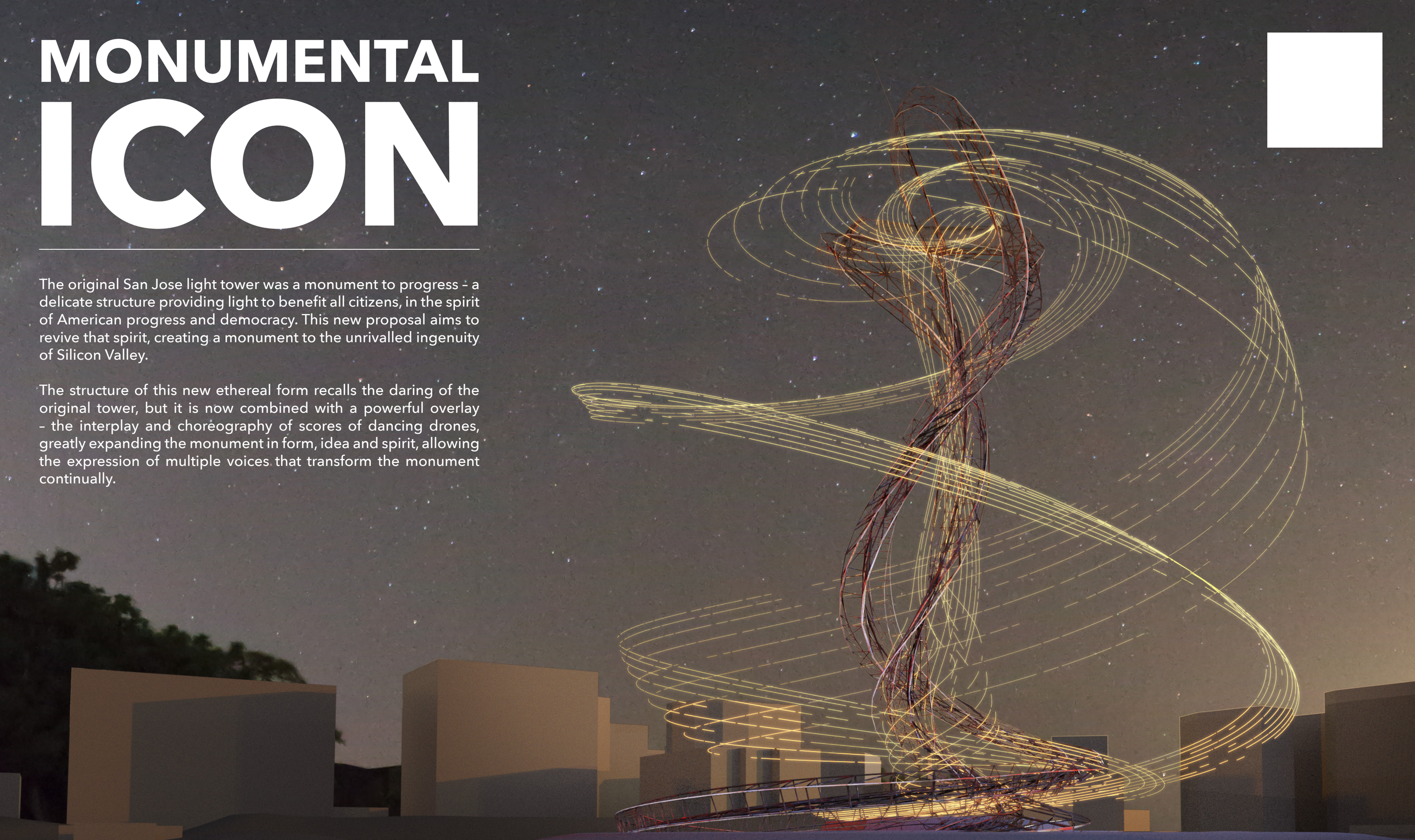
MONUMENTAL ICON

The original San Jose light tower was a monument to progress – a delicate structure providing light to benefit all citizens, in the spirit of American progress and democracy. This new proposal aims to revive that spirit, creating a monument to the unrivalled ingenuity of Silicon Valley.

The structure of this new ethereal form recalls the daring of the original tower, but it is now combined with a powerful overlay – the interplay and choreography of scores of dancing drones, greatly expanding the monument in form, idea and spirit, allowing the expression of multiple voices that transform the monument continually.



