

# Dumile Feni



## A Retrospective Exhibition

Resource Book

Tshidiso Makhetha

Johannesburg Art Gallery

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# Dumile Feni Resource Book

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Dumile - 0004 - 0001 - 011

This publication was produced to mark and celebrate 10 Years of Democracy  
culminating into the opening of

## **Dumile Feni: A Retrospective Exhibition**

at the Johannesburg Art Gallery from 1 February to 10 April, 2005

Curated by Prince Dube

Worksheet text and exercises: Tshidiso Makhetha and Lorraine Dreift

Worksheet: Tshidiso Makhetha and Lorraine Dreift

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# How to use this resource book

This book was written to get a deeper understanding of the art of Dumile Feni. Most of the artworks cover his illustrious career that is both locally and abroad, as witnessed in the Retrospective Exhibition organised by the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery had to go the extra mile in making this show possible. The endless effort and intensive research by the principal curator, Prince Dube finally brings Dumile's work home for you and I to learn from and appreciate. The main objective of this resource book is to teach learners and the public at large about the significance of art as an effective medium of communication and the tireless struggle of a true son of Africa. Furthermore it will teach, guide, coach and direct learners through different aspects of art that is drawing, print-making and sculpture produced by one of the most prolific artists South Africa has ever produced in its history.

To utilise this resource book you should be in possession of a pen, pencil, notebook and drawing paper.

Since this book focuses on different periods that is, before exile (South Africa), United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), it will therefore be convenient to follow the chronology as per the exhibition plan.

These exercises are designed to teach learners more about the artist. Observe and interrogate the subject and relate it to your personal experience as a South African in the new democracy. We encourage you to use your imagination.

Most of the exercises have been designed to suit high school learners but any other interested groups or individuals can do them.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery Guides will be on hand to assist wherever possible to make the exhibition and this publication as accessible as possible. For further information contact the Education Department at the Johannesburg Art Gallery: Tel (011) 725 3130/84

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# Zwelidumile Jeremiah Mgxaji

This resource book seeks to highlight the imbalances of the past thus creating a bridge between different cultures. The education process in the country needs a serious realignment, and this resource seeks to address that.

When you cast your net within the African pool of brainpower, Dumile's contribution to the artistic rainbow nation is remarkable to say the least. Against all odds and like a rose that grew on concrete, Dumile Feni grew in stature as one of the most prolific artists this country has ever produced.

From an early age as a growing young child Dumile has reflected a deep sense of intuition in art. Prince Dube, Education Curator at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, writes (Dumile Feni Exhibition Catalogue – 2004) that "at the age of six Dumile was already producing wonderful drawings." This indicates how deep rooted his passion for art was. Prince further indicates that Dumile's parents realised that they could not stop this young man from drawing. They were intrigued by his unusual habits of drawing early in the morning before talking to anybody or having breakfast.

Born in Worcester in the Cape Province to isiXhosa speaking parents and nurtured in the Xhosa tradition, which has circumcision intertwined in its social fabric, and thus fitting for Dumile to have been a candidate. Although quite speculative, Dumile has been known to have had San roots. Prince further supports this fact by saying, "Dumile has at some time in his illustrious career taught San art classes whilst in exile".

Dumile was born in 1942, but in his catalogue, Bruce Smith (Artist in Exile – 2004: 12) writes that the dates of Dumile's birth published in various biographies also differ considerably from May 1939 to 1942. Born from a Christian family Dumile was a globetrotter. This is evident from the early age of six, when his family moved to Welcome and Rylands in Cape Town, and his subsequent sojourns in Queenstown, Johannesburg and Durban, with him being forced into exile eventually. Dumile's mother Bettie Feni died and his father remarried Grace Nonqgi Ntisa.

Suffering from tuberculosis was a blessing in disguise as this brought him into contact with other established professional artists. Prince explains that "in 1962, Dumile was admitted to the Charles Hurwitz SANTA Tuberculosis Hospital in Soweto, Johannesburg, where he met another famous South African artist, Ephraim Ngatane. Together they painted murals at the hospital."



After the death of his father the young Dumile left Queenstown for Johannesburg where his mother worked as a domestic worker. His artistic genius saw him rubbing shoulders with artists of high calibre, the likes of Louis Maqhubela, Ephraim Ngatane, Bill Ainslie and Cecil Skotnes. Johannesburg proved to be a fertile ground where Dumile's career started to flourish. Dumile can be counted amongst the most successful artists of his time and this is evident from his solo exhibitions. In his book Prince accentuates that "he also worked with Madame Haenggi of Gallery 101 in Johannesburg where he had his first solo exhibition. He was one of the few artists whose entire works were sold at an exhibition." Similarly Bruce further asserts "despite the exhilaration of the positive response to the exhibitions and perceived success, Dumile found himself in an ambiguous position. On the one hand he was flying the flag for South Africa, while on the other his works were keenly critical of the political regime. It was a situation that could not, for obvious reasons endure, the critical acclaim his works had received made him a target of the officialdom."

South Africa came to be an unbearable and inconducive territory to pursue his future dreams due to apartheid. Prince concurs, "Dumile went into exile in 1968 leaving behind his pregnant girlfriend, Faiza Kobeli, niece of his fellow artist and friend, Eli Kobeli." In exile Dumile displayed his spiritual wisdom at will without any hindrance. He thus became the connection between South Africa and the world at large through his artworks and his African experience.

Bruce further accentuates that "Dumile arrived in London in 1968. He stayed for some time in the apartment of the exiled writer Bloke Modisane, to whom he dedicated a pen and ink drawing." Having worked mostly from memory as a young artist his later works deals more with his life experience.

It is important to note that having amassed art experience nationally and internationally Dumile was a born African artist. He remained true to his roots in his refusal to be assimilated by the western culture as reflected by the themes he stuck to in his artworks. He can be likened to an initiated Sangoma who qualifies and becomes a successful traditional healer. The similarity here lies within the fact that in both instances these individuals, that is Dumile and the Sangoma, respond to a supernatural calling which occupies their lives eternally.

