

Speech by Danish Cultural minister Marianne Jelved on Sept. 12th, 2014
at the Art Center Silkeborg Bad

Thank you for allowing me the word and the invitation to open BEGINNING.
It is a thought-provoking title.

Every day – then a new day begins. And we are just to “catch the day” [carpe diem] - as the actor Robin Williams said in “Dead Poets Society.” And many fortunately do so.

But to some it can be easier said than done just to “catch the day”. It can be difficult to “live in the moment” and leave the past behind. Especially if one has a traumatic past and maybe an unsecure future.

This uncertainty is the pivotal point of this exhibition – and to Moustafa al Yassin – who has been capable to live with his past and with the uncertainty about the future. And still must do.

With longing and powerlessness Moustafa al Yassin every day pay the price for his freedom – with his 30 years of exile from a devastated Syria and his native town Homs.

But anyway he is characterized for his great cheerfulness and his belief in freedom and in all that positive and good, which we also as human beings can do together.

Moustafa al Yassin has with his poems, his personal story and his human spirit created the fertile soil for a strong community, in which also we can take part through this exhibition.

Seven [eight, ed.] artists created a community across national borders and cultures.

Communities are fertile soil for hope and strength, where-ever in the world one lives.

You found each other in a community, and although you are from as well Denmark, Norway and Syria, you are speaking with the very same language.

The language – the poetic and aesthetic language of art – is universal and common to all mankind. It is a language which communicates through sensibility, emotions and moods. It includes instead of excludes, because it is not dependent on the rule and limits of a rational technical language.

Towards the art and what is incomprehensible we are using the sensitive language – the aesthetic language. For this reason it is as important to be able to get on with this language of art as with Danish, Russian or Chinese.

To get back to Robin Williams and “Dead Poets Society”, [Danish newspaper] Politiken printed a quotation from the film in relation to Robin William’s death.

It would like to read this loud, because in my opinion it is not only about poets and poetry, but about art in general:

»We do not read and write poetry, because it is sweet. We read and write poetry, because we are members of mankind. And mankind is full of passion. And medicine, law, business life, engineer's art - those are noble professions and necessary to maintain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love – this is what we stay alive for«.

I do believe that Picasso was right when he said that "Any child is an artist. The problem is how you remain an artist when you grow up".

(quote from i.e. Leo Tandrup <http://leotandrup.dk/blog/?p=118>)

I think that this exhibition can contribute to remind us about that.

Because it shows us, that the past – whether this is light or tough and troublesome – is preserved as memories and stories, which goes on living inside each of us. We are moving around among each other as living files closets for our past – our life and experiences.

I do believe that if we as an audience – like the artists did it in this exhibition – open up to our [personal] archives of experience, share, but also file other people's experiences in ourselves – we will get closer to each other and be wiser.

Art touches us and makes us become curious as human beings.

Therefore this Spring I launched a new strategy about children's meeting with art and culture ("*Børn og unges møde med kunst og kultur*"). This is to secure that children – already when they are very young – will meet art and culture, so that they will grow up with the language of art.

So that they can stick to their inborn 'inner Picasso' and the ability to be in a dialogue and to reflect. About themselves and about our often incomprehensible world - and maybe also those things from the past that hurts.

To be in a dialogue create a common learning- and reflection process. Here we must use a communicative language, because we speak together to reach a mutual understanding. This is in opposition to use the strategic language to obtain a strategic impact on another [person]. (The politician said)

When something new begins, we leave something else behind [us]. But this does not mean that it disappears. And maybe we can help each other to reshape the tough and confused into a lighter future.

This is an important and very essential *beginning*.

Thank you.