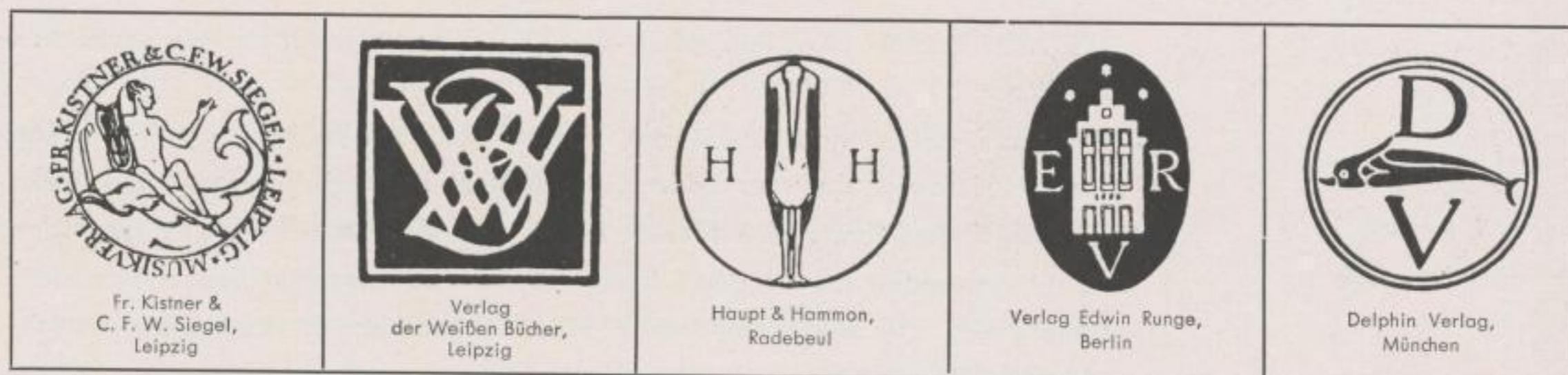


When, in the last decade of the 19th century, the reawakened German art of book-making succeeded in spreading its artistic influence to every part of the book, the publisher's signet was also awakened from the long trance in which it had lain for some centuries, and soon enjoyed a fresh period of prosperity. This was its second period of prosperity, for this small but impressive indication of artistic activity had already once reached a high state of perfection when the art of printing books in Germany was still in its youth, and when the publisher's and printer's signet were the same, because the publisher and the printer were the same person. At that time, when the handicraft of the book printer had reached a high level of artistic taste, the signet was also treated artistically. Leading artists of the day, including Dürer and Holbein, not only provided the whole book with a wealth of illustrations and adornment, but also produced excellent signets, mostly representing figures, which permit of our speaking of a first period of prosperity in the history of the German publisher's signet. With the decline of the high artistic standard which also started in the book trade at the beginning of the 16th century, as in all other artistic handicraft, the publisher's signet became constantly more superficial and atrophied; in the 18th century it was exaggerated

Dr. MAX OSTROP:

THE ARTISTIC PUBLISHER'S SIGNET



with strange flourishes and fancies combined with the publisher's initials, and ended, in the following century, in a state of meaningless bad taste.

Our young book artists, who were the first to take up the artistic make-up of the whole book once more, had so to speak, once more to discover this insignificant and neglected mark; they devoted their attention to it, treating it as a particularly attractive subject for artistic activity, which, however, also provided them with a very difficult but interesting task, owing to the limitation of the means available and its confinement between very narrow and definitely determined limits.

In addition to these purely artistic points of view there were also others of a commercial nature; for the publishers also rediscovered this mark, and that was also of decisive importance for the revival and great development of the signet. Business and art once more set to work hand in hand. Competition and the necessity of advertising led the publishers once more to pay attention to this long neglected mark; it was recognized as an excellent means of refined and artistic advertising, which, without puffing the books, was yet impressive and easy to include in the book's get-up. To give a good example of this, it was the publications of the Insel-Verlag, with its signet designed by Peter Behrens as long ago as 1899 and which may really be called unrivalled, which constantly attracted attention. The signet in the book on the title page and outside on the wrapper attracted the