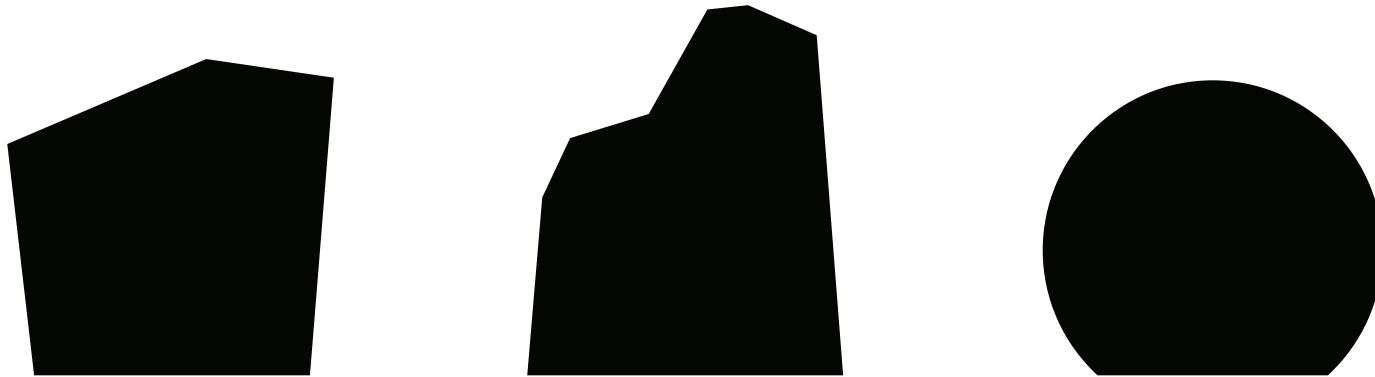


Milan Kundera Tombstone

B | R | N | O

Catalogue of Competition Designs



Milan Kundera Tombstone

Architectural and artistic one-phase open design competition

Contracting Authority

Statutory City of Brno

Organiser

Culture Department, Brno City Municipality

Catalogue of Competition Designs

July 2025



Table of Contents

Word of Introduction	4	doc. MgA. Jakub Gajda, Ph.D.	30
Subject of Competition	5	Ing. Jiří Mašek	31
Competition Panel, Dates and Prizes	8	STABIL s.r.o. – Ing. Petr Daniel, Ing. Pavel Bína	32
Designs		MgA. Tereza Svatošová	33
1st place: Johannes Paar, Mair-Paar Büro für Architektur ZT GmbH	10	HUA HUA ARCHITECTS s.r.o. – Ing. arch. Václav Kocián, MgA. Natalie Chalcarzová	34
2nd place: Hannes Stiefel, Stiefel & Company Architects	12	akad. soch. Zbyněk Fojtů	35
Awards		Ing. arch. Lukáš Kemr	36
akad. arch. David Vávra		Radek Svoboda	37
MgA. Václav Polján	15	DEXON ART s.r.o. – Ing. Jaromír Gargulák	38
atelier jasné s.r.o. – Mgr. Petr Holeček	16	Architekti Brno s.r.o. – Mgr. René Vlasák, akad. mal., Ing. arch. Tomáš Jurák	39
MgA. Lukáš Wagner	17	2109 Di Thomas Baertl	40
Eldar Hajdarevic, M. Sc.	18	Ing. arch. Marek Ječmen, MgA. Zuzana Bartošová	41
MONOLIT elements s.r.o. – Tomáš Vrba, MgA. Hana Svobodová	19	Mgr. Linda Trpálková, Marian Kay	42
No award		akad. arch. Miroslav Vochta, Jan Vavruša	43
Peter Pištěk	20	Ing. arch. Radek Taláš	44
Mgr. art. Peter Ilčík		Ing. arch. Jaroslav Sedlák	45
akad. soch. Jiří Fuchs	22	MgA. Miroslav Žáčok	46
Zuzana Kantová	23	Michaela Tomášková, Jorge Juan Gómez Vázquez, Agáta Slámová, Jiří Polák	47
doc. Jiří Sobotka, akad. soch.	24	Dominik Červinka, Ing. arch. Jan Mojka	48
Studio Kubinský s.r.o. – Bohuš Kubinský, Monika Kubinská	25	Ing. arch. Petr Jureček	49
Ing. arch. Radim Horák	26	Intervence s.r.o. – Mgr. Adam Vodička, Ing. arch. Laura Draxler	50
MON NOM STUDIO s.r.o. – Ing. arch. Roman Ženatý, Dipl. Arch. Adriano Ferrer Escoyla	27	STUDIO D1 s.r.o. – Radovan Veselý, Pavel Tasovský	51
	28	MAILLARD ET MAILLARD – Loic Maillard, Samuel Vermeulen	52
	29		



Word of Introduction

I am pleased to present to you the open, one-stage architectural and artistic competition to design a tombstone for the final resting place of the world-renowned writer and Brno native Milan Kundera, together with his wife Věra, at the Central Cemetery of Brno.

Milan Kundera will remain in history as one of the great writers and thinkers of the 20th and 21st centuries. He spent much of his life in France, yet his bond with Brno remained strong. He was born here, and his father, Ludvík Kundera, was the first rector of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts. His beloved Janáček lived and created here. In 2009, the City of Brno granted him honorary citizenship. Since 2023, it has been preserving his intellectual legacy through the Milan Kundera Library, and it will also become the place where the author and his wife will rest forever.

I had the honour of serving on the jury of the tombstone competition, to which 41 applications were submitted, and 39 projects were evaluated. Given their high quality, we, the jurors, did not have an easy task. We discussed and carefully considered to what extent the individual designs met the requirements for originality, conceptual clarity, and creativity,

and how they reflected the artistic and human legacy of Milan Kundera and his wife Věra. The jury's decision was not unanimous, but we ultimately selected project number 31, submitted by Stiefel & Company Architects, as the winner. At the initiative of Tomáš Kubíček, Director of the Moravian Library and a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Kundera, the Brno City Council re-examined the results and eventually decided on the "levitating tombstone", designed by Austrian architect Johannes Paar, which had placed second. The councillors and Mr. Kubíček agreed that this design best respected the couple's wish for a simple and modest tombstone, in line with Kundera's own authorial style, which avoids ornamentation and is instead analytical, reduced, and unsymbolic in expression.

Allow me to thank all the artists who took part in the competition for their courage, imagination, and creative efforts with which they paid tribute to one of the greatest contemporary writers with Czech—and indeed Brno—roots. I believe that in July 2026, three years after his passing, we will commemorate Milan Kundera at his new tombstone in the honorary burial ground of the Central Cemetery of Brno.

Markéta Vaňková
Mayor of the City of Brno



Subject of Competition



The subject of the competition was the creation of an original design for the tombstone of the honorary grave of Milan Kundera (hereinafter also referred to as the competition design or design), located in the Circle of Honour of Brno Central Cemetery in the group of honorary graves No. 25E, grave site No. 15, and the construction of the tombstone according to the selected design. The Circle of Honour is an honorary burial ground containing the tombstones of prominent figures. It is located in the oldest part of Brno Central Cemetery and is a listed heritage site.

The aim was for the artistically rendered tombstone to serve as a worthy tribute to Milan Kundera's legacy and reflect his story and significance to the current and future generations through its visual concept and contemporary

artistic tendencies. The design competition was expected to result in a design for the tombstone that would be of a high artistic standard, respecting the Kunderas' wish for simplicity – Kundera's style as a writer is analytical, non-symbolic, expressively sparse, yet not simplistic, always aiming at making an intellectual point rather than an ornamental flourish.

