AJ THE ARCHITECTS' JOURNAL

Holocaust Memorial contest: What the jury heard

18 September, 2017 By Merlin Fulcher

AJ competitions editor *Merlin Fulcher* watched Norman Foster, David Adjaye and Daniel Libeskind, among others, present their proposals for a £40 million monument at yesterday's public judging session

Ten star-studded teams including architects Foster + Partners, Zaha Hadid Architects and Heneghan Peng, together with artists and historians such as Rachel Whiteread and Simon Schama, met for a day-long series of public presentations in front of judges yesterday (17 September).

The highly unusual public event, inside the Victoria and Albert Museum's main lecture theatre, was held ahead of a closed session of interviews today which is expected to conclude with the selection of the winner.

The proposed £40 million monument for Victoria Tower Gardens next to the Houses of Parliament has been billed as a 'national asset for remembrance and education sited at the heart of our democracy'. Backed by the UK government, the commission is one of the most eagerly awaited public projects in recent years.

Once completed, the memorial and learning centre will commemorate the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, as well as the Roma, Sinti, homosexuals and disabled people who were also victims.

Although the site for the memorial has already proved controversial, none of the presenting teams questioned the location or mentioned issues such as flooding or security.

The judges, who were officially advised by Malcolm Reading of competition organiser Malcolm Reading Consultants, were introduced to a wide variety of responses, covering almost every scale, interior, exterior, orientation and programmatic approach to what could be built on the Thames-side plot.

The jury was led by TV executive Peter Bazalgette, a former chair of Arts Council England, and also included UK chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and holocaust survivor Ben Helfgott. They were shown large metaphysical sculptures, submerged ambiguous spaces, interactive artworks and highly contextual, evocative forms.

Here is the AJ's verdict on how the different schemes fared on the day.

1. Which proposal for the Holocaust Memorial do you like best?

- Adjaye Associates
- Allied Works
- Caruso St John
- Diamond Schmitt Architects
- Heneghan Peng Architects
- John McAslan + Partners
- Lahdelma &

Adjaye Associates (UK) with Ron Arad Associates, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, DHA, All Clear, Accept & Proceed, Abigail Morris, and Jonathan Safran Foer

Adjaye Associates (UK) with Ron Arad Associates, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, DHA, All Clear, Accept & Proceed, Abigail Morris, and Jonathan Safran Foer

Source: © Adjaye Associates & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Adjaye Associates (UK) with Ron Arad Associates, Gustafson Porter + Bowman, DHA, All Clear, Accept & Proceed, Abigail Morris, and Jonathan Safran Foer

Setting out his take on the brief, David Adjaye described the project as a second-generation monument intended to ‘expand the ripple’ beyond the first-generation monuments that simply memorialised the people lost. At the heart of his proposal is the idea of Victoria Tower Gardens as a site of ‘consciousness for the nation’ in which the new memorial plays a role intricately linked to the existing Pankhurst Statue, Buxton Memorial and Burghers of Calais.

‘We thought it important not to dispute the relationship between the rows of trees and the perspective of parliament,’ said Neil Porter of Gustafson Porter + Bowman. ‘The three monuments link together in seeking out injustice and resolving it. The idea was to create a route which links them towards a final memorial set further away from parliament which bristled in the distances, something you eye would be caught by.’

At ground level, the memorial features 23 walls which create 22 passageways leading into the learning centre and referencing the 22 countries where Jews were exterminated. Commenting on the this, Israeli-born Ron Arad said: ‘I come from a place where discussing the holocaust was like the weather, it was always a group thing, a communal thing. Here, when you enter this, the passages are very narrow and you will experience it momentarily on your own.’

Inside the centre is a vaulted hall and chambers containing the testimonials of holocaust survivors as well as a shaft of light preparing visitors to leave. ‘You leave and there are lights and there is the world,’ Arad said. ‘But let’s not forget what sometimes unfortunately and sadly lurks underground.’

Competition editor’s verdict

This is undoubtedly among the top five proposals seen by the judges, and a strong contender for the commission. The memorial and learning centre is positioned the furthest from parliament of all the concepts, and potentially make the least impact on the park itself. But the concept doesn’t hold back on architectural statement in any way. The below-ground spaces are also extremely well thought out with an appropriate weighting towards the British experience. Possibly the most compelling of all.

