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For immediate release

Contacts:

Kate Hackman, Associate Director, Charlotte Street Foundation
816.994.7731 | kate@charlottestreet.org
www.charlottestreet.org
www.artarch.org

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Ersela Kripa + Stephen Mueller
A G E N C Y architecture / film / research / photography
contact: agency@agencyarchitecture.com
<http://agencyarchitecture.blogspot.com>



**INFORMAL URBANISMS:
THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD**

Urban Culture Project's La Esquina
1000 West 25th Street, Kansas City, MO / 816.221.5115
January 6, 2010, 6:30pm
Free; Donations Welcome

Charlotte Street Foundation's Urban Culture Project, and Art through Architecture, a partnership of Charlotte Street Foundation and American Institute of Architects-KC, are pleased to host *Informal Urbanisms: The Production of Space in the Developing World*, a provocative public program organized by Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller, founding partners of AGENCY, a design and research practice in NYC.

The evening includes a screening of the feature-length documentary film *Garbage Dreams: Raised in the Trash Trade*, which follows the Zaballeen, Cairo's traditional trash collectors, also known as "garbage people." After the screening, Kripa and Mueller will host and moderate a panel discussion concerning emerging conditions in disadvantaged and marginalized urban populations around the world. Panelists include Toby Lunn, Mechanical Engineer; Maureen Lunn, Southtown Foundation / MA International Studies (University of Kansas); Andrew Mikhael, RA, LEEP AP; and Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller of AGENCY, who will also present recent architectural and infrastructural proposals.

10% of proceeds from *Garbage Dreams'* tour will go to the Spirit of Youth Association, a non-governmental organization of Zaballeen, which runs The Recycling School profiled in *Garbage Dreams*.

PART ONE: FILM SCREENING

Film screening of ***GARBAGE DREAMS: Raised in the Trash Trade***, a feature length documentary. (Iskander Films in co-production with Movieart in association with Chicken and Egg)

Filmed over four years, GARBAGE DREAMS follows three teenage boys – Adham, a bright precocious 17-year-old; Osama, a charming impish 16-year-old; Nabil, a shy artistic 18-year-old – born into the trash trade and growing up in the world's largest garbage village, a ghetto located on the outskirts of Cairo. It is a world folded onto itself, an impenetrable labyrinth of narrow roadways camouflaged by trash; it is home to 60,000 Zaballeen (or Zabbaleen), Egypt's "garbage people."

PART TWO: PANEL DISCUSSION

1. Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller of AGENCY

The Romani population in Rome is a community in constant crisis. Historically a nomadic, stateless people, the population has largely settled into a semi-permanent, but tenuous relationship with Italian society. Though a large percentage holds Italian citizenship, the Roma (gypsies) are ostracized, undermined, and discriminated against by officials and citizens alike. With new restrictions on foreign travel, they are unable to use transnational migration as a survival tactic, and without a Romani state, they have no homeland to which they might return. AGENCY proposes infrastructural interventions that benefit the Roma and Roman populations equally allowing for a symbiotic existence without forcing one to assimilate with the other.

(AGENCY's research and project proposals for *Informal Urbanisms* were made possible by the generous support of The MacDowell Colony.)

2. Toby Lunn, Mechanical Engineer

During Sudan's 21 year civil war, the peoples of the Nuba Mountains region found themselves caught between two armies both tactically interested in their ancestral home. Refusing to be terrorized, exterminated, or forcibly conscripted; they used the rugged mountain terrain of their homeland as a bastion of their way of life and as a foil for their attackers.

3. Maureen Lunn, Southtown Foundation; MA International Studies (University of Kansas)

Each Sunday in Hong Kong, China, significant portions of the urban core are flooded by the city's domestic workers, or "Amahs". These women are at a major disadvantage, having left their home country to seek wages and now living in a place where they have no social opportunity due to their work—a significant aspect of their culture. And yet in Hong Kong, they have worked this situation to their advantage by inundating public urban space in a way that has created a permanent and acceptable weekly environment for them to meet with friends, enjoy their home culture, and strike hope in one another.

4. Andrew Mikhael, RA, LEEP AP

The informal development of Rio's favelas, born out of inadequate resources to hold the flood of rural migration, have seen decades of marginalization and exploitation. Government, military, and NGO's have taken their turn at alternatively eradicating and supporting its existence. Now, at a turning point in the life of these communities, the opportunity for integration and transcendence lies within the favela.

About the organizers:

Ersela Kripa, RA, Partner, AGENCY

Ersela Kripa is a licensed architect and founding partner of AGENCY, an award-winning collaborative design and research practice based in New York City. Her previous work has included intervention strategies for failed city centers, and speculative nation-building tactics for disadvantaged countries. She has been awarded a research fellowship from MacDowell Colony where she completed an illustrated research text entitled 'Elements of a Tactical Urbanism', with her partner Stephen Mueller. Ersela is currently developing designs for low-cost sustainable single family residential models in the US and Albania, while working on a recurring research text exploring the development of downtown Kansas City for the KCFreePress. Ersela holds a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University, and a Bachelor of Architecture from New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Stephen Mueller, Partner, AGENCY

Stephen Mueller is an architectural designer and founding partner of AGENCY. He has co-taught graduate design studio at Columbia University with a focus on merging innovative digital design techniques with sustainable building technologies. Stephen is currently developing designs for low-cost sustainable single family residential models in the US and Albania, while working on a recurring research text exploring the development of downtown Kansas City for the KCFreePress. Stephen holds a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University, and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Kansas.

Presenting partners:

Urban Culture Project is an initiative of the Charlotte Street Foundation, an organization dedicated to making Kansas City a place where artists and art thrive. Urban Culture Project creates new opportunities for artists of all disciplines and contributes to urban revitalization by transforming spaces in downtown Kansas City into new venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming. For more information, visit www.charlottestreet.org.

Art through Architecture (AtA) is a partnership program of Charlotte Street Foundation and American Institute of Architects-Kansas City. AtA supports artists and the arts community in Kansas City and enriches architectural practices by providing incentives and tools to encourage and empower architects and their clients to incorporate art and artists from the Kansas City area into their new projects. This locally-developed program seeks to educate and encourage broader community appreciation for and commitment to quality art and design, and to serve as an innovative, progressive model of art-architecture collaboration to be promoted to other art and architecture communities nationally. Visit www.artarch.org for more information.