

Rhona STERN (1914-1998)

Sculptures and monoprints



Rhona Stern in 1964

Group photo with Moses Kottler, Gerard de Leeuw, Zoltan Borberek, Rhona Stern, Coert Steynberg, Dr Anton Rupert, Ernest Ullman and Elza Dziomba, at the Rembrandt Pavilion Exhibition, Johannesburg (17th March to 23rd April, 1964)

Brief CV

Rhona Stern, sculptor and writer, was born in 1914 in Johannesburg, enrolled for architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, but never completed her degree when she got married, started making sculptures (*initially influenced by Giacometti*), wrote novels published in London 1964 to 1969, the last being "Stop halfway and look at the view", after which she stopped writing as her novels were placed under an embargo by the SA authorities as being too subversive.

Rhona Stern returned to sculpture, receiving numerous public and private portrait commissions; she was also part-time lecturer at the University of Pretoria. She made her bronzes by the lost-wax process (*cire perdue*).

Rhona is the only child of the internationally known photographer Leon Levson and his wife Roslyn Elkin from Lithuania. In her early 20s she was married to Maurice Wolk, a medical doctor and lawyer who died at an early age; their son Jonathan Wolk, an anaesthetist, lived in Johannesburg. Much later she married Stanley Stern, a stockbroker from Johannesburg.

Rhona Stern died in her house at Jellicoe Ave in Johannesburg in 1998, where she had been living for 50 years.

Selected Exhibitions

1955 The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition (cat 1384)

1956 The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition (cat 1325, 1393)

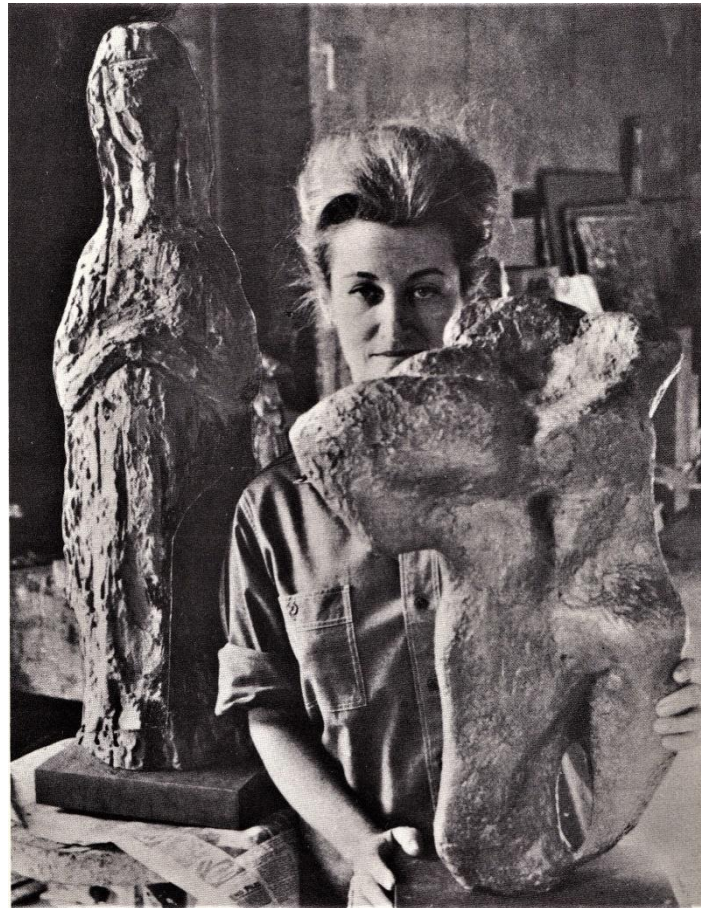
1957 Ben Uri Art Gallery, London (sculptures) (9th September to 3rd October)

