

Jürgen Holstein: „BLICKFANG“ Bucheinbände und Schutzumschläge Berliner Verlage 1919–1933 Pressespiegel — Press review

EYE Magazine — The International Review Of Graphic Design — Vol. 15 Winter 2005, P. 46-47
Steven Heller (Art Director of The New York Times Book Review)

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ARCHIVE GERMAN DESIGN
BY STEVEN HELLER

Jürgen Holstein's volume of rare Weimar-era jackets and covers is an extraordinary labour of love

Buy this book

Weighing in at a little over five pounds, *Blickfang: Bindungen und Dust Jackets of Berlin Publishing Houses, 1919-1933*, a 35 x 38 cm, 550-page cloth-bound tome with more than 1,000 colour illustrations (and two ribbon bookmarks) published in July 2005, is the first collection of its kind. Compiled, edited, introduced and published by German antiquarian book dealer Jürgen Holstein (with visual material from the collection of Jürgen and Waltraud Holstein), *Blickfang*, the German word for 'eye-catcher', lives up to its title. Even for the non-German reader (there are eighteen essays — with but one in English), this critical mass of Weimar-era dust jackets and covers (from books, magazines, pamphlets and manifestos) will make eyes pop. Like many of the covers included by John Heartfield, Georg Grosz, Otto Apke, El Lissitzky, Georg Salzer, Lucian Bernhard, Hans Bellmer, as well as lesser known artists and

designers, whose persuasive and alluring graphics commanded browsers to 'buy this book', *Blickfang* demands the reader savour this ignored row of visual literature. Contemporary graphic design historians routinely include a few key artefacts of German book cover design — such as Heartfield's 1919 Sinclair photomontage jackets for the Malik Verlag or his cover for Kurt Tucholsky's *Deutschland Pschelnd über Ailes*, and occasionally Georg Salzer's jackets for German novels — yet the majority of specimens created for leading publishing houses are lost. The dust jackets for Büchergilde Gutenberg, Der Syndikalist, Die Schmiede and Bruno und Paul Cassirer have been relegated to obscurity for good reason even the most startling were mere advertisements and in most instances destined for the discard bin immediately after being purchased. However, as graphic design

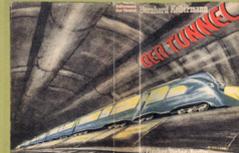
historians are well aware, jackets, despite their ephemeral nature, provide a wraparound of typographic and design innovations. Heartfield's covers are now considered masterpieces of avant-garde practice. They, along with those created by exponents of the New Typography, including Jan Tschichold, Johannes Molahn, Paul Renner and László Moholy-Nagy, reveal how Modernism emerged as an ambient visual language that influenced other media of the period. The examples in *Blickfang* are vivid illustrations of a broader historical narrative that addresses how political and commercial publishing companies appealed to their audiences during this critical epoch, when left and right were battling in the streets for public dominion and political power. For leftwing publishers like the Malik Verlag and the Verlag für Literatur und Politik the jacket was a



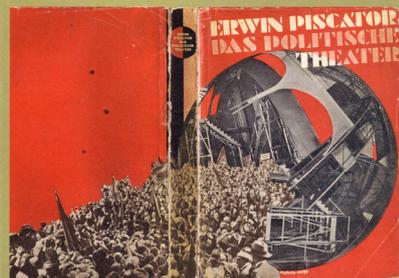
1. Holstein's *Blickfang*
2. *Die Entwertung der Mark* by Franz Jung, Malik Verlag, 1923.
3. *Die Größe Perseus* by 'Tullius Pedaneus' (illustrator and pseudonym), unknown, image based on a portrait by Heinrich Hoffmann, Malik Verlag, 1928. (The 'photographer' Deutscher-Schwarzverlag, 1920.)

recruitment poster that used the persuasive language of socialist realism or polemical symbolism to seek readers who might pick up the banner of revolution. *Blickfang*'s emphasis on leftwing publishers (though a few early Nazi books are discussed) is balanced by an interest in apolitical designs that incorporate Modernist idioms. German dust jacket design was a sponge that soaked up formal influences and concepts. Cubist and Expressionist graphics were common, but photomontage, collage and closely cropped studio photography were the most frequently applied methods. Even some of the radical children's books incorporated photographic elements. Also of note is the widespread rejection of black letter in favour of quirky hand lettering and sans serif typography, underscoring German publishers' willingness to break from tradition. *Blickfang*, an expensive book (198 euros), was a mission for Holstein, who in 2003 self-published a monograph on Georg Salzer. 'I was aware of the narrow market for such a book and thus the financial constraints that would be in place for such a title,' he told me. Moreover only a few publishers were actually interested in taking on this book and in each case it meant compromises that might affect the quality of layout and design, which was carried out by Doris + Kister in Berlin.