In conclusion I would to invite all South Africans to join us in celebrating Dumile's contribution to this new democracy, through his insatiable appetite to produce art regardless of the hardship and context. His lived experience and application of diversified themes are opportunities for the young and old to learn about the history of their motherland. His move to exile was in a sense an expansion of his African territory. This resource book takes you through Dumile's rich history, that is from his home soil, South Africa followed by Britain ending in the United States. Dumile was an ambassador of note who hoisted the African flagship wherever he went across the globe. He thus deserves credit in contributing to the miracle of this new democracy.

# Curator's Statement

As a former learner and educator myself I understand how important educational resource materials are. I commend Tshidiso Makhetha's idea of producing this resource book to supplement and make it easy for you to be part of the *Dumile Feni: A retrospective Exhibition*. This publication is vitally important, especially for schools in the process of introducing Arts and Culture as a learning area.

The Dumile Feni project has had a profound impact on my life through the realm of activity surrounding the curating of this unique exhibition. At one stage, for two weeks running I worked with Dr Ronald Dorris on a manuscript for the book which will follow the exhibition. Ronald Dorris, Ph.D, Drexel Society Class of '58, Professor of African American Studies and Professor of English, writes on my journey in search of Dumile;

What Dumile gave the world is explosive. The question facing us now is who will come along to interpret what he shares with us so that our lives are touched, and we learn to live rather than merely exist. So yes, when you came to New Orleans, you set in place that which is explosive. All of positive forces in the universe embrace your move to actualize potential; all of negative forces in the world are in motion to overshadow your contribution.

So many of our ancestors were brought across the Atlantic to be slaved. That was explosive. Yet they are appeased each time in their power their Spirit sends a hurricane from the coast of Africa clear across the Atlantic to keep the world abreast of understanding that there is no force greater than nature. Who ever dips his hands in the mighty Mississippi envelops the Spirit of our ancestors, signifying that he or she is worthy of the Call and the Response. And once that act is sealed, we are charged with the responsibility of seeing that we do not disavow the task at hand.

Growing up in the hinterlands of KwaZulu/Natal at the height of Bantu Education, it is not expected that I was exposed to art at primary level. While the system offered African learners craft as a subject, my principal Mr. B. Gwala at Dokodweni Bantu Community School at Gingindlovu endeavoured to introduce fine art in Grade 7 in 1979. I was over the moon to see the brushes and paint tubs he showed us even before asking us to pay extra fee for art. To date I do not know what happened to that money or the promised art classes.



The feeling I had about the introduction of art at that age has always been my guiding force that drives me to do all I can to assist learners to achieve their dreams. Today in a democratic South Africa you are fortunate that the Department of Education has made art compulsory in most of the grades through Outcomes Based Education, but I know that shortage of resources prevents educators to implement fine arts properly in the classroom. This resource book attempts to close that gap, and I hoping that you also find it useful.

The exhibition, together with this resource book, which will outlive the exhibition, can be used to cover a number of learning areas and specific outcomes. The Johannesburg Art Gallery as major art museum in Southern Africa understands the critical role it should play in the Outcomes Based Education. This exhibition offers learners many opportunities to demonstrate that they have succeeded in achieving demonstrated knowledge and achievement (outcome). As the process of teaching and learning is guided by the outcome, the *Dumile Feni: A retrospective Exhibition* can be used to plot the learning skills / attitudes (specific outcomes) within the framework of eight learning areas, and the Gallery can help you develop your portfolio.

As I researched and curated this exhibition, I always had in mind its education component. When you visit the Gallery I strongly recommend that you bring with you your own copy of this resource book to help you with your critical outcomes.

I hope you all enjoy the exhibition and that it brought to you new ways of looking at yourself and the world around you. To me the exhibition is an explosion. It took me to all over South Africa and to the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It has taught me to go forward with my life so that I live and not merely exist, and thus bring the task at hand to completion at day's end. I must live that task to fulfilment so that its destiny is manifested.

**Prince Mbusi Dube**

Curator: Education

Johannesburg Art Gallery

*"He was known as the  
Goya of the townships."*

Bill Ainslie, in an interview with Steven Sack, 1988.



**African Guernica**

**1967**

Charcoal on newsprint

218 x 226 cm

Collection of De Beers Art Gallery  
University of Fort Hare

*What is this work about?*

Having looked at the Dumile exhibition, now take a look at the works  
of both artists displayed on the following page.

Ka mora ho sheba pontsho ya Dumile. Sheba mesebetsi e latelang.

Ukhuluma ngani lomsebenzi.

*Dumile's work is called 'AFRICAN GUERNICA'.*

*Dumile is called "The Goya of the Townships".*

*What do you think Goya, Picasso and Dumile have in common?*



*Why do you think Dumile was compared to Goya?*

In his art, Francisco Jose Goya Lucientes [1746-1828] attacked the criminality of war and the universal stupidities of man.

**What disease will he die of?**

**1800**

Engraving from 'The Caprichos'

Artist: Francisco Goya



**Title**  
**unknown.**

**1780**

Engraving

Artist:

Francisco Goya

Pablo Picasso [1881-1973] also painted a work on death, and the destruction of the town of Guernica, as a result of the bombing of the Basque town by the Germans on April 26, 1937.

He called the work 'GUERNICA'.

*Compare Dumile's "African Guernica" to Picasso's work called 'Guernica'.*

*Record your answers, observations, and any sketches from Dumile's South African, English or American period you might want to make here.*

**Be at liberty to use your mother tongue.**

*"In African traditional art, the material reality; rather the spiritual reality through and animal forms."*

Dumile's art came to the attention of the Security Police because of the controversial titles he used in many of his works. In 1960, he was imprisoned for the first time because of his art.

Dumile o ile a iphithlela ntlwana tshwana ka baka la mokgwa oo a neng a reela mesebetsi ya hae ka teng (artworks).

