

ANNA DANIELL

DESIGN CONCEPT:

22 JULY MEMORIAL SITE, NEW GOVERNMENT QUARTER, OSLO

INTRODUCTION

In this complex task, I have tried to find the right balance among all the aspects specified in the call for a national memorial site for the 22 July 2011 terror attack in the Government Quarter in Oslo and the island of Utøya.

The task of formulating such a concept involves many different fields, such as politics, history, urban planning, social science, philosophy, historiography, death, life, form, colour, material, sound, distances, and physical touch. Issues such as wind direction, traffic patterns, sunlight, shadow, and intriguing artistic questions, such as what today's public art has the potential to be, were also part of the task, as I see it.

My personal experience, however, has been that the task's human and emotional aspects were the most important ones. The 22 July terror attack is emotionally overwhelming, and it is still challenging to envision how a physical construct or artistic expression could be able to convey the emotions of the bereaved.

PROCESS

I work as a fine artist, with a particular interest in public art. Several of my previous projects have been based on how a work of art can narrate a story and forge an identity, even while being grounded in the local community. Fine art and sculptures are more than mere objects: they are also conveyors of stories, memories, and historical events.

Early on in the process, it became clear to me that I wanted to develop a concept based on democratic values.

Over the last six months, I have tried not to force an idea into existence, but instead practise restraint and keep my ideas open-ended for as long as possible, because the task is so large that there must

necessarily be a range of solutions that need time in the studio in order to be properly worked through.

It is important to me that my proposed concept does not become an echo chamber for one particular memory, but that it can encompass a variety of views or remembrances of this historic and traumatic event. The second recurring question concerned how this event can be expressed in a respectful, intelligible way at a single memorial site.

In order to support my process and obtain intuitive feedback from multiple perspectives during my work, I convened a focus group consisting of a landscape architect, a young artist, a curator, an art critic, an art writer, a young mother, an author, a social anthropologist, and not at least my own mother. This group provided me with direct, honest, sensible, and thoughtful feedback throughout my preparatory work.



Photo: Focus group, Oslo, 2024.

I studied ancient and modern memorial sites, memorials, and monuments from all over the world that have incorporated art in their remembrance. I also examined the various qualities and functions of such sites and what narratives they sought to tell. One example is the Iron Age Istrehågan burial ground, where large stones were used to outline two boat shapes, one for adults and a smaller one for children.



(Photo: 1. Istrehågan burial ground, Vestfold, Norway. 2. Ellora Caves, Maharashtra, India. 3. The Sphinx, Egypt. 4. Fog-

drenched sculptures, Peru.)

But what is the current artistic and sociopolitical discourse on memorial sites around the world? A good deal has been written about monuments, memorials, and memorial sites, their status at the time they were made, and recent interpretations of their meaning. The call for the task at hand specifically used the word *minneded* (“memorial site”), rather than either *minnesmerke* (“memorial”, lit. “memorial marker”) or *monument*.



(Photo: 1. Genghis Khan statue, Mongolia. 2. Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Japan. 3. We Are Our Mountains monument, Armenia. 5. War memorial, South Africa.)

What is referred to as a “monument” in artistic discourse is currently associated with a somewhat more narrow, specific message, perhaps more like an entirely specific extension of what a given public authority wants to relate, whether about historical events, or outcomes of historical events and specific social mentalities. One example would be a monument commemorating the efforts of Norwegian merchant sailors during the Second World War in order to give them restitution for their post-war lack of public recognition. Climbing onto or eating your lunch on such a monument would perhaps be disrespectful to the monument’s original purpose and etiquette.



(Photo: *The Monument against Fascism*, Hamburg. 2. The Holocaust Memorial, Berlin. 3. Diana Memorial Fountain, London.)

In 1986, Esther Shalev-Gerz created *The Monument against Fascism*, a permanent work of public art in Hamburg, Germany. The memorial was a twelve-metre-high column that, over a period of seven

years, was progressively lowered into the ground where it stood. The citizens of Hamburg were invited to inscribe their name or whatever else they wanted onto the column, and after the column had gradually filled up with writing, it was lowered further down in order to provide more space for writing, until it was finally in place in the ground. This is an iconic example of a new approach to what a memorial site can be – memorial sites can have *multiple meanings*.

