

## A Fruitful Symbiosis: Sculptors and Publishers in Britain between the Wars

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Art books have not so far received a great deal of attention from cultural commentators, yet they exemplify what is arguably a peculiarly twentieth-century phenomenon. Their rise, and some would argue “fall” (as monographs on painting and sculpture morph into slim volumes on lifestyle, and the economics of the book trade edge out diversity and shelf space in major museums), deserves much closer study. This entails an investigation into who published critical and historical texts on art, and why; what influenced the number of books published on certain types of art practice—such as sculpture—at any given time; in photographically-illustrated art books, how art was photographed, by whom, and why that mattered; how a previously uninformed public was reached, captivated, and converted into a body of consumers; and how individual art-lovers could accrete into a mass market for books, and then for modern art itself. What was a specialist subject for a restricted coterie fifty years ago is now part of the common culture: Tate Modern in London is a good gauge of this enormous change for it now receives more than four million visitors a year, a clear demonstration of the current appeal of modern art to a mass public. In Britain, sculpture has played a particularly prominent role in acquainting the public with characteristics of modern art, while publishers between the wars not only introduced able critics who could write vividly and informatively about these developments, but perhaps more importantly, they made big strides in how books on art were produced, and how they might appeal to a mass market. This article will focus on the relationship between sculpture and publishing, and its impact on the growing dominance of modernism in early histories of twentieth century art.

In 1930 Oxford University Press published a book on twentieth century sculptors by the archeologist and classical scholar, Stanley Casson, whose opening remarks explained the rationale of his latest work. “Sculpture is beginning more and more to interest the ordinary man. As a result more sculpture is being carved and more sculptors trained. And as the interest grows so criticism increases. [...] Criticism of sculpture leads to the discus-

sion of the principles that guide it and so, perhaps to the illumination of all concerned" (*Twentieth Century* 1). A rough census of publications on sculpture taken from *The English Catalogue of Books* supports his assumption.<sup>1</sup> From 1906 to 1910 there were twelve new titles on sculpture; from 1911 to 1916 twenty, nearly all on the Greeks. From 1916 to 1920 there were only eight, but one was the first book on Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) and one was on the stone carver, letter-cutter and typographer, Eric Gill (1882-1940), both of whom were sculptors central to the development of a new aesthetic in which methods and materials became privileged bearers of meaning and value. From 1921 to 1925 the total number of sculpture books was nineteen, including another on Gill, one on appreciation and three on the modern period. There is then a marked change. In each five-year period between 1926 and 1941, about thirty titles on sculpture were published in Britain, of which a third were now devoted to the modern period. Books on modern painting were comparable in number and followed a similar trajectory, but it was sculpture that caught the public imagination. Sculpture had a noble history and was often publicly sited: the introduction of any markedly new style or technique tended to be read as a public statement, and one which invariably courted controversy.

Indeed, the interwar period was enlivened by a noisy battle between tradition and innovation which attracted talented warriors in print supported by champions in the publishing world—each with his own agenda.<sup>2</sup> It was a battle fought, above all, through contrasting approaches to the ancient art of sculpture. Requiring patience and precision, the practice of sculpture, whether carving or casting, was time-consuming and physically demanding, took decades to master and, at the turn of the twentieth century, was inscribed within a tradition slow to change. Sculptors were largely dependent on public patronage because their works adorned public buildings or celebrated public men. Their work therefore tended to be recognizable, beautiful, and skilful, and to aspire to the ideal. Sculptors needed to show not only mastery of their material, but that they were adept at making marble or bronze look like what it was not: flesh, leaves, or fabric. Where painting creates the illusion of a world beyond the frame, and literature has the power to create an entire universe in each individual reader's imagination, sculpture shares real space with us, yet has to differentiate itself from all other objects. Traditionally, the meaning of sculpture was established by reference to exterior value systems of, for example, religion, politics, or architecture, and the art of classical Greece was, in the western world, taken to be the acme of sculptural achievement.

