

Profile . . .

★ In a long dark studio, peopled by the dynamic creations of a virile sculptor, stands a giant statue of a man in angry pain. In its wild power, the statue silences to awe the newcomer. The rent garments and fiery disappointment of this bronze Moses are as stern an admonition to-day as in the year Moses descended from Mount Sinai. The creator of this giant is Herman Wald.

Herman Wald's first chosen medium of art was music, but he was never able to study it, because his parents had planned a different career for him. They wanted him to become a Rabbi, and would not finance his musical study. But Herman found that he could study sculpture at the Academy in Hungary (his homeland) on his own efforts. He joined synagogue choirs and opera choruses to earn a living, which enabled him to carry on with his studies, and "sang his way" to Budapest and other European centres to continue his learning.

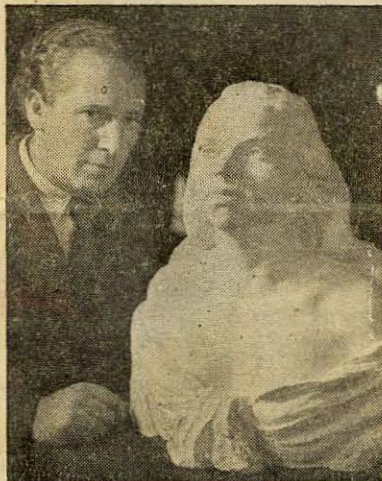
In Vienna he studied under the famous Honaj. The great artist saw a big future ahead for young Herman, but this did not stop him from using his promising pupil as a general cleaning hand . . . "to prepare the floor for future movements," he would say. Mr. Wald wandered all over Europe. Wherever there was a centre of art to which he could go to extend his knowledge and technique, he went. In Germany he worked at film studios, doing theatre decorations to supplement his income, but mostly his voice made his way for him. He went to London, to Paris, to Rome.

In London he arrived at a time when people were beginning to become art-conscious. It was not the temporary interest that arose in some countries during war, but the genuine change that comes with the change of a social order. There Mr. Wald did portraits of personalities and he began work on a statue three times life size. It was a significant work for him. Being too poor to afford materials, he dug fresh clay from the garden of his house. By the time he had completed his huge statue, earthworms were crawling gaily in and out of its eyes and nose, its ears and fingers.

I asked Herman Wald, in an interview with him at his studio the other day, what he thought of the artist in politics. "The world would be better balanced," he replied, "if artists took to politics and politicians learned about art." Even in the field of propaganda, as long as things were done in an acceptable way, the artist had his contribution to make. This was one of the sacrifices that had to be

THE Human Angle

By VIDA



Herman Wald, with his portrait bust of Molly Raisin. "Cutting against the grain in the arts," writes the sculptor, in a book of his aphorisms, "is like cutting into stone the commandment 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images.'"

made by artists in a time of transition—individuality had to be temporarily sacrificed for the common good, and when that was done there would be more time than ever for the real kind of individuality. ("Not," he said, "the individuality as expressed by odd clothing and waist-length hair.")

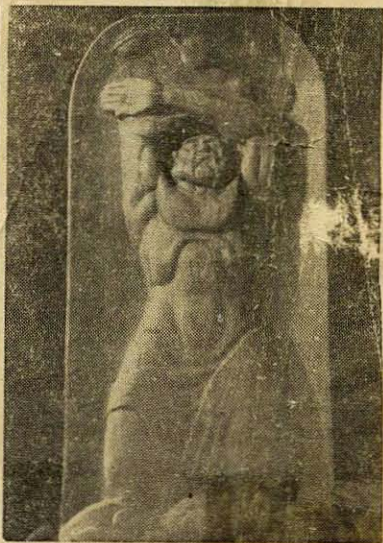
By 1937 Herman Wald had become tired of the decadence of Europe. He wanted to see new continents, and his brother, Rabbi Wald, of East London, already in South Africa, persuaded him to come here. He has been here ever since, continuing quietly with his work, even during five years of army service. Perhaps this is not the best country for a sculptor of the stature of Herman Wald to come to. His Moses, for instance, has

not yet been purchased by the Jewish community for whom it has such a significance. More non-Jews than Jews have asked to see it and have understood its meaning. But he goes on producing his dynamic works: earthy women, fallen soldiers, delicately poised angels. And even his smallest works are so vested with dynamic quality that they have the appearance of great size.

The medium Herman himself prefers is wood, and I have reproduced on this page his latest study in wood, as well as his portrait bust of Molly Raisin—a portrait that almost breathes and moves.

Mr. Wald's work is a synthesis between two schools—between form for form's sake and the symbolic, or literary conception—"I believe in a combination of form and symbol," he says.

I cannot help reflecting here that



"BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH." Herman Wald's beautiful carving, showing Homo Sapiens on the eve of his conquest of the cosmic powers, reaching for the planets, but with feet still earthbound. . . .

Herman Wald is not the only significant artist in this country who suffers from the average South African's ignorance in matters of sculpture. The public buys doubtful sculptural reproductions and inferior "originals" as long as they are imported, and not the local article—while our own good sculptors, whose work certainly is up to the standard of the best "imports," go unpatronised.