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The Sound of Sculpture

When the National Building Museum in Washington asked Winka Dubbeddam to design an installation made of autoclaved aerated concrete, the architect immediately thought of adding sound. The material in question reminded her of famous lightweight structures like Le Corbusier's Philips pavilion, which appeared at the 1958 World Expo, and Vito Acconci's Bra installation, made in 1991: two temporary constructions inextricably tied to sound. In creating her Soundscapes installation for the museum, Dubbeddam, principal of the New York firm Archi-Tectonics, took a comparable approach. With autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC) as her point of departure, she turned to Maya, a generative animation software program that allowed her to "sandpaper" a virtual block of this easy-to-shape material, which is lighter than ordinary concrete block and has special acoustic qualities. Using the software, the architect interpreted a piece of music composed specifically for the project in transformations of the material. The result is a fanciful sculpture displayed in the exhibition hall, where Dubbeddam has hung two rotating loudspeakers diagonally across from each other. These speakers, which move up and down, fill the space with scrambled sound waves. The sculpture reverberates the sound created by audio signals. The installation is one of four made especially for *Masonry Variations*, an exhibition that demonstrates the possibilities of stone, brick, terrazzo and AAC. (Exhibition closes April 4, 2004.)

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