Josef Ganz im Silberfisch

Rémy Markowitsch

2018

for NEUER NORDEN ZURICH 9.6. – 2.9. 2018 Public Art Zurich (AG KIÖR)



Josef Ganz 1898-1967

The processes of defoliation and illumination — the making visible of hidden narratives, situations, and relationship networks — are defining features of Rémy Markowitsch's artistic working method. In terms of content, the artist is moved by extraordinary stories, biographies, and works of literature, and he manifests the results of his research via diverse media. After an invitation to develop a project for New North Zurich, Markowitsch once again encountered the Jewish car manufacturer Josef Ganz (1898-1967) in Zurich, with whom he had already engaged for the exhibition "Wolfsburg Unlimited" in the Art Museum Wolfsburg in 2016.



Zurich, In der Hub 16, Information Panel on the bombing of 1945

Before the second world war, the Jewish engineer Josef Ganz was a renown editor-in-chief of the special interest magazine *Motor-Kritik*, and he worked for German car manufacturers, such as Daimler-Benz, BMW and Adler. He made a significant contribution to German car innovation through his writing and his work as an engineer. The highlight was his design for a "Volkswagen".

In 1931, Ganz received high praise as he presented the prototype of his *Maikäfer* to the automobile world, which encompassed many aspects of the later developed *VW Beetle* —especially the rear-engine, swing-axles and a central tubular chassis.

In Januaary 1933, two weeks after the National Socialists seized power, Ganz introduced his production model of the May-Beetle, the *Standard Superior*, at the International Motor Show in Berlin. Although he was a celebrated pioneer of small cars, his career was nevertheless purposefully undermined by the National Socialists. Subsequently, Josef Ganz was arrested by the Gestapo, the majority of his documents were confiscated, he was dismissed from his position as editor-in-chief, and was banned entirely from publishing. Moreover, the German press was generally forbidden from mentioning his name, also to avoid connecting Ganz to the planned production of a new, state-funded, German Volkswagen.



Cut-out Photograph, Aluminium, 290 \times 180 \times 20 cm

Ganz saw himself forced to flee Germany to survive. After a brief stay in Liechtenstein, he found his first place of exile in Switzerland, in the apartment building on "In der Hub 16" in Zurich's Oberstrass district. His situation, however, remained ambivalent: On the one hand, he managed to secure state funding for a Swiss Volkswagen by building four prototypes in 1937/1938. *Silberfish* was among them and stood out by an aluminium body. In 1946/1947, he also realised a small production series for the Rapid company in Dietikon. Among his many successful innovations was a new suspension system for bobsleigh runners, which helped the Swiss Bobsleigh National Team to win the 1948 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz. On



Josef Ganz im Silberfisch, In der Hub 16, 2018

the other hand, Ganz lived in perpetual fear of deportation as a "stateless person" and was confronted with antisemitism, also in Switzerland.

From 1944 to 1951, Ganz filed numerous lawsuits, mostly without success, for libel and for his patent rights that were deemed void by the Nazi regime, which effectively ruined both his health and his financial situation. Most of the relevant documents are in the State Archives in Zurich. Since his residence permit was not renewed, Josef Ganz was arrested in Zurich on November 9, 1950, by the Immigration Police, and was given twenty-four hours to leave Switzerland. He fled in a rush in his *Silberfisch* via Geneva to Paris and immigrated to Australia the following year. However, his own "engine" was coming to a halt: He suffered several heart attacks both in France and in Australia.

Until his death on Juli 26, 1967, Josef Ganz knew nothing of the German Embassy's intentions to award him the Federal Cross of Merit for his significant contribution to the German automobile industry and to the realisation of the German Volkswagen. The Australian government had declined this move on legal grounds.

In the last year of the war, in 1945, "In der Hub 16" was accidentally bombarded by an American Liberator Bomber, Ganz was no longer living there. Five residents died, and the building was completely destroyed.

Text: Paul Schilperoord, Christoph Doswald and Franziska Wilmsen

Translation: Seda Mimaroglu, Berlin

Commemorative Plaque Josef Ganz, In der Hub 16, Oberstrass, Zürich, 2018

Josef Ganz 1898-1967

der jüdische Ingenie eur des Fachmagazi

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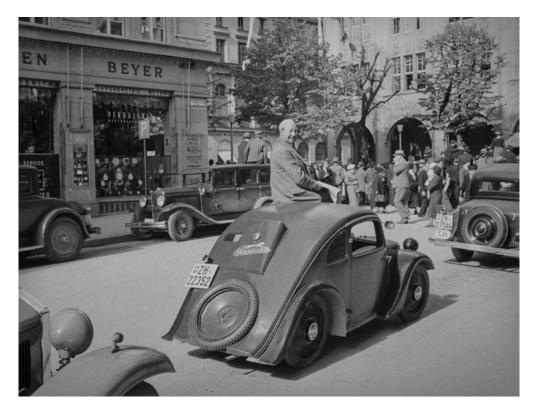
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Josef Ganz on a Standard Superior in Zurich, 1935



Josef Ganz with Silberfisch in St. Moritz, 1948



In der Hub 16, Oberstrass, Zurich

Josef-Ganz-Commemorative Plaque, 2018 Text: Paul Schilperoord, Den Haag Graphics: Stephan Fiedler, Berlin Technical Implementation: Josua Ernst und Martin Schmid, SCHMID & ERNST MÖBELWERKSTATT Kriens-Luzern

Thanks to: Paul Schilperoord for his lead on Josef Ganz's first residence in Switzerland, and to the residents of the Oberstrass district, especially Rosmarie and Harry Thommen. rm

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The Josef Ganz Commemorative Plaque draws on the Swiss artist Rémy Markowitsch's work *Josef Ganz im Silberfisch*; it was developed in 2018, as part of the exhibition NEW NORTH ZURICH, curated by Christoph Doswald, a project of the working group Art in Public Places (AG KiöR) of the city Zurich.

www.neuernorden.org | www.markowitsch.org | www.josefganz.org