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"Ka`bah" to Shine in Hamburg - February 22, 2007 - 04:41
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HAMBERG, GERMANY – Amid welcome from the Muslim minority, German authorities have given the go-ahead to German sculptor Gregor Schneider to showcase a cube reminiscent of Ka`bah in the northern city of Hamburg in front of the Arts Gallery from March 23 to July 10.

"I wanted to introduce to peoples worldwide the oldest place of worship," IslamOnline.net quoted Tuesday, February 20, Schneider as saying.

He said what is unique about Ka`bah is that that aura of mystery surrounding the Muslim building, calling it one of the most breathtaking buildings worldwide.

Schneider's replica is 13 meters long and wide.

The famed sculptor said he tried for many times to take his cube to the Venice Biennale and St Mark Square in Italy, but authorities rejected his requests for "security and political reasons."

The government, priests and Muslim leaders in Italy said that the replica could trigger violent reactions from Muslims, who might see it offensive.

Schneider was further disappointed at adamancy of Berlin's authorities to give his piece of art the green light for the same security reasons cited by Rome.

Since the crisis of the blasphemous Danish cartoons, German authorities are cautiously dealing with pieces of art that might offend Muslims.

In February of last year, the German Academy of Art had withdrawn from a contest a mosque replica with to missile-shaped minarets.

The Hamburg's approval to showcase the cube was applauded by Schneider.

"Hamburg with its heavy Muslim population, mosques and Turkish kebab shops is definitely more fit to display the Ka`bah-like cube than Venice," he said.

Hamburg is home to the largest Muslim minority in Germany. There are some 3.2 million Muslims in Germany and Islam comes third after Protestant and Catholic Christianity.

Born in Rheydt in 1969, Schneider first made a name for himself in the early 1990s with subtle, barely perceptible doubled walls in galleries and art museums.

The climax of Schneider's work on came with his contribution to the Venice Biennale in 2001, when he implanted a complex of twenty-two rooms, passages and dead-ends into the German Pavilion – which earned him the much-coveted Golden Lion award at the Biennale.

Inoffensive

German Muslims have hailed Schneider's work and refused to call it offensive.

"Islam is not against such pieces of art," Chairman of the Higher Council for Muslims in Germany Nadim Elias said.

"Muslims will not consider this work offensive," added Ahmed Yazgi, a member of the Federation of Muslim Communities in Northern Germany.

"Muslims usually decorate their homes with porcelain-made icons featuring Ka`bah porcelain potteries on which Ka`bah is painted," he argued.

Yazgi said German Muslims use Ka`bah-like replicas to practice hajj rituals before going to Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

The Ka`bah is the first and the most ancient house of worship ever built in this life.

Some commentators of the Qur'an say that it was first built by Adam (peace and blessings be upon him) and some others say that it was first built by the Angels on this earth.

When Prophet Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) arrived at the place of the Ka`bah, the building itself did not exist. Even the city of Makkah had no inhabitants.

Allah showed Prophet Ibrahim the site of the Ka`bah (Al-Hajj: 26) and then he and his son Isma`il together raised its foundations and built it from the ground up. (Al-Baqarah: 127).

It is dedicated to the worship of one God. So by facing toward the Ka`bah in prayers, Muslims are stressing the unity of humankind under the Lordship of the One and only God.

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