The urban sculptural landscape that constitutes the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin can be experienced both from afar and up close. The public can sit on it, walk on it, stroll in between it, or withdraw either into or down to a more tranquil space. At the Diana Memorial Fountain in London, children play and adults cool their feet in the summer heat. These are examples of memorial sites that are incorporated into the public space and used there as *interactive memorial sites*.

Arguably, a memorial site that people from that era's society are in physical contact with will refer more immediately to both life and death. Such a site refers to a specific event, to a historical point in time that has passed, but it is also seen and used by both contemporaries and future generations.



Photo: *Collage Sketch in Clay: Children and Sculpture. Unofficial Memorial Site, Utøya.*

When I begin working on this task, I had several vivid images in my head. One of these was of an adolescent or child physically touching a sculpture while playing. I envisioned how the transmission of the history of 22 July would become more alive and accessible precisely in this instant of contact between hand and sculpture. Children and adolescents should of course be shielded from the horrors of the world, but it is conceivable that the historic event will resonate more strongly with people who played on the sculpture in their childhood and who later in life came to understand what the sculpture represented, namely the people who were killed. Perhaps they will be more inquisitive, attentive, and aware of taking care of others in our relatively safe and trust-based democracy.

Here is a picture I took on my mobile phone while I was at Utøya earlier this year. It shows an informal memorial made by children and youth who visited the island. This memorial seemed spontaneous, spacious, and sincere, where a subtle atmosphere was juxtaposed both with the sombre thematic undertones and with my own personal experience, as a spectator, of the local wind and of physically touching the objects on this specific day on the island. This memorial touched me in a profoundly emotional way. It is an example of the transmission of history that struck a chord in me, both as a human being and as a professional artist. My impression is that, all the literature on memorial sites notwithstanding, little has been written about how aesthetics and materials affect memorial sites in either a cultural, historical, or contemporary perspective.

Even though there are exceptions, I do recognize certain visual and physical traits that modern memorial sites have in common. In regard to their colour, memorials are often black, white, and intermediary shades of grey, typically the material's fabricated or natural colour. But are these hues – grey, black, and white – classic and timeless? And what *is* timeless design? For today we know that the “classically white” marble sculptures of ancient Greece were not in fact white, but originally painted in all manner of colours.



Photo: Sketch, painted and unpainted Greek sculptures. 2. The Terracotta Army, China. 3. Personal memorial site, Utøya.

Moreover, modern memorials are often made of heavy materials, where the structure's physical centre of gravity seems to be firmly rooted to the ground or substrate on which it stands, while their physical design often accentuates a sense of emptiness. Recent memorial sites also typically eschew soft and organic forms. There are small, individual differences in the physical design that are meant to represent individual people in the memorial. Another recurring trait is the way each memorial site typically does not vary its use of materials and colours much.

On the basis of the knowledge I have thus acquired over the last six months, as well as my own personal experiences with life and death (a severely life-threatening illness) and my artistic outlook and visual preferences, I have prepared the following design concept for a national memorial site for 22 July.

DESIGN CONCEPT FOR A MEMORIAL SITE



A CAIRN FOR OUR CHILDREN:

MEMORIAL SITE FOR THE 22 JULY TERROR ATTACK IN NORWAY

I would hereby like to propose a memorial site, a work of art, whose metaphorical foundation is the cairn.

The Norwegian word for “cairn”, *varde*, is related to words meaning “to be wary”, “to be aware”, “to be on guard”, “to prevent”, and “to be responsible”. Physically, a cairn is a formation consisting of many individual pieces, where each piece acts as a support system for all the others.

Variations of cairns are found in all cultures around the world, whether as ritual or mythological symbols or as manifestations of practical systems for helping people find the right way, warning them of danger, or mobilizing defence forces. In Norway, the tenth-century king Håkon the Good was the first leader to organize a national warning system of *veter*, that is cairns or beacons, which were placed on hilltops where guards kept watch, lighting the cairns when they had to warn of impending

danger. Not least, cairns remain in place in landscapes across much of the world as reminders of something that happened or existed, and as a symbol of permanence. I will therefore use the cairn as my source of inspiration, as both a thematic and visual point of departure.

