



FEMININITY in the Public Sculpture

GDR cultural policy
and femininity in public



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can be found here.



BIKE TOUR Femininity in the Public Sculpture

This tour takes you through the districts of Niederschönhausen, Pankow, Prenzlauer Berg, Lichtenberg and Friedrichsfelde to see representations of femininity in the public sculpture of the GDR era. In East Germany, equal rights for women were enshrined in law and propagated everywhere – including the fine arts. Starting in the late 1940s and continuing throughout the 1950s, symbolically charged images of mothers and women workers were cast in bronze or carved in stone and put on display in cities. Over the decades that followed, East German streets, squares, and parks became filled with less severe and more everyday scenes: female nudes, athletes, and mothers with children. The tour will explore the different styles of the artists who sculpted images of women in the GDR.

More information:
www.pankow-weissensee-prenzlauerberg.berlin



Tourist Information Center
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Overview of
all art tours



Berlin has a long tradition of artistic engagement with public spaces, buildings, and civil engineering works. As a result, a plethora of sculptures, murals, statues can be found throughout the city. Some objects are hidden; others are placed prominently on walls, in parks, or on streets. Public artworks allow people to encounter art outside museums and function as open invitations to explore their meaning and revel in their wonders. Pankow and Lichtenberg offer public art tours by foot or bike. Participants learn about the creation of the works and their materials along with the social background, life, and output of the artists themselves.



1 Mother Homeland (Mutter Heimat)

Artist: Iwan Gawrilowitsch Perschudtschew (1915–1987)
Location: Soviet Memorial, Schönholzer Heide
Date: 1947–1949
Material: bronze



At the end of the Second World War, the Soviet military administration erected a memorial to Soviet soldiers who died in the Battle of Berlin. The motifs in Mother Homeland are typical of the Soviet Union's monument culture. The mother figure symbolizes love for her homeland and represents all mothers mourning sons who died in the war. She stands behind a dead soldier laid out in front of her on a massive base. She wears a traditionally cut pleated dress, with a patterned cloth draped over her shoulders and arms. Her right hand touches a large laurel wreath, while her left hand holds the Soviet flag, which serves as a shroud covering her son's corpse. The mother's face is tired but composed. The realistic representation and the hyperbolic symbolism, along with the focus on "home", are common stylistic devices of socialist realism, which shaped the art of many Eastern European countries. The depiction of Mother Homeland and the virtues of strength and love ascribed to her recall a central motif of Christian iconography: the Pietà.

In this regard, the mother figure represents traditional Christian values. Her demure femininity, hidden behind her dress, stands in the tradition of antique depictions of ancient goddesses. Perschudtschew's work presents the heroic image of a woman who suffers from the death of her son while radiating composure and strength.

2 Kauernde (Crouching Woman)

Artist: Rolf Winkler (1930–2001)
Location: Hermann-Hesse-Straße 18/ Güllweg, green area
Date: 1983
Installation: 1985
Material: concrete



Rolf Winkler's Crouching Woman is located on a meadow north of Niederschönhausen Palace Park. The figure is perched on a block of stone, her upper body leaning forward, her arms and legs bent and drawn close to her sides. Her head is turned, with the right half of her face resting on her knees. At first glance, it seems as if the woman might be writhing in pain. But her face is relaxed, and her eyes and mouth are closed. Her shoulder-length hair falls to the side, revealing a long neck. It is interesting to contemplate the sculpture's play of forms. The closed, self-contained form

of the body resembles an oval. The great convex arch of her back stands in contrast to her bent arms and legs.

Winkler's ability to balance calm and tension, the concave and the convex, triangle and oval, is on full display here. The work's egg-like form symbolizes the origin not only of sculptural art but of life itself. In this way, Winkler suggests that the life that dwells within the woman is archetypal.

