Precipitous Promontories | Remembrance of the Anthropocene

Ambitious in scale—towering over the plains at 60 meters each—these skyscrapers are meant to be a symbol of duality: of the past and future and of the narratives revolving around the planet we squandered versus the planet we can still hope to preserve for future generations to come.

Old in form, these structural frameworks are intended to serve as a reminder of skyscrapers of recent history that externalises humanity’s hubris—with the environmental impact in their building to be but one aspect of such a destructive stance. But upon closer inspection, these towers represent the new in their use of materials that can inspire how building as we know it today can change with a simple shift to using sustainable solutions.

This proposal aimed at using four components—desert sand called Finite1 for the base, mycelium for the core (viewing deck)2 3, potato starch MDF4 + organic photovoltaic (OPV) solar cells5 for the crown, and bioplastic (soy-based)4 for the sails—that have been around for some time now in order to arrive at a functional and replicable solution to systems of ENERGY (as the structure generates the minimum it needs via the OPV crown) and SHELTER (in its functions as viewing deck where the ‘cores’ of varying heights are located that provides breathtaking views of the Fly Ranch property and beyond + a short-term refuge or events-place with the addition of bioplastic ‘sails’ as shade) as requisite of the design brief.

The concept also takes the trope of duality a step further addressing the crucial element of ensuring ‘thoughtfulness of place’: from a symbol of the not-so-distant dystopic past (again, as that epitome of industrialisation), this play on the form is transformed as a beacon of hope. Inspired by practices of the traditional custodians of the site—the Northern Paiute6—and all such an indigenous culture forwards: with an inherent knowledge of the value of peacefully co-existing with biodiversities at its core. As a loose inflection of the Sun Dance Lodge, this architecture is intended to carry with it the hopes and wishes of the participants of the traditional Sun Dance ceremony—a celebration that understood the value of all forms of life not just on Earth, but the universe itself.7

Primarily a design firm with a commitment to engaging one of the most pressing issues concerning humanity today, we intend to use the funding to collaborate with experts in the further research and development of these technologies not only to ensure that we arrive at a robust prototype upon the award of the project but more importantly add to the knowledge-base that is crucial in ensuring we see the continuity of life as we know it on this planet.

Although as noted, bold in scale, this proposal is ultimately humble in its grasp of the reality that we are but part of the rich biodiversity that make up the Earth. And it is only from this vantage from which we can only truly begin to understand what we have done and more importantly, what can still be done.

1. <https://urbannext.net/finite-concrete-replacement/>
2. <https://www.certifiedenergy.com.au/emerging-materials/emerging-materials-mycelium-brick#:~:text=A%20mycelium%20brick%20is%20an,and%20the%20mycelium%20of%20fungus>.
3. https://criticalconcrete.com/building-with-mushrooms/
4. <https://www.archdaily.com/893552/8-biodegradable-materials-the-construction-industry-needs-to-know-about>
5. <https://www.nrel.gov/pv/organic-photovoltaic-solar-cells.html>
6. <https://4.files.edl.io/8434/10/30/19/173445-e46b5edc-44fe-4f65-85b8-0f582482cadf.pdf>
7. https://www.lakotamall.com/studying-the-sun-dance/