I aim to create a work of art composed of seventy-seven parts, with each part representing one of the victims of the terror attack. The individual parts shall be configured as a larger, overall composition and serve as a memorial site.

Furthermore, I will include a democratic and collective voice by inviting seventy-seven other artists to each make their own symbolic contribution to the work.

By inviting other artists to take part in the design process, I wish to support the basic tenets of democracy and diversity, and also highlight that there are many artists who support these tenets. None of the seventy-seven invited artists will be asked to relate to an individual victim. Rather, their task will be to contribute a symbolic, artistic piece to the whole. After I have received the seventy-seven contributions, I will process them artistically and design the memorial site.

With the backing of these seventy-seven artists – all with their own stories and recollections of the attack, or in some cases contributing instead a symbolic work – I feel confident that this memorial site will encompass a multitude of perspectives and memories of the 22 July terror attack. The site will thus be characterized by diversity and to a greater extent be a more holistic and collective experience.

To reinforce the idea of connection between Utøya, the Utøya pier, and the memorial site in the Government Quarter, I will incorporate certain physical formations from Utøya and the Utøya pier and use them as part of the memorial site in the Government Quarter. An example of this could be the amazing relief font that the firm of Manthey Kula used to design the names of the memorial site at the Utøya pier (if I should be given the right to use this font).

I have previously used a variety of collaborative methods in my art, where I have asked for and encouraged contributions of various kinds, but where I have done the visual design myself – it could perhaps be said that I imbue the sculptures I make with more collective or more open narratives. An example is the piece I made for Oslo City Hall, where I created a sculptural composition consisting of fifteen sculptures, each representing one of Oslo's fifteen districts, and where a resident from each

district was invited to a ceremony where each of them whispered a secret to their district's sculpture before it was mounted on the ceiling.



Photo: Whispering ceremony, Oslo City Hall, 2021.

I want to put the individual parts together in a composition where water, fog, wind, shadows, sounds, plateaus, and already existing tiling will be incorporated into the overall composition that will constitute the memorial site. The names of the victims will also be accentuated and be part of the composition, but they will be gathered in a single place dedicated to ceremonies and commemorations.

There are various ways to go about including and selecting the seventy-seven artists who will be invited to symbolically contribute to the Government Quarter's memorial site. Regardless of how this is ultimately done, the given method will be based on a central principle of democracy, namely that the various contributors should come from a wide range of demographic and geographical backgrounds. For this reason, I also want to move a bit beyond fine art and include a range of practitioners from fields such as literature, poetry, film, theatre, music, fashion, architecture, and more. I myself will be in charge of the design, of setting the overall framework for and overseeing these seventy-seven collaborations, and of incorporating them into a single, coherent work of art.

One example would be to invite a poet to write a poem based on their own experience of the attack. This poem would then be their contribution to the work, and I could then, for instance, take a single

word from their poem, such as “bird”, and create a bronze bird for the sculpture. This bird would then be one of the seventy-seven individual parts of the composition. Another example would be to invite an artist to hold a soft piece of clay while he or she recalls the events of 22 July 2011, and then scale up the piece of clay, with the imprint of their hand, and include it as an abstract piece in the overall composition of the memorial site.

In the event this design concept is to be developed further, I will have to carefully think through exactly how such a collaborative effort is to be orchestrated. I already have a few specific ideas, but there are many different ways of going about this work, each with their own particular advantages. As of today, I am leaning towards a principle of not creating a pre-determined system or work strategy, but instead keeping the process open and tailoring the creative method to the various artists who are invited to participate.

CEREMONIES AND COMMEMORATIONS

As mentioned above, the victims’ names will be gathered in a single location, and this area will be dedicated to future ceremonies and commemorations. In regard to the memorial site’s future use, these ceremonies and commemorations will serve as a bridge between the work of art and society at large. In the event that this design concept is to be developed further, I want to look at how the site’s artistic design can incorporate a ceremonial dimension. This may take various forms, such as collaborating with the 22 July Centre on an oral transmission ceremony at the memorial site, or developing a national memorial ceremony where we resume the age-old practice of using mountain cairns as a warning system – namely by lighting cairns and using them as beacons all over the country in memory of 22 July, whether on every 22 July from now on, or for example every third year.