Winkler belongs to the second generation of sculptors in the GDR, who followed the example of their teachers and remained committed to realistic sculpture. After an apprenticeship as a stone sculptor in Dresden, Winkler studied at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art with Heinrich Drake, an important advocate of realistic sculpture in the GDR. But Winkler's artistic language departs somewhat from the example set by Drake. Crouching Woman is not a typical female nude – idealized and benevolent. Rather, the sculpture's figure is reserved, with plays of opposing forms.

3 Drei Frauen (Three Women)

Artist: Carin Kreuzberg (*1935)
Location: Green area along Elisabethweg/
Ossietzkystraße
Date: 1979
Installation: 1993
Material: Bronze



Three Women face each other in silent dialogue. Inner peace and spirituality emanate from their tall, graceful figures. Their flowing contours and smoothed surfaces buttress the uniform gliding movements of their vertical forms. A closer look reveals subtle differences between the figures. One woman's smile is restrained. Standing with both feet firmly on the ground, she spreads her arms and turns her palms outward. The gazes of the other women are lowered slightly, and they stand in slight contrapposto as they shift their weight from leg to leg. The figures' arms alternate, suggesting movement and liveliness. One woman's arms are behind her back; the other's rest on the front of her thighs. The sensitive interplay of gestures creates a subtle dynamic between the three women.

Carin Kreuzberg studied sculpture with Walter Arnold and Heinrich Drake – advocates of expressive sculpture and important representatives of realism in the fine arts. Like her teachers, she reduces her expressive form to a laconic formal language. The postures of the figures and the positions of the legs and feet recall female representations in Egyptian art. The muted facial expressions and gestures, the powerful simplicity, and the unity of composition are features of Greek sculpture from ancient and early classical periods. Moreover, the sculpture alludes to the Three Graces, well-known figures in Greek and Roman mythology and a common subject in painting and sculpture. But Kreuzberg's sculpture shows a different understanding of public femininity: her women are at peace, spiritually grounded, and yet full of life.

4 Mutter mit Kind (Mother with Child)

Artist: unknown
Location: Leonhard-Frank-Straße,
Bürgerpark Pankow
Date: 1984
Material: sandstone



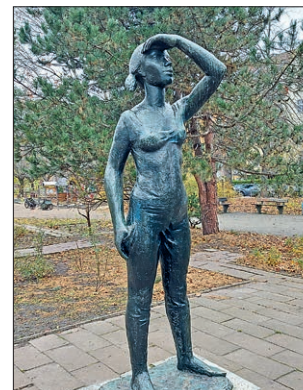
The figures of Mother with Child recline on the grass of the Bürgerpark in Pankow. The pose belongs to a well-established tradition in sculpture. For centuries artists have used it to study human physiology and explore the ways in which their subjects connect with the earth. Here, however, the focus is primarily on the intimate relationship between a mother and her daughter. The mother's head is angled towards the child – perhaps they are talking or enjoying a moment of silence together. The mother's forearms rest on the ground, while her legs support the child. If you look at the sculpture long enough, the mother seems to be rocking the child back and forth. The composition of their heads, the juxtaposition of their bodies and their eye contact hold tension in the space between them, even as the sculpture emanates calm and gravitas. The blockiness of the sculpture, the roughly worked limbs, and the coarse, porous surface betray its sandstone origins.

Mother with Child was created at a time when East German artists had more freedom than they did during the era of mandatory socialist realism in the 1950s and 60s. The mother-child motif was common in the sculpture of the GDR and frequently used for parks, green areas, and pedestrian zones. It is the visual expression of the dominant parenting model in the GDR, in which mothers were the primary caregivers for children and families.

Pankow's Bürgerpark has been a popular destination since its founding, in 1907. The sculptures and statues located within it provide a representative collection of the sculptural art of the GDR and the post-reunification period.

