

Dream Forest

What do the Sydney Opera House, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Eiffel Tower, or Statue of Liberty have in common? One needs only to ask a child to draw them to see the answer. They can be represented instantly, with an economy of lines, carrying a certain naïveté and an overarching simplicity of gesture. Once seen, they “click” in your mind and you can never forget them. It is for these reasons we have explored the possibility of achieving the iconicity of San Jose's new landmark through simple lightness and thinness.

The platforms achieve a carpet-like minimalism by their sharp tapered edges. Towards the center the section of the plate thickens, allowing for trees to grow with sufficient earth for roots, yet the edges of the plates appear like slender lines against the sky and horizon. The new forest, mixing real tree trunks and chrome-plated steel extrusions, intends to intermix subtle reflections of the context and surroundings. To achieve a both fragile yet rigid structure, we utilize a combination of thicker members acting in compression, and thinner members acting in tension. In this way, we eliminate the need for excessive diagonal bracing and shear walls, creating a rational yet lightweight steel structure which gives the impression of appearing as green carpets, without perceptible thickness. The elegance and unconventional structure is further strengthened by trees that appear to grow out of a line.

Nonetheless, in today's world, pure beauty is not sufficient. Performance and environmental consciousness are of equal importance. The main purpose of the dream forest is to actually become a green lung in the city in order to purify air and become a beacon of a new clean environment. At the same time, the structure intends to achieve a net-zero strategy through the structural tubes, which will collect all solar gain from the day and dissipate this heat to the concrete terraces in the evening, making the exterior terraces comfortable at all times of day and minimizing any need for heating. The columns can also carry water from the Guadalupe River for radiant cooling, and carry excess water to cisterns below.

In short, through a simple gesture and child-like silhouette, which performs with a strong environmental consciousness at both the local and urban scale, we hope to enhance social unity providing a new elevated ground for the community and visitors to gather, becoming a new icon for San Jose.