Press Kit

Objects. History. Stories.
Reviewing the Collection

8 May 2026 to 31 October 2027

Deutsches
Historisches
Museum

Design: State Productions

Deutsches Historisches Museum
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Press release
6 May 2026

Objects. History. Stories.

Reviewing the Collection

From 8 May 2026 in the Deutsches Historisches Museum

An amber game board from Königsberg made in 1607, Queen Luise's dressing gown from 1806, the poster for the East Berlin exhibition "40 Years of the GDR", and the IKEA bunk bed salvaged from a refugee shelter in Kassel in 2015 – the collection of the Deutsches Historisches Museum comprises around one million objects that bear witness to German history. From 8 May 2026 to 31 October 2027, the DHM is presenting a selection of some 200 items, some of which have never been shown before, including surprising finds and new acquisitions. The exhibition "Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection" in the Pei Building offers insights into the practice of collecting and examines the items on display in terms of their provenance and significance.

Raphael Gross, President of the Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum:
"By focusing on representative objects, the exhibition seeks to demonstrate how we approach our collection. This includes reflecting on the various historical contexts in which the collection was formed. What perspectives guided the collection activities at different times, and how did the objects on display come into our possession? These questions are of central importance to us as a historical museum."

Wolfgang Cortjaens, Curator and Head of the Collections Applied Arts and Graphics: "The exhibition brings together objects from different eras, ranging from the Middle Ages to the immediate past. Precious items stand side by side with everyday objects, beautiful objects next to rather inconspicuous or even banal ones. This kind of presentation was a conscious curatorial decision, for it is precisely the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory elements that invites a closer look. It allows us to focus on the objects themselves, on the stories and layers of meaning inherent in them, and on their role as witnesses to their time."

In the **first part of the exhibition**, Wolfgang Cortjaens, curator and Head of the Collections Applied Arts and Graphics, focuses on the DHM's collection itself, which, over the course of its 150-year history, has become a historical witness in its own right. A tour through the exhibition follows five defining eras in the institution's eventful history between 1883 and 2006. The Zeughaus, originally built in the early 18th century as a representative armoury of the Prussian kings, housed the "Hall of Fame of the Brandenburg-Prussian Army" from 1883 onwards. Its subsequent history in the 20th century includes the building's further utilisation, initially by the Nazi regime as a military museum, then its temporary use by the Allies after the Second World War, and from 1952, as the central socialist history museum of the GDR, the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (MfDG). Following reunification in 1990, the Deutsches Historisches Museum, founded three years earlier in West Berlin, took over the Zeughaus and its collections. In 2003, the post-modern exhibition hall designed by Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei supplemented the Baroque building.

This part of the exhibition **displays objects and ensembles that represent the collection's focus and the historical perspective of the respective era**. Whether a jacket from a Prussian infantry uniform, a Japanese samurai armour set given to Adolf Hitler by the Imperial Military Reservists' Association, a socialist table centrepiece presented as a state gift from North Vietnam to the GDR, or the first print of the German translation of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America – exhibition objects have always carried political significance. The practice of collecting was never arbitrary.

History is usually understood as a sequence and change over time. But it also tells of shifts in location. The exhibition therefore views history from a particular perspective: **in the second part of the exhibition, places, locations, and regions take centre stage. Selected object histories** tell of contested spheres of influence, of global trade, colonisation, and the exploration of new territories, as well as of vanished places, borders, flight, and exile. The tour therefore does not follow a strict chronology, but rather shows the tension of the changing interrelationships between the different eras.

Among the collection's displays are outstanding artistic cabinet pieces such as a "glass guest book" – the Counts of Oettingen's Welcome Beaker, engraved with 30 names, dates and mottos, a unique testimony to the religious turmoil during the Reformation. A two-volume parchment Luther Bible from 1535 bears witness to the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants while also highlighting territorial claims. A precious game board for Nine Men's Morris, chess, and backgammon, made in 1607 for Anne of Denmark, the English queen consort, illustrates the dynastic and economic interconnections in the Baltic region. An extremely rare ostrich egg, engraved with figurative scenes, tells of the struggle for supremacy in 17th-century global trade, which was closely linked to colonialism in the early modern period.

Heavy machinery and a miner's equipment from the Prosper Haniel colliery in Bottrop – which closed its doors in 2018 as Germany's last active coal mine – symbolise the transformation of an entire industry and a whole region. The medium of photography is represented by a collection of rare vintage prints from the early 20th century, when journeymen and journeywomen celebrated the rituals of the "Walz", the wander years, as a subversive alternative to conformist bourgeois life.

The exhibition concludes with two object histories that could not be more contrasting, yet both tell of movements of flight as well as "migrations of objects": on the one hand, a complete Biedermeier interior which, since its former owner's flight during the Second World War, has undergone an eventful odyssey, only to finally return to Berlin in 2023, just a few hundred metres from its original location, and, on the other hand, two IKEA bed frames converted into a bunk bed that came from a refugee shelter in Kassel, established in 2015. It is adorned with children's drawings that bear witness to their life-threatening escape by boat.

The exhibition is inclusive and largely accessible. A cartographic guidance system allows visitors to trace the origins and movements of selected objects and collections. Eyewitnesses as well as researchers from the collections department provide additional information in recorded interviews. Multimedia kiosks, inclusive stations, and an audio guide in German and English offer further insight during the tour. An accompanying programme explores and expands the themes throughout the exhibition's run. In June 2026, Deutscher Kunstverlag will publish the proceedings of the conference "Playful Alliances: Amber Politics and Courtly Culture in the Early Modern Age", which is devoted to one of the objects on display – the amber game board for Nine Men's Morris, chess, and backgammon.

