

Presseinformation

Museum am Rothenbaum

Rothenbaumchaussee 64 | 20148 Hamburg
Germany | markk-hamburg.de

Resonating Images from Peru



Duration: June 5, 2026 to June 27, 2027

Opening: June 6, 2026 | 4 p.m.

Who owns historical images – and who decides what they convey? The exhibition “Resonating Images from Peru” at the Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK) explores these questions through the historical photographs of the German amateur researcher Hans Heinrich Brüning (1848–1928). As part of the 9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg 2026, the MARKK presents a collaboratively curated exhibition showing how artists and communities in northern Peru are transforming colonially influenced documents into vibrant sources of cultural self-determination.

Brüning’s Legacy – An Archive Between Worlds

During his 50-year stay in the Lambayeque region, Brüning, an engineer and amateur researcher from northern Germany, was among the first to document the cultural history and daily life of the area. His extensive collections of photographs, musical recordings, archaeological and ethnographic objects and field notes serve as the basis of the exhibition. Most of the photographs and parts of the other collections are held at the MARKK, while the majority of the archaeological objects form the core collection of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional Brüning in Lambayeque, Peru.

Revival of Muchik Culture

Since the 1980s, cultural practitioners, scholars and communities in northern Peru have been rediscovering Brüning’s archive. After the photographs were rediscovered at the MARKK (then the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg) and made accessible in Peru, they sparked a revival of local Muchik culture. Today, Brüning’s images continue to resonate across generations and borders and circulate widely on social media. Colorized, annotated and reinterpreted, they create new forms of cultural participation that extend far beyond the museum.

Ambivalent Perspectives and Artistic Reinterpretations

Brüning’s photographs often convey openness and intimacy, yet they are also shaped by power imbalances and colonial stereotypes. As a white, European man and engineer, Brüning occupied a privileged position within Peruvian society. At the same time, the

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people he photographed gaze back with skepticism, curiosity or self-assurance, raising questions about agency and representation.

Contemporary artists from northern Peru engage with these tensions in different ways. Enzo Miguel Matute's photo-ceramics, created specifically for the exhibition, enter into dialogue with pre-colonial portrait vessels, while his ceramic "archaeological fictions" comment with irony on the history of archaeological excavation and looting in Peru. Marystela Camacho's embroidered and watercolor interventions invite a poetic reinterpretation of the photographs.

Between 1910 and 1925, Brüning also recorded the last speakers of the Muchik language as well as musical performances on wax cylinders. These recordings continue to inspire local musicians today.

Marginalized Voices

The exhibition brings images to light that have received little attention until now. For the first time, it explicitly highlights photographs of Afro-Peruvian people in the context of the large sugarcane haciendas where Brüning worked. Peruvian sociologist and activist Roland Álvarez also explores potential queer spaces within Brüning's documents, opening up new perspectives on both past and present.

Beyond the Limits of the Archive

In collaboration with Prof. Gisela Cánepa-Koch (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) and Dr. Walther Maradiegue (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn), this exhibition explores how processes of cultural reappropriation can transcend the boundaries of the museum archive and prompt a collective reevaluation of historical collections. Especially in the digital age, new opportunities for appropriation and participation emerge when local communities use, reinterpret and share historical photos and music online. The exhibition highlights how engaging with Brüning's archive continues to create connections across generations, communities and geographical borders.

For additional press information and images, visit: markk-hamburg.de/en/press/

9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg 2026

The exhibition is part of the 9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg 2026, titled "Alliance, Infinity, Love - in the Face of the Other" (June 5-September 22, 2026). Sponsored by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Department of Culture and Media.