



Fritz with his mother Gabriela and sister Inga, his only sibling, in 1932 (Monika Kos).

Fritz Toni Kos (1926-2006) was born Friedrich Anton Kos on 11 September 1926 at 'Simmering', Lorystraße 61, Wien (Vienna) in Austria. His parents were civil-servant Friedrich Anton (b.1903) and Gabriela Elisabeth (née Knoll, b.1907) Kos. Fritz listed his schooling prior to enrollment at university as four years of gymnasium (grammar school), with four semesters at the Schellinggasse Engineering School, and practical experience of three years as a building-construction technician. It is likely that with the great disruption and suffering in Europe following the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945), Fritz may have had a very unsettled adolescence. It's unclear when he entered the German Armed Forces during the war – perhaps at 18 years of age in late 1944. He received a Certificate of Discharge from the Army on 6 April 1946. In September 1947 Fritz commenced a five-year course at the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna, studying under Professor Franz Schuster (1892–1972) and graduating with a Diploma in Architecture in mid-1951.

In post-war Australia, with increased immigration and dire materials shortages, governments were struggling to meet housing demands, and in October 1950 it was announced in the press that: *The Victorian Housing Commission has signed a £1,000,000 contract with the Thermo Insulated Units Company of Cambridge, England, for the supply of 500 Austrian prefabricated houses. The houses are of wood, and will be two and three bedroom types. The first delivery is expected early next year. The firm is a subsidiary of Thermo Bau, of Austria, which will send 250 Austrian workers to Victoria to help prepare the sites for the homes. The houses will be made to Housing Commission design and specification, and most of them will be placed in country areas.*

In March 1951, under the headline, 'Austrians Coming to Build Here', a Melbourne newspaper reported: *Vanguard of 200 Austrian housing workers is due in Melbourne on Sunday in the steamer Jenny from Genoa. Forty skilled workers - most of them single - will be in the first party. Other groups will arrive later to build up a staff for the erection of Austrian prefabricated timber homes for Housing Commission. They will be the first foreign workers to arrive in Australia on housing contracts.*

Present contract is for 500 homes. It is worth a little more than £1 million, and was let in October to Thermo Insulated Units, of England. This company is allied with the Viennese firm of Thermo Bau, which is supplying the timber components for the houses. Thermo Insulated Units will supply other equipment, such as plumbing, water and drainage pipes from Scotland and baths from Sweden. Almost everything in and around the house down to the kitchen sink will be imported. The contractors can call on local industry only for materials that are plentiful. A company, Tempo Builders Pty Ltd, has been formed here to handle the contract at this end. Associated with it is the building firm of K.G. Hooker and Co. While a director of the new company, Mr P.A. Morawetz, and Mr Hooker were in Vienna last year over the contract, they recruited tradesmen for the scheme.

Hundreds of applications were received from all over Austria. Mr Morawetz said today. Because of economic conditions there, many of the applicants were out of work or about to lose their jobs. Most of the 200 accepted were young men. ... They would be here on a two-year contract, but many would want to settle here permanently. ... A site at East Reservoir is ready for the 350 houses for Melbourne. The other 150 will go to Mildura. Altogether, the Housing Commission has signed contracts worth £5 million with various firms for 3000 imported homes.

Embarking from Venice, Fritz migrated to Australia on board the Lloyd Triestino Line's SS *Toscana*, arriving at Melbourne, Victoria on 10 September 1951, a day before his 25th birthday. He arrived on a working contract as a technician with Tempo Builders of Port Melbourne, employed for the erection of houses delivered to Australia by Thermo Insulated Units of London and Thermobau Montagebau Ges.m.b.H. of Vienna. Kos undertook to work in Victoria for at least two years.



Fritz Kos at arrival in Australia, 1951 (NAA: K1331 1957); Paul Morawetz (*The Architect*, June 1955, p.12).

