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DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

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/ISSUE 111 2019 · S\$8 /

**UCCA DUNE
ART MUSEUM**
OPEN ARCHITECTURE

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WORDS MICHELE KOH MOROLLO

MEDIATING LAND AND SEA

Submerged within the sand dunes of a beach resort community in Hebei, China, UCCA Dune Art Museum by OPEN Architecture encourages the appreciation of both art and nature.



In Hebei, China, Beijing-based OPEN Architecture has built an art museum that serves as the cultural and social core of the Aranya beachside resort community in Qinhuangdao's Bohai Bay.

Named UCCA Dune Art Museum, the building, which sits along a quiet beach, is partially submerged beneath natural sand dunes and composed of organically-shaped, interconnected, grotto and cave-like segments that mediate the space between land and sea.

When the project's lead architects Li Hu and Huang Wenjiang first visited the site,

they were awed by the surreal beauty of the wind-carved dunes.

DUNES AND CELLS

Such dunes play an important role in the coastal ecosystem, but with the growth of the seaside tourism industry in China, many of them have been leveled off to make room for ocean-view real estate developments.

Wanting to protect and preserve this vulnerable ecosystem and save the site from encroaching developers, the architects decided to blur the boundaries between

1
The main entrance to the museum yawns open like the mouth of a cave.

OPPOSITE
An aerial view of the organically-shaped museum, which is partially submerged beneath the dunes.





2
/ 2
The main and largest gallery is illuminated by a large skylight.

/ OPPOSITE
The curved interior walls and thresholds mimic the undulating forms of the sand dunes.

building and landscape, and between art and environment, by designing a museum that enhances the value of the dunes.

Through an iterative, evolutionary process of structural and architectural modeling, they arrived at a design that optimised the building's ability to support the pressure of the sand enveloping the gallery spaces.

The 930m² museum, which includes a reception, café, community room, exhibition spaces, outdoor exhibition areas and a roof terrace, was created as a series of organically-shaped, interconnected "cells".

Located along the easternmost, sea-facing side of the building are cells that

contain galleries, a café, and ancillary spaces that open up directly onto the beach.

From a long, dark, entry tunnel and a small reception area, the space opens up dramatically to reveal the museum's largest, multifunctional, sky-lit gallery.

"The varying sizes and shapes of each 'cell' allows for both individual and communal connection with art, but also sculpts the spatial experiences of visitors as they move through the museum's galleries," says Li.

The layout re-imagines the typical art-viewing experience by seamlessly merging architecture, art and nature.

The museum's flowing form – a

