

## IMAGINATION PLAYGROUND DESIGNED BY RENOWNED U.S. ARCHITECT DAVID ROCKWELL LAUNCHES ACROSS EUROPE

*Play Events in Berlin, Potsdam, Copenhagen, Venice, Helsinki*

*Highly acclaimed play space concept nominated for Berlin DMY Award, selected for U.S. Pavilion at 13<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Biennial*

New York, NY, USA—June 4, 2012. Imagination Playground, the breakthrough play space concept conceived and designed by renowned New York-based architect David Rockwell, is presented for the first time in Berlin, Germany with a special play event and exhibition at the DMY International Design Festival at former Tempelhof Airport, June 6-10. DMY Berlin is an international design network for contemporary product design that organizes the annual festival where both established and emerging designers launch new products, prototypes and experimental concepts.

From more than 500 participating designers, the DMY Jury has nominated Rockwell Group and Imagination Playground for a DMY Award 2012. Ten designers have been nominated for three Awards presented jointly by DMY and the Bauhaus Archive Berlin for pioneering work in the design industry. All nominated projects will be featured in a special exhibition at the Bauhaus Archive/Museum of Design in Berlin from September 12 to October 15, 2012.

Imagination Playground was also chosen to be shown at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Venice Architecture Biennale as part of the U.S. Pavilion, which is organized under the theme *Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good*. In addition, Imagination Playground will travel to Potsdam, London, Copenhagen and Helsinki, World Design Capital 2012. In May, Imagination Playground was presented for the first time in Germany through a special exhibition at Architekturgalerie München and a play event at Munich's University of Television and Film.

From set designs for the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles to interactive exhibition galleries at The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco, Rockwell Group has been a leader in creating imaginative, immersive, and playful environments for high-profile destinations in culture, hospitality, retail, and entertainment. Imagination Playground brings Rockwell's creativity to the world of children's play, blending contemporary design with issues of education, community, and urban space.

### About Imagination Playground

Imagination Playground encourages child-directed, unstructured free play—the kind of play that experts say is critical to a child's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development. With a focus on loose parts, Imagination Playground allows children to stretch their imaginations by constantly altering their environment and inventing new structures. While

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traditional playgrounds consist primarily of fixed equipment, Imagination Playground offers moveable elements in 15 individually designed shapes to inspire constructive play and foster collaboration.

“The driving force behind Imagination Playground was to create a flexible environment that encourages kids to do what they do best: to be creative and to use their imaginations,” said David Rockwell, founder and CEO of Rockwell Group. “We are delighted to bring Imagination Playground to Germany and other parts of Europe this year, as we hope to share this experience of free play with as many children worldwide as possible, and to spark new thinking about what a playground can be.”

Motivated by the desire to help rebuild lower Manhattan after September 11, and his own experience of raising children in a dense urban environment, Rockwell invested five years of *pro bono* research and development to shape the Imagination Playground concept and design. During this time, Rockwell Group consulted with leading psychologists and educators, led focus groups, and tested numerous prototypes.

The first site-specific Imagination Playground Park opened in New York in 2010 through a public-private partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. To meet interest from schools and daycare facilities with limited amounts of space, Rockwell Group subsequently created lightweight, mobile versions of the playground. These cost-efficient, easy-to-install modular playgrounds have since enlivened hundreds of public parks, schools, daycare facilities, and children’s museums across the U.S. and in other countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Haiti, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Switzerland. The U.K. launch of Imagination Playground was at London’s Coram’s Field in 2011. For more information, see [www.imaginationplayground.com](http://www.imaginationplayground.com).

## About the Exhibition Documenting Imagination Playground

Architekturgalerie München celebrated the German launch of Imagination Playground with the opening of the exhibition “Playspaces: Imaginative and Immersive Environments by Rockwell Group.” Created especially for this venue, the exhibition is the most comprehensive exploration to date of Rockwell’s fresh take on play space design. Selections from the exhibition are shown at the DMY International Design Festival and will travel to Potsdam and other European venues.

“Playspaces: Imaginative and Immersive Environments by Rockwell Group” provides an introduction to Rockwell Group’s design practice, which ranges from interior architecture for hotels and restaurants; exhibition design for museums; architecture and design of public spaces, such as airport terminals and children’s hospitals; imaginative set designs for Broadway musicals; to product design. The exhibition primarily explores how Rockwell Group came

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to design Imagination Playground, its sources of inspiration, and the in-depth research that helped bring it to life. Models, sketches, renderings, videos and photographs document the evolution of the play space concept from the first site-specific Imagination Playground in Manhattan, to the scalable models that have been deployed at hundreds of communities across the globe.

Developed by Barry Richards, principal at Rockwell Group and a lead designer of Imagination Playground, the exhibition highlights play theories and precedents that inspired Rockwell Group: for example, progressive ideas about block play by the German educator Friedrich Fröbel; European Adventure Playgrounds with their opportunities for self-directed constructive play; and innovative playground design by architects and artists during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially a collaboration between sculptor Isamu Noguchi and architect Louis Kahn in the 1960s.

Drawing connections to a diverse selection of Rockwell Group projects, the exhibition illustrates the firm's imaginative, playful approach in the design of immersive environments and experiences. Projects cited in this context include: The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco, W Paris – Opéra hotel, set designs for the Academy Awards, and The Cosmopolitan hotel and casino in Las Vegas.

## Rockwell Group

Founded by David Rockwell in 1984, Rockwell Group is an award winning, cross-disciplinary 150-person architecture and design firm specializing in cultural, hospitality, retail, product, and set design. Based in New York, with a satellite office in Madrid, the firm crafts a unique narrative and an immersive environment for each project. Rockwell's interest in theater has informed much of the firm's work, including set designs for the 2009 and 2010 Academy Awards ceremonies in Los Angeles; interior and exhibition design for The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco; Nobu restaurants in Beijing, Dubai, Hong Kong, Melbourne, and New York; Wasabi by Morimoto and the Harbour Bar at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower, Mumbai; W Hotel Union Square, New York; and most recently, W Hotel Paris-Opéra, the first W Hotel in France. For more information, please visit [www.rockwellgroup.com](http://www.rockwellgroup.com).

## **Imagination Playground in Europe in 2012:**

- May 12 Munich: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen (Play Event)
- May 12-June 2 Munich: Architekturgalerie München (Exhibition)
- June 6-10 Berlin: DMY International Design Festival (Play Event + Exhibition)
- June 15-17 Potsdam: Erlebnisquartier Schiffbauergasse (Play Event + Exhibition)
- July 1-7 Copenhagen: Christianshavns Vold
- July 7-8 London: London Festival of Architecture
- August 19 Berlin: Berlinische Galerie. Landesmuseum für Moderne

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Aug. 29-Nov. 25 Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur (Play Event)  
Venice: 13<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Biennial,  
U.S. Pavilion  
Sept. 12-Oct.15 Berlin: Bauhaus Archive/Museum of Design  
(DMY Awards & Jury Selection Exhibition)  
Sept. 6-16 Helsinki: International Design House Exhibition

**For further information, please contact:**

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