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JACKSON SKARDA

CULTURAL PATHWAYS

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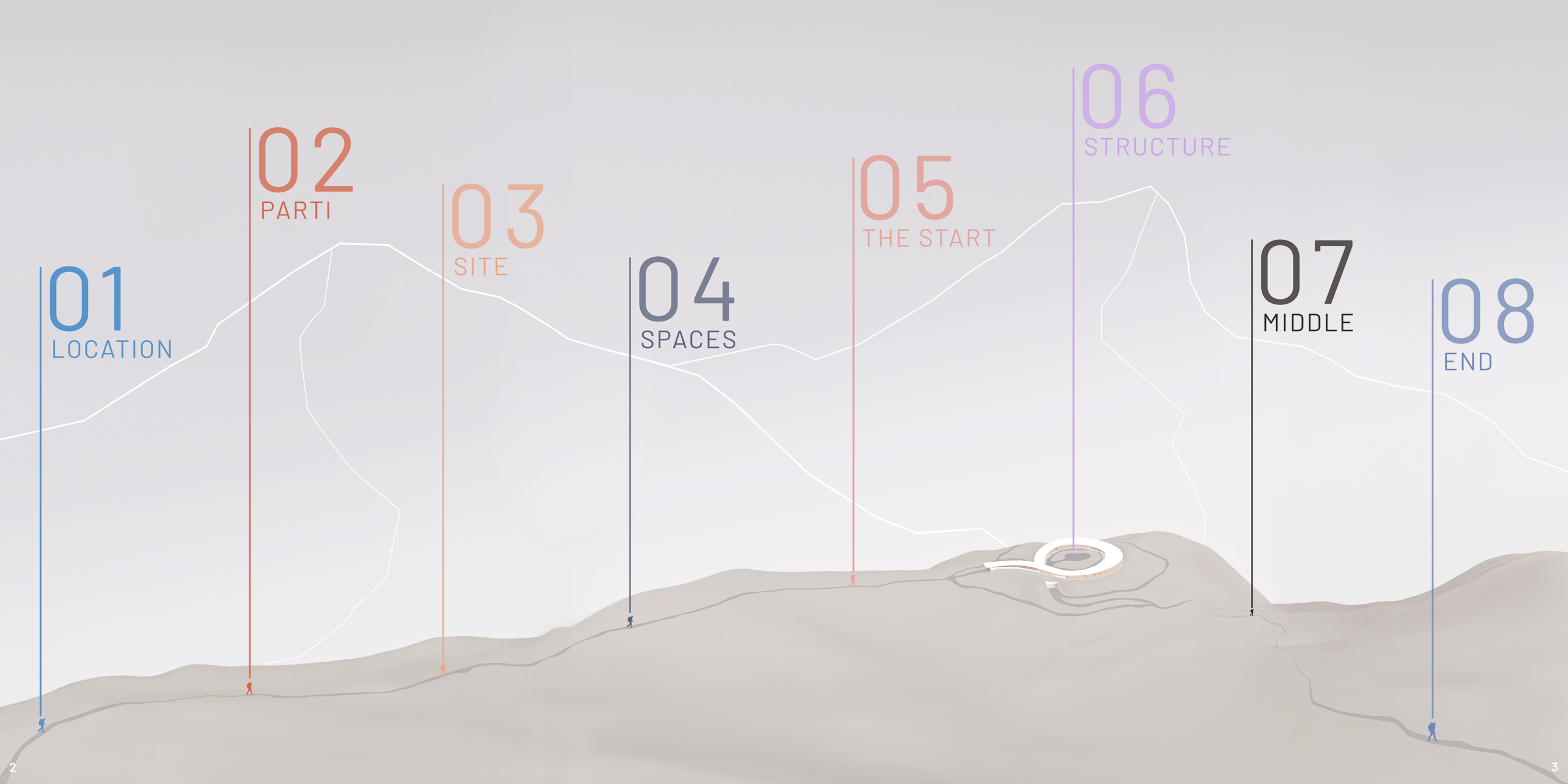
BY JACKSON SKARDA

WITH COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

KOICHIRO AITANI

RAY HOLLIDAY

CHANG-SHAN HUANG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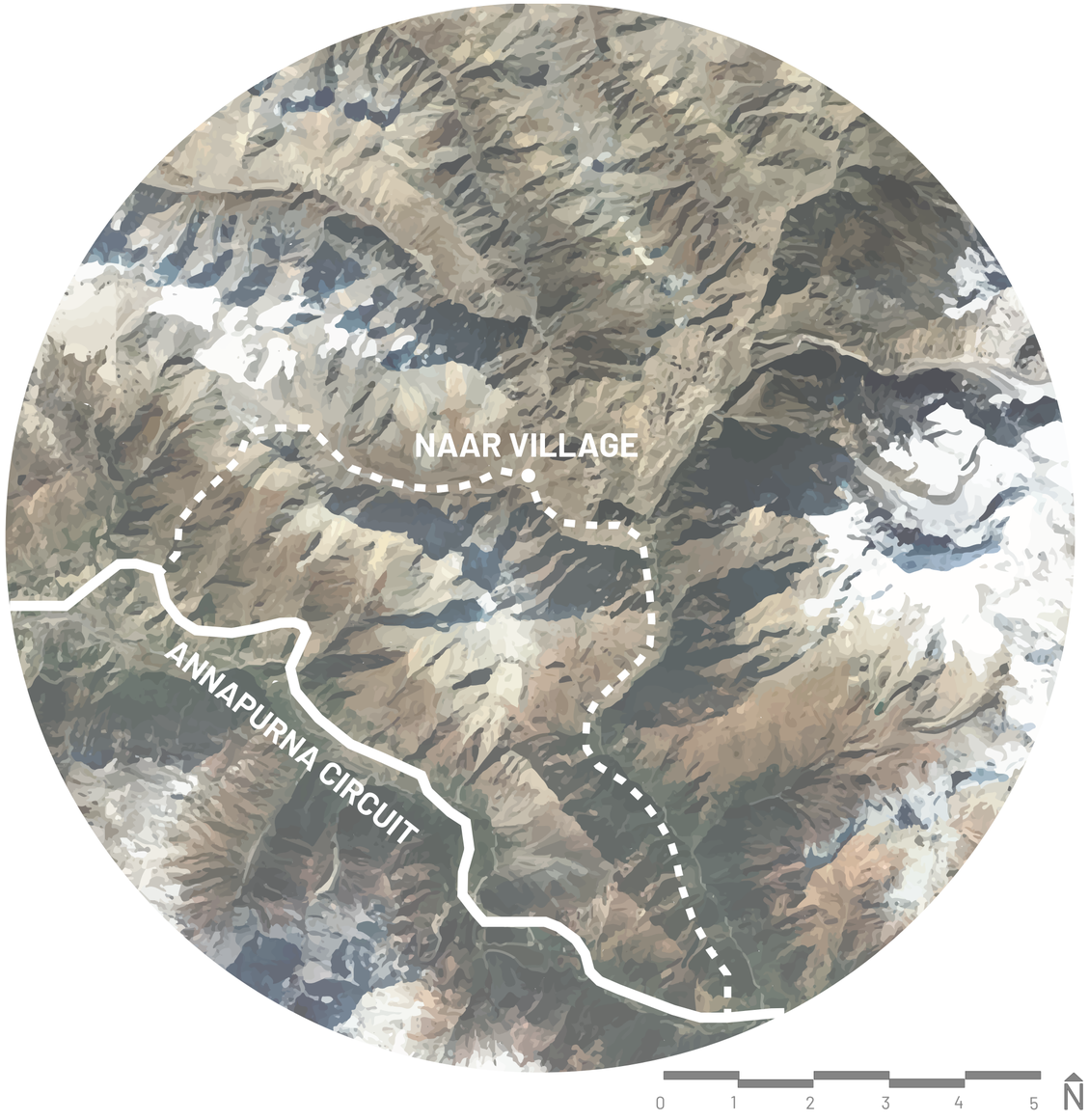
In the mountains of Nepal, snow covered peaks rise and fall below blue skies, stretching all around like a panorama. Red, green, and blue prayer flags, all strung out in a line alongside a dirt pathway, flutter in the wind as hikers amble forward towards the awe-striking Himalayas, which only seem to stay the same size for the hikers, no matter how far they trudge forward. Such an experience can only be described as walking to the top of the world, where everything below seems to disappear. People seeking serenity, meditation, and adventure come to a place like the Himalayas of Nepal. The mountain range covers hundreds of square miles and making the venture through find themselves isolated from the high populations of most cities yet surrounded by natural beauty.

