

HERMAN WALD'S SCULPTURE LIVES ON . . .

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A SCULPTOR is normally an artist who reaches his or her peak late in life. Herman Wald was a Jewish sculptor originally from Hungary who came to bestride South African sculpture like one of the colossuses he himself moulded for a living, yet he died tragically, at the relatively early age of 64, while in Salisbury, Rhodesia to fulfil a commission from the Standard Bank there.

If you've ever gazed in admiration at sculptures like the eighteen leaping impala outside Johannesburg city hall, the 'Unity is Strength' creation which stands in

front of the United Building Society Towers in Troye Street or the twice-life size figure 'Kria' which looms in the forefront of the Witwatersrand Jewish Aged Home, then it may be of interest to relate that Herman Wald was responsible for all of these works, and many more besides.

Born in Hungary on July 7, 1906, Herman Wald graduated from the Hungarian National Academy of Art in 1928 with distinction, having persuaded his Orthodox family that his talent justified the departure from family tradition, which would have obligated him to become a cantor. (The seven previous generations of his family were all Rabbis.)

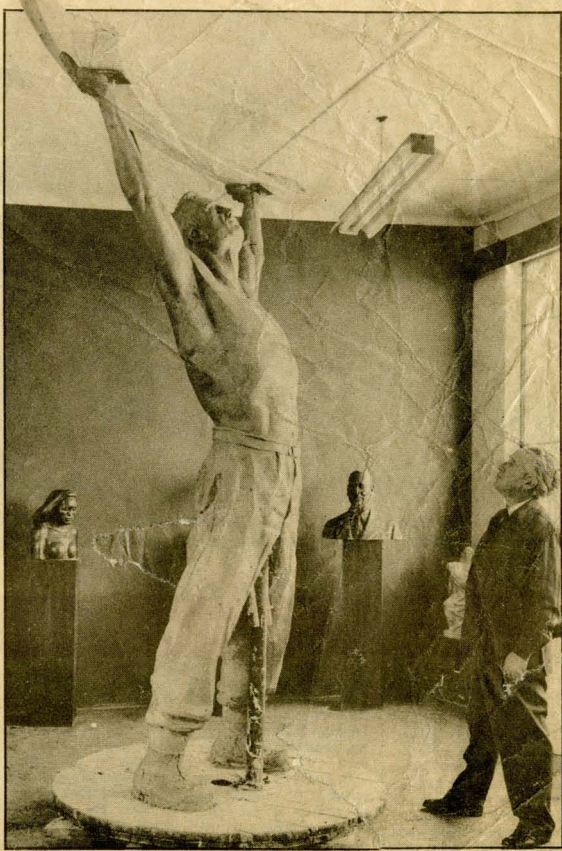
Stints in Vienna, (with master sculptor Anton Hanöck) Berlin, (under the well-known sculptor Totilla) Paris and London honed his promising talent into the sharp, prodigious mastery that characterised a lot of his subsequent work, especially after he arrived in South Africa in 1937.

He had come to this country at the instigation of his brother, Dr Marcus Wald, who was at that time the Rabbi in Kimberley.

After arriving here, he obtained what most sculptors can unfortunately only dream of. That is, steady, varied work for an auspicious clientele and a reputation for being the best.

His Jewishness was never far from Herman Wald the sculptor's awareness. 'Kria' represented a traumatic but choice opportunity for this European Jew to express his outrage and revulsion at the fate which had befallen so many millions of his martyred compatriots during World War II. It stands in the grounds of the Witwatersrand Jewish Aged Home now as a monument to the persecution of the Jewish people down the ages.

Herman Wald also wrought the monument (six fists, holding up shofars) at the Westpark Cemetery, Johannesburg, which commemorates the six million martyrs of the holocaust. Six fists holding up shofars have become synonymous.



HERMAN WALD — contemplating one of the five figures he sculpted for the diamond mines in Kimberley.

Perhaps in deference to his religious background, Herman Wald created for the Berea Congregation the 14 foot (4.5m) Wings of the Shechinah in burnished copper and also the tablets of the ten commandments.

Many other sculptures by this illustrious figure of the arts adorn South African public places, for his gift was as prolific as it was profoundly distinctive.

Mr Wald's son, Michael, honoured the master sculptor's last and unfulfilled obligation after his death in Salisbury, the commis-

sion to build a sculpture called 'Birds in Flight', which sculpture was duly put up outside the Standard bank, Salisbury, where it still stands today.

Herman Wald lives on through the body of his work, however. Many of his pieces in bronze, marble, wood, ceramic and stone are owned by private collectors both in South Africa and overseas. The remainder of his collected works are displayed in the Parktown North Gallery run by his wife Vera. Examples of his work are periodically exhibited in other galleries as well.