

PRESS SERVICE

21 July 2021

PARTICIPATION AND MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AT THE BERLIN GLOBAL

Visitors to the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition will quickly note that its history of Berlin's many interconnections with the world is told from multiple perspectives and by diverse means. The topics change from room to room, and each room itself often presents different views side by side. The "Revolution" room, for example, not only uses multimedia films, poster series and original objects to tell the stories of major uprisings that have taken place in Berlin. It also features an expressive and symbolically rich mural by artist Hanaa El Degham on the outer sides of two elliptical walls, reflecting her experiences in the revolution in Egypt. Video interviews explore the history of the Peaceful Revolution not only from the standpoint of oppositional figures as might be expected – such as Ulrike Poppe who talks about her friend and fellow campaigner Bärbel Bohley – but also through the eyes of Salomao Ngomane, a contract worker from Mozambique at the time.

This multiplicity of voices is intentional. It derives from the conviction at ever more museums that there is not just one ostensibly objective presentation of history, but rather many histories, and that these should be heard. Exhibitions should reflect the diversity in societies, and open themselves to groups whose lived realities are normally not found in museums. This approach also alters the role of curators, who are now asked to provide not only scholarly expertise and skill in creating exhibits, but also the ability to network and coordinate different voices. The curatorial team for the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition sought advice from active members of civil society, invited artists to contribute works, and approached groups and individuals to involve them in aspects of design and implementation. Many partners from the city are also participating in the exhibition's outreach and education programme.

Critical Friends

A circle of "critical friends" was formed in the conceptual stage for each room of the exhibition. Members of civil society, activists and scholars with personal or research experience in the respective topic were invited to participate. They advised the curators on overarching ideas and implementation, supported decision-making processes and provided contacts.

Participatory development of exhibits

Some of the exhibits are the result of close cooperation between curators and external individuals with expertise in the specific topic. Two longer-term participatory projects involved students who conducted research and designed displays as part of their course work. The interactive media stations in the "Boundaries" room were developed largely in conjunction with the Stadt und Grenze ("city and border") seminar led by Henrik Lebuhn and Henning Füller from the Department of Social Sciences at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin.

The students defined the themes and questions for the media stations, did research, took photos, conducted interviews and compiled statistics. The stations cover topics like everyday racism, East and West, noise, gentrification, universal access, and boundaries or limitations in the Humboldt Forum itself.

The shop window exhibit in the "Fashion" room showing current clothing trends was created together with students from the Berlin School of Fashion. They observed what people in Berlin are wearing and developed a corresponding typography. Categories such as "Androgynous", "Boho", "Extravagant eccentric" and "Practical convenience" are illustrated with characteristic outfits, drawings and detailed descriptions. This room also features statements from Berliners on the street whom the students questioned about their relationship to fashion.

Whenever possible, individuals or groups featured in the exhibition were actively involved in the design of the respective exhibits. The "Entertainment" room module showing how hip-hop developed in East and West Berlin in the 1980s and early 1990s is presented not only by cultural historians and sociologists but also by active figures from the period, including the rapper from Kanacks with Brain, DJs from Islamic Force and Downtown Lyrics, sprayers Crime and Ben One and breakdancer Kadir Memiş. They appear in videos and also provided singles, mixtapes, DJ equipment and T-shirts, complete with individual commentary. Together with the curator, they determined which objects best reflect hip-hop culture, their take on life, and the content they wanted to convey.

Activists, groups and individuals were also closely involved in developing the "Free Space" room. They were asked to describe the free spaces they had created, which they view as fragile, but which they need in order to live in Berlin. Members of the collective that ran the Drugstore and Potse youth centres look back at the 40-year history of these two institutions which are now closed. With support from the Archiv der Jugendkulturen, they made a film, selected objects and set up the exhibit themselves. For the "Gender" section of the "Free Space" room, Kreuzberg-based trans woman Fatma Souad was one of those providing input and loan objects, and the Magnus Hirschfeld Society was a consulting partner. For the "Religion" section, three women from different faiths whose voices are heard there helped to develop the module.

In the "Interconnection" room, the 17 Berliners who tell of their relations with people throughout the world were more than interviewees. Some of them discussed the room's concept with curators and joined workshops to explore how individual connections between Berlin and the world can be conveyed in an exhibition context.

