

## Dani Karavan

The internationally renowned designer of walk-in art works or environments was born, the son of a Polish immigrant in 1930 in Tel Aviv. Dani Karavan's youth was spent in the tensions between nature, the emerging city of Tel Aviv and the political situation in Israel. His work focuses on human rights and peace. In 1958 he won first



From left to right: Prof. Christoph Brockhaus, curator of Ma'alot, Dani Karavan, Peter Busmann, architect of the concert hall/museum

prize for his design of the pavilion for the 10th anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel in Jerusalem, this marked an important phase for his art works in the public sphere. In the 1960s, creating set designs for Gian Carlo Menotti and Martha Graham, amongst others, was the focal point of his work.

Between 1963 and 1968 he erected the **Negev Monument** on the edge of the Negev desert. Other important and notable environments are the **Two Environments for Peace**, 1978 in Florence, the urban planning **Environment Cergy-Pontoise**, 1980 near Paris, the **Way of Human Rights**, 1989 at the Germanisches National Museum in Nuremberg and **Grundgesetz 49**, 2003 in Berlin.

## Dani Karavan – worldwide



Florence



Tel Aviv



Nuremberg



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# Ma'alot Gateway to the Cathedral

## Ma'alot – Ascension Song

In former times, pilgrims coming from the banks of the river Rhine and looking up toward the Cathedral would have to **ascend** the hill upon which the Cathedral was built. By naming the environment that he has created, Ma'alot'. Schir ha Ma'alot **שיר המעלות** 'A Song of Ascension', the Israeli artist Dani Karavan references this tradition. As the Psalms 120-134 were translated by Martin Buber. In Hebrew Ma'alot is a biblical, archaic word. It comes from the verb meaning 'to ascend' and encompasses everything from step, rung, staircase, terrace, tribune to podium, above as a contrast to below, the world above. Upon reaching the top your gaze falls immediately on the large architectural sculpture. Here too: Steps. In alternating between granite and cast iron, this sculpture gains its great

significance. In a contemporary sense, it replaces the medieval church St. Maria ad gradus (St. Maria at the stairs), which was built as an extension of the cathedral choir and, in liturgical terms, had been the **gateway to the cathedral** for prominent guests arriving from the Rhine. For today's visitor this sculpture represents a distinctive local landmark.



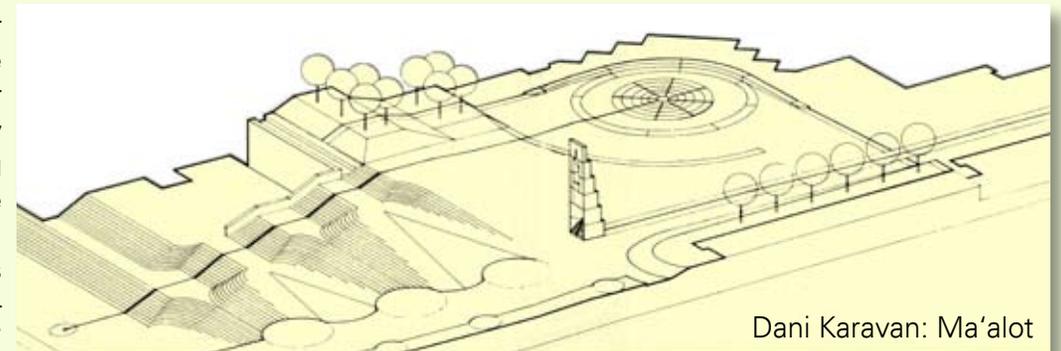
### When 9 becomes 6

To a large extent, Dani Karavan's artistic decisions deal with the materials, the form and the spirit of a place. Consequently, the project was implemented together with the architects of the Dom-Rhein project, Peter Busmann and Godfrid Haberer and the landscape architect Hans Luz. Because of this the square became a **part of the museums architecture**, utilising the same bricks as the museum for the floor, the same granite as the cathedral square for the sculpture and iron railway tracks from the neighbouring train station are used to cover the square's drains. The line of granite slabs ends beyond the tower with a cast-iron plate measuring 2.7 x 2.7

meters. The number 6 is engraved into this iron door at the end of the middle rail, 6 is an inverted 9 which is a multiple of 3. **The number 9 is key to the numerical symbolism** found in this artwork.

### Ma'alot touches on history

All of the measurements used by Karavan can be traced back to the number 18, whether it is by fractions and multiples of 9 or the number 90 which is the measurement (in cm) of the square and of the building. 180 = a human measurement = the height of the steps of the vertical element. The tower consists of **six elements** and **six steps** are embedded at the front of the base. The central line of the granite slabs is made up of six adjacent sections of railway. For Six days a week man is supposed to work and be creatively active, six million Jews fell victim to the Holocaust. However the artwork neither developed from the history of the square nor from memories, it is therefore **not an illustration of history** - „the work has nothing to do with the Holocaust at all“. „But if my work touches upon history in many locations, it is because of the history that is present within the place, just as the materials or the four points of the compass are...“ „When, as a Jew born in Israel, I leave a work of art between the flowing waters of the Rhine and the dormant mass of the Cathedral, I couldn't, even if I wanted to, avoid touching the natural materials with my fingertips, in doing so **I touch memory..**“



Dani Karavan: Ma'alot