

Memorials and the Identity of the Sublime: Global Catastrophe in Local Context

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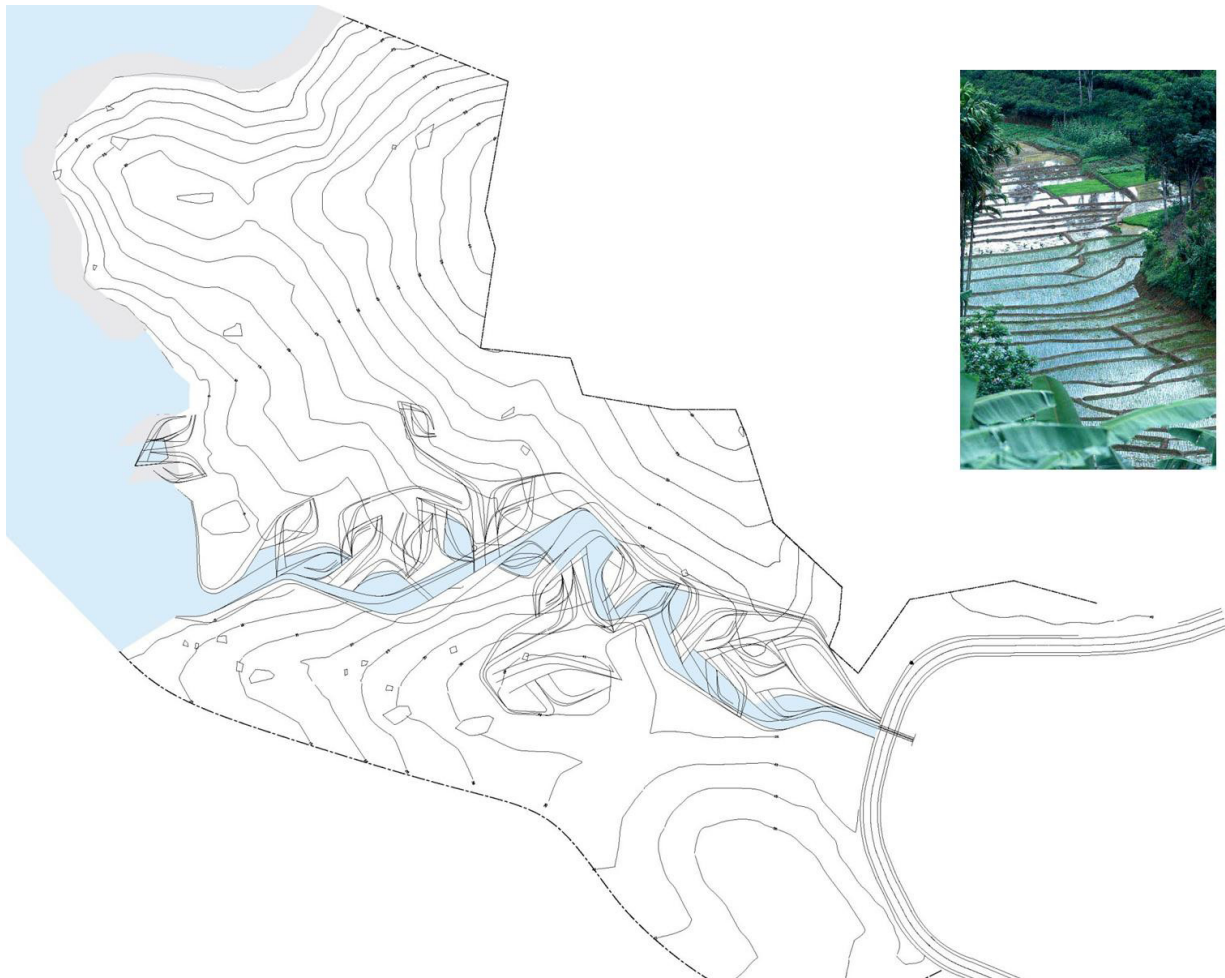


Figure 1. Memorial for the Victims of the Tsunami, Thailand. Deployment of aggregate rhythms of courtyards, enhancing/augmenting an existent drainage channel. Adaptation to steep topograph

This project seeks to analyze the sublime character of memorials as manifestations of a global catastro-

phe in a local context. Memorials affect a heightened awareness of the 'liquidity' of time; a sense of meta-

morphoses of perceptual states via the celebration of rituals and propagation of faux-eidetic memory. The feedback loop between the magnitude and scale of a global catastrophe - such as a tsunami - with local contexts triggers the unconscious sensory experience of spaces for remembrance, in the landscape.

