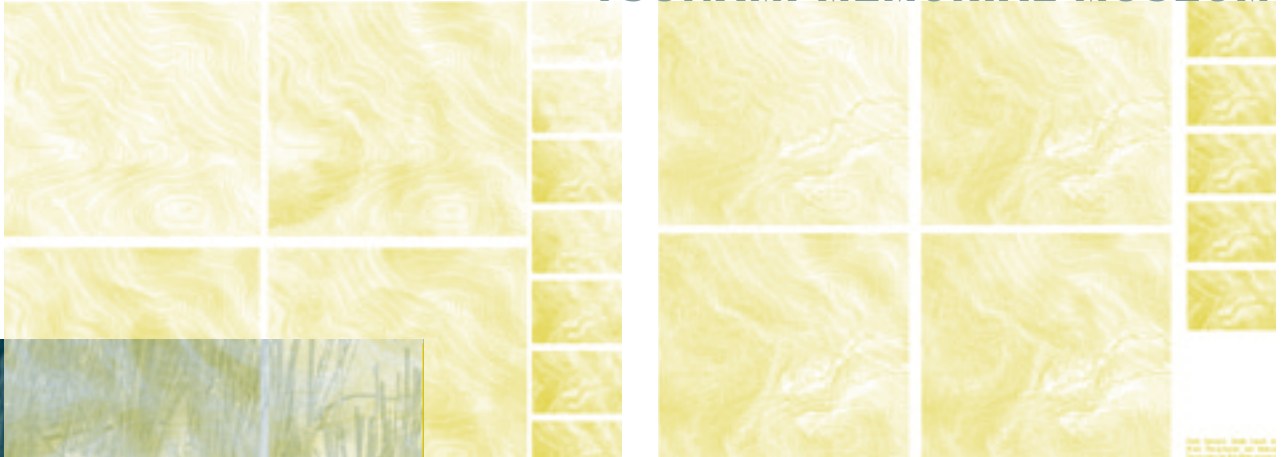


While the tragedy of the Thailand tsunami makes remembering the area emotionally difficult, commemorative practice offers solace in the face of loss; succor amid chaos.

# LANDSCAPE OF RECITATION

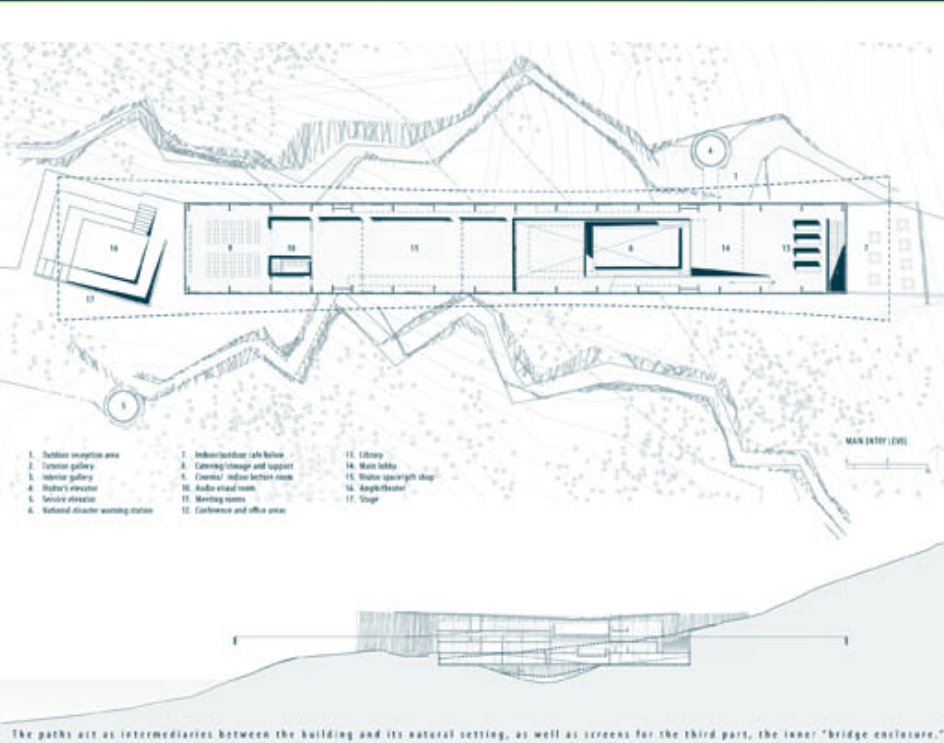
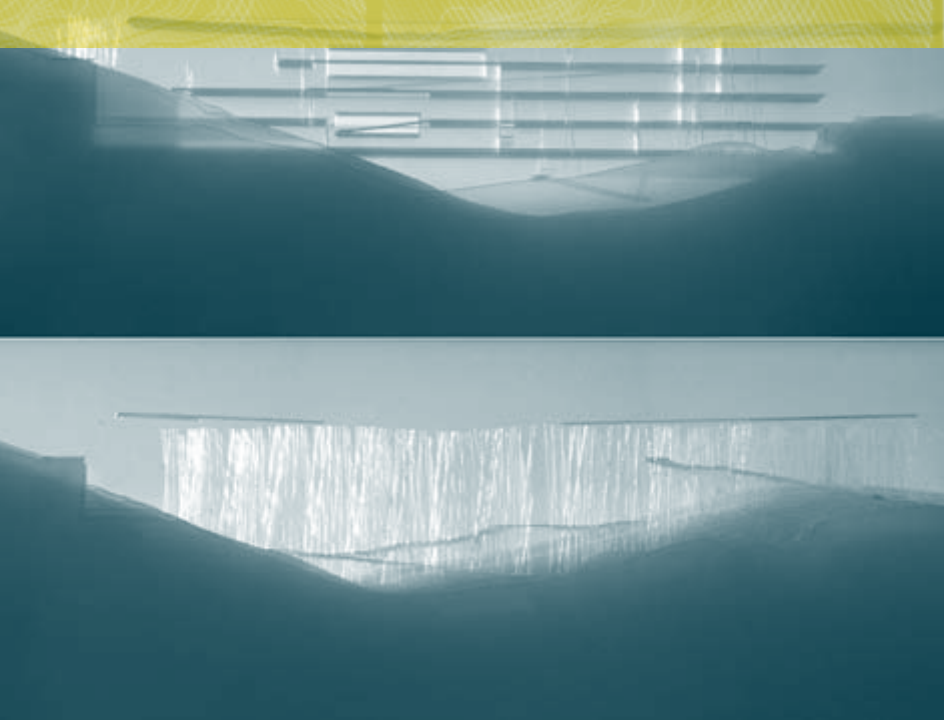
## TSUNAMI MEMORIAL MUSEUM



