

Reverence for seas and mountains is universal. This proposal constructs a symbolic representation of the Santa Cruz Mountains and the San Francisco Bay from their most iconic materials, salt and stone, to describe and celebrate the place that is cradled between them.

The monument to the mountains raises a serpentine meadow above Highway 87, tilting it to the north to shade the slope. Although the highway is a great source of noise, this side of the project is a peaceful place for individual activities - a nod to the stoicism of stones that move at geologic timescales. The base is surrounded by a green-tinted gravel surface studded with boulders that function both as seating elements and as a naturalistic playscape.

The monument to the sea would begin as a monolithic form made of dry salt, but rain and sun would quickly create brine pools on the south-facing upper surface and a salty swale where halophytic plants can be showcased around the base. These pools would be visible from the upper levels of the SAP Center, northbound traffic on Highway 87, and planes flying in and out of SJC. Boardwalks at the base allow visitors to approach the salty walls, and welcoming platforms provide space for socialization, events, and community gatherings.

The primary role of innovative technology in this proposal is in the construction, which may require customized admixtures to replicate qualities of salt and serpentine stone in a buildable material, or computer controlled machining to manufacture small modules that can be aggregated to give the appearance of a solid mass. Depending on the strategy used to construct them, they may be hollow and potentially occupiable. Both proposed materials have translucency and faceting that lend themselves to interesting passive lighting effects. Although the roof of each structure would be opaque, sunlight can illuminate the interior with a diffuse, tinted glow during the day. At night, they could be lit from within. Alternatively, they could be lit only at the base, allowing reflectivity and subsurface scattering to form a soft gradient up the walls.

While there is a sliver of habitat at the top of each monument that may provide some refuge for birds, plants, and other species, the structures primarily serve to foreground the sources of life and prosperity in San Jose. This proposal ultimately seeks to ground visitors and answer the question: Where are you when you stand at the confluence of Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River?