



Feyona van Stom
REVISITED

gallery

manora



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A Journey through frozen moments in time





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Curator's note

A densely forested canyon, sculpted into shape by the Waghora River in Western Maharashtra, turns into a veritable art gallery resplendent with some of India's oldest known Buddhist art, as this labyrinth of scooped out rock extant dating back to the Seventh century BC, became a powerful center of Buddhist theology and artistic patronage.

The brush and the chisel worked in tandem, absorbed in the traditions of ancient Indian Art yet inspired by a Hellenistic approach to sculpture and painted Murals. The viewer is transfixed by the vivaciousness of the female forms, yet never as an object of desire. The myriad, seemingly never ending Jatakas or Stories, animated narratives of both contemporary palace life and that of the common man in Renaissance-like embodiments of Humanism, making their movements and expressions seem like magical, frozen moments in time. These Masterpieces in Antiquity have inexorably drawn artists and historians back to reflect on them again and again.

I was introduced to Feyona van Stom's ceramic sculptural work a decade ago. Her work celebrated the female form in all its graceful dynamism. Her sculptural forms have a charming lyricism to them that evoked a sense

of beauty, grace, movement and comfort in their own femininity. Women depicted in the innumerable Jatakas of Ajanta Murals seem often the backbone of much of the myriad narratives of contemporary palace life, in the Life of Buddha as a prince, emotional drama as it unfolded for example, when he decides to leave home.

Feyona van Stom's style and aesthetics were the perfect fit for REVISITED. Her hand-built ceramic forms express her joy of the lively, theatrical expressionism found in Ajanta's depictions of contemporary palace life. In an intriguing dialogue, her body of work is a delightful contrast of not just in the materials, genre and dimensions used, but a reflection on the extraordinary talent of the Ajanta mural painter in his depiction of women in his compositions. Their garments and enigmatic expressions have a convincing immediacy, dramatic and very much "in-the-moment", drawing us inexorably into their world of prayer, shock, love, anger, dance, peace, prayer, motherhood, wisdom and contemplation, never as objects, but full of life and palpable energy, despite the ravages of time. Van Stom's work highlights this Woman of Substance, in a celebration of the feminine spirit as perhaps the very principle of life itself.

Art Weaves is proud to present REVISITED.







Feyona van Stom

"I have always been interested in people - the form and the shape is the interest. We come in all shapes and sizes. All of them are part of life and who we are. I work almost exclusively with the female form. Having been asked so many times, I have had a lot of time to consider why the female form. Because I am female, and most of my friends are too. I have 3 stepsons and 3 sons - only one daughter made this house a very male dominated house, but that isn't the reason, or not the only reason - the female shape is more interesting, there are more variations and women are more inclined to twist their shape than men. Is this true? Well you only have to look at the hundreds of torsos I have created to see the endless varieties of shape and movement. Then also there is the technique which to me is always changing. Can I make a torso in my sleep - I have been told I can, but no, I need to see where I'm going.

Life drawing groups and classes are necessary for me to work out how other people move. My torsos come alive with the process of firing. Work starts and goes up quickly, suddenly the body is there, it needs a bisque firing first - for the strength and then, decision time, colour? Sometimes. Raku, Woodfire, Pitfire, blackfire, dryglaze, shino glazes, matt or shiny? oxidation firing, reduction firing are some of the choices. Some work and some don't. Some techniques don't work for years and then they suddenly do.

I am part of Barbara Campbell-Allen's woodfire team - I helped to build this kiln, and worked with Barbara in her earlier kiln. Barbara is a terrific teacher and enthusiast, with a completely different style of work - but has always encouraged me to push ahead. The ash glazes from woodfire that settle on my work give them bumps and shine, matt and light in different places - unselected, random. The fire licks the bodies in a very special way giving its' own shading and earthy colour. I feel my sculptures have their own personalities, their own life.

When I was invited by gallery Manora's founder Gomathi Suresh, to exhibit in Bengaluru, the brief was to dwell on the contemporary palace life, at the time of the 7th century B.C.- particularly the females in the palace, who were the principals in the story of Buddha - how life was for them as dancers, maids, queens - their devotion, love and caring. The exhibition was to be called 'Revisited'.

The images I looked at are from books on the Ajanta cave drawings and sculptures in the 28 caves discovered in 1819 by a British expedition, in a ravine some 200 miles north of Bombay. These caves were probably used as monasteries by early Buddhist followers who carved out a quiet space to meditate. Stone carvers carved out massive caves and decorated them with graceful figures, paintings and murals depicting the life of Buddha, scenes of processions, ladies and their handmaidens, jewelled animals, and

fantastical birds and beasts. These caves are the only remaining evidence of painting styles that first developed in India and then travelled via the silk road across Asia to China, Japan and Korea.

