

News Release



BASF helps create total silence at the Guggenheim Museum

In New York City – ranked among the top 10 loudest cities in the world – noise is a constant. The din in restaurants soars over 90 decibels, and subways rushing across the city register more than 80 decibels. Since end of March and running through August 2, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum offers a serene and silent escape:

[PSAD Synthetic Desert III.](#)

The art work, conceived by Doug Wheeler, realized by the Guggenheim Museum, and sponsored by BASF Corporation, manipulates sound, light and space in a “semi-anechoic chamber” designed to suppress all but the lowest levels of ambient sound. The installation makes use, in part, of the technology of sound suppression that is normally applied to experiments and tests in the realm of sound engineering. The room’s lighting and configuration are also designed to induce an optical impression of infinite space. Wheeler compares the visual and acoustic impression of *Synthetic Desert III* to his own experience in the deserts of northern Arizona where near-silent conditions profoundly influence the visual sensation of distance.

“Silence as we know it measures at 30 decibels, and Wheeler’s semi-anechoic chamber will measure in the range of 10-15 decibels – so quiet it could be possible to hear your own heartbeat,” said Doyle Robertson, an expert on melamine foam for BASF in North America.

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The exhibit's anechoic properties are partly enabled by a product known as Basotect®, a flexible, open-cell melamine foam with high sound absorption properties. Basotect is used in an array of architecture, construction and industrial applications such as the elevator cabs in New York City skyscrapers, where it insulates noise for some of the fastest elevators (up to 23 miles/hour) in North America.

Through a blend of chemistry, art and architecture, the Guggenheim presentation will feature 400 pyramids and 600 wedges of Basotect covering the chamber's floor, walls, and ceiling.

From the Guggenheim, Francesca Esmay, Conservator, Jeffrey Weiss, Senior Curator, and Melanie Taylor, Director of Exhibition Design, worked for two years with the artist to produce the work, which was first conceived in 1971 but will be realized here for the first time. The team carefully selected material to build the piece.

“Due to Basotect's properties and design capabilities, it was an ideal choice for the Guggenheim exhibit,” said Joerg Hutmacher, CEO of pinta acoustic, which develops three-dimensional ceiling and wall products for acoustical control. “I am not aware of any other product that could have been used to do what the artist envisioned.”

Because of its high sound-absorbing capacities coupled with its ability to be shaped into almost any form, Basotect empowers and inspires architects, designers, sound engineers and more to create spaces that have proper acoustics and are aesthetically pleasing – whether it's a sports arena, music venue or recording studio. Basotect also has excellent fire properties, is extremely light-weight and easy to install.

About BASF

At BASF, we create chemistry for a sustainable future. We combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility. The approximately 114,000 employees in the BASF Group work on contributing to the success of our customers in nearly all sectors and almost every country in the world. Our portfolio is organized into five segments: Chemicals, Performance Products, Functional Materials & Solutions, Agricultural Solutions and Oil & Gas. BASF generated sales of about €58 billion in 2016. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchanges in Frankfurt (BAS), London (BFA) and Zurich (BAS). Further information at www.basf.com.