Proposal for commemoration of a hiding place at the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery

Dr. Aleksandra Janus, Dr. Natalia Romik

in co-operation with SENNA Kolektyw (Piotr Jakoweńko, Sebastian Kucharuk, Natalia Romik, Agata Korba)

The process of surveying the hiding place identified on the grounds of the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw began in 2019, as part of Dr Natalia Romik's post-doctoral studies research project '(Gerda Henkel Stiftung). In her work (study of several Jewish hiding spaces of the Second World War), she uses investigative methods and tools applied to ward architecture and art (*art-based research*) with the objective of restoring their architectural memory. The survey described below is a continuation of the investigations conducted in 2020: geodetic (carried out with architect Przemysław Kluźniak) and artistic (casts of the hideout brick wall carried out with Agnieszka Szreder and Rafał Żurek).

The second phase of the research work the results of which are presented below was undertaken in a collaborative alliance with anthropologist Dr Aleksandra Janus (and dates back to an interview of Abraham Carmi conducted in 2020). Dr. Aleksandra Janus applies interdisciplinary research methods and tools of anthropology, Jewish Studies, memory studies and literary studies in exploring issues of the space of conflict, genocide and the cultures of memory.

The architectural design of the commemoration was developed by SENNA Kolektyw (architect Sebastian Kucharuk, Piotr Jakoweńko, Dr Natalia Romik), in co-operation with architect Łukasz Boniewski.

The project could not have occurred without the co-operation and substantive support of many people, especially: Abraham Carmi and Krzysztof Bielawski, Łukasz Boniewski, Dalia Gordon, Klaus Hernitschek, Marek Jeżowski, Marcin Karczmarczyk, Przemysław Kluźniak, Agata Korba, dr Michał Laszczkowski, dr Szymon Lenarczyk, Prof. Jacek Leociak, Peter Prestel, Stanisław Ruksza, Aleksander Schwarz, Remigiusz Sosnowski, dr Alina Sulowska, Przemysław Szpilman, Agnieszka Szreder, dr Kuba Szreder, Witold Wrzosiński, Rafał Żwirek.



Interview with Abraham Carmi; pictured, right to left: Aleksandra Janus, Abraham Carmi, Abraham Carmi's wife, Natalia Romik. Israel 2020. Photo credit: Dalia Gordon.

http://miejsce.asp.waw.pl/en/english-hiding-places-the-architecture-of-survival/?fbclid=IwAR2P-fIIw4d1nOeTnYw89k-T4DG_CSG3SN-Syxc4ynyXY6nyXCQutUQMFedI

^{1.} N. Romik, *Hiding Places. The Architecture of Survival*, "Miejsce" 6/2020,



The process of preparing the cast of the hiding place in the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery; pictured, left to right: Agnieszka Szreder, Natalia Romik, Rafał Żwirek. Photo credit: Aleksandra Janus



The process of applying silicone inside the hiding place in the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery. Photo credit: Natalia Romik.

Memory of the ruins

Slowly, boring a tunnel, a guardian mole makes his way, With a small red lamp fastened to his forehead. He touches buried bodies, counts them, pushes on, He distinguishes human ashes by their luminous vapor, The ashes of each man by a different part of the spectrum. (...)

I am afraid, so afraid of the guardian mole. He has swollen eyelids, like a Patriarch Who has sat much in the light of candles Reading the great book of the species.²

This poem is quoted by Jan Błoński in his *Biedni Polacy Patrzą na getto* (The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto), a classic text penned in 1987, in which the author settles accounts with the Polish reluctance to face up to a historical tragedy.³ The mole of the poem still borrows deep underground: still digging into our conscience and probably hiding in the buried bunkers, the wardrobe hideouts, and the cellars now repurposed as pantries. As Błoński explains: (...) we will not drive it away by forgetting about the past or by taking a defensive stance against it.⁴

Invisible in everyday life, the architecture of the hiding places is a potential catalyst for the hidden stories welling up within theses places – ruins pulsating with the stuff of memories. How does one delve into these stories? How does one break through the ruins' respective layers? In our work of researchers, are we not like the mole from Czesław Milosz's wartime poem? What are the research tools most appropriate for the task of recovering memory of the "ruins of the Holocaust," such as the hiding place located within the grave plot no. 41 of the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery.

This wartime graveyard bunker stands as a unique material witness:⁵ its very existence as well as its form and structure bear testimony to the struggle for survival and to the past violence that necessitated this development. Like all other ruins of hiding places, this one is also suffused with a special strain of memory: the incomplete memory, which calls for researching and deserves expression through critical commemoration. This is precisely why Rebecca Solnit considers ruins to be "public triggers of memory" and compares cities without ruins to minds without memories.⁶ This is no reference to some nostalgic attraction to ruins; in its stubborn endurance despite the passage of years, the ruined bunker discussed here conjures up the spirits of the past to haunt our present in the place-after-the-Holocaust.⁷

7. For references to the term "place-after-the-Ghetto" coined by Jacek Leociak as a designation of the site of the former Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw and to the term "place-after-a-camp" used by Roma Sendyka and Kamil Karski to refer to the site of the former KL Płaszów camp see: Jacek Leociak, *Miejsce-po-getcie* (Place-after-the-Ghetto), in his *Spojrzenia na warszawskie getto* [Views of the Warsaw Ghetto], Warsaw 2011; see also: *Eksterytorialny krater. Rozmowa Wojciecha Wilczyka z Romą Sendyką* (An extra-territorial crater. A conversation between Wojciech Wilczyk and Roma Sendyka), "Auto-portret" 27.01.2017, https://autopor- tret.pl/artykuly/eksterytorialny-krater/ (accessed 5.09.2019); Kamil Karski, *Archeologia obozu koncentracyjnego: miejsce – rzeczy – wspomnienia na przykładzie terenu dawnego KL Plaszow* (Archaeology of a concentration camp: the place – the items – the memories, the case of the former KL Plaszow site), https://archeo.edu.pl/biografia2017/2017/10/03/archeologia_obozu_plaszow/ (accessed 5.09.2019).

4 Ibidem.

^{2.} Czesław Miłosz, *Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto* (A Poor Christian looks at the Ghetto), www.milosz.pl/przeczytaj/poezja/30/biedny-chrzescijanin-patrzy-na-getto (accessed: 18.03.2020).

^{3.} Jan Blonski, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto), "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1987 no. 2.

^{5.} Susan Schuppli, Material witness. Media, forensics, evidence, MIT Press 2020.

^{6.} Rebecca Solnit, *The Ruins of Memory*//2007, [in:] Brian Dillon (Ed.), Ruins, MIT Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 152.

Cross-section of a point cloud obtained through 3D scanning; produced and rendered by Przemysław Kluźniak.

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Grave plot no. 41

The research process yielded, among other things, the identities and fates of the people associated with the hiding place on plot no. 41. We have established with a high degree of certainty that the group of persons hiding in it included Abraham Mordechaj Stolbach (later name: Carmi,⁸I born 1928 in Krzeszowice), his mother Lea Stolbach (née Klingberg, born in Będzin) and their relatives Abraham's cousin Dr Izaak Posner (born in Warsaw), and his wife Gutka (née Zylbrajch, born in Modliborzyce); as well as one Halina, the daughter of a stone-mason Moshe Aroniak,⁹ and Dawid Płoński (alias Jurek, born 1926 in Otwock),¹⁰ a relative of the Aroniak family. We also know that the hiding place was built on the initiative of Abraham Moshe Posner, the cemetery administrator¹¹ and at the same time the father of Izaak Posner and uncle of Abraham Stolbach/Carmi.

10. As Płoński relates: I had a close family there [in Warsaw] – Maria Aroniak, from a family known in the Otwock and Warsaw area; they were stonemasons, makers of matzevot. Their father was a lawyer/councilman in the Otwock city office. Each of the sons had their own large family and children. They were my mother's uncles, USC Shoah Foundation testimony, translated by Anna Styczyńska-Marciniak; thanks go to Krzysztof Bielawski for sharing that translation. All excerpts quoted below come from that translated text.

11. In a monograph devoted to the Jewish burial grounds of Warsaw, Abraham Posner figures as the administrator of the Bródno Jewish Cemetery; it is thus unclear whether he was the administrator of both the cemeteries or was possibly employed initially by one and subsequently the other of the cemeteries; see Ignacy Schiper, *Cmentarze żydowskie w Warszawie* (The Jewish Cemeteries in Warsaw), Publishing House of the Jewish Religious Community in Warsaw, Warsaw 1938, p. 199.

