

PRESS RELEASE

9 September 2025

**New exhibition *Paradies* by Christian Thielke  
at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank  
10 September to 7 December 2025**

**As part of Berlin Art Week (10 to 14 September 2025), the exhibition *Paradies (Paradise)* by Christian Thielke will open on 10 September at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank.**

**Contemporary artist Christian Thielke is curating the exhibition. He juxtaposes cityscapes of divided Berlin from the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank with his own recent paintings of abandoned GDR architecture, asking how the utopias of the past still influence our present.**

Christian Thielke, born in East Berlin in 1973, experienced the **GDR and its collapse** firsthand. The contradictions, hopes, and disappointments of this period shape his artistic work. His biography is closely linked to the urban spaces that are the focus of the exhibition *Paradies*.

Thielke's images comment on the **transformation of a society** as a process of slow disappearance - cracked exposed aggregate concrete facades, a boarded-up "Konsum" store, places overgrown with weeds where a social utopia was shattered by reality.

His visual worlds arise from memories, photographs, observations—they appear documentary, but are carefully constructed, painted with precise, objective brushstrokes. They capture what has long since ceased to have a place in the logic of economics: **relics of socialist urban planning**, which were originally intended to organize collective life, but which today, in the wake of the exodus that has characterized development since the 1990s, have been largely abandoned and forgotten.

Created in recent years, Thielke's works are symbols of a society that needs to redefine itself – just like East Germany after 1989. The almost complete **absence of people** in the pictures leaves room for personal interpretations, associations, and emotions – what does it do to a place that is no longer needed, what does it do to the people who live there?

This current perspective is contrasted with around **60 depictions of cities from the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank**. They were created by artists from the GDR such as Manfred Butzmann, Ursula Strozynski, and Ulla Walter, and by West German contemporaries such as Rainer Fetting, K. H. Hödicke, and Barbara Quandt.

They show **Berlin in the second half of the 20th century** - a city between limitation and awakening, between inner emptiness and external change, also almost deserted.

While the works of artists of this generation are historical documents of the social and political upheaval of the post-war period, Christian Thielke's images ask urgently, but not without empathy, what remains of the **hopes and dreams** after the renewed change of system.

In view of the drastic social, political, and ecological changes we are once again facing, *Paradies* does not regard the artistic legacy of the GDR as a closed chapter, but as a sounding board for highly topical questions: What visions fill the voids of the past? How do we experience change today—as silent observers or active shapers? And finally: **How do we want to live?**

*Paradies* runs until **December 7** and rounds off the 40th anniversary of the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank and the Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank.

### **About Christian Thielke:**

Christian Thielke was born in East Berlin in 1973. From 1993 to 1999, he studied painting at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art under Wolfgang Peuker. He spent his time as a master student from 2001 to 2003 at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig under Ulrich Hachulla. In 2005, he received a scholarship from the Käthe-Dorsch-Stiftung. Thielke lives and works in Berlin.

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

Manfred Butzmann, Rainer Fetting, Ellen Fuhr, Gabriele Lina Gabriel-Thieler, Andreas Gehrke, Werner Heldt, Gerhard Hillich, K.H. Hödicke, Barbara Keidel, Carl-Heinz Kliemann, Konrad Knebel, Werner Liebmam, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Kurt Mühlenhaupt, Arno Mohr, Roland Nicolaus, Dietrich Noßky, Barbara Quandt, Klaus Roenspieß, Ursula Strozynski, Christian Thielke, Ulla Walter, Trak Wendisch

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We kindly ask you to always refer to our institution and art collection by their full names as follows:

- Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank
- Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank

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***Paradies, 10 September until 7 December 2025***

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

***Admission 5 Euro, reduced 3 Euro, up to 18 years free.***

***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).***