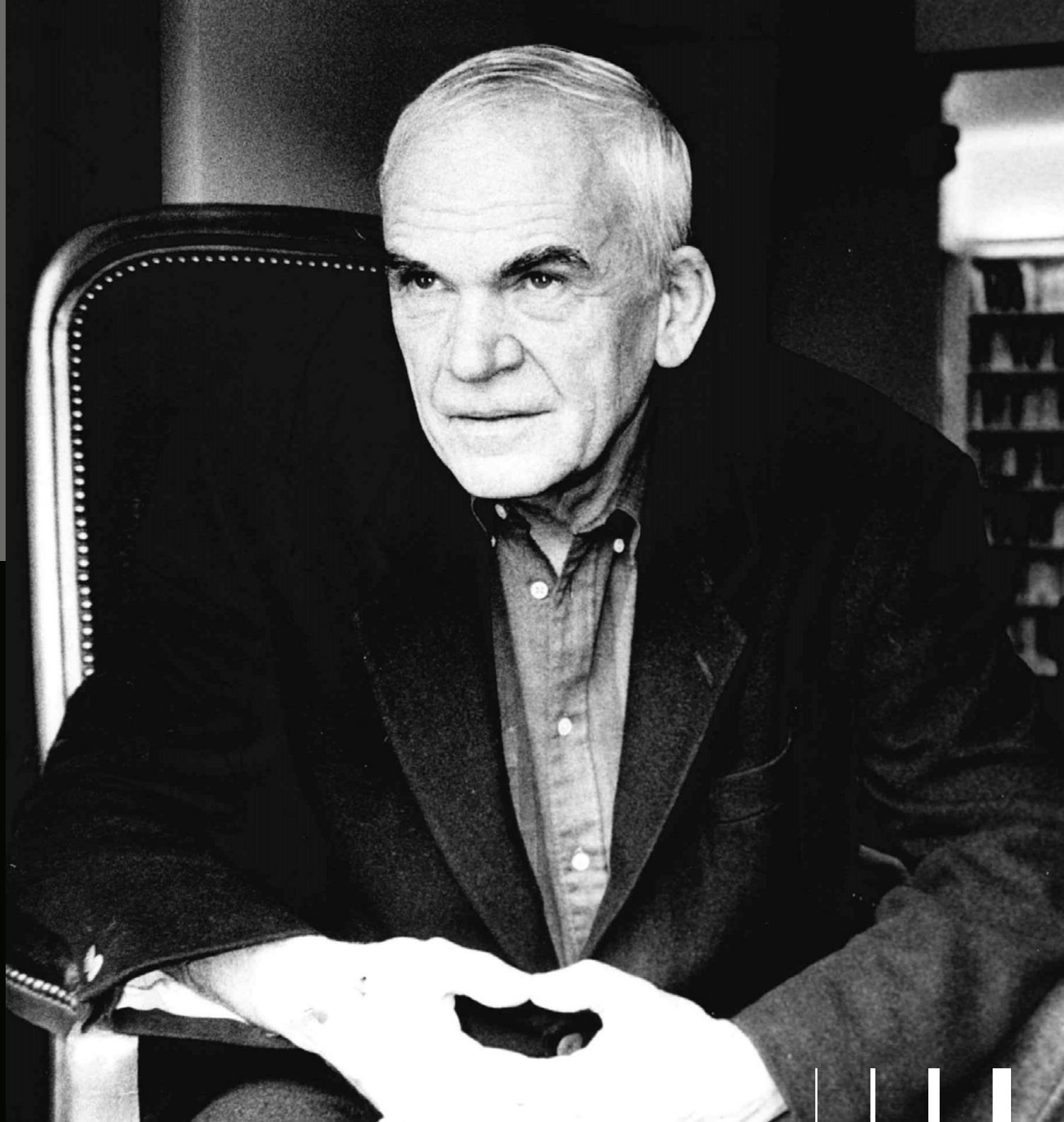
Estimated value of the public contract for the work – CZK 1,250,000 excluding VAT.

Milan Kundera

* 1 April 1929, Brno

† 11 July 2023, Paris

was a Czech-French writer. He lived in France from 1975 and is considered one of the most prominent writers, a representative of Czechoslovak and world literature. He wrote his first works in Czech, and later in French. He entered the world of literature as a poet and playwright, but ultimately became internationally renowned primarily as a novelist and essayist. His works have been translated into many languages and have won international acclaim. Yet Kundera rarely gave interviews or made public appearances. However, his work has left an indelible mark on the literary world.



The Circle of Honour past and present



Since the foundation of the Central Cemetery, the Circle of Honour has been the burial site of Brno's prominent figures and forms a separate group marked 25e, which consists of an inner row (row 1) and an outer one (row 2). The Circle of Honour is accessible from four sides, creating four sections, with six grave spaces in each section within the inner perimeter. In the outer perimeter, there are nine grave sites in two parts and eight and ten sites in the other two parts. This means there are currently sixty grave sites in the Circle of Honour, and it has no more free space after the establishment of the honorary grave for Milan and

Věra Kundera. As the oldest part of Brno Central Cemetery, the part containing the honorary burial ground and the tombstones of prominent figures is a listed heritage site (CATALOGUE NUMBER 1000133680_0005) and this must be reflected in the design and creation of the new Kundera tombstone.

The cemetery is not only the final resting place of the people buried there; it is also a gallery of artistically valuable tombstones by prominent artists or famous stone workshops.

Competition Panel:

regular panel members – dependent

JUDr. Markéta Vaňková, Mayor of Brno

RNDr. Filip Chvátal, Ph.D., Deputy Mayor of Brno

Bc. Kateřina Jarošová, MBA, Brno City Councillor for Marketing and PR

Bc. Tomáš Aberl, Brno City Councillor

regular panel members – independent

doc. MgA. Ondřej Císler, Ph.D., authorised architect, Faculty of Architecture – Czech Technical University in Prague

Mgr. Marcel Fišer, Ph.D., art historian, director of the Gallery of Fine Arts in Cheb

Prof. PhDr. Tomáš Kubíček, Ph.D., Director of the Moravian Library in Brno

Mgr. Terezie Petišková, Director of the Brno House of Arts akad. soch. Martin Zet, artist and sculptor

alternate panel members – dependent

JUDr. PhDr. Martin Příborský, EMLE, Brno City Councillor for Strategic Development, Metropolitan Cooperation and Integrated Territorial Investments

MUDr. Alena Gruberová, Brno City Councillor, member of the Cultural Commission of Brno City Council

alternate panel members – independent

Mgr. Marie Foltýnová, Ph.D., Head of the Department of Public Sculpture Administration at the Prague City Gallery

doc. MgA. Dominik Lang, sculptor, Head of the Department of Free Art – Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague

Dates

Opening of the competition
6 February 2025

Deadline for submission of designs
9 June 2025 by 11.59 p.m.

Panel evaluation session
1 July 2025

Publication of competition results
31 July 2025

Exhibition of competition designs
19 September – 4 October 2024

Prizes

1st place **CZK 75,000**

2nd place **CZK 100,000**

3rd place **not awarded**

Prizes for 6 designs worth a total of CZK 75,000. The 3rd place prize of CZK 50,000 and the Awards amounting to a total of CZK 25,000, i.e. a total of CZK 75,000, were divided up among 6 designs.

Conclusion and Opinion of the Panel



1st place

Paar Büro
für Architektur ZT GmbH





Annotation

The design approaches the theme of memory with a thoughtful, subtle but clearly legible gesture. The tombstone lies horizontally above the urn grave and gives the impression of gently floating above the ground. Its underside follows the topography of the terrain, creating an uneven distance between the stone and the ground. These irregular side views subtly shape the tombstone's distinctive character. The restrained design of the tombstone focuses attention on the inscription itself. Its flat surface remains free of decorative elements and provides space for flowers or personal gifts that may be left by mourners and visitors. This area is thus temporarily filled and emptied again – a quiet place for remembrance and silence.