With the advent of Modernism, the new, and what was deemed intrinsic to the making of sculpture, were introduced as alternative values which, being unfamiliar, required careful verbal articulation. Several early twentieth-century sculptors benefited from close association with modernist

writers: the poet Rilke acted as Rodin's (1840-1917) amanuensis while Ezra Pound did much to publicise the work of the short-lived Gaudier Brzeszka (1891-1915).<sup>3</sup> He was one of several sculptors who began to look beyond western art for examples of how the essence of carving and the nature of the material itself might be realised in expressive form: a tree trunk shaped by an adze produced a very different statue from a Greek marble figure chiselled smooth to show an idealised human body.

The seeds of change that were sown early in the twentieth century were accelerated by the First World War after which sculptors found it harder to obtain commissions and grew less dependent on wealthy patrons. The memorials for which they would once have been the obvious choice were often made to order by stonemasons, so to re-establish a distinct identity, professional sculptors increasingly turned to solo exhibitions of freestanding work unrelated to a pre-existing commission or to the exacting requirements of architectural decoration.<sup>4</sup> By the 1920s, many sculptors had turned away from modeling in clay and then sizing up their work in marble or having it cast in bronze.<sup>5</sup> They were now carving directly into stone which, unlike malleable clay, has a character of its own, an immanent quality that sculptors tried to bring out as if they were working on equal terms with their chosen substance, not seeking to subdue or transform it. It was a form of practice given theoretical substance through being underpinned by the aesthetic of "truth to materials," the idea that a sculptor's goal was to act directly upon matter in such a way as to bring out its innate nature. The result of this approach, in theory and in practice, was to foreground work that emphasized the essential qualities of sculpture: its material, the way in which it was shaped, and its three-dimensionality. If sculptors and their critical mouthpieces were to prevail against the old order with its established institutions, such as the Royal Academy or Royal British Society of Sculptors, its ideals, and generations of adherence to the same working methods, they would need to disseminate information about their innovations not solely in exhibitions, but more widely through the printed word.

While a sculptor might profit from the cooperation of an astute critic who could communicate the essential qualities and merits of a new type of art, the critic in his turn depended on the intervention of a sympathetic publisher to translate his text into a saleable book. The traffic, however, was not all one-way. As the very embodiment of aesthetic values, sculpture could encapsulate all the complexities of a cultural standpoint. Depending on which authors or types of book on sculpture were featured in his list of forthcoming titles, a publisher might be either identified with the establishment, or marked out as an advocate of the modern. It was in making this choice that the publisher Geoffrey Faber became a pro-active and central figure among publishers of books on contemporary visual culture for reasons that had as much to do with forging an identity for his firm as

with any special fondness for the art of sculpture.

In 1924, while working for Oxford University Press, Faber had been invited to transform the Scientific Press into a general publishing house which five years later took his name. “Faber and Faber” has become synonymous with great poetry and the best of new British prose, thanks largely to T. S. Eliot’s early and prolonged involvement as in-house editor and key modernist writer published by the firm.<sup>6</sup> There is another, but no less significant, aspect to Faber and Faber’s early publishing history: the increasing attention Geoffrey Faber paid to books on the visual arts, and particularly to the art of sculpture. Given Faber’s ambition to create a profile for his firm which would embrace the modern and avant-garde, it was fitting that he looked first to that most controversial of contemporary sculptors, Jacob Epstein, and to the lone critic who consistently supported him: R. H. Wilenski of *The Evening Standard*.

In his introduction to a new edition of Sir Jacob Epstein’s autobiography, first published by Michael Joseph in 1940, Richard Buckle rightly pointed out that “Epstein [...] remained throughout his life a victim of publicity: it was the price he paid for making the English conscious of sculpture” (Buckle xi).<sup>7</sup> To many people in the 1920s, sculpture meant either the bland war memorials that seemed to be springing up in every town and village, or the expressive, free-standing works of the recently-deceased Auguste Rodin. Jacob Epstein woke them up. Born in the lower East Side of New York, he had made his home in London in 1905 after seeing the richness of the British Museum’s collections of ethnographic artifacts.