1959 Queen's Hall Art Gallery, Johannesburg (Opening exhibition – Artists' Choice) (2 bronzes: *Torso*, *Angelique* / 2 metal sculptures: *The Game*, *Chaise Longue*) (26th October)

1960 Queen's Hall Art Gallery, Johannesburg ("34 Contemporary SA Artists") (8th August)

1962 Gallery 101 (Gallery 101-UAT 1962 Scholarship) ("Art & Religion") (26th February)
(cat 56/57 - *Crucifixion*: plaster; *Bath-Sheba*: bronze)

1962 Gallery 101, Johannesburg ("First National Graphic Week") (opened by Esmé Berman)
(18th-25th June)



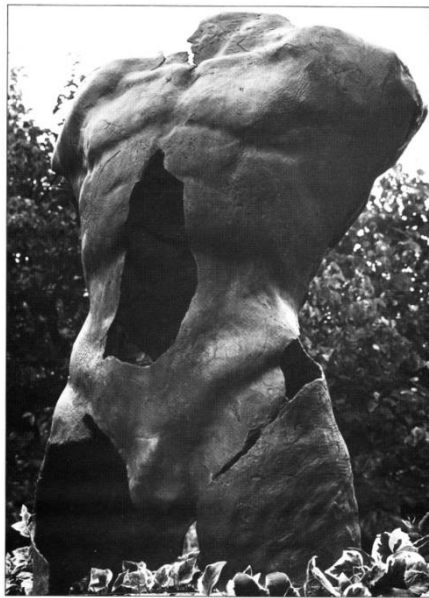
Torso do mar (Sea Torso) (bronze) 53.3 cm cat 18 / Madona das Rochas (bronze) 87.6 cm cat 19

1965 São Paulo Biennale – entries submitted by the SAAA – cat. 18+19

1965 Adler Fielding Galleries, Johannesburg (solo) (14th September) (20 sculptures)

1967 Adler Fielding Galleries, Johannesburg ("Sculptures SA 1900-1967") (12th September) – (cat 92 Torso – bronze on white marble // cat 93 Annunciation – bronze // cat. 94 Small Torso – bronze on rose quartz // cat 95 Madonna – bronze ill.)

1969 Gallery 101, Johannesburg ("Top South African Artists") (10th February, 1969) (cat 1-4):
Dancing Torso (metal), Suez (brass), African Tulip (bronze), Decorative panel (maquette)



"Large Torso" bronze (illustrated in OUR ART 4 ONS KUNS)

1969 Lidchi Gallery, Johannesburg (11th November) (solo) (bronzes)



Rhona Stern – illustrated in ARTLOOK 36, Johannesburg (November, 1969) p30 with some works from her solo show at the Lidchi Gallery, Johannesburg, 1969

1970s Collectors Gallery, Johannesburg (15th October) (36 sculptures and monotypes)

1975 onwards – Strydom Gallery, George – yearly exhibitions

Selected Works in Museums



Crucifixion, 1965 – bronze – 71 cm

Hester Rupert Art Gallery, Graaff-Reinet

Illustrated in "SA Art – Kuns SA" („Twentieth Century S.A. Art") (Martienssen) (Human & Rousseau) (1966) p.96, fig. 70)

Johannesburg Art Gallery

"H.F. Oppenheimer", 1983 – bronze bust - 63x50x32 cm - ed. 5 - cast by Renzo Vignali, Pretoria

Pretoria Art Museum



"Monumental Torso" – not dated, not signed – bronze – 92x69x40 cm – acquired in 1971

Witwatersrand Art Museum WAM (University of the Witwatersrand), Johannesburg

Schlesinger SA Art Coll donation 1979

Request image – work in one of the Vice Chancellor's offices

"The Sisters" (bronze) (S/62/5)

