

The Themersons were some of the most important vanguard artists of the XX century. However, even though their art is internationally recognized, their archive remains unexamined. The first aim of my project is a unique and systematic investigation of the specifics of one of the crucial archives of the Polish-British avant-gardes. I will describe both tactics: the pre-archivisation and throwing away documents of the Themersons, which have their consequences in the actual shape of the collection. The Themerson Archive, one of the biggest vanguard archives in Europe, was created in London (1989-2014) and subsequently transferred to the National Library of Poland in 2014. Apart from a few publications about the history of the archive or articles focused on particular documents this part of their heritage has not yet been the subject of specialised analyses.

The second aim is to analyse selected correspondence, which is the most important part of the whole collection. Out of nearly a thousand people with whom the Themersons have maintained writing contact, it is worthwhile to pay particular attention to the three corpora that constitute the fundamental source material of this project. Firstly, the wartime correspondence between the Themersons. Secondly, the documents shared by Stefan with Bertrand Russell. Thirdly, the correspondence collection created by Franciszka with Irena Grosz. I have selected these sources after seven years of meticulously reading the vast contents of the Themerson Archive for two reasons.

First, these manuscripts provide an unprecedented opportunity to illuminate the artists' own model of the avant-garde. Previous studies have been focused on both their individual and mutual artistic output. However, these studies do not examine the relationship between the Themersons' art and changes in avant-garde practices in Europe.

The second reason these corpora are unique is that each is characterised by the continuity of the exchange (they are not incidental papers), as well as the availability of documents produced by both sides of the correspondence (not only those received by the Themersons). In my research I will focus primarily on letters, postcards, correspondence drafts, as well as correspondence drawings and analyse them in the context of other autobiographical evidence (such as diaries or notes which were included by the authors in their correspondence narration). Selected artefacts are genealogically complex and vary as to their form. Only such varied and complete sources will be able to show us the Themersons' correspondence comprehensively.

Measurable results of my research will be: the first deep analysis of this archive published in the form of a monograph and one article published in an English journal. Presenting the results of my research at conferences abroad and in scientific articles will be of interest not only to Polish researchers, but also to those fluent in English (the majority of sources are bilingual).

The foundation of my methodology will be modern approaches intended for autobiographical heritage. An essential methodological establishment is the assumption that archival materials are not clear carriers of knowledge that undergo reconstruction, but always remain selective. I shall acknowledge that the interpretation of information included in personal documents and visual sources assumes that they be treated as "records of life writing". This approach allows the analysis of intimate written documents – correspondences, diaries, artistic notes etc. – as traces of human narration of experiences and subjective models of understanding events. The examination of sources assumes that they are treated as writing heritage, not as pieces of art. However, I assume that authors of correspondence use conventions inspired by literary and visual culture, which I will show in my analyses.