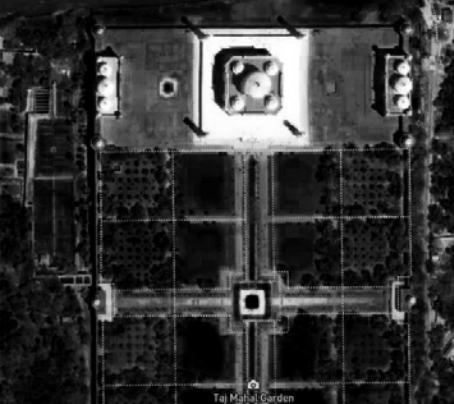
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THE BLACK TAJ

An incomplete memory of the Mughal Empire



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One of the seven wonders of the world ‘Taj Mahal’ is a monument situated in Agra on the banks of river Yamuna. Considered as the most beautiful tomb in the world, Taj Mahal is a living example of the glory of Mughal Empire and illustrates the love story of Shah Jahan and Mumtaj Mahal. However, there is a legend behind this story.

A European traveler by the name of Jean Baptiste Tavernier who visited Agra in 1665 first mentioned the idea of The Black Taj in his writings. Tavernier mentioned that Shah Jahan began to build his own tomb on the other side of the river but could not complete it as he was deposed by his own son Aurangzeb.



THEME: TIME - TWIST

REGENERATING TIME AND RADICAL POSSIBILITIES

Taj Mahal, the building has been the source of an admiration transcending culture and geography, and so personal and emotional responses have consistently eclipsed scholastic appraisals of the monument.

— Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, one of the first European visitors to the Taj Mahal

The Black Taj Mahal (Persian/Urdu: سیاہ تاج محل “Black Taj”, also “the 2nd Taj”) was supposed to be a legendary black marble mausoleum that was planned to be built across the Yamuna River directly opposite the Taj Mahal. Mughal emperor Shah Jahan is widely believed to have desired a mausoleum for himself similar to the one he had built in memory of his deceased wife, Mumtaz Mahal. There has always been a debate in the archaeological and historian circles regarding the authenticity of the plan for the Black Taj. However in 2009, when the pool of Mehtab Bagh (a garden complex that lies north of the Taj across the river) was recreated for historical studies it showed the Black Taj in reflection clearly. Does this imply that Shah Jahan already pinned the location himself when he was planning the original Taj?

Legends say that on the completion of the Taj, the Mughal treasury was almost bankrupted. Later after a grueling battle for the throne, Aurangzeb (the third son of Shah Jahan) seized the reigns of Mughal empire by force, from the eldest son Dara who was the willful choice of Shahjahan. These beautiful Mughal tombs are generally built by the subsequent generation of the Mughal rulers as a token of respect for their fathers. But due to bitter relationships in the family and almost expended Mughal reserves, the supposed will of Shah Jahan to have his final resting place built on the opposite side of the river connecting by a bridge to Mumtaz, never saw the light of the day.

A few historical facts have been mentioned below that can be used for own interpretations.

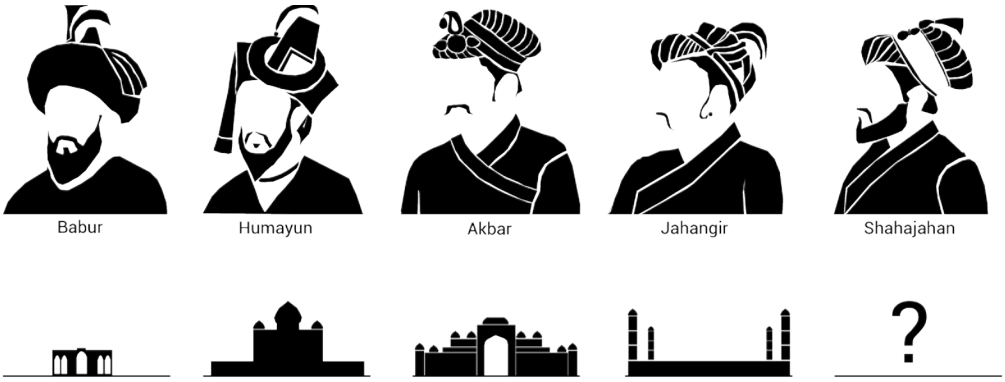


Fig. 1: Emperors and their tombs in chronological order.

