E.THORÉN

ESAIAS THORÉN







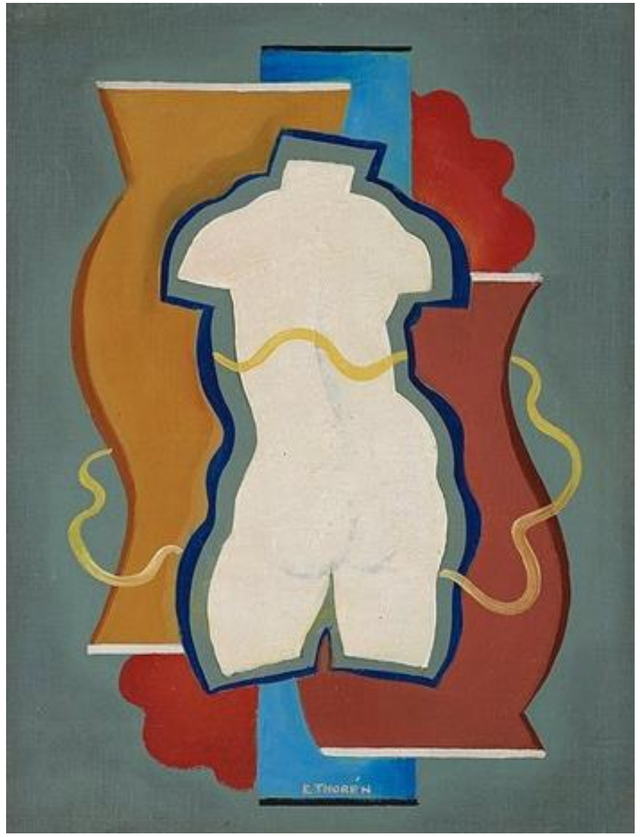








INTRODUCTION

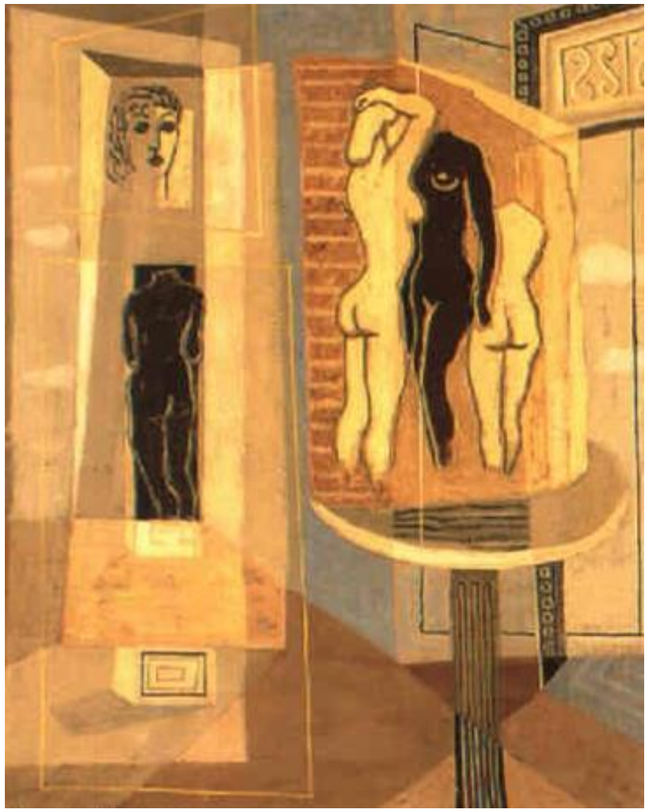


Torso, canvas laid on panel, 28 x 21.5 cm

Esaias Thorén (1901–1981) Esaias Thorén was born in Halmstad, Sweden, in 1901. His father, a carpenter and cabinetmaker, was also active in theatre and music. Thorén originally intended to pursue a musical career but abandoned this ambition around 1919 after encountering the work of the highly influential Swedish artist Gösta Adrian-Nilsson (GAN) who had championed a distinct late-stage meta-cubist style. During the early 1920s he worked in his father's workshop, producing wooden sculptures and reliefs in his spare time. In 1923 he met Sven Jonson, with whom he founded the group De Unga ("The Young"), under the tutelage of Axel Olson. The group held its first exhibition in Halmstad in 1924.