From his giant nude statues made in 1907 for the British Medical Association Building (now Zimbabwe House) in the Strand, central London, to *Rima* in 1925, each new work for a public site created a new scandal. 1907 was the year Picasso painted his landmark proto-Cubist work *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. Version O)* but whereas his group of semi-nudes remained for many years in the studio, Epstein’s Strand statues were completely naked with no concession to the idealised classical nude, and sited in a very public place. *Rima*, commissioned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as a memorial to the naturalist and poet W. H. Hudson, is still located on the site of the former bird sanctuary in London’s Hyde Park. Modest in scale, and set back from the main thoroughfares, it consists of a white stone slab on which Epstein carved in shallow relief the partial figure of a woman in profile with “primitive” features reminiscent of those on Gauguin’s woodcuts. *Rima*’s reception was extraordinarily hostile. Claims were made in the Press that Epstein delighted in deformity, degradation, and degeneracy and although research has revealed that these attacks were orchestrated to look like popular opinion, the sculpture itself was also attacked and daubed in green paint, fascist slogans, and swastikas. It has rightly been pointed out that “More than any other work of the interwar years, *Rima* dictated public

perceptions about the avant-garde” (Friedman 43). Epstein himself declared that “People in England have a definitely literary mind . . . they expected an anecdote with *Rima*. I gave them sculpture” (Epstein, *The Sculptor Speaks* 6). What he actually did was challenge establishment views on beauty and open up critical debate about what might constitute sculptural innovation. His *Rima* was not intended to be a beautiful woman, but to represent a primitive spirit. She does not pretend to be flesh and blood, but shows that she has been carved from stone.

Opposing the hue and cry from the popular press was R. H. Wilenski whose book *The Modern Movement in Art* was first published in 1927, two years after the installation of *Rima*. A cheaper edition followed in 1935 when it was specified on the dust-jacket that four large impressions had been sold since its first publication, and that in those seven years it had become a standard work. Generously, the author pays tribute to the editorial role of his publisher. “This book is dedicated to Geoffrey Faber who invited me to write it and has helped me enormously by criticizing the first drafts.” Faber was thus closely involved from the outset with Wilenski’s first book and the shaping of his ideas, and by aligning himself with someone so partisan, he was also shaping the image of his publishing house. Many years later Wilenski would become series editor for *The Faber Gallery*, a series of monographs on artists that in the public consciousness consolidated the firm’s association with the visual arts as well as poetry.

It was in a letter to Jacob Epstein that Faber showed himself to be not just a dedicated modernist but keen to reach a wide audience. “It has been the policy of the firm which bears my name to play a part in the reformulation of values which is going on at the present day. In the sphere of art-criticism, I persuaded R. H. Wilenski to write his book on *The Modern Movement in Art*—a book which has done much to make modern art more intelligible to the ordinary man.” Citing as key works on his list T. S. Eliot’s *Criterion*, Ezra Pound’s poetry, and Herbert Read’s works of criticism, he continued: “We have identified ourselves with the most important intellectual movement of the time [... The] books I have mentioned are those which have the greatest interest for us.”<sup>8</sup> What he wanted from Epstein was the sculptor’s own voice, in a book that would be half theoretical and half practical, setting out the technical principles of stone carving. This fits into a certain orthodoxy: in the years between the wars a number of books were published that, before addressing questions of aesthetics or the appreciation of sculpture, explained in detail sculptural techniques with the idea that if you knew how a work was made, you would understand and appreciate it more, and be better placed to assess its worth. This inevitably placed a premium on craftsmanship and skill. It was a juxtaposition which proved encouraging to a popular readership of amateurs, but less attractive to artists themselves who later tried to regain a certain professional

distance by emphasizing the difficulties and physical struggle involved in sculptural practice. Geoffrey Faber now asked Epstein's wife if she could persuade her husband to write, as both were well aware of Epstein's difficulty in expressing himself in words. "Coming from him it would have twenty times the force and interest that any book upon his work by any other person could have."<sup>9</sup>

