



PRESS RELEASE

15 May 2024

The Humboldt Forum Focus for 2024

17 May 2024 – 16 February 2025: Special exhibition (opening on 16 May at 6 pm)

€12/6. Early Bird Tickets available until 16 May: €9/4.50

Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic

Special Exhibition and Programme of Events

The Palace of the Republic was built 50 years ago on the site where the Humboldt Forum is located today. The special exhibition *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* casts a light on the history of the Palace, from its initial planning as an element in the urban fabric through its various uses over time to the Schlossplatz debate and its eventual demolition. The exhibition revolves around interviews from the “Remembrance at the Humboldt Forum” project – a mix of prominent figures and people whose stories have not been heard before. The history of the Palace becomes part of the present through personal memories, special objects, and a look at political and social developments. The exhibition forms part of the 2024 programme of the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, which focuses on the Palace of the Republic. To accompany it, there is a varied line-up of events, guided tours, the theatre production *Bau auf! Bau ab!* by Ron Zimmering starting on 17 May, themed days featuring a performative reading by and with Corinna Harfouch, workshops, and an artistic Virtual Reality installation.

For thirty years, the Palace of the Republic was a showcase in the centre of Berlin. From 1976 to 1990, it was the seat of the People’s Chamber and a source of prestige for East Germany, but it also housed everyday culture – with modern design, art, theatre, a discotheque, restaurants, and cafés. In reality, the Palace spent more of its life in a reunited Germany than it did behind the Iron Curtain, and many people have fond memories of the interim cultural use to which the gutted building was put in the early 2000s. However, in 2006 the Bundestag passed a resolution to tear it down. While some were happy to see the end of a building that represented the unconstitutional East German state, others saw it as an erasure of history and the invalidation of East German achievements.

Today, the site is occupied by the Humboldt Forum. Yet, for many people, the Palace is still very much alive in their memories. The exhibition and accompanying programme of events invite visitors to explore all the different memories of the Palace. It also looks at why the Palace of the Republic was demolished and the Humboldt Forum built in its place as a replica of the Baroque royal palace – on top of the concrete foundations of the East German Palace, which were left intact.

The special exhibition

Featuring some 300 exhibits, and extending across 1,300 m², the exhibition looks at the Palace's past and present: objects from and relating to the Palace, designs, models, posters, and photographs – among them fragments of the Glass Flower, Willi Sitte's painting *The Red Flag*, and the lectern from the People's Chamber. Most of the exhibits come from private collections and are on public display for the first time. A further 80 objects belong to the Stiftung Humboldt Forum collection, which took over many of the Palace's interior furnishings from the Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA) in 2019. The collection has since grown, mostly thanks to donations.

At the heart of the exhibition are excerpts from some 50 audio and video interviews from the "Remembrance at the Humboldt Forum" project showing the perspectives of different people who worked in the Palace, visited it, or kept well away. We hear all sorts of voices, ranging from prominent figures to people whose stories have never been told. Their accounts, emotions, and interpretations attest to the vast spectrum of memories that the Palace elicits. Tobias Kruse, a photographer from the Ostkreuz agency, took portraits of the interviewees. Exhibits of private memorabilia from the Palace reveal, in each case, a deeply subjective take on it.

Workshops, events, guided tours, and workshops

A wide range of thematic events and educational programmes await visitors over the course of the year. Performances, films, theatre productions, concerts, guided tours, workshops, VR, and round-table discussions provide a range of opportunities to get to know the many facets of the Palace of the Republic. The themed weekend *Endless Palace* on 15/16 June places memories in the foreground and includes a performative reading of

Heiner Müller – Quartett: Material with Corinna Harfouch, Oscar Olivo, and others. The Transform Yourselves! days (3–6 October) focus on the period post 1989.

Publication

The publication *Blown Away: The Palace of the Republic* positions the Palace within contemporary German debates on representation, diversity, and participation. The book deals with aspects such as asbestos, selling out, building sites, memory, the Glass Flower, cultural palaces, Marx & Engels, reconstruction, “solidarity bazaars”, the Soviet Union, the Stasi, the People’s Chamber, “doubt”, interim usage, and much more. It opens up new perspectives through artistic positions, research, and personal experience and features texts by the likes of Victoria Helene Bergemann, Aron Boks, Gesine Danckwart, Hanno Hochmuth, Dagmar Hovestädt, Zsófia Kelm, and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk.

History of the Site at the Humboldt Forum

Since the beginning of 2014, the Stiftung Humboldt Forum’s focus on the History of the Site has initiated research, indexed and digitized film, television, and photographic material, studied and collected objects and archival materials, and created exhibitions, events, talks and publications on the Palace of the Republic. Twelve “Flashbacks” featuring objects and documents relating to the Palace are permanently installed in the Humboldt Forum and can be explored virtually in the media guide. The Palace also features prominently in the video panorama.

Information and tickets:

Tickets: €12/6

humboldtforum.org/hin-und-weg-der-palast-der-republik-ist-gegenwart

Press photos: humboldtforum.org/presse

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