BY RAVEVARN CHOKSOMBATCHAI

We intentionally propose a gentle recasting of memorial conventions: discrete sites of contemplation modestly submit to the power of the land itself. A path to intimately scaled outdoor rooms, randomly dispersed in the densely forested topography, leads circuitously to the proposed educational center/museum building. In contrast to the magnitude and monumentality of the catastrophe, the proposal seeks a humble state of recognition. Through direct empirical discovery of the self in nature, the path reveals both the horrors of natural catastrophe and the immeasurable humanitarian effort in the aftermath.

Architecture frames nature and human nature in its dialectic of destruction and renewal. The design intends to embrace the nature of existing site conditions both at programmatic and physical levels. Programmatically, the design proposes new development of park trails as major elements of the memorial. These trails are provided as a public network system within the national park for its access and use as a recreational site as well as an alternative route connecting the highway to the Andaman Sea. Presently, the site is rarely used by the general public because of the lack of generous park trails.



The paths act as intermediaries between the building and its natural setting, as well as screens for the third part, the inner "bridge enclosure."

Raveevan Choksombatchai's design for a tsunami memorial and museum incorporates the climatic elements that surround the project's location. Below, a rendering of the museum, which includes an outdoor reception area, interior and exterior galleries, a café, a library, an amphitheater, conference rooms and more, illustrates this approach.

### Recitation Rooms

Along the path, the landscape conjures the experience of moving through the verdant foliage, among rubber plantations and bamboo groves carefully cultivated as climatic screens, and visual foils to the "recitation" rooms. These rooms are constructed of translucent concrete embedded with matrices of optical fibers. These pixilated light patterns create a

