

Claus Ørntofts speech for the unveiling of Three Lions and Nine Hearts

The Queen asked me to look at the park before we met for the first time. Her Majesty was concerned that the solution be site specific. That it wasn't just something that looked as if it had simply fallen out of the sky but related to the site in terms of its content as well as architectonically.

That is just up my street!

I walked around the park and pondered.

Seeing as it was the Queen who had approached me, I thought a lion would be fitting. The figure of the lion has always been a feature of my production, because I have always been interested in the Romanesque stonemasons who built the early granite churches in Denmark and used the Animal as Emblem and Animal as Narrative. The stonemasons had never seen a lion before, but they understood the tale of the strongest animal, powerful and difficult to control. It is protective, as we can see in baptismal fonts, but also with great powers that one had to be wary of.

I kept circling around the theme of the lion - and SAW a lion standing abandoned in the large - in inverted commas - empty, park space.

I looked at other possible solutions, but the idea of the lion kept resurfacing without any obvious way that I could use it. Then I realised that there are actually three lions in the Royal coat of arms. I suddenly saw a simple solution that would fulfill all the requirements: The solution would have a clear relationship to the location and, within the coat of arms, which I had taken as my starting point, had free movement, both in terms of content as well as architectonically. The lions occupy the area in front of the palace with ease, and make it their territory. They create direction in the space and the spaces in between them without actually touching the park.

Thus, the three lions have leapt out of the coat of arms in a free interpretation. The hearts are scattered around them and create an oblique reference to the coat of arms. And there are also three lions on the palace's gable!

When I got the idea, I thought that it would be three triumphant lions that occupied the park and that it would be easy! But when I went from idea to process, I quickly realised that creating triumphant lions was an impossible task, because in my world it

would represent perfection and would become a postulate. And that it thus had to be a process towards triumph. Later in the process I realised that these are three lions are in the midst of a process.

Thank you, Your Majesty, for your confidence in me. The process has been time consuming - almost 5 year from 2008 to 2012 - and many have contributed to the work. A big thank you to Aarhus Municipality and the other gift donors for realizing the completion of the work, and thank you to all those who directly or indirectly have contributed to the accomplishment of the sculptures and the exhibitions, and to the completion of this publication.