



PRESS KIT

Annual Press Conference 2020

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PRESS RELEASE

DIGITALISATION BOOST: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FOREIGN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES



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The coronavirus pandemic also left a mark on the year 2020 for the Goethe-Institut. The German intermediary organisation developed wide-coverage digital and hybrid formats in its cultural programmes. It also implemented innovations in its language work: Online language courses were significantly intensified worldwide, and in November 2020 the Goethe-Institut was recognised as the best digital language teaching institute. However, revenue did fall due to the global restrictions. The Goethe-Instituts in Germany, which rely on course participants from abroad, were hit particularly hard. However, it was possible to mitigate the consequences by interim aid from the government and constant realignments. The new President Carola Lentz, Secretary-General Johannes Ebert and the Business Director Rainer Pollack are therefore optimistic about the future.

8 December 2020

Goethe-Institut President Carola Lentz emphasised that the institute has come through the crisis relatively unscathed so far. This can be attributed not least to the **consistent digitalisation strategy** that the institute has pursued during the past few years. She remarked, "I experience the Goethe-Institut as lively and innovative. It has tested a variety of new approaches in its language courses, youth exchanges and cultural co-productions. The corona pandemic has taught us that foreign cultural and educational policies can be developed further, for example with regard to sustainability and transnational participation." Artistic and civil society partners around the world who have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic need continued support, she added, **"We need strong partners abroad.** A diverse cultural landscape is particularly important in times of crisis: Aesthetic formats allow to transcend the 'given' world in playful ways and to open up spaces of possibility. German society can also benefit from getting to know solutions that other societies have developed. Making such approaches visible and better known here, in Germany, is in my eyes one of the central tasks of the Goethe-Institut." Carola Lentz also advocated a **reappraisal of the history of the institute** which will celebrate its seventieth birthday in 2021. "Like many other organisations, the Goethe-Institut is strongly focused on the present and the future. But if you want to shape the future, you must know about the past." To this end, she is presently working with another scholar on a book, to be published in 2021, that asks, among other questions how the institute has dealt with global political crises and changes in the past. How has it engaged with its own history? "Such historical reflection promotes transparency and orientation," says Lentz.

The secretary-general of the Goethe-Institut Johannes Ebert said, "We are quite pleased about the digital formats we were able to implement at such short notice this year, for example the kulturama livestreaming platform or Danachgedanken, an intellectual archive of the coronavirus pandemic. Next year, we will also partially digitise the **Kultursymposium Weimar**, which will be shedding light on the topic of 'Generations' from an international perspective from 16 to 17 June 2021." With regard to the financial situation, Ebert said, "We are very grateful that the federal government leapt to our aid

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with a **rescue package** so quickly and straightforwardly in the spring to cushion our worldwide sales losses. We are also happy that we are in a much better position economically than initially forecast. It is true that we recorded an **overall 20 percent decline in the number of course participants to 219,000**. But since demand for our **digital courses** increased **by 450 percent to 62,000**, we were able to mitigate the decline somewhat. I am especially pleased that in November, *WirtschaftsWoche* recognised us as the best digital education provider in the field of language teaching institutes in Germany. That is an achievement of the strategic innovations and investments of past years. Finally, I would like to thank the German Bundestag and the Federal Foreign Office for the great confidence they have placed in our work for 2021: They have strengthened the staff structure of the Goethe-Institut by adding new jobs. The **increase in institutional funding** by 3.5 million euros will also enable us to further strengthen the position of the German language abroad and to have a broad impact through further consistent digitalisation.”

The business director of the Goethe-Institut Rainer Pollack said, “The pandemic hit the Goethe-Instituts in Germany particularly hard as they rely on course participants from abroad and were also in an economic consolidation phase. Worldwide, we are presently anticipating **a deficit in the low double-digit million-euro range**, which will be cushioned by the Federal Foreign Office’s rescue package and will be accounted for in roughly equal proportions abroad and in Germany.” Johannes Ebert emphasised that the **realignment of the content of the Goethe-Instituts in Germany** is showing initial successes and noted, “We are pleased that the establishment of centres for international cultural education at Goethe-Instituts in Germany is part of the catalogue of measures that the cabinet committee has drawn up to combat right-wing extremism and racism. The Goethe-Institut will also contribute its expertise from its work abroad here in order to strengthen diversity and openness.”

