

# Arsenal, Tucuman, Argentina

## Arsenal Memory Park & Interpretation Center



### Site and Location

The project is located at the former **Arsenal Miguel de Azcuénaga** in **San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina**, a site of immense historical and cultural significance. Positioned on the northern edge of the city, the Arsenal occupies a vast landscape that once functioned as a military complex and later became one of the country's largest clandestine detention centers during the military dictatorship.



### Introduction

The Arsenal Memorial Park transforms the former detention grounds of the Arsenal Miguel de Azcuénaga in Tucumán, Argentina, into a place of remembrance, learning and ecological restoration. Once a site associated with suffering, loss and enforced disappearances during Argentina's military dictatorship, the project seeks to acknowledge the past while creating spaces that encourage reflection, education and collective healing. Through landscape, architecture and water-sensitive design, the memorial becomes both a tribute to those who suffered and a symbol of resilience for future generations.

### History of Site

The Arsenal Miguel de Azcuénaga served as one of the largest clandestine detention and extermination centers during Argentina's military dictatorship. Hidden within the military complex, countless individuals were unlawfully detained, tortured and disappeared. Years later, investigations and archaeological excavations uncovered human remains within the site, confirming the tragic events that occurred there. Today, the site stands as an important place of memory, carrying the responsibility of preserving the stories of those who suffered while educating future generations about human rights, justice and remembrance.

### The Dirty War



### A Timeline of the Arsenal

|  |  |   |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>1877</b></p> <p>Construction of the Arsenal Miguel de Azcuénaga.</p> | <p><b>1900s</b></p> <p>The site expands to support military operations and infrastructure.</p> | <p><b>1976 - 1983</b></p> <p>Used as a Clandestine detention and extermination center during the military dictatorship.</p> | <p><b>2000s</b></p> <p>Survivors testimonies and investigations begin to reveal the truth behind the site.</p> | <p><b>2013 - Present</b></p> <p>Archaeological excavations uncover human remains and evidence.</p> | <p><b>Today</b></p> <p>The site is recognized as a place of memory.</p> |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|

### From a Site of Horror to a Landscape of Remembrance



#### REMEMBER

To honor the victims and preserve their stories.



#### EDUCATE

To inform human generations about human rights.



#### REFLECT

To encourage dialogue, reflection and empathy.

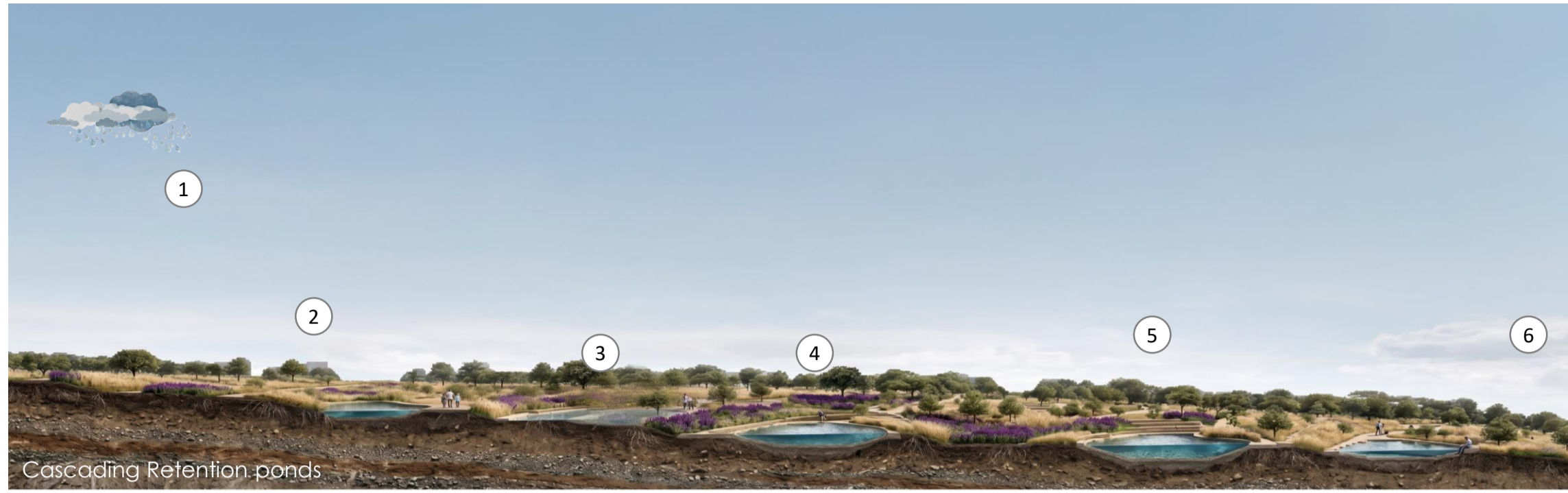


#### REBUILD

To transform pain into hope and collective healing.

**" We remember so that truth lives, justice prevails and memory becomes a path towards a better future. "**

# Landscape Regeneration and Flood Mitigation



- 1 Rainfall  
Rainfall falls on the landscape.
- 2 Upper Catchment  
Natural vegetation slows down the surface runoff and infiltration.
- 3 Cascading Retention Ponds  
A series of ponds capture, slow and store stormwater.
- 4 Water Storage & Filtration  
Water is filtered, recharged and stored within the landscape.
- 5 Controlled Release  
Excess is gradually released at a reduced rate.
- 6 Protected City  
Reduced peak flow and velocity minimizes risks below.

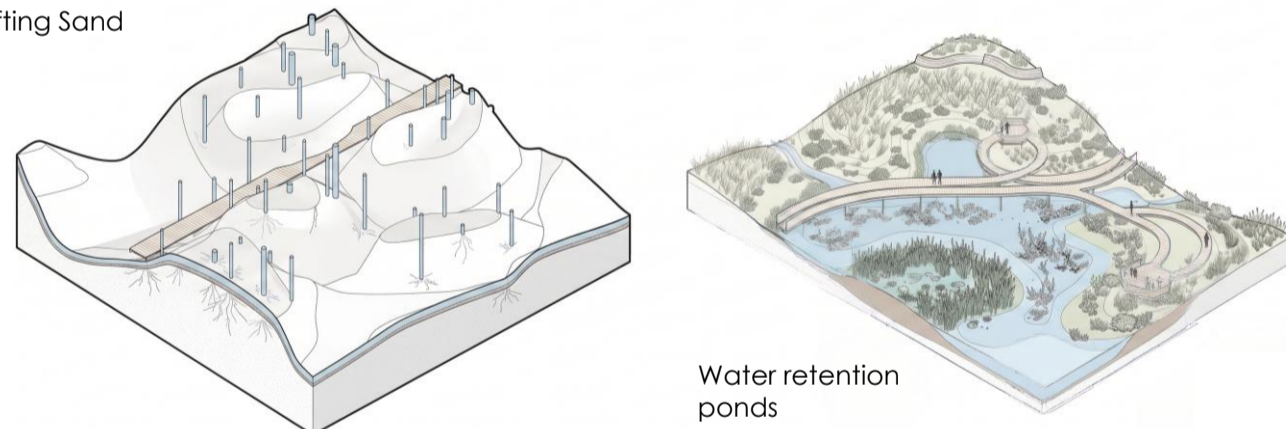


Landscape with water body

## Section 1



## Shifting Sand



Water retention ponds

## Water as Protection and Renewal

Situated at one of the highest points of Tucumán, the Arsenal site naturally receives and channels large volumes of stormwater toward the city below. Rapid urbanization and changing climatic conditions have increased the frequency of flooding in surrounding areas. The proposal transforms the memorial landscape into a series of stepped retention basins that collect, slow and store rainwater before it reaches the city. These cascading water-retention systems reduce runoff velocity, minimize flood risks and recharge the landscape. Water, once a destructive force, becomes an instrument of protection, connecting environmental resilience with the site's narrative of recovery and renewal.



