

Klub Zwei presents
Phaidon – Verlage im Exil / Presses in Exile
Video für Projektion / Video for Projection
DVD, Color, 22 min, A/GB 2006

Dialogue list english

Ursula Seeber

This is the 1934 edition of *Zeitlose Kunst* from Phaidon Press, the first edition edited by Ludwig Goldscheider. It was published three years prior to the English edition that appeared with Allan & Unwin Press, Horowitz' publishing partner. You can see here on the imprint that Phaidon, Vienna has the copyright.

Both books are identical. They are a good example for co-publishing in exile. This was a way for Horovitz to take his publishing production with him when he went into exile. He found an English partner publishing firm and made an English edition of the same book with the same images. The remarkable thing about the German edition of *Art Without Epoch* is that it appeared in Vienna in 1934, during the era of the cooperative state and Austro-fascism. During that time there were a number of restrictions on freedom of expression in art and in the media. Modern art and internationalism were not exactly popular at the time.

The title *Art Without Epoch* also feeds into the debate of "Gothic type against Roman type."
Books published in Roman type automatically indicated an oppositional position to the cooperative state's publications.

In addition, sans serif Roman type was a very modern version of Roman type, which corresponded to Horovitz' intentions as a publisher and editor. This book about timeless art signals its commitment to modernity and its discordance with the cooperative state's cultural agenda, which was geared toward provinciality, regionalism the home country and its native soil.

Phaidon Press is one of the most distinguished publishers of art books. It still exists today. Hardly anyone knows it started in Vienna and was founded by an Austrian émigré. It was also consecutively run and managed by emigrants. In the early 1920s, lawyer Béla Horovitz and two of his friends founded Phaidon Press.

Elly Miller

It was founded in Vienna in 1923 by my father. Together with his school-friend Ludwig Goldscheider, who was an art historian. He was studying art history. I don't think he did a degree in it, but he was at the university. And there was a 3rd school-friend, who started originally, who then – after 2 or 3 years – left the company.

But they started with Deluxe-editions of poetry. I've got some here. Do you want to see it? These are for instance Goethe's Sonette – done as beautiful Deluxe-editions. And beautiful type, lovely paper, fabulously set, you know. Can you see? You're photographing. And curiously enough quite a bit of English literature in translation.

They did Wordsworth Sonnets to leather bound editions, beautifully done. And they were actually translated from Ludwig Goldscheider from the English. Although he hardly knew English to speak when he came to England. He knew the language. In fact, you know, the translators very often don't have to know the language too well. They have to know their own language well. And that's the secret of good translation to know the language into which you translate rather than when you translate from.

Ursula Seeber

Phaidon Press originally set out to publish literature. In the beginning, they mainly did classic literature that was exempt from paying royalties. For example, they published thin-paper editions of Shakespeare and Goethe. Then they began to focus on cultural history books. For example, they published Egon Fridell's *A Cultural History of the Modern Age*.

Elly Miller

My father's English was not great. He wrote beautifully, but he spoke it slightly archaically, rather like literature. I mean, the famous story we were told, for the first time he ever came to England he said to the taxi-driver: „Whilst thou drive me?“ Because he'd only known Shakespearian English. And the taxi-driver thought he was quite mad.

Ursula Seeber

Later, Phaidon focused more on publishing art books. Theodor Mommsen's book on Roman history is one of the most significant works published in the early period. It came out in the middle of last century. Phaidon published it in an abridged version with just 4 volumes. This publication clearly demonstrates Phaidon's publishing policy.

Phaidon's aim was to produce beautiful high-quality books for low prices. As a publisher, Horovitz liked to take risks. He dared print an amazing 30,000 to 50,000 copies of first editions. Success proved him right. In this way, he could produce beautiful books for reasonable prices. Producing popular editions, as they were called at the time, became Phaidon's principle. This enabled people to acquire books – the visual art books later as well – for at least 1/3 the price of comparable books. You could buy art books for the price of a novel.

Elly Miller

He also published some novels. He published a writer called Klabunt. I don't know what his real name was. It was a pseudonym. He published some Schnitzler, Schnitzler Sprüche. And then literature, Plato. And gradually came to history. His greatest success was in his popular editions, called „Volksausgaben“. The whole of Mommsen's „Römische Geschichte“, but illustrated. And from the illustrated histories, which became very popular, he started large sized art books, specifically on art with a lot of pictures.

He even had special photography done, commissioned by the Phaidon Press. They had their own photographer who took spectacular pictures by Michelangelo. They did a Rodin. And then my father was also the first to publish a popular edition at very low price. The price of a novel, I don't know how much it was at that time in German. Something like 5 Mark 80, or something like that at the time, that was in the early 30s.

He published a Van Gogh, who was hardly known in 1933, 34. Just as one of the Impressionists, Renoir. All these books were published in the 30s, very low price and became very popular.

Ursula Seeber

In these art books he also successfully managed to do away with a certain inconsistency. We are all familiar with Walter Benjamin's dictum about the destruction of the aura of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. The men at Phaidon Press managed to represent a work of art using the media of reproduction, such as photography and letterpress printing, while still maintaining its aura through cleverly interpreting these works. They contributed a lot to popularizing and democratizing artwork.

The press' success can also be attributed to its technical possibilities. They had access to photogravure printing, which is no simple procedure. Although they had chosen this more expensive form of production, photogravure has the advantage you can print a high volume without a loss of print quality. Aside from that, photogravure printing allows for a wide spectrum of tonal values, which facilitates the printing of finely nuanced illustrations. This is particularly important when printing art photographs. Sculptures came out vividly sculptural.

