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Walter Mittelholzer Revisited

From the Walter Mittelholzer Photo Archive

Kaspar Surber

ISBN	9783858815439
Publisher	Scheidegger & Spiess
Binding	Hardback
Territory	World excluding Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, United States, Canada, and Japan
Size	260 mm x 200 mm
Pages	192 Pages
Illustrations	47 color, 198 b&w
Name of series	Pictorial Worlds
Price	£50.00

- Features a vast selection of Walter Mittelholzer's outstanding photographs from his flight expeditions to foreign countries
- Looks at a lesser-known part of the history of Swiss media and photography
- Revaluates Mittelholzer's media activity from today's post-colonial perspective

Walter Mittelholzer (1894-1937), pioneer of aviation and co-founder of Switzerland's legendary airline Swissair, is chiefly revered as an accomplished aerial photographer. His spectacular views of the Swiss Alps have been very popular ever since he began publishing them in the 1920s. Much lesser known today are his expeditions by plane to distant places. In his day, he proved to be a keen marketer, selling the images he took on travels to Spitsbergen (Svalbard today), Persia (Iran), and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in his self-written books, in movies, and to the press. His 1926/27 trans-Africa journey on the seaplane *Switzerland* from Zurich via Alexandria to Capetown made his name known internationally, both as an aviator and a photographer. Well-respected entrepreneurs and bankers funded Mittelholzer's undertakings, supporting his goal to promote air travel in Switzerland. The entire Mittelholzer archive is now held as part of ETH Bibliothek's special collections in Zurich. This latest volume in the *Pictorial Worlds* series revaluates Mittelholzer's media activity from today's perspective. It features some 200 of his outstanding photographs. The complementing essay looks at the patronising view of Africa and its people and cultures the aviator-photographer maintained and provides an account of the colonialist backdrop of Swissairss lift-off in 1931. Text in English and German.

Kaspar Surber is a scholar of history and an editor with Zurich-based weekly *Wochenzeitung WOZ*.

Published 1st Jun 2017