

Franciszka Themerson (1907 - 1988)

Why is the mind in the head?

Franciszka Themerson



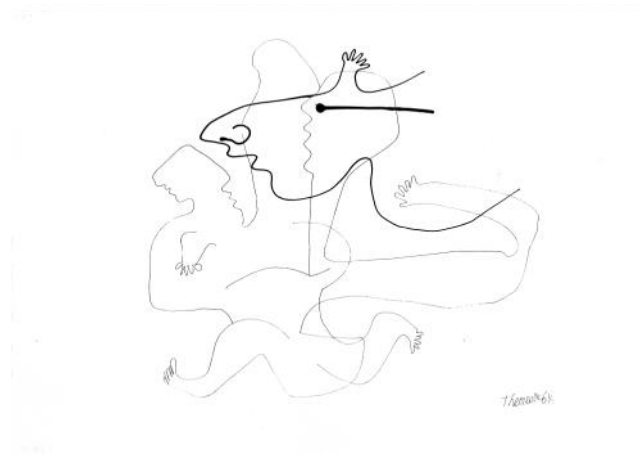
Franciszka in her studio, 1956

Front Cover : **Why is the mind in the head?**, 1952, oil on canvas, 62 x 75

Franciszka Themerson

(1907 - 1988)

Why is the mind in the head?



This catalogue was produced on the occasion of the exhibition of Franciszka Themerson's '*Why is the mind in the head?*' shown at GV Art gallery, London, October 2013, marking the Themerson Year 2013 in Europe



Franciszka painting, June 1975

Why is the Mind in the Head?

Nick Wadley, Curator

Franciszka borrowed this title for her painting of 1954, from a paper by Warren S. McCulloch, the American neurophysiologist, written in 1951. We don't know exactly how or where she came across it, but his was the sort of writing that regularly found its way onto the Themersons' desks. Franciszka's husband, Stefan, attended meetings of the British Association of the Philosophy of Science, and was conversant with its publications. And anyway, the intellectual enquiry of Franciszka's art and its meaning naturally attracted her to questions with this element of philosophical conundrum. *Why is there something rather than nothing?* is the title of a later, 1974 painting in the exhibition, borrowed in this case from the physicist John Archibald Wheeler, to whom incidentally a 1974 poem by Stefan (of the same title) is dedicated.

The oblique approach of such apparently whimsical questions to the fundamental mysteries of being in the world, laced with a dry humour, coincides with core concerns of Franciszka Themerson's art. She first articulated these in her talk, *Bi-Abstract Pictures*, in 1957. This was given at the Common Room in Maida Vale, a weekly club sponsored by the Themersons' publishing house (Gaberbochus Press) with the radical ambition of providing a place for scientists and artists to meet and share ideas. The dismantling of categories of any sort and of the boundaries between them was a natural first instinct for the Themersons, who had spent the 1930s making experimental avant-garde films together in Warsaw, and publishing inventive books for children (his words, her drawings). As an artist, she drew, painted, designed and illustrated books, designed for the theatre; as a writer, he wrote novels, poetry, a play, an opera, essays on artists, ethics, film, language, logic, philosophy, semantics, etc, etc.

In *Bi-Abstract Pictures*, Franciszka remembers a time in the 1940s when she had to reinvent herself as an artist after the dislocating chaos of war. As a child and teenager in Warsaw, in her painter-father's studio she had glimpsed both the magic of making a 'likeness' of the visible world, and the limitations of such art to express the 'undefinable drama' being played out between the order of nature and the inherent disorder of the human condition. Now, in post-war London, she was torn between resorting to cool abstract paintings on the one hand and, on the other, making comic drawings of the world of the bowler-hatted businessmen with whom she mixed in the world of printing and publishing, and who called her 'Mrs T'. She describes it as a strange world, 'half Lewis Carroll, half Ionesco', in which she sometimes felt hopelessly lost. In a single perverse gesture, she brought the two worlds together in the same canvas, and in so doing stumbled upon the germ of liberated pictorial language, with which the undefinable drama of the world might be realised.

She concludes by describing 'A geometry of conflict, built of two kinds of abstraction – hence the name bi-abstract. One, an abstraction of this strange universe in which we find ourselves trapped, expressed by space arrangements, intersecting surfaces, geometrical shapes, and two, an abstraction of what we see and know about the human body, human emotions, human behaviour. I had finally found the visual language I'd been looking for to express reality as I experience it... I did not think it out, I *painted* it out. And now I let it develop within its own laws.'

We can follow that development very clearly through the works in this exhibition. We may observe, too, the remarkable homogeneity of her mature art, in its meanings and in its means. In a letter to Stefan, from the early 1940s when they were separated by the war, she writes that she is slowly beginning to make some art again, and tells him: 'I've acquired a special taste for the line'. Subsequently, drawing lies at the centre of everything. She invents ways of painting that allow her to draw in any number of different ways, with dripped paint, with knives, sticks, and most often with her fingers and thumbs. And we can even see connections between her later work and the moving photograms of their avant-garde films of the 1930s. The dissolving forms of her near-monochrome paintings of the 1960s – in which shapes and lines, faces and bodies seem to be in constant flux, emerging and merging as we look at them – recall the shifting focus, multiple exposure and inversions of positive and negative of her work with moving lights in their films. And this whole seductive, fugitive world of technique is directed, and brought to bear on the drama of the real world, and of real life, by the authority of her story-telling instincts as a master illustrator. Everything she did and made informs everything else. As I remarked earlier, there are no boundaries between categories in the world of the Themersons.

To return to our opening question, the painter's mind *must* be in the painter's head, for one thing, to be close to her eyes. Franciszka's eyes – clear pale blue in those unforgettable early images of her from the 1930s, less clear behind massively thick lenses by the time I knew her in the 1980s – were possessed it seems of a heightened perception, to seize the moment and its meaning. And by an equally extraordinary wedding of what she called the 'body-mind' team, but which I prefer to think of as brain + eye + hand, she had the almost flawless ability to transcribe a thought into animated graphic life.

