

**Rede von Oberbürgermeisterin Henriette Reker anlässlich
des Empfangs für Teilnehmende des Kongresses CODART
26 am 16. März 2025 im Historischen Rathaus**

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Distinguished:

Ms Beekmand, Director of Codart,

Counsellor Melsert, from the embassy of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands in Berlin,

Dr. Dekiert, Director of Wallraf Richartz Museum and Fondation
Couboud,

distinguished congress participants,

A warm welcome to the Historic City Hall of Cologne – a city
hall right in the middle of the Via Culturalis between the
Cologne Cathedral in the north and the 11th-century St Mary's
in the Capitol in the south – right in the heart of a cultural
quarter where 2,000 years of history and art can be
experienced.

Ladies and gentlemen, the city hall's dearest neighbour, the
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, is Cologne's oldest museum. With its
outstanding collection of Dutch and Flemish paintings, the
Codart association has found a highly suitable partner here in
Cologne.

And I am grateful to you, Ms Beekmand, that Codart, this unique organisation of the international art world, has chosen Cologne as venue for the congress.

You will use the conference to discuss art and museums – and, of course, the major debates in culture worldwide. Colonial heritage in museums is one such topic – as is the broad field of provenance research, which you will discuss over the next few days with over 140 curators from more than 20 countries.

Besides the professional exchange you will also gain new insights from the supporting programme: In addition to the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, a large number of other institutions and museums of our City are participating.

You will, however, experience the Cologne museum landscape in a state of change:

For example, the Romano-Germanic Museum next to the cathedral is currently being extensively renovated. The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum is undergoing an extension.

And with the Miqua, a unique museum highlighting the Jewish history and culture of our city is currently being built next to the city hall.

As you can see: Even in economically and financially challenging times for our city, we are committed to our culture. And we do so out of conviction:

I strongly believe that museums are not just wonderful places where we can enjoy art. Museums were and are places of encounter – places where people share common experiences, exchange ideas and engage in dialogue.

Culture unites! And that is what you all stand for!

I wish you a successful congress and an inspiring stay in Cologne!

And now I would like to ask you, Ms Beekmand, to come forward!

Thank you for being Cologne's guest these days!