

An Echo in Time

The Pan-European
Memorial for
Victims of
Totalitarianism
in Brussels

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memorialbrussels.eu
Prague 2024

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Why we
need the
Memorial?



Dear Reader,

The initiative is all about Europe honouring the memory of innocent victims and transcending the challenges of its tumultuous past. The story embodies the essence of individual lives, dignity, love, and suffering. It is a parable of the power of the powerless.

The Pan-European Memorial for Victims of Totalitarianism in Brussels will be a symbol of Europeans' remembrance of their own history. It will be built to commemorate the countless millions of victims of Fascism, Nazism and Communism in Europe.

A single party, under the sway of one paramount leader, seeks dominion over every facet of societal and individual existence, using the might of military and political apparatuses to enforce its will. Opposition voices, diverging from the established line of authority, are stifled and suppressed, while dissenting perspectives are deemed impermissible. Instead, a rigid ideology serves as the sole framework to rationalize and interpret everything. There is also an enemy; anyone can be labelled as such. And anyone can be killed. Can such a world exist? Unfortunately, yes, it did exist in Europe relatively recently.

Totalitarian systems—Fascism, Nazism, and Communism—were responsible for the deaths of millions of people in the 20th century. The crime of the Holocaust has a special and unique place among them. Together, all the criminal actions of all totalitarian regimes led to millions of victims. People were persecuted based on their race, nationality, social origin, religion or for no reason at all – just to keep societies in fear.

The commemoration of the victims of all totalitarian regimes is needed at the European level primarily because we owe it to the victims. But we also need this remembrance to maintain our societies' sensitivity to fundamental human rights and to strengthen resistance to anti-democratic tendencies. The act of never forgetting serves as a powerful pledge to prevent the recurrence of past atrocities. It is a solemn commitment to safeguarding the values of humanity and justice, ensuring that the lessons of history guide us towards a great future.

The project of the Memorial is rooted in the European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism from 2009. In this document, Parliament called for the establishment of a Platform of European Memory and Conscience and the creation of a pan-European memorial for the victims of all totalitarian regimes.

We are responding to this call together with activists from all over Europe. We present this meaningful and moving project 'An Echo in Time'. This concept, selected via an international competition, will soon be transformed into another important site in Brussels, into a place that unites all Europeans. It will also serve the citizens as a new, artistically transformed space. The Memorial will be linked to a virtual Documentation Centre that will be a knowledge base that provides access to reliable and comprehensive information, archives, and educational tools in multiple languages.

An international group of experts will prepare the implementation of the project after an in-depth discussion involving all stakeholders. We have heard many touching stories and words of encouragement during the presentations we have made so far in several European countries. We have received the support of the heads of several states and MEPs. Above all, we have received expressions of support from numerous citizens, many of whom find their own family experience in the project. Each of you can contribute to the creation of the Pan-European Memorial. Anyone can propose the inclusion of a letter or memento from their own family. Everyone can support the project in various ways. Everyone can leave a part of themselves for future generations.

This is a story that belongs to each of us.

Marek Mutor

President of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience

Dear Reader,

In 2008, the European Parliament passed a resolution designating 23rd August as the European Day of Remembrance, a poignant tribute to all victims of 20th-century totalitarianism, including a solemn acknowledgement of the singularity of the Holocaust, recognising the indelible scars imprinted on the fabric of our shared past.

A resolution of the European Parliament in 2009 called for the creation of the first Pan European Memorial for all victims of 20th-century totalitarianism. The Platform of European Memory and Conscience emerged as the custodian of this mission, spearheading an international design competition in 2017 under the auspices of the President of the European Parliament.

Jean Rey Square in central Brussels, named after the past president of the European Commission, was initially designated as the chosen site, a location strategically positioned in proximity to the main EU buildings. However, it presented a design challenge; it bore no physical imprints of totalitarianism, no haunting echoes of atrocities. Unlike infamous sites like Auschwitz, it lacked the weight of history, prompting a crucial question: How do we infuse this space with the memories it lacks?

For a considerable time, I grappled with the task of translating this vision into a meaningful design. Early sketches bore witness to my struggle—architectural gestures devoid of the profound significance required to honour the victims. The breakthrough came when I revisited these sketches and unearthed the qualities Neela Winkelmann, the director of the Platform, envisioned for the Memorial in the European Parliament. She yearned for a beautiful, meaningful structure capable of moving hearts.

Throughout the design process, a singular question consumed my thoughts: How can we bring the voices of the victims to a random square or any given square in a European city? It wasn't until my first visit to the site that a serendipitous encounter provided an answer. A man in a jacket, carrying a suitcase, became the unwitting protagonist—a messenger bearing letters exchanged between victims and their loved ones.

The success of the scheme rested entirely on these letters—testaments to the raw emotions, the unique tones of voice, and the handwriting of those who suffered. Soliciting these letters proved challenging, with a looming competition submission deadline casting a shadow of uncertainty. Four weeks away from abandonment, speculative emails to friends yielded an outpouring of support. In the end, permission to use up to 40,000 letters was acquired from public institutions, archives, and relatives of the victims with their blessings — enough to cover the entire square twice.

Many letters, sent directly from the victims' relatives with blessings, carried the weight of their stories. Their narratives, powerful and poignant, required no commentary from architects to evoke an emotional response. The decision to carefully select and enlarge these letters, imprinting them on the square's new paving blocks, became a transformative act—bringing the victims' voices to the forefront.

The Memorial is not about a conventional 'come and look at me' monument; it's about the absence, inviting passersby to notice, reflect, and make an emotional connection. Walking over enlarged images of victims' letters is not disrespectful, as we find precedent in countless examples of ledger stones commemorating the deceased laid into the floor of churches from the Middle Ages; it symbolises the fact that we are the legacy of the victims, who gifted us the privilege to breathe the air of freedom and reflects on the indifference in societies controlled by totalitarian regimes, endorsing the inexplicable crimes in silence.

This Memorial is not about confrontation; it is about healing. It's perfectly fine for passersby to overlook it, as commemoration demands emotional readiness. However, one day, someone might pick up a letter in their own language, forging an emotional connection with the victims—a testament to the enduring power of remembrance.

Tszwai So

Designer / Director of Spheron Architects



An Echo in Time

**Pan-European Memorial for the Victims
of Totalitarianism in Brussels**

Designed by Tszwai So



Road to An Echo in Time

The participants of the open, public competition were presented with clear yet flexible guidelines designed to ignite their artistic vision while ensuring a profound and meaningful commemoration of the victims of all totalitarian regimes, as stated in the European Parliament resolution from 2nd April 2009:

must be inclusive of the victims of National
Socialism, Fascism, and and Communism

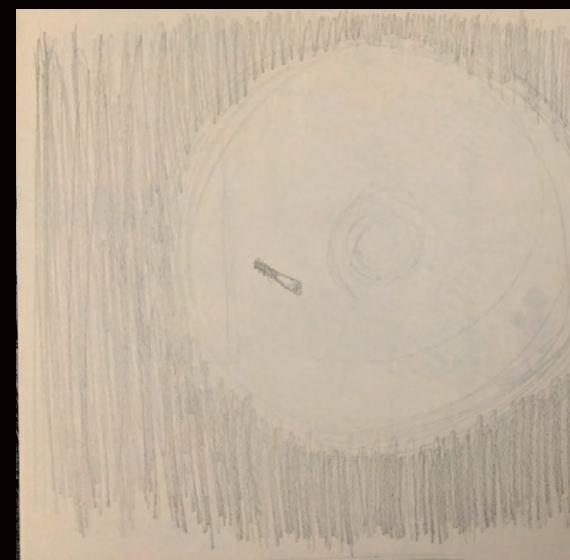
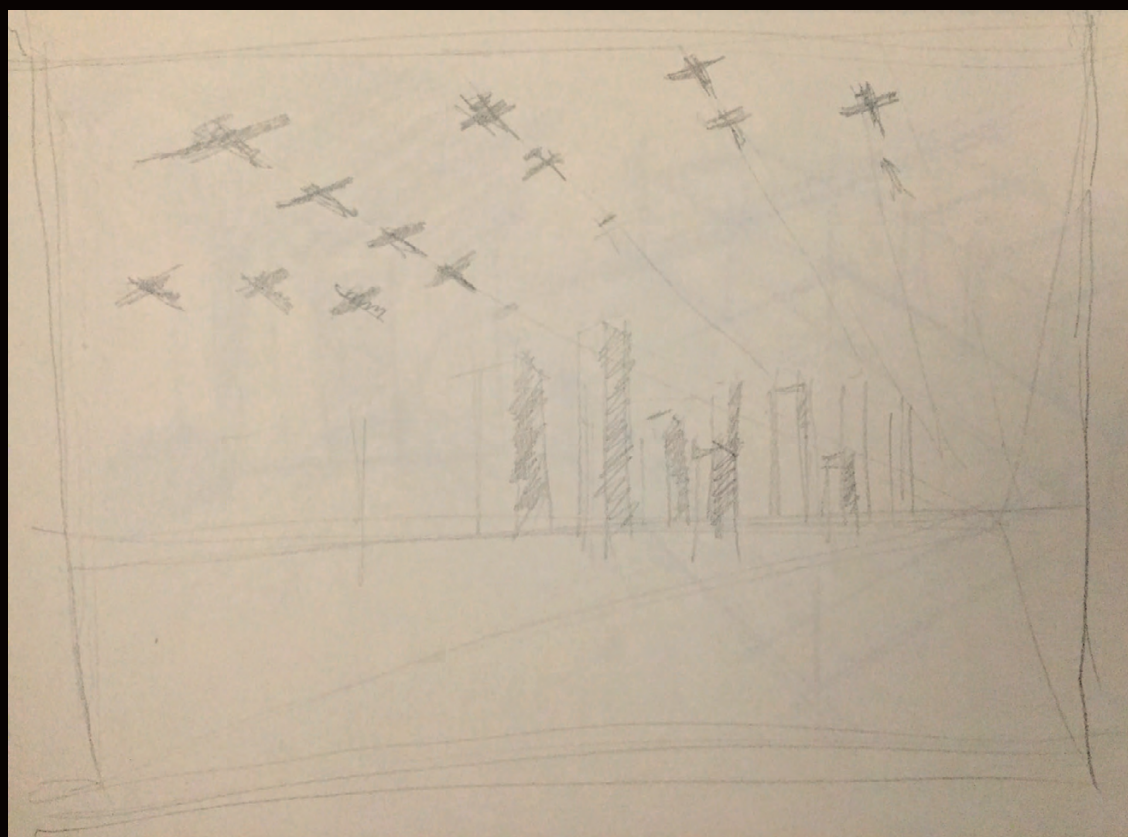
must be inclusive of men, women, and children

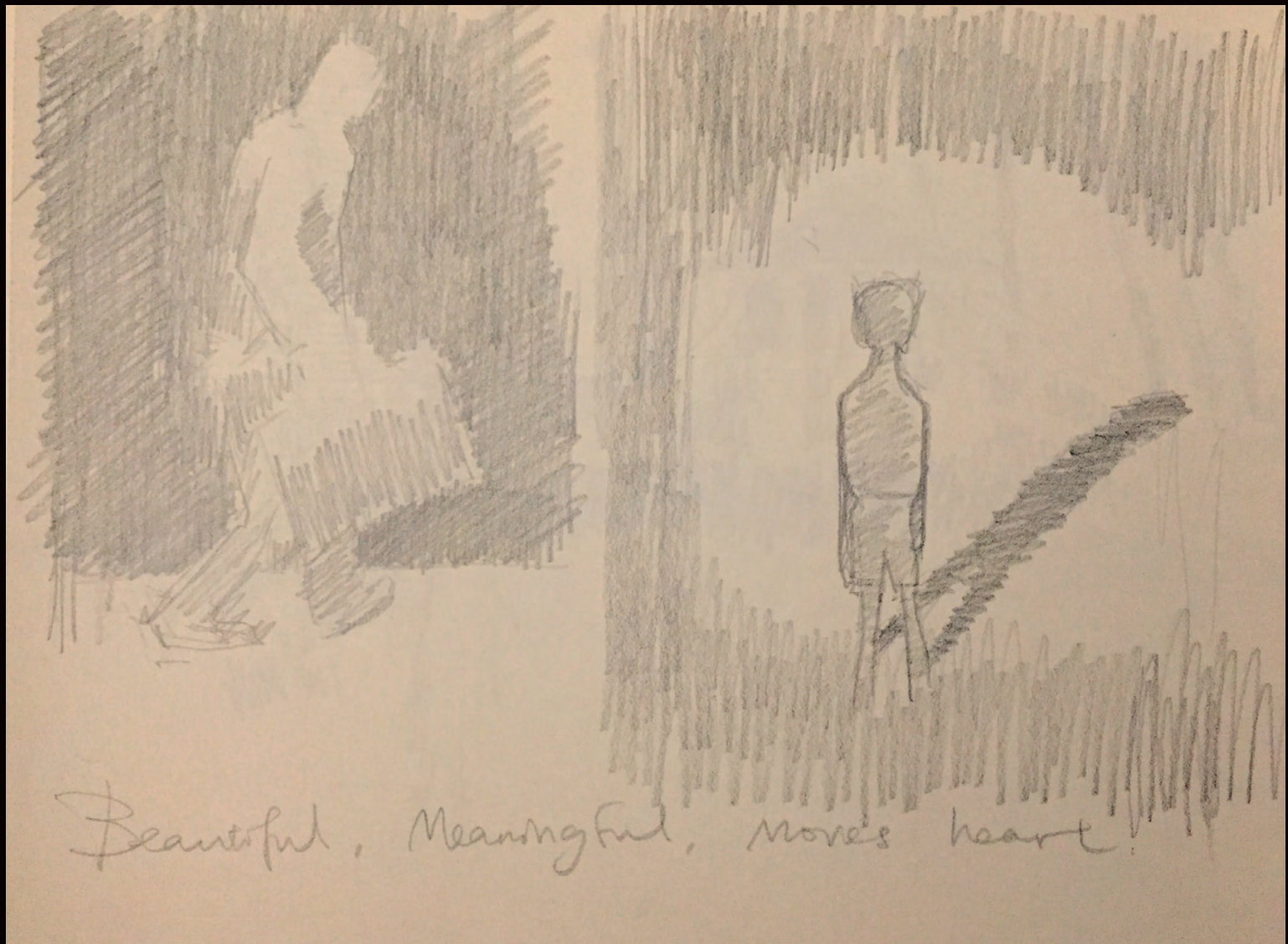
must not interfere with the natural flow and
movement of people across the square