Ebert also spoke about the **work of the Goethe-Institut in museum partnerships**. “We’re convinced that even closer international cooperation between museums will establish new museum practices that not only benefit the institutions of the so-called Global South, but also museum work in Germany, and will give Europe new stimuli,” he said, “Many joint initiatives abroad have resulted from long-time local partnerships on site.” A **conference in Rio de Janeiro** next year held in cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office and several museums will deal with the consequences of the fire at Brazil’s National Museum two years ago. The **exhibition project Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories** is dedicated to the role of museums in the culture of remembrance in Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Germany. With the support of the Federal Cultural Foundation, the **Invisible Inventories** project will “lift” Kenyan cultural assets from archives **in Nairobi, Cologne and Frankfurt am Main** for the first time and provide them with object biographies. Anisha Soff from the Goethe-Institut in Nairobi reported on this.



MUSEUM ALLIANCES ON FOUR CONTINENTS

The Goethe-Institut has long been working closely with museums around the world. They are places for education, exchange and participation – and therefore important partners if projects are to have a lasting effect. The Goethe-Institut advocates an interdisciplinary approach by internationally networking museum practitioners, cultural professionals, political actors and academics. In 2021, for example, the Museumsgespräche, which have been dedicated to the future of African museums for several years, will enter a new phase. Invisible Inventories will examine Kenyan cultural assets held in museum archives. The exhibition project Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories will focus on the role played by museums in the cultures of remembrance in Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Germany. And an international conference in Rio de Janeiro will deal with the consequences of the fire at Brazil's National Museum two years ago. It will be carried out in cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office and numerous museums.

INVISIBLE INVENTORIES EXHIBITION PROJECT

How can we make Kenyan cultural assets that are owned by cultural institutions in Europe and the United States, for example, accessible to Kenya's contemporary society? This is the mission of the International Inventories Programme, for which the Goethe-Institut joined up with the National Museum in Nairobi, Kenya, the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne, the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main and the artist collectives The Nest and SHIFT and other partners. Together they are creating an inventory of the Kenyan objects in a database in order to create more transparency in museum archives. The database presently (as of November 2020) comprises over **32,000 objects from thirty different institutions** that have made their archive data available. In the long term, the database will also be made accessible to the public. Alongside this, public discussions are being held in Kenya called the Object Movement Dialogues. They are less about concrete questions of restitution than about creating a forum for intellectual as well as emotional explorations of individual objects. As Njoki Ngumi of The Nest asked in one of these dialogues, "Who are the people who left the object behind? And if the object is to return to a society that has been robbed of it, who are the people that the object encounters?"

This long-term collaborative and interdisciplinary process will result in several publications and the **Invisible Inventories exhibition**, three different versions of which will be shown in 2021. The first exhibition will open on **17 March 2021 at the Nairobi National Museum**, the second on **27 May 2021 at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum** in Cologne, and the third exhibition will follow them on **5 October 2021 at the Weltkulturen Museum** in Frankfurt am Main. The exhibitions are funded by the Federal Cultural



Foundation. Their artistic direction is a collective effort by the International Inventories Programme team.

All three exhibitions bring together scientific and artistic research produced by museum specialists, scholars and artists over the past two years. For this purpose, they studied the Kenyan objects, their cultural interrelationships and their specific appropriation by institutions in the Global North. They also address the psychological and political impacts of the loss or absence of these objects in the communities that originally created them. Many of the Kenyan objects have been in the collections of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne and the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main for decades and some have never been exhibited in public. For a selection of the objects, the museum experts Njeri Gachihi, Frauke Gathof, Clara Himmelträger, Lydia Nafula, Leonie Neumann, Philemon Nyamanga and Juma Ondeng' compiled comprehensive object biographies for the first time.

