

Humboldt Forum

Press Kit

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Introduction

Situated on a historic site adjacent to Berlin's world-famous Museum Island quarter and at the crossroads connecting the Brandenburg Gate and Alexanderplatz, the Humboldt Forum welcomes visitors to a landmark public space in the heart of the city. In area covering over 40,000 square metres, the vibrant centre for culture, science, exchange and debate features world-class collections and a diverse programme of exhibitions, discussions, performances and events, bringing together different cultures, perspectives and insights into some of the most important issues facing our world today.

The Humboldt Forum is inspired and informed by the spirit of Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, names synonymous worldwide with education, culture, science, and the value of nature in contemporary thinking. The centre represents a pioneering partnership between four experienced partners from the cultural and academic fields—the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) responsible for two of Berlin's great museums, the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum of Asian Art); the Stadtmuseum Berlin (City Museum Berlin) with the exhibition BERLIN GLOBAL; the Humboldt University with the Humboldt Lab; and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (Humboldt Forum Foundation).

History of the site

City district, Monastery, Palace, Parade Ground, Palace of the Republic, open space: Scarcely any other site in Berlin has experienced such a concentration of social, urban, political and cultural developments over the past 800 years as the site on which today's Humboldt Forum is situated. Numerous princes and politicians have worked and built or remodelled here, making their political claims visible.

The Humboldt Forum is a new building on a special site. Its creation is closely connected with its 800-year history and the symbolic political charge of this place. Numerous debates about its future were conducted; they continue today with different focus points. So what makes a meadow on the Spree a special site? And how can this approximately 7 hectares of land between today's Lustgarten and Breite Straße have such significance that disputes never cease with regard to its design and use?

Questions that occupy the exhibitions on the history of the site. They commemorate important moments in the site's history and offer insights into a wide variety of architectural styles, uses and environments.

One area, four exhibitions

Four exhibitions in the Humboldt Forum recount in over 1500 square metres the history of this disputed site – from the city in the Middle Ages, the Dominican Monastery from around 1300 to 1536 through the Hohenzollern Castle that dominated the square for centuries to the Palace of the Republic and the archaeological excavations in the period before the Humboldt Forum was built. From new buildings and conversions, political visions and claims, living and working at this historic focal point.

The exhibitions on the history of the site are decentralised and can be seen all over the building: The video panorama in the Passage presents a concentrated overview spanning eight centuries and serves at the same time as an introduction and table of contents for the other exhibition areas. Using original artefacts, the Palace Cellar gives insight into the life and work of people behind the scenes of the former Berlin Palace. The sculpture in the Schlüterhof presents original façade figures of the baroque palace. Distributed throughout the entire building, from the cellar to the roof, on the staircases and in the restaurants, 35 so-called flashbacks highlight significant events in the site's history and the important uses to which it has been put.

Impressions. The Humboldt Brothers

Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt are the brothers after whom the Humboldt Forum is named. Their manner of interconnected thinking, their curiosity and their openness have been the guiding influence on the Forum's design. The *exhibition Impressions. The Humboldt Brothers* casts a spotlight on their work, the circumstances of the times in which they lived, and creates connections with the principles and contents of the Humboldt Forum.

The life and work of Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt are multilayered and link to global questions that extend to our reality in the present. They connected public education, a new understanding of nature and an occupation with languages and cultures.

The perspectives on the brothers are diverse: Alexander (1769–1859), the globe-trotter, who turned his attention to local and global interactions, and viewed people and nature in context. Wilhelm (1767–1835), whose occupation with many languages is described as the basis of his comparative view of people and their cultures. The cosmopolitan thinking of the brothers, which was oriented in the philosophies of the Enlightenment and the modern sciences that arose around 1800, saw freedom as a right of all people. They were patrons of art and culture, combining an overriding concept of education with social participation. But there is also the view of the Humboldt Brothers as exponents of a universalism with a European stamp, as players in colonial contexts, and voices of a system of knowledge dominated by Europe.

The Humboldt brothers combine an exploratory approach to the world, the movement and observation in cultural and linguistic, colonial and imperial contexts, with stories of humanity and the social and political circumstances of their epoch and with perspectives for the future.

The Berlin Global Exhibition at the Humboldt Forum: Berlin in an interconnected world

On 4,000 square metres of floor space, the Stadtmuseum Berlin tells of the complex web of interrelationships between Berlin and the world. Immersive installations lead visitors into theme-based worlds that reflect the many sides of the city.

BERLIN GLOBAL, a major permanent exhibition, offers visitors a unique insight into contemporary Berlin. BERLIN GLOBAL is a collaboration between Kulturprojekte Berlin and Stadtmuseum Berlin, with several Berlin communities actively involved to reflect the true character of the city. The exhibition explores the interrelationships between Berlin and the world through thematic displays incorporating a plethora of music, sounds, installations, art commissions, graphics, photographs and objects, that together create a powerful multi-layered experience.