In 1757, Sir Edmund Burke penned what would become a famous treatise called *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, in the tradition of Longinus and others. By the nineteenth century, the sublime had become a preoccupation of artists and writers alike, through both the European mode of the Romantic sublime and American transcendentalism, which can now be revisited using strategies of aggregation.

Memorials are machines of remembrance, operated by the fleeting polyrhythm of collective memory. The design of a memorial project for the victims of the Tsunami in Thailand is infused with a positive attitude about the remembrance of life, and the absorption of death as a fundamental cyclic energy, a phenomena based on periodicity and the dialectic montage of rhythmic moods and atmospheres. The project's three-dimensionality is resolved by adopting strategies of aggregation of courtyard-like components which produce qualitative thresholds for the perception of the body in space, reflecting the exuberant foliage and micro-ecologies of Phuket Park in Thailand. Memorials are machines of remembrance, operated by the fleeting polyrhythm of collective memory. The feedback loop between global and local is defined by participation and engagement with the topological terrain, sustaining dialectic notions of landscape. To address this synthetic environmental approach, the design work based on the adaptation to local vicissitude basically attempts at the "construction of horizons" understood as the constant generation of connective tissue via the instrumentality of infrastructure design. The inclusive design approach of feedback between the global catastrophe and its local counterpoint entails a new synthesis for the comprehensive and seamless assemblage of construction, programme and circulation throughout the open landscape, and into the Sublime, the untamed nature.

The project's three-dimensionality is resolved by adopting strategies of aggregation of courtyard-like components that produce qualitative thresholds for the perception of the body in space. The system

subdivides progressively into sub-components or chunks which are hinged and articulated smoothly, and these so-called chunks are actually courtyards for remembrance at the scale of two or three families. An existing drainage channel communicates the entire system of interconnected courtyards, stressing the joinery between courtyard clusters (meta-components).

The spatial organization provides never ending circuitry communicating the two ends of the project whereby visitors can walk on the upper edges of all the spaces of remembrance and descend into the courtyards, moving from a global perception of the entire complex to the submersion into the local, private spaces of remembrance while experiencing the brutal juxtaposition of artificial and natural systems, at once a sign of terror and optimism. The project distributes effects of memory as an exterior system of periodicity organized through supple, pliant vectorial links of circulation which register the specific, variegated types of connections of a succession of courtyards as a means for local effects to lend specific spatial and tectonic identity to each courtyard or subset of affiliated courtyards as the whole system cascades down the mountain towards the beach - all along following and expanding the path of the enhanced drainage channel that can periodically get flooded. In this memorial, both interiority and exteriority reflect the simultaneous capacities of the globally distributed system to address a local context and to absorb the impact of the tsunami, by creating a perceptual fluid array of rhythmic events along the main path of the project.

Due to the grandiose scale of the memorial, this project can cultivate all sorts of micro-events and micro-environments throughout, generating local ecologies coupled by the potential to capture and distribute solar energy, to harness winds and rain via the geometrical disposition of canopies. These sheltering spaces are structured by bundles of cables that can serve as capacitors to feed the rhythmic network of courtyards in a concerted synchrony of vital, poetic thrust. Ultimately, the memorial seeks to consolidate the memory of the global impact that the tsunami had on peoples' lives by enacting the brutal interaction between the systems in nature and the rhythmic perception of unfolding events throughout sequentially interconnected spaces of congregation.

