



Hannah Höch, The Bride (Pandora), 1924/1927, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Art in Berlin 1880 – 1980

Discoveries and Rediscoveries
50 Years Berlinische Galerie

For 50 years the Berlinische Galerie has documented the stormy history of art and culture in Berlin. As a city Berlin is caught up in a constant whirl of change and its art scene is always reinventing itself. This turbulent story – from the dawn of modernism around 1900 through to the 1980s – is the subject of our permanent exhibition “Art in Berlin 1880–1980”.

From April 2025 the presentation from the collection at the Berlinische Galerie will display a fresh diversity across a space of more than 1000 square metres. The 50th anniversary is an opportunity to tell new stories about how and why these works found their way into our museum. Moreover, some chapters in the exhibition have been entirely redesigned. There is even a dedicated room called “Hannah Höch: Homage” where visitors can get to know the famous Dada artist more closely. Roughly 250 works await discovery – paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, photographs, architectural designs and archive documents, some of them never or rarely shown before. Apart from a selection drawn from the first hundred artworks to arrive at the Berlinische Galerie, we have included artists who have been unjustly forgotten and showcased some new acquisitions.

Visitors are taken on a time journey through Berlin in 17 chapters: the era of the Kaisers, the Weimar Republic, Nazi dictatorship, new beginnings after 1945, Cold War in the divided city and alternative lifestyles in both East and West which sprang up in the shadow of the Wall. From the late 1970s, non-conformist subcultures appeared in the art scene of East Berlin, while in West Berlin the Neue Wilden placed the partitioned city back in the international limelight.

The Berlinische Galerie turns 50

The Berlinische Galerie has a distinctive profile. It collects modern and contemporary art made in Berlin. The art historian Eberhard Roters (1929–1994) was commissioned by the West Berlin Senate to produce a blueprint for a museum with a local focus and an international reach. When the Berlinische Galerie was officially founded in 1975, Roters became its first director. The priorities he set still guide the museum in its work. One objective was to build an interdisciplinary collection. Alongside the fine arts there would be photography and architecture, and plans were soon forged to include artists’ archives containing documentary material. Another important task from the outset was to rediscover artists who had unjustly been consigned to oblivion.

Thanks to the civic commitment of some enthusiastic art lovers, the Berlinische Galerie started life as a non-profit association. Since 1994 it has been a foundation under public law. As Berlin's public museum of modern art, photography and architecture, it first acquired a home of its own in 2004, when it took up residence on Alte Jakobstrasse.

Historical photography: Marie Panckow

In 1979 the Berlinische Galerie acquired a set of historical photographs depicting the urban fabric and its architecture. These 170 albumen prints originated from an "Atelier M. Panckow". The street directory revealed that "M. Panckow" stood for Marie Panckow (1836–1903), who managed the photography studio from 1870 after inheriting it from her first husband Adolph Panckow. This made her one of the few urban and architectural photographers who were recording public, imperial and private buildings in Berlin und Potsdam around 1871, many of them since destroyed. These were the seeds of the Photography Collection, which has become a valuable resource for historians of both architecture and photography.

Rediscovered: Julie Wolfthorn and Jeanne Mammen

Ever since its foundation the Berlinische Galerie has been committed to making the work of persecuted and forgotten artists available to a broader public again. Julie Wolfthorn (1864–1944) was one of the most successful women artists of her day and one of the few women among the founding members of the Berlin Secession. She belonged to a number of associations, where she advocated for her female colleagues. Many of her portraits feature confident women from the artistic milieu, and the painting "Dancer" is an example. Wolfthorn was one of many Berlin artists who suffered persecution under the Nazi regime because of their Jewish roots. In 1942 she was deported to the concentration camp at Terezin, where she died in 1944.