Spread over an area of 4,000 square metres, BERLIN GLOBAL is the first of a new generation of city exhibitions. Saturated with interactive technology and expansive installations, BERLIN GLOBAL takes visitors on an exciting cultural journey through the city, with topics ranging from revolution and war to entertainment and fashion. Rather than a classical account of the city's history, BERLIN GLOBAL offers a contemporary take.

Installed at the heart of BERLIN GLOBAL is the 5-tonne 2.3 metre metal entrance door to the world-famous Tresor Techno Club, which was opened by musician, activist and clubber Dimitri Hegemann in 1992. The door was originally located in the steel vault of the Jewish-owned Wertheim department store, which had been dispossessed by the national socialists in the 1940s. The door was rescued after languishing for decades in the no-man's land at the militarised border of the city and was moved to BERLIN GLOBAL as the first object to be placed in the exhibition.

After the Wall fell in 1989, dozens of the city's abandoned industrial spaces, particularly in the ex-communist east, were converted into pop-up electronic music venues, attracting party people from east and west Germany and around the world. The most legendary of the early 1990s clubs was Tresor.

The exhibition is divided into seven themes, Revolution, Free Space, Boundaries, Entertainment, War, Fashion, Interconnection. Each section of the exhibition is highlighted by specially commissioned art installations reflecting the multi-cultural society of Berlin.

OnWater: Exhibition of the Humboldt Lab

Water is life, but it can also destroy. The exhibition “On Water. WasserWissen in Berlin” shows current research projects of the Berlin University Alliance (BUA) on the topic of water.

Water is ubiquitous – We drink it, bathe in it, experience it as rain, ice, or a river. And yet it remains contradictory, as it is both familiar and at the same time unpredictable. Sometimes there is too much of it, sometimes too little. Sometimes it flows, sometimes it’s lacking, sometimes it floods entire stretches of land.

As a result of climate change, growing cities, and global inequality, water has become a challenge. It cannot be controlled easily and raises questions about established practices. Water is not a passive object, but instead a dynamic element that demands new scientific perspectives and social negotiation. The exhibition On Water presents Berlin University Alliance (BUA) research projects that deal with water from a wide range of perspectives. They all aim to learn from its properties – such as its cycles, its adaptability, and its binding force – to find solutions for the future. The audio track provides deeper insights into the interplay between humans and water. In it, scientists explain why it makes sense to listen to water, as it knows more than we think.

Ethnologisches Museum and Museum für Asiatische Kunst

The Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum) are among the largest and most significant museums of their kinds in the world.

The Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum offer a survey of the world's cultures and art, spanning the ages as well as the continents. While maintaining their old home in Berlin's Dahlem district for scholarship and research, the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum, both run by Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums), have moved in 2020 to a new permanent home at Humboldt Forum. More than 20,000 objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas are displayed over a total of 17,000 square metres. Some objects are on temporary display and will occasionally rotate with others from the collection.

The installation provides the space and flexibility to show the two museums' collections in a new way, drawing on both collections to tell the story of humanity, and focusing as much on the intangible aspects of cultural legacy as on the artefacts themselves. Themes running through the displays include ritual, issues around religion, the images that indigenous societies present of themselves, the importance of craftsmanship, and the relationship of tradition to contemporary art.

Alongside the physical objects are sound recordings from the Berlin Phonogram Archive. This unique collection of ethnomusicological recordings dates back to 1900 and is one of the best collections of ethnomusicological recordings in the world. Offering a critical examination of European colonialism, the displays give voice to colonised people's points of view and relate the artefacts to contemporary social issues. They focus on the history of the collections and highlight new research findings.

As well as the permanent displays, there is space within the galleries for temporary exhibitions. These exhibitions respond to current, often critical, issues. Drawing on the expertise of curators from a variety of scientific, ethnological, artistic and educational

fields, they will be designed in close cooperation with representatives from societies and communities whose histories and identities are interwoven with the exhibited objects. Around these exhibitions will be educational activities and public programmes encouraging further enquiry.

Public Programmes

At the centre of Humboldt Forum's activity is its commitment to encouraging discussion and debate around the topics presented in its exhibitions, as well as acting as a meeting place for visitors and as a space to present special events.

Throughout the year, an extensive public programme takes place across the Humboldt Forum – from art installations and projections to guided tours, talks and lectures to artistic interventions, performance, dance, concerts and film.

These have included the open-air festival Durchlüften, the film festival Box Office Around the World, the performance festival Transkontinentale, and cultural education programmes for visitors of all ages in the large-scale workshop spaces.

Food and Retail

Several gastronomic offerings are available at the Humboldt Forum.

LEBENSWELTEN BISTRO

Ground Floor, Passage

Open all day, the Lebenswelten team works in an ecologically sustainable way, and prides itself on its diverse and tasty cuisine with a focus on Berlin classics and a vegetarian bowl counter. Vegetarian and vegan dishes are available along with burgers, schnitzel and meatballs.