LOCATION

01

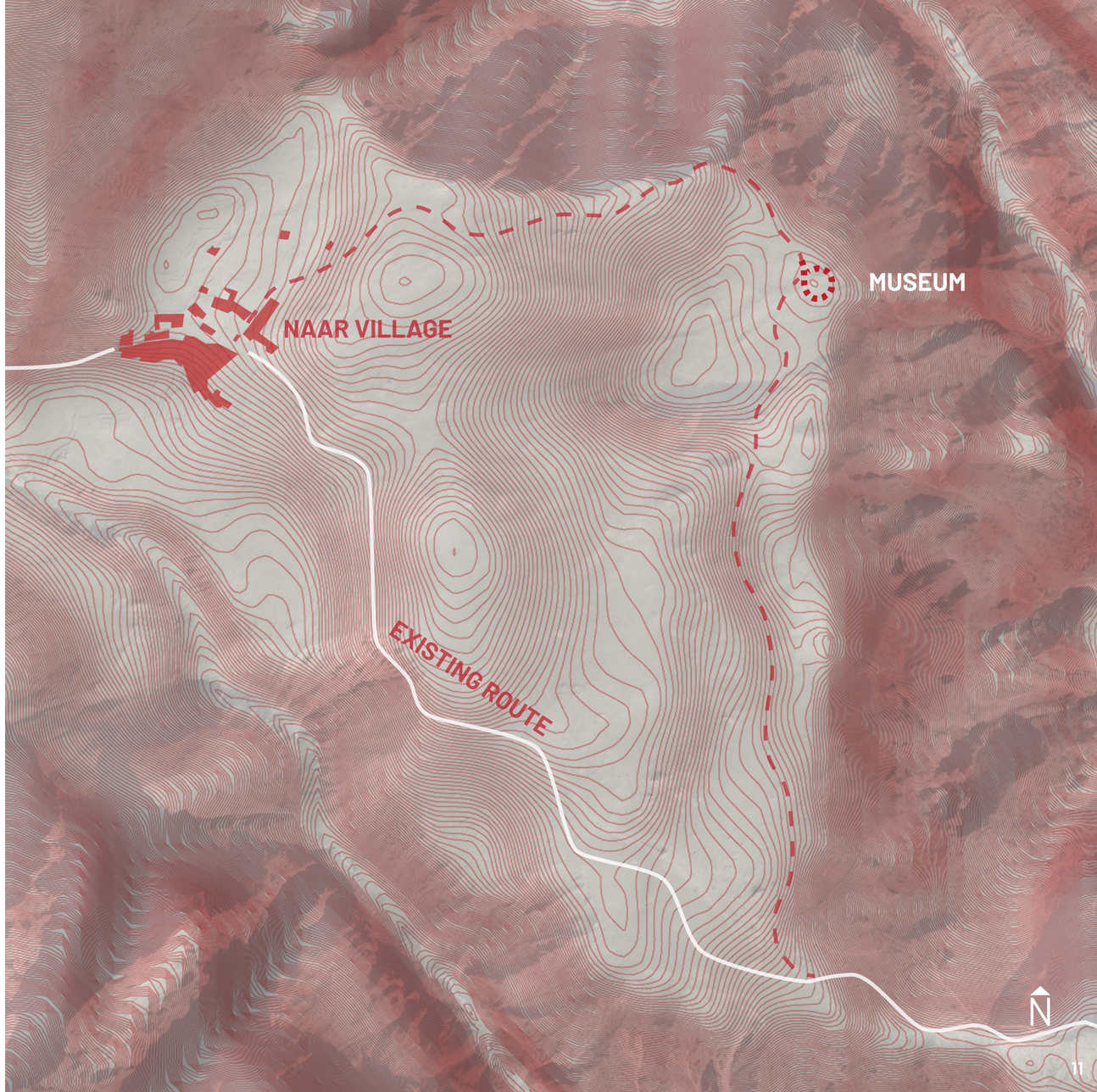
NAAR, NEPAL

Nepal, which is situated between India and Tibet, has one of the most impressive mountain ranges spanning its northing border. This mountain range, which contains some of the worlds most impressive mountain peaks, is known as the Himalayas. People come from all over the world to hike this area, and many of them will follow a route known as the Annapurna circuit which connects to a plethora of other routes and destinations. Many of these destinations involve not just the beautiful nature, but also the rich culture and history of Nepal. Some of these destinations are ancient monasteries, shrines, villages, or decorated hiking routes. Nepal has maintained a strong connection with its past, both physically and culturally. One could stay in a village that has existed for centuries or observe farming practices that have been passed down through generations.



One such destination is the village of Naar, a remote village that can be hiked to from the Annapurna circuit in less than a day. While there are multiple routes to Naar, the main route takes hikers through a mountain pass where they can see mountains stretching out in every direction. From here they begin a descent into the mountain valley. Along the way to Naar, hikers will experience hand made shrines, prayer flags, and incredible vistas that can hardly be described in words. The shrines and prayer flags act as moments of pause and meditation for hikers and locals. Some of these shrines have existed for hundreds of years.

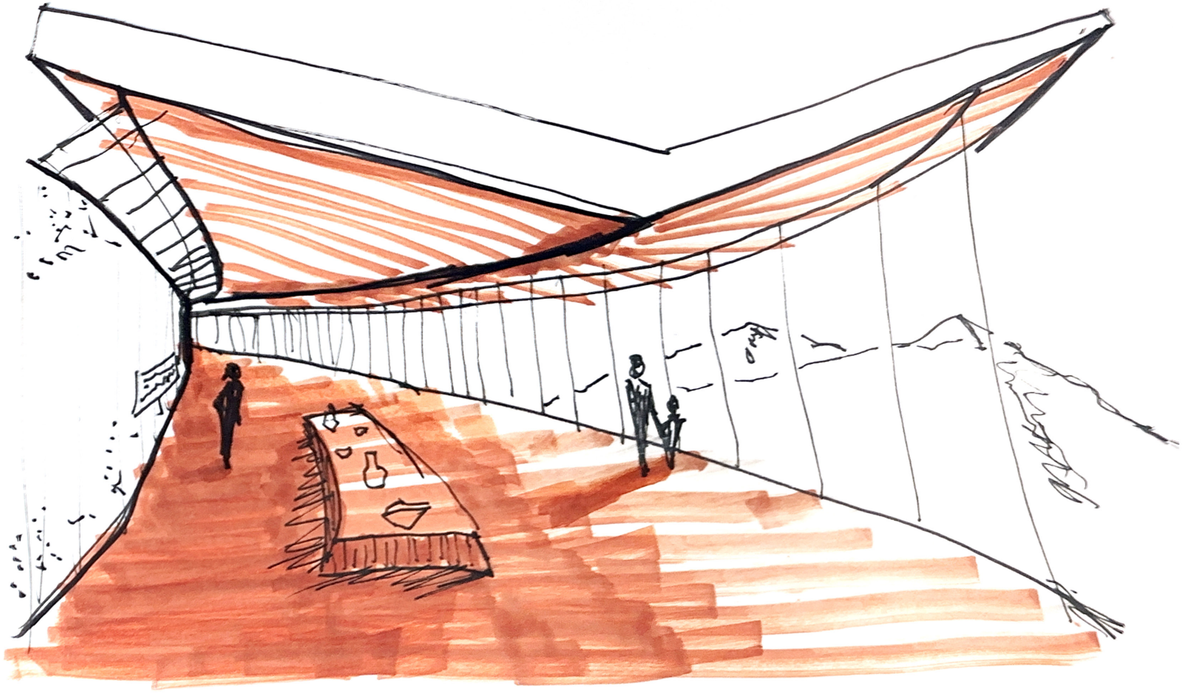
The village is built on the side of a hill and faces south, where it can catch every bit of available sunlight. The houses are made from local stone, and many have existed for over a hundred years. Naar relies on tourism and local farming to live in such a remote location. Upon walking just outside the village and through the nearby hills, you come to the site of our project.

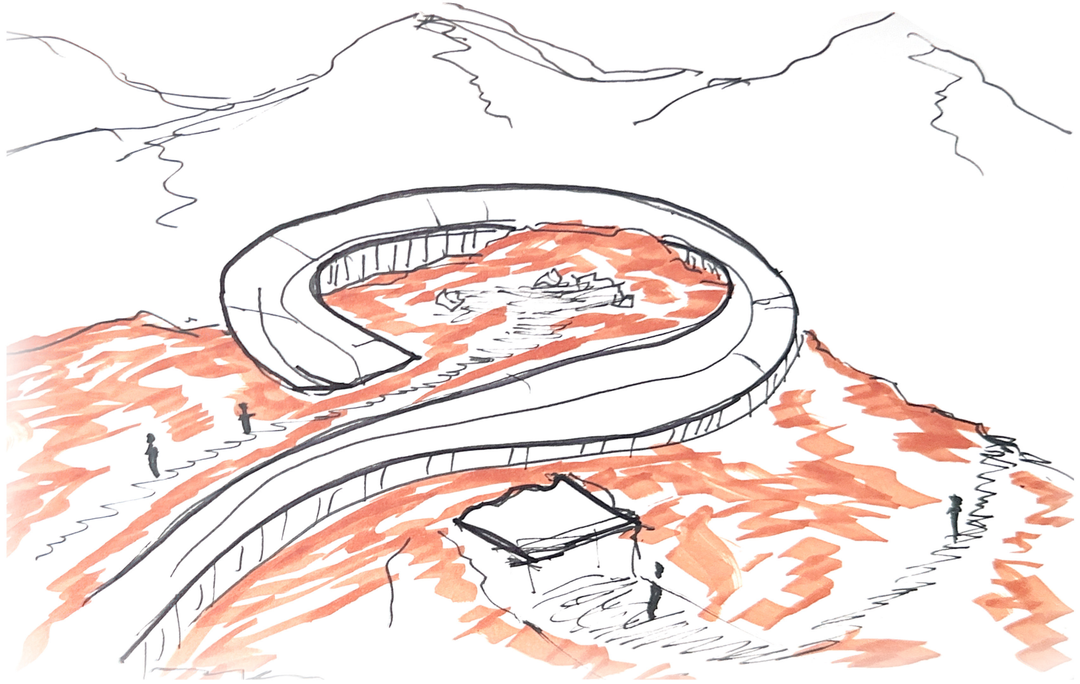


THE PARTI

02 ON THE WING

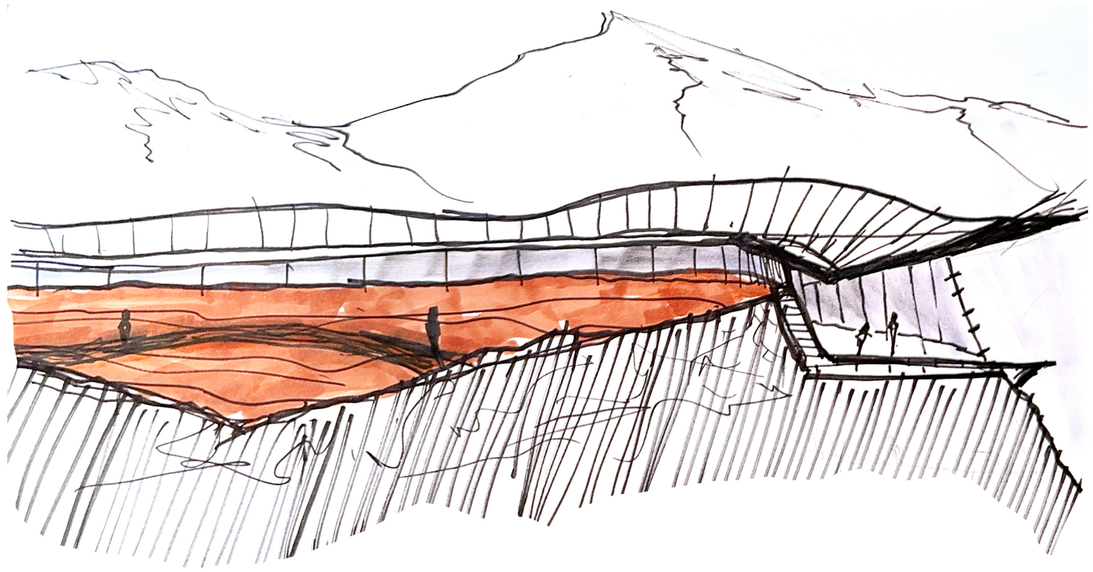
The roof for this project would be very important, as it becomes the gesture of the building. I knew I wanted this gesture to be gentle, but also feel natural and free. I immediately wanted to create something parametrically. I had the idea of a butterfly profile roof, that follows the path of the building. The butterfly profile would allow for water collection at its spine, and solar panels on its south facing angles. As the profile moves along its path, the wings of this butterfly gently open and close. I created grasshopper file to play with this form, and after countless hours, designed something that would match the rolling hills of the area. The space within would look out over the valleys and peaks, guiding people on a journey at the end of the world.





