

Press release

23 May 2025

Temporary exhibitions

Duration: starting 24 May 2025, admission free

Three New Exhibitions: Indigenous Perspectives, Art from Japan, and Perspectives on Conservation Projects

Three temporary exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum will offer visitors new insights into the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum and Museum für Asiatische Kunst. The exhibition *Restaurierung im Dialog* (Conservation in Dialogue) offers insights into the museums' conservation and restoration work, which often remains invisible to the public. The decision-making processes and the ethical aspects play a central role and are increasingly addressed in dialogue with representatives of the societies of origin. The Indigenous artist Feliciano Lana from Brazil tells the story of contact between Indigenous peoples and *white* people in his cycle of paintings *Die Geschichte der Weißen* (The Story of White People). His works open up new perspectives on colonialism and capitalism, some of them very personal. The works of Japanese artist Takehito Koganezawa revolve around perceptions of time and space, providing new, playful opportunities to examine the power of the imagination and aesthetic perception. All three exhibitions were conceived jointly by the Ethnologisches Museum, the Museum für Asiatische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss in cooperation with international partners.

Conservation in Dialogue

24 May 2025 – 1 June 2026, Room 301

Before the Humboldt Forum opened, thousands of exhibits from various regions of the world were restored. This work usually takes place behind the scenes and therefore often remains invisible to the public. But who actually decides which objects should be preserved and how? And which perspectives do international partners contribute? The exhibition offers insights into the work of conservation, from preliminary evaluation to

ethical considerations. This illuminates not only the conservation techniques themselves but also the associated cultural issues that must be taken into account.

The exhibition features five very different “objects” and cultural belongings: two crest poles from the northwestern coast of Canada, a small Chinese lacquered cabinet from the Qing dynasty, a 20th-century Mongolian shrine, and a ceremonial pipe of the Umoⁿhoⁿ from Nebraska. Each exhibit has its own story to tell – not only about its origins but also about the decisions that determined its current state and manner of presentation.

Take the Buddhist shrine from Inner Mongolia (China), which came to Berlin in 1932 as a result of an expedition led by Sven Hedin. Old photos clearly show that the arrangement of its contents repeatedly changed over the years, and individual elements once held in the shrine have now disappeared completely. The presentation we see today is the result of collaboration with partners – Buddhist monks, museum curators, and restorers – in Mongolia.

Another example shows how earlier restorations sometimes harmed an object’s cultural and spiritual significance. But also how, thanks to increasing collaborative work with partners, new approaches are being developed. The stem and head of a ceremonial pipe belonging to the Umoⁿhoⁿ were once glued together – a simple conservation measure from a Western point of view, but in the eyes of the Umoⁿhoⁿ it represents a serious violation. Traditionally, the pipe stem and the head are only joined together during a ceremony. At other times they must be kept separate. The exhibition presents the exchange with partners and proposed solutions for display, restoration, and storage.

The exhibition is accompanied by the educational project *Einsichten – Aussichten* (Insights – Prospects), in which pupils of the Carl-Friedrich-von-Siemens high school in Berlin-Spandau created four audio texts that enable visitors to experience the exhibits on display in completely new ways.

Feliciano Lana: The Story of *White People*

24 May 2025 – 1 June 2026, Room 302

The series of paintings illustrates the common origins of white and Indigenous people, the expulsion of the whites, and their return as soldiers, missionaries, and explorers. The watercolours done by Indigenous artist Feliciano Lana, who died in 2020, document the history of contact between Indigenous peoples and white people on the upper Rio Negro in the Brazilian Amazon. Lana's works present colonial history from the point of view of those who in Western portrayals appear merely as voiceless objects. In recurring motifs he weaves together past and present, thus emphasizing the enduring colonial legacy.

Feliciano Pimentel Lana (1937–2020), artist, storyteller, and kumu (healer) of the Desana people, was originally from the upper Rio Negro on the border between Brazil and Colombia. In the Western world he is regarded as one of the first Indigenous artists from the Amazon region. His artistic career began in the early 1970s, when he was invited by the Lithuanian-born Pater Casimiro Béksta to record the region's Indigenous culture. Originally, the idea was for Lana to take photographs and make audio recordings, but instead he decided to record his knowledge in painted images. Over the years he developed expertise in making the region's traditions and mythological universe visible. Shortly before his death he was commissioned by the Ethnologisches Museum to make the series of paintings on display here. Before that, no one had ever asked him about the story of white people.

In the exhibition Lana's paintings depicting events such as missionizing, the rubber boom, and the gold rush are accompanied by texts based on conversations with the artist. The close interweaving of words and images is an established feature of narrative traditions in the upper Rio Negro and is reflected in the video installation, in which other contemporary witnesses are given an opportunity to speak. Lana has influenced a new generation of Indigenous artists in Brazil, some of whose works also appear in this exhibition. They take up Lana's themes and are concerned with the collective memory of constant violence.

Takehito Koganezawa: One on Two, Two from One

24 May – 12 October 2025, Room 304

The artist Takehito Koganezawa works with a variety of media ranging from drawing to video, installations, and performance. His conceptual and experimental works, in which he brings these different media into a dialogue with one another, explore our perceptions of time and space. They seek to make the flow of time visible as moving pictures or to fathom the nature of emptiness, and thus deliberately aim to blank out meaning. The idea is to open up new and playful dimensions to viewers in which they can explore the power of the imagination as well as perception. *One on Two, Two from One* shows new acquisitions of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst as well as drawings and sculptures that the artist created specially for the exhibition.

Koganezawa's works have been shown in many solo and group exhibitions as well as at biennales and triennales all over the world. They are represented in important museums and collections of global contemporary art. Born in Tokyo in 1974, and once again resident there, his artistic home from 1999 to 2016 was Berlin, to which he has now returned for this exhibition.

The exhibition also includes works that he made during a residency in Berlin. Under the title *Exquisite Corpse*, Koganezawa invited students from the weißensee kunsthochschule berlin to a joint workshop. *Cadavre exquis*, or *Exquisite Corpse*, refers to a playful method designed to prompt unconscious and unplanned actions. It was invented in 1925/26 by a group of surrealist artists and has been used many times by other artists ever since. Koganezawa likewise often employs visual experiments in his work designed to bring about chance happenings. In the workshop the participants created new images as a group. In doing this, Koganezawa asked them to integrate their ideas about authorship and the art of collaboration.

The temporary exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum

Along with the special exhibitions on the ground floor, the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss also puts on temporary exhibitions in collaboration with the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin as well as partners from many regions of the world. The result of years of collaboration, they afford new and more profound insights into the museum's holdings as well as into various societies and their perspectives. The exhibitions address current issues, developments, and challenges in a global context. As Hartmut Dorgerloh, General Director of the Humboldt Forum, says, "With their transdisciplinary, collaborative, and often artistic approaches, the temporary exhibitions offer visitors new ways of accessing the topics the actors at the Humboldt Forum are concerned with." Following exhibitions devoted to the North American Omaha and Haida, the Indian Naga, issues raised by objects from Tanzania, looted art, Korean art, and artistic internationalism in the GDR, the three new exhibitions opening shortly will continue this successful collaboration.

Information on the exhibitions:

Conservation in Dialogue: humboldtforum.org/conservation-in-dialogue

Feliciano Lana: humboldtforum.org/feliciano-lana

Takehito Koganezawa: humboldtforum.org/takehito-koganezawa

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