Creating a ceremonial framework at the memorial site for physical actions and/or oral transmissions of the history of 22 July will help reinforce our collective memory about what happened on that summer day in 2011. This is a central and vital part of the memorial site, and it will be a priority if this design concept is to be developed further.

DESIGN

The memorial will have a permanent physical presence, even as it visualizes the immaterial forms of light, sound, wind, and water. The memorial shall have a reassuring presence, characterized by

thematic gravitas, a calm, natural atmosphere, and the inclusion of a few more vulnerable undertones.

A Cairn for Our Children aims to be experienced as a humane, intimate, and diverse memorial site. I want for it to be possible to readily explain the site's artistic design, in only a few sentences, to different groups regardless of their age, cultural background, and education. At the same time, the memorial site shall include more complex visual and thematic allusions that can be understood independent of social class and artistic genre. It is important that the site's design does not cause visitors to feel small or alienated.

The design shall represent the diversity of the Norwegian populace by using a variety of durable materials, idioms, and techniques. The site's subtle composition will juxtapose a mix of organic and rigid forms, figurative and abstract shapes, and smooth and rough surfaces.

Given the way today's memorials typically look, it feels a bit radical to suggest something boldly colourful, and an extremely wide-ranging chromatic scheme may possibly be experienced as a bit too brash. Nevertheless, I do want to consider the use of certain colours and coloured objects/ sculptural pieces in order to contrast, make visible, and promote a spirit of humanity by employing colours that are to be found in nature.

Each piece in the composition shall be designed individually, where elements such as mist, a reflecting pool, and plateaus will count as pieces in the composition. Water will be part of the overall work, and a separate water design, consisting of a reflecting pool and mist, will be prepared.

This is a memorial site that can be experienced physically, and it will be designed so that it partly facilitates being used in the urban landscape. Natural indentations in the site's organic shapes will encourage people to sit down. Certain areas in the composition will be more intimate and afford space where people can sit in peace and quiet, while other areas will be more accommodating to several people at the same time. As of today, my assessment is that locating the memorial site in a less trafficked area may help people perceive it as friendlier and more natural, as it would be closer to the trees that are already there. A shadow from a venerable, spacious tree may feel more inviting than a shadow from a building.

