

The New York Times

By The Associated Press

June 7, 2019

WARSAW, Poland — A giant plastic palm tree that has become an artistic symbol of Warsaw has "died" as part of a stunt to draw attention to climate change.

Residents were surprised to see this week that the popular tree's leaves had turned gray and were drooping, causing a buzz on social media.

"I wondered what had happened and I found on the internet that this is against air pollution and for the environment," said Bogusia Niegocka, a 42-year-old shop assistant.

"This is a very good move, but I'm not sure it will it really make people think. Everyone wants to drive into town in the car," she said Friday in the roundabout where the tree stands.

The artists behind the tree, Joanna Rajkowska and the Museum of Modern Art, had it installed on a downtown traffic island in 2002. This week they replaced the green leaves with lifeless-looking gray ones, to put the focus on the threat that civilization poses to the environment, and smog in Warsaw.

"I have this fear but also a sense of disillusionment that people allow themselves such silly things (that threaten the environment) in the name of short-term political interests or economic expansion," Rajkowska told the *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily. "The dead palm is a sign of this."

The move marked U.N. World Environment Day on Wednesday.

Among those praising the idea of "killing" the tree as a way of warning against the effects of climate change Friday was Ola Kania with her 4-year-old son Jas.

"I pointed out the tree to my child and said that everything will look this way if people don't take better care of the planet," she said.

Rajkowska said the green leaves will eventually be restored.

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DEATH OF THE PALM TREE

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2019



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* 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 situation of deepening anthropogenic 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 palm tree 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.