

MEDIA RELEASE

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International Congress of Art Critics, Paris 1949. 2nd left: Carola Giedion-Welcker

The Power of Art Criticism

New book:

“**Avant-Gardes Focused Through Art Criticism. A Tribute to Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893–1979)**”

Can you be born ahead of your time and still find an audience? It is a dilemma that faces every avant-garde artist who rejects mainstream taste and yet hopes to be a commercial success. Art criticism is an instrument that can help the creative worker to achieve both: revolutionary innovation and public recognition. A publication by the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) now investigates the conflicted relationship between artists, art critics and the public. The new book focuses on the art historian Carola Giedion-Welcker.

20th-century avant-gardes radically discarded traditional values and rules. Nevertheless, the proponents of these movements were obliged to sell their works in order to earn a living. Consequently they needed to succeed with an audience, even if this was fundamentally at odds with their avant-garde aims.

Of course, avant-garde artists sought to propagate these aims in artistic circles. To add weight to their case, they joined ranks to form groups, arguing their cause in manifestos. Art critics, however, were far more effective in attracting recognition for the avant garde. Charismatic characters such as Will Grohmann, Herbert Read, Peggy Guggenheim and Clement Greenberg assumed the role of mediators between the artists and their audience, indelibly influencing the way posterity came to read these historical movements. Among them was Carola Giedion-Welcker, who operated within the international modernist network as an art historian and a reviewer of art and literature. With her commitment to the art and literature of her day, she was one of the outstanding figures in the cultural life of Zurich, and her impact was international.

In 2009 SIK-ISEA held an interdisciplinary [symposium](#) in her honour. One of the planning team was Iris Bruderer, who has published a knowledgeable monograph on Carola Giedion-Welcker. Selected contributions from that symposium have now been collected in volume 6 of the Institute's series «outlines».

Publication data

Avantgarden im Fokus der Kunstkritik Eine Hommage an Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893–1979), proceedings of the symposium by the same name, SIK-ISEA, 22/23 October 2009 («outlines», vol. 6), ed. Regula Krähenbühl, Zurich: SIK-ISEA, 2011. Introduction: Regula Krähenbühl; papers by **Marcel Baumgartner**: *Feinde, 1938: CGW vs. P. M. Kunstkritik zwischen Richteramt und Komplizenschaft*, **Christian Bracht**: *Die Logik des Kommentars. Carola Giedion-Welckers «Moderne Plastik» (1937)*, **Iris Bruderer-Oswald**: «*Von einem humanen Optimismus erfüllt*». *Carola Giedions Briefwechsel mit Nina Kandinsky*, **Annika Hossain**: *Kunstmäzeneninnen im Dienste der amerikanischen Avantgarde*, **Kornelia Imesch**: *Neues Denken – Neues Sehen? Das Ewig-Ideale im Werk der Kunsthistorikerin Carola Giedion-Welcker*, **Karlheinz Lüdeking**: *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Humanität. Carola Giedion-Welcker und die Kunst nach 1945*, **Stanislaus von Moos**: *Die Welt als Skulptur. Zur Aktualität der «Synthese der Künste»*, **Franz Müller**: «*These, Antithese, Synthese*». *Eine (Abschieds-)Feier der Avantgarde*, **Regine Prange**: «*Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter*». *Zur Kunstkonzeption von Carola Giedion-Welcker im Verhältnis zu Arnold Gehlens soziologischer Ästhetik*, **Martin Schieder**: «*Der Kritiker ist für die Kunst*». *Will Grohmann und die Moderne, 1914–1968*, **Dieter Schwarz**: *Fragen um Arp. Ein Arbeitsbericht*, **Fritz Senn**: *Subjektive Erinnerungen an Carola Giedion-Welcker im Verhältnis zu James Joyce*, **Klaus Völker**: *In Zürich, wo kein frischer Wind weht... Carola Giedion-Welcker und die gelebte Historie*, **Stefan Zweifel**: *Ein Lehrstuhl des Lebens: Dr. Faustcarola*.

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