

CIMITERO MONUMENTALE MILAN, ITALY

November 2012
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And now for something completely different.....

Who would have thought that as I use up a diminishing number of weekends for sight-seeing as my work contract draws to an end here in northern Italy I'd chose to visit a cemetery? Well, this was no ordinary cemetery.....

Milan's Cimitero Monumentale was designed by Carlo Maciachini (1818 -1899) to accommodate a number of smaller disorganized and poorly maintained cemeteries scattered around the city. Designed as a resting place for 'any and all' members of Milan's society it's construction started in 1862 and the site was inaugurated in 1866 and such was the splendour of the design that it quickly became the resting place of choice for renown local artists, sculptors, poets, architects, sportsmen and men of learning.

The main building and façade, Il Tempio della Fama, is sumptuously adorned with numerous tombs of famous individuals from Milan's history and gives a foretaste to visitors of the richness in Italian artistic styles and decorations over the years which are to be found inside this magnificent cemetery.

I had a tip off from a friend at work that this cemetery warranted a visit so on a bitterly cold , grey and misty November morning I decided to go take a peek.

Hold your breath for what I found!.

As I arrived in front of the splendid Tempio della Fama the whole of the street in front of the imposing entrance gates was a massive construction site caused by an urban development project to extend Milan's Metro system to the location.

Peering through hazard warning tapes and over bright orange plastic bollards I spotted a deep dark hole in the ground, presumably the future entrance to the Metro station but looking more like a fast track to hell for the souls inside the cemetery who were refused access to the pearly gates.

I finally located a small entrance gate and walked inside to be met by a friendly Italian gate warden manning a small office. Imagining that like most places in Italy I'd have to pay to gain entrance I was surprised to find out the cemetery is free to all and open 6 days a week .

The warden asked me my nationality and seemed genuinely disappointed when I said 'English', not because of my nationality but by the fact that the only site map and guides he had on display were in Italian. He brightened up when I spoke to him in Italian and told him that I could more or less manage the local language and he added that the reason that he only had Italian guides was that there wasn't much call for them seeing as the cemetery received very few local visitors as tourists . In his own words 'Italians prefer to visit the mountains or the beaches and generally lack culture'.... His words, not mine!

Armed with my guide to what promised to be a pretty large place I headed for the entrance arches to the cemetery.

The sight that confronted me inside was pretty amazing and despite the gloom and cold weather I couldn't wait to get my camera out and start snapping shots.

The following slides give a pretty decent representation of what I saw and why this place so amazed me. I've split them into two groups; firstly what I call 'monolithic tombs and mausoleums' and secondly, sculptures and decorations.

I got a bit carried away taking photos and the 80 or so I've selected for this presentation, out of over 300 I took, pretty much paint the scene. The overall tone of subdued greyness in many of the slides reflects the weather conditions and the fact that at 9 am in the morning some parts of the cemetery were extremely dark, particularly where large shady trees were planted. However, in hindsight, the colours seem fittings for shots of a cemetery. My excuse but one that I think is valid.

So, without more ado, on to the slides.

Enjoy!

Il Tempio della Fama
(The Temple of Fame)







The entrance arches into the cemetery



Looking back at the main building from inside of the cemetery



Tombs set into the alcoves in the walls of the wings of the main building, facing the cemetery



The approach to the cemetery after passing through the main entrance arches

Just inside the main approach into the cemetery, to the right of the entrance, an incredibly tall tomb welcomes the visitor.

There follows a row of distinctive monuments, each with a particular style and decoration, leading into what is an immense cemetery filled with all manner of burial monuments .

Complimenting these monolithic structures the cemetery includes many 'traditional' graves , often simple stone slabs or plinths, but usually decorated with exquisite statues or ornamentation.



Monolithic tombs and mausoleums...









Note the tapered door frame of the previous mausoleum





FAMIGLIA
LAMPERTI

OVIDO RAINOLDI
17 - 6 - 1889
11 - 11 - 1942
BERMINIA BERETTA
RAINOLDI
5 - 7 - 1892
13 - 6 - 1940







GIORGIO GIOVANNI
CLEMENSE CARLOTTA 1874
CLEMENSE ANTONIO 1874
CLEMENSE MARIA CAROLA 1874
CLEMENSE CLEMENSE 1874
CLEMENSE PIETRO 1874

















NOLITE CONFIDERE IN FILIIS HOMINUM
IN QUIBUS NON EST SALUS DOMINI
REGIT ME ET ANIMAM MEAM DEBIT SOLA
DEUS DE LACRIMIS MEIS IN LOCO PASQUE
ME COLLOCAVIT IN DIE NONISSIMO
DE TERRA SUPER RECTIVIS SVIS ET IN
CITATIONE MEA DESO DEVM MEVM













