

Press release, November 14, 2024

Barbara Klemm: Light and Dark. Photographs from Germany

30 November 2024 – 23 March 2025

GfZK Villa

Curated by Ursula Zeller and Matthias Flügge in collaboration with the artist

Press preview: Friday, November 29, 11 am

Opening: Friday, November 29, 7 pm

With the exhibition *Light and Dark. Photographs from Germany*, the ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen presents photographs by one of Germany's leading photographers. From 30 November 2024, they will be shown in Germany for the first time in 15 years at the GfZK – Museum of Contemporary Art.

Barbara Klemm's works bear witness to the historical development and present-day reality of a country that was divided for decades. Many of her pictures have become icons of contemporary history, shaping the cultural memory of several generations. It is a body of photographic work that blends documentation and artistic inspiration in a way that is rarely encountered in the German press.

Most of the photographs shown in the exhibition were taken for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Starting in 1959, Barbara Klemm began her career at this newspaper working as a laboratory assistant and in plate production. From 1970, she became an editorial photographer focusing primarily on political and feature photography. However, her photographs are far more than coverage photos taken for the moment. They offer an insight into the most significant aspects of social life in both the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR. A central focus of the exhibition is on photographs taken in East and West Germany before and after reunification. These images portray diverse aspects of social life, including politics, culture, and business. They depict a wide range of social realities – precarious and everyday situations, demonstrations, protests, migrant life, as well as cultural events, mass gatherings and urban space.

Since 2009, the ifa travelling exhibition *Barbara Klemm. Light and Dark. Photographs from Germany* has been shown all over the world, in countries including Poland, Russia, Mexico and South Korea and at venues such as Harvard University in Cambridge, USA in 2015. Its next destination, the GfZK, marks the 30th stop on this journey. The exhibition will open on Friday, 29 November 2024 at 7 pm, with Barbara Klemm and the exhibition's curators, Matthias Flügge and Ursula Zeller, in attendance.

Barbara Klemm, photographer: "It is a pleasure for me that the exhibition *Light and Dark* with my photographs of Germany, which ifa has shown in 29 cities all over the world, can now be seen in Leipzig. I consider my documentation of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany to be the most important journalistic work of my career. The big demonstrations in Leipzig were an important starting point for these developments."

Franciska Zólyom, director of the GfZK – Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig:

“Barbara Klemm’s photographs bring a striking immediacy to historic moments. She lets us share in these moments, retaining an intuitively well-chosen distance from the events depicted. We are delighted to show the first extensive presentation of her work in Leipzig, thus enriching our ongoing-analysis of the history of East and West Germany.”

Gitte Zschoch, General Secretary of ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen: “Through touring exhibitions, we at ifa bring contemporary art to new places around the world, providing opportunities for new encounters and debates. The exhibition *Light and Dark* with Barbara Klemm’s photographs sets an international example for the visibility of East and West German art perspectives. It shows four decades of German history – from the division of the country up to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequences of reunification. It has been travelling around the world for 15 years, and the interest it generates remains un-wavering. It now returns to Germany from Sofia, Bulgaria to the GfZK in Leipzig. Here, I hope that we can contribute to a profound and inspiring exploration of East and West German history.”

About the ifa touring exhibitions

Since the 1970s, ifa has been initiating, curating and promoting exhibitions that are shown worldwide in cooperation with local partners. With more than 20 touring exhibitions currently ongoing, ifa creates space for international artistic perspectives, co-creation, and opportunities for global exchange and networking between artists and cultural practitioners.

www.ifa.de/kunst/tourneeausstellungen

About ifa

ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen works with partners worldwide to promote freedom in the arts, research and civil society. It gives a voice to activists, artists and scientists, promotes collaboration and works closely with European partners in the pursuit of its goals. Based on its core competencies in art, research and civil society, ifa builds networks to achieve a lasting impact. ifa is supported by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the state of Baden-Württemberg and its capital Stuttgart.

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About the GfZK

The GfZK – Museum of Contemporary Art is an exhibition space for contemporary art and a museum for post-1945 art. It promotes and represents international artistic positions and carries out collaborative and research projects. Both the programme and the collection reflect an interest in engaging with diverse artistic forms of expression, perspectives and generations.

www.gfzk.de

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Barbara Klemm: Light and Dark. Photographs from Germany is an exhibition by ifa — Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V. ifa is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, the state of Baden-Württemberg, and the city of Stuttgart.

