

**40 Years of the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank – *MENSCH BERLIN*  
Anniversary Exhibition (20 February – 22 June 2025)  
at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank**

**This year, the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank and the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank celebrate their 40th anniversary. *MENSCH BERLIN* features artworks by more than 70 artists, inviting a discussion about the reception of art from the German Democratic Republic and the role of corporates as cultural patrons.**

After 40 years, the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank is one of the oldest German art collections founded by a corporate. Although many companies did not discover the art market until its boom in the early 2000s or have only attracted attention through the sale of their artworks over the last several years, the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank has been growing and flourishing for four decades. This is partly thanks to the Stiftung KUNSTFORUM der Berliner Volksbank gGmbH, a non-profit organization which owns the collection, ensuring it cannot be sold.

The collection was founded by the GrundkreditBank in 1985. In 1999, it was expanded and restructured during the merger of the Berliner Volksbank and the GrundkreditBank.

The collection's initial focus on artworks from the GDR was an unusual decision for a company based in West Berlin. On the advice of art consultant and gallerist Dieter Brusberg and later in collaboration with Rüdiger Küttner, director of the Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR (GDR State Art Trade), the bank acquired art from the GDR and presented it in exhibitions that drew substantial public attention.

Under the leitmotif ***Bilder vom Menschen – Bilder für Menschen*** (Images of People – Images for People), an extensive collection of figurative artworks from the post-war era was established and later expanded to include ***Berliner Stadtbilder*** (Images of the City Berlin). Today, the collection encompasses over 1,500 works by nearly 200 artists from both East and West Germany.

*We are proud of the regional network we have developed through this art collection and its works, especially through the continued involvement of the artists. Our personal exchanges with them make it special. We are highly invested in making this (art) historically significant collection and its works from the GDR, in particular, regularly accessible to a wide audience – at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank, and this year in Vienna, as well. Our workshop for arts education, the “Werkstatt für Kreative”, turns 20 years old this year and plays a significant part in this important*

*cultural education work. Together with the Berliner Volksbank, the workshop provides a valuable contribution to supporting arts and culture in Berlin and Brandenburg.*

Sebastian Pflum, managing director of the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank

### **MENSCH BERLIN Anniversary Exhibition**

The **MENSCH BERLIN** anniversary exhibition features highlights from the collection and artworks never before presented to the public, including significant works from the Berliner Schule and Leipziger Schule, as well as the Neo-Expressionist Neue Wilde movement and East Berlin's alternative art scene. Paintings, sculptures, and works on paper produced between 1949 and 2018 are on view.

The exhibition traces the development of the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank and the transformation of the art scene in Berlin and its surrounding regions – reflecting the Berlin Wall's division of the city, the turbulent period of Germany's reunification, and the tension between East and West.

Manfred Butzmann's and Ursula Strozynski's monochrome images of Berlin, for example, document the melancholy of a divided city, while Roland Nicolaus' luminous panorama of the Berlin Ensemble on Schiffbauerdamm or Barbara Quandt's *Mauer am Brandenburger Tor* (The Wall at Brandenburg Gate) convey a sense of new beginnings.

Works by important East German artists, such as Angela Hampel, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Harald Metzkes, Werner Tübke and Ulla Walter, underscore the collection's quality, as do artworks by influential figures from the West German art scene, including Horst Antes, Christa Dichgans, FRANEK, Helmut Middendorf and Rainer Fetting.

The exhibition also raises the question of how art from the GDR is perceived today. As an authentic window onto history or ideologically tainted? This question has long led to art from the GDR playing an ambivalent role in German art history.

*However, the time of upheaval was also a time of rethinking, reformulating and convergence. With the return to the elemental, to color and material, artists in East and West faced similar visual challenges. These artistic forces of important protagonists from East and West face each other in the collection. A beautiful analogy between art from East and West before the Wall came down can be seen, for example, between the two paintings "Frau mit weißer Schlange", 1988 by Angela Hampel, and "Zyklus fremde Frauen (2)", 1986 by FRANEK. The mythically charged motifs both stage in their own way a self-image for the consciousness of free femininity.*

Anja Mosbeck, Artistic Director and curator of the exhibition

### **A Dynamic Exhibition**

An exhibition highlight: Selected artworks will regularly be exchanged throughout the duration of the exhibition in Berlin, giving visitors new insights into this unusual collection's diversity.

## **MENSCH BERLIN in Vienna**

The continuation of the exhibition in Vienna's prestigious Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien is a further high point of this anniversary year. From **9 July to 31 August 2025**, **MENSCH BERLIN** will be on view in Austria's capital, expanding the reach of this exceptional collection's cultural heritage beyond Germany.

### **Artists in the exhibition, among others:**

Horst Antes, Elvira Bach, Annemirl Bauer, Rolf Biebl, Norbert Bisky, Christa Böhme, Karol Broniatowski, Gudrun Brüne, Manfred Butzmann, Luciano Castelli, Fritz Cremer, Christa Dichgans, E.R.N.A., Rainer Fetting, Wieland Förster, FRANEK, Ellen Fuhr, Klaus Fußmann, Hubertus Giebe, Sighard Gille, Hans-Hendrik Grimmling, Clemens Gröszer, Waldemar Grzimek, Bertold Haag, Angela Hampel, Bernhard Heisig, Heinz Heisig, Burkhard Held, Werner Heldt, Sabine Herrmann, Barbara Keidel, Klaus Killisch, Carl-Heinz Kliemann, Gregor-Torsten Kozik, Hans Laabs, Roland Ladwig, Helge Leiberg, Via Lewandowsky, Werner Liebmann, Rolf Lindemann, Markus Lüpertz, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Harald Metzkes, Helmut Middendorf, Roland Nicolaus, Dietrich Noßky, Barbara Quandt, Erich Fritz Reuter, Hans Scheuerecker, Cornelia Schleime, Ludwig Gabriel Schrieber, Willi Sitte, Gerd Sonntag, Hans Stein, Werner Stötzer, Strawalde, Ursula Strozynski, Rolf Szymanski, Christian Thoelke, Werner Tübke, Hans Uhlmann, Hans Vent, Ulla Walter, Trak Wendisch, Jürgen Wenzel, Bernd Zimmer

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**MENSCH BERLIN, 10 February until 22 June 2025**

**Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm, Mondays closed**

**Admission 5 Euro, reduced 3 Euro, up to 18 years free. An anniversary publication will be published.**

**Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank, Kaiserdamm 105, 14057 Berlin (Charlottenburg)**

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**We recommend using public transport (S-Ringbahn Messe Nord/ICC, U2 Sophie-Charlotte-Platz or Kaiserdamm).**