Panel evaluation

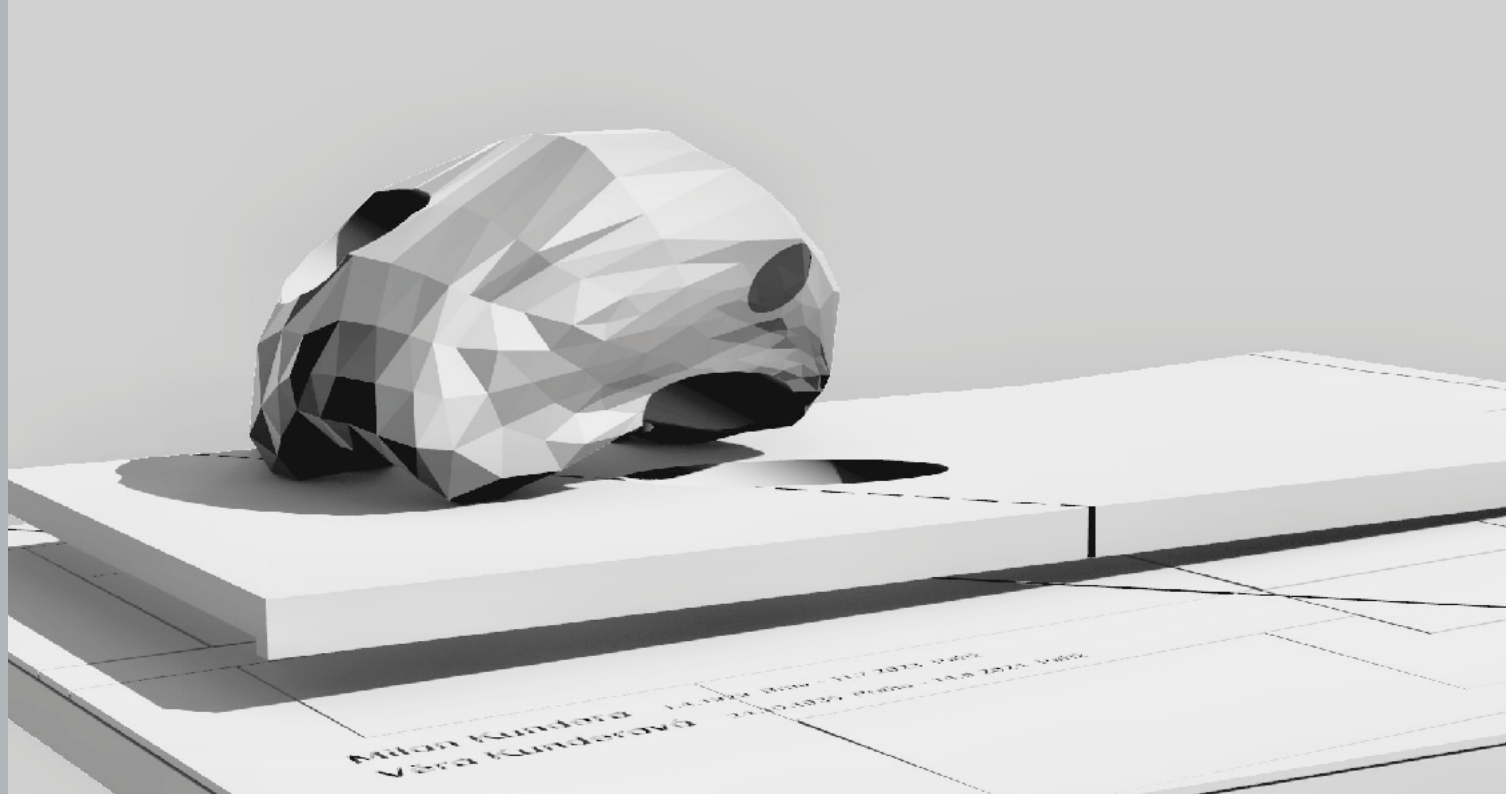
The panel stated that the design is impressively subtle and legible, yet also poetic and sparse, thus meeting the requirement of stylistic simplicity. The panel also praised the typographic aspect of the design and the conceptual approach to achieving the purpose of the competition. The restrained design and impression of a levitating tombstone meets the requirements for originality and creativity very well. The members of the panel stated that the design embodies several levels of meaning, which are allusions to the work of Milan Kundera (the principle of lightness and heaviness, irony, immortality, structure, pure composition integrating multiple semantic levels, ineffability, subtlety and the unspoken nature of a semantic gesture, i.e. openness of meaning). The panel appreciated the respect shown for Milan Kundera's work.

Material

white béton brut

2nd place

Stiefel & Company architects /
Hannes Stiefel



Annotation

One of the central motifs in Milan Kundera's work is that of exile and its ambiguity in relation to the personal and collective contexts of history and origin, place and present, direction and future. Death is a special kind of exile, the grave a strange form of residence. This ambiguity persists while control over expression and form is lost – the laws of nature take over.

Our design takes this major turning point into account. What remains after a long time is the stage, into whose apparent emptiness is inscribed everything that preceded it. The grave site is a work about transience and the rise of life and death. It is only by chance that the east-west line of honorary graves is oriented almost parallel to the axis that connects the grave of Milan and Věra Kundera with their home and Kundera's office in Paris. The main character – the protagonist – is an object that is milled of solid wood and has a complex yet not complicated geometry. Ideally, it should come from from a Czech tree, such as a small-leaved or winter lime. The wood is untreated and is exposed to weathering and a long process of decay



Panel evaluation

The panel especially appreciated the conceptual approach, which combines the exact geometric elements incorporated into the tombstone with the poetic metaphor of impermanence as expressed by the wooden object. The panel considers the choice of wood – a material with a limited lifespan – to be an original and bold approach that adds a new dimension of meaning to the funereal theme. The wooden part of the tombstone is the bearer of an unsought abstract form and its natural ageing, transformation over time and gradual disappearance become an integral part of the work's expression. This process, which thematises the passage of time and challenges the notion of permanence, is a distinct strength of the design in the eyes of the panel. The design reflects contemporary artistic language and aesthetic sensibility, while offering both the opportunity for meditation and an

awareness of finality that add a touch of the monumental. After the natural disappearance of the wooden part (within a few decades), a permanent element remains in place – a stone plaque, whose subtle motifs continue to honour Milan Kundera's literary legacy and commemorate his work.

The design brings a purity to a serious subject with ease, in harmony with the surroundings and nearby tombstones. The mutual harmony of material and proportions creates a perfect aesthetic that nicely captures the personality of both Milan and Věra Kundera.

Material

wood, marble, concrete

Award-winning designs



akad. arch. David Vávra

Collaborators:

Ing. arch. Marie Vávrová,
Robert Daňek



Annotation

The chosen design is simple, consisting of two equivalent plates that are displaced, so as not to add too much pathos to the grave. Two identical, opposing stones sink into the ground on opposite sides, revealing their lateral faces, upon which the names of the departed appear. It's like a little prank of nature. A memento mori of ridiculous loves. A certain subtlety and simplicity is proclaimed by the quality of the material. A durable stone was deliberately chosen – the French Pierre de Comblanchien limestone, whose popularity is evidenced by the use of this material for many tombstones in Paris's Montmartre and Père Lachaise cemeteries, not to mention the interiors of the Sacré-Coeur Basilica. As a counterbalance to the French stone, the remaining space of the grave site is paved with Czech granite, which is quarried near Brno. The polarity of the stones loosely paraphrases the Czech-French destiny of the Kunderas. The lettering font is the same as that used on the titles of Kundera's first books.

Panel evaluation

The panel praised the simplicity of the design, which refers to the closeness of two people, as well as its sophisticated geometry.

Material

hard limestone with marble-like properties, paving – granite



Annotation

The main element of Milan Kundera's tombstone is a sculpted likeness of the writer set in an abstracted book. The design of the book is extremely minimalist, in line with the sparseness and clarity of Milan Kundera's works and drawings. The scale of the book is monumental, emphasising Milan Kundera's artistic contribution on a global scale. The book is designed in polished stainless steel, a material that will reflect the world around it at all times. The unconventionally sculpted relief of Milan Kundera creates an appealing link between the author himself and the book as a whole. The writer steps out of the book and speaks to visitors at the graveside

Panel evaluation

The panel commended the original approach and the use of the traditional and widely used motif of the book in the competition. It praised the spatiality of the work and the courage in the planned technical concept of the relief figure emerging from the pages of the book.

Material

Czech sandstone (Božanov), stainless steel, cast iron, reinforced concrete (foundations)



Annotation

As simple an approach as possible was taken to the tombstone, free of ostentation or superfluous details. Although Milan and his wife Věra spent most of their lives in France, his roots remained firmly connected to Brno and Moravia, where he embarked on his world career as a writer. His first novel, *The Joke*, is set in Moravia and the tombstone itself is conceived as a manuscript of that very novel. The manuscript of the first novel symbolising the beginning of a professional career and the first steps on the path to immortality (oblivion). Immortality is understood here as the image of the deceased in the mind of the living. A memory as light as a sheet of paper played with by the wind. Sheets blowing in the wind as a symbol of energy, the creative process, a journey and the lightness of being. The upper section consists of four panels stacked in a way that creates the impression of fluttering sheets of paper.

