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State Museum of Egyptian Art

“Stumbling-blocks” (*Stolpersteine*) in front and inside of the Egyptian Museum

The State Museum of Egyptian Art (SMÄK) has installed six stumbling-blocks (*Stolpersteine*) in front of and within the museum building on Gabelsbergerstraße. These stumbling-blocks are a memorial to the previous inhabitants of the site and their fate at the hands of the Nazi Party. The State Museum of Egyptian Art has been working for some time towards providing a fitting way of showing the Nazi history of the museum's current site, in the spirit of contemporary archaeology. The *Stolpersteine* installation is a co-operation with artist Gunter Demnig and the initiative Stolpersteine für München e.V.

The museum's Stumbling-blocks honour the previous inhabitants of the site and commemorate their fate at the hands of the Nazi Party. They are:

Laura Obriner, née Drey, (1871-1942)
Henriette Drey (1873-1942)
Konrad Dobrin (1902-1952)
Georg Hermann Dobriner (1903-1992)
Dr. Ernst Darmstaedter (1877-1938)
Fritz Heinrich Hermann (1888-1941)

They lived on Arcisstraße houses numbers 28 and 32. in the area now occupied by the State Museum of Egyptian Art (the numbering system has changed since then). These six stumbling-blocks for the victims of Nazi terror are meant not only to recall the persecution and forced evictions perpetrated by the regime, but also to serve as a warning against antisemitism, hate and marginalisation in the present, such as the recent violence in Halle and Hanau. Commemorative acts are one of society's way of taking a stance against hate crimes.

The site

On the site on which the State Museum of Egyptian Art now stands, it was decided in 1938 to build a Chancellery for the NSDAP. To make space for the new building, the owners of the houses on Gabelsbergerstraße and Arcisstraße were forcefully evicted and their houses pulled down. They were to be replaced by a five-storey building with several wings and a length of 180 metres (ca. 590 feet). By the time the war suspended construction on the Chancellery, only the subterranean bunkers (with walls of steel-reinforced concrete four metres – 13 feet – thick) had been finished. Between 1965 and 1970, the plot was partially built over with outbuildings for the Technical University. During construction for the Egyptian Museum and the University of Television and Film, the Technical University buildings were pulled down and

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the bunkers blasted. An information panel in the foyer of the museum gives the history of the site.

An archaeologist's view – looking down

Museum Director Dr. Sylvia Schoske explains the reasoning behind the stumbling-blocks: "With the *Stolpersteine*, we seek to commemorate the victims of the Nazi regime in the place where they lived, their own homes. The Arcisstraße weaves their history into that of the museum. Looking down at the ground, where we find the *Stolpersteine*, is a habitual gesture for an archaeologist – important and valuable testimonies to the past await the archaeologist on and below the ground."

The house on Arcisstraße 32 and its inhabitants

The house belonged to a couple, Isaak and Maria Drey, who passed it on to their daughter Laura. Her married name was Dobriner and she lived there with her children Georg Hermann and Konrad, as well as with her sister Henriette Drey, until they were evicted by the NSDAP – the whole area around the Königsplatz was to become Party headquarters, the private homes along the Arcisstraße and Gabelsbergerstraße pulled down.

Laura Dobriner, née Drey, was born in Munich on November 23rd, 1871 and in 1900 married Dr. Phil. et Chem. Paul Dobriner, born on August 17th, 1863 in Schmallenberg. He graduated in Königsberg in 1886. He was a very successful chemist who spent almost his whole career at I.G. Farben in Leverkusen, becoming department head of the analytical labs. Dr. Paul Dobriner suffered from depression and was often off sick for months on end before finally retiring in 1926. He spent the last years of his life in various sanatoriums and homes until his death in the sanatorium at Eglfing-Haar on March 2nd, 1933. The directorate of I.G. Farben published a laudatory eulogy in his obituary in the journal *Angewandter Chemie*, year 46 1933, Nr. 10, p. 160.

The Dobringer family moved back to Munich in 1924; Laura Dobringer lived in her parents' house on Arcisstraße 32 until it was requisitioned by the NSDAP in April of 1934. She then moved several times within Munich before moving to Füssen for a while, then to Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) until she came back to Munich to stay with the Selz family on Franz-Josephstraße 15, then in a pension on Widenmayerstraße 6. In December of 1941 she was forcefully relocated to the camp in Milbertshofen from where she was deported on July 1st, 1942 to Theresienstadt. She was murdered there on July 7th.

Her sons, Konrad Dobriner, born on October 14th 1902 and Georg Hermann Dobriner, born on October 28th 1903, lived with their mother in Munich for a time. Both went to University. Konrad became a well-known Endocrinologist. An obituary published in the British Medical Journal of March 29th 1952 (p. 715) mentions that he graduated from Freiburg University and went on to postgraduate studies in two disciplines. His doctorate is listed for July 7th, 1933 in the honour rolls of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich for the field of medicine. On May 17th, 1934, Konrad emigrated to New York. He died on March 10th, 1952 in New York City.

Georg Dobriner emigrated to the USA in 1933 and died on June 30th, 1992 in Santa Barbara, California. Nothing is known about his profession in the US.

Henriette Drey was born in Munich on May 5th, 1873 as one of five children to Isaak Moritz and Maria Drey. After being forcibly relocated several times, she was quite elderly by the time she was deported to Theresienstadt and murdered there on July 7th, 1942.

The house on Arcisstraße 28 and its inhabitants

This was the home of Dr. phil Ernst Darmstaedter from 1918 to 1934. When the house was requisitioned by the NSDAP, the owners and tenants were evicted. Ernst Darmstaedter moved to Stockdorf near Gauting. Ernst Darmstaedter took his own life on November 13th, 1938, four days after the Kristallnacht on November 9th.

Ernst Darmstaedter was born on January 13th, 1877 in Mannheim. He was the son of merchants. After getting his doctorate in chemistry in Heidelberg in 1901, Ernst worked as a chemist and on the editorial staff of a number of scientific journals. His book "The Alchemy Geber" was published in Berlin in 1922; a second edition came out in 1969.

Another inhabitant of Arcisstraße 28 was the hatter Fritz Heinrich Hermann, born on October 9th, 1888 in Berlin. Between 1918 and 1920 he was a member of the volunteer corps of the Baltic Territorial Army and was rewarded with the *Reichsurkunde* for his bravery. He spent many years abroad for business before moving from Temesvar, Rumania, to Munich in 1927. After being forced out of the Arcisstraße, Fritz Heinrich Hermann married Rosa Krochmal, née Blum, born on March 18th 1895 in Drohobycz, Galicia. During the first Munich deportation on November 20th 1941, the couple was deported to Kaunas in Lithuania and shot on November 25th together with about a thousand other Munich Jews.