should draw people in physically, enable a physical
experience for the visitors

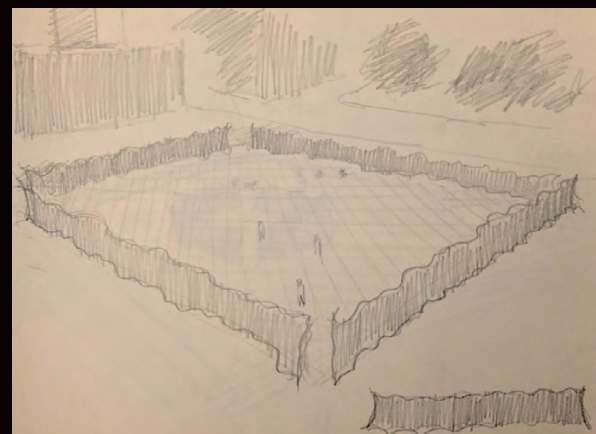
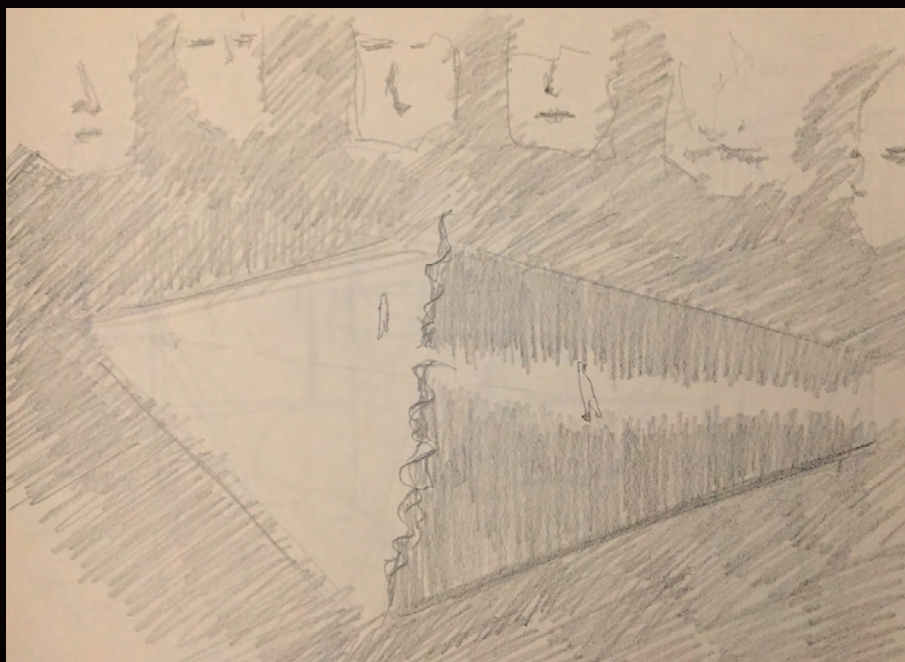
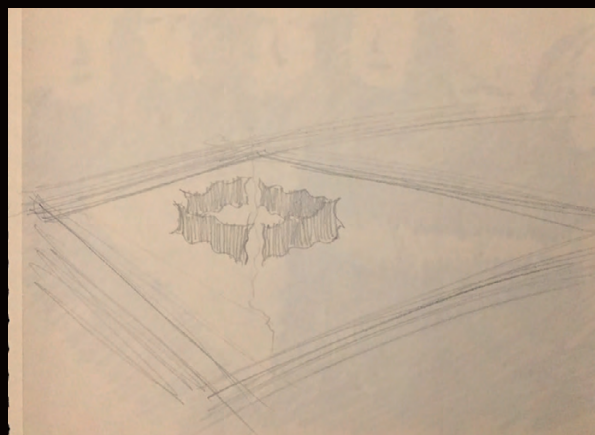
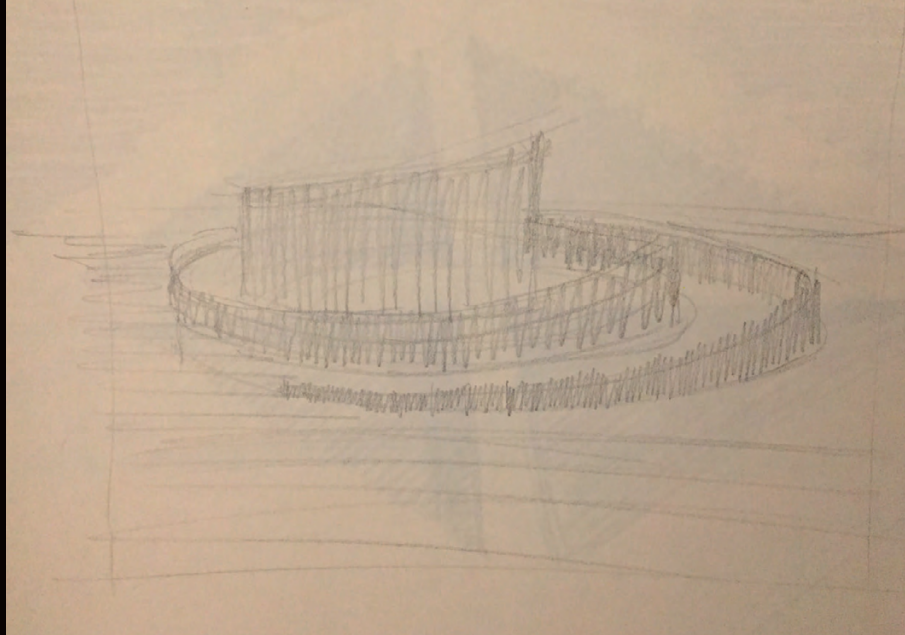
should build on a symbiosis of nature, art,
townscape, and landscape.

The design challenge posed by Jean Rey Square is indeed unique and profound. Unlike infamous sites like Auschwitz, which bear the physical imprints and haunting echoes of atrocities, the square presents a blank canvas—a space devoid of tangible reminders of totalitarianism's horrors. It prompted a crucial question for Tszwai So: How do we infuse this space with the memories it lacks? We can see this struggle in various concepts of the Memorial by Tszwai So.





But at the centre of his thoughts were the words from our call: beautiful, meaningful, moves the heart



The Messenger

On a chilly morning, I walked as usual across Jean Rey Square with my mind preoccupied with worldly concerns.

As I looked down, an image of an old letter written in a language familiar to me emerged from the ground – I suddenly realised that I was surrounded by letters between people and their loved ones who had been imprisoned or deported by the totalitarian regimes; they told the real story of a tragedy on a scale that I could never have perceived in our society.

I saw myself as nothing more than a messenger, carrying a suitcase full of letters between the victims and scattering them over the square...

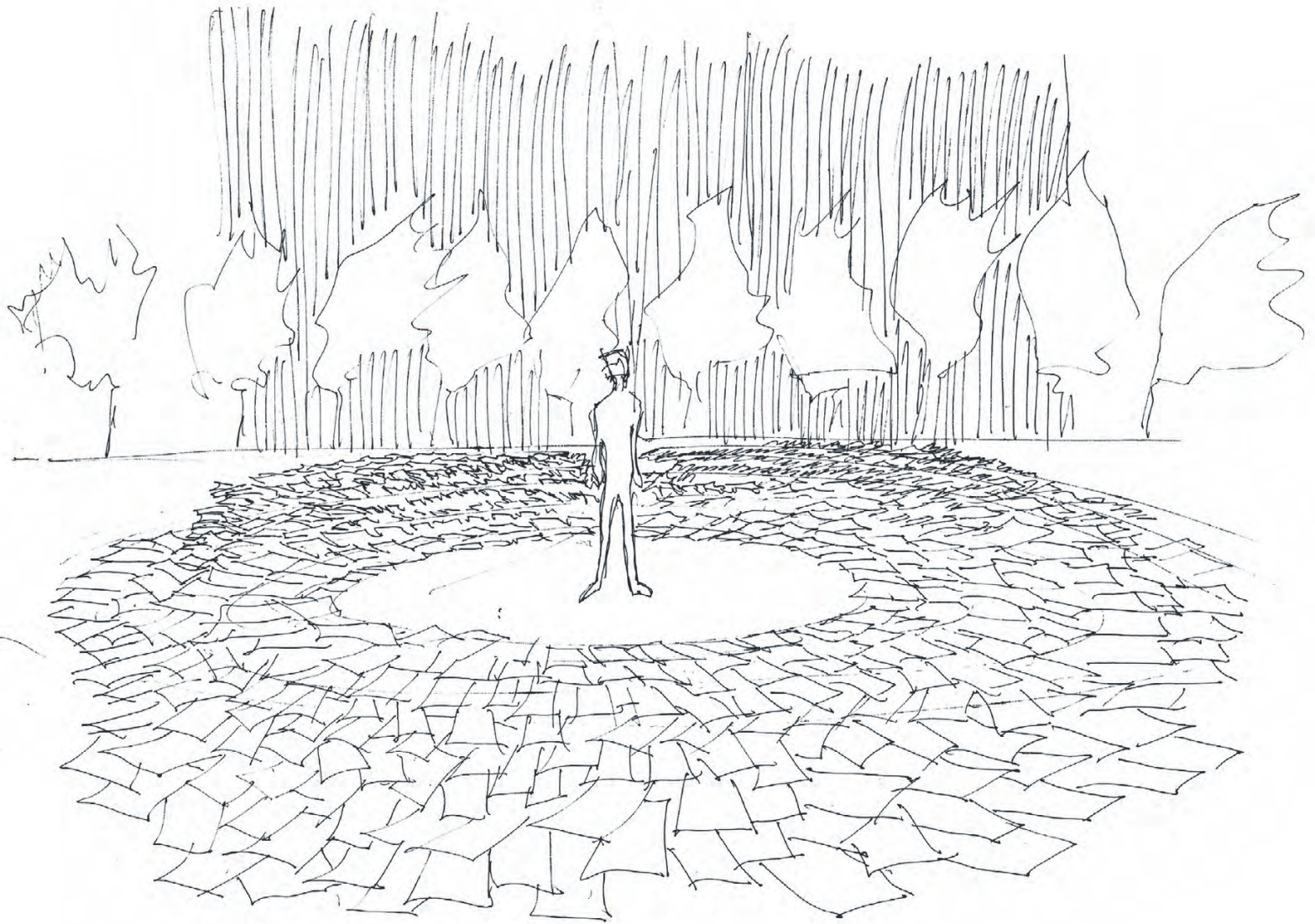
→ CREDIT:

The Messenger by Tszwai So

(charcoal on paper, 838 mm x 1143 mm)

Victoria and Albert Museum, the RIBA collections, London





Tszwai So had a vision of himself being a messenger for the victims, collecting letters written by the victims to their loved ones from all over Europe. He then used smeared charcoal to register his initial impressions of the site, as well as his idea.