These sculptures are my impression of the sculptures and paintings. I grew up in Hong Kong and these stories about Buddha were not new to me. I let these images and the historical scenes drift around in my subconscious for months before starting on the works. I had been asked to show the humanity, the feelings and the expressions in the dancing figures as well as their grace. Once I started, I decided to work on the heads as paintings, and leave the body in my usual style with perhaps more movement, variety and sensuality. In all I created about 50 heads to choose from, and many dancing ladies - only one is different from my usual style.

This brief is another challenge in my art life, one of many challenges. I don't take on many commissions, but this was an interesting idea - to make my work as a reminder of ancient sculptures. Previously I have made a few commissions, including a 3 metre tall sculpture of a torso cast in Bronze for Huangshu Wetlands Park in Changsha, Hunan, China in 2015. I have owned and run two successful galleries 'The Art Gallery at Whale Beach' and 'gallery41' in Woolloomooloo in Sydney, Australia. I have exhibited my art at SOFA, NY., and in Chicago USA over 7 years. I have also exhibited my work and other artists' works in Art Sydney 4 times.

I have been the vice president and am the present president of the Sculptors Society in NSW and we actively promote and exhibit works by a large group of artists regularly in NSW and beyond. I'm on the committee of Harbour Sculpture on the harbour at Woolwich, and have been on the committee of art projects and workshops, and also donated many of my works to charities. I have solo exhibitions regularly with Mu gallery on Headland

park on Sydney's foreshore, and have been part of many group exhibitions. My work is in private and public collections all over the world, and I hope it finds a happy audience in India.

On the Technical side - which will interest some potters, I like to work with a groggy clay - that is, clay that has been fired, ground, and then added to clay. This gives the clay strength and stands up stronger. I like to work with clay as you can work from the inside and the outside. It is completely open to techniques and I always do a bisque firing as a first firing, once the clay has dried. I use slips and stains when I need colour. I am always trying new glazes, new primitive firings and new ideas - some work for me and some fall by the wayside."

Feyona van Stom





T22

T18





T18



T15



T24



T21



T16



T20





T11



T23



T17



T12



T19



T14



T25





T13



H8



H1



H4



H9 H10





H5



H2




H6



H7

REFERENCE SHEET

H1.	Head	20 x 16 x 18 cms x 1 Kg	Disbilief green glaze red lips
H2.	Head	19 x 14 x 21 cms x 1 Kg	Apsara pit fired, white, blue, black
H3.	Head	22 x 14 x 19 cms x 1 kg	Rapt brown with big eyes and bun
H4.	Head	20 x 21 x 19 cms x 1 Kg	Auspicious light brown, red lips, bun
H5.	Head	19 x 19 x 15 cms x 1 Kg	Apsara 2 abstract dry glaze yellow
H6.	Head	19 x 14 x 17 cms x 1 Kg	Conversation abstract, woodfired brown
H7.	Head	14 x 17 x 12 cms x 1 Kg	Devotee reduction fired thick white glaze
H8.	Head	20 x 23 x 18 cms x 1.5 Kg	Vira(Heroic) blue with big slanted eyes
H9.	Head	22 x 15 x 19 cms x 1Kg	Harmony dry glazed, orange eyes red lips
H10.	Head	22 x 15 x 19 cms x 1Kg	Offering dry glazed orange, red lips
T11.	Torso	38 x 30 x 19 cms x 2.5 Kg	Mara (Temptation of Buddha) raku, glaze
T12.	Torso	28 x 22 x 21 cms x 2 Kg	Fearless raku white dancer
T13.	Torso	27 x 21 x 17 cms x 2 Kg	Virtue white glazed sculpture
T14.	Torso	29 x 17 x 13 cms x 1 Kg	Heroic raku dark glaze - blue and gold
T15.	Torso	44 x 26 x 25 cms x 4 Kg	Generosity cream, woodfired
T16.	Torso	35 x 22 x 17 cms x 2.5 Kg	Peace dry glazed green and brown
T17.	Torso	30 x 17 x 15 cms x 1.5 Kg	Harmony raku white glaze
T18.	Torso	20 x 23 x 18 cms x 1.5 Kg	Wisdom pitfired dark clay, head with bun
T19.	Torso	37 x 25 x 17 cms x 3 Kg	Laughter sgraffito dark clay with white lines
T20.	Torso	7 x 32 x 22 cms x 5 Kg	Heroic reduction fired shino glaze
T21.	Torso	48 x 34 x 23 cms x 5 Kg	Joy green dry glaze stoneware fired
T22.	Torso	46 x 30 x 22 cms x 4 Kg	Regal black fired
T23.	Torso	26 x 25 x 21 cms x 2.5 Kg	Beauty pitfired dancer - white, blue, smokey
T24.	Torso	50 x 39 x 16 cms x 3 Kg	Anguish green dry glazed
T25.	Torso	50 x 32 x 23 cms x 3 Kg	Rapture painted with head hair, necklaces.

