

# German Stories

News  
from Frankfurt



Juergen Boos in Conversation with Beltz & Gelberg  
Books from Germany on a Contemporary Debate – Identity  
documenta – 100 Days for Contemporary Art and Politics  
Three Plus One in German – A Column by Alina Bronsky



## BEST OF FRANKFURT 2021



1 'Re:connect – Welcome back to Frankfurt': Juergen Boos, Director of the Frankfurter Buchmesse, and Karin Schmidt-Friderichs, President of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association, welcome the publishing industry at the Opening Ceremony 2021 | 2 The ARD Book Fair Night in the Festhalle is a well-attended event | 3 Former Minister of State for Culture and the Media, Prof. Monika Grütters, thanks the literary industry for its commitment during the pandemic at the Opening Ceremony 2021 | 4 The Guest of Honour Pavilion showcases the creativity of the literary and cultural scene of this year's guest nation, Canada, under the motto 'Singular Plurality – Singulier Pluriel' | 5 Readers meet their favourite authors up close at a signing box at the Agora | 6 THE ARTS+ is a digital crossover between publishing and the international creative industry | 7 Bestselling author Gaby Hauptmann in a signing box | 8 Researcher and journalist Mai Thi Nguyen-Kim speaks up for scientific truth and knowledge transfer at the ARD Book Fair Stage | 9 Singer-songwriter Alvaro Soler greets his fans at a signing box | 10 Award-winning Canadian author Kim Thúy talks about the cultural and creative diversity of Canada | 11 Author Ralf Koenig presents his new book at the ARD Book Fair Stage | 12 Politician and author: Aminata Touré shows what needs to change to enable diversity in high-level political positions | 13 Author and musician Sven Regener in an interview at the ARD Book Fair Night

## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

We are back with 'German Stories' and news from Frankfurt! And because we've been grouping the Frankfurter Buchmesse international activities under the title 'German Stories' for some time now, our accompanying annual issue will also appear under the same name from now on (german-stories.de). The content of this issue continues to be about interesting new publications, topical themes, anniversaries and awards.

A much-discussed topic worldwide right now is 'Identity'. We have therefore put together a collection of titles that highlight the many different, and controversial, points of view in the current debate – from non-fiction and theoretical reflections to personal accounts and fiction. I would particularly like to recommend the short essay by Emilia Roig that accompanies the article. In 'Levelly Human Is Enough', Roig comes straight to the point about the lack of any 'identity politics' at all.

Tsitsi Dangaremba is an activist for humanity and justice, peace and freedom across all borders and skin colours. She was awarded the Peace Prize of

the German Book Trade in 2021. The author and filmmaker from Zimbabwe is considered one of Africa's strongest voices. The award ceremony in Frankfurt's Paulskirche was one of the emotional highlights of the last Frankfurter Buchmesse.

Beltz & Gelberg was recently able to celebrate a very special anniversary. The renowned children's and YA book publisher proudly turned 50. Buchmesse Director Juergen Boos spoke with the publisher and her staff about the changing challenges in the market and the importance of tradition.

The documenta in Kassel, the world's largest exhibition of contemporary art, will take place for the 15th time in 2022. Time for a look back at the highlights of past exhibitions, and a look at a selection of books on works and artists.

By the way, the cover motif is by a Frankfurt artist. 'Gossip' by Tatjana Prenzel shows what we all long for: encounter and exchange, across all languages, ethnicities, religions and borders.

Stay well and stay positive!

Lars Birken-Bertsch



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# Books – a Key Medium for Reflection



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**Katja Keul**, born in Berlin, is a qualified lawyer. In 2009 she became a member of the German Bundestag for the Alliance 90/The Greens. Since 8 December 2021 she has been a Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office.

Every year in October, the world comes to Frankfurt. People from across the globe gather together here because they have one thing in common: their love of culture and of words, whether in written, printed or (increasingly) electronic form. The Frankfurter Buchmesse, therefore, stands for something that is at the heart of international cultural policy, namely facilitating dialogue between people and civil societies and giving them the opportunity to work together, across borders, on the things they really care about. In our globalised and interconnected world, we have no choice but to work together internationally if we want to make a difference. This is true of almost all the major global issues facing us

today, from tackling the pandemic to fighting global inequality to combating climate change. We will only succeed in all these objectives if we take advantage of the commitment and ideas of science and civil society; if cities worldwide connect with each other and share their best ideas; if artists, journalists and human rights defenders are able to go about their work freely.

The development of international scientific co-operation, city diplomacy, sustainability and the preservation of social freedoms will therefore be key pillars of our international cultural policy in the years to come. It is also important that we continue to confront our colonial past. This chapter of our history has been swept under the carpet for far too long.

All of these issues will also play an important role at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, because books are, and always will be, one of the main media for social debate and reflection. That is why we need a strong book market, with owner-run bookshops as its backbone. These bookshops, thanks to their dedication and creativity, have survived the difficult years of the pandemic, but they still face major challenges, such as growing competition from the online book trade.

This year, we are welcoming an important European partner to Frankfurt with whom we have close links: Spain. We look forward to celebrating and deepening the diverse ties between our countries. Let us be open to surprises, to discovering and turning new and unfamiliar pages, whether between the covers of books or in our conversations with others at the exhibition hall in Frankfurt. ♦

# Creatividad Desbordante

Almost exactly 30 years after its first appearance as Guest of Honour in 1991, Spain is once again Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

Spain will present its diverse book industry, which has developed into the country's most important cultural scene in recent years, under the motto 'Creatividad Desbordante / Spilling Creativity'.

Spain's main focus is linguistic diversity: Spain is home to a multitude of cultures and languages that enrich the literary offering. The special features of the various regions and their linguistic characteristics are what make up Spanish literature. This is why bibliodiversity in Spanish publishing is one of the cornerstones of the presentation. An extensive translation promotion programme lies at the heart of every Guest of Honour presentation. The programme aims to provide financial support to facilitate access to Spanish literary works and contemporary literature for publishers of all sizes.

Lisa Grüneisen, who has translated works by authors including Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Carlos Fuentes and Miguel Delibes into German, explains: 'Spanish literature not only includes those works written in Castilian, but also literature written in Catalan, Basque or Galician. After the end of Franco's dictatorship and the associated renunciation of language centralism, we can no longer speak of one single Spanish literature.' Translator Sabine Giersberg is fascinated by the immense cultural diversity that Spanish literature portrays: 'Authors like Antonio Muñoz Molina, Enrique Vila-Matas, Fernando Aramburu, Ana María Matute, Carmen Laforet or Almudena Grandes – to name but a few – have created a kaleidoscope of Spain's many faces, which has

been carried into other countries through translations. But classics like *Don Quixote* or the poetry of the Siglo de Oro have lost none of their lustre over the centuries either.'

An overview of new titles from Spain in German translation is provided by the Frankfurter Buchmesse's list of new publications (updated monthly): [buchmesse.de/ehrengast](https://buchmesse.de/ehrengast) ♦



Ceremonial handover of the GuestScroll from Caroline Fortin, President Canada FBM2020/21, to María José Gálvez, Director General of Books and Promotion of Reading / Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sport, with Juergen Boos, Director Frankfurter Buchmesse

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JUERGEN BOOS IN CONVERSATION WITH

# Marianne Rübelmann, Petra Albers and Franziska Schiebe

Books with resonance: children's and young adult publisher Beltz & Gelberg celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2021, and paperback imprint Gulliver has reached a proud milestone of 35 years. Both belong to the long-established, family-run Beltz publishing group, one of the most important publishers of educational and psychology books in Germany. We asked: how do you celebrate an anniversary in the middle of a pandemic? How do you strike a balance between tradition and innovation? And what plans does the 7th generation of publishers have for the future?



© Silvi Malleus

**J.B.** Beltz & Gelberg's 50th anniversary and Gulliver's 35th anniversary both fell during the second summer of the pandemic. How did that make you feel? To what extent were you able to put your plans into action?

**M.R.** Of course, we still tend to look at the 180 years we've been publishing as a whole. But it's great to see Beltz & Gelberg at 50 – this imprint was the big innovation in those 180 years. It also brings us the highest revenue in the publishing group today.

**P.A.** It was clear right away that we couldn't throw a big publishing party with all our authors, and that we needed to think of something that would create a bit of profile while allowing people to maintain a safe distance. So we came up with the idea of the 'Anniversary Bus', which toured the country, stopping in to see our authors and readers.

## Gelberg wanted to make a statement – my father was supportive of that

**J.B.** Looking back at Beltz & Gelberg's early years – weren't children's books something of an anomaly within the publishing house at first?

**P.A.** I wouldn't say they were an anomaly. After all, this wasn't just the founding of a publisher – it was the founding of a publisher in the context of an existing printing house, and was a logical extension given its rapidly expanding educational programme.

**M.R.** Ultimately, it all turned on a happy encounter between my father, Dr Manfred Beltz-Rübelmann, and Hans-Joachim Gelberg at a book fair, where Mr Gelberg approached my father and said that he had a few ideas. My father liked starting new projects, which is how our psychology programme came about later as well. He met Frank Schwoerer (long-time publisher at Campus Verlag) at a book fair, too – and they got going after that. The agreement was: one brings in the capital, the other the ideas, and they were a great team for many years.

**J.B.** A chance encounter at a book fair with far-reaching consequences ...

**M.R.** Yes, combined with my father's overall interest in developing the company – moving forward and growing Beltz both financially and in terms of its scope.



On the road in the 'Anniversary Bus': the entertainer duo Friedrich & Bo drove through Germany in a vintage 1971 VW Bully. Here with publisher Marianne Rübelmann (left).

© FBW/Kathrin Grün

**J.B.** How did Beltz & Gelberg's strong identity come about – its orange branding?

**M.R.** It was a time when books had very clear colour schemes. Above all, Hans-Joachim Gelberg wanted to make a statement – with certain subjects as well. My father was supportive of that. Very early on, in the 1970s, we published educational books for children and young adults. A few weeks ago I found a book about sustainability in the archives, again from the 1970s, which could easily be republished today.

**P.A.** Hans-Joachim had a background in the book trade. He knew the business and had vision. And that means you know how to stand out in the marketplace.

**J.B.** When you think of the subjects covered – like ecology and sex education – there was obviously a strong sense of mission ...

**P.A.** Hans-Joachim had a literary background. He always said that if you can write for adults, you can write for children too. He talked to all the authors. And society was ready for these kinds of subjects. Non-fiction was less his cup of tea, but he took up their themes in literature, with authors like Christine Nöstlinger, Leonie Ossowski and others.

**J.B.** Biographies were an important building block within the publishing programme for young adults.

**P.A.** Yes, the idea of a series featuring people's life stories was prompted by the memory of the Nazi book burnings, and the idea that those authors and texts needed to be revived. Hans-Joachim did this quite pragmatically: he only published the biographies of figures who were no longer alive, so that he could avoid copyright issues. And that resulted in an extensive series of short texts in brochure form – because the books needed to be affordable to reach a large audience. That was the concept.



© Silvi Malleus

A strong colour for a strong brand: orange is everywhere.





**Marianne Rübelmann** has been Managing Director of the Beltz publishing group since 2005.

**Petra Albers** assumed responsibility for the Beltz & Gelberg and Gulliver publishing programmes the same year.

**Franziska Schiebe**, who has been with the company since 2013, is head of marketing and sales for Beltz.



Two friends travel to Panama together. Janosch's children's classic has made it to many bookshelves all over the world. From: Janosch, *Oh, wie schön ist Panama*, Beltz & Gelberg

**J.B.** Were these all original works or were there already some translations among them?

**P.A.** No, Hans-Joachim was entirely steeped in German literature. Rights for foreign texts only came in later via the editors he worked with. He hugely expanded the narrative children's books segment – and picture books – in Beltz & Gelberg's programme. And he was the one who discovered Nikolaus Heidelberg and gave him the chance to develop – somebody who also walks a fine line between adult and children's books.

**J.B.** And conversely – was there international interest in the books?

**P.A.** There was early interest in Janosch and Mirjam Pressler's works. We started selling rights on a grand scale in the 1980s. And we've been able to expand that area again considerably now. We sell a great deal to France, Italy and Spain, a great deal to the Netherlands and Scandinavia, extremely well to China, a reasonable amount to Russia, and of course to Korea as well. We really felt the effect of the lockdown in China, but sales have picked up again now. We also sell a lot in Turkey, especially classic authors like Janosch. This clearly has something to do with countries opening up, but they also need to have money to spend in the first place.

**J.B.** You've managed to turn a number of authors' works into real classics. That's an extraordinary strength.

**M.R.** Perhaps in part because schools really liked our authors and their books are still read in schools today.

**P.A.** Yes, that's also an exceptional feature of our publishing house: we hold on to rights for a long time. It's become more difficult today because you have to sell a certain number of books annually, so that the book somehow supports itself. We can't hold on to every title by Peter Härtling or Klaus

Kordon anymore, but a lot has to happen before we relinquish the rights. We have a really nice publishing history with Erwin Moser. He was very successful, then other authors came along, Moser fell ill, and he couldn't write anything new. His books began to slip into discount territory. But we managed to rebuild his profile; we re-edited his works, because there's so much depth to his stories. And it's taken almost a generation for those who grew up with him and remember him positively to have kids of their own. We've seen this with Janosch and with Moser, and you need to have that patience and then to judge the right moment. For Moser, that moment is now, because he has a certain calmness about him and gets how you can see the big picture in small details. That's just mindfulness by another name.