In 1925 Thorén enrolled at Carl Wilhelmsson's painting school in Stockholm. The following year he travelled to Paris with Jonson, studying under Otte Sköld. Despite being exposed to the new ideas of Surrealism as proclaimed by Andre Breton and the many iterations of modern expressions forged by innovative artists in Paris, having faced limited financial opportunities, the pair returned to Halmstad in 1927 and established Modern Reklam ("Modern Advertising"), a combined studio and painting school that soon became a significant meeting place for local artists and intellectuals.

Thorén met GAN and Stellan Mörner in 1928; the latter commissioned him to produce murals for Halmstad Castle, the governor's residence. In 1929 he co-founded the Halmstad Group (Halmstadgruppen) together with Waldemar Lorentzon, Axel and Erik Olson, Sven Jonson and Stellan Mörner. At this time Thorén worked in a post-Cubist idiom, before gradually turning towards Concrete Art, Purism and proto-Surrealism. In 1930 he contributed to the controversial Stockholm exhibition Art Concret, organised by Otto G. Carlsund, that included artists such as Piet Mondrian, Jean Arp, Amédée Ozenfant, Le Corbusier and Fernand Léger.



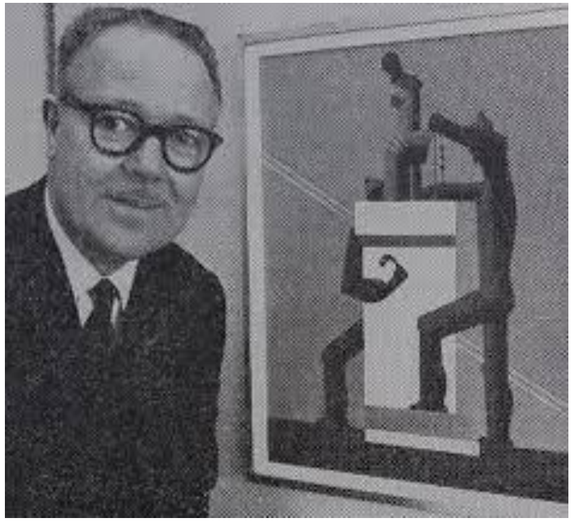
Skulpt"rens atelj„ 1949, Oil on Panel, 61 x 50 cm.

Thorén undertook studies in graphic arts at the Royal Art School in Stockholm in 1931 and, during the early 1930s, created a series of sculptural objects and reliefs influenced by GAN's cubo-futurism. By the mid-1930s he had aligned himself with the Surrealist direction pursued by his colleagues in the Halmstad Group. His Surrealist works from this period are characterised by symbolic content, dramatic staging and often strongly sculptural figures. He participated in Kubisme = Surrealisme in Copenhagen (1935), as well as in the international Surrealist exhibitions in London (1936, 1937) and Paris (1938).

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Thorén's surrealism was shaped by the tense political climate in Europe, but he chose to address this formally in his works, as supposed to literally. One can sense this in his treatment of illusory spaces that form architectural tensions, rather than physcosomatic ones as prescribed by Breton's manifesto, which put him at odds with some of the more dogmatically driven surrealists.

During the 1940s he was active in the Söndrum Colony alongside Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen, Elsa Thoresen and fellow members of the Halmstad Group, joining artists, poets and writers along the Halmstad coast. The 1950s brought a shift towards a more irreverent mode, with an emphasis on colour, shape and composition and less focus on narrative content. From the 1960s onwards, Thorén developed a pronounced interest in beach finds, marine motifs and fragmentary sculptural forms. He continued to work with a distinctly surreal and playful sensibility until his death in 1981.

BIOGRAPHY



Esaias Thorén in 1961 with a painting created from 1929

1901

1 Born in Halmstad, Sweden.
Thorén grew up in a cultural environment that later shaped his interest in art and modernist ideas.

1920s

2 Early Artistic Training
He explored painting seriously, studying modernist movements emerging across Europe and developing his foundational skills.