LOOP DESIGN

While playing with multiple forms, couldn't take my attention from a linear loop. Unlike a circle this loop had open ends, marking a clear start and end. This simple loop suddenly felt integrated directly into the path or journey from the village, where one could enter from the trail, walk the museum, and re merge back onto the path. I had the instinct to situate this loop around a small hill, giving significance to the topography at the center of the loop. To maintain the continuity of this ribbon loop, I decided to have the path cut down into the earth, go underneath itself, and emerge from the ground at the end. By becoming part of the path from one village to another, the project becomes part of the hiker's journey.



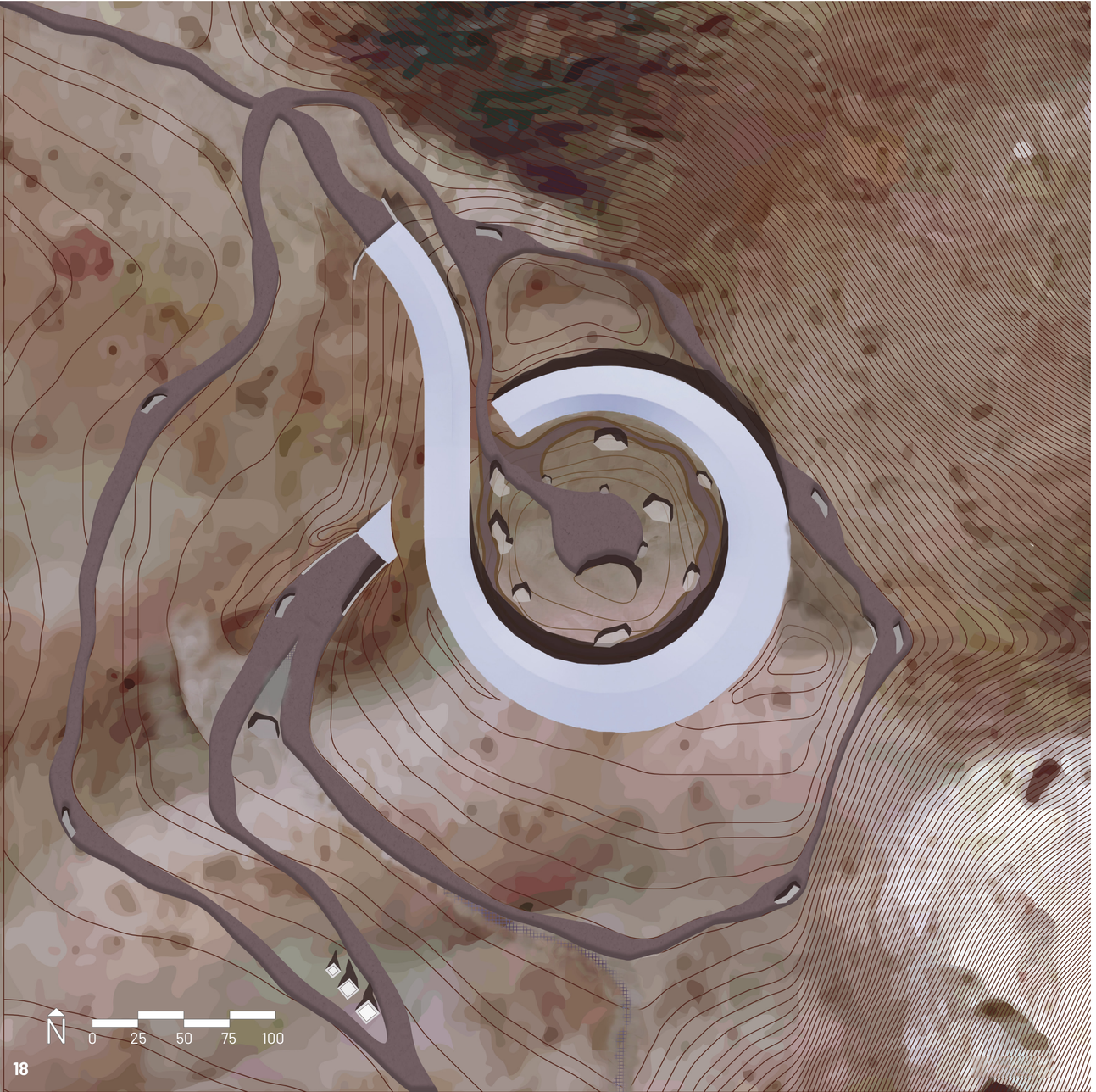
SET INTO THE EARTH

The next question became what this gesture could be. The local architecture is all rectangular, small buildings made from stone and a bit of timber. They are simple, yet their strikingly unique quality is how they are cut into the hillside, stair stepping down with the slope of the mountain. I immediately wanted to have a project that would maintain a strong physical relationship with the topography. While many buildings are built around grids which dominate the landscape, this architecture was equal with and respectful of the landscape.

THE SITE

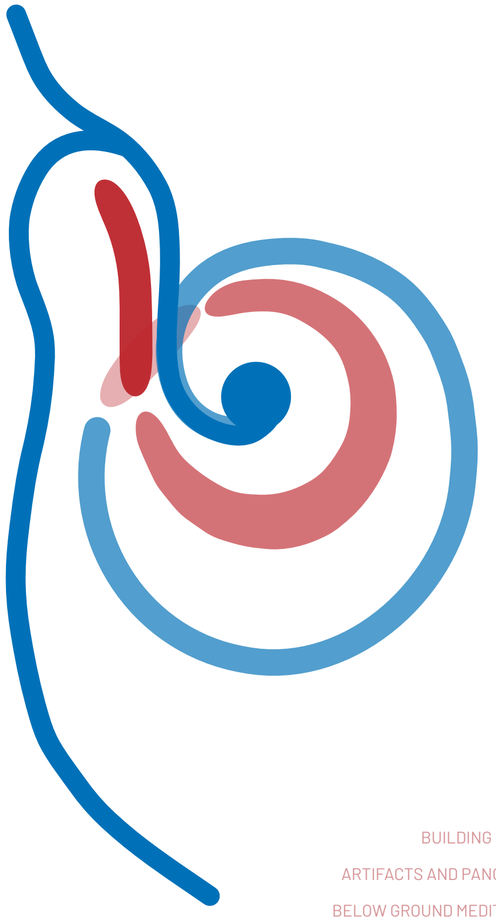
03 ON A HILL

Upon walking just outside the village and through the nearby hills, you come to the site of our project. This project, Cultural Pathways, is an opportunity for hikers and locals to reflect on their journey as they connect with the nature around them and the rich artifacts of Nepal's past. The function of the project is a cultural museum and linear exhibition which directly integrates with the physical hiking path. The artifacts inside come from the greater area of Nepal as well as the local context of Naar village. This section of the journey then allows people to look back on the past, while also reflecting on the present. Along the way, the user stays connected to nature itself and the Grande mountains they've come to see. The idea for the museum itself stems from the desire to create a space that feels like an oasis of comfort and protection that shields people from the outside while allowing them to remain emersed in the beautiful world. Like sitting next to a fire in the middle of winter and looking out the window, you get to experience the irreplaceable feeling of the warm fire without sacrificing the experience of the white snow and dark sky. This project seeks to recreate that feeling.



CIRCULATION DIAGRAM

THE CIRCULAR FORM IN NEPAL CULTURE HAS MEDITATIVE SIGNIFICANCE, AND IS OFTEN USED IN METAPHORS FOR LIFE.



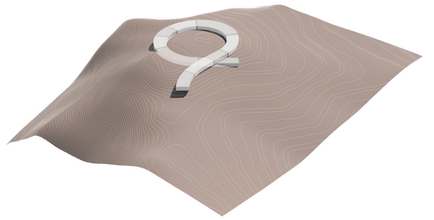
BUILDING ENTRY

ARTIFACTS AND PANORAMA

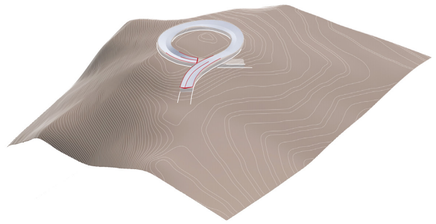
BELOW GROUND MEDITATION

HIKING PATHWAY TO CENTER

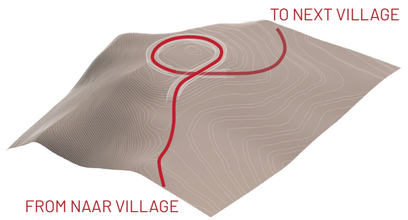
FROM CENTER TO NAAR OR NEXT VILLAGE



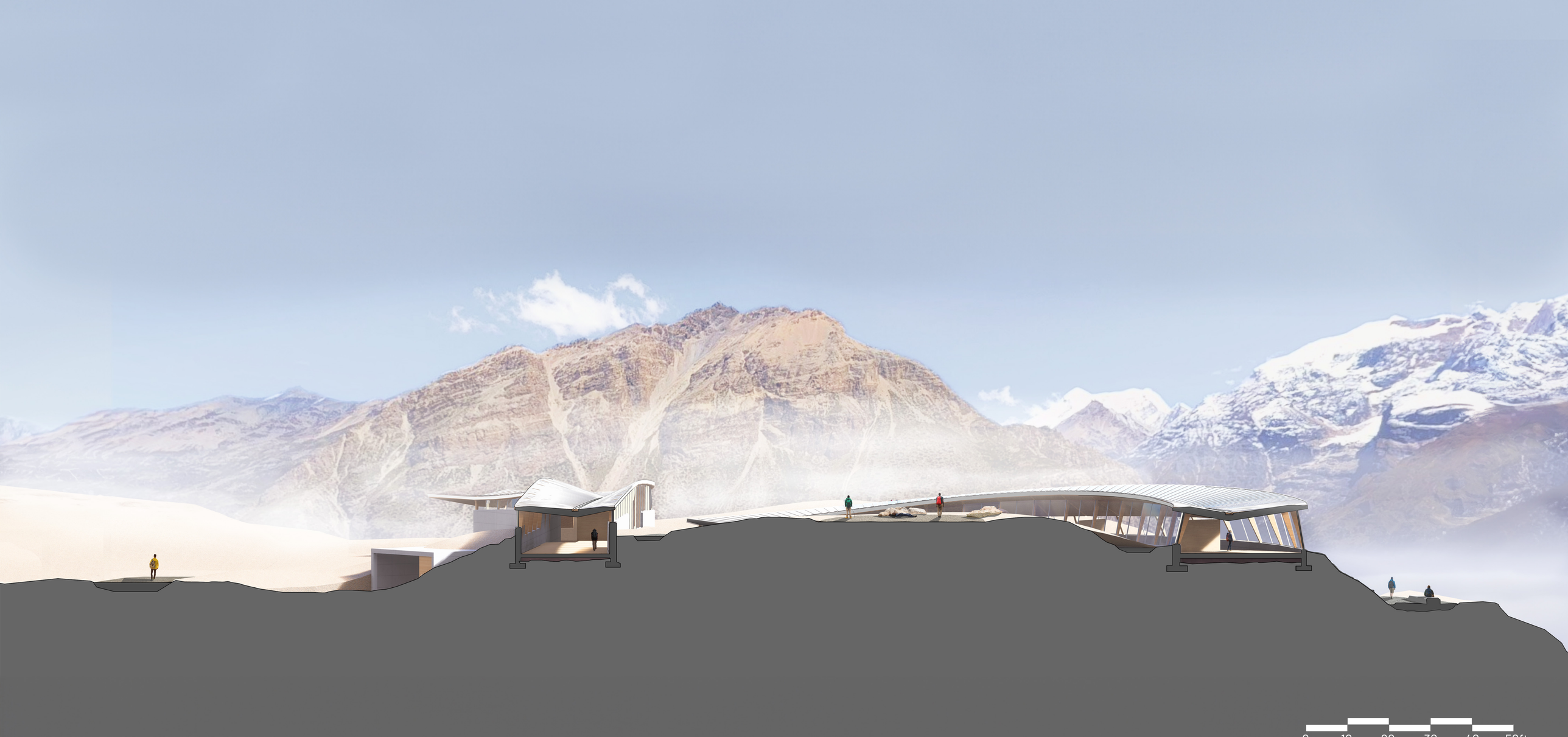
THE PROJECT IS ORGANIZED IN SECTION THAT LEAD ONE INTO THE OTHER. THE ORGANIZATION ALLOWS FOR GENTLE TRANSITION BETWEEN SPACES.



