

HELENA VAZ DA SILVA AWARD CEREMONY
Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, 3 October 2014



**Special Message by Maestro Plácido Domingo,
President of Europa Nostra**

***Dear President Barroso,
Dear Madam Cavaco Silva,
Dear winners of the Helena Vaz da Silva Award,
Dear Friends,***

I am very sorry that I cannot be with you in Lisbon for this special evening. Lisbon is one of my favourite cities in Europe. And I keep an extremely fond memory of my last visit, in June 2012, for the Europa Nostra Congress and European Heritage Awards Ceremony, which was held in the magical setting of the Jerónimos Monastery.

Tonight we honour the eminent laureates of the second edition of the **Helena Vaz da Silva European Award for Raising Public Awareness on Cultural Heritage**. Just as Helena Vaz da Silva was in the past, they continue to be engaged European intellectuals.

They come from three corners of Our Europe: **Turkey, the Netherlands and Portugal**. Europe needs such engaged citizens who in different ways - through their novels, scientific work or journalistic essays - tell - directly or indirectly - the story of Europe as a Cultural project. The entire life of **Helena Vaz da Silva** was dedicated to this noble goal. And by being here tonight, we honour both her memory and her key contribution to a Europe of culture, and to a culture of Europe.

Let me first congratulate our Grand Prix winner **Orhan Pamuk**. The beauty and the message of his novels have been celebrated around the Globe. But tonight, in Lisbon, Europa Nostra, together with the **Centro Nacional de Cultura**, wishes to honour the specific contribution which Orhan Pamuk continuously makes to the celebration of Europe's Symphony of cultures. And he is doing this, not only as a Nobel Prize winning novelist, but also as an engaged journalist and heritage activist.

Mr Pamuk, from a trained architect, you turned to be a writer, and what a writer! And now, from an acclaimed author, you turn to be a heritage communicator with a strong conviction that we can only build a prosperous future if we keep our memory and the sense of our history and identity.

In *The Museum of Innocence* your main character is driven by an obsessive attachment to all the objects and things that he associates with his beloved one, objects that bring back strong memories of the moments they shared. Europa Nostra and I myself believe that the amazing wealth of Europe's works of art make up our collective *Museum of Innocence*, our precious connection both to our past and to our future, *our timeless Wunderkammer*. We need to take proper care of this treasure trove and we need to engage, all together, in protecting it... and in opposing any acts of demolition or disrespect towards this treasure, which happens far too often, not only in times of war but alas also, and increasingly so, in times of peace.

Indeed such acts are happening in Mr Pamuk's native city Istanbul; also in our host city Lisbon and in many other historical and beautiful places in Europe and beyond. We must mobilise and raise our voice against such developments since we have a duty to protect and transmit this heritage, as human beings, as Europeans and as heirs to an amazing collective inheritance.

My warmest congratulations also to the winner of the Special Award of the Jury, **José-Augusto França** from Portugal, who - through his outstanding and lifelong work as an eminent art historian - knew how to place the magnificent art of his home country into the wider context of European and world culture and history. He has thus shown us, again and again, that culture, art and heritage know no borders. We should use this precious material to build bridges, not walls, between the peoples, communities and citizens of Our Europe and also with those who live elsewhere on the Globe.

I also want to express my deep appreciation for the laureate of this year's Special Mention of the Jury, **Pieter Steinz** from the Netherlands. His columns '*Made in Europe*' are all about connections; about works of art and monuments and music and literature that unite us, that serve as the glue that holds our continent together. They indeed form the cultural DNA of Europe. We urge the European Commission and other partners to help us to translate this book and to make it available throughout Europe to all secondary schools as an invitation to embark upon a fascinating journey of discovering the richness of Europe's culture, heritage and art.

Pieter Steinz cannot be with us today in Lisbon, as he is suffering from ALS disease. Many of you will have heard of the ice-bucket challenge – which I also took – to raise awareness about the need to step up our efforts to combat this terrible disease. Pieter, through your daughter Jet, we wish you every strength and we send you the expression of our warm appreciation and friendship. We also look forward to reading many more "Made in Europe" essays which you continue to compose and share on your website.

We need Europe's story to be re-invented again and again, to be re-told by each new generation. We need a New Narrative for Europe, a New Melody that puts Culture in the bright spotlight, in the middle of the stage. **President Barroso** – whom I had the pleasure of meeting last December in Brussels and who honours us with his presence tonight at our ceremony – initiated a project which promotes exactly that - A New Narrative for Europe.

I am therefore proud of the role Europa Nostra has and will continue to play in this important project. Economy and trade are, of course, vitally important, but we must realize that the European Union is, first and foremost, a **Union of Cultures!** This year's laureates of the Helena Vaz da Silva Award are all key contributors to the process of drafting this New Narrative for a Europe which draws its energy and inspiration from the resonating power of the **Symphony of its Cultures.** Only in this way shall we be able to engineer the much needed Renaissance of our continent, of our civilisation and above all of the aesthetical and ethical values which are fundamental to our common European edifice.

I look forward to coming back to Lisbon soon. Perhaps to sing together with the unique orchestra composed of the six historic organs in Mafra which in 2012 won an EU Prize for Cultural Heritage/ Europa Nostra Award. And perhaps also to enjoy the sound of the bells of the Mafra Palace which figure on Europa Nostra's list of **The 7 Most Endangered**, which will hopefully be restored soon, thanks to a joint effort towards saving such precious pieces of heritage, so they can be enjoyed for many years and by many generations to come.