

Abschied ist ein intimer Moment

Munich, Westfriedhof, 2004–2007

Stone circle and fountain in the urnfield, cemetery field number 167a, Westfriedhof (cemetery), Munich, carried out between 2004 and 2007. A competition entry, selected in 2003 by Quivid, Kommission für Kunst am Bau und im öffentlichen Raum der Stadt München (Commission for Public Art of the City of Munich)

A sculpture was created, but did not take on shape until people who visited the cemetery helped to form it. For a year I went to the place every week and conducted conversations with mourners and visitors about the significance of saying farewell, and the search for comfort. During this period, I experienced all of the seasons and encounters were determined by coincidence. By asking the question, “May I speak with you?”, I opened up an opportunity that was almost always gratefully accepted, although there was also the answer, “No. It’s too fresh.”

Florian Matzner, text for the documentation published by the Baureferat (building directorate, Ed.), of the City of Munich, Quivid 2007

“We never talked about death ...” “It’s not really important if there is a God. He’s needed.” These, and many other quotations, can be found in the stone circle that is placed in the center of the urnfield in the Westfriedhof (cemetery). With a diameter of six meters and a height of sixty centimeters, the stone circle has an interior made of light-colored granite, while the exterior is of dark granite. This combination of colors and materials symbolically unites life and death in eternity.

For an entire year Karolin Bräg conducted intense conversations with people visiting the gravesite of a relative or friend at the Westfriedhof. These conversations were always about the loss of a loved one, the tragedy of being unprepared or fated to loneliness. The artist then distilled individual quotes and sentence fragments from these contexts and engraved them in her own handwriting into the granite, thus producing a collection of personal, even intimate statements, associations, and desires. For visitors they are an opportunity and motivation to examine in a conscious way their own death or the loss of loved one. With this stone ring, Bräg both carefully and determinedly establishes an abiding symbol that manifests very diverse forms of mourning and encourages people to follow their own individual paths.

For the passerby, however, the stone circle looks like a monumental altar from a distance, inviting one to sit down and linger, to have an encounter with oneself and with others—a place where one can remember, commemorate, and pause to think for a moment. This work was made possible by the generous legacy of a patron.