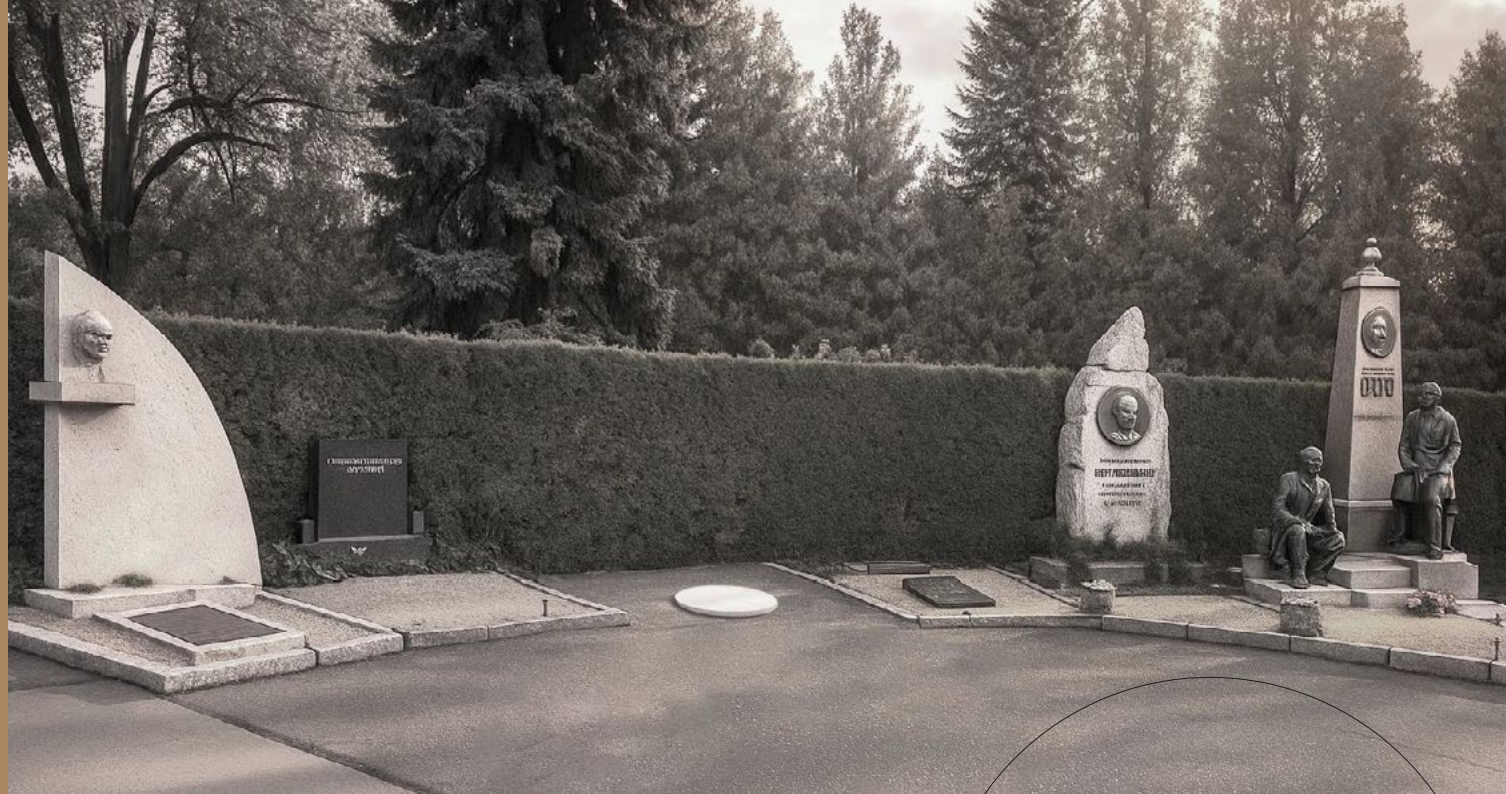
Panel evaluation

The panel commended the tasteful integration into the space and the approach to the design, which is impressively light and appealing.

Material

concrete, duralumin sheets

18



Annotation

A levitating circle in the plane of silent nothingness. The tombstone of Milan Kundera and Věra Kundera. A white circular marble platform hovering above the ground in a symmetrical composition that defies the finitude of existence. Like existence, nothing is eternal, not even the monumental permanence of stone. The mechanism allows it to change, giving the circle two different states: temporary and eternal. The temporary state, obtained by rotating the tombstone, opens the grave and allows urns to be placed in the underground chamber. The symmetry is broken. The eternal state is the permanent position where the ring seals the chamber in its original place. Forever in symmetry. The names are modestly engraved on the small front face of the circle, again arranged in a fine composition of cohesion, taking up the front one after the other.

Panel evaluation

The panel praised the bold, almost radical minimalism that evokes the meditative nature of the memorial sites of Japanese art culture. The members praised the typographic aspect of the design.

Material

marble

MONOLIT elements s.r.o. –
Tomáš Vrba,
Hana Svobodová

Collaborators:
Tibor Mužík,
Adam Horák



Annotation

The design works with a vertical element – a monolithic metal pillar set into a stone plinth. The structure is characterised by its strict geometry and minimal formal eloquence. The pointed end of the pillar either pierces the base or grows out of it – depending on the angle of view. The metal element is shaped so as to create the illusion of falling – it leans towards the observer. This physical uncertainty is an essential part of the design: the visual stability of the building is merely an illusion. What feels solid is actually in constant internal tension. The design symbolises the simultaneous existence of two incompatible attitudes. The object is optically mirrored in its surroundings and in the figure of the observer, thus remaining partially invisible and merging with the environment – it looks more like an idea than a physical monument. It also defines the imaginary centre of the honorary burial ground.

Panel evaluation

The panel appreciated the clear narrative of clarity and literality. It also commended the fitting scale of the design within the entire space, as well as the clean lines of the design.

Material

stainless steel, marble, concrete, Corten

Unawarded designs





Ideological plan

The tombstone consists of a white book block at ten times the scale of the Czech edition of Kundera's works, levitating above the plinth. The grooving of the side walls evokes a block of paper, its slanted cut into shifted halves symbolises the author's life in two countries, his complicated relationship with the Czech Republic and the multilayered nature of his works and their interpretations. The text uses an enlarged typescript (Hermes 3000). The fact that the tombstone is set away from the face of the plinth creates a space for visitors to place flowers and candles.

Material

The base, including the urn chamber, is reinforced concrete; the plinth and headstone are made of ultra-high-value concrete.



Annotation

The dominant idea of Milan Kundera's monument, expressed through minimalist formal language, is mirroring as a metaphor for the dialogues of memory and identity. The monument is made of two stelae of polished black granite, with the granite bust of Milan Kundera, located on the back of the first stela, mirrored on the polished surface of the second. The front side of the monument is clean, with the names of Milan and Věra Kundera and their life details inscribed in stainless steel. The monument is a quiet space of reflection that combines visual purity with deep meaning.

Material

black granite, stainless-steel lettering



Annotation

The design expresses the affiliation to the countries where Milan Kundera lived and worked. This integration of his life, thought and work is physically expressed by the two juxtaposed flags of the two countries, with the colouration of each flag defined by structural differentiation. White = flat, smooth, polished surface, red = vertical waveform, blue = diagonal waveform. The two flags are set at an obtuse angle to each other, suggesting an open book and thus expressing the literary work to which he devoted his entire life. This sculptural, relief part of the tombstone is set on the urn chamber, which is visually open, and both urns are placed in it. The front of the urn chamber is covered with unbreakable glass, protecting the urns from the weather and vandalism.

Material

grey, polished and sandblasted granite + shatterproof glass + wired glass

Zuzana Kantová

Collaborator:

Ing. arch. Jan Brejcha



Annotation

Just as Milan Kundera finds his characters and creates stories with them, so here the architect found and stacked the most suitable stones to create a monument for the writer and his wife. The main material of the monument is stone. However, it is not a classic single monolith, but a layering of different types. The stones communicate with and build on one another, working with lightness and weight; contrasts in shape and colour are important here. The individual stones are imported from different places. Their colour and shape are selected so as to achieve variety and contrast. Some stones are left in their original naked form, while some are roughly cut to a basic shape and polished.

Material

marble, granite

Dimensions

140 × 130 × 140 cm, 250–300 cm in height

Total price

CZK 1,240,000



Annotation

The author longed to remain hidden, overshadowed by his work. This is provided not just by his closely guarded privacy, but also his reluctance to talk about himself. In one of his essays, MK quotes Maupassant: "A man's private life and his face are not for public enjoyment." On a stone base there rests a composition of two elemental prisms, motivated by the upper half of the letter K, the lower part of which disappears into the body of the plinth. The metal bench in the foreground creates a certain distance, defining the visitor's movement. The inscription *L'Immortalité* cuts through the upper part of the bench. In suitable lighting conditions the incised inscription is projected onto the granite pavement, in which the urn chamber is embedded. The bench can also serve as a place for laying or inserting flowers. *Immortality* is the title of Kundera's seventh opus

and the last to be written in Czech. This novel, considered by many to be Kundera's most outstanding, seems most appropriate to commemorate his work. The concept of *Immortality*, however, is certainly more ambiguous in the context of the author and his work, and it is left to the viewer to decide what meaning to ascribe to it.

