

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

JACK B. YEATS AND OSKAR KOKOSHK
- "A COMPARISON".

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INTRODUCTION

"What are the characteristics of Expressionism?
power, emotional intensity, something of the
mystic, not reflective but aggressive and
immediate, not insinuating but attacking".

Jack B. Yeats and Oskar Kokoshka are two artists who have been described as expressionist painters. Though from basically different backgrounds and life styles, these two artists found through expressionism a common link, that being, freedom of 'interpreting' their subjects and expressing a feeling.

What this thesis attempts to examine are the similarities, if any, between the works of Oskar Kokoshka and Jack B. Yeats and to clarify the difference.

The first two Chapters deal solely with the lives of Jack B. Yeats and Kokoshka, the third attempts to compare and contrast the works of the two artists.

CHAPTER ONE:LIFE AND WORKS OF JACK B. YEATSTHE EARLY YEARS

Jack B. Yeats grew up amidst a very artistic atmosphere, in that his father was John Butler Yeats, an artist in his own right, with many talents including philosophy and debate. He obtained a degree in Classics, Metaphysics and Logic and took up a career in Law.

In 1862 after his father's death, John Butler Yeats inherited his estate in Co. Kildare. He married Susan Pollexfen a year later and settled in Kildare. Two years later William Butler Yeats was born to John and Susan, the same year John decided to leave his career of Law. The family moved to London to live at 23, Fitzroy Street near Regents Park. Here John pursued his artistic talents at 'Heatherlies' School, Newman Street.

Jack B. Yeats was born in 1871, and he was one of four children, the others being Lily, Robert and William. Jack had his father's creativeness and talent and soon picked up a pencil and began to draw quietly, never showing his drawings to anyone. He tended to draw, even from this early age, groups of animate objects always engaged in some sort of drama.

Jack spent most of his youth in Sligo and was brought up by his grandparents, William Pollexfen and Elizabeth Middleton who were noted for their kindness and sensitivity to Jack, never discouraging Jack's desire to draw.

Instead, they nourished his fast growing talent with affection and admiration. John Butler Yeats was to say later ¹"his grandparents were the best education for him".

He attended a private school which was run by 'The Misses Blythe', three sisters. He was a dreamy child who found the skies, hills and characters of Sligo more interesting than lessons. He was extremely aware of his surroundings, his favourite pastime being to stroll along the country roads investigating the characters he found there.

He was drawn to Fairs, Sporting Events, Circuses, the Harbours, Races in fact any event which enticed people and drama, the two elements Yeats was to find fascinating throughout his entire career as a painter.

He was touched by tales of mystery and imagination, was especially intrigued by the legends and local beliefs of Sligo. Sligo was the 'perfect' place for such an artist, a paradise for sketching and observing. Everything went down in his sketch book that interested him, drawings which were never to leave his minds eye. By drawing he imprinted these 'colloquial happenings' in his head from which he could draw from in the years of creativity that were to follow. He was constantly to refer to the 'life' in Sligo.

Jack remained with his grandparents until 1887 and then went to London to live with his family again, though making it a priority to return to Sligo in the summer.

Jack attended Art Schools in London, but very few examples of his early work remain. Though life in London was far removed from Sligo, he quickly became interested in the events that were all around him. He visited Exhibitions and Circuses.

Kensington School of Art emphasised technical studies and did little to help Jack apart from perfecting his drawing ability. Thomas Armstrong was the director who had worked in Paris with Whistler and Du Maurier. He attended a school in Chiswick and then finally in Westminster under Fred Brown who influenced him more profoundly than the others.

¹Hilary Pyle, a Biography - ps.19

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Jack frequented the Theatre, Music Halls and the London Docks and continued his sketchbooks avidly.

His first printed drawings appeared in the 'Vegetarian' while he was still at Art School, already a characteristic style was emerging. He continued to illustrate articles and stories and ultimately he became a graphic artist. In 1891, he worked with a magazine called "The Paddock Life" and naturally took to studying sports of every kind and would express them visually for the magazine, always adding a touch of humour. As John Fitzmaurice Mills said of his illustrations later:-

²"He is not just fixing a scene of the crowds down onto a sheet of paper with some black firm strokes. He is creating a permanent evocation of that movement, so that the whole sketch simmers with life and noise".

He developed his drawing technique as he worked on as a black and white illustrator, employing crosshatching and contrasting soft lines with hard lines. And as time went on he became more deliberate in his aims.

He married in 1894 to a college student, Mary Cottenham White and was working with Harry Furnis, a master of 'political characature'. He appeared regularly in 'Punch' magazine under a pseudonym 'W. Bird'.

With the coming of photographic reproduction, so did the decline of illustrators and so Jack B. Yeats turned to Watercolour. His first watercolours fed directly from his cartoons and were angular, outlined and narrative.

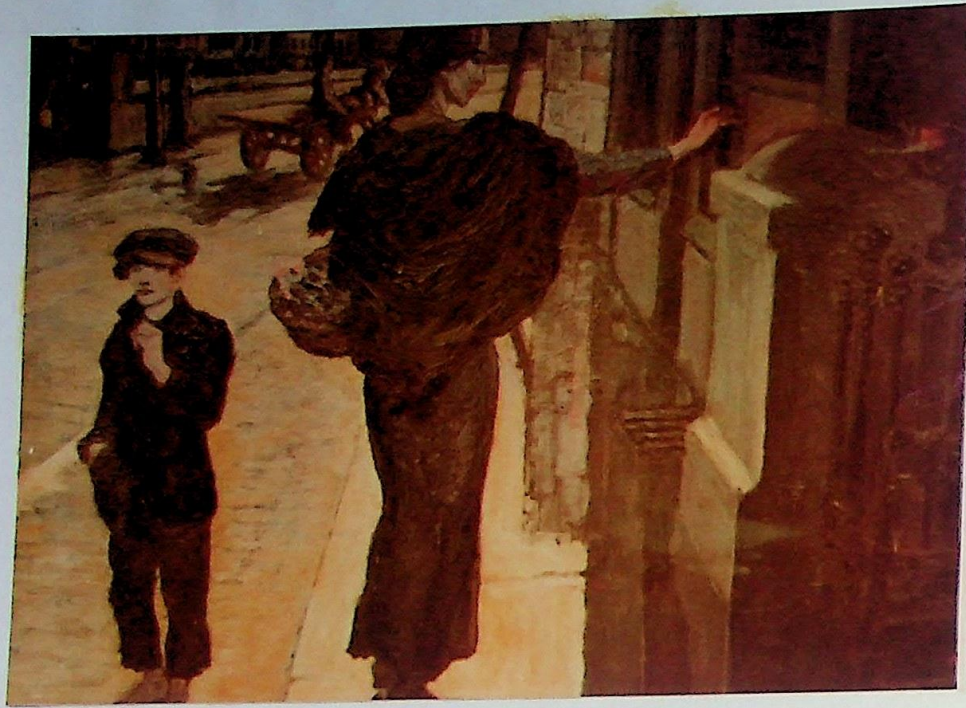
'The Man from Aranmore' 1905 still contains the outline and a basically illustrative treatment, the colouring is evocative of misty hills and has a great 'feeling' emanating from it, it predominantly however, portrays Yeats's flair for description. Yeats constantly battled between writing and painting. I think he successfully transforms the written word to a 'visual description'.