a. Floods in Tucumán



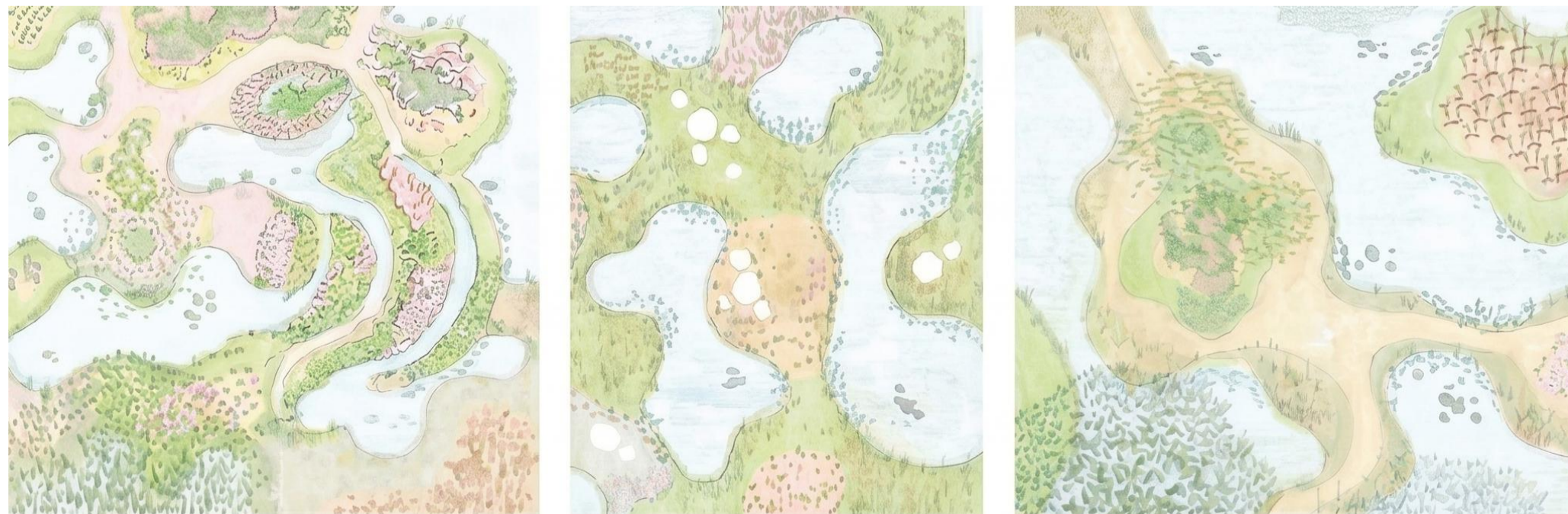
b. Floods in Tucumán

## Flood Mitigation Strategy

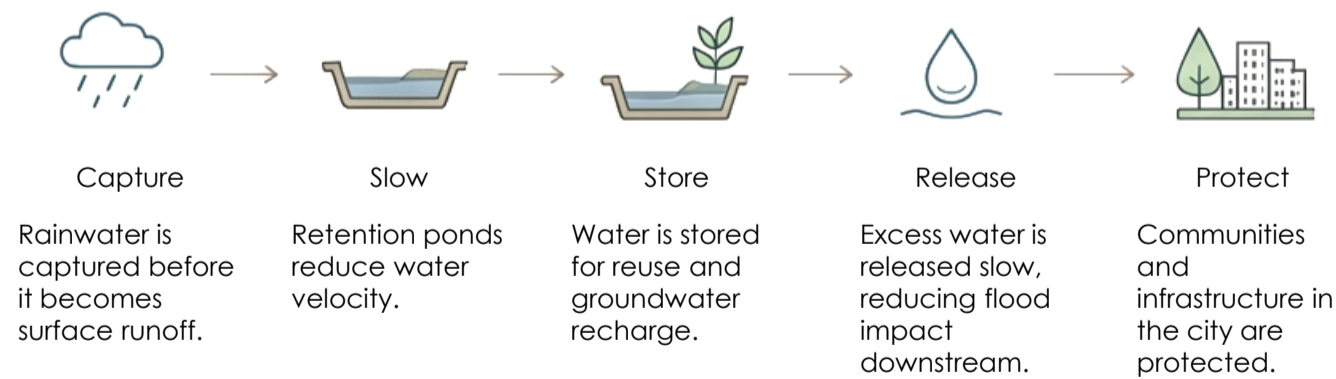


Section 2

## Landscape with water body



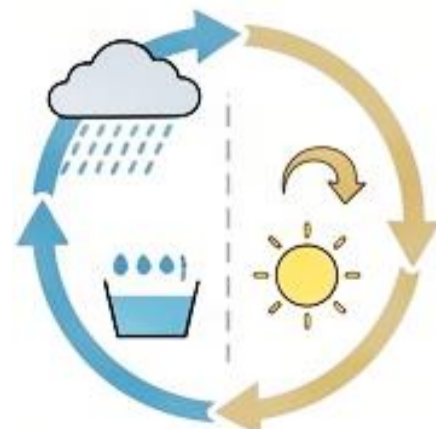
## How it works



## Seasonal Water Cycle System

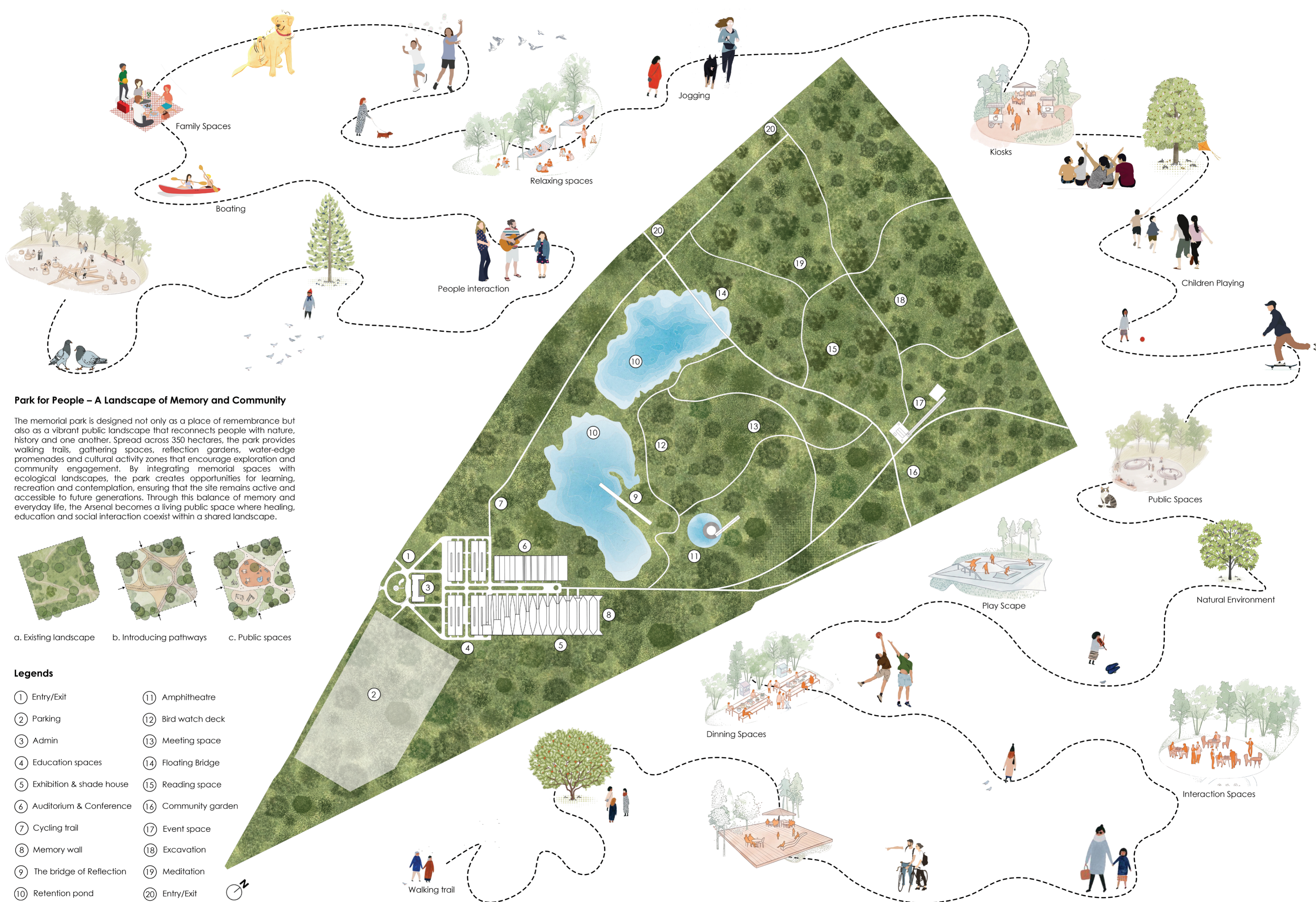
### Monsoon Storage

High Rainfall – retention ponds



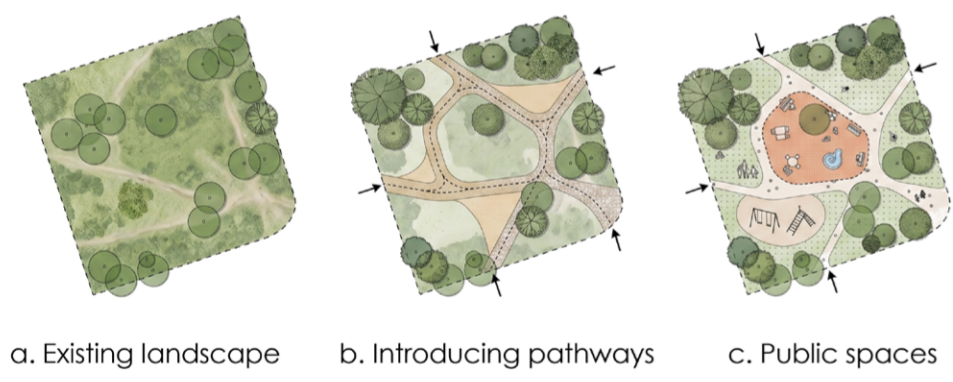
### Summer Reuse

Pumped from the retention ponds for irrigation.



**Park for People – A Landscape of Memory and Community**

The memorial park is designed not only as a place of remembrance but also as a vibrant public landscape that reconnects people with nature, history and one another. Spread across 350 hectares, the park provides walking trails, gathering spaces, reflection gardens, water-edge promenades and cultural activity zones that encourage exploration and community engagement. By