

Dr. Silke Flegel and Dr. Frank Hoffmann

(Ruhr University Bochum)

**We are stepping out of our roles” - GDR Artists and Intellectuals in the
Peaceful Revolution**

In October 1989, the theaters of the GDR established themselves in the viewpoint of Friedrich Schiller as moral institutions and places of liberal self-reflection. The very first was the ensemble of the Dresden State Theater, which emerged from its stage roles, and accused the country and party leadership of being unreliable and a danger to the future. Further examples, including the mass rally organized by Berlin theaters on Alexanderplatz in Berlin on November 4, 1989, attest to how artists and intellectuals are advancing social change in the German Democratic Republic. Although this awakening is soon followed by the shock of defeat, which is most notably recorded by Volker Braun's and Heiner Miller's poems. The Braun's „Erfahrung der Freiheit“ ("Experience of Freedom") goes hand in hand with the recognition that the privileged role of the spokesman, that was courageously exercised by some poets and artists in the dictatorship, is taken over by the interplay of free media and political pluralism in the democratic system. The lectures demonstrate the tragic and historical need for the dual role reversal for the revolution and German unification.

About the speakers:

Dr. Frank Hoffmann studied history, German studies, education science and philosophy in Bochum. He obtained his first State Examination for the teaching profession. He is lecturer for adult education and also research associate and since 2012 he has been the managing director of the Institute for German Cultural Studies of Ruhr University Bochum. Dr. Frank Hoffmann was coordinator for the post graduate doctoral program Promotionskolleg Ost-West (2001-2008) In Bochum and of the RUB Europadialog (2015-2019). He participated in numerous international projects of scientific cooperation. Research focuses: contemporary history, cultural history, German regional and cultural studies, especially the GDR and united Germany.

Dr. Silke Flegel completed her vocational training in a law firm and notarial office in the Ruhr area, additionally, she studied theater, film and television studies, modern German literature, education and art history in Bochum. She had involvements at the German studies institute (German Literature and Book Studies of the 19th century) and at the Institute for German Cultural Studies of the Ruhr University Bochum, where she worked as a scientific assistant. Dr. Flegel was coordinator of the post graduate doctoral program Promotionskolleg Ost-West, (2001-2008) – and the RUB Europadialog (2015-2019). Her research focuses contain: German culture and cultural history, especially film and literature from the beginning of 1945, currently a particular focus on German remigrants in the cultural life of the GDR; book culture (literary paperbacks) of the 19th century.