

TIMELINE OF A STATUE OF LEOPOLD II: 1873 – 2020

11 August 1869: King Leopold II, reigning monarch since 1865, visits Ekeren on his way to the military base in Brasschaat.

7 September 1873: The statue by sculptor Joseph Jacques Ducaju is inaugurated on the central market place of Ekeren. It adorns a newly built plinth that also houses a modern water pump, and replaces the old well and pillory. The statue is made out of Bentheimer stone and is likely the first public statue of Leopold II erected in Belgium. The plinth carries a sign saying: TO / H.M. / LEOPOLD / 7-7-1873



The statue on its original plinth and location, date unknown.

1960: The old water pump is torn down and the statue is moved to the centre of the market place.

1993: The market of Ekeren is redesigned and the statue is moved to another spot closer to the Saint Lambert Church. The statue is given a new, less ornate plinth that carries the original text.

23 June 2007: The statue is covered in red paint, symbolising the blood on the hands of Leopold II following his violent regime in the Congo Free State. This damage is removed by the maintenance team of Kunst in de Stad – Middelheimmuseum.

Note: This is the first documented case of protest-driven vandalism against this statue, yet it is possible there were earlier actions not mentioned in the currently available archives.



The statue following vandalism in June 2007.

7 – 8 November 2009: The statue is once again covered in red paint. This damage is removed by the maintenance team of Kunst in de Stad – Middelheimmuseum.

August 2018: The district of Ekeren places a sign next to the statue, written in collaboration with the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren. The sign reads:

‘On August 11, 1869, King Leopold II got off at Ekeren station, on his way to the military camp of Brasschaat. This statue was erected four years later in memory of the royal visit. Originally, the statue stood next to the water pump in the middle of the market place. In 1960 the statue was moved and in 1993 it got a large plinth. In 1885, twelve years after the statue was inaugurated, King Leopold II acquired personal control over the Congo Free State. This would last until 1908. In order to make a profit from rubber and ivory, violence and exploitation are not shunned. Historians note an innumerable drop in the number of Congolese people. The thoughts of the people of Ekeren are with the victims of the colonization.’

16 – 17 May 2020: The statue is tagged with black graffiti: swastika’s, the word “Heil” and the slogan “Congo belongs to us” are written on the figure and plinth. The damage on the figure is removed by the maintenance team of Kunst in de Stad – Middelheimmuseum, traces on the plinth remain visible.



The statue on 17 May 2020.

30 – 31 May 2020: The statue is covered in red paint.



The statue on 31 May 2020.

3 – 4 June 2020: The statue is severely damaged after being set on fire.



The statue on 4 June 2020.

4 June 2020: The mayor of Antwerp and the mayor of the district Ekeren order for the statue to be removed.

8 – 9 June 2020: The plinth is torn down, the statue is removed and brought to the storage of the Middelheim Museum.



The statue ready for transport on 9 June 2020.