



# Female sculptors in the GDR

Art by women in public space



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## BIKE TOUR Female sculptors in the GDR

As in society, women are structurally disadvantaged in the art world and do not receive as much attention as their male colleagues. That was also true in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), despite the importance it placed on equality for women. After the fall of the Wall in 1989, some female artists from the East had difficulties establishing themselves in reunified Germany.

The tour follows the footsteps of East German female sculptors through the districts of Weißensee, Pankow, Niederschönhausen, Prenzlauer Berg, and Berlin-Mitte. It features bronze sculptures by female artists who studied, lived, and worked in the GDR.

**More information:**

[www.pankow-weissensee-prenzlauerberg.berlin](http://www.pankow-weissensee-prenzlauerberg.berlin)



Kultur- & Tourismusmarketing  
Berlin-Pankow

### Tourist Information Center

Kulturbrauerei im Sudhaus, Haus 2  
Schönhauser Allee 36, 10435 Berlin Prenzlauer Berg  
Tel.: +49 30 - 44 35 21 70 · E-Mail: [info@tic-berlin.de](mailto:info@tic-berlin.de)

Overview of  
all art tours



## Art in Architecture

The districts of former East Berlin are filled with public art from the GDR era. Many works arose as part of a state program introduced in 1950 to promote “art in architecture”. The state program focused on giving artistic flourishes to administrative buildings, cultural landmarks, and public housing. Starting in the mid-1960s, the GDR expanded the program to include surrounding areas as well. The state exclusively commissioned artists who were members of the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR (VBK). Membership in the VBK was not only a requirement to receive public contracts or entry in official exhibitions. It was a prerequisite for freelance work as well. Especially in the early phase of the GDR, art in architecture was an important part of socialist policy. But the strictly policed tenets of socialist realism restricted artists in their choice of themes, motifs, and styles.

## Art production in the GDR: The new image of man in socialist realism

An important objective of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was to propagate an idea of the human in line with the Marxist-Leninist ideal of society. The party wanted to mold people into loyal citizens with “socialist characters” using the figurative language of socialist realism. The style’s populist aesthetics were a form of propaganda meant to spread idealized images and serve the culture of remembrance. But the “new image of man” was also an object of artistic debate. As different from each other as the artists and works on this tour are, they all have one thing in common: they depict everyday people – couples, mothers and children, young people, reconstruction volunteers, and workers.



### 1 Dichter und Mädchen (Poet and Girl)

**Artist:** Sabine Teubner MBaye (\*1953)  
**Location:** Bürgerpark Pankow  
**Date:** 1999  
**Material:** bronze

The group of figures by the artist Sabine Teubner MBaye is accompanied by a strange tension. At first glance, the relationship between the two figures is unclear. The girl, who is standing, appears motionless and static. Her face is only hinted at, and her facial expressions remain hidden. A few meters away is the poet, whose muscular body faces her, while his gaze seems to look downward. His physical presence is broken by his resting posture and pensive expression. The curious posture invites viewers to look at the sculpture from different angles. Every new perspective creates a new impression of the poet's body and the space that the sculpture occupies. This becomes particularly clear in relationship to the girl. Though each of the figures dwells in its own space, certain viewer perspectives bring to light their intersection and interaction. The lively surface structure of the two bronze sculptures provides a glimpse into the process of Teubner MBaye, who created plaster models for the bronze casting based on sketches. Between 1972 and 1977, Teubner MBaye studied sculpture at the Weißensee Academy of Art. She has had a studio in Pankow since 1979. Her wide-ranging output includes sculpture, painting, graphic art, performances, and installations.