According to available accounts, the place was constructed with the help of the aforementioned Moshe Aroniak,¹² who came from a long line of stonemasons that operated reputable family-owned workshops in Warsaw and Otwock,¹³ serving the local Jewish burial grounds. Aroniak and Posner organised the hiding place for their relatives. One other person appears in the accounts of Stolbach/Carmi and Płoński: a rabbi by the name of Horowitz, but even that is not certain and not much more beyond that is known about him.¹⁴ In addition to the hideout within grave plot no. 41, Abraham Moshe Posner organised another hiding place (no traces of it remain today) near the gravesite of Ida Kamińska, where his other relatives hid: Rocha Tenenblum (née Klingberg, born in Będzin) with her son Izaak (born 1937 in Krzeszowice) and Hanka Klingberg. The Klingberg sisters were daughters of Abraham Mordechaj Klingberg, the rabbi of Działoszyce, and granddaughters of Abraham Mordechaj Klingberg, the rabbi of Działoszyce, and great-granddaughters of Izaak Klingberg, the rabbi of Komarno.

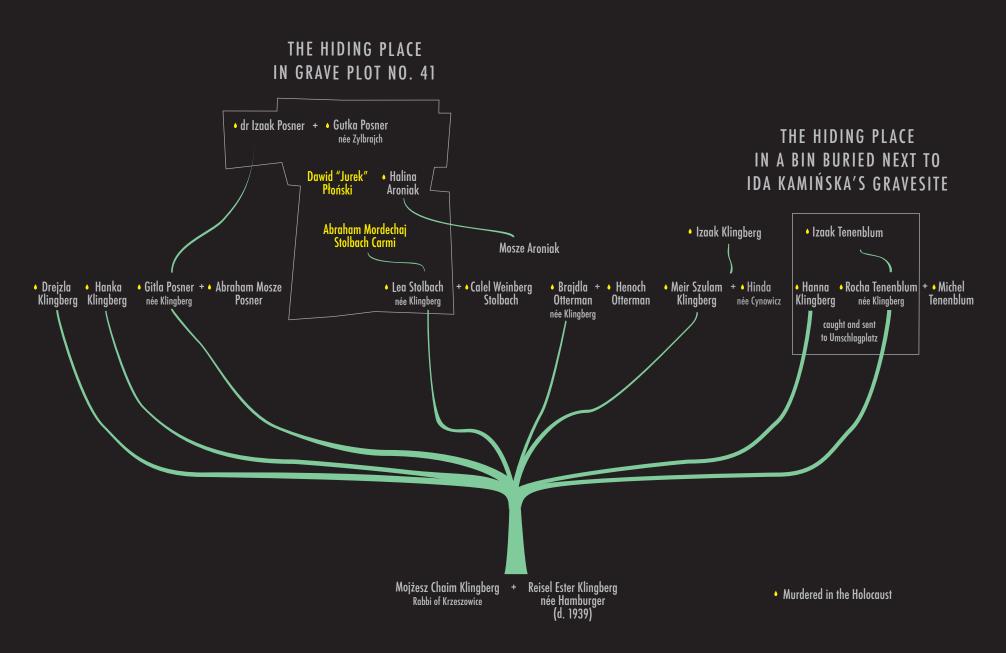
12. This is testified to by both Stolbach/Carmi and Płoński, although it is difficult to determine clearly to what extent the initiative was Posner's as opposed to Aroniak's

13. The workshops were probably owned by Elijahu Aroniak. Krzysztof Bielawski made us aware that it is likely that Aroniak was a relation of the Otwock based family of stonemasons. A man named Aroniak also appears in Maria Godeks testimony forming part of the Oral History Archive of the Warsaw Rising Museum. According to this account, one Aroniak was a sculptor who designed and built tombstones for the Jewish cemetery, and who served in the Jewish police during the war, see:https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/maria-godek,2823.html (accessed: 1.02.2021).

14 As he enumerates the users of the hiding place in his conversation with the authors, which took place in March 2020 in his Tel Aviv flat, Abraham Stolbach/Carmi says *Maybe one more, his name was Horowitz. He was a rabbi in some place. But I am not sure, I didn't see him there.*" Płoński's accounts mention a former rabbi of the Polish Army or a Polish officer, but we have not been able to establish whether this is a reference to the aforementioned Horowitz or another person; Płoński may have also referred to the cemetery administrator Posner as a "rabbi." For Płoński's accounts see his testimonies for the USC Shoah Foundation and those published in *We Remember. Testimonies of Twenty-four Members of Kibbutz Megiddo who Survived the Holocaust*, eds. Denise Nevo, Mira Berger, Shengold Publishers Inc., New York 1994.

^{8.} Abraham Stolbach changed his name after the war.

^{9.} We know her name through the accounts of Dawid Płoński.



Family links between the people who found shelter in a hiding place located in the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery. Graphic design: Piotr Jakoweńko Most of what we know about the hiding place comes from the account of Abraham Stolbach/Carmi and because he had shared his testimony repeatedly, his perspective has come to dominate the accounts about the place.¹⁵ The series of accounts and reminiscences of Dawid Płoński constitute another equally important source of knowledge about the location of interest. Nevertheless, the hiding place and Dawid's stay in the cemetery occupy a lesser place in his wartime memories than his exploits as a member of a group of Jewish boys who peddled cigarettes around Plac Trzech Krzyży (they came to be known as the Tripple Cross Square Cigarette Hawkers).¹⁶ and his later involvement in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.¹⁷

Neither of the two hiding places mentioned was a permanent residence of the aforementioned people, but was rather used as a place of refuge from direct danger. On a daily basis, Posner's relatives resided in the funerary building.¹⁸ Posner himself lived there from the beginning of the war,¹⁹ most probably having moved into it after his flat was bombed in September 1939.²⁰

17. Dawid "Jurek" Płoński survived the war as did Abraham Stolbach/Carmi and they both shared their life stories on numerous occasions.

18. According to Stolbach/Carmie, his main place of hiding was a closet in which burial shrouds were kept.

19. It is not clear if and when his wife joined him. There is some discrepancy in the Stolbach/ Carmi account as to whether the two of them lived there together from the very beginning or whether, in the initial stage, it was just him alone. In an interview conducted in March 2020, Stolbach/Carmi mentions in passing that the couple being his relations did not live together. The mentions of Isaac and Gutka's wedding in 1940 place it in "the Posners' flat," but it is not clear whether this refers to the cemetery administrator's flat destroyed in 1939 or another flat, e.g. the one where Izaak lived. Płoński's account of the death of Posner's immediate family also includes the information that his wife and daughter lived in the Ghetto.

20. Abraham Posner's father, Rabbi Chaim Posner, died in the same year; his tombstone was made

The Ohel complex had living quarters formerly occupied by the cemetery staff.²¹ Lea Stolbach joined the Posners (her sister Gitla and her husband) there when she moved with her son to Warsaw from Otwock, from the house of her uncle, Meir Szulam Klingberg.²² Lea's husband and Abraham's father Bezalel (Calel) Stolbach was to join the family (from Lvov, according to the available accounts), but he was captured and placed in Gęsiówka; his fate subsequent to those events remains unknown.²³ Most probably, all the relatives mentioned here took part in the wedding of Izaak Posner and Gutka Zylbrajch, which took place in January 1940 in a flat at 14 Próżna Street, an event Abraham Stolbach/Carmi remembers.

from slabs taken from the unfinished mausoleum of Jewish soldiers fallen fighting for Poland's independence the construction of which began in 1939 and was interrupted by the outbreak of the war. Also buried in the cemetery is Reisel Klingberg, Stolbach/Carmi's grandmother who also died in 1939 and whose simple headstone still stands on the cemetery plot 56, row 32, number 3.

21. Ignacy Schiper, op. cit., p. 92.

22. According to Stolbach/Carmi, the war caught up with his mother and him on holiday with his grandparents in Krzeszowice, where they had come from Leżajsk, their place of residence. He related in his conversation with us: (...) *Jewish mothers would typically go to their (grand)mothers' house for the summer holidays. We lived in Leżajsk, near Łańcut and Rzeszów. (...) And we spent summers in Krzeszowice. Because it was nice there. Four days before the outbreak of the war... My grandfather, who was the rabbi of that town, came to us. Everyone said that the war would break out in two or three days and that the French and the English would help. Nothing came of that and so we went to Otwock. We had an uncle there. We were in Otwock during the bombardment of Warsaw. (...) When the warfare ended, we all went to Warsaw. I had an aunt and uncle in Warsaw. My uncle was in charge of the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.*

23. Conversation of the authors with Abraham Stolbach/Carmi.

^{15.} Carmi retold his story in the course of his many returns to Warsaw and the cemetery, with Israeli tour groups.

^{16.} Józef Ziemian, *Papierosiarze z Placu Trzech Krzyży (The Cigarette Hawkers of Plac Trzech Krzy*ży). Łódź, Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1995.

While Abraham Moshe Posner was able to move freely around the cemetery, as were the gravediggers and the caretaker Lajbel, the others of the group kept themselves hidden, at least to some extent. As Stolbach/Carmi recalls:

[we were] to some extent hidden and to some extent not hidden. Also to some extent, my mother wanted me to study, because a child who was a single child and came from Krakow at that had to study; so they taught me Hebrew and Latin. (...) A Jewish child had to be a rabbi, a doctor or a lawyer. And for these three things you needed to know your Latin.²⁴

Stolbach/Carmi relates that the Germans initially did not patrol the cemetery and many people other than the cemetery workers stayed there. According to this account, officially, only holders of proper work permits testifying to their employment at the cemetery were allowed to stay there, but this was not strictly enforced, at least initially. As Stolbach/Carmi recalls, the extent of that freedom was such that after curfew the cemetery became a scene of drinking parties, game playing and at times even artistic performances (e.g. by Regina Cukier).

