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Media Information, February 2024

Viennese Nostalgia – Connected Memories of Emil Singer

As of February 14, 2024, the Jewish Museum Vienna, a Wien Holding museum, is showing prints by the forgotten Jewish-Austrian artist Emil Singer (1881–1942) in the cabinet exhibition *Viennese Nostalgia – Connected Memories of Emil Singer*. What remains of his life are fragments: his etchings, acquired from collectors across Europe and the United States, as well as letters, archival materials, and stories passed down by those who knew him.

A Nostalgic Journey through Vienna

In 2019 James “Sandy” Rikoon gifted part of his collection of Emil Singer’s prints, which take a nostalgic look at Vienna, to the Jewish Museum Vienna. Picturesque cityscapes and landscapes, including St. Stephen’s Square or Schönbrunn Palace Park, convey an image of an “Old Vienna” that no longer existed at that time. The works on display from 1914 to the 1930s were created during a time of crisis, marked by the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy, the establishment of nation-states, and the rise of fascism. None of this is to be found in Singer’s prints, which rather depict a romantic longing for a vanished world.

Emil Singer’s Unsuccessful Escape Story

The exhibition not only provides insights into Emil Singer’s artistic oeuvre but also sheds light on his tragically failed escape attempts from National Socialist Vienna. No longer permitted to sell his works in the German Reich due to his Jewish descent, Singer tried to open a market for his art through friends and acquaintances in the USA. Faced with the increasingly catastrophic situation for Jews, he ultimately asked his American patrons for help in emigrating to the USA.

Despite numerous declarations of support and an approved quota number, the Singer couple's visa application was rejected by the US consul. The subsequent deportation in 1942 sealed their tragic fate. Both were murdered.

New Insights through Generous Donations and Research

Researching this collection has revealed a network of historians and collectors, such as Henry Isaacs, art collector Axel Junghans, and James "Sandy" Rikoon, all working in tandem to retrace the life and works of this artist who was murdered in the Shoah. The generous donations enable a comprehensive reexamination of Emil Singer's oeuvre. His representations of Vienna are characterized by his technical sophistication and painterly implementation and show a multi-faceted artist whose personal fate is inextricably linked to his era. This Austro-American story touches upon the hurdles of emigration in World War II, issues of provenance and restitution, as well as on how stories find their way to the Jewish Museum.

Viennese Nostalgia – Connected Memories of Emil Singer

can be seen from February 14, 2024 to September 1, 2024 at the Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse 11, a Wien Holding museum. Curated by Caitlin Gura and Daniela Pscheiden, and designed by Führer, Wien, the exhibition is accompanied by a self-published German/English catalog that costs € 18.90 and features numerous illustrations by Emil Singer. The Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The second location, Museum Judenplatz, Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (wintertime), respectively 5 p.m. (summertime).

Further information can be found at www.jmw.at or info@jmw.at.

Photos and press material for the current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna homepage at www.jmw.at/de/presse. The press photos can be used without charge for reporting purposes by naming the copyright holder.

Queries

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