

The Earth Above Our Head

Connection to nature is the underlying desire for the advancement of all technology. The proposed icon for Silicon Valley, the land of technology, is a symbol of this connection. "Earth above our head" is a large chunk of earth raised high in the sky by a simple structure.

The proposal embraces one of the most significant natural features of the land it occupies- the watershed. At the intersection of two rivers, in Silicon Valley, it operates as a water reservoir. The large container holds a reservoir that collects stormwater. Water is naturally filtered without the use of chemicals. It is filtered through sand and gravel and zooplankton plants. It can be returned to the creek whenever needed or used however required for the community. This artificial land is created with a mix of lightweight concrete and sand that allows the natural growth of vegetation on and around it.

The 200-foot-tall megastructure that supports it, is flexible and can accommodate a variety of programs supporting social relations. By integrating infrastructure and landscape it helps create a more resilient and adaptive environment. It accommodates all kinds of vegetation, including edible gardens. At the same time, it provides ramps, stairs, a funicular and an elevator that connect pedestrians and bicycle riders to the city and the Guadalupe trail. It supports photovoltaics and solar panels, which produce all the energy it requires to operate. This net-zero structure becomes part of the green/blue infrastructure that facilitates improved connectivity between communities in the entire region.

The project becomes a place for people to come together. The landmark stays in the collective memory not only as an image but as a shared experience of space of contemplation and production. Whether at the top and around the water or along the paths that climb the structure, the project brings joy and playful social interactions to public space.

It sits on the east side of the block on a simple triangular geometry in plan. The ground, it sits on, mirrors the shape of the structure above it in section. It is excavated to create a topography that accommodates further social programs including an outdoor auditorium.

As the sun goes down, the piece is lit up against the dark infrastructure that supports it and captures the imagination of passers-by as a large floating cloud.