

CITATION: SUSAN HILL WARD

Ms Susan Hill Ward has played an exceptional role in the recognition and preservation of South Africa's world-renowned heritage of San Rock Art. An English Major from Wellesley College, Massachusetts, Ms Ward holds a BA Honours in Social Cultural Anthropology from the University of Delaware, a second Honours from the New School in New York and a Masters programme in Western psychology.

She developed a deep interest in Japanese culture in the 1960s, which led her to study Eastern philosophies and the history of African cultures. She first encountered San rock paintings in the Cederberg in the Western Cape and subsequently read a book written by a member of the Wits Rock Art Research Institute. She contacted the Institute, and this initiated a long, close relationship with Wits.

Over the decades, Ms Ward has supported the Institute, its students, and staff, in numerous ways. The value of her support, together with her enthusiasm and passion for Rock Art, is immeasurable. She has funded prizes for the best Master's degree research proposals, has awarded generous bursaries for numerous postgraduate students and funded a five-year post in RARI. She remains in close contact with the students that she funds.

Ms Ward has also facilitated a better understanding of the imagery that is our national heritage that now features in our national coat of arms. She has contributed significantly to the recording of rock paintings that are threatened by the passage of time and, in some areas, vandalism and this outcome of her support is of national importance. She has assisted in the establishment and continuation of the African Rock Art Digital Archive which houses 300 000 records, and which is the most comprehensive archive of photographs and copies of rock art imagery in the world.

Known for facilitating public exhibitions of the Institute's collections, Ms Ward, in one notable instance, funded a beautifully illustrated handbook to accompany the exhibition of this work. She has also accompanied members of RARI in the field to witness them at work in the rock shelters, from the Drakensberg to France. She makes herself available to support members of the Institute when they lecture around the world or when they receive awards.

In addition to her two decades of support for the Rock Art Research Institute, Ms Ward has sponsored a permanent professorship in Consciousness Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. She has also helped to train a new generation of researchers at Wits and is thereby a contributor to the preservation of South Africa's national heritage and of the world's understanding of our shared history.

It is for these reasons and in recognition of her achievements that it is befitting that the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg awards a Gold Medal to Susan Hill Ward.