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Speech at the rector's inauguration and handing over the rector's chain

As a former rector, it is a great honor to hand over the rector's chain, this symbol of the office. The chain was created by Professor Emerita Ingjerd Hanevold.

To become the rector of an institution like KHiO is a privilege. There are few contexts for higher artistic education that offer such an interesting breadth and such good conditions grounded in infrastructure and highly competent staff.

But being a rector is a demanding job, I won't deny that. At the same time, it must be said that commitments that are rewarding rarely come for free, and the work at KHiO is in many ways truly rewarding.

At KHiO, we educate the artists of tomorrow, and what could be more important? As cultural and social beings, we humans need the counterfactual perspectives that art can provide us in order to envision alternative futures and to gain different perspectives on everything we do and have around us. Given the complexity of all the challenges the world is facing, the role of art, and therefore artistic education as well, is becoming increasingly important in society.

Over the past decades, higher artistic education has, for better or for worse, become more and more integrated into the university sector. A fundamental component that arises from this integration and that is worth embracing is academic freedom and the related academic freedom of expression. Without these fundamental prerequisites for teaching and the search for new knowledge at universities and colleges, there is no doubt that the outcome will be poorer and more limited.

In addition to this, and as an underlying condition for us at an art university, we find artistic freedom. What this informally defined freedom asserts is that art can never or should never become an instrument for illustrating pre-established truths and values. The day when art becomes such an instrument, it will have relinquished its ability to create counterfactual perspectives and to subject our established norms and habits to radical criticism.

A former colleague wrote in a text that art must be like an unpredictable dog, one that doesn't hesitate to bite the hand that feeds it. The author Graham Greene put it a bit differently in a discussion where he debated the role of the writer in society: *Loyalty confines us to accepted opinions: loyalty forbids us to comprehend sympathetically our dissident fellows; but disloyalty encourages us to roam experimentally through any human mind: it gives to the novelist the extra dimension of sympathy.*

These conditions come along with the work of leading an institution like KHiO, and they are something that both generates and takes energy at the same time. Much of the task is about trying to ensure that there's more on the positive and generating side rather than on the negative and consuming side of the equation.

Leading a university or a college is complex in itself, but leading an art school adds a few degrees of complexity to the work. I have had the privilege of being a rector, and it is with gratitude that I take with me the experiences it has given me. With these words I wish you, Marianne, all the best in the job you have ahead of you.

Thank you.