

## Address by the Ambassador of Switzerland to Greece

H.E. Mr. Stefan Estermann

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy – and proud – to be with you tonight on the occasion of the opening of the retrospective exhibition «Shut your Eyes and See» by the Greek-Swiss Artist Nakis Panayotidis, here at the Vassilis & Elisa Goulandris Foundation in Athens, under the auspices of the Embassy of Switzerland in Greece.

Dear Nakis,

This is a wonderful, almost miraculous moment for us. A dream finally comes true. What has been a bold idea some three years ago, has now become reality: To have a retrospective for your work in Athens, the city where you have grown up. And to have it in one of the – no! in THE most renowned museum for contemporary art in Greece!

For the last 50 years, you have been mainly working in Bern, the lovely capital of Switzerland, the historic center of which is integrally under UNESCO protection. The city center is nestled in a loop of the Aare river, which brings its crystal clear, sometimes milky-turquoise waters from the alpine glaciers.

Your workshop is located down on the banks of the river, in the so-called Dampfzentrale, or Steam Power Station, a vibrant center of independent, rebellious and non-conformist youth culture. This is where you come from, and this is where you still are.

As a true Bernese, and as a passionate swimmer – you do like all Bernese people do, you take a swim in the Aare river, of course. From your workshop, you take a walk upstream, and when you went far enough, you jump into the powerful torrents, which take you back to the starting point. You let yourself drift, and when your ears are under water, you hear the giggling of the pebbles on the riverbed, as they have been doing for millions of years, without a pause. Then you shut your eyes and see...

Dear Guests,

I would like to express my warmest words of appreciation and thanks to the Vassilis and Elisa Goulandris Foundation for hosting this exhibition.

My special acknowledgement goes to the two curators, Ms. Fleurette Karadóntis, President of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, and Mr. Matthias Frehner, former Director of the Kunstmuseum Bern.

The exhibition has been financially supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, and I would like to express my special recognition to the company SIKA Hellas, a subsidiary of SIKA Switzerland, and their Managing Director Spyros Hatzifotis for their generous sponsorship.

Εύχομαι σε όλους σας μια υπέροχη βραδιά!

(I wish you all a wonderful evening!)