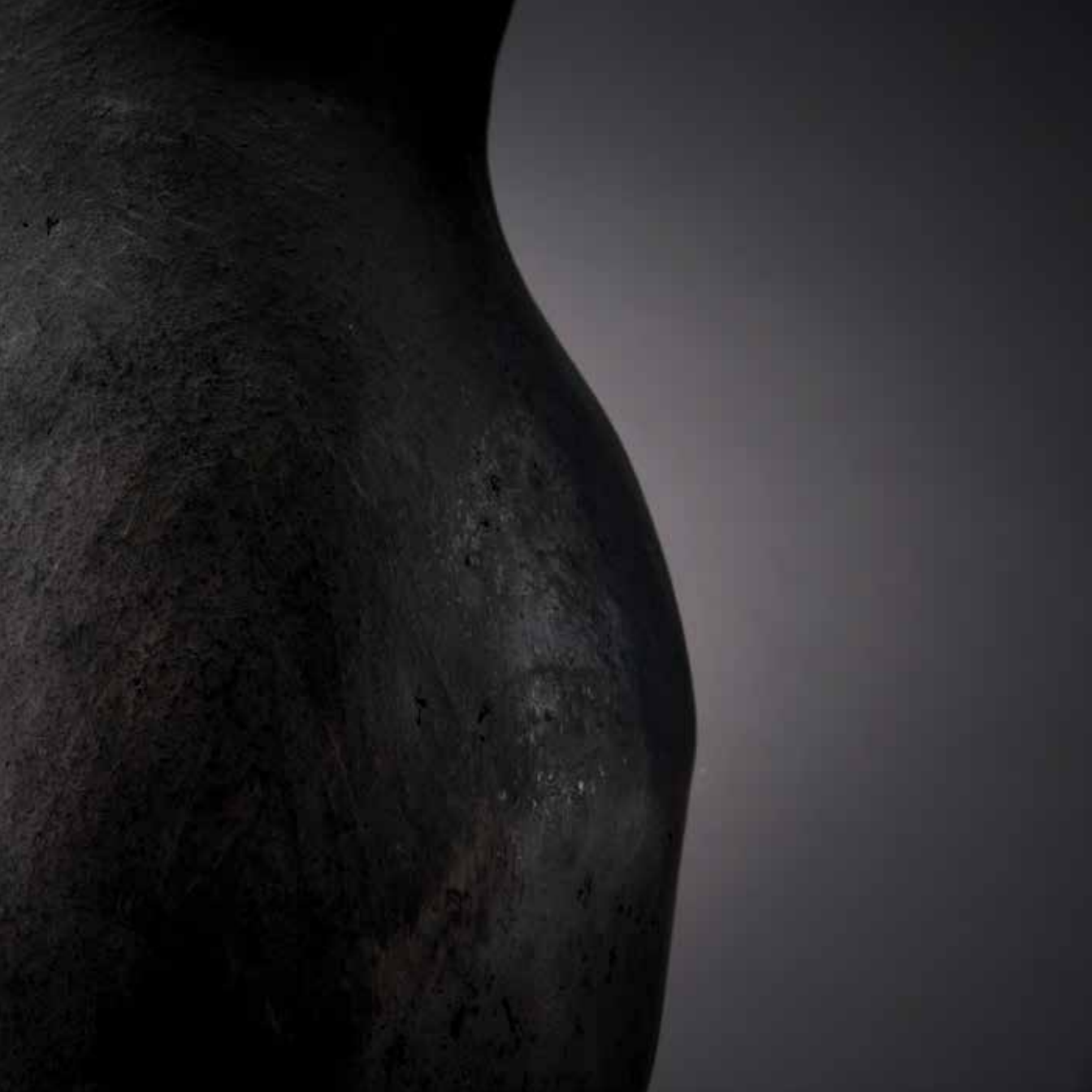


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