

Impala sculptor sang while he worked

By the Art Critic

LONG BEFORE THE IMPALAS of the new Oppenheimer memorial fountain leapt into town and into the news, neighbours whose suburban garden bordered that of Herman Wald's studio not only had a ringside view through the big windows of the fountain in the making, but (unknown to the sculptor) had the pleasure of hearing him singing, in a rich, yellow baritone, when the work was going according to plan.

And why should he not sing? For that cherished scheme of an arc of sculpture to be used somewhere for a fountain had been preserved as a drawing in his portfolio for years until suddenly the vision became reality and a spell of intensive hard work followed (for he was in the process of completing another large commission).

It was a piece of sculpture that delighted him, said his wife, Vera. Indeed that arch of leaping buck must have seemed like a breeze from the bushveld to this sculptor of dramatic Biblical and allegorical subjects.

Herman Wald was reared on the Bible for his family had been Rabbinical for generations. His late father was a Rabbi and so are his two brothers.

He was born in Gluj, Hungary, but as a lad he realized his wish to study art in Budapest, where he won a bursary at the Academy of Art, allowing him to continue his career.

After graduating he went to Vienna, where he studied under Hannock in his studio set in the beautiful Vienna woods. From there he went first to Berlin and then to Paris to study new techniques.

NEW YORK SHOW

Since he came to South Africa in 1937 he has exhibited widely and in 1952 he held an exhibition in New York which was well received by the critics.

Two of his large memorial works are the striking monument to European Jewry which stands in consecrated ground at West Park Cemetery and his "Kris" (rending of the garments) outside the fine new Jewish Old Age Home and Hospital at Sandringham.

But of all his public commissions none has found such a general human appeal as the impala fountain (which he named "Stampede") springing like a surprise on an empty stand in the middle of town, to remind homing office workers that "stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage."

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