Yeats was an individual artist, like Oscar Kokoshka, in that he was not interested in what was going on outside his own pursuits. He travelled to Italy, Paris and the U.S.A. and considered these travels a form of education, also during the nineties his interest in Japanese art blossomed, but mainly he worked independently of major influences and continued to describe Irish life and character in watercolour.

In 1910, Jack returned to Ireland and began to paint in oils. Again they began as descriptive paintings, not unlike the watercolours. 'The Parish Priest' or 'Portrait of a Cleric' was painted during this time and is an excellent example of his rendering of the 'Irish folk'. He uses black outlines around the figure in a traditional Irish setting.

The artist who influenced Yeats at this stage was Walter Sickert, it was from him Yeats learned and adopted the thick, short flat brushstrokes that swirl up the desired colour.

'Empty Creels' is a striking example of this influence. This painting also portrays Jack's preoccupation with light and dark contrasts. It depicts very descriptively a silhouetted figure of a young boy on a donkey in mid gallop down a street. The brushstrokes evenly cover the canvass. The tones are low key and subtly conjure up a magical air. The composition is now moving



IN MEMORY. 1915. By Jack B. Yeats.

into using the central figure silhouetted against the sky and the landscape is secondary to the 'theme'. These silhouette figures date back as far as 1899. 'Before the Start' and 'a lift in the long car' are also examples of this.

After Yeats moved back to Dublin in 1910, he settled in Greystones and his painting was to acquire a deeper 'sense of meaning'. They become less linear and more 'painterly', this can be seen in 'The Circus Dwarf' painted in 1912. Here we are confronted with the circus dwarf, the comical figure of the bright lights of the circus. But the dwarf not smiling and the colours are painted in large flat areas in strong reds and greens and we feel a certain sympathy with this pathetic face in the noble surroundings. It evokes thought and brings to mind Velasquez 'Las meninas'. This painting marks a departure from the narrative paintings done earlier.

Having witnessed many frenzied political and socialist meetings, Yeats was passionately involved with Irish affairs and he felt deeply for the Irish people. He hated war and evil and advocated the 'perfect life' free from all tyranny. During this time he expressed in his paintings, the attitudes of many ordinary people towards National concerns. He was a witness of the 1916 rising and his patriotic feelings ran deep at this time.

One such painting that was inspired by the political situation in Ireland, is 'In Memory' 1915. It recalls the incident of the 26th July 1914, when three people were killed on Batchelors Walk. A flower girl is shown, who drops a rose from her blanket through the open gate of a house on the right. Again he makes use of the silhouetted figure against a bright eery light thrown on the street. Symbolism was to play an important part in expression for Yeats.

²The Irish Times 28th February 1969

THE EXPRESSIONIST DEVELOPMENT

During the 1920's he painted a lot in Kenmare, Glengarrif, Parknasilla and the Burren and usually his paintings were of straight landscapes devoid of drama

A change of mood creeps into his work, no longer are we looking at illustrative pictures, there is a new dimension being injected into his paintings via a new technique and style.

'The Liffey swim' 1923 hints at this departure. We now look at characters looking into the Liffey watching the swimmers and before we see the swimmers we see this lively rush of water shooting past in daring colours. No longer is the paint applied in the old technique, but it comes straight from the tube and onto the canvass with a palette knife. It is as if he had an irrepressable urge to act swiftly and create something new.

"The Breaker out" 1925, is a painting of a man on a boat, the same subject matter he always used but now there is imagination and creativity sprouting from it. It contains the fourth dimension, that is 'The self'. Yeats was moving into a highly creative stage in his career. Not only was he recording 'Irish life', but he was evolving, as a painter, significantly towards being part of an international 'style' and this style, to my mind, was a form of 'expressionism'

His painting during this phase bears a striking resemblance to the work of Oskar Kokoshka, in that the two artists, despite similarities in technique, were striving towards revealing 'the self' in painting.

CHAPTER TWO:

LIFE AND WORKS OF OSKAR KOKOSHKA

THE EARLY YEARS

Oskar Kokoshka was fourteen years younger than Yeats, he was born in 1886 in a small town called Poechlarn on the Danube. His father came from an old Patrician family in Prague. His mother was the daughter of a forrester in Styria. His father was a goldsmith amidst vast industrial advances and found it increasingly hard to adapt to the 'changes' that were required of him. He was a bad businessman and consequently the family fell to poverty, until they moved to an outer suburb of Vienna.

Vienna was bubbling with life at the time, by being there, Kokoshka was to be exposed during his youth to one of the biggest revolutions in the history of european art, that being the break with traditional, academic and representational art. He was surrounded by a lot more 'energy' than Yeats was and was quite firm in his belief that visual art could express so much more than the written word.

Intending to study Chemistry he obtained a scholarship through a concerned teacher, to the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts. Like Yeats, this school had little to offer him except to perfect his drawing and he was considered by his tutors to be a competent draughtsman. He frequented museums of art in Vienna and was drawn to the African masks from the southern seas. He found the direct and bold art of Africa fascinating in comparison to the more conventional art he was seeing in his school.

Socially, in Vienna at this time there was a lot of tension out of which grew a stage of 'decadence' which was cynical and argumentative, it was during this time Kokoshka was to begin his artistic career.

In comparison to Yeats, Kokoshka was a strong talkative independent type of person. Yeats was quieter and more modest but he indeed was independent. Perhaps Kokoshka's life was fraught with more tension and hardship than Yeats.