This did not preclude others from trying. To Wilenski, sculpture deriving from the Greek tradition was now barren: not only had it nothing left to give, but the longevity of the classical tradition was attributable to the machinations of a powerful clique. There were so many other traditions on which an artist could draw, and this exploration of alternative forms, if not the cultures from which they emanated, was one of the great liberating forces of the early twentieth century. Epstein himself built up a remarkable personal collection of African sculpture seeing in it many of the qualities for which he was searching in his own work. These he identified as "simplification and directness. The union of naturalism and design, its striking architectural qualities" (Epstein, *Autobiography* 90). To validate a very different type of sculpture, an alternative critical framework had to be put in place, its aesthetic and ethical measuring instruments re-calibrated.

In the early 1930s a succession of books was published in which sculptors paid homage to alternative traditions, or which prioritised certain materials and practices such as stone-carving over the more traditionally-favoured modeling in clay and subsequent casting in bronze. This was to re-frame public perception of the artist and cast him in the heroic mould, as a sturdy worker or powerful physical presence. In the 1920s much had been made of the distinction between carving and modeling: a carver sought to find the form embedded in wood or stone, and had a very particular, immediate and personal engagement with this resistant material. A sculptor who worked in clay by modeling it, and then sending the model away to be cast in bronze, was not only working at one remove from the finished object, but was more concerned with surface effect than with the three-dimensional form that Henry Moore (1898-1986) would see as the very essence of sculpture. In Faber's words, this did indeed amount to a "re-formulation of values." In fact, though, it was a largely false dichotomy, for sculptors needed to understand the properties of all their materials, and any modeler in clay would have to be able to conceive of the finished bronze or marble. Tradition/innovation and modeling/carving were largely rhetorical polarities, but they served a valid purpose: to make possible new value systems in which a different kind of sculptural practice might thrive and which would open up the field of modern art. By suggesting that something important was at stake and that sculpture was a contentious art, and by then bringing these issues to a wider readership, art books created an engagement with sculpture that culminated in such postwar public events as the first open-

air sculpture show sponsored by a municipal authority (the LCC) in 1948. Held in Battersea Park, it attracted 170,000 visitors.<sup>10</sup>

How this re-formulation was presented in published form concerned not only Faber but also his author Wilenski whose guest lecture at the Victoria and Albert Museum turned rapidly into another full length book published by Faber in 1932 as *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*. As a writer, Wilenski was dogmatic and propagandist, but also informative and entertaining, with a clear sense of what he wanted to convey and how he wanted the book to look. Wilenski's handwritten list of selected illustrations included four photographs of work by Henry Moore, a larger number than for any other artist in the book, and a sign that Moore was now filling Epstein's shoes as the fulcrum for debate about contemporary sculpture. As so often today, the cost of illustrations proved problematic and Wilenski wrote to Faber in protest. "I have never been asked before to bear any of the expense of illustrating my books; and I certainly could not afford in this case when the advance is tiny and the royalties earmarked for the debt. But what I have always done and will do in this case is to lend you photographs from my own collection if in return you let me have for my collection the original photographs of the things I get elsewhere for the book after they have been reproduced."<sup>11</sup> Illustrations, in other words, were subordinate to the text. Photographs could be drawn from any source and were considered to be reminders or simulacra of the objects rather than images in their own right with distinct properties that could be exploited to further the argument of the book.<sup>12</sup>

Wilenski was closely concerned with every aspect of production, specifying the type of binding he wanted, at what time of year he thought the book should be published and how much it should cost. "If 7/6 is possible, it would be an immense advantage. I now have a very wide public but three quarters of that public and probably 90% have never *bought* one of my books because they could never afford to do so—except the two quite cheap ones which as you know sold very well." 7/6d remained the standard price for a novel, for example, throughout the interwar period. Not surprisingly, Wilenski asked for a larger advance than £30 because he believed his book was more important and controversial than originally envisaged. It was also much longer. "It is now really two books in one—an attack on the Greek sculpture camp and a book on the modern experiments." As an afterthought he added "It is also really a book on *Epstein!*"<sup>13</sup> Wilenski's latest work was well received by sculptors, notably contemporary stone carvers, and many wrote to express their appreciation: Eric Gill found it "altogether good and valuable and inspiring"; Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) thought it "a very good book [which] should help all of us"; and Eric Kennington wrote that "Apart from its explosive energy, it's got a quality just like a carving itself."<sup>14</sup>