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection

An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

Exhibition texts

Deutsches Historisches Museum

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An amber board game from Königsberg made in 1607, Queen Luise's dressing gown from 1806, the poster for the East Berlin exhibition "40 Years of the GDR", and a bunk bed salvaged from a Kassel refugee shelter in 2015 – the collection of the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) comprises around one million objects that bear witness to German history.

The exhibition explores the practice of collecting and examines selected objects in terms of their origins and meanings. Through these items, it relates history and personal stories from a unique perspective.

History is often viewed as a sequence of events and changes over time. But it also unfolds through movements across spaces. The stories told by the museum's objects therefore lay particular importance on places, regions, and origins.

Divided into two main sections, the exhibition first focuses on the DHM collection itself. With nearly 150 years of existance, it has become part of history in its own right. This section is followed by a tour of selected objects illustrating shifts in political, social, and cultural landscapes.

The Collection as a Historical Site

The history of the DHM's current collection spans several eras of German history – from Prussia up to the unification of Germany. Starting in 1883, the Berlin Zeughaus housed the Hall of Fame of the Prussian Army. After the Emperor's abdication, the Army Museum was incorporated into the State Museums. From 1934, the Nazi regime used it for propaganda, and in 1940 the Wehrmacht took over the museum. It was closed by the Allied Powers in 1945. In 1952, the GDR opened the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (MfDG) in the Zeughaus; since 1990, it has been the home of the Deutsches Historisches Museum.

Collecting was never a neutral act. Every object carries political and symbolic meaning. Which criteria have guided the selection of these objects? And why does the collection include a Prussian infantry uniform, Japanese samurai armour, socialist table decorations from North Vietnam, and the first German-language print of the United States Declaration of Independence?

The exhibition presents exceptional objects and ensembles that reflect the collection's focus and the perception of history across these different eras.

The Hall of Fame of the Brandenburg-Prussian Army

On 17 March 1877, Emperor Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, signed a law to redesign the Berlin Zeughaus (Armoury). It was to be used as a museum, serving as the Hall of Fame of the Brandenburg-Prussian Army. Completed in 1730, the building had previously functioned as a Prussian weapons depot.

The main structural changes, based on plans by Friedrich Hitzig, were the glass roof over the courtyard and the double staircases. They led to the newly vaulted upper floor and the domed hall. This upper level housed the "Hall of Rulers" and two adjoining "Halls of Generals".

Weapons and trophies continued to form the core of the new museum's collection. Artillery pieces and flags captured in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 were displayed in the courtyard. After the founding of the German Empire in 1871, calls for a pan-German collection had grown louder. Nevertheless, the military and army of Brandenburg-Prussia remained the museum's main focus for a long time.

The Military Museum in the Nazi Era

In 1934, the National Socialists began converting the Zeughaus into a military museum. In line with Nazi ideology, it was intended to serve as a place of education and instruction for the German people.

Initially, only few new objects were acquired. Collections such as a group of trophies from the Wars of Liberation of 1813 remained rare exceptions. To strengthen the personality cult around Adolf Hitler, several diplomatic gifts from allied nations were added to the collection.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the focus shifted to wartime propaganda. In 1940, the Wehrmacht took over the museum. It now displayed spoils of war, many of them obtained through the wars of aggression. Despite bombing raids, the authorities kept the museum open until autumn 1944 in an effort to bolster the population's will to persevere.

Interim Use and First Exhibitions

After the war, the Allied Command closed the Zeughaus and dispersed its collections, viewing them as symbols of German militarism. The Allies also demanded the return of spoils and trophies from earlier wars. Cannons from the collection were melted down for metal.

From 1947 onwards, a large portion of the remaining collection was taken to the Soviet Union, much of which was gradually returned in 1958.

In 1947, the Soviet military administration decreed that the Berlin Zeughaus should serve as a municipal art museum. Ludwig Justi, the Director General of the Berlin State Museums, previously dismissed by the National Socialists, curated several art exhibitions there until the Alte Nationalgalerie reopened in 1949.

Museum für Deutsche Geschichte, GDR

The Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (MfDG) served as the GDR's national history museum. In 1952, the Central Committee of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) established it in the Zeughaus. German history was now presented from a Marxist-Leninist perspective.

The MfDG's first exhibition was dedicated to Karl Marx. The installation of its new permanent display and the expansion of its collection – decimated by war and looting – took place gradually. Later additions included material evidence of everyday culture from industry, crafts, and agriculture, documenting the GDR's economic and cultural development.

The museum focused on the history of the labour movement and historical events seen as precursors to socialism, such as the Peasants' Wars and the Revolution of 1848/49. A recurring theme was the communist resistance to fascism, which the GDR used to distinguish itself politically from the Federal Republic.

Deutsches Historisches Museum

The Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) was founded in 1987 under the auspices of the Federal Republic of Germany. In September 1990, the GDR transferred the real estate and collections of the former Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (MfDG) to the Federal Government. In 1992, the Zeughaus became the DHM's main site and the venue of its future permanent exhibition on German history.

Between 1998 and 2003, an extension for temporary exhibitions was built based on a design by architect I. M. Pei. In June 2006, the new permanent exhibition "German History from the Middle Ages to the Fall of the Berlin Wall" opened in the fully renovated Zeughaus.