Nick Wadley
London, September 2013



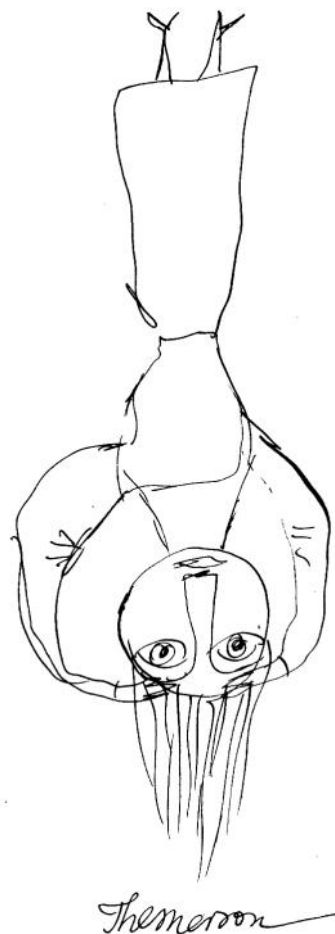
Gathering image (detail), 1962, oil on canvas, 153 x 122

Bi-Abstract Pictures

Some people have called me at one time or another an 'intellectual' painter, and many people have asked me at one time or another what my pictures are all about. So this will be about my pictures. Not exactly about the pictures themselves, but about their pictorial language. I did not think out that language. I 'painted it out'. But painting can be the painter's way of thinking. The two processes have many similarities. For both, painting and thinking one has to concentrate, put oneself into a certain state of freedom from other thoughts, worries, immediate activities – and then give to the mind, or, in the case of painting, to the body-mind team, the signal: *Go*. The ways of putting oneself into a state of work vary with different people. Some people, in order to think, need a comfortable armchair, or a drink, or both; some pace the streets for hours, some think in solitude, others need a crowd round them. Some painters have to work themselves into a frenzy of passion and hatred to attack the canvas, some like to listen to music. I even know a painter who likes to paint listening to Mrs Dale's Dairy¹. All this is necessary to occupy the not-needed-at-the-moment disturbing part of the body-mind team, and let the creative part work as freely as possible. And then a poem is born, or a picture – and if it does not sound like hundreds of other poems, or look like hundreds of other pictures, about which hundreds of articles have already been written, people will invariably ask what it is all about.

There are many things in my pictures I couldn't explain. As a matter of fact I cannot think of anything in them I could translate into words. People often ask me why is one or another of my figures upside down? I could answer emotionally: 'Haven't you ever asked yourself a question: *"Am I standing on my head, or is the world upside down?"*' Or I could give a more elaborate answer: that the laws of gravitation have no right in the space of a picture which has its own laws. If I place the picture on the ceiling, the picture will not change, but there will be no figure upside down. But all this doesn't explain at all why the figure *is* upside down. And really and truly, I do not know myself. The only reasonable answer would be: 'Because such happens to be the syntax of my pictorial language'.

This language developed as my life developed, so, naturally, I have to start from the beginning.



I was born, as my family's friends used to say, with a pencil in my hand. I started to draw even before I started to walk. This wasn't so very extraordinary, as I was born into a house full of pictures, paints and brushes where drawing and painting seemed as natural a function of life as eating and sleeping. Or indeed more so. My father was a painter, and my sister seven years older than I, used to spend all her free time covering every blank piece of paper in the house with drawings. I remember well the drawings of circus horses she made on the tablecloth in our dining room. Dancing horses, drawn in blue ink, which, to our servant's distress, wouldn't wash out.

However, my first real memory of my own drawing goes back only to the time when I was five. I was sitting on a small stool facing the large mirror in the wardrobe of my parents' bedroom and trying to make my self-portrait. I looked carefully at the reflection of my face in the mirror and tried to repeat its shape in my sketchbook. All went well till I came to the eyes. I couldn't make my pencilled eyes look at me with the same intensity as my eyes in the mirror. So I tried to strengthen them. I made them blacker and blacker. And they became less and less like my own eyes, which were light blue. But I had no means yet to translate the intensity of a look into a drawing, or even to understand that this was what I wanted to do. So I pressed my pencil harder and harder until two holes appeared in the paper and, exhausted, I burst into tears. Our old cook, hearing my howling, ran from the kitchen, took me in her arms and seeing the damage I had done, tried to console me, saying: 'Don't cry, sweetheart, I'll buy you another sketchbook'. She did not see the work of art. She only saw two holes in the paper. Upon which I cried still more bitterly. This was my first experience of not being understood by the public.

When I was seven or eight, I was introduced by my father to the intricacies of drawing technique. He was holding a class in his studio, where about a dozen young students and elderly ladies sat in front of their easels and learned to draw from the model. I also had an easel put there for me and a board with a sheet of white cartridge paper pinned to it, set at the lowest pegs, to suit my size.

I remember well the overwhelming feeling of anxiety and exhilaration I experienced when I found myself in front of that huge whiteness, looking at it, full of expectation. It was a very similar feeling to the one I had when faced with the white keyboard of the piano (I was just starting piano lessons then and was not yet allowed to touch the black keys) – wondering what sound would be brought forth into the universe when I pressed the keys with my fingers.

My father was an academic painter. He had studied in the eighteen-nineties in the Academy of Munich, and his teaching was thoroughly academic. We soon learned how to make a rapid sketch of the model's head, first carefully measuring the proportions of the nose and the mouth in the oval of the face, and next marking the slant and exact place of the eyes. Only then were

we allowed to embark on detailed drawing of some part of the face. It was usually, for one reason or another, the right eye. And, by the end of the first three-hour session, the twelve easels carried twelve schematic drawings of a face, each with one, beautifully modelled eye, staring at you.

Never has any surrealist picture made such a strong impression on me as those twelve living, single eyes which inhabited my father's studio. However, the following day, when all the drawings were worked on again and the details of the face were completed, the magic vanished, and I was faced with twelve unsatisfactory attempts to imitate the model's face.



I have not dwelt upon these childhood impressions just because they may seem amusing now, but because they can perhaps provide some key to my further work. I wanted to express that undefinable element which, I now think, must have been the life in my eyes in the mirror. At first I had no technical means or knowledge of how to do it. Later, when I had learnt the accepted technique of drawing the face, the result was entirely unsatisfactory to me. Obviously that 'undefinable' element must

have been something other, or something more, than the mere appearance of life. But what was it? I was faintly aware of its existence, but I did not know how to abstract it from the mass of other things it was mixed with. The problem, obviously, was to find one's own way of saying what one wanted to say, of catching that 'undefinable' something, and building a language in which to communicate it.

The training I got in my father's studio as a child was not the only training I had. When I was seventeen, I entered the Academy of Art in Warsaw, and worked there for seven years. A whole seven years of strict, professional training. I did not learn my art there. But I learned my craft. I mean, the craft of painting, preparing the canvas, using various techniques — all that,

mixed uncannily with such subjects as Perspective, Anatomy, and History of Art.