Born as Prince Shihab-ud-din Muhammad Khurram in the Lahore of 1592, Shah Jahan was the son of Emperor Jahangir. His name Khurram, which means “joyful” in Persian, was given to him by his grandfather Akbar the Great. He displayed great military skills at an early age against numerous enemies including Mewar, the Lodi in the Deccan, and Kangra. This impressed his father so much that Shah Jahan received the title “Shah Jahan Bahadur" from him. He wasn't just a sharp military leader, but also had an exceptional talent for building and proved it by re-designing buildings within the Agra fort. Among the many titles he had earned, “The Builder of the Marvels" was one that proved the most deserving in the time to come.

The emperor's love for finest architecture with impeccable symmetry is very much evident, in almost every single detail which were planned. Be it the Taj, the gardens, or the inspirations where the components of the Taj came from to the execution in reality. An emperor who never compromised on anything and was the ruler of one of the largest empires that ever existed, did not find a resting place for himself?

Seems a bit strange.

The apparent section through the river, showing Taj at one end and Mehtab bagh at the other. One end with built mausoleum and other with a landscaped garden.

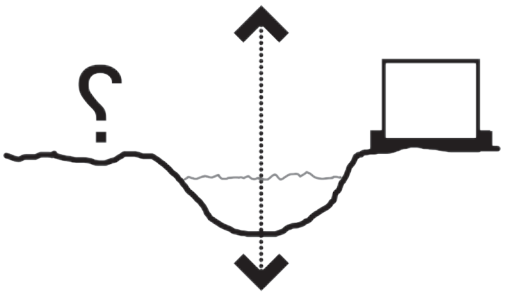


Fig. 2: Schematic section of the river.

Color distribution across the landscape of Taj Complex, with shades of red and brown as base, with White of Taj as focal point, within the context.

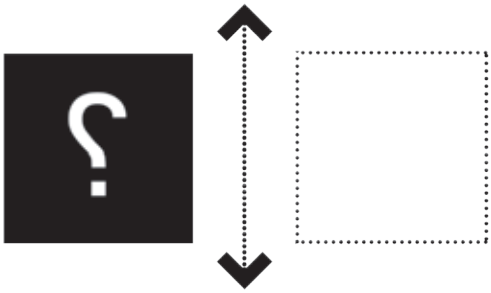


Fig. 3: Presence of Color white and imbalance.

Let us assume the possibility that it was supposed to exist. Now, we vest this opportunity upon ***YOU****, how would you build the Black Taj?*

If we TWIST time and build a project that was supposed to be made in the past, however is being realised TODAY, how will **YOU** as a designer capitalize this opportunity? By this we are not conceiving the tomb as the problem, but something much extensive than that.

What we are really are looking at is an idea, that can exhibit the Mughal contribution in the country right next to '**the place which frames its summit**'. This line of thought can have immense possibilities, challenges & solutions. Here we are eyeing at that one single, idea, that can complete this tale, to re-gather all these crumpling fragments again and can create an experiential storyline for the people.

A frame with the sky, the river, the backdrop of the fort behind the Taj Mahal and the world waiting eagerly for your next massive design opportunity.



Fig. 4: A view of the river front from the Bukhari Masjid. (Credits: Timestance)

A Memorial, A Relic, An Interpretation, any idea is not too vague if you are able to complete this storyline - or here 'the missing link'. The stage here is framed by the skies of Agra, the 7th Wonder of the World and the global creative community eagerly waiting for your next massive design opportunity.

ISSUE / NEED:

1. **Educate**: People, **2. Address:** Deterioration, **3. Develop:** Extend what we have today, **4. Celebrate:** For what it was.



Educate

To educate tourists and enthusiasts, about the immense wealth of knowledge of Mughal history. To make this information lucid as well as use architecture to support this function of reaching out to more people.



Address

To address the fact that these historic structures and built forms have an expiry. Also, at the same time the knowledge resources are not only getting diluted but most of it does not reach to people which is a major issue.



Develop

We are not at all looking at a structure that would be competing the Taj, or outdo it in any manner. We are looking for outputs that make the whole experience better. In other words, it helps in extending of what is there now, and adds value to it.



Celebrate

Mughal history is an inseparable facet of the subcontinent and its contribution to the world is extraordinary. A building that celebrates this unparalleled legacy is an unspoken necessity of today.

