

Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic

Special Exhibition and Programme of Events

Quotes

Claudia Roth, Minister of State for Culture and Media: “The former Palace of the Republic is just as inextricably linked to the eventful history of this site as the reconstructed Royal Palace is. The creation of the Humboldt Forum itself can be traced back to the decisions to demolish the Palace of the Republic and to reconstruct the Royal Palace, and we are still embroiled in the debate about all this today. Which is why it’s good and important that the Humboldt Forum is staging this exhibition and providing a forum to engage with the history of the site.”

Hartmut Dorgerloh, general director of the Humboldt Forum: “In terms of its history and symbolism, the Palace of the Republic is an issue that concerns all Germans. As the Stiftung Humboldt Forum, we feel uniquely responsible for it and for what people associate with it. In the many encounters and conversations we had in the years of intensive preparation for the 2024 focus *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic*, we discovered just how deeply people’s memories of the Palace and the sociopolitical changes of 1989/90 impact the present. Although the decision to demolish the Palace was made democratically, the discussion about it at the time was very controversial – and for some people the demolition was also traumatic. Our programme deals with all the issues and emotions associated with the Palace of the Republic. The divergent and sometimes controversial perspectives of people who witnessed events at the time provide a vital impetus, opening up new perspectives and stimulating debates that are relevant today: we at the Humboldt Forum feel it is our duty – one that we are keen to fulfil – to stage these debates. We look forward to the discourse that our exhibition provokes.”

Judith Prokasky, head of programming for *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic*: “Many people have worked together over the years to put together this programming focus. Disagreements, misunderstandings, and rejection have been as much par for the course as trust, creativity, surprising moments, laughter, and insight. My hope is that as the annual programme unfolds, there will be many more moments in which people meet

and open up to one another. The question of coming to terms with the period around the fall of the Wall, and of art and culture in the context of politics could not be more relevant today.”

Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, medic, president of the People’s Chamber and interim head of the East German state in 1990 – *Remembrance at the Humboldt Forum* project: “For me, the most important event is what happened on 23 August 1990 at around 2 am in the former Palace of the Republic on the site now occupied by the Humboldt Forum: the freely elected People’s Chamber of East Germany decided to reunify the country and approved East Germany’s accession to the Federal Republic on 3 October 1990!”

Viet Duc Nguyen, student of silicate technology in Freiburg (1975–1980) – *Remembrance at the Humboldt Forum* project and a “critical companion” on the *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* project: “The Palace of the Republic was an unmistakable landmark in the cityscape for decades. Despite its showcase function, it was always a building for everyone. That’s how I remember it. I think that if the Humboldt Forum can realize its potential in these two respects, everyone will benefit.”

Ron Zimmering, director of the theatre production *Bau auf! Bau ab!*: “My passion is bringing together different people, stories, art forms, and genres in a shared theatrical experience. I want to stage encounters! This is also at the heart of my work. And that’s what’s happening at the Humboldt Forum too, with about 100 Berliners bringing the Palace of the Republic back to life for a few hours at a time.”

Reinhard Alings, curator of the *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* exhibition: “A sky full of question marks? We are not proclaiming any truths in the exhibition: we’re well aware of how ambivalent people are about the subject and we’re much more interested in asking questions. What actually happened here, at this place of power and prestige that has always been so prominent and so controversial? The exhibition at the Humboldt Forum aims to provide a stimulus to get people to look back – without anger or fervour – over half a century, from the demolition of the Royal Palace to the demolition of the Palace of the Republic. The answers to the questions that arise from the many perspectives in this exhibition are for every individual to find for themselves.”

Anke Schnabel, curator of the *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* exhibition: “The Palace of the Republic is a opportunity for storytelling: personal, ambivalent, and contradictory memories are at the heart of this exhibition and connect the past with the present. Rooted in lived experiences on this site, it deals with the history of upheaval in a united Germany and ultimately with where we are today as a society. The exhibition invites you to listen, to engage with the perspectives of others, and to come to your own conclusions.”