

# **Humboldt Forum**

## **Press Kit**

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#### **Stiftung Humboldt Forum**

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# Introduction

Situated on a historic site adjacent to Berlin's world-famous Museum Island quarter and at the crossroads connecting the Brandenburg Gate and Alexanderplatz, the Humboldt Forum opened to the public in 2021, welcoming visitors to a landmark new public space in the heart of the city. In area covering over 40,000 square metres, the vibrant new centre for culture, science, exchange and debate features world-class collections and a diverse programme of exhibitions, discussions, performances and events, bringing together different cultures, perspectives and insights into some of the most important issues facing our world today.

The Humboldt Forum is inspired and informed by the spirit of Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, names synonymous worldwide with education, culture, science, and the value of nature in contemporary thinking. The centre represents a pioneering partnership between four experienced partners from the cultural and academic fields—the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation responsible for two of Berlin's great museums, the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art; Cultural Projects Berlin together with the City Museum Berlin; Humboldt University; and the Humboldt Forum Foundation.

# History of the site

**City district, Monastery, Palace, Parade Ground, Palace of the Republic, open space: Scarcely any other site in Berlin has experienced such a concentration of social, urban, political and cultural developments over the past 800 years as the site on which today's Humboldt Forum is situated. Numerous princes and politicians have worked and built or remodelled here, making their political claims visible.**

The Humboldt Forum is a new building on a special site. Its creation is closely connected with its 800-year history and the symbolic political charge of this place. Numerous debates about its future were conducted; they continue today with different focus points. So what makes a meadow on the Spree a special site? And how can this approximately 7 hectares of land between today's Lustgarten and Breite Straße have such significance that disputes never cease with regard to its design and use?

Questions that occupy the exhibitions on the history of the site. They commemorate important moments in the site's history and offer insights into a wide variety of architectural styles, uses and environments. The exhibits on display are not only witnesses from the past, but also cause for a constant examination of the history of this square - an important stimulus for the programme and profile of the Humboldt Forum.

## **One area, four exhibitions**

Four exhibitions in the Humboldt Forum recount in over 1500 square metres the history of this disputed site - from the city in the Middle Ages, the Dominican Monastery from around 1300 to 1536 through the Hohenzollern Castle that dominated the square for centuries to the Palace of the Republic and the archaeological excavations in the period before the Humboldt Forum was built. From new buildings and conversions, political visions and claims, living and working at this historic focal point.

The exhibitions on the history of the site are decentralised and can be seen all over the building: The video panorama in the Passage presents a concentrated overview spanning eight centuries and serves at the same time as an introduction and table of contents for the other exhibition areas. Using original artefacts, the Palace Cellar gives insight into the life and work of people behind the scenes of the former Berlin Palace. The sculpture in the Schlüterhof presents original façade figures of the baroque palace. Distributed throughout the entire building, from the cellar to the roof, on the staircases and in the restaurants, 35 so-called flashbacks highlight significant events in the site's history and the important uses to which it has been put.

## Impressions. The Humboldt Brothers

**Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt are the brothers after whom the Humboldt Forum is named. Their manner of interconnected thinking, their curiosity and their openness have been the guiding influence on the Forum's design. The exhibition Impressions. The Humboldt Brothers casts a spotlight on their work, the circumstances of the times in which they lived, and creates connections with the principles and contents of the Humboldt Forum.**

The life and work of Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt are multilayered and link to global questions that extend to our reality in the present. They connected public education, a new understanding of nature and an occupation with languages and cultures.

The perspectives on the brothers are diverse: Alexander (1769–1859), the globe-trotter, who turned his attention to local and global interactions, and viewed people and nature in context. Wilhelm (1767–1835), whose occupation with many languages is described as the basis of his comparative view of people and their cultures. The cosmopolitan thinking of the brothers, which was oriented in the philosophies of the Enlightenment and the modern sciences that arose around 1800, saw freedom as a right of all people. They were patrons of art and culture, combining an overriding concept of education with social participation. But there is also the view of the Humboldt Brothers as exponents of a universalism with a European stamp, as players in colonial contexts, and voices of a system of knowledge dominated by Europe.

The Humboldt brothers combine an exploratory approach to the world, the movement and observation in cultural and linguistic, colonial and imperial contexts, with stories of humanity and the social and political circumstances of their epoch and with perspectives for the future.