When Holstein and his wife found a mint copy of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) with its rare Georg Salzer designed dust wrapper, he got the idea to collect privately in this generally neglected area of Berlin book culture which



4. *Revolutions*, Adolpho di Achilli, Berlin, 1920.
5. *Die Entwertung der Mark*, Franz Jung, Malik Verlag, 1923.
6. *Die Größe Perseus*, 'Tullius Pedaneus', illustration and lettering by Georg Salzer, Malik Verlag, 1928.
7. *Das Politische Theater* by Erwin Piscator, illustrated by László Moholy-Nagy, Malik Verlag, 1928.
8. *Monographie der Arbeiterbewegung für Nazi* and *Führerbrief*, Leo Altmann Verlag, 1925.



9. *Lusitania*, Lucian Bernhard, 1928.

embodied so much the spirit of the time as well as the period's high level of graphic design. In Germany dust jackets tended not to be kept and are scarce. Also, German books were published in comparatively small editions. The first edition of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) was an edition of 50,000, while the first edition of Robert Mutt's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1926) was produced in an edition of 5,000. Thomas Mann's *Joseph und seine Brüder* (1933) was a relatively large edition at 120,000 copies. 'It is a curious phenomenon of print and design culture interest that more and more monographs and exhibition

catalogues are produced in Germany dealing with the poster, whereas for the dust wrapper (a mini poster), there exists but a handful of monographic pamphlets and poorly illustrated catalogues,' says Holstein. The reason is obvious. Despite the digital revolution, the cost of producing a book with 1,000 colour illustrations in an edition of 400 copies was almost beyond Holstein's means. *Blickfang* took three years to produce. Holstein says there will not be a second edition or printing by him, nor will it be licensed to a commercial publisher for publication in a condensed, less expensive format. 'Once the book is out, that's it,' he says. @



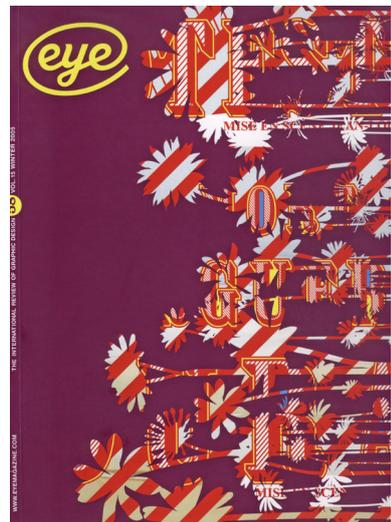
10. *Die große Trommel*, Otto Apke, 1928.



11. *Kinderland 1932*, Bruno und Paul Cassirer, 1932.



12. *Eros*, 'Tullius Pedaneus', 1928.



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Art Director of The New York Times Book Review
Consulting Editor: VOICE: The AIGA Online Journal of Graphic Design
Contributing editor: Print, Eye, ID, Baseline
Contributing writer: Metropolis, Grafik, Step

Education: New York University
School of Visual Arts

Books authored, edited, or co-authored:

More than 90 books on graphic design, illustration and political art, including „Paul Rand;“ „Merz to Emigre and Beyond: Avant Garde Magazine Design of the Twentieth Century;“ „Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design;“ „Handwritten: Expressive Lettering in the Digital Age;“ „The Education of a Typographer;“ „Graphic Design History;“ „Graphic Style: From Victorian to Postmodern;“ „Typography: Type Design from Victorian to Postmodern;“ „The Education of A Graphic Designer;“ „Italian Art Deco: Graphic Design Between the Wars;“ „Faces on the Edge: Type in the Digital Age;“ „The Swastika: A Symbol Beyond Redemption?;“ „French Modern: Art Deco Graphic Design;“ „Euro Deco;“ „Cuba Style;“ „Times Square Style;“ „The Savage Mirror: The Art of Contemporary Caricature;“ „Texts on Type;“ „Graphic Humor: The Art of Graphic Wit;“ „Citizen Designer;“ „Seymour Chwast: The Left Handed Designer;“ „Innovators of American Illustration;“ „Art Against War;“ and „The Push Pin Graphic: Twenty Five Years of Design and Illustration.“

Curatorial works include:

„Simplicissimus, Germany's Most Influential Satire Magazine;“ „Political Art, Ten Years of Graphic Commentary,“ AIGA; „L'Assiette au Beurre;“ „The Art of Satire;“ „Typographic Treasures, The Work of W.A. Dwiggins.“

Awards and honors include:

Three National Endowment for the Arts Design Arts fellowships; 1998
Special Educators Award, Art Directors Club; 1999
AIGA Medal for Lifetime Achievement; 1999 Hershel Levit Award, Pratt Institute; 2000
Outstanding Client Award, Graphic Artists Guild