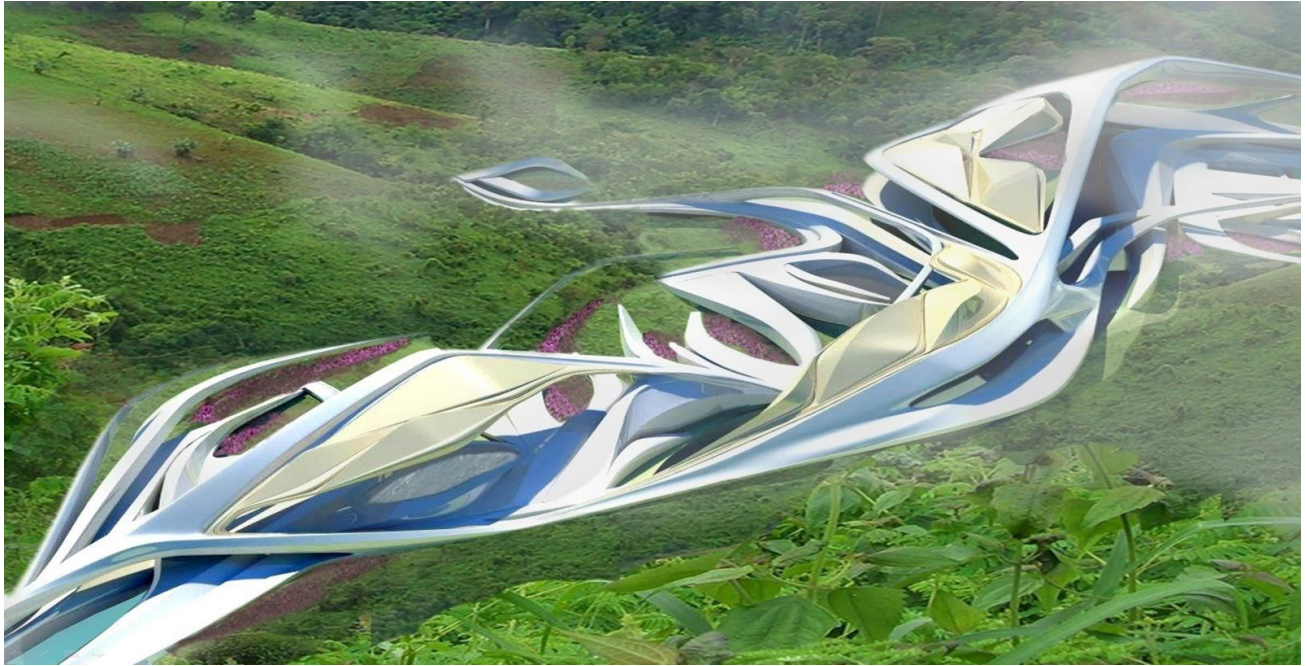


Figure 2. Interaction between the courtyards system and the elevated level beams and eventually, canopies.