A selection of the historical Kenyan objects is complemented by contemporary works by two artist collectives. The Kenyan collective The Nest, represented by Jim Chuchu and Njoki Ngumi, uses seemingly endless lines of mail-order labels to visualise the sheer mass of objects and their different values – purchase, insurance and emotional value – as well as the power of individual Western dealers and institutions. Sam Hopkins and Marian Nur Goni from the international collective SHIFT present a sound installation based on the diverse stories of the so-called “Man-Eaters of Tsavo.” In the late nineteenth century, the two legendary man-eating lions succeeded in hindering the British imperial machinery’s attempts to build railways in East Africa. They are presently on display – taxidermied – in Chicago. Simon Rittmeier, also part of the SHIFT collective, dedicates himself to international cases of restitution with his works “Takeover” and “Lightning Strikes the Obelisk.” His work goes beyond the Kenyan context to examine, for example, the return of the Axum Obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia. More information:

www.inventoriesprogramme.org

The International Inventories Programme is a project by the Goethe-Institut, the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) in Nairobi, the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum (RJM) in Cologne, the Weltkulturen Museum (WKM) in Frankfurt am Main and the artist collectives The Nest (Kenya) and SHIFT (Germany/France). The Invisible Inventories exhibition project is funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation.

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MUSEUMFUTURES AFRICA - WHAT DOES AN AFRICAN MUSEUM LOOK LIKE?

For several years now, the Goethe-Institut has been organizing local and transnational workshops on the African continent under the title "Museumsgespräche" on such questions as: What can and should a "national museum" be in a post-colonial context? And what does the museum of the future look like on the African continent? This is where the "MuseumFutures Africa" project comes in. It aims to facilitate change by supporting cooperation among African museums and with their respective neighbours. After an Africa-wide invitation to tender, a jury of experts selected six museums whose geographies and subject-matter reflect the continent's diverse museum landscape. Using a peer-to-peer model, two sets of museums are connected to form tandems to specifically identify local challenges and to deal with them intensively and independently. The museums each form groups with various stakeholders for roughly one year to find new ways of collecting, researching, mediating and involving society. A curriculum designed by African experts (Abiti Nelson, Tatiana Page and Rebecca Corey) is provided for this purpose. At the end of the process, the learning groups from two museums will visit one another and exchange ideas. The result will be a pan-African network of museums. The programme began with the first workshops in November 2020. The essential learning processes are continuously documented and passed on in a publication that will be produced by the end of 2021.

The selected museums include the **Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire** in Dakar, Senegal, which was founded in 1938 as the Institut français d'Afrique noire. After independence, it established itself as one of the world's most renowned institutions for the research of African cultures. The **National Museum of Guinea** in Conakry houses a collection of objects from various ethnic groups in the country, including religious artefacts, art and everyday objects. The **National Museums of Kenya** in Nairobi comprise a large number of institutions, including a considerable number of exhibitions ranging from art to natural history and anthropological museums. **Steve Biko Centre** in King William's Town, South Africa is dedicated to the life of the activist and intellectual who founded the Black Consciousness movement. The **Uganda Museum** in Kampala, the country's largest, has a variety of different collections that deal mainly with the anthropology of the various ethnic groups of Uganda. As part of the Pan-Atlantic University, the **Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art** in Lekki, Nigeria is dedicated to the African arts and houses a wide range of Nigerian artworks.



MuseumFutures Africa is a series of projects by the Goethe-Instituts in sub-Saharan Africa and is taking place at the participating locations in collaboration with national museums, museum associations, ministries and UNESCO.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM CONFERENCE IN RIO DE JANEIRO

More than two years ago, Brazil's National Museum in Rio de Janeiro fell victim to a major fire. It was the most important museum of its kind in Latin America, with a collection of around 20 million objects – including artefacts from long-extinct indigenous groups and the last surviving recordings of their languages. Since the fire, the Foreign Office and the Goethe-Institut have been involved in the rescue work and the development of a concept for a new museum. It also aims to emphasise the social importance of museums as a whole. Many museum partners from South America are facing enormous challenges in view of the volatile economic and political situation on the continent and the effects of the pandemic.

