

## Concept

Six months after the German invasion in 1941, close to 70,000 Jews were murdered in Latvia. What is now called the “Holocaust of bullets” led to the massacre of 90% of the Latvian Jewish population. They had been living in Latvia since the 17th century and were fully integrated. It is one of the darkest sides of Latvian history. The Soviets, when they rewrote the story of the Nazi occupation in their own glory, intentionally left out the fate of the Jews. In Cesis, I discovered, by chance, the memorial stone that is set in the forest in commemoration of the Holocaust. It soberly mentions the victims of Fascism. It laid there, deeply buried under the moss and the branches, until Zoja dug it out. I met Zoja by chance. Later, she led me to this memorial. According to historians, 200 to 300 Jews from Cesis and its surroundings were exterminated close to the Nierieris lake. The grave was never excavated and only forty victims were ever identified. The exact identity of the murderers remains unknown.

No Jewish community is left in Cesis and the Germans burnt all archives when they fled. Zoja is not Jewish but she maintains this lost memorial that no one remembers in the area. She came across it one day when she was picking mushrooms. When I tell the story of this unknown sanctuary to the youth in Cesis, people born after the Soviet occupation, I aroused a true curiosity. Young Latvians long for a complete memory where only the shadows of their own identity stand. But how can it be recreated when the traces are old, witnesses have disappeared and so many ideological layers have covered up the tracks? My work is about this black hole. The birch woods here, like in Birkenau, keep the secret of the crimes.