IN REMEMBRANCE
AND AS A REMINDER
Road traffic crashes are not of our choosing.

They strike unexpectedly, cause severe injury and leave us in unbearable pain. They have tragic and irreversible consequences. In a blink of an eye, they take away the people and the things we love. This memorial tells the stories of the victims of road traffic crashes and serves as a poignant reminder to society. The memorial provides a place for confrontation, peace, serenity, compassion, remembrance, and it makes us think of those who have been lost. It is a space, where for a moment, the sun and the shadows link thousands of victims, their families, the people responsible for road traffic crashes, and all of us. A permanent message to us has been carved into the granodiorite stone monument that is in the form of rolling waves. The memorial is the work of architect and academic, Marko Marijan Mušič, who made it entirely from white tonalite stone from Pohorje.

The words that are carved into it were written by Niko Grafenauer, a Slovenian poet and academic, the memorial itself stands at the Žale cemetery in Ljubljana.

Ljubljana, 13 November 2013
Feelings and fear. A compulsion.  

A calling.

I do not keep count anymore of the calls, confessions, and tragically sad life stories. The thousands of people who lost their lives, and those who were lost in silent and profound depths of pain. The numbers fade and become a stream of shadowy faces. When will it be enough, when will it end?

There came a realisation that this pain wears people down, destroys relationships and erodes friendships – that it divides untold numbers of people. It creates two poles. Poles that have one common denominator: the complete loss of the life that had been lived up until the tragedy. What is more, the nation is divided between these two poles. There are those who have lost, and those who have taken away.

The calling grew stronger. I started thinking about all the unknown factors and the questions related to them. About concrete concerns and questions such as “where?”, “from where?”, “how?”, “who?”… Who would understand and support this calling, who would help me achieve it?

A pathway and special people appeared to help. People who have something special in their souls, hearts and eyes… I do not know what it is exactly. It is something more. A spark that gives them the power to use their talents to help, and allows them to be a force for good. To see that which is invisible and usually imperceptible, but is in reality, very much alive and among us. These two invisible poles of pain that exist here, among us, in our families, amid friends, acquaintances, neighbours and co-workers.

The calling kept growing stronger and the first steps were taken. Ideas, designs, plans, models, adjustments, and the outline of the memorial emerged.

It took three years for the memorial to be finished. The unknown factors and questions were resolved. The memorial, a fusion of an element produced by Slovenian nature and spiritual suffering, now stands. Stands as a symbol of remembrance and as a reminder. Stands as a reminder to remember!

I thank Mr Bojan Lepičnik and all those who answered my call, and the call of thousands, and helped to make this a reality.

Robert Štaba  
President of the Safe Journey Institute  
(Zavod Varna pot)
The memorial to the casualties of road traffic crashes in Slovenia, is made of locally quarried stone, and symbolizes the flow of our lives, which may be abruptly halted, or dramatically changed, due to a tragic event.

There are architectural elements that hint at something that cannot be put into words, and which stretch beyond everyday life and pragmatism into the realm of meaningfulness and spirituality. An inversion happens – the rock hard stone, rigid and immobile, starts to move in waves, becoming supple and fluid. The concept behind the shaping of the monument was that the stone should take on the undulating and moving quality of a liquid. The wave-like flow patterns occurring naturally in liquids or other flexible and malleable materials would themselves become monumentalized and venerable. Another inversion delivers an additional message. The weight and matter of the stone has been dematerialized. It is usual for stone, which is torn from the earth, to be arranged on the ground, but here it floats weightlessly above the horizon, over the arcaded landscape of the outer park of the cemetery. It is about to leave the sphere of gravity, corporeality and rationality, and pass over to the sphere of the irrational, the spiritual and the symbolic.