The children inhabiting the cemetery were involved in smuggling.²⁵ Being a place of shelter, the cemetery also sensed the mounting terror: *The Jewish cemetery was growing, the Jewish ghetto was shrinking*, writes Józef Ziemian.²⁶ As Stolbach/Carmi recalls, live children were brought into the cemetery in coffins: to be hidden on the Aryan side. The section of the cemetery wall behind the mausoleum of Jewish soldiers fallen in the struggle for Poland's independence was dismantled (analysis of wartime aerial photographs confirms that) in order to facilitate mass burials of the dead on the adjacent plot of Skra Stadium, as the burial ground could not keep up with demand for digging of individual graves. Płoński also recalls the horror:

There was a constant flow of corpses from the Ghetto – which by the end of 1942 numbered 60-70 thousand or some 100,000 out of the [initial] half a million by the end of the summer 1942 -that where thrown directly into the pits; no name or number.²⁷

26.Józef Ziemian, op. cit., p. 25.

27. Testimony of Dawid Płoński for the USC Shoah Foundation.

^{25.} The little smugglers are known from literature, memoirs and studies on the Warsaw Ghetto; see, among others: S. Ney, *Dzieci getta (Children of the Ghetto)*, Warsaw 1947; B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście (The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City)*, Warsaw 2013 pp. 481-490; R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej. Październik 1939 – marzec 1943 (People from the closed district - from the history of Jews in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation. October 1939 - March 1943)*, Warsaw 1993, pp. 46-47; H. Grinberg, J. Kostański, *Szmuglerzy (The Smugglers)*, Warsaw 2001; B. K. Świerczyński, *Szmugiel na wagę życia (Smuggle worth the life)*, Warsaw 2015. There is also a poem entitled *Mały szmugler (The little smuggler)*, which was published in: *Pieśń ujdzie cało... Antologia wierszy o Żydach pod okupacją niemiecką (The song will survive... Anthology of poems about Jews under German occupation)*, M. M. Borwicz (ed.), Lublin 2012 (reprint), pp. 115-116.

According to Stolbach/Carmi, the two hiding places were prepared by Posner after Czerniakow's death and after another of the Klingberg sisters, Brajndla (married to Otterman), and her two daughters had been taken to Treblinka. He claims that the hiding place of interest to us was created through removal of a brick wall separating a newly built double vault. This is surprising as grave plot no. 41 is part of the cemetery's Orthodox Jewish section, with predominantly 19th century graves; thus, if there were indeed two brick masonry burial plots there, they must have been built just before the war.²⁸ However, the conducted survey of the hiding place seems to bear out this hypothesis: the interior has clearly two parts to it, and its shape and dimensions roughly correspond to those of two bricked graves. The hiding place prepared by Posner was covered with three rail sections (which remain there to this today), on which headstones (matzevot) were laid flat, forming a makeshift ceiling. As Stolbach/Carmi remembers it: And they put two metal rails on it, (...) and on these rails they put some tubes, and we threw these headstones on top, which included Mrs. Rosenberg's. (...) We always thought this would end tomorrow. I need [a place] to live for one day. I need to hide for a few days. I need to hide for a few hours. I need to hide for a few minutes. I cannot grasp this today.²⁹

Carmi was a child when he helped in building of the hiding place, which essentially involved covering up traces of the construction process. In his account, he addresses Moshe Gelbkron,³⁰ the cemetery caretaker who saved his life: I helped you in the building of the hiding places. You stood inside and demolished the partition that separated the two graves in order to join them into one. You threw up the broken bricks and soil from the pit. I would take those bricks and soil and scatter them around so there would be no trace. Lucky these were bricked graves; imagine how hard you would have had to work if they were made of concrete, like the ones here in Israel.³¹ In his memoirs he describes the technique of camouflaging the hiding place and recalls the issue of darkness and damp prevailing inside it: You were our alarm [Gelbkron was a security guard and normally stood at the gate -A, NR]. Whenever you approached the grave plots, we knew the Germans were approaching and we ran to hide. Mum, Dr. Ajzyk and Gutka, Jurek, his cousin and I would go to hide in the graves; we would move the matzevot, we hid underneath and slid the matzevot back. Mum would leave a gap so that light and air could flow through, but it was still dark in there, so dark that I could hardly read the inscriptions on the matzevot we covered ourselves with. The ground was damp and it smelled of damp. Jurek said that if had to live through all this in the wintertime, we wouldn't have been able to breathe.³²

^{28.} This is a problem brought out both by Przemysław Szpilman, the former director of the cemetery, and Krzysztof Bielawski, who mentions the hiding place in his book, K. Bielawski, *Zagłada cmentarzy żydowskich* (The Destruction of Jewish Cemeteries). We can assume that in the early decades of the 20th century there was still an unused plot there; a bricked grave(s) must have been prepared there for assimilated people, since bricked grave burials are not Jewish religious law compliant.

^{29.} Conversation of the authors with Abraham Stolbach/Carmi.

^{30.} Mosze Gelbkron was a cemetery caretaker and security guard. During the period described by Carmi, Gelbkron's wife lived on the Aryan side. He survived the war and is buried in the Tel Mond cemetery in Netanya.

^{31.} Efrat Chaba, Helki be-erets ha-Hayim, Miskal - Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chedem Books, Tel Aviv 2013

^{32.} Stolbach/Carmi, op. cit., pp. 135-136.



The second hiding place prepared by Posner, near the grave of Ida Kaminska, was constructed out of a bin buried in the ground and two rainwater downpipe sections, whose task was to deliver air inside. Rocha, Izaak and Hanka, who were hiding there, were – according to Stolbach/Carmi – discovered there and delivered to the Umschlagplatz.³³ On 6 September 1942, Stolbach/Carmi himself was also captured along with his mother, as they did not manage to reach the hiding place as they run out of the funerary building and were sent to the Ghetto together with Posner and his men. The cemetery workers (and their families) were to be spared by the Germans, as they were needed for burial of the incoming corpses. The author's mother was saved by posing as the wife of one of the workers, Mosze Gelbkron, and Stolbach/Carmi himself, then fourteen years old, was supposedly hidden in the same man's backpack. Also in September 1942, Izaak and Gutka Posner were found shot dead at an open entrance to the plot no. 41 hiding place. As Płoński recalls:

There was a moment that broke me down. (...) this was Dr. [Izaak Posner – AJ, NR] who drafted the regulations [stating] that when the Germans come, whoever is in the grave stays in the grave [the plot no. 41 hiding place – AJ, NR], and whoever is not there does not run in that direction. My uncle's daughter, Halina, the wife of that Doctor whose father was the manager of that cemetery – Rabbi Posner, was there. And it was him who ran there. The Germans ran after him and killed everyone. We managed to bury them. We buried that daughter and that couple, and two other people who were there.³⁴

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The interior of the hiding place in the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery, the brickwork steps. Photo credit: Szymon Lenarczyk.

^{33.} Ibidem, p. 149.

^{34.} Testimony of Dawid Płoński for the USC Shoah Foundation.

This is how Stolbach/Carmi recalls the event: It was the uncle who found them. He immediately ran to the hiding place to see if his son and daughter-in-law were there. Nobody had seen them anywhere else, so they must have still been there. (...) When the uncle didn't come back for a long time, you went to get him and saw that he was standing motionless. The grave was open and both of them lay next to it, shot dead. It is not clear whether they were caught before they had time to hide or whether the hiding place itself was discovered and they were ordered to come out. It was for five days that they lay there, in a quiet deserted cemetery that no one had entered before you arrived. You moved them to the grave of Rabbi Posner, dug their graves, covered them with earth and said nothing.³⁵

Through Płoński's account we also learned that the remaining members of Posner's immediate family were taken to the Umschlagplatz: He [Posner] was informed that his wife and second daughter, who were in the Ghetto, were at the deportation square. It was gruesome. [Posner] put on the mantle of the Chevra Kadisha, [took] a horse drawn hearse – the dead were loaded onto this cart – and they [the Chevra Kadisha] drove in and out, and picked up these corpses. He rides in and asks: "Where is my wife?." "She's already gone".³⁶

While Stolbach/Carmi recollects the hiding place primarily as a place of rescue, Płoński's account brings out his trauma connected with the death of some of the people who were hiding there: [After those events – AJ, NR], I could never enter closed spaces. I was afraid. If it's open, well, maybe there will be a way to escape; if closed or not, they might be shooting; I just cannot be between walls. All my life is like that. If there's a queue, I won't stand in it either. Either I enter from a side or I don't enter at all, no matter what. This has stayed with me to this day.³⁷

36. Testimony of Dawid Płoński for the USC Shoah Foundation.

37. Ibidem.

Gutka and Izaak Posner were buried at the grave of their grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Posner. Their funeral was the occasion of Stolbach/Carmi's last visit to the cemetery during the war; from it he remembered the vandalised and looted funerary building.