Ripples of Letters

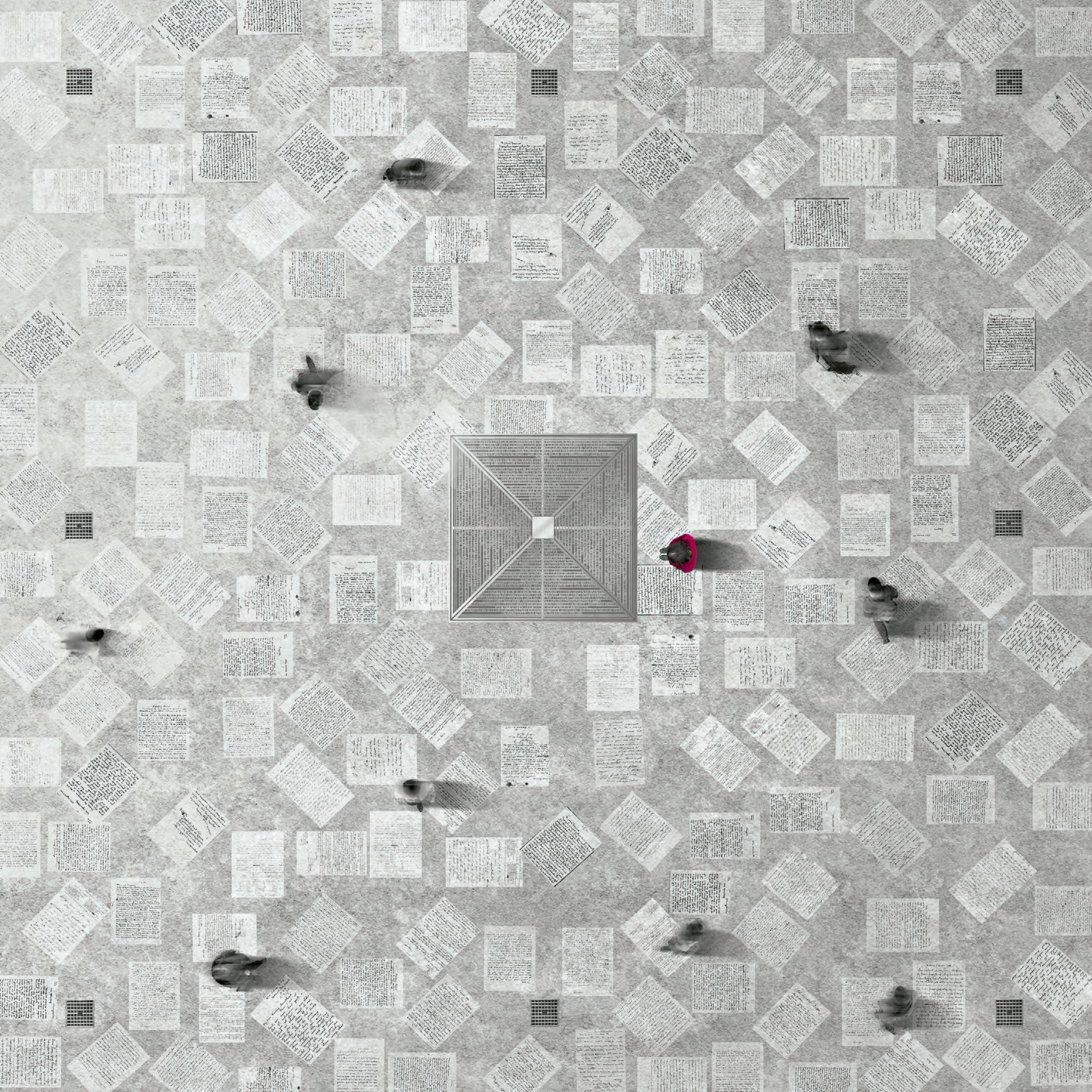
In 2017, Tszwai So and his team sent out a simple worldwide appeal, explaining the design intent to individuals who were related to the victims and institutions or archives involved in the study of and research into Totalitarianism.

As of 15 December 2017, So had been given support and permission from around 20 institutions or individuals to use more than 40,000 letters between victims of Totalitarianism and their loved ones.

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The floor plan collage showing from above the Memorial, which is designed to be made of paving slabs printed with numerous enlarged images of carefully selected letters, written by the victims and their relatives.

Giving Voice to the Victims

At the heart of the Memorial lies the profound significance of the letters—each one is a testament to the raw emotions, unique tones of voice, and the handwriting of those who endured unspeakable suffering. These letters are not just artefacts but poignant echoes of lives disrupted, voices silenced, and dreams shattered.

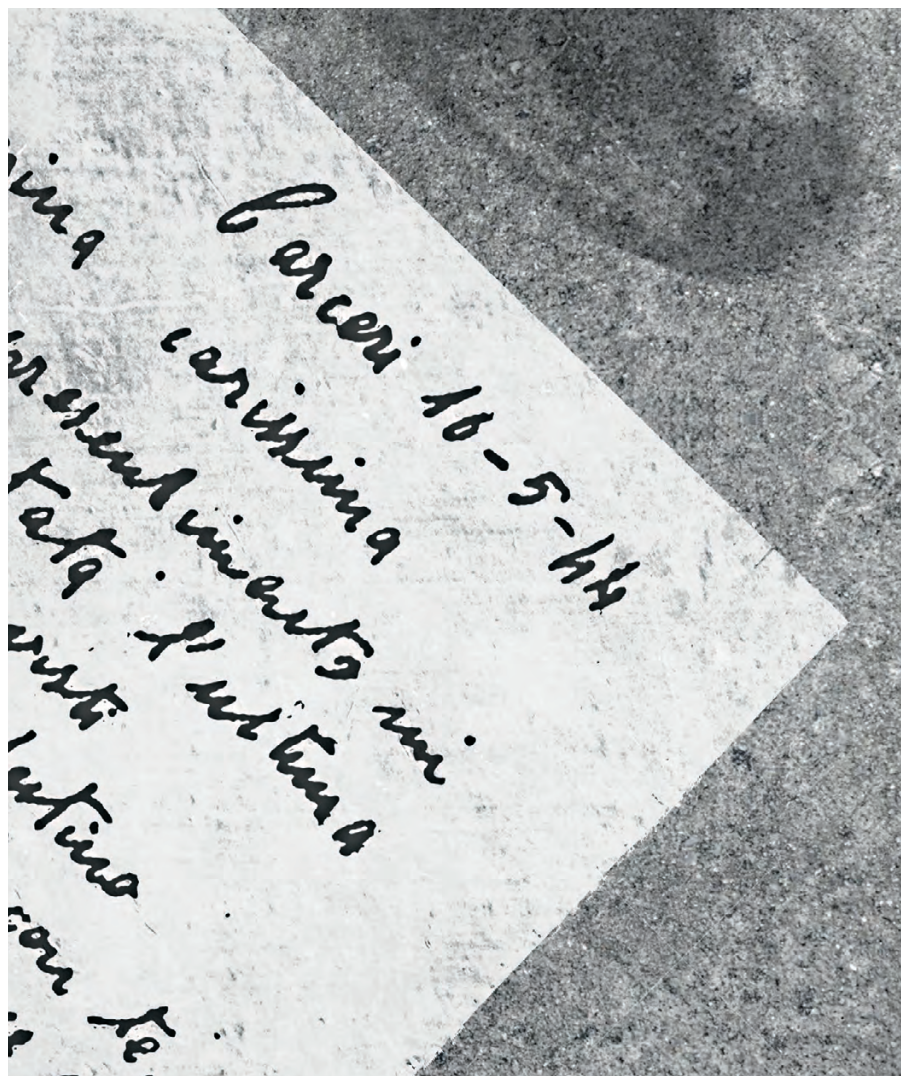
As custodians of these precious artefacts, we are entrusted with the solemn duty of preserving their legacy and ensuring that their voices are never forgotten. In commemorating the victims, we also reaffirm our commitment to justice, truth, and collective remembrance. The Memorial stands as a beacon of hope for future generations.

TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN

Dear Mama

A sad presentiment tells me that we met for the last time today. Dearest Mama fate keeps on being cruel to you. This life of mine, that together we have contended so many times to the death, finally manages to escape me. Please find comfort in the thought that I will be strong until the end. Certainly I do not feel afraid. The only thorn in my heart is knowing that Milli and you will be alone in this world.

THIS IS THE LAST LETTER FROM
VALERIO BAVASSANO.



➤ TOP RIGHT

Source:

INSMLI Association, Italy

Letter from:

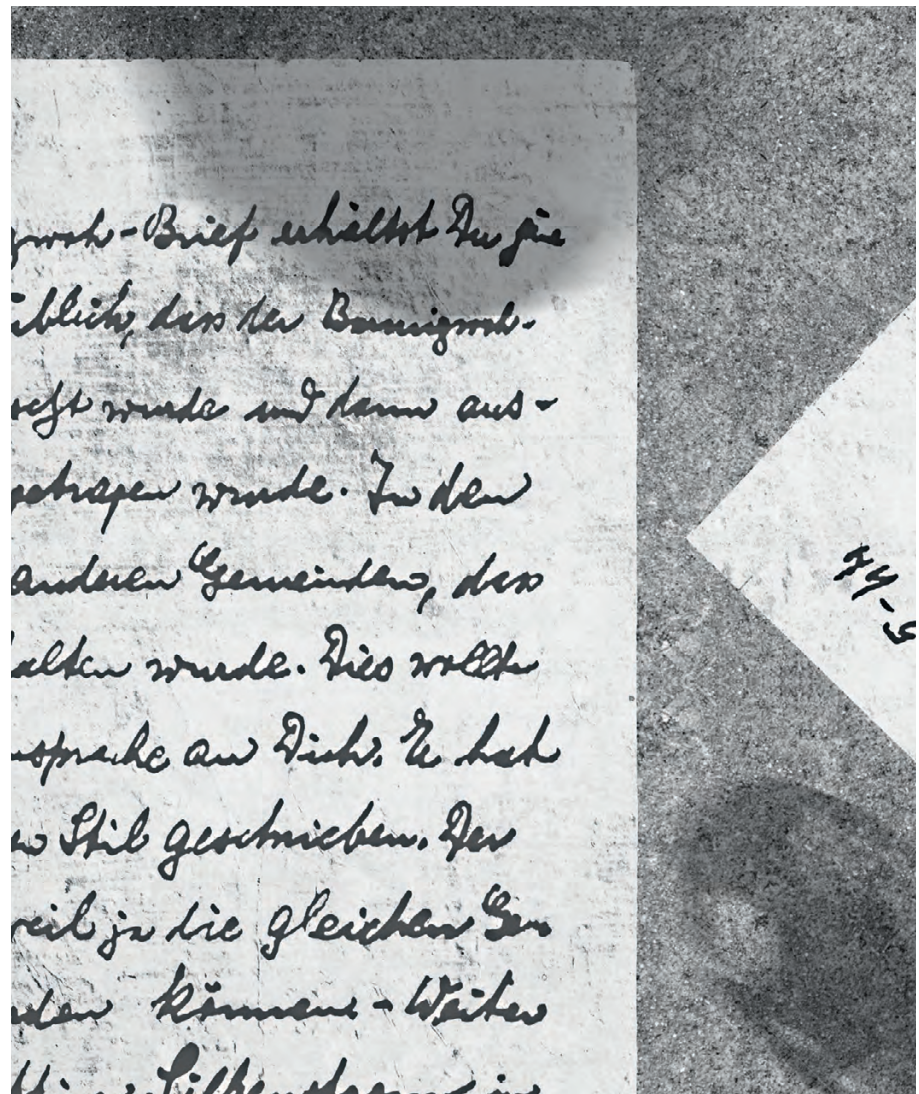
Marassi Prison, Genoa, Italy

Date:

16 May 1944

TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN

My dear Manfred,
I heartily congratulate you on your birthday...
You have had to taste the suffering of the last few years.
Your mother and your brother, both in an unknown place,
will think of you with much anguish on this day.
Since neither your parents nor siblings nor other
relatives are able to surround you to help you celebrate
this day, I hope the sole family representative will
endeavour to provide you with some joy...