**J.B.** I think that's a really nice way of putting it. So you work more like an agent with the authors and develop them. Have you also sold his works abroad?

**P.A.** Yes, lots – and very quickly to Japan. He fits so well into Japanese culture with its visual language, those very simple lines.

**J.B.** Is holding on to authors a typical German quality or more of a Beltz quality?

**M.R.** I'd say we definitely like to hold on to things. To people, to authors. We want to go on a journey together, and to play a guardian role as well.

**P.A.** You'll see the same in other children's publishers who've been around for a long time. Younger publishing houses simply don't have the backlist. These publishers might not even get the chance to build up a stable of authors and illustrators anymore, because they now publish with lots of different publishers simultaneously.

**J.B.** Is loyalty to publishers lacking?

**P.A.** It's an economic issue. Even we find that it's increasingly difficult to have illustrators working exclusively for us. If we manage to create something unique with authors and illustrators, something that could only be realised at Beltz & Gelberg, then we've already achieved a great deal. And we pull that off pretty well.

**J.B.** I think it's always helped for authors to be given a clear credit.

**F.S.** Yes, then you have a clear reference point in the marketplace.

**P.A.** I'm quite certain that Axel Scheffler is in that category. And that he sees it the same way.

**J.B.** When you look back over the entire 180 years – how have you managed the balancing act between tradition and innovation?

**M.R.** I think it's wonderful to have a tradition, so that you can invest in innovation and the future. The fact that this publishing house has already experienced and overcome so many setbacks gives us a composure that lets us work very calmly. What we really value is the independence we've maintained all these years. That's extremely important to us. It's the reason why we recently brought a new generation of the family into the

## Primary goal is still safeguarding our independence

business. We didn't want to be the old partners sitting around a table making decisions at some point. We won't fragment the family business; people are welcome to get involved, but there's no obligation. The primary goal is still safeguarding our independence, even seven generations down the line.

**J.B.** COVID-19 has brought about a push in digitalisation, especially in schools. How has this affected your strategy? Are apps still an area you're interested in?

**F.S.** Our apps (such as the 'Wörterfresser' app) were flagship projects. We've always said that reading and reading aloud, which of course has an emotional dimension, is our focus. Compared to children's books, there's much more pressure to digitise in other publishing sectors. The e-commerce sector has developed significantly in the COVID-19 era. Our kids' story books are particularly dependent on booksellers' recommendations, and we have to try to compensate for that, whether it's through social media or on a more technical level through Search Engine Optimisation.

**J.B.** Do you feel that podcasting has relevance for you?

**F.S.** We had a podcast channel during the pandemic, because we knew our platforms were going to be reduced and wanted to introduce our authors to readers. Anyone in the podcast business knows how difficult it is if you don't have really big names. And the truth is that 50% of a podcast budget has to be spent on marketing alone.

**P.A.** The pandemic has really digitised our target group. Parents buying books have arrived in the digital era, due to home schooling, for example. We're thinking a lot about the knock-on effects of





Nice, such a lazy day with friends – from the new picture book by Philip Waechter: *Ein Tag mit Freunden*.



Together they master all the ups and downs of life. Real friends are simply invincible.

this. It's not a question of how good the content is, but rather how something we currently do exclusively in book form can be presented differently and possibly digitally. Which age groups, which parents and teachers are interested in certain types of content? These issues are coming at us faster than we could ever have imagined back in 2018.

**J.B.** In the end, it's about stories. If you look at a development like the Toniebox, now successful throughout Europe – these things work thanks to their particular touch and feel. Have you also sold rights to Tonie?

**P.A.** Yes, Martin Baltscheit's *Geschichten vom Löwen* (Lion Stories) was the first Tonie figure, so we were indirectly involved. It's a fantastic idea, and everyone underestimated it with typical book industry arrogance. In the past, you'd have got annoyed when a bestseller went to another publisher. Now you have to get up to speed with other formats as well.

We got our 'Warrior Cats' series out as audiobooks very quickly. That was really worthwhile – we immediately had good sales. You have to do that kind of thing fast now. In the past, we'd have thought it over for far too long.

**J.B.** Earlier, you mentioned a book on sustainability from the 1970s. Now you have the '100% Naturbuch' (Nature Book) series. Is that paying off for you?

**M.R.** What I don't want at our printing works or here at the press is greenwashing – 'buying our way out' through certification, while we publishers end up throwing away thousands of books still in their plastic wrappers. We have certification for our printing operations in Bad Langensalza and we pay a great deal for that, but this needs to be just a starting point rather than our goal. Our goal must be to work in such a way that we use as little electricity and as few chemicals as possible. What helps – and we do this too – is using green electricity. But publishers are still using chemistry to make books more appealing to consumers – through lamination, for example – and that's where we have to make changes. But we do think about how to produce each and every product in the most eco-friendly way.

**P.A.** The problem is that we produce more than we sell, because we have to maintain a certain level of stock for bookshops, traders and so on, which ultimately may not be sold. That means we're

always working with a certain rate of returns. A print-on-demand system isn't feasible. We can afford the nature books because we've now sold so many rights that we can do large print runs.

**J.B.** A sign that it's the right way to go.

**P.A.** Our nature series is truly pioneering. But the crucial point is that customers have to be willing to pay more. What people want and what they're willing to pay are sometimes miles apart. We have relatively affluent customers, but they still check the price.

## Our goal is to use as little electricity and chemicals as possible

**J.B.** I think customers are willing to spend more for quality.

**F.S.** There are certain price limits for children's books, such as a typical birthday present, which shouldn't cost more than 10 € – and that's also the absolute upper limit for school books. But yes, the whole sector finally has to start raising its prices.

**J.B.** Publishers are on the front line of expectations about identity and diversity policies. I'd be interested to hear your experiences in that respect.

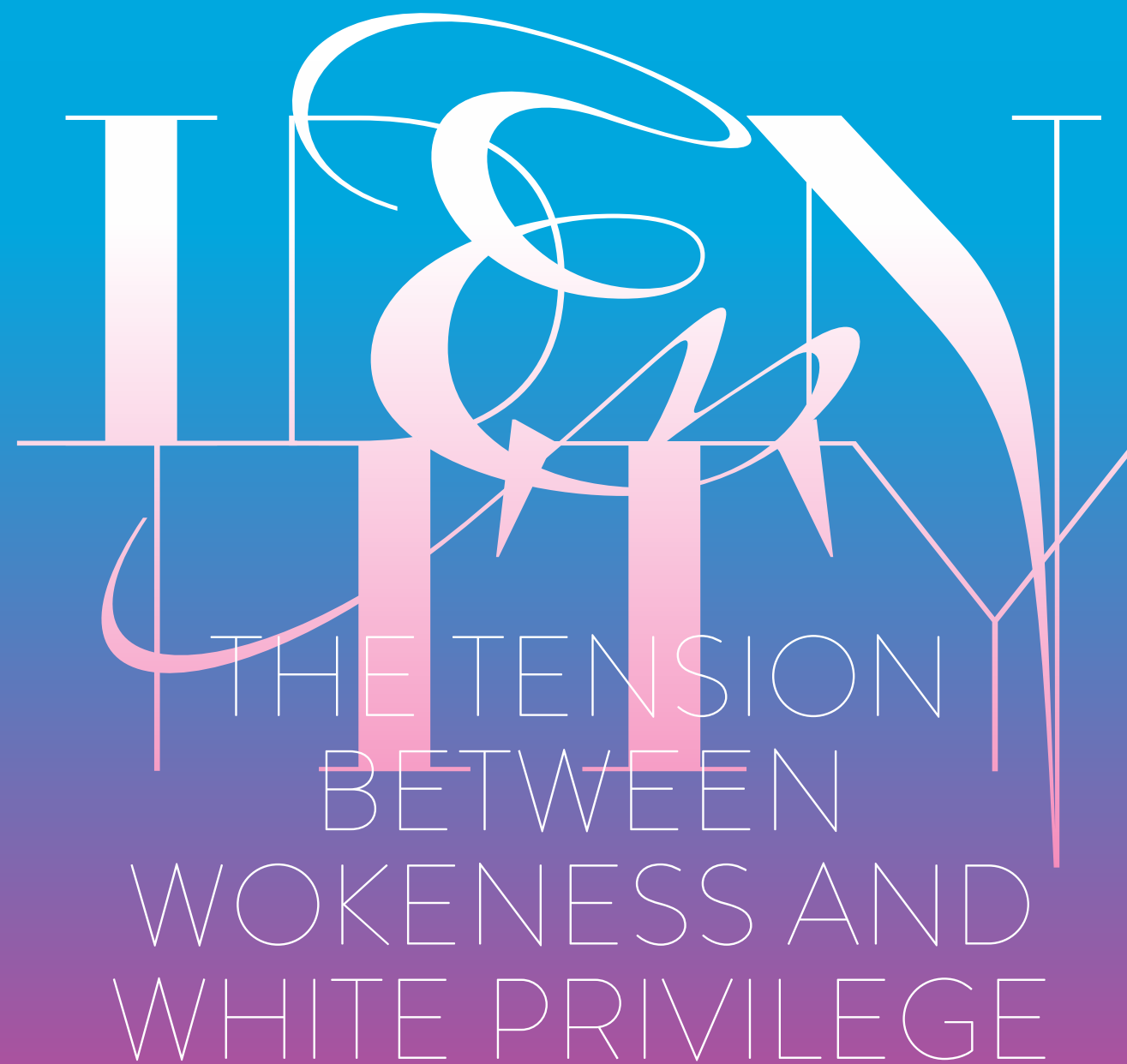
**P.A.** It's a big area. We look carefully at every title, but we don't 'modernise' our classics. There was a case involving a Christine Nöstlinger book. I discussed it with her daughters and we came to the conclusion that Nöstlinger wouldn't have changed the passage herself, so we left it as it was. And it subsequently wasn't a problem. With Janosch, there was an instance a while back where the protagonist's paw was at the same height as a woman's chest, and we left that as it was too. We don't just pay attention to the text, but to the images as well. Because illustrators have to learn to show diversity, too. You can't just give a face a different colour.

**J.B.** 'Sensitivity readers' – is that an issue for you?

**P.A.** We had a book due out next year read by someone of the relevant sexuality. They alerted us to something very important that we hadn't been able to spot ourselves. But ultimately the publisher has to decide – even if opinions sometimes differ.

**J.B.** Many thanks to you all for the interview. ♦

## BOOKS FROM GERMANY ON A CONTEMPORARY DEBATE: IDENTITY



In Germany, as elsewhere, there has been heated debate about issues surrounding 'identity politics'. Many new publications in various genres illustrate the different viewpoints and positions, arguments and counterarguments.



More information about the featured book collection can be found here.



It wasn't only her voice that caused a stir: Conchita Wurst, winner of the Eurovision Song Contest 2014.

On my last visit to my favourite bookshop there was a surprise in store for me. As usual, new German-language and international titles were displayed on a table of their own. Among them I found the novels and stories currently being discussed in the German arts sections, as well as a few other recommended titles. The latest paperback releases had been placed on another, smaller table right by the door. But this display featured an eclectic mix of titles, and at first I couldn't work out what they all had in common.

## A DEBATE WHICH AFFECTS PUBLISHING IN ITS OWN WAY

On closer inspection, I realised that the books on the table were all new releases by authors of colour. A feeling of irritation came over me: one table held books by white authors, the other books by authors of colour. I was immediately reminded of images from apartheid-era South Africa: seats with signs saying 'Only for Whites' and others labelled 'Only for Blacks'. I can't believe it, I thought: 'my' bookshop – always so well organised, with passionate, knowledgeable staff and a carefully selected range of titles – was resorting to the same selection methods as a system I had nothing but contempt for?

The idea was well-intentioned, of course, I knew that. It was about drawing attention to authors of

colour. But my irritation persisted. This initiative didn't sit right with me.

And already, with this little vignette from everyday life, we have plunged into the midst of a socio-political conflict which has been the subject of heated public discussion in Germany and in many other countries: the 'identity politics' debate.

The areas of social conflict involved in this debate are manifold: they include the inequality in gender relations, the treatment of sexual minorities, the integration of people of colour. They involve white privilege and the recognition of other cultures and cultural practices, and they raise issues of dominance and oppression. They question the validity of Enlightenment values and the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and focus on European imperial colonialism, whose effects are still being felt. The thread running through all of these initially very diverse-seeming issues is their linguistic foundation.

In this debate, the battle lines are starkly drawn. Arguments from both sides often resemble projectiles, and in many cases the level of mutual suspicion goes far beyond what you would expect even of a highly polemical debate. Statements are picked apart for suspicious vocabulary, and argumentative opposition sometimes turns to genuine hostility.

One cause of this profound polarisation surely lies in the fact that being called upon to change one's own use of language constitutes a huge intervention in the personal life of any individual. Every utterance becomes almost a declaration of support for one side or the other, regardless of whether the speaker intends it as such. To use a military metaphor: when language becomes a battlefield, the dividing line between combatants and non-combatants falls away; and because

everybody uses language, everybody is forced to decide which side they are on.

Because the battle lines supposedly reveal themselves in our use of language, the book and publishing industry is inevitably affected by this debate in its own way. The industry no longer finds itself in the position of information-provider, supplying a range of books on all the aforementioned themes, written from a variety of perspectives, which feed into the public discourse. This is the role it has traditionally played – but no longer. Now, many people see it as 'taking sides' by linguistically aligning itself with one side or the other.

