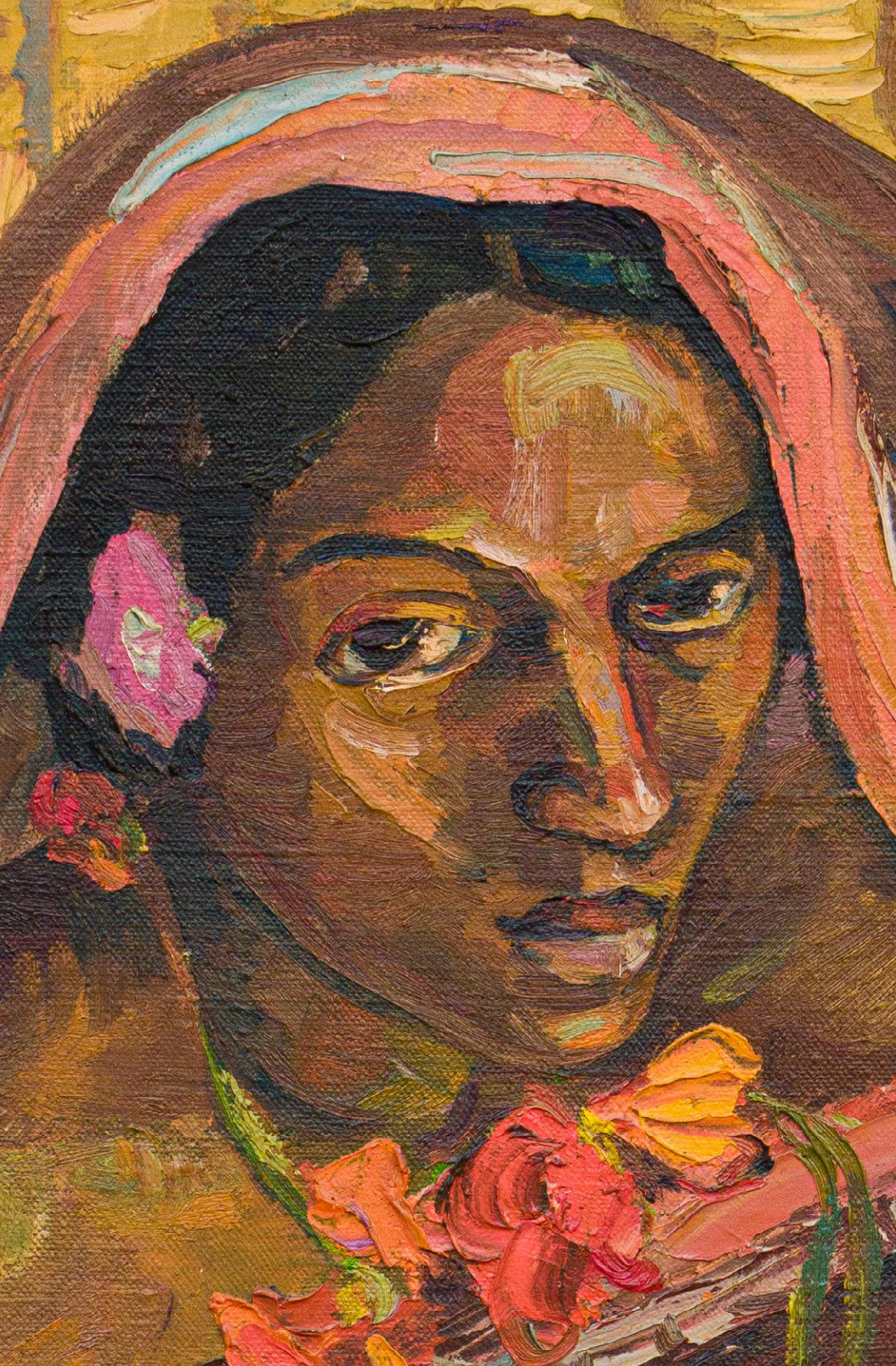


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IRMA STERN  
*Indian Girl, Zanzibar*