↗ TOP RIGHT

Source:

Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, USA
Wildman collection letter number 50

Letter from:

unknown concentration camp

Date:

8 April 1943

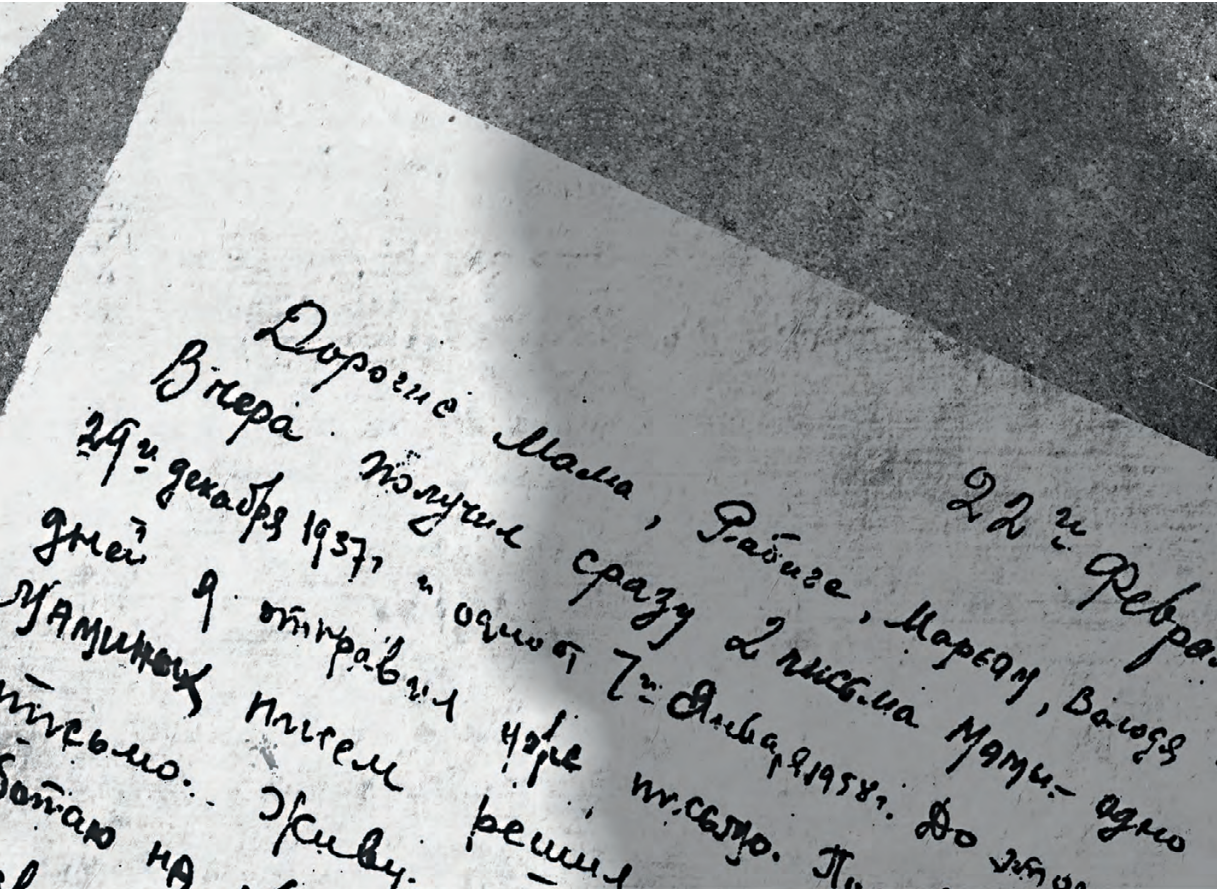
↓ BOTTOM

Source:
Private collection of Mr. Cajcyc from Moscow, Russia
Letter from:
Selgon station, the Far East
Date:
22 February 1938

TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN

Dear Mama, Rabiga, Maryam, Voldymyr and Yusuf,
...One thing that's bad here is the overcrowdedness.
We live with 70 people in a narrow barrack... sometimes
feel so depressed and I don't know what to do. Mama
writes that I should save my health. That's the only way
to survive here. God forbid you fall ill - then you can
consider that you're dead...

THIS IS THE LAST LETTER FROM HASAN;
HE WAS EXECUTED ON 26 MARCH

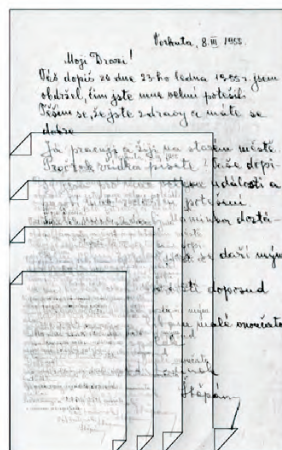
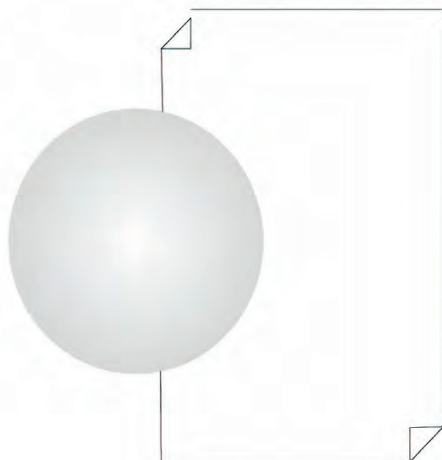


Building the Memorial

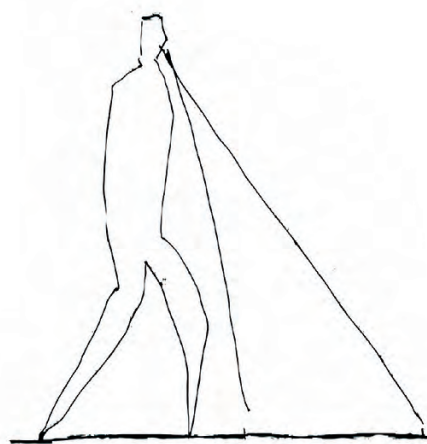
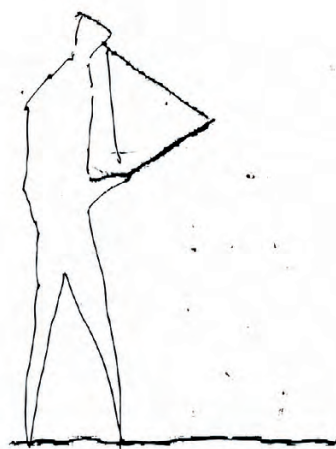
The construction of the Memorial does not entail a technologically complex process. It simply involves replacing existing paving stones with new ones imprinted with enlarged images of the letters.

This approach eliminates the need for intricate construction or excavation work, and poses no risk to existing infrastructure.

The production of concrete slabs is a well-established technological process, yielding durable paving surfaces that ensure the safety of pedestrians as they traverse the area.



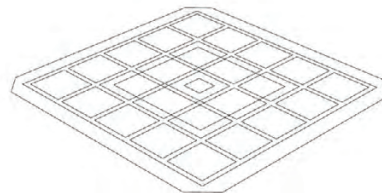
Each letter will undergo enlargement before being imprinted onto the new paving blocks. This approach represents a transformative gesture, elevating the voices of the victims to the forefront of public consciousness.



The enlargement and printing process on the new paving slabs will ensure that individuals can comfortably read the letters while standing, fostering a more engaging and accessible experience for visitors.

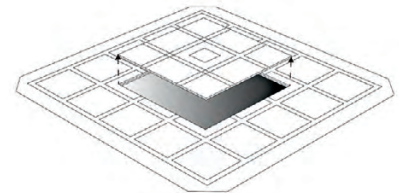
Re-paving Process

The existing paving stones, covering approximately 300m², will be removed and replaced by new paving printed with enlarged images of the letters.



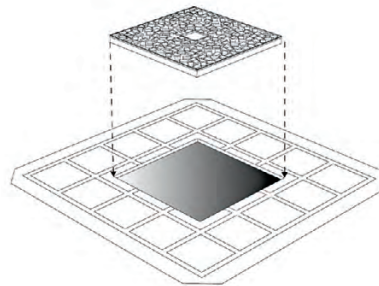
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Existing pavings



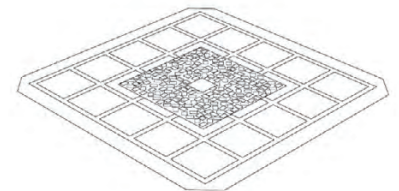
2.

Removal of the old paving



3.

New concrete paving
printed with images of
the letters are installed



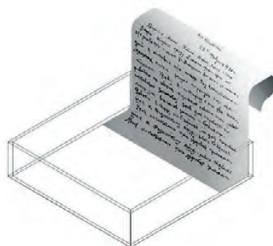
4.

Completion



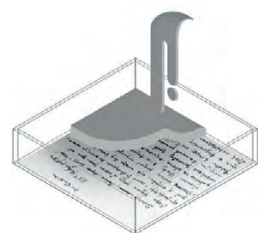
1.

Printing the letters onto a synthetic foil that is treated with a concrete deactivator



2.

The foil is laid into the mould



3.

The concrete is poured into the mould



4.

The panel is removed once the concrete has hardened after 24 hours.



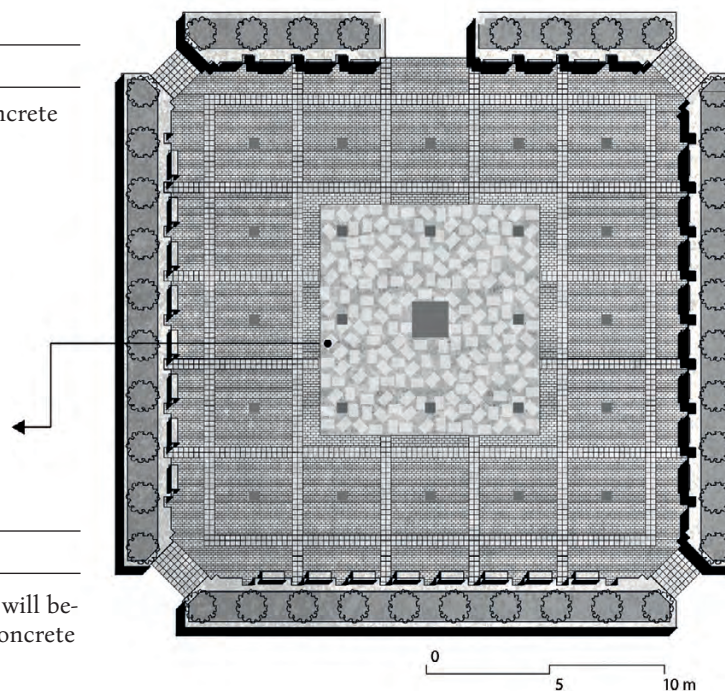
5.

The foil is removed. The surface treated with the deactivator is washed out



6.

The enlarged images of the letters will become visible on the new precast concrete tiles to form the new pavings



A Place for the Citizens

As an urban project, the Memorial will not encroach upon space vital to the local Brussels community – in our understanding, the place will be something more than before; it will enhance the area meaningfully. In addition to the re-paving operation, we assume that our initiative will revitalise the immediate surroundings to benefit residents.

The place's functionality remains intact; it can still be utilised in diverse ways. The Memorial is not about beckoning attention. Instead, it embodies absence, inviting passersby to pause, reflect, and emotionally engage. We will not create any obstacles or elevations; the terrain will remain flat and accessible.

Walking over enlarged images of victims' letters is not disrespectful, as we find precedent in countless examples of ledger stones commemorating the deceased laid into the floor of churches from the Middle Ages.

The Memorial, seamlessly integrated into daily life, may be overlooked by some, as commemoration requires emotional readiness. However, one day, someone might pick up a letter in their own language, forging an emotional connection with the victims—a testament to the enduring power of remembrance.



in einem
Kontext
mit
den
Begriffen
der
Kultur

mit - Brief enthält die
Karte, die der Empfänger
sich macht und dann aus-
schlagen wurde. In den
Kontexten "Kontexten" der



22. Februar
Dorotea Mama, Raab, Marek, Vano
Viera
29. Dezember 1937, "Osmot 7. Aufl.
Gmei
UAMIKOV
mit

Technology in the Service of the Memorial

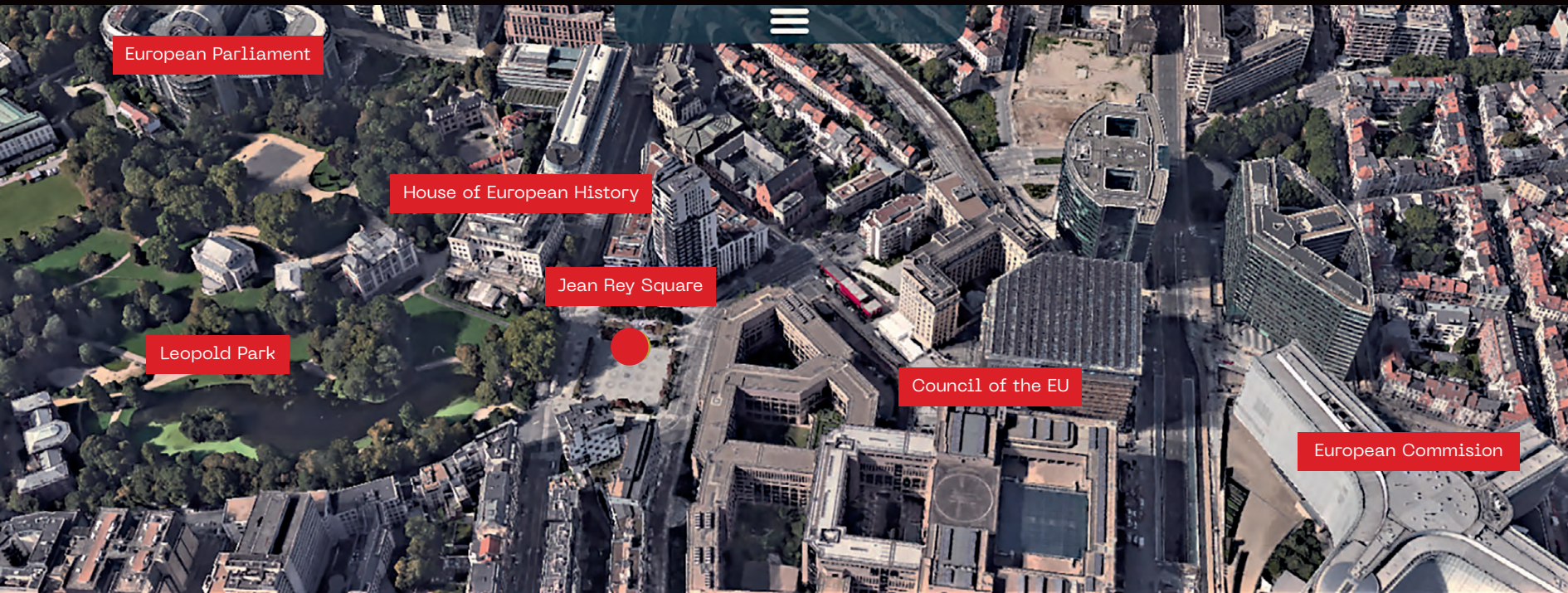
Embedded within the very fabric of the Memorial's concrete slabs are QR codes and other markers, offering visitors access to a wealth of knowledge and augmented reality tools. Leveraging modern technologies, we ensure that everyone can engage with the Memorial in meaningful ways, regardless of language or ability.