It is possible that Tempo Builders director Paul Morawetz may have met Fritz Kos in Vienna during 1950 when recruiting staff, with the company in Melbourne 1951-1953, and later in Perth, WA. In 1955, Morawetz established a lucrative scholarship for architectural students at the Perth Technical College: *The scholarship has been endowed by a Czech-born Melbourne businessman, Mr. Paul A. Morawetz who has settled in trust £10 000 worth of his own shares in Tip Top Paints (Australia) Ltd, a Company of which he is the Managing Director. ... Mr. Morawetz, a former manager of the Skoda Company in Bangkok, resigned in 1939 as a protest against Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia. The small paint firm he started in Melbourne in 1941 has since developed into a large public company with factories in Melbourne, Hobart, Townsville and Perth.*

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
 Aliens Act, 1947
 Form R.A. 2

Soos
Vic

NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ABODE

†The Postmaster, or
 †The Commonwealth Migration Officer:

TAKE notice that I, Kos (Surname or main name) FRIEDRICH TONI (Christian or other names)
 formerly residing at Melbourne 67 Barkly St. St. Kilda
 changed my place of residence or abode to 145 Victoria Street, Mordialloc
 on 8th March 1954

I am registered as an alien under the Aliens Act, 1947, the number of the Certificate issued to me being 254408

My occupation is ARCHITECT and my nationality is AUSTRIAN
 Year of birth 1926

Signature of Alien [Signature]
 Date 20. 3. 54.

self employed

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

New address endorsed on Certificate of Registration.
 Federal Electorate
 Commonwealth Migration Officer or Postmaster.
 † Whichever is applicable.

69087/10/53-10m.

National Archives of Australia NAA: K1331, 1957/KOS F

Friedrich Kos' 'Notice of Change of Abode' form of March 1954 (NAA K1331, 1957 - KOS F).

Noted as a self-employed architect, in March 1954 Friedrich Toni Kos lodged a 'Notice of Change of Abode' form, required under the Commonwealth *Aliens Act 1947*, moving from 67 Barkly Street St Kilda in Melbourne to 145 Victoria Street Mosman (probably Mosman Park in the western suburbs of Perth, WA).

Architect Iwan Iwanoff (1919-1986) and his wife Linda, photographers Alex and Swetlana Risco, Ron Armstrong and architect Raymond Jones (1925-2022) were among Fritz's close friends in Perth. After finishing his degree in Melbourne in 1951, Ray Jones had worked for leading architects Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson, and registered as an architect in Victoria during August 1952. While there he met Fritz Kos. Jones started his own practice in Perth during September 1953, was soon busy with projects – and with the increased work load was assisted by Kos, who appears to have moved to WA in March of 1954.



Swetlana Risco ('Northam Grows with Migrants', *The Good Neighbour*, 1 November 1954, p.2); Iwan Iwanoff designed Schmidt-Lademann house Floreat (1959 Risco & Kos photo, Wikimedia).

By 1957, Fritz was living at 66 Preston Street Como, and soon after joined the Hensman Park Tennis Club. He was naturalized as an Australian citizen in South Perth on 20 March 1957. It seems he joined in a business partnership at Perth with Northam-based photographers Alexander and Swetlana Risco in the late 1950s. Russian-born Alex Risco and his wife Swetlana (also Lana) had met on their immigrant ship coming out to Australia, gained their first knowledge of Australia from life in the immigration centre near Northam, and soon established photo studios at Northam and Merredin. Risco-Kos photographers, with a studio in the CML Building at 55 St George's Terrace in Perth, advertised their 'creative photography' services in the Royal Australian Institute of Architect (RAIA) periodical *The Architect* from September 1959, having produced the cover photo of that edition and others through to the end of 1960, when Kos becomes the sole photographer credited in his work for the magazine.



Portrait of architect Gene Mapp (1932-1998) c.1959 by Risco & Kos (Janis Mapp-Sonnemann); and Risco-Kos covers for *The Architect*, September 1959 and March 1960.



Fritz Kos cover designs for *The Architect*: The Steam Driven Architect (December 1961, see also March 1962, p.33 letter from Professor A.S. Hook); Hale School off-form concrete (September 1962); The Merry Christmas Architect (December 1963 - shows Ron Dyer as incoming editor, retiring editors Dennis Silver and Peter Maidment, Fritz Kos [Mad Jim] and Peter Parkinson [Caliban] lying down with mask on).

At some stage, Fritz moved to 86 Marine Parade Cottesloe. He officially changed his birth name of Friedrich Anton Kos to Fritz Toni Kos in September 1963, and Ray Jones was the 'Best Man' when Fritz and Jane Margaret Roper were married 27 July 1963 at St Luke's Church Cottesloe. They bought a house on Dalkeith Road, Nedlands in 1965, subsequently had a daughter Monika, and lived at that location for around 30 years.