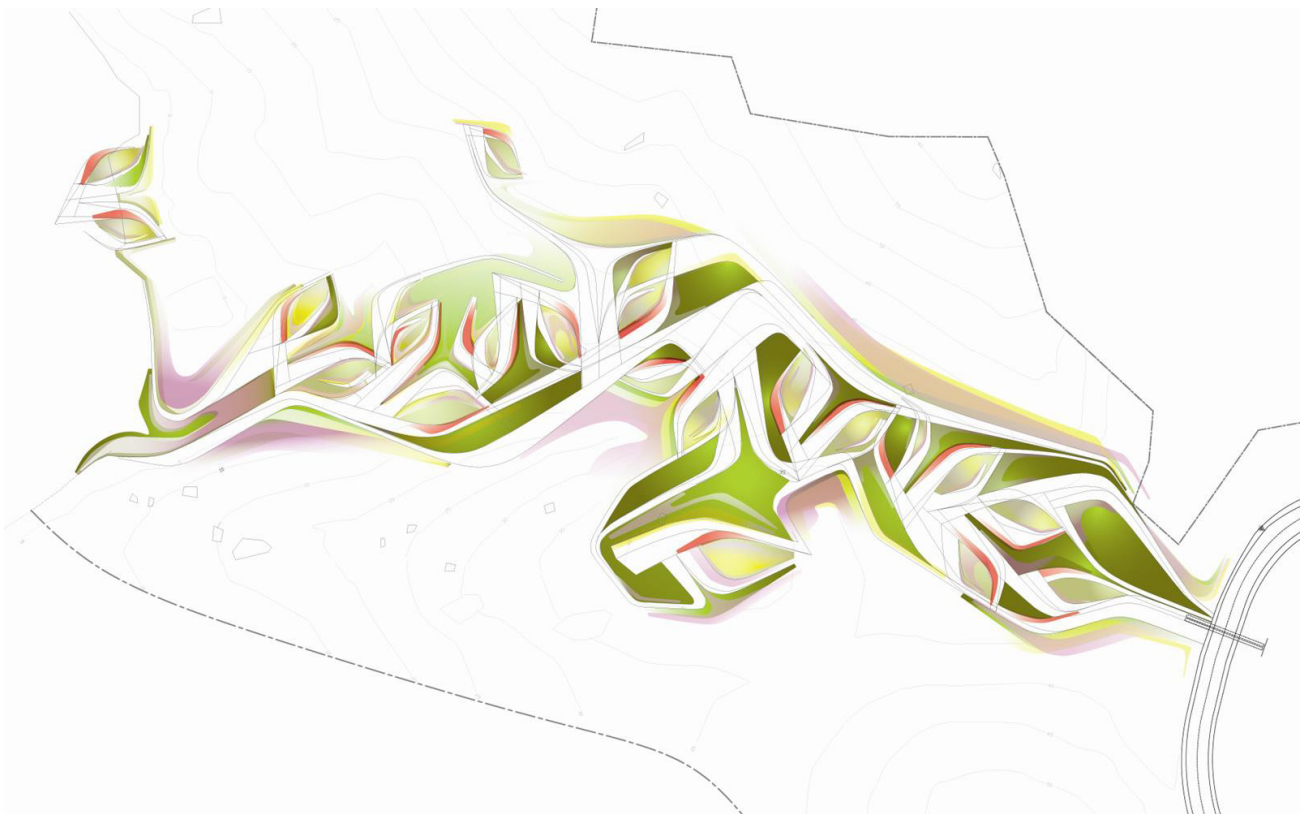


Figure 3. Aerial view of the landscape effects, exploiting the organizational capacities and their distribution of species that provide different local atmospheric conditions through development of ecologies.

