

Awardee: Naveen Kishore

Publisher, India

Naveen Kishore is the founder and managing director of Seagull Books in Kolkata. With registered offices in London and New York, Seagull is established in the international publishing world like no other Indian publishing house. Kishore is led not by the market, but by personal convictions and passions. By launching the “German List” book series, he has greatly enhanced the position of German-language literature in the English language not only in India but worldwide.

Naveen Kishore publishes an ambitious series of books of German literature in outstanding English translations called “The German List”, a cooperation with the Goethe-Institut. Seagull Books is the first to publish German authors such as Brigitte Reimann and Ralf Rothmann in English, in carefully edited and aesthetically designed editions. Over the past seven years Seagull has acquired the rights to over 60 books from German publishers. By founding the Seagull School of Publishing in Kolkata in 2011, he has provided major stimuli to professionalize publishing all over India. According to the statement by the conferment commission, Naveen Kishore represents, in an outstanding way and at the highest level, dialogue and cultural cooperation between India and Germany.

Naveen Kishore was born in 1953. His relationship with Germany began through books in his youth when he read British and American editions of German-language classics. He studied English literature and initially worked as a lighting designer in Kolkata. In 1982 he founded the publishing house Seagull Books focusing on art, theatre and film, followed by books on politics, culture studies and philosophy. Today, it also publishes literature, including poetry and serious fiction, and owns the worldwide English-language publishing rights for books by Paul Celan, Ingeborg Bachmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Thomas Bernhard, Imre Kertész, Yves Bonnefoy, Mo Yan, Mahasweta Devi, Peter Handke and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, among many others. Seagull Books received its first award in 1983 from the Indian government for a paperback edition of five plays by Franz Xaver Kroetz, and has received several awards since for its excellence in production. With untiring energy, Kishore has continued to work on the promotion of the arts in general and the culture of books in particular. He opened the Seagull Bookshop in 1997 and registered offices of Seagull Books in the United Kingdom and the USA in 2005. In 1987, he founded the Seagull Foundation for the Arts, which has run various successful programmes, including a gallery to showcase contemporary art and photography; the PeaceWorks initiative, which works with youth through the arts; and the Seagull School of Publishing, which offers professional training for book editors and designers.

Quotes by Naveen Kishore

"I've always turned to a certain kind of European thought in poetry and philosophy and literature, and seen it always as a space for hope. I'm not talking about the politics or economics of our current-day situation, but of a certain kind of literary value." (Deutsche Welle Online, April 2013)

"Seagull. I would describe the kind of publishing we do as a handloom effort. Somewhat akin to a cottage industry. Instinctive, often improvised, definitely personal and, more often than not, highly risky. This business of producing books with small print runs and highly esoteric subject areas is an enterprise that is best performed by like-minded devotees of the craft, zealously guarding their autonomy, fiercely independent, sensitive to the needs of their authors and to the varied but highly specialized needs of their readers. Money is definitely not their main motive or they would have chosen some other profession. The work itself is reward enough for those of us who see ourselves as publishers and editors of the printed word." (Letter to Ford Foundation, New Delhi, 1997, on the 'nature' of Seagull's work)

"The intuitive has a home. Solitude. And the more knowledge you amass. The more books you read. The more alone you are. [...] Actively inviting melancholy? Perhaps. I am not advocating the luxury of reclusiveness. I am simply suggesting a life of solitude that is aware, alive, introspective and ever so sensual." (Unpublished text on the 'Intuitive', April 2013)

"Gestation. Time to chew over. To absorb new ideas. It may sometimes take years, even decades, to find a readership large enough to justify the existence of a new book. To even begin to recover costs. Even then the marketplace has never been a responsible judge of the value of an original idea if we are to go by the innumerable books that have been labelled 'great' but never made anything other than losses. Therefore, the current trend of deciding to publish only those books that commit immediate profit tends to obliterate a large number of valuable works from publisher's future lists." (Letter to Ford Foundation, New Delhi, 1997, on the 'nature' of Seagull's work)

On writing:

"Density. Something out of nothing. Essence. Meaning. [...] How wonderful to be able to write about the 'feelingful and the meaningful' each time you dip your pen into the inkpot and prepare to embrace the as-yet virgin paper!" (*A Brief Ruminantion About Nothing*, Seagull Theatre Quarterly, Issue no 34/35, 2002)

"I do not have a pre-plan, I simply make myself available ... like the blotting paper of old, I soak in conversations, listen to authors already on my list, converse with translators, listen some more to academic friends around the world, travel, talk to publishers and sometimes blindly agree to be led into a world of literature that they are familiar with." (Magazine New Books in German, autumn edition 2010)

“You often feel that you have to publish people who make sense to you. [...] In my mind you have to pay a price for this kind of philosophy and this kind of thinking in publishing, which is quality thought and literature; you put it out there and you hope it will find a buyer. It will never be a successful corporate business in the way you and the world would understand it. But it will carry on because ultimately the list is so strong.” (Publishing Perspectives Online, April 2013)