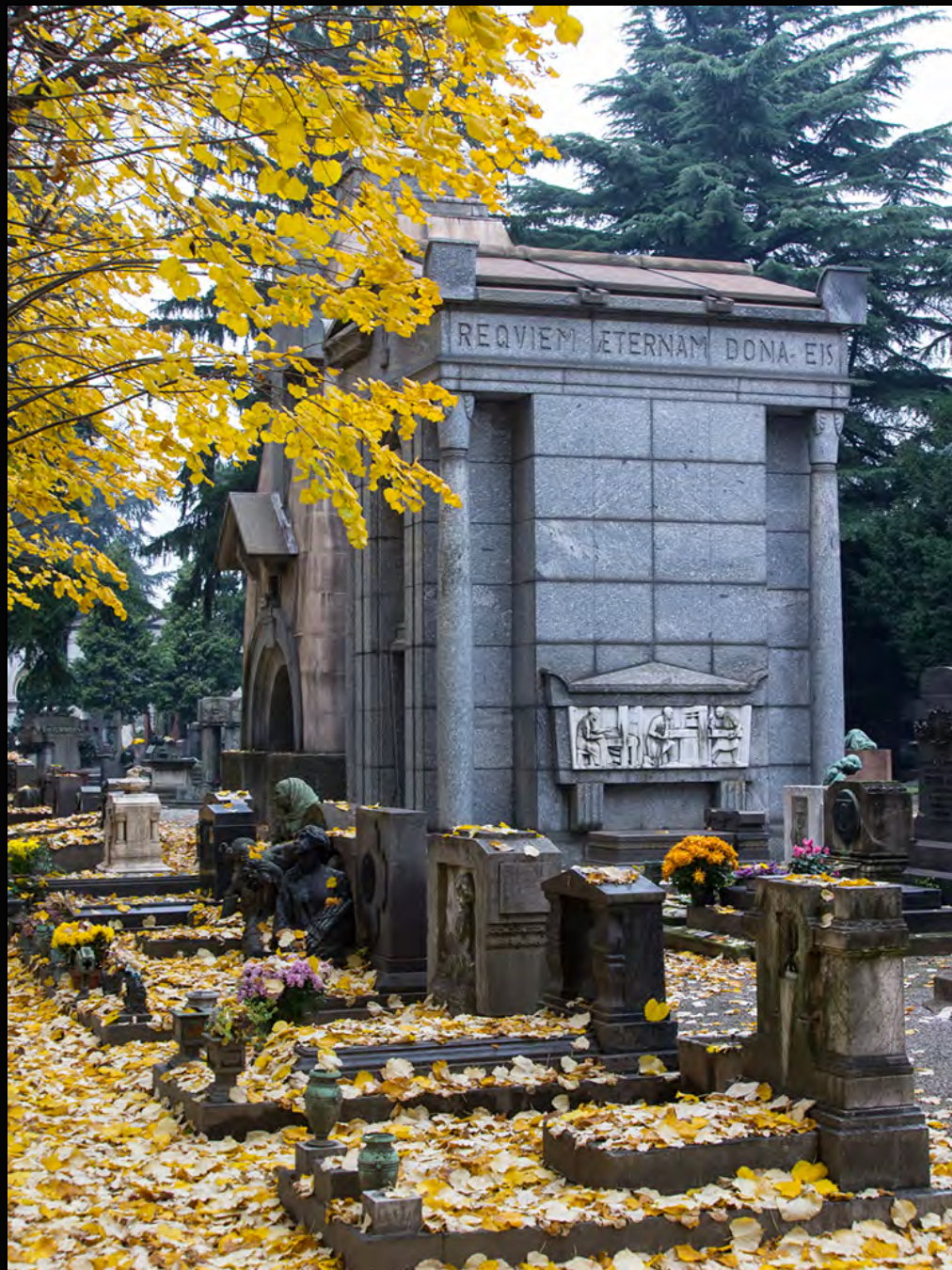
In one part of the cemetery a boulevard of tall trees in with splendid autumn yellow leaves added a touch of warmth and colour to the otherwise cold, grey and gloomy appearance of many of the mausoleums and tombs

