

## Press release

Berlin, 13 September 2019



# **250 years young! Celebrating Alexander von Humboldt's birthday**

Opening of the festivities on 13 and 14 September 2019, with contributions from places including Berlin, Bogotá, Lima, London, Mexico City, Novosibirsk, Potsdam, Quito and the Amazon region

This evening, on 13 September 2019, at 7 pm, will see the start of two days of public festivities marking the 250th anniversary of Alexander von Humboldt's birth, organized by the Humboldt Forum together with the Goethe-Institut. Around sixty artists and experts from all parts of the globe, particularly Latin America, will be presenting their current views on topics and insights relating to Alexander von Humboldt.

On both days, visitors can expect a packed programme of exhibitions, installations, performances, music, lectures and discussions at the Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss. In addition, children and young people are welcome to take part in the family programme, which starts on Saturday at midday (for details see the programme booklet at [humboldtforum.com/presse](http://humboldtforum.com/presse)). What's more, the two large-scale projections illuminating the eastern facade of the Humboldt Forum on both evenings from 9 pm can be seen by everybody, and are best viewed from Marx-Engels-Forum.

Admission is free of charge. Registration is required at [humboldtforum.org/avh250](http://humboldtforum.org/avh250). Friday evening is already fully booked, but anybody who is prepared to wait has a chance of gaining late entry.

All the events focus on the ideas and findings of the polymath Alexander von Humboldt, highlighting their impressive global relevance today. At the same time, visitors can find out more about characteristic aspects of the programme planning at the Humboldt Forum. Two exhibitions shed light on contemporary and critical perspectives of Humboldt's legacy. Performances will reveal decolonial standpoints on Latin America. Visitors can retrace Humboldt's steps and discover indigenous perspectives by means of 360°films and virtual reality displays.

**Monika Grütters**, minister of state for culture and the media, explained beforehand: “Alexander von Humboldt is a role model with his pioneering approaches to otherness. This makes him absolutely on trend, as he has always been. In the face of increasing racist and nationalist segregation and marginalization, he blazes a trail not only for an approach to all peoples that is as self-confident as it is cosmopolitan, but also for the ideal of an equitable dialogue between the various cultures of the world. This is why Alexander von Humboldt – together with his linguist brother Wilhelm – are the inspiration for the Humboldt Forum, a venue for the cultures of the world that will encourage us to draw closer to ‘completely unfamiliar’ territory. We want to combine various research and scientific disciplines with art and culture under the roof of the Humboldt Forum, along with activities for a heterogeneous general public from all around the world – and from all the different worlds that come together here in Berlin. The result will be a vibrant setting for public debates with as wide a scope as possible. This is why I have so vigorously advocated free admission to the permanent exhibition.”

**Hartmut Dorgerloh**, general director of the Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss: “To mark the 250th anniversary of Alexander von Humboldt’s birth, we offer a sneak preview of things to come. Along with sixty artists and experts from all around the globe we will be providing an initial glimpse into the kind of programming that will one day be presented at the Humboldt Forum.”

**Johannes Ebert**, secretary general of the Goethe-Institut, said at the press conference: “Alexander von Humboldt is of exceptional significance in many countries – not just in Latin America but also far beyond. Consequently, numerous Goethe-Institutes around the world are marking the anniversary in 2019 by coming together with their partners to explore the impact of his work. We are delighted that we have been able to bring several of these projects to the Humboldt Forum. Moreover, this joint festival heralds the start of a new era of cooperation: we at the Goethe-Institut are convinced that our global network of partners from the spheres of culture and civic society enables us to make a key contribution to what the Humboldt Forum is set to become – a hub of international exchange, where historical contexts, artefacts and global interactions are explored from multiple perspectives.”

The president of the Goethe-Institut, **Klaus-Dieter Lehmann**, who on Saturday afternoon is due to open the “Conéxion Humboldt” discussion between experts from Berlin, Bogotá und Novosibirsk, emphasized that “Alexander von Humboldt regarded the whole world as his habitat and object of research. He relied on a number of basic principles: forming his own impression of the world, overcoming hierarchical thought processes, viewing cultures as equal and comprehending the value of diversity. This made it possible for him to turn

science and scholarship into public knowledge. Amidst all the specialisation, we need to return to the idea of the big picture.”