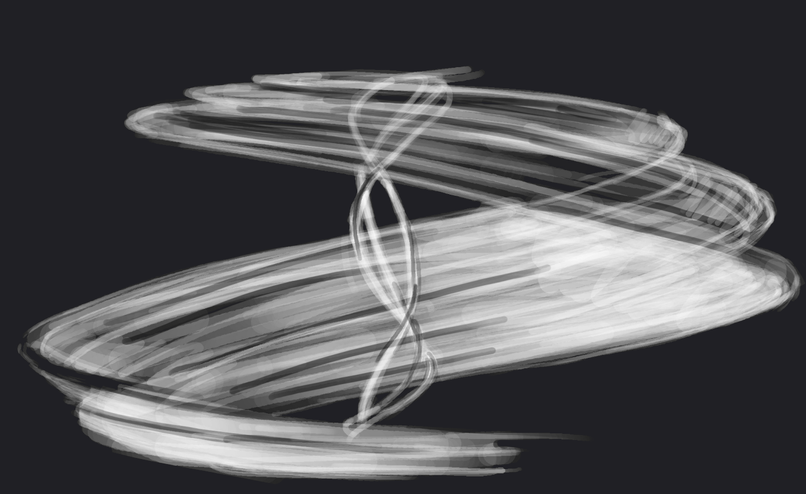
Body & soul - an icon of two intrinsic forms

This new proposal is the result of the synergistic interaction between two distinct elements, physical and gestural, body and soul. It's physical structure comprises two towering, intertwined carbon-fibre and steel ribbons, emerging from a ripple-like depression in the ground. It references the slender and progressive original light tower and peoples' interdependence. The gestural aspect comprises a series of animated light orchestrations, created by the programmed flight of brightly lit drones (emitters), constantly changing their patterns, lights, and forms, involving the public as active authors in the sculpture, which can be constantly re-imagined and recreated over time.

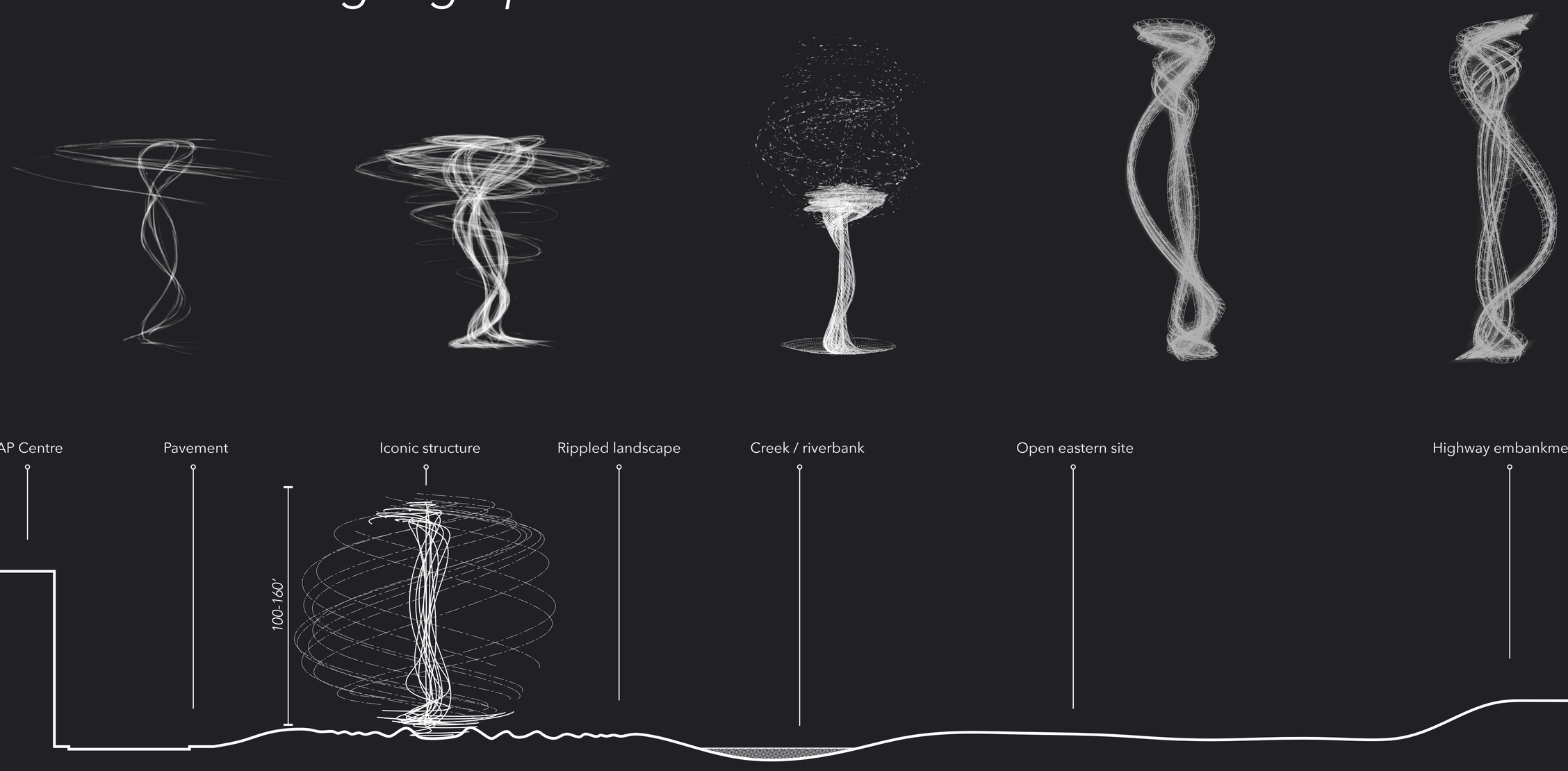
The emitter paths can be regularly reprogrammed by crowd-sourcing – creating the first ever democratic public sculpture, open to all, regardless of background or education. The resultant diversity of form, colour, and pattern directly reflects the diversity of voices forming the communities of San Jose and beyond, allowing a multiplicity and democratization of the sculptural form and even the ability to be a marker of significant events. This open public spectacle defies the tradition of static monolithic monuments, authored by individuals.