The author was, however, hurt that his book had not been better

publicised but resignedly pointed out that by Christmas it had sold just over 1,000 copies, an improvement on the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, published in the mid-nineteenth century, which had achieved a sale of only 150 copies in its first six months. Few print-runs of books about art initially exceeded 2,000, but though print-run and sales were modest, the reach of Wilenski's message was extensive. *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture* was reviewed not just in the national and art press, but also in local papers, architectural journals, and weeklies such as *The Listener*, which printed articles and transcripts of broadcast debates.

There is a marked change over a short period in how this book was presented in the Faber catalogue: in the summer of 1932 it was "an illuminating account of changes in the sculptor's aims since Rodin," and by the Autumn it had become "this challenging book" which attacks the methods of archeologists and historians of Greek sculpture, whom Wilenski is quoted as calling "professional propagandists for the reputations of certain sculptors in ancient Greece, whose works no longer exist." His remark was a thinly-veiled attack on Stanley Casson, the archeologist and lover of Greece who was quoted at the beginning of this article and whose own books on sculpture were being published by Oxford University Press at the same time as Wilenski's on modern art were issuing from the house of Faber and Faber.

In 1928 Casson had set out to produce a survey in response to what he too perceived as a growing interest in sculpture. It was not that he failed to acknowledge some of the same artists as Wilenski but that he saw them as quite literally beyond the pale. According to Casson, "The work of Archipenko [1887-1964], Zadkine [1890-1967], and others of the inorganic school is often of great charm and beauty, but it falls outside the main development of sculpture. [...] In ancient Greece, and nowhere else to the same degree, sculpture in stone was an integral part of the artistic life of the people and never a mere artistic luxury" (Casson, *Some Modern Sculptors* v).<sup>15</sup> In other words, art once had a purpose and a function, whether ritualistic or decorative, and statues had a clear destination: they were made for a particular building and not on a whim. He abhorred Rodin's "egotism" and valued instead the kind of artist who expressed not his personal emotions but the spirit of his race or time in history, most notably the Croatian, Ivan Mestrovic (1883-1962).<sup>16</sup> Casson's adherence to the classical canon as the only one valid for all time meant that much contemporary work was dismissed as charming or egocentric, contributing nothing to the development of sculpture as a whole. Set against such forcefully expressed views, published by one of the most prestigious university publishers, it was not surprising that Faber felt bound to declare his allegiance in no uncertain terms. There may also have been a more personal reason behind Faber's insistence on appearing distinct and modern given that he had formerly



been employed by Oxford University Press.

By the mid 1930s, the Wilenski/Casson debate was played out. Herbert Read, the critic who would eventually supersede Wilenski as mouth-piece of the sculptural avant-garde, was already a published Faber author when, in 1929, Geoffrey Faber wrote to him as follows: "We should like it to be part of the understanding between us, though perhaps not incorporated in our formal agreement, that you should give us the opportunity of commissioning your next serious book. . . . At the moment we haven't any definite suggestion to make. But perhaps you have."<sup>17</sup> The following week, Faber wrote again saying he was prepared to increase Read's advance from £35 to £50, improving considerably on the original offer. "Frankly it is because we do not want you to go elsewhere!"<sup>18</sup> Holding on to Read was part of Geoffrey Faber's wider vision for his new firm, and what it would stand for intellectually. In 1931 Faber published Read's book *The Meaning of Art* and in 1933 his *Art Now*. In 1934, Read compiled (for the publisher, gallery-owner and art bookseller Anton Zwemmer) the first monograph on Henry Moore which, though it sold poorly, established a firm friendship and working relationship between sculptor and critic. The same year Read edited a highly significant anthology of artist's writings and photographs published by Cassell as *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* in which Moore made his frequently quoted statement that "Complete sculptural expression is form in its full spatial reality" (Read, *Unit One* 29). Twenty years later, however, when Read was asked to give the Mellon lectures in Washington on *The Art of Sculpture*, it was to Faber he turned once more, and the lectures were published in 1956 as *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*.

