Opening hours:

Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., every 4th Sunday in the month from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. for evening events. Special appointments for groups of 10 or more persons are possible upon request.

Virtual:

www.krefeld.de
www.villamerlaender.de
An extensive picture description is available for listening under Project MEMOO, among other things.

Offers for Schools:

90 minutes in the Villa Merländer with a lecture, assignments and presentation of the solutions by the students, also as preparation for trips to memorial sites (Auschwitz-Birkenau), Stolperstein (tripping stone) tours in the city centre, supervision of research papers and educational partnerships.

Additional topics and offers are possible.

Free of charge: Donations to the non-profit Villa Merländer Friends Association flow back to the work in the Villa Merländer. The association is glad to accept new members.

Contacts:

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City of Krefeld
City Archive/NS Documentation Centre
47792 Krefeld
Exhibition in the Villa Merländer
Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 42
47799 Krefeld

Before his deportation, Richard Merländer had to sell the house to his tenant and she turned it into a boarding house.

For some time after that, the name Miramare was a reminder of the previous owner. „Mare“ represents the sea („Meer“ in German) from Merländer.

Since the Merländer heirs were not interested in having a residence in Krefeld after the war, the new owner was able to continue running the boarding house for a period of time. Following some changes in ownership and use, the NS Documentation Centre of the City of Krefeld moved into the Villa Merländer in 1991. Previously concealed by wallpaper, the murals have been visible once again in a slightly restored form since 1998. Richard Merländer’s living room is now a location for various events – from the storytelling café to extracurricular instruction.

The former rooms for the personnel now hold a compact exhibition on the topic of „Krefeld and National Socialism.“ This is where people can learn more about the era of the National Socialist dictatorship. All of the displayed materials have a direct relationship to the City of Krefeld.

Built in 1925 for the merchant Richard Merländer, the villa has a moving history. The landlord lived there in the years up to 1938, sometimes together with two of his brothers and the staff. In the beginning phase, the house was decorated with the works of Expressionist artist Heinrich Campendonk. Only the murals in Merländer’s games room remain to be seen. They were even covered up before 1933 because this space became the living room for the personnel. Shortly thereafter, Expressionism was considered to be „degenerate“ art. Heinrich Campendonk went into exile, even though he – in contrast to Richard Merländer – was not a Jew.

When Richard and Karl Merländer were mistreated during the November Pogrom of 1938, this era came to its final end. Richard and Karl Merländer fled the house. Karl Merländer’s heart could not cope with the agitation. He died a short time later.

Richard Merländer lived in a house on Bismarckstrasse until 1941. It was hardly possible for him to still leave Germany at that time. Whether he submitted the corresponding applications is unknown. However, the files show that Richard Merländer suffered all levels of humiliation - up until the deportation to Theresienstadt in July 1942 and his gassing at the Treblinka death camp in September of the same year.
The exhibition places main points of emphasis on the topics of „Seizure of Power in Germany,“ Everyday Life in National Socialism, “Persecution of the Jews” and “War.”

Time and again, evidence of the former large home has also been installed in the rooms - in the details of the furnishings, the sounds and the smells.

People can touch some of the things or hold them in their hand. This type of presentation is intended to clarify how the National Socialist dictatorship also penetrated into the social life and private spaces.

For example, the chapter on the „Seizure of Power in Germany“ directs the eyes to the hint of a living room. It is dominated by an NS-era radio, from which primarily light entertainment can be heard. Radio had just become affordable back then due to mass production.

For the NS propaganda, which knew how to use the latest techniques, broadcasting was an important means of solidifying its power, creating opinions and dominating the public mood. At schools, offices and factories, as well as sometimes in the stadiums or public places: It was neither possible to escape the eyes nor the voice of Adolf Hitler.

Public life initially changed due to the continual marches and parades. Increasingly more uniforms could be seen on the streets named after the Nazi role models. The industrial location was reinforced by construction of the Rhine Bridge (Adolf Hitler Bridge), awarding of armament orders and opening of a „New Barracks“ (Adolf von Nassau Barracks on the Ludendorff-Allee). The Deutsche Edelstahlwerke AG steel plant was given the honorary title of „National Socialist Model Plant."

Special attention was focused on the young people. Boys were subjected to pre-military training. For the girls more than the boys, the emphasis was on health and an ideal physical image. Reproduction through couples who were considered valuable to the race was promoted by both propaganda and the granting of loans. Marriage was considered to be the nucleus of a healthy people.

Those who did not want to (or could not) fit into the „people’s community“ (Volksgemeinschaft) were persecuted and killed in the worst case.

Without help from the outside, it would not have been possible to establish the National Socialist dictatorship in Krefeld. The new rulers kept themselves in power by bringing their people into leading positions and usually had to revert to out-of-towners (Mayor Dr. Heuyng and District Head Diestelkamp).

For the Krefeld Jews, life changed radically with the first weeks in February and March of 1933. They were prohibited from working in many professions and forms of training. Organisations and associations assumed Aryan Paragraphs or disbanded.

Despite the initial attempts to assert themselves in the impossible situation, many people left the German Reich. By the start of the war in 1939, the number of Jews in Krefeld had been cut in half.

The remaining Jews suffered from their social exclusion and a systematic plundering by the state. In 1941, the Gestapo and police deported the first Krefeld Jews to Lodz and Riga. In 1942, this process was completed with the deportations to Izbica and the transport of elderly Jews to Theresienstadt.

People who survived the deportations were the exceptions. They usually just stayed until the fate of their relatives could be clarified. Krefeld was no longer their home.

Immediately after 1933, special attention was given to building the civil air raid protection. Krefeld was the location of important arms factories (Deutsche Edelstahlwerke AG, IG Farben and Rheinische Kunstseide AG). With the start of the war, their production was expanded. Male and female foreign forced workers replaced the German men who had gone to war.

In June 1943, the city suffered an airstrike that was remembered as especially horrible. Entire city districts were destroyed. There was only room for the many dead in a mass grave.

Towards the end of the war, the last reserves were also to be mobilised in Krefeld. Increasingly younger people were drafted, and even married women were no longer exempt from service duties.

The invasion of the American troops in 1945 occurred without any major incidents. The city was not defended.

Very few Nazis received genuine punishment. Most of Krefeld’s citizens were not even subjected to denazification. Almost everyone ultimately adapted to the new circumstances.