

PRESS RELEASE

8 September 2026

Vietnam. Kunst. DDR. Reclaiming Solidarity

New Exhibition at Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank

9 September to 6 December 2026

The exhibition *Vietnam. Kunst. DDR. Reclaiming Solidarity* (Vietnam. Art. GDR. Reclaiming Solidarity) explores the connections between Vietnam and the GDR from an artistic perspective. It examines how solidarity with Vietnam during the Vietnam War was depicted in GDR art, how these images are interpreted today, and how contemporary artists reflect on the experiences of Vietnamese migrants.

The GDR maintained **diplomatic relations** with North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) beginning in the 1950s and continued these relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam following the country's unification.

International solidarity with the “socialist brother state” was also reflected in the GDR's artistic output.

The **Vietnam War** (1955–1975) played a central role in this context. Numerous posters, prints, and paintings emerged at the intersection of state commissions, anti-imperialist propaganda, and artistic autonomy.

The works on display, including pieces from the **Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank**, reveal these ambivalences. Political messages intertwine with cultural attributions and personal projections, as seen, for example, in the works of **Dieter Goltzsche**, **Doris Kahane**, and **Hans Vent**.

Some artists from the GDR traveled to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam themselves. This led, for example, to the creation in 1970 of the portfolio *Vietnam – Das geht dich an* (Vietnam – It is Your Concern!) by **Wolfgang Speer and Peter Westphal**.

Another focus is on Vietnamese artists who studied in the GDR under bilateral agreements, such as the artist **Trịnh Kim Vinh**. Her works combine Vietnamese visual traditions, influences of classical Modernism, and aspects of Socialist Realism.

Contemporary works also explore the experiences of **Vietnamese “contract workers”**, approximately 60,000 of whom came to the GDR in the 1980s.

The works of **Nguyễn Phương Thanh, Fungi, Minh Duc Pham, and Tra My Nguyen** expand the historical discourse to include questions of self-perception and how one is perceived by others, post-migrant identity formation, and memory.

Drawing on family histories, documents, and material legacies, they open up new perspectives on a **socialist migration history** that appears only fragmentarily in Germany’s collective memory.

They also highlight the **discrepancies** between the GDR’s official rhetoric of solidarity and the reality of life for Vietnamese people, which was often marked by exclusion and external control. In the event of a pregnancy, for example, the only options were often abortion or returning home.

In his installation *Krank ist krank und Fliegen ist fliegen* (Sick is sick, and Flying is flying, 2026), Minh Duc Pham draws on research and his own memories to explore the **travel and reproductive rights** of Vietnamese “contract workers” and the transformation of their economic circumstances after the Cold War.

The exhibition invites visitors to **critically examine** the concept of international solidarity and offers points of connection to current debates on global interconnectedness. How is solidarity defined, experienced, and renegotiated to this day?

Artists:

Theo Balden, Annemirl Bauer, Gerhard Bondzin, Claudia Borchers, Manfred Böttcher, Manfred Butzmann, Fritz Cremer, Fritz Duda, Fritz Eisel, Wolfgang Frankenstein, Wieland Förster, Fungi, Dieter Goltzsche, Lea Grundig, Rolf Händler, Sabine Herrmann, Uta Hünninger, Doris Kahane, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Harald Metzkes, Tra My Nguyen, Nguyễn Phương Thanh, Minh Duc Pham, Veronika Radulovic, Robert Rehfeldt, Willi Sitte, Wolfgang Speer, Trần Việt Sơn, Erika Stürmer-Alex, Max Uhlig, Hans Vent, Trịnh Kim Vinh, Heidi Vogel, Peter Westphal

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We kindly ask you to refer to the names of our institution and art collection exclusively as follows and in full:

Stiftung Kunstforum Berliner Volksbank

Kunstsammlung der Berliner Volksbank

Vietnam. Kunst. DDR. Reclaiming Solidarity

9 September until 6 December 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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We recommend using public transport (S-Ringbahn Messe Nord/ICC, U2 Sophie-Charlotte-Platz or Kaiserdamm)