The principal teachers at the Vienna School was Kolo Moser and Alfred Roller both pupils of Gustav Klimt. Gustav Klimt was the leading figure in the progressive art of Vienna.

Kokoshka was, like Yeats master of drawing, and he drew in the early years in pen and ink, using firm outlines. He always drew people, and tended to exaggerate the joints of the figures by elongation, thus making his work quite expressive. His earliest drawings convey gloomy looking, underfed models with bony angular bodies. He drew using thin contour lines which are linear and crude.

Kokoshka worked for the "Wiener Werkstatte" designing post cards and posters in return for a small fee. He worked as a graphic artist for quite a while.

He exhibited some of his work in The Vienna Art Exhibition in 1908, which was organised by the most eminent artists in Vienna at that time - Gustav Klimt, Cizek, Moll, Josef Hoffman and Alfred Roller.

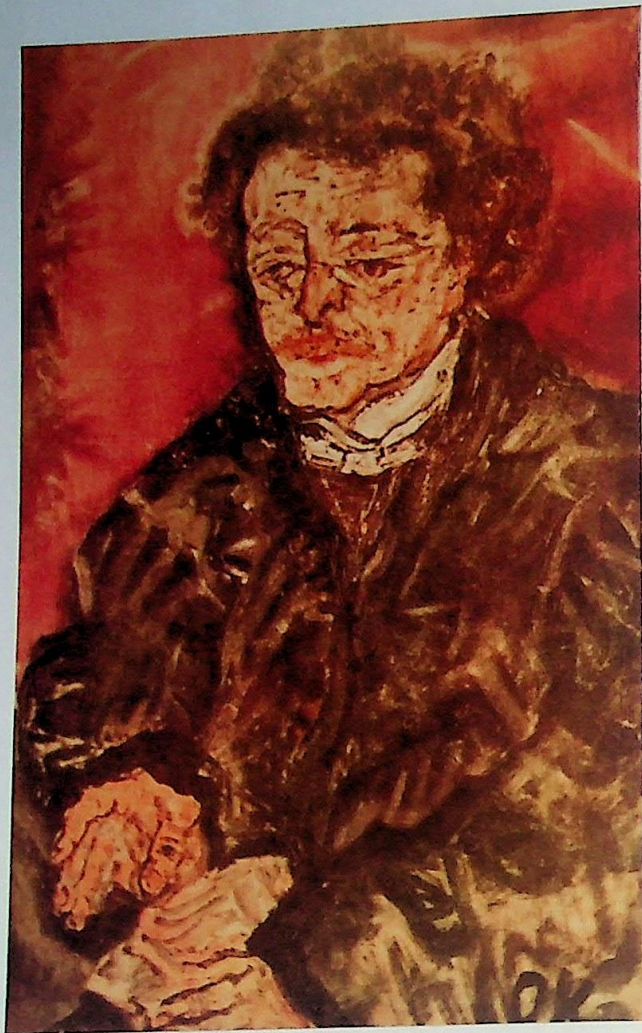
Kokoshka exhibited posters and large scale designs for a Gobelin Tapestry, a sculpture and a picture book called "The dreaming boys". He was attacked by the critics who thought his art

was 'monstrous'. After his first dramatic piece of work was performed called 'Murder, hope of women' it convinced the critics he was an 'enfant terrible'

"The dreaming boys was an illustrated book about the fears and yearnings of young boys. The pictures were entirely under the influence of Art nouveau, in their 'Flower like' effect and flat areas of colour, but Kokoshka aimed at expressing these fears and yearnings through themes of suppressed sexuality and tragedy which were to re-occur throughout his career.

It was this exhibition which brought Kokoshka in contact with Adolph Loos, an architect who was advocating the 'Modern functional' style of Architecture. He persuaded Kokoshka to leave the "Wiener Werkstatte" and set about finding him portrait commissions. Kokoshka was then commissioned a portrait in Switzerland, by Aguste Forel, an eminent biologist, he painted Forel sitting at a desk by a window. The family refused to buy the portrait because of Kokoshka's style, they were presumably unaccustomed to such 'tradition breaking' methods of portraiture. Loos also brought Kokoshka in contact with Hewart Walden, the founder and editor of 'Der Sturm', who immediately suggested Kokoshka go with him to Berlin and contribute to the magazine.

This began a series of portraits painted by Kokoshka. His drawings of this period contain lines of varying strengths, contours and he used diagonal repetitive lines for shading purposes and squiggly lines for hair. Later on he met Cassirer, a renowned Berlin art dealer, who was to buy a painting a year from Kokoshka. He did portraits of Walden, Blumer, Baum and Caro desperately attempting to portray each individual characteristics of the men. Like his drawings, they were very linear portraits almost 'character like' as graphic elements predominate.



PORTRAIT OF HUGO CARO. By Oskar Kokoshka.

The portrait of "Hugo Caro" 1910, is a striking example of his style at this period and also marks the subtle break from a 'Caligraphic Style' to a more 'painterly' manner

He always painted his subjects against an undefined background, so that the figure appeared almost isolated and awkward against such surroundings. He would scratch into the canvass with his fingernail believing anything that he could 'draw' with was all important if it obtained the desired effect. By 1911, Kokoshka returned to Vienna and took up a position in the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts as an assistant teacher.

The paintings he exhibited in Hagenbund were criticized harshly.

A CHANGE IN STYLE

Kokoshka's next departure, or change in style, came with the deliberate decision to rid the picture of a thematic element and express himself more directly in 'paint'. The harsh contours begin to fade and colour becomes more predominant as a primary mode of expression.

1912 - 1914 marks the time when he changed from a 'Calligraphic Style', to a more flowing 'painterly style'. His colours become more intense and pure, as Kokoshka becomes acutely aware of the 'image' he was creating, 'space' was now to become an obsession. In 1913 he went to Italy and saw the great Venetian colourists' paintings and was impressed especially with the work of Tintoretto. He believed colour was so much more than just the surface and was the 'ultimate' in seeing.

In 1914 he painted 'Bride of the Wind' which will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter. It basically conveys through colour, movement and repose simultaneously. The human figure is still the centre point of his work in terms of composition and the landscape was secondary to that.