To meet higher museum and conservation standards, the Zeughaus has been undergoing renewed renovation since 2021. At the same time, an in-house project team is revising the content and educational programmes for the new permanent exhibition.

Spaces, Places, Settings

The second part of the exhibition focuses on the stories behind the objects and their place in history. These narratives evoke contested territories, global trade, colonisation and the exploration of new lands, as well as borders, flight, and exile.

The selected examples do not follow a strict chronology. They draw on different eras that interconnect with each other.

A Luther Bible, for instance, attests to the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants, while also reflecting competing territorial claims. Meanwhile, relics from the Ruhr region's last coal mine, tell not only of that entire region's industrial development, but also of its profound transformation in the 21st century.

A cartographic guidance system lets visitors trace the origins and journeys of selected objects. In-depth interviews with experts and contemporary witnesses provide further insights.

The Oettingen Welcome – A Glass Guest Book

The Welcome beaker of the Counts of Oettingen follows the tradition of 16th-century friendship books. In a sense, it is a "glass guest book". Thirty-two people engraved their names, initials, or mottos into the glass with a diamond needle. The oldest inscription dates from 1548, the most recent from 1650.

The Oettingen ruled a county in the Riesgau (Swabia) area that was under the direct authority of the emperor. Their territory was fiercely contested during the conflicts of the Reformation. This is reflected in the drinking vessel: the earliest name entered on the beaker is that of Georg Karg, whom Luther recommended as court preacher in Oettingen.

The beaker bears the names of many members of the predominantly Protestant high nobility of southern Germany. The two most frequently mentioned dates refer to the final phase of the Thirty Years' War (1618 1648): the Battle of Nördlingen in 1634 and the Ulm Truce of 1647.

The Ortenburg Bible

Joachim von Ortenburg, Imperial Count of Lower Bavaria, was a passionate collector. Today, 550 to 600 volumes from his library can still be traced. Handwritten entries in the books offer glimpses into their owner's life.

The count's collecting was strongly influenced by his political ambitions and religious convictions. In 1561, his brother-in-law Ulrich Fugger bestowed the so-called Ortenburg Bible to him as a gift. The Bible in Luther's translation was likely the catalyst for the introduction of the Reformation in the Imperial Countship of Ortenburg in 1563.

Cuius regio eius religio ("Whose realm, his religion") had been the governing principle in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation since the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. The count's conversion to Lutheranism brought him considerable political and financial conflict with the Catholic dukes of Bavaria, whose territories completely surrounded the small county of Ortenburg.

Anna of Denmark's Board Game Box

The southern Baltic region between Danzig (Gdańsk, Poland) and Klaipėda (Lithuania) has always been culturally and linguistically diverse. From 1230 onwards, the Teutonic Order conquered and administered large parts of the region.

Amber, a fossilised tree resin found along the Baltic coast, the origins of which long remained unknown, was one of the most important trade goods. Its extraction and export were strictly regulated.

After the dissolution of the State of the Teutonic Order in 1561, the amber trade monopoly initially passed to Prussia, then in 1618 to the Electorate of Brandenburg. Alongside Danzig, Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) became a major trading hub.

Only amber carvers granted privileges by the court were permitted to work the material. State gifts made of amber were particularly prized at European royal courts. Luxury items like this board game box were often presented as diplomatic gifts to forge political alliances.

Maritime Trade and Early Globalisation

A Baroque hall cabinet, an engraved ostrich egg, and a travelogue filled with nautical charts: all three objects evoke the 17th-century struggle for supremacy in global trade.

For centuries, until around 1450, the German Hanseatic League had dominated international maritime trade. The "discovery" and conquest of the Americas, the rise of new territorial states, the partial shift of maritime trade routes to land routes, and growing competition in commerce and shipbuilding gradually diminished its influence. The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC), founded in Amsterdam in 1602, emerged as a formidable rival to the North German league of cities.

Dutch economic power rested on their control of the spice route from East Asia to Europe. Their main base was Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia). They consolidated dominance through strategic overseas colonisation and the settlement of Europeans, while simultaneously resettling and enslaving indigenous populations. In the early modern period, global maritime trade and colonialism were inextricably linked.

Porcelain – A Mysterious Commodity from China

Porcelain has been produced in China for thousands of years. In Europe, it first gained popularity with the onset of global maritime trade in the 15th century.

Until the 19th century, Jingdezhen in the eastern Chinese province of Jiangxi was the global centre of porcelain production. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), it became the official "imperial production site". The city's geographical location favoured local industry: kaolin, feldspar, and quartz, porcelain's key ingredients, were mined in the surrounding mountains. Workshops were sealed off from the outside world to keep the formulas and manufacturing processes secret.

In the 17th century, the arrival of imported tea and coffee spurred European demand for Chinese tableware. Among the most active porcelain collectors was Elector Friedrich August I of Saxony, known as "the Strong". Between 1710 and 1720 alone, he acquired 25,000 Asian porcelain objects. His "porcelain mania" led to the founding of Europe's first porcelain manufactory in Meissen in 1710. This heralded the decline of Chinese imports.

The Prosper-Haniel Colliery

Prosper-Haniel in Bottrop, Germany's last active coal mine, ceased operations in 2018. In a symbolic ceremony, miners extracted a final piece of coal from the depths.

Since the mid-18th century, industrial mining had underpinned the Ruhr region's economic strength. Together with the iron and steel industry, it turned the region into one of Europe's most important coal and steel centres. After 1945, coal became a symbol of the Federal Republic of Germany's economic resurgence.