We are already seeing agencies advising publishing houses on gender-sensitive issues, and revising manuscripts accordingly. Certain authors, in notes to their publications, apologise in advance for having unintentionally offended any readers. The collection *Beißreflexe. Kritik an queerem Aktivismus, autoritären Sehnsüchten, Sprechverboten*, published by the queer activist Patsy L'Amour laLove, was banned from a queer book fair in Berlin-Kreuzberg due to its content, which caused several publishers to withdraw from the event.

## 'WHERE ARE YOU FROM?'

The Frankfurter Buchmesse collection 'What Am I?' sheds light on the controversial facets of the current debate. In his personal account *Der weiße Fleck*, Mohamed Amjahid holds up a mirror to the majority in our society, and describes the daily racism to which he is subjected as the son of a Moroccan migrant worker.

Kann ich mal die Hautfarbe?



© Illustration von Jörg Wühle aus Labor Antirassismus, Ich, so du so © 2017 Beltz & Gelberg in der Verlagsgruppe Beltz, Weinheim Basel

Alice Hasters and Noah Sow are two passionate representatives of the younger generation who bring their own lucid points of view to the debate. In their opinion, the question 'Where are you from?' comes from a racist place, even if the speaker does not personally mean it that way. We often hear about white people – ostensibly out of admiration, but often without asking – touching the hair of people of colour. This too is rooted in racism, the authors argue: it is yet another manifestation of the kind of structural racism that goes beyond individual intentions.

In *Exit Racism*, author Tupoka Ogette has written an instruction manual on how to think in an anti-racist way. It is an instruction manual in the literal sense: Ogette, a workshop leader and antiracism trainer, structures her book as a dialogue and aims it explicitly at a white readership.

'Can you pass me the skin colour?'  
'Here you go.'



Patsy L'Amour laLove  
**Beißreflexe**  
(Querverlag)  
Queer stands for a self-consciously perverse rejoinder to heterosexual manias and hostility to otherness. 27 authors address this form of queer activism and its theoretical context.



Mohamed Amjahid  
**Der weiße Fleck**  
(Piper)  
Even if the awareness of inequality in our country has grown, racist thinking remains deeply rooted in all of us, invisible to the white majority. Amjahid aims to shed light on these blind spots.



Alice Hasters  
**Was weiße Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen, aber wissen sollten**  
(hanserblau)  
Powerfully yet patiently Hasters describes how racism shapes her everyday life as a black woman in Germany.



Noah Sow  
**Deutschland Schwarz Weiß**  
(BoD)  
Since its first publication in 2008, this book has become a standard work for teaching and discussing structural racism in Germany, and has lost none of its topicality to this day.



Tupoka Ogette  
**Exit Racism**  
(Unrast)  
A critical journey for readers, not only sharing concrete knowledge with them about the history of racism and its impacts, but also supporting them in an emotional confrontation with the topic.



Jörg Scheller  
**Identität im Zwielficht**  
(Claudius)  
In the media, identity politics has become a battle cry. This book aims to contribute greater objectivity to the debates.





The rainbow flag: a worldwide symbol of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and the acceptance of different ways of life.

With his book *Identität im Zwielficht*, art historian Jörg Scheller wants to move between the two front lines rather than cowering in the trenches. He stresses the importance of having a concept of identity, as long as it remains descriptive and does not start to posit static essences in an 'ideologically prescriptive' way. It is clear that the postcolonial identity debate poses questions not only about the individual's ability to cope with everyday life, but in particular about every form of art. The essay *Wie frei ist die Kunst?* by journalist and art critic Hanno Rauterberg, is a passionate plea for the 'universal freedom of art'.

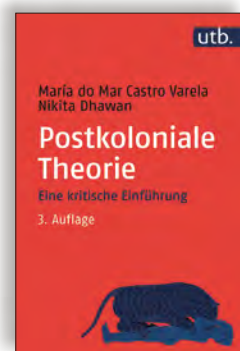
## ANTIRACIST THINKING CAN BE LEARNED

The work *Postkoloniale Theorie*, already in its third edition, is aimed at an academic audience. This study by academics Maria do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan looks at the founding texts of postcolonial theory by Edward W. Said (1978), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994), and analyses them in their current context.

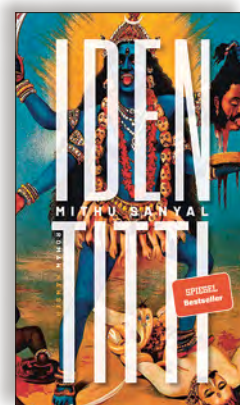
Author Mithu M. Sanyal appeals to a broad public with her novel *Identitti*, which was shortlisted for the German Book Prize in 2021. In the novel, a person of colour – a professor of postcolonial studies and undisputed figurehead of her department – is found to have perpetrated a deliberate deception. Professor Saraswati is not really a person of colour, as she claims – she's a white woman! It is no coincidence that this title should appear at the end of an article about such a deeply controversial subject. In her review of *Identitti*, author Alina Bronsky wrote: 'What a mercilessly funny search for identity, in which nothing and nobody is spared. Reading it not only makes you smarter – it also puts you in a better mood.'



Hanno Rauterberg  
**Wie frei ist die Kunst?**  
(Suhrkamp)  
What is hidden behind the debate on morality and aesthetics: is political correctness endangering the autonomy of the artist? And why is the quarrel taking place at this moment in history?



Maria do Mar Castro Varela, Nikita Dhawan  
**Postkoloniale Theorie**  
(UTB)  
The updated third edition also engages with contemporary debates on globalisation, religion, human rights and decolonisation.



Mithu Sanyal  
**Identitti**  
(Hanser)  
From race, sex and gender to colonialism: a fun and entertaining novel written with delightful self-mockery and liberating knowledge.



Emilia Roig  
**Why we matter**  
(Aufbau)  
A ground-breaking debut exposing the patterns of systematic oppression through Emilia Roig's own experiences and family history. Landed her on the German bestseller lists.

## LEVELLY HUMAN IS ENOUGH



Identity politics divides us, creates artificial groups in society and reinforces discrimination instead of combating it. Isn't it the opposite of what social justice movements should be doing? Wouldn't it be more effective to bring us together instead of highlighting our differences? Aren't we all human? And most importantly, do we want to be put in boxes – aren't we all more complex than these fixed identity dimensions?

Yes. We are eminently more complex than the boxes that were invented centuries ago to define, separate and classify humans. Instead of boxes, I would rather speak of a ladder, a powerful, yet mostly invisible hierarchy in which we are all embedded. Depending on our gender, skin colour, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class and disability (or a combination of these), we occupy the higher or lower ranks of this ladder. Boxes exist independently of each other; they are separate, do not relate to each other. The ladder depicts more accurately the hierarchical relation that exists between these categories. The codependency between these identities becomes unmistakably clear. Women are constructed in relation to men, Blacks in relation to whites, queers in relation to straight people, disabled people in relation to non-disabled people. The superiority of men, whites, straight and non-disabled people relies on the constant devaluation and dehumanization of their opposites. This is when we understand that dismantling this hierarchy requires that we make the oppressed groups visible, but also that we name and define the invisible norm, which has been constructed as superior – as 'normal', the standard against which intelligence, beauty, and overall worth are measured. 'Normal' people are

not used to being named, to being made visible. Their existence, perspectives, interests and experiences stand for humanity as a whole. 'Men's literature', 'heterosexual bar', 'white culture', need not be named. We have come to a point where we need a new 'normal', a normal that reflects the magnificent diversity of our experiences, perspectives, bodies. We need a new normal which doesn't rely on the brutal exclusion of the majority of the world's population to establish itself as the superior norm. We need a non-hierarchical normal, and only then will we be able to say 'we are all human' without dissonance, without hypocrisy.

Identity politics did not invent these categories, nor is it reaffirming the hierarchy that holds them together. Instead, identity politics unveils the brutal logic of oppression by deconstructing the categories that imprison us – including by naming them. Before we can declare these categories obsolete, we need to recognize that they have shaped and continue to shape our lives in tremendous ways: femicides, genocides, racist police violence, mass incarceration, colonization, the systematic murder of trans women.

Identity politics is all about liberation. The Combahee River Collective, a group of US-American Black feminists who coined the term identity politics, formulated their political demands with eloquent humility: 'To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.'

**Emilia Zenzile Roig**, PhD, is the founder and director of the Center for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) in Berlin. She teaches Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory and Postcolonial Studies, International and European Law in Germany, France and the US and gives talks and lectures on intersectionality, feminism, racism, discrimination, diversity and inclusion. 2021 her book *Why We Matter* was published.



**Tobias Voss**

was Vice President of International Markets at the Frankfurter Buchmesse. As such, he was responsible for relations with the fair's international clients. He is currently working as a consultant for Frankfurter Buchmesse.





© Mathias Bother

**Jakob Augstein** studied politics at FU Berlin and at the Institut d'études politiques in Paris. He worked as a reporter for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Berlin and East Germany for ten years. Since 2008 he has been the publisher and managing director of the weekly newspaper *der Freitag*. His first novel, *Strömung*, was published in January 2022.

## IDENTITY POLITICS – THE NEW CLASS STRUGGLE?

What is 'identity politics'? Anyone who knows the answer is probably against the idea. In recent months, the term has had an illustrious career – but only as a caricature and a distortion. Anyone who talks about 'identity politics' is perpetuating a deception. Yes, there is a revolution underway. But it is not about identities. Instead, like any revolution worth its salt, it is about justice. New social and political movements are coming to the fore, and fighting for their rights. The unease this is causing is clear from the opposition to 'identity politics' we are seeing from so many different camps. The huge amount of debate around the issue makes it feel as though this is about self-defence, about combating the coordinated attack of a phalanx of unwanted modernity. But this assumption too is mistaken. There can be no coherent 'identity politics'. Because the main groups we tend to associate with identity politics – women, migrants, LGBT people, Black people and people of colour – are not clearly distinguishable entities. They do not share the same experiences of discrimination and threat, and we should be under no illusions about the hierarchies that exist among them: those who are discriminated against also discriminate against others. The various forms of identity politics are accused of dividing society and robbing it of the capacity for solidarity. It takes a certain amount of chutz-

pah, if you ask me, to make this argument: first Black people and migrants are backed into a corner by being discriminated against, and then, when some of them fight back, they are accused of dividing society. This accusation reveals that identity politics is not about the identity of specific group interests at all, but about the identity of the majority. No wonder it has led to such bitter wrangling.

The more serious criticism of identity politics, however, is a self-criticism used by those on the left. It is the idea that, by concentrating on the interests of the few, the left has lost sight of the interests of the many; that it has given up on the big social question in favour of a plethora of cultural questions.

But here, too, the opposite is true. The problem for the left in recent years has not been that it was too far to the left on social issues, but that it was too far to the right on economic ones. And there is also a genuine misunderstanding here: so-called identity politics is about access, influence, representation, money – not so different from the traditional class struggle over distribution. It's just that the beneficiaries are different.

Instead of playing off disadvantaged groups against each other, the left should feel equal responsibility for all of them, and should not get distracted by talk of identity politics. When the German football team played Hungary in the Euros in late June 2021, and there was debate over whether the stadium in Munich should be lit up in rainbow colours as a protest against Viktor Orbán's homophobic policies, corporations like BMW and the HypoVereinsbank suddenly hoisted the rainbow flag. All well and good. But does that mean capitalism is now free of discrimination? ♦

## IDENTITY POLITICS: A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS



© private

Until not so very long ago, the term 'identity' was the preserve of right-wing movements, which interpreted it in a nationalistic and chauvinistic way. Today, it is increasingly being used on the left as a way of emancipating groups who experience discrimination. This, however, raises the question of whether the conscious recognition of identity can ever have a positive effect, especially from a progressive point of view.

For a start: what do we mean when we talk about identity? Every individual's identity is a prism with a thousand facets. Each facet expresses something about our identity, but none of them gives an exhaustive answer to the question of our identity.

Anyone who puts the concept of identity at the centre of their political project cannot help but smooth out this complexity and make reference to categories, groups and labels which risk turning people, with their own unique and unrepeatable identities and above all their own ideas, values, abilities and skills, into interchangeable representatives of a label.

We should not forget, of course, that different groups do have specific characteristics and needs, and may therefore enjoy certain special rights. The point is, however, that these characteristics and needs are the *starting point* and not the *foundation* of these rights: in other words, people have rights not *on the basis of these characteristics* but on the basis that we all belong to the human race. Gay people, women and migrants have rights not because they are gay, women or migrants, but because they are human beings.

In the end, identity politics starts to reveal all of its internal contradictions. *Identity* is to do with the

world of facts (and coincidence): with the fact of being black or white, male or female, of having been born in one place rather than another, into one family rather than another, of having grown up in one culture rather than another. Whereas *politics* (in the broadest sense) is to do with the world of values. And Max Weber, and Hume before him, taught us that values cannot automatically be derived from facts. Facts are extremely important in determining the conditions in which we all live, and thus also in shaping our values, but they are not the goal of political action itself, which cannot help being guided by values. For this reason, identity politics is a contradiction in terms. Just because two people share a fact of life, such as gender or ethnic background, does not automatically mean they share an idea, a principle, a value or a political project. And conversely, people can share an idea, a principle, a value or a political project without sharing one or more of the mosaic tiles of their own identities. ♦

**Cinzia Sciuto** is a doctor of philosophy. She works as a journalist and is editor of *MicroMega*, the Italian magazine about philosophy and politics. She writes for several Italian and German publications. Her book *Die Fallen des Multikulturalismus* was published in 2020.