integrating memorial spaces with ecological landscapes, the park creates opportunities for learning, recreation and contemplation, ensuring that the site remains active and accessible to future generations. Through this balance of memory and everyday life, the Arsenal becomes a living public space where healing, education and social interaction coexist within a shared landscape.



- Legends**
- ① Entry/Exit
  - ② Parking
  - ③ Admin
  - ④ Education spaces
  - ⑤ Exhibition & shade house
  - ⑥ Auditorium & Conference
  - ⑦ Cycling trail
  - ⑧ Memory wall
  - ⑨ The bridge of Reflection
  - ⑩ Retention pond
  - ⑪ Amphitheatre
  - ⑫ Bird watch deck
  - ⑬ Meeting space
  - ⑭ Floating Bridge
  - ⑮ Reading space
  - ⑯ Community garden
  - ⑰ Event space
  - ⑱ Excavation
  - ⑲ Meditation
  - ⑳ Entry/Exit





Detail Plan 1

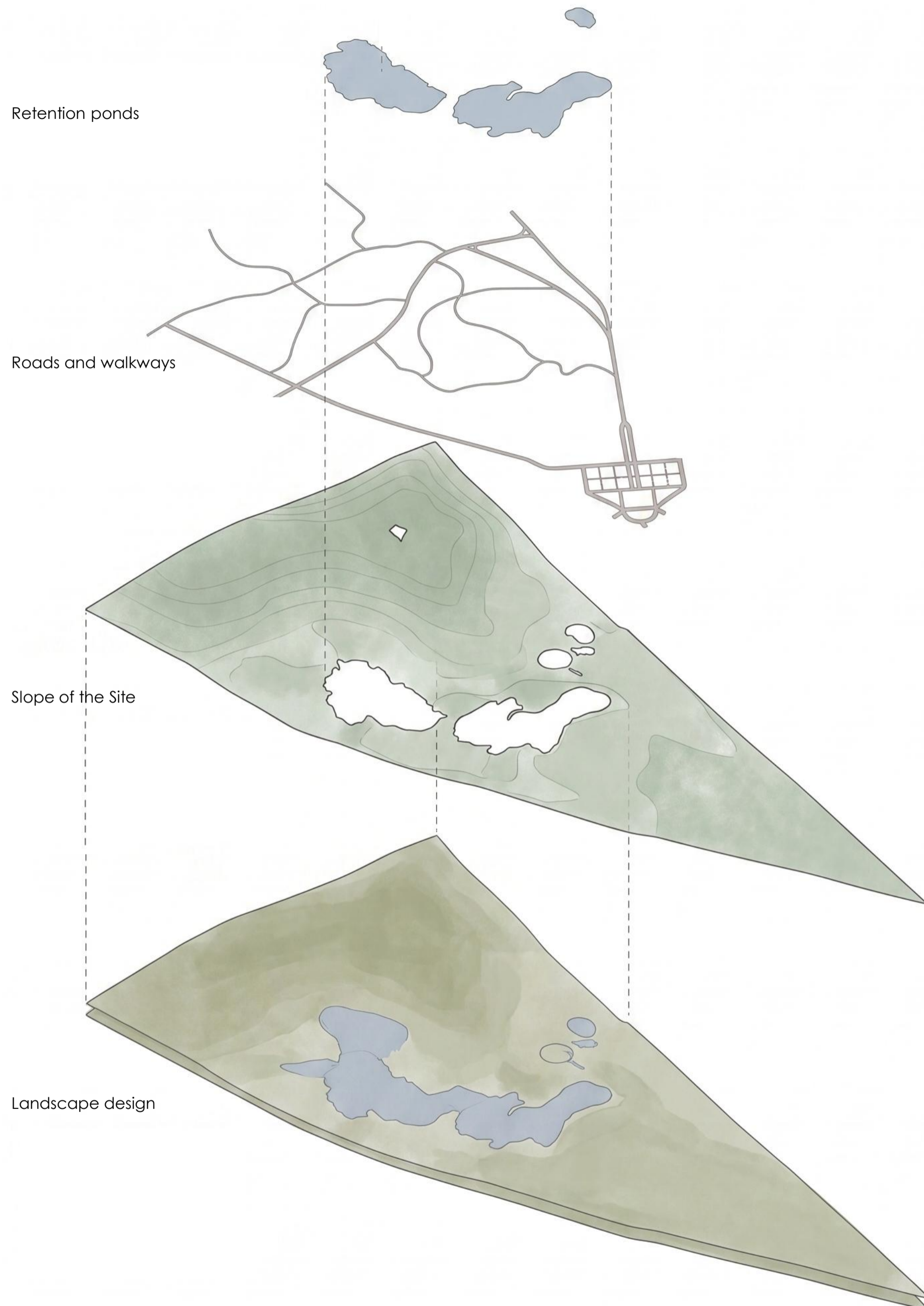
### Existing Structures and Architectural Continuity