By the late 1950s, inexpensive oil and imported coal plunged West German coal mining into a deep crisis. The collieries tried to offset the falling prices through technical innovation. At the same time, the state supported the industry for decades – until 2018. Today, the headframes are closed down, and the former colliery site is being redeveloped as part of the region's structural transformation. Mining leaves long-term responsibilities, including the ongoing drainage of mine water.

The German Stadium – Mass Culture, Sports, Power

The chest reveals a view of a place that no longer exists:
the German Stadium in Berlin-Charlottenburg.
Built as a venue for the 1916 Olympic Games,
Germany's first large-scale stadium set
a milestone for modern sports architecture.

Some 60,000 spectators gathered for the inauguration in June 1913. The "Imperial Homage Sports Festival"
was timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of
Kaiser Wilhelm II's reign. At the same time,
the high-profile celebration of German sports was
a showcase to promote the German Empire.
The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 thwarted
plans to hold the Olympic Games in Berlin.

In 1934, the Nazi leadership ordered the stands
of the German Stadium demolished. The once
grandest arena in the German Empire had to make
way for the new Berlin Olympic Stadium.

Chronicle of a Tunnel Construction

After the Second World War, Germany was divided. The Soviet occupation zone became the GDR, ruled by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. On 13 August 1961, the GDR regime began to construct the Berlin Wall. This divided the city, separating families and friends. The border was heavily guarded, and escapees were shot on sight.

Even so, GDR citizens dared to flee across the inner German border. Until the 1980s, numerous tunnels were dug in Berlin near the Wall, often with support from West Berlin. The helpers included relatives of GDR citizens as well as idealists like the student Peter Rutzen.

In the winter of 1963, Rutzen helped build a tunnel at Bernauer Strasse. He documented the hardships and dangers in a diary. After several setbacks, he gave up. The project was doomed from the outset: an informer had tipped off the Stasi. Those on the East Berlin side planning to escape were arrested.

One Place – Two Countries

The street Neustrasse/Nieuwstraat forms a two kilometre stretch of the German-Dutch border, separating the municipality of Herzogenrath on the German side and that of Kerkrade on the Dutch side. Over the course of more than 800 years, the two places have grown together culturally and economically. Their shared dialect, known as Kerkrade or Herzogenrath Low German, further shapes their common identity.

Until the First World War, border crossings on Neustrasse were marked only by simple barriers. In 1915, a "death fence" was erected down the middle of the road to deter deserters. During the Nazi era, the Gestapo monitored passenger traffic, marking a major turning point. After the war, Allied forces controlled the border: residents needed a border pass to cross.

The 1960 German-Dutch border treaty restored a single shared barrier on Neustrasse. From 1969 to 1993, a 40 cm-high wall marked the border. After its removal in 1993, the two cities formed the first symbolic European city, Eurode.

The "Walz" – Between Tradition and Subculture

The tradition of the "Walz", the wandering of journeymen, remains particularly strong in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and parts of France. In 2015, UNESCO recognised it as Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The origins of the Walz date back to the Middle Ages. Around 1200, newly emerging craft guilds required candidates to earn the title of "master" (Magister) before opening a workshop. From around 1400, journeymen were required to travel after their exams to gain experience and practical skills. The strict rules of the Walz remain valid today: a journeyman on the Walz must not return to his hometown for at least three years and one day.

The journeyman's travel book serves as proof of the places visited. Other rules mandate remaining single and debt-free, wearing the traditional costume in public, speaking the "secret language" Rotwelsch, and owning no possessions.

Thomas Mann – Exile's Warning Voice

Shortly after Adolf Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933, writer Thomas Mann left Germany on a lecture tour. He never returned. After the liberation from National Socialism, he lived in Switzerland; his relationship with Germany remained strained throughout his life.

Winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize in Literature, Mann repeatedly issued warnings against National Socialism from exile. In 1938, he moved to the United States. On 1 September 1939, as German troops invaded Poland, marking the beginning of the Second World War, Mann published the manifesto *This War*. In it, he condemned the crimes of the Nazi regime and the complicity of the German people in stark terms.

From exile in the United States, Mann began recording radio speeches in 1940. The BBC broadcast them to Germany on longwave under the title "Deutsche Hörer!" ("Listen, Germany!").

The Migration of an Object – A Furniture Ensemble from the Schinkel Era

The mahogany and rosewood-veneered furniture ensemble originally stood in a townhouse at Unter den Linden 16. From 1810, the ground floor was home to Friedrich Bornitz, a physician who worked at the Charité hospital, and his family. After his death, the seating group and artistic works passed to his son, Friedrich Alexander, who from 1845 lived in the still-extant rectory in Berlin-Lichtenberg.

Through the marriage of Bornitz's daughter Alexandrine Wilhelmine, the furniture passed to the Pfannenstiel family. Before the Second World War, the ensemble belonged to her grandson. The music teacher Ekkehart Pfannenstiel was a member of the SA and supporter of the Nazi youth music movement's teaching practices. He took the family heirlooms with him to various locations during the war. From 1946, he taught at secondary school in Oldenburg. He later bequeathed the furniture to his student, the future art historian Dietmar J. Ponert, whose family had fled Breslau in 1945.

With the transfer of the collection to the DHM in 2023, the furniture has returned to Berlin-Mitte after nearly 200 years – just a few hundred metres from its original location.