# Free and Independent

Tsitsi Dangarembga, 2021 Peace Prize winner



Since 1950, the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, the professional organisation of publishers and booksellers in the Federal Republic of Germany, has awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. The debates and discussions triggered by the prize and its winners have made it one of the country's most important cultural prizes.



**Holger Heimann** is a literary critic and works for various newspapers and broadcasters. He lives in Berlin.

Reading Tsitsi Dangarembga's novels is an intense experience, one that's both unsettling and cathartic. The Zimbabwean author and filmmaker's key focus is the traumatic effect of colonial rule – and the silence surrounding it. This is especially true of Dangarembga's semi-autobiographical Tambudzai trilogy, which depicts the difficult emancipation of Tambu, a gifted girl who becomes a vulnerable woman, and which made the author visible far beyond her homeland.

*Nervous Conditions*, the first in the trilogy, was published back in 1988. The novel was awarded the Commonwealth Book Prize for the African Region and established Dangarembga as one of the continent's most radical female voices. The *Book of Not* appeared after a sizable gap in 2006, and *This Mournable Body* another twelve years later. This third novel was nominated for the Booker Prize, placing a renewed spotlight on a writer who thematises processes of female self-empowerment with close reference to her own life.

The German Publishers and Booksellers Association recently awarded Dangarembga the 2021 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, hailing the 62-year-old author as one of 'her nation's most important artists' and a 'widely recognised voice of Africa'. This prestigious and internationally renowned prize is traditionally presented at the close of the Frankfurter Buchmesse in a ceremony at the city's Paulskirche. In a highly personal

and emotional laudatory speech, the sociologist and Germanist Auma Obama, the eldest half-sister of former US President Barack Obama, skilfully traced the author's development into one of Africa's most distinguished political activists and artists. 'An 'ordinary' life was never an option for you', said Obama when summing up her friend's path.

Tsitsi Dangarembga has always combined artistic creativity with a commitment to liberal ideals, and this has sometimes had consequences. Her resolute advocacy of women's rights and criticism of political corruption led to her conviction and brief imprisonment in Zimbabwe in 2020. But Dangarembga won't be deterred – she is a fighter. In her acceptance speech in Frankfurt, she pointed out that Zimbabwe has never known peace: 'Various institutionalised forms of violence were practised on black bodies by white bodies in Zimbabwe when British settlers arrived to occupy the land'. The country's independence in 1980 has done little to alter this history of violence. It is part of a tragic colonial legacy that the violence exported by the West 'is too often the order of the day in postcolonial countries'.

For Dangarembga, this means that the struggle for civil liberties and social change continues. In her speech, she expressed the hope that she and her audience might experience reading encounters 'that effect positive transformation for peace'. And this is what her novels invite us to do. ♦



**Tsitsi Dangarembga**, born on February 14, 1959 in Mutoko in present-day north-eastern Zimbabwe, is one of the most important writers, playwrights and filmmakers in her country. She has been active for many years in promoting freedom, women's rights and political change in Zimbabwe. In 2021, she received the PEN Pinter Prize as well as the PEN International Award for Freedom of Expression, which honours authors who continue their writing despite persecution.



100 DAYS FOR CONTEMPORARY ART AND POLITICS

# documenta

From a 'dilettantish project' to the most important modern art exhibition series in the world

[german-stories.de/  
documenta](https://german-stories.de/documenta)

More information  
about the featured  
book collection  
can be found here.

## More than just art

**E**very five years, documenta turns the Hessian city of Kassel into an epicentre of modern art. From the first documenta in 1955 to the documenta of 2017, visitor numbers rose steadily to over one million. Different curator teams and concepts guarantee a lively, international view of contemporary art and social dialogue. But documenta's beginnings were much less promising, at least where funding was concerned. A report by the relevant government ministry declared, as late in the day as October 1954, 'if I am to be frank about my overall impression of this project, I would have to say that it seems very dilettantish.'

The Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs eventually approved a grant in February 1955, 'in acknowledgement of the expected impact of the proposed exhibition on the Soviet Occupation Zone': in Kassel, which was the home of documenta founder Arnold Bode, and a 'zonal border area', the 'development of the visual arts throughout our century' would now be documented 'at the European level'.

The first documenta was a stunning success: 134,000 people attended, including Alfred Barr, the founding director of the MoMA. Turtle soup and Sekt Orange were served for the celebratory dinner, and the catalogue was already sold out!

documenta has always been more than just an art event. During the Cold War, documenta's selection of artists and works was a way of setting itself apart from the GDR and the Eastern Bloc and embracing the USA and the West. The exhibiting of modern art was synonymous with political modernisation. documenta developed into a forum for criticism in which social contradictions were explored at the confluence between politics and art. The works displayed at documenta – the kind of modern art that had been vilified by the Nazis – became beloved of the public, and served as a way of distancing this new era from that of National Socialism. Bode exhibited Wilhelm Lehmbruck's 'Knieende' ('Kneeling Woman') in a central position in the rotunda of the Fridericianum. It had occupied a similarly central position at the Nazi propaganda show 'Entartete Kunst' ('Degenerate Art') in Munich in 1937. At documenta, it symbolised the rehabilitation of modern art, and an open-minded and cosmopolitan West Germany. However, there were also works on display by artists who had not been proscribed in 1933–1945. This ambivalence was reflected in the composition

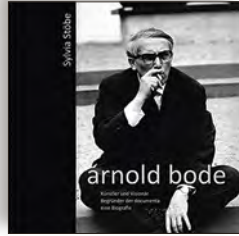


© Anja Meyer

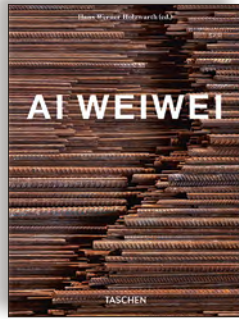
When books become  
a work of art: 'The  
Parthenon of Books'

Joseph Beuys himself plants one of the 7000 oak trees in front of the Fridericianum in Kassel.





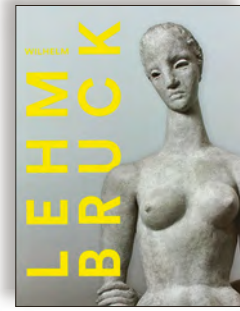
Sylvia Stöbe  
**Arnold Bode**  
(Euregio)  
The man who launched documenta, his work as an artist, designer, interior architect and urban planning visionary.



Hans Werner Holzwarth  
**Ai Weiwei**  
(Taschen)  
This monograph highlights all the stages of conceptual artist, painter, sculptor and architect Ai Weiwei's career.



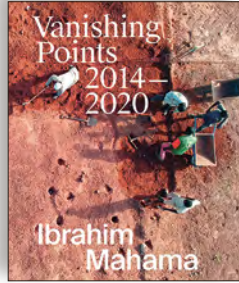
Raphael Gross, Lars Bang Larsen, Dorlis Blume et al.  
**Documenta**  
(Prestel)  
The history of documenta in the context of Federal Germany's political, cultural and socio-historical development.



Kulturstiftung der Länder, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart  
**Wilhelm Lehmbruck**  
(Sandstein)  
Wilhelm Lehmbruck's statue 'Kneeling Woman' was an icon of the first documenta in 1955.



Kate Nesin, Dirk Snauwaert, et al.  
**Jimmie Durham**  
(Phaidon)  
This book traces the life of the legendary American iconoclast, Arkansas-born Durham.



Torsten Reiter, Alexander Bär  
**Ibrahim Mahama**  
(Kerber)  
Mahama's idea of social sculpture also informs his project 'Parliament of Ghosts', which was displayed in Tamale, Ghana, in 2020.



**Caroline Keller** studied art history, archaeology and history. She has previously worked at Taschen Verlag and at the Fraunhofer Institute in Cologne, and since 2008 she has overseen the list of Leipzig publisher E. A. Seemann, where she produces non-fiction books about culture for adults and children.

of the documenta team itself: of its twenty-one members, ten were former members of the Nazi party, the SA or the SS, including Werner Haftmann.

The fourth documenta almost exploded 'on collision with pop art and politics', wrote *Die Zeit*. Almost a third of the works came from the USA, and in 1968, a year full of demonstrations, many of the protests were against the USA's war in Vietnam. From an artistic perspective, there was – rather belatedly – some pop art on display, but the complete absence of contemporary trends including Fluxus, Happening and Performance was strongly criticised.

In 1977, at documenta 6, examples of Socialist Realism were exhibited for the first time by Manfred Schneckenburger. They included works by Willi Sitte, Bernhard Heisig, Werner Tübke and Wolfgang Mattheuer. This led, however, to Gerhard Richter, Georg Baselitz, A.R. Penck and Markus Lüpertz taking down their own works the day before the exhibition opened, because they did not want them displayed in such close proximity to the 'official' art of the GDR. The population of Kassel, for its part, was outraged about Walter De Maria's underground installation 'Vertical Earth Kilometer' and the elaborate and costly process of inserting the thousand-metre brass rod into the ground. Today, the Earth Kilometer is a documenta icon.

## 7000 trees and 1001 chairs

documenta 7 took place in 1982 under the shadow of Ronald Reagan's Cold War policies, which included plans to place intermediate-range missiles in West Germany. This mobilised a peace movement which led to the largest demonstration in post-war history. documenta director Rudi Fuchs exhibited Hans Haacke's 'Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers', a portrait of Reagan behind a rope barrier from which a red carpet led to a photograph of an anti-Reagan demonstration in Bonn. There was also Joseph Beuys's tree-planting campaign '7000 Eichen' ('7000 Oaks'), which became the subject of controversial debate among Kassel's citizens but which, with their help, ended up being a great success.

documenta X, designed by Catherine David in 1997, was the first in a series of exhibitions that engaged critically with globalisation and the concept of the West during the Cold War. And in 2002, documenta 11 finally set itself the challenge of looking beyond Western art history by including artistic positions from all over the world – a change which was long overdue.

The motto of documenta 12, 'Migration der Form' ('The Migration of Form') was reflected in Ai

Weiwei's 2007 work 'Fairytale'. The artist had invited 1001 of his compatriots to Kassel and had brought 1001 wooden chairs, dating from the time of the Qing dynasty, to documenta to serve as 'islands of calm' for discussions.

More than a million visitors attended documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens – it was the best-attended modern art exhibition of all time. Photogenic visitor magnets included Marta Minujín's 'The Parthenon of Books', consisting of 67,000 banned books, and an installation created by Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama, who covered the gatehouses of Kassel with used jute sacks. The sacks represented global trade, capitalism, the working class and the place where they were produced.

## A place where art helps people

In summer 2022, ruangrupa, an artist collective from Jakarta, will curate documenta fifteen. Their concept is based on the idea of lumbung (an Indonesian word for a rice barn used by the whole community) and reflects the importance of and the need for greater sustainability, collectivity, connectedness in a globalised world, the development of community resources and fair distribution.

The documenta committee decided unanimously in favour of ruangrupa, 'because it is clearly capable of appealing to a variety of target audiences – including people who are not the traditional target audiences for art – and encouraging local participation. At a time in which innovative strength lies mainly in independent community organisations, it seems right to offer a platform to this collective approach in the form of documenta.'

The most important question for ruangrupa – 'How can we create a place in which art helps the people around it?' is one they explore as a collaborative network. Individual resources are shared: people and their different points of view, time, energy, knowledge, money, materials.

The participating artists, who can be seen in publications, include the late Jimmie Durham, who often explored the issue of identity in his works. The Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Centre for Art and Urban Studies) works in a district of Berlin that is home to middle-class people and migrants. The artist collective wants to activate the social



Documenta-Archiv, Birgitta Coers  
**Imaging Beuys**  
(Hatje Cantz)  
Kassel-based Schwerdtle photographed several documenta artists. His photos of the 7000 Oaks project have shaped Beuys' popular image.



Ingeborg Rauss  
**Ex-Position**  
(VDM Verlag Dr. Müller)  
Drawing on the artistic strategies of documenta 11, this book shows the extent to which the artistic confrontations with real problems are related to globalisation.



KW Institute for Contemporary Art, ZK/U Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik  
**STATISTA**  
(Park Books)  
From May to December 2019, the art project STATISTA explored ways in which co-operation in urban development can succeed if oriented towards the common good.

and spatial relationships within this disparate group and to explore the way in which art can accelerate this process. Their latest project is the regeneration of the Haus der Statistik in Berlin.

ruangrupa has developed a series of shared values for all participants: HUMOUR, GENEROSITY, CURIOSITY, CONTENTMENT, INDEPENDENCE, LOCAL ROOTEDNESS, TRANSPARENCY, REGENERATION. If these are reflected in documenta fifteen, it will have been a success not only for the artistic but also for the social concept. ♦





The last German emperor Wilhelm II suffers from the shame of his lost reign. To distract himself he cuts down trees in the count's forest. From: Jan Bachmann *Der Kaiser im Exil*, Edition Moderne

NEW GRAPHIC NOVELS FROM GERMANY

# BIOGRAPHICAL, FICTIONAL, FANTASTICAL

The German comics scene doesn't have a particularly big share of the domestic book market, but it's evolving and making its mark – with some interesting thematic trends.

When we think of political cartoons or the newspaper comic strips often considered to be the origin of the genre, it's their ability to react quickly to current events that leaves an impression. But this shouldn't obscure the fact that the world of graphic novels is rather different – with books of substantial length, stand-alones rather than series, and a target audience of adult readers.

