

Coatepec

Built on the foundation of ecological succession and ancient theology, *Coatepec* is an urban renewal for social, environmental, and political despair. This Indigenous culture memorial aims to be a catalyst for change as it delves into the mastery of the Aztec people and the ancient mythology that once brought prosperity to the Aztec Empire for decades. An undying, self-less relationship with their ecosystem inspires an age-old approach to the significance of sustainable living.

During the reign of the Triple Alliance, Coatepec (“the hill of the serpents”) was one of the most sacred places of Aztec theology and the birthplace of Huitzilopochtli, the national god of the Aztec people. The term *coatl*, meaning “serpent” or “twin” was vastly used in the mythology of the ancient America’s as the serpent was an enormous symbol of pride for Aztec culture and the backbone of this project.

The massive gold (brass) sphere, seemingly protected by a double-headed serpent, is a piece of art in itself and the main focal point to the project. With precisely punched openings, the sphere allows the sun’s rays to penetrate deep into the winding, underground tunnel, paying homage to the ingenious Aztec calendar and their relentless respect to the sun. At night, artificial light is projected inside the sphere to create a dramatic lantern effect and acting much like a light beacon. The natural, serpentine motion of the architecture invites the healing elements of the environment to be actively involved. A gentle sweeping gesture of the roof provides occupants an urban oasis amongst the tree canopies and a unique view right in the heart of Silicon Valley. A relocated children’s play area can be found at the northwest corner of the site while a plethora of outdoor shaded areas allow individuals to escape the hot California sun while still providing the much-needed corridor to the Guadeloupe River.

A second serpent structure, located on Arena Green East, continues the flowing motion from the west but in a rather different way. A newly proposed reflection pond, gravel path, and a re-establishment of the site’s trees looks to replace the existing tennis courts while providing a comforting noise buffer. The architecture here appears skeletal but represents the process of shedding skin, a natural habit snakes endure as an act of renewal and transformation; the epitome of what *Coatepec* hopes to achieve.