PRICE ON REQUEST  
VIEWING BY APPOINTMENT

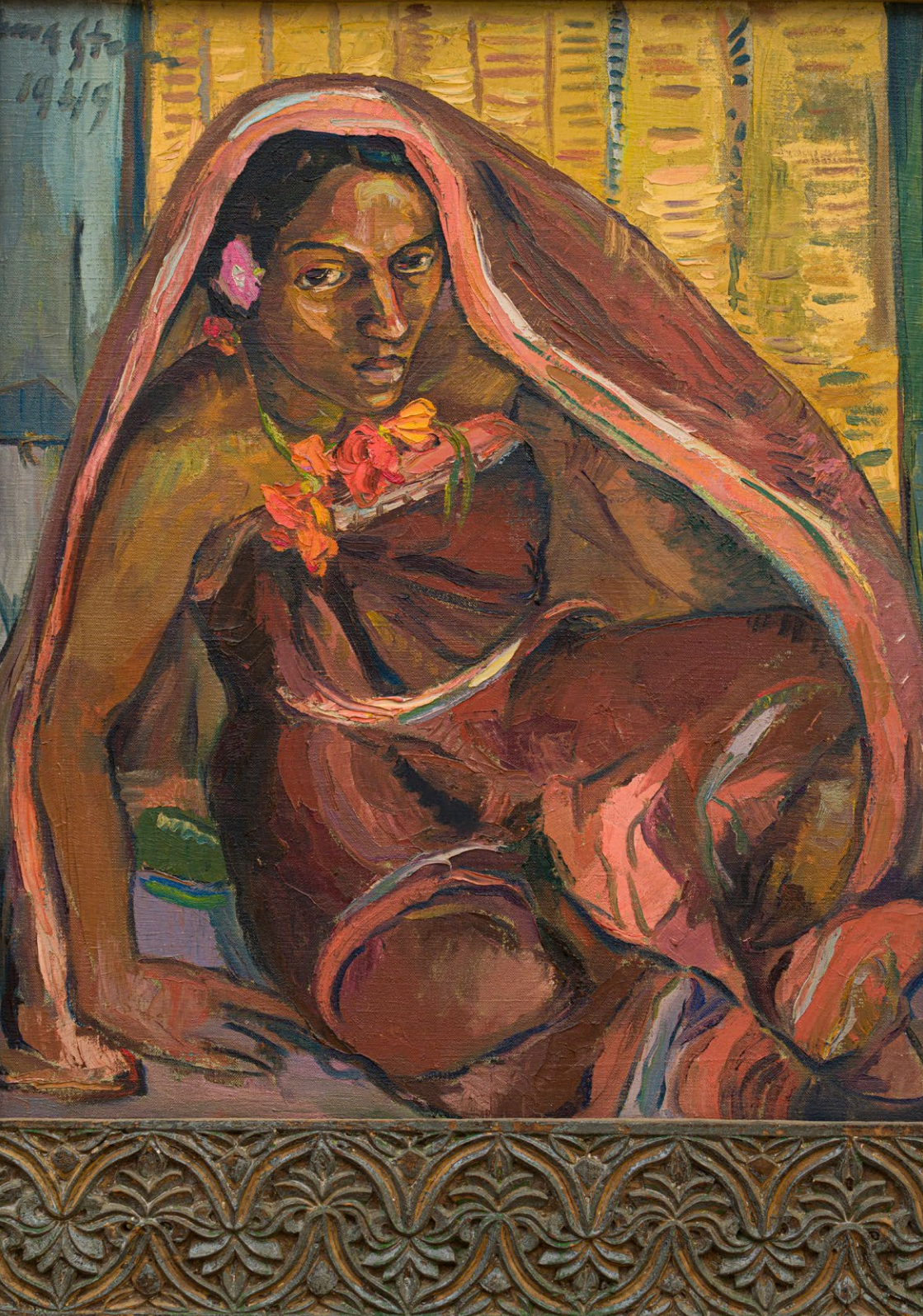
ENQUIRIES  
Kirsty Colledge  
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+27 83 326 8283