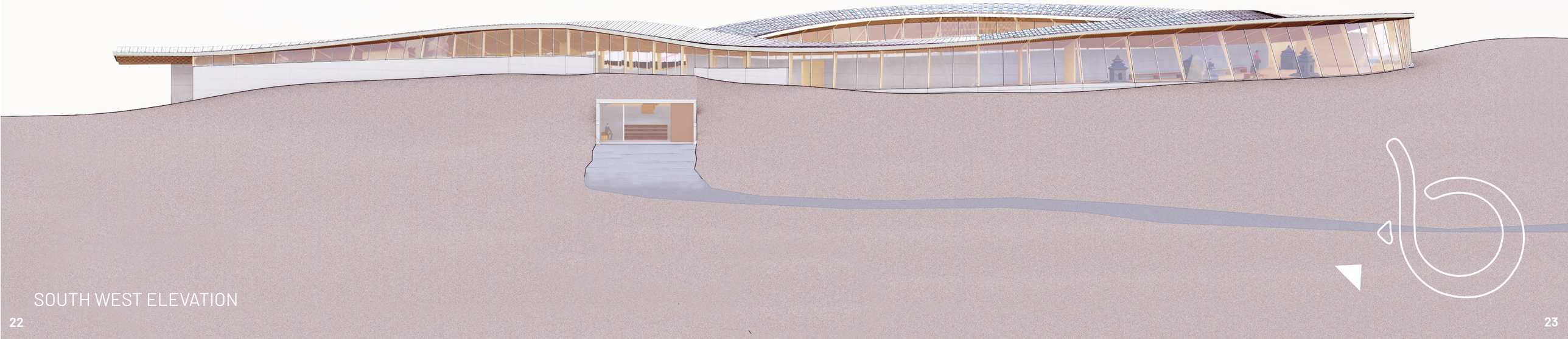
THE ROOF IS AN EXTRUDED BUTTERFLY PROFILE THAT FOLLOWS THE PATH OF THE BUILDING AROUND, AND ENDS AS THE SPACE GOES BELOW GROUND LEVEL.



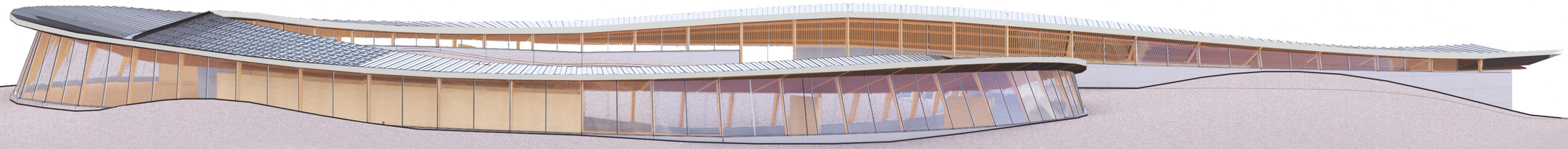
BY BECOMING PART OF THE PATH FROM ONE VILLAGE TO THE NEXT, THE PROJECT BECOMES PART OF THE HIKERS JOURNEY, AS WELL AS A GENTLE GESTURE.



NORTH FACING SITE SECTION



SOUTH WEST ELEVATION

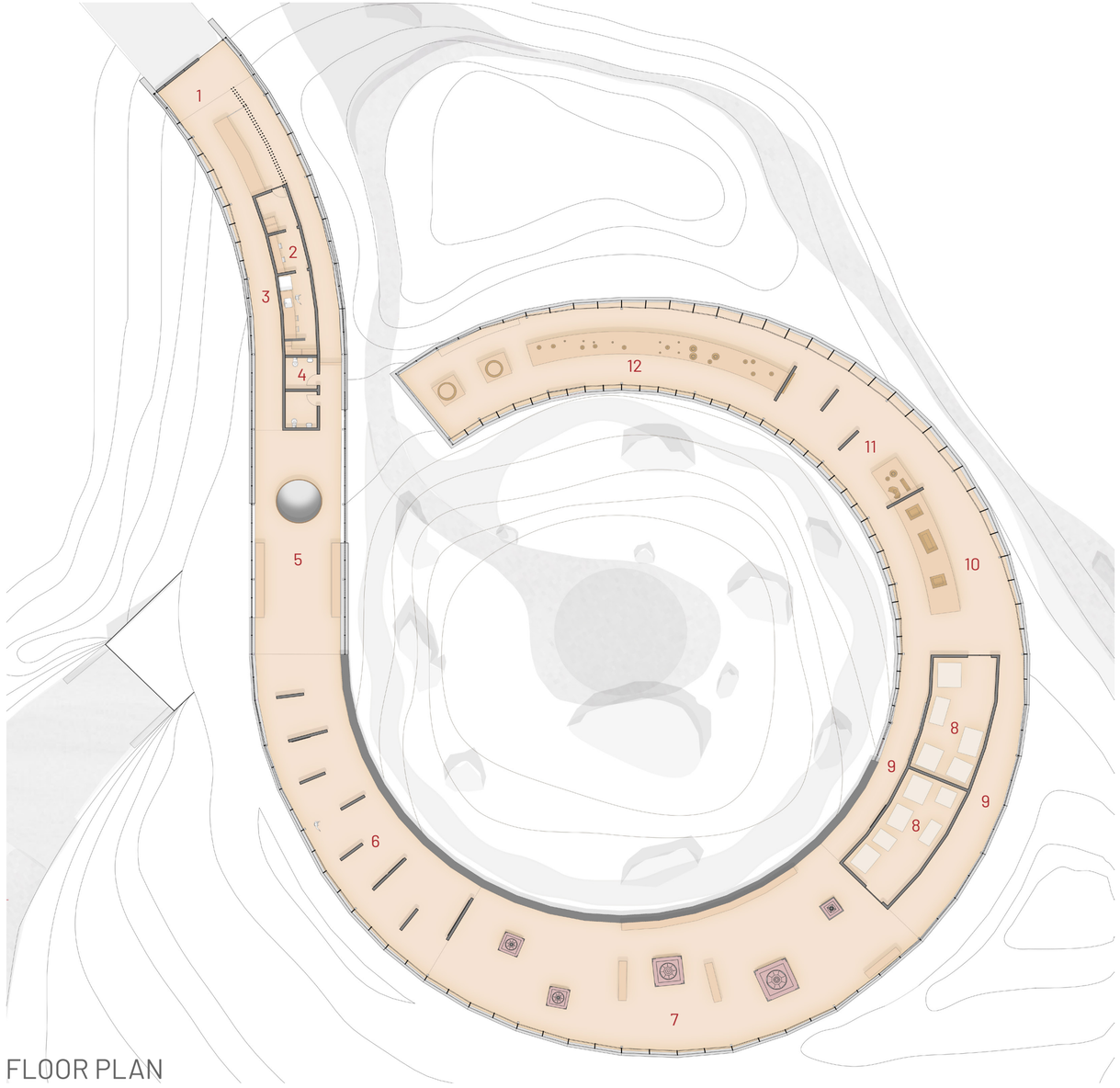


EAST ELEVATION

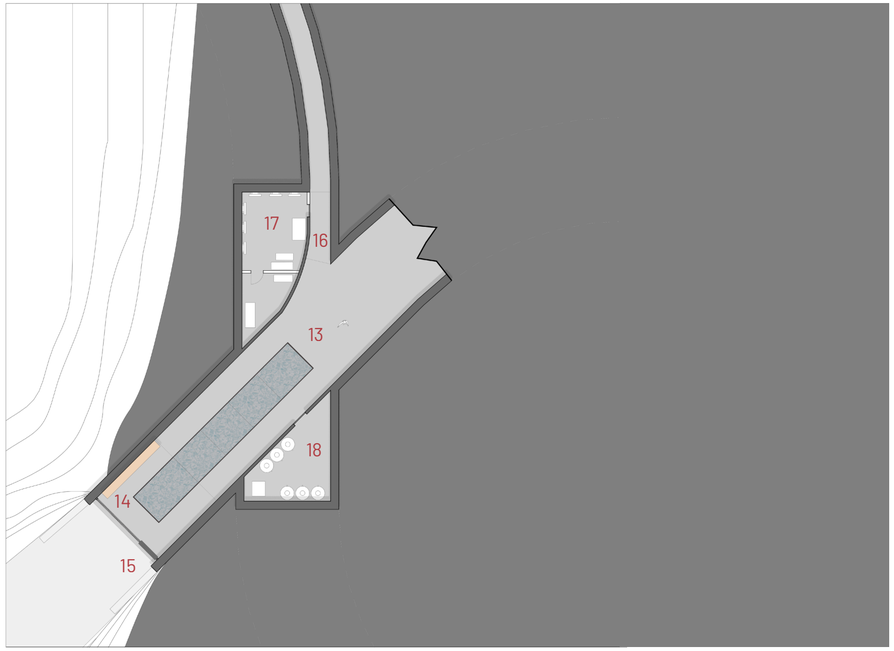
SPACES

04 IN A LINE

The project spaces could then be organized in a linear fashion, allowing for seamless transition between spaces. These spaces would be based on the various types of art in Nepal. Upon doing research, I wanted a section for wall-based art, shrines, local art, pottery, and small copper statues. The wall-based art would be for Nepal's tapestries and frescoes, and the shrine room would be a large meditative space where people could move around the large shrines. I also included space for the local village to contribute to, and an open display for any temporary exhibits. The building itself was then divided into its beginning, middle, and end, as these are significant moments in any journey.