After the outbreak of war, Kokoshka volunteered for the Imperial 15th Dragoons, the most aristocratic Austrian Cavalry. Kokoshka hated war and in 1914 he returned a semi-invalid, after a wound he received at the front. He settled in Dresden for a while, and made new friends, consisting of other artists and intellectuals.

His painting was interrupted as he had to go to Stockholm for some time to receive treatment for the wound in his head received by a bullet. It is said that he was extremely depressed and disturbed during this time.

He soon met up with Dr. Fritz Neuberger who invited him to stay at his house on the Weisser Hirsch. Here he met all sorts of interesting people. He visited the Dresden Gallery and saw Cranach, and Rembrandt. Soon he began painting again, and one large work called 'The friends' 1917 emerged in yet a new style. It portrays Kathe Richter an actress, Walter Hasendever a poet and Ivor Von Lucken a writer, Kokoshka himself and Dr. Neuberger. The paint is applied opaquely on the canvass and brighter colours over the dark base reveals the figures in swirling broken brushstrokes.

'Woman in Blue' 1919 still shows the use of thickly applied paint, this time the brushstrokes are calmer and flatter. He knitted together rectangular areas of colour rather like a mosaic. The woman in this picture is a doll made by a craftsman. Kokoshka was to paint frequently from this doll as it was life size.

THE NEED TO EXPLORE

In 1924, Kokoshka left Dresden, embarked on a travelling expedition feeling the 'need to explore'. He travelled through the course of ten years, visiting many parts of Europe and the Middle East, including Switzerland, Italy, France, Spain, England, North Africa, Turkey and Palestine.

Now he began painting straight landscapes, the figure no longer holding the key position. In 1924 he settled in Blonay on Lake Geneva and he visited Italy often from here. He painted 'Boats near the Dogenna Venice' during one of his recurrent visits back to Vienna. It is an impressive example of his new aims in painting. Much lighter in texture than the earlier works, there is a tremendous emphasis on the 'space' in the painting shown by his placing of boats on the harbour. The horizon line is quite high revealing more of the harbour. The use of colour is not as opaque or vibrant - he now combines the colours more delicately. The brushstrokes swirl and give a lovely effect of airiness and freedom.

He now found his subject matter in Opera houses, the Mosques of Istanbul and Jerusalem, beaches, harbours, churches, deserts and mountains. When in London he did some remarkable coloured studies of the animals in a London Zoo, forever trying to capture the 'character' of the animals. Mostly however, his time was devoted to the painting of landscapes, attaining a remarkable sense of depth, using rivers of avenues cutting through the picture plain. He abandoned a geometric perspective in preference to a multi-viewpoint picture instead of the figure being the central point.

In 1938 Austria was occupied by the German Nazis and Kokoshka was listed as a 'degenerate artist'. He fled to Prague and continued painting landscapes.

In 1937, there was an exhibition of 'degenerate art' held in Munich. Kokoshka exhibited one hundred and seventeen works. After the outbreak of war officially he went to Cornwall with his future wife Olda Palkovska. As a protest against the inhumanities of war he painted many political and allegorical pictures aimed at teaching and warning people against the evils of war.

After the war he made trips to Europe and also made short visits to England and Ireland, so it is quite definite that he came in contact with the works of Jack B. Yeats.

He travelled to Boston, and received public recognition and in 1950 he opened a summer school on the Lake Geneva which was called 'The School of Seeing'. He continued to receive numerous portrait commissions from Austrian and German Heads of State and come-the end of his life he had achieved many honours and distinctions.

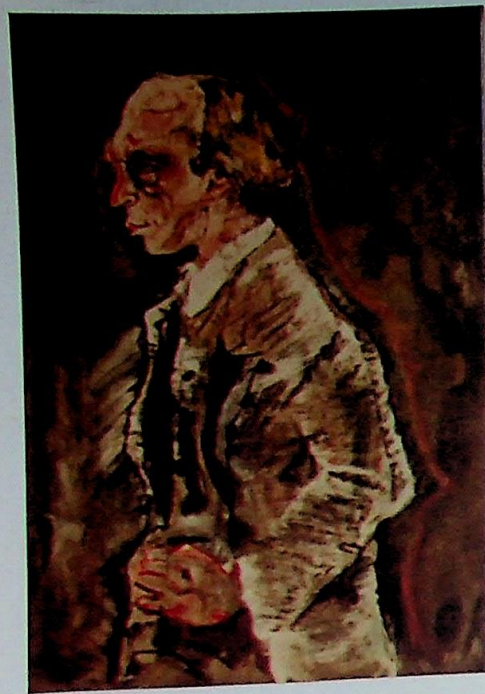
He was a very 'human' person with humanist ideals, and through his writings and lectures it can be seen he was a passionate seeker after the 'truth' - and he wanted, above all, to arouse everyone to experience truth through 'seeing'.

CHAPTER THREE:'COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE ARTIST WORK'

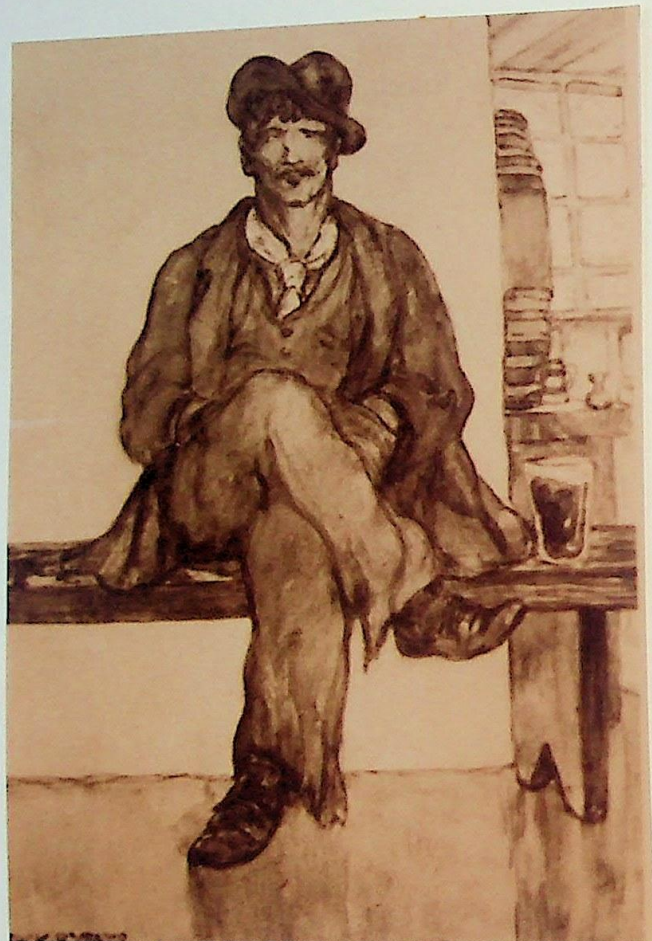
Oscar Kokoshka and Jack B. Yeats had little in common with regard to their lifestyles. Jack B. Yeats was brought up in the quiet, intimate and rustic surroundings of Co. Sligo, while Kokoshka was brought up in a suburb off one of the liveliest cities of that time, Vienna.

