

Franciszka Themerson - painter, illustrator, set designer. Born in 1907 in Warsaw. She graduated from the Z. Kurmanowa in Warsaw. Between 1918 and 1923, she was a student at the Warsaw Academy of Music. In 1922, she exhibited her works for the first time at the Fourth Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture in the Warsaw Jewish Community. In 1924, she began to study painting and printmaking at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (under T. Pruszkowski and W. Skoczylas). She received her diploma with honours in 1931. In the same year, she married Stefan Themerson. From 1926, she illustrated children's books by such authors as J. Brzechwa, J. Tuwim, A. Świrszczyńska. In 1930, the first book written by her husband Stefan with her drawings *Historia Felka Strąka* was published. Since then, she illustrated all children's books written by her husband. Between the wars, she collaborated with the magazines "Płomyk", "Płomyczek" and "Słonko". Together with her husband, she created experimental films and photograms: *Apteka* (1931, lost), *Europa* (1932), *Drobiazg melodyjny* (1933), *Zwarcie* (1935, lost) with music by W. Lutosławski, *Przygoda człowieka poczciwego* (there will be no hole in the sky if you go tyłem) (1937) with music by S. Kisielewski, *Calling Mr Smith* (1943) and *The Eye and the Ear* (1944/1945), based on a song by K. Szymanowski with words by J. Tuwim. In 1938, the Themersons left the country and moved to Paris, where the outbreak of World War II found them. From 1941, she worked in the Cartographic Team of the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish Government in London. In 1948, she and her husband founded the Gaberbocchus Press publishing house. Franciszka was the artistic director of the publishing house and did the illustrations for most of the books printed there. From 1957 to 1959, in parallel with the publishing work, there was a so-called Common Room in the premises of the publishing house, a salon that brought together writers, artists, philosophers and critics. In its 31 years of operation, Gaberbocchus Press published some 60 books, such as the first British editions of *Jare's Ubu Roi* (1951), *Russell's The Good Citizen's Alphabet* (1953) and *Queneau's Exercise in Style* (1958). The publisher also published works by writers of the British avant-garde: *Pol-Dives*, *Eugene Walter*, *Stevie Smith*. Gaberbocchus Press books came out in five series: *General*, *Limited Edition*, *Juveniles*, *Black Series*, *The First Dozen*. The most flagship series was the *Black Series* (1954-1957), which published, among others: *J. C. Russell Abandon Spa Hot* (1954), *F. Themerson The Way it Walks* (1954), *C. H. Sisson Versions and Perversions of Heine* (1955), *Pol-Dives The Song of Wright Misery - Le Poème de la misère claire* (1955), *P. Fetherston Day Off* (1955), *S. Themerson factor T* (1956), *A. Stern A Metaphysical Reverie* (1956) and *B. J. Huddleston A Line in Time* (1957). In 1979 the publishing house Gaberbocchus Press was taken over (at the request of the owners) by *Uitgeverij De Harmonie*, a Dutch independent publishing house founded by *Jaco Groot*. After the war, Françoise turned her attention mainly to painting and printmaking, but also to set design. In 1951, her first solo exhibition takes place at the *Water Theatre Club* in London and in 1957 another, at *Gallery One*. In 1963, the *Drian Gallery* held her first retrospective exhibition of her work from 1943 to 1963, followed a year later by a retrospective at *Warsaw's Zachęta Gallery*. In 1969, she published a collection of drawings, *Traces of Living*. Franciszka Themerson was also involved in stage design, designing costumes and masks. In 1952 she designed the masks for *King Ubu* (ICA), and in 1964 she designed the set and costumes for a performance of this play in Stockholm (in 1966 she received the *Gold Medal* for these at the *First International Triennial of Theatre Scenography* in Yugoslavia). In 1967, *Brecht's Threepenny Opera* premiered in Stockholm, for which she designed the sets, figures, masks and costumes. In 1951 she was appointed a member of the *Society of Industrial Artists and Designers*. From 1963 to 1968 she taught in the Departments of *Graphic Design*, *Theatre Design* and *Fine Art* at the *Central School of Art*, *Wimbledon School of art* and *Bath Academy of Art*. In 1976 she became an honorary member of the *Union Internationale de la Marionette*. In 1987 she was awarded the *Ordre de la Grande Gidouille de la Collège de Pataphysique*. She died in 1988 in London.

The works on show are a gift from Halima Nałęcz and a deposit from TP&AE