Allied Works (USA) with Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Robert Montgomery, OLIN, and Lisa Strausfeld

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Allied Works' vision, outlined by principal Brad Cloepfil, eschewed creating yet another 'icon', instead focusing on the 'power and intimacy and the ability of a voice to transcend time'. Intended as a sacred space and sanctuary for survivors' voices, the proposal is based on an ancient Jewish prayer shawl which is a symbol of refuge and meditation.

Inside the structure are five rooms, which recall distinctive stages within the Holocaust: incitement, escalation and annihilation, and the courage and resilience of survivors. The final space focuses on contemporary vigilance with provision for community uses and serves as a hub for other related exhibitions in London and beyond.

Above ground, the team would create an entrance opposite Dean Stanley Street and relocate the Buxton Memorial adjacent to the playground. Snowdrops and bluebells will articulate the shawl in an ephemeral way with a blue and white colour scheme, while a flower market and a seed exchange would also be added to the playground.

Artistic collaborator Robert Montgomery said: 'Our proposal is more a garden and devotional space, and my contribution is a poem of conscience. Monuments don't stop atrocities, broken-heartedness stops things from happening again. The question for this monument is: how do we stay broken-hearted as a society in the decades after the holocaust generation has gone?'

> *When we are sleeping aeroplanes carrying memories*
> *Of the horrors we have given our silent consent to*
> *Fly into the night skies of our cities to gather like clouds*
> *And condense into our dreams before morning*
>
> *Poem by Robert Montgomery*

Competition editor's verdict

One of three proposals that shouldn't have made the final shortlist. A beautiful and compelling concept but one that fails to engage at any great depth with the unique character of the British experience, both in its sculptural form and its interior spaces. Its proposal to move the Buxton Memorial seems unnecessary.

Zaha Hadid Architects (UK) with Anish Kapoor, Event London, Sophie Walker Studio, Lord Cultural Resources, Arup Lighting Design, Whybrow, and Access=Design

Zaha Hadid Architects (UK) with Anish Kapoor, Event London, Sophie Walker Studio, Lord Cultural Resources, Arup Lighting Design, Whybrow, and Access=Design

Source: © Anish Kapoor and Zaha Hadid Architects & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Zaha Hadid Architects (UK) with Anish Kapoor, Event London, Sophie Walker Studio, Lord Cultural Resources, Arup Lighting Design, Whybrow, and Access=Design

Artist Anish Kapoor opened the team's presentation by declaring that a true memorial was not simply an object but a 'private act of engagement with a place or monument which evokes the sign of the events to be remembered.' He proposed a processional zone entered through a grove of trees 'like the sober and formal pillars of religious buildings', leading to an inner sanctum which 'concentrates the mind and formalises the body'.

At its heart is a huge 80m-tall and 20m-diameter bronze wedged in a square aperture in the ground – 'sitting between ground, underworld and sky' and seemingly 'cast of heat, dark and charred earth.' Intended to look like a meteorite, the sculpture dominates the learning centre's main ceremonial gathering space, which is accessed by stairs that double up as amphitheatre seating.

Around the memorial hall are galleries and museum spaces, while the interior of the sculpture itself features a concrete spherical chamber 10m in diameter, small enough for quiet reflection but also 'big enough to inspire a sense of awe'. Jim Heverin of Zaha Hadid Architects described how the 19m-wide steps descending into the sanctuary could hold up to 1,000 people during major events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, but also function as an 'everyday space where people can sit, have lunch, as much part of the gardens as the learning centre'.

Kapoor said: 'We have made our memorial as a series of spaces which are open to everyone. This memorial we feel addresses the terrible history of the holocaust but also in our troubled world it is open to people of all faiths in acknowledgement of our shared humanity.'

Competition editor's verdict

A grand statement which will test the jury's appetite for making bold interventions in this historic public space. The amphitheatre seating will create an awesome and highly meaningful venue for major ceremonies, creating a visual boost on local, national and international scales for such activities. The journey inside the sculpture could be problematic, but the concept remains a very strong contender to win.

Caruso St John (UK) with Rachel Whiteread, Marcus Taylor, Vogt Landscape Architects, Arup Lighting Design, and David Bonnett Associates

Caruso St John (UK) with Rachel Whiteread, Marcus Taylor, Vogt Landscape Architects, Arup Lighting Design, and David Bonnett Associates

Source: © Caruso St John Architects, Marcus Taylor and Rachel Whiteread & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Caruso St John (UK) with Rachel Whiteread, Marcus Taylor, Vogt Landscape Architects, Arup Lighting Design, and David Bonnett Associates

Artist Rachel Whiteread began by explaining the central role of the testament of the survivors. ‘Our intention is their voices become the irrefutable solid filling the empty space of the hall and the casks above, as architects and artist are providing the framework for those voices,’ she said.

