

## **The Jury's Speech, 8 April 2025: Excerpts from the Jury's Decision**

**Marianne Borgen, jury chair**

Dear all,

This is a big day – a day that we in the jury for the National 22 July Memorial Site have been looking forward to for quite some time.

Coming from many different backgrounds, we began our work as a jury in December 2023, starting with a two-day gathering on the island of Utøya. Our task has been to select the ten applicants that would be asked to submit sketch proposals for a memorial site, choose three of these proposals to be further refined, and finally decide which proposal we believe should be realized as the National 22 July Memorial Site in Oslo.

The memorial site will be an important place for bereaved family members, survivors, and all other affected parties. It will be a place that will serve as a venue for remembrance, that will move its visitors, and that will offer them space for reflection, strength, and hope. It will be a place for ceremonies and commemorations.

We need such a place more than ever.

The terrorist attack on 22 July 2011 was a massive and politically deliberate one that targeted both the Labour Party and its youth wing the AUF and the basic democratic values of Norwegian society.

The attack killed seventy-seven people, injured hundreds more both physically and mentally, caused sorrow and anguish in thousands of families, and impacted an entire nation. At that time, we promised one another more openness and more democracy – together, we would create a more equitable and just society. We have not managed to do that, however: we still have a big job to do.

Unfortunately, the ideology that motivated the terror and hatred is very much alive today. Norway has also experienced additional terrorist acts since the 22 July attack, first on 10 August 2019 and then on 25 June 2022. We live in a world where fewer and fewer people live in democracies and where human rights are being challenged and violated every single day. In an increasing number of countries, we see that freedom of expression is either under threat or non-existent and that people are being detained or killed for expressing their opinions. We see totalitarian and authoritarian leaders who oppress and terrorize their own people and who put international law, UN conventions, and the UN's international cooperation completely aside, creating a highly destabilized world. These are very troubling developments indeed.

Given all of these points, the 22 July Memorial Site is so incredibly important, as a place that clearly lays out what is at stake, what we should remember, and what we mustn't keep quiet about.

It has been a great honour and pleasure to be allowed to chair this wonderful jury. We have had an open and inclusive process, and it has been tremendously exciting to follow the artists and architects who have participated in the various rounds of the competition. For the jury, our contact with the 22 July Support Group, the employees in the Government Quarter, and the AUF has also been critically important. We have also been pleased to see the public engagement that the media coverage has aroused and also to receive feedback from so many individuals during our work.

The jury has had demanding and meaningful conversations. All ten proposals that were presented last June were deemed relevant and meaningful responses to what a contemporary memorial site can be. The jury chose to invite three participants to refine their proposals: Raqs Media Collective; Matias Faldbakken; and Henning Sunde, Hanne Tyrmi, and Rainer Stange. We offered specific advice on how they could develop their proposals, and throughout the autumn of 2024 the participants also met with key stakeholder groups as well as the jury.

Together as a jury, we have reviewed the proposals thoroughly. As was mentioned by a previous speaker, the competition has been carried out with a particular emphasis on openness and involvement, and during the process we have been informed by both oral and written feedback and reflections.

In each their own unique way, all three proposals provide good solutions to the task at hand. All three respond to the competition programme's requirements and stipulations, but they do so in highly dissimilar ways. They also fulfil different needs, expectations, and wishes. We have therefore taken plenty of time to thoroughly assess each proposal: Every single one of us on the jury has felt the burden of choosing the memorial that the country needs, both now and in the future, and we have also sensed the importance of such a national memorial site in the wake of the 22 July terrorist attacks.

I am very happy that, today, we can finally announce the jury's decision.

We will soon hear excerpts from the jury's assessment read in turn by all of us on the jury – but first of all, it is time to let you know who won, and of course to present the winner here on the stage.

The winning proposal tells a compelling story about how our common values are formed, in the present, past, and future alike, and also about the structures we establish to manage, protect, and negotiate these values. We strongly believe that the winning proposal will become a prominent memorial site, and moreover, that it will be a place of remembrance and spur public engagement, interest, wonderment, and reflection.