The magnificent words by Niko Grafenauer, which were written especially for this monument, eloquently communicate that which is generally not able to be expressed. They are carved between the two key words at the beginning and the end – SOMETIMES and GOODBYE. The echo of the ambiguous emphasis on these words is now trapped in stone, trapped within the form of the monument. The memorial is made from a rare and prized white vein of locally quarried stone called Pohorje tonalite. The three blocks, which were cut especially for this monument, determined the specific measurements of each element included in the further stages of planning. The contracting company, Mineral from Podpeč, deserves recognition and praise for their careful processing of the stone and their ability to assemble and install such a challenging object, using a mixture of cutting-edge tools and traditional artisanship.

Academic Marko Mušič
When the architect and academic Marko Mušič asked me to write an epitaph for all those who have died in road traffic crashes for his ‘Entrance to Navje’, as I would name the new part of the Žale cemetery, he did not know that I had barely survived an automobile accident in Jeprca when I was 37 years old. A photo of the wreckage was published in the “Crime and Accidents” section of the newspaper, Dnevnik. My friends and colleagues who saw it thought I was dead, because they were convinced that nobody could survive an accident like that. The trauma team that treated me were surprised to see me get up, and that it was only necessary to reattach my tongue and patch up some cuts on my nose and hands. My bones were unbroken. They asked me how it was possible and told me that I was incredibly lucky.

What saved me from the worst, was that by chance I had worn a seatbelt; it was torn in my collision with the truck, and was only held together by a single thread. These memories came flooding back from the depths of my mind when I sat at my desk to write a few lines that would be appropriate for the epitaph at Žale. I racked my brains to find a way to avoid moralising, because every road crash is governed by fate; fate is unpredictable and enigmatic, and the marks it leaves on every living thing can sometimes be gentle, and sometimes harsh.

After several attempts the words that are now carved into the white Pohorje tonalite came into being:
SOMETIMES you need to stop here, to realize how someone, with their back turned towards you, could leave in the midst of life, down that road which ejected them, into their self-uttered GOODBYE.

I tried to condense and include as many different overlapping layers of message as possible into the lines. Firstly, there is the vibrant pulse of life; which gives us the energy to move forward in time, it flows towards the horizon and onwards to infinity. That is why in this lifelong endeavour to live more fully, to achieve self-realization according to our ideas and how we perceive ourselves, we sometimes have to stop and think about death, because we always forget that part of life. Facing this truth is the hardest when the people that are closest to us are involved in various types of accidents or they die in road traffic crashes. A growing number of young people are among those whose lives are abruptly cut short as result of road traffic crashes. When this happens, there is neither the time nor the opportunity to say goodbye to them while they are still alive, because they take their everlasting leave from this world without uttering a word.

Nobody knows for sure if they meet God, but it is true that “goodbye” (Note: a reference to the old form which was “God be with you” in English) is a parting word in Slovenian and in general use; it has Christian roots and appears in Slovenian vocabulary.

During the course of my life, I have often used the old form of “goodbye” with various people, and sometimes I have used it with those who have died. That is why I think it fits in well at the end of the epitaph.

Academic Niko Grafenauer
At the invitation of the director of Žale cemetery, our company, Mineral, decided to participate in the project for the construction of the memorial monument to road traffic crash victims.

The Pohorje tonalite that was chosen, is a natural Slovenian stone which is especially suitable for permanent monuments because of its excellent resistance to the natural elements. It is quarried in Cezlak in the Pohorje Mountains. It is valued for its amazing mechanical and physical properties, such as its high tensile and flexural strength, freeze thaw resistance and corrosion resistance. Geologically speaking, the stone is actually granodiorite, which is a stone of exceptional quality. For all these reasons, Pohorje tonalite is very suitable for outdoor use. A special feature of this tonalite stone is that there exists a very white vein that cannot be found on the same scale anywhere else. The whole memorial is made from this vein, and it is probably the largest structure made of Pohorje tonalite, that is made entirely out of the white vein.

Pohorje tonalite is a part of the Slovenian national identity because it has inspired many Slovenian architects and sculptors. It is often used for monuments, and many Slovenian squares are paved with tonalite paving stones. Today the most monumental and the most representative architectural work made from Pohorje tonalite is the square, Trg republike [Republic Square] in Ljubljana, both towers of which were designed by Edvard Ravnikar. Today the squares of Slovenian cities that are paved with paving stones are being extensively restored, so Pohorje tonalite remains a popular material in Slovenian architecture, and is part of the architectural identity of Slovenia.

