

Sculptor exhibits work

Prison camp survivor remembers, and looks ahead

By HELEN ZUCKER

Alfred Tibor's impressive show, "We Are the Living," has been held over

through May 27 at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

Tibor, whose family was exterminated in concentration camps, gives us a



During his 5 1/2 years as a prisoner in a Siberian war camp, Tibor dug clay from the frozen ground to sculpt.

moving series of abstract pieces dealing with the Holocaust.

They have a combined power that requires a great deal of space. These pieces need room to breathe. Though the community center offered Tibor a generous space, the entire lobby is not ample enough for his special talent.

Tibor himself is as unusual as his work. A small man in a beard, who reminds me of Tach, the winsome hero of "Bagtime," Tibor does not seem like a man who spent six years in a Siberian prison camp. He is art director of an advertising firm in Columbus, Ohio, and his art is encouraged by his dressmaker wife.

He escaped from Hungary with his family in 1956, after Stalin mercilessly suppressed the Hungarian revolution, and he has worked as a commercial artist and showroom designer until recently.

His years of working with many different media has paid off in this varied show. Tibor works equally well in bronze, marble, plexiglas, wood, cold cast resin, alabaster and aluminum. A bronze entitled "Holocaust" is permanently housed in the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem.

News in '45' is a portrait in resin of a man throwing back his head, shouting the joyful news that the end of the war has arrived. The mouth opens in a passionate shout to the world.

"Remembrance" is a complicated

bronze that works on many symbolic levels. Small figures on ground level, soldiers, push people into cavernous masses above the figures, smoke rises.

There are no stark chimneys, no further reminders of the reality of the camps. Instead, the smoke, symbolizing souls, soars upward in a widening spiral, topped by a flag. Tibor is saying that the spirit survives, no matter what.

The artist moves easily from such pieces to lively statues of mothers and children, "Woman Cribbing Her Hair," and "Happiness," a little piece in which a figure throws a baby joyfully into the air as he dances on one foot in the summer air.

Tibor's "Lovers" melt into one another in the timeless fashion of lovers everywhere, and his "Seals" and "Tall Tales" are clean, lively creatures.

A work entitled "Hope" shows us a young mother holding a baby, looking ahead into the future, in contrast to a hooded head entitled "Fear." The latter piece has terrifying, deep-set eyes.

The fact that Tibor can move between such contrasts is a testimonial to his skill as well as his talent. He captures his daughter, Eva, a dancer, in a beautifully modeled head. His son, "Thomas," and his "Grandma," whom

he remembers down to the last wisep of curled hair, are alive and breathing in this show too.

"MOSES," HOLDING THE TABLETS aloft, ready to smash them, particularly impressed me. The mouth is open in a scream of holy outrage. The whole body twists back in rage as Moses advances down the mountain toward his people who have forgotten God. This Moses knows that if his people lose the cohesion that has carried them this far across the desert, they will never make it. The push-pull of the figure, the balance on the mountain is just right.

This chapter of the Bible is rendered whole in the figure of Moses.

"The Immigrant," is a realistic, moving piece. It is reminiscent of Jacob's photographs of the families that arrived at New York Harbor in the early part of the 20th century.

The tall father stands, slightly frightened, but very protective of his family as they huddle around him. The old suitcases, the battered handles, the important household items packed to start life anew, are all here. I particularly like Tibor's work with resin, a medium that picks up the clay impressions and gives the work an added texture.

I also liked a bronze of a "Kneeling Woman," "Blessing," an eloquent

bronze of men praying. You can practically hear them singing beneath their prayer shawls, and "Man With A Bird."

Judy Jaccaroli, a center member, brought "Man With A Bird."

Tibor kindly consented to go to the new home she and her husband are building, to help them find the proper place for this piece that speaks eloquently of the brotherhood of man.

The last piece in the show, "Girl With A Bird Ball," is another beauty — very clean, very little. A sweet, curly, white marble girl with a pony tail holds a bright ball aloft. She is telling us that rebirth is possible, that playfulness exists, that the heart has enormous powers of recuperation.

Tibor thinks "pregnant women are beautiful," and his statue of a woman embracing her unborn child, "already embracing her unborn child," conveys his feelings. His insistence that technique must serve content is evident throughout this show. So is his belief in hard work. He does every piece with his own hands, has no studio help, doesn't want any.

Tibor's work is in collections in Belgium and Israel, and in many private collections in the United States. He takes commissions, but produces only limited editions.

Some of these moving works are faintly being there. The center is at 6000 W. Maple, West Bloomfield.

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