'Best Man' Ray Jones at left, with Fritz Kos at St Luke's Church Cottesloe, July 1963. Jones, a former top-level Australian Rules footballer, was a tall man – Fritz was 6 foot high (Monika Kos); 'Fritz Kos Photography, 55 St George's Terrace Perth' (*The Architect*, September 1964, p.26 - the advertisement's photo was also used on the March 1962 cover; it is likely to show Perth Council House under construction in 1961-1962, as the steel-frame matches SLWA 340552PD).



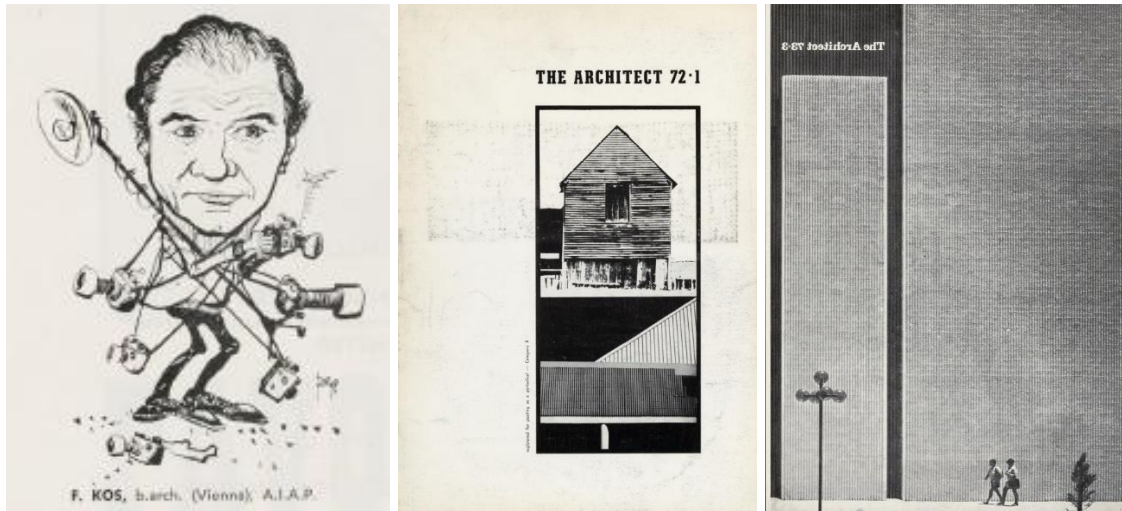
Fritz Kos' 1965 photo of the nearly finished Dumas House at West Perth (SLWA 340709PD).

Fritz and Jane are attributed as the artists for a number of the covers of *The Architect* from March 1965 through to March 1966. *The Architect* of September 1965 noted that Fritz Kos had moved to a new studio at 331 Murray Street Perth.



Fritz & Jane Kos cover designs for *The Architect* (March 1965, September 1965, March 1966).

As a measure of the respect in which he was held by the architectural profession, in 1970 Fritz was invited to act as a jury member of the RAIA WA Chapter Bronze Medal Award, joining prominent local architects John Duncan (1928-2005) and Gus Ferguson (1931-2024); Edward Scollay (RAIA President), Ronald Gilling (RAIA Director), and Sir Thomas Wardle (Mayor of Perth).



Fritz Kos cartoon of 1970 (*The Architect*, June 1970, p.21, by 'pag' - Peter Ashley Garvey); Fritz Kos cover designs for *The Architect* (March 1972, December 1973).

Fritz was variously responsible for cover designs, the layout, as a member of the editorial committee, and eventually for organizing commercial advertising in *The Architect* for sixteen years from 1959 through to March 1975, when it was announced that he was stepping down, and that 'his photos, we hope, will continue to appear in the journal in the future'. And indeed that was the case, with Kos' services continuing to be sought by the larger commercial architectural practices and many businesses involved in the built environment through until the early 1990s, when he retired at around 65 years of age.



Fritz Kos photo of 1915 AMP Building, north-west corner of St George's Terrace & William Street Perth, shortly before its demolition, 24 January 1972 (SLWA 341133PD).



