

by Angie Moses
photos courtesy of Zimsculpt

Stone sculptures come to Daniel Stowe

African art
showcased
throughout
the summer

DSBG

Daniel Stowe
Botanical Garden

Zimbabwe Sculpture Exhibit

June 27-September 28

(Opening reception: June 26, 6 p.m., \$20)

www.zimsculpt.com

Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden
6500 S. New Hope Road
Belmont, NC 28012
www.dsbgo.org

Admission: \$12

Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily

Guinea Fowl, by Passmore Mupindika

www.pridemagazine.com

More than 100 stone sculptures from Zimbabwe will grace the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden this summer. Some pieces will weigh over a ton, rise over nine feet tall, and require a forklift to move. Some will fit in the palm of your hand. All will be available for sale.

Along with the sculptures placed throughout the grounds, Daniel Stowe also will display special plants representative of Zimbabwe, such as grasses, hibiscus and a lily that is the national flower. The gift store will offer baskets and other African crafts.

The exhibit starts June 27 and runs through September 28. Two of the Zimbabwean sculptors (Passmore Mupindika and Patrick Sephani) will be in residency at Daniel Stowe for the duration of the exhibit, and a third (Dominic Benhura) will visit for a week at the end of August.

Zimbabwe carving tradition

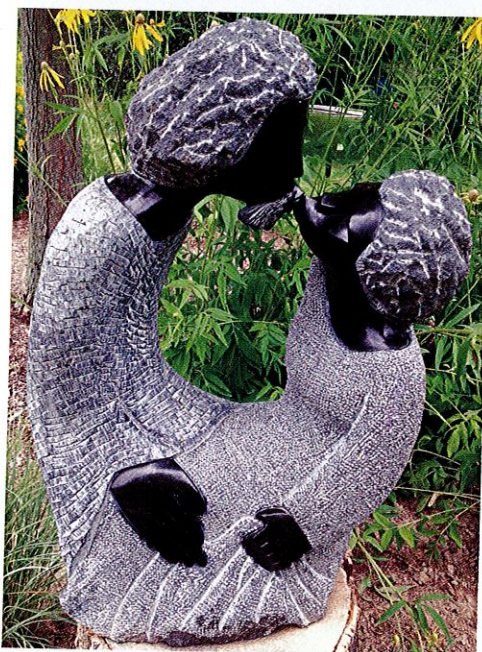
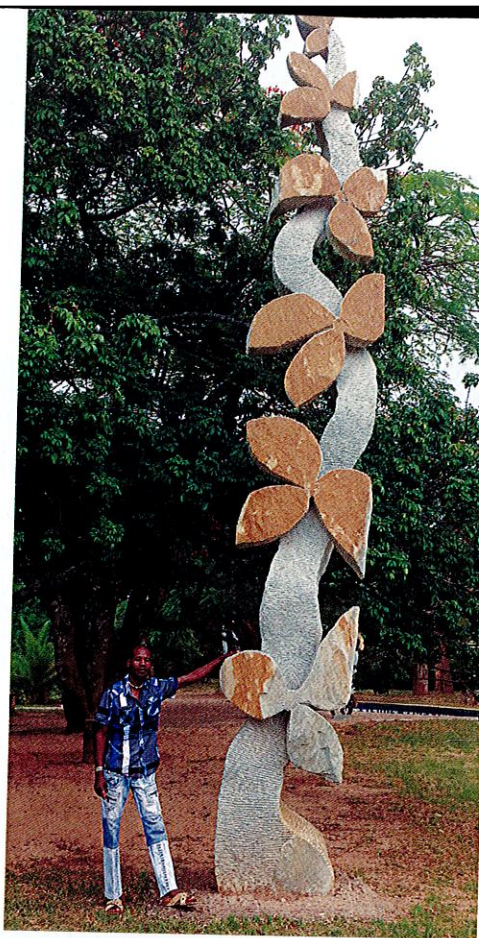
Zimbabwe means "House of Stone" in the Shona language. When the former British colony, known as Rhodesia, gained independence in 1980, it chose the name Zimbabwe in commemoration of its ancient stone carving tradition.