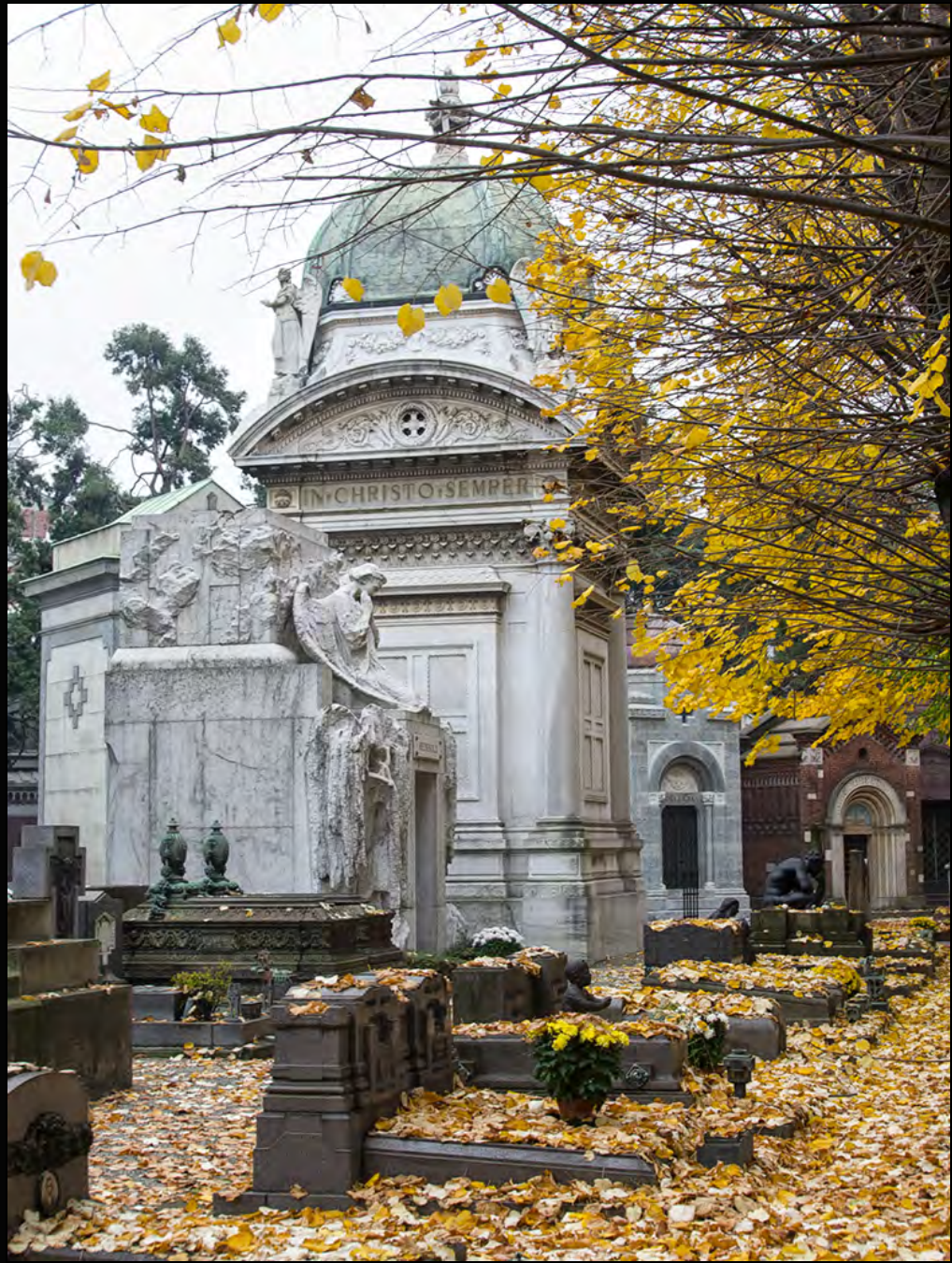


















RIZZI













Probably the most photographed mausoleum in the cemetery is the following marble sculpted tower . Note the entrance door in the base of the tower which is full size and gives an indication of the height of this structure.



QVI CVM DIVITIAS IN VITAE CVLTVM ATQVE ORNATVM
ET SIBI ET SVIS ET CIVIBVS MAXIMAS COMPARAVISSET



QUI CIVI DIVITIAS IN VITAE CIVITVM ATQVE ORNATVM REGEM LITTERAS HUMANITATEM CONSTITVIT
ET SIBI ET SVIS ET CIVIBVS MAXIMAS COMPARAVISSET PVBLICE EXPONENS ADIS IMPRESSAS SITIT





Sculptures and decorated graves
Some large, some small, all unique...



By far the most recognized of the sculptures is this life size portrayal in bronze of the last supper – the tomb of Davide Campari – inventor of the drink named after him