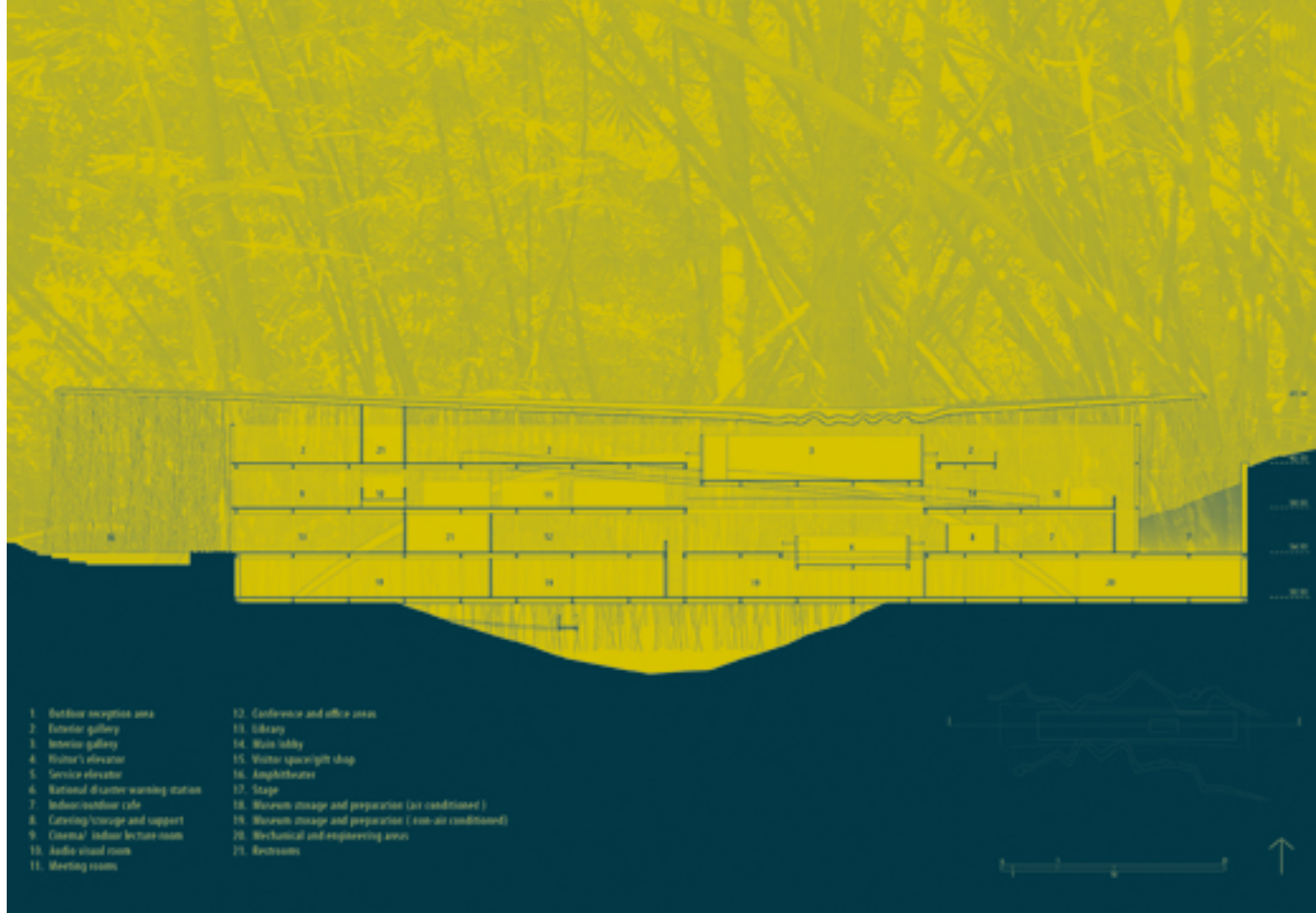
text that records the date and time of the catastrophe in 38 languages spoken by people whose lives were affected by this disaster and who joined together in the humanitarian effort. Together they form a path that connects the land to the Andaman Sea.

