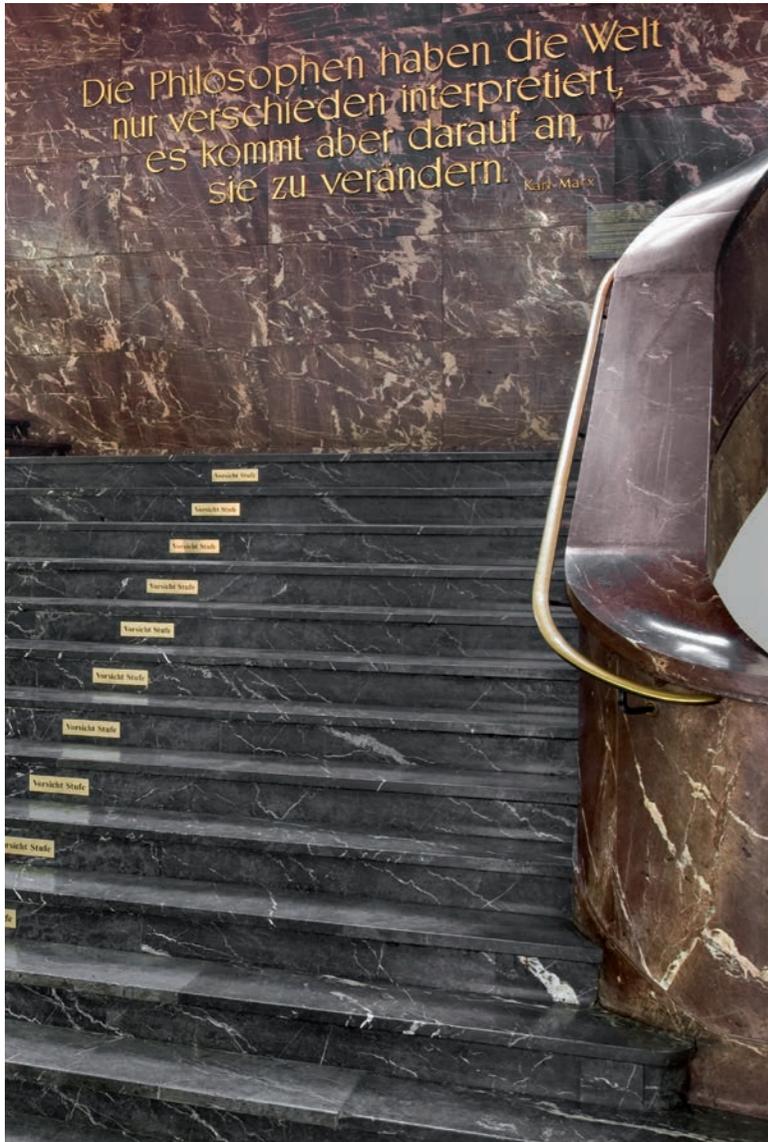
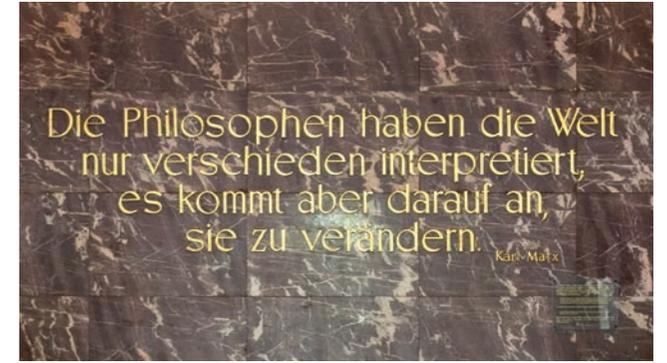




The 11th Thesis on Feuerbach and the art installation “Vorsicht Stufe” (“Mind the Step”)



The entrance to the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin is a listed building that is clearly influenced by the era in which it was built. A quotation from Karl Marx was fixed in a central position in golden letters in 1953:

“Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it”

In 2010 The HU took the opportunity afforded by its bicentenary to get to grips with this legacy. The quotation was contextualised using art and thus the foyer given a modern look. The artist Ceal Floyer emerged as the winner of a competition. Her installation not only tackles the quotation, but also allows for the fact that the thesis is seen as a provocative feature of a listed building. The golden letters and “Mind the step” are a sign of the historical tolerance and the internal satisfaction of a formerly divided country.

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it.

Les philosophes n'ont fait qu'interpréter diversement le monde, ce qui importe, c'est de le transformer.

I filosofi hanno solo interpretato in vari modo il mondo; ciò che importa, invece, è cambiarlo.

Los filósofos no han hecho más que interpretar el mundo de diversos modos, pero de lo que se trata es de transformarlo.

Filosofen hebben de wereld alleen maar op verschillende manieren geïnterpreteerd, het komt er op aan de wereld te veranderen.

Os filósofos apenas têm interpretado o mundo de maneiras diferentes; a questão, porém, é transformá-lo.

Filozofowie jedynie różnie interpretowali świat, a tymczasem chodzi o to, by go zmienić.

哲学家们只是对世界作了不同的解释，关键在于要改变世界。

哲学者たちは世界をたださまざまに解釈してただけである。しかし肝腎なのはそれを変えることである。

Философы лишь различным образом объясняли мир, но дело заключается в том, чтобы изменить его.

The 11th Thesis on Feuerbach

In 1845, Karl Marx noted down eleven theses on the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. Friedrich Engels discovered them “in an old notebook of Marx” in 1888 and published them in an appendix to his book entitled „Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy“.

Engels wrote: “These are notes to be elaborated at a later time, written in haste, absolutely not intended for print, but invaluable as the document wherein the ingenious seed of the new ideology is deposited.”

The eleventh Feuerbach thesis states: *“Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.”*

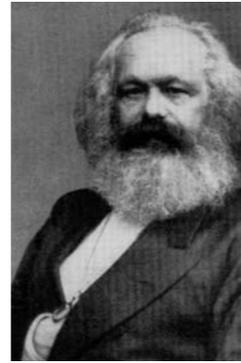
Friedrich Engels, Marx’s friend and companion, added the word “however” in his edited version.

The eleventh thesis on Feuerbach as revised by Friedrich Engels was put on display in the reconstructed foyer of the main building, which had been destroyed during the Second World War, by order of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the ruling party of the GDR) in 1953.

The idea was to honour Karl Marx as a former law student (1836-1840) at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin. The inauguration of the new ensemble, which also included a bust of Karl Marx positioned in front of the Senate Hall,



Ludwig Feuerbach



Karl Marx



Friedrich Engels

took place in May 1953 – the official Karl Marx commemorative year to mark 135 years since the philosopher’s birth and 70 years since his death.

There has been heated debate about this thesis both inside and outside the Humboldt-Universität following German reunification. Critics considered it a “symbol of the regime”. Its content was discussed in a series of public lectures. In the end, it was agreed not to remove the brass letters, as the building, including its foyer, is a listed monument.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) was a German philosopher who was highly influential during the “pre-March” movement. He studied at the Berlin Universität from 1824–1826 and attended all of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel’s lectures which influenced his thinking.

Karl Marx (1818 –1883) was a German philosopher, political journalist and influential theoretician of Socialism and Communism. He studied in Berlin from 1836–1840. His main work is “Das Kapital” (Capital), which contains controversial ideas that are still hotly debated today.

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) and Karl Marx developed the social theory today referred to as Marxism. Marx and Engels published “The Communist Manifesto” in 1848. Engels published the second and third volumes of “Capital” following Marx’s death in 1883.

“Vorsicht Stufe” (“Mind the Step”) art installation

To mark the 200th anniversary of the HU Berlin, a competition was held to find an installation that would redesign the foyer of HU’s main building, which was heavily destroyed during World War II and reconstructed in the 1950s. The artist Ceal Floyer won the competition beating off four other contestants.

The installation is called “Vorsicht Stufe”. Numerous identical brass signs inscribed with these words were made for the project and mounted on the 56 risers of the main flight of stairs and the two upper flights branching out to the left and right. They are ordinary brass warning signs in a reduced form, signs that we all know from everyday life whenever we walk through buildings. But the hidden strength of Floyer’s installation is not in the individual sign, but in the perception of the situation created by the sequence of terms. Seen from the foyer, the signs appear to continue indefinitely giving rise to strange correlations of axis within the spatial framework of the foyer, an historical monument dominated by red marble and GDR design. But it is precisely in this confusion and in the matter of danger, both of which grasp our attention, that the risk of tripping up – physically and mentally – becomes hidden. It reverses the essential nature of the individual sign when in the service of the warning signs rendering them banal and stripping them of their actual function. The British artist also shows a sense of humour about the German sense of order and the DIN standard which regulates warnings in public spaces. Floyer does not tell the story herself, however. She toys with the expectations of the spectator. In the end, there is a



Ceal Floyer

free association with intervention – aesthetic spatial experience, provocation or a warning against space and citation? This is for those passing through the foyer to decide.

The British artist Ceal Floyer, who was born in 1968, studied at Goldsmiths College in London from 1991 to 1994. The artist, who chooses to live in Berlin, has won numerous internationally recognised awards for art, among them the Paul Hamlyn Award in 2002 and National Gallery Young Art Prize in 2007. Her comprehensive artistic repertoire is shown in many exhibitions and renowned galleries worldwide.

Art in the Foyer is a project of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität Society and is kindly supported by the honorary chairman Dr. h.c. Hartwig Piepenbrock.

Office Public Relation

Bettina Busse, Constanze Haase, Jochen O. Ley (Text), Sabrina Schulze, Heike Zappe, Anke Hervol (Text Ceal Floyer)

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