



HISTORY

They are frozen in time and sometimes deceptively real. Perpetuated in stone or bronze, looking over water, streets, parks or squares, dog statues can be found all over the world.

Dog Statues

Ulmer Dog (Le Chien – Le Chien Vert) – Jean-Baptiste Van Heffen

by RIA HÖRTER

A bronze statue of a Great Dane stands in the southwest corner of the Jubel Parc (Parc du Cinquantenaire) in Brussels. *Ulmer Dog* seems to be the popular name, but *Le Chien* (*The Dog*) and *Le Chien Vert* (*The Green Dog*) are used as well.

Ulmer Dog

The Parc du Cinquantenaire was established by King Leopold II of Belgium (1835-1909) to celebrate 50 years of Belgian independence (1830-80) with something that would last for years to come. The park was also the site of the Brussels International Exhibition in 1897, as well as trade fairs, exhibitions and festivals, including the 75th-anniversary celebration of Belgian independence in 1905.

A military training ground outside central Brussels was turned into the 74-acre park and exhibition center by Belgian architect Gédéon Bordiau (1832-1904). About 30 acres became classical gardens with laurel trees, straight pathways and two exhibition halls. Mature chestnut trees, elms, maples and lime trees were planted in 1888.

Today at the park one can visit the Grand Mosque, the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History, the Royal Museum for Art and History and... the *Ulmer Dog*, officially *The Dog* or, in French, *Le Chien*.



The Ulmer Dog in Brussels

The Dog is a bronze statue commissioned by the city of Brussels and created in 1869 from a plaster model by Jean-Baptiste Van Heffen (1840-ca.1890). Initially, *The Dog* was housed in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. In 1896, the statue was moved outside to a blue stone plinth in the park. Some say that the dog is on the watch, but nobody knows for whom or what.

For a sculpture exhibition during the 75th-anniversary festivities of Belgian independence in 1905, the statue was temporarily relocated to the entrance of the Woluwe Park.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the statue had gained a patina – tarnish due to oxidation of the bronze from exposure to the elements. Hence, the statue's other name: *Le Chien Vert* (*The Green Dog*). A tram stop, pubs, cafés and other businesses were all named after *Le Chien Vert* – the iconic statue that became green after a relatively short time.

Englishe Dogge and Dänische Dogge

“Big, heavy dogs” used mainly for hunting big game could be found all over medieval Europe. They were mentioned in *Pactus Alemannorum*, a seventh-century code based on Alemannic common law: *Bonum Canem porcatorium, qui capit porcas, ursaritum, qui ursos capit, vel qui vaccam et*

In the 19th century, the term Englishe Dogge was still in use, but changed gradually to Deutsche Dogge (German mastiff), then to Great Dane.





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taurum prendit, si occiderit aliquis, cum 3 solidis componat.
“If somebody kills a good pig dog that catches pigs, a bear dog that catches bears, or [a dog] that seizes a cow or a bull, then he will be fined three Solidis.”

The par force hunt was a popular pastime at the European royal courts, with sometimes 80 to 100 armored dogs participating. In the 1600s, heavy dogs, rather high on leg, were exported from England to central Europe; in Germany, these imports were known as *Englishe Doggen* (English mastiffs). A German type developed in the 17th century, and by the beginning of the 18th century, their descendants had become regional types – for example, the *Ulmer Dogge*, a large, heavy dog with a black or black-and-white coat for the most part, named after the town of Ulm in southern Germany,

Another type, called the *Dänische Dogge* (Danish mastiff), had a fawn, Isabella or brindle coat, and was smaller and lighter than the *Ulmer Dogge*. In the 19th century, the term *Englishe Dogge* was still in use, but changed gradually to *Deutsche Dogge* (German mastiff), then to Great Dane.

Cammerhunde and Leibhunde

The terms *Sauvage* or *Saurüde* (boar hound) or *Hatzrüde* (hunting hound) were used in 17th- and 18th-century literature about the hunt, probably to distinguish them from the *Leibhunde* (body dogs, catch dogs) and *Cammerhunde* (house dogs). The *Leibhunde* and *Cammerhunde* were held in high regard and sometimes adorned with silver and gold collars. Gradually, the boar hounds became companion dogs under the name *Deutsche Dogge* (German mastiff), although the names *Ulmer Dogge* and *Ulmer Hund* were still used in the Würt-



Café Restaurant du Chien Vert (Green Dog Restaurant) around the beginning of the 20th century.



A postcard dating from WWI (1914-18) showing the Parc du Cinquantenaire and Le Chien Vert in Brussels.



*Another dog statue by Van Heffen, a hound, standing ramrod stiff and looking at a turtle.
This statue with the appropriate name The Surprise stands in the garden of the Palace of the Academies, Brussels.*

temberg region of southern Germany.

One of the first dog shows in Germany took place in Hamburg, in 1863. Eight *Dänische Doggen* and seven *Ulmer Doggen* were entered. In 1869, 15 Danish and 12 *Ulmer Doggen* were entered at a show in Altona, one of the most important harbours in Denmark until 1865, now a suburb of Hamburg. The 15 Danish dogs were owned by Germans, not Danes.

Following a recommendation by show judges, it was decided, in 1880, to register the *Ulmer Dogge*, *Hatzrüde*, *Sauvage* and *Dänische Dogge* under one name – *Deutsche Dogge* (German Mastiff) – and judge them according to the same breed standard. England and France chose (for political reasons) the name Great Dane.

The Sculptor

The creator of the statue in Brussels was Belgian sculptor Jean-Baptiste Van Heffen (1840-ca.1890). Why a dog and not a horse or another animal? I was unable to find the answer.

Apart from *Ulmer Dog*, Van Heffen made another dog, a hound, standing ramrod stiff and looking at a turtle. This statue has the appropriate name *La Surprise* (*The Surprise*). It shows 1862 on the plinth, but according to the *Academiepaleis* (*Palace of the Academies*) website, the date should be 1869.

In the second half of the 19th century, Van Heffen exhibited in Brussels, Vienna and Paris; his work shows a great diversity.

Prince Laurent of Belgium (1963-), a younger brother of the present King Philippe, is known to be a great dog fancier. In his book *Suivez le Chien dans l'art et la ville* (*Follow the Dog in art and the city*) Laurent mentioned *The Dog*, which he called *Le Molosse* (*The Molosser*).