The proposal takes the Buxton Memorial as the basis for a cast to create a series of objects that are beacons above ground while also lighting the exhibition space below. Seen from the park, the arrangement features one large lantern and eight smaller lanterns, which could be used like a menorah during Hanukkah.

Each structure would also serve as an oculus, lighting the cave-like below-ground areas. These will feature the voices of the survivors arranged in an ‘organic fashion’ with no single or prescribed route to follow. Interior walls will be constructed of undulating concrete, reminiscent of curtains or drapery, suggesting something beyond and will also feature alcoves for contemplation.

Peter St John of Caruso St John said the monument set out to bring ‘an atmosphere of serious and stillness to the middle of the park’, which would not be so heavy as to infringe on other uses such as sunbathing or festivities. ‘The idea is all aspects above and below are linked by light, the light of the sky, the reflected light of the river, and light from above and below,’ he said. ‘This quality of the monument will be seen from outside the park, from across the river and from the bridges around.’

Competition editor’s verdict

A beautiful and supremely thoughtful proposal, which could create a new and highly memorable object out of an existing locally recognisable structure. The test will be whether jurors place their confidence in this image as a new vessel for communicating the British experience. As an illuminated gem next to the Thames, its contribution to the city – like the many Holocaust survivors and refugees who made the UK their home – would be exquisite.

Diamond Schmitt Architects (CA) with Martha Schwartz Partners, and Ralph Appelbaum Associates

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Source: © Diamond Schmitt Architects & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Diamond Schmitt Architects (CA) with Martha Schwartz Partners, and Ralph Appelbaum Associates

Martin Davidson, principal at Diamond Schmitt Architects described Victoria Tower Gardens as a remarkable site that needed to be enhanced. He said: ‘We decided early on that our focus was on a memorial and not a monument; a place of quiet repose separate from the city.’ Aiming to ‘take part in the life of the park without taking away from it,’ the project features a raised amphitheatre along with an oval-shaped memorial accessed by a downward sloping ramp together occupying less than two per cent of the green space.

Studio founder Jack Diamond said: ‘The journey starts at the ramp, and light diminishes as one descends into the memorial in the shape of an oval, representing the present of a terrible absence.’ The walls feature the names of concentration camps and feature markers representing the six million lives lost.

Triangular glass panels inserted into floor and ceiling will depict a large star of David and other logos of persecuted groups. Instead of tickets, visitors will receive smart wristbands which allow them to customise the information they receive by geography and age group. At the end of the journey they will also be invited to place a pebble on a symbolic gravestone as an act of personal remembrance.

Davidson said: ‘The learning centre must actively enable emotional learning. Visitors, especially young ones, may have very different emotional factors. Impact is created when you are changed by a memory; this is where “never forget” becomes “never again”.’

Competition editor’s verdict

Another less distinctive proposal, somewhat overshadowed by schemes presented later in the day offering similar but improved courtyard concepts. The glass floor would create a meaningful image from above and a statement that many of the other contenders possibly overlooked.

Foster + Partners (UK) with Michal Rovner and Future\Pace, Local Projects, Avner Shalev, Simon Schama, Samantha Heywood, Tillotson Design Associates, David Bonnett Associates, and Whybrow

Foster + Partners (UK) with Michal Rovner and Future\Pace, Local Projects, Avner Shalev, Simon Schama, Samantha Heywood, Tillotson Design Associates, David Bonnett Associates, and Whybrow

Source: © Foster + Partners and Michal Rovner & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Foster + Partners (UK) with Michal Rovner and Future\Pace, Local Projects, Avner Shalev, Simon Schama, Samantha Heywood, Tillotson Design Associates, David Bonnett Associates, and Whybrow

Norman Foster, senior partner Michael Jones, artist Michal Rovner and historian Simon Schama opted for a panel discussion-style seating arrangement instead of sharing the lectern. Following introductions, the team screened a short film narrated by Foster featuring extracts of Rovner's work recreating haunting drawings created by children inside the death camps.