But when, after seven years, I found myself in front of an easel in my own studio, my main problem hadn't even begun to be solved. The problem was that of finding a visual language.

Now, when one has more than half one's life behind one, the thing to which one wants to give shape has had time to become much more complicated than a puzzling affair of a pair of eyes in a mirror. It has become all living things, all happenings, feelings, shapes, forces and laws. Around us and within us. All those laws of nature which give birth to what people call harmony, order, balance, symmetry – all that some people call by the rather flat word – 'beauty'. All the forces of growth and development, the biological processes and mathematical laws, all we have learnt about the ways in which our world is built, all the ways of destruction and decay. All of that fantastic construction in the middle of which we grope around, full of fears, pleasures, anxieties and violence, joys and tragedies, stupidities and angers.

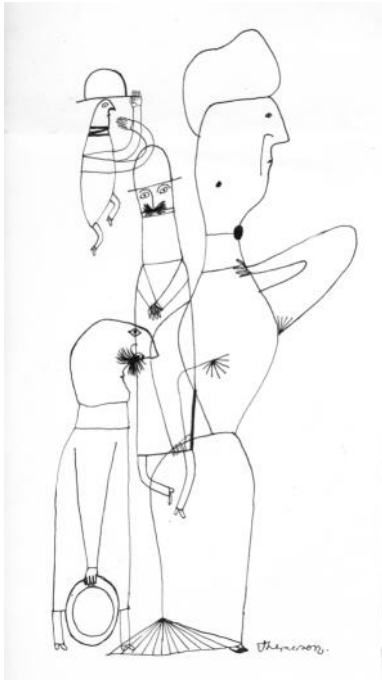
It seemed to me that the interrelation between these two sides: order in nature on the one side, and the human condition on the other, was the undefinable drama to be grasped, dealt with and communicated by me.

It was a big subject. Too big. I have a horror of expressionism. But whenever I tried to touch in painting the human side of a problem which had its roots in my human experiences, my canvases turned fiercely expressionistic. I tried to eliminate this element altogether, and painted for some time what I considered cool, detached, abstract pictures. I tried to organise the space within the picture according to its own laws.



Two rhythms, 1948, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 75

It was not unlike planning the disposition of columns at the entrance to a Greek temple – it was not unlike nature (I hoped it was *like* it) building its crystals and shells. It was a marvellous, luxurious experience, but not a satisfactory one. Why? I do not know. Perhaps because when I remember the magnificent Mondrians in the Whitechapel Gallery, I remember at the same time the old, withered woman who was sitting there in the corner, knitting. Perhaps because the



exquisite proportions of the columns of the Parthenon always bring to my mind the Greek merchant squatting at the entrance to the Propylaea, selling sponges and hideous plaster busts of Liszt and Beethoven.

Anyway, there I was with my abstract pictures into which a new element was already creeping, disturbing the order, balance and rhythm of my canvases.

Strangely enough, I noticed a similar thing happening to other painters at the same time. Already a new term had been concocted by the critics – a hybrid, called 'abstract-expressionism'.

This was no good. It was not fair to distort the balance of my colours and shapes because of the intrusion of the human side. I wanted to join those two elements as they were joined in the universe. Intermingled, fighting, and yet inescapably dovetailed. Here again was the old problem of finding a pictorial language.

It came in a rather unexpected way.

I was leading a very active life at the time. Unbearably so. I was frequenting art societies and committee meetings. I was organising book printing and production. I was having talks with printers, paper-merchants and binders, all very nice and helpful, faintly amused by my continental ways, and bewildered by the things I asked them to print. They talked to me in all kinds of ways. They were charming, or haughty, or just jocular. 'Yes, certainly. Mrs TI' 'All the best, Mrs TI' I spent days in the City, having endless talks with bowler-hatted businessmen who introduced me to the fascinating games of small talk and avoiding issues. with young, equally bowler-hatted men who had just left the Guards and, being too impatient to wait for their rich relatives to die, had decided to make a lot of money by writing best-sellers, or drawing strip-cartoons, or both. With elderly, titled and bejewelled ladies who would fall



Two bowler-hatted gentlemen in an unexpected place. (detail), 1950, oil on canvas, 62 x 75 (private collection)

fast asleep between one exclamation of 'Oh how very interesting!' and another.

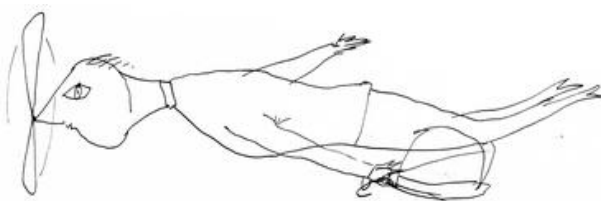


It was a tiring experience, but very edifying, and sometimes incredibly amusing. It was, I am sure, as amusing to them – if not as edifying. I was completely entangled in this strange world, half Lewis Carroll, half Ionesco. I sometimes felt hopelessly lost. I soon found myself, like a schoolchild drawing a caricature of his teacher under the desk, filling the pages of my sketchbook with little, very important men in bowler hats. I made them run, and skip with skipping ropes. I put propellers at the tips of their noses and let them fly. I made them quarrelsome, or angry, or self-important. But I felt there was something more to it for me than just keeping sane by laughter.

A perverse thought occurred to me: How would all these little very important people behave in my abstract canvases? I put two little bowler-hatted men, drawn deeply in white paint, in the middle of a whitish picture with only one coloured square. They provided a strange counterbalance of human silliness and self-importance to my modest, perfect red square. I call the picture: *Two Bowler-hatted Gentlemen in an Unexpected Place*. They were in an unexpected place. I am sure no bowler-hatted gentleman had ever found himself in such a place before. It was not a good picture, but the bridgehead had been established.

I continued the invasion. Every new abstract picture of mine had its human inhabitants. They were everywhere. Behind the squares, on top of the triangles, between the structure of lines and surfaces. And then a strange thing happened. My bowler-hatted gentlemen started to change. They began to forget their bowler hats, their self-importance. They weren't funny anymore. Now and then they dared to show that they were capable of suffering. They stopped being gentlemen, they became *men* and sometimes, *women*. They weren't ashamed any more to express fear of distress, and they did it without being expressionistic trespassers on the onlooker's feelings.