Mughal history in India restricted to these monuments and in books which are fairly inaccessible to general public. There are museums, public libraries, art centers, galleries etc. holds fragments of these reminiscent past but are rarely made to work as a whole. Dissemination of this waning shell of knowledge is a need of the hour. Means to convey this information can also be a part of the design, in addition to architectural aspects of the idea.

OUTCOME:

The problem has been briefly outlined to see the results in terms of an architectural outcome. Approaches can be varied, **but are not at all restricted to only the ideas in the design brief .**

Function: Fit and possible.
Heritage: Respects but not replicates.
Landmarks: Addresses city and its context.
Views: Considers the views and settings as a whole.
Helps Agra: In all possible ways.
Time: Considering from today to the coming millenia.

MONUMENT / CONSERVATION:

Intersection: Of cultures, dynasties, hierarchy, empire, values, contribution.
Shall not over power: The design is in no way a competition to beat Taj.
Adds value: Brings more value to the table and more over solves the issue.
The missing link: Sets in that idea of culmination.

INTERPRETATION:

We are looking for radical ideas that satisfy these criteria's with one unified outcome. Design decisions that are brave, yet informed. Unconventional, but which make sense. A string that weaves through all the tiny pieces. Traditional outcomes are accepted but the design is expected as a rejuvenator to the Taj as well as Mughal history, and carries it further through the coming centuries.

SITE:

The site designated is an equivalent patch of land allocated at the Mehtab Bagh, opposite to the Taj Mahal on the banks of the River Yamuna River. The built is supposed to be contained within this site patch only. The pool or landscape of existing Mehtab Bagh can be levelled or retained as per design solution proposed. The site boundaries can be taken from the attached DWG file. Excavation as well as level additions are permitted but shall be backed by feasibility, practicality and strong design justifications.

The process of arriving at the final design is quintessential through the product as well as process. The material pallet, construction technique and landscape elements are kept unrestricted, to allow more experimentations. Literal interpretation of BLACK TAJ, is not recommended.

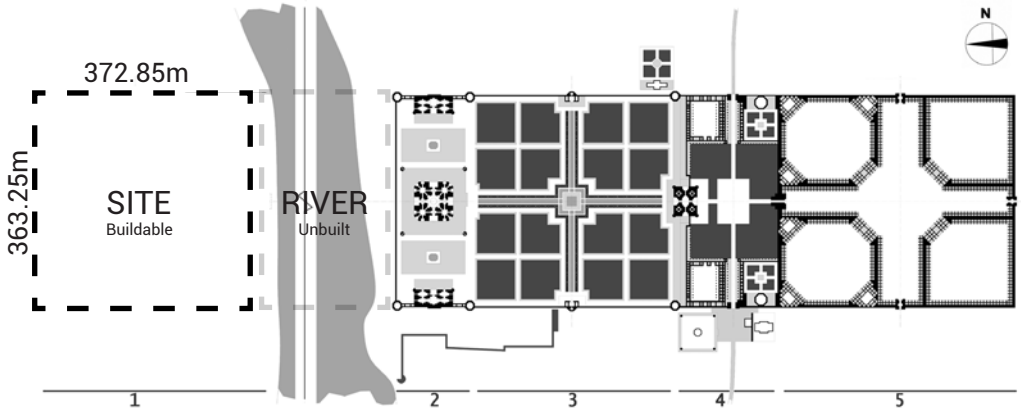


Fig. 5: Plan of Taj Complex and the proposed site. (Credits: Wikipedia)

1. Site, 2. Taj Mahal, 3. Charbagh, 4. Jilaukhana Tomb, 5. Taj Ganj Market

The site area is around 3 Acres (13543sq.m.). Participants are free to use the entire site area. The height shall not be more than the Taj Mahal (73m). Here the rationale will be your ideas for function + program, based on the design approach. The river can be intervened in the highlighted zone by unbuilt means or propositions that deal with it in features like landscape. Bridges connecting Taj are not permitted.

ELIGIBILITY:

The competition/events/exhibitions/project/publication/presentation are open to anyone (Student & Professionals) who is at least 18-year-old till the last date of registration.

