



Greeting

The Humboldt Lab Dahlem was a project of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) in cooperation with the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). It developed new forms of presenting artefacts of the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum) of the Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin) in Dahlem for the planned Humboldt-Forum in Berlin-Mitte. The experiment began with the question of how objects accommodated in a museum can open up new perspectives on our globalized present. In its search for solutions, the Humboldt Lab Dahlem therefore collaborated with scholars, custodians, curators, and artists. The results were regularly presented in so-called “Probebühnen” during the opening hours of the museum. In this manner, the Humboldt Lab Dahlem provided stimuli for dealing with the current challenges of presentation and mediation that are also posed to other museums in Germany and Europe.

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24h Dahlem / Teaser

Human existence manifests itself in ways of life and how they are passed on in objects and thoughts. In this sense, we have two fantastic, albeit structurally totally different, archives at our disposal with the street and the museum. The film installation “24h Dahlem” by the artist Clara Jo and the musician Robert Lippok sets these archives in a productive relationship to each other: Images from the collections in Dahlem are combined with sounds from the TV documentary “24h Berlin.” The three parts of the installation – “Night,” “Day,” and “Future” – link the everyday life and longings of Berliners with the daily activities at the Museen Dahlem and the expectations associated with the construction of the Humboldt-Forum in Berlin-Mitte. The result is an emphatic, transdisciplinary essay on a dissolving and an emerging venue housing the lively collections.

24h Dahlem / Project Description

Testing Contemporariness

by Martin Heller

The basic idea behind the “Tanz der Archive (Dance of Archives)” project which led to the film installation “24h Dahlem” was to let the city of Berlin and its museums in Dahlem enter into an unusual dialog. The municipal archives to be linked were quite different: On the one hand, the collections of the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum – a huge stock of non-European artifacts located in Berlin due to various political and cultural constellations and activities. On the other, the archive of the TV production “24h Berlin – A Day in the Life,” which attracted great attention in 2009. The 24-hour documentation produced by the broadcasters arte and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg portrays a day in Berlin in images shot by 80 professional crews as well as amateurs. These images are publically accessible in the online archive of the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen (www.first-we-take-berlin.de), comprising 11,000 videos clips of raw material.

These archives are comparable in that human existence manifests itself in both. Tangible in narratives and



rituals, determined by love and pain, and connected by people residing in Berlin. For, of course, Berliners play the leading part in “24h Berlin,” just as they make up a substantial portion of the museum-goers in Dahlem, who with each visit bring along their own experiences of life, urban perceptions and personal expectations.

Based on this, the Humboldt Lab Dahlem and the Deutsche Kinemathek organized a two-stage concept competition in spring of 2013. From the 22 submitted concept drafts, three proposals were shortlisted. In the end, the Berlin-based American artist Clara Jo was commissioned to realize her project, “24h Dahlem,” that sought to apply the 24-hour formula to Dahlem. Clara Jo was interested in both the daily routines of the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum and the major changes that they are undergoing.

Night, Day, Future

As a structure, the filmmaker suggested presenting the 24 hours of a day in Dahlem in three parts. Instead of the expectable division into three times eight hours, a dramaturgically more convincing and sophisticated constellation emerged. Part 1 was to be dedicated to the night in Dahlem, Part 2 to the day, and Part 3 to the future – with a spectacular view of the construction site of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin Mitte.

To cope with the entire project in a creative and economical way, a stepwise realization became necessary. The three parts of “24h Dahlem” were therefore produced one after the other and presented at different times, all in the frame of Probebühne 3, but in spatially separated installations.

But what did the dance consist of? How did the city and the museums get together? The equally surprising and convincing solution resulted from the artist’s collaboration with the musician Robert Lippok, who first searched the online archive of the Kinemathek and then the collections in Dahlem for suitable sounds and acoustic documents. He succeeded in creating a special and, despite all complexity, comprehensible web of references between the video and audio track for each of the three parts. This resulted in something novel: a transdisciplinary essay on this location of the collections in Dahlem, which is on the verge of being closed down and then relocated to the Humboldt-Forum.