A Refugee Shelter in Kassel

For years, people have fled crisis regions worldwide to seek refuge in Europe. In 2015, over one million arrived in Germany – a historic peak. The large number of protection seekers sparked debates over the European Union's refugee and asylum policies, as well as migration to Germany.

The children's drawings on the bed frame – an overcrowded boat on the open sea – evoke a life threatening escape. The donation of the bed and privacy boxes to the DHM was endorsed by then-District President Walter Lübcke. The CDU politician championed refugee aid and integration. In 2019, he was murdered on his home terrace by a right-wing extremist.

Deutsches Historisches Museum

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An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

Dr Wolfgang Cortjaens, Curator and Head of the Collections Applied Art and Graphics

Dr. Wolfgang Cortjaens, Foto: © Thomas Bruns

Wolfgang Cortjaens has been Head of the Collections Applied Arts and Graphics at the Deutsches Historisches Museum since 2020. A doctor of art and architectural history whose research focuses on the 18th and 19th centuries, he was a freelance research associate at the Catholic University of Leuven from 2003 to 2010. He subsequently worked, amongst other roles, as a curatorial assistant at the Alte Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2006/2007), as curator and deputy director at the Begas Haus – Museum für Kunst und Regionalgeschichte Heinsberg (2011–2015), and as Head of Archives and Library at the Schwules Museum in Berlin (2016–2018), where he curated the highly acclaimed exhibition "Winckelmann – Das göttliche Geschlecht" (Winckelmann – The Divine Gender, 2017). His published works include the conference proceedings "Stil-Linien diagrammatischer Kunstgeschichte" (Style Lines of Diagrammatical Art History, 2014, ed., with Karten Heck), which came out of a DFG research grant; "Queer Archaeology. Winckelmann and His Passionate Followers" (2022, ed., with Christian E. Loeben); and a monograph on the Biedermeier artist Johann Baptist Joseph Bastiné, currently being published. In 2023/24, Cortjaens served as research associate on the project team for the exhibition "What is Enlightenment? Questions for the 18th Century" at the Deutsches Historisches Museum. In 2024, together with Thomas Weißbrich, Head of the Collection Militaria 2, he initiated the interdisciplinary conference "Playful Alliances: Statesmanship, Warfare and Fortuna in the Early Modern Period", the findings of which have been incorporated into the publication on the Königsberg game board presented in the exhibition.

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Deutsches Historisches Museum

Objekte. Geschichte. Geschichten. Blick in die Sammlung

Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums

Dates and Facts

Place	Deutsches Historisches Museum Pei Building, ground floor
Running time	8 May 2026 to 31 October 2027
Opening hours	Monday to Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm Quiet Hours (exhibition time with no group tours): Tues 4–6 pm, Sat 10 am–noon Closed on 24 December 2026
Admission	Single ticket: 7 € | reduced 3,50 € | free up to age 18 Combi ticket (all exhibitions): 10 € | reduced 5 € | free up to age 18 Online-tickets: ticket.dhm.de
Information	Deutsches Historisches Museum Unter den Linden 2 | 10117 Berlin Tel. +49 30 20304-0 | info@dhm.de
Internet	www.dhm.de
Social Media	#dhmBerlin
Exhibition surface area	ca. 410 m², Pei Building, ground floor
Extent of the exhibition	Around 200 Objects from the DHM collection, 13 maps, 6 timelines, 1 projection on Zeughaus history, 2 audio stations, 7 historical film clips, 3 interactive media stations, 17 Interviews
President	Raphael Gross
Director of Exhibitions	N.N.

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Project head	Dorlis Blume
Curator	Wolfgang Cortjaens
Project assistant	Martin Koch
Academic trainee	Simon Sacha
Education and Communication	Brigitte Vogel-Janotta
Exhibition design	Hans Hagemeister, Johannes Karger, Gregor Müller-Übach, Marie Uhle
Audioguide	Verena Günther, Berlin
Accompanying programme	Nike Thurn
Accompanying publication	Spielerische Allianzen. Bernsteinpolitik und höfische Kultur in der Frühen Neuzeit (eds. Fritz Backhaus, Wolfgang Cortjaens, Thomas Weißbrich) Deutscher Kunstverlag
Sponsor	Supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media

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Conference Publication

Playful Alliances: Amber Politics and Courtly Culture in the Early Modern Period

Edited by Fritz Backhaus, Wolfgang Cortjaens, Thomas Weißbrich

256 pages, in German
100 illustrations
Brochure

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Between 1590 and 1620, numerous game board sets for Nine Men's Morris, chess and Tric-Trac were produced within the compass of the Prussian court in Königsberg, marking an artistic high point in amber craftsmanship. For the first time, this volume examines the context in which these precious cabinet pieces were created, against the backdrop of courtly (gaming) culture and dynastic alliance politics.

The Deutsches Historisches Museum's acquisition of a Königsberg game board from 1607 in 2021 provided the impetus for an interdisciplinary investigation of the culturally and historically significant sub-group of Prussian "amber diplomacy". The 13 essays in this volume combine perspectives from art, cultural, and economic history, bringing to life the Baltic region as a strategic focal point of the period "around 1600".

- First interdisciplinary study on Königsberg amber game boards from around 1600
- New perspectives on a hitherto only marginally studied field of early modern luxury objects

- With contributions by Valeria Butera, Wolfgang Cortjaens, Mathias Herrmann, Katharina Küster-Heise, Rahul Kulka, Markus Laufs, Ulrich Schädler, Antje Scherner, Verena Wasmuth, Klaus Weber, Thomas Weißbrich, Sabine Witt

Available from June 2026 in bookshops, the DHM museum shop, and online.

