

Rome

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# It's back to Rome for artist George

26-10-1972

**THE TALENTED** Zulu artist, George Msimang (24), who returns to Rome for a second year of study in December, hopes to settle in Durban eventually to teach in the townships.

Back in Durban for a few months after the Salami, spaghetti and statue world of his student life in Italy. Mr Msimang said in an interview that he would never be tempted to remain in Europe permanently.

"I've enjoyed living in Rome but the cost of living is very high, but I would want to return to look after my parents who live in Lamontville," he said.



Now fairly fluent in Italian, Mr Msimang said that at first the language problem had proved difficult.

"We had two lectures a day in sketching and painting which were given in Italian. I learnt the language quickly though through friends and other students."

George Msimang began drawing at the age of 10 "depicting township life in chalk." And after obtaining his student certificate he studied at an art school at Rorkes' Drift.

## SCHOLARSHIP

It was while there that he won a R600 scholarship and return air fare to study at the Accademia Dell Arte in Rome.

This scholarship has now been renewed for a further year's study "There are a lot of foreigners at the Accademia, including many Blacks from all parts of Africa and the United States — they are all very kind."

Hesitant and softly spoken Mr Msimang said that his favourite sight in Rome was St Peters — while his favourite artists were Degas, Lautric and Daumier.

"I spend a lot of my free time in the Accademia Della Musica listening to the piano, guitar and flute, or going to the cinema. I used to play the flute as a boy."



## George Msimang of South Africa



BOISTEROUS WOMAN, BLACK INK

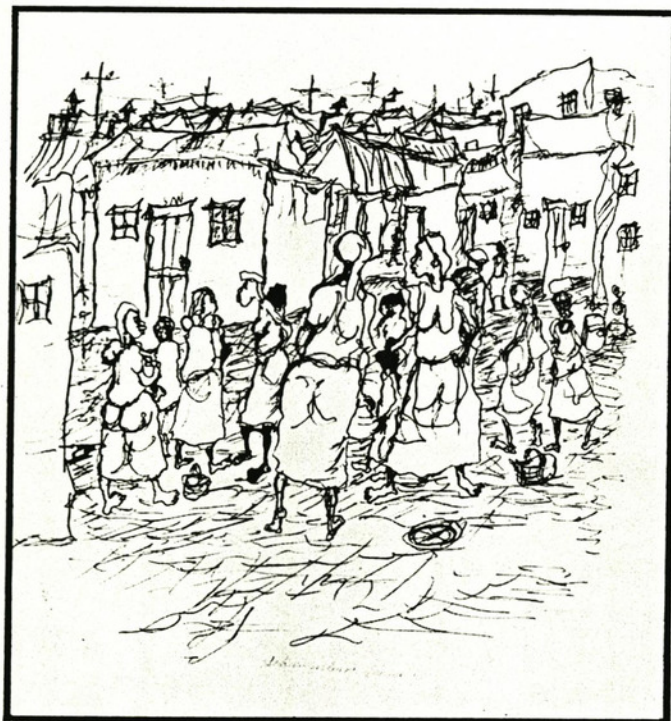
George Msimang has become a major South African artist. *African Arts'* recognition of his ability in awarding him a prize in the 1970 competition (Volume IV, Number 2) has been confirmed by the recent works he sent to us, seventeen pen-and-ink and three charcoal drawings, as well as photocopies of lithographs. This material served as tangible evidence of his statement in the accompanying letter that he has indeed been "working very hard in order to reach success."

Born and educated in Durban, Msimang's first works were drawings in pencil, as that was the only tool available to him. Jo Thorpe, Secretary of the South African Institute of Race Relations in Durban, provided him with the encouragement she has given other young Black South African artists such as Tito Zungu and Cyprian Shilakoe. Under the tutelage of Barry D. Mackie, a local art teacher, Msimang had several shows in the area before his success in *African Arts'* art competition. We were impressed then, not only by his obvious talent but by the young man's unpretentious confidence and ambition, and his commitment to his art. At that time, Msimang sent us a short essay entitled "I Find it Tough," which begins, "I am twenty-two years old, alive and energetic . . . I have a bold stroke." He went on to relate an incident that indicates the difficulties of being a Black artist engaged in social commentary: "One sunny day, I was pouring my heart out on a life-size drawing in the township's community centre. I had no studio. I broke off for lunch and left my drawing propped against a wall. Imagine my shock when on returning, I found my work torn to shreds as if a madman had been slashing away at it with some sharp instrument. I had to burn the drawing. I suggested that someone is against my opinion. Frustration and lack of employment opportunities may force me to leave Durban for better pastures . . ."

