

CONTRACT SECTION 1

PRELIMINARY DESIGN / Intro

At the current stage of development, our preliminary design cannot comprise merely the “filling” of the **BERLINER STADTSCHLOSS / HUMBOLDT-FORUM**. Although the palace has not yet been built, it has a powerful and controversial symbolic significance.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN

Filling the shell with content.

Inside goes outside. And vice versa. Between these two actions lies a process that begins in the agora. Rather than a replica of the historical façade, the largest daylight LED projection screen in Europe will be installed – 6,739 square metres. This area, which will be filled with content on a scale of 1:1, is the medium for all messages, the window from one world to the other. Here, on a kind of meta-level, the historical façade of the Stadtschloss can be presented 1:1, or the visitor's gaze can roam across the cupola of the cave of the ring-bearing doves, or over the Lienzo Seler II. And, in letters more than 10 metres high, a Tibetan proverb scrolls across the entire width of the **HUMBOLDT-FORUM**:

“ACTIVITY IS THE PRECURSOR OF THOUGHT.”

Glass rooms project from the closed architectural shell, windows to look into inside from outside.

As emphasised in the specification, contemporary study of non-European art and culture is a dynamic and ongoing process – a movement that is an interdisciplinary challenge and that takes us forward.

Philosophy of the Preliminary Design ARTISTS + SCIENTISTS IN THE MUSEUM

The Humboldt Forum will bring together, in the centre of Berlin, all the treasures and collections from non-European cultures, and archives and libraries of national importance. The collections of the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art will be confronted increasingly, and increasingly fast, with new issues and debates, not only when the Humboldt Forum is built. For this reason, great flexibility is a precondition of anything that may be considered. However, to ensure that this flexibility is not arbitrary, we suggest incorporating an idea in which the ever-topical investigation of the present and past of the many different cultures and traditions of knowledge that the items in the collection represent is quasi-inherent.

The Humboldt-Forum should provide ateliers that give artists, writers, musicians, scientists and media artists an opportunity to study the exhibits and cultures of their choice, so that they can present the results of their work to a wide audience. It should even be considered whether an artists' village or an artists' house could be built in the *Schlüterhöfe*. Scholarship students from all countries, including Berlin residents – with or without immigrant background – can promote our study of the items in the collection and bring old and new art together.

Thus one of the principal demands of the Humboldt Forum, namely a networking of collection-relevant knowledge and scientific research in various disciplines, would be implemented on an artistic level. Research would be complemented with a creative and socially up-to-date view that appeals to the senses, addresses the Humboldt Forum visitor directly and ensures a continuous renewal of perspectives. Through this, the Humboldt Forum would not only become an interface between culture, science and research, but also a place where artists can evoke the very necessary “dialogue with the other” – whether friend, opponent or even oppressor.

Here, the view of the exhibits, of their contexts, of the history of their collection, can come into its own. So also can appreciation of the exhibits with their unique expressiveness as aesthetic art objects; and this could also give new impetus to interdisciplinary research.

For scholarship students, both the temporary exhibition rooms and the collections themselves could be the locations for their presentations. (Cooperation should be sought with intermediary organisations, e.g. DAAD, the Goethe-Institut, the cultural foundations of the Länder, the Bosch Cultural Foundation, the Association of Künstlerhäuser [Artists’ Houses] in Germany.) The debate would thus repeatedly be given new impetus and would lead to an avant-garde treatment that would not harm conservational considerations; on the other hand, it would continuously reinvigorate appraisal of the exhibits – making the Humboldt Forum a centre of lively debate.

For “Contract Section 1” and “Contract Section 2” we would opt for a flexible but restrained exhibition architecture that only comes to the fore with grand installations/presentations and use of media at the designated locations.

“Activity precedes thought” (Tibetan proverb)

In the airspace above the AGORA hovers the FROZEN BIG BANG.

It is a SIGNAL, a large, SPACE-OCCUPYING placing of SYMBOLS. A movement which, penetrating the architecture, continues from inside to outside. (See Stefan Sous, “Exploding Mail Coach”, in the *Museum for Communication, Berlin*.) The exploding particles of this “Big Bang” are symbolic replicas of the ethnological exhibits.

The “sacred” objects somersault and tumble, the fabrics and scrolls are whirled through the airspace, the space of the continuously changing times. A symbol of cultural dynamism, movement, thought and artistic creativity, which will never end as long as human beings live on this planet.

ARTISTS + SCIENTISTS LIVE IN THE MUSEUM

In our design concept, artists and scientists in the museum means that the artists actually also live in the **HUMBOLDT FORUM**. They work here, they swap ideas, also with the visitors. The plans call for a multi-storey think-tank residence in the *Schlüterhof*. Not a hotel, with all its tightly organised logistics.

This is where the artists and scientists will live and collaborate. Here, the cloistered scientific researcher will meet the cloistered creative artist. Together, they will find the Philosopher's Stone, the Theory of Everything or whatever it is that essentially keeps the world together. And when the whatever it is seems mature they will present it to the world.

Paying guests will also be able to rent accommodation in this think-tank residence. But this will not entitle them to quiet nights, nor to meet the scientists and artists.

