**Fly Ranch Deep Learning Experience**

When we first approached this design challenge we were struck with the scale and beauty of the site. Our instinct was to dive into the rich bodies of knowledge made available and immerse ourselves in the place. We were drawn by the layers of history and the rich physical and cultural landscapes of Fly Ranch located on Northern Paiute ancestral lands.

As time progressed our chance of visiting the site diminished and we continued our explorations in a remote manner. We thanked the LAGI organisers for providing such a wealth of supplemental information. In addition, owing to the global pandemic, this way of remote investigation and interaction was to become increasingly prevalent in our day to day lives and work, and began to shape our response to the brief.

An initial guiding question emerged - how can we propose a physical intervention on a site we can’t feel or sense? If we act with limited understanding then we risk further ecosystem degradation, a potential tragedy given the sense of care and responsibility which was powerfully emerging within us for this fragile place.

We were also consistently challenging ourselves to consider what it means to act sustainably in this place at this time. Our research and practice was thrust into a period of reassessment. What assumptions were we operating on? What bias had we inherited? What needed to change to more meaningfully contribute to humanity thriving in harmony with the natural world? How can we recover and restate the importance of the ecological framework which is the very foundation of human existence? It became apparent that we needed to be able to understand the systems we operate in much more deeply. Ways of listening to place and culture, to experience deep knowledge, were to be prioritised.

Through this fundamental assessment of ourselves and our work we moved away from the call for physical proposition. It felt premature, risky, ‘out of place’. What if the correct response was to do nothing? Did structures even belong here? How can we listen sufficiently to allow this place to tell us a correct and respectful response?

It is from this understanding that our response emerged. We were now more fascinated by the opportunity that the design challenge presented to build a deep appreciation of place. How everyone who considered this challenge was already accumulating and synthesizing knowledge and the potential this represented. We, and every other participant, were all already part of this community. With this in mind we would like to present our proposition for the Fly Ranch Deep Learning Experience…

***Sustainability demands regeneration, regeneration demands deep understanding of place.***

Our present ecological circumstance demands that in order to be **sustainable our actions need to** **be** **regenerative**[[1]](#footnote-1). Actions which are ‘less damaging’ or even strive to be ‘restorative’ are now insufficient.

But in order to conceive of **truly regenerative practices** we need to perceive places as **whole living systems**. This compels an understanding of the interrelated biological, cultural, social, geological and spiritual aspects of any environment.

Formulating regenerative actions therefore requires the sensitive and effective **integration** of diverse domains of knowledge into decision making. This demands **open and highly collaborative** methods of knowledge exchange, idea generation, evaluation and analysis.

Fascinatingly the LAGI 2020 Fly Ranch Design Challenge presents as an incredible opportunity to develop a platform from which to achieve this. Each participant through their focused engagement with the brief, background materials, place and people as well as undertaking actions of research, development and prototyping **is now a rich repository of integrated knowledge of this place**.

**Imagine the learning potential** if these fragmented sources of integrated knowledge could be highly effectively and compellingly captured, combined, communicated as well as being given the opportunity to thrive and evolve.

During this unique time of focus and engagement there is an incredible opportunity to create a tool to enable a highly accessible and **very deep and integrated conception of place**. A potent, collaborative, lasting and evolving learning resource, well beyond what any individual voice can achieve**.** A wellspring from which **powerfully regenerative actions can emerge** now and into the future.

Recognising this extraordinary potential, our submission is therefore not to create a physical object but **to create a platform for a beautiful, open, inclusive learning experience** principally based on documenting and communicating the unique knowledge, experiences and design propositions of the LAGI 2020 Fly Ranch design challenge.­­

The format of our submission is a proposal for an interactive and evolving immersive digital 3D environment of Fly Ranch populated with absorbing content drawn from LAGI 2020 Fly Ranch participants as well as the rich repositories of existing information.

‘Visitors’ will journey through a virtual exhibition of participants’ design submissions and engagement experience ‘installed in place’. Different ‘encounter moments’ will allow visitors to interact with diverse types and modes of knowledge such as audio and video recordings as they travel building a rich appreciation of place.

Specific exhibits could also be subject to simulations of weather, solar radiance, lighting etc. to illustrate, test and monitor key aspects of their performance. The platform also provides the opportunity to further enhance an integrated understanding of place by embedding and communicating existing and emerging primary sources of knowledge for example oral histories, soundscape recordings and technical data.