## Biographies and history

German publishing has discovered graphic novels (and picture books) as a vehicle for the biographies of famous people. The results aren't always convincing, but in the case of *Ernst Busch. Der letzte Prolet* they truly are. Jochen Voit's in-depth research and his clever idea of embedding the life story of Ernst Busch – a singer and actor who had considerable success in East Germany – within the tale of a vanished portrait results in a graphic novel

that really works, not least thanks to strong visuals by Sophia Hirsch.

Matthias Lehmann's *Parallel* is also visually impressive, and shows how gay people in Germany were persecuted regardless of political system. Lehmann tells the story of Karl, who is unable to admit to his family or himself that he is gay, either in East or West Germany.

Young Swiss illustrator Jan Bachmann has established himself as a specialist in eccentric political figures. As the title of his graphic novel suggests, *Der Kaiser im Exil* depicts the stay of Wilhelm II, the last German emperor, at Amerongen Castle in the Netherlands. After abdicating, the former ruler mindlessly cuts down trees while hoping for a return to Germany, where he still has a surprising number of supporters. Bachmann does a wonderful job of portraying the absurdity of this walking anachronism with his almost slapstick illustrations.

Autobiographical experiences have been the subject of graphic novels for quite some time now. Their perspective has gradually widened, with attempts to link the private and the historical becoming ever more visible. Bianca Schaalburg

[german-stories.de/  
comics](http://german-stories.de/comics)

More information about the featured book collection can be found [here](#).

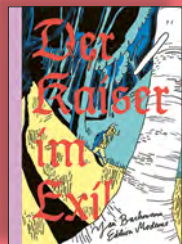


Jochen Voit, Hirsch (ill.)  
**Ernst Busch. Der letzte Prolet**  
(Avant)



Matthias Lehmann  
**Parallel**  
(Reprodukt)





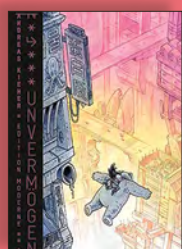
Jan Bachmann  
**Der Kaiser im Exil**  
(Edition Moderne)



Bianca Schaalburg  
**Der Duft der Kiefern**  
(Avant)



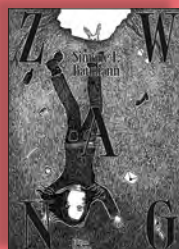
Jennifer Daniel  
**Das Gutachten**  
(Carlsen)



Andreas Kiener  
**Unvermögen**  
(Edition Moderne)



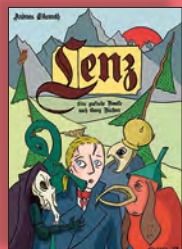
Thomas v. Kummant,  
Benjamin v. Eckartsberg  
**Gung Ho.**  
*Die weiße Flut*  
(Cross Cult)



Simone F. Baumann  
**Zwang**  
(Edition Moderne)



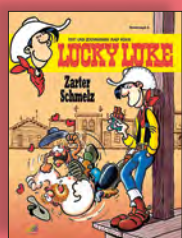
Lina Ehrentraut  
**Melek + Ich**  
(Edition Moderne)



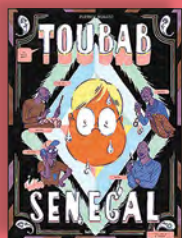
Andreas Eikenroth  
**Lenz**  
(Edition 52)



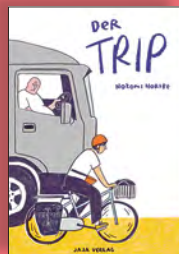
Arno Schmidt,  
Nicolas Mahler (ill.)  
**Schwarze Spiegel**  
(Suhrkamp)



Ralf König  
**Lucky Luke.**  
*Zarter Schmelz*  
(Egmont)



Patrick Bonato  
**Toubab im Senegal**  
(Luftschacht)



Nozomi Horibe  
**Der Trip**  
(Jaja)

pulls off this challenge with aplomb in *Der Duft der Kiefern*, a chronicle of her own family research. She painstakingly reveals that which is suppressed and concealed, and in doing so handles her family history in an impressively unsparing way. Her work explores connections to the Nazi regime, along with the power of repression and silence. Titles like Jennifer Daniel's *Das Gutachten*, about the Red Army Faction, are a sign that 20th century German history is increasingly being thematised in new graphic novels. And no wonder – they offer an impressive way of combining research with the narrative possibilities of fiction.

## Tales of the future and battling constraints

Science fiction is a classic genre for comics and graphic novels. The artist's visual imagination and illustrative talents allow fantasy worlds, utopias and dystopias to be created without breaking the bank. Outstanding German-language examples include *Unvermögen*, in which Andreas Kiener uses poetic images to depict a little girl's search for her mother on an almost devastated 23rd century Earth. Her companion is a robot whose programming she's cleverly managed to trick. *Gung Ho*, a comic book series by illustrator Thomas von Kummant and writer Benjamin von Eckartsberg has been lavished with international praise. The fifth volume, *Die weiße Flut*, sees the highly atmospheric, action-packed story about two teenagers fighting an authoritarian regime draw to a close. Swiss publisher Edition Moderne has a reputation for being progressive, both visually and in terms of the stories it tells. It explores themes such as the future and the individual's battle against constraints quite uniquely – in the present day. In *Zwang*, up-and-coming cartoonist Simone F. Baumann uses virtuoso images to give an unflinching analysis of her daily struggle against the chaos and constrictions of life – though not without humour, which also runs through Lina Ehrentraut's madcap *Melek + Ich*. Here, the protagonist creates a second version of herself using an avatar in another dimension, with whom she promptly falls in love.

## Literary greats = great comics?

Adaptations of well-known literary works by graphic novels can be tricky – they often misleadingly suggest that readers are getting something complex in a lighter form. Two new publications quickly dispel this impression. Author Andreas Eikenroth takes on Georg Büchner's *Lenz*. His frenzy of colours and forms offers a convincing interpretation of the protagonist's encroaching madness during his stay in the Vosges mountains. For Viennese illustrator Nicolas Mahler, world literature is the model for his own highly individual approach, which renders the spirit of great literature with minimalist wit, but nonetheless retains immense precision. Following graphic novels on James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Robert Musil, it's the turn of Arno Schmidt's dystopian *Schwarze Spiegel*. Once again, the internationally acclaimed Austrian succeeds in creating a superb adaptation of a classic. Of course there have long been classics in comics, too, and Lucky Luke is definitely one of them. Ralf König is the second German illustrator (after Mawil) to have the honour of putting his version of the lonely cowboy on the page. In *Zarter Schmelz*, questions one might expect about homosexuality in the Wild West are finally given the space they deserve. König proves both his terrific timing as a narrator and his stylistic sovereignty when dealing with this comic icon. Graphic journalism has been an emerging trend over the past few years, one that has shown the comic world's capacity for political reportage. This includes travelogues, especially when they're presented as cleverly and aptly as in Nozomi Horibe's and Patrick Bonato's works. In *Der Trip*, Horibe, a Japanese cartoonist living in Berlin, chronicles a month-long cycling tour around her adopted country. Questions of identity and belonging are portrayed with subtlety and disarming accuracy. The *Toubab im Senegal* – 'toubab' being a West African term for a white person – is author Patrick Bonato himself. With self-irony and a wonderful use of colour, Bonato recounts his stay in a foreign land that initially overwhelms him, only to become highly enriching. The growing public recognition of graphic novels in Germany is also illustrated by the number of prizes and scholarships available. The Kulturverwaltung



Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, a friend of Goethe, suffered from mental illness and was sent to Oberlin's vicarage. Lenz temporarily loses consciousness, suffers from anxiety attacks and loses his sense of space and time, which Eikenroth translates into intense, atmospheric images. From: Andreas Eikenroth *Lenz*, Edition 52

des Berliner Senats (the Berlin Senate's Department of Culture) awards five generously funded scholarships to Berlin-based comic artists. Similarly, the Berthold Leibinger Foundation supports the journey of outstanding graphic novels into print. In addition, established literary prizes are slowly opening up to graphic novels and are thus encouraging the development of this rich cultural scene – one that shows tremendous promise for the future. ♦



### Jakob Hoffmann

organises events featuring comic artists, including the 'Yippie!' festival and the 'Stories and Strips' series. He is currently preparing an exhibition on Axel Scheffler letter envelopes, and lives in Frankfurt am Main.



© Hartmut Schröder

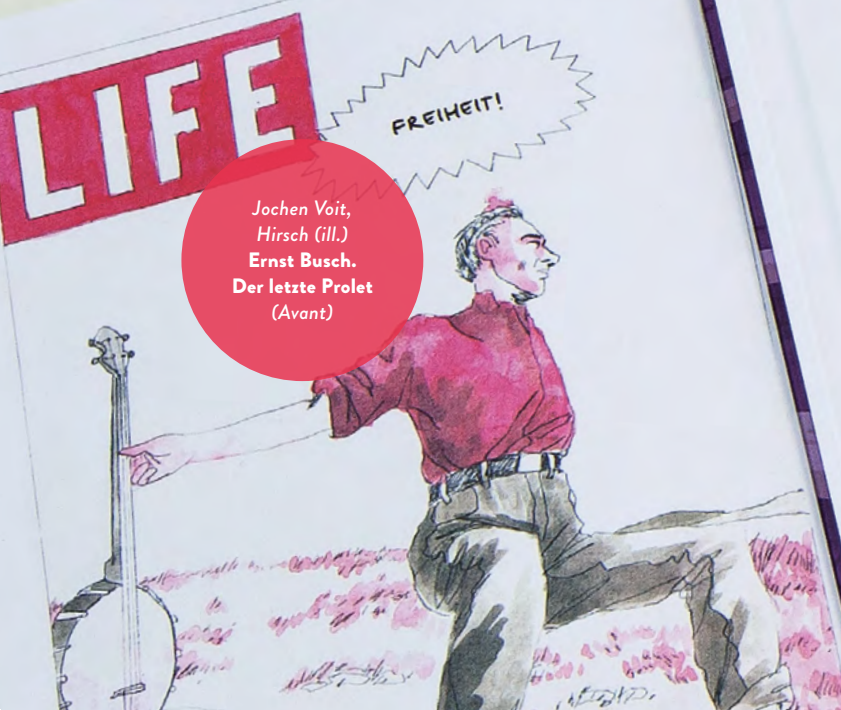


Patrick Bonato  
Toubab im Senegal  
(Luftschacht)

Henning Wagenbreth  
Rückwärtsland  
(Peter Hammer)



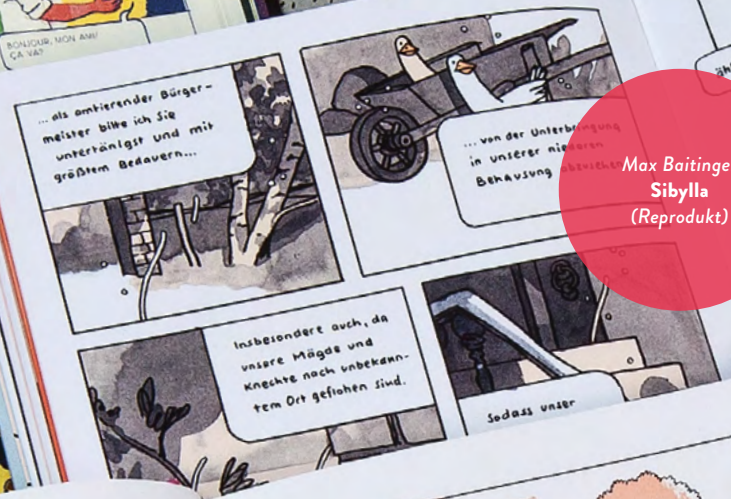
Till Lukat  
Kondensstreifen  
im Kopf  
(Avant)



Jochen Voit,  
Hirsch (ill.)  
Ernst Busch.  
Der letzte Prolet  
(Avant)



Anna Rakhmanko,  
Mikkel Sommer (ill.)  
Vasja, dein Opa  
(Rotopol)



Max Baitinger  
Sibylla  
(Reprodukt)



Ban Zarbo  
Cold.  
Die Kreatur  
(Altraverse)



Andreas Kiener  
Unvermögen  
(Edition Moderne)



Arno Schmidt,  
Nicolas Mahler  
Schwarze Spiegel  
(Suhrkamp)



und in Ausnahmezustände  
durchaus schon wahrnehm



## SELECTED TRANSLATIONS

# Books That Travel 2022

Every year, there are thousands of new books in German. But which ones will readers all over the world love? Respected, independent recommendations of brilliant and original books from Austria, Germany and Switzerland from a range of genres.

[german-stories.de/  
travel-22](https://german-stories.de/travel-22)

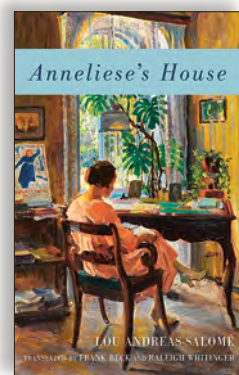
More information  
about the featured  
book collection  
can be found here.



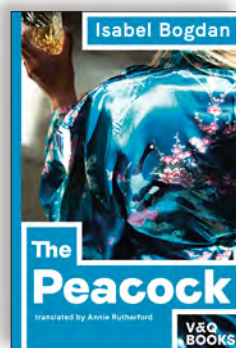
**Sarah Hemens**  
is the Project Director  
of New Books in  
German, which pro-  
motes German-  
language literature  
for translation into  
English in the UK,  
USA, and beyond.