Material

stone – granite, Corten

**Studio Kubinský s.r.o. –
Bohuš Kubinský,
Monika Kubinská**

**Collaborators:
Ing. arch. Michaela Hantabalová,
hantabal architekti s.r.o.,
Martin Bojňanský Kamenárstvo –
Šamorín**



Annotation

Milan Kundera was an author wreathed in paradox and silence, a writer of intellectual precision. His work does not lead us along beaten paths, but stands us in front of a mirror. It is reflection – as a visual and philosophical motif – that is the basis of our tombstone design. The central element of the composition is a monolithic granite stele, an abstract resemblance of a human figure. Its shape – sparse, free of ornamentation – is vaguely reminiscent of the statues from Easter Island: archetypes of memory and silence.

A mirror-polished stainless-steel plate is embedded in the front cut surface, precisely following the cut. This reflective element invites the visitor to see themselves in it for a moment – along with the sky above them – and thus intuitively connect with the genius loci and the work. It is a mirror for the present, not a monument to the past. The back of the stele hints at the Czechoslovak tricolour – a subtle

motif implying a return home to Brno. The design as a whole is in the spirit of Kundera's style: analytical, free of pathos, sparse in expression yet precise in meaning. It is not a monument that speaks for the author – it is a space that lets him speak for himself. Or us to ourselves.

Material

granite

Ing. arch. Radim Horák

**Collaborator:
Ivana Jarošová**



Annotation

The left side of the stone (depicting the work) is roughly worked, while the right side with the names and dates is finely smoothed. This combination of surfaces represents Kundera's division between two worlds, Czechoslovakia and France. The shape of the tombstone is also reminiscent of a book, and is partially open as a nod to Kundera's introverted nature and a certain sense of detachment.

Not everyone was granted a glimpse inside – but what was left unspoken was carried by the pen onto paper. This is the reason why each line embedded in the stone symbolises one published work by Kundera. There are 29 lines in total. At the same time, these lines may resemble staff lines for sheet music, referring to his roots (his father Ludvík Kundera) and his lifelong passion for music. The main motif, however,

is centred around the characters from the covers of books published by Atlantis, the work of artist Boris Mysliveček, which have become a clearly recognisable symbol of his work. The symbols are arranged chronologically, are 12 × 12 cm in size and are done in bronze.

Material

sandstone, bronze

MON NOM STUDIO s.r.o. –
Ing. arch. Roman Ženatý,
Dipl. Arch. Adriano Ferrer Escoyla

Collaborator:
Denisa Kučerová



Annotation

The design of the tombstone attempts to reflect the themes of identity, self-reflection, illusion and memory – motifs often present in the artist's work. At the same time, it retains a simplicity of form and artistry, in accordance with the wishes of the Kundera family. The composition consists of an elevated L-shaped mass, the main material of which is cut matt black granite. The inner walls of the tombstone are fitted with two mirror panels made of metal-coated glass, inscribed with names and dates. The mirrored surfaces are joined at right angles to create a reflection that is not mirror-reversed – meaning one sees one's image as it really looks. The remainder of the grave site merges with the landscaping of the immediate surroundings. The surface is fine-grained gravel. At the front, the area is complemented by a solitary plant: a lavender or lily, in reference to Kundera's link to France.

Material

polished matt granite, metal-coated glass

doc. MgA. Jakub Gajda, Ph.D.

Collaborators:

**doc. Ing. arch. Eva Špačková, Ph.D.,
Bc. Veronika Zelenková**



Annotation

The design of Milan Kundera's tombstone works with the overall spatial concept of the site. At the rear of the space there are two tall pillars - one perpendicular, and a slimmer one leaning against it. These pillars can signify the solidity and anchorage of Kundera's work, the position of books in a library, or the connection or support of man and woman. The texts are positively rendered in high plasticity (2 cm) using the Hermes 1943 typeface, which was used for typing, a reminder of the era and writing technique in the years when Milan Kundera was composing significant works in both Czech and French. An important element and leitmotif of the tombstone is the treatment of the writer's name, where the letter i in Milan is deliberately placed one line higher, resembling a typewriting error. It's therefore a deliberate TYPO – JOKE.

Material

béton brut, stainless steel (font)

Ing. Jiří Mašek

Collaborators:

Jan Štunc,

Ing. arch. Vladimír Krajíc,

Ing. arch. Martin Křenek



Annotation

The tombstone is conceived as an abstract expression of the life and work of Milan and Věra Kundera using seven metal blocks of different sizes and positions, symbolising the complexity, interconnectedness and individuality of human destinies, similar to those in Kundera's novels. The design eschews ornamentation and literal symbolism, instead using sparse forms and an intellectual approach appropriate to the artist's style. The lead bust of Milan Kundera, incorporated into the central block, commemorates his personality and creative legacy.

Material

steel, Corten, concrete, lead and tin – bust

**STABIL s.r.o. –
Ing. Petr Daniel,
Ing. Pavel Bína**

**Collaborator:
Dana Chatrná**



Annotation

The tombstone consists of three stone slabs laid flat. Monumental white slabs of polished Carrara marble will cover the entire grave area, giving the tombstone the necessary monumental aspect to reflect the importance and dignity of Milan and Věra Kundera. This pure white base is intended to evoke a blank double sheet of paper, representing a challenge for any artist just before their hand touches it. The main – and only – visual element is the work of Dalibor Chatrný (1925–2012), a contemporary of Milan Kundera (1929–2023), whose work was chosen also in view of the fact that he is not commemorated or visible in the city's public space, making it fitting to associate it with such a significant outdoor work as the tombstone of the world-renowned writer Milan Kundera and his wife Věra.

Material

Carrara marble



Annotation

The sculpture represents a lightly folded sheet of paper lying on the surface of the honorary grave site. The typewritten inscription is slightly pressed into the stone, rendered in black. Nothing could be more fitting than this symbol of the writer – inscribed with typewritten text. The statue is designed as a stone block of white Carrara marble standing on a concrete base. The lightweight paper is forced to adapt to the heavy mass in the block of stone, becoming a sculpture and giving the viewer the impression of both lightness and heaviness, which, knowing Kundera's work, evokes many reflections... The entire trapezoidal space is surrounded by a granite curb and strewn with white stones, meaning the viewer focuses on the regular shape of the

sculpture. The stone surroundings are a suitable place for laying flowers and candles. Throughout the day, one can observe the changing light on the four surfaces of the object, divided by the shaft, which naturally forms a cross. This, too, can inspire various reflections in the viewer.

Material

Carrara marble

**HUA HUA ARCHITECTS s.r.o. –
Ing. arch. Václav Kocián,
MgA. Natalie Chalcarzová**

**Collaborators:
Martin Flégl,
Filip Rajman**



Annotation

The double grave of Milan and Věra Kundera is covered by a steel tombstone in the shape of two books standing side by side. The larger, thicker book and the smaller, subtler one stand together as man and woman, the central literary theme of writer Milan Kundera. Like books in a library, they stand close together and support each other. Their spines face forward and, when viewed from the front, between the pages we see the distinctive text MILAN A VĚRA KUNDEROVI.

Material

10 mm Corten sheet, paving – granite cube 150 mm



Annotation

The tombstone's dominant element is a granite stone in the stylized shape of a slightly open book. The book symbolises Kundera's novels, poetry collections and other literary works. The name of the writer and his wife with their life dates are designed as a typographic block – representing the imaginary cover of the book. The names and the couple's birth and death dates are complemented by one of Kundera's most striking drawings, which he sketched for his wife soon after they emigrated to France, the picture becoming very close to her heart. The stylised pages of the book feature the titles of all the author's novels and poetry collections vertically. The dots on the last page represent other works, essays, etc. Similar in size to the dominant book-shaped stone is the horizontal plate, which is divided to form the letter K. The remaining area is also covered with granite slabs of a different colour.

