

Death of the Palm Tree

On June 1, 2019 *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue* installation by Joanna Rajkowska—a palm tree standing on the Charles de Gaulle roundabout in the heart of Warsaw—changed out of recognition. Its top has turned ash-grey, the leaves have dried out and are falling.

Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue (2002) is the most iconic Polish artistic project in public space since 1989. It originated from Rajkowska's visit to Israel, which made her realize the void left by the absence of the Jewish community in Poland and the significance of the history and etymology of Aleje Jerozolimskie street name to Warsaw identity.

Since its beginnings, the palm tree has sparked extreme emotions. But eventually it became one of the new symbols of Warsaw, both exotic and familiar, provoking and energizing. It is an anchor point for protests, manifestations, and happenings. In the context of climate change, the exotic tree became a sign of crisis, a warning sign placed in the center of Warsaw.

The 2019 death of the palm tree is a project commissioned by [UNEP/GRID-Warsaw Centre](#) and run by the artist Joanna Rajkowska in collaboration with [Syrena Communications](#), supported by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. The transformation of the installation aims to draw attention to air pollution and global climate change as part of the actions taken during the World Environment Day. It will last through June 14, 2019.

[The archive of the *Greetings from the Jerusalem Avenue*](#) is part of the The Archives of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, a project of digitalisation and presentation of archives of the artistic practices after 1945. The installation itself remains in the deposit of the Museum.

Instagram: [@warszawskapalma](#)

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Joanna Rajkowska (b. 1968) is a Polish artist based in Warsaw and London. Best known for her work in public space, where she uses real-life situations, energies, organisms and materials to construct sites, installations and ephemeral actions. She utilises elements as diverse as plants, buildings, found objects, water and smoke. De-familiarizing, de-humanizing and relating are her operating devices. She is interested in the limitations and the limiting of human activities, multiplicity of agencies and human and non-human relations.

The outcomes of her works range from urban axes and architectural projects, through geological fantasies, excavation sites to underwater sculptures. Both alongside and separately, she produces films, photographs and models. Most of her works happen, live and age in public space. Thus, her practice embraces all the entities involved as well as their relations, including organic and inorganic beings. The artist understands her projects like organisms, as she focuses on matter in its molecular or cellular dimension, its life cycle, growth and ageing. With a strong conviction that we, as humans, have failed to produce a viable, sustainable culture, she often confronts historical and sociopolitical contexts with the lives of species other than human. Tinted with disappointment, her work visualizes and questions the notion of the nature-culture divide.