

NATIVE ART GENIUS

AMAZING SCULPTOR IN CITY

ZULU LORE

MODELS OF WILD LIFE

PRAISE FROM PRINCESS ALICE

N.M. 10/10/56

(From Our City Correspondent.)

Maritzburg, Oct. 10.—The Native Economic Commission is making a special visit to Maritzburg tomorrow to inspect the work of a Native sculptor, 17 years of age, who has been acclaimed a genius by Native experts of Natal and who enjoys the distinction of being the only Native who has been awarded a prize at the Royal Agricultural Show. His name is Hezekiel Ntuli, and he is the proudest Native in Natal for his handiwork elicited the praise of Princess Alice, who is now the possessor of four of his most amazing models of African wild life and Native lore.

Humble Workshop

Hezekiel is a discovery of Mr. Stanley Williams, a well-known Maritzburg resident, who now has him indentured by arrangement with the Native Affairs Department. In a little back yard in Chamber Street, Hezekiel's fingers are all day fashioning birds, beasts and humans out of rough clay. He uses no tools of any de-



Model by the young Native of an elephant killing a leopard.

scription. In Mr. Williams' office there are more than 200 of these models. These models display a remarkable sense of observation and an altogether unique knowledge of the wild life of Zululand. Hezekiel has endeavoured most successfully to represent some of the incidents which he regards as landmarks in his life and he has even recaptured ideas which came to him in dreams.

Devoutly religious, there is a fervent enthusiasm about all of his work. Leading citizens of South Africa have inspected his work and without exception they have acclaimed him as a natural genius.

In his own words, Hezekiel was born "Ten hours from Eshowe." Mr. Williams discovered him in October, 1920, on the pavement in Loop Street. He was endeavouring to sell a miniature model of a lion. He was so poor that he might have

not a bit interested, declared Mr. Williams, but his dog was. It was a big black retriever and it circled round the model with hair bristling with rage. The rugged simplicity and natural beauty of the model appealed to Mr. Williams and from that day the boy came under his personal charge.

Hezekiel is wonderfully well developed for his 17 years. His hands are those of an artist, with fingers of exceptional length.

Dream Model

There are models of all kinds—Hezekiel rarely takes more than a day to complete a model, and sometimes he makes two or three in a day. There are elephants and tigers and Native chiefs, and all are associated in some way or other with incidents in his life. One night he dreamed that a Native priest was endeavouring to convert a khela. The next night he dreamt that the conversion had been accomplished, and in two very interesting models he has captured the incidents. The converted man has an intense look on his face. It is this attention to detail that makes his work so interesting.

Intensely dramatic was his simple narrative of this study, depending entirely upon his memory and imagination. He explained that when he should have been looking after his father's cattle he was busy looking at a group of baboons hunting for spiders and scorpions for their evening meal. He heard scuffling and bellowing and saw one of his father's bulls being gored by a buffalo. Hezekiel knew he had been remiss. Within 24 hours the wound was a festering sore, covered by flies. He went to a neighbouring khela and such was his personality that he persuaded this minor chief to come and doctor the animal.

That is the story which he has attempted to produce in clay. He has gone further. He has visualised the beast when the khela arrived by showing the crawling maggots around the festering wound. In a model of this size, standing but seven inches high, particular attention is drawn to the intense expression of the khela as he is about to apply the "muti" to the wound. In his left hand he holds a small calabash into which he has just dipped a feather, and he has applied the medicine. It must have been effective, as the animal is seen attempting to rise. But Hezekiel spoke to it in its own language and it was pacified.

These are some of the views on Hezekiel's work:

Mr. Lennox Ward, Attorney-General: "Simply wonderful."

Mr. Botha Reed, until recently Master of the Supreme Court in Natal: "Astonishing."

"Oscar" For Native Art



LILLIAN NJAPHA, typist to Mr. W. J. Mseleku, secretary of the African Arts Festival, holding the "Oscar"—known as "uBedu"—which will be awarded to the outstanding artist or group at the festival prizewinners' concert to be held in the City Hall on Saturday, September 29. The statuette, the work of Ezekiel Ntuli, of Eshowe, will be presented by the Paramount Chief of the Zulus, Cyprian Bekuzulu. The festival was inspired by Mr. Edward Dunn and Mr. K. E. Masinga of the S.A.B.C., the first one being held in 1951. 29/10/56

Newspaper Cutting Book
9
Lillian Njapha

FROM: ARTISTS FILES:
HEZEKIEL NTULI
NEZ 0002-0003-007

PRODUCED BY THE
KILLIE CAMPBELL AFRICANA LIBRARY
FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

Noted Zulu Artist Is a Sage

"Sunday Times" Correspondent
Eshowe, Saturday.

I PAID a visit this week to Hezekieli Ntuli, a Zulu who has gained widespread fame with his clay sculptures. He lives a few miles north of here. I found his three huts easily among some orange trees on the crest of a hill and in answer to my call, he emerged stooping from the low entrance of the largest hut. He has a narrow, intelligent face and bright, observant eyes.

We squatted among models and heaps of unmoulded clay on the earthen floor of the hut. Ntuli picked up a completed bust, and his long, thin fingers rested lightly on the round head, narrowing at the top, with upper jaw bones barely visible, wide, staring eyes, heavy lips and short cropped ears. "Beware of such a man," said Ntuli, "he is both stupid and cruel."

Then he picked up the bust of an old woman. "Look," he said, "Do you not see the puzzled, tired look of an old one whose spirit has been crushed by never ending labour? She is now too old to work and her mind is too blunted to think."

An hour passed as Ntuli showed me his art. Ntuli's expressive fingers explained clearly when the Zulu language became confusing to my ears.

Born near Eshowe in 1912, Ntuli was 13 when a European discovered his exceptional gift and sent him to school at Pietermaritzburg. There he remained for two years, and one of his first works was put on view in the city's museum.

In 1936 he took some of his models to Johannesburg to the Empire Exhibition, and there he met a Hollander who showed him a clay far superior to that which he had been using. He determined to find an equally good mixture for himself, and when the exhibition closed he spent more than a year wandering over Natal and Zululand, testing various mixtures without success.

PRESENTED TO THE KING

Finally, he returned to his own district, and there he found a clay mixture that satisfied him. He obtained permission from the local chief to make his home upon the site of his good fortune and it is here that he is living now.

He was presented to the King during the Royal tour of the Union, and made His Majesty a present of four models. This act brought him many orders from dealers, but he is not interested in work of this kind.

"I am not a machine," he told me. "I take a long time to make a single figure."

His comment on the King was: "He has good eyes and a great forehead. He is an honest man."

I left feeling that I had met a man who had a deep understanding of mankind, and who lived for his art.

Hezekiel 140, Eshowe, 9.2.4

Noted, No. 1, 1941