

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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A six-foot scale model of Louis Kahn's Monument to the Six Million Jewish Martyrs will have its first public showing at The Museum of Modern Art from October 17 through November 15. Commissioned by the Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs representing nearly 50 national and local Jewish organizations, the monument was designed for a site in Battery Park, alongside the Promenade near the Emma Lazarus Tablet and overlooking the Statue of Liberty. It has been approved in principle by the Parks Department and by the City Art Commission, and it is hoped that work can be completed by 1970.

Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, says that the monument offers a physical embodiment of hope as well as despair. It consists of seven glass piers each 10' square and 11' high placed on a 66' square granite pedestal. The center pier has been given the character of a small chapel into which people may enter. The walls of the chapel will be inscribed. The six piers around the center, all of equal dimensions, are blank. "The one - the chapel - speaks; the other six are silent," the architect says.

The piers are constructed of solid blocks of glass that interlock without the use of mortar. "Changes of light, the seasons of the year, the play of the weather, and the drama of movement on the river will transmit their life to the monument," Mr. Kahn says.

Louis Kahn was selected to design the monument by an Art Advisory Committee of architects, art historians, and museum curators, under the chairmanship of David Lloyd Kreeger, Washington attorney, Jewish community leader, and art patron. (List attached)

Monuments to those of all faiths martyred during World War II have been built in Paris, West Berlin, and Jerusalem, as well as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy, Mr. Drexler points out. "The martyrdom of 6,000,000 Jews during World War II was a catastrophe of such magnitude that, for many people, neither philosophy nor religion can calm the emotional and intellectual turmoil bequeathed to us. But whatever our private thoughts on the problem of genocide may be, the event itself, however unbearable, must not be banished from memory."

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

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COMMITTEE TO COMMEMORATE THE SIX MILLION JEWISH MARTYRS

ART ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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The martyrdom of 6,000,000 Jews during World War II was a catastrophe of such magnitude that, for many people, neither philosophy nor religion can calm the emotional and intellectual turmoil bequeathed to us. But whatever our private thoughts on the problem of genocide may be, the event itself, however unbearable, must not be banished from memory.

Monuments to those of all faiths martyred during World War II have been built in Paris, West Berlin, and Jerusalem, as well as in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Italy. For many years interested persons have contemplated the construction of such a monument in New York City. The project exhibited here is the culmination of their effort.

Designed by Louis Kahn for a site in Battery Park, the monument offers a physical embodiment of hope as well as despair. It consists of a granite pedestal on which are placed seven glass piers, so that, in the architect's words, "the sun could come through and leave a shadow filled with light".

The monument is indeed an environment of light created by an arrangement of seven piers, the center pier being given the character of a small chapel into which people may enter. The walls of this chapel will be inscribed. The six piers around the center, all of equal dimensions, are blank. "The one—the chapel—speaks; the other six are silent."

"The six and one stand on a granite base, 66' square and high enough so that people may sit on its edge. Each glass pier is 10' square and 11' high. The space separating each pier, in a pattern of repose and restraint, is equal to the dimension of the pier itself.

"The piers are constructed with solid blocks of glass placed one over the other and interlocking without the use of mortar. The entire construction will be evident as one looks through each pier and through the entire composition of piers. Changes of light, the seasons of the year, the play of the weather and the drama of movement on the river will transmit their life to the monument."

The design has been approved in principle by the Parks Department and by the City Art Commission; it is hoped that work can be completed by 1970.

MEMORIAL TO THE SIX MILLION JEWISH MARTYRS

A BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

For many years, the Jewish community labored long and hard to build a suitable memorial and monument to our 6,000,000 martyred brothers. On a number of occasions, committees were formed to attain this goal but, for a variety of reasons, they were unsuccessful.

At the end of 1965 more than 30 national and local Jewish organizations met to form a Committee to Commemorate the Six Million Jewish Martyrs. Other groups indicated an interest. This was the first unified, major commitment of the large American Jewish community to create such a memorial.

The Committee continued to enlarge its support among Jewish organizations and agreed to seek two specific objectives:

1. Initially, to erect a unique monument to the martyrs, in a city which has the largest Jewish population of any in the world and is the gateway to the United States.
2. To then attempt to build a Memorial House, as a living tribute to the generations which will never be born.

Considerable time and effort were expended to locate a suitable site, and assure approval by the responsible city officials. Finally, a site at the foot of Battery Park was approved, on the promenade overlooking the Statue of Liberty and near the historic Castle Garden. It also adjoins a tribute plaque to Emma Lazarus.

To assure the project's success, the noted art collector and Jewish communal leader, Mr. David Lloyd Kreeger, agreed to assemble a prestigious Art Committee. He gathered a number of America's outstanding art experts, curators and architects as advisors, including Philip Johnson, Percival Goodman, Thomas Buechner, H. Harvard Arnason, and Abram Lerner. The noted architect, Professor Louis I. Kahn of Philadelphia, who is also designing the "World Synagogue" in Jerusalem, was unanimously designated to render the design. Throughout, noted Jewish scholars, writers, philosophers and religious personalities were consulted.

There have been many meetings with Prof. Kahn, the Art Committee, representatives of all interested sponsoring organizations, and the appropriate municipal agencies. Out of this deliberative process, we have developed what we believe is a most unusual design for the monument.

It is to consist of six pillars, eleven feet in height and fashioned out of a unique glass. A seventh central pillar, of a different hue, on which appropriate English, Yiddish and Hebrew inscriptions shall be etched, will be protected by the other pillars. A distinguished committee of religious personalities and scholars is to be designated to select the suitable inscriptions.

Surrounding this glass monument will be landscaping and benches, to accommodate passing visitors or group meetings. When completed, the monument will be a remembrance not only to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust but to all of those destroyed by the Nazi juggernaut. It will also remind future generations, of all faiths, that the beast in man can be unleashed if we do not remain vigilant.

We are now entering the final phase of our fulfillment of this sacred obligation. We will have to prepare and organize a campaign to raise the funds required for the design, the casting of the special glass, the construction and the landscaping. To this end, we will need the involvement and support of large numbers of persons active and interested in Jewish life.

To complete the task of remembrance and rededication, we must renew our energies to build and dedicate this monument.

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