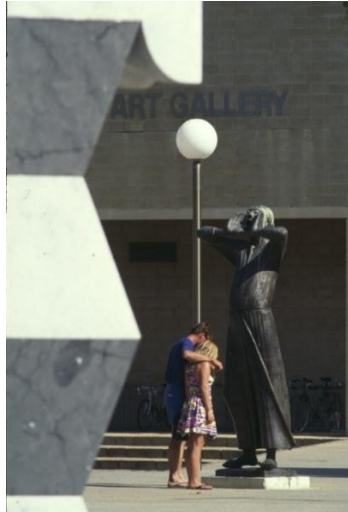
Fritz Kos' 1980s business card - about the time of his move to 587 Newcastle Street West Perth (Monika Kos); Fritz Kos and Ernest Polis at the book launch by Premier Brian Burke of Ian Hocking's 'Perth - the Building Challenge', 14 April 1987 (SLWA 370098PD).

Of Fritz' interests outside of his photographic work, daughter Monika notes that: *'Dad loved chess and was a member of the Metropolitan Chess Club in Drabble House, Nedlands. He was always a keen sportsman, playing tennis, squash and later sailing - joining Mounts Bay Sailing Club, competing in a Laser. In the late 1980s, he bought a small runabout and with his 'assistant' John Morris, took to the Swan River to photograph yacht racing. He'd always get in the way of competing craft, and would cop a fair amount of abuse! Dad also took up lawn bowls while living in Nedlands, continuing with the sport almost until his death.*

Upon retirement, Mum and Dad sold Dalkeith Road and went their separate ways, but remained married and friends. Dad moved to Stoneville where he took up woodwork and bonsai! Mum, an artist, moved to Bicton and had a studio in The Old George in East Fremantle.'

One of a number of post-war immigrants who brought new ideas and skills to the architectural profession in WA during the second half of the Twentieth Century, Fritz Kos enjoyed 55 years of fruitful enterprise in his adopted country. Fritz died 26 June 2006 at Bicton aged 79 years, survived by Jane, Monika and two grandchildren. Jane passed away 13 October 2007 at Bicton aged 71 years.

It appears Fritz Kos worked in architectural offices in WA for a short period in the 1950s, but his architectural training and remarkable photographic skills ensured that he left a tremendously valuable record of the built environment in the State. Celebrated in the profession, he chronicled the urban and architectural history of WA from the 1960s to the early 1990s. The Fritz Kos collection of photographs left to the State Library of Western Australia includes 2943 negatives and 18 slides, is digitized and available online, providing a fabulous resource for those interested in the State's history.



Fritz Kos photo of *Der Rufer* (The Caller) by Gerhard Marcks in front of the Art Gallery of Western Australia (1987-1992, SLWA 134876PD).

Fritz was clearly the most significant architectural photographer in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Western Australia, enjoying patronage from many prominent businesses and larger architectural practices. A celebration in September 2026 of the finest photos from within the State Library's Fritz Kos archive would be a timely marking of the centenary of his birth.

References:

'£1,000,000 Contract for Prefab. Homes', *The Age*, 18 October 1950, p.6 (Thermo timber houses).
'Austrians Coming to Build Here', *The Herald*, 2 March 1951, p.9 (Paul Morawetz director of Tempo Builders).

NAA: K1331, 1957; KOS Friedrich, Austrian, arrived Melbourne per Toscana 10 September 1951.

'The Morawetz Prize', *The Architect*, June 1955, pp.12-13 (Paul Morawetz, Tip Top Paints).

'Certificates of Naturalization', *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 21 November 1957, p.3563.

'Fritz Kos Photography', *The Architect*, March 1961, p.18 (located in basement of CML Building).

Ian Hocking, 'Perth – The Building Challenge', Master Builders Assoc. of WA, West Perth, 1987 (photographic index p.152 notes Fritz Kos and Ernest Polis as the major contributors of images).

Fritz Kos and Colin Lowe, 'Perth : four walks through the city', Fritz Kos Photographer, 1992.

Fritz Kos collection of photographs, SLWA BA1595 (2943 negatives, 18 slides).

Pers. comms. Monika Kos, May–July 2026.

Pers. comms. Craig Smith, Warren Kerr (former members of *The Architect* editorial committees), July 2026.

Pers. comm. Damien Smith photographer (studied under Alex Risco), July 2026.

Heritage Committee review: 20 August 2026 Last updated: 4 August 2026

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