



PRESS RELEASE

22 March 2024

Focus for the year 2024

13 April 2024: Public performance

17 May 2024 – 16 February 2025: Special exhibition

(Press conference: 15 May 2024, 11 am)

17–18/20/22–24/31 May 2024, 7 pm: theatre spectacular

Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic **Special exhibition and series of events in the Humboldt Forum**

Fifty years ago the Palace of the Republic was built on the site now occupied by the Humboldt Forum. This vanished building is one of the year's focuses for the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, which is dedicating the programme *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* to it. It centres on a large special exhibition, the theatre spectacular *Build Up! Tear Down!*, and a diverse series of events and educational offerings, including themed days, workshops, and virtual reality presentations. If you would like to learn more about the size and exact location of the Palace of the Republic, come to the performance taking place at the Humboldt Forum on 13 April 2024. The outline of the Palace of the Republic will be marked out on the ground for the event. The virtual discovery tour “Re-Set: The Palace of the Republic in Augmented Reality” will launch the same day. You can access it using your mobile phone by scanning a QR code.

The Palace of the Republic stood on the site of what is now Humboldt Forum until 2008. Up until 1990 it was the home of the People's Chamber and a prestige location projecting the power of the East German government, but it was also site of everyday culture with modern design, art, theatre, a discotheque, restaurants, and cafes. But the Palace had a longer life as part of the Federal Republic than it did in the GDR, and many people were thrilled by the interim cultural projects that took place in the gutted building in the early 2000s. The Bundestag finally voted in favour of demolition, however, which started in 2006. While some saw this as an act of emancipation, clearing away a building that was

the emblem of an illegitimate state, others felt the demolition served to erase their history and invalidate East Germany's achievements.

This year, fifty years after construction began on the Palace of the Republic and thirty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of the Humboldt Forum's focuses is the programme *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic*. It begins with an exploration of this ambiguous site, which for many also symbolizes the end of the GDR. It offers an opportunity for discussions and stories as well as a critical examination of the significance of sites such as these in creating a sense of identity. It also serves as a starting point for a discussion about political and social development and participation – for Berlin, Germany, and beyond.

17 May 2024 to 16 February 2025: special exhibition

Spread over 1,300 square metres and including some 300 objects, the exhibition *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* examines the past and present of the Palace. Many of these objects can be seen again for the first time since the building closed. Visitors can discover objects from and relating to the Palace, designs, models, posters and photographs, and audio and video interviews from the project "Memory Work at the Humboldt Forum", as well as interactive offerings.

The exhibition focuses on the building's various phases, from its planning and construction (1973–76), its use as a multipurpose political and cultural building in the GDR, and its significance as the home of the first freely elected People's Chamber to its interim usage as a cultural venue and its demolition by the German federal government, a process that was completed in 2008. Numerous artworks and furnishings from the Palace of the Republic enable visitors to visualize the ways in which the building was used, including fragments from the Glass Flower and Willi Sitte's painting *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag). At the centre of the exhibition are excerpts from around fifty interviews presenting the viewpoints of people who worked in the Palace, visited it, or deliberately sought to avoid it: we listen to prominent figures as well as people whose voices have previously gone unheard.

13 April 2024: Performance – Spatial Play: Sound and Steps at the Outline Marking of the Palace of the Republic

What were the dimensions of the Palace of the Republic? How shaky does the ground feel? What does dragging one's feet have to do with civil disobedience? On 13 April 2024 at 3 pm visitors can explore the Palace's outline paced out on the ground. For the opening, the sound and performance artist katrinem has developed an audio and walking experience. Together with her and twenty-four spatial performers, visitors can trace out the vestiges of the Palace.

From 13 April 2024: outdoors and digital – Re-Set: The Palace of the Republic in Augmented Reality

QR codes found along the outline recreate a virtual image of the Palace – just scan them with your mobile phone and discover the seven remarkable views in augmented reality: the east and west facades, the foyer, the espresso bar, the People's Chamber, and the Great Hall.

From 17 May 2024: the theatre spectacular *Build Up! Tear Down!*, a theatre presentation focusing on the Palace of the Republic with excerpts from Heiner Müller's *Der Bau* (The Construction Site) and *Franziska Linkerhand* by Brigitte Reimann

This theatrical journey through time focuses on the nearly thirty-year existence of this East German prestige building, bringing the history of the "People's Palace" to life. In a cooperative undertaking with the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts and the Hanns Eisler School of Music, a citizens' ensemble, contemporary witnesses, and choruses resurrect the building as part of this theatre happening and highlight the traces this vanished structure has left behind. The premiere is on 17 May 2023, and there will be a total of seven performances.

VR installation, events, guided tours, and workshops

Guided tours and workshops present the history and significance of the Palace of the Republic and invite visitors to speak with one another and share their thoughts. The focus is both on the construction, function, and use of the Palace at various points in time and on people's diverse memories of it. Tandem and curator-led guided tours offer unique insights and perspectives. Workshops for school classes and adults are centred on

analysing the interviews and engaging in creative writing in relation to the Palace of the Republic.

Book

The catalogue *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* examines the Palace from the perspective of current discussions across Germany dealing with the issues of representation, diversity, and participation. The book focuses on a range of themes: asbestos, selling out, construction sites, memory, the Glass Flower, palaces of culture, Marx and Engels, reconstruction, solidarity bazaars, the Soviet Union, the People's Chamber, Doubt, interim usage, and much more. Artistic positions, research, and experiential knowledge present readers with a number of new perspectives. The book features texts by a variety of authors, including Victoria Helene Bergemann, Aron Boks, Gesine Danckwart, Hanno Hochmuth, Dagmar Hovestädt, Zsófia Kelm, and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk.

History of the Site in the Humboldt Forum

Since 2014, the History of the Site department has been conducting research, cataloguing and digitizing film, television, and photographic material, researching and compiling objects and archival materials, and organising exhibitions and events as well as lectures and publications focusing on the Palace of the Republic. Twelve "trails" with objects or documents about the Palace of the Republic are permanently on display in the Humboldt Forum and can also be explored virtually using the Media Guide. The Palace of the Republic also plays a prominent role in the Video Panorama.

Information and tickets:

For the first time, the Humboldt Forum will offer early-bird tickets at a lower price of 9 euros and 4.50 euros reduced. This offer is valid until 16 May 2024. You can find out more at humboldtforum.org/hin-und-weg-der-palast-der-republik-ist-gegenwart.

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 the Stadtmuseum Berlin for the BERLIN GLOBAL exhibition.

PRESS CONTACTS

Michael Mathis, Spokesperson

+49 30 265 950-525, michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org

Hendrik von Boxberg, Projekt PR

+49 177 7379207, presse@von-boxberg.de

Andrea Brandis, Press Officer

+49 30 265 950-237, andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org

Mirko Nowak, Head of Communications

+49 30 265 950-520, mirko.nowak@humboldtforum.org
humboldtforum.org/en/press