University of Pretoria Museums, Pretoria

Three Heads in Plaster of Paris

Selected Publications

Artlook 16 Johannesburg – 1968 March Vol 2 No 4, p.7 ill

Artlook 28 Johannesburg – 1969 March p.7 ill



"Torso II – Athena", 1971, bronze 65cm H

Artlook 36 Johannesburg – 1969 November, p.30 (*illustrated in b/white*), and in colour in Sotheby's Johannesburg catalogue on 11th Nov. 2008 – Lot 149

"Art in South Africa since 1900" (Balkema) (1962) (F.L. Alexander) - Fig. 140 "Wall panel" illustrated, Fig 141 "Seated Mother & child" bronze half-life size illustrated

"Art & Artists of South Africa" (Berman) (Balkema) (1983) pp. 344, 382, 395, 409, 514/517 – ISBN 0 86961 144 5

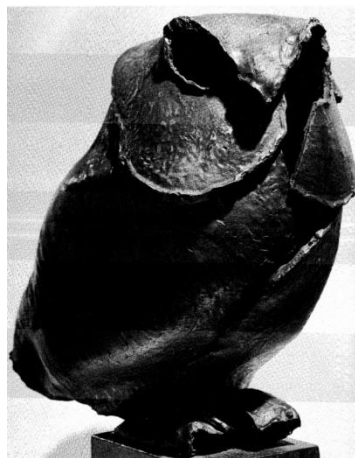
"Looking at South African Art – a Guide to the Study and Appreciation of Art" (Harmsen) (van Schaik) (1988) cat 99 p 90 – ISBN 0-627-01565-4

"The Dictionary of South African Painters and Sculptors" (Ogilvie) (Everard Read) 1988 – pp 635/6 – ISBN 0-620-12663-9

"Women marching into the 21st century: wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo" (H.S.R.C., Pretoria) (2000) pp 186/187



"Head" early 1970, bronze – twice life-size, illustrated in "Our Art 4" – ISBN 0-7970-2832-3 pp 82-89



"Owl" – bronze 1/1 illustrated in "Looking at South African Art – a Guide to the Study and Appreciation of Art" (Harmsen) (van Schaik) (1988) – ISBN 0-627-01565-4

Our Art 4 Ons Kuns (Frieda Harmsen) (F.E.S.T., Pretoria) (1993) pp 82-89 – ISBN 0-7970-2832-3

"Stories teen my muur" ("Die Gebroke Bronsbeelde") (Strydom) (Inset Uitg.) (2016) pp209-214 – ISBN 978-0-620-73132-4



Maquette of "Man and Woman" – bronze – 21cm H



"Man + Woman" bronze – 129cm H / 125 cm H – img. ©Matthys Strydom – Priv. Coll.

*Illustrated in "Stories teen my muur" ("Die Gebroke Bronsbeelde") (Strydom) (Inset Uitg) (2016)
pp209 ISBN 978-0-620-73132-4*



"Dance" bronze 1/1 exhibited at Gallery 101, Johannesburg – cat 137 – ZAR950

Kimberley

This twice life-size bust of H.F. Oppenheimer, sculpted by Rhona Stern, was the first bronze bust in South Africa to stand in the open and took seven months to complete. The bust was stolen in December 1988 and presumably destroyed but replaced later by the artist

Original Graphics by Rhona Stern



"Seagull" monoprint 36x50 cm – auctioned by Roseberys, London – 11th June, 2016 – Lot 149 together with "Male nude" litho, signed in pencil - 51x36 cm

Further reading

HARMSSEN, F. "Graven images: three South African artists." *Jewish Affairs* 48(2), 1993: 140-145. Judith Gluckman (drawing, lithographs), Rhona Stern (sculpture), Cecily Sash (painting)

KNIGHT, N. "South African Jewish sculptors", *Supplement. Zionist Record & S.A*, September 25, 1970: 88-90. Includes Ernest Ullman, Rhona Stern and Moses Kottler

Stern, Rhona - "Sculptor, Johannesburg" *Jewish Affairs* 8(3) 1953: 49-50