This principle already becomes evident in Part 1, “Night,” which shows a guard on his nightly round through the museum. Spectators follow him through the exhibition spaces and depots, experiencing the Ethnological Museum in a passive state that has little to do with the actualities of the museum, but a lot with the directing of the nightly inspector. His inspection lamp at times makes grotesque discoveries, while the room lighting eliminates all differences between day and night. Lippok plays around these images with diverse recordings of nightlife in Berlin drawn from the online archive, which together with the impressions from the museum lead to ever new associations. Someone gives an account of his nightshift, while elsewhere people are partying; prayers can be heard as well as disco basses.

Part 2, “Day,” focuses on unexpectedly cryptic, everyday working processes in the museum. The filmmaker observed two members of the museum staff with her camera – Ulrike Folie in the Visual Anthropology Archive and Albrecht Wiedmann in the Phonogram Archive – and edited the shots in parallel. Ethnological films are being viewed and catalogued; Clara Jo edits sequences of these films and historical material going back to the founder of the museum, Adolf Bastian, between her own shots. With the wax cylinders, in turn, a medium is depicted that radiates a sensually attractive foreignness. This almost poetic flow of images is accompanied by wax cylinder recordings from East Africa from 1930 and by sounds that Robert Lippok produced with instruments from the ethno-musicological collection – in a literally tentative exploration of as yet unknown possibilities.

Part 3 is different again: In “Future,” the city is shown for the first time with the construction site of the Humboldt Forum in the center of Berlin. Of course, the film can only allude to the building under construction. In a spectacular choreography, it fantasizes about the Palace and simultaneously shows work being conducted in the Palace Workshop, where historicizing facade elements are manufactured. The substance of what is to be realized with the Humboldt-Forum cannot be shown; the future remains a promise.

A Telling Speechlessness

The plan was to set the images of “Future” to excerpts of interviews held by Clara Jo with staff members in Dahlem. However, a strange imbalance between words and images arose during the realization, so that the commentary was omitted: a perhaps telling speechlessness. Instead, one can again hear urban sounds from the online archive of “24h Berlin” and audio tracks of non-European musical instruments.



The films by Clara Jo and Robert Lippok extract moments of great intensity from the institution of the museum and the exhibitions in Dahlem, where they were installed. No documentary commission and no didactics are at play. Artistic freedom, stepwise testing, and the assurance that one is allowed to fail, if that should be the case, allow results that are convincing precisely due to this openness.

Contemporaneity is one of the main concerns of the exhibitions in the future Humboldt-Forum. Contemporaneity is not just the topicality of contents, but the complex result of emotions, language, stances, and approaches. "24h Dahlem" conveys a sense of what this could entail.

Martin Heller is a member of the direction of the Humboldt Lab Dahlem and responsible for content planning for the Humboldt-Forum.

24h Dahlem / Positions

"I wanted to expose this feeling of uncertainty"

Discovering Dahlem, creating parallel worlds and the confusion of seeing oneself represented as "the Other": The artist Clara Jo and the musician Robert Lippok on their three-part film installation "24h Dahlem."
Interview: Christiane Kühl

Clara Jo, you are an American of Korean descent and have been living in Berlin for four years. What did you find attractive about dealing with the collections in Dahlem?

Clara Jo: When I first visited the Ethnological Museum in Dahlem one and a half years ago, I knew immediately that this was where I would like to film. I was completely unfamiliar with the institution and wanted to understand it and its history. I know that the basic idea of the museum was for people to view other places and cultures in order to understand themselves. But when I visited the museum in Dahlem, I suddenly saw myself being represented as the Other. That was a weird perspective shift, and I wanted to understand that perspective. That's what I found attractive in the work.

Robert Lippok, you were born in Berlin. Do you remember the first time you visited the Ethnological Museum?

Robert Lippok: It was shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in the early 1990s. I was shocked by the beauty of the collection. Especially the room with the boats – I had never seen anything like it. And this strange corner of Berlin called Dahlem – that also had something to do with "discovering" for me. Dahlem, too, was something foreign and unknown.