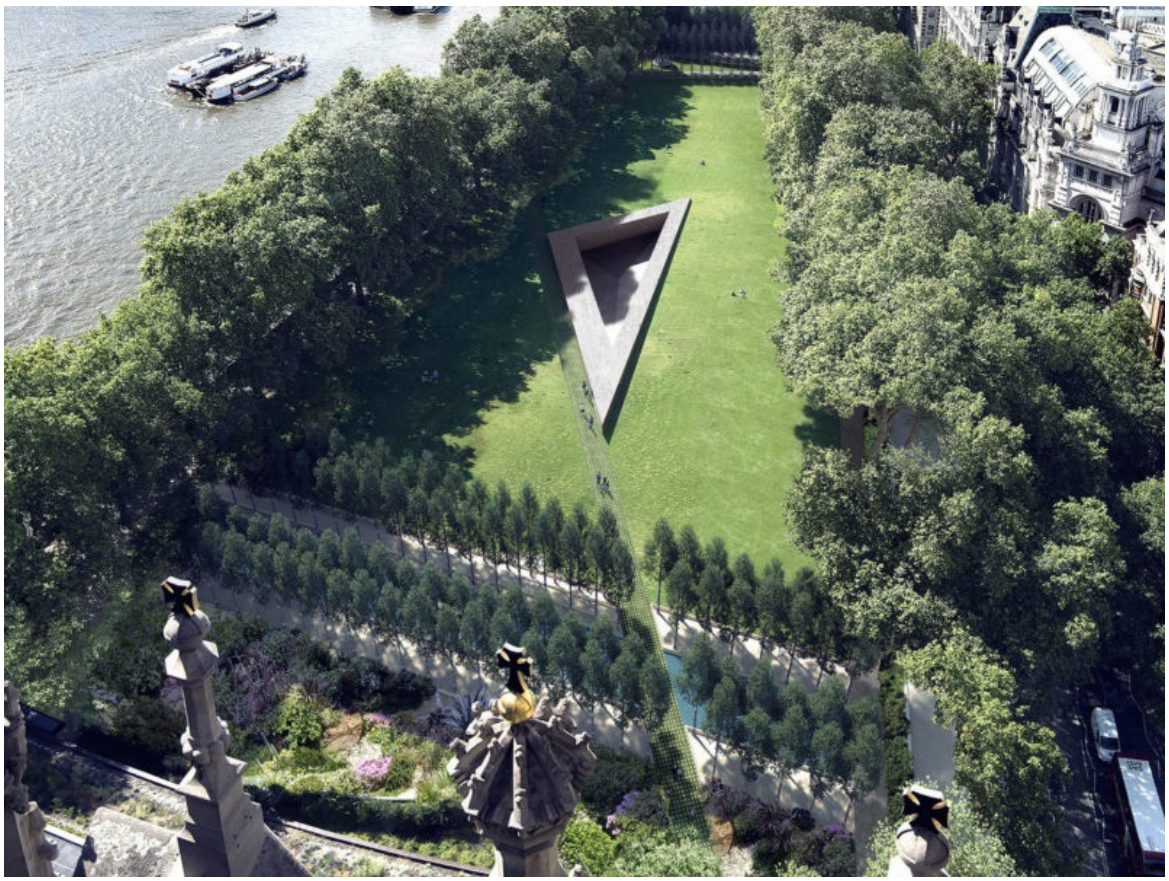
Describing the collaboration, Foster said: 'We've come together 17 times in three different cities. When we saw the site together for the first time, we were moved by the normality of the gardens, and asked ourselves how can we remove ourselves from this normality to enter another world.' The memorial opens with a sculpture reminiscent of the 1933 book-burnings and features a simple linear journey, evocative of the railway tracks into the camps, down a ramp to a submerged room featuring an artwork by Rovner of 60,000 moving figures 'which could be them, or could be us'.

Schama commented: ‘Nothing could be more opposite to the space of freedom experienced by people in these gardens than the holocaust. It was a wound opened on the body of space and freedom; you want to open that wound.’ In an apparent swipe at rival proposals, he added: ‘There is almost nothing you can make as a work of visual or artistic statement which could be commensurable with the enormity of the tragedy. Yyou want something that avoids hyperbole. This proposal has a modesty of moral compression. It doesn’t come to the gardens and say: ‘I am art, I am sculpture’; it is a place you can choose to enter modestly into this experience.’

