



Franz Kreuzer, Gerd Prechtel, Christoph Steiner. *A Tiger in the Tank: Ernest Dichter: An Austrian Advertising Guru.* Translated by Lars Henning. Riverside: Ariadne Press, 2007. 214 pp. ISBN 978-1-57241-152-4.



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An Austrian Pioneer in the Psychology of Advertising

Ernest Dichter was born in Vienna in 1907 and studied psychology there. He was influenced by Paul Lazarsfeld and the Viennese scholars of cognitive theory in the 1930s. Coincidentally, he even grew up on Berggasse 19—just across the street from Sigmund Freud, though he never met the founder of psychoanalysis. He emigrated to the United States via Paris with his wife Hedy in 1937. In this country, he quickly made a name for himself as an expert in motivational techniques. He claims to have developed the concept of an *image* and may be most well recognized for the Esso slogan: “Put the Tiger in your Tank”; hence, the title of this interesting book.

This book is one of many useful English translations of Austrian literature and scholarship published by Ariadne Press. Originally entitled *Tiger im Tank. Ernest Dichter. Ein Österreicher als Werbeguru* (2002), the book features contributions from various Austrian scholars and writers. Following an introduction by Gerd Prechtel, the reader will find the transcript of an interview with Dichter conducted by Franz Kreuzer in the ORF-Nachtstudio in 1981. The third section of the book

provides a portrait of Dichter by Thomas Cudlik and Christoph Steiner, followed by Peter Scheer’s “Memories of a Friend.” The fifth section provides the transcript of an interview that Gerd Prechtel conducted with Hedy Dichter, and this, in turn, is followed by three more transcripts of interviews with Patrick Schierholz, Christian Mikunda, and Paul Watzlawik. Finally, the book offers an essay by Dichter, “Interpretive Versus Descriptive Research,” as well as an essay on his father by Dichter’s son, Thomas, and a concluding chapter by Gerd Prechtel, “The Austria of Which I Dream,” in which the author quotes Dichter’s dreams of Austria as “a teacher because it is less threatening and awakens less jealousy [than bigger countries]” (p. 203).

Much as the concluding chapter illustrates, this book is almost in equal portion about Austria as it is about Dichter. As an English translation, it will be of most use to English-speaking scholars who are interested in the relationship between Dichter and the country that had essentially evicted—if not persecuted and killed—many of its great scientists following the Anschluss to Na-

tional Socialist Germany. However, the book should also prove to be of great interest to scholars in advertising and motivational research who are looking for a well-researched, interesting study of Dichter. Finally, as Prechtel points out in his introductory essay, Dichter stands among those successful Austrian emigrants whose careers flourished in the United States, such as “Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder, Peter Drucker, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bruno Bettelheim, Paul Watzlawik, and Rudolf Ekstein” (p. 13), a context that makes this book of great interest to historians studying the life of European emigrants in North America.

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