Imisebenzi kaDumile yaphazamisa abomthetho ngoba yayigxeka ingcindezelo ngalesosikhathi lokho kwenza ukuthi aboshwe ngo-1960 eqalana ngqa empilweni yakhe.

*What are your views on this subject?*

*Do you think that any government has the right to jail artists for works that it considers subversive or revolutionary?*

*Are you aware of any other government that forbade certain artists to create artworks?*

*Ana mesebetsi ya Dumile e ne hlekefetsa melao ya kgethollo? (Sesotho)*

*Ingabe imisebenzi kaDumile muphazamisile uhulumeni wengcindezelo? (Zulu)*



# Masks of Luthuli in SA after 34 years 'in exile'

This caption appeared in the Saturday Star dated 26 January 2002

*mask does not represent a artist strives to approach a images suggested by human*

Rotimi Fani-Kayode – artist.

"Producing the sculptures of Luthuli at that time was very risky because Feni was making an unambiguous anti-apartheid statement. This led to harassment and eventually he left South Africa." says Marilyn Martin of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town.

Feni went into exile to England in 1968 and died in New York in 1991. He explained his decision to leave the country of his birth in an interview in 1968 with playwright Barney Simon that was published in The Classic, an arts and culture journal at the time.

"The government had given me six months to stay in Johannesburg. Then, they said I must go back to where I was born - the reserve in the Cape. I wanted to stay in Johannesburg because here is where my friends are. I am trying to get a passport for overseas. I want to see America and Europe. Then I want to live in Swaziland." he said

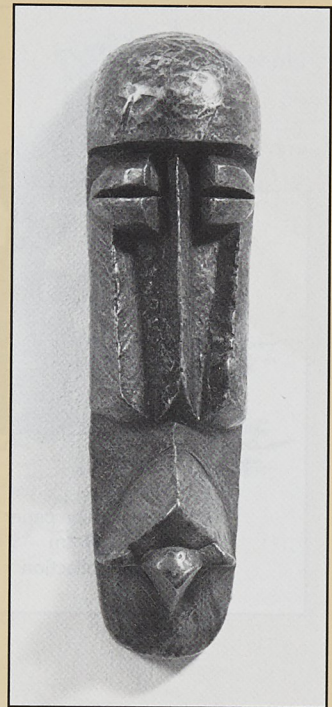
Mmuso wa kgethollo o ile wa mo qoselletsa ho tloha Gauteng hore a kgutlele mahaeng, ke lona lebaka le ileng la mo hatella hore a tsamaye ho ya mose/exile

Uhulumeni wengcidenzelo waphoqa uDumile ukuthi ahambe esamuholela ukuthi aye-exile.



**Portrait of Chief Albert Luthuli 1968**

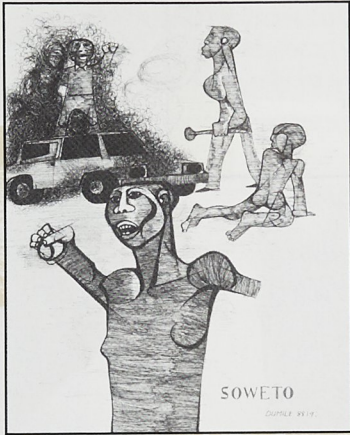
Bronze sculpture  
580 x 160 x 150 cm  
Johannesburg Art Gallery



**Portrait of Chief Albert Luthuli 1968**

Bronze sculpture  
270 x 80 x 80 cm  
Johannesburg Art Gallery

Albert John Mvumbi Luthuli [1898 - 1967] was a Zulu chief, teacher, and religious leader. He was the president of the ANC from 1952 to 1967. He was the first African winner of the Nobel peace prize for his efforts in waging a non-violent campaign against racial discrimination.



**Soweto**

**1976**

Black pen on paper

42.7 x 34.6 cm

Private collection

**Woman with children**

**1967**

Conte crayon on paper

118.5 x 101.8 cm

South African National Gallery



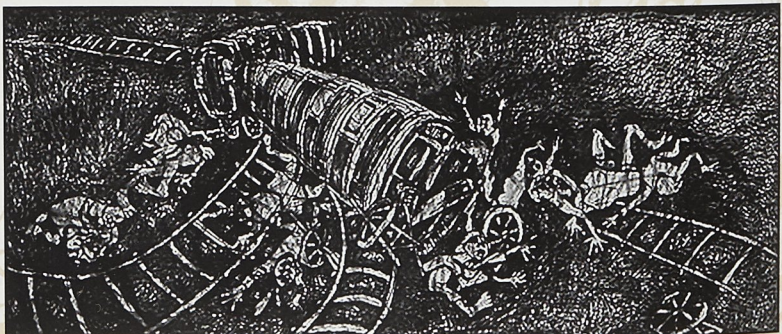
**Railway Accident**

**1966**

Conte crayon on paper

107 x 237 cm

South African National Gallery



*His drawings and  
the pain, sorrow, and  
Africans in South*

*Mesebetsi ya Dumile  
mahloko le  
setjhaba sa*

*Umsebenzi ka-Dumile  
zinvhlungu zesizwe*



South Africa

*sculptures portray  
anger of the  
Africa.*

*o ne e bua ka  
tlheketso ya  
ma-Africa*

*ukhuluma nge  
sase uMzanzi Africa*

Lionel Ngakane, 1970



**The Stricken Household**  
**1965**

Charcoal on paper

97 x 147 cm

Omar Badsha collection



**Father, teach me how  
to pray!**

**1967**

Conte crayon on paper

193 x 90 cm

Collection of De Beers A.G.