The exhibition *Impressions. The Humboldt Brothers* spot light on the life and times of the brothers. The title *Impressions* refers to the spatial representation of the exhibition: It is situated between the Passage, which, as the core of Franco Stella's design, creates a public urban space accessible by day and by night within the building complex, and the Stair Hall of the Humboldt Forum. As you cross the Passage, pictures and words appear on the window surfaces of the Stair Hall, from which an association game develops between the brothers and the contents and programme of the Humboldt Forum. The pictures on the inside of the window niches become theme fields and stories. The exhibition does not follow a biographical or linear narrative. Neither is it a grand narrative: rather, it forms open "windows" into history.

# After Nature: Inaugural Exhibition of the Humboldt Lab

## **The Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin takes the interactions between the climate crisis and society as the basis for its first exhibition in the Humboldt Forum**

The exhibition in the Humboldt Forum deals with the interactions between climate change and biodiversity loss as well as the global crises of democratic principles of order. It draws on a wide array of voices from scientific research in order to address the effects of man-made changes to the global environment. The title of the exhibition refers in equal measure to both the destruction of species and ecosystems and the idea of “learning from nature”. The exhibition on the first floor of the Humboldt Forum encompasses a 150-square-metre foyer and a main hall of 600 square metres. Admission to the Humboldt Lab is free.

### **Research questions and approaches to solutions from the world of science**

Scientists from various disciplines address their research questions and enter into a dialogue with the public on a kinetic wall. Historical objects from the collections of the HU and other universities elucidate answers to these topical questions from the history of science. Three academic archives are being revisited for the exhibition and, when viewed together, they enable a space for in-depth historical examination of the questions raised by the exhibition. Before entering the exhibition space, the public passes by an interactive projection of a school of fish. This projection points in equal measure to the sensitivity of ecosystems and biodiversity and the threats these face. The research approaches of the seven Berlin Clusters of Excellence – Math+, Matters of Activity, NeuroCure, Science of Intelligence, SCRIPTS, Temporal Communities and UniSysCat – shine a light on the diversity of research conducted by the Berlin University Alliance.

The design of the exhibition itself is reminiscent of a modern cabinet of curiosities, in which the objects are constantly entering into new relationships with one another via a movable hanging system. The exhibition will be continuously updated.

In addition to the Clusters of Excellence of the Berlin University Alliance – a consortium in which the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the Freie Universität Berlin, the Technische Universität Berlin and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin collaborate as part of the Excellence Strategy competition launched by the federal and state governments – numerous institutes and departments of the HU, together with their national and international partner organisations, as well as student research projects and initiatives are playing a part in shaping the content of the exhibition. The Joachim Herz Foundation is partner.

# **The Berlin Global Exhibition at the Humboldt Forum: Berlin in an interconnected world**

**On 4,000 square metres of floor space, the Stadtmuseum Berlin tells of the complex web of interrelationships between Berlin and the world. Immersive installations lead visitors into theme-based worlds that reflect the many sides of the city.**

BERLIN GLOBAL, a major permanent exhibition, offers visitors a unique insight into contemporary Berlin. BERLIN GLOBAL is a collaboration between Kulturprojekte Berlin and Stadtmuseum Berlin, with several Berlin communities actively involved to reflect the true character of the city. The exhibition explores the interrelationships between Berlin and the world through thematic displays incorporating a plethora of music, sounds, installations, art commissions, graphics, photographs and objects, that together create a powerful multi-layered experience.

Spread over an area of 4,000 square metres, BERLIN GLOBAL is the first of a new generation of city exhibitions. Saturated with interactive technology and expansive installations, BERLIN GLOBAL takes visitors on an exciting cultural journey through the city, with topics ranging from revolution and war to entertainment and fashion. Rather than a classical account of the city's history, BERLIN GLOBAL offers a contemporary take.

Installed at the heart of BERLIN GLOBAL is the 5-tonne 2.3 metre metal entrance door to the world-famous Tresor Techno Club, which was opened by musician, activist and clubber Dimitri Hegemann in 1992. The door was originally located in the steel vault of the Jewish-owned Wertheim department store, which had been dispossessed by the national socialists in the 1940s. The door was rescued after languishing for decades in the no-man's land at the militarised border of the city and was moved to BERLIN GLOBAL as the first object to be placed in the exhibition.