Humboldt Lab's call for proposals sought a concept linking the museum archive in Dahlem with the archive of the television film "24h Berlin" shot in 2008. Film implies moving images, while a museum archive appears rather static. Interestingly, you decided not to use any images from "24h Berlin" in your project, but only the audio track. Conversely, you depicted the museum in constant motion already in the first part of "24h Dahlem," with a camera following a guard on his inspection tour. How did you come up with this concept?

Jo: The decision was made on a practical level. I just had the feeling that the TV image material would not fit with what I wanted to shoot. That's why I opted for the audio level and used it more like a parallel story. Also, considering Robert's experience, I thought it would be a perfect fit.

Lippok: In 2008, I and my band To Rococo Rot did a recording with of Walter Ruttmann's "Weekend," a radio play from 1930, for the Bayerischer Rundfunk. We did an updated version and walked through Berlin with recording devices to capture the sound of a present-day weekend. When Clara told me that she didn't want to use the image material of "24h Berlin," I immediately found that very interesting. The audio material of the production is very powerful. You don't need the pictures to understand what's happening. We then listened to a lot, searching for good quotes, interview excerpts on migration and people moving to Berlin.



The online archive is huge. How did you make a selection?

Jo: The archive is tagged pretty well. I wanted to do the first part of the film on the theme of “Night,” so we looked specifically for that. The second part, “Day,” I wanted to do on returning to Dahlem.

Lippok: We had the entire sound on a large hard disk, so we could do pure audio research.

Jo: It was almost like working blind.

Lippok: I didn’t find it hard.

Jo: But for me it was almost impossible!

And how did you approach the museum archives?

Jo: I was a stranger coming to Dahlem and I just decided to speak to as many people as possible. At the same time, I knew that I wanted to divide the film into three parts, which taken together would show one day in the life of the museum. I played around with different real scenarios. At times it was strange to work here as an artist; scientists are taken more seriously in the museum. But all in all, we received a lot of support. That can be seen especially in the second part of the film, which I shot in the Archive for Visual Anthropology and the Phonogram Archive. Ulrike Folie and Albrecht Wiedmann were very forthcoming.

I filmed Ulrike at work, cataloging the collection’s films. I fictionalized the scenario by mixing the image material she is viewing with material that doesn’t belong to the collection: strips from a box of editing rests that Gerd Koch, the former director of the South Pacific Department, recorded during field studies. This is accompanied by Robert playing instruments of the collection, which was a further reference to the archive.

What was it like playing these old instruments?

Lippok: I decided not to really play the instruments, because I’m not able to. I just wanted to produce their sounds. I played neither rhythms nor melodies, but tried to understand how the instruments sound in regard to their body, the resonance chamber. So I only plucked individual strings or hit the drums. Very simple. I didn’t process the recording afterwards either, but used them like raw material and created several layers.

The third part of the film is entirely different. While the first two parts are set in the museum and depict a self-contained world focused of just a few persons, “Future” was shot at the construction site on the Berliner Schlossplatz; the hermetic world opens itself up.

Jo: As we all know, that is where the Humboldt Forum will move to – at this point, it’s difficult to visualize what exactly will happen to the collection. I wanted to expose this feeling of uncertainty. I by no means wanted to monumentalize the site, that’s why I combined the construction site with the work at the palace workshop of the Berlin Palace – Humboldtforum Foundation in the edit. The screed was just being laid at the construction site, and in the palace workshop sections of the baroque facade for the Humboldt Forum were being manufactured. That was the situation in 2013. I wanted to combine part three with the others, the Schlossplatz in Berlin-Mitte with the collections in Dahlem, I wanted everything to come together... but somehow I didn’t really succeed in doing so.

Lippok: But that’s the good thing about the Lab: it allows research and incompleteness. What we are now presenting is one version of the project. There will be another one.

To what extent was the work influenced by the awareness that it would be shown in the Ethnological Museum and not in a gallery space for contemporary art?

