

PAR Performing Arts Magazine

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A group photo of participants in the "Humboldt in Progress" project. (Photo by Stefanie Loos, courtesy of Humboldt Forum)

" Humboldtting! " is a five-year project started in 2021 by Berlin's popular museum " Humboldt Forum " (Humboldt Forum) (**Note 1**). It cooperates with the school schedule of local middle schools in Berlin and invites one student every six months. Group artists or teams to collaborate with the same group of 30 middle school students to perform creative art activities, which are presented publicly around the end of February and June every year. This project was initiated by the Programs and Events Department of the Humboldt Forum. Julia Nickel, the curator of the department, invited Donaire, artistic and research director of the " Mammalian Diving Reflex " theater company, which has performed in Taiwan. (Darren O'Donnell) and long-term partner Australian independent producer Alice Fleming plan, hoping to enable this group of teenagers from diverse backgrounds whose family members have not yet become regular museum visitors to participate in this project. They and their families can have a long-term dialogue and connection with the museum.

This project concept was inspired by Alexander. Feng. Inspired by Alexander von Humboldt's five-year inspection of the Americas, the spirit of the Humboldt Forum has been put into practice to a considerable extent: as a forum to open dialogue, deepen connections, and form a new knowledge system in an open and dynamic manner, hoping to contribute to Berlin Inject new energy. As Taiwanese curator Geng Yiwei mentioned in the "Reporter" article **(Note 2)** , the Humboldt Forum on Museum Island is facing a large influx of immigrants in this metropolis. How can the young generation also see what belongs to the city? The culture of their ancestors and responding to the multi-ethnic situation of the contemporary international city are the important missions of the museum today. "Humboldt in Progress" not only hopes to allow this group of "young researchers" to enter the museum to participate in creative development as "artists", but also uses the high interactivity of performing arts to invite their relatives and friends into the museum to exert a "ripple effect" and spread the project. Influence.

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The stage performance "Matters of Taste" was completed under the leadership of artist Manuel Ahnemüller. (Photo by David von Becker provided by Humboldt Forum)

Build long-term relationships with young people to create sustainability for the arts

This group of "young researchers" comes from Thomas-Mann-Gymnasium in the Märkische Viertel district in northern Berlin. They are about 13 to 15 years old. Most of them are second or third generation Turkish immigrants, and some are white people and a very small number of descendants of Vietnamese immigrants. Although the school seems to be well-equipped, with a small theater and multimedia room, and a municipal swimming pool next to it, Menkosu District has always been considered a "problem area", and most of the residents are from the working class, marginalized groups, or have immigrant backgrounds people. This can be traced back to the townhouses built in this area between 1956 and 1975 to create a sense of community in collective life, but later became "a slum disguised under the concept of beautiful social architecture", filled with "long sadness" (**Note 3**). The community atmosphere is less close-knit, resulting in relatively serious crime problems, making it more marginalized in urban development.

The Education Department of the Humboldt Forum initially contacted several schools like Thomas Mann Middle School, and finally decided to cooperate with this one of the few middle schools that offer arts and culture courses for the "Humboldt Ongoing" project. According to Jocelyne Stahl, curator of academic education at the Humboldt Forum, the school's faculty and staff were highly enthusiastic about the project when approached, because the project requires long-term cooperation from the school and will increase the workload of teachers and administrative staff. Quantity, so the attitude of the school is also very critical. "It is common to cooperate with schools, but it is very rare to cooperate to such an in-depth level in this mode." Starr said that the planning team had a consensus in the early stages of the project to target 30 students in what can be called a "focus group." Carry out long-term plans instead of investing the same resources in short-term and large numbers of targets. "This is more sustainable...especially this is a social participation project...to really build connections between people."



