This year, the Buddy Bears are sending their Christmas greetings from their hometown Berlin. Until 7\textsuperscript{th} January, the United Buddy Bears bring together people and cultures (e.g. the many artists from all over the world who came to exhibition opening) once again – this time on the Berlin square \textit{Walter-Benjamin-Platz}. With this 31\textsuperscript{st} exhibition – part of a journey to all five continents – the 2m tall sculptures stand for tolerance and international understanding – a particularly fitting message for the Christmas season.

As always, the exhibition – located in the City West – is open to everybody round the clock, completely free of charge. In addition, children can take part in a drawing competition until the end of the exhibition, right there at Walter-Benjamin Platz, in the temporary Buddy Bear studio. So there are many good reasons to take a look at the exhibition of 141 United Buddy Bears on the atmospherically illuminated square near the boulevard Ku’damm.

Happy Christmas and a Bear-tastic New Year!
The Buddy Bears celebrate diversity

To celebrate the return of the Buddy Bears to their hometown Berlin, the initiators of the exhibition, Eva and Klaus Herlitz, invited guests to a festive opening event that took place on Walter-Benjamin-Platz on 1st December. Ambassadors and embassy representatives from more than 50 countries gathered in the circle of the exhibition, which is under the patronage Marianne Freifrau von Weizsäcker. Among the guests were also many international artists, supporters and sponsors, as well as long-standing companions of the exhibition, such as Heidi Hetzer and District Mayor Reinhard Naumann (Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf). On this frosty morning, Sawsan Chebli, State Secretary for Civic Engagement and International Affairs, found the right words to welcome the bears from all over the world that bring their message of tolerance and international understanding to their hometown.

The joint presence of representatives of the major world religions, organised by the priest Dr. Gerdi Nützel, was a particular highlight at the opening event. The representatives of seven world religions read prayers for peace that belonged to their respective faiths. It was very moving to hear how all the prayers asked for mutual respect and tolerance – and for different people and nations to live together in peace. One prayer said: “We know that religions have been abused in history and up to the present day to justify acts of violence against other people and states. In a joint conversation, we are trying to find ways of engagement for a peaceful and just life together.“

A moving message that emphasises the mission of the United Buddy Bears during their ongoing global tour.

We also thank the patrons of this exhibition:

Lawyer & notary (retired) Albert Meyer; A. Schmidt GmbH & Co. KG; AHORN Hotels & Resorts; Air in Berlin – Hotel; Bankhaus Lampe; BEITEN BURK哈RTD – law firm; Brunhild and Lothar Aflerbach; Cornelius Bartenbach Haesemann & Partner; Carsten Zahn; ellington; enoiteca IL CALICE; Frank, Follert and Loczenski; Grand Hyatt Berlin; Hauert Projekt GmbH; Herlitz Romania; Hyperion Hotel Berlin; Mario Schmidt; Louisa’s Place; Merck Finck – private bank; Robert Lindner GmbH & Co.KG; STILL; Victor’s Residenz-Hotels
Berlin At the Green Buddy Award ceremony on 16 November 2017 in Berlin, companies were honoured for the 7th time for including ecology and sustainability in their corporate philosophy. For the first time, the Young Green Buddy was presented as part of the environmental award ceremony of the Berlin district Tempelhof-Schöneberg. The prize went to a project investigating sustainable consumption in the school environment, launched by the secondary school Rheingau Gymnasium. According to District Mayor Angelika Schöttler, the Green Buddy Award 2017 continues to be a great success. Eva and Klaus Herlitz, who supported the awards once again by providing the Buddy Bär Berlin trophies, were also amazed about the initiative of the award-winning companies. “The question is not who owns our environment, but who protects it. All the winners of a GREEN BUDDY AWARD belong into the latter group. We owe them a big THANK YOU!”

This year, the Green Buddys were presented at “Urban Nation”, the recently opened museum for contemporary urban art.

Champions 2017

Berlin On 9th December, a great gala event took place to celebrate Berlin athletes and a special commitment to sports – the Champions 2017. It was an emotional evening, where Buddy Bears were awarded to athletes across the generations. The first trophies went to four young athletes, who were in the public eye due to their outstanding successes during the past year. The golden Buddy Bears were awarded to the speed skater Claudia Pechstein and the diver Patrick Hausding. The BR Volleys received their Buddy Bears as the best Berlin team 2017 immediately after they had won an away game.

Charity

Since 20 June 2001, when Buddy Bears appeared in the streets and squares of Berlin for the first time, Buddy Bear activities and help for children in need have formed an inseparable unit. Time and again, Buddy Bears are sold at auctions during charity events in aid of UNICEF and other children’s relief organisations. The total amount of all funds raised so far is €2,274,000

The UNICEF stand on Walter-Benjamin-Platz during the current exhibition.