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THE CASTS OF A CREATIVE

Local artist inspired by the beauty that life holds

Local artist and sculptor Sarah Richards finds her inspiration in the beauty she sees around her. Focusing on both humans and animals, Richards uses the medium of sculpture to bring her mental visions to life. Working in bronze means that Richards' work will last a lifetime and beyond; acting as more of an investment than simply a work of art. Her inspirations come not from the more serious side of life, but from the happier aspects – love, new life, light, and genuine laughter. We take a deep look into the works of this charismatic local artist...

Text by Shannon Correia / Photography © Sarah Richards





Inspired by the world and the beautiful parts of life, Sarah Richards brings both creatures and humans to life in the complex form of bronze sculptures. Richards loves the medium of sculpture - "A bronze will outlive generations. It's an investment in time. If you buy a bronze sculpture for your business, it's a testament to the belief in your legacy."

Richards always enjoyed all creative pursuits, whether it was clay-based holiday art classes, or painting pictures for Father Christmas. "I always took the creation of artworks very seriously. I recently found a picture of myself painting when I was about seven or eight, and you can see the concentration of my face," says Richards, speaking on her earliest memory of the arts.

Being an artist was tough in the beginning, says Richards. Loving so many aspects of creating, she found it difficult to settle on a subject matter, let alone a medium. Eventually though, the decision was made - she happily settled on bronze and has been using it as her medium of creation for the last 15 years. Being an artist requires not only genuine enjoyment of the creative process, but an awareness and aptitude for the business side - dealing with clients, developing relationships with galleries and so on. "I make my artworks because I want to make them, and I do so to spread beauty. I choose bronze to give my clients the best quality, and it brings me great joy that every piece that I make goes to a loving home where it will be cherished," explains Richards.

Any artwork by any artist starts with inspiration. For Richards, there is much to be inspired by. She explains that it changes daily, sometimes minute-by-minute. Rather than delve into the darker aspects of life, Richards focuses on the world's beauty and its inhabitants - both creatures and humans. "I am inspired by the challenge of making each work, discovering, and learning through my hands via my hands," says the artist.

When it comes to crafting, Richards says her creative process is a little chaotic. "I sometimes start with a plan - especially as a sculpture requires an armature (internal metal structure) that has to be made first," she says, which she invariably ends up changing as she goes along, cutting out bits of wire if they are in the wrong places. At times a weakness can become part of the process in a healthy way. The artist confesses that impatience is her greatest weakness. Richards explains "I generally take a problem head on and I can be very impatient, so have to redo sections, or improve on them as I go, and as I understand the subject better," she says.

When describing the bronze casting process, Richards believes people will be "awestruck by the complexity and skills required to make a sculpture. Not just the artwork itself but the whole fiery process." It is in this where the true value of bronze lies: it is the labour involved, the skills of several different people, and the casting



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materials that are the costly part of the process, not the bronze itself. As an artist, the value for Richards is the journey of getting to know each subject and the challenge of better understanding it.

Despite being expensive, Richards started out with small works, hoping that this would lead her to create much larger works in the studio of her not too distant future. She worked on a strategy to use bronze as she wanted to create works of the best quality, which would attract both appreciative art and bronze collectors. "I also wanted to make works that were made from the best material. Bronze is indestructible and so the best investment art there is," she explains. Through the labour of her hands, she was able to reach that goal. "I have a beautiful studio in the midlands, with a view and indigenous forest. I get to make small sculptures and have made a couple of three-metre high pieces too," says Richards.

Richards is currently working on a variety of works and is on the cusp of beginning others. This includes a pair of giraffes for a client (as a gift to his wife) and a relief mural of a tree as a fundraising initiative for a small school in Howick, Thembelihle Primary School. "I am painting the tree, and we will be selling the bronze and metal leaves to raise funds for the school. I am finishing off a half-size figure hugging her knees, as well as creating more contemporary works that use moulds from the ground to make panels and other creations – these are a bit more experimental," says Richards, who concludes by saying: "I have several projects in different stages of experimentation and this keeps the creative juices flowing. A small element of the unknown, and a challenge."

For more information, visit www.sarahrichards.co.za