MEDIA PRESENTATION: EXTENDED RESEARCH

In the case of the major installations/presentations and the display rooms, stationary media pools will be installed in addition to the uncomplicated, user-friendly audio guide system. Here, touch screens, iPads etc. will be available for visitors to view photos and films, and to carry out in-depth research. It should also be possible to use databases that are not normally accessible for non-accredited visitors. Architecturally, these media pools will closely resemble closed systems. These Think-BALLS are spherical media containers. Only the glow of the screens penetrates to the outside. Visitors passing by will not be distracted, while visitors researching a topic of interest can do so undisturbed.

AUDIO GUIDE SYSTEM

In the course of more than twenty years' experience with audio guide programs in museums we have ascertained that two components are crucial for positive acceptance by visitors. First, an excitingly scripted text in radio play quality, interspersed with original recordings (statements etc.), and edited like a good cultural programme for radio. The second important point with regard to acceptance is intuitive menus. If the instructions are too complicated, visitors will immediately be discouraged. This positive acceptance is indispensable, because the system is also intended to serve as a NAVIGATOR for visitors.

CONTRACT SECTION 2

PERSONAL GUIDES

A navigator in the audio guide system, a graphical tape, the famous “thread” that you’re not supposed to lose, a trace of a material let into the floor, a virtual stream-bed beneath armoured glass as a visual info-tape – all these can guide and inform visitors. For visitors who dislike electronic systems there will be pictograms and info texts. But the truly tailor-made tour is a tour with a personal guide: a job creation scenario – whether a student, a jobless or retired academic, a pensioner – almost omniscient, multilingual... Apart from her/his knowledge, the “HUMBOLDT Sherpa” is equipped with a licence to present original wit, folding chairs, thermos flasks and a board game, The Little Mobile Gambling Den. Visitors can only win glass beads – so that they get the impression of being “savages” and “naïve”.

THE FAST-TRACK or HIGHLIGHTS TOUR comprises the SOLITAIRE PRESENTATIONS and the THEME WORLDS. Visitors are also encouraged to visit the THINK-BALLS and their special content. Nobody should leave the Humboldt Forum without having had access to all sources of information. (The audio guide system serves as a navigator!) Visitors can choose between a tour of the highlights, a choice of options or a full tour. The time needed for each attraction will also be indicated.

THE THEME WORLDS are WORLDS IN ACTION,

they are themes and collections. We set them side by side in extremely varied perspectives, continuing them intellectually in historical and contemporary documents, in results of scientific research and in indigenous voices that have no hierarchy. For this purpose, apart from the exhibits and the context of their collection, media systems, projection screens and portable media systems (iPads etc.) will be provided; and it will be possible to record up-to-date content on them according to requirements.

THEME WORLD: The development of writing

From cuneiform, first delivery notes, glyphs etc. to present-day text message emoticons (short for emotional icons) – :-) happy :-)) very happy :-))) overjoyed.

Another THEME WORLD

will be devoted to the ethnologist and researcher Eduard Seler, the founder of Mexican and Ancient American Studies in Germany. Besides his excavations in Mexico, Seler made the decoding of the written sources, the Aztec codices, his life's work. His wife Cäcilie Seler-Sachs supported him in his work and documented the expeditions with her camera. These photos and the history of collection of the objects could represent a fine example of an "ideal researcher's life" at the turn of the 20th century.

ROOM INSTALLATION:

Impression of Seler's study (around 1887) with inset screens for film footage on Seler's work, original photos, correspondence etc. By way of an example, we want a historical treatment to be comprehensible for visitors. This still has its place beside new, state-of-the-art research methods.

We want to give the visitor insights into that time – both socially and politically –, into the way people thought, lived, communicated, travelled; into the way a researcher with a western cultural background approached other cultures. And also, by what devious routes people obtained sought-after exhibits.

The most important large exhibit is the Lienzo Seler II, a world-famous ethnological highlight, a very large, folded cotton cloth painted with hieroglyphs that have not yet been completely deciphered. To protect the Lienzo Seler II, it will be presented on a ramp (barrier-free and thus disabled-friendly), allowing visitors a detailed view. A 1:1 large-scale projection will explain the contents and meaning of the deciphered codices.

THE DISPLAY ROOM / BENIN COLLECTION

With over 500 objects, the Ethnological Museum has one of the world's most important collections from the kingdom of Benin (Nigeria), second only to that of the British Museum. The brass plates are to be presented in a special display room. It will function as a closed system, a kind of safe through which the exhibits slowly pass in a loop. The brass objects will be mounted on a stable supporting screen that moves past the visitors – who can sit down to rest on African stools. Stationary info desks with screens provide the relevant information, explaining the key exhibits. *(Also access to MDS and Internet.)*

THE PALAU HOUSE | MEETING POINT in the Oceania section

The PALAU house and its contextual ambience are not only a space for events, but also communication and meeting points for readings, media presentations, initiatives of our artists etc. The Palau house can change its location. Mounted on a "stage coach", it becomes mobile.