CARILLO COLONNELLO
1891 - 1942

VINCENTO COLONNELLO
1890 - 1942

GIANNINA COLONNELLO
1890 - 1942

CARILLO COLONNELLO
1891 - 1942





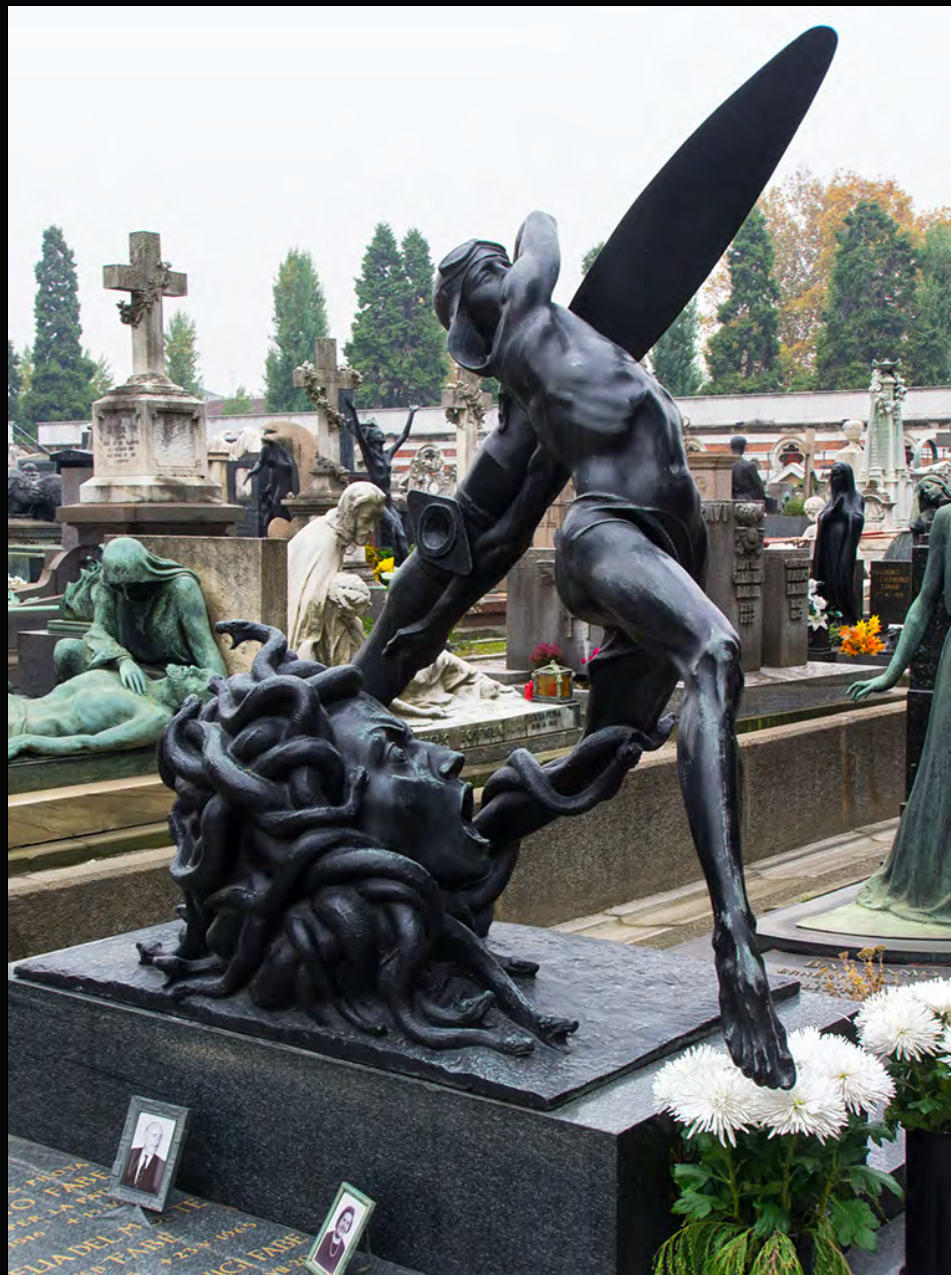








A personal favourite of mine, the owner of this tomb was the president of a local association of bread makers



The tomb of a renown aviator





AIDA SILLANI
BORRA
14-5-1871
22-11-1911
ALBERTO

FAMIGLIA MELONCELLI



OTTO
1848
1888







Probably my all time favourite sculpture hidden in this completely overgrown tomb

Walking back into main building and up onto the first floor of Il Tempio della Fama affords a panoramic view of the cemetery alongside even more decorated tombs amongst the terraces and archways of this building











The previous slide was the last shot of my visit taken after just over 3 hours of wandering around this vast collection of Italian art and design and I didn't even manage to see more than 50% of the site. I also missed out on the photographic archives and a tour of the larger part of Il Tempio della Fama..

As I was leaving the scene the weather was a little more cheerful than when I arrived and a number of foreign visitors had entered the cemetery from a tour bus parked outside. I hope they were as suitably impressed as I was.

On reflection, as a tourist interested in art and who likes playing with a camera, this location beats all of the museums and art galleries I have seen to date in Italy. The Cimitero Municipale is an open air, real life gallery, even if it does cater for those individuals who have departed this earth. If I get the chance I'll be paying a return visit to this incredible place, but only for the day, not for eternity!

Thanks for visiting my presentation.

Jim