They found their place in the space co-ordinates I arranged for them. The process of unification began. Counterbalanced by their environment, they became abstractions of emotions, meanings and situations. Every picture now carried within its space the geometry of conflict built of two kinds of abstractions – hence the name: bi-abstract pictures. One – an abstraction



of this strange universe in which we find ourselves trapped, expressed by space arrangements, intersecting surfaces, geometrical shapes, and two – an abstraction of what we see and know



Franciszka in her studio, 1960

about the human body, human emotions, human behaviour. I had finally found the visual language I had been looking for to explore and express reality as I experience it. A bi-abstract language. As I said at the very beginning – I did not think it out. I painted it out. And now I let it develop within its own laws.

A critic once called my bi-abstract pictures 'white modern cave paintings'. I liked the flattering comparison. I liked it still more when I went, a few months later, to see the caves at Lascaux, and saw the huge, heavy, magnificent, more-than-alive cows and bulls, a strange horse with swift, delicate legs and a tender muzzle, all drawn or incised in the uneven stone surface of the natural geometry of the looming walls and ceiling of the cave. I said: more-than-alive. It was like having known that horse when it was born and stumbling on its awkward legs, and like seeing it die in the future. It was like the essence of life itself, caught by the man who made the pictures 20,000 years ago. Or perhaps it was not a man? I mean – it might have been a woman, might it not?

Franciszka Themerson
London, November 1957

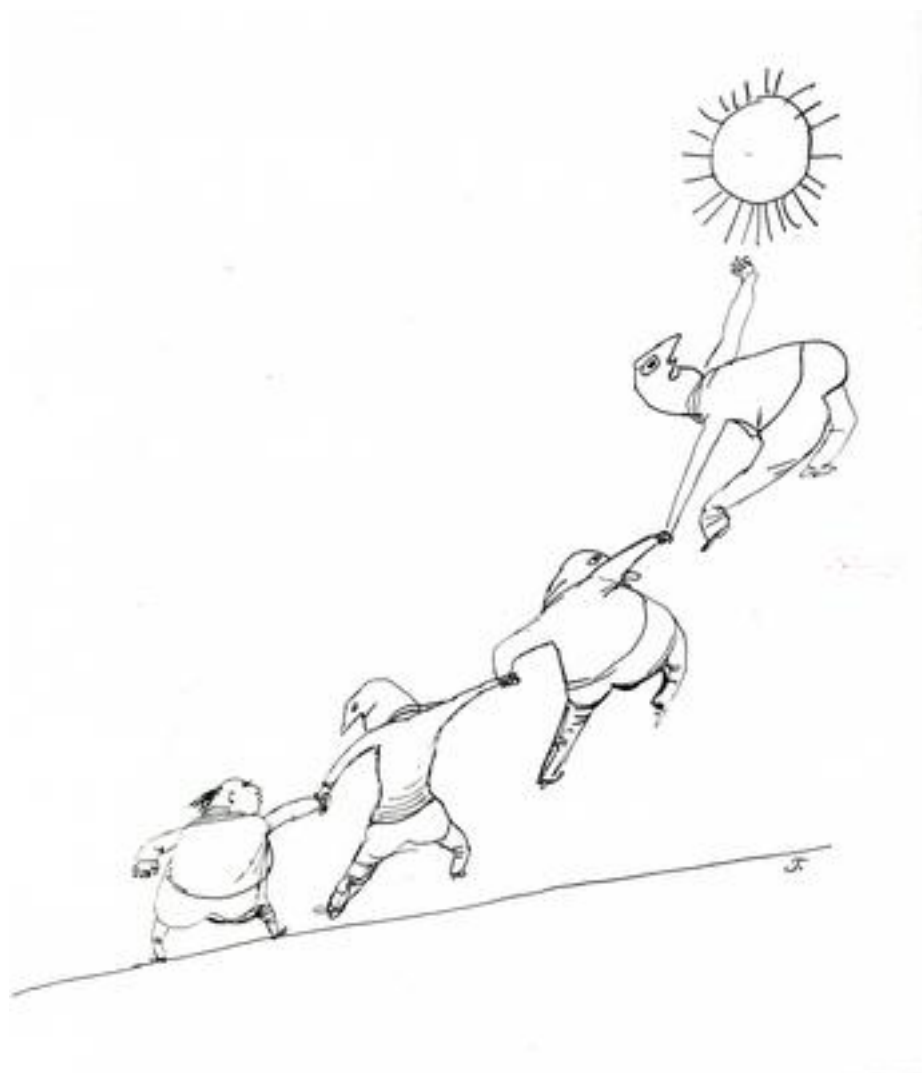
¹ a popular BBC serial radio drama broadcast each weekday afternoon between 1948 and 1969.

This was a talk that Franciszka Themerson gave at Gaberbocchus Common Room on 28 November 1957. Its title then was 'Twelve Living Eyes In My Father's Studio'.

It was first published as 'Bi-Abstract Pictures' in *Art News and Review*, vol.X, no.16, 30 August 1958, pp.6-7

Then in Nicholas Wadley, ed. *The Drawings of Franciszka Themerson*, Gaberbocchus Press, 1991, pp.20-31

