

The Israeli Painter Yehuda Vardi a Treasure of Monumental Paintings Devoted to Raoul Wallenberg.

Redactor: Victoria Sara Dazin



Yehuda Vardi (1919 – 1990)

The Israeli painter Yehuda Vardi had gained name and recognition in his home country for his soft, colorful portraits of beautiful women. Portraying Wallenberg reveals a work unprecedented in his oeuvre; a treasure of monumental paintings devoted to Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of thousands of Jews in World War 2.

Born in Iraq, Vardi immigrated to Israel at the age of seven with his family, to settle first in a Kibbutz and later in Tel Aviv, where he studied art at University. He was a socially conscious artist, and upon reading about Wallenberg, he saw the Swedish diplomat as his hero. Mesmerized by the story of Wallenberg, the painter studied obsessively every book or document he could find about the savior of the Budapest Jewish community.



His fascination was captured in a series of monumental paintings: 31 oil paintings on canvas of 2 x 3 meters (7 x 10 feet) and 3 x 3 meters (10 x 10 feet). The paintings portray Wallenberg himself, the Jewish victims of the holocaust, the martyrdom of children, Jewish men and women bearing the yellow star being deported to death camps, and more.



Vardi was 62 years old when he died in tragic circumstances in 1990.

יהודה ורדי נחום ז"ל

בן אברהם וורדה



בן 64 במותו

נולד בעירק - בגדד
נולד בי"ב באדר תרפ"ו 26/2/1926
התגורר בתל אביב
נהרג בפעולת איבה
בי"ד בטבת תשנ"א 31/12/1990
מקום אירוע: תל אביב
הובא למנוחת עולמים בתל אביב -
קרית שאול
אזור: 2, גוש: 31, שורה: 22
הותיר: אישה ושני בנים
יהודה מונצח באנדרטה בהר הרצל
בלוח מס' 56

קורות חיים

יהודה, בן אברהם וורדה, נולד בי"ב באדר תרפ"ו, (26.02.1926) בבגדד, עיראק. עלה ארצה בגיל צעיר.

היה בוגר המדרשה למורים לציור ותלמידם של מרסל ינקו, סטימצקי, שטרייכמן ואבני. הוא צייר תפאורות להצגות חשובות, והשתתף בתערוכות רבות בארץ ובארצות הברית.

יהודה היה נשוי לסוזי ואב לאבי ולרועי. היה חבר באגודת הציירים והפסלים, והשתתף בתערוכות הכלליות של האגודה במוזיאון תל אביב. בשנים האחרונות לחייו הקדיש את כל זמנו להעלאת סדרת תמונות על חייו של ראול ולנברג, הדיפלומט השוודי שהציל רבבות מיהודי הונגריה בתקופת השואה.

ביום שני י"ד בטבת תשנ"א, (31.12.1990), הגיע יהודה לבית הקברות בקריית שאול, תל אביב, כדי להניח פרחים על קבר הוריו. הוא נרצח ע"י מחבל בדקירות סכין, וגופתו נמצאה מוטלת ליד קבר אמו.

יהודה היה בן 64 במותו. הובא למנוחת עולמים בבית העלמין בקריית שאול, תל אביב.

Raoul Wallenberg (1912- 1945?)

Wallenberg's Work and Life

The Early Years

1912. Raoul Wallenberg was born into the renowned Swedish Wallenberg family of bankers, politicians, and diplomats. He later graduated with honors

in architecture at the University of Michigan in the United States. During the early years of Wallenberg's career, his paternal grandfather, Gustav Wallenberg a respected diplomat, is crucial to Raoul.

The elder Wallenberg takes on the education of Raoul, and raises him as a 'citizen of the world'. He makes sure that Raoul learns languages, travels abroad, and takes on various commercial positions. After high school and completing the Swedish military service, Wallenberg spent a year in Paris. Thereafter, he goes to the US, to study architecture at the University of Michigan. He was a top student and graduated in 1935.

After graduation, in 1936 Raoul Wallenberg returned to Sweden. Shortly thereafter he leaves again to work commercially in South Africa and Haifa, Palestine. During his time working at a Dutch bank in Haifa, he became acquainted with anti-Semitism.

In 1941, Raoul Wallenberg was appointed foreign trade representative of the Central European Trading Company whose director was Kálmán Lauer. Through Lauer, a Hungarian Jew, and his family, Wallenberg makes his first acquaintance with Budapest and Hungary through visits to the country between 1941 and 1943.



