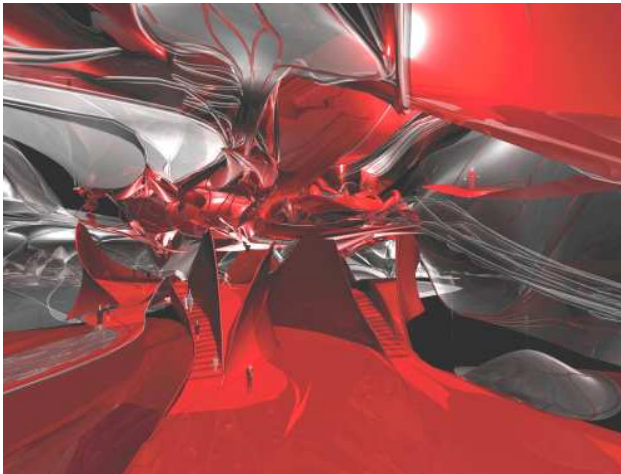


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**SFMOMA PRESENTS FIRST SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY
ARCHITECT HERNÁN DÍAZ ALONSO**



Busan Master Plan and Concert Hall (interior), 2003-04; digital rendering; © Xefirotarch 2005

From March 31 through September 17, 2006, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the exhibition *Xefirotarch/design series 4*. Organized by Joseph Rosa, guest curator and former Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design at SFMOMA, the exhibition features selected key projects by Xefirotarch, the Los Angeles-based design firm led by founding principal Hernán Díaz Alonso. Following its SFMOMA debut, the exhibition will travel internationally, making this the first *design series* presentation to go on tour.

Xefirotarch is the fourth installment in SFMOMA's annual *design series*, launched in 2003 to highlight the work of emerging architects, graphic designers, and industrial designers at the forefront of their disciplines.

Díaz Alonso's baroque designs—resembling animal forms, plant structures, or fungal growths—can seem both playful and bizarre. He blurs the visual and spatial boundaries between surface, decoration, and structure to create an original, distinctly figurative architectural approach that's greatly influenced by contemporary art practice. The studio's biomorphic aesthetic is conceptually indebted to the groundbreaking work of such digitally literate architects as Greg Lynn and Asymptote (Hani Rashid and Lisa Anne Couture), but Díaz Alonso takes the potential of design technologies in a new direction. His aesthetic, always sensual but often grotesque, evolves through a series of conceptually linked projects and experiments whose ultimate goal is to offer a temporal experience as well as a spatial one. The resulting work explores an undefined domain between the formal demands and narrative possibilities of architecture.

Joseph Rosa notes, "Xefirotarch's refined investigations of form are an example of how digital architecture has matured since the mid-1990s. No longer fascinated by merely producing blob-based structures, Díaz Alonso has expanded the theory and practice of this new architectural approach. His vision,

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based on constantly morphing geometry, represents flexible arrangement in architectural form rather than stasis. Gathered here, the studio's most important designs over the last five years suggest organic complexity as a way of redefining concepts of beauty and the grotesque in architecture, offering almost a natural history of this evolving aesthetic."

For *design series 4*, Xefirotarch will command 1,000 square feet on the Museum's second floor. The exhibition's centerpiece, *Sangre* (Spanish for "blood"), a sculptural installation created specifically for this presentation, will fill an entire gallery. Finished with patented factory-issue *Ferrari Red* paint, *Sangre* suggests both the sleekness of a manufactured object and the biomorphic oddity of an alien creature. It will incorporate into its structure a selection of architectural models and design maquettes from Xefirotarch's current and previous projects, including *Busan Master Plan and Concert Hall*, *Landmark Tower/U2 Studio Project*, *Cell Concept: Earphones and Display System*, and *Sur*, the studio's winning entry in the 2005 MoMA/P.S.1 Young Architects Program. The exhibition also will feature six monitors playing DVD animations of the studio's projects, as well as a number of small-scale models displayed in vitrines.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1969, Díaz Alonso trained at Columbia University in New York and worked in the offices of architectural icons Peter Eisenman and the late Enric Miralles prior to founding his own firm, Xefirotarch, in Los Angeles in 1999. Focusing on architecture, product design, and digital animation, the studio's creations are undulating masses characterized by flux and shifting degrees of stability. Díaz Alonso thinks of each project as an extension of the last—or as one enormous, continuing project. His work incorporates an interest in cinema and his early desire to be a filmmaker, with the use of animation software such as *Maya*, for example. A product initially created for the motion picture industry, *Maya* allows the architect to treat each project like a sequence that can be edited and reordered to create different views and narratives.

