

Frans Wilhelm Odelmark, Tombstones on a Church Wall, c. 1870/80, watercolor on paper, 33 x 36 cm, signed lower right "F.W.Odelmark", unframed.

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (60 x 50 cm) of the company HALBE. A fitting frame – in museum quality – with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE can be provided on request.

Frans Wilhelm (Vilhelm) Odelmark (Västervik 1849 – 1937 Stockholm) was a Swedish artist who specialized primarily in architectural motifs, which he found during his numerous international stays and travels. The Düsseldorf school of painting had a formative influence on him. He was particularly outstanding as a watercolor painter. Works by Odelmark can now be found in collections including the Swedish National Museum.

After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm (1866–1868), he continued his education from 1870 to 1875 in Düsseldorf, where he was able to learn from outstanding professors in the field of architectural painting. From 1875 to 1880 and again from 1882 to 1884, he lived in Munich before later settling in his native Stockholm. His numerous study trips took him to Austria, Italy, and Spain. In addition to many works depicting views of Venice and church interiors, for example in Assisi or Nuremberg, the reproduction of scenes from the Orient forms a major focus of his work. Whether the many views of Cairo and the numerous harem scenes not only catered to the Orientalist taste of the time, but were also based on travel experiences, remains unclear.

The watercolor offered here depicts three gravestones or epitaphs from the Middle Ages and early modern period, which were placed on a side wall of a church, monastery, or cloister, in an extremely atmospheric manner—note, for example, the cobwebs. The descending staircase with Odelmark's signature on the right reinforces this secondary placement. Although some words of the inscriptions can be read, the exact location can unfortunately no longer be verified today. The view does not appear a second time in Odelmark's work. The fact that he makes a secondary scene the main theme of a representation is a strong artistic decision. What is striking about Odelmark in general is that he usually does not favor postcard motifs or main views, but rather courtyards and details of interiors or views of corners, street intersections, etc. In this respect, he is similar to famous Düsseldorf architectural painters such as Adolf Seel (1829–1907) and Adolf Schill (1848–1911).