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## The Tear Drop Memorial: A 9/11 Monument From Russia

QUILLIGRAPHER • DEC 4, 2020

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COMMENT

*I've been an online writer for more than 11 years. My articles typically focus on politics and history.*

*"To the Struggle Against World Terrorism" by Zurab Tsereteli*

When you ask someone where they were on September 11, 2001, expect a reply filled with vivid details. Unlike most other days, 9/11 had an impact on every American's life, on the future of our country, and on the security of the world.

As a life-defining day, it ranks right up there with the day Neil Armstrong spoke to the world from the surface of the moon, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." It became as life-altering as the bullet fired from the sixth-floor window of Dallas' Texas School Book Depository on November 22, 1963. And, like all widely shared defining events, 9/11 has many monuments and memorials to convey the significance of that horrendous day to generations yet to be born.

*WTC 9/11/2001*

### **Tear of Grief**

One of the more controversial of all the 9/11 memorials is the Russian-inspired sculpture originally known as the "Tear of Grief". The forty-foot stainless steel replica of a teardrop suspended in a fractured 100-foot, 175-ton, bronze-clad tower now bears the official title "[To the Struggle Against World Terrorism](#)". This extraordinary work is a gift to the United States from the citizens of Russia and from the renowned sculptor Zurab Tsereteli.

Mr. Tsereteli first envisioned the image of the "Tear of Grief" on September 11 after he witnessed the horrific destruction of the World Trade Center on Moscow television and, later, as he drove past a gathering of crying Muscovites in front of the nearby US embassy. He began the design of the "Tear Drop Memorial" on that same day.

*In another sculpture by Tsereteli, Saint George slays a nuclear-age dragon.  
"Good Defeats Evil" by Zurab Tsereteli donated to the United Nations in 1990.*

### **The Artist**

Born in 1934, Zurab Tsereteli is the energetic president of the Russian Academy of Arts. He has been a controversial icon at the center of Russian and Soviet art for decades. His creative ingenuity is responsible for his worldwide fame, and his artistic vision has often led to a vortex of criticism in his own country.

His use of American and Soviet missiles scrap to create his sculpture of St. George at the United Nations brought him international acclaim. In stark contrast, there have also been serious threats to blow up his 165-foot sculpture of Peter the Great in downtown Moscow.

## The Controversy

It is, therefore, not surprising that among all the 9/11 memorials, his would be one engulfed in a firestorm of controversy. Due to the support from former Jersey City Mayor Glenn Cunningham, the "Tear of Grief" monument committee was able to bypass many of the usual review requirements. The murmurs of opposition grew into an uproar, however, when the popular mayor died in May 2004.

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Opponents and neighborhood groups quickly launched an aggressive campaign against the memorial. Residents, art groups, and civic associations joined together to derail the entire project. Local cultural arts groups condemned the sculpture as "[an insensitive, self-aggrandizing piece of pompousness](#) by one of the world's blatant self-promoters."

But Guy Catrillo, the former co-chairman of the stumbling 9/11 committee, may have turned the tide by suggesting that the "Tear of Grief" should not be considered a 9/11 monument but, rather, a statement about world terrorism. The official title was revised "To the Struggle Against World Terrorism," and the project regained momentum.

## *Harbor View Park*

### **The Project**

In September 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin was present in Bayonne, New Jersey, for the groundbreaking that launched the one-year construction project. The entire structure was designed and built in Russia, transported in pieces to the US, and assembled in Harbor View Park on the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor. The remarkable view from this beautiful two-acre public park on the New Jersey side of New York Harbor includes both the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty.

The completed sculpture was dedicated on 9/11/2006 in a ceremony attended by President Bill Clinton, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Governor Jon Corzine, Senator Frank Lautenberg, Senator Robert Menendez, and family members of World Trade Center victims. Grammy award winner Leann Rimes was on hand to sing the National Anthem.