Jeanne Mammen (1890–1976) ranks today as one of the best-known artists of the 1920s. She had been almost forgotten when the Berlinische Galerie began to acquire her works soon after its foundation. Since then the museum has made her the subject of several exhibitions and publications. The early portrait "My Sister in the Studio" shows Mammen's sister Maria Louise (1888–1956), who was also an artist. The two trained together in Paris, Brussels and Rome and shared a studio for many years. The painting was found after Mammen's death when the attic over her

Berlin studio was cleared out. No other painting of hers has survived from the 1910s, before Mammen came to Berlin and developed her distinctive style.

Hannah Höch: Homage

To mark its 50th anniversary, the Berlinische Galerie has devoted a room of her own to this exceptional artist, creating a special ambience where visitors can enjoy her key works from the 1910s and 1920s. Hannah Höch (1889–1978) plays a significant role in the museum's collection thanks to founding director Eberhard Roters (1929–1994). He contacted Höch early on in 1967, when she was leading a secluded life in Heiligensee on the fringes of Berlin. Roters managed not only to purchase a number of artworks, but also to secure her documentary estate for the collection. It is a unique trove of material about the history of Dada and the 20th-century avant-garde. The museum's holdings on Hannah Höch are now the biggest in the world.

Nazi mega-projects in Berlin

Under Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) architecture came to symbolise power and oppression. From 1936 he and Albert Speer (1905–1981) planned the Nazi regime's biggest urban project of all: transforming Berlin into "Germania, capital of the Reich". Speer designed a gigantic crossing between two major axes near the Brandenburg Gate. The centrepiece was a pompous domed hall (315 metres long, 290 metres high). All the existing buildings, apart from the Reichstag and the Victory Column, were to be pulled down to make way. In 1938 demolition began around the central bow in the river and what is now the Kulturforum. Many people, among them Jewish residents, were driven from their homes and their property was forcibly confiscated.

Comrades and team players: Women who built Berlin, capital of the GDR

The biggest, most significant collection of architectural material about the city of Berlin is held by the Berlinische Galerie. These ever-expanding archives serve as a basis for exhibitions and teaching, international research and publications. One valuable section consists of records about architectures in East Berlin in the years from 1949 to 1989. Researchers cataloguing this material have turned up information about women who helped significantly as architects to rebuild East Berlin as the capital of the GDR. Most of these women belonged to collectives led by men. What precise role they played is hard for an outsider

to define. Public visibility for individual achievements was not encouraged. Any finished work – so the intended message – was the result of a shared process. This continues to hamper research and we have no full view of how women contributed to the city's former eastern sector as architects and urban planners. The documents and film footage on display here, some for the first time, offer insights into our current state of knowledge. They show that individual East German women had a hand in construction's royal discipline: design.

In the shadow of the Wall: Cornelia Schleime and Gülden Artun

When the Berlinische Galerie was founded in 1975, the city was still divided into west and east. Purchases of recent art, one pillar in the collection's stated mission, were confined to West Berlin. Only once the Wall fell in 1989 was it easier to fill at least some gaps in the holdings with works reflecting the art scene in East Berlin.

When the East Berlin artist Cornelia Schleime (*1953) managed to move to West Berlin in 1984 after several failed applications, the Berlinische Galerie immediately stepped in to support her. She had been obliged to leave behind all the work she had so far produced. Eberhard Roters chose the direct route to acquire several paintings made in her new studio, including "Girl's Head" from 1985.

Gülden Artun (*1953) had already been active in West Berlin's international art scene before the Wall fell. She initially studied German in Ankara, the city of her birth. In 1976 she moved to West Berlin and soon enrolled in the painting class given by artist Marwan (1934–2016) at the Hochschule der Bildenden Künste (now University of the Arts). "When I came to West Berlin in 1976, the city seemed like a paradise to me," Artun wrote. "I think that feeling of being free is the first condition for making art." Her painting "King", which negotiates power relations, was bought by the Berlinische Galerie in 1984 after a visit to the artist's studio.

