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| **Kumalo, Sydney (1935-1988)** |
| Sydney Alex Kumal, Sydney Alex Khumalo |
| Sydney Kumalo (1935-1988) was an important early black modernist working primarily in cast metal sculpture and drawing. As artist and educator, Kumalo's contribution was twofold: an embrace of sculpture at a time when most urban South African modernists worked exclusively in 2D media, and a sophisticated rethinking of African sculptural forms through the language of international modernism. Kumalo initiated his art career at the Polly Street Art Center in Johannesburg. Here he trained from 1952 to 1957 under Cecil Skotnes; subsequently he apprenticed to the sculptor Eduardo Villa until 1959. Early on Kumalo developed an interest in traditional West and Central African sculpture, as well as Cubism and mid-century European modernism and its related primitivism, most notably the work of Marino Marini, Henry Moore, and Lynn Chadwick. Kumalo collaborated on a number of public art projects with Cecil Skotnes, and together with other South African artists (including Villa, Skotnes, Cecily Sash, Guiseppe Cattaneo and Ezrom Legae) he exhibited locally and internationally as part of the multi-racial modernist Amadlozi Group. These collaborations speak to Kumalo's refusal to accept the dictates of apartheid ideology. |
| Sydney Kumalo (1935-1988) was an important early black modernist working primarily in cast metal sculpture and drawing. As artist and educator, Kumalo's contribution was twofold: an embrace of sculpture at a time when most urban South African modernists worked exclusively in 2D media, and a sophisticated rethinking of African sculptural forms through the language of international modernism. Kumalo initiated his art career at the Polly Street Art Center in Johannesburg. Here he trained from 1952 to 1957 under Cecil Skotnes; subsequently he apprenticed to the sculptor Eduardo Villa until 1959. Early on Kumalo developed an interest in traditional West and Central African sculpture, as well as Cubism and mid-century European modernism and its related primitivism, most notably the work of Marino Marini, Henry Moore, and Lynn Chadwick. Kumalo collaborated on a number of public art projects with Cecil Skotnes, and together with other South African artists (including Villa, Skotnes, Cecily Sash, Guiseppe Cattaneo and Ezrom Legae) he exhibited locally and internationally as part of the multi-racial modernist Amadlozi Group. These collaborations speak to Kumalo's refusal to accept the dictates of apartheid ideology.  From 1960 to 1964 Kumalo served as the first black art instructor at the Polly Street Art Center and the Jubilee Social Centre, where he shaped the sensibilities and styles of a generation of modern black South African artists, including Ezrom Legae, Leonard Matsoso, and Louis Maqhubela. He advocated for drawing artistic inspiration from African heritage as well as universal themes, and for the development of a contemporary African idiom through the language of international modernism. He also encouraged his students to pursue art as a full-time professional career, which, after 1965, he achieved. This was an exceptional accomplishment for a black South African artist at the time.  Until his death in 1988, Kumalo remained active in international and regional exhibition arenas. He travelled widely and achieved notable recognition for his work through awards and participation in such prestigious events as the Venice and Sao Paulo Biennales. In 1967 Kumalo was a guest of USSALEP (the United States South Africa Leadership Exchange Program) during a visit to the USA. He also visited Germany in 1979, with a return to the USA in 1985.  His work is featured in the collections of the Durban Art Museum;  Johannesburg Art Gallery; Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation; Sandton Town Council; Iziko South African National Gallery; Sanlam Art Collection, Bellville; De Beers Centenary Art Gallery, University of Fort Hare; University of South Africa, Pretoria; and University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.  [File: DancingWoman.jpg]  Figure 1 Dancing Woman, Bronze |
| Further reading:  (Peffer, 2009) (Sack, 1988) |