These innovative features enable visitors to access translations of letters into various languages, delve into the stories of individual people, and explore broad historical context. Moreover, individuals with disabilities can engage with and experience the Memorial through solutions such as audio descriptions and visual information.

Each letter serves as a gateway to history, knowledge, and understanding. The QR codes function as digital portals, bridging the gap between past and present, memory and remembrance. With a simple scan, every visitor embarks on a transformative journey—an invitation to unlock the poignant narratives encapsulated within the letters of the victims.

About Jean Rey Square

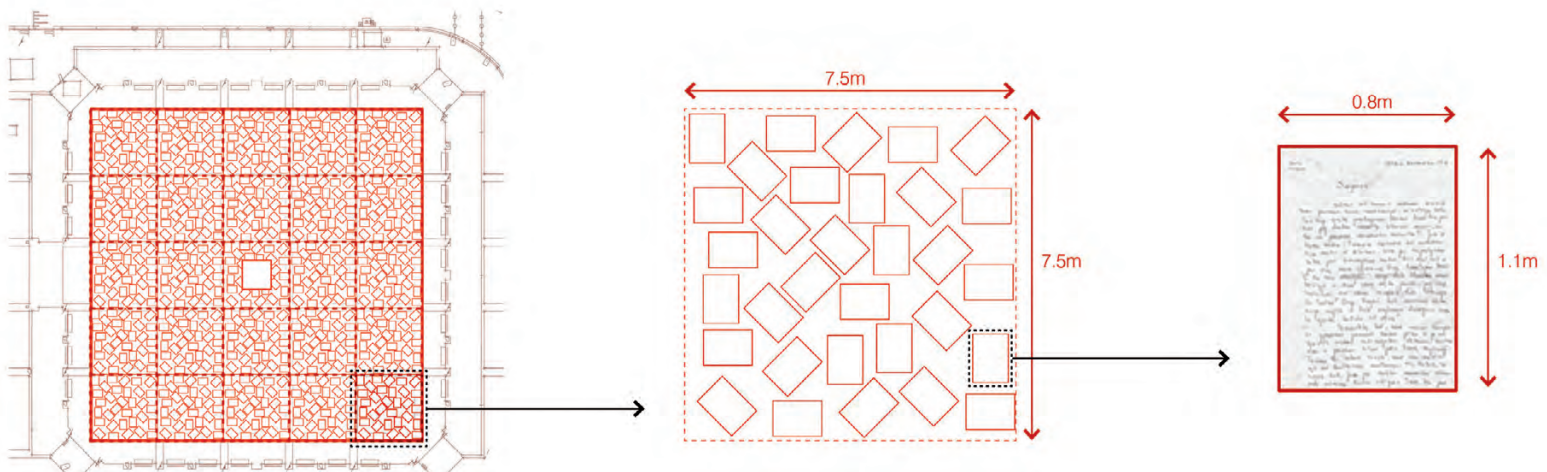
The initial call for the design of the Memorial stipulated Jean Rey Square as the primary location for the future remembrance site. This choice of location appears to be ideal, situated as it is between two paramount institutions of the European Union—the European Parliament and the European Commission—directly opposite the House of European History.

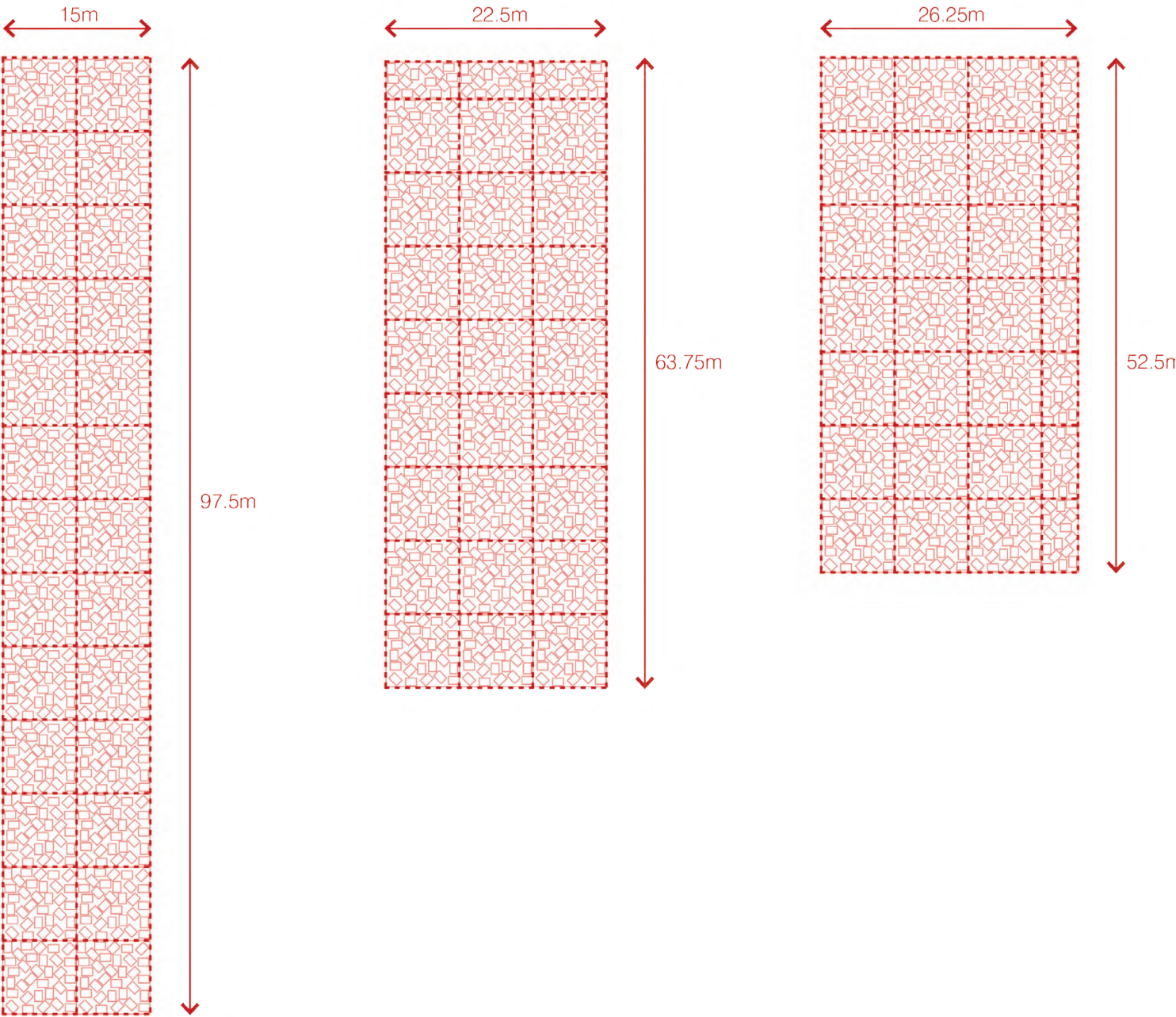


Adaptability and Flexibility of Design

The brilliance of Tszwai So's concept lies in its remarkable flexibility, allowing individual letters to be arranged in a multitude of configurations to suit the available space. This adaptability grants the project almost boundless potential—it can take the form of a traditional square, an intimate alleyway, or even an irregular plaza.

However, amidst this versatility, one essential criterion remains non-negotiable: the memorial must stand as a dignified and worthy tribute in the heart of the European Quarter.





Possible alternative configurations of the Memorial

A Truly Pan-European Project

We embarked on a journey across several European countries, from Spain to Poland and from Estonia to Albania. At each stop along the way, our mission was clear: to engage with diverse communities and stakeholders, including politicians, opinion leaders, public and non-governmental organization heads, scholars, and ordinary citizens.

Our aim is to foster broad participation from across Europe, recognising that the true essence of our project lies in discussions and cooperation. We believe that involving as many Europeans as possible in the process can create a genuinely Pan-European project.



Presenting the Memorial throughout Europe

Since the project's beginning, we have recognised the importance of fostering pan-European engagement. That's why, starting in 2021, we launched an extensive program to present the Memorial across various countries. From Brussels to Barcelona, from Paris to Prague, and many places in between—including Wrocław, Warsaw, Szczecin, Vilnius, Tallinn, Tirana, Shkodër, Pitesti, Timisoara, and beyond—we embarked on a journey of dialogue and collaboration. We engaged with representatives from the European Parliament, national parliaments, and, most importantly, ordinary citizens invested in our project.

We spoke with thousands of individuals at countless events and meetings, sharing our vision and receiving overwhelming support. Thousands more encountered our educational materials, and we exchanged greetings and ideas with many more.

But this is just the beginning as we look ahead and plan more presentations, discussions, and meetings!



46

Handwritten text in German, likely a letter or document, with some corrections and a date "1946".

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Handwritten text in German, likely a letter or document, with some corrections and a date "1946".

Open Call for the Letters

The initial appeal of Tszwai So was incredibly well received, but we have to ensure that the letters of victims of all totalitarianism from the 20th century reflect diverse perspectives and stories. We will launch an open call to state, public, and non-governmental institutions. Additionally, we will invite individual Europeans to share with us their artefacts—the last handwritten letters of their family members.

Handwritten text in German, likely a letter or document, with some corrections and a date "1946".

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International Committee

The next vital step will be the selection of letters. We will establish an international committee comprised of experts representing members of the Platform and other European institutions dedicated to history and memory. This committee will also include scholars, researchers, public opinion leaders, and representatives of Brussels and the European Union. We want to cooperate with a wide range of people for whom this project will be important. Together, they will meticulously select the letters to be included in the Memorial, prioritizing historical accuracy and embracing multi-perspectives.

More Than
Just the
Memorial

The Memorial project transcends its role as a solemn site of remembrance; it embodies a multifaceted endeavour aimed at fostering understanding, education, and collective reflection. Central to this initiative is the creation of a virtual Documentation Centre—a repository of knowledge that will serve as the cornerstone of the entire project.

Through the QR codes discreetly embedded within the Memorial concrete slabs, every visitor is invited on a transformative journey—a gateway to unlock the narratives encapsulated within the victims' letters.

Regardless of their background or origins, visitors can access the Documentation Centre and read translations of the letters in numerous languages. This ensures that the stories of those who suffered under totalitarian regimes resonate across linguistic boundaries.

The Documentation Centre aspires to be more than a repository of historical artefacts; it is a testament to the richness and complexity of individual lives. In addition to the letters themselves, the Centre will feature compelling narratives that delve into the personal stories of the letter writers, offering a profound insight into their experiences, aspirations, and resilience.

Moreover, the diverse audience that will engage with the Memorial, the Documentation Centre will curate educational texts. From young students to seasoned scholars, each visitor will find resources that illuminate the historical context surrounding the letters, grounded in factual accuracy and presented with sensitivity and clarity.

The Documentation Centre will embrace the ethos that every life deserves to be remembered and told.



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Research and Discussion Hub

The Documentation Centre, envisioned as more than just a virtual knowledge repository, will emerge as a dynamic hub for research and dialogue surrounding European remembrance of all forms of totalitarianism. It will transcend the confines of a traditional institution, becoming an active participant in scholarly discourse and community engagement initiatives across the continent.

At its core, the Center will embark on its own research endeavors, delving deep into the archives to uncover hidden narratives and shed light on overlooked aspects of European history. Its collections will be made accessible to researchers, educators, and the public alike, fostering a culture of inquiry and critical reflection.

A key facet of the Center's mission will be its commitment to disseminating historical truth and fostering dialogue. Through a series of events and outreach efforts spanning across Europe, it will engage with diverse communities, amplifying voices, and facilitating meaningful conversations about our shared past.

