

## JOSEF HERMAN JOURNEY

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Flowers Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of the work of Josef Herman as part of the nationwide *Insiders/Outsiders* arts festival. Josef Herman was renowned for capturing the essence of the British working classes, making a distinct contribution to the artistic scene in Britain from his arrival in 1940. His transcendent images of coal miners, fishermen and farm workers from Wales, Scotland and Suffolk represented the dignity of ordinary people and a reverence for the quiet beauty in everyday life.

Josef Herman was born in 1911 in Warsaw, where he grew up in a predominantly Jewish working class neighbourhood. He moved to Brussels in 1938 to escape the oppressive political conditions in Poland and fled to France and then Britain in 1940, remaining in the UK for the rest of his life.

The exhibition *Journey* is the first major exhibition of Herman's work since 2011. It includes key works drawn from across 50 years of Herman's career, from 1938 to the 1980s, including many rarely seen paintings from private collections. The wide scope of work explores his radical shift of style and subject from the social focus of paintings made in Brussels, Glasgow and beyond to the more solitary, contemplative world represented in later years.



*The Dream*, 1942, oil on canvas

The exhibition begins with Herman's experience of his new life in Brussels in *The Gamblers*, a convivial genre scene representing the comparative freedom away from Poland. It continues with paintings produced in Glasgow following his arrival in 1940, featuring dreams and memories of family and the Jewish community that he left behind. Exuberant social gatherings such as *Jews Dancing* are punctuated by haunting images of refugees and pogroms, such as *Mother and Child Fleeing*, and the terrifying figure of *The Transit Officer*, a design for the costumes of the ballet *We Are This Land: A Russian Masque*. The ink drawing *Gossiping in Warsaw* is one of the last examples of this period, taken from *Memory of Memories*, a visual account of his childhood.

In 1942, Herman received the news that his entire family had been killed, marking a final end to his paintings of family or Jewish life in Warsaw from 1943. From this time onwards, Herman's paintings focused on a more solemn, introspective imagery. In 1944, Herman moved to South Wales, where he found new subject matter painting working men and women, often represented as anonymous characters with no distinguishing features. Solitary figures such as *Standing Miner* reflect the dignity of the workers, often represented at the end of the long and arduous working day. He referred to the archetypal miner as "a walking monument to labour". His palette was transformed with radiant copper skies and glowing sunsets, elevating the ordinary worker's life with a sense of drama and mystery. Later paintings include small domestic groups such as *Fisherman with Family* and *Farmer with Family*. Their combination of an earthy palette with the warmth of late evening sun or poignant twilight tones reflects Herman's interest in looking beyond their particular stories to suggest a universally shared humanity.

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes: [Hannah@flowersgallery.com](mailto:Hannah@flowersgallery.com) / 020 7920 7777.



## ABOUT JOSEF HERMAN (RA, OBE)

Josef Herman (1911-2000) was born in Warsaw and studied at Warsaw School of Art and Decoration (1930 - 31). Herman left Poland for Brussels in 1938, fled to Paris and then to Britain in 1940, arriving in Glasgow. In 1943 he moved to London, where he exhibited with L S Lowry, moving again in 1944 to the Welsh mining village of Ystradgynlais, where the local mining community would inspire his subsequent paintings. Throughout his life he travelled extensively, and his work has been shown in over 250 exhibitions across five continents, including the Festival of Britain exhibition on London's South Bank in 1951; Camden Arts Centre; Geffrye Museum; and Whitechapel Gallery, London; National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Ernst Museum, Budapest; and the Jewish Museum, New York. His work is represented in many major collections including Tate; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; National Museum of Wales; Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal; National Gallery of Canada; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Wellington National Art Gallery, New Zealand; and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, amongst many others. Herman was awarded an OBE in 1981 for services to British art and was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1990.

## ABOUT *INSIDERS/OUTSIDERS* ARTS FESTIVAL

Insiders/Outsiders is a nationwide arts festival paying tribute to the indelible contribution of the artists, photographers, writers, architects, designers, actors, film-makers, dancers and musicians, as well as art historians, dealers and publishers, who in fleeing Nazi-dominated Europe in the 1930s so greatly enriched British culture. Running from March 2019 until March 2020, it comprises well over 100 exhibitions, concerts, performances, film screenings, walks, lectures, literary and educational events. <https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org>



Clockwise from top left: *Jews Dancing*, 1940, gouache on paper; *Miners*, 1968, oil on canvas; *Untitled*, 1985-86, oil on board; *Mother and Child Fleeing*, 1942, oil on canvas. All images (c) The Estate of Josef Herman, courtesy of Flowers Gallery.