FLOOR PLAN

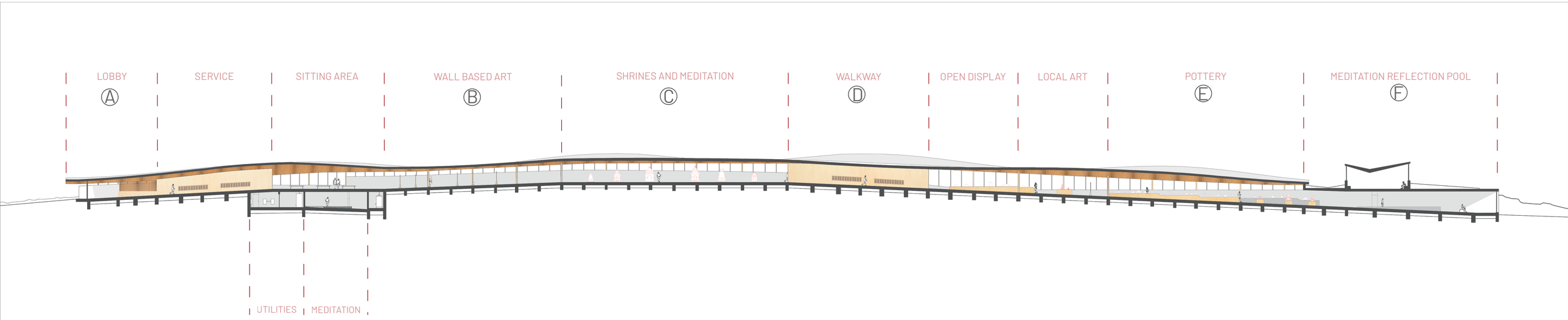


0 20 40 60 80 100FT N

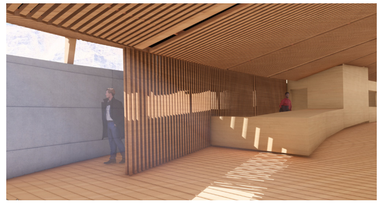
1. LOBBY
2. SERVICE
3. PRAYER WHEEL WALKWAY
4. BATHROOMS
5. SEATING AREA AND VIEW TO LOWER LEVEL
6. PAINTINGS AND WALL BASED ART

1. SHRINE AND MEDITATION SPACE
2. STORAGE
3. WALKWAY
4. OPEN DISPLAY
5. LOCAL ART
6. POTTERY AND COPER STATUES
7. REFLECTION POOL

1. MEDITATION SEATING
2. EXIT
3. PATH TO MUSEUM LOBBY
4. SOLAR STORAGE
5. WATER STORAGE



0 10 20 30 40 50FT UNFOLDED SECTION



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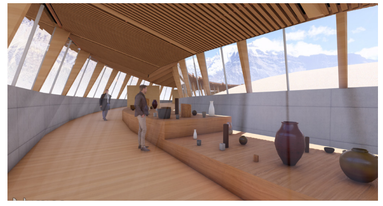

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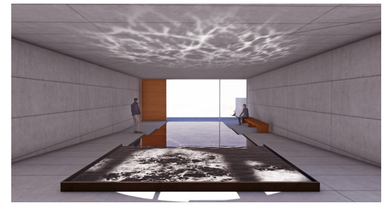

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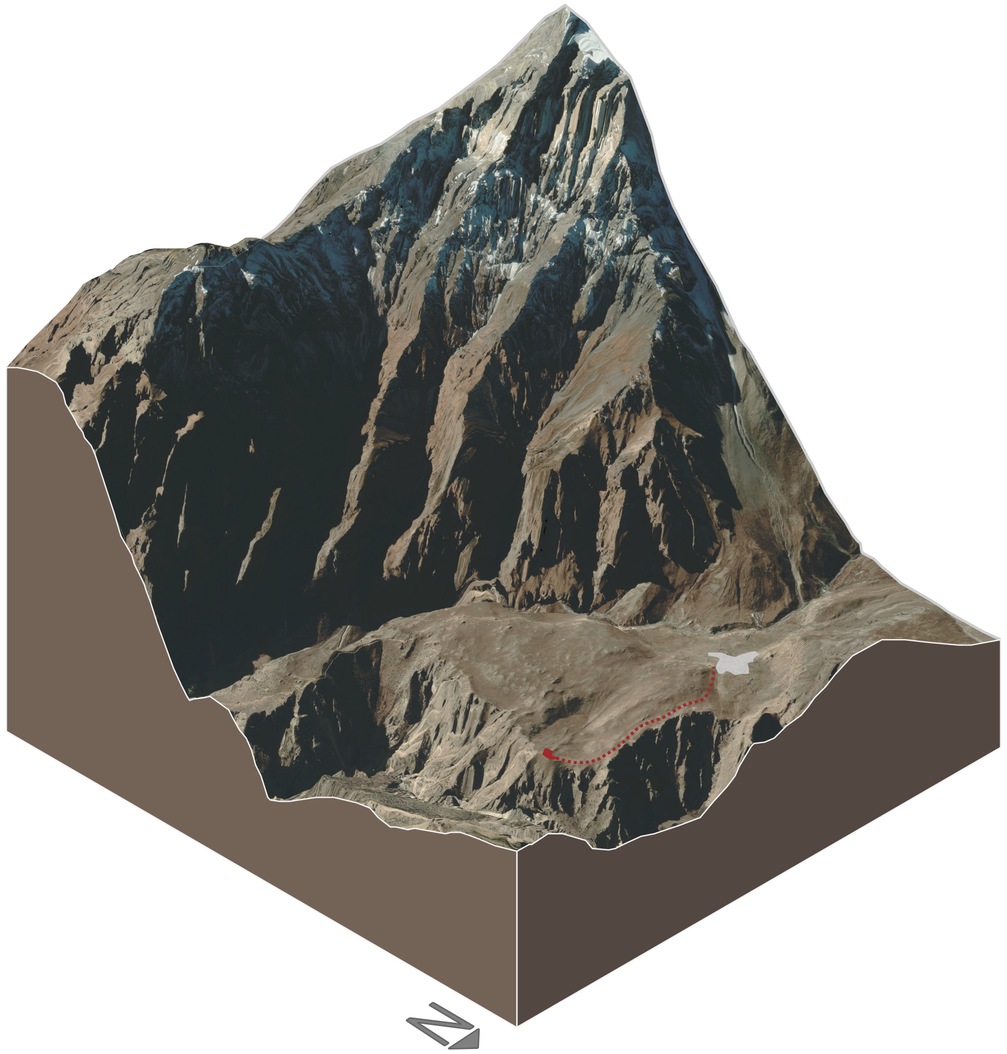
THE START

05 A GENTLE CURVE

The entry sequence starts as you approach the building from afar, and see the gentle form which stands out as an oasis and moment of rest in the beautiful landscape. This approach is not only important as an architectural choice, but it is important for the buildings context. The local context has beautiful, ancient architecture and amazing mountain ranges. It is important to not try to compete with or take away from these elements. If the local people are going to experience something new and different, it shouldn't feel obtrusive. The goal is that this building says 'take a moment to see the beauty around you' rather than 'look at me'. The building should be an integration, not a distraction.

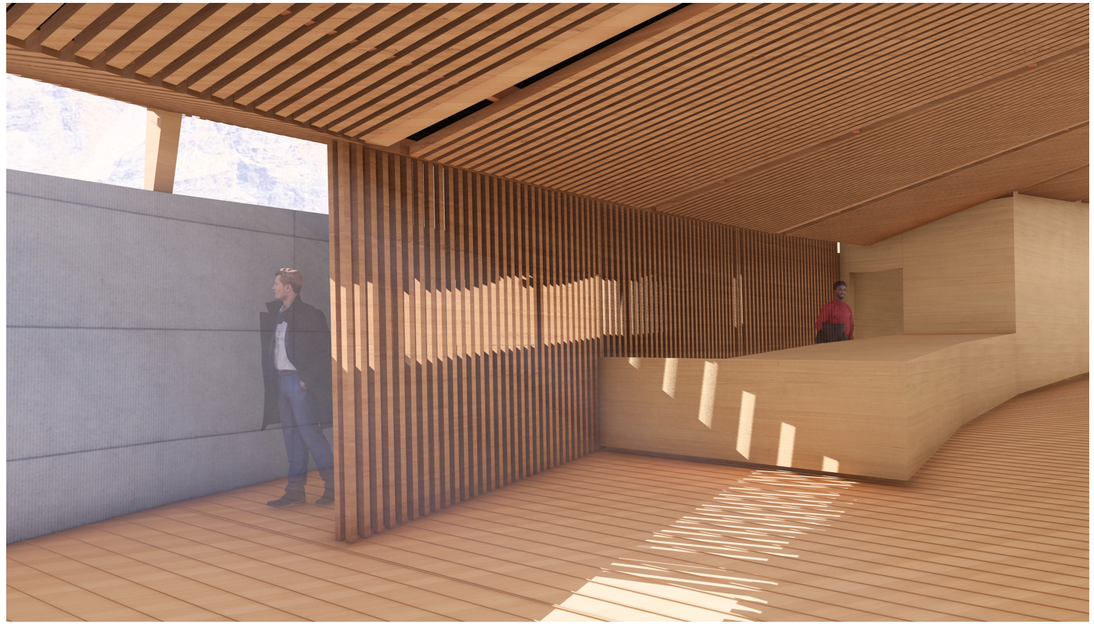
This illustration is meant to provide a sense of scale for the project. The mountains in this area are even much higher than what is shown here, however they wouldn't even fit on the page. The village itself sits at around 13,500 ft in elevation. However some of the surrounding mountains reach upwards of 20,000 ft. Seeing these mountains in person would be hard to fathom, and this project is nothing but a dot in comparison to their scale. As you approach the project which sits 1 mile from the village, you would walk across rolling hills and enjoy the open space that sits in this valley. This walk is apart of the journey of the building. In a way, the journey of Cultural Pathways starts at this moment.

The project site also sits just on the edge of a small valley, allowing the user to look below as they walk along the east side of the loop.



TERRAIN AXON

As you get closer, you see the cure of the building drawing you in, and the warm mood interior offering comfort from the cold. The curve of the building also draws you in and hints at the linear journey you are about to embark on.