Competition editor’s verdict

It was very clear that in choosing this proposal the jury would also be choosing a team. And working with this team would be an extraordinary experience. The scheme was deeply powerful and moving and would resonate internationally as one of the world’s greatest public artworks. But more detail could have been given on the ‘flexible space’ where the British experience is meant to be articulated.

Heneghan Peng Architects (IE) and Sven Anderson with Gustafson Porter, Event, Bruce Mau Design, BuroHappold Engineering, Bartenbach, and Duncan Boddy (PFB Construction)



Heneghan Peng Architects (IE) with Gustafson Porter, Event, Bruce Mau Design, BuroHappold Engineering, Bartenbach, and Duncan Boddy (PFB Construction)

Source: © heneghan peng architects & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Heneghan Peng Architects (IE) with Gustafson Porter + Bowman, Event, Bruce Mau Design, BuroHappold Engineering, Bartenbach, and Duncan Boddy (PFB Construction)

Shih-Fu Peng of Heneghan Peng Architects took to the stage with sound artist Sven Anderson and Kathryn Gustafson of Gustafson Porter – also part of the Adjaye team – standing solemnly and close together by the lectern. Their concept is a centrally located 'triangular incision', creating a sunken courtyard sheltered from the noise of the city and surrounded by a larger submerged learning centre in a similar shape.

Visitors pass through new formal landscaping in the park and enter the form through a series of ramps, which transport them down into the main memorial space. Once inside, they find themselves in a solemn and safe place positioned between two triangles: one framing the sky, the other the ground. Along the walls are hundreds of niches containing wooden blocks, which can be touched to hear survivors' testimonies.

Peng said: 'The middle of the garden is the quietest place of all. The memorial itself – not just the learning centre – should hold these testimonies and nothing in between to create a heightened sense of listening, pause and reflect.' The learning centre is accessed from the memorial space and features education and social spaces with its submerged triangular form intentionally visible from above. When visitors leave, they return up a series of intimate ramps contained within the memorial's perimeter walls.

Gustafson commented: The site is a clarion between the Thames and the city, we chose the quietest, calmest part of the park. Our landscaping is about threshold and the journey of those taken from their homes and on to the death camp. After visiting the memorial you come back out into the light and sky, the reassuring openness of tolerance and democracy.'

Competition editor's verdict

Perhaps the strongest architecturally and the strongest treatment of survivors' voices. Definitely one of the top five contenders. The elegant structure benefits from minimal landscaping in its immediate curtilage but the planting and water feature nearby feels visually harsh (at least in the renders).

John McAslan + Partners (UK) with MASS Design Group, DP9, London Communications Agency, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Local Projects, Modus Operandi, JencksSquared, and Lily Jencks Studio

John McAslan + Partners (UK) with MASS Design Group, DP9, London Communications Agency, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Local Projects, Modus Operandi, JencksSquared, and Lily Jencks Studio

Source: © John McAslan + Partners and MASS Design Group & Malcolm Reading Consultants

John McAslan + Partners (UK) with MASS Design Group, DP9, London Communications Agency, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Local Projects, Modus Operandi, JencksSquared, and Lily Jencks Studio

John McAslan, studio partner Hannah Lawson, Michael Murphy of MASS Design Group and Lily Jencks introduced their proposal as a team. McAslan said the idea was to memorialise loss while also creating sanctuary which relates to its civic surroundings, to form an environment where ‘spatial gravity is engrossing and where civility, knowledge and personal reactions coexist.’

The central concept of the memorial is a mound of six million ‘visitation stones’ symbolising the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Each stone is created from granite extracted from quarries set up by the Nazis as concentration camps. The ‘restorative justice’ concept invites visitors to take a stone home with them as a symbolic representation of the diaspora and a personal commitment against intolerance.

Explaining the concept, Murphy said: ‘We propose a memorial can do more change than what we understand a memorial can achieve. We need memorials that demand we participate, that we have a role in their making. It must do more than just mark; it must force us to act and remember the seeds of evil are in us, but also the seeds of courage. To fight to advance history forward with our own moral resolves.’ Once all the stones have been taken, in their place will be an open amphitheatre for discussions and meditation at the heart of the city.

Lawson described how visitors approach the monument via a narrowing path which travels directly towards the ‘overwhelming construct’ of the six million stones. The learning centre, which could be submerged or arranged around the memorial at surface level, features a ‘vast and interactive gallery’ lit by glazed apertures in the memorial walls above.