### *Indian Girl, Zanzibar*

signed and dated 1949; inscribed with the artist's name, the title, the date, medium and catalogue number 57 on a Grosvenor Gallery label adhered to the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name on an Irma Stern memorial exhibition label for Grosvenor Gallery adhered to the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name, the title 'Indian-meisie, Zanzibar' and the title 'Indian Girl', the date and catalogue number 37 on a Pretoria Art Museum label adhered to the reverse; inscribed with the title 'Indian Girl, Zanzibar', the date, medium and numbered 37 on an Homage to Irma Stern Exhibition label for Rembrandt Art Centre adhered to the reverse

96,5 by 86,5 cm excluding frame  
121 by 98,5 by 5 cm including frame  
oil on canvas with Zanzibari frame



**PROVENANCE**

Stephan Welz & Co in Association with Sotheby's, Johannesburg, 30 August 1994, lot 330.

**EXHIBITED**

Grosvenor Gallery, London, Irma Stern Memorial Exhibition, 14 March to 15 April 1967.  
Rembrandt Art Centre and Pretoria Art Museum, Johannesburg and Pretoria, *Homage to Irma Stern*, 1968.

After another lengthy stay in Zanzibar in 1945, the island and its people lingered in Stern's imagination. Her visits provided endless exotic source material – sketches, notes, memories – of which some were published in the 1948 travelogue *Zanzibar*. Back in her studio in Cape Town, many evocative recollections were developed into new canvases. Not to lose a palpable sense of place, standout examples were framed using the intricately carved Zanzibari door and window mouldings that Stern had smuggled back with her. *Indian Girl, Zanzibar*, painted in 1949, is perhaps one of the artist's last masterpieces from this Zanzibar period.

A commanding, inventive and ravishing portrait, *Indian Girl, Zanzibar* shows Stern at the very peak of her powers. The young sitter, almost enveloped in her maroon and carmine sari, would have been part of the island's Bahora community. Largely descended from Hindi traders but very much a part of Zanzibar's Muslim society, these women, often beautiful and from wealthy families, appealed to Stern's aesthetic. Describing another Bahora woman, who she painted in 1945, the artist's interest was plain: 'It was a lovely harmony in this young girl, slim and tall, with the gentle movements of a well-bred race. Her eyes were like dark pools, swimming with the glance of tragedy curious in so young a face, yet so common in the eastern woman.'

Stern positioned her sitter in a curious space with blue-washed walls and a teal-framed window. Seated on a violet and green rug, with her sari caught up beneath her, she is framed by a screen or curtain built up, in the main, with horizontal dabs and layers of orange and gold. This painterly action in the background, a clever stylistic trait that added an extra layer of richness to the painting's surface, was employed in other related works such as *The Mauve Sari* from 1946.

The woman's seated pose, with one knee higher than the other, makes *Indian Girl, Zanzibar* a neat companion piece – compositionally, at least – to *Arab Priest* (1945), acquired by the Qatar Museums Authority in 2010. Considering the sitter's carefully modelled face, moreover, her enigmatic stare, the bright garland hanging from her neck, and the lilac flower pinned behind her ear, some of Gauguin's South Seas paintings come to mind too. Stern's portrait is imbued with more tenderness, however, and the created intimacy lacks any sense of threat.

...her paintings are made to be looked at and to be savoured for their energetic orchestration of colour, shape, line, tone and texture. They assert the making process, the expressive power of pictorial form and the physicality of the materials used. But, however absorbed Stern was in the process of painting, her subjects maintain their importance.

