

PRESS RELEASE
27 November 2024

Exhibition and Events Programme

The exhibition runs from 29 November 2024, free of charge

Opening for invited guests: 28 November 2024, from 6.30 pm in Hall 1

Registration for members of the media: presse@humboldtforum.org

Singeli Label Night: 30 November 2024, 7 pm

European premiere of *Frozen Power*. Guest performance by MUDA Africa from Dar es Salaam

5–8 December 2024, 7 pm

Histories of Tanzania

The special exhibition *Histories of Tanzania* illuminates the chequered histories of the territory of modern-day Tanzania. Curators from Dar es Salaam, Songea, and Berlin have developed the exhibition collaboratively, in conversation with representatives of communities in Tanzania. The exhibition presents their different perspectives and stories, dealing, in particular, with the violence of German colonial rule and its consequences. It also presents the artistic positions of East African artists and shows short films by school students from Berlin and Dar es Salaam, which investigate traces of colonialism in their respective cities. A diverse programme of events accompanies the exhibition, featuring artists from the fields of film, dance, photography, media art, and music. The highlight here is the European premiere of *Frozen Power*, the new work by Tanzanian dance company MUDA Africa.

The area covered by modern-day Tanzania is one of the earth's oldest inhabited regions. Its geographical location on the Indian Ocean meant that the societies there were involved early on in interregional trade networks. Under German colonial rule, from 1884 to 1919, Tanzania was known as "German East Africa" and thereafter, until independence in 1961, it was ruled by the British under the name of "Tanganyika". The consequences of colonial oppression, exploitation, and violence can still be felt today.

During this period, thousands of cultural belongings were brought to Germany. In Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) alone there are more than 10,000 "objects" from the territory of modern-day Tanzania.

The exhibition

The exhibition *Histories of Tanzania* tells the stories of the societies and people who inhabited the territory of present-day Tanzania, presenting an array of multifaceted accounts that reach far back into the past. It also focuses on the cultural belongings on display in the exhibition and not only examines their origin and significance but also asks questions about the histories and contexts relating to these objects that have not been documented in the museum archive. The period of colonial oppression and exploitation is explored in particular detail, with critical scrutiny applied to colonial narratives and racist attributions. We seek to uncover who is writing whose history and why.

The exhibition was developed collaboratively: curators from Dar es Salaam, Songea, and Berlin as well as representatives of communities in Tanzania have been given the opportunity to present their perspectives in texts and filmed interviews. Works by East African artists offer a critical examination of the colonial gaze. In the exhibition design these contributions are presented alongside Tanzanian cultural belongings within structures made of teak and bamboo that protect the "objects" and provide an aesthetic setting that appeals to the senses.

The Minister of State for Culture and the Media, Claudia Roth: "The exhibition *Histories of Tanzania* testifies to the highly successful cooperation between the Tanzanian-German curatorial team and the representatives of communities in Tanzania. Moreover, it impressively conveys the perspectives of people in modern-day Tanzania. The use of cultural belongings, in particular, takes us on a journey through Tanzanian history. I am convinced that in doing so, the exhibition provides an important contribution to the critical examination of our colonial heritage."

Hartmut Dorgerloh, General Director of the Humboldt Forum: "In this exhibition, visitors can truly experience the Humboldt Forum as a venue that impressively presents an international diversity of voices. Resulting from years of collaboration between curators here and their colleagues in Tanzania, the exhibition combines curatorial and artistic approaches with the viewpoints of representatives from Tanzanian communities, alongside an array of empirical knowledge, ultimately creating (hi)stories that are told from multiple perspectives. Not only does it reflect the Humboldt Forum's mission, it also provides impetus for our future work; indeed, my sincere hope is that it will inspire

innovative processes that make it possible – in conjunction with our visitors – to open up fresh ways of looking at the past, present, and future of Germany’s colonial past.”

Noel Lwoga, Director of the National Museum of Tanzania: “We, the National Museum of Tanzania, have been privileged to play a central role in the preparation of this exhibition - from the provenance research that laid the foundation for the interpretation of collections, to the conceptualization of the exhibition, and supporting the joint curatorial team throughout the deep fieldwork journey. In its making, the National Museum of Tanzania and the Tanzanian community groups provided invaluable historical and cultural insights, ensuring that the narrative authentically represents the Tanzanian people, heritage, and identity.”

Hermann Parzinger, President of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz: “For well over ten years we have been working with our Tanzanian partners to find a common approach for dealing with the history of our Tanzania collection. Some of the objects are inextricably linked to the former reign of violence, which makes it all the more important that this impressive exhibition is the product of a truly groundbreaking form of collaboration. I hope it not only attracts a great number of visitors but also sparks debates about Europe and Africa, about the past, about responsibility – and about the future that we share in this, our only world. That is the mission of the Humboldt Forum.”