**T**he Frankfurter Buchmesse is delighted to share with you its list of Books That Travel 2022. The books on the list include fiction, non-fiction, children's and young adult literature, and volumes of poetry, all of which have recently been published in English translation. The stories and ideas explored in these books can now be enjoyed by much wider audiences thanks to the work of literary translators. Reading books in translation enables us to gain a wider perspective and to understand ourselves and others around the world better. Books from other countries give us valuable glimpses into different ways of thinking and being, but can also remind us of the universality of some experiences and emotions. The publication of the list seems a good moment, therefore, to express our thanks to all those translators who have enabled the books on this list – and the many more books we did not have space for – to travel. ♦

## Novel



**Lou Andreas-Salomé**  
**Das Haus**  
(Europäischer  
Literaturverlag)  
**T: Frank Beck,  
Raleigh Whiting**  
A family history  
from the end of the  
20th century by  
one of Germany's  
most extraordinary  
female writers.



**Isabel Bogdan**  
**Der Pfau**  
(Kiepenheuer &  
Witsch)  
**T: Annie Rutherford**  
A dilapidated castle  
in the Scottish  
Highlands, a group  
of bankers on a  
teambuilding trip  
and a peacock gone  
rogue – and the  
chaos is complete!



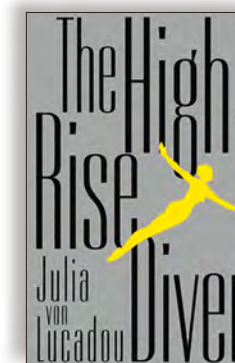
**Ulrich Alexander  
Boschwitz**  
**Der Reisende**  
(Klett-Cotta)  
**T: Philip Boehm**  
Berlin, November  
1938: Otto  
Silbermann, a  
respected Jewish  
businessman,  
realises he must  
flee. But all avenues  
are shut down. A  
rediscovered classic.



**Daniela Krien**  
**Die Liebe im  
Ernstfall**  
(Diogenes)  
**T: Jamie Bulloch**  
Five women  
attempt the im-  
possible – to love,  
to be strong,  
and to stay true  
to themselves.  
Spiegel #1 best-  
seller in Germany.



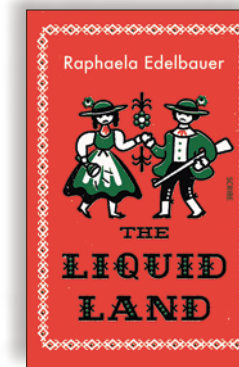
**Mariana Leky**  
**Was man von hier  
aus sehen kann**  
(Dumont)  
**T: Tess Lewis**  
When Selma  
dreams of an okapi  
someone is about  
to die. But who? A  
heartwarming story  
about the absurdity  
of life and death  
by award-winning  
novelist Leky.



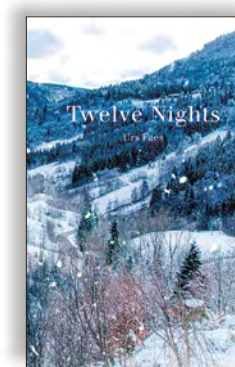
**Julia von Lucadou**  
**Die Hoch-  
hausspringerin**  
(Hanser Berlin)  
**T: Sharmila Cohen**  
A chilling and  
distressingly plau-  
sible dystopia  
for readers of The  
Handmaid's Tale,  
The Circle, and  
Brave New World.



**Helene Bukowski**  
**Milchzähne**  
(Blumenbar)  
**T: Jen Calleja**  
'A gripping debut  
novel ... there's no  
shortage of climate  
fiction these days,  
but this one is  
distinguished by its  
striking vision.'  
Publishers Weekly



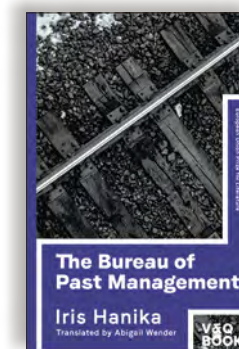
**Raphaela Edelbauer**  
**Das flüssige Land**  
(Klett-Cotta)  
**T: Jen Calleja**  
In the literary  
tradition of Thomas  
Bernhard and  
Elfriede Jelinek,  
The Liquid Land is  
a dangerous novel,  
at once glittering  
nightmare and dark.



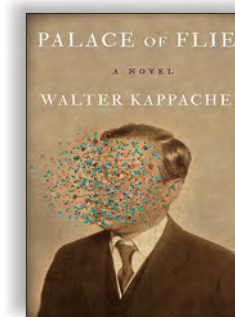
**Urs Faes**  
**Raunächte**  
(Suhrkamp)  
**T: Jamie Lee Searle**  
Twelve Nights is a  
hymn to the winter  
landscape and  
the power of story-  
telling, a beautiful  
novella of the  
natural world and  
our place in it.



**Sebastian Fitzek**  
**Passagier 23**  
(Droemer Knauer)  
**T: Jamie Bulloch**  
Bloody, breathless,  
discomforting and  
gripping, set in a  
simultaneously vast  
but claustrophobic  
super-liner. By  
Germany's most  
successful author  
of psychological  
thrillers.



**Iris Hanika**  
**Das Eigentliche**  
(Droschl)  
**T: Abigail Wender**  
Hanika shows how  
the crimes of  
the Nazi era hold  
the Germans in  
their clutches to  
this day. Can a  
country manage  
its past?



**Walter Kappacher**  
**Der Fliegenpalast**  
(Residenz)  
**T: Georg Bauer**  
An absorbing,  
sensitive novel about  
a famed author  
in crisis: the ageing  
Hugo von  
Hofmannsthal  
returns to the  
place of his youth.

Nonfiction is a pleasure all its own, a deep  
dive into fields outside my usual range  
that invite me in and enable me to write with  
a (faux-)authority that ripens into true  
understanding.

Shelley Frisch

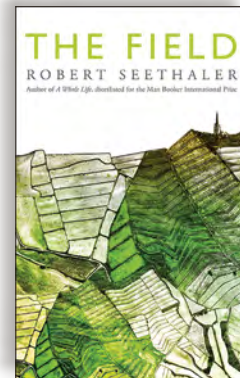




Selim Özdoğan  
**Die Tochter des Schmieds**  
(Aufbau)  
*T: Ayşe Tüркоğlu, Katy Derbyshire*  
'Reading it was like falling in love. If everyone read this book, the world would be a better place.' Fatih Akin, director



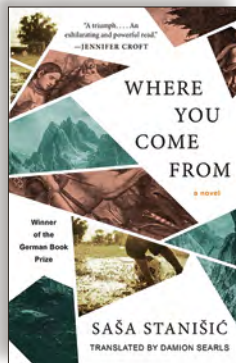
Bernhard Schlink  
**Olga**  
(Diogenes)  
*T: Charlotte Collins*  
A sweeping novel of love and passion from author of the international best-seller *The Reader* about a woman who fights against the prejudices of the time to find her place in the world.



Robert Seethaler  
**Das Feld**  
(Goldmann)  
*T: Charlotte Collins*  
'This book about a village's dead proves that subtle literary quality and bestseller success do not have to be mutually exclusive.' Die Zeit

Contemporary German literature is diverse, and the younger generation of writers don't necessarily carry the burden of the past, resulting in new and exciting voices.

Alexandra Roesch



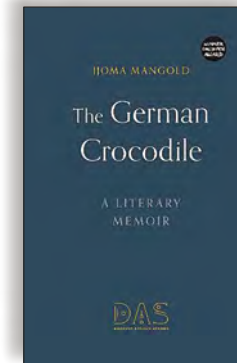
Saša Stanišić  
**Herkunft**  
(Luchterhand)  
*T: Damion Searls*  
Stanišić traces a family's escape during the conflict in Yugoslavia, and the years that followed as they built a life in Germany. A powerful exploration of identity and belonging.



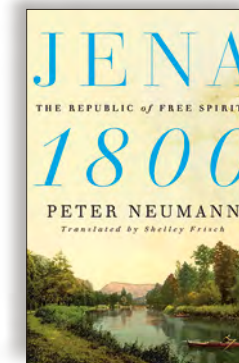
Hans von Trotha  
**Pollak's Arm**  
(Wagenbach)  
*T: Elisabeth Lauffer*  
Stimulating historical fiction for lovers of Rome and the world of antiquity, centred on one of the greatest masterpieces of all time.



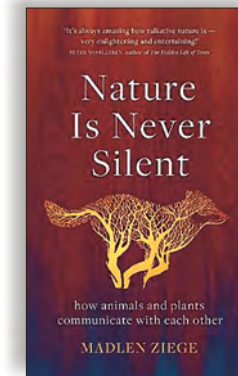
Juli Zeh  
**Neujahr**  
(Luchterhand)  
*T: Alta L. Price*  
Lanzarote on New Year's Day: a middle-aged, middle-class father starts a bike ride to end in an unexpectedly dark family drama. Longlisted for the 2022 PEN Translation Award.



Ijoma Mangold  
**Das deutsche Krokodil**  
(Rowohlt)  
*T: Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp*  
In this memoir of growing up different, one of Germany's best literary critics remembers his youth in 1970s Heidelberg and the new Federal Republic.



Peter Neumann  
**Jena 1800**  
(Siedler)  
*T: Shelley Frisch*  
An award-winning poet and philosopher reveals the history of the German idealist oasis where discussions of revolution, literature and beliefs gave birth to the modern world.



Madlen Ziege  
**Kein Schweigen im Walde**  
(Piper)  
*T: Alexandra Roesch*  
For readers of *Entangled Life* and *The Hidden Life of Trees*, a fascinating journey into the world of plants and animals, and how they communicate.



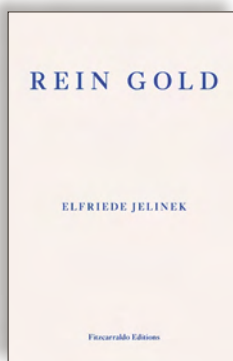
Translations spark engagement with worlds outside the ones we inhabit, so we translators are both diplomats and activists in the ongoing struggle against narrowmindedness.

Philip Boehm

## Graphic Novel



Birgit Weyhe  
**Madgermanes**  
(Avant)  
*T: Katy Derbyshire*  
Madgermanes is what the Mozambican workers once contracted out to East Germany are called today. Weyhe tells their stories.



Elfriede Jelinek  
**Rein Gold**  
(Rowohlt)  
*T: Gitta Honegger*  
2004 Nobel Prize in Literature laureate Elfriede Jelinek's *Rein Gold* reconstructs the events of Wagner's epic Ring cycle and extends them into the present day.

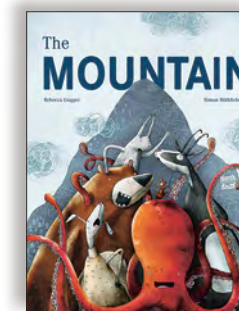


Harald Jähner  
**Wolfszeit**  
(Rowohlt)  
*T: Shaun Whiteside*  
Germany, 1945: a country in ruins. How does a nation recover from fascism and turn toward a free society once more?

## Children



Katja Frixie, Florentine Prechtel (ill.)  
**Der zauberhafte Wunschbuchladen**  
(Dressler)  
*T: Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp*  
What do you do when your best friend moves away? Clara takes comfort in Mrs Owl's bookshop.



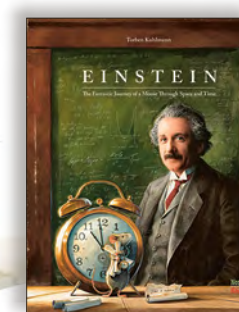
Rebecca Gurger, Simon Röthlisberger (ill.)  
**Der Berg**  
(NordSüd)  
*T: Marshall Yarbrough*  
It seems the mountain looks different to every animal. How can that be? Who is right?



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© 2021 NordSüd Verlag AG, Zürich/Schweiz



Torben Kuhlmann  
**Einstein**  
(NordSüd)  
*T: David Henry Wilson*  
Time is relative! Award-winning illustrator Kuhlmann's brilliant new book bends time and imagination.



Jochen Till, Wiebke Rauters (ill.)  
**Memento Monstrum**  
(Coppengrath)  
*T: Rachel Ward*  
Warning! This book contains Count Dracula's quite true memoirs.



## MEMORIES OF A BOOK FAIR THAT WAS NOT A BOOK FAIR

# Subject: *I NEED FRANKFURT*

My old friend Jordi Nadal, founder of Plataforma Editorial in Barcelona, and I (founder of Mensch Publishing) were in discussion about whether to attend the Frankfurt Book Fair 2021 in person. This conversation morphed into this exchange of emails and SMS which in turn led to the English publication of one of Jordi's titles. These are our real emails.



*From: Jordi Nadal*  
*Sent: 16 May 21 17:00*  
*To: Richard Charkin*  
*Subject: I need Frankfurt*

Richard, wow, Frankfurt! It has been the Jewel of my year for over three decades: where I have met all my pals, where I learned about serendipity and about luck and bad luck, where I won – and lost – most conveyed books for so long. Like a Chinese Restaurant, always a bitter-sweet sauce. Frankfurt as a milestone. As a place to be, a place to learn. Frankfurt as the milestone about feeling humble (among so many clever guys – and, I reckon, some mediocrity). But, above all, these giant booths where groups can intimidate, just because no one walks with Caesar Laurels and the line 'Respite post te! Hominem te esse memento!' YES, all will decay. Either because you retire, either because you start something new, as employee or brand-new own project, either because you got scared or because you become stingy ... How do you feel about this? J



Jordi Nadal and Sten Nadolny at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2017. Jordi published his last book, *Das Glück des Zauberers*.

