

## **ART IS ABOUT MOVING OUR MINDS**

**Speech held by Gerald Bast, Head of the Oskar Kokoschka Prize Jury and President of the University of Applied Arts Vienna at the Awarding Ceremony for Raymond PETTIBON**

Distinguished and honourable guests! Ladies and Gentlemen! Dear Friends!

On behalf of the Oskar Kokoschka Prize- jury, I am having the honour to welcome you at the University of Applied Arts on this March 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, the 124<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Oskar Kokoschka, a former student and teacher at this institution.

Since the last Kokoschka Prize Ceremony two years ago, the world experienced challenging times and what happened in terms of globalization and political as well as economic developments of course also influenced the system of the arts - and will influence it in the future. The very basis of common economic thought was shattered. The idea of a self-guiding market, a market believed to automatically cater for a society's wellbeing - without the necessity of political interference, this idea showed to be flawed, seems to fade away for at least certain sectors, like Banks or the car industry – while at the same time the cultural sector, the system of the arts more and more is forced to be driven by mere market mechanisms.

My Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, WE know that Art is more than conserving and perpetuating redundant symbols of aestheticism. Art is not about dismantling museums into content-less entertainment-centres, creating saturated and hollow minds. Art is not just something to hang in Banks or bourgeois saloons as cognitive fig-leaves. The system of the arts is more than the sector of what is called Creative Economy. Art is about progress and innovation, not about repeating the old but about generating the new! And most importantly, Art is not about beauty. The real beauty of arts lies in its ability to MOVE OUR MINDS. Art allows us to set out for new directions and overcome personal limitations and fears. Art is about MOVING OUR MINDS - so we can gain a better understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

A state-sponsored art prize like the Oskar Kokoschka Prize is a strong symbol, showing that

art matters to Austrian politics and to our society. And especially in these crisis-shaken times, in which a lot of important people want to make us believe, that the future of our civilization is depending on the use of the right economic strategies - especially in such days we have to proclaim: No, it' not just the economy, stupid!

Especially in our times we have to point out the importance of the arts for the development of our societies. And in this sense the Oskar Kokoschka Prize should not only be a symbol, it should rather be guidance for political action, a political commitment to pro-active promotion of the Arts.

It is not by accident that the Oskar Kokoschka Prize, one of Austria's – and not only Austria's - most prestigious art prizes, is awarded at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, an institution which was and is dedicated to impacting on society by the arts and impacting on the system of the arts by aesthetic innovation.

Founded in 1981 by the Austrian Government and initiated by the University of Applied Arts Vienna, the prize is awarded on a two-year basis to a living artist for outstanding achievements in the field of fine arts.

Hans Hartung, Mario Merz, Gerhard Richter, Siegfried Anzinger, Agnes Martin, Jannis Kounellis, John Baldessari, Maria Lassnig, Valie EXPORT, Ilya Kabakov, Günter Brus, Martha Rosler, William Kentridge. To these extraordinary artists the Oskar-Kokoschka Prize was awarded so far. And today we are honoured to make Raymond Pettibon part of this most distinguished group of prize winners.

With this decision, the jury gives tribute to an artist who deals with drawings as well as with text, an artist who puts the two at the very centre of his work in the most sublime ways. It was the multidisciplinary approach as well as addressing issues of ideology and power which most strongly convinced the jury of Raymon Pettibon. Raymond Petibon who opens the frontiers between popular culture and the system of the arts - and thereby showing, that art has its place in the very centreof our societies – Raymond Petibon is indeed one of the most interesting contemporary artists. We are honoured to welcome you Mr. Pettibon – and congratulations in the name of the jury!