Artistic positions in the exhibition

Works by East African artists critically examine the colonial gaze. In *Context Not Available*, Charity Atukunda, Liz Kobusinge, and Gloria Kiconco explore the lasting impact of colonial photography from East Africa.

Artist Amani Abeid tells the stories of four instances of cultural belongings in four comic-strip accounts. The comics are designed as A4 blocks: visitors are invited to take individual pages home with them.

Teams led by film-makers Nicholas Calvin Mwakatobe and Tara followed the process of developing the exhibition, which features numerous photographs of the places the cultural belongings originated from and interviews with representatives from Tanzania.

The *City Research* student project

An integral component of the exhibition is the international schools project *City Research*. Two groups of school students – one in Berlin, one in Dar es Salaam – set out to explore

their respective cities to examine the traces of colonialism still discernible today. The exhibition showcases the short films that they produced, which focused on buildings, street names, and public squares.

Guided tour, workshop, and brochure in simple language

The guided tour of the exhibition provides insights into the origin stories of the items on display, examines questions of restitution, and sheds light on how museums are now dealing with cultural belongings. The tour includes a look at current debates, e.g. on politics after Tanzanian independence or the renaming of streets with names dating to the colonial era.

The workshop *(World) Images: Reading Colonial Photography* focuses on the colonial period in former German East Africa as a means of engaging with historical colonial photography. Participants will make zines (folded magazines) that will feature as part of a growing installation in the exhibition.

A 50-page brochure produced in simple language makes the exhibition accessible to visitors with learning difficulties. It presents a selection of the exhibition texts in simple language and copious visual material.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the National Museum of Tanzania, the Ethnologisches Museum, and the Zentralarchiv (Central Archive) of the Staatliche Museen Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss.

Events on the opening weekend

A diverse programme of events accompanies the exhibition, with a focus on the opening weekend. Films, dance performances, communal eating, photography and VR presentations, concerts, and workshops on the East African game of bao present contemporary artistic positions from Tanzania and the Tanzanian diaspora. The Tanzanian artists reflect critically on the long shadows cast by the colonial era and formulate visions of the future that transcend colonial narratives. Audiences will gain insights into the current debates, aesthetics, and strategies of cultural (re)appropriation

and get a taste of the dynamic, young, burgeoning cultural scene in Dar es Salaam, one of the world's fastest-growing metropolises.

Selected highlights

On 30 November the legendary Dar es Salaam record label **SISSO Records** presents a **Singeli Label Night** with live acts from the likes of **Jay Mita**, **Kadilida**, and **Nana & Zai**. Singeli is the sound of Dar es Salaam's youth – a hybrid of traditional Tanzanian musical genres, from Taraab to Ngoma, mixed with electro beats and pitched up to 300 bpm. Ecstatic, subversive dance music made for local communities that is as frenetic and eclectic as the urban landscape of Dar es Salaam.

In a **music lecture** on 30 November and 1 December, the legendary **John Kitime**, who has been an avid chronicler of Tanzanian music culture for more than 50 years, will take the audience through the histories of Tanzania, bringing them to life through music. He will play hits and rare treasures from his unique archive and recount the stories behind the record covers, demo tapes, and vinyl rarities – from the years when the independence struggle was raging and the formative period of African socialism (*Ujamaa*) to the present day. The popular musician and radio host tirelessly travels the country to catalogue and digitise recordings that were presumed lost and make them available to the public again.

The **DAR Foto Festival** will be held in the Humboldt Forum in a pop-up format throughout the opening weekend. Five young photographers were commissioned by the festival to explore the theme of “coexistence” and look into questions of historical memory, diversity, and identity in Tanzania today.

Another highlight of the opening programme is *Frozen Power*, the European premiere of the most recent piece by Tanzanian dance company **MUDA Africa**, staged every evening at 7 pm from 5 to 8 December 2024. Mixing contemporary dance and theatre, choreographer **Ian Mwaizunga** explores female empowerment and the magic of reimagining history. Five dancers and a live musician tell the story of a female ruler who is beset by colonial occupation and local intrigues and has to fight to hold on to power.

The exhibition is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

Histories of Tanzania

Temporary exhibition, from 29 November 2024, rooms 212 and 211 (2nd floor)

Free admission

Information on the exhibition and the educational and events programme:

humboldtforum.org/geschichten-tansanias

Press Images can be downloaded at humboldtforum.org/en/press.

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