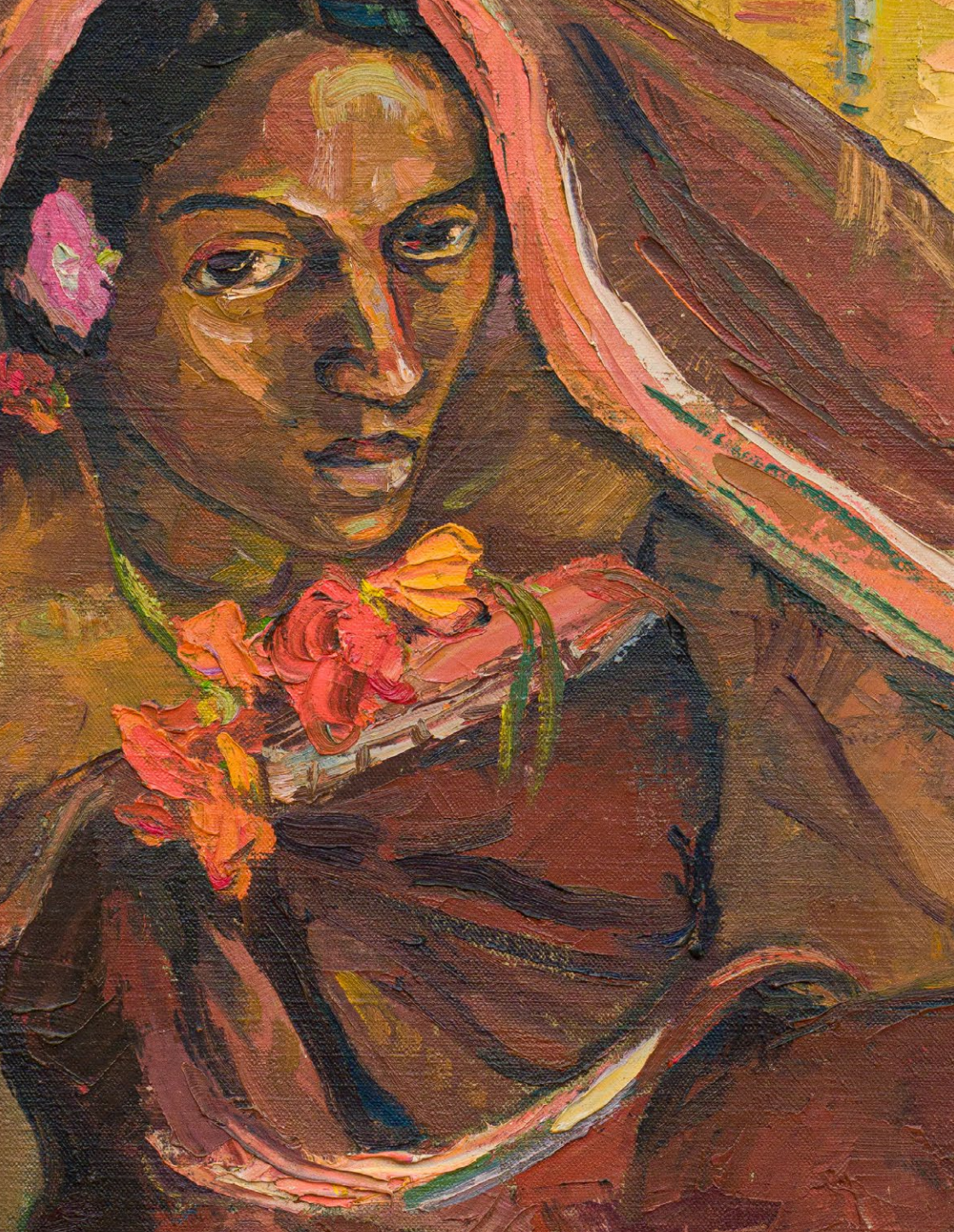
MARION ARNOLD



Irma Stern, *Arab Priest*, 1945, Qatar Museum Authority.



Irma Stern, *The Mauve Sari*, 1946.



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