The design preserves and adapts the existing Arsenal buildings as functional spaces, recognizing their historical significance while giving them a new purpose within the memorial. Rather than replacing the original structures, the proposal reuses them for exhibitions, educational programs, community activities and memorial functions, allowing the architecture itself to become a witness to history. By retaining these buildings, the project maintains a tangible connection to the site's past and preserves the memory embedded within its walls.

New interventions are carefully extended from the existing structures using the same architectural language of pitched roofs, scale and rhythm found throughout the Arsenal complex. These contemporary additions do not imitate the past but evolve from it, creating a seamless dialogue between old and new. The continuous roof forms unify the development while respecting the site's identity, ensuring that the memorial grows from the existing fabric rather than overpowering it. Together, the preserved structures and new extensions create a cohesive environment where memory, function and renewal coexist.



## Exploded View



The existing natural slope of the Arsenal site was utilized as a flood-mitigation strategy by introducing a series of cascading water retention ponds that capture, slow, and store stormwater before it reaches the city below. Integrated within a public memorial park, these water landscapes reduce flood risk while creating recreational, ecological, and reflective spaces for visitors. The system transforms the site into a resilient memory park where environmental protection, public engagement, and remembrance coexist within a single landscape.

## Massing Concept – The Scar

### A Wound That Remains, A Memory That Heals

The massing takes its language from the existing pitched roof structures found across the Arsenal site - simple, repetitive, and industrial in character.

These familiar forms are stretched, fractured, and reassembled into a continuous architectural gesture that cuts across the landscape like a scar.

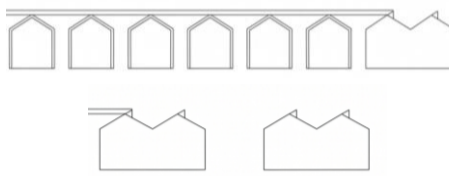
The roof line rises and folds, opens and closes, creating moments of compression and release - much like the emotional journey of those who endured loss, confinement and silence.

From above, the building appears as a wound etched into the land - a permanent mark that acknowledges the pain of the past.

Yet, like every scar, it also speaks of survival, resilience and the possibility of healing.



### From Existing Language



### Design Intent

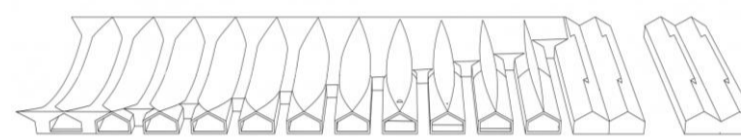
Maintain the architectural language of the existing pitched roof structures.

Introduce moments of rupture and openness.

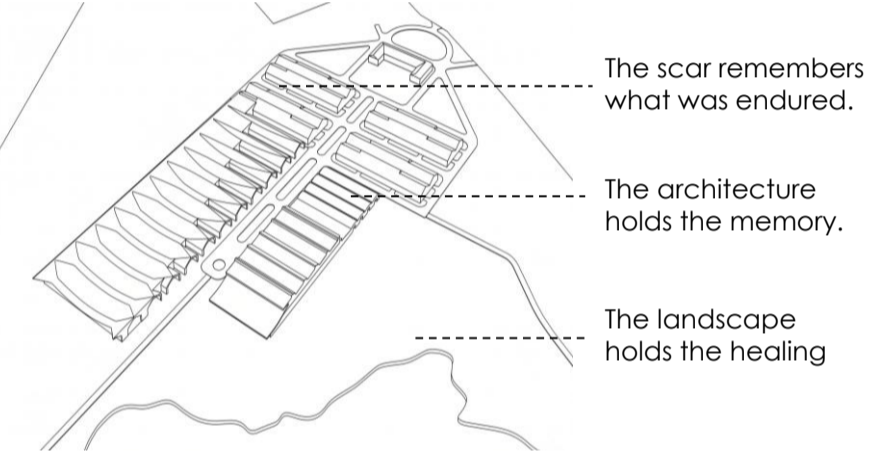
Express the wound of the site through roof geometry.

Create a building that is both a memorial and place for a life.

### ...To a Scar In The Landscape



### A Scar That Remembers



## Programming Concept

### Pavilion for Historical Exhibition + Shade House

#### Shade House

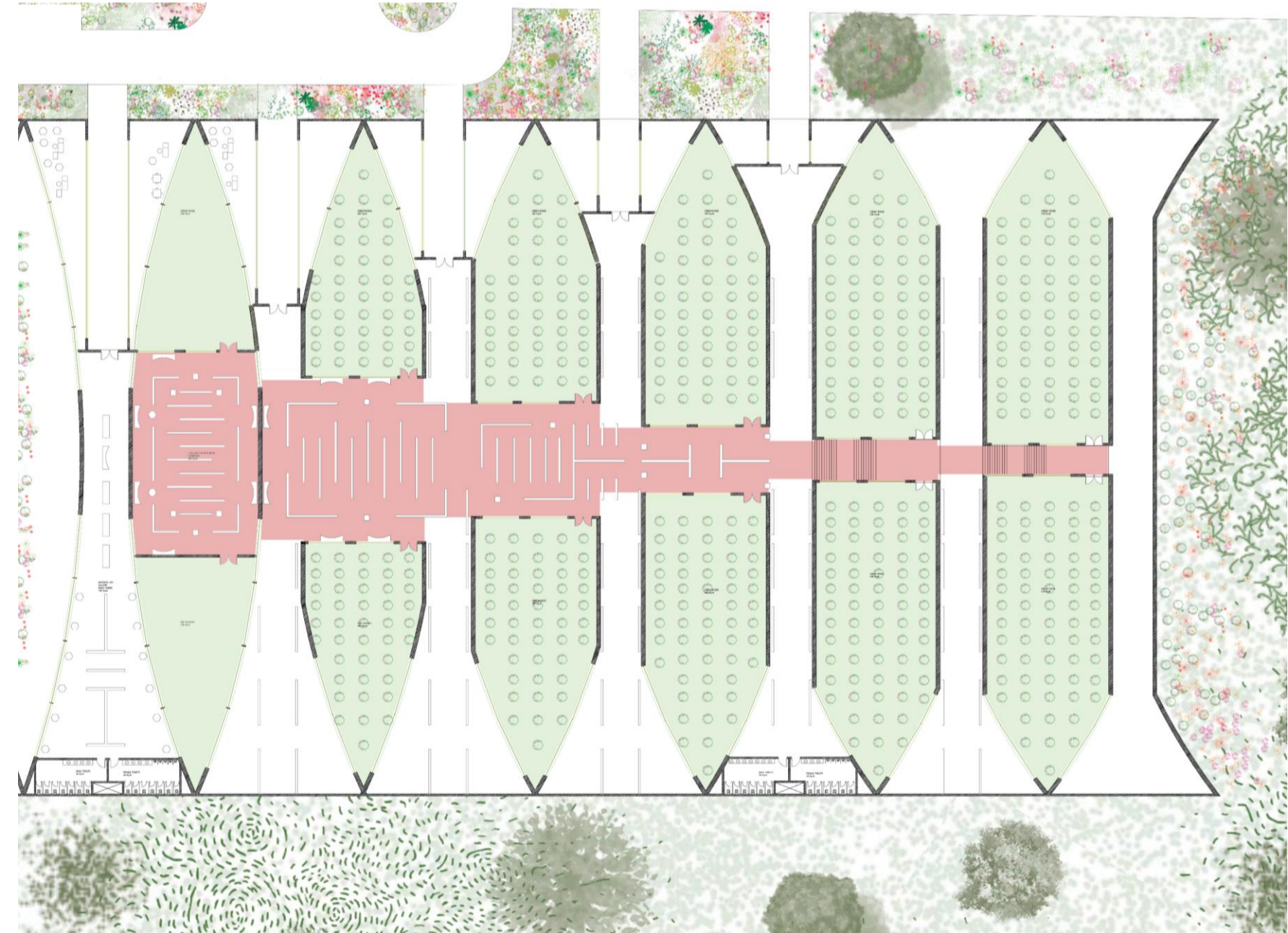
The elongated shaded volumes function as plant cultivation spaces and nurseries. These shade houses are climate responsive environments that protect and nurture a variety of plants - native species, medicinal plants, and memory gardens. They create a living layer of green throughout the site, providing ecological restoration, natural cooling and a continuous connection to nature.

