Equestrian monument to King Frederick William III of Prussia

In 1815, the territories which became constituted in 1822 as the Rhine Province came under the rule of the Prussian king. The annexation by Prussia marked the close of 20 years of war with France - first of all under the Revolution regime and then under Napoleon. Following the Congress of Vienna, the reign of Frederick William III came to be seen as a time of peace as well as economic and cultural progress. In honor of the monarch towns and provinces erected monuments with the equestrian statue of him.

In 1860 and 1862, two competitions to build such a monument in Cologne were still undecided. Ultimately, the initiators awarded the contract to Gustav Hermann Blaeser and Hermann Schievelbein. After the death of the latter, Blaeser redesigned the pedestal. When he, too, died, the task of completing the relief and the missing figures was taken over by Alexander Calandrelli. The official inauguration of the equestrian statue of King Frederick William III finally took place on 26 September 1878.

Figures on plinth:
1. Johann David Ludwig Graf Yorck von Wartenberg (Field marshal)
2. Heinrich Theodor von Schön (Financial councillor, agricultural reformer)
3. Friedrich Ludwig Christian Graf zu Solms-Laubach (Provincial president)
4. Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst (Lieutenant general, military reformer)
5. Peter Christian Beuth (State councillor, promoter of trade and industry)
6. Wilhelm von Humboldt (University founder, educational reformer)
7. Friedrich Graf Kleist von Nollendorf (Field marshal)

Rhine side, figure in centre of plinth:
8. Karl August Fürst von Hardenberg (State reformer)

Figures on relief:
B. Science: Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, Philipp Joseph von Rehfues, Karl Siegmund Franz Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Philipp Franz von Walther, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Carl von Savigny, Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, Christian August Brandis, Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland
C. Music: Bernhard Klein, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Carl Maria von Weber, Ludwig van Beethoven, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Ferdinand Ries, Carl Friedrich Zelter

Rhine side, relief
D. Dedication: The plate refers to the donations for erection of the monument collected by local committees in the whole of the Rhine Province.
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Following war damage, dismantling and storage of what bronze elements were still preserved, the plinth figures were displayed at various, for the most part publicly accessible locations within the city. The king’s head and the rump and tail of the horse were preserved from being melted down. 1982 saw the start of initiatives for restoration of the monument, which was completed in the current form in 2015.

The arrangement of the figures and reliefs corresponds to the original, and reflects the historical social hierarchy. Below the monarch on horseback, the next-highest rank is accorded to the senior military officers, who are placed in prominent positions at the corners. The choice of the persons depicted is an expression of the initiators’ world view. Renowned entrepreneurs and nameless workers stand on the same level. However, the workers remain a symbol for entrepreneurial activity. In style, the monument combines elements of classicism that hark back to antiquity with a form of realism that is strongly influenced by works of Christian Daniel Rauch to be found in Berlin.

Figures on plinth:

1. Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow Graf von Dennewitz (General)
2. Alexander von Humboldt (Explorer)
3. Barthold Georg Niebuhr (Historian)
4. August Graf Neidhardt von Gneisenau (Military reformer, field marshal)
5. Ernst Moritz Arndt (“Freedom poet”)
6. Friedrich Christian Adolf von Motz (Economic and administrative politician)
7. Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (Field marshal)

City side, figure in centre of plinth

16. Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherr vom und zum Stein (State reformer)

Figures on relief:

E. Industry: Franz Haniel, Friedrich Freiherr von Diergardt, August Borsig
G. Commerce: August Freiherr von der Heydt, Ludolf Camphausen, David Hansemann, Matthias Stinnes, Peter Heinrich Merkens

City side, figures on relief:


For more information, go to: www.stadt-koeln.de/heumarktdenkmal*  
*German version available