Read also acted as literary adviser to Routledge and Heinemann, and thus intervened at several stages of art book publishing for a number of different firms, effectively holding the power of veto over manuscripts. He was in a position to edit and review those that were published, thus making him an important interface with the reading public and vindicating his publisher's early acuity in keeping him within the Faber fold. He described himself as "a hardened professional reader," a comment substantiated by the large number of reader's reports by Read that are still held in publishers' archives, and he also produced an enormous amount of criticism. It was, though, largely work undertaken to support his family, and he was known to have complained to T. S. Eliot that he had to review books in order to survive.

In its first decade Faber and Faber established and consolidated its modernist credentials through publishing authors such as Wilenski and Read who promoted a particular type of sculpture and were identified with a distinct critical standpoint, but in 1937 it published a copiously-illustrated book with a very different approach to modern sculpture.

To stay at the forefront of modern art publishing, Faber introduced a book with a much more modern, streamlined appearance. *Circle. International Survey of Constructive Art* was edited by the architect, J. L. Martin, and the artists Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) and Naum Gabo (1890-1977), and divided into four sections: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Art and Life. In it, Barbara Hepworth, for example, defined her work in pure formal and spatial terms, with the idea that the basic principles underlying such work were universal and made it applicable in the wider arena of society. Just as they had in *Unit One*, the landmark publication for British abstraction in painting and sculpture published in 1934, a group of young artists were again expressing their views in their own words without recourse to the mediation of a critic and, most importantly, paying close attention to how their work appeared in reproduction.

Stanley Casson, in his first sculpture book, had relied on borrowed photographs and traditional sources of supply such as the Italian firm of Alinari. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century, Alinari had a virtual monopoly on photographs of architecture and works of sculpture, not simply because of the quantity they owned, but the fact that they undercut comparable firms such as Braun in France by charging only half as much.<sup>19</sup> Their images continued to dominate right up until the 1930s although, contrary to popular belief, these were not objective records but the result of a distinctive house style. Sculpture was invariably photographed from a frontal viewpoint, always strongly lit and frequently set against a dark background with no hint of real context, so that the striking tonal contrast made for a dramatic—even theatrical—effect. For his second book on sculpture, published in 1930, Casson borrowed most of his photographs from the sculptors whose work he was reproducing. From Rodin onwards, sculptors increasingly photographed their work themselves, so that they could control viewpoint, lighting, and the image of the artist in his studio, conscious that it was mainly through photographs that people would see the bulk of their work. They were becoming very sophisticated in how they portrayed themselves and the sculpture they had made and more frequently included in their selected images at least some details of location, whether it was where the work had been made or the place in which it would eventually be seen. In the interwar period, for example, the sculptor with pretensions to modernity, whether male or female, was invariably shown as the craftsman carver, true to his or her materials; the sculpture itself was carefully lit to bring out its three-dimensional qualities and surface texture; and there was a preferred angle or viewpoint to create an impression of scale or mass.<sup>20</sup>

Of the early 1930s it has been said that “culture was everywhere but you could barely afford it” (Baker 7). Those who saw how they could overcome financial obstacles and make culture accessible for mass consumption ushered in a profound change not only in the relationship between book

and reader, but also between art and viewer. Books on the visual arts now began to reach a much wider public. In part this was a legacy of the Faber/Wilenski collaboration which had been forged to make modern art more intelligible to the ordinary man, and in part it was the result of three quite distinct developments in publishing: the innovations in art book publishing introduced by the Phaidon Press, the rise of book clubs in the UK, and the paperback revolution pioneered by Allen Lane who launched Penguin Books in 1935. Here too, the nature and quality of art in reproduction was an important factor.

