

GOETHE-MEDAL 2023

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY YI-WEI KENG

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- Check against delivery -

All the mammals have the canine teeth, so call the dog teeth. When the animal shows the dog teeth. It means they want to aggress. We human, also have dog teeth, but we show the dog teeth, it becomes a smile. For me, this is the function of culture and art, to transform the aggression into friendship. I was born in a small town to face the Pacific Ocean. I like to watch the ocean and image what it will be at the other side. For me, Germany is the ocean, the other side. It gives me the freedom to image. Freedom is the action of imagination. I like German culture not because I want to be German. I am Taiwanese. I like Germany because it gives me a chance to think who I am. That is the beginning of freedom. Freedom means having the courage to meet the other. That is why Goethe also had the idea about World Literature (Weltliteratur).

I want to thank my wife Huei-Chin Hsiao even she can't be here today. I would like to express my gratitude for the supports from Taipei Arts Festival, Taoyuan Iron Rose Festival, and Weiwuying Center for the arts. Then I want to give the very special thanks to the four directors of Goethe-Institut Taipei. Markus Wernhard, Dr. Clemens Treter, Jens Rösler, and Theresa Hümmer. Without their helps, it won't be possible for me to receive Goethe Medal and stand here to give a speech, with smile.