Xefirotarch's *Landmark Tower/U2 Studio Project, Dublin* (2002) is an early example of the studio's architecture modeled on biology. An entry in a competition to build a mixed-use complex in Dublin, this multistory glass-enclosed building acts like a city, housing both commercial and residential spaces inside a monumental, animal-like form that Díaz Alonso has described as *Arach* (Gaelic for "dragon"). Public and private spaces—including a design for the band U2's sound studio—intermingle on the upper interior levels, and a series of pedestrian lobbies create dynamic continuum with the outside. The design reinforces the organic blending of programs within the building and proposes a narrative to connect inhabitant, structure, and environmental site.

Xefirotarch's *Busan Master Plan and Concert Hall* (2003–04), a proposal for the redesign of the Gwangalli Waterfront in Busan, South Korea, gave the studio the opportunity to further utilize a process Díaz Alonso has described as "cellular aggregation," meaning the finished design is generated through incremental multiplication and variation of a single form. His concept for this bustling commercial and recreational waterfront—comprising, among other things, a cruise-ship terminal, an enormous beach, a convention center and hotel, and a multipurpose concert hall—is inspired by the beach environment itself and is imagined as a web of intersecting eddies that pool together to form islands of activity. At the center

of this web, forming its own small island, is the concert hall. Like the amphibious creature it resembles, the hall is an intermediary between city and sea, serving as a porous hub for the ebb and flow of pedestrians. Its dynamically wavy, intersecting spaces converge on the massive, bulbous forms that house the theater and auditorium.

Xefirotarch's *Cell Concept: Earphones and Display System*, (2005–06) envisions a set of earphones as well as a retail storage and display system for a major cellular communications client. The cell phone accessory, a flexible silicone membrane that the studio describes as a "technological prosthetic," sprouts from the ear and wraps around the jawline like a tattoo. When not in use, it folds into the cell phone and the entire unit is enveloped, like an embryo, in a translucent polyurethane pouch. The design for store display extends this biological aesthetic: A network of wired, programmable cells attach to one another with Velcro-like bristles. Like DNA, the cells function both individually (as shelves and recharging units) and collectively (as a system of walls and structures that may be customized to fit the specific needs of each space).

A study in topography and surface manipulation, *Sur* (2005), Xefirotarch's winning entry in the MoMA/P.S.1 Young Architects Program, was installed in P.S.1's courtyard and served as the venue for its summer music series. Beneath a canopy of leaflike, concrete-colored forms made from fabric sheathing and aluminum tubes, visitors lounged on eccentrically shaped fiberglass benches and platforms coated in slick race-car red. The title, taken from a popular Argentinean tango, references the rhythmic forms of the architecture as well as the festival atmosphere. At once cartoonish and slightly menacing, the pavilion was among Xefirotarch's first designs built in the United States.

Xefirotarch / design series 4 is accompanied by a small-format catalogue (48 pages, soft cover, \$16.95) that includes more than ninety full-color reproductions, with an essay by Joseph Rosa and project descriptions by Ruth Keffer, curatorial associate for architecture and design at SFMOMA. In a dynamic, cinematic style that mirrors Díaz Alonso's creative process, this publication explores his diverse influences.

The objective of SFMOMA's *design series* is to identify and provide exposure for emerging talents in the field of design who have not yet had solo museum exhibitions. Previous artists featured in the *design series* include Lindy Roy (2003), Yves Béhar (2004) and the New York-based firm 2x4 (2005).

Xefirotarch/design series 4 is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is generously supported by Christine and Michael Murray, and Nancy and Steven H. Oliver, and an anonymous donor.

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Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

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Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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