

## DESIGN LIKE YOU GIVE A DAMN: ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSES TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Edited By: Architecture for Humanity<sup>1</sup>. Metropolis Books, New York 2006, 333 pages.

In his introduction to *Design Like You Give a Damn*, Cameron Sinclair explains that the purpose of his organization is to demonstrate, “that for every ‘celebrity architect’ there are hundreds of designers around the world, working under the ideal that it is not just how we build but what we build that truly matters” (31). *Design Like You Give a Damn* offers readers a summary of the last 100 years of humanitarian design and a sampling of recently-implemented or proposed design solutions for important social problems. Many of the concepts featured in this volume focus on issues related to rebuilding after disaster and upgrading slums. The use of visual and verbal information engages both architects and persons not formally trained in architecture who are interested in exploring humanitarian design concepts.

The “Housing” section comprises the majority of *Design Like You Give A Damn*. The summaries accompanying designs related to emergency and transitional housing solutions help explain the difficulties architects encounter when creating new housing of these specific types. Emergency and transitional solutions are critical to improving the quality of life for those displaced by natural disaster or war. However, the book’s emphasis on these particular forms of shelter overlooks important issues involving sanitation and reasonable permanent housing for the one billion people who live in slums worldwide. The Clean Hub System proposal, by John Gavin Dwyer of Shelter Architecture, is an example of a feasible sanitation project—a building powered with solar energy that provides clean water, toilets, and bathing facilities for hundreds of slum dwellers. Such solutions remind us that we must continue to generate new ideas and create solutions for the problems faced everyday, not just when isolated episodes of crisis occur.

*Design Like You Give a Damn* provides an introduction to both historical and recent humanitarian design projects for non-designers and highlights some of the difficulties architects encounter when trying to create feasible and affordable designs. The volume also provides professionals interested in humanitarian efforts with ideas for potential design partnerships and funding sources, and provides insight on construction-related costs and the viability of specific projects. Although each project is only briefly discussed, the information presented enables one to visually understand and respond to the work of others, allowing for a dialogue to unfold about the significance of design in the larger world.

The book does not directly offer advice about how to get involved in specific humanitarian efforts, but it provides a good overview of the impact design can have when searching for solutions to social problems. Cameron Sinclair’s introduction convincingly explains the importance of groups like Architecture for Humanity; he emphasizes that the design profession needs “to create an open-source network for innovative solutions while still protecting the rights of the designer” (31). If this occurs, Sinclair believes more architects will become involved in efforts to create more *meaningful* designs; architecture will do more than construct *prettier* places, it will *improve lives*.

- KELLY KOSS

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<sup>1</sup> Architecture for Humanity is a charitable organization that was founded in 1999 to promote architectural and design solutions to global, social and humanitarian crises. More information is available at: <http://architectureforhumanity.org>