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection

An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

Accompanying Programme

Objects in the Spotlight

What stories do the exhibition objects tell – about themselves, their era, and our collection? In four sessions, we will focus on one object at a time and trace its history. Join us!

Deutsches Historisches Museum

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Wed., 1 July 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

The Ottoman Turban Helmet

A shimmering protection: Once worn by a high-ranking warrior in the Ottoman Empire, this helmet later found its way into the Zeughaus "Hall of Fame" via the collection of Prince Carl of Prussia. What can it tell us about the symbolism and craftsmanship of such armour—and about the history and interests of the Berlin collections that later proudly displayed it?

With Deniz Erduman-Çalış, Curator at the Museum of Islamic Art; Aaron Jochim, Head of Militaria: Weapons – Armour – Military equipment; and Helen Pfeifer, Associate Professor in Early Ottoman History at the University of Cambridge

Wed., 5 August 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

Queen Luise of Prussia's Morning Gown

An eventful garment: From the queen's wardrobe to the Soviet Union's Ministry of Culture and then to the GDR's Museum für Deutsche Geschichte, this silk cloak has had quite a journey. What role did feudal fashion play in the wearer's own era – and what role did it play in the Marxist-Leninist collection of the GDR?

With Birte Förster, Professor of 19th- and 20th-Century History at Bielefeld University, and Julia Franke, Head of Everyday Culture: Civilian clothing and textiles – Politics – Religion – Emblems

Wed., 2 Sept. 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

The "Song of the Germans"

A telling gift: On the occasion of its founding in 1987, the Federal Government and the Federal Chancellor presented the DHM with Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben's 1841 lyrics and sheet music. What did the song's music and lyrics represent at the time of their creation, during the Weimar Republic, under National Socialism, and in a divided Germany—and what foundation did they provide for the collection of the newly founded museum?

With Daniel Morat, curator of the 19th-century section of the New Core Exhibition; Pamela M. Potter, Professor of German and Music at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Yvonne Wasserloos, Professor of Musicology at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg

Wed., 7 October 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

The Ortenburg Bible

A consequential text: Only 10 copies of this early edition of the Luther Bible from 1535 were printed on parchment; one is now held at the DHM. What far-reaching – including political – consequences did this Bible have for German history in general and for its former owner in particular—and what significance does it have for the museum's library today?

With Matthias Miller, Head of the Library and the Collection Manuscripts and Old Books, Ursula Rautenberg, Professor (em.) of Book Science at Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg, and Stefan Wild, local historian and 3rd mayor of Ortenburg

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Speed Dating with the Collection

6 objects in 60 minutes: Over four sessions, the exhibition team invites you to encounter selected objects up close. Each time the bell rings, we move on—but at the end, there will be time for another close look. Event held in German.

Wed., 8 July 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

with Dorlis Blume, Head of project; Martin Koch, Project assistant; and Simon Sacha, Academic trainee

Wed., 12 August 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

with Wolfgang Cortjaens, Curator; Martin Koch, Project assistant; and Simon Sacha, Academic trainee

Wed., 9 September 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

with Dorlis Blume, Head of project; Wolfgang Cortjaens, Curator; and Simon Sacha, Academic trainee

Wed., 14 October 2026, 6.30 pm, Pei Building

with Dorlis Blume, Head of project; Wolfgang Cortjaens, Curator; and Simon Sacha, Academic trainee

Registration and further information under www.dhm.de/en/programme

Subject to change

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection

An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

Tours and educational offers

Inclusive and Accessible

Exhibition for All

Cultural participation for all visitors is of utmost importance to the DHM. That is why selected exhibitions, including the current one, are designed to be inclusive and largely accessible. A tactile floor plan provides information about the five rooms, and a tactile floor guidance system leads to all main texts as well as to multisensory, inclusive communication stations (IKS). Replicas of original exhibition objects for hands-on exploration and interactive participation stations convey inclusive content about selected exhibition topics. Exhibition objects are presented at varying heights, display cases are wheelchair-accessible, and high-contrast text facilitates reading. All main texts are available in German, English, Easy Language, German Sign Language, Braille, and large print.

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
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presse@dhm.de

www.dhm.de

There are five inclusive stations on the following topics:

The Collection of Prince Carl of Prussia
Locating Objects
History in Engravings: The Ostrich Egg
Mining Technology
Migration History(ies) in Boxes

Offers

Audio tour in German and English with object descriptions

Guided tours in German, English, and other languages; telephone tours, inclusive tours in German with object descriptions, in easy-to-read language, and in German Sign Language

Inclusive tours and educational programmes

You can also find the current schedule on the DHM website. For registration, information, and booking, visit: fuehrung@dhm.de or call 030/20304-750.

All of the inclusive programmes can also be booked by individuals or groups independently of public tour dates.

