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Denmark's most famous landmark, The Little Mermaid, gets a male counterpart

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(Press images available – please contact sub@kulturstyrelsen.dk)

She has been beheaded twice, lost an arm, and been daubed with paint at least seven times. The iconic statue of the Little Mermaid from Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale is now getting a male counterpart: "Han" – a polished stainless steel sculpture featuring a young boy on a stone. The sculpture has been created by Elmgreen & Dragset, the artist duo behind the recent four-meter high bronze sculpture in one of London's most distinguished spaces – Trafalgar Square.

"Han" depicts a young man. He is positioned on a stone by the seaside – just like his famous "sister" in Copenhagen. The new sculpture has been created in contemporary materials: both the male figure and the stone have been cast in polished stainless steel, mirroring the surroundings in the sculpture's curved surface thereby creating a distorted imagery reminiscent of a psychedelic aesthetic. With true Elmgreen & Dragset chicanery and courtesy of a hydraulic mechanism, the eyes of the sculpture will close for a split second once every hour – just one blink – before it becomes a traditional static statue once more.

"Han" is highly-anticipated in Denmark due to its prominent permanent location on the harbour of Elsinore, opposite the Castle of Kronborg – famous as the historic setting of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Michael Elmgreen says, *"Creating a sculptural art work that will be installed in a public space is significantly different from showing it in the context of a museum. Visitors who enter a museum have already prepared themselves for a visual experience; whereas an audience outside a museum hasn't actually asked to have an artistic experience – that is important to bear in mind when you, as an artist, are commissioned to do a public sculpture. The sculpture must communicate on all kinds of levels."*

"Han" is a work that encourages to many complex readings behind its outwardly appealing surface. It makes clear references to "The Little Mermaid." The two sculptures are almost identical in size and, like his older sister, "Han" sits on a rock, gazing out toward the sea. However, the sculpture raises not only questions of nationality and gender politics. Located at the far end of a jetty, the sculpture also tells the tale of loneliness in our modern society – of being alone amongst the many.

Notes to Editors

"Han" is the result of a collaboration between the Municipality of Elsinore and the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Public Art, who jointly selected the artists and approved and financed the project.

"Han" will be unveiled on Saturday, June 2, 2012 (4pm – 6pm). The event is open to all.

About Elmgreen & Dragset

Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, based in Berlin and London, have worked together as an artist duo since 1995. They have held numerous solo exhibitions in art institutions worldwide, including Serpentine Gallery and Tate Modern in London, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, ZKM Museum of Modern Art in Karlsruhe, The Power Plant in Toronto, MUSAC in Léon, and Kunsthalle Zürich. Their work has been included in the Berlin, Sao Paulo, Gwangju, Moscow, Singapore and Istanbul biennials, and in 2009 they received a special mention for their exhibition "The Collectors" in the Nordic and Danish Pavilions at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Amongst their most well known works are "Prada Marfa" – a full scale replica of a Prada boutique in the middle of the Texan desert, and "Short Cut" – a car and a caravan breaking through the ground which was first shown in Milan and now resides in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Upcoming projects include the Scandinavian debut of their play "Happy Days in the Art World", a Performa Commission that premiered in New York, at the Bergen International Festival and the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen in Summer 2012.

In Autumn 2012 Elmgreen & Dragset will participate in the Liverpool Biennial and in Autumn 2013 they will have a major exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

About Elsinore

Elsinore is located on the northeast coast of the island of Zealand in eastern Denmark, a 45 minute drive north of Copenhagen, with a population of just over 61,000. The city's historically significant harbour is currently being developed into a new cultural and leisure area that aims to strengthen Elsinore's role as an international cultural centre.

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