Lippok: Clara just did her work without thinking about what the audience would think or understand. No compromises. That’s completely correct. Because if you compromise, you don’t know with whom you compromise. You don’t know the audience at all. It’s stupid anyway to believe that gallery-goers are smarter than museum visitors or that children don’t want to watch experimental videos.

Jo: I conceived the film installation as an intervention. It is not placed in the collection but in spaces in between: “Night” in the corridor between the Golden Triangle (Laos, Myanmar, Thailand) and the South



Pacific exhibition space, "Future" in the foyer between the entrances to the Asian Art Museum and the Ethnological Museum. I wanted to create a parallel world, so that the visitors could discover areas that are usually invisible.

How did the work evolve from the concept to the installation?

Jo: I made many decisions spontaneously, since I mostly had to shoot at locations I had never seen before. I wanted to keep the images open and empty in a certain respect, so that Robert would have a projection screen to work with. I wanted to give him room to breathe. That's why there are long takes of places and architectures, to allow a balance between vision and sound. The use of sound is the most radical aspect of the film.

Lippok: A nod doesn't make a sound, but ... (nods and laughs)

Did your perception of the museum change?

Jo: Yes, very much.

And? How does it present itself to you as a non-European seeing herself reflected in it as "the Other"?

Jo: I still have to digest that. Really, I still have to think about that.

What would the ideal Ethnological Museum look like?

Lippok: Yesterday I drove by the House of World Cultures (HKW) and suddenly thought that the Ethnological Museum and the HKW should be joined, so that there is not only the museum and the archive but also a political approach to the countries, to contemporary everyday life. Different approaches to other cultures, not just via the museum but also artistically; through concerts, lectures, exhibitions. Bringing that together would be an ideal situation, in my view. Ethnological museums virtually cry out for being brought into society in a different way. But the plans are now different. – They should have kept the Palace of the Republic and made a Centre Pompidou out of it, housing the House of World Cultures and the Ethnological Museum. That would have been a killer.

Jo: Problem solved. (laughs)

*Artist Clara Jo (*1986, USA) received a Meisterschüler degree (2013) in the class of Olafur Eliasson (Institut für Raumexperimente, UdK Berlin). She received a B.A. in Photography from Bard College (New York) in 2008. Collaborative performance and film works with artist James Gregory Atkinson have been shown at MMK Museum für Moderne Künste Frankfurt, Kunsthalle Krems, Club Transmediale, Hessische Kunsthalle Frankfurt, West Germany (received grant from Kulturrat Kreuzberg/Friedrichshain) and HAU2. Group exhibitions include White Columns (New York) and the Swiss Institute (New York).*

Since his youth, Robert Lippok has been active as a musician and fine artist in various formations. In the 1990s, he, his brother Ronald, and Stefan Schneider founded the band to rococo rot, which became known worldwide with releases on the labels Kitty-Yo, City Slang and Staubgold, among others. With to rococo rot, Robert Lippok also developed sound pieces for artists including Olaf Nicolai (Bonner Kunstverein, 2000, Palais de Tokyo, 2002, HAU Berlin, 2006), Doug Aitken (Serpentine Gallery, London, 2001) and Takehito Koganezawa ("On the way to the peak of normal", Montevideo and Amsterdam, 2000). In addition, to rococo rot has collaborated in radio plays for the Bayerischer Rundfunk, among others, and composed a new version of Walter Ruttmann's sound montage "Weekend". Lippok also performs as a solo artist and with the electronic duo Tarwater. As a fine artist, he deals with architectural spaces and audio concepts. He participated in the show "space to face" at the Westfälischen Kunstverein (Münster, 2004), among others.

Christiane Kühl is a journalist and theater-maker living in Berlin. Together with Barbara Schindler she is responsible for the online documentation of the projects for the Humboldt Lab Dahlem. The interview was conducted in Berlin in February 2014.



