

**PRESS INFORMATION****7 OCTOBER 2020**

## Highlights of the Opening Year

**(in chronological order)**

### History of the Site

The Humboldt Forum is a new building with a history. The History of the Site section presents 800 years of historical and structural developments in four permanent exhibitions spread over a total area of 1,500 square metres. A 28-metre-long video panorama allows visitors to visualize the various aspects of the History of the Site. The Palace Cellar contains the sole surviving original fragments of the medieval Dominican monastery, as well as the cellars of the Berlin Palace, which were uncovered in 2008. Original figures and architectural sculptures from the Palace facades are exhibited in the Sculpture Hall. 35 Traces distributed around the Humboldt Forum also recall key historical events and uses of the site, with a focus on the Palace of the Republic.

### The Humboldt brothers

The brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt inspired the name of the Humboldt Forum. Their integrated thought processes, along with their curiosity and open-mindedness, have greatly influenced the direction taken by the Forum. The approaches we take to the brothers reflect their diversity: there is Alexander von Humboldt, who, concerned with local and global correlations, observed the links between mankind and nature. Then we have Wilhelm, whose preoccupation with numerous languages is regarded as forming the basis for taking a comparative outlook on people, their cultures, and their thought. This compact exhibition casts a spotlight on their work and the times in which they lived while seeking points of connection to the principles of the Humboldt Forum.

### *Have a Seat! An exhibition for children*

When do we sit, and where, why and how? How are welcoming gestures, conventions or rank expressed? And what kinds of seating orders apply in groups and societies? *Have a Seat! An exhibition for children* provides space for the youngest visitors aged three to ten to playfully discover and learn all about sitting in various cultures. This first special exhibition sets the tone for the programme as a whole: children will be among the first people to find a place for themselves in the Humboldt Forum. This thematically arranged exhibition showcases

original historical exhibits, reconstructed hands-on objects, and areas that visitors can co-design, offering scope for thinking together about communal living in various cultures.

### **After Nature: Inaugural Exhibition of the Humboldt Lab**

Humans have left their mark on every ecosystem, on the earth's atmosphere, and even on the deepest geological layers of the planet. This is the background to *After Nature*, the exhibition with which the Humboldt University inaugurates the Humboldt Lab. The exhibition shows how the relationships between political systems and nature are responsible for this transformation, and inversely how issues concerning the environment and resources exert immense influence on all political systems. Scientists from a range of disciplines will discuss the dramatically changing relationship between humans and the environment as well as the challenges to liberal social systems posed by phenomena such as nationalism, authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism and social movements.

### ***BERLIN GLOBAL***

With *BERLIN GLOBAL*, the Stadtmuseum Berlin and Kulturprojekte Berlin show a network of relationships between Berlin and the world in a space of about 4,000 square metres. The exhibition does not provide a chronological account of Berlin's history. Instead, large-scale installations in seven thematic rooms make the city's stories tangible: Revolution, Free Space, Boundaries, Entertainment, War, Fashion and Interconnection. Cross-sectional topics such as colonialism or National Socialism are taken up throughout the exhibition. An interactive tour invites visitors to express their own opinions and take action. With a participatory approach that included consultation and cooperation with experts, museums, interest groups and communities, as well as new collaborations with several artists, the exhibition reflects a broad spectrum of perspectives on the city.

### **Hybrid formats for dialogues and lectures**

Every Thursday, the Humboldt Forum will open a space for critical discussion in which a dialogue or lecture will be presented not only live but also digitally and interactively. It will be through these series of critical discourse, that the building transforms into a Forum. These series are dedicated in turn to the challenges facing ethnographic collections, explanations of scholarly discourses, or current socio-political issues. As the first inclusively designed publication at the Humboldt Forum, the sensory book *Vom Kloster zum Humboldt Forum. 700 Jahre Geschichte und Architektur. Ein Buch zum Tasten, Sehen und Hören* (From Monastery to Humboldt Forum: 700 Years of History and Architecture – A Book to Touch, See and Listen to) is also set to try out an inclusive digital format.

### **Cultural education – opening the workshop spaces**

Education, learning and scholarship are core tasks for the Humboldt Forum. With this in mind, a network of diverse activities is to be spread throughout the entire building, aimed at groups and individual visitors of all ages. There will be tours, talks, and artistic, participatory and scholarly projects on offer. In addition, special initiatives and workshops will make the Humboldt Forum an open and social venue for reflection and discussion for diverse audiences. One focus is on the workshop spaces on the first floor, in an area measuring 1,000 square metres that is specifically designated for education, communication and events. Moreover, even before the workshop spaces open, knowledgeable museum educators will be on hand to answer visitors' questions and give insights into the Humboldt Forum project and its central concerns, particularly the building's history and architecture.

### **Terrible Beauty. Elephant – Human – Ivory**

Ivory polarizes. As early as 40,000 years ago, people were creating the oldest known art objects from tusks. Yet ivory also stands for injustice and violence, slavery, and colonial exploitation. The Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss is coming together with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin to stage a special exhibition where visitors can find out all about this complex history, complete with educational activities and a series of accompanying events. The aim is to present the intriguing association between the cultural and historical significance of ivory and the aspects concerning natural history, along with the socio-ecological consequences of its use as a raw material. In this respect, the exhibition will also establish a link to the objects in the west wing from the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, which will go on display from late summer onwards, and provide a wider perspective on the history of their reception.

### **Moving the Forum. Our bodies – our positions – our dance**

The dance and community project led by Jo Parkes and Jana Lüthje brings together Berlin-based professional dancers and groups of amateur dancers for a joint artistic activity over a period of several months. It encourages people to access the Forum via performative research and movement within its spaces, thereby approaching the Humboldt Forum from an unconventional perspective. As a participative artistic project at the intersection of contemporary dance and fine art, it works by utilizing the museum's spaces for a performative and architectural appropriation of rooms which will be both partially empty and partially filled with objects. The choreographic works will ultimately be performed throughout the entire Humboldt Forum.

### **Ethnologisches Museum and Museum für Asiatische Kunst**

From late summer 2021

With around 20,000 exhibits spread over 14,000 square metres on the second and third floors of the Humboldt Forum, the collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, which are of global significance, are presented in an overview of the world's art and cultures that spans epochs and continents. In late summer of 2021, part one of the collection will be opened: the west wing will feature the renowned boats and houses from Oceania, reconstructed Buddhist cult caves from the region around the Silk Road, the exhibition space dedicated to Japanese art, complete with walk-in teahouse, as well as parts of the Africa collection. At the end of 2021 and start of 2022, the east wing will also open. Highlights will include holdings from the central and southern Andes, the history of the Afro-Brazilian diaspora in the Amazon region, Khmer art, and the global diversity of Islam.

The exhibits and sound documents presented from the collection of the Ethnologisches Museum place the focus equally on material and immaterial heritage. The themes highlighted include the history of the collection, religious questions, contemporary art, and the significance of artisanal techniques, rituals, ceremonies and the perspectives of Indigenous communities. As part of this process, the museum will also critically engage with the legacy of colonialism and the role of Europe. The Museum für Asiatische Kunst will present art and artisan craftwork from the fifth millennium BCE through to the present day: East Asian painting, calligraphy and graphic art, lacquer art and ceramics, art and culture from the Silk Road, South Asian and South-East Asian, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sculptures as well as Indian painting from the Moghul era.

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