5 Berliner Mädchen (Berlin Girl)

Artist: Gerhard Rommel (1934–2014)
Location: Heinz-Knobloch-Platz, green area
Date: 1961
Installation: 1962
Material: Bronze



The best word to describe the figure in Gerhard Rommel's Berlin Girl is Göre, or brat: cheeky, self-confident, standing with both feet firmly on the ground, she gazes defiantly into the distance. To aid her vision, the girl raises her head slightly and puts her hand on her forehead. Her hair is tied into

two bushy pigtails and her snub nose underscores her girlish character. She casually puts her right hand in her pant pocket. Her bold and self-possessed demeanor is also reflected in her clothes: a thin shirt and tight trousers cover her slender youthful body. The slightly arched back and rounded outstretched belly apostrophize her bearing. Maybe she is looking for her date in the park. Anyone who crosses her path is bound to get a mouthful.

The bronze sculpture was erected in 1962 on a square renamed in 2005 after the writer Heinz Knobloch, who died two years earlier. The sculpture's realism shows the influence of Fritz Cremer and Heinrich Drake, important representatives of the realist school with whom Rommel trained in the 1950s and 60s.

The sculpture's femininity is self-assured, sassy, charming and literally forward-looking. Though the everyday motif that Rommel created was typical for the squares and pedestrian zones of its time, his handling of the subject is evidence of East Germany's relative openness when it came to depictions of women in public space.

6 Große Badende (Large Bathing Woman)

Artist: Wieland Förster (*1930)
Location: Fröbelstraße 17/Diesterweg-
straße, next to house no. 2
Date: 1971–1973
Material: bronze



The figure in Large Bathing Woman does not assume any of the positions that are typical in sculpture – sitting, standing, reclining. On the contrary, the figure is positioned at a diagonal in space and seems to remain somewhere between swimming and floating. When walking around the sculpture, one notices the dynamic force of her arms and legs. Partly angled, partly stretched, they advance and create powerful lines and geometric shapes. The waist, turned 90 degrees to the side, indicates a twisting movement. The expansive pelvis acts as a hinge, giving the impression of a body whose upper and lower halves are rotating in opposite directions. By contrast, her face appears relaxed: her head is slightly bent back, and her eyes and mouth are closed.

The figure in Large Bathing Woman seems to be enjoying the moment in the water. The lush shapes in the pelvis and chest area are pleasing to the eye. Her swelling and ebbing forms reveals an energetic rhythm reflecting both her inner vitality and the movements of the water. Förster's modeling merges the figure with its environment, an approach to sculpture he developed in the 1970s and applied many times since.

The naturalism of the design betrays the influence of Walter Arnold and Fritz Cremer, with whom Förster studied in the 1950s and 1960s. But Förster also went beyond their realism to something more dynamic and expressive, a figure representing his own ideal of feminine vigor and beauty. Though public nude sculptures were commonplace in the GDR, some East Germans criticised Large Bathing Woman for its blatant eroticism.

7 Felicia

Artist: József Seregi (*1939)
Location: Northern end of Anton Saefkow Park, Villa am Fennpfuhl (registry office)
Date: 1987
Installation: 1988
Material: Reinhardtsdorf sandstone



The name Felicia is Latin for “the lucky one”, and the figure in this sculpture looks the part. Sitting comfortably on the ground, her face is friendly and her full mouth displays a welcoming smile. Curved lines in the sandstone mimic the texture of hair tied into a braid. The bent arms and legs form a fascinating contrast to the rounded arch of the back. In keeping with its times, Felicia’s forms are freer than was common in the early years of the GDR. Its true-to-life naturalness and curvaceousness eschews the idealizing tendencies of sculpture since antiquity. The figure’s body, though formed from a cube, displays an artless joie de vivre that is perfectly in tune with its surroundings. The sculpture was created for the 2nd International Berlin Sculptor Symposium, which was held in 1987 in Schlosspark Berlin-Buch under the motto “Poetry of the Big City”.