Tomaž Urleb
Director of Mineral, d. o. o.
Žale cemetery is the most important Slovenian cemetery, and is a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE). The area is under heritage protection and has significant cultural, historical and artistic significance for Slovenia. It is enriched by the creations of many renowned sculptors, architects and other artists. The installation of the memorial monument dedicated to road crash victims in Slovenia gives Žale cemetery a new role, as it becomes a place of reconciliation for victims, their families and the people responsible for road traffic crashes. It also serves as a reminder to society, that the number of tragic road crashes should be reduced.

mag. Robert Martinčič
Director of Žale Javno podjetje, d. o. o.
ZRTVAH
PROMETNIH
NESREČ
V
SLOVENIJI
Road traffic crash statistics, detailed reports and roadside photographs, preventive actions and initiatives... We have grown dangerously accustomed to them, so they do not affect us anymore; we tend to think that they do not concern us. And then it happens to someone close to us. Everything changes then. In a moment we realize how little it takes to mean that tomorrow never comes.

The City of Ljubljana understands that every road traffic crash resulting in serious injury or death is a terrible loss not only for the family, but for the whole community. That is why we have been supporting the activities of the Safe Journey Institute for many years, and we were honoured to participate in the installation of the memorial monument to casualties of road traffic crashes in Slovenia at the Žale cemetery in Ljubljana.

We wish, at least in a small way, to show our support for the victims of road traffic crashes and their families, although we can only do this through reminders of potential risks, and through publicly expressed regret and commemoration.

A passer-by may stop for a moment to look at the evocative waves, read the lines written about life, and think of all the unfulfilled wishes of those who have lost their lives on the road...

And thus, its purpose will have been achieved.

Zoran Janković
Mayor of Ljubljana
SE MORAS TU USTAVITI, DA DOJAMBA
KAKO JE KDO.
S HRBITOM OBRNJEN PROTIV TEBO.

SPRETLJIVEH OSEB.
PLOČETE KI KONCE.

VCASIH
Road traffic crashes have a direct or indirect impact on each person and each family.

It is about time that such tragedies were prevented. In 2009, a meeting of non-governmental organizations from all over the world, that represent the victims of road traffic accidents and seek to promote road traffic safety, was held in Brussels; they prepared recommendations to governments for the Decade of Action for Road Safety. The key recommendations were:

- to jointly observe the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, which is organized on the third Sunday in November every year by the victims as an opportunity to show the consequences of road hazards and the impact of road traffic fatalities and injuries,

- to organize a national day of remembrance for road traffic victims in every capital in every country.

The memorial monument to victims is a place where those who have been injured in road traffic crashes or have suffered irreversible injuries because of them, can let go of part of their burden. This place will provide some support and strength to those who have lost a family member or a friend.

Jeannot Mersch
President of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
Honorary Patron
Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti

Donors
Academic Marko Mušič, concept and design of the monument
Academic Niko Grafenauer, the inscribed words
Atelje Marko Mušič, d. o. o., project documentation and management related to the masonry and installation
Mineral, podjetje za pridobivanje, predelavo in montažo naravnega kamna, d. o. o.

Mestna občina Ljubljana
Zavod Varna pož
Žale Javna podjetje, d. o. o.
Avto-motov zveza Slovenije
Družba za avtocestne v Republiki Sloveniji, d. d.
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Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za gradbeništvo in Geodezijo
Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za pomorstvo in promet
Univerza v Ljubljani, Tehnična fakulteta
Zaposleni Direkcije Republike Slovenije za ute

Združenje občinskih redarjev Slovenije/Zveza zdravstvenih ter odredbe in avtomobilistov Slovenije

Monograph production:
Jože Suhadolnik, photography
Fantom, concepts
Solus d. o. o., design and production
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www.varna-pož.si
On the sun there are no shadows, love is a gift.

Dreams are without tears, love is a gift.