After he managed to save himself with the help of cemetery caretaker Mosze Gelbkron, Stolbach/Carmi hid, with his uncle and mother, in a tenement at 42 Muranowska Street, at first probably in a niche behind a wardrobe in a third floor flat, and then in a bunker in the building basement. As he recalls:

We carried the earth from the basement in our suitcases and scattered it at the 40 and 38 Muranowska Street [cellars]. Because all those basements were open, we could escape. (...) And it wasn't very nice there, because it was very dark (...). On Monday, April 26th, they threw gas grenades [and] we came out of the bunker. They took us through the Muranowska Street side gate. My uncle, me and about 30 other people were there. And they took my Mum and aunt out of the Niska Street side gate.³⁸ From there they are all taken to Majdanek, where Stolbach/Carmi is separated from his mother.³⁹ From Majdanek, Stolbach/Carmi and his uncle are taken to the forced labour camp in Budzyń (German: SS-Arbeitslager Budzyn).Though he does not return to the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery again during the war, the story of his rescue and survival at the Budzyń camp is once again linked with the cemetery and Płoński.

^{35.} Efrat Chaba, op. cit., p. 149.

^{38.} Conversation of the authors with Abraham Stolbach/Carmi.

^{39.} Stolbach/Carmi does not know the further fate of his mother, who was most probably killed in the Majdanek concentration and extermination camp.

The *matzevot* fragments masking the entrance to the hideout. Photo credit: Natalia Romik. In response to an offer of help from a Polish fellow prisoner (who later turns out to be a Jew by the name of David Lieberman), Stolbach/Carmi describes the spot in the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery where his mother hid some jewellery.⁴⁰

A short while later, exhausted and doubting own survival, Stolbach/Carmi receives a loaf of bread in which the valuables are hidden. As it would later turn out, Lieberman was helped in locating the hoard by Płoński, who was still in Warsaw at that time, living in the Powązki cemetery;⁴¹ they made their way from Powązki to Okopowa with Lieberman, located the grave of Rabbi Posner and together extracted the jewellery.⁴² While Stolbach/Carmi's later wartime circumstances are no longer connected with Warsaw, Płoński stays in the city: he joins a group of urchins engaged in hawking cigarettes described by Ziemian, and later establishes a relationship with Ryszard Walewski (Abram Lewi), a Ghetto resistance movement activist, through whom he becomes involved in the Ghetto Uprising.

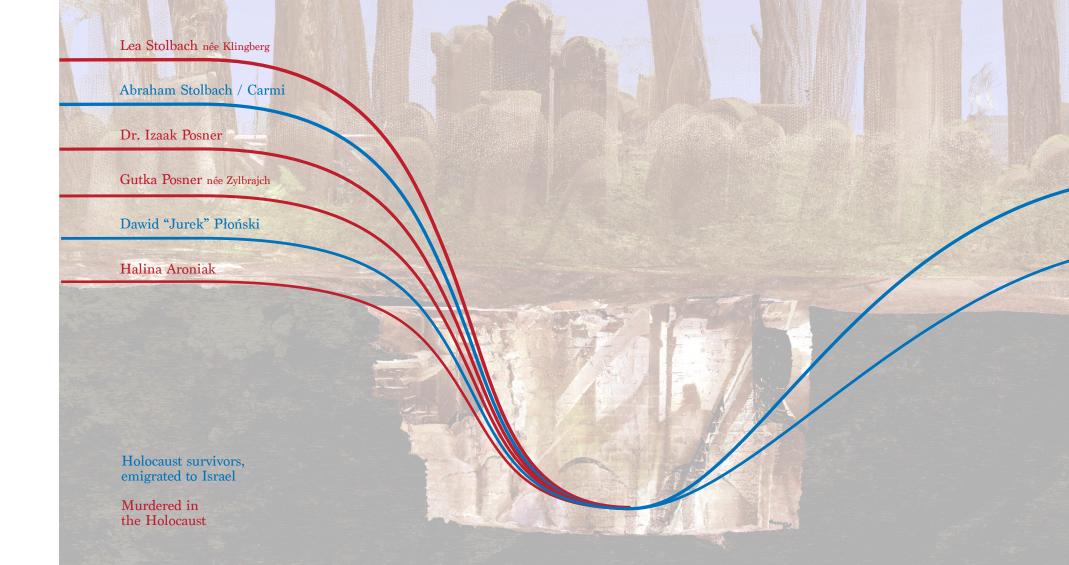
41. As we read in Ziemian's book: Jurek thought about spending the night at the Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery. He used to work there and knew the area. However, he decided to go to the Catholic cemetery of Powązki. It seemed safer to him, Józef Ziemian, op. cit., p. 66.

42. Stolbach/Carmi recalls his post-war meeting with Płoński many years later: *He is in Holon* (...) *there is a book about the Warsaw Ghetto today. I couldn't do otherwise but go there. I come there, I meet the boy who was with me.* During this meeting, "Jurek," who, as we are told, was subsequently hiding in the Powązki cemetery, tells Stolbach/Carmi about Lieberman's visit to Warsaw: Some Jew, Lieberman, was sniffing around the Jewish cemetery when there was no one there anymore *and we were hiding there. And he asked me: "Do you know where Rabbi Posner's monument is?" So I told him: "Sure I do." "Then take me there, at night, from Powązki."* As we learn from Stolbach/Carmi's account: *Jurek broke that* [slab on Rabbi Posner's grave] *and took out my mother's jewellery and gave it to Mr. Lieberman, who was no Pole – that was Lieberman*; conversation of the authors with Abraham Stolbach/Carmi. According to this account and according to Płoński's account quoted earlier, Lieberman lived in Tel Aviv after the war and Stolbach/Carmi managed to meet him. Both Stolbach/Carmi and Płoński survived the war and made their way to Israel. Stolbach/Carmi fought in the First Israeli-Arab War and was taken prisoner. He later worked at Mikveh Israel Agricultural School and the Israeli Ministry of Education. Dawid "Jurek" Płoński emigrated to Israel from Lublin, where he lived after the war and, like his wartime friend, fought in the First Israeli-Arab War. Płoński was one of the founders of the Meggido Kibbutz, where he lived until his death and where his funeral took place on 6 April 2007. In 1948, he was awarded the Cross of Valour at the motion of the Main Board of the Polish Association of Participants in Armed Struggle for Independence and Democracy: for his merits in the armed struggle against the Nazi occupant. Both of them started families and were actively involved in cultivating the memory of the Holocaust, which also involved coming to Poland on ceremonial occasions or for educational purposes.

When the war broke out, Abraham Stolbach/Carmi was 11 and Dawid Płoński 13 years old. Asked about the story of his survival, the former said:

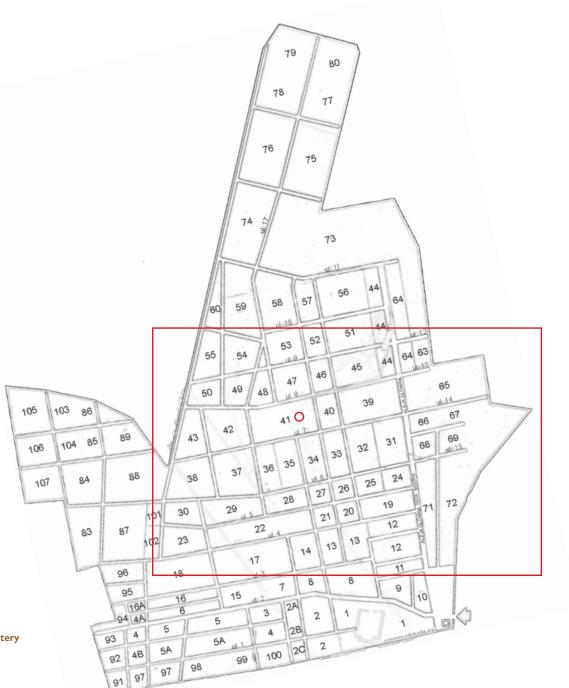
Children know how to stay alive. (...) Children [are] like rats. Do you know why? Because children do not stall to take anything [along]. (...) A grandmother needs a pillow, but a child?

^{40.} There are some discrepancies in the accounts of what exactly was hidden and where it was hidden: Stolbach/Carmi speaks of jewellery hidden in the tombstone of his grandfather while Płoński speaks of money hidden in the grave of Dr. Izaak Posner. However, the two burials are next to each other, we are certainly talking about more or less the same location. Płoński's account is included, among others, in a publication titled *We Remember*, p. 144.



The persons who found shelter in the hiding place. Graphic design: Piotr Jakoweńko.





LiDAR imaging of the cemetery site section of interest, Geoportal.