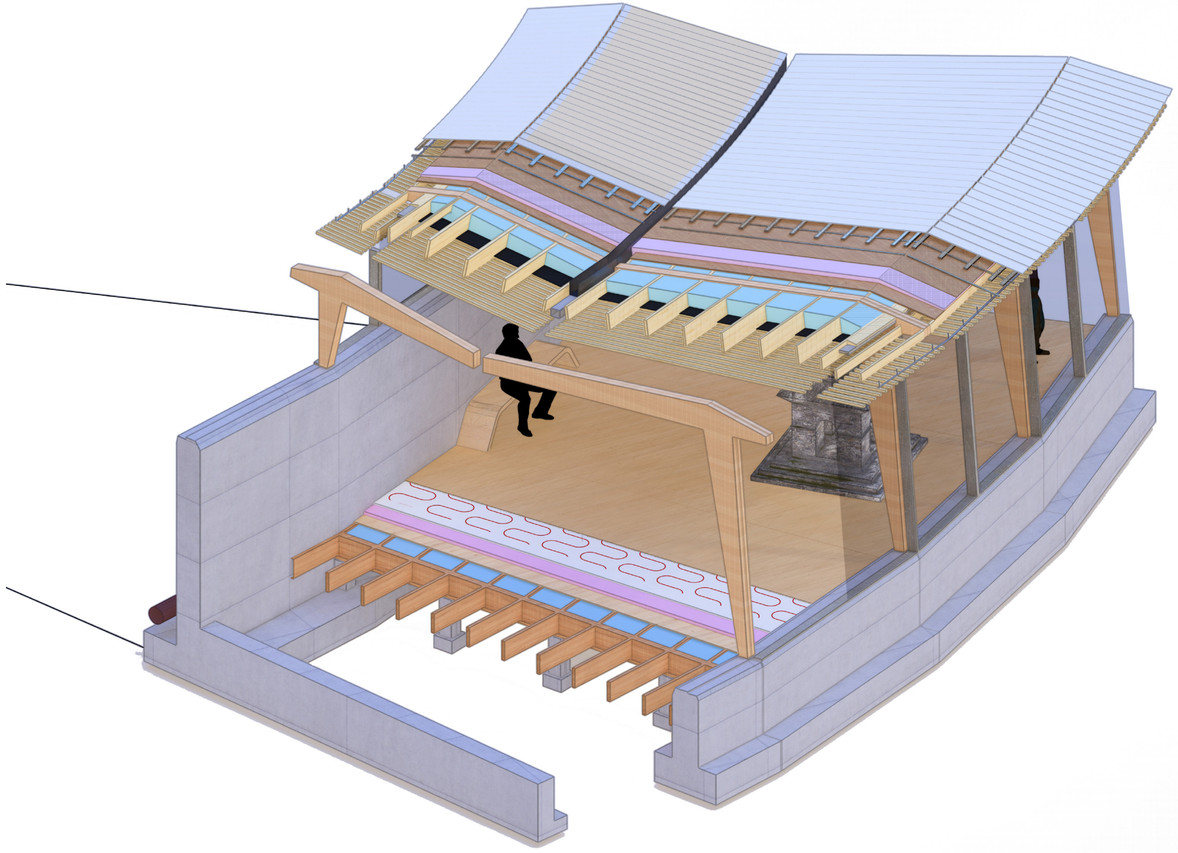


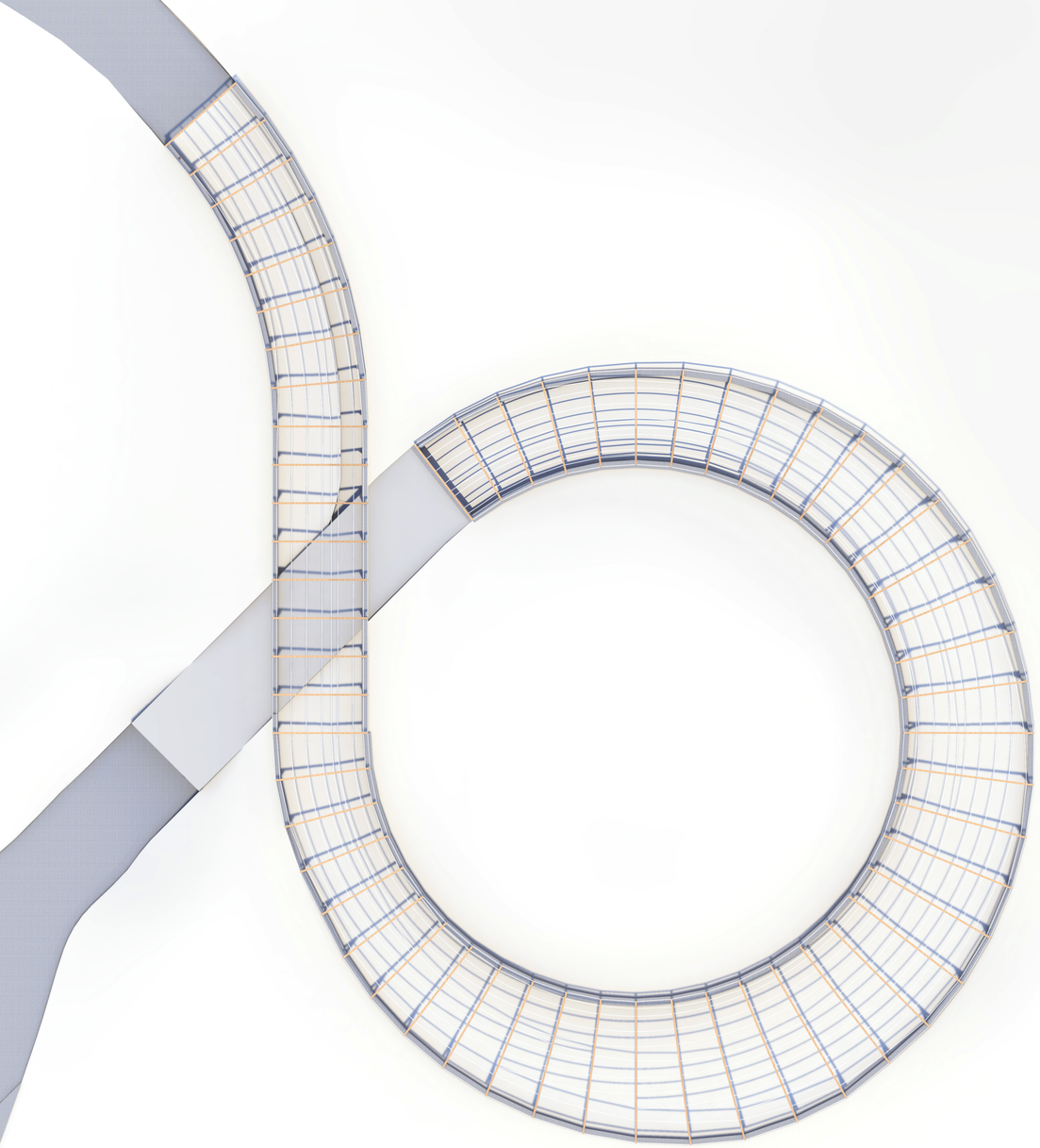
The lobby starts with a large front desk where you can turn over your backpacks and bags for safekeeping. You then begin the interior section of this project's journey by walking down a narrow hall. Here you can also see where people are emerging who have just finished the museum procession.

STRUCTURE

06 A RADIAL GRID

The structure is made of two glulam pieces, which are bolted to concrete retaining walls. Joists run in between these members supporting a soffit system, thick insulation, and a water collection system which runs in the spine. The floor has underpanel water heating. The floor structure is simply lumber which sits on the concrete beams and footings. The space within the floor structure can then be filled with thick insulation. The Metal roof also houses solar panels on the south facing angles. The overall loop of the building roof has a high point, so the spine, where water collection happens, maintains a slope. This slope can carry waer along the path of the building where it can be brought into the building for collection or expelled from the roof.





WOOD JOIST

The roof is supported by wood joists that run inbetween the wood beam system

WOOD SOFFIT

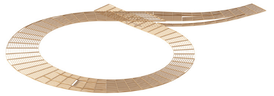
the interior of the roof is a 2 x 2 inch wood stick soffit system

BEAM AND COLUMN

The main structure is a custom cut glulam piece.

WOOD PLANK FLOORING

The interior floor is wood planks which point outward from the circle center.

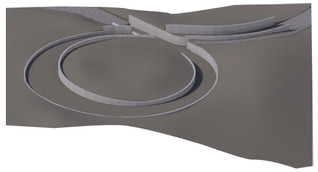


WOOD FLOOR STRUCTURE

2x12 wood lumber structure supports the floor.

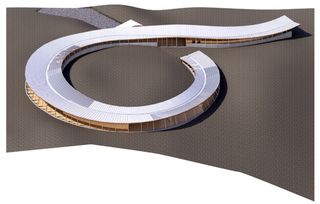
CONCRETE FOOTINGS

Concrete beams and footings support the floor structure.



RETAINING WALL

Concrete retaining walls hold back soil allowing the building to cut into the ground.



