IVAN KOS

The Jewish Tower in Maribor, 1917, drawing, 12.6 x 14.4 cm

The Jewish Tower in Maribor, 1935, linocut, 26.2 x 36 cm

Ivan Kos (1895, Gornja Radgona–1981, Maribor) was one of the key creators of Maribor's artistic landscape. He started his studies in 1918 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, however, due to the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and him joining the ranks of Rudolf Maister's combatants, Kos left Vienna and in 1919 continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where he graduated. During his student years, Kos was a guest exhibitor at exhibitions organised by Maribor's first art society, the Ivan Grohar Art Club, and in 1920, his works were exhibited as part of the first art exhibition in Maribor. In 1924, Kos returned to Maribor as an academy-trained painter. As an unestablished artist, he initially made a living by drawing at the dermatology ward of Maribor Hospital, then worked as a drawing teacher at the classical grammar school.

The most interesting period of Kos's work was the 1920s and 1930s, when his art was all about Expressionism and New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit). This is the time when his painting (Self-Portrait, 1926; The Girl with an Orange, 1927) was at its peak and when he created his finest prints – a cycle of brush drawings (Beggars) – and some excellent watercolours. During the post-war years, Kos's focus was on realism with a touch of lyricism. The town of Maribor was a source of inspiration for a large part of Kos's vedute. He depicted scenes from the old town, in particular the Lent area. His favourite art techniques were watercolour painting, drawing and printmaking. The Maribor Art Gallery's collection contains Kos's drawing of the Jewish Tower, which he created during his youth, before he entered the academy, and a linocut from the 1930s, when the artist created his finest prints and drawings. Centuries-old architecture and Lent's ever-changing appearance have long attracted the local circle of painters, who have depicted it in numerous works of art.