Material

stone – granite, foundation slab – reinforced concrete

Ing. arch. Lukáš Kemr

Collaborators:

Ing. arch. Jindra Kemrová,

Ing. Aleš Holanec,

Ing. Aleš Holanec ml



Annotation

The design of Milan Kundera's tombstone is an abstract expression of the uniqueness of this world-famous writer – novelist. And just like in the novel, there is a story hidden in this work of art. A story whose main motif is freedom. A freedom based on the inner strength of Kundera's personality. And perhaps it's not just freedom, perhaps it's immortality. Kundera's distinctive character traits predetermine the vertical form of the tombstone. It is divided into two parts by a distinctive horizontal joint. The heavy and dark part at the bottom symbolises life in Czechoslovakia, while the top lighter part represents life in France.

Material

granite, limestone, marble, quartz, aggregate and concrete

Radek Svoboda

Collaborators:

**Ing. arch. Lenka Kropšová,
Ing. arch. Alžběta Wahlová,
Švec beton s.r.o.**



Annotation

The simple tombstone reflects Kundera's writing style, which is analytical, free of symbolism and expressively sparse, yet far from simplistic, always aiming at making an intellectual point, not an ornamental flourish.

The mass of the tombstone is made of basic geometric shapes – circle/cylinder, square, and rectangle/block. In the vast majority with dimensions in multiples of 7. Milan Kundera was fond of this number: he used it in his work. The horizontal mass of the tombstone will levitate slightly above the terrain and neighbouring graves. This will clearly distinguish it from the mostly vertical neighbouring tombstones, as will the extraordinary life of Milan Kundera. The tombstone will be sculpted from a modern material – refined *béton brut*. The horizontal surface of the tombstone will bear a drawing by Milan Kundera, whose story is the basic building block (idea) underlying the proposed design.

Material

PB3-PB5 class *béton brut*

**DEXON ART s.r.o. –
Ing. Jaromír Gargulák**

**Collaborator:
Ing. Michal Kristen**



Annotation

Idea: The design itself respects Věra Kundera's wish that the memorial be kept as simple as possible. Considering the fact that they spent their entire lives surrounded by books and that it was through books that Kundera's ideas reached people, a book was chosen as the cornerstone, or rather two books. Book 1 – A standing open book to symbolise Milan Kundera's personality; the left side is blank – unwritten, the beginning of the journey of life. The right page, which contains the inscribed text, symbolises the written page of life from the birth to the passing of the couple Book 2 – Laid down, referring to the personality of Věra Kundera, who, through her approach and support, shaped the environment around her husband. These books intersect each other and form a unified whole.

Material

bronze alloy CuSn8

**Architekti Brno s.r.o. –
Mgr. René Vlasák, akad. mal.,
Ing. arch. Tomáš Jurák**

**Collaborator:
Bc. David Kunderát**



The monument is based on the motif of levitation as a symbol of human thought. The two horizontals represent the relationship between the earth (the symbol of being, the lasting world) and the horizontal levitating above it (the symbol of bounded being). The main source of inspiration are the ideas from the novel Ignorance, which explore the levitation of persons. A strong theme running through the novel is the feeling that one does not belong anywhere, a sense that has taken root in people as a silent companion. Even when people try to put down roots, they always feel that their true existence is somewhere else. In the country they left behind, or in the idea of a home that no longer exists. They are eternal strangers, even in their own lives. The accumulation of rust on the base is not predetermined. Its form depends on time and how it is perceived. As it changes, the monument always offers a new perspective

and reminds us of the changeability of life. After some time, the crushed limestone base is restored by smoothing the surface, allowing the process to begin again. The monument thus enters a ceaseless natural cycle of change.

Material

solid Corten steel plate and white limestone

2109 Di Thomas Baertl

**Collaborator:
Ivo De Nooijer**



Annotation

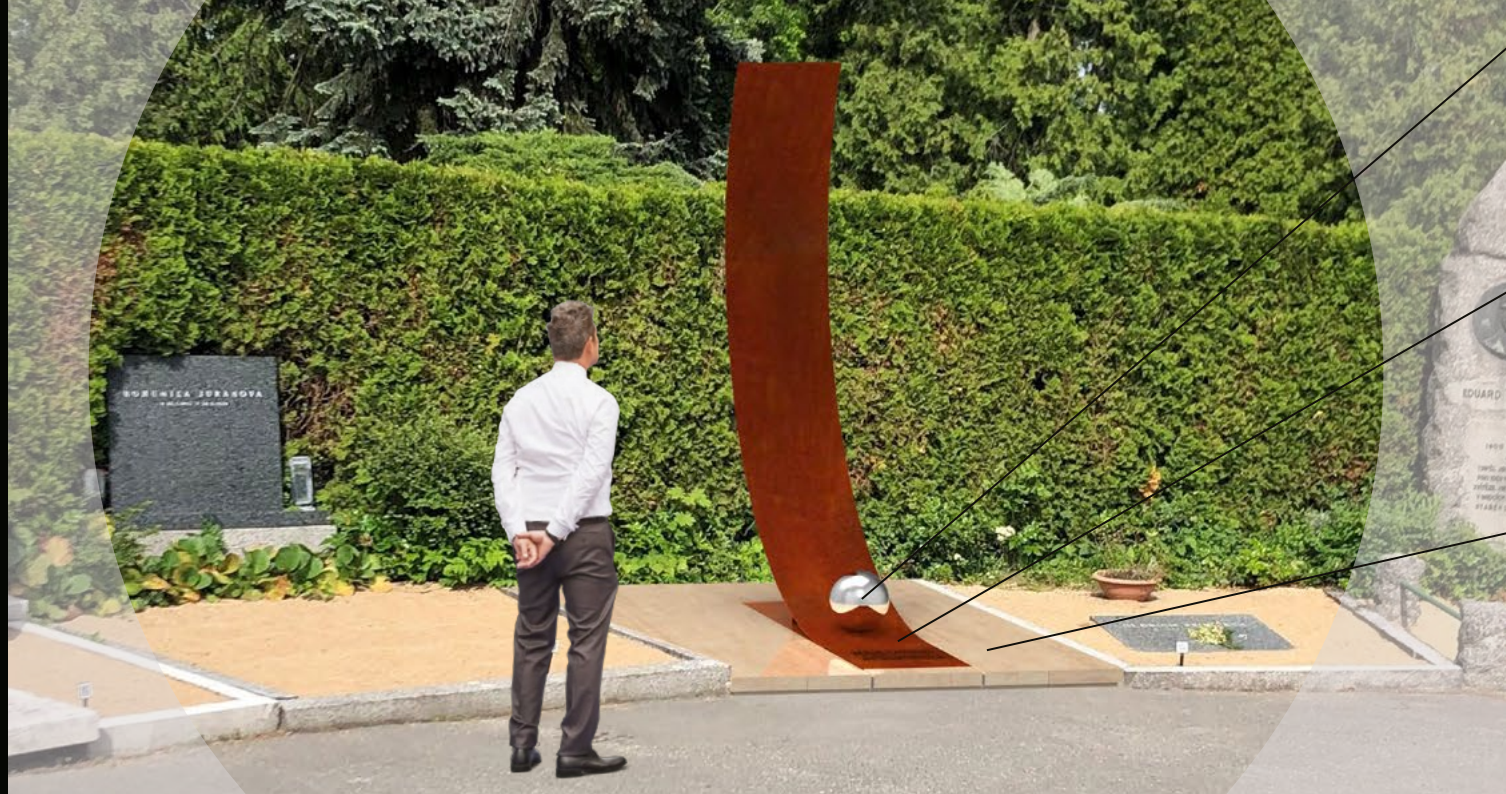
Milan Kundera's tombstone does not follow the idea of monumentality. It seeks a form that is close to Kundera's way of thinking and writing: quiet, precise, multi-layered. It transforms the delicate balance between lightness and depth of thought into a sparse yet expressive architectural gesture. The tombstone consists of a slightly inclined rectangle of coloured concrete. The slab looks as though it is not even on the ground. Its inclination means it moves slightly away from the ground, as if, like an idea, it were gently defying gravity. This subtle distancing symbolises the distance with which Kundera viewed the world without ever completely distancing himself from it. Two bronze inserts: one for symbols of memory, the other hidden and intended for urns. A quiet place where closeness, time and relationships are gently intertwined.

