

OF THE LAND

Our relationship with the land will dictate our future. Throughout our complicated history, our love for the land has evolved from a sense of belonging to the land, to the land belonging to us.

The Mesabi Range was billions of years in the making, well before man walked the earth. Glaciers, two miles deep, carved where volcanoes once stood. After the glaciers melted away, Indigenous peoples moved with the seasons for millennia, belonging to these forests and waterways.

European settlers changed that relationship to the land in Minnesota. The 1800s brought rapid extraction, with pine forests felled, iron ore pulled from pits and mines, and waterways dammed.

Present day mining and clearcutting embody this tension we create through extraction. These processes provide material necessary to our present society, but destroy and pollute. However, nature responds with resiliency by way of new plant growth, pooling lakes, and evolution.

Man can be harsh on nature. But man also has the ability to witness what remains, what regenerates, what endures. We can remember what it means to belong to the land, rather than it to us.

Of the land, a rest stop, located just outside of Grand Rapids, MN, is a meeting point of travelers and nature. A series of walkways are a means to explore the riverfront site. Steel pillars, scatter across the forest. As tree trunks hold up the forest canopy, these pillars allow for nature to grow and evolve below. The rest stop is composed of solely wood and steel, the very materials extracted here in Northern Minnesota. Gathering and resting spaces are situated for minimal impact on the current riverfront and forest ecology.

Of the land is not about what belongs to us, it's about where we belong.



CONTOURS

A once natural riverfront site has turned into a sloped pocket, enclosed by roads, trails and man-made topography.



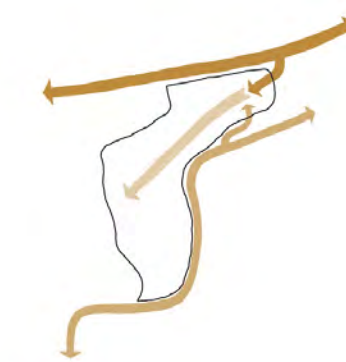
FOREST

Dating back to white pine harvesting in the 1800s, scarce old growth and fragmented habitats now scatter northern Minnesota.



WATER

The Prairie River and flanking mining pit lakes have this evolving beauty, sparked by human extraction of nature.



APPROACH

61 and the Mesabi trail meet at the northeast corner of the property, acting as the logical entry to the site, with natural beauty to the southeast creating a draw to the opposing corner.



VIEWS

Distant and intimate views surround the forested pocket. The riverfront, bridges, mounds and curves make this site a special opportunity for moments of contemplation.



HOVELS

Early lumberjacks and lived in simple structures called hovels. These simple structures had an open pit fire in the middle for bread baking, drying clothes and warmth.



PILLARS

Pillars can lift a structure above the forest floor just as the trunk of a tree lifts the canopy, facilitating growth of the habitat below.



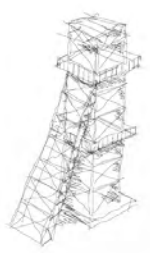
LAYERS

Open mining pits have a duality of human and nature. Vast, destructive canyons are left from mining, but there is some beauty in the layers of excavation circling vast canyons and their interaction with the topography.