University of Fort Hare

**In respect of the dead, the  
living and the unborn**

**1967**

Charcoal and white conte on paper

193 x 78 cm

Pretoria Art Museum



**Dumile Feni** - Before exile [1963 - 1968]

*The ferocity and compassion of his work.*

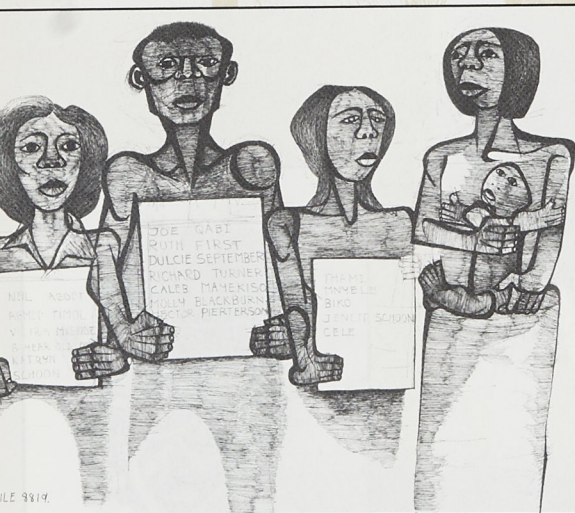
*Mesebetsi ya Dumile ine e le lonya le kutlwelo  
bohloko*

*Umsebenzi ka-Dumile u nolaka nobubele*

Bill Ainslie – artist.

*Spend a few moments considering Bill Ainslie's statement. Is it possible for  
someone to be both ferocious as well as compassionate?*

United States of America



**South Africa If You Could Talk**

Graphite

?? x cm

Private collection

*Interpret the meaning of the  
two artworks on this page*



**Untitled**

**1966**

Ball pen, pen and ink on paper

45 x 102 cm

South African National Gallery



*Dumile in his drawings grieves and generates feelings of emotion.  
His drawings are metaphysical outpourings of the subconscious.*

*Dumile o ne a bontsha ho hlora le kutlwelo bohloko setjhabeng*

*UDumile ebucikweni bakhe uyadabukisa ebese ekhombisa imizwa  
elusikisiki*

E. J. de Jager. Professor of Anthropology,  
University of Fort Hare, South Africa.



**The Ogre**

**1965**

Charcoal on paper  
91 x 60 cm  
Pretoria Art Museum

Anthropology is the study of humankind, especially its societies and customs. Until 1950, mainly non-Western civilisations were studied.

*Consider the following statement:  
'The Ogre' is an accusation against human injustice and it draws our attention to the plight of the underprivileged. Do you agree? Why do YOU think Dumile grieved?*

*Mosebetsi wa Dumile o ka hodimo  
"Ogre" o nyahlatsa tshwaro empe  
ya mmuso setjhabeng.  
Ha o sheba o nahana hore Dumile  
o ne a hlora le moyeng?*

*Yini ucabange ukuthi uDumile  
wahlupheka?*

**Dumile Feni** - Before exile [1963 - 1968]

*If you want me to weep, you must first grieve.*

*Ha ke lla nsthidise.*

Uma ufuna ngikhale, kumelele udabukise kuqala

Horace – poet

Horace, whose full name was Quintus Horatio Flaccio [65 B.C.] was the son of a freed slave. He was one of the greatest lyric poets of all time.

*What does this quote mean?*



**The Scream**

**1966 or 1967**

Charcoal on paper

71 x 53.5 cm

Collection of De Beers Art Gallery,  
University of Fort Hare



**The Scream**

**1966**

Bronze [ed. 3]

27 x 18 x 17 cm

Collection of De Beers Art Gallery,  
University of Fort Hare

*Do these two artworks, both titled 'The Scream' evoke emotions in you?  
Consider both the medium and the making of each artwork.  
Which one is more powerful? Give reasons for your choice.*



*His work is characterised by contortion and distortion which often erupts into violent emotion.*

E. J. de Jager, 1973

'Contemporary African Art in South Africa'

**Boy and Chair**

**1966**

Charcoal and paper

73 x 55.7 cm

Collection of De Beers

Art Gallery,

University of Fort Hare



*Do the dramatic facial expressions and the exaggerated posture of the outstretched hands of the two figures evoke an emotion?*

*If so, what emotion? Record your answers on this page.*

*Sheba tsela eo mesebetsi ena e meraro e entsweng ka teng, a na mesebetsi ena e etsa maikutlo a hao hore a be jwang, hlalosa?*

*Ukuveza umumo wobuso nokukhuliswa komumo kuveza miphim izizwa?*

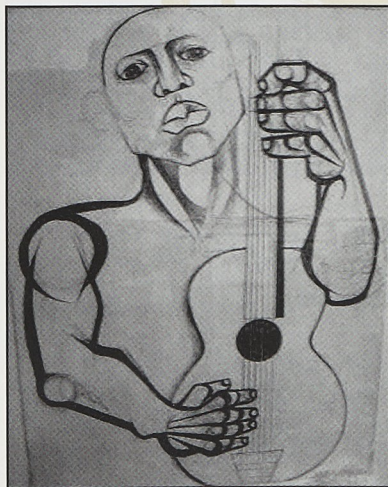
*When I listen to jazz, I get ideas. Even in London, my mind is taken back home.*

*mminothoko wa Jazz oa  
nkgothatsa hobane ke  
hopola morao hae ka  
tsela e jwalo ke kgona ho  
etsa mosebetse o  
tswileng matsoho*

*Ukulalela i Jazz ku  
ngipha amaqhinga,  
njengoba ngiseLondon  
ingqondo yami isekhaya*

Dumile Feni – artist

*What does this statement tell  
you about Dumile?  
Comment on these artworks.*



*Music was Dumile's  
inspiration.*

Pat Williams reporting in his obituary  
for Dumile in the London  
Independent. 22.11.1991