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Site survey⁴³

In January 2021, a preliminary archaeological reconnaissance (survey) of a Second World War Jewish hiding place was conducted at the Warsaw Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery. Its aim was to identify the conditions within the structure as the basis of planning future stages of conservation and archaeological works. The reconnaissance was conducted under the supervision of Aleksander Schwarz, a representative of the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries.

In the course of the reconnaissance an existent need was identified: for replacement of a wooden structure protecting the interior, dating from the 1990s or the first decade of the 21st century. In consultation with a construction specialist⁴⁴ and on his recommendation, the old structure protecting the internal architecture of the hiding place was replaced with a new one (fabricated of larch wood).

During the works, the top soil layer with organic fragments (leaves, branches, etc.) resting directly on the three *matzevot* forming the vault ceiling of the hiding place was removed. The decayed old wooden structure was gradually removed and an archaeological reconnaissance performed of the soil lying directly on the surface of the object. Part of the embankment layer was removed mechanically, the soil was scraped manually, with spatulas, from the surface of the bottom of the hiding place and transported beyond the site perimeter using buckets. The top layer of soil lying directly on the usable surface of the hiding place was removed (approx. 10 cm). This constituted of compacted dark brown sand mixed with organic fragments, which over the years had gradually penetrated the interior.



^{43.} Extract from the text prepared on the basis of a report by Dr. Szymon Lenarczyk and Urszula Kusz.

^{44.} The timber replacement work inside the hiding place was proposed by construction specialist Marcin Karczmarczyk, who drafted a construction report on the architecture and guidelines for fabrication of the new timber structure.



A pipe fragment uncovered in the upper part of the hiding place in the course of the preliminary archaeological reconnaissance. Photo credit: Szymon Lenarczyk.

> Preliminary archaeological reconnaissance. Photo credit: Natalia Romik.



Found directly in the soil layer inside the hiding place, several movable objects were documented and preliminary preservation work done on them.

These were:



A fragment of a metal fitting, perhaps from fencing of one of the nearby tombstones;

Three fragments of lime-sand plaster or other hydraulic binder rendering – most probably parts of a larger piece;

OBVERSE: smoothed surface with preserved free hand painted lettering (A/U – one fragment; I/N/A - another fragment);

REVERSE: irregular surface, not worked;





Fragment of ceramic cladding tablet, dimensions of $15 \times 12 \times 2$ cm;

OBVERSE: gglazed surface; handwritten lettering with paint:

- in the first row, only the initial letters of the name - "PA" - are clearly

legible

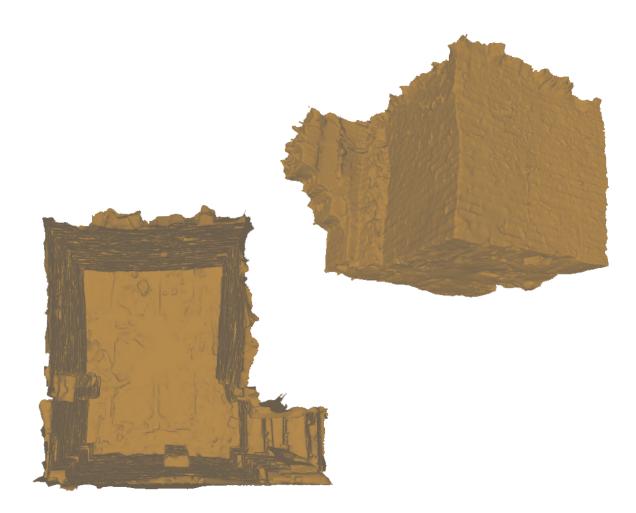
- in the second row, readable CZEWSKA
- in the third row the name ADELA is legible.

REVERSE: fluted surface⁴⁵.

The last object is probably an example of a temporary plaque that marked the grave between the funeral and the erection of the final tombstone. It differs in material, shape, content and the lack of white undercoat from about a hundred of such tablets found during the inventory works at the Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street, conducted in the years 2006–2010. Such plates were usually made of concrete, oblong in shape and contained the date of death. The improvised, unique character of the material suggests a burial from the period between the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the end of the war. However, the lack of a date of death raises doubts as to whether it is actually a plaque marking the grave.

As a result of the described works, the entire top layer of the soil deposit in the hiding place interior was cleared out. The soil was sieved and deposited in the immediate vicinity of the structure, as recommended by a representative of the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries. The uncovered floor area and the cleaned inner wall bases of the structure may suggest that its usable level actually used during the Second World War had been partially exposed.

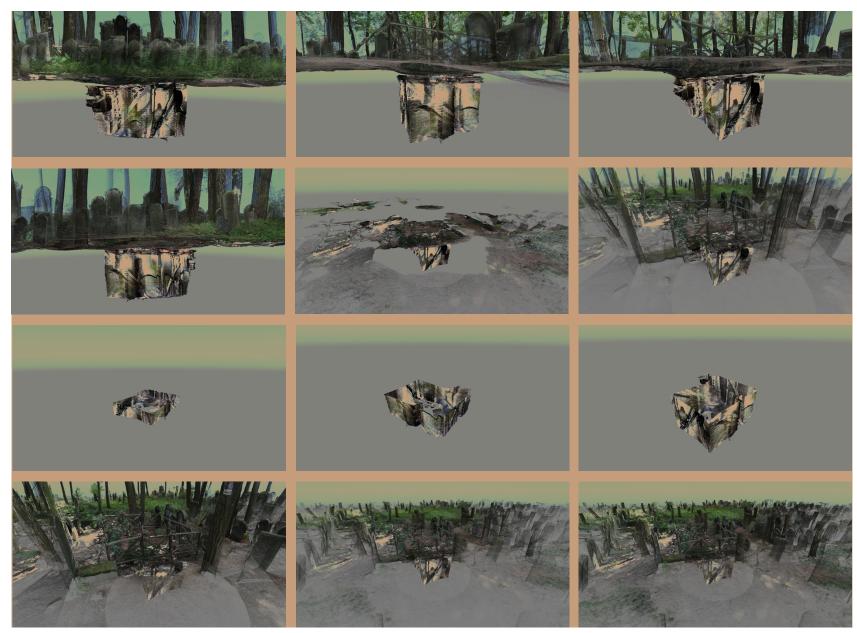
^{45.} The above fragment was pulled from the backfill then seasoned and pre-cleaned of organic soiling mechanically and chemically (C2000 1:6 distilled water). Its surface was treated with 1-2% Paraloid B72 solution in acetone/toluene.



Computer generated 3D model based on a laser scan; produced and rendered by Przemysław Kluźniak. Photo credit: Natalia Romik.



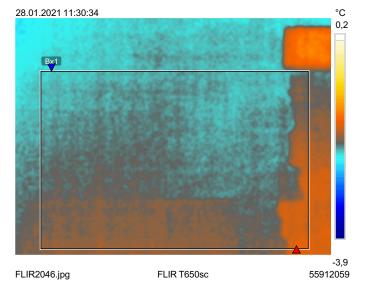
3D model of an architectural detail obtained via 3D optical scanner; produced and rendered by Przemysław Kluźniak. Photo credit: Natalia Romik.



Animation of a cross-section of a point cloud obtained through 3D scanning; produced and rendered by Przemysław Kluźniak.

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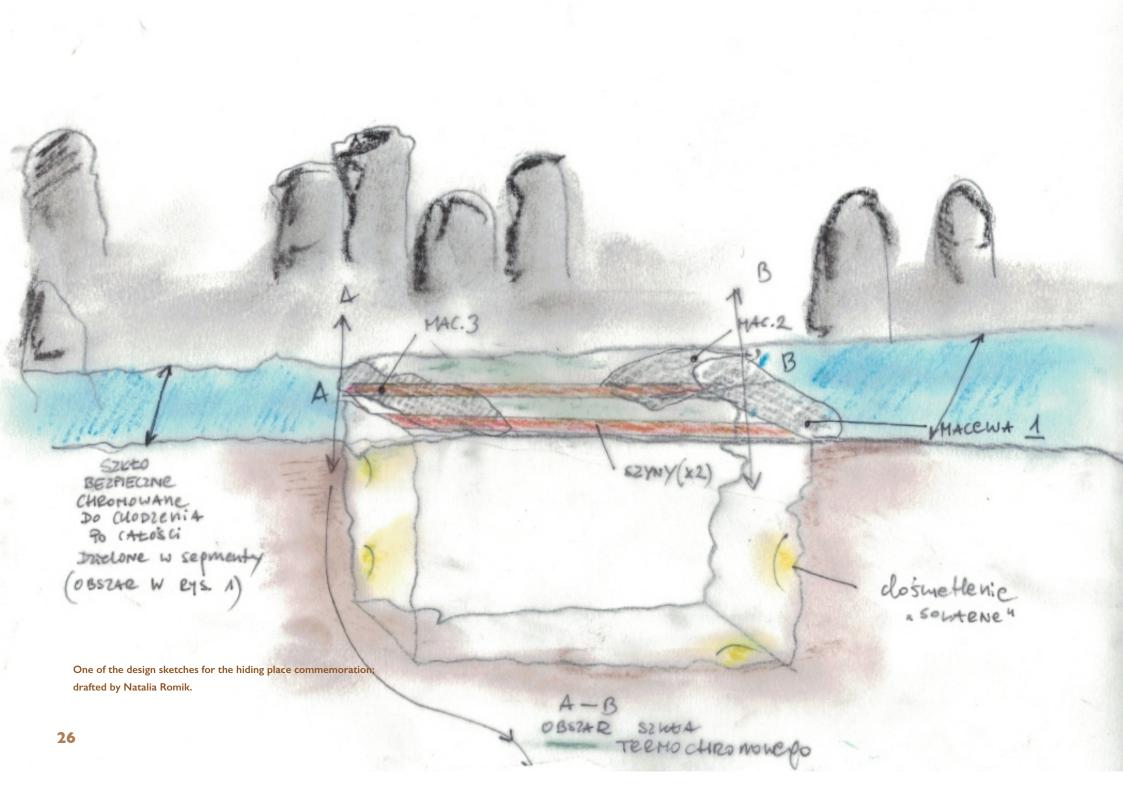