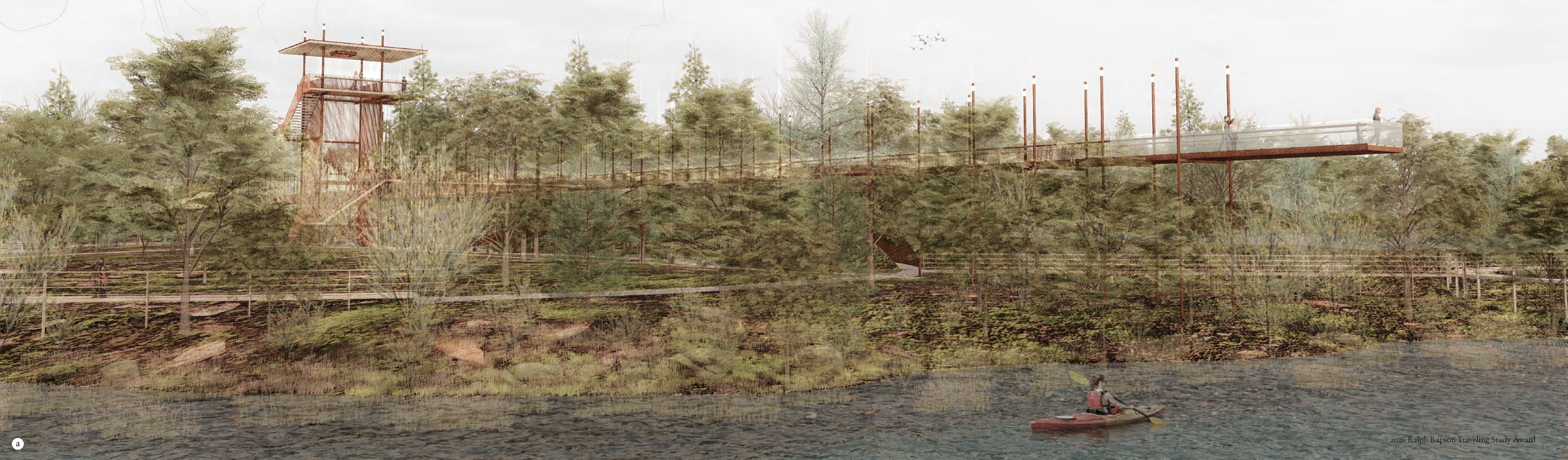
CONVEYOR

Conveyors are a form of horizontal transportation, moving contents from one location to the next. They extend up with rigid, but light steel frames.



HEADFRAME

Like conveyors, headframes extend from underground mining sites. But, instead they facilitate vertical transportation rather than horizontal.



Adjacent to the car and bike parking, is the restroom structure. This space acts as the introduction to the site, allowing visitors to make a quick stop, explore or rest.



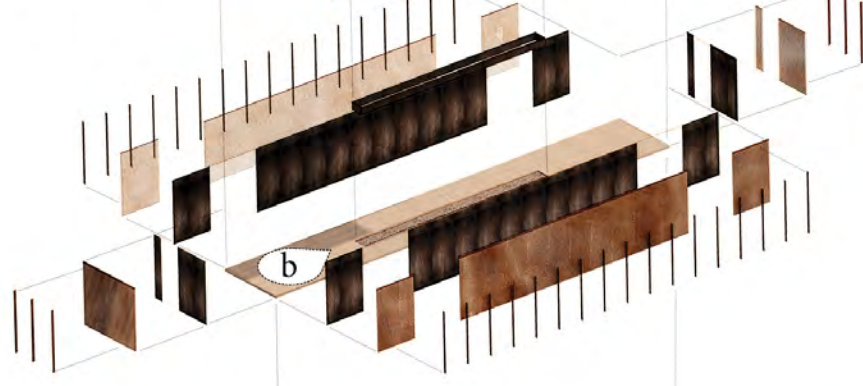
The enclosed structures are clad in a dimensional accoya lap rainscreen, with creating a horizontal facade, similar to the hovel structures often made of horizontal timbers

In addition to the rainscreens, the bridge platform is made of accoya decking, a modified wood material made of pine, harvested in Minnesota. The sustainably forested pine is modified with an eco-friendly process and will last over 50

In order to minimize impact of the rest stop infrastructure, a series of weathered steel pillars are placed through the forest on the site, allowing the bridge to lightly touch the ground, while lifting the bridge structure well above the forest floor

Bike, car and snowmobile parking are situated where the Masabi Trail and highway meet, both for easy access and minimal impact on the heavily forest portion of the site

Farther down the bridge is the gathering space and history exhibit. A central skylight and firepit are inspired by the 1800s hovel structures with open firepits for cooking and warmth.



A series of cross beams support the gathering and exhibit structure that sits inside of the pillars.

One cut through the landscape circles through the man made slope to the east. This was altered for the Mesabi Railway, now reused as a biking and snowmobile trail

A small circular boardwalk is oriented toward the highway bridge, an intimate secondary view to the dam altered riverway

Railings made of weathered steel rods. Simple in form and maintenance.

A staircase wraps the exterior of the observation tower, inspired by the exposed steel structure of mining towers or headframes

Weathered steel crossbeams extend between the pillars to support the accoya decking and staircases, while allowing for a light frame to touch down at the forest floor.

Just as a headframe is used for transporting goods and people from underground mines, the observation tower extends above the trees, allowing visitors to capture panoramic views of the surrounding mining pit lakes

A substantial steel structure below the bridge decking cantilevers to the edge of the forest, keeping the structure out of the flood plain, while maximizing views

A small circular boardwalk sits over the floodplain, allowing the path to maintain usability at various water levels

The main walking bridge extends through the site, oriented toward the tailing mound, river and trail bridge.

The observation tower is centered on the largest circular path, just as headframes and conveyors often stand at the center of mining activities

A series of boardwalks and trails allow for year round hiking, running and cross country skiing, while minimizing the man made infrastructure on the forest floor.