24h Dahlem / Credits

A project of the Probebühne 3, October 17, 2013 through March 30, 2014

Director: Clara Jo

Composition, Sound Design: Robert Lippok

Project jury "Dance of Archives (Tanz der Archive)": Raffael Dedo Gadebusch, Martin Heller, Iman Kamel, Peter Paul Kubitz

Project director "Tanz der Archive", Production director "24h Dahlem": Claudia Relota

Advice: Jürgen Keiper

Editing www.first-we-take-berlin.de: Christiane Grün

Chapter 1: Night

Director of Photography: Michael Laakmann

Steadycam: Matthias Biber

Boom Operator: César Fernández

Camera Assistants: Sezgin Devran, Jens Hallmann

Edit: Carolina Hellsgård

Actor: Alexander Abramyan

We would like to thank: Ines Buschmann, Raffael Dedo Gadebusch, Eßkultur, Maria Gaida, Leonie Gärtner, Lothar Günther, Maren Hatoum, Paola Ivanov, Peter Junge, Hendryk Ortlieb, Uta Rahman-Steinert, Eva Ritz, Verena Rodatus, Markus Schindlbeck, Christina Werner – Institut für Raumexperimente

Special thanks to: The company Dussmann and the guards of the museums Dahlem

Film equipment: 25p, Delight Rental Service

Technical equipment: cine plus

Image material: Collection depots, study rooms and exhibition spaces of the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum, 2013

Audio material: Online archive of the TV production "24h Berlin – A Day in the Life", 2008

Chapter 2: Day

Director of Photography: Michael Laakmann

Boom Operator: César Fernández

Camera Assistant: Jens Hallmann

Edit: Carolina Hellsgård

Speaker: Luise Helm

Sound Engineer: Juri Bader

Thanks to: Jana Bulir, Ines Buschmann, Dussmann Security, Eßkultur, Toralf Gabsch, Uta Rahman-Steinert, Verena Rodatus, Anja Zenner, Maxi Zimmermann

Special thanks to: Ulrike Folie, Lars-Christian Koch, Ricarda Kopal, Carsten Neubert, Markus Schindlbeck, Albrecht Wiedmann

Film equipment: 25p, Delight Rental Service, Tectum

Technical equipment: cine plus

Image material: Albrecht Wiedmann in the Phonogram Archive and Ulrike Folie at the "Steenbeck 6000" flatbed editor in the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum), 2013

Audio material: interviews from the online archive of the TV production "24h Berlin – A Day in the Life", 2008; quotes from letters by Adolf Bastian (1860 to 1904); wax cylinder with a recording by Hamizi bin Ismaili from East-Africa, Collection Thurnwald, 1930; sounds of instruments from the Musical Instruments' Collection of the Ethnomusicology Department of the Ethnological Museum, played by Robert Lippok, 2013

Chapter 3: Future

Director of Photography: Michael Laakmann

Steadycam: Matthias Biber

Camera Assistants: Jens Hallmann, Christopher Haug

Boom Operator: Hans Bramm

Edit: Carolina Hellsgård

Set Runner: Semhar Amedeberhan

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Film equipment: 25p, Kortwich, Rock'n Roll Rental

Technical equipment: EIDOTECH

Image material: construction site of the Humboldt-Forum and works of the stone sculptures and strumpets at the Palace Workshop of the Berlin Palace–Humboldtforum Foundation, 2014

Audio material: cluster of city sounds in Berlin from the online archive of www.first-we-take-berlin.de, and recorded sounds of old non-European instruments from the sound archive in the Ethnomusicology Department of the Ethnological Museum, 2014

24h Dahlem / Imprint Documentation

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Note for the PDF print version: all links can be accessed on the respective subpages of www.humboldt-lab.de.



Film still „24h Dahlem: Chapter 1: Night,“ © Clara Jo



Installation view "24h Dahlem: Chapter 2: Day," photo: Jens Ziehe



Concert "The Persistence of Memory" by Robert Lippok and Nino Errera on the occasion of the completion of "Chapter 3: Future" of the project "24h Dahlem," photo: Sebastian Bolesch



Opening of "24h Dahlem: Chapter 3: Future," photo: Sebastian Bolesch



Opening of "24h Dahlem: Chapter 3: Future," photo: Sebastian Bolesch