*De: Richard Charkin*  
*Enviado el: 16 de mayo de 2021 18:07*  
*Para: Jordi Nadal*  
*Asunto: RE: I need Frankfurt*

Pshaw. Three decades. I am closing fast on five decades. Not up there with George Weidenfeld yet. So many stories. Vidia Naipaul winning the Nobel Prize. Frankfurter Hof late evenings and the crammed bar at the Park. And who are those old people going the other way on the moving footways – oh God, they are my contemporaries. But what can we achieve by being old Frankfurt friends? Can we make a book together? R

*From: Jordi Nadal*  
*Sent: 16 May 2021 17:10*  
*To: Richard Charkin*  
*Subject: RE: I need Frankfurt*

I would love to make a book with you, indeed, because we're Friends, because I respect your catalogue and because I am vain, and vanity moves me (it won't disappear until I am gone of this life!) Vanity is a great place for a place, how was it about Vanity Fair. I remember the posh receptions where I finally eat properly. The former great Bertelsmann Empfang which was the closest to Ben Hur's Circus Maximus. And I remember meeting Friends and having fun in small dinners, set for people who decided to exchange thoughts, ideas, memories and laughs instead of information about how big and powerful their companies were. J

*De: Richard Charkin*  
*Enviado el: 16 de mayo de 2021 18:18*  
*Para: Jordi Nadal*  
*Asunto: RE: I need Frankfurt*

Enough nostalgia. Let's do business. What book? It should be good; it should be important for our friends at Frankfurt and important for readers. We should do it together. Any ideas? Rx

*From: Jordi Nadal*  
*Sent: 16 May 2021 17:23*  
*To: Richard Charkin*  
*Subject: RE: I need Frankfurt*

Oh, a book, yes, I forgot. I am terribly sorry I don't have zig 10000nd readers in social networks, I can only write. Is this too pauper? I could tell a story. Hence, as I am not good with my own words, I'd like to use the best, most amazing, most astonishing paragraphs I have read about the best writers, and maybe comment them, in a sort of framework with the rite and delicacy of a blunt anthem. How does it sound? Do I have to get you tipsy at the Frankfurter Hof to convince you?

*De: Richard Charkin*  
*Enviado el: 16 de mayo de 2021 18:28*  
*Para: Jordi Nadal*  
*Asunto: RE: I need Frankfurt*

It sounds like you know exactly what you want and it's a book you've published and haven't sold English-language rights. Am I correct? You pretend to be an intellectual but really you are a salesman.

*On Sun, 16 May 2021 at 6:19 pm, Jordi Nadal wrote:*

Something against being a salesman? I am fed up with all this pretending posh people in Frankfurt, who try to make as if sales would be easy or not relevant at all. I want to use the best to achieve the best for every book (read my lips: make profit)

*De: Richard Charkin*  
*Enviado el: domingo, 16 de mayo de 2021 19:36*  
*Para: Jordi Nadal*  
*Asunto: Re: I need Frankfurt*

All good publishers are salespeople and want/need profitable businesses. So, what could we do

together to celebrate international literature, its importance, and the importance of reading for health, mental and physical? What's the book?

*From: Jordi Nadal*  
*Sent: 16 May 2021 19:10*  
*To: Richard Charkin*  
*Subject: RE: I need Frankfurt*

How about having a summit (in the frame of the Frankfurt book fair where three Ministers of three great European countries meet to praise the Reading as a Cultural Educational Health activity? So that 3 big shots all over the EU can praise and agree that reading is MORE than education, reading is MORE than culture and MORE than health. Reading is life. And we will all go nuts and bananas if we don't read. Damn COVID

*El 16 mayo 2021, a las 20:24, Richard Charkin escribió:*

So let me publish your brilliant *Libroterapia* in English. May I? And we can use it in both Spanish and English, and German and any other languages our publishing friends care to make available and do what you say at Frankfurt next year.

*On Sun, 16 May 2021 at 21:35, Jordi Nadal wrote:*

Sure thing. Just for the pure joy of riding together again. Thanks!

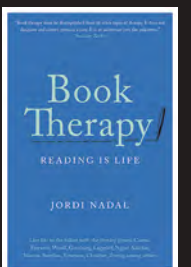
*Enviado desde mi iPhone*

### Epilogue:

So we published in English within weeks under the title *Book Therapy*. Jordi has had any number of interviews about the book such as with the Brazilian publisher and vice-President of IPA, Karine Pansa – and the book keeps selling. This was not the result of a hyped Frankfurt auction or a huge advance but because of friendships and understanding generated through the continuity, inclusivity, and internationalism of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Royalties on the English-language edition are being paid to the charity supporting reading in prisons and schools in deprived areas, Give a Book. Rights for other languages are available from Jordi and the both books are available worldwide from all good booksellers. ♦



Richard Charkin looking decidedly shifty on the Heinemann stand at Frankfurt in 1994, the time of Naomi Campbell's debut novel *Swan*.



Jordi Nadal  
**Book Therapy**  
(Mensch Publishing)



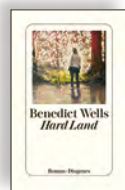
## Bookselling Heroes



It is awarded every year and recognises outstanding owner-run bookshops: the German Bookshop Prize. These are the 'Best Bookshops' of 2021: | 1 The Andere Buchhandlung in Rostock, run by Manfred Keiper, impresses with its curated range of titles and programme of events. | 2 Müller & Böhm in Düsseldorf and its owners Rudolf Müller and Selinde Böhm are renowned for the many literary events they put on at Heinrich Heine's birthplace. | 3 Buchhandlung Mahr in Langenau organises numerous cultural events such as the 'Kultursommer' ('Summer of Culture') event series.



## Six International Locations in German Novels



### MISSOURI

Benedict Wells  
**Hard Land**  
(Diogenes)



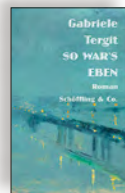
### PARIS

Emine Sevgi Özdamar  
**Ein von Schatten begrenzter Raum**  
(Suhrkamp)



### SAINT-JACQUES-AUX-BOIS

Max Küng  
**Fremde Freunde**  
(Kein & Aber)



### PRAGUE ET AL.

Gabriele Tergit  
**So war's eben**  
(Schöffling)



### BAGHDAD

Abbas Khider  
**Der Erinnerungsfälscher**  
(Hanser)



### NEW YORK

Ulrike Sterblich  
**The German Girl**  
(Rowohlt)

## Fantastic Heroes

Fantasy for young and old

Babylon Berlin  
plus magic



J. C. Vogt  
**Anarchie Déco**  
(Fischer Tor)

Of Gods and  
Humans, Creatures  
and Demons



Lilli Thal  
**Tier aus Stein, Tier aus Gold**  
(Gerstenberg)

Count Dracula is  
still alive



Dana Grigorcea  
**Die nicht sterben**  
(Penguin)

Epic, progressive  
and wholesome



James A. Sullivan  
**Das Erbe der Elfenmagierin**  
(Piper)

## Book Heroines 2021



1 'Literature as a fragile counterforce against injustice and violence in the face of despair.' Antje Rávik Strubel receives the German Book Prize 2021 for her novel *Blaue Frau* ('Blue Woman'). The Foundation for Book Culture and the Promotion of Reading, run by the German Publishers and Booksellers Association, gives an annual award to the best German-language title of the year, to coincide with the start of the Frankfurter Buchmesse. | 2 Colombian author Pilar Quintana is the 2021 winner of Litprom's LiBeraturpreis for her novel *La Perra* ('The Bitch'). This award recognises a particularly popular book by a female writer from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab World. 3 Germany's *BücherFrauen* – Women in Publishing – created a new biennial literary prize, the 'Christine'. The inaugural winner is Mely Kiyak for her book *Frausein* ('Womanhood'), thanks to its linguistic artistry, its content and its social relevance.

## Translation Heroes



One unique opportunity for translators is the Frankfurt International Translators Programme, organised by Frankfurter Buchmesse with the financial support of the German Federal Foreign Office. In 2021 the programme took place for the second time. Twenty-five international literary and non-fiction translators from German, hailing from all over the world, took part in an exclusive exchange and networking programme.

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# From Little Kids to Big Ones, From the Child's World to the Cosmos

A child's everyday life is full of feelings, crying, laughing, being together, being apart, having fun and sleeping. To a child, everything is important and experienced with great intensity. At the same time, the world is big and exciting. Who are we humans in this world? And anyway, what is the world compared to the cosmos? Books can help to make sense of all this.



When spring comes, the first birds will soon be heard again. Die Wunderwelt der Vögel lets us see them.

**W**immelbuch *Gefühle* offers search-and-find fun even for the very youngest. Big emotions can happen anywhere, whether in the swimming pool or in the magic castle. It's good to be able to talk about them calmly during a shared reading session. Reading together isn't always straightforward, as we see when the animals in *Kann ich bitte in die Mitte?* sit down to read together. It seems quite simple: choose a book and start reading. But the cat is missing a cushion, the lion has no room, the stork is not here yet, and someone always wants to be in the middle. No sooner has everyone called out: 'Right, we can get started now ...' than someone on the reading

sofa comes up with something new. Wonderful fun. *Schlafen wie die Rüben* works in a very similar way. Who hasn't encountered bedtime dramas about falling asleep? The authors turn things around: a calm bedtime routine is so yesterday – first we have to chase the monsters away. This is easily done with fast-paced rhymes and dynamic pictures until everyone collapses into bed, exhausted. Thorsten with the bristles and little mouse Line are firmly convinced that cuddles and hugs are a great comfort when they discover Theo the rhinoceros in the cupboard. Together with the other animal friends, they want to make Theo laugh again.

[german-stories.de/  
cbot-2022-1](http://german-stories.de/cbot-2022-1)

Further information about the Frankfurter Buchmesse's biannual collection 'Children's Books on Tour' can be found [here](#).

However, themes like too much closeness – and not enough – are also covered in *Das große Knuddeln*. Direct and with a light touch. In *Ein Kuchen für das Krokodil*, the mouse realises when she wants to bake the crocodile a birthday cake that having good intentions doesn't necessarily mean you'll do a great job. Somehow nothing goes according to plan. Too many ingredients that have no place in a cake fall into the dough. Fortunately, the bear can help the desperate mouse, and in the end a great kind of cake makes for an unforgettable celebration.

## Nature, of course!

Maybe it's because we are increasingly losing touch with nature that we want to look at it more and more closely and get to know it better. This curiosity is evident in children's books too. Even if almost everything seems to have been said in the

fields of biology and zoology, there are aspects that perhaps only work in children's books and that do not fit easily into a genre.

For example, *Von Riesengroß bis Klitzeklein* examines proportions in nature. From the close-up illustrations of a tiny flower in relation to a cow right up to outer space – this is a lavish picture book with philosophical content, because perspective matters.

Things get really close to nature in *Meine wilden Nachbarn*. In this volume from the series 100% Naturbuch, printed on recycled paper, the illustrator deals with animals in the city and their association with humans. The whole thing is as minimalist as it is humorous, and the illustrations make it comprehensible even for the very youngest readers.

The volumes of the *Entdecke* series offer a combination of illustration and photography, detailed information and surprise. For example in *Korallenriff*,



**Sylvia Mucke**  
has been editor-in-chief at *Eselsohr* for more than ten years.



Alexandra Helm  
**Gefühle Wimmelbuch**  
(Wimmelbuch-verlag)  
Over 200 expressions to help children navigate the emotional world.



Susanne Straßer  
**Kann ich bitte in die Mitte?**  
(Peter Hammer)  
A board picture book for very little ones.



Finn-Ole Heinrich, Ditta Zipfel, Tine Schulz (ill.)  
**Schlafen wie die Rüben**  
(Mairisch)  
From the winners of the German Youth Literature Award in 2014 and 2020.



Timon and Julian Meyer (ill.)  
**Das große Knuddeln**  
(Diogenes)  
Cuddle expert: fluffy, soft and of a cheerful nature.



Claudia Wirth  
**Ein Kuchen für das Krokodil**  
(Jungbrunnen)  
'A witty and action-packed picture book story ... with many unexpected twists.' ekz.Bibliotheksservice



Julia Klee, Sabine Rothmund (ill.)  
**Von Riesengroß bis Klitzeklein**  
(Esslinger)  
An extraordinary picture book with a clever zoom effect that encourages a mindful approach to our environment.



Katrin Wiehle  
**Meine wilden Nachbarn**  
(Beltz & Gelberg)  
Go out into the wilderness on your doorstep – inside and outside 100% natural.



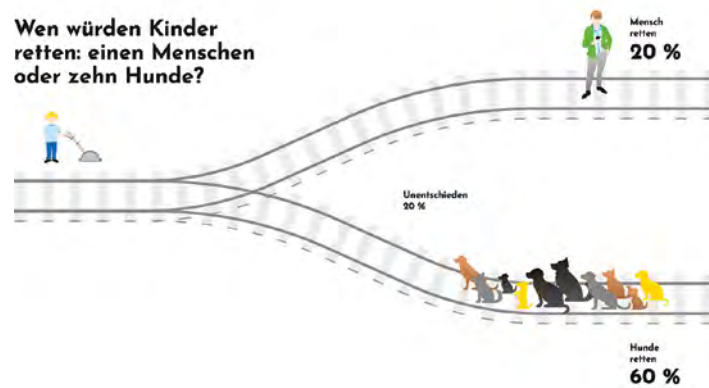
Daniel Knop  
**Entdecke das Korallenriff**  
(Natur und Tier)  
From cute clownfish and seahorses to beautiful starfish and toothy sharks – everything about the world of coral reefs.