Material

concrete, bronze

**Ing. arch. Marek Ječmen,
MgA. Zuzana Bartošová**

**Collaborator:
Ing. arch. Tomáš Madro**



Annotation

The tombstone depicts the idea of the heaviness and lightness of being, which relates not only to Kundera's work but also to the theme of life and death. The tombstone it intended to serve as a reminder of a life the contained both heaviness and lightness, and this can also be seen in the often difficult fate of the author. The concept of the tombstone is inspired by an excerpt from the book *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, where the author reflects on heaviness and lightness and their meanings: "Is the weight really terrible and lightness so wonderful?" These reflections are so powerful and all-encompassing that they clearly inspired their artistic representation. The weight or burden that we each figuratively carries with us is here represented by the sphere, while conversely the sheet of

metal which is set in motion by the weight of the sphere is intended to express the lightness with which this mass is stretched aloft. The rounded sheet of metal is, as it were, a seesaw in our lives, where heaviness outweighs lightness, and vice versa, the two complementing one another equally.

Material

Corten, steel, travertine, chrome, concrete



Annotation

On the conceptual level behind the implementation of Milan Kundera's tombstone, the author is striving to achieve a subtle yet visually unmistakable link between his design and Kundera's work. In Kundera's case, it is a work of art, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. The designer visually connects the tombstone with the writer's reflections in this, his most famous work: "... that man is lighter than air, he soars to the heights, he leaves the earth and his earthly essence..." – this passage now expresses Kundera's departure from the earth and his own earthly essence, while the weight of his own legacy leaves him permanently bound to the earth; there is both weight and lightness here... However, in order to find a starting point for the form and expression of the tombstone, it was also necessary to

respect Věra Kundera's wishes: a simple style, expressive austerity, the absence of ornament and a gradation towards Kundera's intellectual point, which, without being primarily calculated, can be surprising in its form and immediately provoke reflection on its content. It was this path of Kundera's that the designer of the tombstone decided to build on.

Material

black granite, white stone chippings



Annotation

The memorial consists of a granite slab with a bronze sculpture. The slab will be made of two types of granite, the left part of Czech granite from Kamenná, while the right part with the inscription and the place for memorial items will be made of polished French granite from the Tarn region. The bronze sculpture is inspired by a fluttering scarf, formed from the title of Milan Kundera's works. The lettering on the slab will be metal, recessed.

Material

béton brut, stone, stainless steel, glass



Annotation

The design is intended as a reference to the two sides of Milan Kundera – a world-famous author and a man who carefully protected his privacy. The form is based on the motif of stacked books, symbolising how Kundera entered the public sphere exclusively through his work. Concrete, chosen as the primary material, here serves not only as a durable element, but also as a metaphor for the weight of memory. In the centre of the tombstone the mass is deliberately left out – a space filled with moss creates a quiet contrast to the surrounding structure. The only thing hovering here is the urn chamber, separated from the surroundings, into which the spines of books are imprinted. Its form is also a nod to archetypal architecture, which, through its classical models, resonates with Kundera's postmodern multilayeredness, his fragmentary view of reality, and the interweaving of the semantic and the temporal.

Material

high-strength UHPC concrete

Ing. arch. Jaroslav Sedlák

Collaborator:

Ing. arch. Jiří Markevič



Annotation

The smooth, convex dome in the centre gives the impression of a mirrored surface – as if it were a lens or a reflective sphere. This form evokes Kundera's ability to reflect social phenomena, to analyse them from a distance and to transform them into a brilliant literary form. Reflectivity here symbolises the mirroring of society through the novel, in which the reader both sees and loses themselves. The flowing, almost “melted” transition between the spherical object and the base gives an organic and unstable impression. It reminds us of Kundera's theme of the elusiveness of memory, identity and truth – everything changes, flows and re-forms. It is a visual metaphor for his postmodern scepticism of “permanent truths”. While the concrete base ages and matures, the dome remains unchanged – as an instrument of introspective reflection.

Material

stainless steel and concrete



Annotation

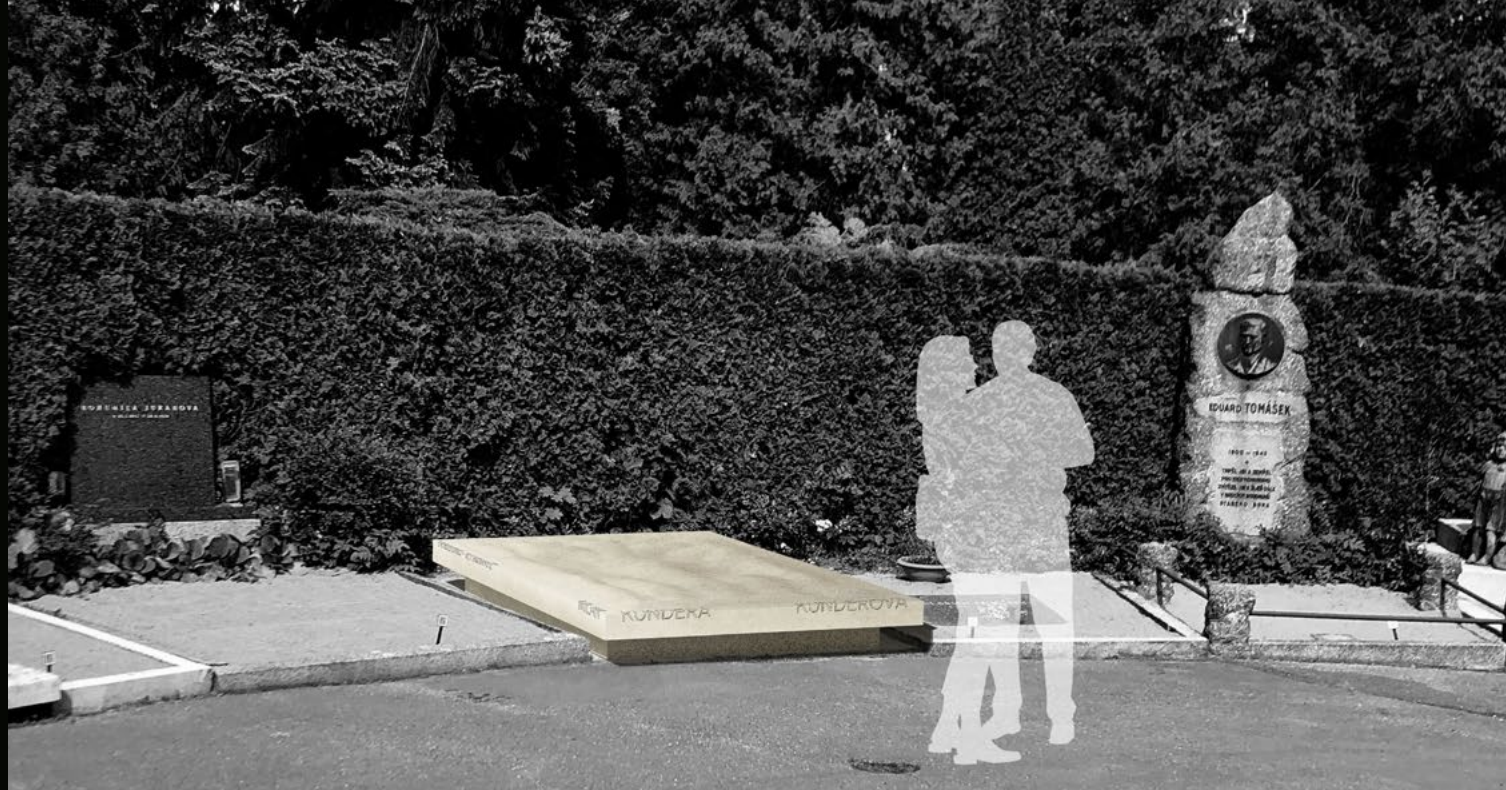
Paper was the writer's traditional material, capturing the word to convey it to the reader. Paper made it possible to record the text and made the narrator a writer. The design represents crumpled paper taken out of a typewriter. Kundera carefully edited his texts, constantly refining them until he was satisfied. Discarded paper is a reflection of creative energy. The tombstone is designed in white Carrara marble. The white is pure, flawless, perfect. Perfection in his works was Milan Kundera's goal. The roofs of Paris, where Kundera lived and died, are also white. Paper is light, yet when embodied in stone it becomes heavy. Lightness and heaviness are the opposites with which Kundera worked.

