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IRMA STERN and HER WORK

SA LIFE AND THE
WOMAN'S FORUM

I WAS born in 1894, at Schweizer-Reneke, in the Eastern Transvaal, of German parentage; and my early childhood was spent in its lonely surroundings.

It was in Germany that I received my schooling, but half of the period was passed in journeying to and from South Africa.

My travels left in my youthful mind deep impressions of the beauty of the scenery and the native life in Africa, and of the cultural values of Europe.

At quite an early age, I spent all my spare time drawing and painting, trying to express the life around around me.

In 1913 I went to the Weimar Academy, attending it for several years. My teachers were Professor Gavi Melchers (Holland) and Professor Mackensen (Germany). After that I went to Berlin, and studied under Martin Brandenburg.

My first exhibition was in 1918, in Berlin, at one of the leading art galleries (Fritz Gurlitt's). After that my work was exhibited throughout the Continent, exhibitions being held in Chemnitz, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Hanover, Breslau, Vienna, and other cities.

I had the experience of these exhibitions and the acknowledgment of the European Press behind me when I returned to South Africa in 1920. Two years later I exhibited, for the first time in the Union, at Cape Town, and was surprised beyond words to find that art could create animosity. In this same year I had the good fortune to discover a place unspoilt by civilisation, where I was able to find native life in all its beauty and splendour, and where were painted a great many of my large compositions, which are now hanging in European galleries. This work I never showed in South Africa, as "native" studies were not very popular here at that time.



Miss Irma Stern.

[Photo: Leon Levson.]