Interview with the artist (German only)



### 2 Sitzendes Liebespaar (Sitting Lovers)

**Artist:** Carin Kreuzberg (\*1935)  
**Location:** Amalienpark Pankow  
**Date:** 1976  
**Material:** bronze

A young woman and man lean back-to-back while sitting on a bench. Their arms hang loosely at their sides. The man is slightly taller and the woman's head is tilted. Their faces and expressions are similar: young, soft featured, satisfied, turned to the side, looking slightly downward. Both are barefoot and in simple clothes and have nearly identical postures, right down to the fingertips. They mirror each other in a kind of three-dimensional dip-tich. The bronze sculpture Sitting Lovers represents an ideal couple who support each other on a shared foundation. Since antiquity, couples have been a popular motif in art. The relationship is not always romantic. Sometimes the figures are siblings, a parent and a child, friends, or allies. In their classic form, however, depictions of couples represent adults joined in love or marriage. The sculptor Carin Kreuzberg studied sculpture with Walter Arnold and Hans Steger from 1953 to 1955 at the University of Fine Arts in Dresden. She then studied with Heinrich Drake at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art. She has worked as a freelance artist in Berlin since 1966.



### 3 Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art

**Location:** Bühringstraße 20, 13086 Berlin  
Founded as the "Art School of the North" after the Second World War, the academy was meant to serve as an alternative to traditional art schools. It offered degrees in architecture, commercial graphics, industrial design, ceramics, fashion design, textile and surface design, painting, sculpture, set design, and costume design. Owing to its roots in Bauhaus philosophy, it also offered students the possibility of combining the study of architecture with the fine arts. The entrance area features a wall frieze by Toni Mau and reliefs by Jürgen von Woyski, which depicts various moments of teaching and making art at the academy. After the fall of the Wall, the campus was expanded and modernized.

Many female artists began their studies at the art academy in Weißensee. Before 1919, women were not permitted to enroll at public art schools in Germany and could attend only private institutes. That finally changed during the Weimar Republic. Female sculptors at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art attended the master classes of well-known artists such as Theo Balden, Fritz Cremer, and Heinrich Drake. Unlike the teachers, who remained bound to tradition, realism, and clarity, their students looked for inspiration in new work from all over Europe, prompting them to experiment with more abstract, form-centric designs.



### 4 Junger Arbeiter (Young Worker)

**Artist:** Christa Sammler (\*1932)  
**Location:** Park am Weißen See (near the open-air theater), 13086 Berlin-Weißensee  
**Date:** 1963–68  
**Installation:** 1968  
**Material:** bronze

This life-size bronze sculpture by Christa Sammler embodies the ideal of the hard-working and loyal citizen of the GDR. Following the requirements imposed on GDR artists, Sammler created a worker that is young, upright, and tall. He has a broad back and is wearing loose work clothes and boots. The shirt reveals a muscular chest and the sleeves are rolled up, indicating that he is ready to get to work. Young Worker is a classic example of socialist realism, a style characterized by idealized representations of communist society. Socialist realist art served to commemorate the reconstruction efforts after the Second World War and the importance of hard work for a "country of workers and farmers".

The sculptor Christa Sammler studied from 1951 to 1956 at the University of Fine Arts in Dresden. Between 1956 and 1958 she was a master student of Gustav Seitz at the East German Academy of the Arts. Between 1980 and 1991 she made numerous trips abroad, including to Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Greece, and Italy.



### 5 Aus der Geschichte des Bezirks Prenzlauer Berg (From the History of Prenzlauer Berg)

**Artist:** Birgit Horota-Müller (1936–2021)  
**Location:** Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg  
**Date:** 1971  
**Material:** bronze

At the foot of the Oderbruchkippe, a mountain of rubble created from the ruins of the Second World War that became the Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg at the end of the 1960s, is a bronze relief by the sculptor Birgit Horota-Müller. Unfortunately, the multi-part wall frieze was covered with tar and is almost unrecognizable. The mural illustrates the history of the district of Prenzlauer Berg. From 1957 to 1985, the sculpture was part of the biennial exhibition Plastic and Flowers in Treptower Park. The district government later acquired the work and installed it at its current location. The relief has a total length of around 10 meters. It consists of several cleverly juxtaposed representations of historical events, people, and narrative scenes.

