crédit Suisse Private Banking, de la Liberté, de l'Imprimerie Saint-Paul, de Cartier SA et de l'Etablissement Cantonal des Assurances des Bâtiments.

Every Thursday during the exhibition, *Sushi in La Cuisine*

Reservations until Wednesday evening : 026 323 23 51

Thursday 23rd of May at 8 pm : Guided tour of the exhibition with Michel Ritter, Director of Fri-Art

Next exhibition : Christoph Draeger - Berdaguer & Péjus

16th of June through 11th of August. Opening Saturday 15th June at 17 o'clock