Unlike traditional institutions with centralized headquarters, the Center will adopt a decentralised approach, operating in a dispersed manner across countries. By decentralising its operations, it seeks to ensure widespread accessibility and inclusivity, effectively telling the story of Europe's common history to audiences far and wide.





Educational Programmes

The Memorial, in the heart of the European Union, will serve as a reminder of the shared commitment to safeguarding democratic values, promoting human rights, and preventing the recurrence of such atrocities. It will be a visible sign of common European remembrance.

In tandem with the Memorial, we envision a comprehensive educational programme to illuminate the history of totalitarianism and promote the principles of democracy and human rights. These educational initiatives will exert a dual impact: locally, they will enrich the surroundings of the Memorial and engage with the visitors; on a broader scale, through our extensive network and with the help of technology, they will resonate across Europe, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our shared values.

Through these multi-pronged efforts, we aspire not only to commemorate the past but also to empower future generations with the knowledge and resilience needed to safeguard the ideals of democracy, justice, and human dignity.

About the Designer

Tszwai So is a London-based British artist and architect. His body of work is primarily concerned with the subjective connection between human emotions and the built environment, ranging from architecture, drawings, film-making, and public arts to writing. He has received multiple accolades and competition wins internationally for both his artistic and architectural works.

He was named a rising star by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 2016. The following year he completed the much-lauded Belarusian Memorial Chapel in London, commissioned by the Holy See of Rome for the Belarusian diaspora community. The memorial church has since then become a cultural icon visited by Belarusians worldwide.

In 2018, he won the first prize in an international competition under the auspices of the European Parliament for the Pan-European Memorial for all victims of 20th century totalitarianism; the same year his drawings won the RIBA International Drawing competition, the Eye Line Award. He was honoured by Wolfson College, University of Cambridge in 2019 with a solo exhibition and His film *E-motion-Al City* premiered at the Venice Biennale in 2021.

The same year he also won the competition to reimagine Peckham Square in London. In addition to being a regular columnist for the RIBA journal, Tszwai is a researcher and an authority on memorial design; his latest book 'Remembrance Now' co-authored with Michèle Woodger has been published by Lund Humphries in 2023.

Tszwai's drawings are in the permanent collections of the V&A Museum and Yad Vashem (currently loaned to Wolfson College, University of Cambridge)

'(Tszwai So's oeuvre) demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to the emotional attachment his clients and their communities have to the environment he designs for them, including the space around and the space enclosed by his buildings. His thoughtful, considered approach to his building design is philosophical and artistic'.

Margaret Greeves, curator, former deputy director, Fitzwilliam Museum

'This is an architecture (of Tsuneai So), and means of expressing that architecture, that is globally inclusive and refreshingly free of dogma.'

Hugh Pearman MBE, critic, former editor, RIBA Journal

'... (Tsuneai So's work is) notable for drawing together the historical threads of diverse narratives, both communal and intensely personal, including experience of atrocity, dislocation and loss, in designs that are unflinching yet redemptive.'

Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge



Belarusian Memorial Chapel

London, completed 2017



Completed in 2017, London's only all wooden church was built for the UK's Belarusian diaspora community and is dedicated to the memory of victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster as well as those who perished during the country's turbulent history of the 20th century.

The design reimagines the historic wooden churches that once populated Belarus, imbuing the space with memories and emotion. Traditional forms such as the Baroque cupola are complimented by contemporary detailing, exemplified by the undulating exterior fins that form an unobtrusive yet dynamic façade.

Similarly, low clerestory windows enhance natural lighting inside, while giving the appearance that the structure is floating. At night, a beacon is created for the community, as the chapel is illuminated from within, referencing the torching of wooden churches in WWII.

The wooden church has since become a widely recognised cultural icon for Belarusians worldwide, visited by many Belarusians from abroad including the Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in 2023.

'There is a kind of sensibility about this project (Belarusian Memorial Chapel) that's quite hard to name but very easy to feel,'

Lesley Lokko, RIBA Royal Gold Medallist 2024



'The standout new church is the Belarusian Memorial Chapel in Finchley, north London, exquisitely formed of timber in the tradition of rural churches in Belarus... it is really quite beautiful and a reminder that churches still have the presence to become landmarks.'

Edwin Heathcote, Financial Times



The Blue

Taipei, completed 2024



Tszwai So led those artists associated with Emotionalism, a movement questioning the meaning of art and architecture in this AI-dominated age, to experimentally turn a 50+-year-old landmark building in central Taipei into an art-themed hotel with free art spaces for the public. Stripping the building back to its core, embracing uncertainties and human errors by addressing design challenges as unexpected constraints emerged.

The floor surface of the GF lobby, the public pavements, and columns feature a collaborative artwork made of quotes on AI and human creativity contributed by over 50 distinguished artists, architects, as well as thinkers from around the world, and even ChatGPT.

The installation is punctuated with smashed glass recycled from the building waste on site, which could be interpreted as fallen trees or teardrops, serving as an emotional tribute to one of the clients' late mother who unexpectedly passed away at the start of the project.

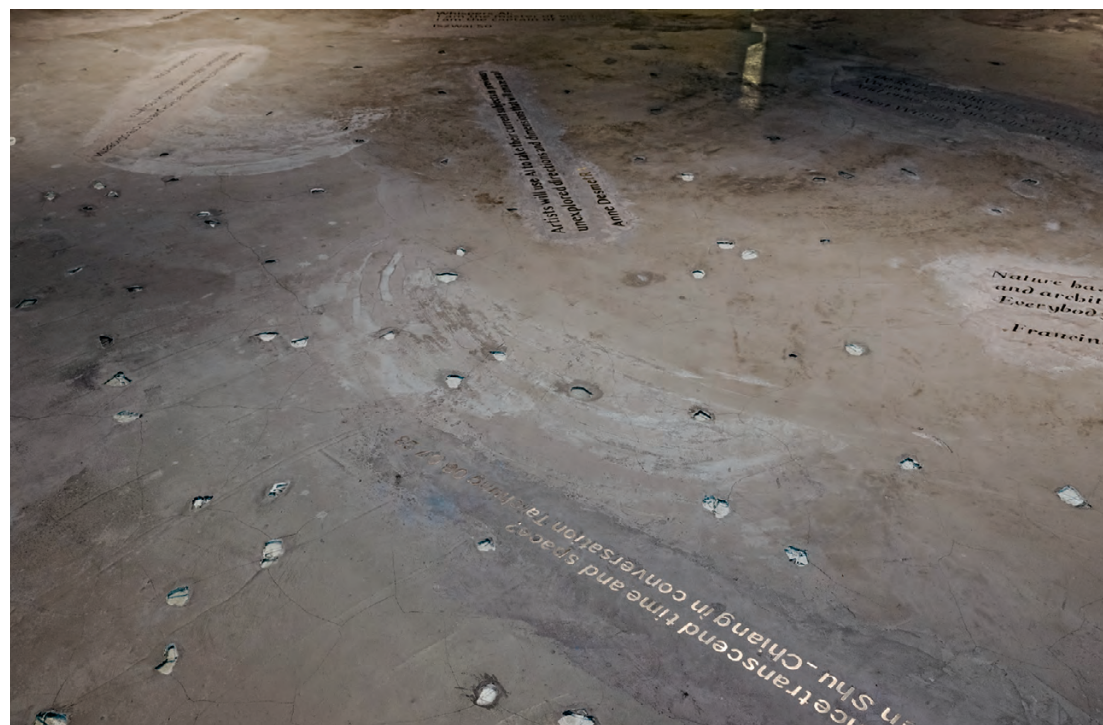


'Tszwai So's The Blue Hotel redefines Taipei's landscape.'

Sofia de la Cruz,
Wallpaper* Magazine

'The temptation... is to regard the refurbished building (The Blue)...as a work of art itself. Because in many ways it is.'

Stephen McCarty, South China Morning Post





Slonim, 1941

In 2017, Tszwai So was invited to join the steering committee of the Slonim Synagogue Restoration Campaign by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage.

Slonim was the scene of a series of massacres that occurred over a year starting in 1941, where the entire Jewish population of 22,000 was exterminated by the Nazis.

The synagogue, which was the place of worship for many affected by the massacre, was abandoned in the 1990s and is now a virtual ruin.

So explore the private archive of the memoirs of renowned British TV presenter, Natasha Kaplinsky's family...

As a result, this poignant charcoal drawing was created. It has since then been accepted into the prestigious permanent art collection of Yad Vashem, currently loaned to Wolfson College, University of Cambridge.

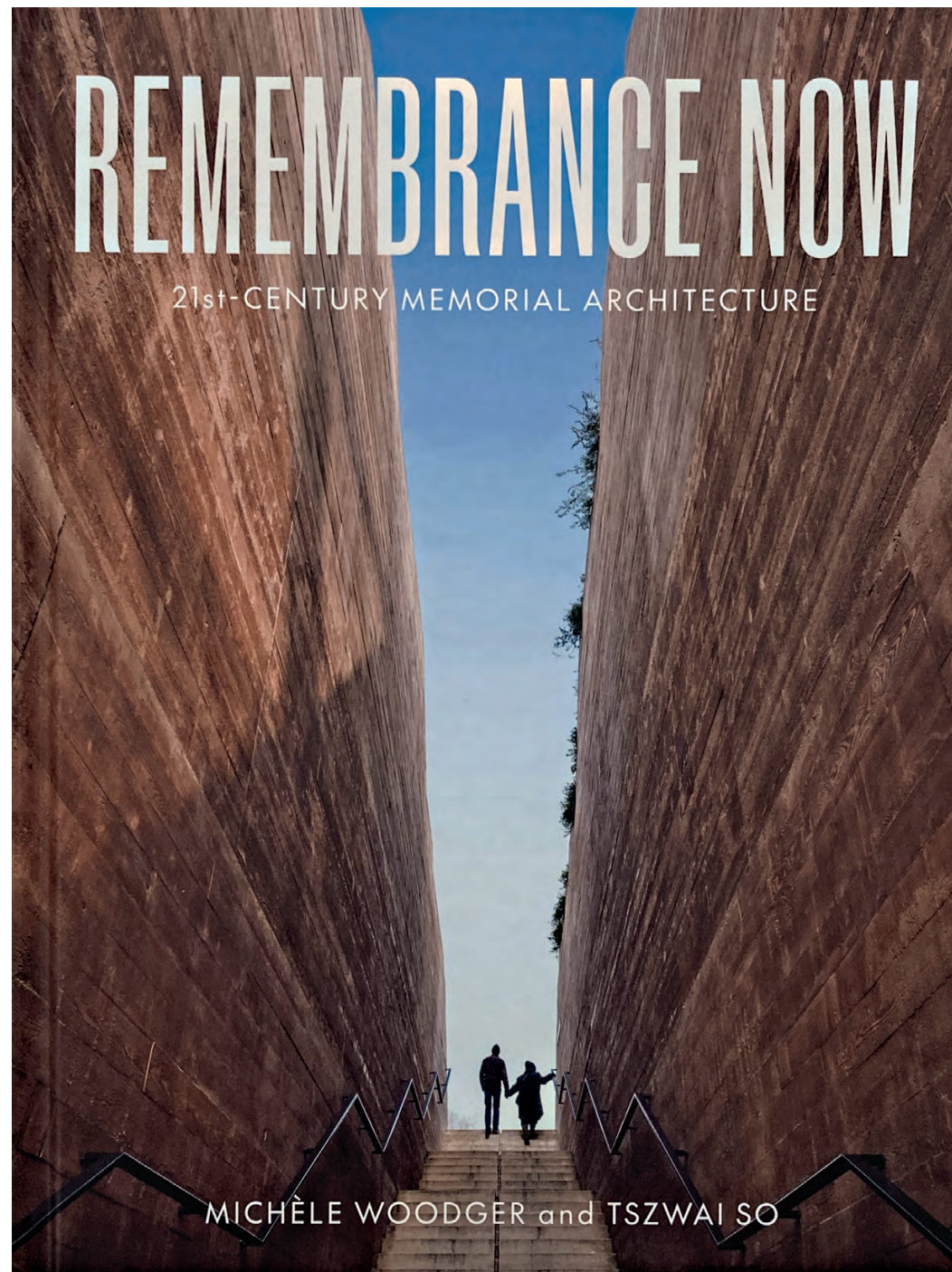
Remembrance now

As authorities on memorial designs, Tszwai So and British architectural writer Michèle Woodger collaborated on a book providing an overview of architect-led memorial design from the 21st century. It was published by Lund Humphries in 2023.

Emotionally intelligent design is an often-overlooked area in contemporary architecture, and memorials, by default, are designed to evoke emotional responses from the public.

Memorials featured are international in scope and include those designed by Moshe Safdie, Michael Arad, Daniel Libeskind, Peter Zumthor, MASS Design Group, and Snøhetta.

Each one of these is hauntingly eloquent and highlights the effectiveness of a memorial in focusing society's consciousness on important issues.