Kokoshka's life was fraught with war and hardship which spurred on his desire to paint, and develop a style that was both powerful and vehement. Art for him was a way to express his views of life and thoughts as well as emotions. He made rebellious speeches, wrote essays and articles and generally used as many tools as was possible to communicate his aversion to-wards evil and corruption. He expressed the application and irony for his friends as did Bosch, Breugal and Ensor. Kokoshka warned and preached through his art as well as being aware of the 'image'. Jack B. Yeats was also spurred on by the constant troubles in Ireland. He represented many feelings of the time before and after the 1916 rising and felt very strongly to-wards his country, the troubles awakened in him strong emotions much were to be expressed at a much later phase. Kokoshka was a very alert and articulate man, who enjoyed discussion, and enjoyed writing whilst Yeats was quieter in his expressions of deep concern.

Both artists started their careers as graphic artists, and their drawings were similar in that they both used black ink and a pen and drew heavy strong outlines to contain their figures.



PORTRAIT OF HERWARTH WALDEN. By Oskar Kokoshka.

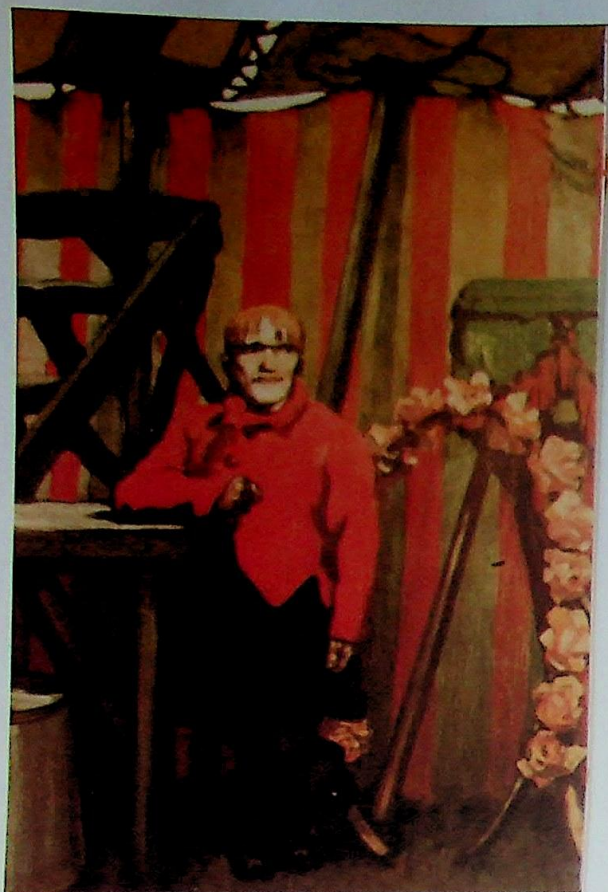


THE ROGUE. By Jack B. Yeats.

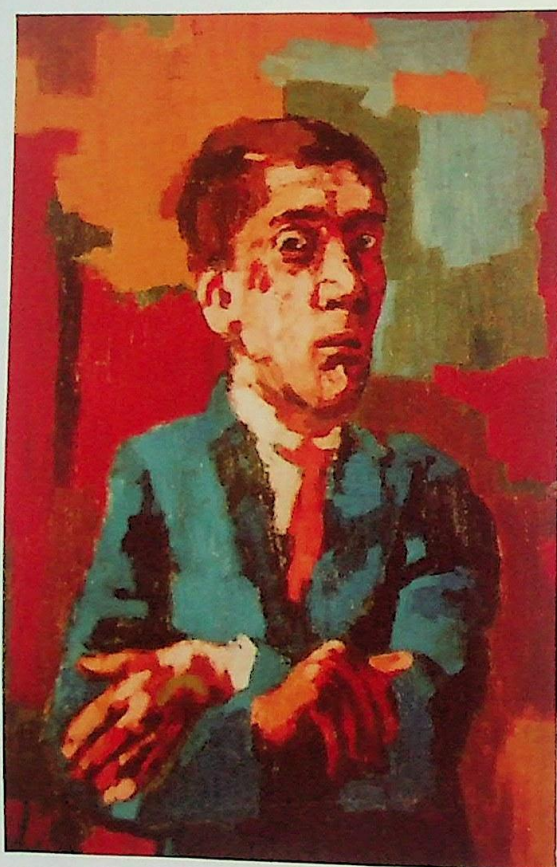
Both attended Art Schools, and gained a greater understanding of line. From a very early stage Kokoshka drew his models at art school as gloomy, wide eyed, skinny, gaunt figures with angular bones and elongated joints. Yeats on the other hand drew the life 'outside', and chose his subject matter in the ordinary every day town folk going about their business. The linear quality of Yeats drawing was far from gloomy or sad, they were simply narrative.

Kokoshka felt different from ordinary people and he enjoyed being the outsider, he rebelled all the more for it. While Kokoshka felt 'impending doom', Yeats was too engrossed in sketching life around him to notice. Kokoshka's early portraits to paint people he knew well, usually writers, poets or artists. He would set them a pose and then strove to capture the 'mood' and the 'character' of his sitter. His painting of 'Herwarth Walden' 1910 who was the editor of 'Der sturm' is characterstic of his early style. In the foreground we see a rather disturbed awkward looking figure emerging out of a hazy, undefined background of deep browns and burgundy reds. The face isa profile and bright red flashes of paint appear down the nose and again it is picked up on the hand. The clothes hang uneasily on the body as Kokoshka transmits to us the psychological state of this person. The effects are still linear as with his drawings.

