After their liberation from Gusen concentration camp, Robert and John became close friends and frequently co-designed projects together. In 1947, the Committee for the Victims of Nazi Persecution sponsored an architectural competition to build a Memorial to Jewish Martyrs in the Kozma Street Cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in Hungary. Robert and John submitted a powerful memorial design that featured a part of 50-foot tall arches and an inscribed memorial wall. They won the competition but the sponsoring committee was unable or unwilling to build their design. In 1948 or 1949, the committee built the second-place designed project together. In 1947, the Committee for the Holocaust Victims of Nazi Persecution sponsored an architectural competition to build a Memorial to Jewish Martyrs in the Kozma Street Cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in Hungary. Robert and John received B’nai B’rith scholarships that brought them to Miami University and friend, John Macsai. Robert and John graduated with a degree in architecture from Miami University in 1949. John had a successful career as an architect, becoming an authority on designing housing for the elderly and disabled.

JOHN MACSAI
(1926–2007), Holocaust Survivor

Robert Diamant was born on April 22, 1922 in Budapest, Hungary into a family of artists. Robert Diamant’s plans changed when the collaborationist Hungarian government passed anti-Jewish laws in 1938-39. In January 1944, Robert was imprisoned at Mauthausen and later transferred to Gusen I. He was released on May 4, 1945 and endured a harrowing return home to Budapest. After liberation, Robert worked in the architecture program at Budapest University of Technology and Economics where he met his future architecture partner and friend, John Macsai. Robert and John received B’nai B’rith scholarships that brought them to Miami University in 1947. Robert graduated from Miami University with a degree in architecture in 1949 and joined Skidmore, Owings & Merill. Over the course of his distinguished career, Robert won several prestigious architecture awards.

ROBERT DIAMANT
(1922–2015), Holocaust Survivor

John Macsai was born Jaros Ludott on May 22, 1926 in Budapest, Hungary into a warm family who fostered his early love of art. When the collaborationist Hungarian government passed anti-Jewish laws in 1938-39, John was forced into labor service. During April 1945, John survived a death march to Mauthausen concentration camp and endured three weeks in Mauthausen and Gusen concentration camps before being liberated on May 5, 1945. After returning home, John entered the architectural program at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics and later graduated with a degree in architecture from Miami University in 1949. John had a successful career as an architect, becoming an authority on designing housing for the elderly and disabled.

Memorial Competition

After their liberation from Gusen concentration camp, Robert and John became close friends and frequently co-designed projects together. In 1947, the Committee for the Victims of Nazi Persecution sponsored an architectural competition to build a Memorial to Jewish Martyrs in the Kozma Street Cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in Hungary. Robert and John submitted a powerful memorial design that featured a part of 50-foot tall arches and an inscribed memorial wall. They won the competition but the sponsoring committee was unable or unwilling to build their design. In 1948 or 1949, the committee built the second-place designed project together. In 1947, the Committee for the Holocaust Victims of Nazi Persecution sponsored an architectural competition to build a Memorial to Jewish Martyrs in the Kozma Street Cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in Hungary. Robert and John received B’nai B’rith scholarships that brought them to Miami University and friend, John Macsai. Robert and John graduated with a degree in architecture from Miami University in 1949. John had a successful career as an architect, becoming an authority on designing housing for the elderly and disabled.

Community Memory Work

Memory work includes social practices that create and transmit memories. Robert and John’s design for the Memorial to Jewish Martyrs in the Kozma Street Cemetery occupies a disjointed place in history. The proposed site for the memorial exists, but the structure doesn’t. Even though their memorial contains significant meaning for John and Robert personally (and for their families), their memorial never became part of the lived, social practices of Holocaust remembrance in Hungary. By designing the VR memorial project as anti-redemptory and open-ended, we can make space for new forms of community engagement and memory work without underestimating the importance of contemporary memory.