



Franciszka Themerson: Stories from the Life

Ben Uri Gallery, London NW8 0RH (20 February – 23 May 2005)

Early paintings and drawings from Warsaw and London



Dance, 1929, oil on canvas, 114 x 63 cm

The Ben Uri Research Unit (BURU) is happy to present the exhibition *Franciszka Themerson: Stories from the Life*, which consists of her paintings and drawings of 1929 during her time as a student at the School of Fine Art in Warsaw, followed by her drawings of 1933, and ending with examples of her early work in London.

Central to the display are three oil paintings of interiors – two never previously exhibited. 'What is striking about the paintings,' notes Jasia Reichardt in her catalogue introduction, 'is not only the density of colour, so unfamiliar in the artist's later work, but also that they are about interiors and the activities within them: dancing, dressmaking, eating. The black and white drawings of landscapes, as well as interiors, were made during students' visit to a building that was perhaps a town hall, in Schnackenburg, Lower Saxony, and its surrounding landscape.'

When the exhibition ends, the works made in Poland will be donated to the National Museum in Warsaw.'

To indicate a continuity with Franciszka's later work in the 1940s in London, the display also includes three transitional paintings, which unlike her later works, are dense with colour and depict or suggest images of figures within interiors.

A catalogue with an introduction by Jasia Reichardt and designed by Pedro Cid Proença will accompany the exhibition.

Ben Uri Gallery & Museum, 108a Boundary Road, St John's Wood, London NW8 ORH
Exhibition open: Wednesdays to Fridays: 10 am – 5.30pm.

Notes for Editors:

This exhibition reflects Ben Uri's core research focus on the Refugee and Immigrant contribution to British visual culture since 1900: see buru.org.uk & diaspora-artists.net

About the artist:

Painter, illustrator, designer in print and on stage, Franciszka Themerson (1907 Warsaw – 1988 London) studied at Warsaw Academy of Music (1918–22), then trained as a painter, graduating with distinction from the Warsaw Academy of Art in 1931. Together with her husband Stefan Themerson (1910 Płock – 1988 London), she worked on avant-garde films during the 1930s in Warsaw, then as an illustrator of children's books in Paris, before moving to London in 1940, to work for the Polish Government in Exile. After being reunited with Stefan in London in 1942, she became art director (1948–79) of the Gaberbocchus Press they co-founded, publishing first English editions of Adler, Apollinaire, Jarry and Schwitters, among others. As well as their numerous collaborative projects, Franciszka continued to develop her highly original work as a painter, theatre designer, and illustrator.

About Ben Uri

See: www.benuri.org

Founded in 1915 in Whitechapel, London. In 2018 Ben Uri transformed the standard museum operating model and launched the first full-scale virtual art museum and research centre focusing exclusively on the Jewish, Refugee, and wide Immigrant contribution to British visual culture since 1900. In 2024 Ben Uri is recognised as a leading and distinctive academic research resource with over 3200 profiles published on buru.org.uk and diaspora-artists.net.

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