

PRESS RELEASE

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MENSCH BERLIN: Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank presents anniversary exhibition in Vienna

MENSCH BERLIN, the major exhibition celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank and the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank, can be viewed at the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien from July 9 to August 21, 2025.

The Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank and the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank are celebrating their 40th anniversary with the **MENSCH BERLIN** anniversary exhibition. Following the public success of the exhibition in Berlin, it can now be visited at the **Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien** from **July 9 to August 21**.

The exhibition features more than **120 paintings, sculptures and works on paper** - created between 1950 and 2011 - and tells the story of the changing art landscape of divided Berlin and neighboring regions.

In seven thematically divided rooms, central positions of “Berliner Schule” and “Leipziger Schule”, “Neue Wilde” and the alternative East Berlin art scene are shown. A further focus is on the collection's leitmotif “**Bilder vom Menschen - Bilder für Menschen**” (Images of People – Images for People), supplemented by “**Berliner Stadtbilder**” (Images of the City Berlin), as well as the artistic examination of the Wall and the turbulent period of reunification.

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

Insights into a unique collection profile

Founded in **1985** by GrundkreditBank and expanded in 1999 through the merger of Berliner Volksbank and GrundkreditBank, the art collection surprised with its unusual focus on art from the GDR for a West Berlin company.

Today, the collection includes more than **1,500 works by around 200 artists** and is owned by the non-profit Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank.

Over four decades, continuous expansion, curatorial rigor and regular public presentations have created a distinctive collection profile. Central artistic positions meet in the interplay between East and West: Works by artists with an East German biography such as **Angela Hampel, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Harald Metzkes, Werner Tübke** and **Ulla Walter** stand alongside works by West German artists such as **Horst Antes, Christa Dichgans, Rainer Fetting** and **Markus Lüpertz**.

With MENSCH BERLIN, we are bringing a large selection of striking works from four decades of collecting to Vienna - to a place that stands for cultural exchange like no other. At the end of June 1989, almost exactly 36 years before the opening of our exhibition here in Austria, the Austrian and Hungarian foreign ministers cut through the local border fence to great media effect. In doing so, they further contributed to the dismantling of the “Iron Curtain”. Further symbolic openings of this border enabled many GDR citizens to leave the country via Hungary and Austria, even before the opening of the Berlin Wall. With the first presentation of an exhibition outside the Federal Republic of Germany on the occasion of our anniversary, we are also celebrating this piece of history and the close cultural ties between the capitals of Vienna and Berlin.

Sebastian Pflum, managing director of the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank

The closure of the Bank Austria Kunstforum Vienna has also affected this exhibition project and therefore **MENSCH BERLIN** must end on August 21, 2025 and not on August 31 as planned.

The future of the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien will be strongly characterized by collaboration and innovative exhibition projects. The collaboration with the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank marks the end of exhibition operations at the Freyung and is also the beginning of future plans. The MENSCH BERLIN exhibition is a high-quality farewell to the Freyung and an enrichment of the Viennese cultural summer.

Ingrid Brugger, Director of the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien

The exhibition at the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien can be viewed free of charge, daily from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm. Further information at <https://kunstforum.berlin> and <https://www.kunstforumwien.at/de/startseite>

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