From 3 to 5 June 2021, the Goethe-Institut and the Brazilian National Museum are organising an international museum conference in Rio de Janeiro together with numerous German museums and cultural institutions and supported by the Federal Foreign Office. In particular, the conference aims to develop concepts that prepare natural history and anthropological museums for the future in difficult times. The central themes of the conference are “Museums and the conflicting priorities of society,” “Collections and archives” and “Sustainability.” To this end, the Goethe-Institut will coordinate and organise workshops from January 2021, which will take place in tandems between the National Museum and German museums and partners.

The results of the workshops will be presented at the conference in June 2021. The Ethnologische Museum in Berlin, for example, will hold workshops on feather art and its Brazilian collection, the Linden Museum für Völkerkunde in Stuttgart will deal with the topics of inclusion and diversity, and the Humboldt Forum with archives and alternative approaches to objects. The Ibero-American Institute, in turn, will organise discussions with indigenous experts about their views on collecting institutions, and the Römisch-Germanische Zentralmuseum will explore the recording and digitisation of collections. ICOM's International Committee for Audiovisual, New Technologies and Social Media (AVICOM) will offer a seminar on reducing barriers, the Museum für Naturkunde will hold a workshop on the preparation of large animals, and the Goethe-Institut is organising four online seminars together with the University of Applied Sciences (HTW Berlin) on topics such as digitisation, archiving and museum education. In addition, “The Future of Biennials



and Museums” is planned for April 2021 in cooperation with the Berlin Biennale, a visitor journey for museum professionals and curators from South America who will also be invited to the museum conference. More information at www.goethe.de/brasilien

An event by the Goethe-Institut and the Museu Nacional/UFRJ with support from the Federal Foreign Office.

COLLECTING ENTANGLEMENTS AND EMBODIED HISTORIES EXHIBITION PROJECT

The embodiment of histories in the diverse social contexts of Southeast Asia and “the West” is the focus of the exhibition project Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories. On the initiative of the Goethe-Institut, the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, the Thai MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum (Chiang Mai), the Singapore Art Museum and the Galeri Nasional Indonesia (Jakarta) have joined forces for it. After a kick-off conference at Hamburger Bahnhof in June 2019, which asked about the connections between curatorial and artistic practice, the research project will lead to various exhibitions by the participating institutions in 2021. The exhibitions initially planned for this year had to be postponed due to the pandemic. A different focus is being developed at each location under the direction of one of the participating curators from the research and exhibition team. The respective social and institutional contexts as well as the interplay of works from the four participating collections are equally taken into account.

In **Chiang Mai**, Grydthia Gaweewong and her co-curators will focus on significant social movements from the Cold War to the present **from May 2021**. The political upheavals and their artistic resonances – such as the student unrest in the 1970s and the upsurge in conceptual art in Thailand in the 1980s – mirror each other. For the exhibition that will open at the **National Gallery of Singapore in August 2021**, curator June Yap and her curatorial team will explore the nature of relationships, affinities and influences through the gesture of giving and giving back. The works gathered here address the gift as a performative act, as a pictorial reminder of the act of giving, as an artistic reflection of its spiritual energy, but also the social obligation associated with it. The team around head curator Anna-Catharina Gebbers at Hamburger Bahnhof is working from Joseph Beuys’s expanded concept of art as social sculpture to examine how performance, video and installation relate as critical art forms to political protests and social developments in Southeast Asia and “the West.” The results will be presented to the public from October 2021. Starting in **January 2022**, the **exhibition in Jakarta will document** the relationships between artists, their practices and their sense of belonging, regardless of their



nationality and supposed political identity – based on an exhibition of contemporary art from the non-aligned states presented in Jakarta in 1995, of which some of the works were added to the collection of the Galeri Nasional Indonesia.

A sustainable network for curatorial exchange is being created with the project *Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories*. This places collections – and thus museum policies – in a larger social and historical context.

Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories is a cooperative project by the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, the MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum – Chiang Mai, the Singapore Art Museum and the Galeri Nasional Indonesia – Jakarta initiated by the Goethe-Institut.



KULTURSYMPOSIUM WEIMAR 2021 GENERATIONS 16-17 June 2021 (digital edition)

From rapidly progressing climate change to political reforms, from loud protests for equality to the passing on of influence and wealth, from time-honoured traditions to the longing for eternal youth: the theme of generations runs through many of the debates and conflicts of our era. The '68ers, Baby Boomers, Millennials and Generation Z are just a few of the names that academics and the media use to label certain birth cohorts. But what do the members of the deeply divided South African "Born Free" generation actually have in common? What connects the millions of Chinese of the "Little Emperor" generation? What does the notion of "generations" really mean in different regions of the world? How do young and old co-exist around the world?

On 16 and 17 June 2021, the Goethe-Institut's third Kultursymposium Weimar will shed light on the generation question from international perspectives of culture, science, business, media and politics. It will have three thematic focal points: The first is "Conflicts and Cooperation" and the question of how the generations argue among themselves – at breakfast tables and in parliaments, on Twitter and on the street. Solidarity, boundaries and protest will be brought into focus here, unequal power relations and the generational change in politics and business will be discussed. For instance, how does the young techno scene in Iran put up resistance? How do cross-generational housing projects in Asian megacities affect social cohesion?

The second focus is on "Sustainability and the Future." Hardly any other topic presently affects intergenerational relationships as much as how we deal with climate change: While the young generation worldwide calls for sustainable changes, an older generation of politicians is still shaping the future in many countries. But the consequences of demographic change are also changing the relationship between the generations. As a country with the highest average age worldwide, Japan faces completely different challenges than a country like Niger, which has to find unique development strategies for an extremely young and rapidly growing population. In an attempt to reconcile the contradicting goals of sustainability and growth, the question arises: What should the world of tomorrow look like – and who makes the rules?



The third focus, “Identity and Remembrance,” is about narratives from the past that shape who we are, to whom we feel we belong and how we write our own stories to the present day. How does the legacy of the Argentine military dictatorship shape the descendants of the perpetrators and victims? What effects do social trauma have across generations? Last but not least, a look will also be taken at how ideas of love, sexuality and partnership develop from generation to generation, also with a view to the increasing isolation of the elderly, to which the Danish city of Aarhus, for example, is seeking new answers.

Unlike the first two editions of the Kultursymposium, this time the festival will largely take place online due to the present uncertainties. Instead of the traditional festival centre in the middle of the cultural city of Weimar, a decentralised festival atmosphere will be created in 2021, with discursive and artistic contributions from Weimar and around the world, with lectures and panel discussions, films and performances as well as interactive offerings. The festival will thus enable a dialogue between the head of one of the oldest family businesses in the world, a penguin rebelling on behalf of South Korea’s youth, and young scientists who are building a satellite in Kyrgyzstan. For the Goethe-Institut, the digital edition of the Kultursymposium Weimar is a forward-looking opportunity to create a platform that incorporates the objectives of cultural exchange, global networking and participation not only in content, but also in form.

About the Kultursymposium Weimar

The Kultursymposium Weimar is a discursive festival for new networks and ideas. Every two years, the Goethe-Institut invites over five hundred people from all over the world to come together in Weimar to attend the event. Interdisciplinary, diverse and international, the Kultursymposium reflects the richness and complexity of global discourses and proposes new ideas for international cultural exchange. Every edition of the successful festival format treats a new topic: in 2016 it was “The Sharing Game,” in 2019 “Recalculating the Route” on the challenges of our ever more complex world and in 2021 “Generations.” Further information: www.goethe.de/kultursymposium

The Kultursymposium Weimar is made possible by the involvement of the following businesses from the economic advisory board of the Goethe-Institut: Bertelsmann, Evonik Industries AG, Siemens AG and WÜRTH. The media partner is 3sat.