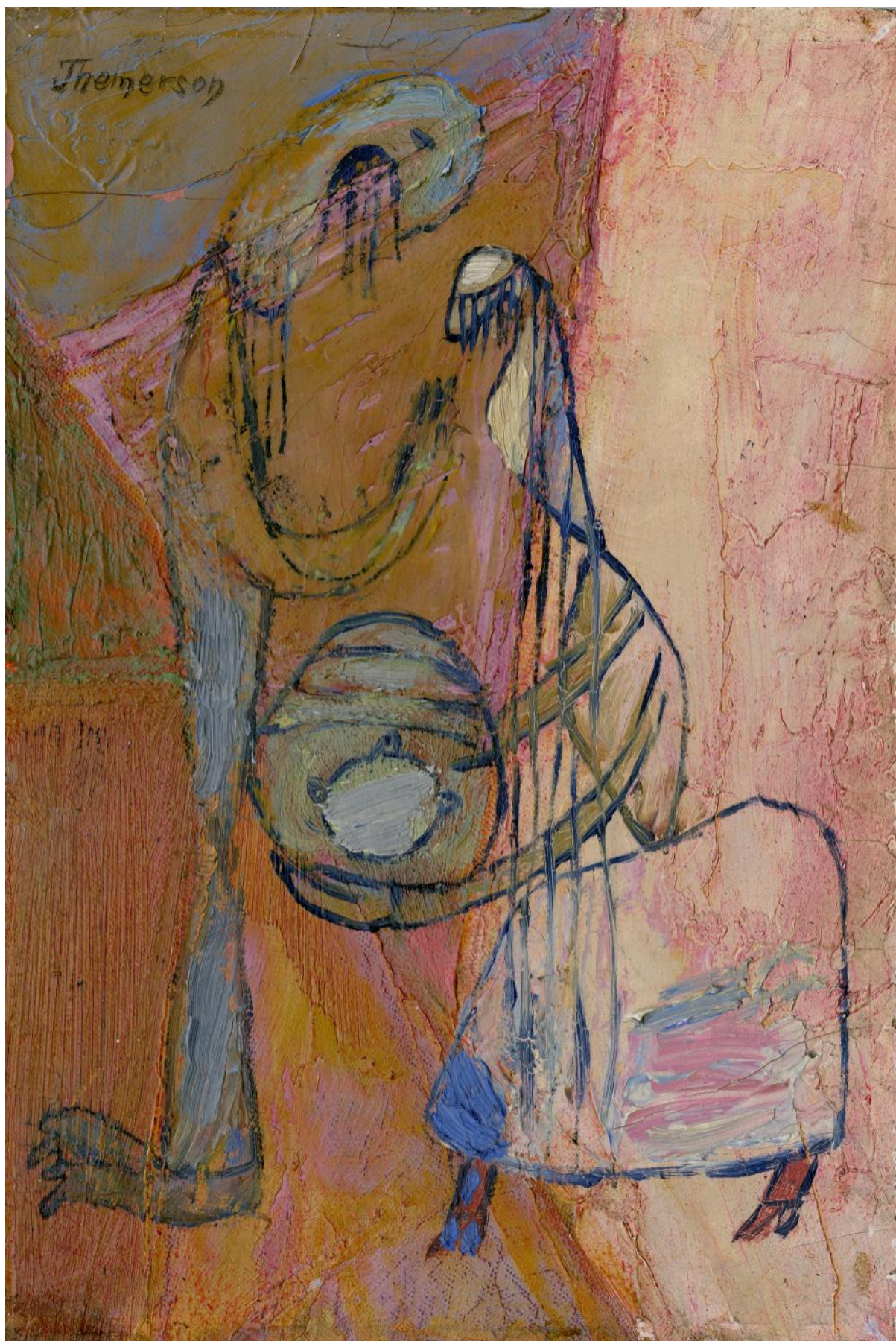
also as 'Obrazy bi-abstrakcyjne' in translation by Klara Kopcińska, in the catalogue of *Festiwal Świat według Themersonów*, Gdańsk, 1993, pp.21-24



Franciszka Themerson

(1907 - 1988)

exhibition of paintings and drawings



Composition (the gift), c. 1949, oil on board 23 x 15



Emportez-moi sans me briser, 1952, oil on canvas, 62 x 75
formerly collection of Barbara Wright



Gemmae, 1963, oil on canvas, 152 x 122



Gathering image, 1962, oil on canvas, 153 x 122



Gigantic head, 1959, oil and metallic paint on canvas, 61 x 51



New presence, 1968, acrylic on unprimed canvas, 63.5 x 76



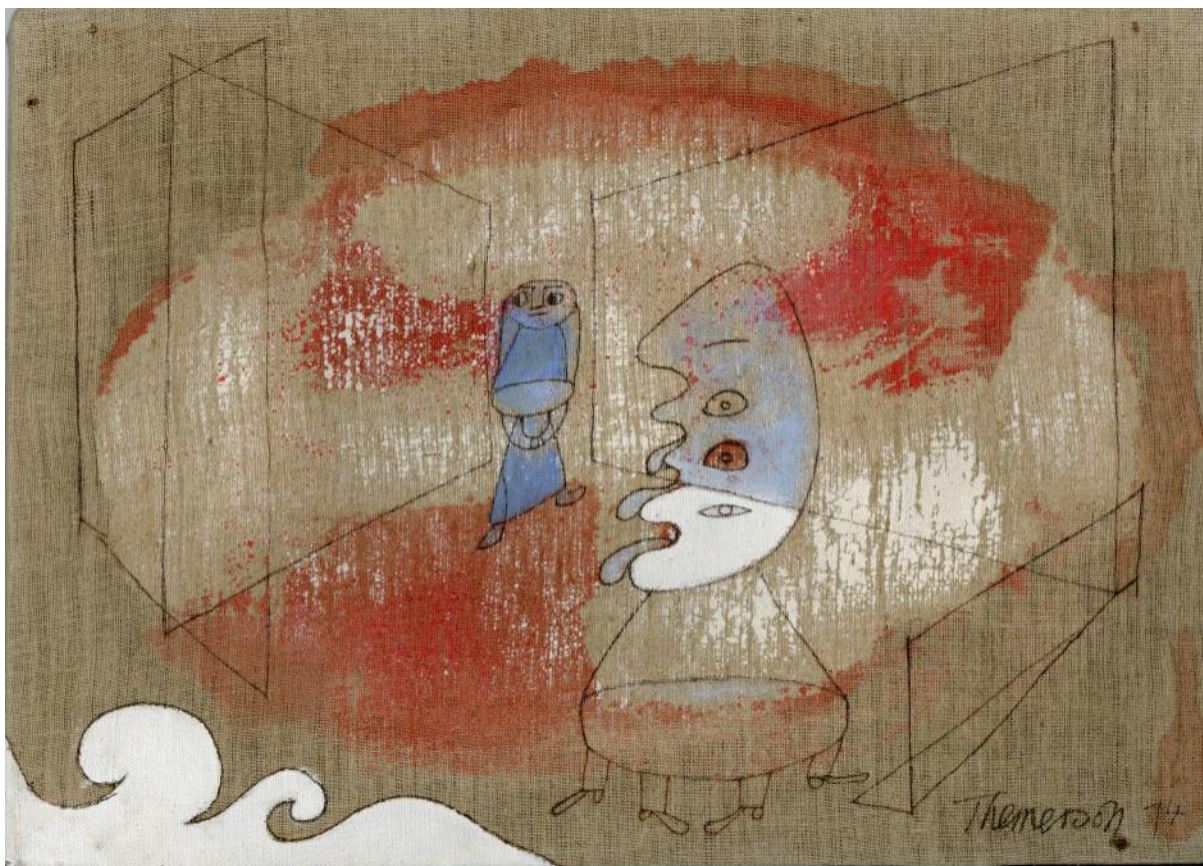
A person I know, 1972, oil on canvas, 75 x 63