After a comprehensive assessment, the jury has collectively chosen ***Upholding by Matias Faldbakken*** as the winner of the competition for the National 22 July Memorial Site.

***Presentation of the decision by the jury members***

**My name is Trude Schjelderup Iversen, and I am the project's curator at KORO.**

The winning proposal, *Upholding*, involves re-erecting the steel rig that was designed and custom-made to move and preserve Pablo Picasso's mural *The Fishermen* during the reconstruction of the new Government Quarter. Inside this rig, Faldbakken will place a monumental mosaic made of stone. The mosaic depicts a small wader that lives in the Tyrifjord around Utøya, as surrounded by some reeds, straw, and twigs, as well as their water reflections. The mosaic will consist of a half a million stones.

The names of the victims of the 22 July terror attack will be inscribed on the rig's bottom beam in front of the mosaic, setting up a natural area where people can place candles and flowers.

The memorial site will be both peaceful and painful. The mosaic, featuring the simple drawing of the wader, is open and beautiful and sets up a direct contrast to the rig's industrial look. Something fragile and unpretentious, something that is without a voice of its own, is

literally held up by the rig. All in all, it as an intriguing and perhaps even magnetic work, full of many layers of potential meaning.

It is a demanding, monumental, and insistent proposal, but also one that is imbued with a profound sense of care and humility in regard to those who must live with the ramifications of the terrorist attack every single day. The work allows space for a range of conflicting emotions and marks a “before” and “after” in regard to the terrorist attack.

When the jury has chosen *Upholding* as the competition’s winner, it is because we believe that the proposal has an artistic power that is effective and that will thus, in a powerful manner, help the memory of 22 July 2011 be managed in an open and constantly engaging, confronting, and mobilizing way.

The proposal is meticulously thought out and can – if desired – be realized in time to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the terrorist attack.

**My name is Regitze Schäffer Botnen. I serve as a board member of the National 22 July Support Group and have been appointed by them. I am a survivor of the Utøya massacre.**

While the physical scars of the terrorist attack itself are either gradually disappearing or being deliberately preserved, many of us

have been left with lasting physical or psychological scars of our own. Lives were brutally terminated that day – and lives were changed forever. For those of us who are living with the experience of terror on our bodies, it is vital to have a place that not only comforts and heals, but also contains a variety of emotions, and to have a memorial site that can inspire people to want to find out how the attack could happen and why – so that we who are here today do not forget the history of the attack, and so that those who come after us learn about it.

The memorial site shall help ensure the lasting memory of those who were killed. But instead of only responding to expectations of a site where people can gather for comfort and contemplation, *Upholding* also responds to other needs. It will not be a memorial site you relate to neutrally or indifferently. The overall imagery and the fragile wader have the potential to become a symbol of something greater, with the reflected imagery also encompassing things that we cannot reach, and a life on the other side. It is an upside-down world, one that is also a window to 22 July.

**My name is Fabian Wahl Sandvold. I'm a national board member of the AUF and have been appointed by them to be a jury member.**

The jury has assessed the proposals in regard to a variety of stipulations and requirements, but for the AUF the most important

stipulation was that “the memorial site shall form part of society’s ongoing work to prevent a similar attack and counteract the ideology that fuels such attacks”.

This is a fairly challenging task. And, of course, a memorial site can’t do that job by itself. That is what *we* must do, each and every one of us, both as individuals and as a community.

That said, we do believe that *Upholding* has the ability to have a mobilizing effect through its monumental and insistent form, a form that may also, conversely, evoke something fragile that we all must safeguard.

The steel rig’s scaffolding-like appearance, as though something at a construction site, may also remind us of the continuous work it takes to secure democracy. The hundreds of thousands of stones that make up the mosaic may each be tiny by themselves, but together they will stand strong when facing weather, time, and fate.

Our hope is that *Upholding*, in tandem with the nearby 22 July Centre, will endure as a marching order both to us and to future generations. It reminds us not only of the forces that we must build up a democratic resilience against, but also of the values we must fight for.



**My name is Lena Fahre, and I am the director of the 22 July Centre.**

When they are both completed, the 22 July Centre and the memorial site will relate to each other in a powerful, meaningful way.