‘The space is visually accessed using the stone as a key, so everybody understands the true meaning of the preciousness of the lives lost,’ Lawson said. ‘As a visitor you are confronted with a choice, to return the stone, or to take it with you and be a custodian for its future.’

Competition editor’s verdict

Architecturally and conceptually stunning. It is compact, meaningful, inviting and challenging. There are obvious questions over how the visitation stones will work in practice but it is clear the proposal has created a unique bridge to translate the tragedy and its survivors’ stories into a far-reaching commitment to a better future.

Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects (FI) with David Morley Architects, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, and Hemgård Landscape Design

Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects (FI) with David Morley Architects, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, and Hemgård Landscape Design

Source: © Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects and David Morley Architects & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects (FI) with David Morley Architects, Ralph Appelbaum Associates, and Hemgård Landscape Design

David Morley and Rainer Mahlamäki shared the stage for the penultimate presentation of the day. Building on the experience of previous projects such as the Museum of History of Jews in Warsaw, their proposal seeks to respect the openness of the gardens and British democracy while creating a new monument inspired by sky, wind and water and the railway tracks that transported Jews to the death camps.

Mahlamäki said: ‘The concept is based on the idea of two arcs. One arc is the arc of survivors who came to the UK, and another describes the route to the concentration camps. We are symbolically describing the history of Holocaust in the United Kingdom and also on the continent.’ The forms will be created from Cor-ten steel intended to reference the ‘memory of flow and time’.

The immersive learning centre is accessed by a long ramp which accentuates the narrowness of the memorial structure and is marked by a Holy Tree at its entrance. Within the submerged space are exhibition spaces which form part of the interiors. The landscape proposal for the wider park features a series of waves inspired by water droplets which recognise that visitors will arrive from varied directions and therefore ensure the memorial is visible.

Competition editor's verdict

A thoughtful proposal which didn't quite feel unique to London nor with the potential for international recognition the commission requires.

Studio Libeskind (US) with Haptic Architects, Martha Schwartz Partners, Lord Cultural Resources, BuroHappold Engineering, Alan Baxter, Garbers & James, and James E. Young

Studio Libeskind (US) with Haptic Architects, Martha Schwartz Partners, Lord Cultural Resources, BuroHappold Engineering, Alan Baxter, Garbers & James, and James E. Young

Source: © Studio Libeskind and Haptic Architects & Malcolm Reading Consultants

Studio Libeskind (US) with Haptic Architects, Martha Schwartz Partners, Lord Cultural Resources, BuroHappold Engineering, Alan Baxter, Garbers & James, and James E. Young

Daniel and Nina Libeskind shared the stage to present their proposal named The Longest Shadow. The design centres around a large plaza facing away from the Houses of Parliament, which could be used for Holocaust Memorial Day and a long ‘path of hope’ symbolising the *kindertransport* which saved thousands of children from extermination.

Daniel Libeskind said: ‘We wanted to create a monument and a sculptural project which is really minimal and recognises the importance of Victoria tower gardens.’ The plaza is ‘sharp plane’ which conveys visitors towards a large shadow created by an oblique wall of brown reflective metal which offers a bird’s eye view reflection.

Once inside the 2.5m-high space, visitors may either enter the learning centre or leave via the ‘path of hope’. Inside the visitor centre are spaces that slowly descend downwards and go into dead ends offering one way out, the ‘path of hope’ which is constructed of a lighter material, providing a ‘meditation towards the south, towards the light and the sky.’

The path finishes on a new terrace close to the Buxton Memorial, extending beyond the existing embankment wall and into the Thames. Libeskind said: ’When you come out you are on the terrace and it’s very important that when you stand there you are in the beauty if London, the Thames, the water from the English Channel, that was so specific for the UK’s survival and its ultimate victory over fascism.’

Competition editor’s verdict

Very strong and bold, particularly in the decision for darkness to dominate the main gathering space, and for positioning the memorial approach looking away from parliament. The project invites visitors to feel and to see the British experience, and is among the five ideas most worthy of winning.

View from the room … *by Merlin Fulcher*

Sunday’s open presentation day was virtually unprecedented. Rarely is the selection process for such a major nationally important competition made so public.