Birgit Horota-Müller studied sculpture at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art with Heinrich Drake. After graduating in 1960, she worked as a freelance artist in Berlin. In 1963, she joined the VBK and participated in exhibitions at home and abroad. Between 1983 and 1996, Horota-Müller worked as a teaching assistant in the House of Children (Haus der Kinder) in Berlin-Lichtenberg. Beginning in the late 1990s, she devoted herself to drawing and printmaking.



### 6 Mutter mit Kind (Mother with Child)

**Artist:** Lore Plietzsch (\*1930)  
**Location:** Pieskower Weg 48, in the garden outside the Sonnenblume day care center  
**Date:** 1964  
**Material:** bronze

A young mother bends lovingly over her little girl, holding the child by the arm and supporting her from behind. The child, arms outstretched, seems to be taking her first steps. The bronze sculpture was probably created as a commissioned work for the day care center, which opened in 1963. In the GDR, the equality of women was enshrined in the constitution, and the compatibility of family and work was of paramount importance. But the measures to strengthen the rights of women and mothers served less to emancipate women than to solve the economic, political, and social problems of East German society. The "mother with child" motif was widespread in socialist realism, and Lore Plietzsch returned to the topic again and again.

Lore Plietzsch studied from 1947 to 1952 at the University of Architecture and Fine Arts in Weimar. Later she was a student of Fritz Cremer at the Academy of Arts in the GDR. She has worked as a freelance artist in Berlin since 1956.





## 7 Mädchen mit Katzen (Girl with Cats)

**Artist:** Johanna Jura (1923–1994)  
**Location:** behind Greifswalder Straße 88  
**Date:** 1977  
**Installation:** 1980  
**Material:** bronze



The bronze sculpture could be a playful scene from the artist's childhood. The group of figures, consisting of a young girl and two cats, is mounted on multiple bases made of light granite. The girl, in a hooded coat, striped trousers, and simple shoes, stands bent forward with her legs apart. She holds a little cat, which is lying on its stomach on the floor. In front of it, one step lower, sits a larger, graceful cat with attentive eyes. The cats are probably a playful kitten and her watchful mother. The sculpture was erected on Greifswalder Strasse in 1980 and then moved to an interior courtyard in 1997, where it now rests amid high-rise apartment buildings.

Johanna Jura studied sculpture and weaving at the Burg Giebichenstein Art Academy in Halle / Saale from 1942 to 1946. After completing her studies, she initially worked as a freelance artist in Halle. In 1959 she moved to Erfurt, where she taught sculptural design at the Institute for Art Education at Martin Luther University. From 1964 to 1994 she lived and worked as a freelance sculptor in Berlin-Mahlsdorf, where she started a workshop for small ceramic sculptures in 1979.

## 8 Nackte vom Ostseeplatz (The Naked Woman from Ostseeplatz)

**Artist:** Anna Franziska Schwarzbach (\*1949)  
**Location:** Mittelpromenade Ostseeplatz  
**Date:** 1987  
**Installation:** 1990  
**Material:** bronze



The Naked Woman from Ostseeplatz was commissioned as part of the beautification of Ostseeplatz. It consists of a graceful young woman who crouches on her heels atop a high pedestal. Viewed from the side, her arched back and bent legs form a "zigzag"; viewed from the front and back, the woman appears upright, her neck, outstretched. On her head, which is turned to the side, she balances a shallow bowl with rods, buttressed by her right hand. Her left arm hangs loosely at her side. The base along with the step-like structures on either side of the sculpture were also designed by the artist.

Anna Franziska Schwarzbach studied architecture at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art from 1968 to 1973. Between 1973 and 1975 she worked as an architect at the Palace of the Republic. From 1975 to 1979 she completed an evening course in portrait sculpture at the Weißensee Academy. She has been a freelance sculptor since 1977.