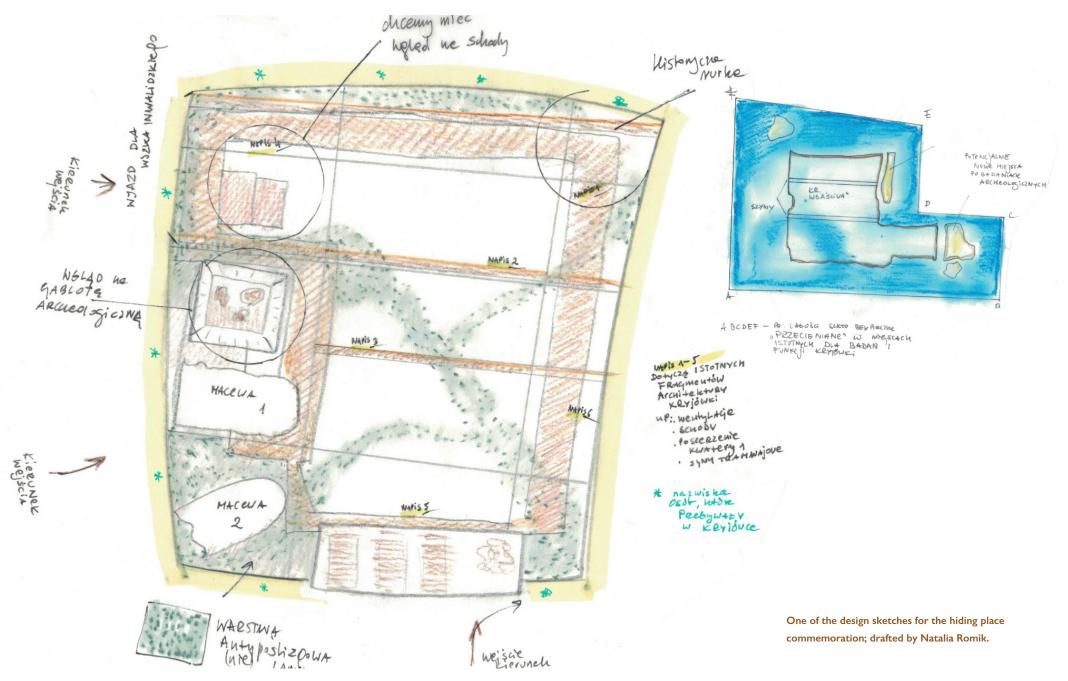
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Survival architecture

At present, the hiding place located on grave plot no. 41, situated nearby a large grouping of ohel tomb structures in the Okopowa cemetery, stands slightly above the horizon line. In summer, in the underbrush of mosses and robinias, it is almost completely invisible. After it was located in the 1990s by the then director of the cemetery, Przemysław Szpilman, it was sometimes visited by Israeli tour groups and the few who knew about its existence. However, it escapes the attention of the untrained eye, which does not know what to look for. Apart from the information gathered to date about the fate of the people connected with it, the hideout conceals unspoken and forever unfinished stories of fear, death and the will to survive. This temporary and by necessity not designed to last long hiding place remains surprisingly durable. During its construction in 1942, Abraham Moshe Posner and Moshe Aroniak probably adapted two adjacent bricked grave chambers⁴⁶ to erect the simple structure, which they then enlarged using burnt bricks and mortar. A metal beam was placed over the small room (created through the expansion of the space under two grave plots), which served as a structural element supporting a vault ceiling made of matzevot fragments.

On account of its character and its history, the hiding place demands commemoration, but creating any kind of monumental vertical form there does not seem appropriate. No shape can possible convey the suffering, the fear of a stranger's step, the thirst, the hunger or the conspiratorial whispers. Instead, we decided to offer the site a treatment characteristic of archaeological sites: to bring to light its testimonial character, its material evidence. In a gesture of avoiding figurative, monumental representation, this proposition is a conscious reference to the tradition of counter-monuments,⁴⁷ especially to the work of such artists as Jochen Gerz⁴⁸ and Esther Shalev (and their Monument Against Fascism in Hamburg) or Peter Eisenmann, as well as to the Oskar Hansen's "Road" project.⁴⁹ At the same time, it is the outcome of activating the environmental perspective in the Holocaust history,⁵⁰ which has led us to adopt a visual strategy that brings out 'what is' in a place which is both a space of memory (which a cemetery undoubtedly is) and a space of nature.

^{46.} In his book on Warsaw Jewish cemeteries, Ignacy Shiper provides the standard dimensions of a grave for an adult: 3 to 6 ells long, 1 ell wide and 3 ells and 6 inches deep, see: I. Schiper, op. cit., p. 218.

^{47.} See, among others. James E. Young, The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today, "Critical Inquiry," Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter, 1992), pp. 267-296; and by the same author, *Memory, Counter-memory, and the End of the Monument, in: Image and Remembrance*, eds. S. Hornstein, F. Jacobowitz, Bloomington–Indianapolis 2003.

^{48.} https://jochengerz.eu/works/mahnmal-gegen-rassismus

^{49.} https://artmuseum.pl/pl/kolekcja/praca/hansen-oskar-jarnuszkiewicz-jerzy-palka-julian-rosinski

^{50.} See the issue of the "Teksty Drugie" journal devoted to the topic: "Teksty Drugie" 2017/2.

View of the hiding place, taken from a drone. Photo credit: Przemysław Kluźniak. 1.1

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When describing his experience of hiding, Abraham Stolbach/Carmi recalled the light shining through the gaps between the roofing headstones and the treetops visible through them. As a result of natural succession, the entire cemetery – including the surroundings of the hiding place – is now densely overgrown with trees (Robin's wattle, maples, birches, as well as ash and lime trees), which stand as a testimony to the post-war fate of the place, forming a unique monument;⁵¹ in the light of Jewish law, the trees belong to the dead resting there.⁵² Moreover, the Jewish religious law (*halacha*), which forbids any interference with the burial sites of Jewish remains.⁵³ also dictates the possible course of action here. The hiding place is located in a place densely surrounded by burials, and although it is certain there are no human remains in it,⁵⁴ it is adjacent to burials on all sides.

All of the above factors have influenced the proposed form of commemoration, which gives precedence to the informing form, which seeks to bear witness to the historical space itself, expose its aura, and draw on the knowledge gained through archival searches and the archaeological reconnaissance. In the proposed architectural concept, the overriding concern (apart from the layer informing about the hiding place, the people who hid there and the results of its archaeological and geodetic surveys) was the (non-)interference in the cemetery landscape, but rather providing only visual underscoring in the landscape of the interlacing between 'nature' and the vivisected space of the investigated hiding place. As a result, the commemoration is intended to fit harmoniously into the cemetery space.

The very structure of the proposed project is a kind of 'memory map' of the site, seeking to extract what "its walls remember," as well as to present the messages the geodetic survey, the archival research and the preliminary archaeological reconnaissance have yielded.

^{51.} We refer to Jacek Małczyński's article on the trees in Bełżec; see Jacek Małczyński, *Drzewa "żywe pomniki" w Muzeum - Miejscu Pamięci w Bełżcu* (Trees as "living memorials" at the Museum – Memorial Site in Bełżec), "Teksty Drugie" 2009, 1-2, pp. 208-214.

^{52.}As Aleksander Schwarz (formerly Wąsowicz) says in an interview given to "Midrasz:" *The old trees are the property of the dead, because their roots touch the bones, so they also deserve respect.* Aleksander Wąsowicz interviewed by Piotr Paziński, "Midrasz" 2007 no. 4, p. 7.

^{53.} The Jerusalem Talmud states: *It is forbidden to carry the dead and their bones from their resting place.* (Moed Kattan 2:4). See also: Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 363:1

^{54.} The grave plot no. 41 had no extra earth pile, as present in other parts of the cemetery, hence, there is no risk of a burial present under the hiding place itself.