Guided Tours in Simple Language

60 minutes

3 € (plus admission)

Every first Saturday of the month at 12 noon

Tandem tour with translation into German Sign Language (DGS)

60 minutes

3 € (plus admission)

Every second Saturday of the month at 12 noon

Tour with object descriptions for blind, visually impaired, and sighted persons

60 minutes

3 € (plus admission)

Every third Saturday of the month at 12 noon

Telephone tour for blind, visually impaired, and sighted persons

90 minutes

5 € (plus admission)

Every second Wednesday of the month at 6 pm

Audio tour with object descriptions

German and English as well as German with room and object descriptions for blind and visually impaired persons

60-90 minutes

3 € (plus admission)

Inclusive tours for school classes

Inclusive and interactive workshop for after-school groups and elementary school classes, grade level 1-6

90 minutes
1 € per pupil

Inclusive offers for children and families

Guided tour for children and families

Just old stuff? Search. Collect. Explore

90 minutes

8-12 years of age

3 € plus admission (free up to 18 years)

Family ticket 18 €, only available in the museum! (admission and tour for 2 adults and max. 3 children)
Also bookable for families 30 € (max. 10 persons), plus admission for adults
The tour for families and children are also inclusively designed and can be translated into German sign language upon prior request.

Audio tour / Audio guide

German and English as well as German with room and object descriptions for blind and visually impaired people
60-90 minutes
3 € (plus admission)

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Offers for individual visitors

Public tours:
60 minutes
3 € (plus admission)

German:
Mo 3 pm, Tu 1 pm, Th 3 pm, Fr 2 pm, Sa 2 pm, Su 4 pm

English:
Mo 4 pm, Fr 4 pm

Offers for children and families

Guided tour for children and families:

Just old stuff? Search. Collect. Explore

90 minutes

8-12 years of age

Sundays at 2 pm

3 € plus admission (free up to 18 years)

Family ticket 18 €, only available in the museum! (admission and tour for 2 adults and max. 3 children)
Also bookable for families 30 € (max. 10 persons), plus admission for adults
The tours for families and children are also inclusively designed and can be translated into German sign language upon prior request.

Bookable Offers

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, and other languages upon request

Guided Tour for Adults

60 minutes
75 € plus admission (max. 25 persons), 30 € plus admission (for max. 10 persons)

Thematic Tour:

75 minutes
1 € school classes (per person and free admission as a class)
1€ seminar group (per person)
30 € group (up to 10 persons, plus admission)
75 € group (max. 25 persons, plus admission)

The museum also offers bookable exhibition tours on selected topics.
More information at our website: (Link)

Guided Tour for Students
60 minutes
1 € per student

Learn German at the Museum

Guided tour for integration and orientation courses

German
90 minutes
1 € per person

Offers for school classes

Inclusive and interactive workshop for after-school groups and elementary school classes, grades 1–6

German
90 minutes
1 € per pupil

Deutsches Historisches Museum

Tour for school classes in grades 7–10

German
60 minutes
1 € per pupil

Tour for school classes in grades 11–13

German
60 minutes
1 € per pupil

History workshop for school classes in grades 7–10

German
120 minutes
2 € per pupil

History workshop for school classes in grades 11–13

German
120 minutes
2 € per pupil

Thematic tour:

German
75 minutes
1 € per pupil

The museum offers bookable guided tours of the exhibition on selected topics.

For more information, please visit our website: **(LINK)**

PRESS IMAGES

Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection

Deutsches Historisches Museum

An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum

8 May 2026 to 31 October 2027

1 Exhibition of new acquisitions from 1910/11 in the Zeughaus on the occasion of Kaiser Wilhelm II's birthday, August Scherl Illustrations-Centrale G.m.b.H., Berlin, 1912 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

2 Hermann Joseph Wilhelm Knackfuß: Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau at the Battle of Turin on 7 September 1706, 1884, Oil on canvas © Deutsches Historisches Museum

3 Hounskull, Northern Italy, ca. 1360, Iron, brass © Deutsches Historisches Museum

4 Dressing gown of Queen Luise of Prussia, Germany or France, 1806–1810, Silk, taffeta, trimmings, metal, wool © Deutsches Historisches Museum

Download press images: www.dhm.de/en/press

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PRESS IMAGES

Objects. History. Stories. Reviewing the Collection

Deutsches Historisches Museum

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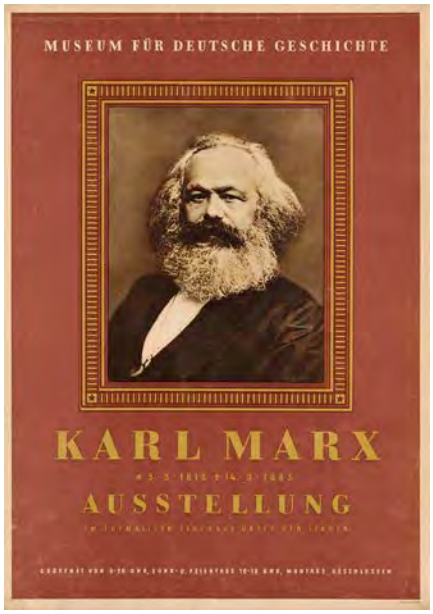
8 May 2026 to 31 October 2027

5 First printing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in German, Authors: Thomas Jefferson et al., Translator: Charles Cist, Philadelphia, 6.–8.7.1776, Paper © Deutsches Historisches Museum



6 Exhibition poster "Karl Marx" in the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte, East Berlin, 1953 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

7 The Communist Manifesto in the first special exhibition "Karl Marx" at the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte, East Berlin, 1955 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

8 Exhibition poster "40 Years GDR", Printer: Neues Deutschland, East Berlin 1989 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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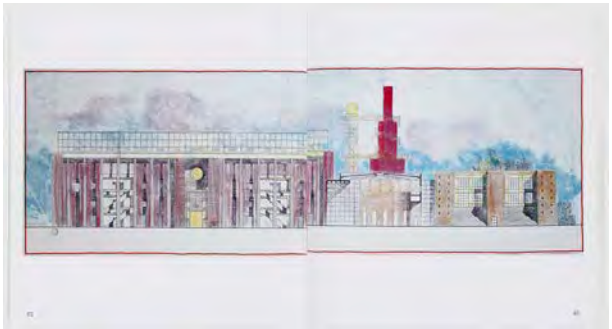
9 Table decoration with part of an American airplane wreck based on a photo from the Vietnam War, Vietnam, 1967–1975, Wood, aluminium, engraved © Deutsches Historisches Museum

10 Table decoration for International Labour Day on 1 May, Portugal, Mai 1981, Brass, cast, embossed © Deutsches Historisches Museum

11 Matthias Koeppel: … and everything will be good again. 3 October 90 in front of the Neue Wache, Berlin, 1991, Canvas, oil paints © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



12 Longitudinal section of the unrealised design for the DHM in the Spreebogen, Draft: Aldo Rossi, 1987, in: Aldo Rossi. Deutsches Historisches Museum 1989, Berlin 1989 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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13 Welcome beaker of the Oettingen counts, the so-called Oettingen Welcome, Southern Germany, engravings 1548–1650, Glass, colourless, engraved; silver, gold-plated and engraved © DHM

14 Board game box for nine men's morris, chess, and tric trac, formerly in possession of Anne of Denmark, dated "5. Aprilis 1607", amber, ivory, metal foil, ebony, silver © Deutsches Historisches Museum

15 Engraved ostrich egg with motifs from Jan Huygen van Linschoten's Itinerario, Netherlands, ca. 1600/1620, Ostrich egg, notched, engraved, blackened © Deutsches Historisches Museum

NAVIGATIO
AC ITINERARIVM
IOHANNIS HVGONIS LIN-
SCOTANI IN ORIENTALEM SIVE LVSITANO-
RVM INDIAM DESCRIPTIONIS EIVSDEM TERRAE AC TRACTVVM
HAGÆ-COMITIS

16 Title page of the travelogue of the Dutch seafarer Jan Huygen van Linschoten's voyage to India, First edition in Latin (Itinerario), The Hague, 1599 © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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17 Transverse cutting head (shearer head) for a roadheader, Voestalpine AG, Austria, 2003/2016, Steel, cast and bolted © Deutsches Historisches Museum

18 Hexagonal chest with a model of the German Stadium, Berlin-Charlottenburg, Gustav Baumann, Berlin/Potsdam, 1912 (model), 1923/24 (chest), Marquetry hardwoods © Deutsches Historisches Museum

19 Two former boundary stones of the border, Neustraße/Nieuwstraat, Herzogenrath (D)/Kerkrade (NL), 1968/1993, Precast concrete © Deutsches Historisches Museum

20 Journeymen of the Association of Upright Foreign and Domestic Journeymen Carpenters and Slaters and construction workers on the roof truss of a building, dated "October 1926", gelatin silver print © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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21 Woman dressed in a journeyman's uniform with a travel bundle, Cologne, dated "Carnival 1929", silver gelatine print © Deutsches Historisches Museum

22 Bunk bed for refugees and two privacy boxes, Two wooden Ikea beds, model Fjellse, Kassel, 2015, Pine-wood, inscribed, painted © Deutsches Historisches Museum

Download press images: www.dhm.de/en/press

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DHM Exhibition Preview 2026

As of: 4 May 2026, additions and alterations are subject to change

Deutsches Historisches Museum

16 October May 2026 to 11 April 2027

Controversial Kinship. Colonial and National Socialist Violence

Deutsches Historisches Museum

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The DHM is planning an exhibition for October 2026 comparing key aspects of colonial and Nazi violence in the 20th century. The exhibition will be shown in the basement of the Pei Building.

It is dedicated to the history of a comparison that extends far beyond the field of historical science. This is not a new idea: in the 1930s, comparisons were made between colonial and National Socialist forms of power.

This juxtaposition focuses on the idea of a close "kinship" between two historically violent regimes that differed significantly in terms of time, space and structure: on the one hand, European colonial rule, which lasted for several centuries, and on the other, the brief phase of National Socialist rule over Europe, in which the planning and exercise of extreme violence took place at a radically accelerated pace.

The exhibition tells the story of this comparison in the period from 1900 to 1960. It highlights central themes that played a role in the debate and contrasts historical sources with contemporary as well as later interpretations. With its international focus, the exhibition presents examples from European colonialism and National Socialist rule over Europe. On the one hand, it explores key issues – such as the role of racism, antisemitism, forced labour, concentration camps, and resistance – that enable factual comparisons and the perception of specific features. On the other hand, it examines the political exploitation of such parallels since the 1930s.

Historical comparisons can serve to sharpen analysis: they reveal both structural similarities and fundamental differences. In this way, discrepancies and distinctive features can be identified. However, the exhibition will also address the problems and limitations attached to such comparisons.

By presenting the history of this debate and the underlying historical facts, the exhibition aims to contribute to an objective and nuanced discussion of the topic.

The exhibition is curated by Dr Stephan Malinowski.

Pei building, ground floor

Picture: Clearing of land by setting grass on fire for economic and geopolitical purposes during a German research expedition to Tendaguru in German East Africa (now Tanzania), 1909/1913, Photographer: Edwin Hennig or Werner Janensch © Berlin, Museum für Naturkunde