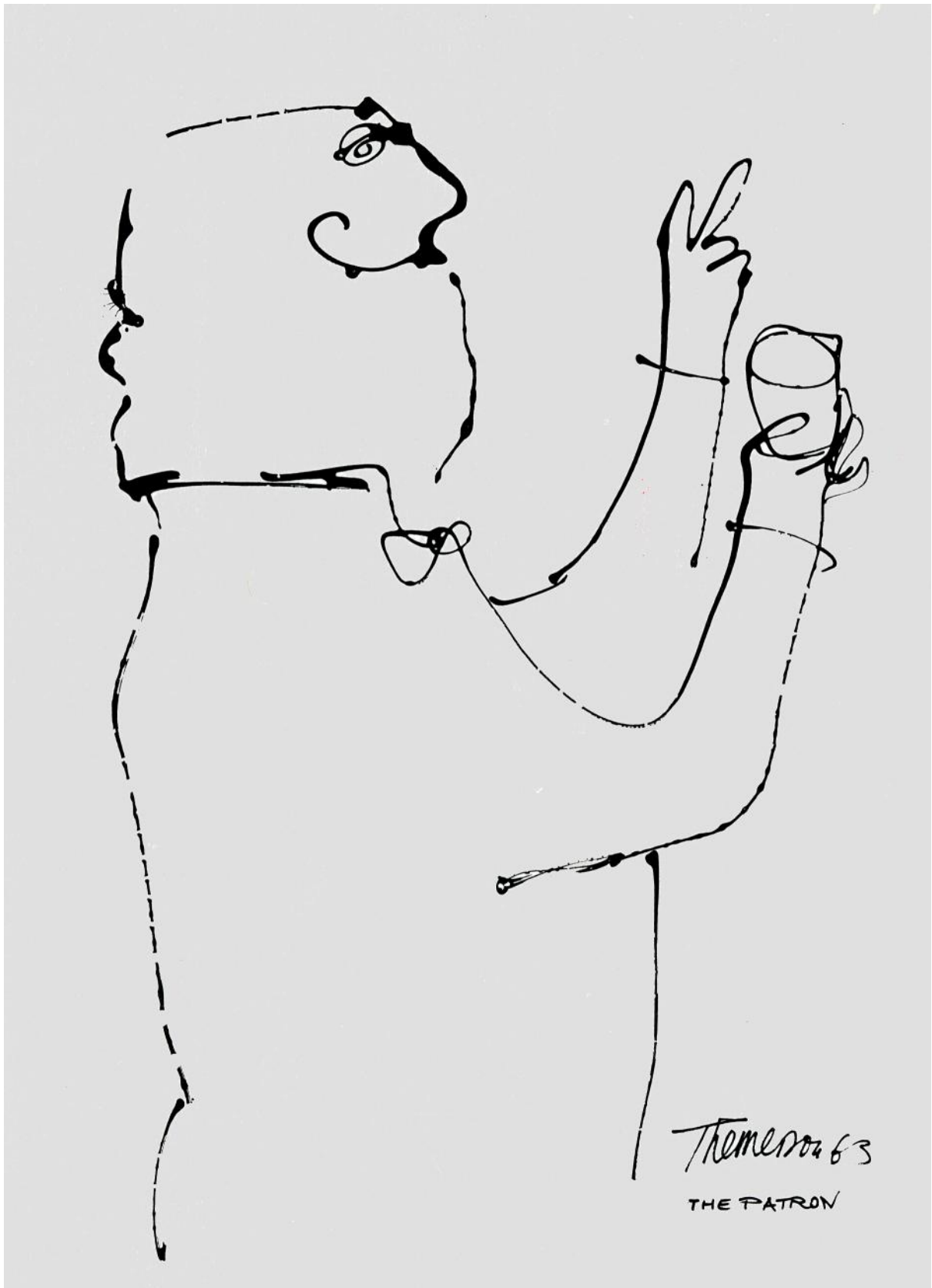
Multifigure, black and red, 1952, acrylic on canvas, 132 x 99



Dilemma, 1974, pen, acrylic on unprimed canvas, 25.5 x 25.5



Two figures in an interior, 1974, Pen, acrylic on unprimed canvas, 25 x 35



The patron, 1963, pen and ink, 63 x 46



The drinker, 1963, pen and ink, 65 x 49.9



Party games, 1963, pen and ink, 23.5 x 35.5
from the series 'Traces of Living'



Why are you angry?, 1977, ink and coloured crayons, 52 x 63.5

Selected exhibitions

1940s	contributes to group shows of the London Group, A.I.A. – and at Gimpel Fils, the Redfern Gallery, London	1981-82	<i>Stefan and Franciszka Themerson, Poszukiwania Wizualne / Visual Researches</i> – Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź; Galeria Zachęta, Warsaw; Muzeum Narodowe, Wrocław
1951	first one man show – Watergate Theatre Club, London	1983	<i>Presences Polonaises, l'art vivant autour du Musée de Łódź</i> – Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
1956	<i>Les Editions de Gaberbocchus</i> – La Hune bookshop, Paris	1984	<i>Constructivism in Poland 1923 to 1936</i> – Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge
1957	one man show – Gallery One, London	1988	death of Franciszka Themerson, in London
1959	one man show – Gallery One, London	1989	<i>Minnesutställning: Themersons, Stefan and Franciszka</i> – Marionetteatern, Stockholm
1963	<i>Franciszka Themerson – a retrospective exhibition (1943-63)</i> – Drian Galleries, London	1990-91	<i>Franciszka Themerson – Stefan Themerson, from the collection of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź</i> – Galeria Stara, Lublin
1964	Franciszka Themerson retrospective exhibition – Galeria Zachęta, Warsaw <i>Franciszka Themerson Och Kung Ubu</i> – Konstfrämjandet Galleriet, Stockholm	1991	<i>The Drawings of Franciszka Themerson</i> (retrospective exhibition of drawings) – Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg
1965	<i>Franciszka Themerson: drawings</i> – Marjorie Parr Gallery, London	1992	<i>Franciszka Themerson, Drawings</i> – Gardner Centre, University of Sussex, Falmer
1966	One man show – New Gallery, Belfast	1993	<i>Franciszka Themerson, Figures in Space</i> – Redfern Gallery, London <i>Franciszka Themerson: Designs for the Theatre</i> – Olivier Foyer, Royal National Theatre, London <i>Lines from Life, The Art of Franciszka Themerson</i> – Foyer Galleries, Royal Festival Hall, London <i>The Themersons and the Gaberbocchus Press</i> – an
1968	<i>I Musici di Franciszka Themerson</i> (drawings) – Il Vicolo Galleria d'Arte, Genoa Franciszka Themerson; one-man show – Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh		
1975	<i>Franciszka Themerson – it all depends on the point of view.</i> retrospective exhibition – Whitechapel Art Gallery, London		
1977-78	<i>Franciszka Themerson: paintings, drawings and theatre design</i> – Gruenebaum Gallery, New York		

