

Welcome address Geschichtsverein für Göttingen und Umgebung e.V.

At this place I would like to welcome you on behalf of the Göttingen Historical Society. Today we are laying two Stolpersteine for Amalie and Bernhard Katz.

Started as an art project, the artist Gunter Demnig has now been laying Stolpersteine for 30 years: we find more than 90,000 stones in public spaces in 1,800 European communities. Demnig understands this form of commemoration of the victims of National Socialism as commemorative art. This form of remembrance has also been taking place in Göttingen for 10 years. Gunter Demnig indeed conceived the Stolpersteine as a way to set them apart from monumental memorials and ritualized – and therefore impersonal and sometimes ossified – commemoration. They put the reminiscence of each individual victim at the heart [of commemoration]. In this way, the persecuted and murdered people return to our everyday life, to our present day. Hence, they are also visible in the cityscape, the Stolpersteine find a place in front of the residences chosen last in each case.

I deliberately said: "We are laying". The project is supported by the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, the Göttingen Historical Society and the City of Göttingen. They are assisted by a group of experts. Fortunately, pupils have also been involved in the preparation and execution of the laying [of the Stolpersteine] for quite some time. Together with their specialist teachers, they research the biographies of the persecuted and murdered people and present them on the occasion of the laying ceremonies. They have also provided musical accompaniment for the individual laying ceremonies for some time. You can feel their interest and you can clearly see their commitment to giving the victims and murdered people a face and a story again. This gives cause to optimism to some extent: the laying of Stolpersteine in Göttingen is not an event exclusively for people over 60.

Let me conclude by quoting Gunter Demnig who is absent today:

"Stumble, hesitate, stop, think - that's how someone may feel who notices a stone like this on the pavement. That is what I wish for. The most beautiful definition comes from a schoolboy. He said: "You don't tumble; you stumble with your head and your heart".