

Statement by George Steinmann, Project «Symbioses of Responsibility»
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What Change can Art and Culture Achieve?

Arts and culture matter. Even in conflict situations, they are anything but a luxury. The promotion of arts and culture holds great potential for conflict prevention and transformation, as well as for post-conflict reconstruction.

Guided by the conviction that arts and culture can change individual lives, strengthen social cohesion, bring about transformation and build bridges, I believe that our society, together with state agencies, should include arts in the debate on future viability.

Dialogue is the essence of the twenty-first century. We live in a globalised world, we are completely interconnected and we have access to infinite information. But this will amount to nothing unless we find our way to a culture of mutual respect. Only mutual understanding of different views and perspectives will allow us to resolve our current problems.

I therefore believe that art which adequately meets the challenges of our times will have overcome its self-imposed modern age isolation.

I not only want to respond with my art, I also want to foster relational networks. I am interested in dialogue and cooperation in the knowledge that social reality in the twenty-first century has become too complex for us to indulge in the luxury of reduction to discrete academic disciplines.

Let me make one thing very clear:

There is no time left for pessimism. We must act. Let us work today for the world of tomorrow's world. If we care about our legacy for future generations, it is time now to take decisive global action. We must galvanise political and personal will across and beyond all borders.

To be successful, we ought to create a 'Symbiosis of Responsibility'. This also means questioning our daily routines and practicing mitigation, credibility, frugality and humility. I am certain that change towards a lastingly viable society cannot be achieved without the knowledge inherent in and imparted by art in all its aesthetic and cultural dimensions. I want to say more: Artists have at their heart the task of transformation.

We must work to resolve conflicts in a spirit of reconciliation. Doing so involves a sense of compassion and caring. We have to reconcile ourselves with our world. The answer lies within ourselves.

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