

The Monument is A Dilemma

The Monument is A Forest Nursery

The Monument is A Process

The Monument may be A Failure

The Monument may be A Forest

The plan to erect a monument “From Those You Saved” requires the creation of a \*We (“Those”). We believe that the debates among the potential protagonists of that \*We represent a unique asset that should be incorporated into the monument.

At its grand opening, the monument is not a forest but a forest nursery. After its opening, a social discourse will aim to create the \*We and decide on the future of the monument as a forest, that is, enable it to become a forest - at a location to be decided. The monument is then not only the forest nursery but also the process, which will take place in cooperation with the Polin Museum and is limited to 18 months in duration.

The forest shall eventually be planted permanently in an urban location in Warsaw as a participatory process. The urban location of the forest represents the alienating character of the helping action, of the saving, which was only carried out by a minority of Poles who often remained isolated after 1945. The forest as a monument represents ambiguity. The forest was a place of death, where Jews were killed by execution and in Nazi concentration camps. But the forest was also a hide-out, a place of survival and a place of resistance. Who helped Jews, who saved Jews? It will never be possible to set ultimate criteria, to pinpoint exact numbers. These questions can only be answered with ambiguity. That very ambiguity is represented in the monument.

If the \*We fails to materialize and reach an agreement, there will be no forest and the monument fails as well - due to the diminutive nature of the forest nursery and the ephemeral nature of its trees, which would have no space to grow. This inherent fragility is an intricate part of the monument, without which it could not achieve its full dimension. The potential inability to express gratitude as a \*We is an intrinsic feature of the entire project from the outset.

Ten Pomnik to Dylemat

Ten Pomnik to Szkołka leśna

Ten Pomnik to Proces

Ten Pomnik może być Niepowodzeniem

Ten Pomnik może być Lasem

Plan wzniesienia pomnika “Od tych, których uratowaliście” wymaga stworzenia przestrzeni, w której mogłoby powstać zbiorowe \*My (uratowani). Wierzmy, że dyskusje toczone między potencjalnymi aktorami tego \*My mogą stanowić niepowtarzalną wartość, która powinna być częścią pomnika.

W chwili inauguracji pomnik będzie nie lasem lecz szkołką leśną. Jednym z celów dyskusji, którą chcemy wywołać, jest wyłonienie zbiorowego \*My, jak również podjęcie wspólnej decyzji co do przyszłości pomnika jako lasu – umożliwienia mu stania się lasem rosnącym w ustalonej lokalizacji. Pomnik jest więc nie tylko szkołką leśną, lecz również zakrojonym na 18 miesięcy procesem, odbywającym się wraz z Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich POLIN.

Sadzenie lasu w przestrzeni miejskiej Warszawy winno być procesem partycypacyjnym. Miejska lokalizacja lasu symbolizuje wyobcowanie pomocy – akcji ratowania Żydów – przedsięwziętej przez mniejszość polską, w dużej mierze wyizolowanej z dyskursu społeczno-politycznego po 1945 r. Las jako pomnik reprezentuje niejednoznaczność. Las to przeszłe miejsce śmierci, miejsce, w którym dokonywano egzekucji Żydów z niemieckich obozów nazistowskich. Las był również kryjówką, miejscem przetrwania, miejscem oporu. Kto pomagał Żydom? Kto ratował Żydów? Nigdy nie będzie możliwym ostateczne ustalenie kryteriów, które pozwolą na precyzyjne określenie liczby tych ludzi. Te pytania są skazane na niejednoznaczne odpowiedzi. Tą niejednoznaczność reprezentuje pomnik.

Jeśli stworzenie \*MY nie powiedzie się, nie będzie również lasu. Pomnik stanie się niepowodzeniem, jeśli drzewa efemerycznej szkołki leśnej nie będą miały przestrzeni do wyrośnięcia. Kruchość pomnika jest warunkiem koniecznym do osiągnięcia jego potencjalnej wielkości. Potencjalna niemożność wyrażenia kolektywnej wdzięczności – wdzięczności \*Nas – jest nieodłącznie wpisana w projekt od jego początku.

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The plan to erect a monument dedicated to Poles who saved Jewish lives is exceptional because it is to be established by “Those You Saved”, by Jews who want to commemorate the righteous, those who saved their lives or the lives of their family members. This special characteristic represents the project’s greatest advantage and, at the same time, poses its greatest hurdle, resulting in the following dilemma.

