

Elza Kastl Obereigner (1884–1973)

Elza Kastl was born in Ljubljana to the military officer Karl Kastl and the merchant Frančiška, née Peterka. Her father, Karl Kastl, was raised to the peerage for his military merits, but he was also an amateur painter and encouraged his daughter's interest in art. Along with her regular schooling, she learned painting from the Austrian painter Heinrich Wettach (1858–1929), who had his own painting school in Ljubljana, and the basics of modelling from the Czech carver Celestin Mis (1863–1918), who taught at the Ljubljana State Craft School. In 1901, she created the allegorical statue *Charity*, which for many years decorated the conference hall of the *Kranjska hranilnica* (Carniolan Savings Bank). During the years 1905–1906, she studied at the Vienna Academy for Women (*Wiener Frauenakademie*), since enrollment at the fine art academy for girls was not yet possible at the time. Among her teachers were the Czech painter Hans Tichy and Adalbert Seligmann for painting and Richard Kauffungen for sculpture. During the years 1906–1907, she attended the private painting school of the Italian painter Edoardo Gelli (1853–1933) in Florence, where she learned portrait painting.

The artist introduced herself to the public as early as 1901, when she was only seventeen years old. Until her marriage, she focused mostly on sculpture, an unusual choice for a girl. She also participated at the 2nd Slovenian Art Exhibition (1902), as well as at Kazina in 1907 and in the following years. She was a member of both the Slovenian and German art societies in Ljubljana. Shortly after finishing her studies, she began to receive various commissions from the Church. Between 1909 and 1910, she travelled around Germany with her parents and sister, also visiting Venice, Bohinj, Prague, Brno, and Vienna. In 1911, she married captain Henrik Obereigner and moved to Klagenfurt. Her daughter Elisabeth Charlotte was born in 1913, son Georg in 1914, but he died soon after. Her husband was also declared missing in the same year and Elza returned with her daughter to her parents' birth home in Ljubljana. Elza's widowed sister Frida also returned there with her daughter Friederika.

Later, Elza devoted herself to painting and especially miniatures, and gave up sculpture. She was considered the last miniaturist. In 1965, a selection of her miniatures was included in the *Portrait Miniatures* exhibition at the National Museum of Slovenia. Her art has always reflected a beautified past, but Elza Kastl Obereigner was one of the first artists to contribute a female voice to the predominantly male environment of art. She was a contemporary of writer and world traveller Alma Karlin, painter Ivana Kobilca, writer Zofka Kveder, designer Helena Vurnik, and poet Lily Novy (who was a family friend; Elza portrayed her two daughters). Her sculptural oeuvre was presented to the public for the first time in 2018 at the Ljubljana City Museum. A catalogue with an accompanying study by curator Barbara Savenc was published on the occasion of the exhibition.