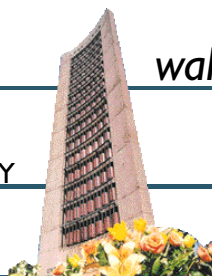

HAMBURG: THE OHLSDORF CEMETERY

*An invitation to extensive
walks in the gardens*

GERMANY



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An invitation to extensive walks in the gardens



Previous page:
In 1927 the Hamburg-born
sculptor Richard Kuöhl
produced this work taking

inspiration from Classical
models. He was buried at
Ohlsdorf in 1966, in the
tomb he himself had realized

The plan for a central municipal cemetery, which was to replace small century-old churchyards, was developed in the mid-19th century. It took into account the foreseeable increase in population and the demand for individual graves, as well as grave numbering and burial records.

The Ohlsdorf Cemetery was established in 1877 as a non-denominational and multi-regional burial site, and at that time it was quite far from town. Today its 4 million sqm are completely surrounded by built-up areas. A 17 km road network provides access to the cemetery; there are 4 entrances for vehicles and two special bus lines.

Since its opening, nearly 1.5 million burials were carried out and the cemetery now hosts 280,000 graves. About 40% of all burials in Hamburg take place here; in 2002 there were 1600



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The 1926 bust of Wilhelm
Cordes, first director of
Ohlsdorf cemetery, his life-
long concern, is in the
Rosengarten (Rose Garden).



The water tower (1898) is indeed a technical structure, but, thanks to its ornamental architecture, it fits quite well into the landscape. Today it hosts a small exhibition on the famous theatre woman director, Gerda Gmelin, set up by the Garten der Frauen (Women's Garden) Association

A large area had been planned for the imposing administration building, that was built 35 years later, in 1911



interments and 4300 urn burials; 230 gardeners take care of graves and all facilities.

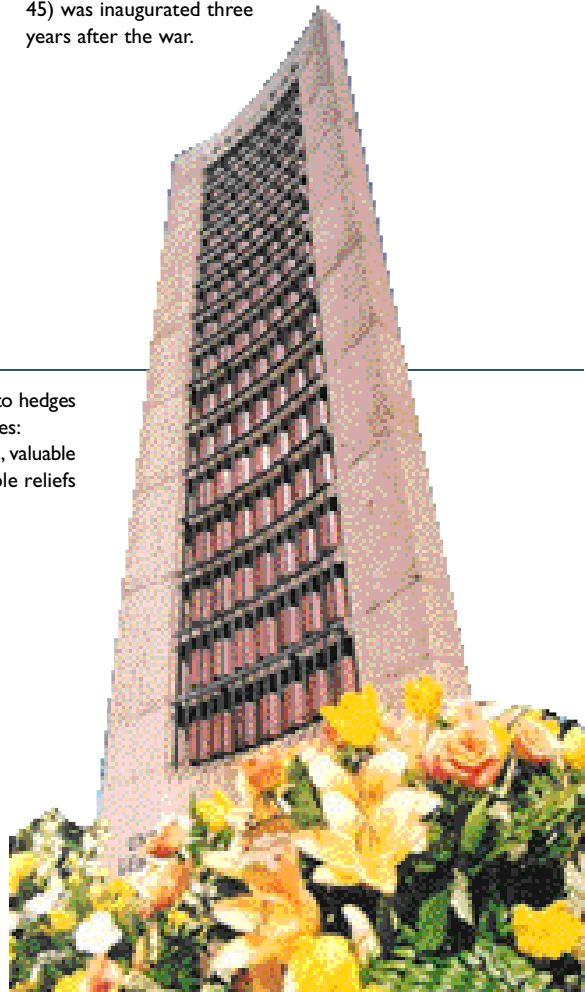
Two different landscaping trends contributed to the current aspect of the cemetery. The first architect was Wilhelm Cordes (1840-1917), of national and international renown, who worked 38 years to create a "garden cemetery", thus providing a well-known example for similar cemeteries throughout Germany. This early section still maintains its graceful interplay between architecture, sculpture and landscape. Large burial plots are skilfully surrounded by thick groves while a variety of trees, often forest-like, and rhododendrons characterise the oldest part of the cemetery.

The cemetery was expanded after World War I, on the basis of a project by Otto Linne (1869-1937), the first garden planning manager in

105 urns contain ash and soil from as many Nazi concentration camps., This Denkmal der Opfer des Nationalsozialismus 1933-45 (Monument to the Victims of National-Socialism, 1933-45) was inaugurated three years after the war.



