

Dora2

"It all started as a discovery in the archeological sense of the term, as I was leaning against the solid mass of concrete... , with my gaze extended over the horizon of the ocean...

This solid mass of concrete and this worthless object managed to martial my interest...

I was most impressed by a feeling, internal and external, of being immediately crushed.

A complete series of cultural memories came to mind: the Egyptian mastabas, the Etruscan tombs, the Aztec structures...as if this vast pieces of artillery fortification could be identified as funeral ceremony, as if the Todt Organization could manage the organization of a religious space...

My objective started as solely archeological. I would hunt these gray forms until they would transmit to me a part of their mystery: why these extraordinary constructions would not be perceived, or even recognised?"

Paul Virilio, from Introduction to Bunker Archeology

Space

Visiting again Dora 2 in Trondheim in January 2020, before starting my diploma, I felt like Paul Virilio, seeing this timeless monuments is drifting more into the past than the future.

Although this structure is an echoe of a forever passed time, a mad period in history, its physical presence is very much real, even hyper-real.

Walking through Dora 2 I almost felt the weight of the structure pulling me towards its super-massive concrete facades.

The language of this monolith and its blind screens of the lateral walls, the passive closeness without openings in the rear sections, and the offensive opening in the front, is felt as strangely calling for the action. As for the top, there is really nothing there except the thick mass of defence concrete, as engineered protection from the air missiles. The military infrastructures create always, in some way, the experience of a field of action, that of duel and battle, even so many years passed after its construction. To the geologist's engagement with tectonic and geomorphological movements, the military engineers added the engagement with potentialities for the use of troops, war machinery and weapons and their diverse means of communication and destruction. And - that's why the structure feels like it does.

Dora 1 and 2

The construction of Dora 1, The neighbouring structure to Dora 2, the bunker which would become part of the largest German naval base in Northern Europe, started in the autumn of 1941, one year after the invasion of Norway. The reinforced concrete roof was 3.5 m thick. The walls were concrete 3 m thick. The whole bunker was 153 m × 105 m, the largest and strongest in German Atlantic defence line.

Construction of smaller bunker just west of it, Dora 2, was started in 1942, but it was only half-completed by the end of the war. Dora 2 has footprint off 5656m², where 4088m² is covered also by a 3,5m thick roof. The bunker is about 162m long, but 54m wide, with a total height of 14,5m. The outer walls are 2.5 meters, the inner walls have a thickness of 1,2m. 2200m² of its footprint is sunken 12m below sea level.

I realized, the spaces I visited couldn't be recreated in 2020. But I felt strong interest to do something with this structure, even not knowing how to name and describe it. I wanted to reuse and colonize Dora2, not just letting the public in, but ALSO to juxtapose some kind of program to its building structure. How to describe this wish? As reconstruction, or re-constitution of the structure, conversion, or taking it in use? All these ideas seemed somehow inadequate.

Dora2 is now occupied by Trondheim Harbor, occasionally letting the public in on guided tours through the facility. I took part of a guided tour summer 2019. We entered the bunker from its western facade, and into an enfilade space, with two north-oriented Halls. Most of the spaces were not in use. We got the chance to descend the stairs 12m down to the original submarine basin, into a very unique, and almost religious experience, especially when knowing that this vast space is submerged to the beautiful fjords of Trondheim.

Then, I thought that the theme of "investigation and activation of its possible architectural potential and resistance" would be a strong driving force for my project. I couldn't imagine a more suitable program than the art program, to do more justice to Dora2 and its spaces.

The art scene in Trondheim has for years been challenged with the lack of studios spaces for artists. The Norwegian Artists Center (NKM) fears that Trondheim will become a region without expertise in the arts. From a survey, it was found that 92.3% of the students at KiT (Visual art department of NTNU) want to establish themselves in Trondheim after graduation. At the same time newly graduated and people in the field of art don't have adequate facilities, studios, and workshops. Workshops within the craft-based education such as wood, ceramics, glass, and textiles are in demand - also from the students at NTNU.

The lack of facilities to practice art has not only impacted the general interest in the arts in Trondheim, but has also resulted in inadequate storage spaces for art. Some of Trondheims art and culture institutions already rent storage spaces from Dora 1. The rest of art institutions and museums in Trondheim rely mostly on improvised storages of non-exhibited art.

I wish to create space that will facilitate the new and more engaged production of art and at the same time, I want to unify spaces for archiving of art in the city.

Contemporary Art functions

The tectonic mass of Dora2 feels like it has been there for several centuries. It is a building that has stood the test of time, a unique robust structural power that is difficult to surpass.

Inside the bunker there are two large north oriented, dominating the hall spaces. Since Dora2 was never completed just half of the planned roof stands there. This roof has a surface of 4088m², and is completely open, with views towards the Trondheim fjords in the north and the city to the south.

I wanted to intervene with minimal "damage" into the structure, at the same time taking advantage of its structural possibilities. Frac Dunkerque by Lacaton Vassal was an important reference for my project, where the office duplicated the existing building, and moved all its content to the new structure, resulting in a large exhibition hall free from the functional programs.