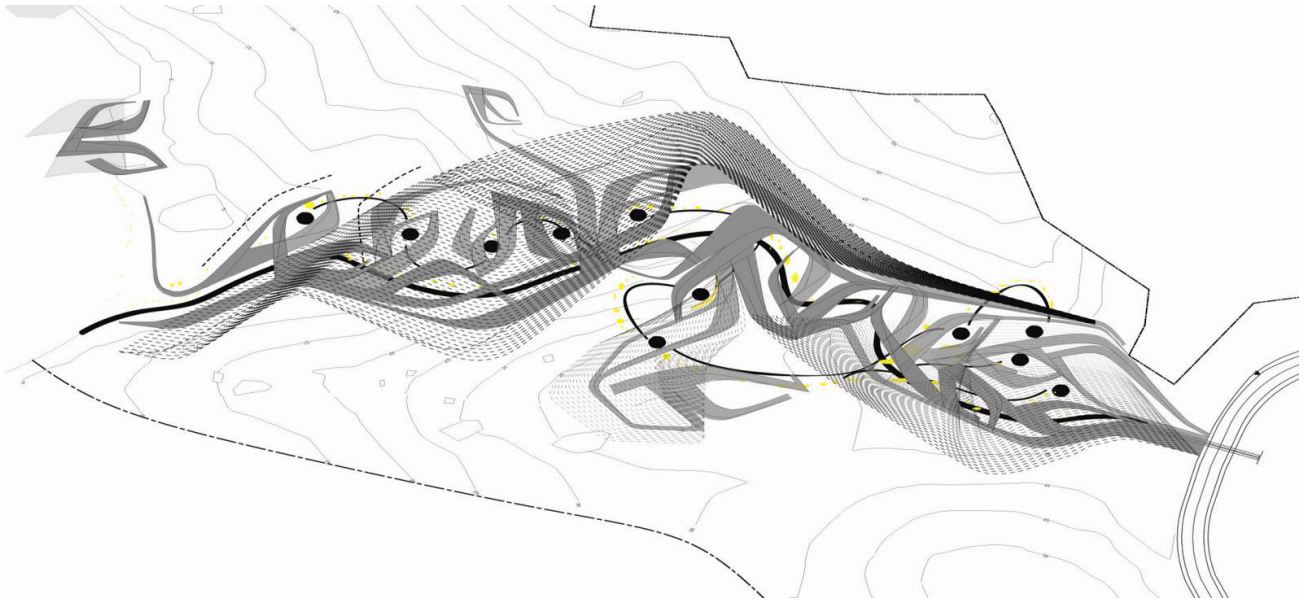


Figure 4. The same organizational principles apply through perception, the system tends to loop upon itself producing a host of simultaneous micro-events throughout the topologies.

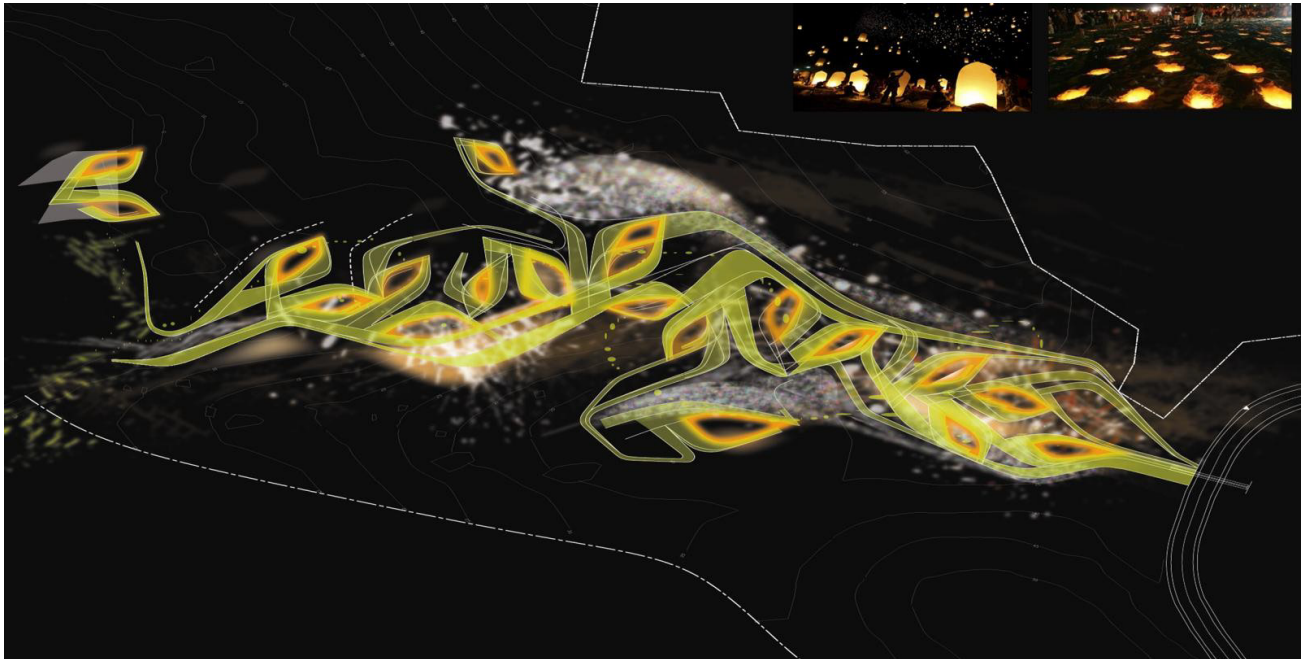


Figure 5. Periodicity of events synchronized with the rhythmic proliferation of courtyards for remembrance and awareness.



Figure 6. View from the beach showing the main dry channel passage which communicates the entire system of aggregated courtyards, stressing the joinery between meta-components.



Figure 7. Axonometric view of integrated system - canopies on display are woven with the landscape and with the circulatory paths, generating both global and local scalar effects.