#### Exhibition Space

The internal linear spaces are dedicated to exhibitions, archives, and interpretation. These galleries tell the story of the site, honoring the memory of those who suffered and preserving their voices for future generations. The exhibition spaces are designed as open, flexible and reflective areas for learning, remembrance and emotional engagement.

#### Fusion of Function

The shade houses and exhibition spaces are fused together in a continuous spatial sequence. The green shaded volumes surround and frame the exhibition spaces, creating a dialogue between memory and life, loss and regeneration.



Exhibition Space  
(Memory / Interpretation)

Shade House  
(Plant Cultivation)

Connected spaces that work together to create a journey of healing and reflection



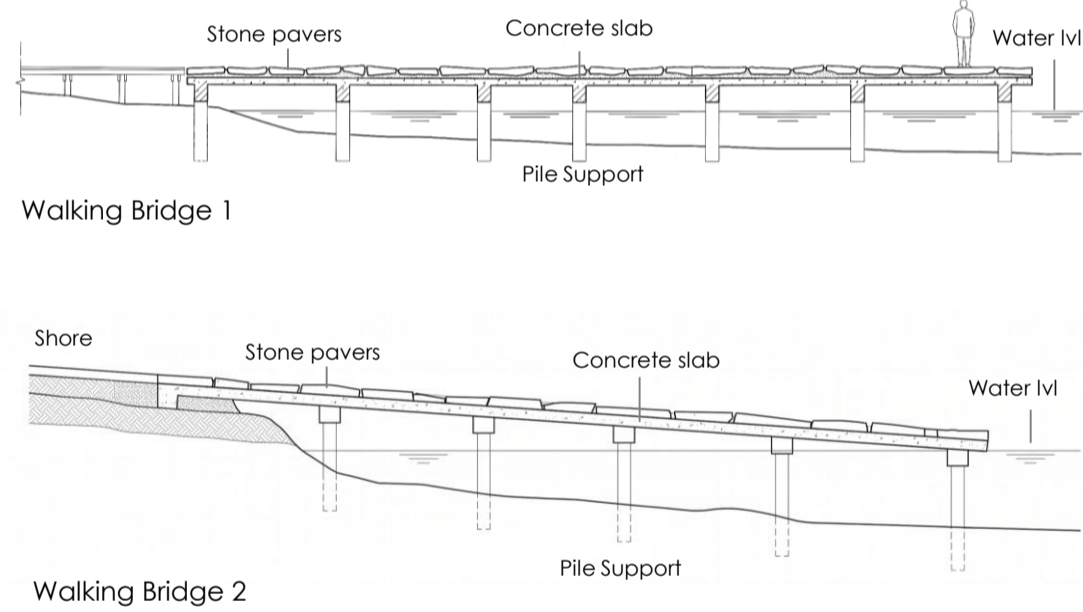


Walking Bridge 1

## The Bridge of Reflection

### A Journey Across Silence

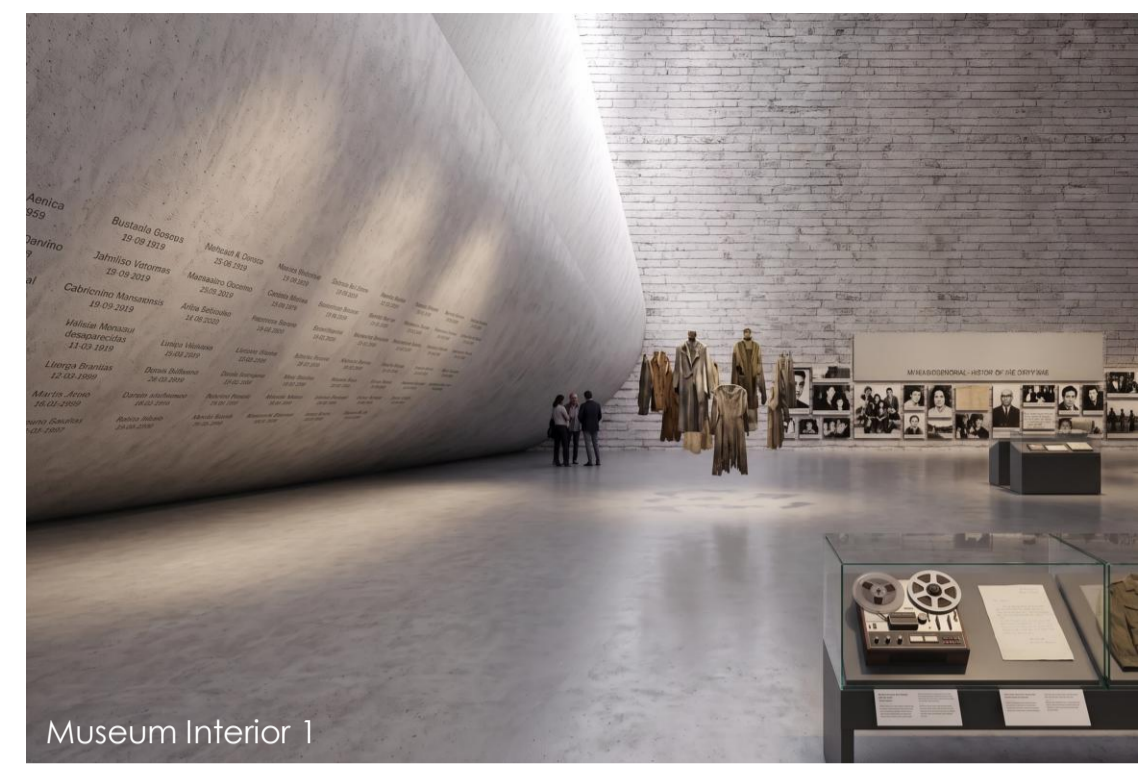
Extending across the site's largest retention basin, the bridge offers a solitary path suspended above water. As visitors walk along its length, the surrounding landscape gradually unfolds, creating moments of contemplation and introspection. The experience evokes a sense of isolation, remembrance and personal reflection. Surrounded by still water and open horizons, the bridge becomes a symbolic journey through memory, allowing visitors to connect emotionally with the site's history while contemplating its future.