*11-sided granite base*

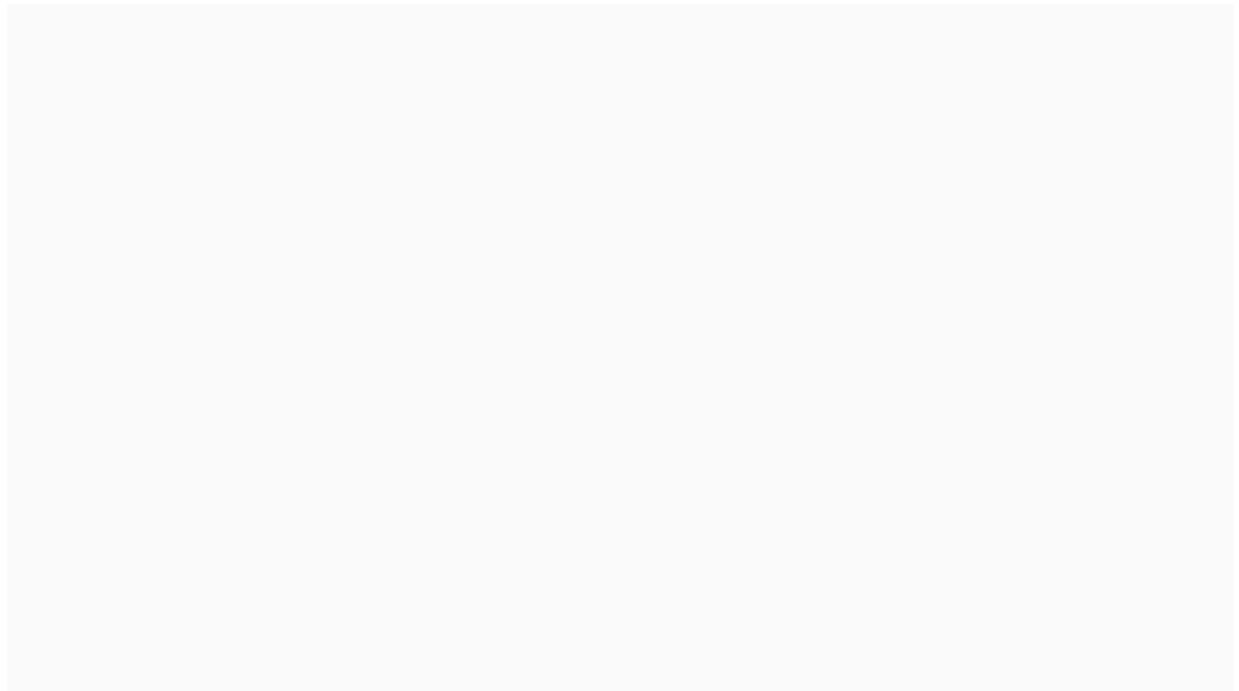
### **More Controversy**

The 11-sided granite base of the sculpture listed 3,024 names of persons killed on the tragic September 11th in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, in addition to six others who died in the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. The artist, unfortunately, used an outdated list. **He failed to remove 43 names** that were deleted from the official record between October 2003 and January 2004 when their actual deaths, and in some cases their existence, was not proven. As a result, criticism and controversy continued to swirl around this ten-story sculpture on the shores of New York Harbor.

### **Beyond the Controversy**

Within the international arena of one-upmanship, the Russian gift of the "Tear of Grief" has captured a New York Harbor distinction that had long been held by the French. From now on, visitors sailing into the Port of New York will observe Russia's "Tear Drop Memorial" off the port side before they see France's Statue of Liberty standing proudly with her torch held high above Liberty Island.

This is, however, a shallow distinction. Besides rising above the controversy and overcoming the din of provincial opposition, there is another far more significant aspect to this sculpture. It stands today within sight of the World Trade Center as a permanent expression of grief and empathy from the citizens of a country considered to be a political enemy.



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