1929

3 Co-founds the Halmstad Group
Thorén joined other young artists to introduce modernism and Surrealist ideas to Sweden — a defining moment in his career.

1930s

4 European Influence & Style
Through travels and exhibitions, he absorbed Cubist and Surrealist concepts, refining the geometric, symbolic style he became known for.

1940s–1950s

5 Mature Modernist Period
Thorén produced some of his most recognized works, characterized by structured forms, dreamlike imagery, and strong visual identity.

1981

6 Passing & Lasting Legacy
He died in 1981, leaving behind a significant contribution to Scandinavian modernism and works now held in major museum collections.

THE HALMSTAD GROUP

The Halmstad Group (Halmstadgruppen) was a collective of six young Swedish artists who, beginning in the late 1920s, played a central role in bringing European modernism and Surrealist ideas into Sweden. Their work challenged the traditional, conservative Swedish art environment of the time.



Foto: Halmstadgruppen, 1934. Foto: Zenta

Their Role in Modern Swedish Art

• They introduced new visual languages—Cubism, Surrealism, geometric abstraction—at a time when these movements were still unfamiliar to Swedish audiences.
• The group emphasized international exchange, traveling to Europe to study modernist trends and exhibiting with progressive artists abroad.
• They became one of the most influential forces in Scandinavian modern art of the 20th century.



The Halmstad Group painted by group member Stellan Mörner

Esaias Thorén's Contribution

• Thorén was one of the founding members and a key creative voice.
• His combination of structured geometry and poetic Surrealist imagery shaped the group's identity.
• He helped position the group as a bridge between Scandinavian art and broader European avant-garde movements.

ARTISTIC STYLE & THEMES

Main Characteristics of Style

• Clear, geometric compositions
• Simplified forms with strong structural balance
• Surrealist undertones that create a dreamlike, quiet atmosphere
• Use of precise outlines and controlled color palettes



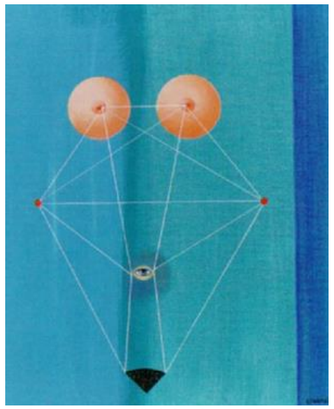
Geometrisk komposition, oil on panel, 38 x 46 cm

Recurring Motifs

• Architectural forms
• Windows, doors, and open spaces (symbolic “passages”)
• Quiet landscapes
• Figures reduced to simple shapes, sometimes abstracted



Black shapes on the beach, 1973, oil and mixed media on board, 50 x 61 cm.



Linjer som förbinder, 1979, Oil on Panel, 60 x 49 cm.

Evolution of Artistic Approach

Early period:
– Influenced by Cubism and early experiments in abstraction
– Exploration of spatial structure and fragmented forms



”Komposition V”, Oil on panel, 31 x 41 cm

Mature period:
– Shift toward cleaner geometry and symbolic imagery
– Increased clarity, harmony, and visual calm
– Surrealist influence became subtle rather than overt



Fragment vid Havet, 1980, oil on panel, 61 x 50 cm.

