

Correcting several misunderstandings concerning Herbert Fiedler
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Introduction

Much has been written about Herbert Fiedler in the last few decades. Information about his life can be found in standard works: e.g. Peter Scheen, *Lexicon Nederlandse beeldende kunstenaars*, (Den Haag, 1962). In addition, he has been the subject of extensive discussion in catalogues of solo- and group exhibitions and auctions, in newspaper reviews and on the internet. Unfortunately not all of these texts are based on the correct facts. Sometimes these errors are transmitted from author to author.

The Foundation Herbert Fiedler Project appreciates that this list is not exhaustive, but hopes that writers, researchers and reviewers will find it useful.

Herbert Fiedler is the name preferred by the artist.

At his birth Fiedler was given the names Otto Herbert Fiedler. He used the name Otto exclusively for official documents as e.g. passports. Family and friends called him *Fiedler*, a few people used Herbert. Many did not even know that he even had another first name! Still today he is spoken of, even by his daughter as *Fiedler*.

Hans Jaffé began to use the name *Otto* and that led to complete confusion about how to address *Fiedler*.

Herbert Fiedler's father was a procurator in the then well-known publishing house Velhagen & Klasing in Leipzig. He was **neither the publisher nor a director** of the firm.

Fiedler earned his diploma from the Nicolai Gymnasium on 18 March 1910 and began his studies at the Royal Academy in Dresden after the summer vacation, **not in 1909**.

Fiedler left the Academy in the spring of 1912 (**not 1911**) and then moved to Berlin. He was quickly followed by fellow student, Georg Gross, who did **not** precede him.

Fiedler left Berlin for Paris in the Spring of 1913 (**not in 1912**).

Alas, he had to leave Paris on 31 July 1914, one day before the beginning of a generous grant (which consisted of support in the form of a studio and a monthly stipend from Mrs. Hedwich Jaenchen-Woermann of Hamburg). Via Cologne and

Berlin he returned to Leipzig. He was under the presumption that he would not be called up for military service, given the fact that his brother was already serving. But six weeks later, after brief basic training, he was sent directly to the front in Russia. Thus he had **not-** as some have written-**on his way to the Netherlands in 1914 fallen into the hands of the Germans, who already occupied Brussels...'**

In 1916- **not in 1917-** he returned severely wounded from the Russian front. After months in a field- hospital (he was put into substitute service and had to work in a distribution office in Berlin until 1921.

Forced by economic circumstances Fiedler worked from 1922-24 for a real-estate agency in Berlin and from 1924-26 for the film studios and workshops of *UFA*. He was **never a civil-servant**, as he has sometimes been described.

Fiedler came to know his wife-to be, the artist *Amrey*, in Paris and **not in Zürich** It was Amrey- **not Fiedler-** who took part in the Salon d'Automne in 1931.

Amrey is the preferred given name of Annemarie Balsiger (Zürich 1909-1999 Amsterdam) **not Anna Fiedler-Balsinger.**

Fiedler **was never** in Switzerland. Thus he was also **never in Zürich nor did he ever** paint there.

In 1933 Fiedler and Amrey traveled to Paris and Provence. The purpose of that trip was to avoid the rising threat from Nazism.

Fiedler was neither then or later- as far as is now known- **ever at the coast of Brittany nor did he ever paint there.**

Eventually Fiedler and Amrey, at the advice of Kurt Kahle (a UFA photographer who had earlier emigrated), leaving many things behind, set out for Amsterdam. They were **not headed for Portugal** (even though that had earlier been their plan). Fiedler and Amery arrived in Amsterdam 20 December 1934, **not 1937**, and moved in early 1935 to Laren (N.H.)

Their daughter, Sabine, was born in 1939 at Laren (N.H.) and lived for the most part in Amsterdam, where she still resides. Sabine **never** lived in Germany and thus could **not have lived in Leipzig.**

Fiedler and his family were **not interned** in May 1940.

They were forced- **i.e. they did not volunteer-** on June 6, 1940 to move again and returned to Amsterdam, this time to Maarten Jansz. Kosterstraat 11.

On 18 July 1944 the Germans forced Fiedler to join the German army. He considered the possibility of going underground, but decided finally **not** to do it after weighing the possible danger to his wife, child and potential givers of

assistance in hiding.

Fiedler **did not desert at the beginning of 1945** and **did not** go underground in Amsterdam. It was only on 7 May 1945 that Fiedler could escape the German army, with the assistance of Dutch farmers, and walked from Alphen a/d Rijn to Amsterdam.

It was not until 1957, **not 1954**, that Fiedler and his family were naturalized as citizens of the Netherlands.

Fiedler did **not continue to live until his death** at Maarten Jansz. Kosterstraat 11, Amsterdam.

After the demolition of the Gallery on the Frederiksplein, where he and many other artists had their studios, he was offered a studio with living quarters in the Rapenburgerstraat 79. He moved there on 31 December 1960.

After WW II, Fiedler visited Germany **only two times**. Once in 1953 at the invitation of the Beckmann Society he stayed in Munich and Murnau. The second time was in 1959 at the invitation of –and together with– the glassworker and artist Gisèle d’Ailley-Van Waterschoot v.d. Gracht to Linnich to oversee the execution of his design for a clown in leaded glass.

Fiedler did **not** decide to become a painter after he had seen the Isenheim Altar. He had made that decision much earlier.

Fiedler signed his work as *Fiedler*; *H.Fiedler*; *Hfiedler*; *hfiedler*; *HF*; *F*.

Until the end of the war, Fiedler and his wife addressed each other as *Philippe* and *Germaine* or simply *Maine* and they sometimes signed their work with those pet names.

In Paris Fiedler studied in 1913-1914 at the Académie Colarossi and **not at the Académie Julian**.

Fiedler had **not one, but two** solo exhibitions in the Netherlands: in 1936 with Otto Geveke and in 1937 at the Gallery De Brug, both in Amsterdam.

Fiedler did not begin to work in gouache until **after the war**. See his unpublished diary for 27 Aug. 1945; ...*(I am) now trying to paint with gouache. But I am not yet fully comfortable with this medium...*

Fiedler was **not** the co-founder of the artist’s society “De Realisten” (the Realists) in 1948. Although both Fiedler and Amrey became members of the society in 1948.

Landscapes were **always** a theme for Fiedler and **not merely** for a short period.

Fiedler was **not a student** of Beckmann. At best, they were contemporaries and acquaintances who did not visit each other's studio. Beckmann only visited Fiedler once at home. Mainly they saw each other in cafes.

Fiedler is **not a German Expressionist in the strict sense of the definition.** **Neither he nor Gross or Beckmann** were members of *Der Blaue Reiter* or *Die Brücke*. It is possible that an expressive form of painting can be the equivalent of German Expressionism.

In the end, Fiedler and Beckmann greatly admired each other. But they were **never** a role model for each other. Others served that role for Fiedler, as exemplified by various works; *Hommage à Henri Rousseau le Douanier*; *Par reconnaissance pour les maîtres* as well as copies after *Cranach, Poussin, Daumier, etc.*

Those who may have information that they would like to use in connection with the biography or works of Herbert Fiedler should address their inquiries to the Foundation or to the **Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie** (National Office for Arthistorical Documentation) in The Hague.

The Foundation and the RKD would much appreciate it if visitors to the website would contribute any amplifications and improvements

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