

Dantes Plads and the cultural history

By Jette Ingerslev

Prehistory

The area south of Dantes Plads used to be salt marshes. The geological conditions were complicated with limestone, glacial deposits, sand layers, and underground currents in Rådhusdalen under H. C. Andersens Boulevard.

Ramparts and Bastion

Vestervold was established in the 1600s with eight bastions. Holcks Bastion, named after major general Eiler Holck, was built in 1670 on settled terrain in Kalveboderne. The interior of the building was densely built with housing for craftsmen from Tøjhuset and Holmen. In the late 1700s, a riding house was built in the Bastion, and a riding arena was established for the nearby barracks of the Lifeguards on horseback. In 1819-30 a branch observatory was established at the tip of the Bastion with a view towards the Round Tower. In 1888 the Bastion was dismantled, and the front moat thrown in. The Bastion was located between Vester Voldgade and H.C. Andersens Boulevard of Ny Vestergade.



Holckenhushuset with festive lighting.



Marathon run in front of the Glyptotek and the Dante Column with Beatrice.



Life and happy days at Dantes Plads.

Buildings at Dantes Plads

The Prince's Palace, anchored on stilts, was designed by architect Nicolaj Eigtved in 1744. After an extension, the National Museum was opened in 1892. More extensions followed.

Holckenhushuset, a four-winged impressive residential complex in Hausmann style by architect Philip Schmidt, was inaugurated in 1893 with 11 studio apartments for artists. The first was P. S. Krøyer, followed by over a hundred artists. Kristian Zartmann, Emil Nolde, Agnes Slott-Møller, Gerda Wegmann, Kasper and Peter Bonnén.

Brewer Carl Jacobsen's The New Glyptotek, designed by architect Vilhelm Dahlerup, was inaugurated in 1896. After this, several extensions were made; in 1906 by architect Hack Kampmann, in 1996 by architect Henning Larsen and finally in 2006 by architects Dissing+Weitling. The Glyptotek was built on a landfill, with consequent problems with instability, cracks, and basement flooding.

The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters' Palace by architect Vilhelm Petersen, was inaugurated in 1898.

Dante's Square

In 1888, brewer Carl Jacobsen expressed that an attractive square should be constructed in front of the new Glyptotek to entice visitors into the building, which should be like a temple for art and experiences.

To mark the cultural cohesion between Italy and Denmark, a group of Danes and Italians in Rome wanted to mark the 600th anniversary of Dante Alighieri's death on 14.09.1321 with a square and a pillar. The establishment was delayed, but on 21.06.1922, the Italian king Vittorio Emanuele III and the Danish king Christian X - with great festivity - laid the foundation stone for the Dante Column and Dante's Square in front of the Glyptotek.

Until World War II, Vestre Boulevard was a park-like facility in front of the Glyptotek. After the opening of Langebro in 1954, shelters and a multi-lane road - now H. C. Andersens Boulevard - have divided the space into two. Glyptoteket, however, is still located at Dante's Square 7.

When designing the space, high priority was given to the architectural viewing line perspective towards Christiansborg Palace and the Glyptotek, respectively.

In 1938, a memorial was erected to the four most famous Danish linguists, including Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) and Vilhelm Thomsen (1842-1927).

In 2011, the square was beautifully renovated by architects COBE and GHB Landscape Architects, with small hills, flower beds and 24 robinie trees that now reach the height of the third floor. There is outdoor seating in the least polluted part of the square towards Vester Voldgade, which has also been renovated into a peaceful boulevard for cyclists and other vulnerable road users between the City Hall Square and Christianshavn via Lille Langebro.

To mark the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, Jens Galschiøt's five-meter-high sculpture "Dante in dialogue with the 21st century. Fuck Q-Park's parking basement" was erected in the middle of the square to the great pleasure of the residents and the many visitors.

The urban space

The urban space in 2023 appears as a green oasis, with the large trees creating a healthier environment between the historic buildings. It is a space for contemplation, play, fun and learning about art, culture and architecture.



View towards Christiansborg Castle.



17 May is celebrated at the Dantes sculpture by Jens Galschiøt.



Jazz music on Dantes Plads.

Parking garage at Dantes Plads?

Q-Park's parking basement at Dantes Plads, with an expected 1,000 cars daily in and out via the peaceful Vester Voldgade, will forever destroy the beautiful and historic urban space. We hope that responsible politicians will get this.