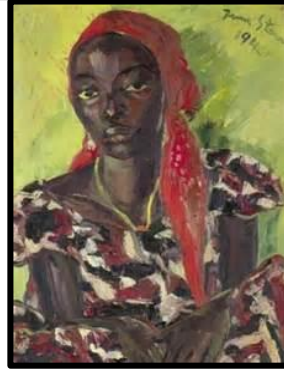


Irma Stern



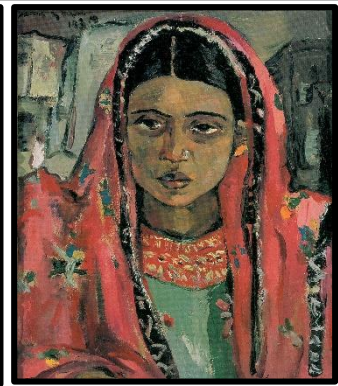
Portrait of Ursula



Indian Woman



Congolese Woman



Zanzibar Woman

"The artist creates in order to become free of himself, only to find himself again in the end."

**Irma Stern
(1894 - 1966)**

Irma Stern was born in 1894 to German Jewish parents in Schweizer-Reneke, Transvaal ((Gauteng)). She studied in Weimar and Berlin and had her inaugural exhibition in Berlin in 1919. Although she is well known for her oil paintings, she has also worked as a sculptor whose portrayal of African people gave her white counterparts insight into the African ways of life.

Irma Stern is considered to be South Africa's foremost artist in terms of public recognition and the record prices that her works fetch at an auction. At first misunderstood for her highly individual and modernist style by the conservative and shockable public of Cape Town, she gradually won acceptance and eventually acclaim.

Her strong interest in portraying black people was also a point of public controversy, especially in the 1930s.

When it came to portraying an African sitter, she seemed to have little interest in recording their names. Her interest lay in the appearance of the exotic 'other' and what she termed the 'soul of Africa'. As she once stated: *'It is only through personal contact that one can get a few glimpses into the hidden depths of the primitive and childlike yet rich soul of the native and this soul is what I try to reflect in my pictures of South Africa'*. Many of her paintings of people from other cultures are concerned primarily with the culture rather than the

Stern's work was unappreciated at first in South Africa where critics derided her early exhibitions in the 1920s with reviews titled *"Art of Miss Irma Stern - Ugliness as a cult"*.
On her return to South Africa, equipped with influences from German expressionism she had her first exhibition but that was dismissed as "immoral" and became subject to police investigation.

Irma was one of the most important artists to be produced by South Africa. Her work can be seen in major South African embassies throughout Europe and her house in Rosebank (Cape Town) has been turned into the Irma Stern Museum.

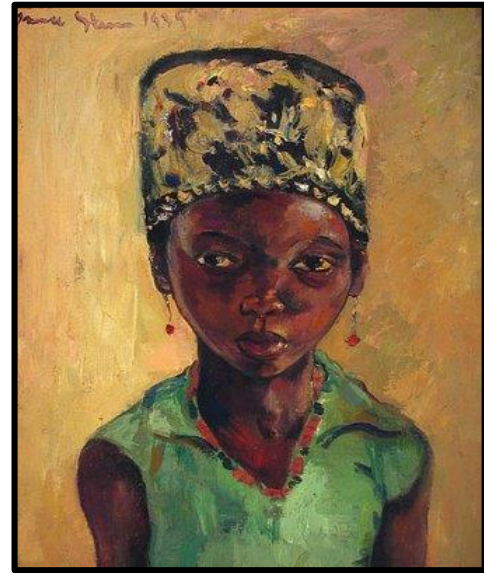
Irma Stern's paintings are bold and emotionally intense



Portrait of a young girl



Portrait of a young girl

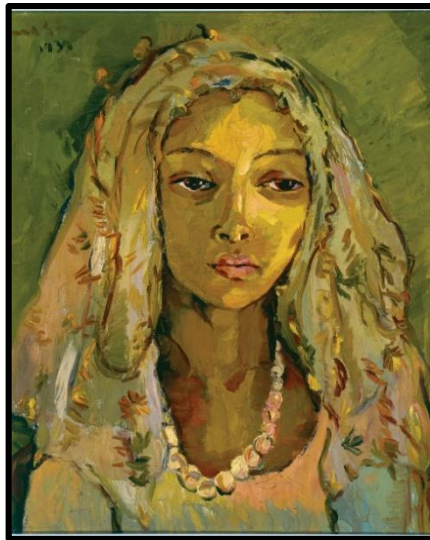


Portrait of a young girl

It took time for Stern's use of modernism and her primary tools of colour and rhythm to find acceptance in the conservative art world of South Africa



Malay girl

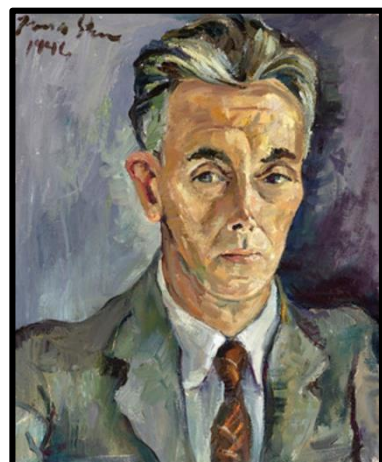


Portrait of a young Malay girl



African Woman

Stern used oils and water colours along with charcoal and gouache to create her works.



Gouache is a type of paint, and its main appeal is that it is water-based.

Other than that, it is very similar to acrylics. However, the fact that it's water-based renders it different uses than acrylics. It could also be described as concentrated watercolours, which makes it heavier and more opaque and less transparent

This exceptional painting, *Portrait of Pierre Ryckman*, is a prime example of this seamless blend of painterly passion and personal reflection.



The University of Cape Town Irma Stern Museum

The Museum, established in 1971, is governed by the University of Cape Town and the Irma Stern Trust. It aims to promote an understanding and appreciation of the life, work and travels of Irma Stern, by displaying a collection of her art and artefacts in the domestic setting of her home.

The collection shows Irma Stern's development as an artist, who worked as a painter, sculptor and ceramist. Her life-long interest in depicting people is evident in the predominance of portraits and exotic figures interspersed with lush landscapes and vibrant still lifes.



Irma's zest for life expressed in her love of abundant colour is evident everywhere in each of the rooms in which she lived, worked and enjoyed entertaining. Visitors to the museum can experience this uniquely furnished interior when viewing the sitting room, dining room and studio retained in the manner left by the artist.



Irma Stern travelled extensively in Europe and explored Southern Africa, Zanzibar and the Congo. These trips provided a wide range of subject matter for her paintings and gave her opportunities to acquire and assemble an eclectic collection of artefacts for her home.

'It was a shock to me to see how the natural picturesqueness of the native in his kraal had almost disappeared ... Today he has submitted to civilization ... he wears Everyman's clothes and boots. He looks odd and drab in this garb ... to those of us who saw the beauty of the native in his natural state the change is sad.'