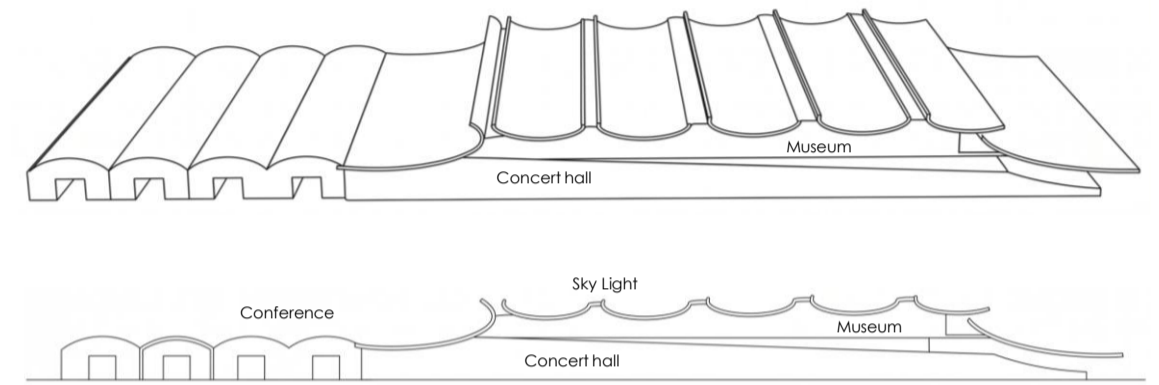
Walking Bridge 2



Concert Hall Exterior



Museum Interior 1



Exterior Landscape 1



Museum Interior 2



Museum Interior 3

The interior spaces are designed as quiet and contemplative environments that encourage reflection, learning, and remembrance. Preserved historic structures are combined with new interventions, allowing natural light, vegetation, and open courtyards to create a sense of healing and renewal within the memorial. The sequence of exhibition spaces, preserved cells, and gathering areas guides visitors through the site's history while fostering awareness, memory, and hope for the future.



Museum Interior 4

## Excavation Void – The Empty Heart

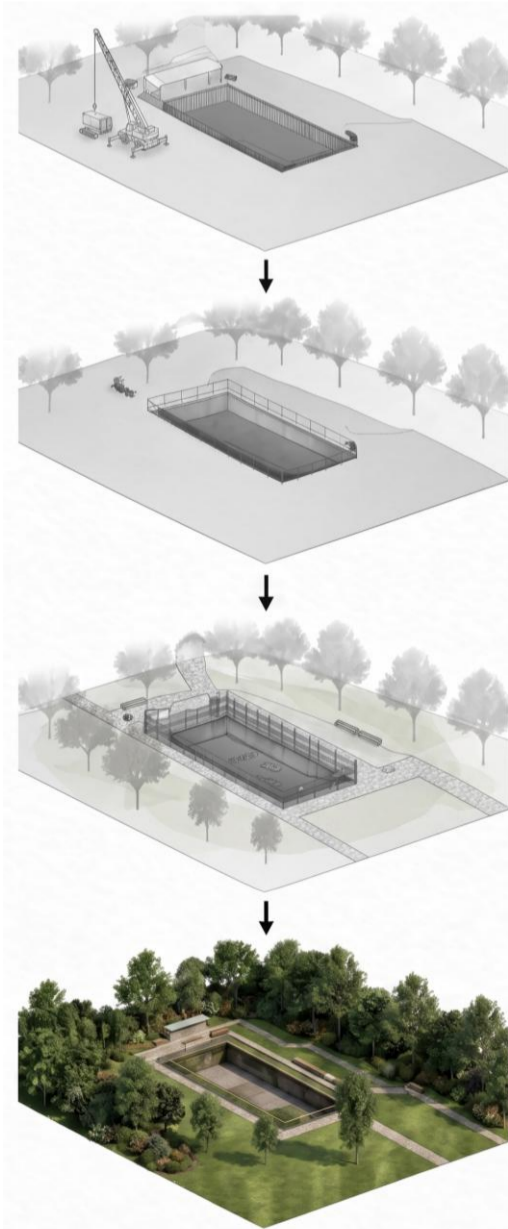


### Preserving the Absence

A portion of the site currently remains under archaeological investigation where human remains have been discovered. Rather than filling this excavation after research is completed, the proposal preserves it as an open void within the landscape. This deliberate absence becomes a memorial in itself—an empty space that represents the lives lost and the memories that can never be fully recovered. The void stands as a silent reminder of those who disappeared, creating a powerful emotional experience through absence rather than monumentality.



### Process Diagram

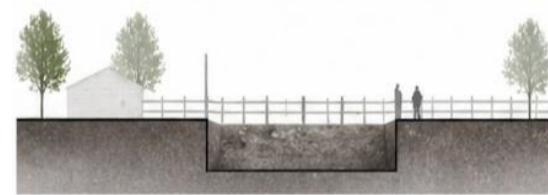


**1. EXISTING CONDITION**  
Excavated under archaeological investigation.

**2. RESEARCH COMPLETED**  
Excavation remains open, protected and preserved.

**3. PRESERVED VOID**  
Landscape integrates the void as a place of memory and reflection.

**4. LIVING CONTEXT**  
The void stands within a living landscape, maintaining memory through absence.



### Design Principles



**PRESERVE**  
Do not erase the past.  
Keep the void open.



**RESPECT**  
Create a sacred landscape of reflection.



**REMEMBER**  
Let the absence become a powerful reminder.

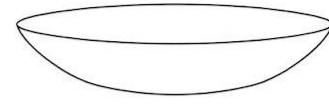


**CONNECT**  
Link the void with paths of learning and memory.

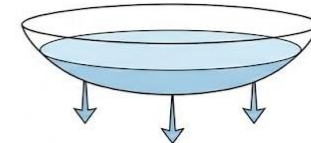


## Amphitheatre of Reflection

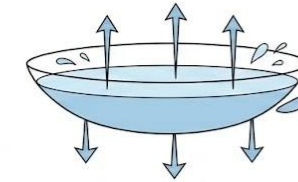
### Design Concept



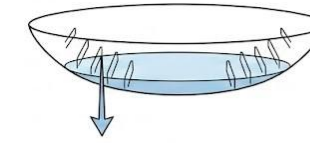
**1. THE BOWL**  
A circular form carved as a shallow bowl.