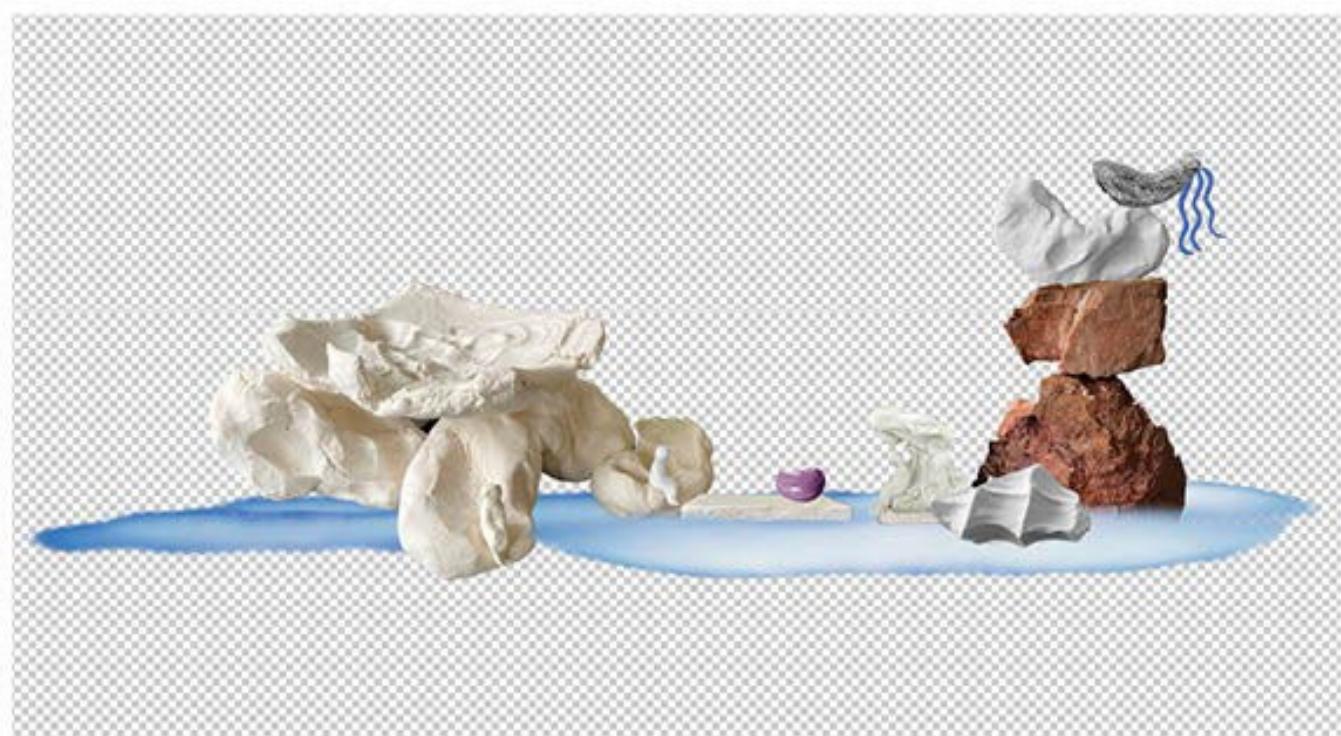
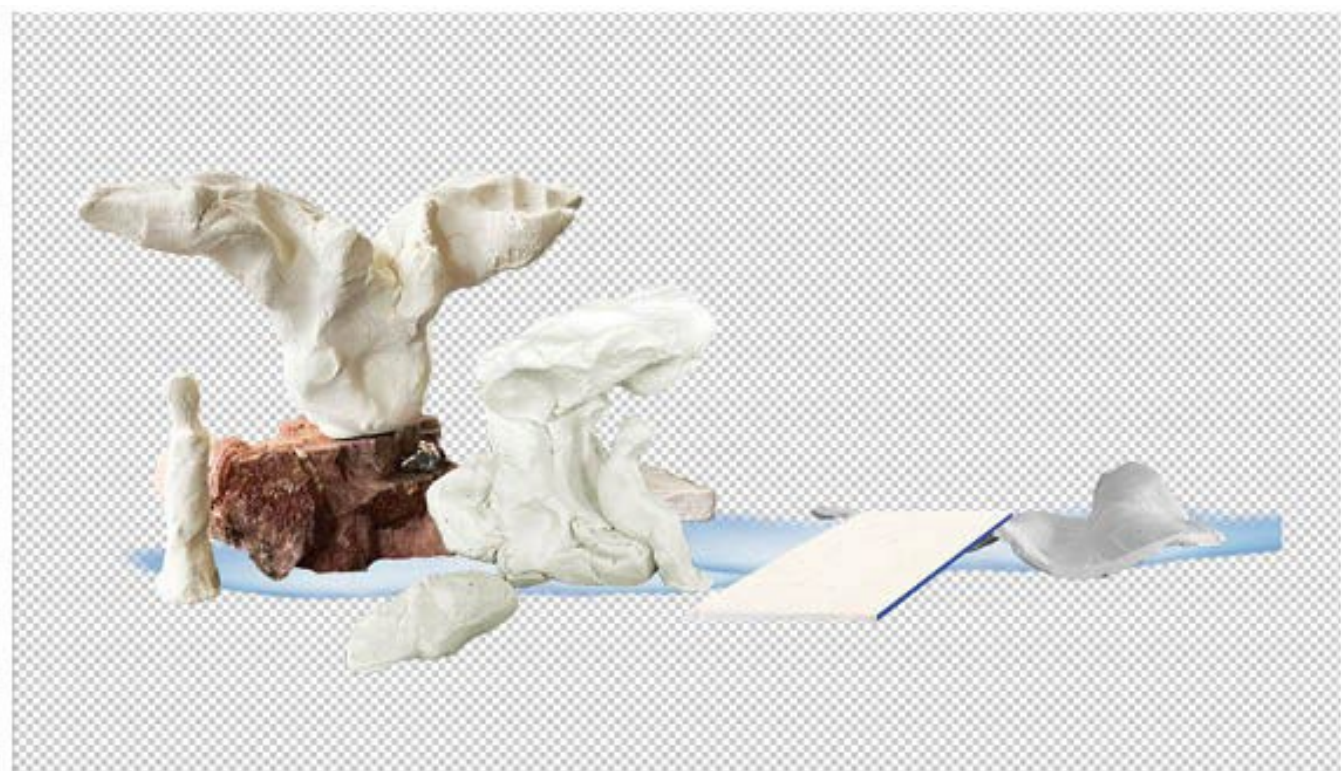
The site's exact placement depends on many factors, and along with the size of the total artwork it is something that must be revised and worked out in further dialogue with the construction project for the new Government Quarter. Safety and security will be a priority when designing the site, particularly in regard to tall elements that are climbable. A general, basic principle shall also be formulated concerning both an eco-friendly approach to all of the design preparation's processes and the possibility of re-use.