## 9 Stehendes Paar (Standing Couple)

**Artist:** Sabina Grzimek (\*1942)  
**Location:** at the corner of Gubitzstraße and Ostseestraße  
**Date:** 1968  
**Material:** bronze



Sabina Grzimek completed Standing Couple for her final exam at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art, which she attended from 1962 to 1967 under the tutelage of Heinrich Drake and Ludwig Engelhardt. After graduating, she worked as a freelance artist for two years before entering the Academy of Arts as a "master student".

This sculpture is a further example of the couple motif. A man and a woman stand barefoot on a simple pedestal. The couple, slightly smaller than life, seems static and motionless. The rough surface structure only hints at clothing, and their arms are fused with their shoulders, making them appear broader. The man's arms hang motionless, and his hands are heavy and large. The woman's arms are bent and her hands clasped below her breasts, lending the figure a sense of movement. Their small heads, narrow faces, and forward-looking gazes are expressionless and serious. Apart from appearing as a pair, nothing indicates a relationship. There is no touch, no eye contact, no other form of communication. Thusly separated, they seem to be independent individuals – a characteristic that reappears in many of the artist's subsequent works.

## 10 Ballspielendes Mädchen (Ball-playing Girl)

**Artist:** Ursula Schneider-Schulz (1925–2015)  
**Location:** Kanzowstraße, playground  
**Date:** 1956–1957  
**Material:** bronze



The "ball-playing girl" welcomes visitors to the playground. The life-size bronze sculpture fits thematically into its surroundings. A girl in her summer dress standing there barefoot and her legs slightly apart. She holds a ball in her hand and is ready to swing and throw. With her left arm bent, she seems to be balancing herself and asking her opponent to catch the ball. The girl is in the moment of movement, but still seems static. The well-executed genre depiction is a typical example of sculpting in the GDR in the 1950s. In the execution of her works, Schneider-Schulz often followed the classic sculpting tradition. Figures of girls and women form a focal point in the artist's work.

Ursula Schneider-Schulz studied at the University of Architecture and Fine Arts in Weimar from 1946 to 1951. From 1951 to 1954 she studied at the University of Fine and Applied Arts in Berlin-Weißensee with Heinrich Drake and Fritz Koelle. From 1954 she worked as a freelancer in Berlin, later in Jena and from 1964 in Magdeburg.

## 11 Stehendes Mädchen (Standing Girl)

**Artist:** Karin Gralki (\*1951)  
**Location:** Helmholzplatz, Prenzlauer Berg  
**Date:** 2001  
**Material:** bronze



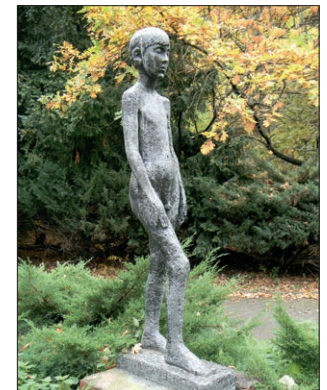
Karin Gralki's Standing Girl is a nondescript work. The somewhat less than life-sized nude figure is delicate and fragile. Immobile and somewhat apathetic, her long arms hang down at her sides. Her facial expression has a serious air, and the corners of her mouth are slightly drawn down. But the figure's withdrawn rigidity is at odds with the restless surface structure of the patinated bronze.

Gralki created the original design for the sculpture during the GDR era. For the model, she used a 13-year-old girl model from Prenzlauer Berg. The sculpture captures the transition to puberty and expresses young people's confrontation with self and world. Standing Girl was installed at its current location during the remodeling of Helmholzplatz, which began in 1999 and ended in 2003.

The artist Karin Gralki lives and works in Prenzlauer Berg. From 1982 to 1987 she studied sculpture at the Berlin-Weißensee Academy of Art with Jo Jastram and Baldur Schönfelder. Between 1988 and 1991 she taught sculpture at the Berlin Cultural Academy. Since 2005 she has mainly focused on drawing and graphic art.

