
Office dA: VORODUO: An Architect's Installation

January 26 - April 30, 2008
Press Release

This installation is the second in a series of site specific studies designed by Office dA. The first of this series titled 'Voromuro' was commissioned by and exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston, MA, USA (Summer 2007).

Situated within one of the main galleries at Pékín Fine Arts, and blurring the lines between art and architecture, 'Voroduo' is a monumental symmetrical construction comprised of 100's of interlocking acrylic "cells" that responds to its context like an animate object twisting back onto itself and pulling the public around the piece. The public is encouraged to use the shape of the installation as a guide - visitors will enter on a path that moves around the object, allowing viewers to slowly discover its spatial, material, and atmospheric qualities before exiting the room on the opposite side.

'Voroduo' is one result of an ongoing study by architects at Office dA with structural shapes, and the units used to fabricate them. Based on a Voronoi mathematical diagram, the geometry of the installation inverts onto itself seamlessly from a bowl to a vaulted dome through a vertical wall, thus escaping the typical division between opposing structural systems, such as a concrete shell structure and a steel truss. 'Voroduo' also examines the relationship between the building interior and its potential for monumental object presentation. Rather than the more traditional stacking of bricks or arraying of tiles, the Voronoi diagram is adopted in this installation as a way to organize its units in a varied and flexible way. As such, the organization of its plastic cells is able to adapt itself to various architectural conditions such as wall, arch, and dome. No two cells are alike - ranging from cylindrical, to cubic, to more complex shapes - allowing the piece to adjust in order to achieve a structural balance. Thus, as the installation changes from wall to dome, the cells vary in shape, size, and direction in response to changing forces, loads, and stresses.

This variation in the cellular patterning produces a dynamic visual effect as the piece alternates between opaque and transparent, between dense patterning and sparse patterning. Made from 125 sheets of flexible plastic cut into 600 cells, 'Voroduo's' material affect is at once ephemeral and solid. As one moves into and through the space, the installation appears to change states, from fluid to rigid and back again.

This project was installed with the assistance of the School of Architecture at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing. This is the first in a series of design-based projects at Pékín Fine Arts, aimed at engaging local audiences with the latest in international architecture and design based theory and practice.

Ms. Monica Ponce de Leon is principal architect of Office dA, founded in 1991. She is also a professor of architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Mr. Nader Tehrani is principal architect of Office dA, founded in 1991. He is also a professor of architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) School of Architecture and Planning

Mr. Brandon Clifford, project architect for Voroduo, is an architect at Office dA

Office dA, is a Boston-based architecture and design firm led by principal partners Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani. The innovative installation and design based work of Office dA, has been exhibited at New York's MOMA and the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum.