

# Monument of the Grey Buses

## Monument for the Victims of the

## „Euthanasia-Action T 4“ 1940/41

[www.dasdenkmaldergrauenbusse.de](http://www.dasdenkmaldergrauenbusse.de)

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### „Where are you taking us?“

The so-called “Euthanasia-Action” (Aktion T 4) of the National Socialists claimed about 200,000 mentally ill and handicapped victims during World War II. They were considered “not worthy of living”. At least 90,000 patients died of hunger or inadequate nourishment, or were murdered with drugs in state-run sanatoriums. More than 70,000 men, women, and children were murdered in gas chambers during the secret operation “T4” in 1940/41. The mass murder was centrally organised at Tiergartenstraße 4 in Berlin (therefore the abbreviation “T4”). Grafeneck, Brandenburg, Bernburg, Hartheim (near Linz), Sonnenstein and Hadamar were the towns where the murders took place. The staff of these killing institutions later worked in concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec. There is hardly a region in Germany that was not effected by this organised mass murder. Mentally and physically handicapped people were the first victims of a systematic, well-organised annihilation plan directed against the ill and those regarded as “racially inferior” by the Nazi-regime. The “Monument of the Grey Buses” serves as a reminder of the transports of the patients to their deaths. The artists Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz designed the monument for the Weißenau Psychiatric Centre near Ravensburg in 2006. A bus based on the same model as the one that drove from the hospitals to the death camps in the years 1940 and 1941, in its original size and concrete form, commemorates the mass murder. “Where are you taking us?” – the question of one of the patients - is inscribed on the bus monument.

### The Monument on the Move

One of the two buses created by the artists is stationery. The other bus moves from place to place. The Grey-Bus Monument does not only commemorate the murdered victims of 'Euthanasia' but also reflects on the perpetrators and their deeds. The grey busses that were tools of the perpetrators are now being used as a means of transporting memory: it is a kind of history on wheels. The moving of 70 tonnes of concrete bus is also a transportation of suppressed history. The actual moving process of the monument also plays a decisive role. Similar to how our memory works, the coming and going of this memorial in the shape of a grey bus is like how, nowadays, suppressed and tabooed memories suddenly appear and vanish from our minds.

Remembering is a process: pictures are created and then forgotten. Memory continually changes and is always on the move. Remembering and suppressing things is also a central topic in psychiatry. The bus follows the path of the 'Euthanasia' murders, pinpointing the sites of the crimes, the victims and the perpetrators and then moves on.

The length of stay of the second bus at each particular site can be several months or years, depending on the result of negotiations and on the participation of the respective municipalities and institutions (the transport will ideally be financed by donations and public funds). It is crucial for the monument to stay on the move.

### The Grey-Bus Monument in Brandenburg / Havel

The monument arrived at the site of the former central planning office of the National Socialist 'Euthanasia' programme on Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin on January 18th, 2008. It was moved to Brandenburg/Havel one year later on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009: to the site where the murder of 9.722 people began on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Once again the Grey-Bus Monument is to act as a reminder at the authentic site that combined efforts are required to create a memorial site and learning centre that fulfils its historic role and present day significance: 70 years after Hitler's 'Euthanasia' decree.