In 1972 an opportunity presented itself. The Italian Government awarded Msimang a fellowship to attend the Academia di Belle Arti in Rome, where he studied painting and graphics for three years. Last August, he returned to Durban, where he hopes to have his own studio and open an art school for his people.

While in Rome, Msimang's confidence in his ability sustained him during the difficult period of cultural adjustment. He wrote to us in May 1975: "I do believe in

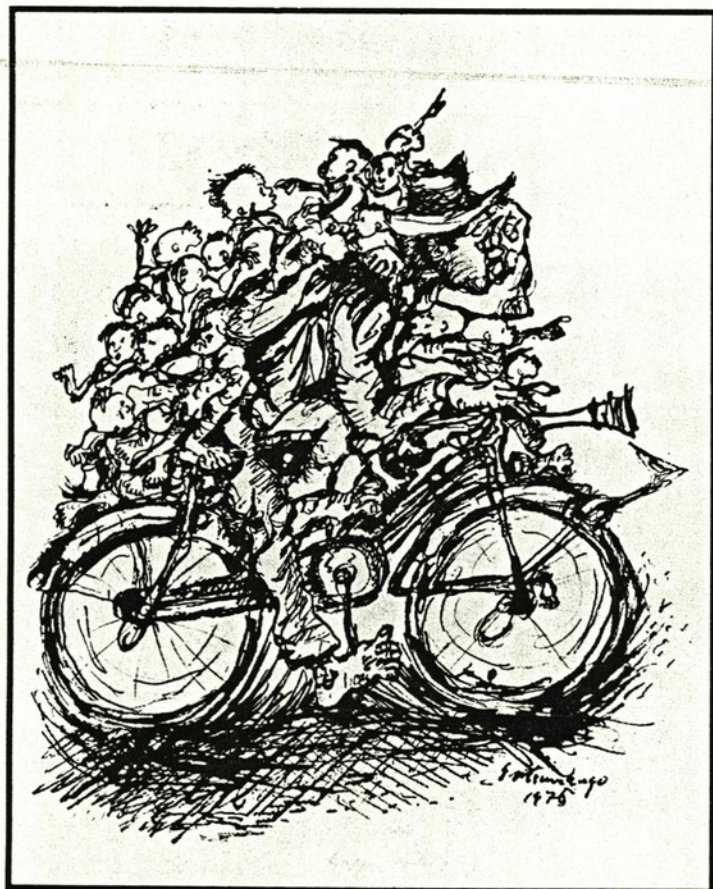




JOHANNESBURG TOWNSHIP, BLACK INK

my work so strongly . . . I'm working hard also, doing so many different techniques in art." These included oil painting (on which he is presently concentrating) and monoprints. The artist explained the last as "a technique where oil is applied on a plastic blade, then spread using a roller. After the whole blade is covered with oil paint, you take a page and draw fast on the back of the paper. The drawing will appear beneath, just like linocut."

Msimang's stay in Europe did not alter the distinctively African quality of his work. It is especially revealing that in all of the drawings recently received from Rome, which were apparently executed there, the subject remains Black South Africa. This selection seems to be generally less brutally satiric than his earlier charcoals, such as the devastating portrait of "The Preacher" (Volume IV, Number 2), although he does not shy away from the harshness of reality, depicted in "Township Neighbors." Perhaps it is the medium of pen and ink that contributes to the lightening of mood as well as visual tone. While in "The Musician," a 1969 charcoal (Volume IV, Number 2), the subject is almost submerged in blackness, the figures in his new drawings are defined by a fluid, nervous line that gives the immediacy of quick sketches. Dark tones are usually created by traditional cross-hatching or other concentrations of line which, however dense, retain their linear identity, never quite dissolving into mass.