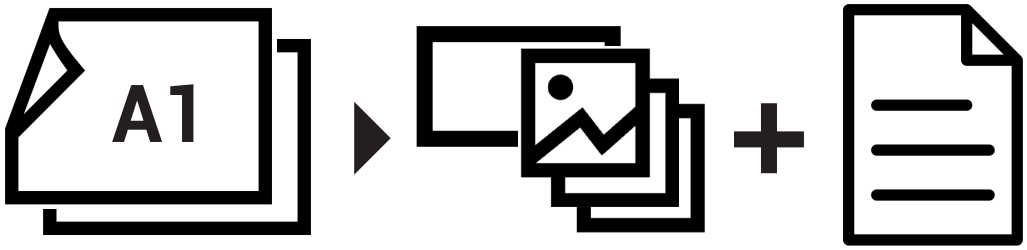
Anyone who is less than 18 years old may still participate in the competition but must be a part of a team whose leader/at least one member is 18 year or older.

Employees of UNFUSE/UNIEGIS NETWORK PRIVATE LIMITED/Jury member/Curator/ organizing panel or anyone who is in direct/close relation to them are barred from receiving any prize money, however they can enter into the competition to project and compete with other designs. Such entries if found are worthy then will be displayed on a separate panel but no award will be given to such entries.

The competition is open to people of all nationalities and professions (including students).

SUBMISSION / TEAM:

A maximum of 4 people can participate as a team. We are looking for a multi-disciplinary approach in the submissions and such teams would have an edge along with the quality of submission. Submission are expected in maximum of two DIN – A1 presentation boards in digital format. (Jpeg – PDF). Hand rendered as well as use of digital mediums are allowed. If abstractions are a part in contributing to the design they are expected to be laid clearly in the process, with the help of visual or verbal medium.



2 x A1 sheets | Cover + Individual Images | Questionnaire + Form

OBLIGATORY SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

1. There are three obligatory items that need to be submitted in all the entries, failing which the entry may be disqualified/rejected by our server while sorting the entries:

a. Maximum Two DIN – A1 presentation boards in digital format. (Jpeg or PDF).
b. Questionnaire as attached in the competition brief.
c. Cover Image of size 1024 x 410 px or larger in aspect ratio 2.5:1 should be included in the folder.
d.Individual Images and graphics used in the sheet or any additional views (for publication purpose only)

2. Participants are encouraged to submit additional materials, such as videos, physical model images or additional textual material by mail however, submission of these contents is not obligatory, nor shall their submission/non-submission will influence the evaluation process. This data will be used for web publications.
Email: contact@unfuse.xyz

3. Please do not include your name or any other Mark of Identification on the submission of Sheets. Participant need to mention their Registration no. as the file name according to given guidelines, failing to do so will subject entries for automatic rejection by the server.

4. Guidelines for naming your entries:

a. All the entries with respective materials will have to be submitted in a .zip file.
b. .zip file name should be <YOUR REGISTRATION NUMBER>
c. Following files should be included in the .zip file adhering to the guidelines given below:

i. Presentation board file name: <YOUR REGISTRATION NUMBER> Sheet<NUMBER>
ii. Participation form (to be filled by each participant separately) file name: <REGISTRATION NUMBER> <PARTICIPANT NAME>
iii. Questionnaire file name: <YOUR REGISTRAION NUMBER> Questionnaire
iv. Cover Image file name: <YOUR REGISTRATION NUMBER> Cover <No.>
v. Individual illustration images: <YOUR REGISTRATION NUMBER> Image <No.>

PRIZE:



1st Prize
Reward of 2500$, trophy + certificate a nd b ragging r ights o f UNFUSE CHAMPION at UNconference 2018.



Ticket to Unconference 2018
The 1st prize winner gets a sponsored trip to UNconference workshop 2018.



3 Runner ups
3 Reward of 1000$ + 500$ +500$ each in cash and medal of honor and certificate.



10 Honorable Mentions
Each honorable mention gets a medal + certi icate and our biannual digest of UNFUSE.



Publication
All medal holders, and winners will get an elaborate section of publishing in the UNFUSE 2018 design book and on our partner websites.



Web presentation
All shortlisted entries will be featured on our website and will be awarded a participation certificate.