In the Government Quarter that is now being reconstructed, many of the vestiges of the terrorist attack are disappearing. Some of them will nevertheless be preserved and made visible, and these vestiges will become an important part of the 22 July Centre's presentation of the attack. The steel rig, similar to the one used to hold Picasso's *Fishermen* when it was removed from the **now-demolished** Y-Block, clearly alludes to the Government Quarter.

Taking its cue from site-specific elements, the work also presents one particular outcome of the terrorist attack, namely the structure built to preserve what we as a society chose, and still choose, to preserve.

Inside the 22 July Centre, the causes and consequences of the terrorist attack will be presented: the focus will be on history and information, and reflection and discussion will be promoted. Outside at the memorial site, *Upholding* will serve as a place for people to gather, reflect, and talk both before and after visiting the centre.

The memorial room inside the West Pavilion will be directly linked to the memorial site outside, and some of the mosaic's imagery will be visible from inside.

At the 22 July Centre, visitors see a flower on display seventy-seven times a year: a flower for each person killed in the Government Quarter and on Utøya – a flower for every birthday that comes and goes, without any of them getting older. The *Upholding* memorial site will allow this act of remembrance to be moved out into the public, with space allocated for a flower to be placed between the individual's inscribed name and age. Every birthday can thus be commemorated in the urban space as a reminder of the human consequences of terror.

**My name is Mohamed Abdi, and I am a teacher and writer.**

The memorial site shall be for everyone – that was clearly stipulated in the competition programme. It shall be for survivors, the bereaved, and other people who were affected, whether they live in Norway or abroad. And it shall be a national memorial site. The jury's decision was made by the eleven of us who sat on the jury, but it was made on behalf of the entire population. This is a memorial site for the entire country.

As a national memorial site, it will share a connection to the national memorial site located at the ferry landing across from Utøya, but also to other local memorials and memorial sites that commemorate 22 July throughout Norway.

*Upholding* will not repeat what other memorial sites do – rather, it will do something else. It is an immediate and powerful work, with a radicality that sets it apart from the memorial sites that already exist. It thereby adds something new: the mosaic, the imagery, and the rig all allow for a wide range of interpretations.

And the mosaic itself, consisting of **hundreds of thousands of** small stone fragments, can also be understood as symbolically representing democracy and Norwegian society.

Norway is a multicultural and diverse democracy, and this will be reflected in the memorial. Through this memorial site, we will strive for more democracy, more humanity. But never more naivety.

**My name is Camille Norment, and I'm an artist.**

What can a memorial be? It can help to hold us in a memory of the past, it can be a beacon for the future and an affirmation of values; it can do both. While it offers a place for contemplation, it should by all means, *keep people in discussion.*

Representing the field of art on this jury, I feel our selection affirms the unique power of art, and what it can do to bring us forward – through our grief, our uncertainties, curiosities, and what we demand for the future.

Art is so strongly supported in this country because we believe in the value it has for society in challenging the known, shaping perspectives, and *helping societies to evolve*.

We see in this memorial, a protection of our memories of a tragic past, and a strong voice for the future of *what we want and need to do – support the fragility of democracy and multiplicity, and the society that so many lost their lives for*.

**My name is Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum, and I am the head of the arts department at KORO.**

22 July 2011 is a watershed moment both for the Government Quarter as a place and for Norway as a nation. For those of us who remember that day, it lingers as a physical presence in our body, but also as a series of detailed and boldly outlined images. Not even the buildings that are being built, the stones that are being laid, or the trees that are being planted and taking root can ever erase that day.

Even so, the distance in time is becoming ever greater. And with the added years come forgetfulness, normalization, and abstraction. To people who were children at the time, or not yet born, the distance in time feels greater still. To them, the day is almost unreal: 22 July is just a date, and seventy-seven just a number.

At the same time, things are happening around the world that remind us that the terrorist attack was not an isolated incident. The ideas did not belong to just one man, but were symptomatic of an underlying movement. It is more important than *ever* that we remember.

Matias Faldbakken's proposal defies the tendency of time and human memory to simplify and marginalize. Like a kind of enduring protest sign, it encourages us to take a standpoint. The rig is an insistent presence in a perfectly groomed urban area. The red surface facing Akersgata is a clear manifestation. And with its alert gaze, the wader is an eternal witness to our choices and actions.