Artistic points of view

Artists added new perspectives to the exhibition's topics by creating works for some of the rooms. For the "Remembrance" space in the "War" room, Philip Kojo Metz produced the performative work *SORRYFORNOTHING* which addresses German silence about the country's colonial past.

In the "Free Space" room, the coproduction of the steel sculpture "Overlords" by David Mesguich (France) and the installation „Camera: No Freedom: Total Control“ by DOTDOTDOT (Norway) reflects the growing threat to privacy from the disclosure of personal data. Known for video portraits of Black Germans in his *Schwarz Rot Gold* online project, filmmaker Jermain Raffington was commissioned to examine racism in German entertainment culture. He provided the dramaturgy and sensitive approach to this newly developed module in the "Entertainment" room. Documentary filmmaker Eva Knopf and excerpts of her work *Majubs Reise* are featured in the "War" room. She tells of Mahjub bin Adam Mohamed Hussein, who was born in Dar es Salaam, fought on the side of the German colonial rulers in World War One, and travelled to Berlin in 1929 to claim pay for active duty – but in vain. In 1944 he was murdered in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

Other works made for the exhibition include the first room's immersive mural entitled *Thinking the World* by urban artists How and Nosm, Hanaa El Degham's *The Birth of Osiris* in the "Revolution" room, wall drawings by Ali Fitzgerald, the *Mietengrab* ("rent grave") installation by Rocco and His Brothers in the "Free Space" room, graffiti by artists CRIME TDC and Some in the "Entertainment" room, and a sculpture by Tape That in

the "Interconnection" room.

Open Spaces

The exhibition also offers what it calls Open Spaces, where groups, associations and initiatives present their own views largely independently. These perspectives address the exhibition's topics in unusual and often underrepresented or critical ways. BERLIN GLOBAL's three Open Spaces are meant to be visible as such, with bright blue walls and floors that contrast with the rest of the exhibition space. They are located in the "Berlin Images", "Entertainment" and "Interconnection" rooms. Curatorial advice is available to the groups if desired, as well as support for their design and media work. The only set aspect of the Open Spaces is the selection procedure. Groups can submit ideas, which are evaluated by a jury. The content of the three spaces changes every 18 months on a staggered basis.

For the opening of the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition, the Open Space in the "Interconnection" room will feature eight works of art made at the Kunstwerkstatt Kreuzberg studio under the direction of David Permantier. The studio is run by Lebenshilfe Berlin, an organization that supports self-determination and societal participation by people with cognitive limitations – individuals with unique abilities, conditions, histories and strategies for living their lives. This Open Space displays group and individual creations, paintings, prints, collages and a large crocheted work. It also includes commentary on eight exhibition topics by the studio's participating artists.

The Open Space in the "Berlin Images" room is expected to be ready in autumn 2021 with an exhibit by the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma. Texts, historical photos, a film and part of photographer Chad Evans Wyatt's *RomaRising* portrait series present a nuanced picture of the Sinti and Roma and tell of their decades-long struggle against discrimination and for recognition of the genocide perpetrated on them by the Nazis.

The Open Space in the "Entertainment" room will initially remain empty to signal that interested groups can apply to use it.

BERLIN GLOBAL – A coproduction of Kulturprojekte Berlin and the Stadtmuseum Berlin

The BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition opened on July 20 on the first floor above ground of the Humboldt Forum. On around 4,000 square metres of space, it explores the complex web of relations between Berlin and the world. Immersive installations and atmospheric presentations lead visitors into theme-based rooms that reflect the many sides of the city.

The BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition at the Humboldt Forum is a coproduction of Kulturprojekte Berlin and the Stadtmuseum Berlin. Its design and contents were developed by a team led by Paul Spies, Chief Curator for the State of Berlin at the Humboldt Forum and Director of the Stadtmuseum Berlin. Kulturprojekte Berlin is responsible for the overall production, communications and – together with the Stadtmuseum Berlin – displays which are universally accessible and inclusive.

Major actors at the Humboldt Forum include the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz), Kulturprojekte Berlin, the Stadtmuseum Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, under the direction of the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss.

More information

www.berlin-global-ausstellung.de

www.humboldtforum.org

www.kulturprojekte.berlin

www.stadtmuseum.de

[Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [#berlinglobal](#)

Press contact

Franziska Schönberner

+49 (0) 30 24749-750

f.schoenberner@kulturprojekte.berlin