As a total contrast, at this stage Yeats painted 'The Rogue' in 1903 Here we have an ordinary every day worker sitting in total relaxation on a bench in a pub beside his pint of beer. Yeats uses the surroundings and describes them to us as a visual narrative, Kokoshka disregards all clothes and status symbols, they did not matter to him at all. Yeats describes the character by showing us clearly the beer barrell, his scarf, and raggy pants, and the



THE CIRCUS DWARF. 1912. By Jack B. Yeats.



SELF PORTRAIT WITH ARMS CROSSED. By Oskar Kokoshka.

whole scene is bathed in natural daylight. Yeats does not attempt to explore the mind or convey inner feelings, this was not his concern at first. He battled fiercely with the urge to write instead of paint, and was to change his mind completely about that in later years, meanwhile he conveyed his sense of design and a gift for dramatic narrative.

Both painters were to break with their previously calligraphic styles and opt for a more painterly manner. This can be seen in Kokoshka's portrait of 'Hugo Caro' 1910, where the harsh lines become slightly more diffused, and thicker paint is applied to the face, in Yeats's 'Circus Dwarf 1912, the paint becomes more evenly coated and thickly applied and is similar to the 'Self portrait with arms crossed' by Kokoshka in 1922. Yeats begins to delve deeper, the 'look' on the face of the dwarf, becomes mysterious and penetrating very like Kokoshka's self portrait, both artists using daring colours placed side by side in large areas. The stance of the dwarf is more disconcerting than earlier portraits, his definition is more colourful and less dependent on the black contour. Yeats essential talent, that of a colourist is more evident.

In the early twenties, Yeats, after a series of experiments with oils settled into a more expressionist approach. From about 1911 onwards, Yeats pictures though still largely narrative in content, took on a brooding quality as the approach becomes slightly more 'subjective'. He became aware of the 'Craft' of the painting as a means of communication as did Kokoshka. 'The Liffy Swim' 1923 shows this evolving tendency very well. The strong contours begin to disappear and the paint is applied with surprising urgency and spontaneity as with Kokoshka's development, Yeats painting also feed off the last, Yeats had been painting fifteen years before a stylistic break appeared, on becoming a lot more concerned about



THE LIFFEY SWIM. 1923. By Jack B. Yeats.



BRIDE OF THE WIND. By Oskar Kokoshka.

what he was saying as well as 'how' he said it in "The Liffey Swim". The brushstrokes, formerly cautious, become spontaneous as if Yeats had an irrepressible desire to act an impulse to get the desired effect. "The bride of the wind" or "The Tempest" as it is commonly called, also shows a break with harsh contouring. The paint is applied thickly on the canvas and colour takes on a new importance. Again the swirling brushstrokes can be seen in both paintings. Both subject matter relies on the figure. Kokoshka is referring to a relationship he had with a woman called Alma Mahler.

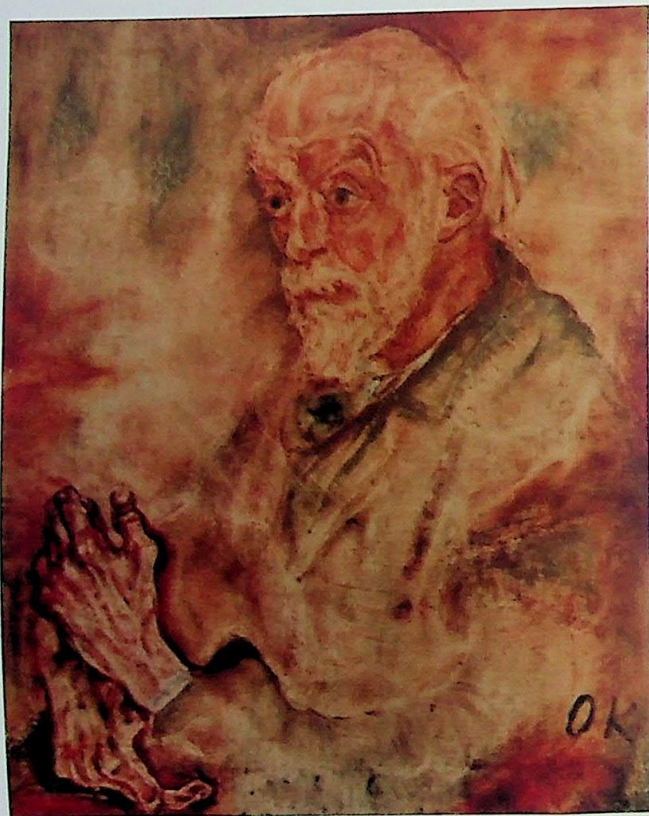
The two compositions have a strong diagonal movement, from the right hand corner of the picture to the upper left hand side, leading the eye upwards and into the painting. Yeats uses the heads of the spectators to point to the event in the Liffey, and the eye is carried up to the bridge and out again. Both paintings are involved in some kind of drama, movement, action and unrest. This is conveyed more than ever in the technique of paint used. The colour similarities are quite striking, in that both paintings are dominated by a vivid blue. Yeats represents the speed of the river by the startling intermingling of red and blue, yellow and green, leaving some areas of red in pure flashes darting downstream. These tints of red give an effective sense of movement and excitement.

Kokoshka also paints large swirls of blue tipped with a pinky red to achieve a swirling movement. Kokoshka and Yeats used red where most other artists would use black. In these two paintings both artists were expressing through colour a 'surge of emotion', and throughout their careers as artists they would only choose subject matter capable of stirring up that emotion.

The mood emanating from 'Bride of the Wind' is that of sleep, rest, repose amidst a turbulent vortex of swirling atmospheric shapes, communicating a sense of freedom locked within inevitable disturbances.



THE BREAKER OUT. 1925. By Jack B. Yeats.



PORTRAIT OF AGUSTE FOREL. By Oskar Kokoshka.

The two figures are totally oblivious to the outer forces and power which envelope them.

Kokoshka was greatly influenced and inspired by the work of the great Venetian artists and used some of their techniques in his own highly original work. He admired the colours of Veronese, Titian and above all Tintoretto, this is evident in 'Bride of the wind'. Yeats's 'Liffey Swim' marked the beginning of a series of highly visionary and imaginative paintings.