**2. ON WATER**  
Placed on the pond to create a floating experience.

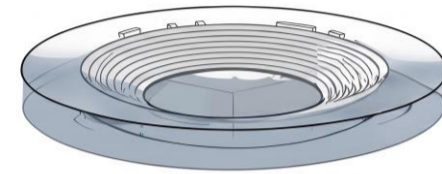


**3. RISING WATER**  
As the water level rises, the lower steps are submerged.

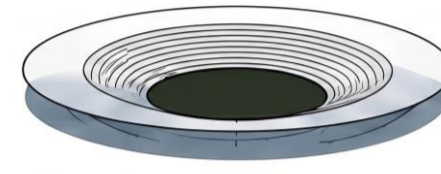


**4. RECEDING WATER**  
As the water level decreases, more steps are revealed.

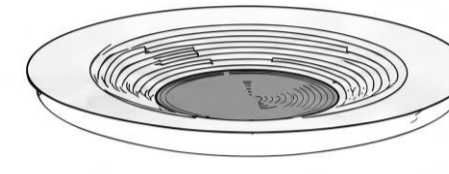
### Water Level Adaptability



**HIGH WATER LEVEL**  
Lower steps submerged. The amphitheatre appears to float.



**MEDIUM WATER LEVEL**  
Middle steps in use, balanced interaction with water.



**LOW WATER LEVEL**  
More steps exposed, large seating area and gathering space.



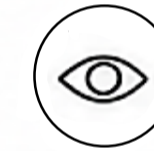
**WATER AS ELEMENT**  
Water becomes an active participant in the space.



**GATHERING & REFLECTION**  
A flexible space for ceremonies, performances and quiet reflection.



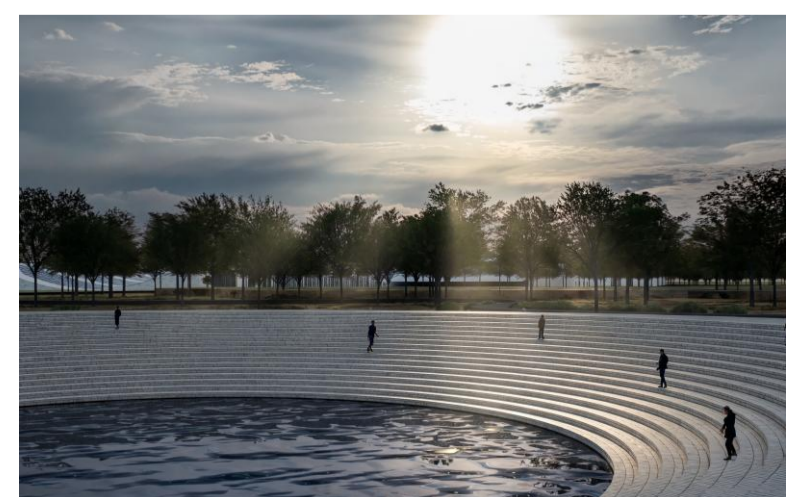
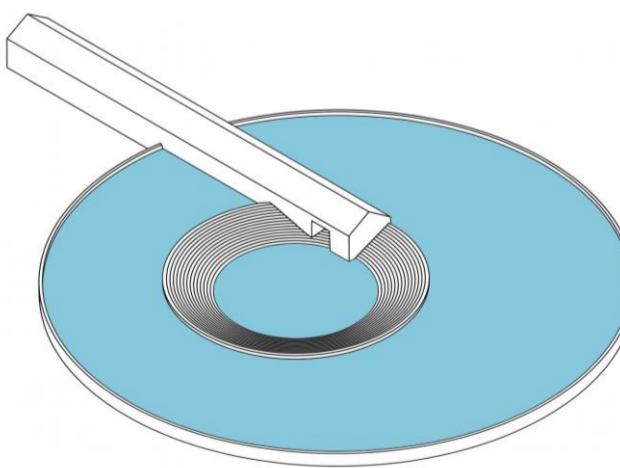
**DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE**  
The amphitheatre changes its form with the season and rainfall.



**CONNECTION TO NATURE**  
A continuous dialogue between architecture, water and landscape.

The amphitheatre is designed as a circular bowl floating within the water retention pond, creating a unique relationship between people, landscape and water. The stepped seating descends toward the center, allowing visitors to gather, reflect and experience the changing character of the memorial throughout the year.

As rainfall increases, the water level gradually rises and partially submerges the lower steps, transforming the amphitheatre into a reflective water space. During drier periods, the water recedes, revealing more seating and expanding the usable gathering area. This constant transformation makes the amphitheatre a living memorial, where the presence and absence of water symbolize memory, loss and renewal. The changing water levels create an ever-evolving experience, reminding visitors that memory, like water, is never static but continually reshapes the landscape over time.



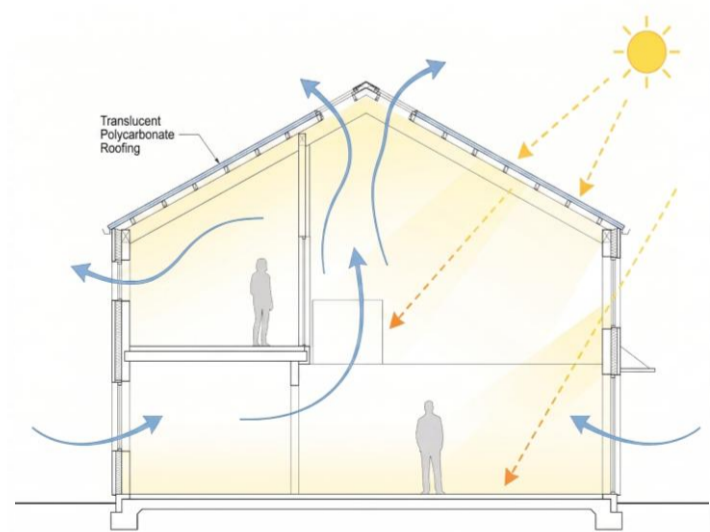
## Transparent Roof – Light Through Memory

### Architecture of Light and Truth

A translucent roof spans the memorial structures, allowing natural light to filter gently into the interior spaces. The roof creates a sense of openness and transparency, contrasting with the secrecy and darkness that once defined the site's history. Throughout the day, changing patterns of sunlight animate the interiors, creating moments of reflection and serenity. The transparent roof symbolizes truth, visibility and remembrance, ensuring that the stories held within the memorial remain illuminated and never hidden again.



### Roof Concept Diagram



**Translucent Roof**  
Lets natural light filter in while protecting from rain and glare.

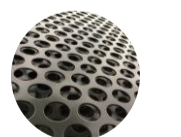
**Light Diffusion**  
Soft, even daylight creates calm and reflective interiors.

**Structural Frame**  
Repetitive pitched frame maintains the architectural language of the site.

**MATERIAL PALETTE**  
Lightweight, durable and diffusing materials for a soft, luminous environment.



TRANSLUCENT POLYCARBONATE



PERFORATED METAL SHEET



Light reveals. It does not hide.



A roof that unites, yet sets us free.



Truth is visible. Memory is alive.



Illuminating the past, inspiring the future.



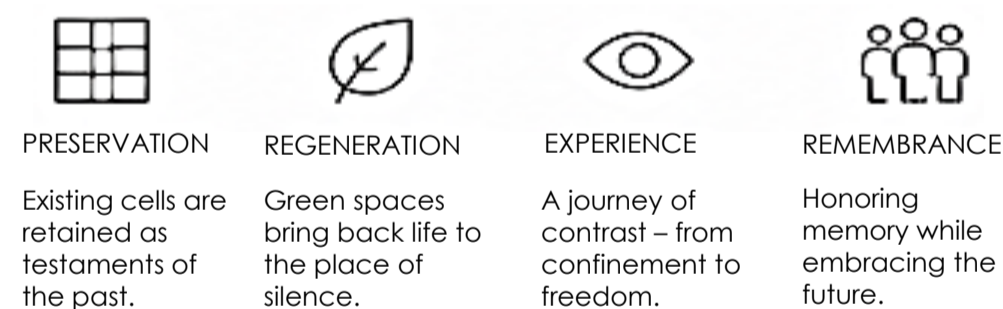
## The Cells and Living Memory

### Life Emerging Between Spaces of Confinement

The preserved detention cells remain as powerful reminders of the conditions endured by countless individuals.