Lena Zeise  
**Balto & Togo**  
(Gerstenberg)  
An illustrated retelling of the 'Serum Run to Nome'.



Wen würden Kinder retten: einen Menschen oder zehn Hunde?



Who would children save: a human or ten dogs?  
Save a human: 20%  
Undecided: 20%  
Save dogs: 60%

From: Tin Fischer, Mario Mensch (ill.)  
Einer von Hundert wird 100 (Hoffmann & Campe)

the experts pack facts into an exciting writing style that creates reader loyalty. An exciting story and lots of factual information come together in the non-fiction picture book *Balto & Togo*. Illustrator/author Lena Zeise has traced the exciting race for a vaccine serum that took place in Alaska about 100 years ago. In the process, human and animal fates, inhospitable wilderness and research are processed into an account that is as compelling as a cinema film. And even when non-fiction books remain true to a theme and style, today they go far beyond the mere transmission of information. The *Wunderwelt der Vögel* presents detailed information about ornithology via artistic and modern-looking picture tableaux. If you want to know more, you can read the clear and informative texts. *Faszination Krake* is ambitious, artistic and unique, and was rightly chosen as the Junior Science Book of the Year 2022.

## Wicked times!

The future promises to be challenging. There was a good reason why the TV documentary *The Ten Most Wicked Periods of History!* (ZDF) nominated the future as the undisputed number 1 in its very special Top 10. The future is on everyone's mind. A writing competition organised jointly with the Verein *Zukunft schreiben e.V.* on the theme of *Zukunftschreiben statt Schwarzmalen* brought Tessloff Verlag more than 200 entries from authors of all ages. The best '11 stories of encouragement about climate change and environmental protection', as the subtitle says, are brought together in the anthology of the same name – all searching for ways out of the current environmental crisis. In her book *Das ist auch meine Welt!* Gerda Raidt confronts us all, young and old, with the question

'How can we make it better?' Unlike comparable publications, she does not simply recruit the younger generation to protect the environment, but clearly defines responsibilities and connections. Her book is the embodiment of a discourse that refuses to take refuge in simple answers. This makes it all the more remarkable. Patricia Thoma even lets us dream our future in *Unsere Zukunft träumen*. The result is a picture book of visionary utopias for tomorrow for all age groups, true to the title, accompanied by dream-like illustrative scenarios.

## Space, Earth, humankind

Standing with both feet in the here and now, we dream ourselves into the future. So it's no surprise that humankind and our immediate and wider surroundings, i.e. the Earth and outer space, are currently the focus of many new publications, from books for first-time readers to innovative non-fiction books for young adults. Even beginner readers can discover the environment on a large and small scale with the titles from the *WAS IST WAS. Erstes Lesen easy!* series, which include outer space, trees and sea creatures. Dieter Braun offers a visual treat with *Die Welt der Meere*: a concise, to-the-point text with sophisticated illustrations. The series *Dein Lesestart, 2. Klasse* from Duden Verlag offers something similar. With Oetinger's *Lesestarter, 2. Lesestufe* you can even accompany the first German female astronauts: *Unser Weg ins Weltall*. With *Frag doch mal die Maus!* beginner readers can turn their attention to the future. In the series' volume *Future*, the popular TV rodent answers more than 20 questions on the issue with easy-to-read texts and clearly understandable illustrations. The matching foundation for such abstract musings can be found in the volume *Unsere Erde*. A lot of information is offered here. Tone, text, typesetting, pictures and graphics are perfectly coordinated.

## Who are we?

Who are we? *Wir Menschen* explores this question with short, to-the-point texts and expressive pictures in which we encounter both familiar and perplexing things along fascinatingly intricate paths. The authors focus on emotions and humour and emphasise the connecting elements. The book

remains consistently in the 'we' perspective, so the reader is always included. It succeeds in helping us, the readers, to reflect on our own experience and empathise with others. *Einer von Hundert wird 100* is a masterpiece of infographics. The authors do not exaggerate when they claim in the subtitle that they offer 'pretty

much everything you need to know about life'. All this is presented in graphics that are as simple as they are impressive. Clear structure + wacky facts + cheeky humour = irresistible dream team. Not a non-fiction book for teenagers in the classic sense, but they will definitely love it. ♦



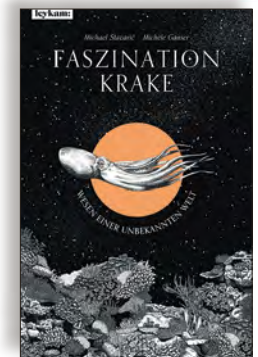
Michael Stavaric, Michèle Ganser (ill.)  
**Faszination Krake** (Leykam)  
'In this digital age, a book could not be more beautifully designed. The high-quality layout ... shows that children are important'. Spektrum der Wissenschaft



Carolin Hensler, Lara Paulussen (ill.)  
**Wunderwelt der Vögel** (arsEdition)  
Discover the fascinating world of birds. Perfect for gaining first knowledge.



**Zukunftschreiben statt Schwarzmalen** (Tessloff)  
Newbie writers and experienced authors create fantastic visions of the future, introduce contemporary role models and develop smart ideas for sustainable lifestyles.



Gerda Raidt  
**Das ist auch meine Welt!** (Beltz & Gelberg)  
Climate crisis, animal welfare, justice – a passionate plea for change and a new start puts everyday situations into a global context.



Patricia Thoma  
**Unsere Zukunft träumen** (Beltz & Gelberg)  
This powerful, inspiring and positive presentation of the topic of our future engages children's imagination and playful creativity.



Sonja Meierjürgen, Marie Gerstner (ill.)  
**Tiere im Meer** (Tessloff)  
The sea – a paradise for little explorers and discoverers, which they can explore independently with this first reading book.



Dieter Braun  
**Die Welt der Meere** (Knesebeck)  
The new masterpiece by the author of several bestselling books.



Insa Thiele-Eich, Suzanna Randall, Petra Eimer (ill.)  
**Unser Weg ins Weltall** (Oetinger)  
The first two German astronauts report on their intensive training prior to their flight to the ISS space station.



Sylvia Englert, Lorenzo Orlandi (ill.)  
**Die Erde** (Carlsen)  
Why don't islands just float away? Can mountains grow? Answers to children's most important questions.



Bernd Mölck-Tassel © Jacoby & Stuart



Dieter Böge, Bernd Mölck-Tassel (ill.)  
**Wir Menschen** (Jacoby & Stuart)  
Despite all our differences, we humans are actually very similar! This book teaches us to appreciate who we are!



Tin Fischer, Mario Mensch (ill.)  
**Einer von Hundert wird 100** (Hoffmann & Campe)  
The renowned data journalist Tin Fischer has researched surprising facts relating to all phases of life.



# Three Plus One in German

A Column by Alina Bronsky



**Alina Bronsky**, born in Yekaterinburg, Russia, has been living in Germany since the 1990s. Her bestselling debut novel *Scherbenpark* was adapted for the big screen. *Baba Dunjas letzte Liebe* was nominated for the German Book Prize and her novel *Der Zopf meiner Großmutter* was on the Spiegel bestseller list for weeks. Her most recent novel *Barbara stirbt nicht* was published by Kiepenheuer & Witsch in autumn 2019.

One of the jokes might go like this: a Russian, a German and a (insert member of random nation here – my finger lands on a Swiss) are asked to work out  $3 + 1$ . And no, it's not about who gets it right. It's about which of the three aforementioned participants complains the loudest about the cheek of being ambushed with numbers and mathematical calculations.

For me, the situation is clear. No matter how tricky the task: the Russian's reputation is on the line. No matter how simple the task: the German turns away in disgust. To make things a bit more edgy (and realistic), let's give the German in the joke an arts PhD. A terrible cliché – if it wasn't borne out on such a regular basis.

Admittedly, this field study of mine is small. That said, I'll soon have spent thirty years constantly marvelling at how readily super-intelligent, spectacularly well-educated and professionally successful Germans act as if maths were a contagious disease.

If they turn out not to be fluent in a dead language, or not to play an instrument skilfully enough, or not to know in passing who Bismarck's Postmaster General was in 1873, they'll only admit this shortcoming – if at all – with the greatest of shame. By contrast, many seem downright proud, not just of forgetting a binomial formula, but of never really having learned it properly at all.

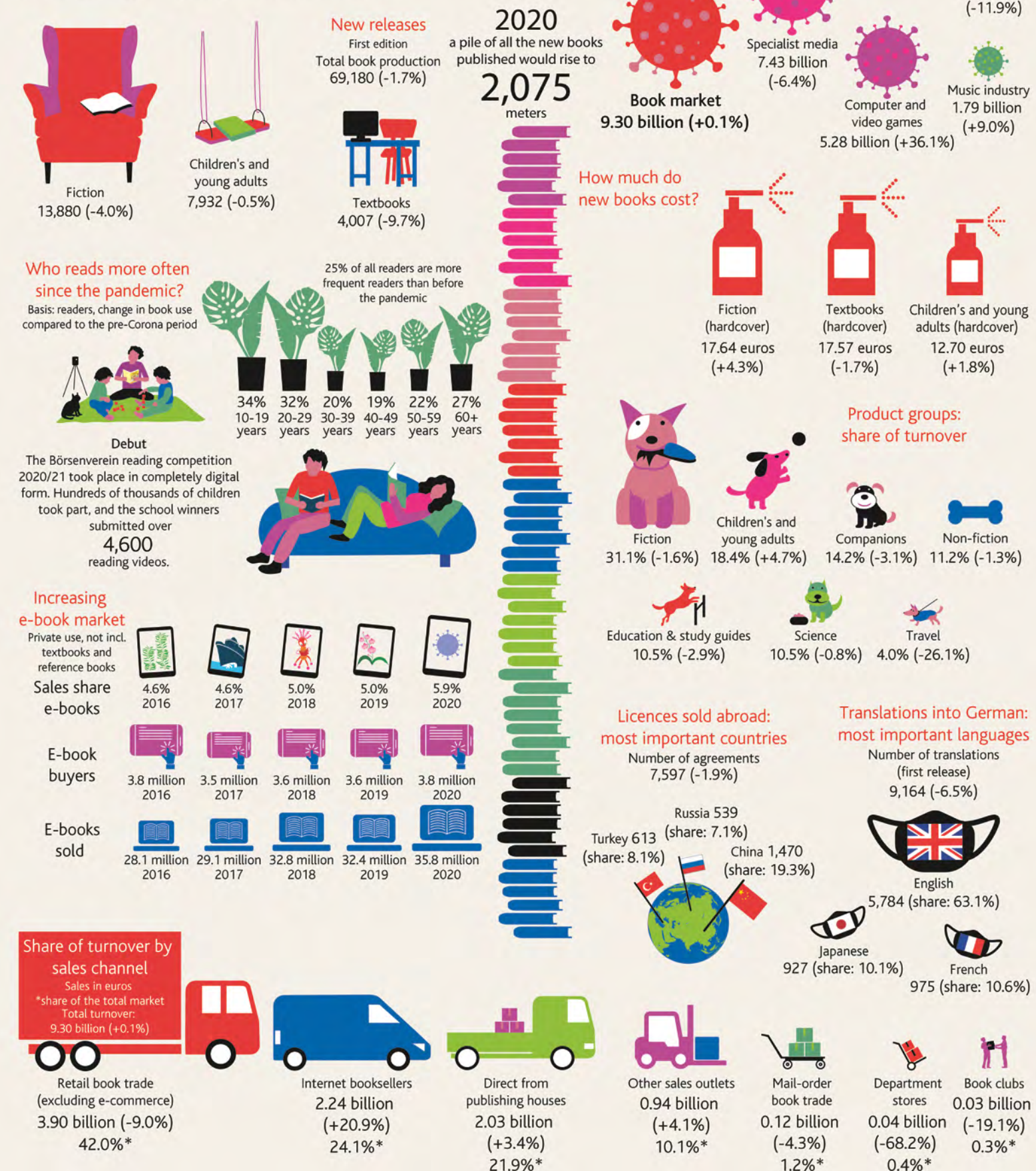
What goes on in German maths classes that so consistently scares off those who'd sooner view themselves as having artistic sensibilities? Which chromosome is encoded with the tendency to make fun of the numerical arts? And why, of all people, does it so often afflict those born and educated in the land of Gauss, Leibniz and Cantor?

As someone who hails from Eastern Europe, I can sit back and relax. My early childhood socialisation allows me to mix up capital cities and Latin tenses, but not the rules of differentiation. The fact that I took an advanced maths class in high school many years ago makes me forever a nerd in German cultural circles, which is why I'm forgiven for not being able to remember a single historical date. But I can count in binary on my fingers instead, all the way up to 31. I don't have to let on how easy this is, even for young school kids – not right away, anyhow.

By the way, I was never any good at mental arithmetic. It's a pity that the motto 'maths is the art of avoiding calculation' isn't more widely known among non-mathematicians. After all, what are calculators for?

## The Corona Book Market 2020

Data for Germany, change compared to 2019 in brackets







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