Yeats's portrait, a character study of a man on a boat called 'The Breaker Out' 1925 suddenly is not so far removed from Kokoshka's early portraits such as 'Portrait of Auguste Forel 1910. The technique has become similar in that Yeats is also scratching into the surface of the paint. 'Auguste Forel shows the face of an old man, made transparent by age, Kokoshka scratched lines aggressively into the surface to accentuate the contour, he smoothed out areas, glazed, blended areas to heighten the effect of outline, very like Yeats technique on 'the Breaker out' - the eyes of the man become less narrative and more expressive. The background is not as well defined as before. The colours pulsate with vigour, the rich blues, fluid brushstrokes so much broader than before. Red is streaked down the face and figure in the same manner as Kokoshka in the 'Herwarth Walden' portrait. Another notable development was that of the figure in the foreground beginning to blend and unite to the background. Yeats trained himself not through the study of the great masters, but repeatedly incorporating sketches, memories of anything that stimulated him to 'create'

In the 1930^s Yeats moved fully into this impending 'expressionists' style which he was to remain faithful to till death. 'About to Write a letter' marks Yeats final abandon of the boundaries of outline. The paint now came directly out of the tube and onto the canvas via



IN MEMORY OF BOUCICAULT AND BIANCONI. By Jack B. Yeats.



FRIENDS. By Oskar Kokoshka.

a palette knife or the fingers as the urgency increases to act. The colour in this painting is rich and vibrant. The red of the tablecloth looms up from the base of the painting and points precariously at the corner of a richly decorated room, decked with pictures hanging on the wall, on which the images are hazy and undefined. This provides the setting for a man with a pallid anxious face reaching towards the table in the exact moment of picking up the letter. He catches the moment in mid air against the bluey depths of the carpet.

Kokoshka was experiencing the possibilities of colour also, as can be seen in "Self portrait with arms Crossed" 1922. Again emphasis is laid on the hands and eyes, and the composition 'grows out of the figure' at this stage. The artist takes on an uneasy stance and threatening glare. he paints larger, flatter areas of vivid colours and juxtaposes elementary greens with reds similar to 'Circus Dwarf' which was discussed already. These larger areas of more 'controlled' colour gave Kokoshka's painting an air of 'calmness' and quietude', compared to the fiery expressions of Yeats at the relatively same stage of both developments.

"In memory of Boucicault and Bianconi" 1937, you have Yeats, telling us another story, the technique is similar to Kokoshka's opaque period for example 'Bride in the wind' and 'friends' a portrait he did in Dresden whilst staying with Doctor Neuberger. Yeats places figures and horses in the foreground, in the background there is a waterfall and thick foliage, Yeats has zoomed into an area and only a small patch of sky is visible. Kokoshka has also zoomed into a group of people, stress still lying in the faces and hands. Yeats streaked the colours together with subtle changes of hues and tints, capturing the movement and drama of the scene. One figure has his arms outstretched as the other figures try to coax the horses across the river. The waterfall streams down in fresh whites tinged



BY STREEDAGH STRAND. By Jack B. Yeats.



BOATS ON THE DOGENNA. By Oskar Kokoshka.

with pink and white, dappled light bounces of the foliage highlighting areas and throwing other areas into darkness. Yeats often ignored the palette and used his thumb and fingers to apply the paint.

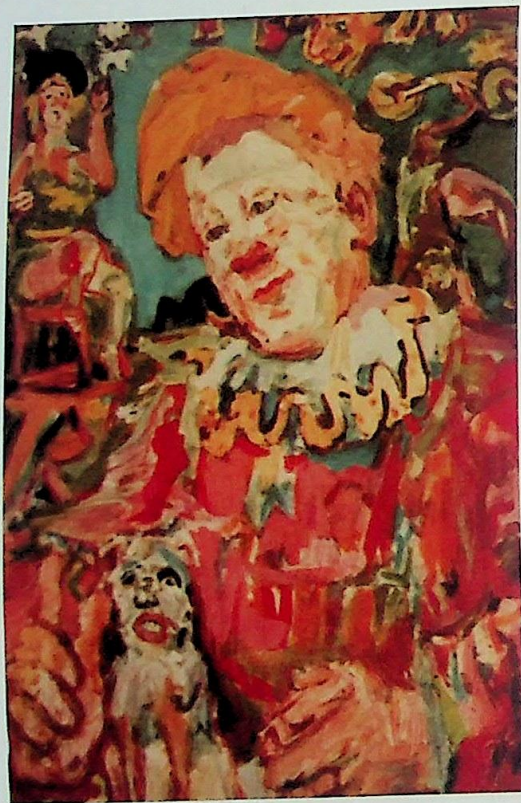
During Kokoshka's many travels to various parts of the world he began to open his eyes to life around him and began finding subject matter that interested him. Like Yeats he began to paint landscapes, characters, clowns, animals, bridges, boats, harbours, opera halls and buildings. It seemed that Kokoshka was moving from a subjective approach to a more objective, dispassionate, natural form of expression, in which he could convey his often contradictory feelings in a more balanced fashion.

He now looks outward towards the landscapes of Vienna, London and Switzerland and often found special interest in urban landscapes, where there is a sense of drama and movement. He takes on a panoramic, vast views never isolating any given part. Yeats on the other hand was moving from a completely objective approach to a more subjective approach, looking inwards and projecting 'himself' onto outward scenes.

"By Streedagh Strand" 1940, shows Yeats reaching supreme spirituality. The confines of definition are gone, and the paint itself speaks louder than the figure in the foreground. His passionate feelings could have arose out of his sensitivity to the Irish question. Like Kokoshka, Yeats expanded his vision though always painting the Irish scenery - Kokoshka wanted to take in the world and painted vast areas of land.



CLOWN AMONGST THE PEOPLE. By Jack B. Yeats.



CLOWN WITH DOG. By Oskar Kokoshka.

The figure in "Streedagh Strand" no longer holds the central position. The emphasis is now on the vast empty space of the sky and land. This shift of emphasis can be seen in Kokoshka's landscapes for example "Boats on the Dogenna river, Venice" shows us a harbour scene in the distance, with boats scattered skillfully, never dominating the scene. Also in the painting, it can be seen that Kokoshka achieves a different kind of spacial depth to Yeats. In "By Streedagh Strand", the viewpoint is straightforward, and the space seems more 'confined' and stretches horizontally, suggesting space in the 'middle' stretch of the painting. Whereas in Kokoshka's 'Boats on the Dogenna', the spacial effect is more infinite, and points horizontally, vertically and diagonally through the painting. Kokoshka's viewpoint tends to come from above the scene looking down.