**Diana Rico**, artist, Colombia: “As a South American living in Bogota I grew up learning how European explorers discovered us. Having spent more than twenty years living and working with indigenous peoples in Colombia, I became that explorer myself and have learned the precious and sophisticated science kept by the traditional people for the present times. Being able to bring this glimpse of understanding into Berlin as part of a collective work is a unique opportunity for me. *Juyeko Humboldt* is the result of the inspiration we gather from the dialogue between worlds.”

**The ceremony** for invited guests on Saturday morning will be opened by the minister of state for culture, Monika Grütters. After a welcoming address from Berlin’s lord mayor Michael Müller, historian Miruna Achim from Mexico City will give a keynote speech providing a compelling change of perspective that gives the American view of Humboldt’s impact. The Federal Ministry of Finance is marking the 250th anniversary of Alexander von Humboldt’s birthday by issuing a 20-euro commemorative coin. It shows a portrait of Humboldt as well as the Chimborazo volcano. A knot pattern symbolizes how the sciences are interwoven: *everything is interaction* was a key statement by Humboldt. Concluding the ceremony, the parliamentary state secretary to the federal finance minister, Bettina Hagedorn, will present the commemorative coin designed by Carsten Theumer to five of the artists involved in the events.

#### **Admission free of charge with online registration**

The events are open to registered visitors in five different time slots under the titles *Cosmos I–V*. The programme begins on Friday, 13 September 2019, at 7 pm. Friday evening is already fully booked, but anybody who is prepared to wait has a chance of gaining late entry. On Saturday, 14 September, the programme of events takes place from 12 noon until midnight, tickets are still available. The construction site will be partially opened for the occasion. Access to the festivities will be via the southern entrance to the site.

**The entire programme** and the online registration form are available online at [humboldtforum.org/avh250](http://humboldtforum.org/avh250).

**A thematic dossier** compiled by the Goethe-Institut, containing interviews, films, pictures and articles relating to the event, will be available online from 13 September at [goethe.de/humboldt250](http://goethe.de/humboldt250).

All events will be in the original languages, generally with translations as required into German, English and Spanish

## **250 years young!** **Celebrating Alexander von Humboldt's birthday**

Public events on 13 and 14 September 2019, with contributions from Berlin, Bogotá, Lima, London, Mexico City, Novosibirsk, Potsdam, Quito and the Amazon region

**Date** Friday/Saturday, 13/14 September 2019

**Time** Friday 7 pm to 2 am, Saturday 12 noon until midnight

**Doors open** Friday from 6 pm, Saturday from 11.45 am

**Location** Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, access via the southern construction site entrance (Baustelleneingang Süd), Breite Straße / Schlossplatz, 10178 Berlin

**Language** Events will be in the original languages, generally with translations as required into German, English and Spanish

**Entry is free of charge** with online registration for a specific time slot (due to limited capacity) at [humboldtforum.org/avh250](http://humboldtforum.org/avh250)

**Programme** Lavinia Frey (Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss), Andrea Rostásy; Joachim Bernauer (Goethe-Institut) and Wenzel Bilger (Goethe-Institut)

An event organised by the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF) in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut as part of the Humboldt Year.

The Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss is funded by the Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media and by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, as well as on the basis of a resolution by the German Federal Parliament.

The programme items *La naturaleza de las cosas: Humboldt, idas y venidas, Experimenta/Sur: Tejidos conectivos, Humboldt360°* | *Eine Expedition in Lateinamerika* and *Humboldt Hackatón de realidad mixta* are part of the *Humboldt y las Americas* season of events, supported by funding from the Federal Foreign Office. The projection *O Ciclo Anual no Rio Tiquié* is a cooperation between the SHF, the Ethnologisches Museum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA).

**Media partners** Deutsche Welle, rbb

**The actors participating in the Humboldt Forum** are the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK) with the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (SMB), Kulturprojekte Berlin and Stadtmuseum Berlin, and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU), with the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF) at the helm.

**Further information** is available at  
[humboldtforum.org/avh250](http://humboldtforum.org/avh250)  
[goethe.de/humboldt250](http://goethe.de/humboldt250)  
**#AvH250**

### **Press contacts**

Michael Mathis, press officer for the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, +49 151 1617 97  
[27,michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org](mailto:27,michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org), [humboldtforum.org/presse](http://humboldtforum.org/presse)

Dr. Jessica Kraatz Magri, press officer for the Goethe-Institut, +49 89 15921-249, [jessica.kraatzmagri@goethe.de](mailto:jessica.kraatzmagri@goethe.de)

**Press photographs** are available to download at  
[humboldtforum.org/de/inhalte/presse](http://humboldtforum.org/de/inhalte/presse)