**My name is Ingeborg Hjorth, and I'm the head of research and development at the Falstad Centre.**

The jury believes that the *Upholding* memorial site will contribute to the act of remembrance as an inclusive and participatory process. The winning proposal offers us a memorial site that is complex and saturated with meaning. We believe that it will open up for conversations we need both now and in the future – conversations about both the strengths and the weaknesses of democracy.

The process of physically shaping the memorial site will provide room for co-creation: The mosaic will be produced in Italy, at an experienced mosaic workshop, and some of the stones will be put in

place there. The rest will be set into the mosaic when the work has arrived at Johan Nygaardsvolds Plass in Oslo, where bereaved family members, survivors, and other stakeholders will be invited to participate in the work's finalization.

We strongly believe that people will be able to develop a personal bond to the memorial site through this process, which reinforces the very symbolism of the work. Faldbakken's memorial site reminds us that each and every one of us is a vital part of our society and that we all have a role to play in it.

**My name is Øystein Rø, and I'm an architect.**

*Upholding* is a highly site-specific memorial that engages in an intimate dialogue with the history, art, architecture, and materials of its location. But even as it is part of the Government Quarter in Oslo, it is also a window to Utøya. It thereby builds a bridge between the two sites of the terrorist attack in an unexpected and compelling manner.

The proposal sets up a separate space within the Government Quarter, defined by both new and historical elements, namely the new monumental sculpture, the nineteenth-century linden alley, the wing shape of the West Pavilion, and the entrance to the 22 July

Centre. The other elements are thereby inscribed with new meaning as a frame for the national memorial.

The result is a memorial site that is an open square, accessible from four corners. It is a place for reflection, for coming together. Open, but still sheltered.

The square provides breathing space, as Faldbakken himself writes, right in the middle of the architecture of power. And in this square we will encounter a powerful, but at the same time fragile monolith – an eternal reminder to never forget.

**My name is Mathias Danbolt. I'm a professor of art history at the University of Copenhagen, where I study monuments and memorial sites.**

One of the considerations the jury has emphasized is how a memorial site will endure over time, as well as what conditions must be present for its material qualities and symbolic meanings to continue to be recognized and understood in the future.

We can't predict how future generations will interpret the work. But we do know that monuments and memorial sites are often gradually integrated into the cityscape, and gradually fade into the background – which makes them easy to overlook.

*Upholding's* innovative design gives the memorial site the potential to counter such a tendency. Faldbakken's work will remain on the site as an insistent – and for some perhaps also disturbing – element that provokes wonderment, interest, and questions.

With time, the rig's allusion to the **now-demolished** Y-Block will eventually fade, and the scaffolding-like structure and beautiful mosaic will create a space in the middle of Oslo to commemorate those who were killed and those who survived, and remind us of what was destroyed and what was preserved – even as it will serve as a constant reminder of the collective work required to keep the story of both the consequences of terror and the resilience of democracy alive.

### **Marianne Borgen (concluding remarks)**

As you now have heard, we as a jury have made our decision on the basis of our wide-ranging, comprehensive expertise, diverse experiences, and professional opinions. Our decision was made in accordance with the jury's mandate and regulations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all 220 groups and individuals who applied to participate in the competition. It is wonderful that so many of them wanted to be part of this. I also thank everyone involved in creating the ten powerful and distinct



sketch proposals during the first round of the competition. All of them showed a strong commitment and great creativity, and all of them helped increase our understanding of what a memorial site can be and what it can do.

In particular, I would like to warmly thank the three finalists, who with their strong personal commitment, interest, creativity, professionalism, and ability to listen have provided us with relevant and meaningful responses to what a good memorial site for the future can be.

I would also like to thank my fellow jury members for our good, warm, and confidential collaboration. On behalf of the entire jury, I must also thank project manager Mari Magnus, who has had full control throughout the entire process, and who has assisted all the participants and the jury in an outstanding way from start to finish. We have now submitted our decision both to the public and to KORO, and our work is hereby over.