First and foremost, erecting the monument is urgent. Time is passing and 70 years after the end of Nazism both those who saved and those who were saved are dwindling in numbers. Therefore a core priority of the project should be to waste as little time as possible and open the monument as soon as is feasible. But this is not an easy task if the inherent logic of the project is to be adhered to. Erecting a monument “From Those You Saved” requires two steps which both involve a time-consuming process: 1) the creation of a \*We, supporting the monument, 2) joint decision-making, e.g. where is the best location for the monument.

We believe that the emotional debates among the potential protagonists of that \*We result from this dilemma, that on the one hand time is passing and it is urgent that action be taken soon and, on the other hand, due to its very nature, the project itself necessitates prolonged involved discourse. However, we believe these debates are hardly a bitter pill to be swallowed; rather they represent a unique asset and should be deliberately incorporated into the monument. The dilemma is an asset.

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At its grand opening, the monument is not a forest but rather a forest nursery. It is the vision of a forest, that must be enabled by the \*We. If the \*We fails, there will be no forest and the monument fails as well. The fragility of the monument is the precondition for achieving its potential magnitude.

The forest nursery is located in a large, raised bed behind the Polin Museum, a formal reference to the small hill upon which stands the historic linden tree, the only remnant of the pre-Ghetto period. The forest nursery consists of the following trees, all common in Warsaw: lime, ash-tree, aspen, birch, hornbeam, field maple, norway maple, common oak tree, common alder. The trees - as two-year saplings - are planted in close proximity to each other (30-40 cm) and arranged in double rows with an aisle of 70-80 cm. Due to the rough figures, the number of trees can only be estimated (~4.000). This approximate number is not to be communicated publicly. In any case, the number will change over the course of time since some of the trees planted will not grow roots, a perfectly normal occurrence in a nursery. The raised bed will be bordered by a wooden structure; one of the sides will serve as a display to communicate information about the monument and its development.

The forest nursery takes into consideration the fact that the park is used intensely by the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Furthermore, it maintains the image of urban life of contemporary Warsaw, seen when standing within the museum and looking out through the large window at the park.

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After the opening of the monument in the form of the forest nursery, a social discourse will aim to create the \*We. This body will then decide on the future of the monument and enable it to become a forest. The protagonists of this process are Jews who were saved or their family members who have a sincere interest in erecting a monument to the righteous Poles and who have contributed to the discussion so far.

This process should consist of a symposium, workshops and discussions. The precise method shall be agreed upon by the foundation and the museum in dialogue. The discussion process is an essential part of the monument project, therefore its costs shall be covered by the project budget. The result of the process should be a joint decision on 1) creating the \*We, 2) defining exactly to whom the monument is addressed, 3) how to transform the forest nursery into a forest and where to locate it.

The duration of the process is limited to 18 months - the time span, in which the forest nursery can be sustained without requiring transplanting. Since the monument is spatially and discursively linked to the Polin Museum and the museum is dedicated to Jewish life, the process of discussion shall take place in the museum.

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In case the creation of the \*We fails or in case the created \*We is unable to agree on how to proceed with the monument, the forest nursery remains in place and the monument fails. This failure would manifest itself in the diminutive nature of the forest nursery, which never became a forest and in the ephemeral nature of its trees, which would not have space to grow. The potential inability to express gratitude as a \*We is thus an intrinsic feature of the entire project from the outset.

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The main reason for planting a forest as a monument is the ambiguity represented by the forest. This ambiguity parallels the ambiguity of saving Jewish lives and the ambiguous history of how those actions have been dealt with in Poland from the end of the German occupation to the present day. The forest was a place of death, where Jews were killed by execution. The forest was a place where many Nazi concentration camps were located. But the forest was also a hide-out, a place of survival and a place of resistance. Who helped Jews, who saved Jews? It will never be possible to set ultimate criteria; it will never be possible to pinpoint exact numbers. These questions can only be answered with ambiguity. And that very ambiguity should be represented in the monument.

The forest shall be planted in an urban location in Warsaw – wherever that may be: in the park next to the museum, in one of the sites mentioned in the current debate or in any other place that the \*We comes up with during the discussion process. The forest is being planted as a participatory process, which includes

members of the \*We and Polish civil society who agree with the character of the project. The urban location of the forest is key because it represents the alienating character of the helping action, of the saving, which was only carried out by a minority of Poles who, in many cases, remained isolated after the end of the German occupation due to Polish anti-Semitism.

The forest can bear any shape as long as it includes the two proposed glades which mirror the two monuments for the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. They remind us of those who were not helped, those who were not saved and – in the case of a different location – remind us of the place where the monument originated.