HAPPY RIDING, BLACK INK



WASHDAY, BLACK INK



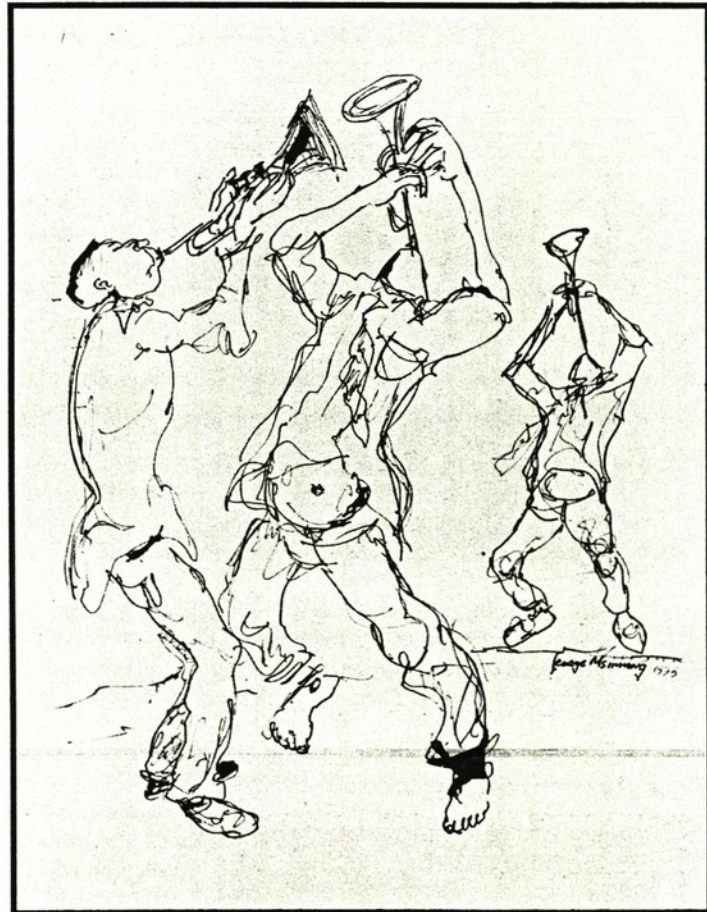


MOTHER AND KIDS, CHARCOAL

Musicians are a recurring subject. They are often portrayed "in ecstasy" as if uncontainable tensions are being released through their playing. It is the children, however, as central subjects or background figures, who pervade his scenes of everyday life in his country: they appear on the backs of their mothers who are performing their daily chores ("Washday"), or their presence may be indicated only by their limbs protruding from behind a main figure ("The Musicians"). Often they are depicted as an unsortable tangle of arms, legs, and heads ("Happy Riding"). In each drawing, the questions "How are they to be provided for now?" and "What of their future?" are implied. "Mother & Kids" is an almost comic portrait of a desperate figure unable to cope with her numerous and energetic offspring; the artist, like any good satirist, skillfully arouses in the viewer a simultaneous awareness of the humorous and the tragic.

In the five years since we first saw his work, George Msimang has achieved the "further significant creativity" promised by his prizewinning drawings. His skills have been developed and his technical repertoire enlarged, but it is the wit and sympathy with which he documents the Black South African scene that continue to give his art its unique emotional power. □

*Pen-and-ink and charcoal drawings by George Msimang will be on exhibit at the Gallery Nimba, Seattle, Washington, from November 15 through December 1975.*



ECSTATIC MUSICIANS, BLACK INK



THE YOUNG ONES, CHARCOAL



# Durban artist wins American award

A DURBAN artist, Mr. George Msimango, of Lamontville, was one of four chosen to share a 1 000-dollar prize (R700) awarded by the African Studies Centre of the University of California at Los Angeles.

Mr. Msimango, here with some of his work at the Institute of Race Relations in Durban yesterday, has exhibited his art in Johannesburg and Durban.

Photographs of some of his charcoal drawings were sent to the University of California for submission to the art competition run by its African Arts magazine.

Mr. Msimango recently received a letter telling him that the contributions to the competition were of such a high standard that it had been decided to divide the prize among four artists.

The magazine would feature his work in a future issue.

Shy and quietly pleased about his award, Mr. Msimango. (22) said he would probably spend the money on art materials.