## 12 Junge aus der Marienburger Straße (Boy from Marienburger Straße)

**Artist:** Sabina Grzimek (\*1942)  
**Location:** Ernst-Thälmann-Park, in front of the WABE arts center, Danziger Straße 103  
**Date:** 1983–1984  
**Installation:** c. 1986  
**Material:** bronze



A boy stands with offset legs, slightly contrapposto. His right hand rests on his right leg while his left arm wraps around his hips. The boy's long, thin arms and legs make him seem vulnerable, as does his serious expression. The plaster model was completed in 1968–1970. However, the bronze casting did not occur until the early 1980s. In 1986, the sculpture was placed in front of the newly opened WABE arts center. WABE continues to host arts and culture events today.

Sabina Grzimek comes from a well-known family of artists. Her father was the sculptor Waldemar Grzimek. Her mother was Christa Grzimek, a painter who after her divorce from Waldemar in 1953 married the sculptor Fritz Cremer. Her brother is the ceramicist Tomas Grzimek. After studying at the Weißensee Academy of Art, Sabina Grzimek was Fritz Cremer's student at the GDR Academy of Arts from 1969 to 1972. Since 1972 she has worked as a freelance artist in Berlin and Erkner.



# HIGHLIGHTS ALONG THE ROUTE



**A 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

**B Café Stück vom Glück**  
Small, creative cafe in a colorful flea market style and living room atmosphere with terrace. Wilhelm-Kuhr-Str. 2, 13187 Berlin

**C Fahrradladen Panke Rad**  
Bike shop  
Florastraße 20, 13187 Berlin

**D Weißer See**  
Small lake surrounded by a wooded footpath with bathing areas, boat rentals and a beach bar on the shore.

**E Jewish Cemetery Weißensee**  
Expansive Jewish cemetery with 115,000 graves and a memorial site for victims of the Holocaust and World War II. Herbert-Baum-Str. 45, 13088 Berlin

**F Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg**  
29 hectare public park built on a mountain of rubble.

**G Residential Palace at Ostseepark**  
Built between 1953 and 1955 according to plans by the architect Hermann Henselmann in the „Socialist Classicism“ style. Ostseestraße 85–105, 10409 Berlin



**H 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

**I VELOBANDE Bikes & Coffee**  
Bike shop  
Prenzlauer Allee 59, 10405 Berlin

**J Kollwitzplatz**  
Square named after the artist and former resident Käthe Kollwitz with a copy of one of her sculptures. Kollwitzstraße 1, 10405 Berlin

**K Kulturbrauerei**  
Culture and event complex in a historic brewery; Rock concerts, shows and open air events. Schönhauser Allee 36/ Knaackstraße 97, 10435 Berlin



**L Prater beer garden**  
Oldest beer garden in Berlin, 600 seats, self-service, serving locally brewed beer. Kastanienallee 7–9, 10435 Berlin

## TOUR DESCRIPTION

**Starting point:** Bürgerpark Pankow, Wilhelm-Kuhr-Straße 9, 13187 Berlin  
GPS: 52.570583, 13.393786

**Destination point:** Ernst-Thälmann-Park, in front of the WABE arts center, Danziger Straße 103  
GPS: 52.53753, 13.43111

**Distance:** ca. 19,8 km **Time:** ca. 3 hours



## IMPRINT

A project of the tourism association Pankow e. V. in cooperation with the Department of Art and Culture of the district Lichtenberg.

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Funded by the Office for Economic Development Berlin-Pankow

**Text:** Caroline Warth

**English editing:** Dominic Bonfiglio

**Photos:** Caroline Warth, tic Berlin Pankow

**Map:** MapOSMatic/OCitySMap-contributors

**Map data:** OpenStreetMap.org/contributors

**Design:** Mediendesign Anne Tegler