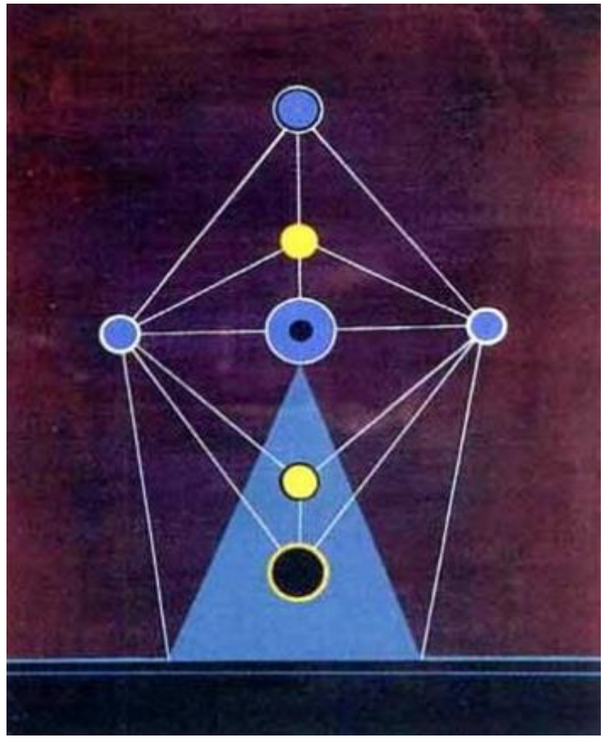
Connection to European Modernism

Thorén’s work reflects the major movements shaping early 20th-century art:
– Cubism: geometric simplification, spatial experiments
– Surrealism: dreamlike symbolism, internal psychological space
– Constructivism/abstraction: emphasis on form, structure, and balance

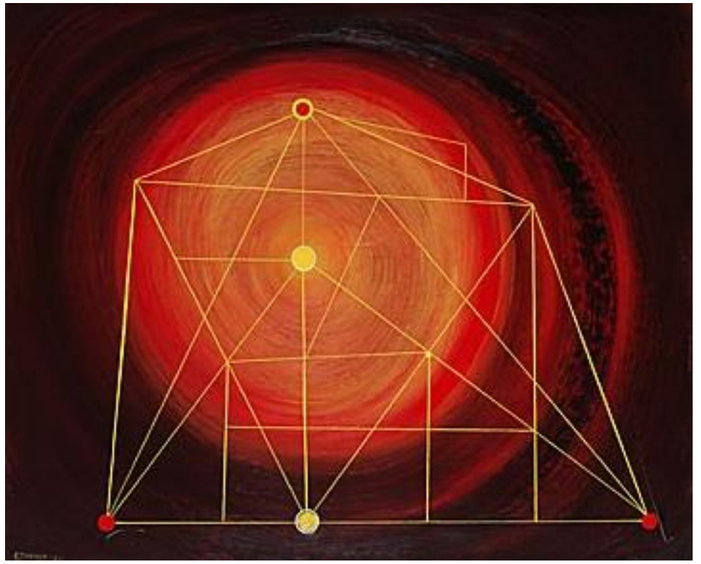
WORKS



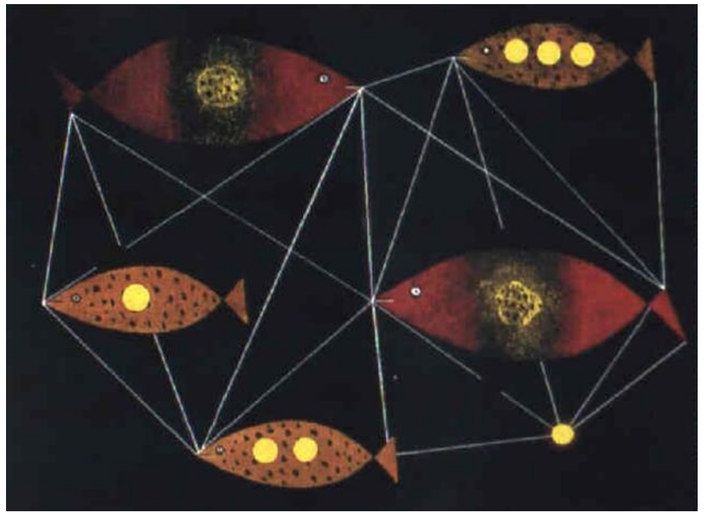
Geometrisk komposition I, oil on panel, 55 x 45.5 cm.



Geometrisk komposition, 1980, Oil on Cardboard, 50 x 38 cm.



Komposition, 1980, oil on panel, 50 x 61 cm



Fiskstim, 1980, Oil on Panel, 54 x 65 cm

WORKS



”Röd fanfar”, 1934, Oil on panel, 73 x 60 cm



Surrealistiskt stilleben, oil on panel, 49 x 60 cm



Surrealistisk komposition, Oil on panel, 73 x 92 cm.



Tidens ansikte, 1972, Oil on panel, 49 x 60.5 cm.