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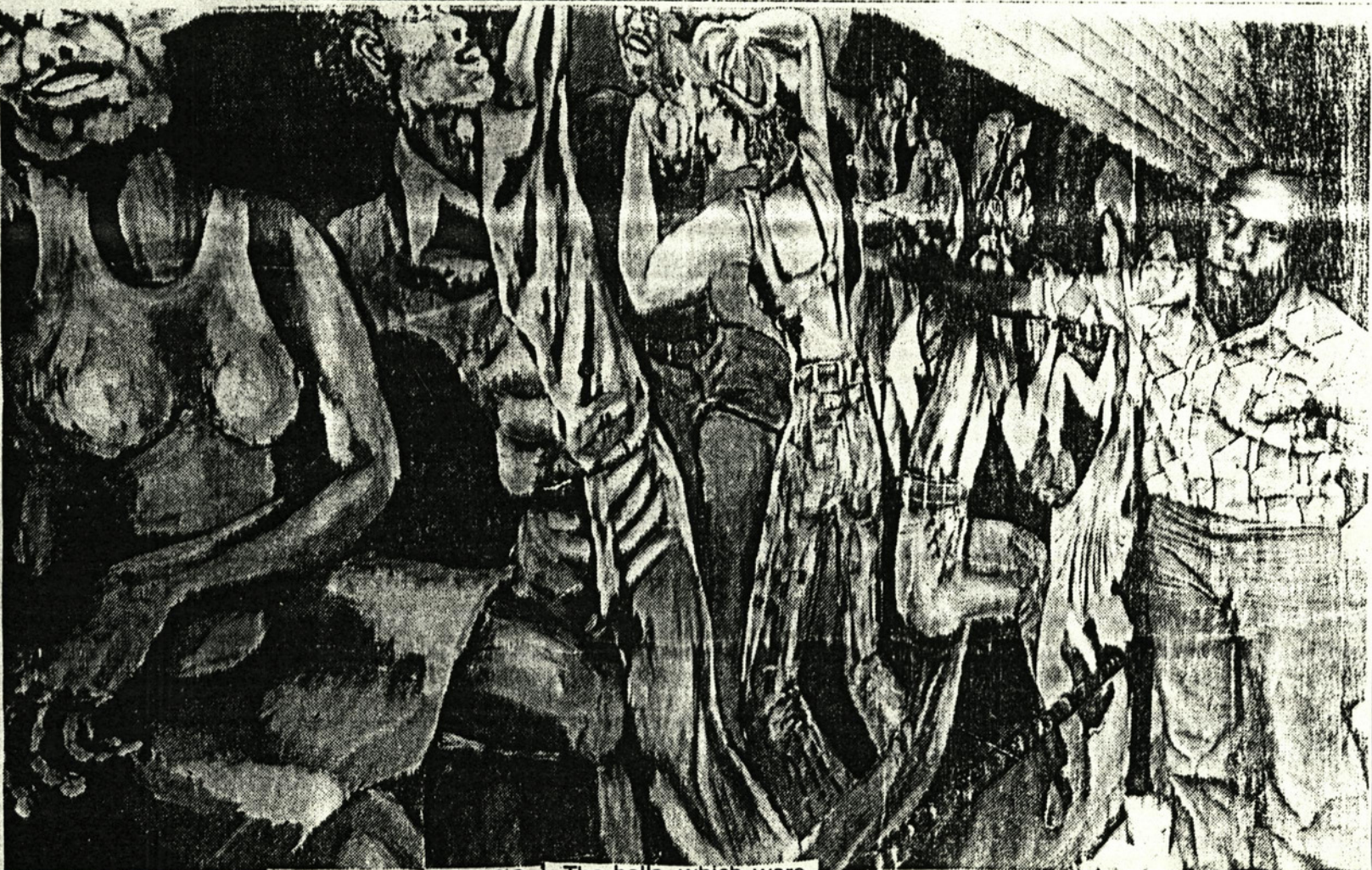
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THE NATAL MERCURY 29.12.25 NR. 3470 4p 25 Datum 27 OCT 1977



AFRICAN artist Charles Nkozi puts the final touches to one of the murals in the Glebe Tavern, on the outskirts of Umlazi.

The R220 000 building was put up by the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board to serve the residents of the nearby hostels.

The halls, which were decorated by Mr. Nkozi, Mr. Joseph Mdhlovu, Mr. George Msimang and Mr. Duke Ketye, serve beer and food.



ROY NDINISA

Born: 1st January, 1977 at Mamelodi

Educated at Mamelodi School, Ezazi School and Barberton School for 5 years.

Returned to Pretoria in 1968.

First group exhibition in Waterkloof Ridge, Pretoria, followed by another group exhibition at the Arcadia Centre, Pretoria in 1977.

Self-taught but also studied with Mr Michael Zondi  
Full time artist.

Media: Woodcuts, drawings in pencil and ink and sculpture.

GABRIEL KEEN KOBONI

*Born in Pietermaritzburg*

*21st May 1939, and educated in Loram Art School  
and Indalem Institution, Natal.*

*5 One man shows*

*8 groups and represented in 3 Public buildings in  
the city of Durban.*

*Private collections the world over.*

*You are cordially invited to  
attend an EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY  
AFRO-ART.*

**SCULPTURES BY G. KUBONI**

**INK DRAWINGS BY M. MAAPOLA**

*Together with Guest Artist.*

**A.R. PULLEN      ROY NDINISA**

MIKE NKOLO MAAPOLA

*First one man exhibition*

*S.A. Ass. of Arts, Second at Boulevard Hotel  
third S.A. Ass. of Arts*

*and 25 group exhibitions throughout Pretoria,  
Johannesburg, Cape Town including*

*The United States and Australia*

*The exhibition will be held at Good-Hope Bld.  
Corner of Potgieter & Boom Street  
On the 21st September 1980*

*The exhibition will be opened by  
PERCY QOBOZA  
at 2 p.m.*

*Eng. Tel. 32493*