**Nina Series**

Black pen on paper  
75.5 x 57 cm  
Private collection

*He was inspired by  
jazz and its  
the race problem in*

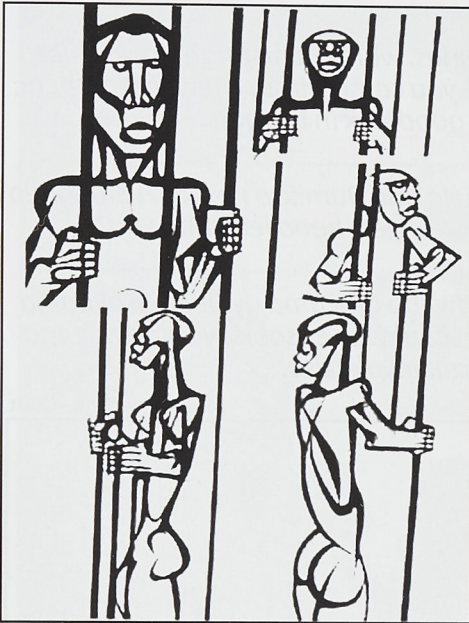
**Untitled [Guitar Player]**

Pen and paper  
60 x 45.4 cm  
Private collection

*Comment on*



United States of America



**Untitled [Behind Bars]**

Pen on paper

45.3 x 60 cm

Dumile Feni Family Trust

*My subjects are Africans because they are my people, but my message, the idea I am bringing to put across has nothing to do with racialism – I am not interested in politics. My situations are human ones.*

*Dumile o ne a sebeletsa setjhaba ka diketso tsa hae ka hohle hohle o ne a lwantsha / phehisa melao ya mmuso wa kgethollo, kemelo ya hae ke ya setjhaba sa ma-Africa*

*Ubuciko bami bubonisa amaAfrica akithi, kodwa umlayezo, wami egiwuthumelayo awunakwenza lutho nezombangazwe no buthlwanga .*

Dumile Feni

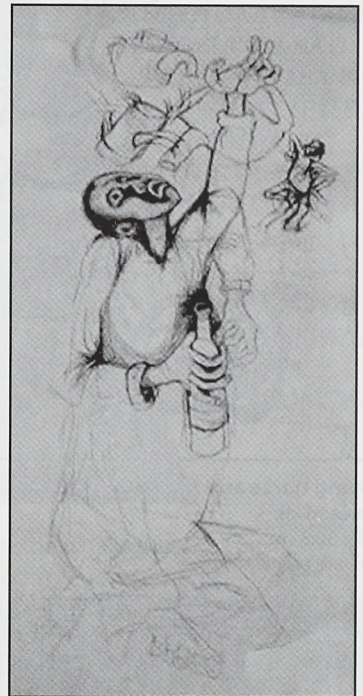
**Man Drinking**

Charcoal on paper

240 x 102 cm

Bruce Campbell-Smith collection

South Africa



two themes –  
exponents, and  
South Africa.

Report in the International Herald Tribune published with the New York Times and the Washington Post. Aug 23-24, 1969

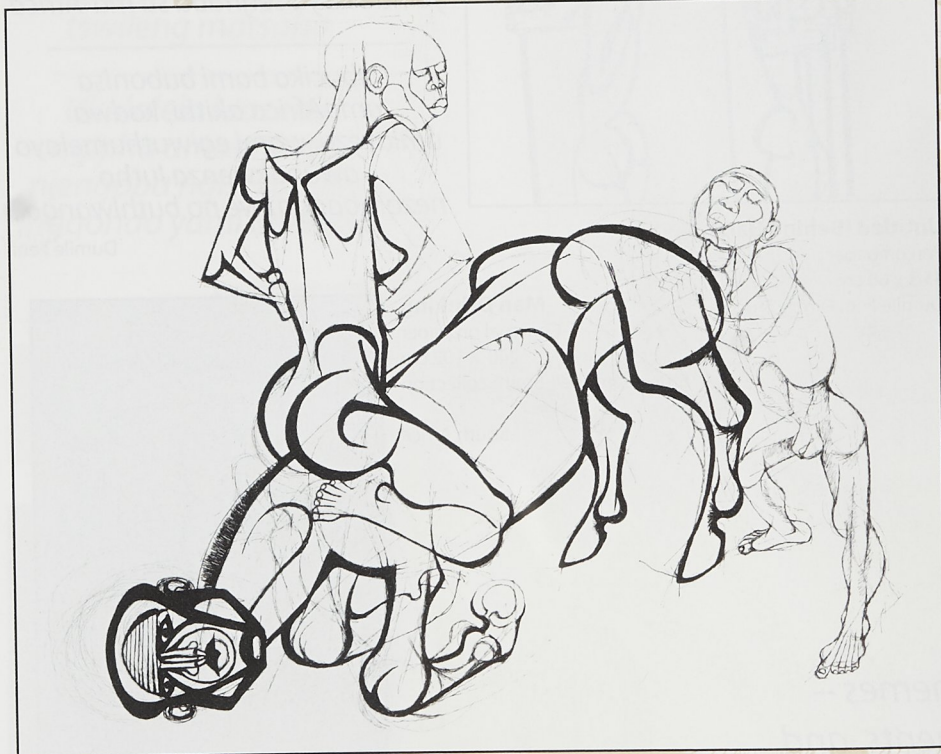
these artworks.

*Now someone like Dumile did drawings, which at first sight looked like down and out scare-crows. But when you came within a few feet of them, they would give you a good kick in the guts.*

*Mesebetsi ya maqetellong pele ho lefu la hae Dumile o ne a etsa diphofolo tse fokolang. A na o nahana hore o ne a bona lefu lahae na?*

*Umuntu onjengo Dumile wenza imidwebo othi uma uyibuko okokuqala ibe sengathi ayithi-shu futhi injenge sakukwali esisabisayo. Kodwa uma usondela kuyo izikunyakazisa.*

William Kentridge – artist.