The staged performance of the "Shake Forum" project in 2023. (Photo by Stefanie Loos, courtesy of Humboldt Forum)

Establishing long-term relationships with young people to achieve sustainable development of the art and cultural field began in Donaire's unintentional plan more than 10 years ago. Ru prototype park person in charge Gong Youying mentioned (**Note 4**) that through art projects, Donaire has participated in the Ruhr Triennale in Germany and the LIFT London International Theater Festival in the United Kingdom on a three- to five-year basis. Festival) has achieved remarkable results. Donaire will also take the members of the long-term cooperation "The Torontonians" (The Torontonians) to London and the Ruhr to promote cross-border and cross-cultural exchanges among young people. These art projects have made the more marginal group of young people can gain attention. Because Donaire and his collaborators regard these young people as equal collaborative creative partners, these artistic participation experiences allow young people to feel their own importance and have more imagination about the impact they can have on the world. With the possibility, this partnership forms a new "social contract" that "changes their disadvantaged status of being legally discriminated against".

Note:

1. The Humboldt Forum is located in the Berliner Schloss in the center of Berlin. It is named after Alexander. Humboldt and William. Named after the Humboldt brothers, it covers an area of 40,000 square meters and is close to the famous Museum Island. It is one of Berlin's important landmarks. The exhibitions and activities of the Humboldt Forum are rich and diverse, covering the fields of art, science, history and culture. It regularly holds concerts, performances, discussions and parent-child activities, aiming to promote cultural exchanges, academic discussions and public participation. It has been controversial due to the discovery of historical relics during the construction process and the maintenance of the architectural appearance of the historical palace.
2. Geng Yiwei, " Kicking London on the left and beating Paris on the right, Berlin shows its power ", "Reporter", February 6, 2016.
3. Albanian artist Anli. Anri Sala created the video work "Long Sorrow" (Long Sorrow) in 2005 with the theme of Menkesu District, which was exhibited at the 2016 Taipei Biennale.
4. Gong Youying, "Cultivation of artistic successors through creative actions" , "PAR Performing Arts" No. 305, May 2018.

〈Inviting young people to co-create and build the future of museums - About the 5-year plan of Berlin's "Humboldt Forum" "Humboldt in Progress" (Part 2)〉

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The tape art installation planned in the 2023 "Shaking Forum" project has become a permanent collection. (Photo by Stefanie Loos)

During the actual visit to "Humboldt in Progress", the students chatted privately and said that they were happy that their opinions were valued more in this class than in other classes, and both teachers and other artists were relatively willing to listen to their ideas. From the activity participation process, it can also be seen that some students actively put forward their own ideas, and most of them are also quite enthusiastic about hands-on DIY activities. However, some students may be shy in adolescence or unfamiliar with the medium. For example, choosing party music is not an activity they have experienced in their daily lives. When artists need students to participate, they need more encouragement. and guidance.

Although the team is ambitious, the newly built large venues and the rebellious teenagers are also challenging. While it has abundant resources and manpower, the Humboldt Forum is also a large machine with a complicated organizational structure. Like other German cultural institutions, it is too large to maintain flexibility. For example, because the technical department needs to arrange resources and manpower in advance, it often has to confirm

technical needs while the artist team is still developing with the students. As a result, some decisions must be made before students participate, which sometimes triggers a small backlash from students. For example, the "Shake Project", which will be performed in July 2023, will display installations with different "vibes" in four spaces of the venue to explore the atmosphere lacking in the Humboldt Forum in the eyes of young people. Among them, the tape art exhibited in the workshop classroom on the second floor and has been confirmed to become a permanent collection. In the early stages of creation, it was a material decided to use for space design. One of the students said, "Although it is very interesting, we still hope to get our consent first." "Whether it is the venue system or the will of young people, the ability and experience of the invited artist team are tested.

Emerging Art Criticism



" Pigeons, Strawberries, Dilemma - Interesting Sound Guide " performance scene. (Photo by Frank Sperling)

Taiwan's " Prototype Paradise " was invited to participate and create performances with teenagers

Taiwan's "Prototype Paradise" was also invited by Donaire , and Gong Youying organized a team to participate in this exchange program that spanned about three years. In 2022, she and Chen Yijun, a theater consultant who now lives in Munich, went to Berlin to visit related activities when the project was launched. The observation project was also the first time to

meet with young people; starting in 2023, Xiao Yuqin, the artistic director of Silele, joined, and the three people were mainly responsible for the early stage planning concepts and directions. During this period, artist Chen Chengting, who was living in Berlin, also joined in to engage in spatial visual design and object production. The preparation and part of the execution phase of the project were conducted remotely, with Donaire and teaching artist Melika. Melika Ramic maintains contact with local teenagers in Berlin. Melika has been responsible for managing students and assisting in the connection between schools, artist teams and students for a long time. In 2024, the team will gather in Berlin, conduct more intensive work with young people in March and June, and finally perform 4 guided tour-style participatory performances at the Humboldt Forum from June 28th to 29th.

