Ground Truth is a way-finding, storytelling, multi-sensory, experiential, eco-cultural artwork on the landscape; a regeneratively purposeful path exploring place, time, inspired learning and creative imagination. A number of primary elements have been combined as an integrated whole artwork. It is as much a conceptual experience as a physical work on the landscape.

The proposed Ground Truth artwork, sited on the lower bench between the Drogheda house and the Chamisa house, provides a meandering, exploratory path with creatively inspiring, surprising and sense stimulating encounters along the way. It is designed to extend Modern Elder Academy’s mission and its learning intentions onto the ranch landscape.

Designed to join the existing dirt paths that connect the Drogheda house and the Chamisa house, a simple trail through open areas of the site follows next to the serpentine form, providing access to the Amphitheater, the Testbeds, and other installation elements. The Path consists of two primary loops, allowing for shorter or longer exploratory walks with 360 degree views of Saddleback Ranch. The Path will be wheelchair accessible, with slight regrading so that no steps or steep slopes will be encountered. The Ground Truth installation area is to be off-limits to equine grazing or riding.

Pathways, forms and structures in the installation, will have specially designed low-level, fiber optic, blue and UV spectrum illumination. Low-level UV illumination is a sensory attractor to many pollinators, and will also serve to guide night walks and special events amid the installation.

TEAM:
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SHAPE-SHIFTING SERPENT

For more than a millennium, the horned or plumed serpent, known in the Tewa Pueblo language as Awanyu, has occupied a place of great importance within the culture and cosmology of the Puebloan Indians of this region. Symbolic both of earthly and supernatural phenomena; clouds, rain, lightning, bodies of water and the fusion of the terrestrial to the heavenly, its likeness has snaked itself across steep desert rock faces and sheer cliff overhangs in the high desert terrain.

The serpent also has a metaphorical reference to lightning, which bolts from its open mouth in an attempt to influence the celestial guardians to coax rain from the sky. The serpent may be associated with the four (or six) directions, the colors of which the snakes also assume.

We are not creating the Shape-Shifting Serpent as a literal serpent or snake, but rather as a sculptural work on the land, with much significance and many influences.

LEGEND

1. Shape-Shifting Serpent sections and Adjoining Path
2. Labyrinth
3. Native Grasses Testbed
4. Wildflower Testbed
5. Amphitheater
6. Pollinator Testbed
7. Healing Testbed
8. Llareta (five total)

Scale: 1"=100'
LABYRINTH
Accessible from the existing dirt road connecting the two residences, between two tall yucca plants, the Shape-Shifting Serpent's path emerges as rocky, earth mounded coils in a labyrinthian spiral pattern on the ground, low, composed of variously sized, occasionally colorful rocks, with lavender plants sprouting in between.

Painted text on the larger rocks, as it is read, leads the way along the spiral, from the entry to the exit path.

Two Prisms strategically mounted on poles, with small solar tracking sensors, create a spectral 'light saber' effect across the Labyrinth at different times of day through changes of seasons.

WILDFLOWER TESTBED
The four Testbeds shown and described in our presentation are small examples for regenerative landscape learning and understandings. Their detailed realization, with ultimate design, location, preparation, planting and watering would necessarily result from a regenerative community collaboration among selected expert advisors and caretakers.

A garden of seasonal colorful wildflowers and fragrances, gives opportunity to learn about soils and healthy multi-seasonal biotic processes.

The serpentine form surrounds and protects the plantings from harsh western winds. This creates a place to rest and contemplate, as the Serpent lowers itself into the earth, creating a bench-height surface for guests to sit upon.

AMPHITHEATER
The Amphitheater is a simple traditionally understood semi-circular place of social gathering, for classes, for events, for contemplation and for considering a purpose-filled life, in the round, on the land. It provides colorful tiered undulating formed seating for 24+, with a small stage area.

Amphitheater seating faces to the south-east, in direct line-of-site with the distant 'saddleback'.

A fire bowl may be located at the Amphitheater's center, for evening gatherings around the warm glow of contained firewood flames and embers.