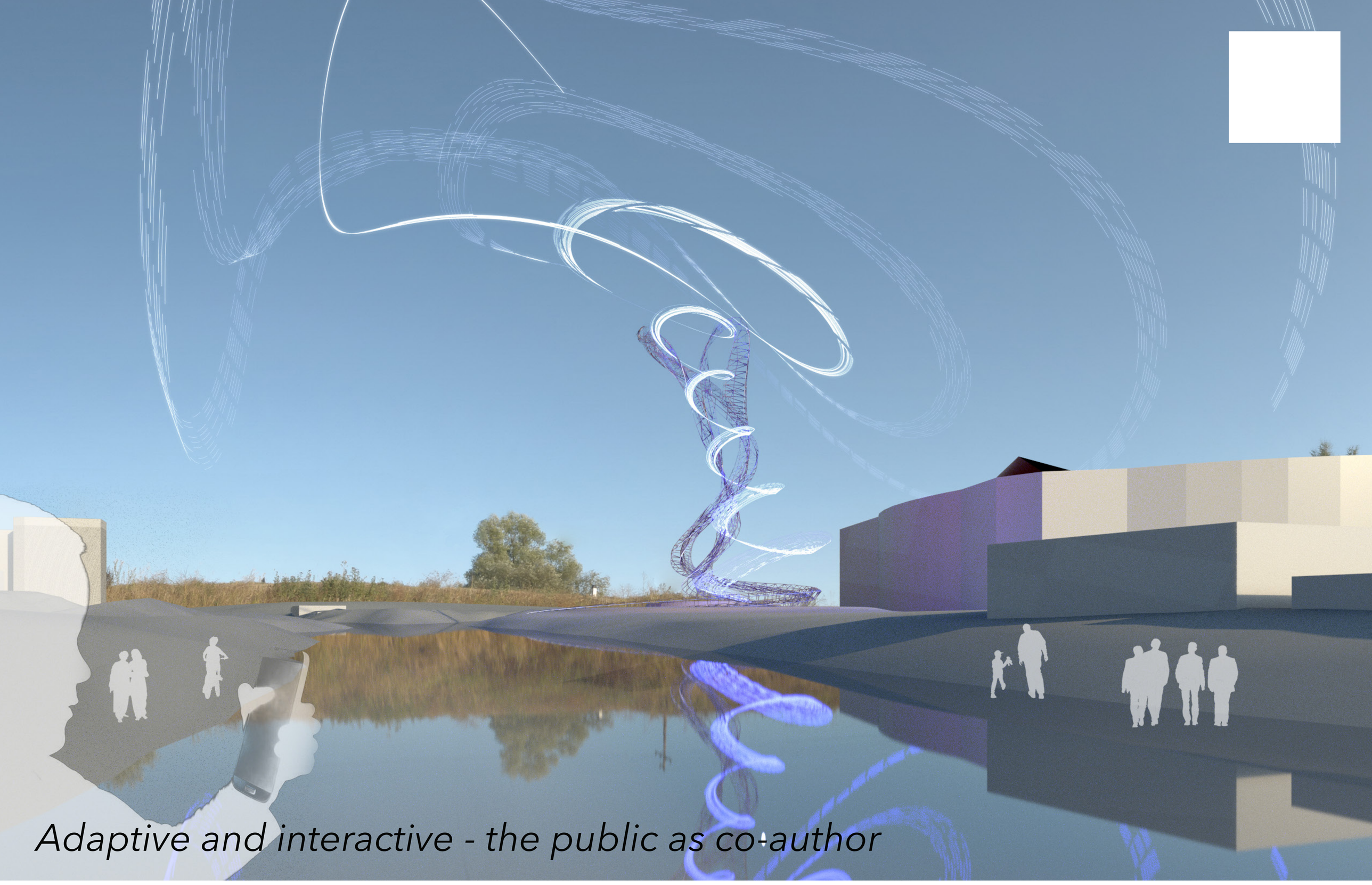
The emitters house cameras, allowing remote virtual exploration of the sculpture or park, filming from any angle, and even a selfie-assistant. Energy-efficient programmable LEDs allow limitless, constantly changing exploration of form, colour, and pattern, timed and compliant with any restrictions from aviation control. This allows a small physical footprint, utilising net-zero carbon construction, while forms expand during choreography to encompass the entire park without harming the local environment. The attractor is an iconic, unique design, with a form that is both instantly recognisable and deeply complex, visible and impactful by foot, bicycle, highway, air and even remotely.