The country is rich in hard stone deposits, such as springstone, serpentine and opal stone, which all offer good resistance to the sculptor and can be polished to a high shine. Each Zimbabwe sculpture is carved out of one piece of stone using hand tools, not machines. The artists achieve an amazing range of surfaces: smooth, pitted surfaces that look like metal, bumpy natural surfaces and an array of dot-line patterns. A 6-foot sculpture can take up to four months to complete.

Familiar African style

The Shona sculpture style will seem familiar — elongated figures, especially men, faces resembling African masks and faces broken down into geometric shapes. Picasso, Matisse, Miro and Modigliani all were influenced by this African style. The Shona look is sleek and stylized, whether a piece is abstract or representative of botanicals, animals or people.

Shona sculpture as it is known today, did not take root until the 1950's when the director of the Rhodesian Art Gallery, Frank Whitten, began equipping native artists and bringing their art in Paris, London and New York. Although the Shona people have a long tradition of carving stone for buildings and non-art purposes, they did not widely embrace it as an art form until this time. Visitors of the Atlanta airport may recognize the Shona style from the airport's permanent collection of sculptures, featuring Zimbabwe's top artists, including Dominic Benhura. The pieces, which line the



In Love, by Patrick Sephani

pedestrian corridor between the T Gates and Concourse A, debuted in 2001.

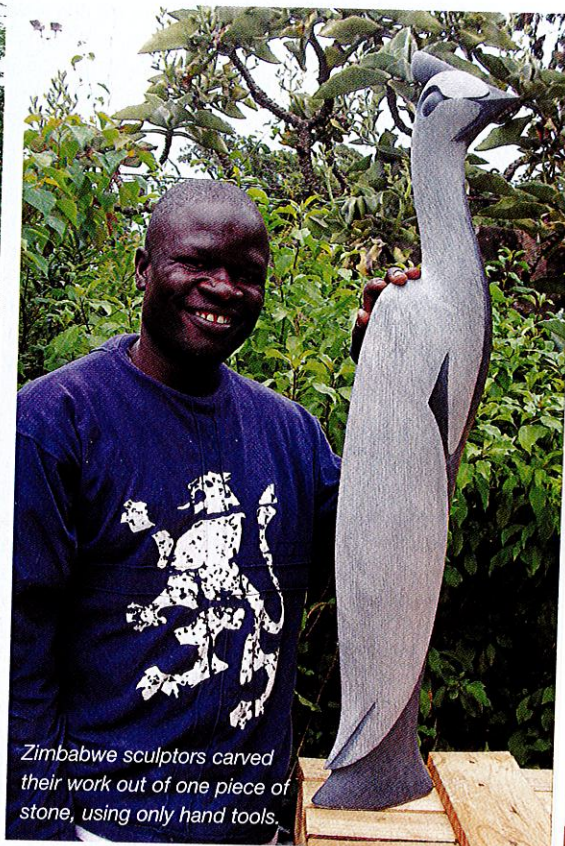
Natural garden companions

The organic stone and curved lines of Zimbabwe sculpture blend well in the garden setting, and the durability of the stone can hold its own against Mother Nature.

Jim Hoffman, director of marketing at Daniel Stowe, says, "We are always on the lookout for different kinds of art that we can display here that is a good

companion to our horticultural display. We thought this art was gorgeous."

Zimbabwe artists allow a stone's uniqueness to tell them what to sculpt. Like gardening, the sculpture is a dance between nature's will and man's.



Zimbabwe sculptors carved their work out of one piece of stone, using only hand tools.

Patrick Sephani, one of the artists who will be in residence over the summer, says, "I have to communicate with the stone itself and try to bring out what's inside it."

Zimsculpt

The company running the exhibit is called Zimsculpt. Based in Harare, Zimbabwe, the owners stay in direct communication with the 248 artists they represent — artists who span four generations and range from those just starting out to late-career, highly collectible artists.

English curator Vivienne Prince Coisette founded Zimsculpt in 2000. Coisette had been promoting British artists of various mediums, but when she saw a show of Zimbabwe sculpture, she says she "fell in love."

She has been promoting Zimbabwe sculpture ever since at exhibits in England, Dubai, Bahrain, Canada and the United States. Zimsculpt first connected with Daniel Stowe through the Botanical Garden in Naples, Fla., which has sponsored an exhibit in the past.

Coisette says of Zimbabwe sculpture, "It's got a lot of history, this art form. It's not just craft. It's not masks or tribal. It's very contemporary." ■