

The Coffee Board

A Sculpture by Jens Galschiøt



A historical monument centered on the workers of Aarhus Harbor.

An unusual sculpture is to be placed in the second largest city in Denmark, Aarhus. The sculpture is an interpretation of a workers monument, which is to maintain the remembrance and to set a historical trace back to the centuries where the harbor was the city's working center. The Danish sculptor Jens Galschiøt has been chosen for the task, which is financed by one of the largest culture and art foundations in Denmark, "the Salling Foundation".



It begins with a group of dockworkers who got the idea to make a sculpture

The story leading up to signing the contract is a rather good one. It begins with a group of dockworkers who got the idea to make a sculpture, that could mark and bring remembrance to how the Harbor of Aarhus, in centuries, were influenced by the dockworker's hard work loading the many ships.

Both the active and retired dockworkers meet regularly in worker's Welfare House, which has existed since 1936, placed in the Inner Harbor. Here stories are exchanged and old friendships are maintained. From the Welfare House the workers could follow the transformation of "their" old Harbor and workplace to new uses, where tourism, residences, educational institutions, pass time activities and café latte Cafés is taking over the Harbor with growing speed. A development happening all over Europe.

It was in this Welfare House the idea to make a memorial, showing the workers of the Harbor, first occurred. A former dockworker, Palle Joergensen, took the initiative and formed the idea to put "Historical Traces", in the form of a sculpture group, into motion. The idea was further developed by the Worker's Union "LO Aarhus", who formed the "Culture Group 2017" to realize the project. They contacted a number of artists and chose Galschiot's idea "the Coffee Board" due to the following reason.

"Our ideas and thoughts are convincingly shown and used in the work we have been presented. This concerns the aesthetic and artistic creation, but also the fact that Jens Galschiot already has the capacity and experience to rise to the challenge and create a worthy sculpture in full size."

The big problem is always the money. However the dockworkers surprised all with their enormous amounts of ideas, resources and energy, which culminated with one of Denmark's biggest Culture- and Art Foundations "the Salling Foundation" donating the 405.000 Euros needed to pay for the monument costs. The Foundation became the sole donator of the entire project, and owner of the Foundation, Karin Salling, explains their decision with the following statement: *"The sculpture is a celebration and a reminder of the hard work, which, through centuries, has taken place on the harbor, and I am convinced that the sculpture will be the subject of admiration and joy for the people in the area."*

The Coffee Board

The sculpture is built around a loading crew and is centered on a “Coffee Board”, where a crew of dockworkers is receiving a load of Coffee Sacks from an (imaginary) crane. The Coffee Sacks and the rope from the crane are levitating “freely” in the air and create the illusion of the ship and the cranes surrounding them.

In one end of the board a dockworker is loading a Coffee Sack onto the back of another dockworker, placed on the ground. Close by another dockworker is retrieving a dropped sack from the ground. The sculpture is consisting of 7 copper persons in natural size. The materials of the sculpture are cobber, bronze and stainless steel.

The sculpture will be placed in the center of Aarhus Harbor, where the stream becomes the harbor, just across the worker’s Welfare House. At this location the dock workers would meet every morning and get chosen for the different tasks by “Aarhus Stevedore Company” – An area, which today marks the transition from the city’s local harbor area and the modern industrial harbor.

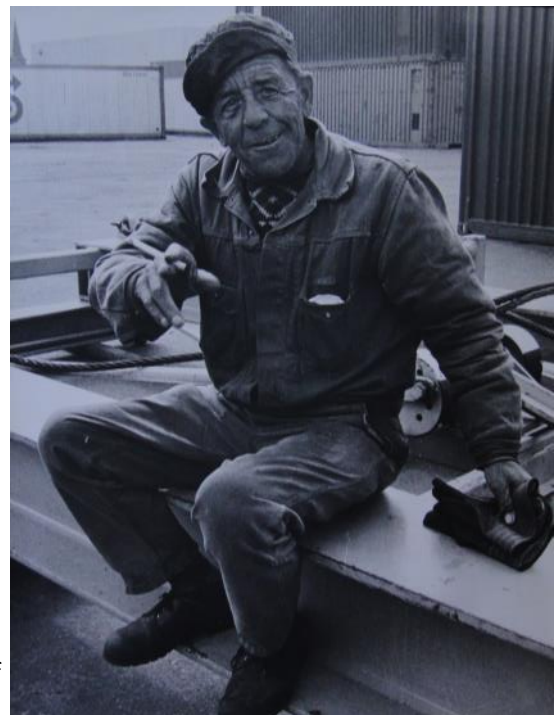
In the future the area will be buzzing with life and diversity. And exactly this spot will let the historical traces come to its rights: symbolized through preservation of the expression of a line of work, which has in time been taken over by machines.

The sculpture will be a symbol of the great importance Aarhus Harbor and its many workplaces has had – and will continue to have – to the development of Aarhus as a trade city and power center of Eastern Denmark

Jens Galschiot signed the contract in February 2016, and the sculpture is to be finished by the summer 2017, where Aarhus is named “European Culture City”.

Galschiot and his workers are already well under way with the preparations. The engineer Lars Bredahl is doing calculations on the difficult structures, and experiments with Coffee Sacks and ropes are being conducted. During the next few months the sculpture will be taking form. It takes a huge amount of work to make a monument of this size, and even though August 2017 is a long time away, much of the hard work must begin already.

“This is an exciting task, and I am looking forward to begin the work on the sculpture. It takes a huge effort every time we venture into a project of this size, and we are preparing the workshop to embrace this challenge. The workshop is already covered in old photos of Coffee Sacks, loading and offloading of ships, and dockworkers, which are to inspire the actual creation of the sculpture group.” - Tells Jens Galschiot by the project’s beginning in February 2016.



Old photos

The basis of the sculpture is a selection of photos showing typical work situations on the Harbor of Aarhus, linked with dialogue between previous and current dockworkers and the "Culture Group 2017". The theme of the illustration is the loading and offloading work on the harbor. This precise situation is an almost iconic image of the work, conducted through centuries, in all harbors. Thus making an almost timeless historic statement.

Naturalism

The sculptures artistic construction is relatively naturalistic. This artistic point of view will make the sculpture easily understandable, and will lay the grounds for establishing a popular memorial in the center of the new harbor environment in Aarhus.

It is important that a historical sculpture, which illustrates the work on the Harbor of Aarhus, is easily recognizable and bring back some happy memories. The meeting with the past is both a contrast of and a basis for the modern harbor's area. The name "Historical Traces" is symbol of this. Contrasting the meeting between the hard manual labor and the modern mechanical handling, and the meeting between the industrial harbor and the city's future use of the local harbor areas.

Contact

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Jens Galschiot Jens Galschiot has through more than three decades mad himself renowned with his many sculptures critical of society, and his art happenings which emanates from the artist workshop in Odense.



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