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http://www.zimart.ca/shona.html

A Zimbabwean based company which exports abstracts, fine art ,stone, wooden sculptures handcrafts and many more African products worldwide.

African stone sculpture from Zimbabwe is often called Shona sculpture, named after the largest tribe engaged in sculpting. Zimbabwe – derived from the Shona word “dzimbadzamabwe” which means ‘house of stone’ – is the only country on the African continent that has large deposits of stone suitable for sculpting.

In ancient times stone was used extensively for building and for decorative purposes. The Great Zimbabwe settlement, now a World Heritage Site, is testimony to the skill and artistry of the ancestors of today’s sculptors. Built between the 11th and 15th centuries, at a time when Europe was just emerging from the Dark Ages, these accomplished stone masons used hand-hewn granite blocks to painstakingly and precisely build ornate towers and enclosures – all free of mortar. Parts of the settlement combine natural rock formation and dry stone construction – the two blending aesthetically and functionally.

Centuries later, in the late 1950s, Frank McEwen, the founding curator of the National Gallery of what was then Southern Rhodesia, recognizing the Shona peoples’ affinity with stone, and their innate creativity, established a sculpture workshop at the Gallery and invited the participation of aspiring stone sculptors. There was no attempt to instruct. Those who were interested were simply given the tools and the stone. As McEwen described it, their work

revealed “the images they bore in their souls”. No technical training was given. The sculptors learned from one another and taught one another.

Shona Sculptures

    These African stone sculptures are known as Shona sculpture or Zimbabwe Shona sculpture because they are hand carved by the Shona of Zimbabwe. The Shona people of Zimbabwe have been hand sculpting stone into works of art for nearly a thousand years.   Even though the craft is ancient, the style has continually evolved and the carvings created today are both beautiful and elegant.  The contemporary, yet eternal, shape of these sculptures bring splendor to the home and compliments any decor.  The themes these sculptures portray represent  esteemed values in the Shona culture of family, love, life and nature.  
   
     The stone is serpentine and can be found in Zimbabwe with  colors ranging from black and green to yellows, orange, grey, red, and even purple.  Each piece is unique, both in the expression made by the sculptor's hands and in the natural patterns in the rock formed millions of years ago.

     These beautiful pieces of Shona art can be used in the home, garden, or office.  Many of these stone sculptures make wonderful gifts for many occassions, including weddings, engagements, and anniversaries.  African Import Art offers **free ground shipping**for all stone sculptures less than 10 lbs. in the USA.

Zimbabwe means Great Stone House.

It is fitting that stone sculpture is the art that most represents the people of Zimbabwe and one which they have become world-renowned for.

Totems & Traditions

One of the earliest known Zimbabwe Traditions is the use of Totems and these are often depicted in the sculptures you see throughout the country.

These Totems also know as mitupos were used by the MaShona to identify the different clans that made up the ancient civilizations of the dynasties. The symbols are usually associated with animal names and provide the social identity of the clan. They are also meant to guard against incestuous behaviour and to praise someone in recited poetry.

There are at least 25 identifiable totems and 60 principal names in the contemporary MaShona society. Totems are usually animals and body parts. Examples include Fish Eagle, Zebra, Lion, Monkey, Elephant or leg, heart and lung, etc.

People of the same totem are descendants of one common ancestor and the MaShona recognize this totem unity even across tribal boundary lines.

Totem identity is very important at traditional ceremonies.  
For example, a person of the same totem, even when that person is from a different tribe, can initiate burial of the deceased. However, a person from a different totem cannot initiate burial and if he does, he risks paying a substantial fine to the family of the deceased.

About mangwanani

Based in Harare, ZimSculpt is passionate about promoting the work of some of the finest Zimbabwean sculptors. By holding exhibitions around the world and making sculptures available for purchase online, we let you experience some of the finest contemporary stone sculpture.

Partner with mangwanani

ZimSculpt partners with people around the world. Contact us if you are interested in hosting an exhibition or are interested in selling our sculptures.

# Working with the Stone

The stone used by Zimbabwean sculptors is unique in the world, in the range of colours that can be found in veins of rock that are literally next to one another in the earth: shades of avocado, pomegranate, granadilla, lemon, peach, plum, grape and mulberry.  
  
More than 250 ores and combinations of serpentines have been identified in Zimbabwe – making it the only African country with significant deposits of stone suitable for carving. The 2.5 billion-year-old Great Dyke, a 510 kilometre series of ridges and hills running through Zimbabwe, is the longest linear mass of mafic and ultramafic rocks in the world. Formed when molten rock forced its way into existing rock formations, which later eroded, this ancient dyke is laced with a range of minerals, and offers an astonishing range of colours and combinations of stone.