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Auschwitz Jewish Center in Poland Nominated for EU Architectural Award for Evocative Memorial Park



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Taube Philanthropies congratulates our longtime grantee, the [Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation \(AJCF\)](#), in Oświęcim, Poland, for being nominated for the 2022 European Union [Mies van der Rohe Award](#) for Contemporary Architecture for its Memorial Park. The shortlist of 40 featured architectural projects are from 18 different European countries. Winners will be announced in April 2022 and the Award ceremony will take place in May. The Memorial Park has already received several prestigious architectural and design awards in Poland.

AJCF's campus in Oświęcim, a Polish town in close proximity to the Nazi death camps Auschwitz-Birkenau, includes the last remaining synagogue of the once-vibrant Jewish community that existed before WWII, a museum to house the artifacts they left behind, a

cultural hub where people can gather, the Jewish cemetery, and the new Memorial Park. AJCF's Center offers immersive programs to teach Holocaust remembrance and anti-hatred to the world.

AJCF inaugurated the Great Synagogue Memorial Park in November 2019, on the 80th anniversary of its destruction in Oświęcim. The Great Synagogue was the largest of nearly 20 houses of prayer in Oshpitzin before the Holocaust, with 2,000 seats and a prominent location near the town's market square. For centuries, the Great Synagogue was the center of Jewish life in the town. Following the Nazi occupation, it was set ablaze and destroyed by the Germans on the night of November 29, 1939.

For many years this site remained an empty lot. Thanks to the generous support of the town of Oświęcim and the German Consulate in Krakow as well as institutional and private donors from Poland and beyond, AJCF has transformed this space into a Memorial Park. The park is the Center's most recent commemoration project and marks the town's commitment to remembering the rich and vibrant Jewish history of Oświęcim. It includes an outline of the synagogue, a path of stone slabs, and displays with a replica of a candelabra found at the site in 2004 and historic photographs.

Stated Tomek Kuncewicz, AJCF Director: "The park is another initiative to commemorate and honor the Jewish heritage of Oshpitzin, the Jewish community, which made up almost 60% of the prewar population. We aim to serve as a model of how to preserve the memory of a destroyed Jewish community and to teach about the devastating effects of hate. This simple, minimalist reflection space, which on one hand commemorates the tragic history and on the other is a beautiful park in the center of the town, is part of our campus where we educate thousands on the lessons of the Holocaust to impact the future toward a world without hate."

The architectural firm that created the Memorial Park is NArchitekTURA, a Krakow-based firm run by Bartosz Haduch. He describes his inspiration for the park in this way: "Almost

a decade ago, I accidentally came across a beautiful industrial waste material – gray sandstone slabs with countless irregular cuts. For many years I was looking for an adequate design opportunity to take advantage of this singular material. Finally, I found the right project in the city of Oświęcim, where it became the leitmotiv of the Memorial Park, symbolizing the ruins of the now defunct Great Synagogue (1863-1939) and the paths of life of the multicultural community that were once criss-crossing in this place."

The memorial is titled "Paths of Life."

[Read more and see a gallery of images here.](#)