On March 19, 1944, Hitler invaded Hungary. The new leadership turns over the Hungarian Jews in the countryside to the Nazis. 450 000 people are deported and almost all of them die.



Hitler sends Eichmann to Hungary as a Nazi official responsible for overseeing the extradition of Jews to death camps. Eichmann's mission was to make sure all Hungarian Jews were liquidated. In the summer of

1944, it becomes apparent that the more than 200,000-strong Jewish Community in Budapest, which had been untouched so far, comes into direct life-threatening danger. July 1944 at the Swedish legation, in similarity to other neutral legations, provisional passports are being issued. This is by no means

enough. More passports and other measures of protection are needed. Sweden needs to help accelerate the procedure of protection.



Negotiations between the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the American War Refugee Board, and the World Jewish Congress, resulted in the decision that a Swede would be appointed to lead a mission to rescue the Jews of Budapest. Wallenberg is recommended by his former manager, Kálmán Lauer, who says that “Wallenberg is the “right man for the job”, possessing all the qualities needed.

Working Life and Diplomatic Efforts

During World War 2, following a world-spanning career in commerce, he was appointed as a secretary at the Swedish embassy in Budapest, Hungary's capital. From the moment he arrived in Budapest in July 1944 as Secretary to the Swedish Legation, Wallenberg became an unusually successful diplomat.

Raoul Wallenberg made tireless negotiation efforts and actions of various neutral diplomatic missions.



The Papal Nunciature and the International and Swedish Red Cross saved as many as 100,000 Hungarian Jews from Nazi persecution. It is well-known that it is thanks to Wallenberg leading the negotiations directly with Adolf Eichmann and the Hungarian Nazi Arrow Cross, that made this possible. In 1944, while Hungary was under the occupation of Nazi Germany, Wallenberg led a unique effort to save Jews whose lives had been threatened by Hitler's "Final Solution".



Wallenberg, motivated by personal sympathy and acting unofficially, issued Swedish passports for thousands of men, women, and children. Issuing those passports and making other diplomatic efforts, Wallenberg practically snatched the remains of Europe's last surviving Jewish community off trains heading for the death camps.



Handing out 'Schutzpass'

Among other measures Wallenberg took to save people's lives – and one of the first things he did – was to hand out protective passports, 'Schutzpass', and set up safe houses for Jews. The blue passports with the three yellow corners, symbolizing the Swedish State, were provisional passports giving Jews the status of Swedish citizens. At first, he can only make a thousand copies, but manages to raise the quota to 4,500 passports, while others estimate it was triple that amount. Wallenberg operates from a special department within the

Swedish Legation and is assisted by more than 300 volunteers. Wallenberg's relief work also involves the establishment of thirty-two so-called "safe houses" under the protection of the Swedish Legation. 15-20,000 Jews are said to have been rescued in this way.

Thanks to these passports, at least some Jews could escape the fate of being brought to different labor camps, mainly at the Austrian border, by trains, or in "death marches". 450,000 were deported to Hungary, and all of them perished.



The disappearance on January 17, 1945

Another thing Wallenberg did, was to draw up a post-war plan on reconstruction and employment opportunities for deportees. It was this plan which Wallenberg brought with him on the day he left the Swedish Legation on 17 January 1945, to visit the Soviet military headquarters in Debrecen in the eastern part of Hungary.

In 1945, after the Soviet authorities took over Budapest, Wallenberg disappeared during a visit to a Russian outpost and was kidnapped. According to eyewitnesses, he was later held in Lyublyanka prison in Russia. The young diplomat, one of the great heroes of the war, had never been seen since. The Russians announced that he had died in prison in 1947. But the mystery of his fate persisted, and many organizations worldwide are still pursuing the truth. What happened in Lyublyanka prison; Did the Russians kidnap the Swedish diplomat thinking he was an American agent? Is it true that he was kidnapped by the henchmen of Brezhnev who had intended to plunder the treasures of Hungarian Jews, which had been in his custody during the war? All these questions remain unanswered.