### **Dying horse and figures**

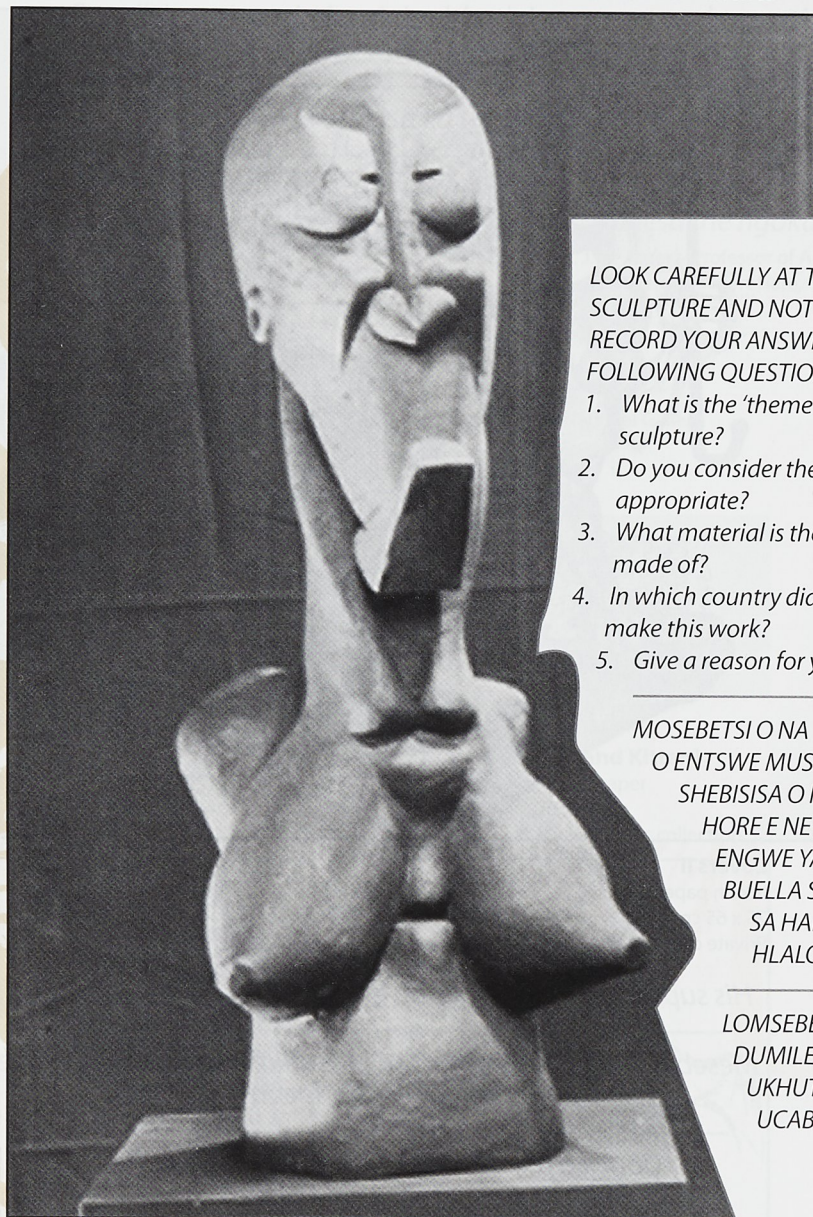
Pen and ink

35 x 50.3 cm

Private collection

*Do YOU feel a 'kick in the guts' when you look at these works ?  
Give your interpretation of this artwork.*





# **Silence**

Bronze

97 x 38 cm

Dr Cyril Khanyile

"Silence" featured in the catalogue  
for the American Committee on Africa's  
Unlock Apartheid's Jails campaign in 1987

LOOK CAREFULLY AT THIS  
SCULPTURE AND NOTE IT'S TITLE.  
RECORD YOUR ANSWERS TO THE  
FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What is the 'theme' of the sculpture?
2. Do you consider the title appropriate?
3. What material is the sculpture made of?
4. In which country did Dumile make this work?
5. Give a reason for your answer.

MOSEBETSI O NA WA DUMILE  
O ENTSWE MUSE, HA O  
SHEBISISA O NAHANA  
HORE E NE E LE TSELA  
ENGWE YA HO  
BUELLA SETJHABA  
SA HABO,  
HLALOSA?

LOMSEBENZI KA  
DUMILE UKWENZA  
UKHUTHI  
UCABANGE INI?



**Lovers II**

Ink on paper

75 x 65 cm

Private collection

*His superb drawings have an extraordinary economy of line.*

*Mesebetsi wa Dumile o ne o sa hlakahlakana ka mogwa o ne o le bonolo ho sheba.*

*Ubuciko bakhe obunobuhlakani bungendlela engajwayelekile yokonga.*

Pat Williams in his obituary for Dumile in the 'London Independent', 1991.

*Would you agree that the lines in this drawing are 'economical'?*  
*Give your interpretation of 'economical' in the above context.*

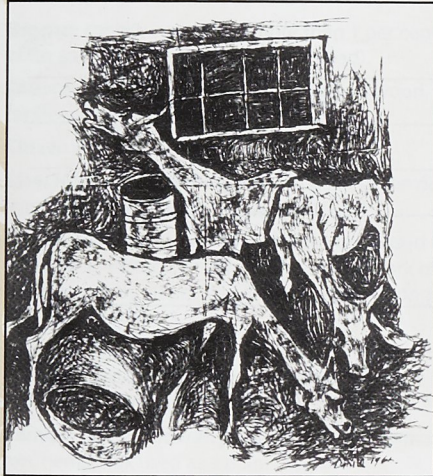


*Dumile's art is entirely original, both in concept and execution.  
He has a style very much his own.*

*Dumile o ne a sebeta ka tsela ya hae e ikgethileng*

*Imisebenzi ka-Dumile ibidabuka kuyena ngokuphelele, ngomcabango nangomthetho wakhe. Isimo sakhe sobuciko singesakhe ngokuphele.*