DEADLINES / ENTRY FEES:

REGISTRATION FEE $50 : 15TH OCTOBER 2017

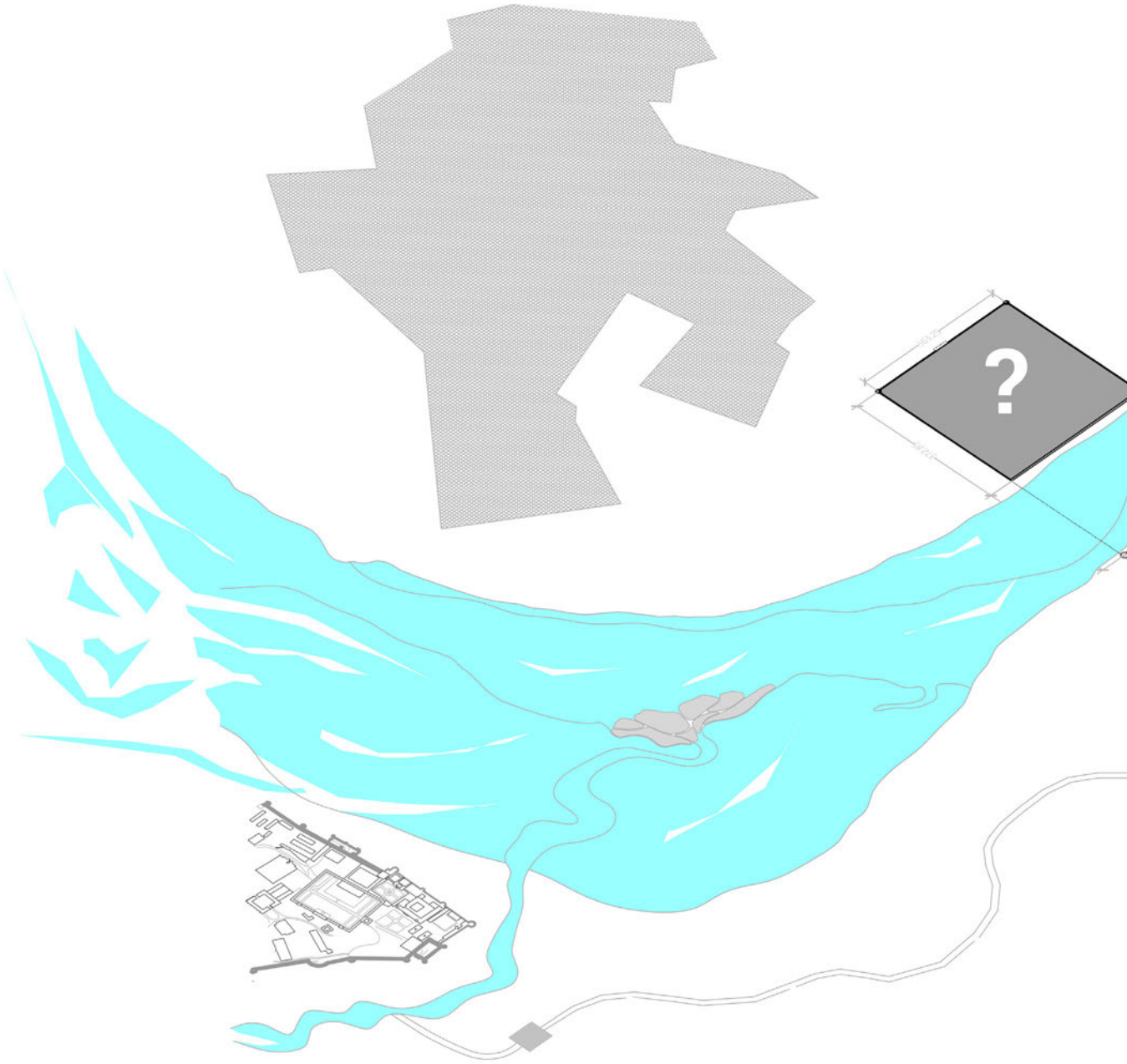
REGISTRATION CLOSES ON: 16TH OCTOBER 2017

LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION : 29TH OCTOBER 2017 12:00PM GMT

RESULT DECLARATION: 31ST DECEMBER 2017

Architecture should speak of its time and ***place*** *, but yearn for timelessness.*

- Frank Gehry



FORMAL CRITERIA-COMPLIANCE OF THE ENTRY WITH THE TERMS OF THE COMPETITION

Following entries will be excluded from the Competition:

a) Submitted after the deadline stated in these General Competition Terms

b) Which do not include appendices stated by these General Competition Terms

c) Who's entry content is not in accord with these General Competition Terms

Besides the compliance of the submitted entries with the Terms of the Competition (in regard to the content and deadlines), the Jury will evaluate the Competition entries in respect to the following criteria:

General evaluation criteria:

