

Herzliche Einladung zum Gastvortrag von

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**HemisFair '68:
The Conquest of the Americas Performed
in the Cold War**

im Rahmen des TWM Forschungskolloquiums

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Charlotte M. Canning is a Visiting Fellow in January and February 2020 upon invitation from Prof. Dr. Christopher Balme in the context of the CAS Research Focus "Global Dis/Connections".



am Mittwoch, 22. Januar 2020, 12:00 c.t. – 14:00 Uhr

**Institut für Theaterwissenschaft
Georgenstraße 11, Raum 109**

HemisFair was held in San Antonio, Texas, from April to October 1968. "The Confluence of the Civilizations," as the fair was titled, also coincided with the 250th anniversary of the city's founding. The six months event celebrated the hemisphere as the place where the Americas and Europe met and forged an equitable new world.

Every supporter of the fair had their own reasons for allocating resources to it. For the federal government it advanced the goals of the Alliance for Progress which intended to eliminate poverty in Latin America while reinforcing US regional hegemony. For state officials, the fair, its organizers argued, was to position Texas as the "gateway to Latin America" for trade and tourism. For the local business community it was to remind everyone that San Antonio was "the capital of North Mexico. We've been here since forever." What underlay these motivations, and made the fair a productive way to realize them, was the idea of development.

All societies moved through stages, contemporary thinking went, and it was the responsibility of the more developed to help those less far along. The US Cold War leadership saw the embrace of development as evidence of their full realization of the promise of modernity, and their right to reshape the world in the image of the US. The scenario they used for this was not from the twentieth century, or even the nineteenth, instead it was one of the oldest in the hemisphere. The fair's title implied that the meeting of civilizations in the Americas had been peaceful and equitable which elided the historical truths of violent military conquest, enslavement, and domination. Hernán Cortés carefully staged his initial meeting with Montezuma in 1519 and the entry of the Catholic Church to México in 1524, and that staging provided the Americas with an enduring scenario of conquest. Development was simply the twentieth century version of this scenario in its palimpsestic genealogy of conquest. Employing a typical US Cold War strategy, HemisFair offered the arts as proof of liberal democracy's freedoms and reinvented conquest for the modern world. In this paper I will demonstrate that development as conquest was the impetus behind foregrounding the arts at HemisFair.