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The Memorial

///// what is it?

Soon after the [group](#) decided to get involved in the project, [Salvador](#) and [Vladimir](#) came up with the idea to create a **underwater memorial** to commemorate the tragic loss of life brought about by the tsunami and to promote a place of healing, but decided the form of the installation was to be determined after spending time in Madiha in order to have cultural context and to get feedback from those who were directly and indirectly affected by the disaster.

After a couple of months living and interacting with the local community and traveling through the more interesting ; culturally rich historical sites of Sri Lanka, the idea of using the lotus flower as the underlining symbol for the form of the memorial was chosen.

We like the idea of what the lotus represents since it's bursting with meanings. The lotus is considered a sacred flower in Buddhism (Buddha's eyes in most sculptures are shaped in the form of a lotus petal), and we especially like the fact that these white flowers can blossom in muddy waters. This in turn is considered symbolic of the potential for illumination according to the religion is inherent in everyone.

However, the lotus is also considered sacred in Hinduism and it is found extensively in Hindu art and architecture, yet offering a flower to the victims of the tsunami is a beautiful and humble act regardless of the culture or religion.

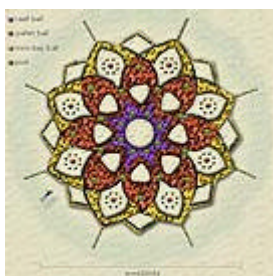
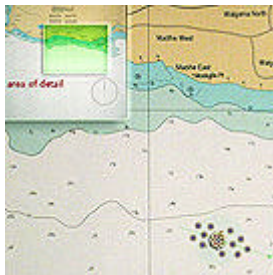
///// form, size and location

Form: The actual form of a lotus flower will be achieved by positioning [reefballs](#) in such a pattern. To the left you can see some images and a scale model done with seeds to simulate the reefballs. Clicking on the images will pop-up an enlargement.

These reefballs are the patented invention of our partner on this venture, [Reefball Foundation](#). The balls are created with a special mix of concrete that pays special attention to its pH so it promotes the growth of marine life within the ball.

The memorial will be composed of two types of lotus flowers. One, a larger and main flower, would be more sophisticated. This large flower would be surrounded by other [smaller flowers](#) that will be composed with less [reefballs](#), creating a simpler shape.

There will be tall posts placed within both flowers. These are reminiscent of the traditional [Sri Lankan stilt fishing](#) poles and allude to the idea of the benevolent aspects of the ocean as a provider. The large lotus will contain 24 posts, paying respect to the approximately 240,000 victims of the tsunami world wide. The smaller flowers will each support one post.





There will be 11 smaller flowers and the total number of posts will be 35, one post for each thousand victims in Sri Lanka.

Size: The diameter of the large flower will be 60mts. The smaller flowers will be around 12mts in diameter. There will be around 4,500 reefballs altogether. The size of a diver would be approximately [this](#) in relation to the large flower.

Location: After extensive scouting in conjunction with the University of Ruhuna and the local fishermen, an appropriate location was found half way between Matara and Mirissa Bay. The site lies 1.8 kms from shore and has an average depth of 19 meters. The precise GPS coordinates of the location are N 05° 55' 52.3, E 80° 30' 47.3.



////////. positive repercussions

The underwater memorial was conceived as a way to underline the positive aspects of the ocean, its life-giving quality. The affected coastal areas have suffered much by the tragedy, but the communities living close to the ocean still depend in large part on it for their livelihood.

It is our intention for the memorial to be an integral part of our plan to bring support and aid to the community at large and thus, the memorial, this offering of lotus flowers, has three goals:



//1. To be offered as a symbol of hope, of healing and reflection that seeks better understanding and serves as a place of remembrance for the many souls lost in the 2004 tsunami. The installation will be a magnificent and huge artificial reef that promotes and nurtures life where presently there is none, creating a beautiful space for introspection, meditation and the acceptance of loss.

//2. To become a magnificent dive site, one which attracts divers from around the world to dive the site repeatedly for its uniqueness, tremendous biological diversity and stunning visual appeal. The site will provide the perfect platform from which the villagers can exercise their recently acquired [divemaster skills](#), while earning much needed income which will trickle down into the local economy as revenue to the shops, guest houses, restaurants and tour operations in the immediate area. The diving experience will truly be unlike that of any location found in the rest of the world. Just take a moment to think about these impressive statistics:

- The reefball material of the entire memorial will be equal to almost 23000 tons of natural reef.
- This reef area will in turn be able to support well over 1.25 million of fish biomass per year!

It is important for the reader to recognize the significant scale and contribution that the memorial makes to the local marine ecosystem. This must be viewed in appropriate context. In the 1998 El-Niño, Sri Lanka lost over 80% of its coral reefs. Since that time, some regrowth occurred, however much of that was decimated during the tsunami. This damage, combined with increased harm from overfishing (collecting of ornamental fish) due to overwhelming economic pressures and lack of alternatives, has led to a state from which many areas of the reef around the island may not be able to recover. Thus the memorial as an artificial reef, serves an even greater purpose: an example of a protected marine sanctuary and incubator for fish species found all along the south coast of the country.

//3. Promote ecological awareness and respect for the ocean environment as well as providing a fecund space for marine biology research, an activity that supports in turn the goals of the local higher-learning institutions, including the University of Ruhuna, a close collaborator of paavima.org. Sample research topics include:

- The abilities of structural formations of varying height to support different fish populations of multiple sizes.
- The correlation between reef surface area, bottom composition and the density of marine organisms.

- The repopulation rates of both naturally arriving and transplanted coral organisms on artificial substrates and the relation of that rate to the growth of the local reef ecosystem.
- Growth and mortality rates for fish, coral and other organisms leading to sustainable, self-regulated and easy to implement methods of fish collection and aquaculture.

Please stay tuned as we'll be updating the progress of the memorial. **Feel free to email us at info@paavima.org should you have any questions, comments or interests that relate to the memorial.**

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