



## THE TRUE VALUE OF BRONZE

*Sarah Richards creating life in sculpture*

**Sarah Richards is an established South African artist and sculptor. Inspired by the world and the beautiful parts of life, Richards brings to life creatures and humans in the form of bronze sculptures. We spoke with the artist to understand more about the artistry of working with this medium, one that lasts a lifetime.**

South African artist and sculptor, Sarah Richards, loves to see sculptures in public spaces, where people can interact with them. In this public appeal, the artist is able to “produce works that they can enjoy, touch, sit on and wonder at,” says Richards. “I think that is why I am happy with doing so many commissioned works. I prefer working directly with a client and creating the works, not exhibiting them.” Likewise, her interest is not in the subject matter of a particular work, but rather in the journey of understanding it better. Richards explains she enjoys “a small element of the unknown and a challenge; the challenge of making each work inspires me. Discovering and learning through my hands.”

Richards understands her subject matter on a deep level. “With the portraits, I find I get to know people through the studying of their faces, often deceased,

always beloved or revered I wonder who they were, and I think of the people left behind, of life and death and how close this is to us every day,” she says.

“The animals or birds are all so unique that I get transported into their worlds, what they eat and how they live, and how this dictates what type of beak they may have” for instance.” It is this which makes the creative process such a fulfilling one.

For Richards, her artworks are made based on a desire for the process and for others. She does not have an attachment to her works, but rather enjoys knowing that they’re going to good homes where they will be loved.

Her enjoyment comes from making them. “I choose bronze to give the clients the best,” she explains. It was only 15 years ago when Richards settled on bronze as her primary medium. During her studies, she was introduced to a short course in bronze casting. “The process intrigued me,” says Richards, who then







turned to her friend Kim Goodwin of The Goodwin Foundry who helped her get started with the processes.

Richards started with small sculptures, hoping that this would, despite being expensive, lead her to create much larger sculptures in the studio of her dreams. Bronze enabled her to create works of the best quality, which would also attract appreciative art and bronze collectors. "I also wanted to create works that were made from the best material. Bronze is indestructible, making it the best investment art there is," she explains. Through the labour of her hands, Richards 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.

The bronze casting processes needed to create a sculpture require an awe-striking amount of complexity and skills. "Not just the artwork itself but the whole fiery process. I think clients would then see the true value of

the bronze better," explains Richards. "The bronze itself is not that expensive – it's the labour involved, the skills of several different people and the casting materials that are the costly part of the process. But unlike other expensive items – a bronze sculpture will last forever!"

"I have several projects in different stages of experimentation, and this keeps the creative juices flowing," says Richards. "I am finishing off a half-size figure hugging her knees, and a pair of giraffes for a client as a gift for his wife," says Richards, who is also starting two additional large-format commissions; a secretary bird, and, a set of portrait busts.

The artist is also in the process of creating contemporary works that use moulds from the ground to make panels and other creations – these are a bit more experimental," says Richards. Also, there is a relief mural of a tree as a fundraising initiative for Thembelihle Primary School, a small school in Howick. "I am painting the tree, and we will be selling leaves and birds on the tree to raise funds for the school. 10