

Project Statement

The original San Jose light tower was a testament to the daring spirit of the times – a delicate structure, a line drawing in the sky, which provided light for all below. This new proposal revives that democratic spirit, with an elusive, gestural tower surrounded by swirling, moving light forms. It is the result of the synergetic interaction between two distinct elements, physical and gestural, body and soul.

The 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 reimagined and recreated over time.

The emitter paths can be regularly reprogrammed by crowdsourcing – 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.