8 Große Liegende (Large Reclining Woman)

Artist: Siegfried Krepp (1930–2013)
Location: Near the entrance of Fennpfuhl-park, Landsberger Allee at the corner of Weißenseer Weg
Date: 1966–1971
Material: bronze



Large Reclining Woman in the Fennpfuhlpark is all about leisure. The female figure lolls about unabashedly on the ground, visibly enjoying the sun. Her relaxed gaze looks into the distance. One arm supports her body, while the other holds her head. The finely draped folds of her dress and tight-fitting fabric reveal the voluptuous curves of her body. Her calves and arms form triangles and diagonals that add dynamic movement to the surroundings. Siegfried Krepp combined elements of classical sculpture with the common design principles of the time: the triangular composition, the rich folds of the fabric, the natural design of the face and body, and the slight exaggeration of the volumes.

The design reflects the aesthetic principles Krepp’s teachers – Waldemar Grzimek, Heinrich Drake, and Fritz Cremer, who were important representatives of realistic sculpture in the GDR. But in contrast to female motifs from the 1950s, when images of Trümmerfrauen – female volunteers who helped clear the rubble and rebuild the country – projected the strength of a fledgling nation, Krepp’s sculpture illustrates the enjoyment of the 1960s and 1970s. The femininity of Large Reclining Woman is characteristic of art in the GDR: self-confident, dignified, and humanist.

9 Mädchen mit Ball (Girl with a Ball)

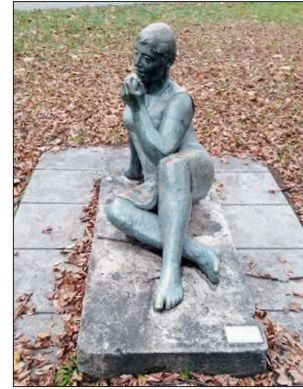
Artist: Christa Sammler (*1932)
Location: Stadtpark Lichtenberg, Möllendorffstraße, near the playground
Date: 1965
Material: bronze



Like a first among equals, the bronze sculpture of a girl towers between the tall, slender trees of Stadtpark Lichtenberg. The girl shifts her weight onto her left leg while extending her right leg to the rear with her foot pointing outward. She stretches her arms in the air and effortlessly balances a ball on her fingertips, her head tilted back slightly and her gaze fixed on the ball. The limbs are abstract, the individual muscles are hardly discernible and the face is stylized. The sculpture seeks to capture a moment of a girl in play: dynamic, emphatic, nimble. Girl with a Ball accords with the East German ideal of athleticism and the antique notion that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Girl with a Ball is perfectly placed in a city park designed for relaxation and recreation.

10 Mädchen mit Apfel (Girl with an Apple)

Artist: Christa Sammler (*1932)
Location: Nibelungenpark, entrance Dietlindstraße
Date: 1961
Material: bronze



Barefoot and wearing a summer dress, the figure in the sculpture is a carefree spirit. Her mouth is open and she seems about to take a bite of the apple she holds in her left hand. Why does she hesitate?

For this work, the sculptor Christa Sammler turned to the subject of leisure, a common theme of public art in parks and open spaces. Sammler’s sculpture is a pared-down depiction taken from real life, with a keen understanding of the human body. The triangular composition provides balance, stability, and harmony – a testament to her study with Walter Arnold and Gustav Seitz in the 1950s, leading representatives of realistic sculpture in the GDR.

Girl with an Apple is one of the artist’s major works and has appeared in numerous art exhibitions. The depiction may seem banal, but it may also contain hidden symbolism. The hesitation could be a moment of reflection on the part of a young woman, or it may signify the moment before Eve commits original sin.

11 Frau (Woman)

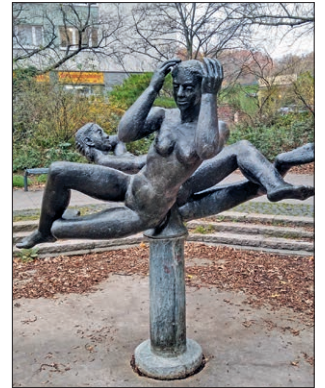
Artist: Karl Lemke (1924–2016)
Location: Rosenfelder Ring 15, green area in front of the medical center
Date: 1975
Material: bronze