Place memory map

The proposed commemoration project provides for placement over the hiding place⁵⁵ of a 3-layer laminated safety glass (opti-white type) supported by an independent architectural structure and divided into segments, which would allow viewing of the former hiding place. The surface of this horizontal monument, in keeping with the intended 'memory map' concept, will be etched/printed (between the bonded layers of glass) with information about the architectural functions of the hiding place. This dimension of the exhibition, regularily found in archaeological sites, will not only reveal to the visitor the amazing structure of the bunker, but also allow them to examine its architectural detail, such as the type of bricks used in its construction, the steps leading into/out of it, or the tram rails which served as an important element of the vault roofing for those in hiding: And they put two metal rails on it, (...) and on these rails they put some tubes, and we threw these headstones on top, which included Mrs. Rosenberg's.⁵⁶

Significantly, the glass covering and at the same time displaying the ground surface of the hiding place is larger than its present boundaries (its dimension will be determined in detail after the final archaeological reconnaissance and the planned conservation work on the hiding place). The shape of the superimposed glass vault, serving an expositional role, will be closely fitted to the surrounding burials.

The concept of covering and securing the hiding place provides for the use of a self-supporting steel structure fabricated of closed profiles (rectangular) and supported on steel pillars. As a result of consultations with the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries representative,⁵⁷ it was decided that the foundations for the support structure would be located inside the hiding place, in the corners of the walls; this in order to avoid any interference with the surrounding area due to the proximity of adjacent graves.

The project provides for the construction of sunken footings of reinforced concrete. The entire structure would be powder coated, with the metal sections treated against corrosion. The safety glass panels being placed on the steel structure will be fabricated in the system technology compliant with all the protection and safety guidelines necessary for use. The steel frame structure (Corten type, with increased resistance to weathering), would harmonise with the surrounding greenery and the historic rails and brickwork. The same material will be used for the display case presenting the excavated archaeological finds and for the information stand.

The project design provides for a technical entrance to the hideout (directly next to the original steps) that will be invisible from the outside and geometrically aligned with the steel structure subdivisions. A view into the interior of the hiding place will be possible from all sides. The memory plate also allows for a safe entry onto its surface. The steel structure (frame) will also take on the function of a carrier of memory; it will have the names of those who found shelter in the hideout engraved on its edges.

In order to minimise condensation of water on the glass coming from the moisture inside the hiding place (a problem encountered on many archaeological commemorations), a 2-cm expansion joint is provided in the new structure, between its edge and the ground.

^{55.} Technical drawing – sectional.

^{56.} Conversation of the authors with Abraham Stolbach/Carmi.

^{57.} Alexander Schwarz was the Commission's representative consulting us.

The glass panels will be made of 3-layer safety glass (opti-white discoloured), with the panel subdivisions and sizes determined after the final dimensioning of the archaeological space. The anti-slip layer on the surface of the memorial, designed in the shape of the Hebrew letter **a** (bet), runs gently down the middle of the memorial, a reference to the words house (beit) and cemetery (beit almin).

Through a special treatment, it will be possible to tint the anti-slip layer (in screen printing technique) with a colour that changes shade depending on the monument viewing angle and sunlight conditions. The letter fulfils an important "hauntological" (spiritual) function, outlined by the philosopher Jaques Derrida, according to which we cannot free ourselves from the ghosts of memory that permeate our lives and shape the future.⁵⁸ It is also a symbol of memory as a 'home' that cannot be reproduced.

The concept also provides for independent lighting inside the hiding place, based on a system of directional solar lamps with LEDs. Their daily recharging will be ensured through a small photovoltaic panel affixed to a nearby tree.

An information stand panel, designed as an integral part of the commemoration, will serve as an additional source of knowledge about the history of the hiding place. Its base will be anchored in a glass panel structure, designed in steel and glass. The stand, which will contain the history of the hideout in Polish, Hebrew and English, will be made of Corten, as will the frame of the monument and the archaeological display case. Alongside the texts, an accurate 3D geodetic model of the hiding place will be displayed, together with a QR code through which the visitors will be able to download an extended history of the research into the commemoration, an interview with Abraham Cami and the accounts of the other people who hid there. An archaeological display case, containing the elements found in the course of the surveys conducted in the summer of 2021 and the existing stone and ceramic elements, will be located just below the glass surface, next to several samples of *matzevot* that served as the hideout's masking and formed its vault roofing. The display case (made of Corten and glass compliant with conservation guidelines) will form an integral part of the memorial's 'memory map.'

The entire minimalist monument, with its archaeological display case, information stand, steel frame with etched names, and the information on the architectural functions of the hiding place, fits within the framework of a released memory archive, a memory (not) given to us once and for all.

^{58.} Jacques Derrida, *Widma Marksa: stan długu, praca żałoby i nowa Międzynarodówka*, translated by T. Załuski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2016 (a Polish language translation of *Spectres de Marx: l'etat de la dette, le travail du denil et la nouvelle Internationale*, 1993).

Rendering of the hiding place commemoration; developed by SENNA Kolektyw, Łukasz Boniewski.

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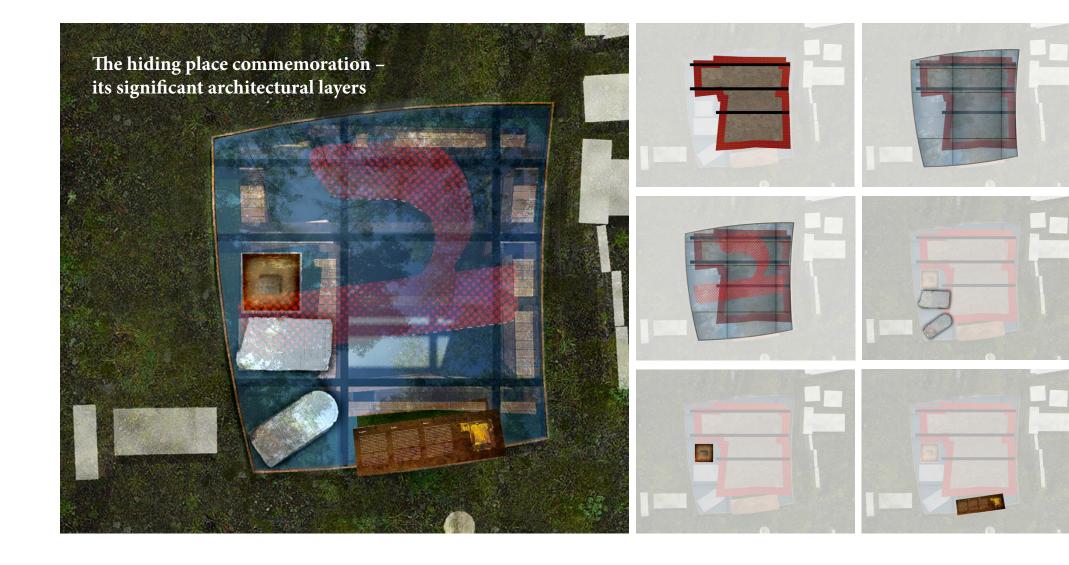
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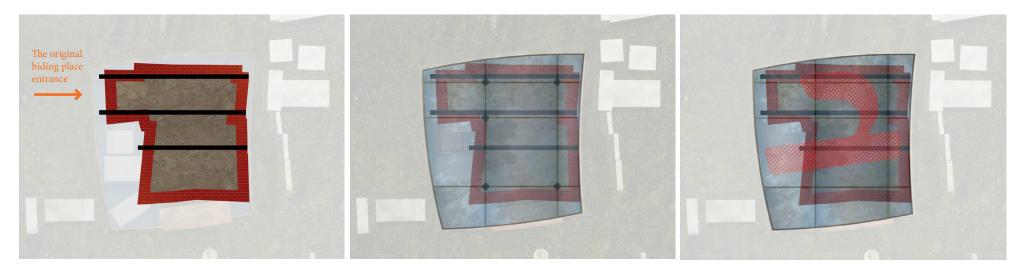
A display case holding the artefacts discovered during the archaeological reconnaissance, including a funerary plaque fragment with the name Adela, will be placed underneath the new glass awning surface. **Two** *matzevot*, which originally served as the roofing cover for the hiding place, will be displayed under glass, within the perimeter of the new commemoration.





The information panel stand, measuring 150 x 50cm, made of steel and glass, will provide key information about the hiding place, including the layout. This will be placed on the north side of the hideout, facing the access path from the cemetery's main alleyway.





The hiding place is a masonry structure, sunk into the ground to about 2m. The walls are one brick thick and made of solid bricks bonded with cement-lime mortar.

Its original roofing was that of headstones (matzevot) on supports of three tram rail sections of steel. **The new awning** made of safety glass will rest on a new self-supporting steel frame placed, in turn, on five support pillars.

Ingress to the shelter interior will be provided through of a glass hatch moved by hydraulic cylinders. The Hebrew letter ⊐ (bet) will be overlaid on the glass awning surface: printed in colour-changing ink. The printed sign will also act as an anti-slip layer enabling safe walking on the glass surface.