Phaidon's reputation and success were based on the complementary talents of the firm's two founders in Vienna. Ludwig Goldscheider's visual acuity, his attention to large-scale photographic reproduction, and particularly his use of the telling detail to illuminate a work of art, meant that the publishers became known for the quality of their art books, and they succeeded in selling large numbers thanks to the financial strategy of Bela Horovitz.<sup>21</sup> He, like Allen Lane, believed in the existence of a large, untapped market for books on art, literature, and serious non-fiction. If enough were published, the unit cost would be reduced and the book could be sold at an affordable price to an imagined community of new readers. His belief was vindicated, and he succeeded in selling art books published in print-runs of fifty thousand. In 1938, just before the Anschluss, Phaidon was acquired by the English publisher Stanley Unwin thereby enabling its two Jewish founders to continue their activities in Britain. Although the firm initially published mainly on pre-twentieth century artists, and painters rather than sculptors, books such as *Rodin* (1939) and *Donatello* (1941) set a standard for the photography of sculpture and the quality that could be expected of a reasonably-priced art book. By cropping the image to bring out particular features, and by the strong tonal contrasts that revealed the most intricate details of texture, touch, and the depth of carving, these photographs introduced readers to close-ups of sculpture such as the head of Donatello's *Gattamelata* that could not be seen so clearly even in situ with the naked eye.

In the history of publishing, the advent of book clubs offered further proof that what was often referred to as "a new reading public" actually existed: the Readers Union, for example, took published books from sixty-four different publishers and reissued them in its own binding at a fraction of the price, offering its members "a library of books which can stand as a true reflection of contemporary fact, thought and imagination" (Baker 17). For two shillings and sixpence, members could acquire a book a month, among which were Stanley Casson's *The Discovery of Man*, Jacob Epstein's *Let There be Sculpture*, and Herbert Read's *The Meaning of Art*. Publishers thereby sold more books, readers became used to buying as well as borrowing them, and book clubs became something of an interwar phe-

nomenon: Readers Union alone reached a membership of fifty thousand. It was in part through book club re-editions that knowledge of sculptors such as Epstein extended well beyond habitual art aficionados and regular borrowers of books.

Aiming at a slightly different and broader market than Phaidon, Allen Lane at Penguin conceived of a cheap paperback series devoted to contemporary art with good quality reproductions of recent work, half of them in colour, and a brief text by a well-known author or critic. The first volume of *The Penguin Modern Painters* was not about a painter at all, but was devoted to the sculptor *Henry Moore* (1943). Illustrated exclusively with his coloured drawings, not his sculpture, it was priced at two shillings and sixpence and was so successful that it had to be re-printed: within five years it had sold over 56,000 copies.<sup>22</sup> This wartime series put Penguin on the map as an art publisher, anticipating the very substantial period-based, *Pelican Histories of Art* which ran to some 50 volumes and were characterised by scholarship, readability, the range of illustrations, and modest price. *Penguin Modern Painters* benefited not only Allen Lane but also Henry Moore whose drawings of dignified figures in bombed-out London buildings spoke to people in a way that his three-dimensional work might not have done: having introduced his imagery, Penguin contributed to making him a household name and in time led to a new audience becoming aware, and increasingly accepting, of his abstract sculpture.

It may be argued that what made such sales figures possible was the sequence of events that created an increasing public interest in sculpture: Epstein's role in drawing attention to the possibilities of this art form; the lively critical debates about tradition and innovation that ensued; their extensive reporting in the press and broadcast media; and the personal statements of artists giving a rationale for their new ideas. Modernist sculptors, exemplified by Epstein and Moore, looked to a great variety of traditions outside Greece—Africa, India, the ancient arts of Mexico, Assyria, and the Cyclades. They now turned to non-traditional materials as well, such as Hoptonwood stone—whose use in sculpture had been pioneered by Gill—and recently devised synthetic materials such as plexiglass, favoured especially by the Constructivist sculptor Naum Gabo. Working with new and non-traditional materials suggested new forms for the objects into which they were fashioned, and sculptors were thus at the forefront of artistic innovation. To disseminate information about such developments in art they needed to take advantage of developments in publishing: the modern design of modern art books, a new style of photography, texts by critically engaged writers or by artists themselves, and experimental methods of marketing, pricing, and selling.