The figure that confronts the viewer in Woman is self-confident, strong, and forward-looking. The larger-than-life size and the elevated position reinforce the impression. While a delicate contrapposto – a stylistic device developed in classical antiquity – supplies movement, wide feet serve to ground her, and powerful hands suggest a woman accustomed to taking charge. A round, smooth face and narrow mouth radiate youthfulness; the short hair frames her face. Woman recalls representations of female reconstruction volunteers and Trümmerfrauen that were common in the 1950s. But Lemke seems to have reimagined her figure as a woman from the 1970s, shed of the staid solemnity that characterized the postwar era. The strength she projects is typical of the emancipated and self-assured image of femininity in the GDR.

12 Spree and Havel

Artist: Dietrich Grünig (1940–2020)
Location: Erich-Kurz-Straße 11–13
Date: 1980–1982
Material: bronze



Two women, one sitting, one reclining, seem to float in the air as water splashes down around them. The women are personifications of the Spree and Havel rivers, which meet near Spandau, on Berlin’s western edge. Like the rivers, the women touch but face in opposite directions. For one woman, the confluence seems to be a delight; for the other, it is a source of unexpected excitement – as their faces and hairstyles show. Dietrich Grünig’s work stands in a tradition going back to antiquity: depicting women as allegorical representations of rivers. Their young, graceful, and athletic bodies allude to the natural strength and freshness of the river water. Likewise, the fountain’s water, which springs from a conical spout into an octagonal basin, is at once invigorating and calming.

The inclusion of art in residential areas and pedestrian zones was characteristic of urban environments in the GDR. Grünig’s work not only enlivens the surrounding public space; it forges a connection to the city and its geography.

HIGHLIGHTS ALONG THE ROUTE

- A Volkspark Schönholzer Heide**
Approx. 35 hectare park with hilly forest, playgrounds, hiking trails and soccer field.



- B Schlosspark Pankow**
Tree-rich park along the river Panke. It is also a historic palace garden with Schönhausen Palace, which is around 300 years old.

**Café Sommerlust
Schlossgarten Schönhausen**
Tschaikowskistr. 1, 13156 Berlin

- C Bürgerpark Pankow**
12 hectare public park. The landmark of the park is the entrance gate on Wilhelm-Kuhr-Straße.
Wilhelm-Kuhr-Str. 9, 13187 Berlin

Rosengarten
Restaurant, café & beer garden
Wilhelm-Kuhr-Str. 9, 13187 Berlin

- D Old malt house Pankow**
One of the most important industrial monuments in Pankow, which was built for the Schultheiss brewery at the end of the 19th century and is now used as a residential building.
Mühlenstr., 13187 Berlin

- E Carl Legien Residential town**
Large housing estate, built 1928–1930 according to plans by Bruno Taut and Franz Hillinger. One of six Berlin housing estates on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
Erich-Weinert-Straße, 10409 Berlin

- F Ernst-Thälmann-Park**
Large park with lawns, walking paths and the imposing monument in honor of the politician Ernst Thälmann.

- G Anton-Saeffkow-Platz**
With park, department store, cafes, GDR urban development

- H rk-contemporary art gallery**
In the Ratskeller in the town hall of Lichtenberg, Möllendorffstr. 6, 10360 Berlin

- I Campus of Democracy**
Former Stasi Grounds and Stasi Museum – Museum of Stasi espionage equipment in the former Stasi headquarters.
Normannenstraße 20, Haus 1, 10365 Berlin

- J German history in 20 pictures**
Underground Station
Magdalenenstraße

- K Museum Lichtenberg im Stadthaus**
Türschmidtstraße 24, 10317 Berlin

- L Stadtfarm Urban Farming**
Visitor center, farm shop, weekly market on Saturdays
im Landschaftspark Herzberge, Allee der Kosmonauten 16, 10315 Berlin



- M Tierpark Berlin-Friedrichsfelde**
One of the two zoological gardens in Berlin, with 160 hectares the largest landscape zoo in Europe.
Am Tierpark 125, 10319 Berlin