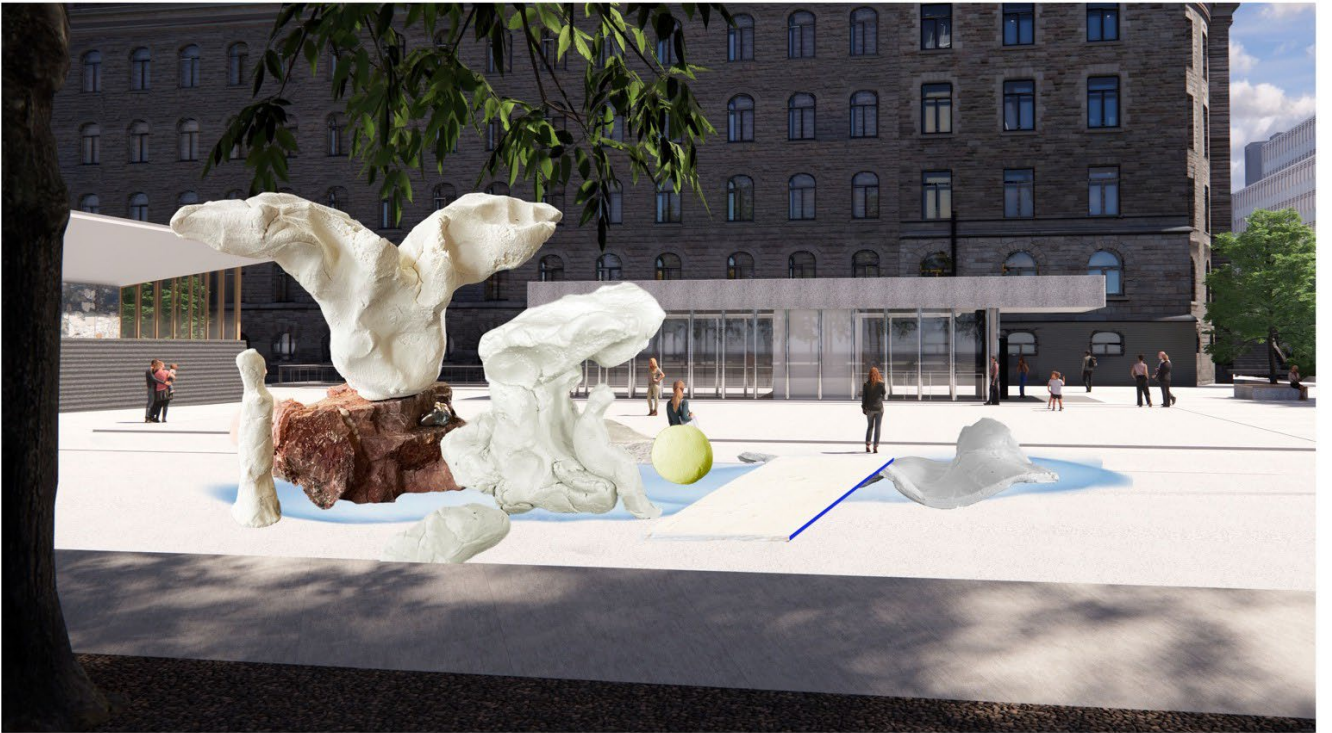
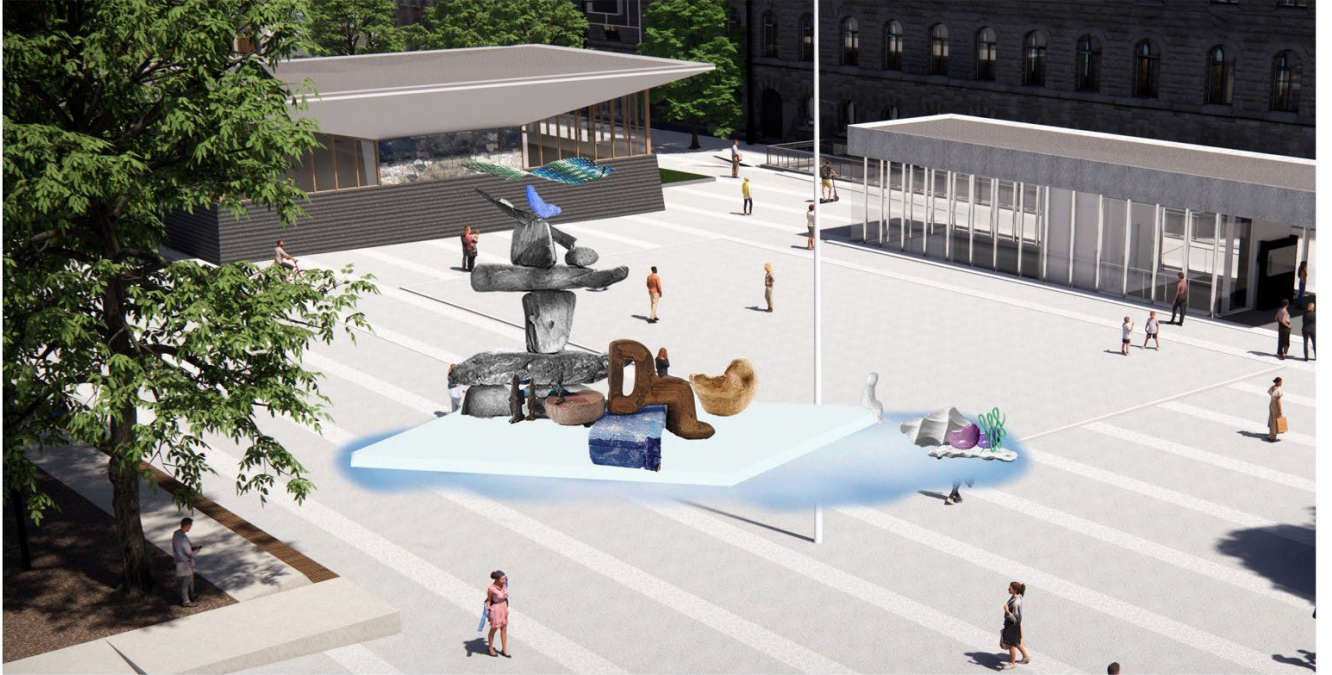
A Cairn for Our Children shall be a coherent, yet diverse artistic landscape.

SKETCHES OF SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE MEMORIAL SITE

In the following, I will present a few preliminary sketches that demonstrate various alternatives for how a composite, yet artistically coherent cairn-based memorial site may look. I would like to underscore that these are all examples of different compositions that outline different directions that I could then refine in the next round. The sketches do not present a finished proposal for what the memorial site will look like.









CONCLUSION

It has been an honour to be allowed to make this design concept for a national memorial site. I would like to thank KORO for their thorough and informative seminars, as well as everyone who has allowed the task to be understood in a more wide-ranging and complex way. I also thank the 22 July Centre, as well as both relatives and Utøya survivors who have shared their stories with us.

I would also like to thank everyone who has helped me in this process, above all Vegard Hegstad and Marte Danielsen Jølbo. Not least, I warmly thank the other participating artists for the highly inspiring works they create.

I wish you in the jury the best of luck with your work and hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Anna Daniell

Oslo, 31 May 2024