

## Stolpersteine and Relatives

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Mr Fleckenstein,  
Dear Gesche-M.Cordes,

I am delighted to welcome you all here at the Hanse-Office, the Joint Representation of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein to the European Union. Thank you Mr Fleckenstein, MEP from and for Hamburg, for being with us tonight in spite of your very busy schedule!

I particularly would like to welcome the photographer who took all these fascinating pictures that made you come here today: Gesche-M. Cordes, and her husband Dr. Mürner.

Mrs Cordes is a real Hamburg native, although she went to Berlin to study photography at the famous Lette-Verein in 1968 - "exciting times", as she says, in a divided city back then. Mrs Cordes works as an independent photographer and has provided photos for major German magazines and newspapers such as "Der Spiegel" und "Die Zeit".

Another important person in the context of this exhibition is Carsten Hess, whom I would like to thank for his initiative to bring us together with Gesche-M. Cordes and thus make this exhibition possible - unfortunately his uncle, Peter Hess, who works very closely with Mrs Cordes in Hamburg, could not make it to Brussels today.

We are very privileged to host these photographs here in Brussels after they have been shown in the famous Hamburger Kunsthaus before - for the opening, more than 500 people turned up! Although the Hanse-Office is not as big as the Kunsthaus and we are not quite that many here tonight, guests have come from as far as Versailles, home to the Bettelheim family, whose photo is shown over there. Welcome and thank you for making the journey!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The exhibition *Stolpersteine and Relatives* which we are opening today is more than an just an art show, it is also a poignant reminder of the darkest period of German history: the terror of the Nazi dictatorship and its victims - people who were persecuted, deported, exterminated or driven to suicide: Jews, political opponents, homosexuals, and the victims of "euthanasia".

With his *Stolpersteine* - literally, stumbling stones - art project, about which Mr Fleckenstein will tell us more in a minute, the artist Gunther Demnig (to be seen in this picture) remembers these victims, whilst Gesche-M. Cordes adds a new dimension by bringing back the memory of the victims in her way.

Between 2002 and 2011, she took photos of relatives of victims and as it were "their" Stolpersteine in Hamburg.

The family members had come from Israel, South Africa, the USA, Brazil and Venezuela to Hamburg in order to commemorate their relatives.

Mrs Cordes' photos of the stumbling stones with the victims' relatives are not just touching images, every one of them also tells a poignant story that you can read in this book. Even better, though, you are lucky to have Mrs Cordes here tonight because she very kindly offered to tell you these moving stories when you ask her to give you a tour of her pictures.

Moreover, you will be able to see a real „Stolperstein“ yourself when you leave this building and turn left - just in front of our neighbours` house, the Bremen EU Office. It is a stumbling stone recently set for the Freemason Jean Sugg. If you carry on in the direction of Rond Point Schuman through Rue Archimède, you can see the Stolpersteine for Felix Nussbaum and Felka Platek. They have been set thanks to the initiative of Ruth Breuer, whom I also would like to welcome here tonight, and the Belgian “Association pour la Mémoire de la Shoah” - bienvenue Mme Swiatlowski, Mme Hamel et merci d’etre venue ce soir!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would to thank you for your attention and end this short introduction with the inspiring words of a Jewish girl, Anne Frank, who wrote this into her famous diary:

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

It is now my great pleasure to pass on the floor to Mr Knut Fleckenstein, MEP from and for Hamburg, who will tell us a bit more about the Stolperstein project and open this exhibition officially.