

secession

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A STATEMENT FROM THE SECESSION

To every time its art. To art its freedom

The program drawn up by the new Austrian coalition government quotes the Secession's motto, "To every time its art. To art its freedom." As the board of the Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession, we would like to use this opportunity to spell out our understanding of the freedom of the arts:

Ever since our artists' association was founded one hundred and twenty years ago, we have sought to live up to our motto, which affirms our faith in continual renewal, diversity, and openness and is incompatible with any political interference with the contents of art and its forms of expression.

Freedom of the arts is necessarily premised on internationality, pluralism, and dialogue. The notion that art's purpose is to buttress a national collective identity presses it into a service that runs counter to its thematic diversity. We are persuaded that it is only in the horizon of this freedom that art can attain relevance and quality.

The freedom our motto demands extends far beyond the individual creative articulation: the exchange of ideas in a larger, pluralistic, international context is what endows the individual voices with cultural significance. That is why culture cannot be reduced to art objects or musical compositions. Nor can it be assessed on the quantitative scales of visitor figures, market values, or the circulation of works. An open society is the air that art needs to breathe.

When a government does not champion a free society, its promise to respect the freedom of the arts is no more than a rhetorical exercise.

The board of the Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession