

Deutsches Hygiene-Museum

# Racism

19.5.2018  
— 6.1.2019

The Invention of Human Races

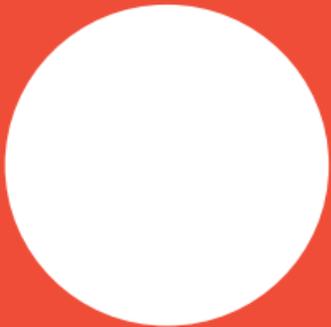


Fig.1

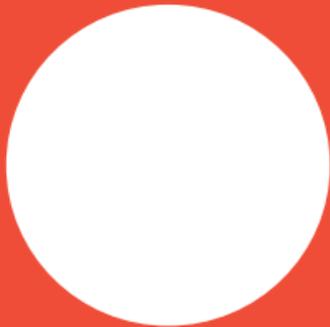


Fig.2

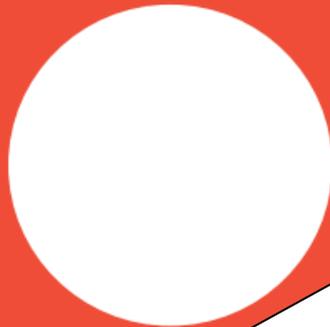


Fig.3

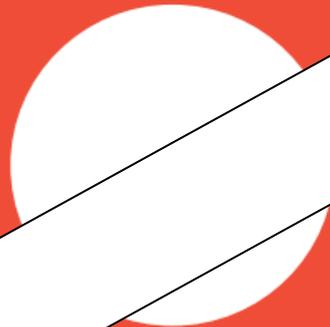


Fig.4

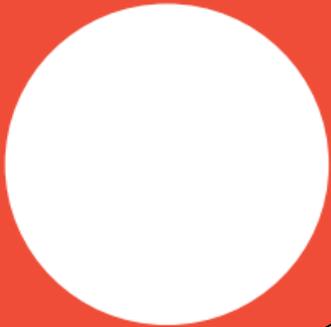


Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7

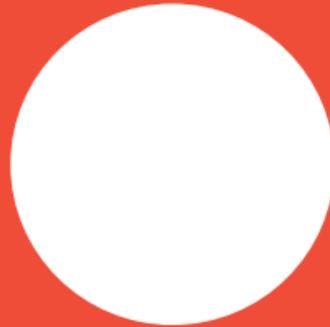


Fig.8

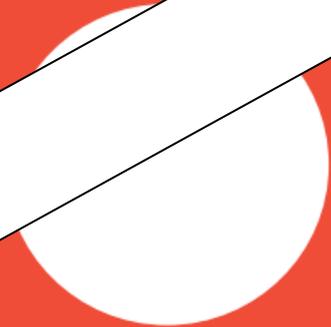


Fig.9

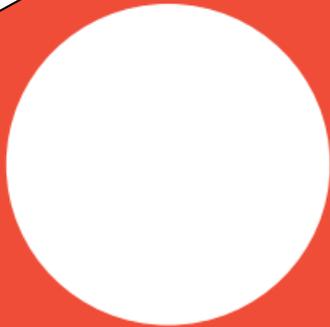


Fig.10

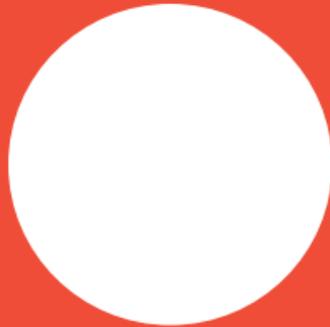


Fig.11

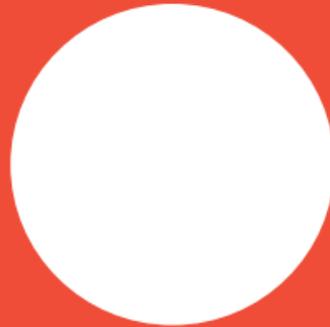


Fig.12

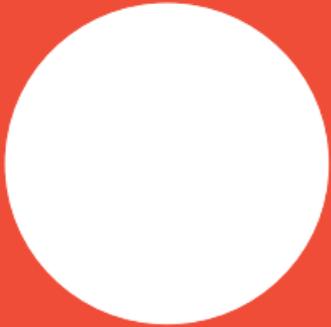


Fig.13

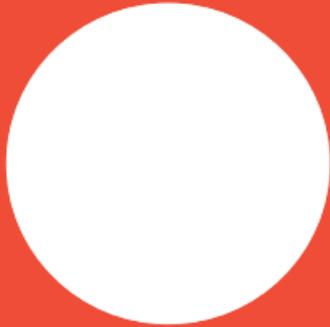


Fig.14

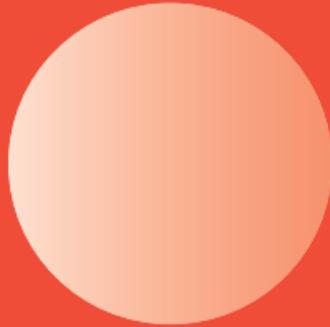


Fig.15

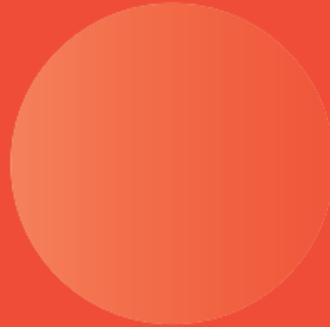


Fig.16

**PRESS KIT**

# RACISM

## THE INVENTION OF HUMAN RACES

An exhibition by the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden

19 May 2018 to 6 January 2019

### Project team:

Curator: **Susanne Wernsing**

Curatorial assistance: **Volker Strähle, Dr. Tiphaine Cattiau**

Video Curators: **Mo Asumang, John Kantara** and **Barbara Lubich**

Consultant: **Prof. Dr. Christian Geulen** (Universität Koblenz-Landau)

Scenography: **Francis Kéré**

### Funders:

Funded by the Free State of Saxony as part of the regional “Integrative Measures” programme

This measure is co-financed from public funds based on the budget drawn up by the members of the Saxon State Parliament

Funded by the Local Action Plan for a diverse, international Dresden

### Media partner:

Deutschlandfunk Kultur

### Facts and figures:

Area: about 800 sqm

Exhibits: ca. 400

Movies and videos: ca. 70

Audio stations: 8

## INTRODUCTION

Racism is an inhumane ideology, but at the same time an everyday occurrence that confronts many people with discrimination and violence. The colour of their skin, their appearance, their religion or their language lead them to have humiliating experiences which are almost unimaginable for other parts of the population. Racism not only hurts individuals but also violates the ideals of equality and freedom that form the basis for our democratic society.

This exhibition investigates how these forms of racism are connected to the term “race”: a category which, while it appears to describe human differences, is in fact really used to justify political, social and cultural inequality.

Though people all over the world look very different from one another, there is no such thing as “human races”. “Races” are an invention whose catastrophic effects have wreaked harm since the 18th century. The exhibition analyses the scientific methods behind the development of this school of thought and presents images and media used to disseminate it to this day. One section addresses the role of the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum as a propaganda machine for so-called “racial hygiene” under National Socialism. Another chapter is devoted to the politics of racial exploitation in the colonial period, the aftereffects of which extend to today’s refugee movements.

All the sections give the floor to figures who have critically examined racial ideologies. Multimedia exhibits, filmed interviews and video installations present current topics for discussion: rampant casual racism, the debate on population genetics, returning stolen cultural assets or the challenges of a post-migrant society.

The project team under curator Susanne Wernsing was advised by a working group made up of experts who deal with racist experiences on a personal or academic level, as activists or as part of education programmes. Their comments have become an important part of the exhibition. The design is the work of Berlin-based Kéré Architecture, who caused an international sensation in 2017 with their spectacular pavilion for the Serpentine Galleries in London.

The project **Racism - the invention of human races** does not only consist of the exhibition. It includes a comprehensive program of events and mediation, which was developed with different partners and will accompany the entire duration. It is aimed at politically active and culturally interested visitors and especially at youth and student groups from grade 6.

## EXHIBITION ROOMS

### HOW DIFFERENT ARE WE?

In the 18th century the Enlightenment proclaimed that all human beings are born equal. But human beings have, in fact, been treated very differently. It's a contradiction scientists have tried to resolve. To justify inequality of treatment, they referred to natural differences between groups of people. New scientific classification systems were created, many revolving around the concept of race. The term referred to biological differences, but it also claimed that specific groups of people enjoyed a higher status than others and therefore more rights.

Anthropologists, ethnologists and biologists for instance have used varying techniques to mark out groups of people from one another. They have referred to these differences as varieties, to different groups as peoples, races, ethnic groups and populations. Most scientists today realise there is no clear-cut order of human forms of life. Cultures, too, cannot be discretely separated and are subject to continual change.

### WHERE DO WE SEE *RACES*?

Even though there is no evidence that human races exist, the idea is embedded in our minds. We see differences between people and believe we are able to detect races. It's something we've learnt to do from many depictions. In the 19th century and in the early 20th century the idea of human races was showcased mainly by exhibitions that used exhibits and statistics to create a discrete reality.

In Nazi Germany such exhibitions combined with the propaganda of racial policy, which posited that only 'strong and healthy human beings' had a right to live. Those who were 'weak', 'sick' or did not conform to 'the German type' were regarded as disruptive or even dangerous. The Deutsches Hygiene-Museum was able to reach a large public with its exhibitions on 'Volksgesundheit', or public health. An exhibition at the city hall in Dresden as early as 1933 vilified artists of modernism as 'degenerate'. And in 1939 the Deutsche Kolonialausstellung put on a trade show that sought to substantiate Germany's claim to colonial possessions.

### WHO ARE WE? WHO ARE THE OTHERS?

It's difficult to say who 'we' are. We prefer to describe what, in our eyes, appears foreign to us. We seek to affirm who we are – and, to do so, we turn our gaze to 'the Other'. There was even a time when people from all over the world were put on show at European zoos. They were meant to illustrate cultures and civilisations considered inferior to ours. Even today, we talk about 'Islam' or

'the Orient' in order to define the 'Western world'. And yet the supposedly foreign culture has long become a part of our own.

In the age of colonialism, European superpowers divided the world up between themselves and ruled over it by force. European missionaries spread Christianity, and businessmen exploited natural resources. Settlers laid claim to land, and colonial soldiers killed indigenous peoples. Economic dependencies and colonial power are part and parcel of Europe's shared history and the history of the countries once occupied. Even today these forces still drive people to flee. The colonial legacy lives on in the thought of a white superiority.

## **HOW DO WE WANT TO LIVE TOGETHER?**

Society today is characterised by a huge cultural, religious and social diversity. Indeed, many people have a history of migration behind them. And yet, for all that long history of shared experiences, the phenomenon of racism has not disappeared. For those affected, racism is a bitter reality, whether it's in everyday life, at school, at work, in movies, or in politics. Not least, it also exists in our own heads. So how can we break down such discriminatory thought patterns and behaviours? How can we devise rules for living together that allow conflicts to be played out and settled fairly? How can we ensure that everyone is able to take part in society on equal terms?

The last room in our exhibition is intended as a place of dialogue, as an opportunity to engage in conversation with one another. Current works by filmmakers of different generations invite you to think, together, about the key issues of the present: What unites us? What separates us? How do we want to live together?