E-motion-AI City

Tszwai So co-founded the art / architecture movement Emotionalism with a group of artists, architects, and thinkers from various parts of the world to reflect on what it means to be human in an age dominated by artificial intelligence.

Their inaugural project was the short film entitled 'E-motion-AI City', written and directed by Tszwai So.

Inspired by the philosophy of psychogeography, the film was showcased at the Venice Biennale in 2021.



History of the Competition

“Calls for the [...] creation of a Pan-European documentation centre/memorial for the victims of all totalitarian regimes.”

(Excerpt from the European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism)

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience has answered this call.

In April 2017, we embarked on a meaningful journey by initiating a worldwide competition that beckoned architects and artists to envision a memorial worthy of its solemn purpose—honouring the victims of totalitarianism. It was to be nestled in the very heart of the European Union, on the historic grounds of Jean Rey Square within the European Quarter district of Brussels.

The competition garnered distinguished patronage from esteemed leaders, including the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Antonio Tajani, who bestowed upon it a High Patronage. Joining in support were individuals such as the EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, Mr. Tibor Navracsics.

In a testament to the global resonance of our competition, 68 contestants hailing from 32 countries across four continents answered the call.

The Jury

From the outset, we recognised the paramount importance of assembling a diverse and esteemed jury—a collection of experts and specialists drawn from various disciplines and backgrounds.

Our invitation extended to renowned architects whose visionary insights could lend depth and innovation to the deliberations and representatives of the Brussels authorities, whose local knowledge and stewardship were seen as indispensable in grounding the project within its urban context. Embracing our identity as a symbol of European unity, representatives of the European Union were integral members. We also extended invitations to esteemed scientists and leaders of memory organisations from across Europe known for their work in preserving and honouring the legacies of those who came before.

This inclusive approach ensured a comprehensive and balanced evaluation process, aligning with our commitment to honour the memory of the victims with integrity and insight.

Norman Robert Foster, Baron Foster of Thames Bank,

UK, Architect, President of the Norman Foster Foundation, Founder and Executive Chairman Foster + Partners

Tibor Navracsics

HU, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

Geoffroy Coomans de Brachène

BE, Alderman for Town Planning and Heritage, City of Brussels

André Francois Lovinfosse

BE, Chairman, Urban Art Committee, City of Brussels

Michael Arad

US, Architect, Author of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum

Julie Beckman and Keith Kaseman

US, Architects, co-authors of the Pentagon Memorial, Virginia

Andrea Grottaroli

IT, Architect, Author of the Jewish Deportation Museum, Borgo San Dalmazzo, Italy

László Tőkés

RO, Member of the European Parliament, leader of the 1989 Romanian Revolution

Łukasz Kaminski

PL, President, Platform of European Memory and Conscience

Neela Winkelmann

CZ, Managing Director, Platform of European Memory and Conscience

Zsolt Szilagy

RO, Member of the Executive Board, Platform of European Memory and Conscience

Toomas Hiio

EE, Chairman of the Board, Estonian Institute of Historical Memory

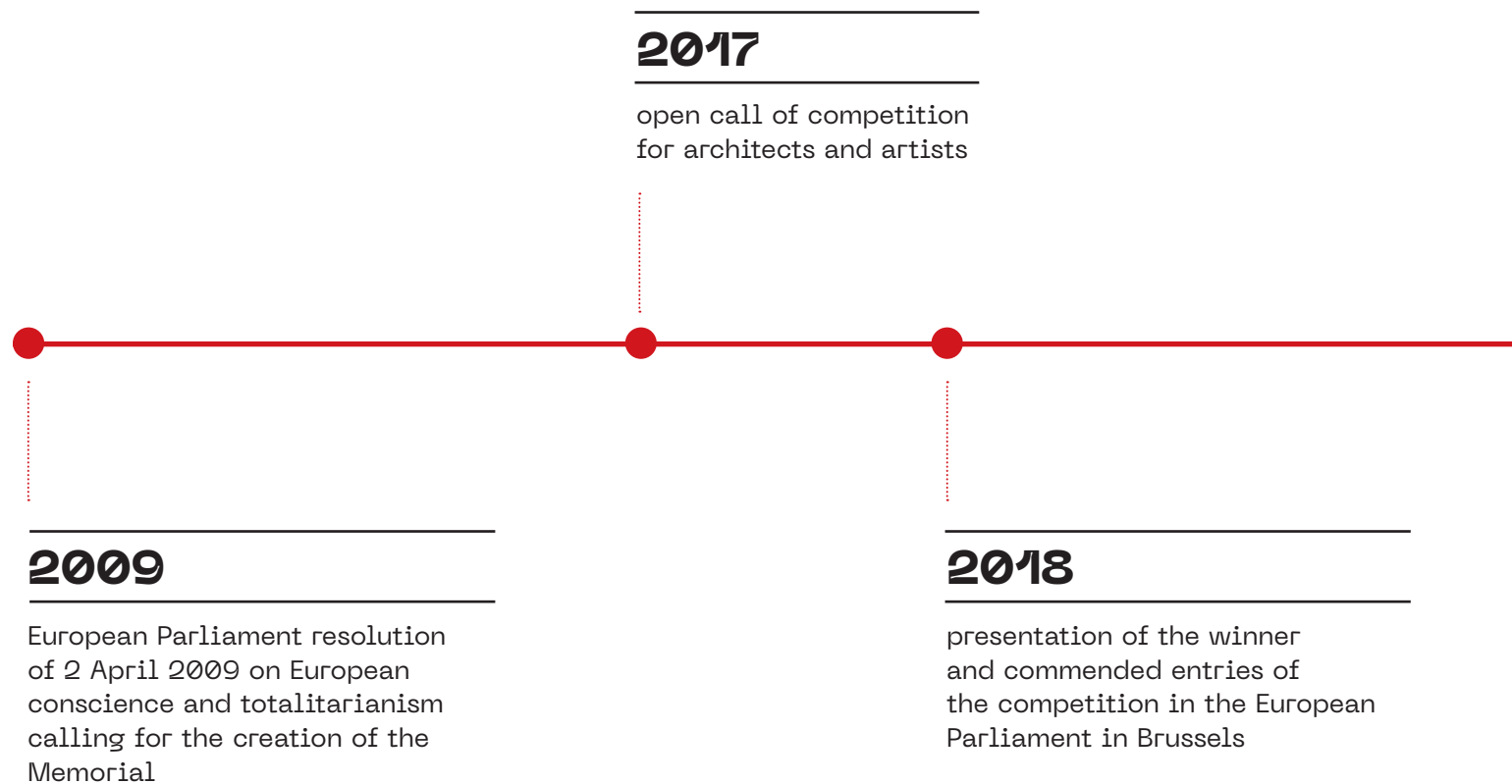
Wolfgang-Christian Fuchs

DE, CEO of the German Union of Victims of Political Tyranny

Andreja Valič Zver

SL, Director of the Slovenian Study Centre for National Reconciliation

Project Timeline



2019

European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe calling for support for the Platform of European Memory and Conscience

2022

Platform begins the implementation of the project after work was suspended due to the pandemic

Other Entries to the Competition

"An Echo in Time" by Tszwai So admirably fulfilled our goal for the Memorial: to resonate with future generations, serving as both a cautionary tale against repeating the tragic experience of the 20th century and a beacon of universal human values.

His work wasn't the only entry: 68 creators from around the world submitted 39 great projects, and below, we present some of those recognised in the competition.

This competition exemplified the depth of talent and the breadth of imagination that converged in the competition, underscoring the omnipresent quest to honour the past, illuminate the present, and shape a future.



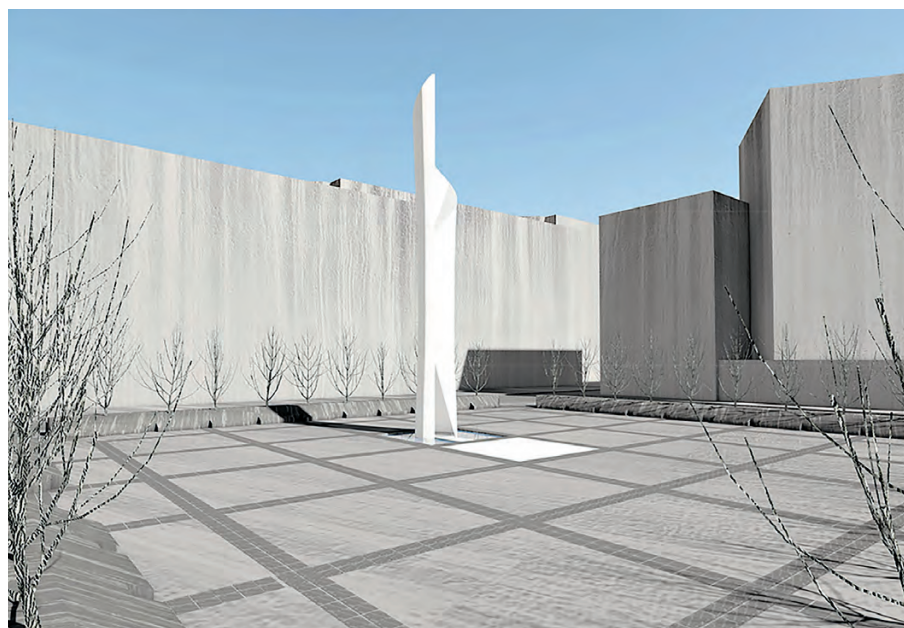
SABINA TANOVIC & DARIO KRISTIC

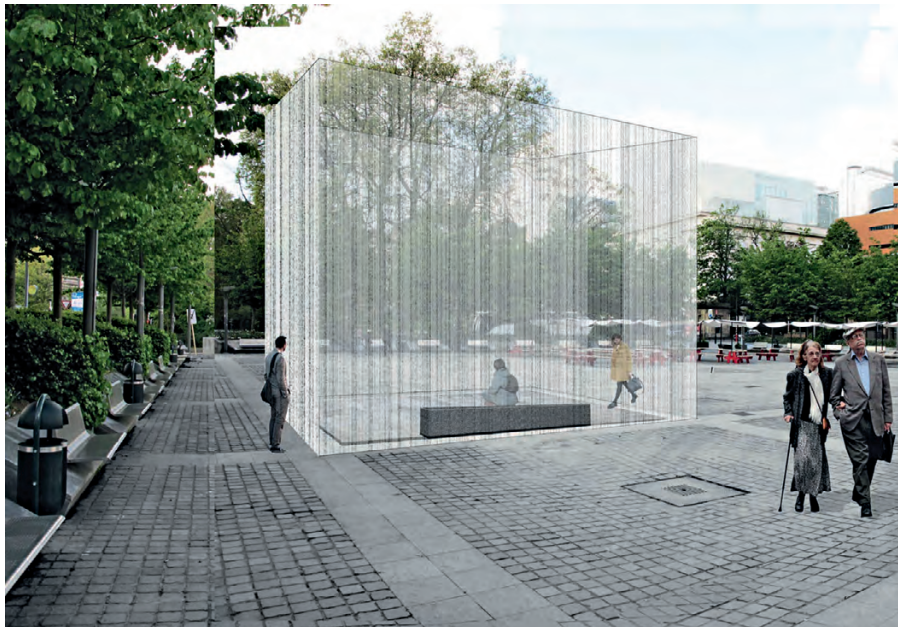
Netherlands



MANTAS MAZILIAUSKAS, POVILAS SORYS,
GITANA STANKIENE
(KLAIPEDOS KOMPROJEKTAS)

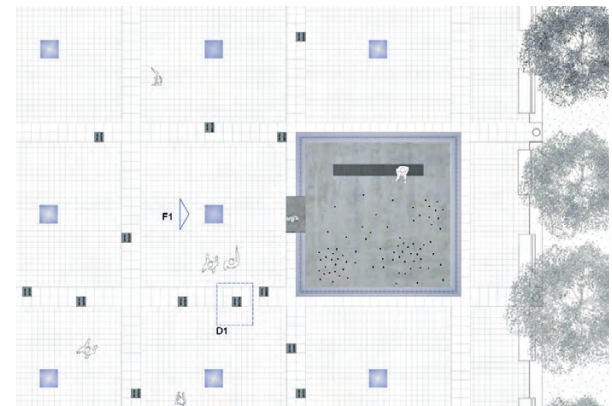
Lithuania





JORDI COMAS I MORA, ANNA PONT
I ARMENGOL
(COMAS-PONT ARQUITECTES SLP)