The title of the performance is "Pigeons, Strawberries , Delimmas - A Playful Audiotour " **(Note 5)** . Through the daily life of young people visiting the museum staff, they can understand the museum from another perspective. appearance. At the beginning of the performance, teenagers presided over the opening to explain the outline and content of the plan. Then the audience was divided into three routes, and the teenagers guided the tour to the main work areas of the museum staff. Listening through headphones to the teenagers' physical descriptions of their interview subjects, as well as recordings of their interviews with the interviewees, the audience is transported to the place where the story takes place. Interactive participation games are also conducted during the process, with young people guiding the audience to express their personal opinions or ideas. Drawing on the experience of other project implementations, the Taiwanese team paid special attention to the division of labor this time, allowing students who are better at oral expression to be responsible for more public explanations, while other students are responsible for serving as DJs, playing music, managing props, etc., which the team calls The role of "stage manager" not only guides the team by holding up an animal puppet **(Note 6)** that symbolizes the interviewee , but also assists in the performance.

Gong Youying mentioned that during the creative process, cultural differences and language barriers were highlighted. For example, if a student has never experienced meditation, it needs to be properly explained, and the text needs to be specially finalized to help students become proficient in the content. Or the language barrier may have softened the power dynamic between teenagers and international artists to some extent, allowing them to return to collaboration in artistic creation. Although some students will inevitably take temporary leave because this cultural course is not a priority in their lives, or may feel bored and lose their willingness to participate, in the end they still successfully completed the performance and received a lot of positive feedback.



"Pigeons, Strawberries, Dilemma - Interesting Sound Guide" performance scene. (Photo by Frank Sperling)

The Taiwan team has been in contact with the teenagers for three years. From the photo records and actual cooperation, we can see the growth of this group of teenagers. Gong Youying shared that someone in the German team mentioned that some students could not speak well in front of strangers two or three years ago, but now they can actually pick up the microphone as a host and talk in front of everyone. She feels that "this should be a performance part of the process, and because performance is doing something in front of the public, some people are becoming more and more accustomed to it." She mentioned that one of the students later became Annemu, a participating artist in the project. She was an intern at Manuel Ahnemüller, so "it was really a turning point in this girl's life because she discovered that she was very interested in painting during this program, and when she was looking for an internship next time, she decided to become this Artist's intern. "Due to the design of the academic system, half of the students will choose economics or science courses after participating in the Taiwan team's program, but what is touching is that one student gave special feedback after participating in the Taiwan program. She liked the experience so much that she decided to stay and participate in Humboldt in Progress.

The massive attention and resources of the Humboldt Forum and the dedicated efforts of the artists are not only for the future of this small group of people, but for the future of the entire field of art and culture. When the world is no longer white supremacist and Eurocentric, the art and literature fields that have long been affected by white cultural hegemony must also

make a certain degree of reform in order to continue the life of museums. Using the performative nature of performing arts to present diverse appearances and voices in the museum, it also allows people to connect in highly interactive activities. At the same time, through the perspectives and opinions of young people that are different from adults, it opens up some rigid perspectives. Thinking, each other becomes each other's muse. In this way, this large museum with a magnificent building like a palace can use the name of a "forum" to allow diverse ethnic groups to participate in dialogue and create a deeper sense of identity, allowing the museum to better reflect today's society and allowing the collection to reflect reality.

Note:

5. For more information, please visit [the performance introduction page](#) of the Humboldt Forum official website .

6. The student who plays the stage manager will hold a pole with an animal selected by the student to represent the interviewee in the performance.

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