Several niches cut into hedges conceal real treasures: artworks, craftworks, valuable sculptures and marble reliefs



The bridge to the Rosengarten (Rose Garden) was donated by the blacksmiths association. It spans an area of natural marshes, the starting point for an educational environmental path through the cemetery

The Margarethenbrunnen (Margarethe Fountain) was realized by Eugen Christ, a blacksmith/artist, on the occasion of the 1953 garden exhibition. He named it after his wife, who had sold her jewels to pay for the materials her husband needed for his piece of art



Hamburg. His plans were thoroughly consistent with the movement for Cemetery Reform and with the new landscaping art of that period. His main conceptual principles translate into strict architectural layouts and grave plots considered as basic units which develop into rows and then into graveyards proper, separated by hedge-lined alleys.

Both sections of the cemetery are suggestive of extensive walks with different features and seasonal charms, especially so in the *Althamburgische Gedächtnisfriedhof* (old Hamburg Memorial Cemetery), the *Rosengarten* (Rose Garden) and, more recently, the *Garten der Frauen* (Women's Garden). In addition, there are several memorial sites for war casualties and the victims of tyranny and oppression as well as the graves of famous public figures. All throughout

the year countless visitors tread these areas, especially in late May/early June, when rhododendrons are in full bloom. Ohlsdorf Cemetery as a whole, thanks to its remarkable inventory of funerary monuments, is a true work of art, where contemporary stonemasonry is documented in various ways. There is evidence that almost 330 architects and sculptors contributed their work; hence, such expressions of past memories often achieve a status as true pieces of art. The cemetery is therefore an open-air museum of a special kind: this unique sculpture park in the cemetery, with over 800 sculptures and relief ornaments, illustrates the memorial art of the 19th and 20th centuries. About 6,000 funerary monuments were deemed worthy of restoration within the framework of a specific research project.

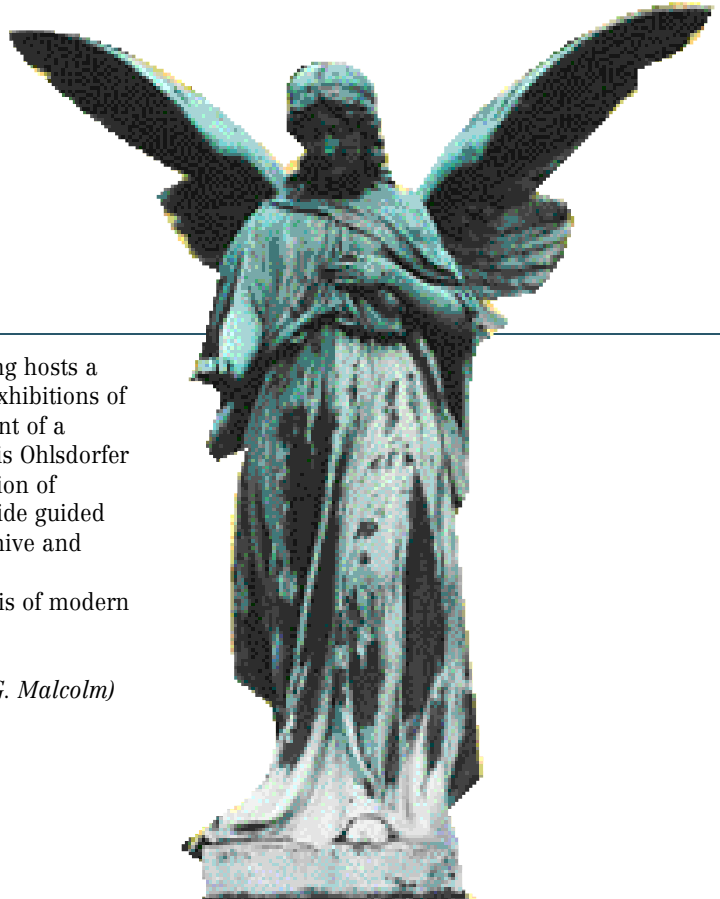




All angels in this cemetery stand on high socles. The reason is that "Visitors, bent by their own mourning, are asked to lift up their heads" – hence, the clear message by the silent angel is "Look upwards!"

This huge statue of Christ (1904-5) is in the Althamburgische Gedächtnisfriedhof (Old Hamburg Memorial Cemetery), a sort of introduction to the cemetery, where senators,

jurists, patrons of the arts, scientists, bishops, priests and artists have their final resting place, after being moved here from various town graveyards in disuse



Since 1996, a small historical building hosts a funerary museum, with temporary exhibitions of sepulchral art, under the management of a voluntary association, the Förderkreis Ohlsdorfer Friedhof e.V. (Society for the Promotion of Ohlsdorf Cemetery), which also provide guided tours and lectures. The society's archive and library are also open to the public. The cemetery is operated on the basis of modern management models.

(Helmut Schoenfeld, translation by G. Malcolm)



Since over a decade the museum, managed by the Förderkreis Ohlsdorfer Friedhof e.V., provides information on any funerary and cemeterial issue. The main topics of the permanent exhibition are cremation, the history of the cemetery and of the famous figures buried at Ohlsdorf, i.e. Hans Albers, Heinz Erhard, Gustaf Gründgens and Wolfgang Borchert



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