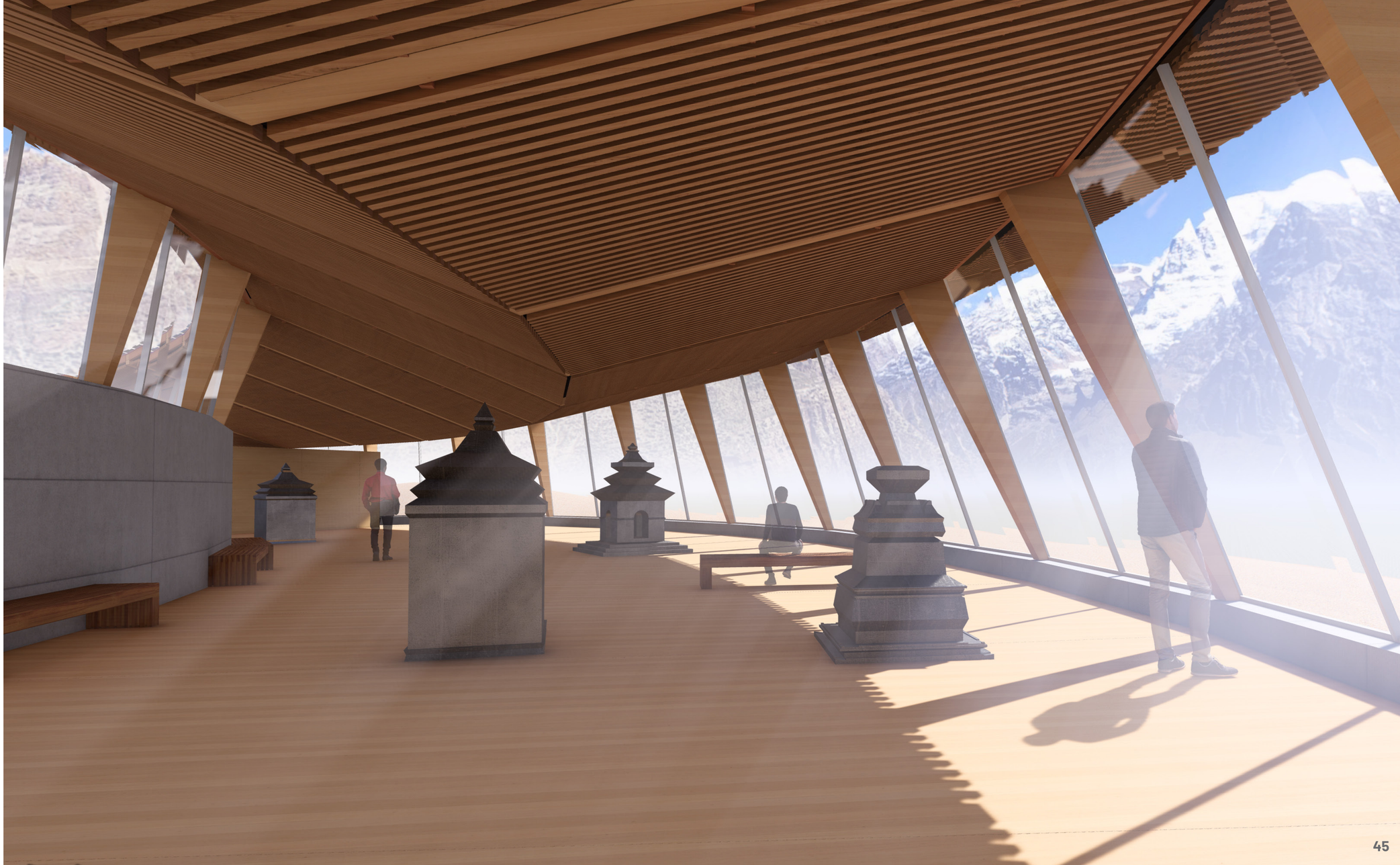
COMBINED MODEL

The overall model is a white roof with subtle solar panels, while the interior is all wood.

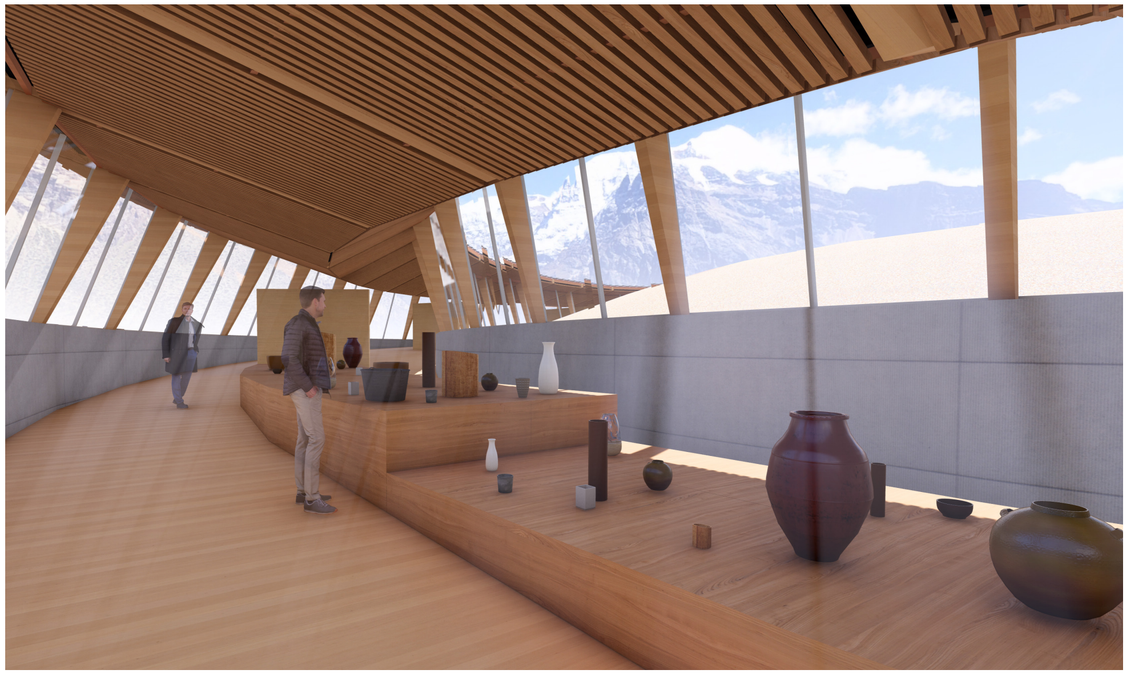
The museum starts with wall based art, which holds Nepal's multiple frescoes, paintings, and weaved blankets. After seeing the wall-based art, you move into the shrine room on the southside of the building. This area is large and gets the most direct sunlight. Here, there is seating and plenty of space to move around, observe, and meditate on the large shrines. All awhile, the cascading mountains tower outside. This moment is the climax of the project. In terms of elevation, it is the highest moment of the project, but it is also the widest moment in the ribbon. After this moment of pause, you move into a section for local art, where you can experience the art of Naar.

MIDDLE

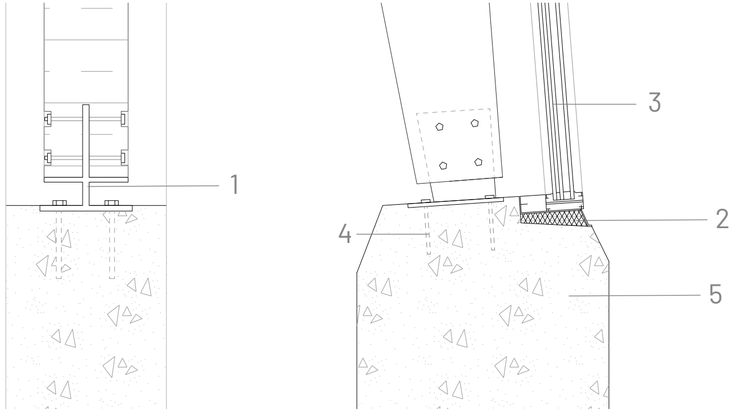
07 A MUSEUM DISPLAY



The large windows running on the building's facades allow users to see the entire height of the mountains around them. Every so often, seating is introduced to allow the user to take in the mountains, sun, and valleys below.

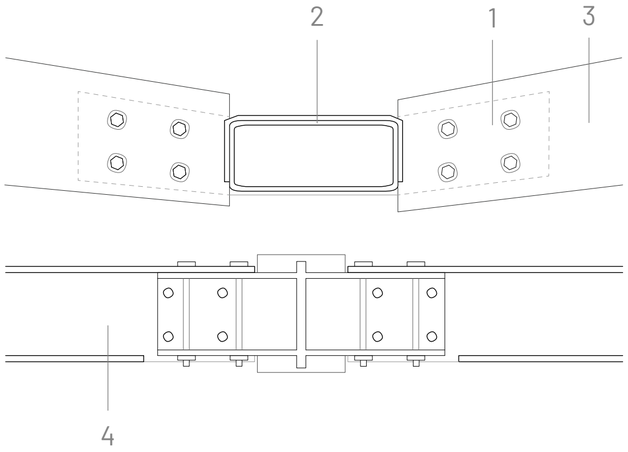


Next, is a long stretching table full of Nepal's pottery heritage. It's in this space that the sloping floor has begun taking you below ground. As you finish seeing the beautiful copper statues, you find yourself now completely underground.