Certainly the star competitors who rolled out their teams, visuals and model throughout the day are more used to presenting their proposals to powerful juries behind closed doors. For this reason, and the profound gravity of the commission, the atmosphere inside the ornate V&A lecture hall was gripping and every team received the audience’s undivided attention all day long.

Beneath huge paintings of Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren sat hundreds of spectators representing a refreshing balance of older and younger generations. Many attended as families experiencing a weekend together just as many others were out doing similar for Open House. A large number of the audience were clearly young architects and designers keen to witness the masters, such as Foster and Libeskind, responding to one of history’s and architecture’s most challenging briefs.

The judges, organisers and their guests sat separately at the front so only the backs of their heads were visible to the public, who booked free tickets for the 10 presentations split into four separate sections. Each of these chapters opened with a standard introduction by jury chair Peter Bazalgette, after which teams were summoned to the stage.

Each team used the lectern and projector in different ways, with the most powerful being those who played audio recounting survivors' testimony. Some brought huge teams with them while others featured principals alone.

There were no questions. But there were profound moments of silence and reflection as the day unfolded and it became clear the act of choosing a design itself held a sacred dimension.

Once it was over the audience left feeling thoughtful, almost drained. But for the competitors and judges the real work was only just beginning.

Jury in full

- **Peter Bazalgette (chair),** chair, United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation and chair, ITV Board
- **Ephraim Mirvis**, Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom
- **Sajid Javid**, Communities and Local Government secretary
- **Sadiq Khan**, Mayor of London
- **Ben Helfgott**, Holocaust survivor, Honorary President, '45 Aid Society and President, Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
- **Samantha Cohen,** assistant private secretary to The Queen
- **Alice M Greenwald,** director, National September 11 Memorial and Museum
- **Daniel Finkelstein**, journalist
- **Sarah Weir,** CEO of Design Council
- **Julia Peyton-Jones,** former director of the Serpentine Galleries
- **Paul Williams**, director, Stanton Williams Architects
- **Charlotte Cohen**, Prime Minister's Holocaust Youth Commissioner
- **Natasha Kaplinsky,** broadcaster. Kaplinsky recently recorded the testimonies of over 100 Holocaust survivors and camp liberators.

Competition brief/vision (see further details on Malcolm Reading Consultants)

Envisaged as a place for everyone to come to remember the Holocaust, as well as a focal point for annual national commemorations, the memorial will affirm the United Kingdom's commitment to stand up against prejudice and hatred. It is intended to inspire reflection and compassion, and encourage present and future generations to respect and embrace difference. In parallel, a new Learning Centre is planned, subject to technical, financial, planning or other constraints, which will advance Holocaust education across the United Kingdom and help visitors develop a deeper understanding of how societal breakdown can, in the worst cases, lead to genocide.

The memorial's site, alongside the Houses of Parliament at the heart of Britain's democracy, is in Victoria Tower Gardens adjacent to the River Thames. The gardens already have a memorial-narrative inspired by democratic values, which aligns with the project. Three prominent monuments, dating from the mid-to-late 19th and early 20th centuries, commemorate the expansion of suffrage, the abolition of slavery and civic sacrifice.

The design challenge is to create an outstanding and sensitively-designed Memorial and Learning Centre that is emotionally powerful while offering visitors an opportunity to deepen their understanding of humanity's darkest hour. For some survivors – and those whose lives were affected by the Holocaust – survival stories can reveal glimmers of hope about human nature; for others, to perceive this moment in history as anything but unbearable is to compromise the Holocaust's implacability.

This is a two-stage international design competition and is being run in accordance with EU procurement guidelines and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The competition was advertised in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJEU).

The project costs are estimated to be up to £40 million, which includes is the cost of works, including contractor preliminaries, OH&P, contingency, inflation, all professional fees, site preparation and VAT where applicable.

The learning centre, expected to measure about 2,650m^2, will not be a conventional exhibition or teaching centre. Instead, it will use the architecture, design and interpretation to set the memorial in context and to convey the magnitude of what happened, while ensuring visitors leave the site with a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and its victims.

