

Press release

Berlin, 7 March 2019

Humboldt Forum Highlights

Discussion #7: Don't Know – Know – Never Know?

On Thursday, **4 April 2019**, at **7:30 pm**, as part of the **Humboldt Forum Highlights** season, the **Humboldt Forum** will host the discussion **Don't Know – Know – Never Know?** at the **Neues Museum on Museum Island**, Bodestraße 1–3, 10178 **Berlin**. Six **experts** will take the Mesoamerican stone figure ***Barrigón*** and the 3D model of an ***Orobates pabsti*** as their starting point for a discussion on **the various contemporary approaches to acquiring knowledge**. Both objects can be viewed during the event. **Admission is free of charge.**

You can register to attend until 3 April 2019 at events.humboldtforum.com. Media representatives should please contact Michael Mathis at m.mathis@humboldtforum.com for mandatory accreditation.

We know so much and yet so little – especially when we continually compare ourselves to others. It was Socrates who made us absolutely sure of one thing: our knowledge of our own lack of knowledge. But how do we make the transformation from unknowing to knowing? Understanding always starts by questioning oneself and others in order to detect specious pseudo-knowledge. And even today, dialogue and exchange in conjunction with constant curiosity and scepticism are more appropriate means of getting to the bottom of the true nature of the world than being satisfied with superficiality.

Beyond a superficial awareness of its form, what knowledge can we derive from the millennia-old carved boulder known as *Barrigón*? What are the limits to knowledge acquisition in contemporary archaeology? What knowledge and new technologies are needed to generate a three-dimensional, life-sized model of *Orobates pabsti* from a fossil of this early land vertebrate? How can knowledge successfully be brought together in a multi-disciplinary approach? Can science and art work together? Where can philosophy lend a helping hand? And what form might new kinds of knowledge acquisition take? These questions will be discussed by six experts in three conversations based on two objects which, as Highlights to be displayed in the future Humboldt Forum, are already playing a role in yielding new knowledge and perspectives.

The **Barrigón** is currently on display at the Neues Museum, and in the future it will move to the Ethnologisches Museum's exhibition spaces in the Humboldt Forum. The first discussion, between Matthias Wemhoff, director of Berlin's Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, and archaeologist Iyaxel Cojti Ren, focuses on this stone figure and how knowledge is acquired in archaeology. In the second section, John A. Nyakatura, joint junior professor for morphology and the history of forms at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, talks with Katja Widmann, curator at the Humboldt Laboratory in the Humboldt Forum, about interdisciplinary research, for it is precisely this type of cooperation that is leading to new findings concerning **Orbates pabsti**, which also will be presented in the Humboldt Universität's exhibition once it has opened its doors. The discussion in the third part between Timothy J. Senior, artist and scholar at the University of Bristol, and Anne Eusterschulte, philosophy professor at the FU Berlin, will focus on the ways knowledge can change as well as the opportunities for acquiring it in an interdisciplinary and collaborative manner.

Iyaxel Cojti Ren is a K'iche' Maya archaeologist specializing in the Post-Classic Mayan culture of the Guatemalan highlands; she is currently writing her dissertation on the origins of the Kaqchikel state as a symbol of resistance from a diachronic and interdisciplinary perspective. **Matthias Wemhoff** has curated major exhibitions of cultural history, is an honorary professor at the Universität Paderborn and the Freie Universität Berlin and managing director of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Archäologie. **John A. Nyakatura** studied geography and biology at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität in Jena, where he also did his doctorate on functional morphology at the Institut für Zoologie und Evolutionsforschung. His current research concerns the correlation between structural and functional aspects of the locomotor systems and changes throughout the evolution of vertebrates. **Katja Widmann** is an exhibition curator and editor who has worked for institutions such as the Deutsches Historisches Museum, the Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten and the Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr. Since spring 2018 she has been part of the Humboldt Laboratory team. **Anne Eusterschulte** is a member of the Collaborative Research Centre 980 "Episteme in Motion – Transfer of Knowledge from the Ancient World to the Early Modern Period" – an interdisciplinary research association investigating the processes of knowledge change in European and non-European pre-modern cultures. **Timothy J. Senior** is a scholar and artist who examines how traditional forms of disciplinary activity in the arts, sciences and humanities might be opened up to new collaborative influences.

Inspired by the eponymous Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt and their delight in exploring the world and comprehending it as a system linking nature and culture in myriad ways, the **Humboldt Forum** will establish a new venue for experience, learning and encounter in the heart of Berlin. The presentations by the various Humboldt Forum institutions will bring together a wide range of

topics from science and art, nature and culture, history and society, accompanied by many different perspectives from past and present, near and far. As a foretaste, the Humboldt Forum is already exhibiting fifteen Highlights: eight are on show on Berlin's Museum Island and at the Kulturforum, while a further selection of objects are to be the focus for eight discussions held at locations throughout the city. Details of all fifteen Humboldt Forum Highlights as well as the full programme can be found at humboldtforum.com/highlights.

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Discussion #7: Don't Know – Know – Never Know?

Datum Thursday, 4 April 2019

Time 7:30 pm

Venue Neues Museum, Bodestraße 1–3 , 10178 Berlin

Languages German and English with interpretation

Admission free of charge

Registration by 3 April 2019 at events.humboldtforum.com

Participants Anne Eusterschulte, John A. Nyakatura, Iyaxel Cojti Ren, Timothy J. Senior, Matthias Wemhoff, Katja Widmann

The evening will be rounded off with an informal event including drinks and snacks.

Organizer Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss

Participating institutions Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz with the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kulturprojekte Berlin with Stadtmuseum Berlin, and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, with the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss at the helm.

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