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THE LITTLE MERMAID GETS A FRIEND

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The Little Mermaid gets a friend
Renderings by Fred Fröhlich.

Writer Daniel Scheffler spends time with the iconic artists Elmgreen & Dragset as they prepare to unveil their latest sculptural project.

Denmark's most iconic item may be a filled pastry in my mind, but it turns out it is a mermaid. Elmgreen & Dragset, famed for their tongue in another's cheek art (or not art), has created a sculpture as a friend for the iconic Little Mermaid statue. This male counterpart will be seated in the harbour of the tiny city of Elsinore in Denmark. Interestingly enough, it's the same Elsinore that Shakespeare's Hamlet – and the rest of the play's mad entourage – called home.

And so this summer Elmgreen & Dragset push the boundaries of homosexual related art yet again (one of their more infamous earlier works is a **memorial for homosexuals who were persecuted under Nazism in Berlin**). The duo is known for their design of a bronzed boy on a rocking horse questioning whether war monuments celebrate the victors or the defeated (**Powerless Structures, Fig.101**) and is currently displayed at the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. But then there is the **Prada Marfa** that bedazzled the fashion world with their design of a Prada store out in the middle of nowhere, Texas.

Back to the 'merboy'. The young mermaid boy is positioned on a stone where he is seated looking into the distance, but with a wink of the eye the friend of Ariel comes alive every hour. The figure and his stone have been cast in polished stainless steel, creating a kind of 'Hunger Games' futurist view of the self as you peer into the metal.

Commissioned by the city of Elsinore and funded by The Danish National Arts Council, Han will stand on the harbour in front of the Castle of Kronborg, a UNESCO world heritage site.

The artists, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset (based in Berlin and London), have worked together as a duo since 1995, and this Autumn they will participate in the Liverpool Biennial. A major exhibition of their work is scheduled for late 2013 at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

Let's see what madness they come up with next...

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