Both the physical and gestural forms are inspired by the 'Butterfly Effect' - a concept in chaos theory which claims that even the smallest actions can have wide-ranging ripple effects. This highlights the fact that despite a deterministic universe, our imperfect knowledge of the present means that the future remains inherently unpredictable and infinite. This is a call to us, to consider future generations, and to know that our choices today can have seismic effects on the future.



Tectonic shifts - geographical and societal





Adaptive and interactive - the public as co-author

Landscape

Three major conceptual interventions to improve the performance, beauty, and delight of the existing park landscaping have been identified:

1. Mystery: enhancing the delight of the park through a series of more intense private spaces (tree copses, seating, hidden paths) and layering the entrances to the park for a more explorative, engaging experience.

2. View corridors: creating three pre-determined view corridors, where the park landscape, iconic structure, city, and mountains behind can be appreciated together in a single, deeply layered view

3. Ripples: raising and lowering sections of earth subtly, to create mounds (viewpoints) and depressions (private spaces), creating more variation and surprise in the existing topography

Lighting

Central to the proposed lighting strategy is the use of drones, equipped with a multitude of energy-efficient LED lights, to create dramatic performances using choreographed patterns and symbols. This powerful strategy allows for an essentially limitless exploration of form, colour, and intensity that can be changed daily, and can be timed and interfaced with any restrictions from aviation control. The structure itself will be lit from the inside, through the embedding of LED filaments inside the carbon tubes, creating a soft, diffused light, which also allows for programming of pattern, colour, and movement. A series of translucent lamps will be used to create safe pathways at night.

Technical

The technical innovation required for the design, programming, engineering and construction of this monumental structure would be at the forefront of all disciplines involved, symbolic of the pioneering ingenuity that is Silicon Valley. Robots and drones could be used to fabricate complex composite material structures, like steel and woven carbon fibre. The incorporation of programming, lighting and drones, that are intrinsic to the sculpture concept creates the potential for the world's first tech-upgradeable icon, allowing it to be updated and reinvented when opportunity arises.

The sculptural structure would be realised at a scale that is within the 200ft height limit to meet aviation guidelines but still be large enough to create an iconic presence in the park and against the city skyline, suggesting that a minimum height would be approximately 85ft. However, the emitters create the opportunity for incredible expansion allowing the monument to momentarily reach scales greater than 200ft.

Facilities

In addition to the site-seeing and gathering potential of the iconic structure, the highway embankment offers a unique opportunity for westward views of the monument, as well as a series of subtly submerged structures. One potential programme is a museum of start-ups (museum of great ideas), dedicated to the uncountable hours of creative work that has happened in this world famous valley.

