

PRESS RELEASE

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**New exhibition *KLASSE IN WEIßENSEE!*
Wolfgang Peuker und seine Schüler:innen
at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank
11 February to 5 July 2026**

Dark past, troubled present: hardly anyone captured Berlin's situation between oppressive attempts to come to terms with history and the growing pains of reunification as evocatively as Wolfgang Peuker. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his death, the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank is dedicating the exhibition *KLASSE IN WEIßENSEE! Wolfgang Peuker und seine Schüler:innen (Class in Weißensee! Wolfgang Peuker and His Students)* to the painter. It honours his artistic legacy and shows how his teaching at the weißensee kunsthochschule berlin (weißensee school of art and design berlin) continues to influence a wide variety of artistic positions. The exhibition is being realised together with the weißensee kunsthochschule berlin, which will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2026.

Influenced by the great masters of the “**Leipziger Schule**”, Wolfgang Peuker analysed the events of his time with critical precision and provocative symbolism in his dark-toned, often surreal paintings.

In 1989, he accepted a teaching position at the Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin after not being offered a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig. In 1993, he was appointed **professor** in Weißensee.

The paintings created during Peuker's time in Berlin comment on the uncertainties in dealing with the past as well as **disturbing social developments of the 1990s**, such as the resurgence of nationalism.

Berlin's historic architecture becomes a stage on which figures from different eras meet: rulers, soldiers, fools, contemporaries. Added to this are **characteristically ambiguous (self-)portraits**, which were central to Peuker's work. With sober grandeur, the personalities act in a symbolic setting.

With these themes, Peuker's work fits perfectly into the profile of the **Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank** (art collection of the Berliner Volksbank) with its leitmotifs "Bilder vom Menschen – Bilder für Menschen" ("Images of People – Images for People") and "Berliner Stadtbilder" ("Images of the City Berlin"). His paintings were included in the art collection early on, which focuses on representational German post-war art, especially by artists from the GDR.

The exhibition at the Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank presents the late works of the painter, who died in 2001, and also introduces four of his best-known students: **Stefanie Hillich, Sibylle Prange, Philipp Schack and Christian Thielke**.

Their works impressively demonstrate how Peuker's teachings of technical mastery, painterly traditions and the critical-analytical gaze of the "Leipziger Schule" gave rise to **independent visual languages**.

Stefanie Hillich creates **fantasy worlds in broken colours** that seem to flow from the subconscious. In fragmented scenes and surreal constellations, dreams become reality and reality becomes dreams.

Sibylle Prange has long focused on **landscapes**, which often bear traces of civilisation. They sharpen the eye for what humans leave behind in peaceful expanses.

Philipp Schack, who died in 2006 at the age of only 39, developed a **powerful, colour-intensive style** while still a student. His abstract, expressive figures are embedded in dense geometric structures – scenes of human interaction that reveal tension, closeness and conflict.

Christian Thielke's figures negotiate private moods as **detached portraits** or turned away from the observer, but also the effects of social upheaval on collective experience.

In her text on the exhibition, art historian and **curator Dr Elke Neumann** writes:

The students describe Wolfgang Peuker as approachable and communicative. He was a teacher who, in addition to providing technical guidance, understood that life outside the studio was also part of being an artist. For him, teaching also encompassed film, music and tabloid journalism — both high and popular culture. He discussed films such as "Das Boot" alongside the television series "Kir Royal", conversed about music, and sometimes taught in the pub. Peuker incorporated some of his students into his art as well. Sibylle Prange, Stefanie Hillich and Philipp Schack sat for him as models.

The exhibition invites visitors to discover not only the obvious **points of reference between master and student**, but also those that only reveal themselves at second glance.

Biographies:

Wolfgang Peuker was born in 1945 in Aussig (today Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic), but moved with his family to Halle/Saale (Saxony-Anhalt). From 1963 to 1965 he attended evening classes at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig. From 1965 to 1970 he completed a study course there under Harry Blume, Bernhard Heisig, Wolfgang Mattheuer and Werner Tübke. Peuker was awarded the Art Prize of the City of Leipzig and the Art Prize of the GDR. In 1984 he took part in the Venice Biennale. In 1993 he became professor at the Weissensee University of the Arts, Berlin. Peuker died in Berlin in 2001.

Stefanie Hillich was born in 1974 in East Berlin. From 1996 to 2001 she studied painting at the Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin under Wolfgang Peuker. In 2003 she was a master student under Barbara Müller-Kageler. Hillich lives and works in Berlin and Brandenburg.

Sibylle Prange was born in 1969 in Eberswalde (Brandenburg). From 1990 to 1995 she studied painting at the Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin under Wolfgang Peuker. In 1995 she spent a year studying abroad at the Royal Academy of Arts and Design in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands. From 1996 to 1997 she was a master student under Wolfgang Peuker. She taught at the Berlin University of the Arts and at the Vitruvius Hochschule Leipzig. Prange lives and works in Berlin and Brandenburg.

Philipp Schack was born in 1967 in East Berlin. From 1989 to 1994 he studied painting at the Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin under Dieter Goltzsche and Wolfgang Peuker. From 1994 to 1995 Schack was a master student under Wolfgang Peuker. He was awarded a scholarship of the Käthe Dorsch Foundation in 1997. From 2001 to 2006 he taught at the Graphic Design School in Schwerin. Schack died in Berlin in 2006.

Christian Thielke was born in 1973 in East Berlin. From 1993 to 1999 he studied painting at the Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin under Wolfgang Peuker. From 2001 to 2003 he was a master student at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig under Ulrich Hachulla. He was awarded a scholarship of the Käthe Dorsch Foundation in 2005. Thielke lives and works in Berlin.

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Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank

KLASSE IN WEIßENSEE! Wolfgang Peuker und seine Schüler:innen

11 February until 5 July 2026

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

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