Both paintings achieve a great feeling of 'space' and 'depth'. The pictures seem to expand into infinity and stretch beyond the confines of the frame, but moreso in Kokoshka's paintings of landscapes. Light shines in both paintings to highlight empty areas, giving movement by the streaking, swirling paint. Yeats's technique is particularly 'expressionist' lumps of paint stand out on the canvass, the isolated figure looks out in awe of his surroundings. Both artists now used the eye for measuring depth, they discarded the mathematics of perspective and followed their 'instincts'.

Two remarkably similar paintings done by Kokoshka and Yeats are "Clown with dog" 1948, and "Clown amongst the people" 1932 by Yeats. Both artists loved circuses and drama, noise and excitement. They both have used the clown figure to express a common theme -



GRIEF. By Jack B. Yeats.



LONDON VIEW WITH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. By Oskar Kokoshka.

the loneliness and isolation of the artist. This reference was a universal one. Both artists achieve an extraordinary feeling of 'sound' in their work. The compositions grown out of the central figure of the clown, who is surrounded by faces and the hustle bustle of the Circus, communicated more through colour and texture than figurative elements.

In "Clown with dog", we see the face of the artist himself, looking down with affection on a dog, who resembles a clown also. The torso of the clown is visible, bright colours dapple his clown suit and the ruffle round his neck. The face of the clown is painted thickly but the expression is that of calmness, his eyes do not confront the viewer but are 'averted' to the dog who shows us a sad, anxious almost pleading face like that of Yeats. In Yeats's painting only the face, neck and the collar ruffles of the clown are visible. Amidst the gaiety and noise looms this sad pleading face disguised as a clown.

In Yeats's later and final works of art, the emotion itself manifests the event rather than the subject of the painting in the same way as Kokoshka's earlier oils. "Grief" 1951 a painting by Yeats expressing his contempt for the evils of war. It is very figurative and a less representational or descriptive way. The paint swirls in indigo blue littering total confusion, large lumps of paint protrude from the surface. Clean, pure colour lift out on the surface and blend in accordingly. The colours on his palette now mainly consisted of Flake White, Titanium, Ivory Black, Cobalt and Windsor Greens, Scarlet Lake, Alizarin, Crimson, Scarlet, Vermillion, Rose Dore, Chinese Blue and Indigo Blue. Towards the end of his career he painted landscapes with usually one figure looking on as 'part' of the picture.

Kokoshka spend a lot of time in England painting views of the City and the "Thames River" - Yeats stuck to the desolate Irish landscapes getting more 'subjective', while Kokoshka was getting more 'objective'. "London view with houses of Parliament"¹⁹⁶⁷ is an uplifting landscape, the distance and expanse is almost symbolic of freedom. What Kokoshka looked for in the landscape was the 'trickle of water that suddenly breaks the silence', or anything that portrayed the 'character' of the place. His colours are light and fluffy, the sky stretches beyond the frame and the buildings scratch the sky - he saw himself as a 'seeing observer' of nature.

Yeats was now convinced of painting as a superior mode of expression and was to say 'language is failing'. Kokoshka had always believed in painting first and he was aware of the thin line between vision and the written word. Yeats allowed his memory of past event be stimulated by his imagination, he would distort the 'original experience' by the new emotion at the movement of painting. In this way the experience was translated into a newly creative happening. Yeats said³ "each painting is an event, a creative work happens".

And kokoshka had an identical belief as he says⁴ "A painter does'nt copy anything he makes a picture. A picture is something that was'nt there before - you have to make it".

Both artists enjoyed fame while they were alive, they both were showered with honours and recognition, although many critics attacked their works as being unruly, monstrous and a host of other 'misinterpretations'. Pierre Schneider wrote of Yeats's⁵ "in him the fluid burns, it is the spirit incandescence that projects fingers of lava - it sharpens into bright cutting blades

.. it broadens as a small voice swells between cliffs
- an intimate cry - this is how it reaches us, moves
us."

Samuel Beckett, who was a close friend of Yeats described
his brushstrokes saying

⁶"with breathless immediacy as there is no occasion,
no time given, no room left for the lenitive comment."

Essentially Oskar Kokoshka and Jack B. Yeats found freedom of
form, enabling each picture to be created anew and endeavoured
to make the creative process visible within the picture itself.
Automatism followed, they shared in their work a freedom of
movement and expanded available space, so that the painting is
not an 'impression of nature' but more an 'expression of feelings'.
They disregarded science and imitation in favour of original
creation.

Kokoshka was very much fascinated by Yeats's paintings and wrote
to him late in life:

⁷"Please, after having had your rest, let your unruly soul
soul for another turn out in the wonderful world of your
sagas and take up painting again! You alone can today tell
in painting such touching stories".

³Quotation from the catalogue of the exhibition, organised
by the Boston Institute of Art.

⁴A colloquy between Kokoshka and Ludwig G. Villeneuve 1962
out of "Goldschneider & Kokoshka interview.

⁵Pierre Schneider - 'The Masters' Series Pg.1 1963

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⁷Hilary Pyle Pg. 150

CONCLUSION

Hilton Kramer described the latter period of Yeat's work in 1971:

⁸"It is, I'm afraid, a style without much power Kokoshka, even in the work of his later years, which is relatively soft and lacking the ferocious bite of his earlier masterpieces is, simply, in another league. Kokoshka's late landscapes look back to the masters, however much they may fall short of their standard. Whereas Yeat's simply float on the surface of provincial taste".

I would have to disagree with this statement and also summarise briefly what has been discussed in the earlier chapters.

It is true that the many differences between the two artists outweigh the many similarities. Kokoshka admired Yeat's painting enormously which would suggest that he had a lot in common with the ideas and sentiments of Yeats. He understood and appreciated the talent of Yeats.

I think both artists were highly individual and independent of much influence. Their art was driven from them by emotion and feeling. They could both express themselves in what they saw around them and bring a new lift to art. To compare their paintings with the old masters would be to compare two completely difference circumstances. Yeats and Kokoshka used similar techniques but both artists were highly original and individual painters. What they were expressing was also themselves - making their art so different yet the same.

⁸23rd/X1/1971 New York Times. Hilton Kramer

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