

# Foundation Stumbling-blocks Amersfoort

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## Donations

Do you wish to support the work of the Foundation Stumbling-blocks Amersfoort? Your donation is very welcome.



## Stumbling-blocks

### What are stumbling-blocks/Stolpersteine?

The German artist Gunter Demnig (1947) has placed memorial stones on the pavement in front of the houses of people who were expelled, deported, murdered or driven to suicide by the Nazis. These Stolpersteine (literally 'stumbling-blocks') commemorate among others Jews, Sinti and Roma, resistance fighters, political prisoners, homosexuals, Jehovah witnesses and euthanasia victims.

The artist calls these "Stolpersteine" as the passer-by will, as it were, stumble over this block with 'head and heart' and has to bend to be able to read the text and name properly.

The foundation Stumbling-blocks Amersfoort has chosen for the Dutch term Struikelstenen Amersfoort. The original name Stolpersteine is the name of the project itself. Stolpern means to stumble, fall, trip, but also to run up against. Stolpersteine, by the way, can be translated literally with a not much used Dutch word: stumbling-blocks, generally a block one stumbles over.

In the pavement a memorial stone (Stolpersteine or stumbling-block) labelled with a person's name, is placed in front of the houses where at that time people lived, who became victims of the Nazi regime. These people, of whom it is known that they were expelled, deported, murdered or driven to suicide by the Nazis (the Nazi regime), are the reason to recall and reconstruct, as much as possible, memories of particularly the Jews, Sinti and Roma, political prisoners, homosexuals, Jehovah witnesses and euthanasia victims; also to contribute to strengthening the awareness of all generations why we still commemorate every year remembrance day on May 4th and celebrate May 5th.

### Gunter Demnig, the artist, who devised the concept

Gunter Demnig grew up in Nauen and Berlin. In 1967 he went to the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Berlin to study art pedagogy. From 1969 until 1970 he went on to study industrial design. From 1971 until 1974 he continued his art pedagogy study at the College of Art in Kassel.

In 1974 Demnig started a study with Harry Kramer in 'free art' at the same College, after which he studied *Planung, Bauleitung und -ausführung in der Denkmalsanierung* for two years. From 1980 until 1985 Demnig was a lecturer in art at the University of Kassel. From 1985 he worked on various art projects in his studio in Cologne in co-operation with among others the *Molkerei-Werkstatt* and *Kunstraum Fuhrwerkswaage* and since 1994 with the *IGNIS-Kulturzentrum*.

From 1996 until 1999 he was involved with the dramatic oratorio "The Walls of Jericho" with video images on the music by Werner Raditschnig in Salzburg (Kollegienkirche), Klagenfurt (Artists House), Český Krumlov (Egon Schiele Art Center), Cologne (Domforum of the Cathedral of Cologne), Millstatt (International



Music Festival in the church) staged by Herbert Gantschacher, in a production of ARBOS – Society for Music and Drama. There is a live recording of this project by the Austrian broadcasting organisation; also an audio-cd (ARBOS 04).

He started the action “Stolpersteine”, which is his most famous project. (Stumble-blocks being memorial stones for all the victims of the Nazi regime).

- 1900 – Action in Cologne in commemoration of the deportation of Sinti and Roma;
- 1993 – Design action Stolpersteine;
- 1996 and 1997 – First (more or less illegal) Stolpersteine in Berlin-Kreuzberg and Cologne;
- 2000 – The official start of the Project Stolpersteine;
- On February 27th, 2005 Gunter Demnig was honoured in Berlin with the *Obermayer German Jewish Award* on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz Concentration camp (1945);
- On October 4th, 2005 Demnig was honoured with the *Verdienstorden der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* for the *Project Stolpersteine* in the Orangery of Castle Charlottenburg in Berlin;
- On August 20th, 2006 Demnig received the Alternative Kölner Ehrenbürgerschaft; he is the second citizen of Cologne who received this honour; the priest Franz Meurer from Cologne-Vingst was the first person to receive this;
- In 2007 Demnig received the *Giesberts-Lewin-Preis* from the *Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* in Cologne;
- On May 23rd, 2008 Demnig was honoured by the German Home Secretary Wolfgang Schauble and the Minister of Justice Brigitte Zypries by being appointed Ambassador for Democracy and Tolerance (Botschafter für Demokratie und Toleranz).

**The mission of Gunter Demnig is that his art should reflect the effects of the society of which he was a part. The history of the Nazi victims in Germany is also a part of his history and this history should never again be concealed.**