After the Wall fell in 1989, dozens of the city's abandoned industrial spaces, particularly in the ex-communist east, were converted into pop-up electronic music venues, attracting party people from east and west Germany and around the world. The most legendary of the early 1990s clubs was Tresor.

The exhibition is divided into seven themes, Revolution, Free Space, Boundaries, Entertainment, War, Fashion, Interconnection. Each section of the exhibition is highlighted by specially commissioned art installations reflecting the multi-cultural society of Berlin. communications and – together with the Stadtmuseum Berlin – displays which are universally accessible and inclusive.

# Ethnological Museum and Asian Art Museum

**The Ethnological Museum and Asian Art Museum are among the largest and most significant museums of their kinds in the world.**

With their relocation, the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum combine forces to offer a survey of the world's cultures and art, spanning the ages as well as the continents. Now, while maintaining their old home in Berlin's Dahlem district for scholarship and research, the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum, both run by Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums), have moved to a new permanent home at Humboldt Forum. More than 20,000 objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas are displayed over a total of 17,000 square metres. Some objects are on temporary display and will occasionally rotate with others from the collection.

The installation provides the space and flexibility to show the two museums' collections in a new way, drawing on both collections to tell the story of humanity, and focusing as much on the intangible aspects of cultural legacy as on the artefacts themselves. Themes running through the displays include ritual, issues around religion, the images that indigenous societies present of themselves, the importance of craftsmanship, and the relationship of tradition to contemporary art.

Alongside the physical objects are sound recordings from the Berlin Phonogram Archive. This unique collection of ethnomusicological recordings dates back to 1900 and is one of the best collections of ethnomusicological recordings in the world. Offering a critical examination of European colonialism, the displays give voice to colonised people's points of view and relate the artefacts to contemporary social issues. They focus on the history of the collections and highlight new research findings.

As well as the permanent displays, there is space within the galleries for temporary exhibitions. These exhibitions respond to current, often critical, issues. Drawing on the expertise of curators from a variety of scientific, ethnological, artistic and educational fields, they will be designed in close cooperation with representatives from societies and communities whose histories and identities are interwoven with the exhibited objects. Around these exhibitions will be educational activities and public programmes encouraging further enquiry.

## Public Programmes

At the centre of Humboldt Forum's activity is its commitment to encouraging discussion and debate around the topics presented in its exhibitions, as well as acting as a meeting place for visitors and as a space to present special events.

Throughout the year, an extensive public programme takes place across the Humboldt Forum – from art installations and projections to guided tours, talks and lectures to artistic interventions, dance and film.

These have included an open-air festival with pop-up architecture and concerts, a film and discussion series linked to the *Terrible Beauty* exhibition, and cultural education programmes for visitors of all ages in the large-scale workshop spaces.

During the building's inaugural year, the Humboldt Forum has hosted almost 40 Berlin dance artists in residence in *Moving the Forum*. Using their bodies, the dancers positioned themselves not only in the architecture, but also to history and the content of the exhibitions.



# Food and Retail

Several gastronomic offerings are available at the Humboldt Forum.

## **LEBENSWELTEN BISTRO**

*Ground Floor, Passage*

Open all day, the Lebenswelten team works in an ecologically sustainable way, and prides itself on its diverse and tasty cuisine with a focus on Berlin classics and a vegetarian bowl counter. Vegetarian and vegan dishes are available along with burgers, schnitzel and meatballs.

## **RESTAURANT & DELI & Wilhelm Alexander**

Ground Floor, Schlüterhof

At the Deli Alexander, guests can experience the “Bread & Bowls” concept on seating designed to accommodate approx. 110 diners indoors and approx. 200 outdoors. The Restaurant Wilhelm focuses on high-quality German-French à la carte cuisine. The regularly changing dishes are also based on various exhibitions in the museum itself.

## **FORUM CAFÉ**

*Stair Hall First Floor*

The Forum Café offers a selection of sweet and savoury dishes, coffee and tea specialities as well as soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

## **BERLIN CAFÉ**

Berlin Global First Floor

The Berlin Café offers a selection of sweet and savoury dishes, coffee and tea specialities as well as soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

### **SHOP AT PORTAL 3**

*Ground Floor, Portal 3*

The Shop at Portal 3 offers select coffee, tea and confectionery from many different countries alongside high-quality publications linked to current exhibitions. Visitors can try them at a **tasting station** before buying.