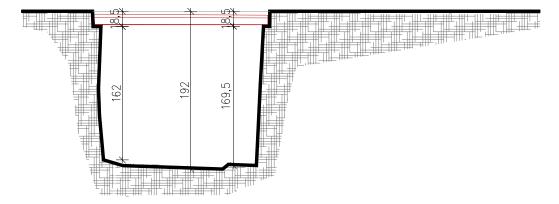


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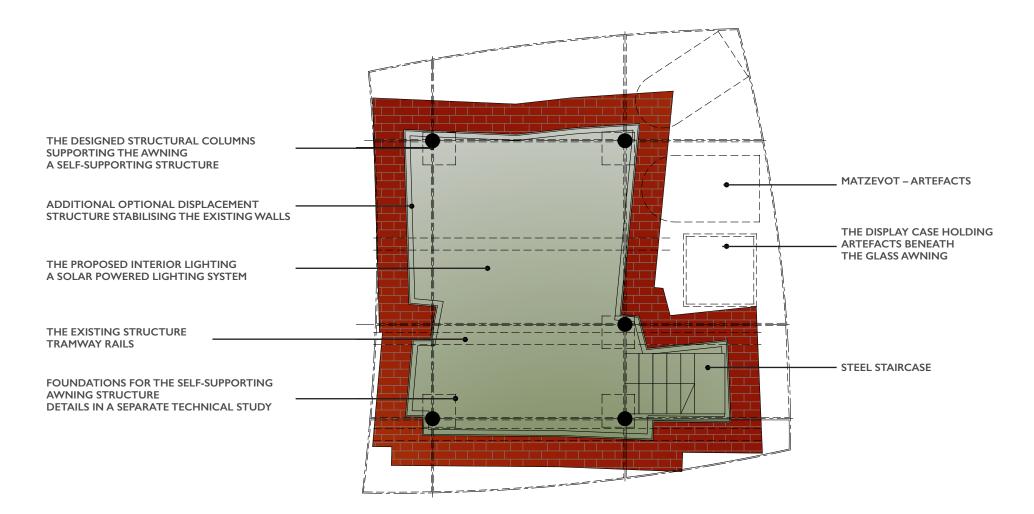
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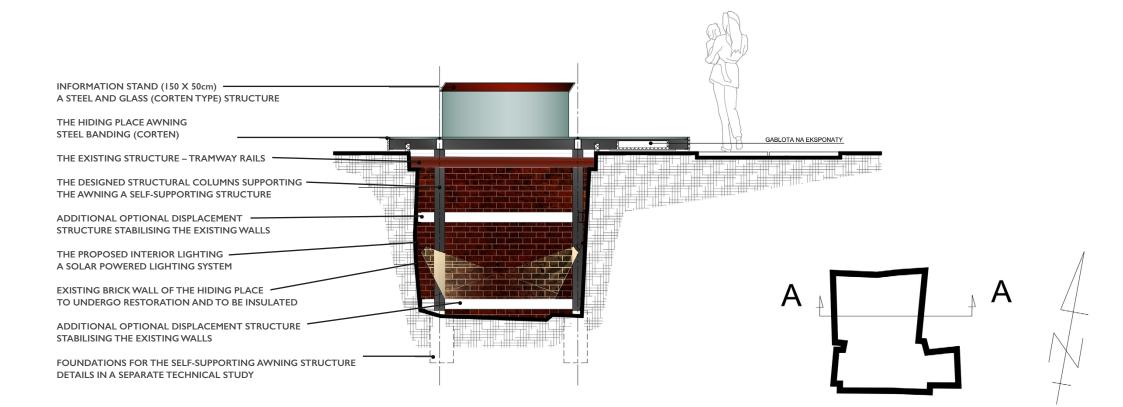
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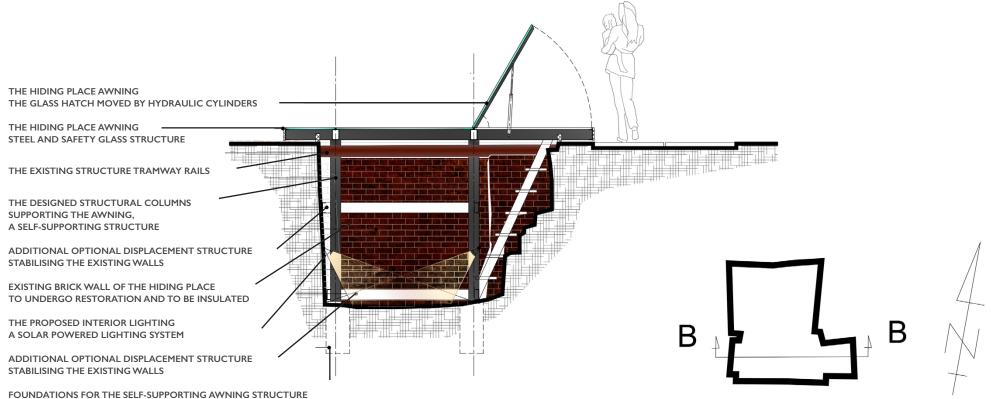
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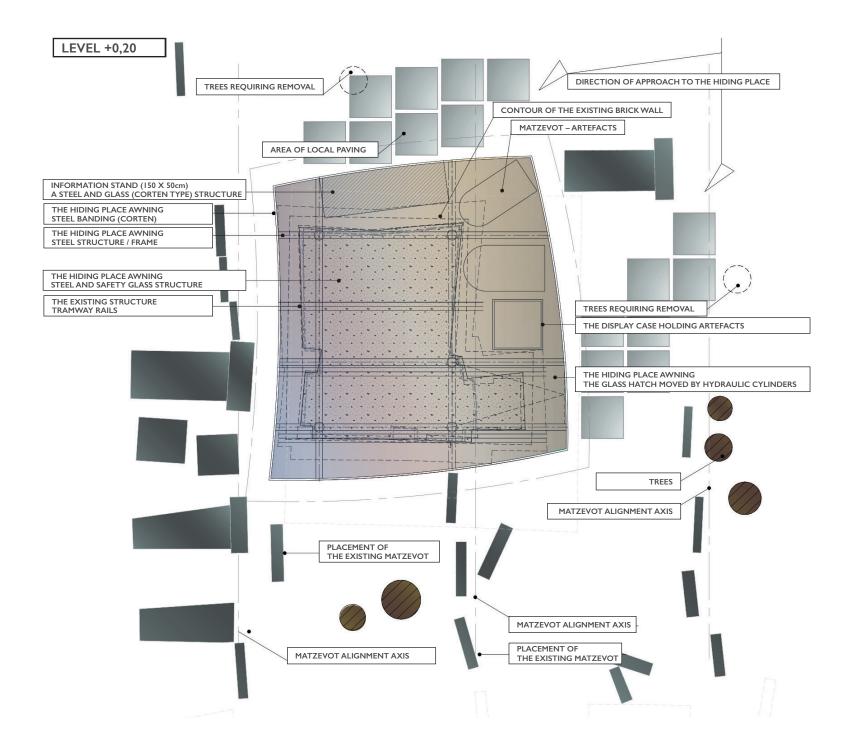


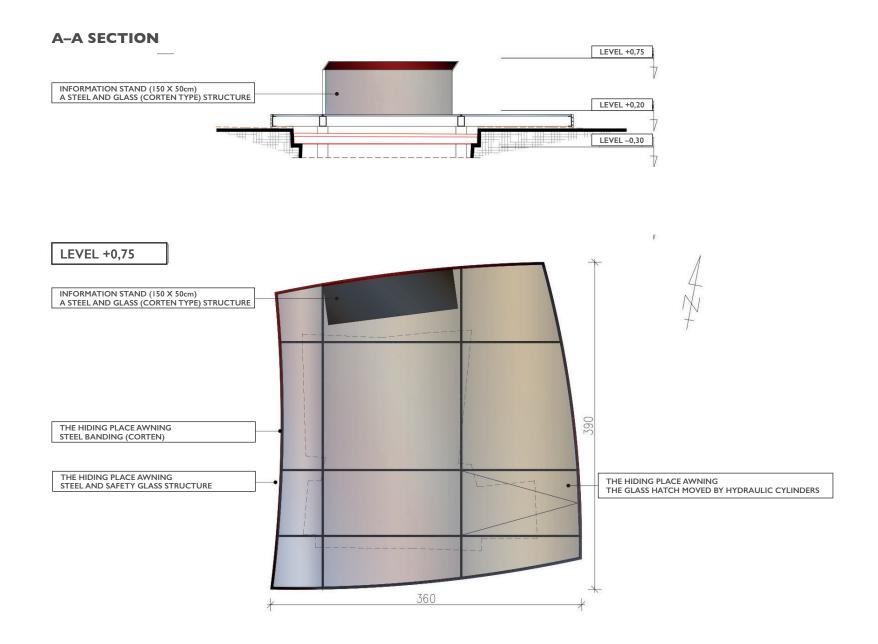


A-A SECTION



DETAILS IN A SEPARATE TECHNICAL STUDY











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Cooperation:



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