



Flooded with light: the gallery rooms create space for art - and for much more.



Mayor Rolf-Georg Köhler opens the exhibition "Göttingen cityscape" by Uwe Brandi.

The French Quarter at the city cemetery: Jazz at the Nobel plaza from the New Orleans Syncopators.



## Versatile Gallery Brings Life to the Old City Cemetery

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the increase in Göttingen's population was bringing its historic graveyards close to capacity, the municipal authorities adopted Mayor Georg Merkel's proposal to establish a "central cemetery." The land for it was selected in 1879, on vacant municipal lands on the road to Grone next to the Jewish burial grounds. City architect Gerber, head of the municipal planning and building office, drew up a plan for generous cemetery grounds, patterning it after Stuttgart's recently created Pragfriedhof. The first section of the new city cemetery was inaugurated in 1881.

In addition to building two gatehouses, the plan also called for the construction of an impressive cemetery chapel. The design – again the work of city architect Gerber – was modeled on the Bismarck Mausoleum in Friedrichsruh. The cruciform structure, inspired by Byzantine and late Romanesque architecture, and the commanding crossing tower, give a dominant architectural emphasis to the cemetery.

Generous and mixed planting, particularly the tree-lined alleys, have made the setting park-like, contributed to its beauty, and created a richness and diversity that is very appealing to birdlife. The landscaped grounds, together with the historic monuments, give the Göttingen city cemetery a unified artistic appearance that, in its entirety, enjoys landmark status today.

When the new Parkfriedhof Junkerberg, a garden cemetery, was built in 1975 in the northern part of the city, the city cemetery lost its function as the central burial ground. In the future, it will be developed into a public park. Of the 46 Nobel Prize winners associated with the University of Göttingen, no fewer than nine are buried in the city cemetery. In 2006, the 125th anniversary of the cemetery, and in special



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tribute to these scholars, a small outdoor memorial plaza was built in the form of Gauss's heptadecagon, its structure designed by Hans-Otto Arnold. The project was sponsored by the local beautification association, the Göttinger Verschönerungsverein e.V., and was inaugurated by Manfred Eigen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

The eastern gatehouse, originally built as a mortuary, was used as a chapel until 1900 and afterwards as an administrative building. It stood empty thereafter, a situation turned to good account by a community group. On their initiative, and with renewed support from the local beautification association, this building became an attractive meeting-place. A site associated with transience has been given new life as a cultural center, with a mix of information, music, and exhibitions. The historic architectural site, a landmark, with its lofty and spacious main galleries and leaded windows, lends the building great charm. In 2011, the "Torhaus-Galerie" (Gatehouse Gallery), which also houses a Nobel Prize winner's information center, was opened to the public with an art exhibition and a welcoming speech by Nobel laureate Manfred Eigen. Artists display their work in four or five exhibitions each year, and concerts, performances, lectures and readings are also held here. Musical walking tours through the cemetery and guided tours focusing on the most notable graves or the meaning of gravestone symbols are also available.

An attractive venue for art, concerts, readings, and performances: The Gatehouse Gallery (photos left and center). On the right: Nobel Prize winner Prof. Dr. Manfred Eigen speaks at the opening of the gallery.

Rust can be so beautiful: Reinhold Wittig with one of his imaginative art objects in the Gatehouse Gallery.