South Africa



**Animals**

**1966**

Wax crayon on paper

112 x 103.5 cm

South African National Gallery

*Comment on the  
pronounced  
differences  
in these animal  
studies.*

**Untitled**

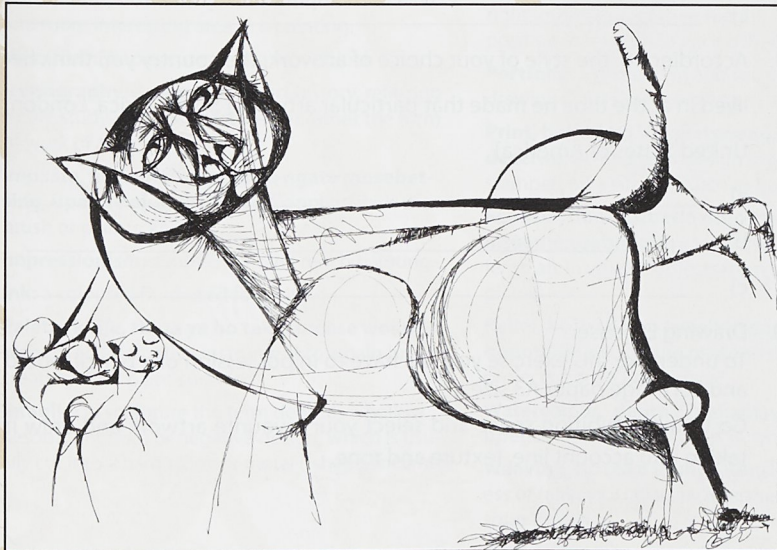
**[Cat and Kitten]**

Ink on paper

70 x 50 cm

Michel Marks collection

United States of America



Finally, read the article on the artist in the front of this Resource Book. Then find an artwork in each of the following categories that especially appealed to you in the Dumile Feni Exhibition, answer the following questions, and provide a sketch of each artwork you've chosen.

- a] Drawing
- b] Painting
- c] Sculpture

1. The full name of the Artist \_\_\_\_\_
2. The year he was born \_\_\_\_\_
3. His nationality \_\_\_\_\_
4. The year he died \_\_\_\_\_
5. The theme of the artwork:
  - a] \_\_\_\_\_
  - b] \_\_\_\_\_
  - c] \_\_\_\_\_
7. The media of the artwork:
  - a] \_\_\_\_\_
  - b] \_\_\_\_\_
  - c] \_\_\_\_\_
8. According to the style of your choice of artwork, the country you think he lived in at the time he made that particular artwork [ South Africa, London, United States of America]
  - a] \_\_\_\_\_
  - b] \_\_\_\_\_
  - c] \_\_\_\_\_
9. Drawing Exercise:  
To undertake this exercise you will have to in possession of a pencil, board and Cartridge paper A3 size.  
Go to the exhibition space and select your favourite artwork and draw it taking into account line, texture and tone.



**Abstract Art:** a term which can generally be applied to any non representational art

**Aesthetics, botle, ubuciko:** the philosophy of beautiful in art and \*taste\*

**Airbrush:** an instrument, looking rather like an outside fountain pen, which sprays paint or varnish by means of compressed air

**Antique:** valuable old masterpieces/artworks.

**Art History, thuto ya botaki, umlando we zobuciko:** a historical study of art

**Bronze:** copper containing more than 1 per cent of tin and sometimes other metals (lead).

**Charcoal:** sticks originating from burned wood, for free hand sketching.

**Chisel:** a sculptor curving tool.

**Clay, letsopa, ubumba:** soil composed of the dust from ingeneos rocks mixed with water

**Chiaroscuro, phapang ya mmala:** a term used to describe the effects of light and dark in a work of art, particularly when they are when they strongly contrasting.

**Casting:** In metalwork it means the pouring of molten metal into a house, decorated in joinery it refers to warping or bending.

**Canvas, lesela, indwangu:** a cloth made from cotton, hemp, flax used as a paint support.

**Cardridge Paper, pampiri, iphepha:** drawing paper.

**Focal Point, botsekeng, okusemqoka:** detailed and more interesting area in a painting.

**Woodcut :** Shapes cut out of a woodblock

**Iconography:** a term used in art history, referring to the study of the subject matter rather the form of work of art

**Impasto, ho sebedisa pente e ngata mosebet-sing, upende olugqinsi:** paint, applied with the brush or palette knife

**Impressionism:** a movement in French painting

**Ink:** a coloured fluid used for writing

**Palette knife, thipa ya ho taka, umese wokudweba:** and alternative instrument to a pain brush creating thick paint surfaces

**Intaglio:** in sculpture the term denotes a hollow (lesoba, imbobo) or negative design, which is usually cut into a hard stone or metal (tshepe, intsimbi)

**Junk art, botaki bo entsweng ka toti, ubuciko obuyenzwe ngo doti:** art which is composed from humble, worthless things and deliberately anti-aesthetic

**Mahogany, patsi/sefate, ukhuni:** a rich, brown, close-grained wood from Central Africa and West Indies

**Museum, ntlo ya ho boloka botaki, inqolobane yamagugu:** A building for the storing and the exhibition of objects including antiquities, natural history, and works of art.

**Naturalism, bonnete, indlelayemvelo:** an approach in art in which objects are depicted as they are empirically observed rather than according to stylistic or conceptual preconceptions.

**Oil Paint pente e hlakaneng le oli, upende lu hlangane na mafutha:** paint in which drying oils are used as the medium.

**Paper, pampiri, iphepha:** A drawing and printing surface, invented in China

**Paper Mache , pampiri e kopantshitsweng le metsi, iphepha eli bondwe ngamanzi:** made from pulped paper, glue, chalk, and sometimes sand.

**Pastel:** a drawing material consisting of a stick of colour made of ground pigment mixed with just enough gum and resin to bind them together.

**Perspective, botebong, ukubonisa kude ngo-mdwebo:** the art of drawing solid objects two-dimensional or shallow surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth and position in relation to each other.

**Portfolio:** a protecting and carrying cover for drawings and similar works on paper.

**Print, botaki bo hatelletseng, ubuciko obucin-dezelwe:** an image or design impressed or stamped on a support such as paper or fabric.

**Realism, ho taka/betla ntho tse tlwaelehileng, intoenjengobinjalo:** a term used generally to refer to art in which subjects from real life are depicted.

**Relief, ho betla ho tswelletseng, umdwebo oqumbile:** a sculpture made so that all or part of it projects from a flat surface.

