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| DESIGNER | OPEN Architecture                      |
| PROJECT  | UCCA Dune Art Museum                   |
| LOCATION | Bohai Bay, Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province |

## Striking a Delicate Balance between Nature and Architecture

On a quiet beach along the coast of northern China's Bohai Bay, curious protrusions emerge from the sand dunes. They belong to the UCCA Dune Art Museum, which lies beneath the surface and comprises a series of curvaceous interconnected spaces that resemble caves. It seems appropriate that visitors to the gallery are invited to appreciate art in the most primal and timeless form of space, as they are reminiscent of humankind's earliest "art galleries." The decision to build this subterranean art museum arose from Beijing-based OPEN Architecture's desire to protect the delicate local dune ecosystem, which has evolved over many thousands of years. According to the architects, the siting of the museum will ensure that the sand dunes will be preserved "instead of being leveled to make space for ocean-view real estate developments, as has happened to many other dunes along the shore." The cavernous spaces include eight interlinked galleries and a cafe. Construction workers in the port city of Qinhuangdao hand-crafted the rounded concrete shells that make up the museum's structure using formwork molds made primarily from small strips of wood. The architects deliberately retained the irregular and imperfect texture left by the formwork, allowing visitors to see traces of the building's manual construction. And the protrusions? These are funnels and openings that allow natural light to fill the museum's spaces. They also frame different views of the outside world so that museum visitors can observe and appreciate ever-changing views of the sky and the sea throughout the day. ■