

Statement on plagiarism of STOLPERSTEINE

The STOLPERSTEINE have been contributing to European commemorative culture for 25 years. These are brass-plated plaques (96x96mm) embossed in concrete that are laid in front of the former homes of victims. They usually bear the words "HERE LIVED" and commemorate all those who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis.

The artist Gunter Demnig created the STOLPERSTEINE. With his six-member team, he ensures that each stone is produced and installed in a manner that is respectful. Each inscription is carefully researched and proofed by local associations, family members and archives. As far as possible, the family members of victims are made aware of the fact that a STOLPERSTEIN is being laid. Utmost effort is made to ensure that local schools and/or history associations participate and small ceremonies are usually organized when a STOLPERSTEIN is laid. The victims' biographies can be found in a database that is currently being updated.¹

Over the past few months, it has come to our attention that more and more stones are being placed in Europe that commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. These are sometimes so similar to the STOLPERSTEINE that they are often mistaken for our stones. We of course have nothing against others commemorating victims of the Nazis but we do face a problem when stones that are not ours are associated with us because we cannot vouch for them. We have no information about their production, the research that went into the inscriptions, the involvement of relatives, property owners, schools, cities, associations or religious representatives. At this point, we would like to point out that the art project STOLPERSTEINE (both form and contents) have a European patent and copyright.

Moreover, we would like to speculate on why perhaps there has been a need to create "copies" of STOLPERSTEINE.

Considering all the effort that goes into making and laying a STOLPERSTEIN, the number of stones is limited. The sculptor Michael Friedrichs-Friedlaender makes each one by hand. This is a conscious decision that counters the Nazis' mass extermination policies, turning numbers back into names.

¹ It is due to go online in mid-2020

Therefore, this commemorative art project will always remain symbolic. This makes it all the more important for each individual to be commemorated in a way that is befitting. Often there is close cooperation between family members, neighbors, the inhabitants of the buildings in front of which STOLPERSTEINE are laid, as well as local associations, schools and educational institutions.

Since the very beginning, this has been intended as a long-term project of constant commemoration. The idea is for it to continue for many more years so that many generations remember.

We appeal to all those who would like to lay Stolpersteine to consider the project in the long term.

We are aware that in certain places STOLPERSTEINE are funded or subsidized by local or national authorities and that funds are often available for a short amount of time. However, since we usually cannot meet the demand as fast as some would like, we ask people to understand that this is a project that can take place over several years. Please contact us for possible solutions.

The STOLPERSTEINE are not a profit-making business. One STOLPERSTEIN currently costs 120 euros and this covers the material, manufacture and laying, as well as organization and the maintenance of a database. In January 2015, the foundation Stiftung-Spuren-Gunter Demnig, which is not allowed to make a profit by law, took over responsibility for the STOLPERSTEINE.

We consider that one of the pillars of our democracy in Germany is to remember the crimes of National Socialism. We have unbounded esteem for all forms of commemoration and advocate diversity when it comes to Germany's "memory culture". We cooperate with other commemorative projects all over the world. Therefore, we appeal for respect for the original idea behind the STOLPERSTEIN and for the protection of the art project's form.

Thank you and best wishes,
Gunter Demnig and the STOLPERSTEIN team