

Speech by Per Stig Moeller, Minister of Culture, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the vernissage *Intervention* by Nadia Plesner, at the Odd Fellow Mansion, Copenhagen, Denmark.

I thank you for the invitation to this very distinguished , politically very important exhibition created by Nadia Plesner. As we can see, Nadia commemorates Picasso.

Picasso once meditated on what it means to be an artist and concluded:
- "The artist is a political being, constantly aware of the heartbraking, passionate or fabulous things, that are happening in the world, creating itself completely in its picture. A painting is not made to decorate apartments, it is an instrument of war."

Although Picasso might have exaggerated his views on art a little bit, since we do have some of his paintings in museums as well as in private homes, what Nadia has done with *her* painting (Darfurnica) is a paraphrase of Picasso's Guernica. Watching this painting and thinking of Guernica, the definition holds - it *is* an instrument of war.

Nadia wants to draw our attention to what is going on, I will get back to that.

For this is a fresh political work. It has not been created to please the eye of the beholder but to relate to our surrounding world in a critical and eyeopening manner, and is therefore important. Nadia, your works are characterized by your strong commitment and your desire to help other people.

You do not distinguish between your artistic work and your social, humanitarian activities. You are an artist who wants to engage your audience, as you yourself are engaged.

And furthermore, you are not afraid to wrestle the big guys ...!

You wrestle Picasso as you have done with Louis Vuitton. The latter having done you the kindness of filing a suit against you, because you made a drawing of a hungry, african child under the name of Simple Living.

And to be honest, this *is* impertinent. Normally you have seen Gorbatojov at Louis Vuitton, but a hungry child, that is only something you can come

up with. And, mind you, carrying a Louis Vuitton look-a-like designerbag over one arm.

It is especially the humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur as well as the miserable conditions for women and children in the refugee camps of Darfur, that obviously has your heart.

And for that I am happy.

Watching Simple Living there is no doubt in my mind whatsoever, that precisely the conditions for the weakest people have your heart the most. As there can be no doubt about that when watching you painting.

Not only are your works a call to those in power to accept the responsibility as long as we are in power. Accepting responsibility is easy, when you are not in power.

Your works call on everybody to accept responsibility and relate to a conflict, that untill now cost 300.000 people their lives and that banished millions of people from their homes to a life in refugee camps.

And Nadia, I have been there.

I visited them. I sat with the children and their mothers in the camps, I spoke with them. And they told me about the terror they had suffered. A terror whose only purpose was to drive them away from the villages.

And worst of all, they told me that the terror continues within og around the refugee camps, even after they have been banished from their homes.

Unfortunately when it comes to tales of peoples sufferings, having heard of one special area, at some point you do not want to hear more.

And that is, I am sorry to say, exactly what is happening with Darfur. Darfur has been forgotten.

That is why it is of the utmost importance, that you will not allow us to forget, using your work to make sure that we are still confronted with the reality and the atrocities of Darfur.

At the same time you insist that we remain critical to what is happening around us, including the shallow culture of entertainment that dominates some media nowadays.

With your painting you demand that we reflect on a life, where celebrities dominate the media (I have seen Paris Hilton somewhere around). She is known for being known, while big catastrophes pass unnoticed, or at least relatively unnoticed.

With *Darfurnica* you illustrate this paradox by showing us the culture of pop as shown by the media together with african civilians and recognisable american and african presidents, i.e. decisionmakers and those responsible.

You illustrate the discrepancy between the shallow and the horrible. You do it by showing us the close coverage of the young, the beautiful and the rich, and on the other hand the poor interest that some of the same media take to the needy in the critical focal points of the world.

And it is precisely put in focus by the Louis Vuitton look-a-like bag. You'll get another case!

But, appraise it yourself everybody. Explore the exhibition and see what reality looks like when filtrated through the eyes of Nadia, a new, young, Danish artist. In a painting that perfectly matches Picasso's description, and I repeat, " A political being, that is constantly aware of the heartbraking things, that are happening in the world."

Nadia, I want to thank you for having done this. Thank you for holding on to Darfur. And congratulations on your exhibition.

I am very happy with your magnificent commitment, artistically and politically. The world needs both, and so do we in Denmark. Thank you.