

## PORTRAIT

**Oscar Troplowitz (\* January 18, 1863 in Gleiwitz , † April 27, 1918 in Hamburg)**

**Art and skin care were entrepreneur Oscar Troplowitz's two great passions during his lifetime. He was a visionary man who combined these two passions in a very unique way to help his company's products become globally successful. Aside from NIVEA, Troplowitz developed many famous brands such as Leukoplast, Labello and Eucerin. In fact, he is today considered to be the German pioneer of product branding. Troplowitz was a man with an avid interest in art who engaged in dialog with significant artists. He was one of the first entrepreneurs to integrate art in product design and advertising, establishing an awareness that design is a factor of success. His first round NIVEA tin design was the blueprint for Beiersdorf's famous modern-day corporate design.**

Oscar Troplowitz had actually wanted to be an architect. However, the son of a Jewish master mason born in Silesia in 1863 had to leave school shortly after obtaining his secondary school leaving certificate. After completing a pharmacist apprenticeship at his uncle Gustav Mankiewicz's pharmacy in Breslau, he studied for his university entrance examination and extended his knowledge by taking a degree in pharmacy. After graduating he went to Heidelberg, where he obtained a Master of Arts and a PhD.

In 1890, at the age of 27, Troplowitz moved to Hamburg to take over Paul Carl Beiersdorf's laboratory in Altona with his uncle's help. Beiersdorf had developed and patented a new type of medical plaster called the gutta-percha plaster. After acquiring the Beiersdorf company, he kept the name and added a modest "& Co." to it. Just two years later he built his own factory on a 1,200 sq m piece of land in Hamburg Eimsbüttel, which is still the location of the Beiersdorf headquarters.

After taking over Beiersdorf, Troplowitz began to transform the little 'laboratory for dermotherapeutic preparations' into a large and soon-to-be international corporation. Together with a team of dermatologists and chemists, Troplowitz set about developing new products. In 1901 the plaster brand Leukoplast was launched, followed by the Labello lip balm in 1909. In 1911 Beiersdorf introduced the first industrially manufactured emulsifier and moisturizing cream, NIVEA, which is still manufactured today with very few modifications to the original formula.

Troplowitz was an enterprising man who soon recognized the power of product branding and advertising. He focused on developing visually appealing products, packaging and advertising to generate awareness for his products. Even back in 1914 Beiersdorf products were on sale in most countries around the world, with exports contributing more than 40 percent of the company's revenue.

As his company became increasingly successful, Troplowitz introduced a number of social reforms for his employees. For example, he was the first employer in Hamburg to reduce weekly working hours from 60 to 48 hours without any pay cuts. Next to relatively high wages he also gave Christmas bonuses and holiday pay. Troplowitz established breast feeding rooms for female employees, a welfare fund for employees suffering financial hardship and a pension, widows and orphans fund. The Troma pension fund, which was named after his brother-in-law and co-partner Otto Hanns Mankiewicz, still exists today.

Once his company was on a solid footing Troplowitz got involved in politics. As a member of the Linke Zentrum party, he was elected to several parliamentary committees in the Hamburg Legislative Assembly. From 1905 onwards he was a permanent member of the Hamburg Construction Committee, he was involved in the Higher Education Committee and the Financial Committee and he was a member of various non-profit organizations. Troplowitz was determined to bring about improvements in Hamburg's elementary schools, in road traffic safety and to provide the city with more parks. He supported the development of Hamburg's Stadtpark, Fritz Schumacher's appointment as Hamburg's Chief Planning Officer and, as a result, he contributed to changing the cityscape.

In the final decade of his life Troplowitz dedicated more of his time to the fine arts. He commissioned Berlin-based architect William Müller to build his house on Agnesstrasse in 1908. Müller, a former student of Messel, designed a villa in the imperial Berlin architectural style with a simple plaster facade. Troplowitz hosted some impressive parties at the villa and it was visited by intellectuals and artists such as students of Arthur Siebelist, whose works he collected. During a trip to Paris in 1909 Troplowitz was inspired by new art movements and in the years that followed he acquired a fine and very individual collection of impressionist and modern art. Troplowitz was one of the first private German collectors to purchase a work by Pablo Picasso - "The Absinthe Drinker". He also acquired paintings by Camille Corot, Auguste Renoir, Max Liebermann, Franz Nölken, Friedrich Lissmann and Max Slevogt, as well as a series of bronze sculptures by Arthur Bock.

The entrepreneur who died at the relatively young age of fifty five had only a short time remaining as a patron of the arts and artists. Yet he made the best possible use of it. When he passed away in 1918 there were some ninety works of art at his villa

and a similar number at his Westensee estate. Being a generous man and a committed patron to the arts, Troplowitz bequeathed the most significant works to the Hamburg Kunsthalle.

### **About Beiersdorf AG**

Cosmetics company Beiersdorf AG is based in Hamburg, Germany, and has around 17,000 employees worldwide. Its sales in 2011 amounted to €5.633 billion. The company has been listed on the DAX since December 2008 and holds NIVEA, World's No.1 Skin Care Brand\*. Other names in its successful international brand portfolio include Eucerin, La Prairie, Labello, 8x4, and Hansaplast. Subsidiary tesa SE is one of the world's leading producers of self-adhesive products and system solutions for industry, craft businesses, and consumers. Beiersdorf has 130 years of skin care experience and is known for its innovative and high-quality products.

*\*Source: Euromonitor International Limited; NIVEA by global brand name in the categories Body Care, Face Care and Hand Care; in retail value terms, 2011*

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