

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**20 January 2022**

## **Special *Terrible Beauty* concluding programme**

**With a discussion and film series, an events and outreach programme, as well as a symposium in collaboration with ICOM, our first major special exhibition programme drew around 80,000 visitors to *Terrible Beauty. Elephant – Human – Ivory*. On 22 and 23 January, the Humboldt Forum invites its visitors to a weekend of events to mark the closing of the exhibition – with the German premiere of Ai Weiwei’s VR project *OMNI*, and *Turning*, a discussion event with human rights and environmental activist Sônia Guajajara.**

To celebrate the success of the *Terrible Beauty. Elephant – Human – Ivory* programme, the Humboldt Forum invites you to a series of events taking place on 22 and 23 January 2022:

- **German premiere of [OMNI](#)**, a 360° film and Ai Weiwei’s first VR artwork:  
Saturday 10am-10pm, Sunday 10am-8pm
- **Discussion: [Turning](#)** part of the *ivory conversations* series, with human rights and environmental activist Sônia Guajajara (German, Portuguese): Sunday 4pm
- **Picture-Book Cinema: *Where big elephants would love to live!*** Sunday 3pm
- **[Overview tour](#)** (German): Saturday and Sunday, 11am
- **[Overview tour](#)** (English): Saturday and Sunday, 3pm
- **Sale:** the catalogue will be available in our two shops and online from [humboldtforum.org](http://humboldtforum.org) at a discounted price of €18.90

### **Special exhibition, discussion, film and educational programme: a look back at the *Terrible Beauty* programme**

The *Terrible Beauty* programme addresses one of the Humboldt Forum's core themes – colonialism and coloniality – focussing on the cultural significance of ivory, in conjunction with its natural history aspects, and the social and ecological consequences of its use. General Director Hartmut Dorgerloh: “*Terrible Beauty* exemplifies the mission of our institution, and its comprehensive programme of exhibition, films, discussions and educational events is also a good example of how we as a forum can illuminate the various perspectives of a topic. We are very pleased with its success, and will drive this mission forward in future programmes.”

The exhibition's global and epoch-spanning narrative, with more than 200 objects from museums including the British Museum in London, the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, the Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, Paris, and the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, paints a picture of the cultural history of ivory using selected exhibits which offer a wide range of perspectives: from the raw material and its processing to the symbol of the tusk and its colonial connotations, from ivory's influence on medicine and ideals of beauty to its role as a symbol of sophistication, from the elephant as hunted quarry to species to be protected, as an important connection in the cycle of nature, and as a carrier of meaning in religion, mythology and artistic contemplation. Interactive audio and hands-on stations offer vivid and tangible access to the theme, complementing the multiplicity of voices in the Forum by presenting statements from international experts across a variety of media.

### **Symposium: *Ivory – what now?* ‘Ivory objects require context’**

The preparation of the exhibition raised the question of whether – and how – ivory, as such a highly-charged biological raw material, a severed body-part of a highly developed, sensitive creature, can be presented in a museum at all. This was also recently the subject of the online symposium *Ivory – what now? Dealing with a controversial material*, which took place at the Humboldt Forum on 17 January in collaboration with ICOM Deutschland. Curators, restorers, natural and social scientists, conservationists and detectives from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Kenya, Canada and the USA came together to develop suggestions for future ways to work with collections and exhibitions, and in education. Their conclusion: “We need a holistic, responsible, transparent and trans-disciplinary approach to the collection, display and research of ivory.”

### **Film and discussion programme**

Around 20 animated, feature and documentary films from Europe, North America, Africa and Asia showcased the elephant's versatility as an actor: the diversity of its real and imagined abilities and culturally ascribed attributes – from classics and historical discoveries such as *Elephant Boy* to current productions from around the world, such as *Chandani and her Elephant*. Each screening began with a personal story: people from all around the world, telling the story of their particular relationship with the film.

The discussion series took place in collaboration with the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the conservation organisation IFAW, and other public voices, and focussed on the relationship between elephant, human and ivory as a model of western perspectives on nature, humans and culture. The education and outreach programme offered public tours, a guided audio and hands-on tour, and special tours and workshops for schools.

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

A richly illustrated publication addressing all the themes in the exhibition. Text and image contributions from international authors and artists pose questions about our responsibility towards the animal and to objects made from ivory, and about how we address the past.

One building, four partners: This diversity is founded on the collaboration of our partner institutions. The Humboldt Forum is a collaboration between the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss; the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz for collections from the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for the Humboldt Lab; and Kulturprojekte Berlin with the Stadtmuseum Berlin for the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition.

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

**Michael Mathis**, Press Officer  
+49 30 265 950-525, [michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org](mailto:michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org)

**Kathrin Luz**, Kathrin Luz Communication  
+49 171 3102472, [kl@luz-communication.de](mailto:kl@luz-communication.de)  
[humboldtforum.org/presse](http://humboldtforum.org/presse)