Split Baobab

The Big Tree

The baobab is a majestic tree native to the semi-arid regions of Africa and northwestern Australia. It has a small canopy and an oversized hollow trunk that it uses to conserve water. In the spirit of discovery, and alluding to scientific dissection, *Split Baobab*, is cut vertically to reveal its hollow and the water flowing through it. Water flows along a ceramic structure with a repeat lace-like pattern recalling both natural fibers and weaving echoing *The Weaver's Gift* sculpture in the park. The water runs in a close circuit covering the ceramic lace in a calm and constant flow.

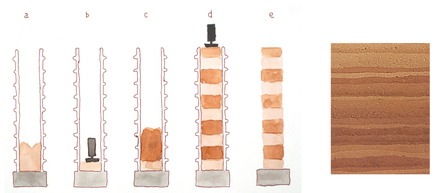
Split Baobab is **175 ft long** and **56 ft** wide and will sit on the northwest side of the park. It will be a unique background for outdoors concerts and gatherings. It is to be built using the rammed earth technique—an ancient and environmentally friendly method that results in manmade sandstone. Recent improvements have made the method more resistant and hydrophobic, though further innovation might be required for this project.

About Rammed Earth

Rammed earth is an ancient form of construction— notably, it was used to build the Great Wall of China. Although many rammed earth structures exist in this basic form, a new 'stabilized' rammed earth variant has been developed which adds a small amount of cement (5-10%) to the mixture to ensure strength and durability.

Rammed Earth construction is the process of ramming a mixture of soil and cement formwork to create walls. When the earth is dry the formwork is removed to reveal solid monolithic walls.

The process is labor intensive, but is considered to have a low environmental impact. It avoids using large quantities of cement—one of the most polluting industries, and when using locally sourced sand and clay it avoids the cost and the environmental impact of transportation.



A scheme for erecting a wall using rammed earth technology. Different layers of the rammed earth monolithic wall are marked with different colors. Steps when erecting a wall: (a) Formwork is built and filled with a layer of moist soil-cement mixture. (b) The layer of moist mixture is compressed. (c) The next layer of moist soil-cement mixture is added. (d) Successive layers of moist earth are added and compressed. (e) The formwork is removed leaving the monolithic wall.



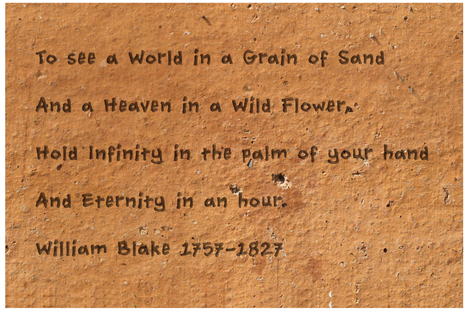


Poetry wall

The bottom part of *The Big Tree* wall, 15ft from the ground, will be resurfaced with clay every year and will call on the area's local poet laureate to inscribe poems into the wet clay. They would be invited to share a poem of their own, one from another author no longer living and a third in another language with its translation; and thus branching the monument in time and space.

A different language is to expand one's horizons if not known and would bring a sense of inclusion to San Jose's citizens who speak the language featured that year. Furthermore, *Split Baobab* would give a new context for poetry to be appreciated and will make it a changing and living monument.

The annual resurfacing will be a community event where children and adults could take part, and literally put their hands into making, preserving, and breathing life into the monument. It is inspired by the annual resurfacing of the Mosque of Djenne in Mali as shown in these photographs. (source: Smithsonian)





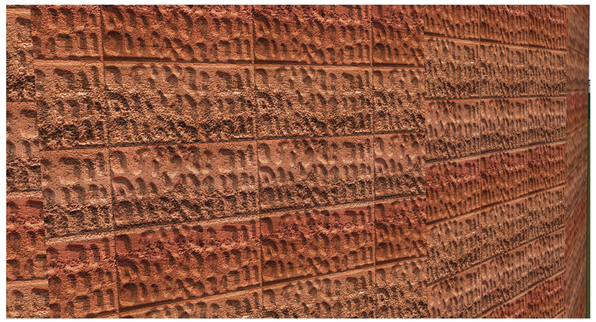












The Core Building

This building will welcome youth from the neighboring schools to train in the arts and poetry. A clay skin on this building will showcase their poems. Another part of the building will be dedicated to study the ecology of the park, the building technique, and the net-zero strategy of Split Baobab that harnesses the sun's energy with nearby solar panels. The whole structure, marrying the arts and the environment, aims to foster the curiosity, creativity and humility that may lead us a safer and more harmonious life on earth.

Its base diameter is 45ft and is 75ft high. Its shape recalls the split in the main two branches of the big tree. It has a roof garden on top. The base of the building will be built using rammed earth building blocks with the pattern of the waterfall pressed into them.



The Dance Floor

Located near the *Core Building*, the dance floor is made with two different colors of earthen floor material, and like *The Big Tree* it is 56 ft wide. Its pattern recalls the pattern of the waterfall structure and the texture of the nearby building. It will be used to organize regular social dancing events and open to other creative performances.