Net Zero Strategy

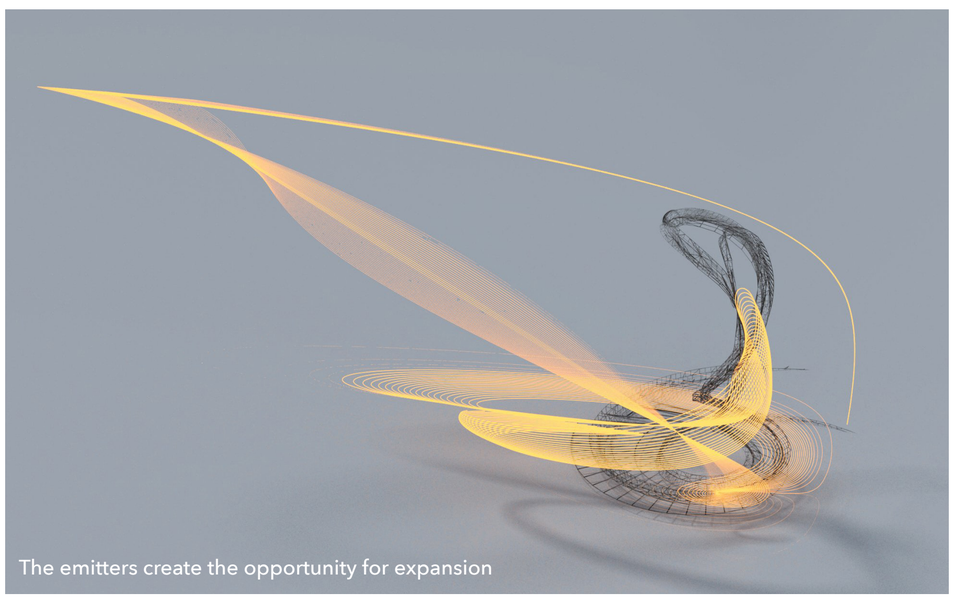
The project aims to achieve zero net carbon with a combination of renewable energy, resource reduction and offset strategies. Energy used on site will be harvested from solar sources, integrated into hard surfaces where technically achievable. Water use for landscaping and ablutions to be partially harvested and partially recovered from grey water. Where embodied carbon in materials cannot be avoided, a WWF-certified carbon offset will be applied for, exceeding any embodied energy.

Tectonic shifts and bedrock mortars

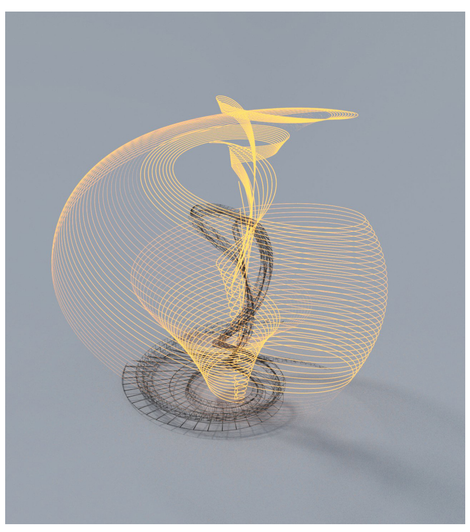
The seismic phenomena of the region are seen as a metaphor of how technology and innovation inform and in return are informed by events of unexpected or dramatic change.
It also reminds us of the double-edge of technology, that it can be used for good or destructive purposes.

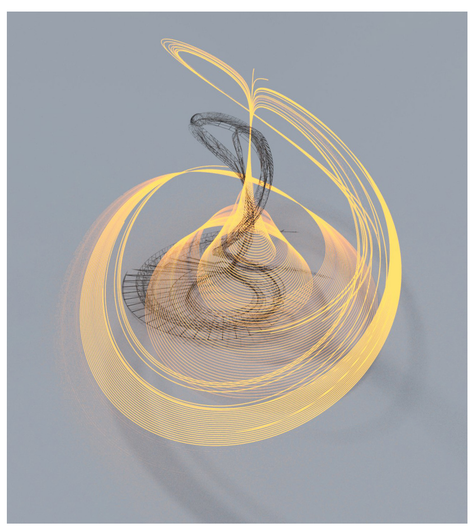
The creeks and riverbanks of Palo Alto were home to the Ohlone people for thousands of years before the great disruption of American settlement buried their grave yards, settlements, and masonry mortars below ground. The landscape approach, of subtle mounded and bowl-like forms, is a recognition of what was here before Silicon Valley, before the highway, and before Palo Alto.

Tectonic shift and the remnants of the Ohlone people have informed the conceptual development of this proposal and have been considered in the design of the site landscaping, as well as the architectural treatment of the footprint and base of the sculpture structure.



The emitters create the opportunity for expansion





Multiplicity of forms, views, and energy