The South Seas has played an important role in the intellectual history of Europe as a utopia, a blueprint for a different kind of existence. The South Sea rendezvous is devoted to exoticism. The Europeans' extremely romantic, even popularly kitschy image of the South Seas could be projected via a semi-circular, 180-300 degree LED projection encircling the Palau house like a brochure: for example, bridge painters and their South Sea impressions, but also the volatile political situation.

The real, present state of the nation is presented on film with soft dissolves and hard cuts. Alternatively, a big, hand-painted, 300-degree perspective: an exotic show of reflective colours that, thanks to changing light, gives pictorial impressions varying between kitsch, illusion and reality.

The little Palau MAGIC HOUSE will be the subject of a special presentation, intended to give the visitor the impression that it is floating freely in the air – a magical illusion created by a trick with mirrors, a spectacle based on the viewing principle of "assisted amazement"!

THE TURFAN CAVE | SPECIAL INSTALLATION

The CAVE OF THE RING-BEARING DOVES is the most valuable exhibit. For this reason it will be given a prominent place under the proposed dome. The cave is truly a magical place.

LIGHTING DESIGN CONCEPT: The TURFAN CAVE will be presented in a darkened room. This also applies to all other collections. In fact, daylight will be excluded from all exhibition rooms.

VIEWING DESIGN CONCEPT: A walk-through room framework, surrounding the cave generously and on various levels, permits new insights and perspectives. This large, high room will be filled with projections, through 360 degrees as well as over its entire height: the firmament, the impressive landscape, the explorers' expedition, the magic of the place, the cave, its rituals etc.

This special presentation must be like a stage set, a trompe l'œil, something deeply moving and unique. As the interior of the cave is not accessible for people in wheelchairs, it will be possible to view the dome via a joystick-controlled video demodulation. The webcam will follow the visitor's gaze; it can also be used for the Humboldt Forum's Internet presence.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS / Forgotten Treasure Troves: THE WAY OF ALL FLESH – THE TRANSIENCE OF THE EXHIBIT.

Almost every exhibit has an enemy intent on devouring it. It depends on how you look at it. Who's stronger? Who's in the majority? And, seen thus, which state of matter of the exhibit is more attractive? Moth eat-art! Forgotten treasure troves. Mini-exhibitions, on the fringes of a major ethnological collection that has to cope with all kinds of perishable materials, are intended to give the visitor backstage insights into the daily routine of museum logistics.

By the time the Humboldt Forum is opened there will be so many unemployed university graduates that every visitor will be able to have his or her personal unroller and unfolder, who will also be a porter for the folding chair, the thermos flask and the food for the day. Profession: museum caddy or, if you prefer, "Humboldt Rent-a-Sherpa".

merz sauter zimmermann gmbh

Organised as an agency geared to providing the most elaborate of platforms for interdisciplinary assignments, we have been planning overall concepts for temporary scenarios and developing solutions for architectural and infotainment remits since 1990.

Our range of services covers draft, design, preparation, research, sourcing, image and action concepts, including all animation elements and their technical, musical, visual and direction-dependent refinement; preliminary design planning, design revision, structural, graphic and medial, invitation to tender process and obtaining of approvals, design of graphics/ communications, production (detail checking) and executive planning, production logistics, evaluation, involvement in contract placement and set-up support. Naturally, we also operate as a general contractor.

To find out more about our firm, visit www.msz.de – you'll find it worthwhile!

Copyright notice

Editing, reproduction, utilisation and trade distribution of this design in part or in whole is permitted only after obtaining the prior written consent of merz sauter zimmermann gmbh as the proprietor of the design.

The execution of its design work/conceptualisation/production is reserved solely for merz sauter zimmermann gmbh.

Project members

Sabine Sauter

Dipl. Ing., Architect, Managing Director
*Project management, architecture, planning,
budget, exhibitions*
merz sauter zimmermann gmbh
Talstraße 41
70188 Stuttgart
Germany
Tel. +49 (0)711 649590
Fax +49 (0)711 602391
Mail mail@msz.de
www.msz.de

Isolde Nagel

Dipl. Ing., Architect
*Project management, architecture, planning,
budget, exhibitions*
A TRANS BERLIN
Ludwig-Richter-Straße 26
D-14467 Potsdam
Germany
Tel. +49 (0)173 2025220
Mail in@atrans.org
www.atrans.org

Gisela Zimmermann

*Concepts and Direction, Audiovisual media,
texts, film and audio programs*
ATELIER ZIMMERMANN
Im Schellenkönig 56
70184 Stuttgart
Germany
Tel. + 49 (0)711 244777
Mobil +49 (0)175 3744559
Mail kontakt@gisela-zimmermann.de
Mail giz.csc@t-online.de
www.gisela-zimmermann.de

Ilona Hirth

Dipl. Des. (FH) Grafik Design
Graphics, Art direction, communication design
Ziegelstraße 3
76185 Karlsruhe
Germany
Tel. +49 (0)721 9850850
mail@ilona-hirth.de
www.ilona-hirth.de

Dr. Ulrike Prinz

Ethnologist
*Concepts and content, workshop content,
texts, forum moderation, research, ethnological
expertise*
Tel. +49 (0)89 188591
Mobil +49 (0)163 3118979
Mail ulprinz@web.de