In the same manner I wanted to work with the duality of an opened and a "closed" space, a huge exhibition hall and an art storage. The geometry and logic of my intervention is defined by the axial spaces of the bunker. Two partition walls had to be removed in order to get the full benefits of the spaces. Apart from that, I worked with two volumes "detached" from the existing walls, which define the spatial and structural idea of the project: The Archive is a volume suspended from the roof, whereas the exhibition is a freestanding volume under the roof. With this idea I wish to promote Trondheim's understanding and engagement with modern and contemporary art, and with the understanding of contemporary attitude toward storing and research of art.

Entering Dora 2 from its western facade you will arrive in a dark and enclosed space on the right and a bright open space on the left. With these conditions I would like to invite public to experience Time based art exhibitions in the enclosed space and Object based art exhibition in the open space.

"Can architecture actually change anything? Or anticipate anything? For example, in the art world? In my own experience, Tate Modern's Turbine Hall was an innovation, inviting not only a different audience but also a new kind of art production and presentation that transcends the traditional format of an exhibition space. Artists devised an entire and utterly immersive universe. They were no longer just visionaries; they were able to create whole universes of their own invention. The architecture had given them the platform and the parameters to do so.

Jacques Herzog, in letter to David Chipperfield, Domus 10/2020

In the same way, the former submarine basin of Dora 2 becomes an ideal space for art and all kind of time and object-based installations. 112m long, 20m wide and 12m tall, with this scale objects will feel immersive, and communicate with its audience in a new language. This new type of gallery space, will challenge artists to create works that they wouldn't be able to do in any other museum space, for the city of Trondheim and Norway. The type of art that can be brought together into a chain with some art institutions, across the globe and create new interest in various layers of the public

This form of contemporary art that engage with the dimension of time and space can be considered as "time and space-based art ". Part of that means to experience art as it unfolds in extraordinary spaces over time, according to the temporal logic of the medium. This usually tends to be digital media art, which includes analogue in terms of film, it can also be video, audio, performance and software-based art, but of course, it could be also a "traditional art", which creates new experience in the confrontation with vast dimensions of space. The content of art can reach the public through different formats and spaces , since it can be screened, projected/ played or organised in different formats, as more intimate installations, long videos, or traditional art installations, etc.

Art archive

The purpose of an Art Archives is to organise, preserve, and make accessible records not in current use and to collect documentation relevant to the work of the institutions. Records may be in any form- including, but not limited to, paper, electronic, photographic, and magnetic media.

Few art institutions in Trondheim have adequate storage facilities. When exposed to a wrong climate materials will try to adapt to the environment, by doing so changes might occur in the original texture and colour. The general rule is that High humidity will cause biological decay, high temperatures will cause chemical decay.

Dora 2 will serve as an affiliate Archive for The state archive at Dora 1. By suspending the structure to the massive concrete roof, the space underneath opens up.

5 Ateliers for artists

A wish to breathe new life into the art Scene in Trondheim, by facilitating the shared space for artists. The concept of the individual genius is still highly attractive in the art world. As in many fields, there is strength in numbers: by joining an art collective artist will benefit from the economical, social and practical experience of shared art spaces. This applies especially for ateliers for young artist, which Trondheim struggle with.

The roof of Dora 2 is like a monolithic mountain with views to the whole city and the fjord. The atelier-structure wraps around the perimeter of the building and creates a generous garden in the center. Like the Bottom of the bunker, that feels isolated from the city, i wanted to create a space on the top that detaches itself from its environment. A garden or forrest that will bring light to the spaces, juxtaposed to the immense man-made construction.

Im working with flexible atelier spaces along the garden. the south end of the roof will foster reading rooms and research spaces.

The language (of existing concrete and new steel construction)

The super rough monolithic architecture of the fortress is almost impossible to match with any contemporary form and material. So, how to continue to build inside (and outside)? After studying the possibility to add new layers of concrete, I decided to use the clear tectonics of steel elements: still constructions hanging from the roof in the archive bay and standing on the top of walls in the art museum bay. See images of conceptual model! The glazed steel interventions will be clearly visible, creating the "modern counterpoint" to its crazy modern monolithic base. In the long winter nights, looking from the fjord, the new compound will hopefully be experienced as a kind of happy festival place.

Conclusion

I called this project of architectural reorganisation of Dora 2 as Investigation and Activation of its Architectural Potential, touching the issue of its huge resistance to all forms of architectural interventions for everyday life of people. The question of potential remains. Dora 2 is a structure, which in line with some others along the Atlantic coast, from Norway to the south of France, can't be destroyed. Its material presence is so inhumanly powerful that it will, so to say, remain for ever. In my architectural attempt, I was treating it as an almost unsurmountable piece of nature, trying to detect its geology, topography, its weak points, and cracks, that would ensure the new life of structure in the city of Trondheim. But still, and parallel to that, it will just remain an immense monumental fortress and museum of its own, conserving everything that wars bring with, that people would never completely understand.