The outstanding challenge and our response to the brief is therefore not to design a physical installation but to use the design challenge as a springboard to design an open and inclusive experience for deeper learning. An evolving platform for the **revealing**, **describing and communication of the whole living system of this place**. A project which strives to produce sufficient understanding to allow us or anyone to truly act regeneratively in place, avoid further system degeneration and to **responsibly, authentically and cooperatively evolve the precious living system of Fly Ranch**.

***Technical Outline & Environmental Impact Summary***

The design utilises mostly human power and relies on electrical energy to operate digital technologies. It proposes to construct a virtual environment using the extensive library of existing documentation, high resolution aerial and site photography, participant digital modelling, site surveys and 3D terrain mapping. It is not expected that there will be significant additional capture of site information and therefore mechanical energy from transport to site and operations on site are minimised or completely avoided. Similarly physical disturbance to the site is likely completely avoided.

An energy management plan would prioritise sustainably sourced nutrition for human energy whilst working on the project. It is difficult to control electrical energy sources for individual operation of computing devices and workplaces during development and operation as these are subject to the generation profiles of local grids. Energy and other sustainability related policies including employee diversity and wellbeing for any professional services employed would however be scrutinised and individual responsibility emphasised through communications when operating the digital platform.

***Prototype***

Our ambition for this project is to create an immersive and highly legible digital learning experience that takes the visitor on a journey of Fly Ranch throughinteractive layers of imagery & information, leveraging the extensive archive of Fly Ranch media and the unique responses from design challenge participants.

This web based experience will offer the visitor a level of choice and predetermined paths, based on a thoughtful visitor journey that encourages the visitor to explore, learn and absorb the content. It is accessible globally and will open the door for learning and collaboration.

At the prototype stage the visitor will be able to navigate the interactive environment and be able to understand the fluid nature of the site. The core of this visual experience will be transitioning between existing site panoramic photography. This will emphasise the immersive tone of the project and allow visitors to explore the site with their cursor in 360 degrees.

The prototype would involve focusing on a particular area of the site and representing up to five exhibits ‘in place’. A preview of feature learning content will be obtained from the following potential sources.

* Designer interviews.
* Technical experts interviews.
* Local persons and stewards interviews.
* Soundscape recordings.
* A virtual mini-conference which brings together designers and local knowledge holders to encourage a dialogue and cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences to populate content for ‘yarning circles’. This may provide a unique source for much primary research and knowledge.
* Surveys of existing and in progress creative and interpretative works.

For future development, beyond prototype stage, a content management system will be required to organise all of the incoming Fly Ranch media once gathered by a research team. In order for the learning experience to exist in perpetuity and evolve, it will require ongoing web hosting and maintenance. Both of these requirements create an exciting opportunity to develop a position for a knowledge curator and custodian of the deep learning experience.

The cost estimate will be discussed on acceptance of the concept and refinement of the prototype scope of work.

***Addressing the Burning Man Principles***

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|  | *Radical Inclusion*  Our submission is highly inclusive. Anyone may be a ‘visitor’ to the learning experience. |
|  | *Gifting*  This platform is free and accessible. It is offered to all. |
|  | *Decomodification*  The custodians are local. It is a participatory experience with no commercial objective. |
|  | *Radical Self-Reliance*  This project encourages the sharing of inner resources. It promotes engagement with the self to build capacity to act authentically and responsibly. |
|  | *Radical Self-Expression*  This project sources individual knowledge. It encourages creative and interpretative acts and collaborative engagement. |
|  | *Communal Effort*  This project deliberately builds methods of creative cooperation and collaboration. It builds a knowledge community. |
|  | *Civic Responsibility*  This project reinforces the role of civic actors in responsibly managing place. Those who engage with the platform are given the means to become custodians of place. |
|  | *Leaving no Trace*  This project touches the earth so lightly. It demands nothing of the physical ecosystem other than to ‘read’ and ‘listen’ to it. |
|  | *Participation*  This project thrives on participation. It is highly inclusive and accessible. It brings participants of the design challenge together and builds a community of practice. |
|  | *Immediacy*  It engages with immediacy through transcending geographical boundaries in real time to make knowledge instantly accessible. |

1. The goal for any action which claims sustainability, is **regeneration**. That is to say **it must actually evolve the living system** within the place which it is situated towards optimal health and vitality. Outcomes whose impacts are ‘less bad’ or promise ‘restoration’ are now insufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)