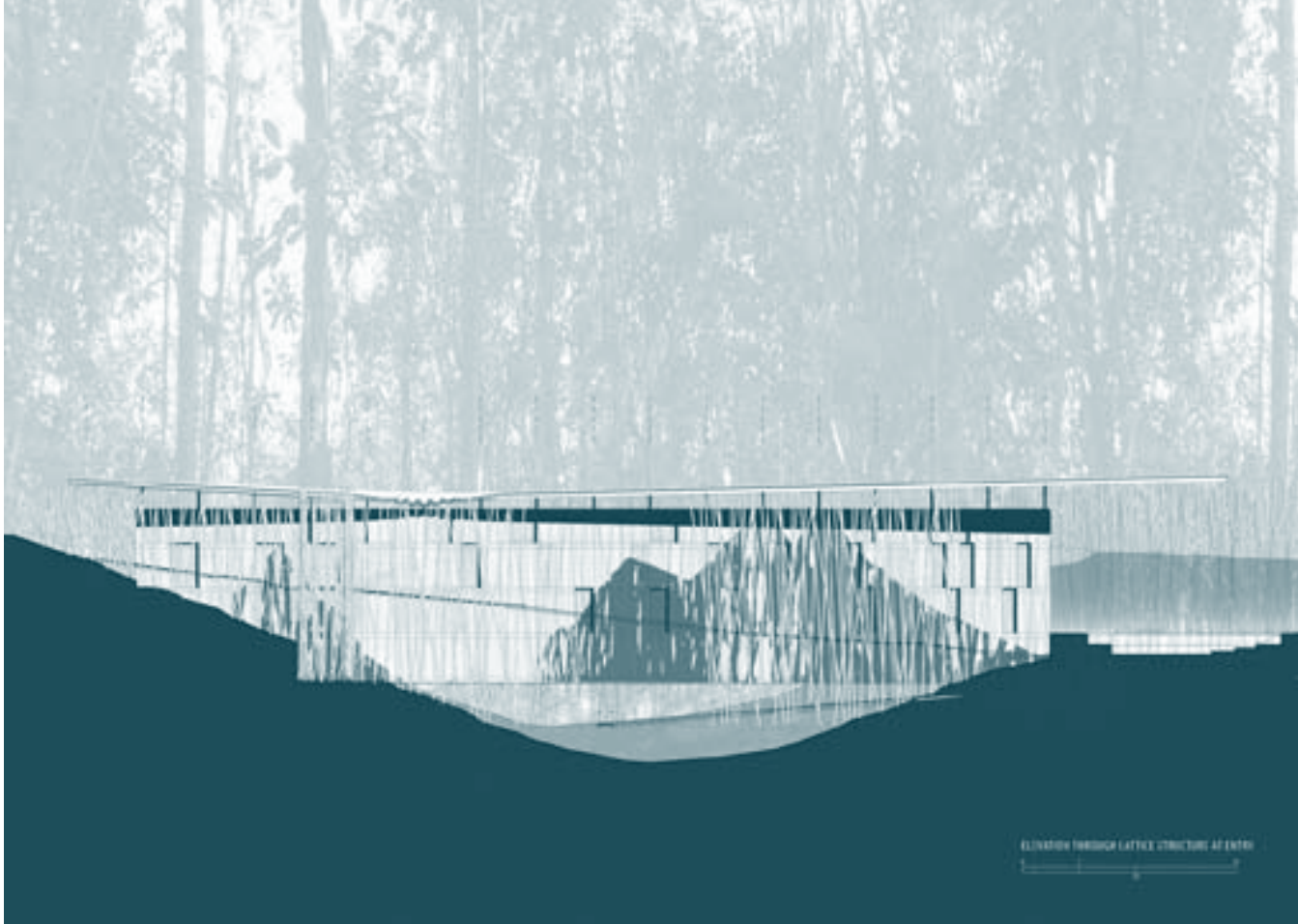
### Site

A path through the forest slowly clears the space to make room just enough for gathering; the path distends to become architecture. Situated within the mid-range canopy of the forest, the architecture registers climatic vectors through its orientation and its strategic site across the ravine, the natural drainage channel. Approachable from either the land or the ocean, it frames the views from both directions. To minimize the effect of the building on the surrounding environment, it is floating off the ground, such that it leaves as small a footprint as possible on the natural landscape. It is imperative that the building be as lightweight as possible to achieve structural efficiency as well as the aesthetic vision of a floating structure, inconspicuous among its natural surroundings.

### Architecture

The architecture is composed of two main structure elements: the steel lattice structures and a bridge-like box enclosure. The steel lattice structures emulate the immediate surrounding landscape; the tangled bamboo groves provide a transition into the bridge-like structure. Here, the lattice enclosures house all the spaces of movement as extensions of the park trails — intermediaries between the building and its natural setting, screening the inner "bridge-like box enclosure." This inner sanctum holds all programmatic spaces and is supported by an arch, which provides the optimal balance between an efficient structural system and an aesthetically floating form. The arch allows for a very flexible floor plan





ELEVATION THROUGH LATTICE STRUCTURE AT ENTRY



with varying floor elevations and double-height ceiling spaces. Each program fluctuates at different elevations within the enclosure and are connected by ramps and walkways extended from the steel lattice. This arrangement permits a visually lightweight secondary structure, a simple contrast to the relatively complex natural environment. The shadow outline of the arch can be seen through the translucent curtain-wall during the day and night.

#### Traces of Evidence

The skin of the building expresses the ways in which architecture and the climatic conditions of its context are in dialogue. Using a digital tool to record wind direction, wind load, and rainfall, the microclimate not only informs the orientation and placement of the architecture, but also it is registered on the outer lat-

tices, woven more densely where more stress is put on the surface. The roof surfaces of the inner bridge-like box enclosure visually register the amount of rainfall through surface deformation experienced both from inside and outside. This topological deformation further expresses the special conditions of its natural setting, recording in its form and on its surface the pressures, stresses, and strains of wind and rain, those natural forces that constantly act on buildings. The surface wrinkles and warbles, making art of erosion, reminding us of its awesome power and the human predicament and paradox of honoring nature, fighting nature, and forgetting and finding ourselves in it. <sup>Fw</sup>

*Raveevarn Choksombatchi is an associate professor of architecture at the UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design. She is the founding principal of VeeV, an architecture practice in San Francisco.*

The museum's many floors are designed with the building's surrounding landscape in mind. Its exterior will metaphorically express the ways in which architecture and the climatic conditions harmoniously co-exist.