The Amphitheater is only a five-minute stroll down the existing path from the Drogheda house, past the large cottonwood trees (with hammocks), and around the rise. It can easily be accessed during daytime or evenings without the need to walk the entire serpentine path.

NATIVE GRASSES TESTBED
The Native Grasses Testbed is a garden of selected seasonal native grasses, where the Labyrinth's extended path and the returning, overarching Serpent forms cross.

Digital explorations of the amphitheater seating forms to mirror the llaretas in the landscape

Indian Rice Grass
Silver Beard Grass
Big Bluestem
Side Oats Grama

Digital explorations of the amphitheater seating forms to mirror the llaretas in the landscape

Four o' clocks/ Mirabilis multiflora
Indian Paintbrush/ Castilleja coccinea
Tickseed/ Coreopsis tinctoria
Blanketflower/ Gaillardia pulchella
Testbeds are creatively intended to inspire radical (rooted) questions and thought-provoking understandings, by stimulating our senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, memory +), while becoming attuned to the sensory world of other living systems. Like all gardens, Testbeds will require daily and long term care and tending. They may serve as examples for MEA site-based regenerative classes and workshops.

The Healing Testbed contains plant species native to the site and the region, including fragrant herbs, wild edible and medicinal plants which provide opportunities for learning and resilient ecological practices.

**HEALING TESTBED**

In this wildflower site one's attention is drawn to a small domed structure with entry opening facing to the West, and amid 'wavelet' forms functioning as gardens sheltering a single-colored flowerbed. Along the top edge of each wavelet is a channel for water catchment and direction that is delineated with a single bright color, marking in the non-blooming seasons which color flower will appear. The Dome's colorful exterior mimics the white-lined sphinx moth colors, a major pollinator in the region, and with the magenta-edged opening points to one of its favorite flower colors, the Four o'clocks (Mirabilis).

Nighttime ultraviolet illumination onto the dome's rich blue interior and banco adds another sensory dimension attracting pollinator insects for study, as they perch inside mesmerized by the light, and rejuvenating visitors through inner reflection in the violet light. Among the spectrum of regional pollinators from assorted insects to hummingbirds, many respond to ultraviolet light regions (hidden from human vision) within the flowers they come to pollinate. Thus, UV stands as an important signal attracting an otherwise hidden world.

**POLLINATOR TESTBED**

In this wildflower site one's attention is drawn to a small domed structure with entry opening facing to the West, and amid ‘wavelet’ forms functioning as gardens sheltering a single-colored flowerbed. Along the top edge of each wavelet is a channel for water catchment and direction that is delineated with a single bright color, marking in the non-blooming seasons which color flower will appear. The Dome's colorful exterior mimics the white-lined sphinx moth colors, a major pollinator in the region, and with the magenta-edged opening points to one of its favorite flower colors, the Four o'clocks (Mirabilis).

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**Llaretas**

Llaretas are a velvety, chartreuse plants native to the high desert grasslands of the South American Andes, at altitudes from 10,000 to 17,000 feet, growing slowly, almost imperceptibly, over thousands of years. We propose creating five Llareta-like sculptures that are large, unusually bulbous, colorful forms that surprisingly appear near and sometimes merge with the Serpentine form and Testbed sites. The Llaretas may be climbed and sat upon by one or more. Their surprising forms and spectral colorations mimic the undulating Amphitheater seating area and certain bulbous areas of the proximate Serpentine form.

**Natural Pigments**

Colors of the Dome exterior are referenced from the sphinx moth while interior UV light illuminates forms. The vibrant magenta color of the Four o'clocks (Mirabilis) is found around the rim of the dome.

**Pollinator Animals**

- **Globe Mallow/Yerba del Negro**
- **Sacred Datura/Toloache**
- **Snakeweed/Escoba de la vi**
- **Bora Navajo Tea/Cota**
- **Purslane/Portulaca**
- **Y arrow/Plumajillo**

**Pigments of the Dome exterior are referenced from the sphinx moth colors, while interior UV light illuminates forms. The vibrant magenta color of the Four o'clocks (Mirabilis) is found around the rim of the dome.**