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IT ALL BEGAN WITH A CALABASH

African artist to exhibit in U.S.

The Argus Correspondent: Pretoria, Wednesday.

LUCKY SIBIYA bought a leaky calabash eight years ago, and carved a design on it because he could not bear to see it stand idle.

He showed it to an artist friend doing woodcuts in low relief. He in Soweto, and since then he has painted colours on to the wood. never looked back.

Now regarded as one of South Africa's most promising African artists, Mr Sibiya is exhibiting at the St Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal and next year leaves for the United States where 15 of his works will go on exhibition in Washington.

'At first I broke the calabash and made a design by gluing the pieces on to a board,' he said, 'but on the advice of Bill Enslin, I decided to use the shape of the calabash as an integral part of the design.'

GREAT DEMAND

There was soon a great demand for his work — which is characterised by bold motifs and intricate design — and he started

doing woodcuts in low relief. He painted colours on to the wood.

These woodcuts form the main part of the exhibition which Mr Sibiya calls his 'couples exhibition,' because of the two strong forms in each of the works that are balanced and related to one another.

'I try to express the relationship and communication between two things, the beautiful fruits of unity,' he said.

'MATCHBOX HOUSE'

A Zulu, Mr Sibiya was born in Vryheid, in Natal, 30 years ago. He moved to Johannesburg in 1953 where he has been living in Soweto, in what he refers to as his 'well known matchbox house' since then.

Recently he ventured into a

new medium — carving on elephant bones.

'The bone has a beautiful texture, but it is difficult to get and has to dry in the sun for a long time to get all the oil out,' he said.

The shapes of the huge bones are incorporated into the work, and the carved sections are blackened.

Mr Sibiya will not exhibit these works in America as the cost of transporting them would be too high.

His forthcoming trip will be his first visit overseas.

The Pretoria exhibition will continue until the end of the month.

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