Spain



DENIS KOUTYLOV

Russia





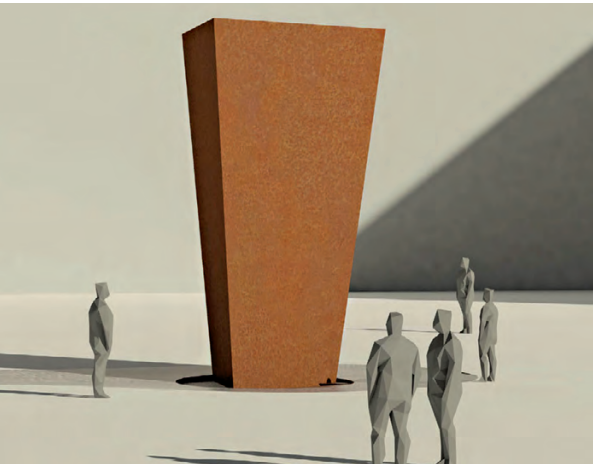
MARUXA TOUCEDA
AND ANGEL DE LA RUBIA

Belgium



MI NIKA ZUPANCIC

Slovenia





VOYTEK GORCZYNSKI, JANUSZ KAPUSTA,
ANDRZEJ PAWLIK
(ABSTRAKT STUDIO ARCHITECTURE)

Canada



GREGA VEZJAK

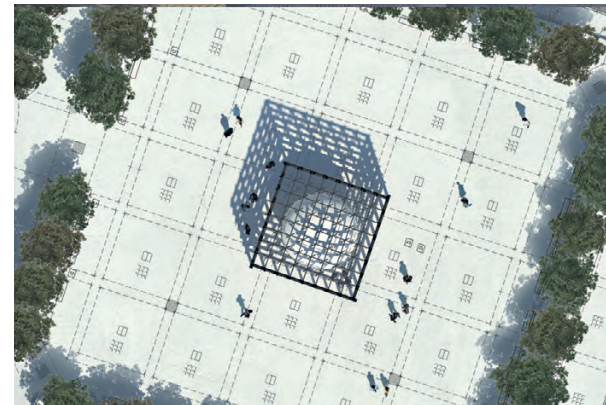
Slovenia





LEVA ZUKAUSKAITĖ, HENRIKAS ZUKAUSKAS,
KESTUTIS ASTRAUSKAS, KESTUTIS MUSTEIKIS

Lithuania







About the Platform of European Memory and Conscience

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience (PEMC) is a non-governmental organisation established in 2011. Currently, our network comprises 72 institutions and organisations from 24 countries worldwide. Our diverse membership includes prominent international organizations, museums, and public archives with varied profiles, as well as local non-governmental organisations and memory institutions. Together, we are dedicated to research, documentation, awareness-raising, and education concerning the history of totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Through collaboration and solidarity, we strive to preserve the memory of victims, promote understanding of historical events, and advocate for human rights and democracy.

We are dedicated to disseminating knowledge about the dark chapters of European history, explicitly emphasising the atrocities perpetrated by totalitarian regimes. The overarching goal is to avert the recurrence of such crimes and contribute to establishing a more resilient and democratic Europe. By fostering dialogue and understanding, the PEMC aims to strengthen democratic values and promote a shared European memory.



OUR GOALS:

to increase public awareness about European history and the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes and to encourage a broad, European-wide discussion about the causes and consequences of totalitarian rule, as well as about common – European values, with the aim of promoting human dignity and human rights

to help prevent intolerance, extremism, anti-democratic movements, and the the recurrence of any totalitarian rule in the future

to work toward creating a Pan-European documentation centre/ memorial for victims of all totalitarian regimes, with the aim of commemorating the victims and raising awareness of the crimes committed by those regimes

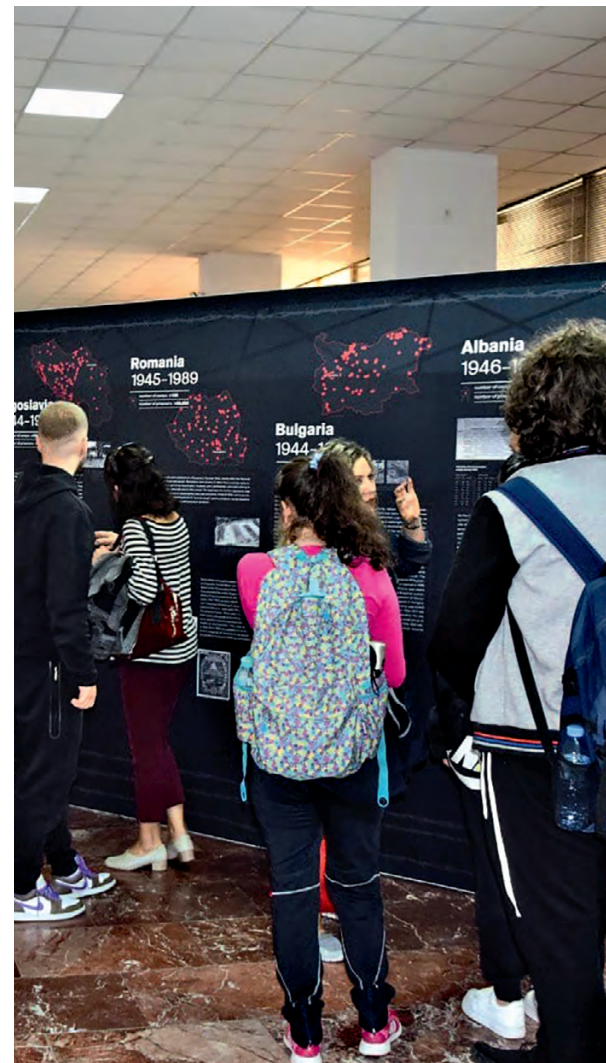
to support initiatives at the European level with a view to giving equal treatment to all crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as to their victims

to contribute to the education of young Europeans about the totalitarian regimes through the development of training courses, teaching curricula, programmes, and aids

to strive to become a partner of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and other organisations in seeking routes toward an honest and open appraisal of Europe's common totalitarian legacy

to contribute toward deepening the integration of all European citizens, furthering the respect and understanding of the essential importance of democracy, human rights, European values, and the rule of law in all of Europe with the goal of avoiding future threats to democracy

to share and exchange knowledge, know-how, and experience with institutions and organisations pursuing analogous goals in other parts of the world."



The Platform unites 72 organisations and institutions from 24 countries across the globe. Our members are leaders in the realms of history, remembrance, and collective memory, each contributing invaluable insights and perspectives to our shared mission. Together, we stand committed to honouring the memory of those who suffered under the yoke of totalitarian regimes, ensuring their stories are never forgotten, and their legacies are upheld with dignity and respect.

We operate as a democratically managed organisation, where each member has the right to vote. Embracing a grassroots approach, we recognise that by amalgamating diverse experiences, perspectives, and skills, we can achieve a synergy that is unparalleled elsewhere. Through inclusive decision-making and collaborative efforts, we harness the collective wisdom and strengths of our members to advance our shared mission and goals.



Member institutions and organisations

(as of 8 December 2023)

Albania

- 1___ Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture
- 2___ Institute for the Integration of Persecuted People in Albania
- 3___ MEMO Center
- 4___ The Institute for the Studies of Communist Crimes and Consequences
- 5___ Kujto Foundation

Bulgaria

- 1___ Citizens' Initiative for Dismantling the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia
Membership suspended by Hannah Arendt Center – Sofia

Canada

- 1___ Czech and Slovak Association of Canada
- 2___ Black Ribbon Day Foundation

Croatia

- 1___ Center for Renewal of Culture (member-candidate)

Czech Republic

- 1___ Association of Former Soldiers of the Auxilliary Technical Battallions – Military Forced Labour Camps with Seat in Prague
- 2___ Centre for Documentation of Totalitarian Regimes
- 3___ Confederation of Political Prisoners of the Czech Republic
- 4___ Memory (Paměť)
- 5___ Political Prisoners.eu
- 6___ Post bellum
- 7___ Prague Academic Club 48
- 8___ Security Services Archive
- 9___ The Memory Traces
- 10___ The Twentieth Century Memorial Museum
- 11___ Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

Estonia

- 1___ Estonian Institute of Historical Memory
- 2___ Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom

France

- 1___ Collège des Bernardins
- 2___ Musée de la Résistance de Limoges (member-candidate)

Georgia

- 1___ Georgian National Museum
- 2___ Museum of Repressed Writers (member-candidate)

Germany

- 1___ Berlin–Hohenschönhausen Memorial
- 2___ International Association of Former Political Prisoners and Victims of Communism
- 3___ Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V.
- 4___ Saxon Memorial Foundation for the Remembrance of Victims of Political Tyranny
- 5___ The Stasi Records Archive (the German Federal Archives),
- 6___ Union of the Associations of the Victims of Communist Tyranny (UOKG)
Membership suspended by Hannah Arendt Society in March 2021

Hungary

- 1___ Hungarian Committee of National Remembrance
- 2___ The Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History
and Society – House of Terror Museum

Iceland

- 1___ Icelandic Research Centre for Innovation and Economic Growth

Italy

- 1___ Gariwo, la foresta dei Giusti

Latvia

- 1___ Koknese Foundation
- 2___ The Occupation Museum Association of Latvia
- 3___ The Occupation of Latvia Research Society

Lithuania

- 1___ Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania
- 2___ Secretariat of The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the
- 3___ Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania

Moldova

- 1___ Centre for the Study of Totalitarianism

Netherlands

- 1___ Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their Victims

Poland

- 1___ Institute of National Remembrance
- 2___ Polish History Museum
- 3___ Remembrance and Future Centre
- 4___ Warsaw Rising Museum
- 5___ Pilecki Institute
- 6___ KARTA Centre Foundation
- 7___ Silesian Centre for Freedom and Solidarity

Romania

- 1___ Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile
- 2___ The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Anticommunist Resistance
- 3___ Timisoara Society
- 4___ Former Deportees from Baragan Association
- 5___ Pitești Prison Memorial Foundation

Slovakia

- 1___ Inconspicuous Heroes
- 2___ Ján Langoš Foundation
- 3___ Nation's Memory Institute
- 4___ Truc sphérique
- 5___ Living Memory

Slovenia

- 1___ Nova slovenska zaveza
- 2___ Study Centre for National Reconciliation
- 3___ Jože Pučnik Institute

Sweden

- 1___ The Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism

Ukraine

- 1___ Centre for Research on the Liberation Movement
- 2___ Foundation to Preserve the History of Maidan
- 3___ Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People
- 4___ National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide
- 5___ UIPN State Archive

United Kingdom

- 1___ Museum of Communist Terror

United States of America

- 1___ Joint Baltic American National Committee
- 2___ Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY:

Support the Memorial!

Join many heads of state, dozens of MEPs, hundreds of institutional leaders, over 70 Platform members, and hundreds of thousands of supporters worldwide who are backing the Memorial project.

Your support is crucial in making this vision a reality and honouring the memory of all the victims of totalitarianism!
Together, let's build the Memorial!

#neveragain

Visit our website and see how
you can support the project
memorialbrussels.eu

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Dear Reader,

"An Echo in Time" is a brilliant design that enables us to fulfil the provisions of the European Parliament's resolution and, foremost, honour the hope entrusted to us by countless individuals who deeply care about this critical issue. At the heart of our mission lies a profound belief: by remembering past lessons, we fortify ourselves against the recurrence of atrocities from the past. We firmly hold that the act of remembrance serves as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path toward a future where the shadows of totalitarianism can never again darken our world. Simply, the past must be kept alive for the sake of future generations.

The Memorial will encapsulate the essence of the peaceful and democratic European Union, emphasising the lessons learned from its totalitarian past and the commitment to preventing history from repeating itself. Tszwai So's design is undeniably "beautiful, meaningful and moves the heart". It embodies universal values that resonate with people from all walks of life. Simultaneously, it carries a deep emotional resonance, stirring the hearts of those who encounter it. This project is not about taking something away but about giving something bigger back to the community.

We envision the creation of the Memorial as a collaborative effort involving scholars, specialists, public opinion leaders, authorities from Brussels and the European Union, and all Europeans. Everyone should play a part in this project to truly make it Pan-European. This is not just the Platform's project; in a sense, it belongs to all of us.

Moreover, the Memorial will serve as more than just a place of remembrance. Integrating modern technologies, it will become a portal to a deeper understanding of our shared history—a history we must continually learn from. In this context, the Documentation Center emerges as a symbol of enlightenment and empathy, underscoring our collective commitment to honouring the past, educating the present, and shaping a brighter future.

No society is immune to historical manipulation and disinformation, which can serve as fuel for exclusivist policies and incite hatred and racism. Defending democracy and upholding human rights is an ongoing endeavour, and history and remembrance can be powerful tools in this effort.

Remembrance of the past is crucial for shaping the future of Europe. The Memorial project represents a significant stride forward—a bold but necessary step in our collective journey.

Let's build it together!

Wojciech Bednarski

Programme Manager and the Memorial Project Leader



An Echo in Time.

Pan-European Memorial
for the Victims of
Totalitarianism in Brussels

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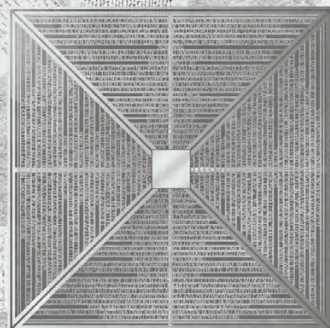


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