Material

granite and Carrara marble

**Michaela Tomášková,
Jorge Juan Gómez Vázquez,
Agáta Slámová,
Jiří Polák**

**Collaborators:
Jacinto Gómez Pedraz,
Vivien Flavia Maria Sorrentino**



Annotation

The tombstone is designed as a negative figural relief in a monolithic concrete slab concealing the lower crypt with the remains. The horizontal slab of the tombstone strips the author from his status as a hero, and the abstract figures depicting Věra and Milan as a woman and a man draw attention to relationships, a theme that Kundera explored intensively. We put them both on the same level, just as Kundera's work is unthinkable without Věra. Kundera's wish was to disappear from the public scene and let his work speak for itself – but this attracted a great deal of public interest in his person. The negative relief is thus a kind of monument to absence, inviting us to look inwards, to reflect, to contemplate.

Material

aerated concrete, concrete



Annotation

The tombstone reflects Kundera's life journey and his attitude towards his own identity. It is made of rammed earth – a material associated with memory, individual experience and landscape. The earth is not a symbol, but a raw material – layered, crumbly, unstable. It preserves traces of the places where Kundera lived and worked. The design is based on respect for the author's restraint – it does not glorify, explain, or impose meanings. His style is quiet, matter-of-fact and humble. It emphasises precision, context and order – not monumentality.

Material

aerated concrete, concrete



Annotation

The aim of the design is to achieve a modern interpretation of a traditional tombstone. A lapidary form of a bookend in the library of world and Czech literature, marked with the most comprehensible symbol, the letter K. The tomb is composed of a pair of prisms with the proportions of 1 : 4 : 9 placed on a slightly offset plinth. The horizontal prism is divided into two; its lower part is removable and allows access to the urn chamber. The vertical panel is cut through with the letter K, below which there is a text description in the form of a negative impression of letters gilded on the inside. The tombstone is designed from high-strength cast polished concrete in anthracite colour. The grave field is defined by curbs with bevelled upper edges, also made of cast concrete. The area between the curbs and the headstone is filled with red crushed marble.

Material

cast polished concrete

**Intervence s.r.o. –
Adam Vodička,
Ing. arch. Laura Draxler**

**Collaborators:
zeitgeist unlimited s.r.o.,
Ing. Monika Jarolímová**



Annotation

The spatial design is subordinate to the intention, the interaction that plays out in the space. The focus is so direct that anything beyond its point is considered ballast and not accepted into the design. The result is thus pure form – backdrops that create a space somewhere in the human being. A moment between moments. The first tone of the tombstone composition is a simple bench. Furniture, as an element by its very nature designed for human use, invites the observer to interact more closely, allowing them to enter and become immersed deeper into the action. The apparent fragility of glass contrasts with humanity, hints at something further away, invites respect and also enhances the significance of the moment. The surface of

the tombstone is covered by a walkable sheet of polished steel, as if it were the unfurled canvas of a liquid mirror. The viewer thus finds themselves face to face with themselves, but their gaze is – as in Milan Kundera's work – redirected elsewhere: to the world around them, which happens peacefully and undisturbed, "behind their back".

Material

cast industrial matte glass, polished steel sheets

**STUDIO D1 s.r.o. –
Radovan Veselý,
Pavel Tasovský**

**Collaborator:
Ing. arch. Vladimír Páček**



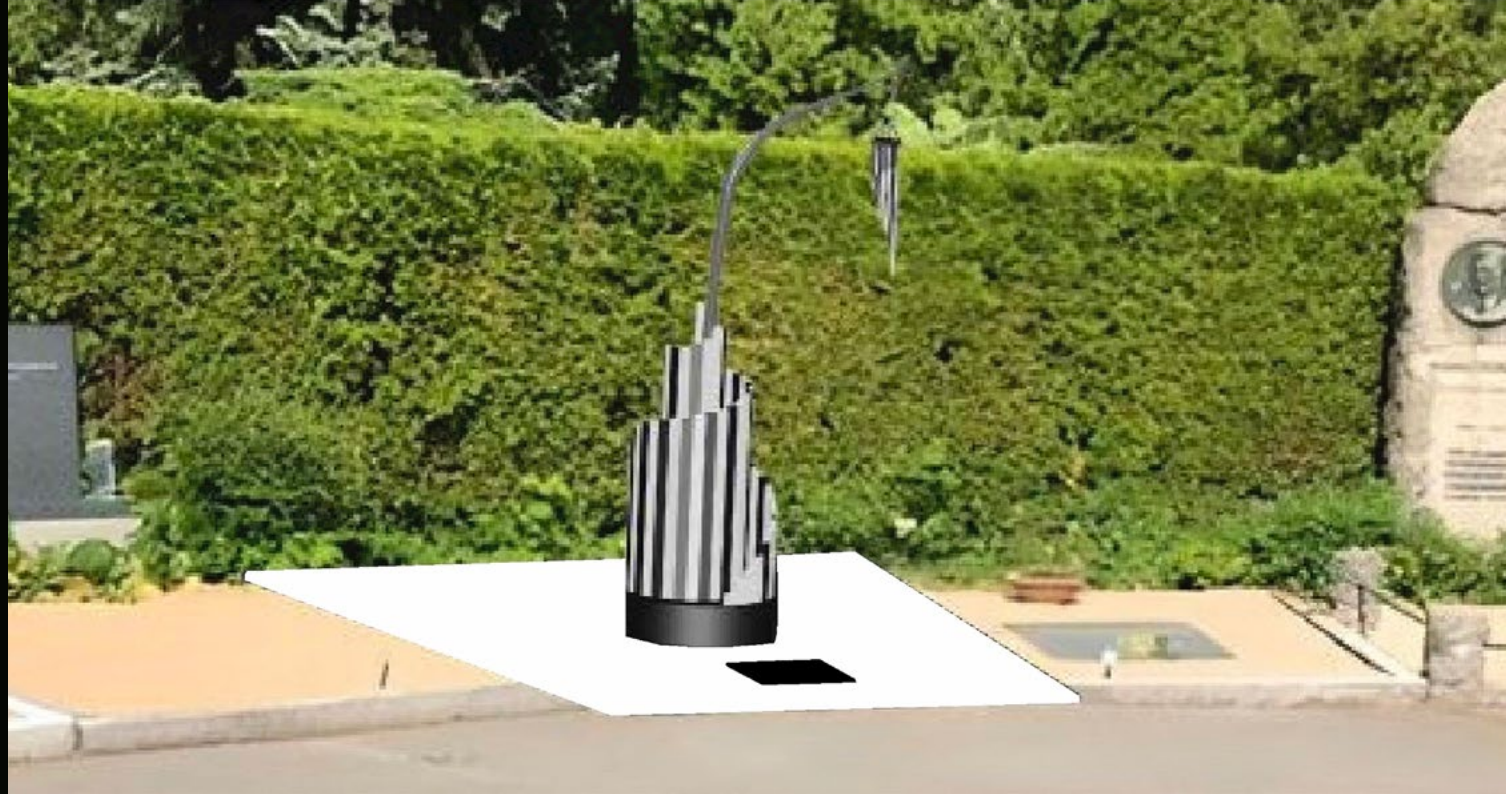
Annotation

The motif and the conceptual title is THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING. The knot-shaped steel sculpture symbolises the complexity of Milan Kundera's life and work. The strength of his personality and work is underlined by the "breaking through" of the stone slabs, and the vertical design reaching toward the sky evokes immortality.

Material

ground concrete, 1.5 cm thick steel plate, granite

**MAILLARD ET MAILARD –
Loic Maillard,
Samuel Vermeulen**



Annotation

The tombstone is designed as a place of contemplation free of pathos, a strong and discreet sculptural presence in dialogue with the cemetery setting and Kundera's work. It invites reflection without imposing a clear meaning – like the novels that have left their mark on the history of world literature. The spiral was chosen for its ability to evoke a non-linear concept of time that unfolds in layers, like memories, return and forgetting, themes that permeate Kundera's work. The black, contrasting with the white vertical lines, refers to the duality present in Kundera's work: lightness and heaviness, memory and oblivion, light and darkness of the world. The second, smaller spiral is suspended higher up and acts as a wind chime, emitting random tones according to the direction and intensity of

the wind. This sonic, minimalist and unpredictable element is a tribute to Kundera's love of music and his penchant for the irony of fate. Two sculptural elements evoke the presence of the couple – Milan and Věra Kundera – in close proximity, without fusion, true to their shared story. Their arrangement suggests a quiet and confidential dialogue.

Material

granite, flamed surface finish

Milan Kundera Tombstone

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