



**PRESS RELEASE**

**March 30, 2023**

**Exhibition and educational and event program**

**April 1 – November 26, 2023; *Día de los muertos*: November 1–5, 2023**

**Press conference: March 30, 2023, 12 p.m.**

**On view from April 1: *in\_finite. Living with Death*, a  
new special exhibition in the Humboldt Forum**

**The special exhibition *in\_finite. Living with Death* in the Humboldt Forum opens on April 1st. Staged as a drama in five acts, the exhibition looks at various aspects of dying and dealing with death, with its perspectives ranging from the individual and personal to the global. Along with the exhibition, the varied educational and event program kicks off as well. Highlights include the Easter concert of the Resident Music Collective and the *Día de los Muertos*.**

The ways people deal with dying, death, and mourning are as individual as they themselves. The Humboldt Forum Foundation addresses this challenging topic through *in\_finite. Living with Death*, a special exhibition and educational and event program that present polyphonic perspectives and ideas, different kinds of practical knowledge, and scientific findings on death and dying.

Hartmut Dorgerloh, General Director of the Humboldt Forum: “The certainty of death connects all human beings and yet remains one of the last great unknowns. With its program focus *in\_finite. Living with Death*, the Humboldt Forum addresses one of the grand, universal themes over the next eight months, offering visitors room to pause, immerse themselves in spaces of experience, engage in dialogue and take a stand.”

**The Exhibition**

How do we live with death? What is a good death? What will remain of us? Swiss curator Detlef Vögeli has conceived the exhibition as a drama in five acts: “The basic dramaturgical idea was to address visitors directly as mortal beings and actors. To create spaces as stages for the visitors to be confronted with different ideas and questions about dying and death that tend to remain hidden behind the curtain of everyday life.”

The design created by British stage designer Tom Piper plays with the metaphor of the theater and translates the drama into an atmospherically intense composition. Piper explains: “In the same way that Shakespeare tries to deal with mortality in *Hamlet*, we are here to encourage people to think about mortality. I think that this is the main point of the exhibition: not to be afraid of death, but to consider it as part of our life—as the theater of life.”

In collaboration with architect Alan Farlie, Piper developed stage environments incorporating videos, sounds, voices, and installations for the exhibition, which, in the interplay of these elements, become moments of intense spatial experience. Says Alan Farlie: “The exhibition focuses on the overall emotional experience. You share the space, you share the experience. Most exhibitions you go through on your own journey—you might have somebody with you but it’s still a very personal route. Whereas we tried to create some sort of movement: from one act to another, from one space to the next.”

On their tour of the exhibition, they encounter a wide range of concepts of death and burial and commemorative rituals that, through the interplay of videos, sounds, voices, installations, and experiences of space, turn into moments of intense confrontation. The exhibition presents perspectives from Berlin’s diverse society, practical knowledge of terminal caregivers from twelve countries, a non-religious and an Islamic corpse washing, as well as scientific approaches to the topic. The knowledge of the vulnerability and transience of all living things also raises ethical and moral questions. The exhibition thus extends the personal perspective to a global and planetary scale. It shows death from a neurological point of view, the unequal living and dying conditions in global society, the responsibility for the nameless dead—and that of humans for life itself, in the context of climate change and the extinction of species.

### **The educational programme**

The educational programme draws a line from individual, existential issues to societal questions. Based on the question “How do we live with death?,” adults and students from seventh grade can explore, discuss, and question the exhibition together whilst making connections to the Humboldt Forum’s permanent exhibitions and collections. The guided tours and workshops are designed to be dialogic and participatory. They were developed in cooperation with the Björn Schulz Foundation, which provides

professional support for severely-ill children and their families. Advanced training for educators and multipliers is offered as well.

### **Events**

Reflection on death in a global context – across genres, categories, and generations – is the focus of the programme of events. Voices from cultural and religious communities get their say, and experts share their (practical) knowledge of terminal care, burial practices, and memorial culture. On the weekends, consultation hours provide visitors with the opportunity to talk to a terminal caregiver, a pathologist, or a funeral speaker. Storytelling programmes for children and families as well as for adults focus on parting. A film programme foregrounds the Global South. The Resident Music Collective takes care of the musical part: over the Easter weekend, the ensemble will play contemporary pieces and pieces in contemporary interpretations on the topic of death. A highlight at the end of the exhibition is the Mexican festival of the dead, Día de los muertos, during which the Calaca Association, an organisation that has been active in Berlin for many years, invites everyone to the Humboldt Forum to enjoy music, performance, a family programme, and a decorated altar.

### **The publication**

A publication of the same name will accompany the exhibition. It documents the contributions to the exhibition, with essays and artistic photo series presenting complementary perspectives. The publication offers insights into very different experiences, ranging from the individual understanding of our personal and cultural view of death to current scientific and media scenarios of dying and extinction in the age of the Anthropocene. This publication includes contributions from Stephen Cave, Cristina Cattaneo, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Robin Wall Kimmerer et al.

### **in\_finite. Living with Death**

1 April – 26 November 2023. Día de los muertos: 1–5 November 2023

Press conference: 30 March 2023

Exhibition admission: 12 / 6 Euro

Information and tickets: [humboldtforum.org/un\\_endlich](https://humboldtforum.org/un_endlich)

**Press images:** [humboldtforum.org/presse](https://humboldtforum.org/presse)

The Humboldt Forum extends its gratitude to the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Leibniz-Institut für Evolutions- und Biodiversitätsforschung, and the Björn Schulz Stiftung.

**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)

**Andrea Brandis**, Press and Communications  
+49 30 265 950-237, [andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org](mailto:andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org)

Mirko Nowak, Head of Communications  
+49 30 265 950-236, [mirko.nowak@humboldtforum.org](mailto:mirko.nowak@humboldtforum.org)

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