### **RESTAURANT BARET**

*Rooftop Terrace, via elevator Stair Hall*

During the day, the Baret Café offers small lunches, coffee and original cakes, and in the evening, modern, unpretentious fine dining with an expanded menu. A variety of carefully selected regional ingredients are combined with fish, meat or vegetarian/vegan to create ever-changing interpretations.

### **HUMBOLDT FORUM SHOP**

The gift shop offers a wide variety of books, souvenirs and accessories to complement the exhibitions, displays and ideas found in the Humboldt Forum. A short guide to the Humboldt Forum and other in-house publications are also available to buy.

The products available in the shop range from classical items to design products and artisanal objects with a regional or global theme. In addition to the Humboldt Forum's own publications and those of its partners, the shop offers a wide range of books, including non-fiction, illustrated books, children's books and current fiction relating to exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum.

## Leadership Biographies

### **Hartmut Dorgerloh**

#### **General Director of Stiftung Humboldt Forum (Humboldt Forum Foundation)**

The art historian, curator of monuments and cultural manager Prof. Dr. Hartmut Dorgerloh is general director and chief executive officer of the Stiftung Humboldt Forum. After senior roles in the Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur in the state of Brandenburg and as the founding director of the Haus der Brandenburgisch-Preußischen Geschichte in Potsdam, he was general director of the Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg from 2002 to 2018. Since 2004 he has lectured as an honorary professor at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

### **Sabine Kunst**

#### **President of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Humboldt University of Berlin)**

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. Sabine Kunst has been President of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin from 2016 to 2021. Previously, Kunst was Minister for Science, Research and Culture (MWFK) in Brandenburg, starting in February 2011, and before that she was President of the University of Potsdam. In 2010 – 2011, Sabine Kunst was the first female President of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the largest funding organisation for the worldwide exchange of researchers and students. Her international engagement as a researcher and university teacher has taken her to a number of countries, including Mexico, South Africa, Bolivia and Peru for research visits and development cooperation. In 2010, she was named University Manager of the Year. In 2013, she received an honorary doctorate in Berlin from the American Jewish University Los Angeles.

### **Paul Spies**

#### **Chief Curator of the Federal State of Berlin in the Humboldt Forum**

Since February 2016, Paul Spies has been Director of the Stadtmuseum Berlin (City Museum Berlin) and Chief Curator of the Federal State of Berlin in the Humboldt Forum. Born in Amsterdam, he co-founded the art history firm D'Arts after graduation, where he remained for 21 years. He was Director of the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum Willet-Holthuysen from 2009 – 2015. The art historian and archaeologist is one of the leading thinkers in the international discussion about the future of city museums.

**Hermann Parzinger**

**President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation**

Hermann Parzinger studied Pre- and Early History, Medieval History and Provincial Roman Archaeology. From 2003 to 2008 he was President of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), since 2008 he has been President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.

**Lars-Christian Koch**

**Director for the Collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums) in the Humboldt Forum**

The music ethnologist and ethnologist Prof. Dr. Lars-Christian Koch is in charge of the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum). From 2003 to 2018 he was head of the department for media and music ethnology, visual anthropology and the phonogramme archive at the Ethnological Museum of the Berlin State Museums. He is also an associate professor of music ethnology at the Universität zu Köln and honorary professor at the Universität der Künste in Berlin.

## Humboldt Forum Practical Info

<b>Address</b>	Humboldt Forum Schlossplatz 10178 Berlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.humboldtforum.org">www.humboldtforum.org</a>
<b>Opening hours</b>	Mon, Wed, Thu, Sun 10am–8pm Fri, Sat 10am–10pm Tue closed
<b>Booking</b>	Due to COVID-19, tickets must be booked in advance to visit an exhibition. Tickets can be booked online or via <a href="tel:+4930992118989">+49 30 99 211 89 89</a> (every day 10am–6pm CET).
<b>Admission</b>	Visiting the Humboldt Forum, there is free admission to the Ethnological Museum and Asian Art Museum, Humboldt Lab, and the permanent displays – <i>History of the Site</i> and <i>Impressions: The Humboldt Brothers</i> . An admission fee will be charged for special exhibitions, and for BERLIN GLOBAL (7 euros). Concessionary rates and free entry are available for select visitors. For more information, visit: <a href="http://www.humboldtforum.org/en/visit/admission-and-tickets/">www.humboldtforum.org/en/visit/admission-and-tickets/</a>