- Value, originality and clarity of the concept
- Advances of thought on current use of heritage and existing space
- Spatial and design quality
- Weaving of the story line and fitting the design proposal into that
- Successful incorporation of historical timeline to that of the present scenario of social, economical and cultural aspects
- Integration of multiple levels of design approaches
- Impactful environmental connections by blending the context and the proposed design

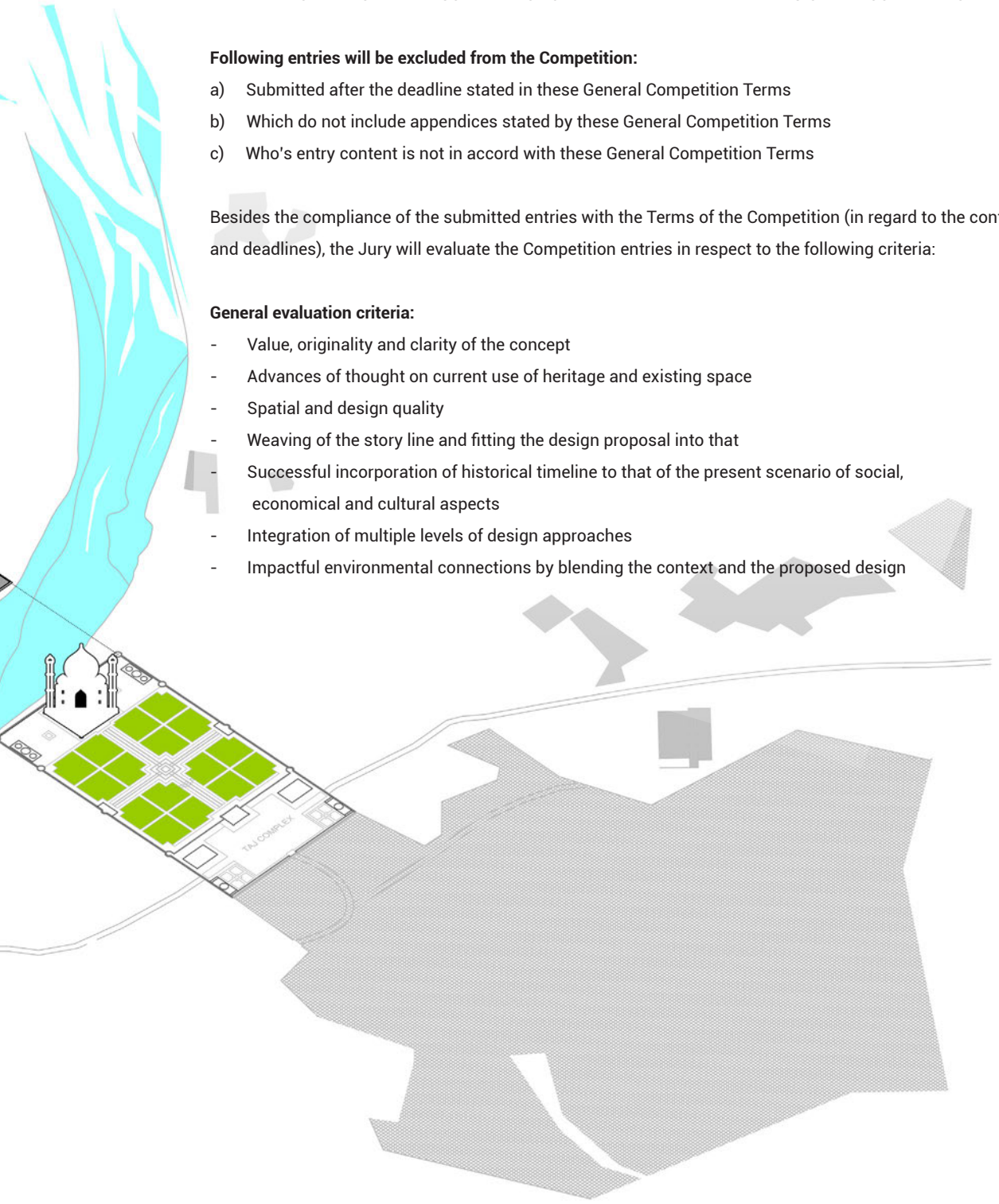


Fig. 6: Illustrative aerial view of the site context.

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Queries? Reach out to us at: Contact@unfuse.xyz

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