

Of Lightness and Burdens

LYNN
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ANTIOCH CALIFORNIA



REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF AMANA JOHNSON

Stones are a lot like people: we emerge together from the cosmic chaos of the original word; we participate in the cycle of growth and dissolution that is life on this planet; we know what it is to be raised high and ground down.

When I first saw the sculpture of Amana Johnson, I was captured by the immense serenity of the faces, a calm that implied the wisdom obtained only from long witness. Many of the stones themselves are from Africa, Zimbabwe, witnesses to uncounted millennia of human exaltation and suffering. The patient, lovely faces spoke to the part of me that knows without words that our drama is only a momentary passing of the seasons.

The more time I spent with Amana and her work, the more I became witness to that balance of opposites in her work. The hard, raw stone becoming supple and fluid, diaphanous cloth; the sudden emergence of figures that had always been there; the questions, exploration, and silent answers given in the falling away of stone. Something ancient? Yes, but also something new. I witnessed moments of unguarded emotion frozen still in the secret reverie of *Thinking of My Beloved.*, the trembling and submitting trust of *Tenderness*, and the brazen vulnerability of *Cracking Open My Shell*. I watched tearfully at the crumbling of stone from places where I thought surely it should remain, only to hear the words ring again that, "There are no mistakes". The working of stone is a lesson of life. The surface is not where the heart is, it lies in a deeper place. It is not for us to impose our ideas on what already is. We must be ready to hear what the stone is saying.

A woman, a chisel, a piece of stone almost too heavy to lift but capable of being carved, of speaking and teaching. It is clear that Amana Johnson possesses the ancient languages of earth and dirt; understands how to *listen* to the unspoken. I believe that Amana is an old soul, channeling the wisdom of stone to help us find a new place of greater harmony and balance in our Lightness and Burden. These stones and images stand, hands open, inviting us to witness, receive and change.

- Dr. Lorraine Bonner

A ONE WOMAN SHOW FEATURING AMANA J. JOHNSON
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