Speech by Mayor Dirk Lukrafka

at the Opening of the Exhibition of the European ARTISTS e.V. Symposium

on Saturday, August 2, 2025

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Artists,

Esteemed Ms. Teschler (Chairwoman of European ARTISTS e.V.),

Dear Guests,

I warmly welcome you all to the impressive pilgrimage church Maria, Queen of Peace – also known as the Mariendom. This is a place whose unique architecture inspires not only the faithful, but also lovers of art and culture from around the world.

It is a great pleasure and a special honor for me to speak to you today at the opening of the international exhibition organized by the association European ARTISTS e.V. A glance at the guest list already reveals: this exhibition is not merely a showcase of art – it symbolizes collaborative work across cultural and geographical boundaries. What we see here today is a coming together that does not dwell on differences, but focuses on what unites us: art.

20 artists from nine countries – including Romania, Slovakia, Egypt, Finland, Croatia, South Korea, Latvia, Serbia, and of course Germany – are enriching our city with their works, each offering diverse perspectives, themes, and questions.

I would like to sincerely thank the association European ARTISTS e.V., under the leadership of Ms. Karola Teschler, for building artistic bridges between countries and people for many years – far beyond political and geographical borders. This symposium and the exhibition here in the Mariendom are powerful expressions of how art can become a dialogue between cultures. Johann

Wolfgang von Goethe once said: “Art is the mediator of the unspeakable.” Where words are no longer enough, Goethe believed, the language of art begins.

Especially in times when social cohesion, respect, and international understanding are more important than ever, we need spaces for exchange such as this artists' symposium. Let us immerse ourselves together in what art can do: create connections, open perspectives, ask questions, and dare to seek answers.

I wish you all enriching encounters, stimulating conversations – and of course, great joy in discovering the artworks.

Thank you – and a warm welcome to Velbert!