- Experiment in Publishing 1948-1979* – La Boetie, New York
- Gaberbocchus Press* – Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall, London
- Oko i Ucho – książki, fotogramy, filmy Franciszki i Stefana Themersonów 1928-1988 (The Eye and the Ear – books, fotograms, films by Franciszka and Stefan Themerson 1928-1988)* – Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw
- Franciszka Themerson i teatr (Franciszka Themerson and the theatre)* – Galeria Pałacyk im. Tadeusza Kulisiewicza, Warsaw
- 1994 *The Themersons and the Gaberbocchus Press – an Experiment in Publishing 1948-1979* – bNO (beroepsvereniging Nederlandse Ontwerpers), Amsterdam
- 1996 *Gaberbocchus Press – un éditeur non conformiste 1948-1979* – Galerie Colbert, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
- Franciszka Themerson: Unposted Letters 1940-42* – Imperial War Museum, London
- Around and about UBU* – Three evenings to celebrate the centenary of *Ubu Roi*. The French Institute pays tribute to Alfred Jarry and to the Themersons who introduced Ubu to Britain in 1951
- 1998 *The Gaberbocchus Press of Stefan & Franciszka Themerson* – Galerie Signe, Heerlen
- Franciszka Themerson: Białe Obrazy / White paintings* – Galeria Kordegarda, Warsaw,
- 1999 *'Why is the mind in the head?'* – one-man show, Art First, London
- 2001 *'What shall I say?'*, one-man show – Art First, London
- 2012 *Themerson & Themerson: Two exhibitions* – Muzeum Mazowieckie, Płock
- 2013 *Franciszka Themerson, a European artist* – 12 Star Gallery, Europe House, London
- The Themersons & the Avant-Garde* – Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź
- Franciszka Themerson: Why is the mind in the head?* – GV Art gallery, London
- Franciszka Themerson and Ubu Roi* – Książnica Płocka, Płock,
- Franciszka Themerson, People and Lines* – Płocka Galeria Sztuki, Płock



Franciszka Themerson

Artist

Franciszka Themerson was born in Warsaw 1907, daughter of the painter Jakub Weinles. She moved to Paris in 1938 with her husband Stefan Themerson, and then, from 1940, lived and worked in London. She was primarily a painter, and always drew, but throughout her life also worked in several other fields of visual art.

From 1931, the year of their marriage, she collaborated with her husband, the writer Stefan Themerson, in experimental film-making; she illustrated his stories for children; and then in London, in 1948, they founded their inimitable avant-garde publishing house, Gaberbocchs Press. She was its art director, principal illustrator, and a source of energy at its heart. They ran the press until 1979 publishing 60 titles, many of them first English editions.

Franciszka and Stefan continued to collaborate intermittently as a way of life, but also pursued independent careers as artist and writer. She won recognition, too, for her theatre design in the 1960s and 1970s, with productions of Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, and of Brecht's Dreigroschenoper for the Stockholm Marionetteatern.

Her prolific mature oeuvre in painting and drawing was achieved against this busy background, building upon a new beginning in mid-1940s London.

During her lifetime, there were major exhibitions of Franciszka's painting and drawing in Britain, Europe and America. Exhibition and publication of her work has continued world-wide since her death in

Nick Wadley

Curator

Nick Wadley writes and draws. He was Head of Art History at Chelsea School of Art, London until 1985, has published on Gauguin and on 19th century French drawing, and has curated exhibitions, including *Kurt Schwitters in Exile* (London, 1981), *Franciszka Themerson Drawings* (Aalborg, Denmark, 1991), *Gaberbocchus Press* (Paris, 1996), *The Secret Life of Clothes* (Fukuoka, Japan, 1998), *UBU in UK* (London, 2000), *Franciszka Themerson, A European Artist* (London 2013). Since the 1990s his own drawings have been published in UK and USA, and exhibited in London, Buenos Aires, Tokyo and Warsaw. In collaboration with Sylvia Libedinsky, he made weekly cartoons for the Daily Telegraph and Financial Times, London, 1997-2001. He writes occasionally for the TLS; is a *Régent* of the *Collège de 'Pataphysique*. His latest book of drawings is *Man + Doctor* (Dalkey Archive, 2012).

He was an intimate friend of the Themersons during the last decade of their lives, is preparing the oeuvre catalogue of Franciszka's work, and has written and lectured extensively about each of them. He collaborates with Jasia Reichardt on looking after the Themerson Archive and estate.

www.nickwadley.net

Is a contemporary art gallery which aims to explore and acknowledge the inter-relationship between art and science, and how the areas cross over and inform one another. The gallery produces exhibitions and events that create a dialogue focused on how modern man interprets and understands the advances in both areas and how an overlap in the technological and the creative, the medical and the historical are paving the way for new aesthetic sensibilities to develop.

With thanks to

Jasia Reichardt

Nick Wadley

Isabel Chenciner

Maja Zeglin

Polish Cultural Institute

LUX

Further Reading List

List of Drawings

- 1991 Nicholas Wadley, 'Lines from life', in
*The Drawings of Franciszka
Themerson*, Nordjyllands
Kunstmuseum, Aalborg.
Gaberbochus, Amsterdam
- 2013 Pawel Polit, Roderick Mengham, Nick
Wadley, et al, in *The Themersons &
the Avant-Garde*, Muzeum Sztuki,
Łódź
- 2013 Jasia Reichardt (ed.), *Franciszka &
Stefan Themerson, Unposted Letters*,
Gaberbochus / De Harmonie,
Amsterdam

