

Split Baobab

And when they read my poems,

I hope they think I'm something natural —

An ancient tree, for instance

Fernando Pessoa

Split Baobab is a tree sectioned in several ways that has in its folds poetry, music, dance, and science. On the westside sits a large hand-built baobab tree sliced vertically revealing a hollow trunk and water flowing through it. The words etched in its bark are poems. East of the river are a dance floor shaped like a tree stump, and next to it a building resembling the core of a baobab where youth can study various arts and learn about the environment.

The baobab is a majestic tree native to the semi-arid regions of Africa and northwestern Australia. It is distinguished by an oversized hollow trunk used to conserve water. *Split Baobab* will be built using the rammed earth technique—an ancient and environmentally friendly method that results in manmade sandstone. Recent improvements made it more resistant and hydrophobic, though further innovation might be required for this project. The water inside will flow along a repeat lace-like pattern recalling both natural fibers and weaving.

The lower part of the tree wall will be covered with clay and resurfaced periodically to allow the area's poet laureate to inscribe poems—one of their own, one from another era, and a third in another language. The annual resurfacing and poem inscription would be a community event like the resurfacing of the mosque of Djenne in Mali that preserves the monument and enshrines community ownership.

The pattern of the waterfall structure will be pressed on the rammed earth building blocks that make the building east of the river and is echoed on the dance floor. This building will welcome youth from the neighboring schools to learn 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, its building techniques, and the net-zero strategy 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 to a more harmonious life on earth.

Split Baobab will be a unique backdrop for outdoors concerts and gatherings or simply a poetic respite in the growing urban sprawl of San Jose. A poem that feels like nature.