



The Penguins of Prague

Insider Art were recently in Prague. The role which animals play in our lives is many layered. Most of us live in urban environments and see a very limited selection of actual live animals. Yet our cities are full of animals. The animal as a sign or a symbol is widespread. The way in which we attach meaning to animals via images is complex. There are all kinds of associations: the lion as strong, the owl as wise, the elephant as rememberful. Animals are used as symbols of civic pride. Social hierarchies and advertising both heavily exploit symbols to define image, value, wealth, strength, power and exclusivity. My lion is bigger than your lion..... MY eagle has a crown..... Advertising also adopts creatures using them as often to tell a story which amuses us as to identify them as food. Art may subvert aspects of the animal to challenge our perceptions. As individuals we identify and have favourites which make us soften and smile, often as a result of childhood experiences. Here are a small selection of the many animals I found in the city of Prague.

There were a few animals I was excited to see but didn't photograph: a very alive and busy red squirrel who came close but wouldn't stay still long enough for a portrait; a pair of ravens whose distinctive guttural croaking identified them as they flew high over the Monastery and a raptor - probably a sparrow hawk - soaring and diving over the Castle.



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