**Watercolour, pente e hlakantsweng le metsi, upende wamanzi:** of paint in which water is used.

**Weaving, ho roka thunga, ukuthunga :** the process of making a fabric by intermeshing twisted or spun threads.

**Exhibitions**

- 1965:** Transvaal Academy, Johannesburg
- 1966:** Gallery 101, Johannesburg (solo)  
SA Breweries Art Prize Exhibition, SA – tour  
Republic Festival Exhibition, Pretoria  
Durban Art Gallery (solo)  
Pretoria Art Museum  
Johannesburg Civic Theatre  
Adler Fielding Galleries, Johannesburg (Artists of Fame and Promise)  
Trans-Natal, Natal Society for Arts, Durban
- 1967:** Transvaal Academy, Johannesburg (solo)  
Sao Paulo Biennale, Brazil  
Gallery 101, Johannesburg (solo)  
Adler Fielding Galleries, Johannesburg (Sculpture SA, 1900 – 1967)
- 1968:** Goodman Gallery (Sketches from a Private Collection) (solo)
- 1969:** Camden Arts Centre, London (Contemporary African Art)  
Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 1970:** Goodman Gallery (The 51 Club Winter Art Exhibition)  
Goodman Gallery (Exhibition from the Collection of Desmond Fisher)
- 1971:** Gallery 101 (group)
- 1972:** Gallery 101 (group)
- 1975:** Goodman Gallery (SA Sculpture)  
Gallery 21, London (African Art from SA)
- 1977:** Gallery 21, SANG (Cape Town Festival)  
RAU, PAM, UOFS, WHAG spell out  
(University of Fort Hare – Contemporary African Art in SA)
- 1981:** Jabulani Standard Bank, Soweto (Black Art Today)
- 1982:** National Museum and Art Gallery, Gaborone, Botswana (Art towards Social Development: an Exhibition of SA Art)
- 1983:** United Nations Exhibition, Commemoration of Namibia Freedom Day, New York City
- 1987:** Unlock Apartheid's Jails, conference on children under apartheid, with Bill Cosby and the American Committee of Africa, Hyatt Hotel, New York City
- 1988:** La Galleria, New York (solo)  
City without Wall Gallery, Newark, New Jersey (Uhuru: an Exhibition of African American Art against Apartheid)  
Voices from Exile (Seven SA Artists), Washington DC, Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia
- 1989:** Portrait of Nelson Mandela for the Pathfinder Mural, New York City
- 1990:** Applecrest, New York (Township Art from SA)
- 1991:** Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown

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2. Bruce Smith: Dumile Artist in Exile, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2004





# Dumile Feni

## Africa's Greatest 20th Century Artist

### Artist Fact File

*"My subjects are Africans because they are my people, but my message, the idea I am bringing to put across has nothing to do with racialism – I am not interested in politics. My situations are human ones."*

Dumile Feni

Zwelidumile Jeremiah, better known as Dumile Feni, is one of the greatest 20th century artists in Africa. He was born in 21 May 1942 in Withuis and moved to Worcester. He and his mother, father, brother and sister moved to Cape Town in 1948, and later moved to Johannesburg where he worked for his father who was an itinerant trader and a preacher. His mother worked as a domestic worker. In Johannesburg they lived in a shack where living conditions were appalling which caused him to develop tuberculosis.

Dumile's artistic capability was nurtured in 1964 when he was a patient at the Charles Hurwitz SANTA Tuberculosis Hospital in Johannesburg. He was encouraged to draw by the artist Ezrom Legae with whom he subsequently painted murals in the hospital. Several persons can claim to have helped Dumile to develop his career as an artist. These people are Ephraim Ngatane who gave him instructions and took him to the Jubilee Art Centre. There he met Cecil Skotnes who helped him develop his drawing techniques. He also worked with Madame Haenggi of Gallery 101 in Johannesburg. He also spent a lot of time with Bill Ainslie.

In 1968 Dumile went into exile in London where he lived for many years. He also visited Nigeria and China. He was an artist in residence in 1979/80 at the African Humanities Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, at the invitation of Professor Mazizi Kunene. After his return to London he occasionally visited the United States of America and subsequently taught at the Massachusetts College of Arts in Boston. In the 1980s he moved to New York where he made a living designing record covers, posters and calendars, illustrating books and painting murals. He died in 1991 of a heart attack while perusing music cassettes in a record bar when he was about to return to South Africa. His body was flown back to the country for burial.

Dumile has practically no academic education and he refused to have any formal training as an artist. He used charcoal on brown butcher paper, ball pen on tissue paper and made sculptures in terracotta and bronze. It was his drawing in particular which won him great acclaim. His drawings are a comment about life in South Africa, depicting township life and its cultural and social values.

Dumile held several solo exhibitions. His first group exhibition was in 1965 at the Transvaal Academy in Johannesburg. Between 1966 and 1969 he had four solo exhibitions in Johannesburg, Durban and in the Grosvenor Gallery in London. Other group exhibitions he had include Voices from Exile Exhibition, in the USA in 1988.

In 1966 he won a Merit Award on the SA Breweries Art Prize Exhibition. In 1971 he was awarded first prize for a bronze sculpture in the art compe-

tition of the African Studio Centre in Los Angeles. In 1967 he represented South Africa at the Sao Paulo Biennale.

Dumile's work has been acquired by major South African art museums including Johannesburg Art Gallery, South African National Gallery, Durban Art Gallery, and University museums. Amongst individual collectors are senior government officials including President Thabo Mbeki. His work is also found in collections in the USA, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Israel.

The exhibition which is curated by Prince Dube will open at the Johannesburg Art Gallery 1 February 2005 and then travel to the South African National Gallery, Durban Art Gallery, Ollewenhuis Art Museum and Pretoria Art Museum



**Twins'**  
Graphite

Michel Marks Collection

**Theme for Lucy'**  
Graphite  
Michel Marks Collection



*"Dumile Feni died in distressful conditions in New York, far away from his motherland, because our erstwhile white masters could see that his anguished figures in painting and sculpture were a pained cry for the recognition of the humanity of others who were different in colour."*

T. M. Mbeki



**Nina Series'**  
Pen and ink  
55 x 47 cm  
Nina Bergman Collection

