

Stone and Wooden Zimbabwe Art

Zimbabwe Art encompasses a large variety of fields, cultures and people. Below we detailed information about Shona stone sculpture and Wood carving but please visit these other pages on more Art from Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Art - Shona Soapstone Carvings

“The angel is already in the stone. It is the job of the artist to remove just enough of the material to release her” – Michelangelo.

These carvings, in a variety of different stones, are made by the **Shona people of Zimbabwe** for whom stone carving is not a traditional craft. Started experimentally about 35 years ago it is now widely recognized as one of the most significant art movements to have evolved in recent times.

Zimbabwean art sculptors talk about the way in which they free a shape from within the stone and the influence of the tribal spirits on their work.

They believe that each work of art finds its way to a predestined owner and that in some way makes the owner part of an extended global family.

The sculptures are wonderfully expressive, many of them portray a human message in a figurative or abstract manner and some of them convey emotional values such as family or the maternal bond.

The **“Ukama”** sculptures are very popular and these are renditions of the family group- couples, dancers, loving families. They symbolize the family bond that is so important to the Shona people. In pieces representing a mother and child the bodies and arms are joined to emphasize the strength and longevity of these relationships.



Ukama sculptures are intended to evoke feelings of harmony and peace that earn the blessings of our ancestors and remind us of our global family.



Art from Zimbabwe especially shona stone sculptures is high sought after around the world, many of the artists realizing international acclaim enabling them to sell their pieces of art for extremely high prices.

Here are some details about some of the more commonly used stones and minerals in Zimbabwe art–

Soapstone

Soapstone is a form of talc. It is a mineral that sometimes forms the greater part of a rock and, being relatively soft, it provides an excellent medium for carving.

Serpentine

A common mineral so called because of the serpent like bands of green color that occur in some forms. Color varies tremendously from light & dark green through to bronze. It has a waxy lustre and is substantially harder than soapstone.

Red Jasper

This is an opaque form of quartz; it takes a high polish and is used as a gemstone.



Malachite

This is an important ore of copper. The color can vary from dark blackish green to a pale yellowish green but usually there is a combination of colors in each stone with concentric banding of the various shades. The resultant appearance is very attractive and since ancient times it has been used for ornaments and jewelry.

Verdite

This beautiful green stone captures the beauty and mystery of Africa. It is a semi precious stone over 3500 million years old and a challenging medium for sculptors and master craftsmen. Ancient tribesman crafted verdite into jewelry.

Its finding is associated with gold seams and, powdered; it has been used by witchdoctors for hundreds of years to induce fertility.

Rare and beautiful, Verdite occurs in a variety of changing patterns and shades ranging from golden browns to rich emerald greens and blues.

In the knowledge that Verdite is found only in Southern Africa, and noting in particular that Zimbabwean Verdite is of a uniquely high quality, it is being sought after by international art collectors and investors who have been quick to recognize it as a rare and intrinsically valuable material.



Zimbabwe art - Wooden Carvings



Buffalo Ironwood Carving

Many of the **ironwood carvings** found in Zimbabwe are of African wildlife. Many of the carvings are inimitable feature pieces, exquisitely hand carved and imbued with the indefinably mystique of Africa.

Many of the carvings are of traditional heads and come in a great variety of sizes and styles. Many different woods are used such as olive, mukwa, fresh teak and pod mahogany. You will also find many carved animals such as buffalo, giraffe, tortoise, crocodile, hippos and warthogs.

Walking Sticks

Mufunko in Tonga or *Tsvimbo* in Shona



Huge variety of Wooden Carvings

In Africa as well as being walking aids, walking sticks are often used in traditional tribal dances to symbolize clubs thrown in war or against wild animals.

They also play an important part in religious beliefs as they are thought to be able to hold ancestral spirits (mudzimu).

These sticks usually depict human or animal forms and are used in dances. A favorite design is the Magic Ball stick which is used by the Batonka tribe as a guard against evil spirits.

A snake carving is very powerful as it is the emblem of the svikiro or spirit medium. The svikiro becomes possessed by and communicates with the mhondoro or tribe spirit who watches over the tribe and helps them in time of need.



Teak and ironwood Hippos

Information and pictures retrieved from [http://www.victoriafalls-guide.net/zimbabwe-art.html#wood carving](http://www.victoriafalls-guide.net/zimbabwe-art.html#wood%20carving)