

**Józef Herman** - was born in 1911 in Warsaw to a Jewish family. He attended the Warsaw School of Fine Arts for two years, then worked briefly as a graphic designer. In 1938, he went to Brussels fleeing rising anti-Semitism and was introduced to many prominent artists working in the city at the time. After the outbreak of the Second World War and the German invasion of Belgium, he fled to France and then to Britain. He initially lived in Glasgow, where he met Polish-born Jankel Adler, and between 1940 and 1943 contributed to the city's remarkable wartime artistic renaissance. He then moved to London, where he met many other European émigrés, such as the Hungarian Michael Peto, with whom he became friends. When Peto decided to take up photography after the war, Joseph Herman encouraged him in his new venture and supported his progress as a photojournalist. In 1942, Herman learned through the Red Cross that his entire family had perished in the Warsaw ghetto. In 1943 he held his first exhibition in London with L.S. Lowry. Herman's own style was bold and distinctive, characterised by strong shapes and minimal detail.

Herman depicted a study of working people as the subjects of his art; these included grape pickers, fishermen and, above all, miners. This last motif became of particular interest to Herman during the eleven years he lived in Ystradgynlais, a mining settlement in South Wales. He had lived there since 1944 and quickly became part of the local community, where he was affectionately called Joe Bach (Little Joe). Among his creative collaborators and friends in Wales was the artist Will Roberts, who lived in Neath.

When he was commissioned to paint a mural for the Festival of Britain in 1951, he decided to make miners the subject of his work. His work *Miners* (1951) showed six men resting on the ground after work. Herman said: "I think it's one of my key works, the most important work I've done in Wales. The mural is on permanent display at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, which is affiliated to Swansea Museum. Some of Herman's works were collected by the Davies sisters, British art patrons and collectors in Wales, as part of their 20th century collections. They donated a collection of 260 works, particularly Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings and sculptures, to the National Museum of Wales in the mid-20th century, greatly expanding their collection.

In 1955 Herman was leaving Wales, caused by the fact that the humidity of the climate was affecting his health. He left briefly for Spain before returning to the UK and settling in London. Despite this, he won a gold medal at the National Eisteddfod in Wales in 1962. At the end of 1955 he moved to Suffolk with his partner Nini Ettlinger, whom he married in 1961. The tragic death of their young daughter prompted them to move out, and in 1972 Herman moved into a house in west London. In 1981 Herman was awarded an Order of the British Empire Class IV (OBE) for services to British art and was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1990. He died in February 2000. In 2004, the Joseph Herman Foundation was established in Ystradgynlais to honour the artist and his legacy and to encourage the study of his work, as well as arts initiatives in South Wales. In 2010, Michael Waters' play *The Secret of Belonging*, about Joseph Herman and the years he spent in Ystradgynlais, was produced by National Theatre Wales. The play featured contemporary Swansea folk music by composer Andy Jones and was performed by Antic Theatre. They first performed in Swansea and then toured South Wales in April and May 2010.

The work is a gift of Halima Nalcz and a deposit of TPAAE