

Tomas Kraus With Joschka Fischer



This is a photograph of me with Joschka Fischer on the occasion of the grand opening of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin in May 2005. The building of the Holocaust Memorial, not far from the Brandenburg Gate, within sight of the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz, in close proximity to Goebbels' bunker, and somewhat further from Hitler's bunker, was accompanied by major controversy. It was said that this sprawling concrete field would only uselessly take up a lot of space, and would not fulfill its intended purpose. But one must experience this space and its structure in person, from the beginning to then realize how petty all such criticisms are; especially the reference to the taking up of space is in Berlin utterly irrelevant, because there everything is large, and one certainly cannot complain of a lack of space. The smooth-surfaced concrete stelae all have the same footprint, are aimed in the same direction, but have varying heights and sit at various levels, so from the edge the entire field is visible, but the deeper one walks among them, the more one is lost. The blocks are up to four meters high, and that which at the beginning seemed on the whole innocent, changes into a maze, which does have some sort of order, but nevertheless has a confining and unpleasant effect. The effect of alienation is perfect, the space gives the impression of a burial ground, a cemetery, a calming, sad and unhappy place, reflective and in some unusual fashion enriching and admirable. An exceptional experience. Underground there is a museum that reminds one of the entire tragedy of the Holocaust. The Jewish Museum is also built in a similar spirit, but its main architectural element are diagonal or broken lines. The building is characterized by a certain derailing, asymmetry, unpredictability, and uncertainty, so it faithfully accompanies the exposition of the exhibition on the history of the Jewish residents of Germany, more precisely Berlin.