RESTAURANT & DELI & Wilhelm Alexander

Ground Floor, Schlüterhof

At the Deli Alexander, guests can experience the “Bread & Bowls” concept on seating designed to accommodate approx. 110 diners indoors and approx. 200 outdoors. The Restaurant Wilhelm focuses on high-quality German-French à la carte cuisine. The regularly changing dishes are also based on various exhibitions in the museum itself.

FORUM CAFÉ

Stair Hall First Floor

The Forum Café offers a selection of sweet and savoury dishes, coffee and tea specialities as well as soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

RESTAURANT BARET

Rooftop Terrace, via elevator Stair Hall

During the day, the Baret Café offers small lunches, coffee and original cakes, and in the evening, modern, unpretentious fine dining with an expanded menu. A variety of carefully selected regional ingredients are combined with fish, meat or vegetarian/vegan to create ever-changing interpretations.

HUMBOLDT FORUM SHOP

The gift shop offers a wide variety of books, souvenirs and accessories to complement the exhibitions, displays and ideas found in the Humboldt Forum.

The products available in the shop range from classical items to design products and artisanal objects with a regional or global theme. In addition to the Humboldt Forum's own publications and those of its partners, the shop offers a wide range of books, including non-fiction, illustrated books, children's books and current fiction relating to exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum.

Selected Dates and Facts about the Humboldt Forum

The Palace: Baroque and Contemporary Architecture

From the eighteenth century onwards, the Berlin Palace – designed by architect and sculptor Andreas Schlüter – has been regarded as one of the most significant secular buildings of the Baroque period north of the Alps. It was partially destroyed in 1945 and demolished in 1950. In this reinterpretation by the Italian architect Franco Stella, the building is combined with the design, technical and urban aspects of the present.

Reconstruction

In 2002, the German parliament approved the reconstruction of the three Baroque outer facades and the cupola of the Berlin Palace, and the three Baroque facades of the Schlüterhof courtyard. Reconstructing of the palace facades is intended to highlight the exceptional artistic achievement of Andreas Schlüter, the Baroque master builder. No guidelines were set for the historical transverse wing between the Schlüterhof and Eosanderhof courtyards and the Renaissance wing to the east. This is where a freestanding and consciously modern structure is now being built.

In summer 2011, the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss set up the Palace Workshop in the city's Spandau district to carry out work on the over 3,000 sandstone elements of the facades.

Palace foundation stone ceremony	1443
Construction of the Baroque Palace	1698 to 1716
Palace Terraces, Lustgarten	1844 to 1846
Palace chapel and dome	1845 to 1854
Palace Terraces – Schlossfreiheit and Schlossplatz	ca. 1901
Wartime destruction of the Berlin Palace	1943 to 1945

Demolition of the Berlin Palace by VEB Aufbau	1950
Parade ground (with tribune)	1951 to 1973
Palace of the Republic (constructed between 1973 and 1976)	1976 to 2009
Erection of the simulated Palace facade	June 1993 to Sept. 1994
The German Bundestag passes a resolution for the partial reconstruction of the Berlin Palace.	2002
Franco Stella is announced the competition winner.	2008
The foundation stone for the Humboldt Forum is laid.	2013
Cultural activities by founding directors Neil McGregor, Hermann Parzinger and Horst Bredekamp begins	2016
The first exhibits are brought in, and the founding directors hand off planning and steering to General Director Hartmut Dorgerloh.	2018
The Humboldt Forum is completed and begins opening in stages.	2021 – 2022

Building

Ground floor space with courtyards	20,529 m ²
Total floor space (with basement) including rooftop cafe.	96,356 m ²
Area of the archaeological monument / archaeological window	c. 1,800 m ²
Building height, upper edge of crown	35 m
Building height, upper edge of dome	60 m
Concrete	100,000 m ³
Steel	20,000 t

Distribution of Space by Floor

Ground floor event areas	1,175 m ²
Foyer	1,290 m ²
Schlüterhof courtyard	3,500 m ²
Passage	
History of the Site	1,500 m ²
Special exhibition spaces	1,460 m ²
Berlin Exhibition (Kulturprojekte and Stadtmuseum Berlin)	4,000 m ²
Humboldt Lab (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)	1,000 m ²
Ethnologisches Museum/Museum für Asiatische Kunst (SMB)	13,900 m ²
Temporary exhibition spaces	3,500 m ²
Akademie (workshops)	1,000 m ²
Remaining (administration, etc.)	1,500 m ²

Humboldt Forum Practical Info

Address	Humboldt Forum Schlossplatz 10178 Berlin
Website	www.humboldtforum.org
Opening hours	Wed to Mon 10:30am–6:30pm Tue closed
Admission	<p>Visiting the Humboldt Forum, there is free admission to the Humboldt Lab, and the permanent displays – <i>History of the Site</i> and <i>Impressions: The Humboldt Brothers</i>.</p> <p>An admission fee will be charged for the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art, BERLIN GLOBAL as well special exhibitions.</p> <p>For more information, visit:</p> <p>www.humboldtforum.org/en/visit/admission-and-tickets/</p>