

FELIX & SPEAR

Modern British and Contemporary Art

Josef Herman (1911-2000)

A Private Collection of 17 drawings

14 - 28 October 2017

Tues-Fri 10.30-18.00

Sat 11.00-15.00

We are pleased to be exhibiting 17 drawings by Josef Herman, an important 20th century Modern British artist. The drawings have an excellent exhibition history and are primarily from the 1940's and 1950's with a few later additions. The collection is available to purchase, please contact Felix & Spear Gallery for further details.

Josef Herman OBE (1911-2000) was a highly regarded Polish-British realist painter who influenced contemporary art, particularly in the UK. His work often had subjects of workers and was inherently political. He was among more than a generation of eastern European Jewish artists who emigrated to escape persecution and worked abroad. For eleven years he lived in South Wales.

Herman was born in Warsaw, Poland into a Jewish family, on 3 January 1911. He attended the Warsaw School of Art for two years before working briefly as a graphic artist.

In 1938 at the age of 27, Herman left Poland for Brussels to escape anti-Semitism. He was introduced to many of the prominent artists then working in the city. After the beginning of World War II and the German invasion of Belgium, he escaped to France and then to Great Britain. He first lived in Glasgow before moving to London for a time.

Herman's style was bold and distinctive, involving strong shapes with minimal detail. Herman studied working people as the subjects of his art, including grape pickers, fishermen and, most notably, coal miners. The latter became a particular interest for Herman during the eleven years that he lived in Ystradgynlais, a mining community in South Wales, beginning in 1944. He became part of the community, where he was fondly nicknamed "Joe Bach". Among his creative collaborators and friends in Wales was the artist Will Roberts, who lived in Neath.

When commissioned in 1951 to paint a mural for the Festival of Britain, Herman took coal miners as his subject. His work *Miners* (1951) showed six men resting above ground after their work. Herman said, "I think it is one of my key pictures and the most important one I did in Wales." The mural is held in the permanent collection of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, affiliated with the Swansea Museum.

Some of Herman's work was collected by the Davies sisters, British art patrons and collectors in Wales, as part of their 20th-century holdings. They bequeathed their joint collection of 260 works, particularly strong in Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings and sculptures, to the National Museum Wales in the mid-20th century, greatly expanding its range.

Leaving Wales in 1955 because his health was affected by the damp climate, Herman lived briefly in Spain and then in London. All the same, he won the Gold Medal for Fine Art at the 1962 Wales National Eisteddfod.

In 1955 he moved to Suffolk with his partner, Nini Ettlinger, whom he married in 1961. The tragic death of their young daughter prompted them to move away and from 1972 Herman lived in West London. In 1981 Herman was awarded an OBE for services to British Art and was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1990. He died in February 2000.

List of works:

1. Head of a miner, 45 x 38 cm, pen and wash
2. Memory of Peasants, Poland, 39.5 x 43 cm, pen and wash
3. Hearing the Air Raid Siren, 40 x 45 cm, pencil and pen and wash
4. Urban River Landscape, 41.5 x 46 cm, pen and wash
5. Huddled Figures with Children, 41.5 x 47.5 cm, pen and wash
6. Couple with an Infant, 40.5 x 44.5 cm, pen and wash
7. A miner and his family, 43 x 47.5 cm, pen and wash
8. A Fisherman, 45 x 39 cm, pen and wash
9. Mother and Child seated, 43.5 x 38 cm, pen and wash
10. Mother and Child Standing, 43.5 x 37.5 cm, pen and wash
11. Memory of Poland, 40 x 34 cm, pen and wash
12. Two Dancers, 38.5 x 42.5 cm, pen and wash and pencil
13. Study of a Dancer, 37 x 41 cm, pencil
14. The Bow, 30.5 x 35 cm, pencil
15. Dancers, 41 x 45 cm, pen and wash and watercolour
16. Three men round a table, 39 x 44.5 cm, pen and wash
17. The Village Square, 39.5 x 45.5 cm, pen and wash

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Tues-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 11-3

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