

July 18th, 1961,
8 o'clock p.m.

13th General Assembly of the International Association
of
Art Critics

Form of welcome!

On the occasion of the 13th general assembly of your association which is now being held in Munich, the City of Munich, the Bavarian capital, has taken the liberty to invite you to a dinner in the banquet-hall of our old town-hall. You have accepted this invitation, and it is my pleasure to welcome you here very cordially on behalf of the citizens and of the town council of Munich, but I am also speaking for myself.

Your association which united nearly 500 leading art critics from 35 countries all over the world, has held its general assemblies and congresses successively in Paris, Venice, Amsterdam, Zurich, Dublin, Istanbul, Oxford, Dubrovnik, Naples, New York, Sao Paulo and Warsaw. We look upon it as an honour and distinction that you have chosen Munich this year as the place for your meeting and have thereby acknowledged Munich as being one of the cultural centres of Europe and the world. This special rank of Munich, thus confirmed by what to my mind is the most experienced and most famous body in the world, finds its justification in the cultural history as well as in the cultural present of our city.

It may well be said of the past that at least since the turn of the 16th century Munich was an important European city. A special characteristic was the fact that Munich was always ready to receive stimulation from other European, especially from Romance peoples, and to develop further on its own what it had received. Without claiming that my list would be complete, I should only like to recall the Dutchmen Sustris, Peter Candid, and Hubert Gerhard, who were educated in Italy, the Italians Orlando di Lasso, Barelli, and Zuccali, and the Walloon

Cuvilliés. They all worked here in Munich, developing to their peak several forms of European art and style, such as the Renaissance in the Church of St. Michael, the Baroque in the Theatinerkirche, and the Rococo in the Residence-Theatre, the Amalienburg, and the rich chambers. On the other hand, Munich played a decisive role in bringing about the break-through to the European modern era, for it was the city where the Jugendstil originated, where in 1909 Wassilij Kandinsky painted the first abstract painting, where Richard Strauss composed his music, and where Stefan George, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Thomas Mann formed their literary circles and laid the foundation for their fame. Today, Munich is most active in the field of art through its great collections among which the Alte Pinakothek and at least since the acquisition of Kandinsky's paintings the City Art Gallery, too, deserve to have a place among European centres of culture. The position of Munich in this field is strengthened by the great number of post-war international art exhibitions showing the works of numerous European painters, such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Munch, Picasso, Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Renoir, and also exhibitions showing the selections of the cultural activities of many European peoples. I must draw attention to one of these exhibitions especially because of its importance and its European character - I am speaking of the anniversary exhibition of 1958, entitled "European Rococo". However, the musical and theatrical life in Munich is international and European in nature, too. This is true for the state opera whose festival has quite well secured its place beside Salzburg and Bayreuth, each time drawing a European audience to Munich. It is true for the performances of Mozart in the Cuvilliés-Theatre which has scarcely its equal. But it is also true for the reputation of our "Kammerspiele" going back to Falkenberg, and it is true for the state theatre, the state operetta, and for the excellent State, Radio and City orchestras.

I am aware that you have important items on the agenda of your assembly and that this will take much of your time. But may be you will have some leisure in order to get acquainted a little bit with this city and its people. Then you soon will notice that here in Munich not only the painters and a more or less critical group of intellectuals are interested in paintings, but that also the majority of the citizens know there is such a thing like art, and you will find that here art is not regarded as a foolish pastime nor as a superfluous luxury. It is rather a lively feeling among all groups of the population, of course with differentiations according to their receptivity and their understanding of art, that art is directly a part of our life. And probably you will also recognize that this city is not only a home of art, but that it is a work of art itself, full of harmony and reconciliation, full of warmth, vigour, and individuality. And then the same thing might happen to you as happened to many others who came to us as strangers and who left us as friends.

In this spirit I wish you full success in your deliberations which may stimulate the development of art all over the world, and I hope that all of us here tonight will spend a few hours of pleasant entertainment and inspiring discussion.

Hans Jochen Vogel
Oberbürgermeister der
Landeshauptstadt München