Between these cells, new landscape interventions introduce vegetation and gardens that emerge from the spaces once associated with imprisonment.

Visitors experience a sequence of emptiness and growth, moving between preserved cells and living green spaces. This contrast highlights the passage of time and symbolizes the triumph of life, memory and hope over oppression and confinement.



From darkness to light.  
From silence to life.



The green spaces between the cells are not just voids; they are acts of healing. They restore nature to a place that once denied life.

They allow visitors to reflect, remember and reconnect – reminding us that even in the darkest places, life finds a way.



**CONFINEMENT**  
Narrow, enclosed, heavy and dark



**TRANSITION**  
A glimpse of light and greenery.



**OPENING**  
Life emerges, breathing space.



**FREEDOM**  
Open to sky, growth and hope.

### Concept Diagram



**1. EXISTING CONDITION**  
Closed cells, isolation and oppression.

**2. INTRODUCING LIFE**  
Green spaces are inserted between cells.

**3. EXPERIENCING CONTRAST**  
A journey between memory and life, emptiness and growth.

### Plan Diagram



## Memory Wall

### A Collective Archive of Remembrance

The Memory Wall is more than a physical surface- it is a living archive shaped by the people.

Designed as a long, linear wall with subtle ledges and recesses, it invites visitors to place personal belongings, photographs, letters, flowers, objects, and messages for their loved ones.

The wall becomes a space of ongoing participation, where memory is not fixed but continuously added, layered, and preserved over time.

Set within the landscape, the Memory Wall stands as a silent witness-an open invitation to remember, reflect, and heal together.

### Details – Places to Leave Memory.



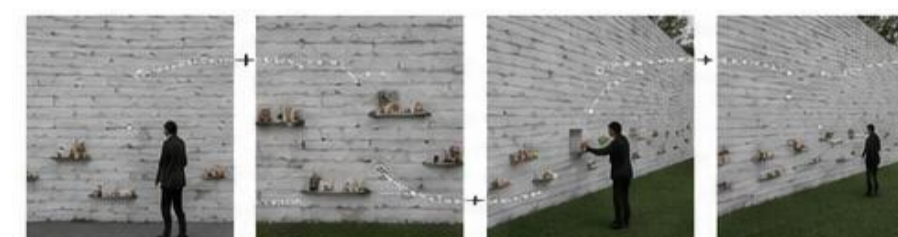
**Shelf ledge**  
For photos, flowers, candles and objects.

**Letter slot**  
For letters, notes and written memory.

**Small niches**  
For keepsakes and personal items.

**Shared space**  
For community offerings and collective acts.

### Experience Journey



**Arrival**  
Approaching the wall, curiosity and respect.

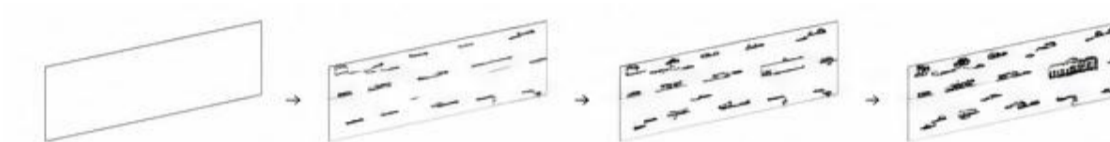
**Discovery**  
Noticing the stories and personal tokens left by others.

**Contribution**  
Leaving a memory, becoming part of collective.

**Reflection**  
Walking along the wall, feeling connection and remembrance.



### Concept Diagram



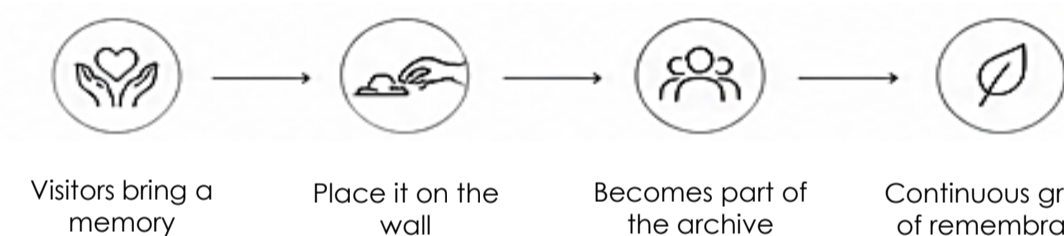
**1. A surface of memory**  
A long wall as a blank canvas for remembrance

**2. Places to leave**  
Ledges and recesses invite visitors to leave tokens, notes and objects.

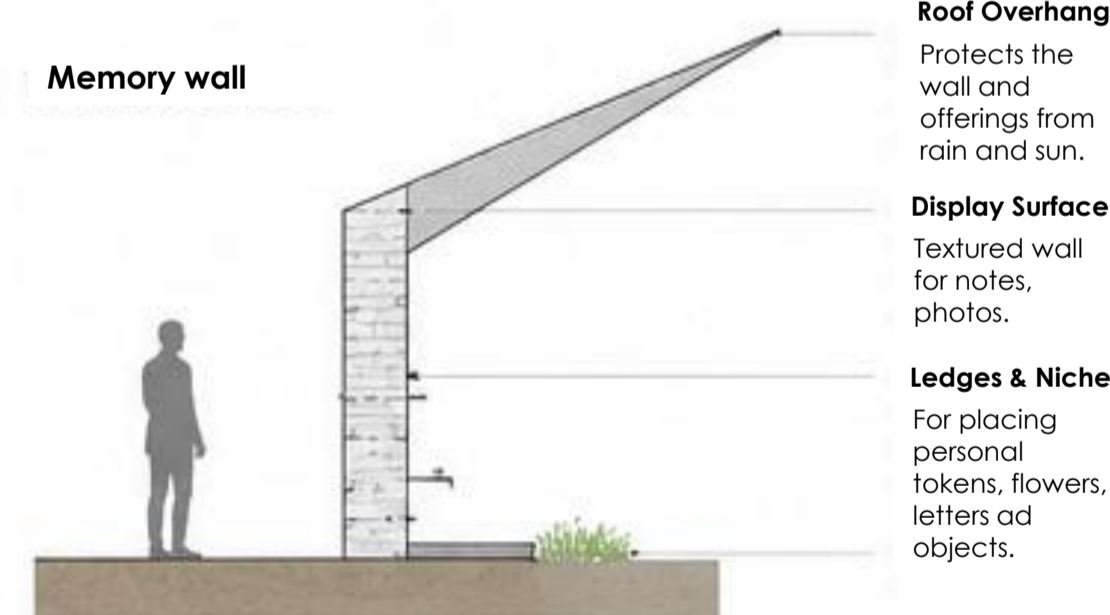
**3. Layers of stories**  
Over time, memories accumulate, creating a living narrative

**4. A living memorial**  
The wall becomes a collective archive of love, loss and remembrance.

### How it Works



### Memory wall



### Memory that Live on



Every object, every word, every gesture-keeps the memory alive.