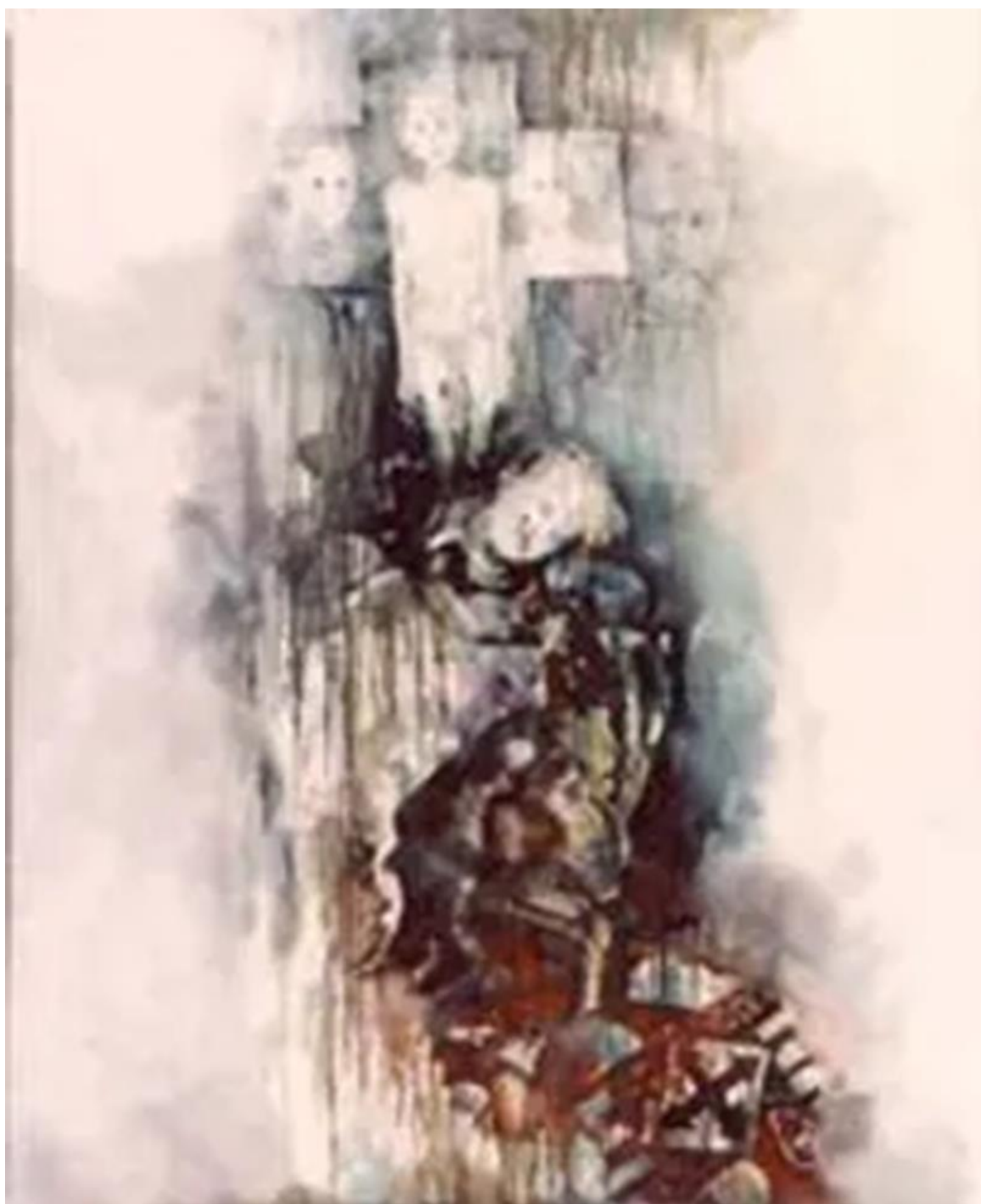
Raoul Wallenberg saved the lives of tens and thousands of Hungarian Jews. Some estimates suggest that he saved as many as 100,000 people.

Wallenberg was honored as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" - people who risked their lives to save the lives of Jews during the Holocaust - by Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.











Bibliography

Raoul Wallenberg, Swedish diplomat.

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<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Raoul-Wallenberg>

Yehuda Vardi - Wallenberg Collection

Yehuda Vardi (1919 – 1990)

<https://artandtwist.wixsite.com/art-and-twist/var-di-wallenberg>

email: walkwithraoul.budapest@gov.se”

“The Israeli Painter Yehuda Vardi a Treasure of Monumental Paintings Devoted to Raoul Wallenberg”, redacted by Victoria Sara Dazin.

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