Horovitz and Goldscheider were experts at what they did. It was no secret that Goldscheider spent lots of time at the printer's. He meticulously oversaw the printing process. For instance, he insisted the color pigments were not coarsely ground, which would usually accelerate the production process. Instead, he insisted that the pigments were ground extra fine in order to achieve a larger range of tonal values.

Another trait specific was Phaidon's new form of the art book. Obviously, art books were already available. But Phaidon began to make picture books with more illustrations and less text. Nevertheless, they were not only books that were pretty to look at. There was a small selection of text, but it was well done. Goldscheider always paid very close attention to the scholarly quality of his books. He put in additional information on the images and explained their origin. His objective was to enable the reader to closely engage with the art illustrated. In *Art Without Epoch* he introduced works of art from each epoch, connecting each piece to modern art.

These works of art were not full-size reproductions, 1:1 in their entire length and width. Portions of the image were selected with great care and attention to the selection and detail. That was new. Goldscheider was able to present works of art in a certain way. A part was missing, the viewer saw only a selection of an entire work of art. This opened up space for the viewer to make associations and stimulated thought, because a

deautomatization of the viewer's perception had taken place.

This book is a fine example. It is about works of art from all epochs, and the publisher was still able to create an extremely beautiful contemporary layout in the style of New Objectivity. This book appeared in two editions, once in German in 1934, and the second in 1937.

Here it says it was published in London. But it was printed in Vienna. This book is an interesting case, because it is evidence of the history of publishing in exile. It is quite apparent that early on Horovitz realized he would have to take certain steps to save his press. He cunningly succeeded in doing so.

Elly Miller

And this is how my father got really to England, because he started English editions with the United States, in America with the Oxford University Press and from 1936 onwards he was publishing English editions with Oxford University Press in the States and with Allan & Unwin, a big publishing house in London.

And that was in fact the association that stayed when he left Vienna in 1938. By that time he'd already established a Phaidon House with Stanley Unwin in London. And the company press continued as Allan & Unwin Phaidon Editions. It was called Phaidon Editions Allan & Unwin until after the war when my father then took the name back again himself and called it Phaidon Press again. Before that it was the „Phaidon Verlag“ in Vienna.

Ursula Seeber

Both publishers agreed that Unwin would purchase Phaidon Press for the sake of outward appearances. This enabled an “Arian” press to sell books in Germany under Phaidon's imprint. They were printed in the Nazi Reich, partly in Leipzig. Those in power were not too fond of that.

Unwin placed large-format advertisements in the German booksellers' journals and surveyed the requests of the German booksellers. Their books became so sought after they could hardly print them fast enough. That is how a press that was actually Jewish-owned could sell its products within Nazi Germany.

And that is how Horovitz managed to save his press during emigration. Because his press had actually been sold. Horovitz was not in Austria at the time of the *Anschluss*. He managed to bring his family and Ludwig Goldscheider to London. He published together with Unwin for many years afterwards.

Elly Miller

And I was working with Goldscheider. I really learned my trade, my publishing trade and design and editing from Goldscheider. I sort of sat at his feet. I used to cut up pictures for him and paste them down, to start with. And so I really learned my trade from him, I think.

Ursula Seeber

The most significant publication by Phaidon Press is definitely *The Story of Art*, its most substantial art history publication. It was published in 1950, during the post-exile period. It has been translated into 30 different languages and millions of editions have been printed. Today, Phaidon Press is most well known for this book by Gombrich. Incidentally, Gombrich also published the first book about Anna Mahler and her work with Phaidon. That book is from the more modern era.

Elly Miller

We sold the press really for, how can I say? It was a family decision, it was a family firm. We got too big to be a small press which we wanted to be. We were 12 actually when we produced really a very large production. It was 12 people which included the porter. It was a time in the late 60s, early 70s when... in order to keep going one had to expand. You had to be a big firm to keep going or you had to reduce, you had to go very small again. We were a middle sized firm which was quite difficult. And also we were a family firm with other family members who weren't working in the press. It was my husband and I who were working there.

My mother never really worked in the press. She was a great supporter of my father, but she was never working in publishing. There were family members and we felt they were best served by our selling the press. My mother, my brother and my sister. Rather than just 2 people in the family keeping a family firm going.

I stayed on at Phaidon doing some freelance editing. My husband had in the meantime set up the Harvey Miller

Publishers imprint. And I switched to that. The books I've been doing since 1972 have all been under the Harvey Miller imprint.

Tamar Wang

I started off with academic books in humanities and social sciences. I've left the company and become freelance. Over the years I've been doing—, I've done some biographies. I worked on a Primo Levi Biography, but also various others. I also worked for a time with BBC publications, that's the print output which accompanies Television.

Klub Zwei (Simone Bader)

I wanted to ask one more thing. Was Saturn Press also "Aryanized"?

Ursula Seeber

Yes, it was "Aryanized". But Ungar founded another press in America, Ungar Press. He also published work by emigrants and was active for a very long time. But Phaidon could not be "Aryanized". That probably drove the greediest people crazy. By the time the *Anschluss* took place, Phaidon was an English press.

Credits

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Klub Zwei
Simone Bader and
Jo Schmeiser

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Interviews with
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Ursula Seeber
Tamar Wang

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