



**HUNDERTWASSER**

**This catalogue was first published on the  
event of the Hundertwasser Exhibitions  
in New Zealand and Australia 1973**

# HUNDERTWASSER'S

COMPLETE GRAPHIC WORK 1951-1976





*A tree can be cut in five minutes,  
But needs years to grow.  
That's the difference between  
technocratic destruction and  
ecological evolution.*

Hundertwasser. 1978

**In 1973, Hundertwasser embarked on an exhibition tour to museums in Australia and New Zealand. To accompany this tour he wanted to publish a catalogue small enough to be carried in a handbag or jacket pocket like a much-loved treasure. It was to be a book with 98 high-quality reproductions – using six special colours in addition to the usual four colours – together with gold and silver, and metal embossing in nine colours. It was to have a hard cover designed by Hundertwasser, with red sewn binding, rounded corners and black edges, and to be set in Souvenir and in the »Regentagschrift« font Hundertwasser himself had designed.**

**But no publishing house was prepared to produce and publish the catalogue-booklet according to Hundertwasser's exacting standards. They were adamant that his specifications and production requirements ran counter to business experience and market conditions, and that the book would be impossible to sell because of the high production costs.**

**So I decided to produce it myself, exactly as Hundertwasser had imagined it, although this was completely at odds with all the market rules, as the publishers explained to me so persuasively. Because Hundertwasser promised me that people would fall in love with it all the same. How right he was! More than 750,000 copies have sold in eighteen editions through exhibitions and through direct sales, without sales representatives, without sales organization, and without a publisher. In 1983 I decided not to produce any further editions, although demand was still very lively. It was the first book Hundertwasser designed down to the last detail, and it was followed by others.**

**How wonderful that Prestel is publishing this book by Hundertwasser again in 2020. This reprint signalises, that the spirit of the book and its magical charm have remained as fresh as ever.**

**Joram Harel  
Vienna, 2020**

*Einen Baum schneidet man in 5 Minuten um.  
Zum Wachsen braucht er aber 50 Jahre.  
Das ist ungefähr das Verhältnis zwischen  
technokratischer Zerstörung und  
ökologischem Aufbau.*

Hundertwasser. 1978

**1973 hatte Hundertwasser eine Ausstellungstournee in Museen in Australien und Neuseeland. Er wollte begleitend dazu ein kleines Buch, das man in der Handtasche oder im Sakko mitnehmen kann wie einen geliebten Schatz. Ein Buch mit 98 Farbproduktionen in den vier Skalafarben und sechs weiteren Farben, Gold und Silber, Metallprägefölien in 9 Farben, mit einem von Hundertwasser entworfenen Hardcover, mit roter Fadenheftung, abgerundeten Buchecken und geschwärztem Schnitt, gesetzt in Souvenir als auch in der von Hundertwasser entworfenen »Regentagschrift«.**

**Kein Verlag war bereit, das Katalogbuch, wie Hundertwasser es wollte, zu produzieren und zu verlegen. Es verstoße in seiner Ausstattung und Produktion gegen alle Erfahrungswerte und**

**Marktgegebenheiten und wäre auf Grund der Produktionskosten unverkäuflich.**

**Ich entschloss mich, es selbst zu produzieren, so wie Hundertwasser es sich vorstellte, obwohl es allen Regeln des Marktes, wie mir von den Verlegern überzeugend dargelegt wurde, diametral entgegen stand. Denn Hundertwasser versprach mir, es würde die Gegenliebe der Menschen finden. Wie Recht er hatte! Über 750.000 Exemplare in 18 Auflagen wurden in Ausstellungen und im Direktverkauf abgesetzt, ohne Vertreter, ohne Vertrieb und ohne einen Verlag. 1983 entschloss ich mich, weitere Auflagen einzustellen, obwohl die Nachfrage noch sehr lebendig war. Es war das erste von Hundertwasser in jedem Detail konzipierte und gestaltete Buch, dem weitere folgten. Wie schön, dass der Prestel Verlag dieses besondere Buch von Hundertwasser im Jahr 2020 wieder herausbringt. Die Neuauflage signalisiert, dass der Geist dieses Buchwerkes und sein Zauber nach wie vor erhalten und lebendig geblieben sind.**

**Joram Harel  
Wien, 2020**



## **HUNDERTWASSER**

**by Walter Koschatzky**

**Director of the Albertina State Collection of  
Graphic Art, Vienna**

**Friedensreich Hundertwasser is outstanding among the postwar generation of Austrian artists. Scarred by the dangers, burdens and sufferings of their childhood, they were suddenly overrun after 1945 by a world from which they had been isolated in their formative years. Instead of going through an organic process of evolution, this generation was in danger of becoming mere imitators. In the end, however they won through, found their identity and started to send out their own message** 

**Born in Vienna in 1928, Hundertwasser gave early proof of this talent. Until 1948 he painted landscapes, flowers and nature in general. He also showed skill as a portrait-painter** 

**Aged twenty, he first encountered the œuvre of Egon Schiele who had died in his prime in 1918. Schiele's influence proved decisive. Study at the Academy disappointed Hundertwasser and he**

**ran away to Italy. There he met the young French painter René Brô who was wandering through Italy with a group of artists. He joined their company and became acquainted with the avant-garde programme of the Ecole de Paris. He did not, however, fully imbibe their philosophy. On the contrary, he matured to a style of his own** 

**Thereafter he travelled widely. In North Africa he fell in love with Arabian music and sought a way of life that began to shape not only his painting but also his basic outlook. In Paris he lived in dire poverty. Yet he considers this experience one of the most important periods in his life. Without abandoning his own convictions, he drew great inspiration from the abstract movement which was then in full bloom. It was in those years that the spiral as a symbol came to birth, and from there on to this day this configuration continued to fire his imagination** 

**He was quick to foresee the end of Tachism. In 1954 he evolved a theory of his own which he called »transautomatism«. He introduced it with the words: »Every one of us has the duty to be creative; it is our only weapon against the new**

**illiteracy.« This became the focal point of his philosophy. To him, art was no longer a purely aesthetic game. The artist carries too much responsibility to shrug off the ignorance of the masses with a resigned »l'art pour l'art«: he has a very definite part to play in mobilising the creative forces in an increasingly shallow consumers' society with its cheap allurements, indolence and passivity. Hundertwasser grew to be convinced that cities with their so called »modern« architecture destroy man by breaking his individuality. He calls the straight line »god-less«, inhuman. Lines should unfold freely and take their own course; men should be free to invent their own dwellings or at least to adapt them. The spiral must be free: vegetative, not geometrical and not final, by no means a mere ornament without meaning or message **

**Opening his first exhibition in the Vienna Art Club in 1952, Hundertwasser said: »I want to be independent of the gigantic bluff of our civilisation.« This was his first public protest, his first warning: others followed – some caused scandals. They all pilloried rot and disintegration – but he did not stop there. He advocated new ways of**