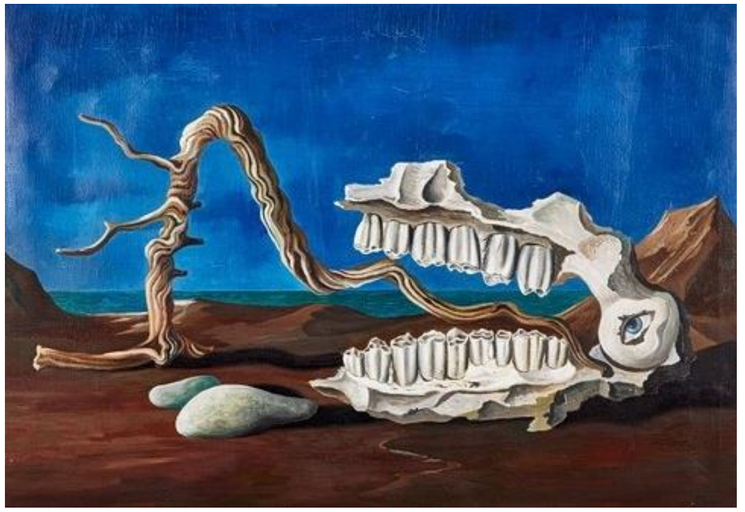
WORKS



Den vita hästen, 1938, oil on canvas, 81 x 60.5 cm



Katedralklippan, oil on panel, 90.5 x 70 cm



Urtid, 1939, oil on canvas, 63 x 92 cm



Nature Morte, Painting on canvas, 43 x 64 cm

NOTES

Thorén’s place in modern art

An Important Scandinavian Modernist

Thorén is regarded as one of Sweden’s key 20th-century modernists due to his role in introducing modernist visual language to Swedish art.

Influence on Later Artists

• His geometric approach inspired generations of Swedish painters exploring structure and abstraction.
• The Halmstad Group became a reference point for artists interested in Surrealism in Nordic contexts.

Exhibition Highlights

• Major group and solo exhibitions across Sweden during the mid-20th century
• Retrospectives in Swedish museums that emphasize his importance in shaping modern art history
• Continuous representation in exhibitions on Scandinavian modernism

Presence in Public Institutions

Works by Thorén are held in:
• Hallands Konstmuseum
• Nationalmuseum (Sweden)
• Regional cultural museums across Sweden
These holdings confirm his historical and cultural significance.



Untitled, Oil on canvas, 20.5 x 45 cm



Surrealistiskt strandmotiv, oil on panel, 22 x 41.5 cm

MARKET & COLLECTING



Esaias Thorén, "Blodsfåglar", 1936

HOW COLLECTORS VIEW THORÉN'S WORK

Thoren's paintings are sought after for their balance of clarity, geometry, and quiet emotional depth. They appeal to collectors seeking Scandinavian modernism with authentic visual personality.

Characteristics Valued by Collectors

Collectors value Thorén's clean geometric structure, the quiet Surrealist atmosphere present in many of his works, and the architectural or symbolic themes that appear throughout his mature period. His paintings are also frequently noted for their good condition and reliable, museum-level provenance, which adds to their appeal on the secondary market.

Position in the Nordic Modernist Market

Thorén's market has been historically steady, but is now rapidly growing, supported by institutional recognition. As global interest in Scandinavian modern art expands, adding new scholarship in accessible languages, collectors increasingly look at The Halmstad Group as a significant modernist movement where important works can still be collected relatively affordably in comparison to more developed markets for Continental surrealist artists such as René Magritte, Joan Miró, Paul Delvaux, Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí.

Thorén's auction market has until recently been mostly active around the Scandinavian countries with his current auction record standing at USD $265.000.00 but where works can still be acquired for as little as $5000.00 and up. Recent presentations through carefully curated exhibitions in Paris and at prestigious art fairs such as Art Basel Paris, point to an exciting new paradigm shift for the artists legacy and market.

Appeal for New Collectors

Thorén's works fit naturally into minimalist and contemporary interiors, making them easy choices for new buyers. Their themes of space, structure, and introspection translate well across cultures, giving the paintings broad accessibility.