

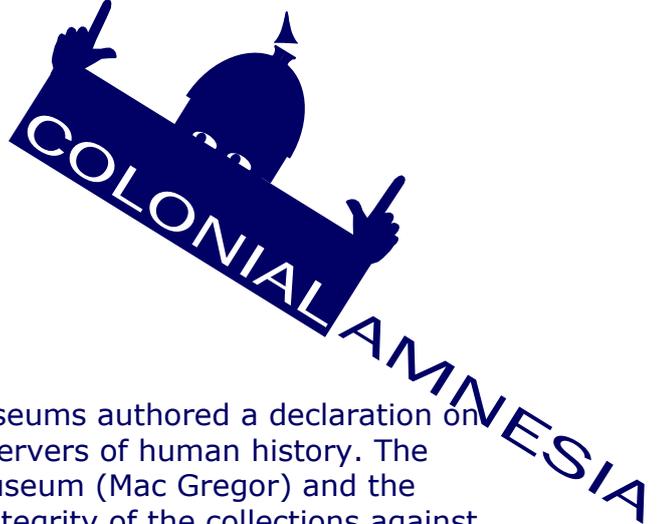
2003



The socialist palace was torn down step for step in a process of so-called "selective dismantling", after it was used as novel location for the parties of McKinsey, or the Federation of German Industries. At the end of the Nineties an initiative of ex-aristocrats and national conservatives was founded. Just like in the tradition of conquerors, it wanted to re-build the emperor's castle on the place where the Palace of the Republic was standing. The ruins of the castle were demolished after the war. This was to demonstrate a clear break from German claims to power. The initiative argued firstly on formal grounds: an historical ensemble was to be restored, but this only badly disguised their desire to abolish this clear break. Historical repetition-ism took its course in plasterboard classicism and Prussian-Disney.

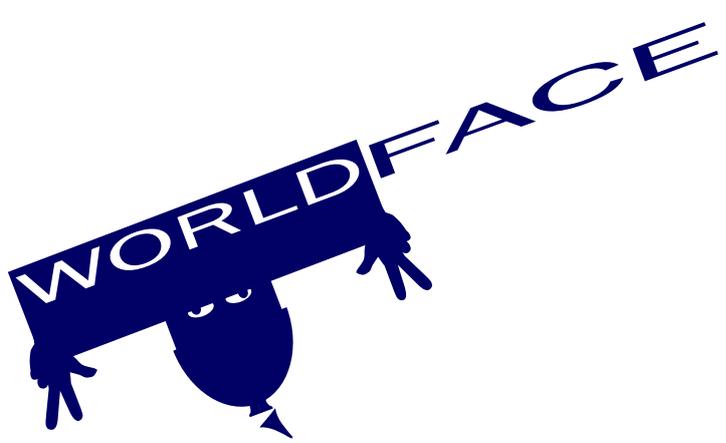
In the beginning, these lobbyists didn't know what exactly should be put in the castle: a shopping mall, a luxury hotel, a multiplex cinema? This perplexity about-faced into permanent enthusiasm through the idea to bring the collections of Berlin's Ethnological Museum and the Humboldt University into the castle: looted art, treasures acquired through deceit, violence, and extortion, skulls from colonial mass murders as resources for racist anthropology projects. All of this inventoried, dissected, indexed in out-dated, and even then, intellectually dubious scientific registers, not telling about the "world" - as the promotion machines from that point onward would tirelessly blare - but rather, only telling about power, its show cases, and colonial amnesia.

2002



The most powerful European and North American museums authored a declaration on the historic importance of universal museums as preservers of human history. The declaration - emphatically advanced by the British Museum (Mac Gregor) and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation - asserts the integrity of the collections against restitution claims. It answered the growing world-wide demands to return looted art to their places of origin; like the Elgin Collection or the Pergamon Alter. They argued - while the European border regiment continually tightened - with the cynical idealism of "secure third countries": The equality of all art and culture from all over the world is a crucial motive for the museum as a place of enlightenment. The Enlightenment museum as a universal museum collects everything and anything, yet it also has to be accessible to everybody ... its openness towards and addressing of the whole of humanity... Nothing and nobody must be excluded from the true universal museum of the Enlightenment." (Peter Klaus Schuster, former Director of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). Since then, in countless announcements from the Humboldt Forum, we have to continually listen to this unbearable "humanism", similar to condoning the continuation of the routine death of refugees on the borders of the European Union.

2015



In a film documentation we can accompany the director of the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin, Klaas Ruitenbeek, to the High Temples of Turfan that were completely destroyed by a German expedition at the turn of the last century. The frescoes were ripped out of the walls and transported to the former Ethnological Museum. (not much remains of them, because the exhibits were largely destroyed in the Second World War – so much for the “security” of western museums.)

We see the director of the museum in front of the walls where crass chisel marks are visible. We see his concerned nodding when the Chinese colleague speaks of cultural and religious losses. For a long time we look on, before the cut comes to the planning team at the construction site of the Humboldt Forum acclaiming the new dome as the proper place to install the frescoes. Then we ask ourselves, how often do we have to watch this, this regret which immediately turns into reclamation, and the permanence of self-forgiveness as a kind of thrust reversal, a legitimating energy accompanied by the continuation of chauvinist world- and culture politics..

We no longer want to cater to the countless ridiculous and partially breath-taking rhetorical excrescences of German hegemonic fantasies that have always been bound to the Humboldt Forum and all its functionaries. They are just as breath-taking as the dictum of the defence minister at the Munich Security Conference (2015), that Germany has to learn to lead. They are as impertinent as the racist refugee politics of Berlin, and so insensitive as the still on-going denial of the German genocide in Namibia. All of this propagates – or forgets, as the case may be, – in unison, a world in which goods, finances, knowledge, memory, artefacts, and life are subjugated under the same monotone stop and go of the regime of circulation.

The world whose presentation the functionaries of the Humboldt Forum claim to show, has long been defeated, destroyed, and plundered. This Museum is not a place of encounters, but rather a dictation. This enlightenment has always been extinct and blind. This place is not suited for occupation; it awaits its selective dismantling.

This statement is not a petition. It can be understood as a new exercise of non-acceptance, that endures, although schemes like Humboldt Forum are implemented from a so-called elite that is blind towards hegemonic power and signification.