Design Values

The Memorial and Learning Centre should:

- Be an outstanding, ambitious, sensitive design that creates an emotionally powerful place for reflection and learning.
- Become a landmark of national significance, highlighting the importance and relevance of the Holocaust to the United Kingdom's history.
- Establish a place where current and future generations can come to remember the Holocaust and commemorate its victims, and which is also a focal point for annual national commemorations.
- Affirm the United Kingdom's commitment to stand up against prejudice and hatred, inspire reflection and compassion, and encourage visitors to respect and embrace difference.
- Be sombre but not shocking; convey the magnitude of what happened in a meaningful and comprehensible way: give visitors a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and its victims.
- Combine design, landscaping and place-making to enhance Victoria Tower Gardens – improving the visual and sensory experience of the green space, giving it focus and civic presence, both for visitors and existing users.
- Be a logical and harmonious addition to the existing memorials in the Gardens, all of which can be viewed as a physical representation of the United Kingdom's conscience and values.
- Address the sensitivities of the historic, political and national importance of the exceptional setting, adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the River Thames – and in one of the most visited, and recognisable parts of London.
- Be widely accessible and communicate to all visitors – regardless of age, faith, background, nationality, language, or knowledge of the Holocaust – attracting and involving people outside the established audience.
- Convey the enormity of the Holocaust and its impact, reflecting the centrality of the destruction of European Jewry to Nazi objectives.
- Appropriately represent the fate of all other victims of Nazi persecutions, Roma, disabled people, Slavs, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and all other political opponents of the Nazi regime

Readers' comments (5)

- Walter Menteth 18 September, 2017 9:27 pm

So what were the proportion of architects on this jury panel, how does construction phasing relate to refurbishment of Parliament next door, and what will really happen to all those trees in that already magnificent small park. Can any subteranean monument really sit happily in this park with 'The Burgers of Calais' by Rodin, without subsuming and diminishing its presence?
I still cant help but feel this remains an inappropriate place for the scale of this monument. Some one please prove me wrong!

- Robert Wakeham 19 September, 2017 8:35 am

  'This historic public space' is really quite small - and fragile - and to do justice to hosting a national holocaust memorial and learning centre deserves a more appropriate location.
  To be next to the Palace of Westminster might seem an excellent location - particularly to national figures keen to identify with the idea - but in all honesty the people most engaged with the project - all the architects and designers - must surely realise how inappropriate this site is, and Peter Bazalgette and the jury should recognise this.

- Industry Professional 19 September, 2017 11:20 am

  This is a very inappropriate site for the memorial, not just for the well known issues of heritage, space, flooding, security etc, but also for the way in which it appears to be whitewashing our political history in relation to the Holocaust.

  The narratives of our democracy saving the world, of our glorious River Thames offering safe passage for kindertransport, of our clear understanding of right and wrong offers a fake, binary version of history which offers no space for our delay and inaction while we knew, and discussed in parliament (as recorded in Hansard) what Hitler was doing to the Jewish population.

  These sadly appear to be primarily about photo opportunities for tourists and the bling statement of "look, we care" and in doing so shoring up our weak idea of what parliament and our fragile democracy is.

  This kind of money could have been spent on genuine holocaust education across the new generation of schoolchildren, a generation who will be the first to not witness or meet any survivors from the times.

- Nathan Silver 19 September, 2017 2:56 pm

Given the AJ's enlightened campaign against the Garden Bridge, its weak acceptance of the terrible holocaust memorial proposal is a shock.

Insistence on this choice of site for a holocaust memorial may have been the second worst idea of David Cameron's administration. First of all, parks should not become convenient building sites. Small parks near centres of high activity have particular charms of serenity that are vital for urban well-being, and Victoria Tower Gardens is now warmly regarded and indeed loved for that.

Second, the precinct of Parliament is already nearly ruined by security problems and the prevailingly ugly and inept attempts at dealing with it. The traffic and security measures necessary to accommodate additional thousands of visitors, with further scores of coaches, no more than 100 meters from the Palace of Westminster, are beyond reasonable imagination. If the invited design competitors have not themselves acknowledged that, it must only be out of deferential tact.

The Westminster Society and the Thorney Island Society-- the local amenity groups-- are implacably opposed to this choice of site, as are many architects, some MPs and some of the best architecture correspondents. I hope the winning team of the competition will soon have the bravery to express the same view, and the AJ likewise.

- David Lewis 19 September, 2017 6:18 pm

  Kapoor and ZHA's proposal is quite a direct copy of one of the best recent pieces of public installation art: Michael Heizer's 'Levitated Mass' at the LA County Museum of Art from 2012. Surely this hasn't gone unnoticed by the learned jury, even if it has by the press covering this competition. It would be laughable if it won, though not a complete surprise.