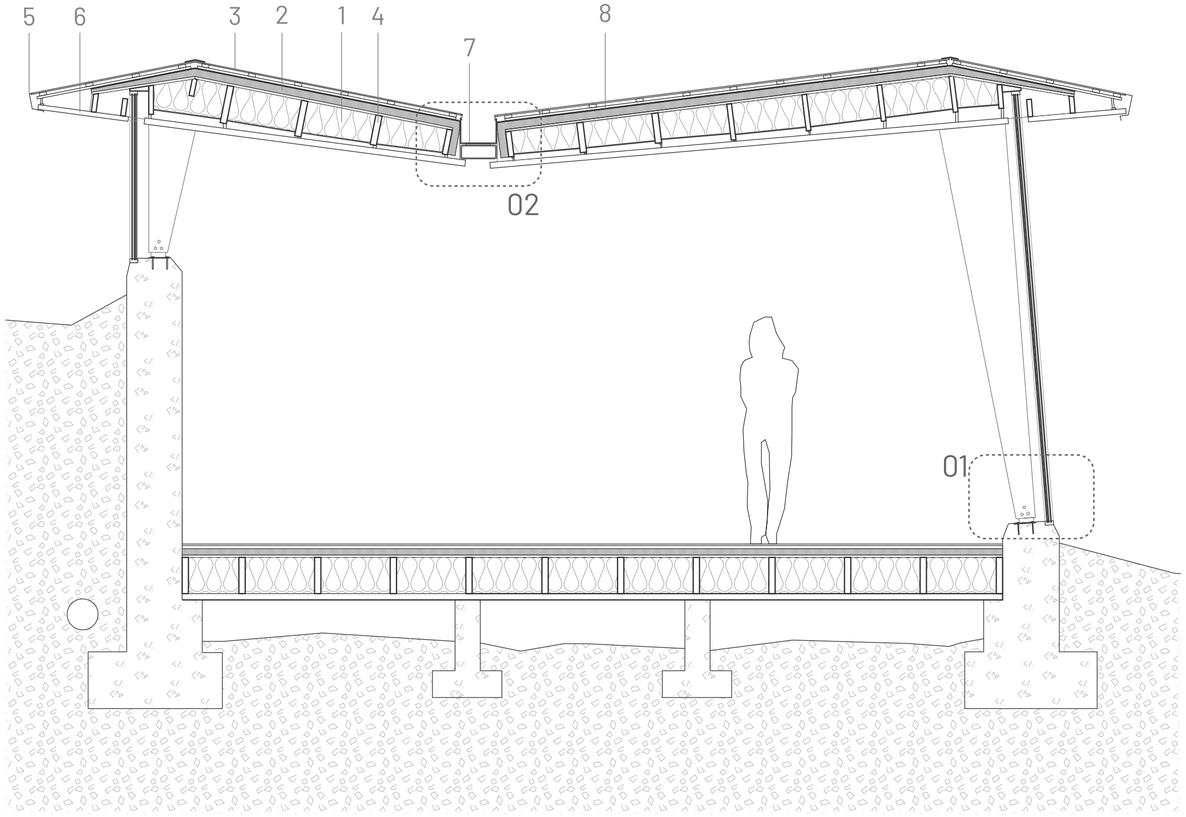
CONNECTION DETAIL 01

1. WELDED KNIFE PLATE
2. RIGID INSULATION
3. TRIPLE PANE
4. CONCRETE EMBEDDED BOLT
5. 2.5FT THICK RETAINING WALL



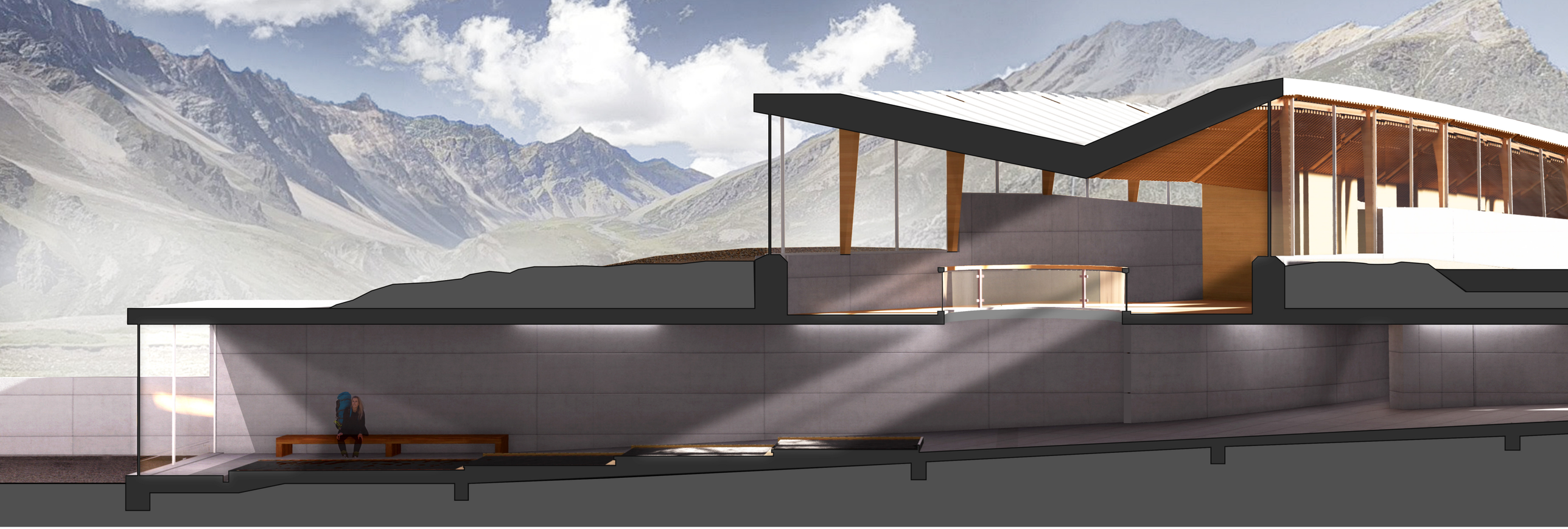
SPINE DETAIL 02

1. KNIFE PLATE
2. 10" X 6" HSS
3. 6 INCH WIDE GLULAM MEMBER
4. CUSTOM HSS SPINE, SLIP ON DESIGN.



1. HEAVY INSULATION
2. 2.5 INCH RIGID INSULATION
3. ALUMINUM METAL ROOFING
4. NOMINAL CUT LUMBER (VARYING SIZES)
5. ALUMINUM METAL FLASHING
6. 2" X 2" WOOD STICK SOFIT
7. 8" X 10" METAL GUTTER SYSTEM
8. .5" THICK WOOD BOARD

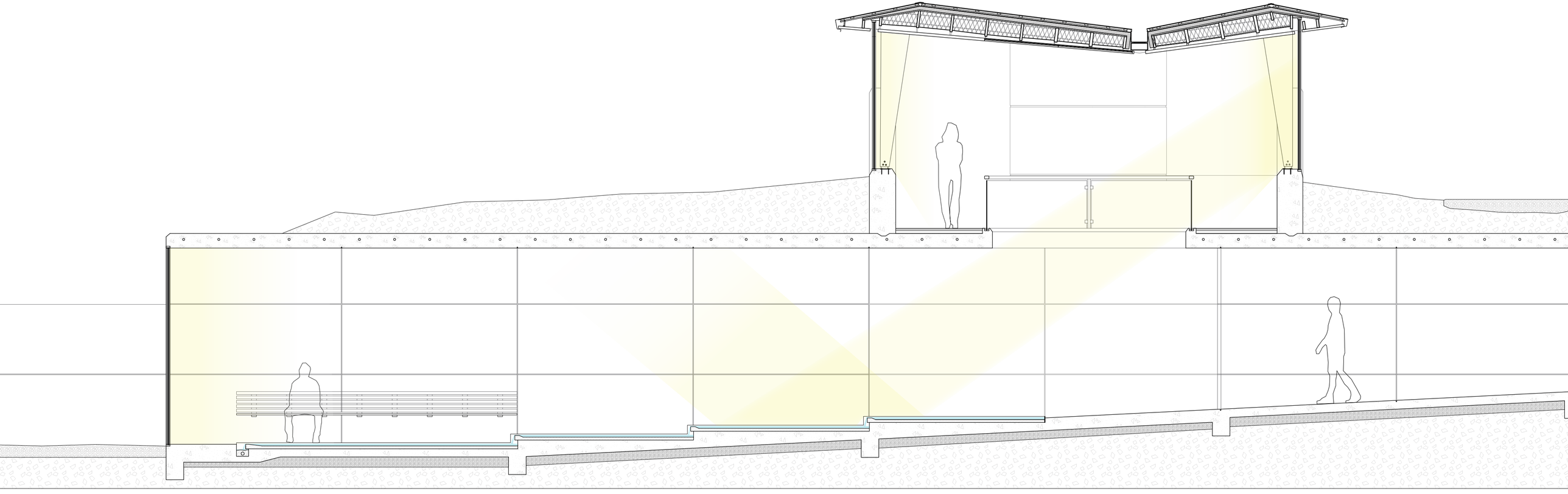
STRUCTURAL SECTION DETAIL



THE END

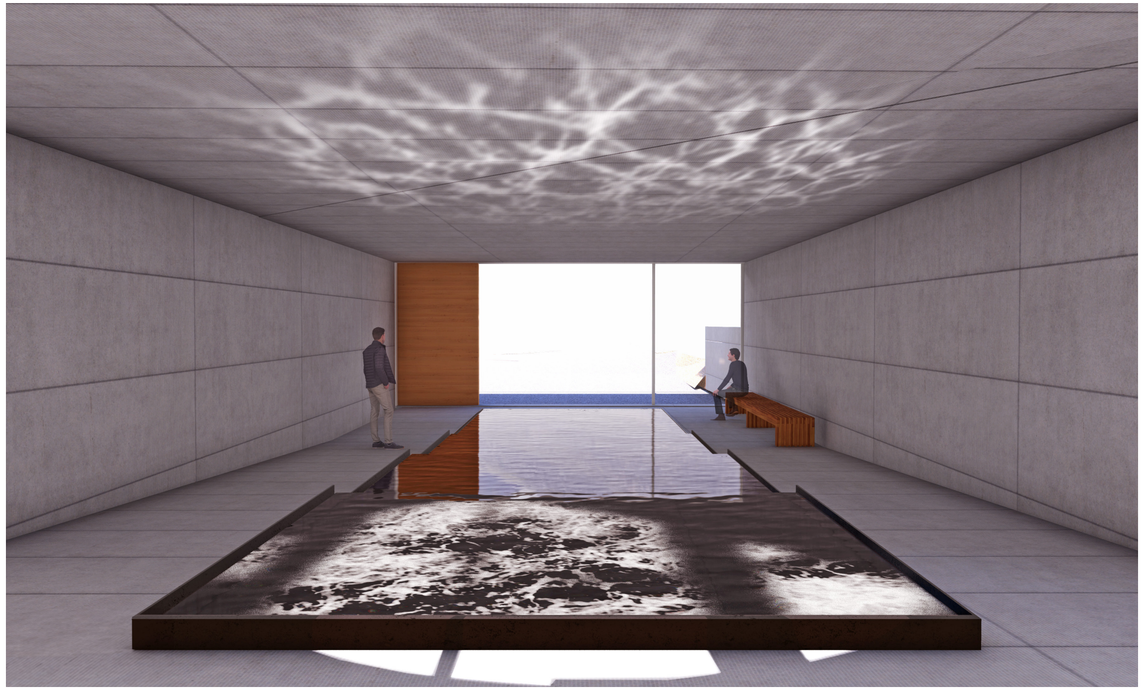
08 A MOMENT TO SIT

The underground section of the building is pierced by an opening to from above to the first seating section of the museum. Light can pour through this opening and reflect on the reflection pool, which stretches down the middle of the museum's final section. As you move along this reflection pool towards a large window at the building's end, you can see mountains reflecting off the water. Near the end of this underground sequence is seating to meditate once again on the journey and enjoy the last moments of being inside the building. Users at the start of the procession can also look down and wonder what might be waiting for them at the end of this journey.



MEDITATION AREA SECTION DETAIL

0 2 4 6 8 10 FT



MEDITATION REFLECTION POOL

When first reaching the reflection pool, the user can slowly see the mountains being reflected from the framed view, and the skylight causes the water to reflect and scatter on the ceiling.

LIGHT WELL

After noticing the cascading light illuminating the once dark area, the user will look back and see a glimpse of where the journey first started. The angle would allow the user to see just the sky coming from the window. At the beginning, there is also a walkway where all you can see is sky, and in this final moment, once again, there is a view of the sky without any mountains or landscapes.

SEATING SPACE

The final seating area allows for both literal and metaphorical reflection, as the path stretches out beyond the building. The reflection pools mirror the mountains off in the distance. The view is meant to be a framed. While the rest of the museum provides a full panorama, this moment causes the user to focus on this one singular view. While the user can from here head back to the start of the museum, the wooden door also presents an opportunity to continue outside. The building ends here, but just as nothing really ends, the user can continue back into the nature where they had come from. From this moment, the user might not know where this pathway continues to. However if they choose to explore, this pathway will lead them on a procession that wraps around the site. This pathway is scattered with stone benches where the user can sit and look out. Eventually, they will be led back to the center of the building. The site plan shows exactly how these pathways wrap around the site. However, until the user decides to take that journey, they can stay in the moment pictured here, looking at the mountains letting there mind wonder.

A SINGLE MOMENT

This pathway takes you to the center of the site, where you are surrounded by the building as it spirals into the ground around you. You are at the highest point of the site, in a singular moment at the top of the world. Mountains surround you, and you get to experience one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

This project allows you to experience and meditate on the journey. Any journey that has a beginning eventually comes to an end, but we always have the present moment, and sometimes a chance to reflect on the past. The beginning of the journey is represented by the buildings approach, the end is represented by the museum's final meditation space, and the present moment in time is represented by the central area of the site. Along the way you get the opportunity to see Nepal's past represented in their rich and colorful artifacts. However, unlike many other museums, these artifacts sit in front of the breathtaking Himalayas which has integrated with Nepal's culture for hundreds of years. It is the goal of Cultural Pathways, that the user is able to meditate on the journey, the nature, Nepal's rich past, and its beautiful present.
Thank you for taking this journey through Cultural Pathways.

THE END

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