PAGE

Title Page

Flight, 1964, pen & ink, 52 x 63

5 **Am I standing on my head?**, 1949, pen
& ink 15 x 10

7 **The artist's table**, 1981, ink, chalk &
crayon, 66 x 54

9 **Bowler-hatted men, aristocratic lady**,
1946, pen & ink, 23.5 x 11

10 **On the way to the office II**, c.1949, pen
& ink, 10 x 25.5

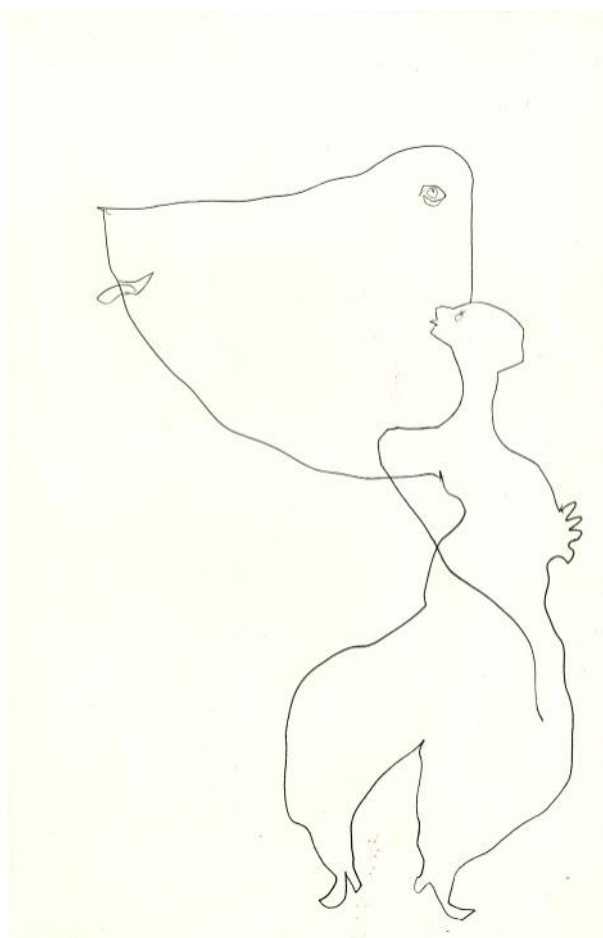
13 **Distance to the sun**, c.1948, pen & ink,
30.5 x 26.5

30 **Drum duet**, 1955, pen & ink, 12.5 x 11

33 **Attraction**, c. 1961, pen & ink, 30.5 x
20 (from the series 'Traces of Living')

Back Cover

Pianist with moustache, 1955, pen &
ink, 19 x 11.5



Franciszka Thermerson (1907–1988)

Why is the mind in the head?

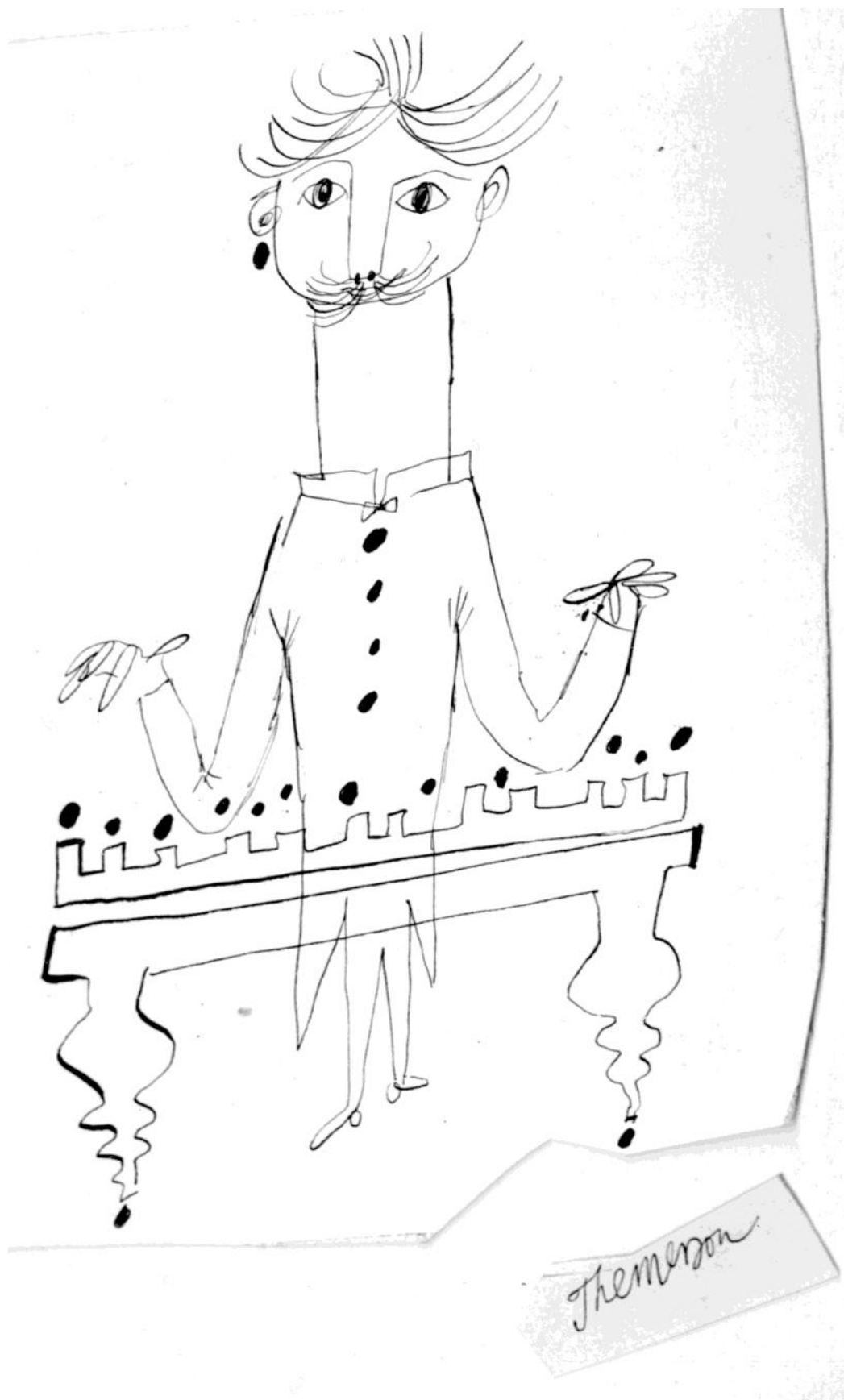
Published in 2013 by
GV Art gallery, London
49 Chiltern Street
London
W1U 6LY
www.gvart.co.uk

Designed by Charles Gollop

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ISBN 978-1-906-000-00-0



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