Helga Paris and Michael Schmidt

From 1967 Helga Paris (1938–2024) photographed the world about her in East Berlin but also motifs elsewhere in the GDR and in other socialist countries. Her series "Pubs in Berlin" (1974 onwards) reflects happy socialising as well as resignation and solitude, all captured in a documentary style. The faces in "Young Berliners" (1981/1982) reveal both nervousness and self-assurance. These photographs formed part of

a large corpus of work built up by Ulrich Domröse for the Association of Fine Artists in the GDR (VBK). In 1992, in the wake of German unification, the Berlinische Galerie acquired this "collection of the photographic history of the GDR". Domröse went on to head the Photography Collection between 2002 and 2020.

In his series "Berlin-Wedding" (1976/77) Michael Schmidt (1945–2014) focused his camera on the district of that name in West Berlin, deliberately producing his prints in nuanced shades of grey. His reputation also stems from the Workshop for Photography (1976–1986), a school and discussion forum which he created together with colleagues at the adult education college in Kreuzberg. The Berlinische Galerie has been collecting specimens of his globally acclaimed oeuvre since 1979 and now owns more than 450 works, including from major series such as "Ceasefire" (1985–87) and "U-NI-TY" (1991–94).

Chapters in the exhibition

- Conservatives and Modernists: Art around 1900
- Embracing modernism: Celebrities from the Stadtmuseum Berlin
- A museum turns 50
- Upheaval and a Fresh Start: Avant-Garde Movements in Berlin, 1910 to 1933
- Hannah Höch: Homage
- A Hub between East and West: El Lissitzky, Proun Room
- A Hub between East and West: Constructivism and the New Vision in the 1920s
- The Cool Gaze: New Objectivity in the 1920s
- Metropolitan Berlin: New Objectivity in the 1920s
- Berlin in the Nazi Era: Art between 1933 and 1945
- Isolation: Artists during Nazi Rule between 1933 and 1945
- A City in Ruins: Berlin after 1945
- Abstraction as the Language of Freedom: Art around 1960
- Comrades and team players: Women who built Berlin, capital of the GDR
- In the Shadow of the Wall: Painting from the 1960s to the 1980s
- Mavericks: Photography in the 1970s and 1980s



Artists (selected)

Gülden Artun, Otto Bartning, Georg Baselitz, Max Beckmann, Lovis Corinth, Otto Dix, Rainer Fetting, Naum Gabo, Galli, George Grosz, Jacoba van Heemskerck, Werner Heldt, Else Hertzner, Ludmilla Herzenstein, Hannah Höch, Dorothy Iannone, Willy Jaeckel, Oskar Kokoschka, Lotte Laserstein, Walter Leistikow, Jeanne Mammen, Ludwig Meidner, Erich Mendelsohn, Felix Nussbaum, Helga Paris, Marie Panckow, Ivan Puni, Anneliese Ratkowski, Gertrude Sandmann, Gertrud Schille, Cornelia Schleime, Michael Schmidt, Eugen Schönebeck, Kurt Schwitters, Louise Stomps, Göta Tellesch, Fred Thieler, Dorothea Tscheschner, Hans Uhlmann, Julie Wolfthorn, Anton von Werner

Accessible art

Tactile models, tactile floor guidance and a Media Guide facilitate access for the blind and visually impaired.

Media Guide

The Media Guide can be used free of charge on a device borrowed at the museum or on the visitor's own smart phone, tablet or desktop computer. It is available in German and English. On the museum device the audio texts are triggered automatically with no need to press keys: bg.berlin/en/mediaguide

Collection Online

To see what works are currently on show, consult our Collection Online: sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de/en

Exhibition architecture and colour design

Permanent collection david saik studio
Hannah Höch Room bfs d flachsbarth schultz

Press Berlinische Galerie

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Admission 10 €, concessions 6 €
(Prices for temporary exhibitions may vary)

Wed–Mon 10 am–6 pm
Tue closed

Press images

berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/art-in-berlin-1880-1980

Online tickets

bg.berlin/en/tickets

Social Media

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