Quotes about Naveen Kishore

“For the worldwide circulation of contemporary German literature in the English language and for its dissemination in Indian languages within India (not as a publisher in these languages, but as an intermediary), for six years there has been a publisher who like no other unites the classical publisher’s traits of curiosity, independence, preservation and promotion of literary quality, first-class production and distribution of books, companion of his writers, networker, educator: Naveen Kishore. In recent years Seagull Books has done more for the dissemination of contemporary German-language literature than American and British publishers could do within their corporate bonds. [...] This means a renaissance in all countries for the awareness of Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Alexander Kluge, with whom Naveen works closely. The effects that Seagull’s overall concept – publisher, publishing school, art gallery and bookseller – will have on the international book market cannot yet be foreseen. Yet we can say with certainty that it is a paradigm shift that will influence other independent publishers on other continents. Just imagine, here comes a publisher from Kolkata and says he is willing to invest in literary quality, in the English language, worldwide, and not as a challenge to New York or London, but [...] as a saving grace for literature in a book market that is becoming ever more arbitrary. It is exactly what Gaston Gallimard and Siegfried Unseld did 100 and 60 years ago, incidentally also during times of historic upheaval.” (Petra Hardt, Suhrkamp Verlag Berlin, in a correspondence with Martin Wälde, director of the Goethe-Institut Kolkata, August 2012)

“Naveen Kishore is a man of many talents. The 60-year-old is a publisher and journalist, a theater practitioner, a widely traveled free spirit and somewhat of a revolutionary in the literary world. Over the past 30 years, Kishore has built his small publishing house, Seagull Books, into the first port of call for English-language translations—including the translation of books by German authors.” (Deutsche Welle Online, Priya Esselborn, 2013)

“Kishore’s special talent for negotiating, his sensitivity and tenaciousness made it all possible [collaboration with publishers such as Gallimard, Suhrkamp and the Chicago University Press]. His work has become a cultural bridge between the East and West.” (Deutsche Welle Online, Priya Esselborn, 2013)

“Kishore hates nothing more than to see how many publishing houses remove books from their catalogues after just three to six months, in order to make space for heavily-hyped new releases.” (Deutsche Welle Online, Priya Esselborn, 2013)

Bibliography

Book titles on “The German List”

Adorno, Theodor W.: *Night Music: Essays on Music, 1928–62**

Bachmann, Ingeborg: *War Diary**

Becker, Jurek: *My Father, the Germans and I: Selected Essays**

Bernhard, Thomas: *Prose**

Bernhard, Thomas: *Victor Halfwit*

Celan, Paul and Bachmann, Ingeborg: *Correspondence**

Dath, Dietmar: *Abolition of the Species**

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *A History of Clouds: 99 Meditations**

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *Brussels, The Gentle Monster**

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *The Silences of Hammerstein**

Frisch, Max: *Answer from the Silence: A Story from the Mountains**

Frisch, Max: *Biography**

Frisch, Max: *Zürich Transit**

Handke, Peter: *Till Day You Do Part or A Question of Light**

Hardt, Petra: *Rights: Buying, Selling, Protecting**

Kinsky, Esther: *Summer Resort**

Kluge, Alexander and Richter, Gerhard: *December**

Loschütz, Gert: *Dark Company**

Müller, Heiner: *Three Plays**

Parei, Inka: *The Shadow-Boxing Woman**

Parei, Inka: *What Darkness Was**

Peltzer, Ulrich: *Part of the Solution**

Quilt (Enzensberger), Linda: *Unlikely Progeny*

Roth, Patrick: *Starlite Terrace**

Rothmann, Ralf: *Fire Doesn't Burn**

Rothmann, Ralf: *Young Light**

Vogl, Joseph: *On Tarrying**

Weiss, Peter: *Hölderlin**

Forthcoming titles

Bernhard, Thomas: *Dieser sturmgepeitschte Mensch*

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie**

Fatah, Sherko: *The Dark Ship**

Fühmann, Franz: *Das Judenauto*

Khider, Abbas: *Der falsche Inder**

Kluge, Alexander: *Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8. April 1945**

Lehr, Thomas: *September**

Lewitscharoff, Sibylle: *Apostoloff**

Pannke, Peter: *Sänger müssen zweimal sterben**

Rights acquired

Bernhard, Thomas and Unseld, Siegfried: *Korrespondenz*

Bräunig, Werner: *Rummelplatz**

Celan, Paul and Celan-Lestrange, Gisele: *Korrespondenz*

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *Album**

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *Meine Lieblings-Flops, gefolgt von einem Ideen-Magazin**

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus: *Über Literatur**

Geiger, Arno: *Der alte König in seinem Exil**

Hampe, Michael: *Das vollkommene Leben*

Handke, Peter: *Essays**

Harlan, Thomas: *Heldenfriedhof**

Harlan, Thomas: *Rosa**

Honigmann, Barbara: *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben**

Kiefer, Anselm: *Notizbücher**

Kluge, Alexander: *Das Labyrinth der zärtlichen Kraft**

Kluge, Alexander: *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike – Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital **

Lasker-Schüler, Elke: *Ausgewählte Gedichte und Essays**

Lewitscharoff, Sibylle: *Blumenberg**

Mosebach, Martin: *Was davor geschah*

Parei, Inka: *Die Kältezentrale*

Rammstedt, Tilmann: *Der Kaiser von China**

Reimann, Brigitte: *Alles schmeckt nach Abschied – Tagebücher 1964-70*

Reimann, Brigitte: *Franziska Linkerhand*

Reimann, Brigitte: *Ich bedaure nichts - Tagebücher 1955-64*

Vogel, Joseph: *Das Gespenst des Kapitals**

* = title sponsored by the Goethe-Institut