

GUARDIANS

by Shona Nunan



Earth Guardian – on exhibition in Saint Tropez

2015

Bronze 2 of 3

206 x 76 x 24 cm

“The ‘Earth Guardian’ has come to me from shields, from leaves, from feathers. Her colour is the reddy brown tones of soil. I love this gentle feminine form that rises from the earth, barely touching it, yet her cloak-like shield is encompassing and incorporating the rhythms of the life that flow like a river around her inner body. Her inner body comes inspired from a beautiful twig I found with the seed pods stuck to the surface, like symbols of fertility and abundance.”





Two Warriors

2021

bronze edition 1 of 8

200 x 79 x 23 cm



Nunan's latest series of Guardians have become warriors, perhaps for a time of greater vigilance. These warrior figures are the closest image to an early memory of traveling in the outback of Australia with her artist father and coming across caves that were guarded by three spirit guardians with their arms crossed and hands outstretched warding off intruders. The image has stayed with Nunan and the influence of the crossed arms have come up many times in the work, like a strong warning to respect the space. The cross appears now in the shield. These particular Guardians have a strongly defined influence of the sword in the torso of the male figure and the female figure with the shield has a spear like influence. Nunan is captivated by the sparseness of sword and shield and finds their almost 2 dimensional elongated forms part of her story of looking for the powerful essence in all things.

Warrior Shield

2021

bronze

edition 2 of 3

244 x 74 x 46 cm



The Guardians

2013

edition 3 of 3

M 237 x 45 x 16 cm

F 237 x 53 x 20 cm

“The Guardians emerged in my work at first as ‘Night’ and ‘Day’ and then they became little fecund women figures on hilltops and single figures in the landscape, ethereal figures connecting to the spirit of the land. In other ancient cultures I have found Guardians too. The Etruscans, the Cycladic Greeks, the Egyptians, the Africans, the pre-Columbians... The Guardians are amongst the great archetypes of civilization and deep down, even today, and without hocus pocus, we know we have to protect the things that are sacred to us, our inner selves, our children, our homes. The Guardians at an entrance are saying, come in, but be respectful. For me, these Guardians symbolically represent the balance of life, they are yin and yang, male and female, conscious and unconscious, night and day.”



Earth Guardian
1999
Bronze unique cast
236 x 30 x 30 cm

This sculpture of 'Earth Guardian', in the mode of Nunan's amphora series, has also a sense of a leaning ancient column with its simplicity of form and elongated protective presence.



Sentinel

2016

bronze

Edition 1 of 6

181 x 48 x 30

'Sentinel' is a strong woman form standing on guard. She comes inspired by the ancient sword, the hilt with its ornate guard and pommel becoming her body and the blade, the graceful length of her legs. In a two dimensional way the sword figure relates to Nunan's vessel series of women forms. The simple strength of the lines in the sword and the lovely swirl of the guards have enriched the language of her woman forms as guardians and sentinels.



Guardians
2020
bronze
edition 2 of 3
250 cm tall



Spirit Guardian
2017
bronze
edition 2 of 8
228 x 67 x 47 cm

The Spirit Guardian came to me in 2011 when we were staying on the beach in Thailand. I found a beautiful segment of tortoise shell that to me looked like the male partner in one of my guardian figures. At this stage in my work, I was a lot more figurative so it took years before this inspirational find was able to evolve with meaning into my work. Spirit Guardian is also evocative of other influences in my work including the shield and the mask of ancient cultures. For me, the Spirit Guardian is about the creation of a form that one recognises as a protector, that in its simplicity and strength it is representative of the essence of life.

This sculpture is highly textured on the 'front' side where there is the reminiscence of human form in the line of the body, the head and the firm anchoring of the lower legs to the earth, the flat rectangular form around it, like a cloak. The texture of this front side has a feeling of being feathery, and I guess this come from my constant delight in feathers and their ability to make you feel swathed in softness, the wing like curl of the feather forms, creating that feel of the mother enfolding her chick. The 'back' of this Guardian is a firm hard surface, like the outer shell. There are some lines that came from the original tortoise shell that for me are the marking of the shoulders and backbone and I have incorporated this 'segmentation' into other guardian figures as well.

'Spirit Guardian' is a quite two dimensional piece in that it is not rounded with sides. Its form is bent gently towards the viewer and feels like it towers over one. Its presence is benign.



Sun Warrior
2004
bronze unique
149 x 42 x 23 cm

Sun Warrior is inspired by Cycladic and early Greek sculpture and above all by the burgeoning strength and power of a young boy turning into a man. These adolescent years are warrior-like as the young man destroys his boyhood and fearlessly engages in the new journey, ready to fight at any moment for his freedom.

The warrior in Nunan's work has emerged as a symbol of the 'fight for life' and a metaphor for courage, strength, endurance and self sacrifice for the good.



Two Earth Guardians

2015

bronze

edition of 8

99 x 86 x 32 cm

A theme in Nunan's work for many years, the Guardians were at first inspired from travels with her artist father when she was a young girl, through the outback of Australia. Discoveries of caves and their sacred painted entities guarding the entrances to these caves, stayed with her as important symbols of protection and safety.

These Earth Guardian forms have evolved and been inspired by shields both African and New Guinean, by beautiful finds of shells and seed pods on sticks, leaves and feathers. They are a pair, male and female, representing the opposite strengths and unity of night and day, conscious and unconscious.



Guardians on the Hill

1994

bronze, unique

20 x 21 x 15 cm



Three
1993
bronze 1 of 8
96 x 74 cm

Three, three women, guardians of the cave.





Chrysalis

2014

bronze 1of8

201 x 32 x 32 cm

Chrysalis comes from a period when we had many young acrobats from Cirque du Soleil in our life, bouncing around us at our arts festival in Bagni di Lucca. Acrobats have a limited working life due to the huge stresses on their body. This is the moment when one of them is no longer able to work as the athlete she was. It is the moment when she must transform, reinvent herself. She feels bound and restricted while she seeks answers to her next road. Chrysalis is a metaphor for life when we must transform ourselves to become even greater, even more beautiful, more courageous than we were before.





Flower
2014
bronze
edition of 8
92 x 10 x 9 cm

Pure innocent youth emerging like a bud into life,
ready to unfurl into a flower.





Guardians

2006

bronze edition 2 of 3

153 x 31 x 12cm Base 37 x 33cm



Guardians
2009
bronze, edition 4 of 8
127 x 24 x 9 male
125 x 28 x 10 female





Acolyte
2000
bronze edition 3 of 3
167 x 52 x 20 cm



Devotee
2003
bronze ed 3 of 8
192 x 52 x 20 cm



Joy
2014
bronze
edition 2 of 8





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