Initially, it was the bold and imaginative publishers such as Geoffrey Faber who, by supporting contemporary artists and critics in the 1920s

and 1930s and seeking to extend the potential readership for writing on art, made possible the emergence of a new genre of book. With its appeal to the common reader, good quality illustrations, and lively writing, the modern art book, through being made more widely accessible, would ultimately play a major role in the triumph of modern art.<sup>23</sup>

### Notes

1. This includes monographs on individual sculptors, materials-based accounts and general histories of sculpture.
2. See S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism*, especially chapter 4 "Sculpture and the Avant-Garde before the First World War." At that time, as Tillyard points out, it was more a question of "piracy" than of mutual benefit, for writers would use sculpture as an illustration of the aesthetics they wished to propound. The same "piracy" later applied to publishers, as is shown by the example of Faber later in this article.
3. See Ezra Pound, *Gaudier Brzeska: a Memoir*.
4. See Ann Compton, "How To Do It': Re-Reading the Sculpture Manual in the Context of Early British Modernism," 2009. I am grateful for early sight of this so far unpublished paper.
5. See, for example, R. Cork, *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill*.
6. See T. S. Eliot's address, *Geoffrey Faber, 1889-1961*, written on the occasion of Geoffrey Faber's memorial service, 10 May 1961, in which he recalled a working relationship and friendship of 35 years. "I loved the man, and part of my own life is in the grave with him" (19).
7. Richard Buckle wrote the introduction to Jacob Epstein's *Epstein, an Autobiography* (1955), which was first published as *Let There Be Sculpture* (without postscript chapter) in London by Michael Joseph in 1940.
8. The Faber Archive. FFA. 1 LB 12. Letter 449. Geoffrey Faber to Jacob Epstein, 24.7.1929.
9. The Faber Archive. FFA. 1 LB 12. Letter 451. Geoffrey Faber to Mrs Epstein, 24.7.1929. Faber failed to sign Epstein as an author.
10. See, for example, Margaret Garlake, *New Art, New World. British Art in Postwar Society*, and especially chapter 10, "Public Art."
11. The Faber Archive. FFA. RdIM 56. R.H. Wilenski to Richard de la Mare, 1 June 1932.
12. The history of technological change in art book illustration has been well covered by Anthony Hamber in his book *"A Higher Branch of the Art": Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839-1880*.
13. The Faber Archive, FFA. RdIM 56. R.H. Wilenski to Richard de la Mare, 1 June 1932.
14. Reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester. R.H. Wilenski Archive, Box 3, Folder 29.

15. Ossip Zadkine's sculpture *Les Ménades* of 1929 was chosen for the dustjacket of Wilenski's book *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*.
16. See Maria Mestrović, *Ivan Mestrović: The Making of a Master*. London: Stacey International, 2008.
17. The Faber Archive, FFA. 1 LB 12. Letter 46. Geoffrey Faber to Herbert Read, 15.2.1929.
18. The Faber Archive, FFA. 1 LB 12. Letter 34. Geoffrey Faber to Herbert Read, 22.2.1929.
19. See Valerie Holman, "‘Still a Makeshift’? Changing Representations of the Renaissance in Twentieth-Century Art Books."
20. See for example Jon Wood in the exhibition catalogue *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*.
21. See *The Early History of the Phaidon Press, 1923-1967*, edited by Valerie Holman, a special issue of *Visual Resources*.
22. University of Bristol, Penguin Archives. File DM 1843, Penguin Modern Painters, "Modern Painters [series] as at March 31<sup>st</sup> 1948."
23. This paper represents my initial response to an exploratory essay by Penelope Curtis, "How Direct Carving Stole the Idea of Modern British Sculpture," in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain, c. 1880-1930*.

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