BRONZE

FIRM, STUBBORN, STRONG, ENDURING

LUXE Magazine met up with Sarah Richards to chat about her love for nature, bronzes and humankind

Sarah Richards is an established South African artist and sculptor living in KwaZulu-Natal. She has been creating bronze sculptures for the past 20 years. Her passion lies in rendering sculpture which shows an attention to detail, and which give an impression of movement and animation. Sarah explores many different subjects; this comes from her fascination with the details and construction of the world. Inspired by public sculpture and monuments around the world Sarah enjoys the challenge of creating world class sculpture for the public commissions she has received. Her smaller figure sculptures include children at play, small figures and nudes.

LM: Sarah, of all materials that you could choose to work with, why Bronze?

SR: **I model the original in wax, a clay based plasticine. The casting process allows me to create the original with texture and details, and this is then all captured in the final bronze. Bronze, a copper alloy, is such an amazing material, strong and can be shown indoors, as well as enduring outdoor weather and water elements.**

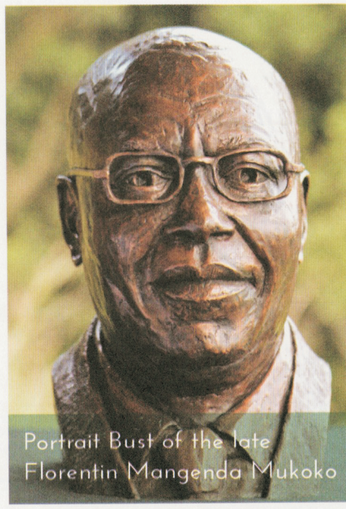
LM: Where does your love of nature originate and how do you represent this in your artwork?

SR: How can one not be inspired by nature! There is a never ending source of shapes, textures and patterns , not to mention the interesting creatures that scuttle about, inspiring wonder at their shapes and mannerisms. My work is very diverse. I haven't been able to 'specialise' in only one genre. I bounce between, animals, birds and other creatures, to the human figure, both monumental and small. I usually do detailed studies, and where I can, make them life-size, to best capture their essence or power.

> "Every day that I am alone in my studio , creating and working on a sculpture, I know I am so blessed to be able to do daily what I love."



White Rhino



Portrait Bust of the late Florentin Mangenda Mukoko


Neighbourhood Watch - Meerkats


Mass of Men - Sardine Run

LM: You have done some amazing commissions, one being the well-known "Mass of Men - Sardine Run" @ King Shaka Airport. How do you get inspired when doing a commission?

SR : The title of the work is from a famous quote of Henry David Thoreau. As I was working on designing, painting and placing the fish into its massing swirl, I found myself thinking how humans behave in such similar ways. We follow other people and our 'so-called' leaders blindly. We head in a direction that does not ultimately get us anywhere. And when something bad happens to us we cluster together, panic and then just repeat our mistakes again - over and over.

LM: And now for a difficult question, what is your favourite piece?

SR: At the moment that is easy to answer, although tomorrow I may give you a different answer! The first of my new works called Recognition – maquette. Something in me clicked and I started to see a way through to expressing an inner ' knowing'. Its difficult for me to really say what that is or why the work works for me – one of those wordless things that had to be made. It is a maquette (small study) because I envision these works to be life-size or larger, and hope someday that they inspire a sponsor to help me realise this dream.

LM: Do you have a mentor/artist that inspires you? Who do you get your inspiration from?

SR: I studied art at school and later at Durban Technikon. Then I travelled for 4 years, visiting galleries and museums when I could to further my art education. I have been exposed to so much that is inspiring, that now I am not sure what has been more influential or not. An artist like Pablo Picasso, who was so prolific, and never stopped exploring different materials and techniques. Willem de Kooning, who explored use of texture, and colour in a uniquely playful way. Rodin, and his beautiful sculptural figures that have a loose yet realistic energy. But mostly I get inspiration from the world around me, the natural and human world, based on my experiences and what I have seen, or thought.

LM: Where can our readers get hold of you or view your artwork?

SR: I have several galleries around Durban, Imbizo Gallery, Ballito, Makiwa Gallery in Umhlanga and the Green gallery in Mount Edgecombe. You can visit me in my studio in the KZN midlands (by appointment only). Or easier still, have a look at my website www.sarahrichards.co.za where my full portfolio of works can be found.

LM: You have started a new range of artworks.... Tell us some more

SR: The new sculptures, "Recognition", "Touching Flow" and "Hold gently what you wish to grow old with" are a culmination of all that I have created already. Many years of acquiring skills and gaining confidence in the creation of figures of various sizes, and creatures of different descriptions. I have constantly explored and search for some way to express this invisible wordless 'something', which has been desperately and persistently willing itself to be 'seen'.

These new works are real but also imaginary. They touch on what I know and don't know. And I play with the dichotomies of life, that can make things so confusing and yet so interesting. What we can touch , and what is imagined, and where do they cross over. I am attracted to the natural environment, its creatures and the hidden flow of energy that is inherent within it. The works are also an exploration of self. Of how I view my physical body, but not necessarily how others see it. The feminine embodies the energies of Mother Nature, with its wildness and changeability, birthing and dying.

I wonder about my relationship with the natural environment: how do I 'belong' and connect to it? I observe how the intellect often separates me from this connection, and disrupts my creative flow by excessive analysis and fear.

I wonder at the impact that humans have on the world, our selfish disregard to this natural flow: this power and refined beauty. We so often take it for granted and feel separate and often fearful of it. This all seems so absurd, and yet our industrialised perspective pushes us further away.

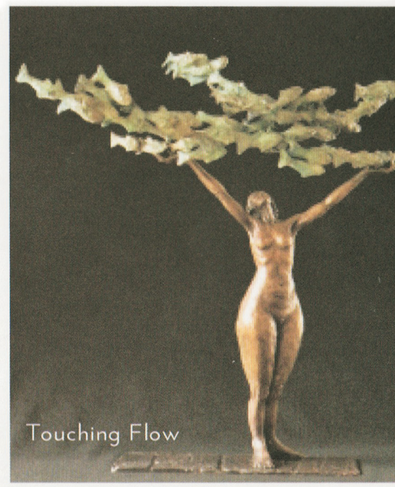
My works are sometimes whimsical, dreamy and playful. But always serious. Of this world and yet imagined. They are a dichotomy, juxtaposing the rational and the irrational. They show my confusion of ideas, my busy brain, and my yearning for something else, a quietness perhaps; something possible that I still need to find, and yet I know I already have.

> "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things."
>
> Henry David Thoreau
> Walden & Civil Disobedience

The King Fishers


Jump!

Recognition


Touching Flow

Hold gently what you wish to grow old with