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BIOGRAPHY

VUMINKOSI ZULU (1947 - 96): KWAZULU-NATAL SCULPTOR AND GRAPHIC ARTIST

Vuminkosi Zulu was born on 24 November 1947 at Maphumulo, KwaZulu-Natal. He grew up under the jurisdiction of the amaBomvu Tribal Authority, at KwaMenyezwayo village, where he tasted both sweet and bitter sides of human life. He was the second child in the family of three children, Zulu being the only boy. His parents were Solomon and Frida. Frida's maiden name was Mhlongo. Zulu's father, the sole bread winner, supported his family through meagre earnings he acquired from the sale of fruit that he grew in his orchard. The money was not enough to enable him to provide for all his children's school needs; life simply proved to be a hopeless struggle for survival.

At the tender age of four, Zulu lost his mother, MaMhlongo. When his father took a second wife, MaGumede, life turned out to be a nightmare since he started school only at the age of thirteen, in 1960, at Mthombeni Primary School, also at Maphumulo. He displayed wonderful, intrinsic talent in art and crafts while still at Standard Four, probably in 1965, at the age of eighteen. In that year he was voted the best artist at an inter-school art and crafts competition. He had submitted a ceramic cow. The work was a combination of ceramics and collage since "foliage" was stuck on a piece of plank with an adhesive. He continued drawing and carving both as a matter of necessity and also as his recreational activity. After completing Standard Six, Zulu proceeded to Kranskop Secondary School, near Ntunjambili, a hill that features prominently in some Zulu traditional tales. It was at this stage that he became a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As he realised that the school fees and stationery expenses were even becoming less affordable than before, he had no option but to look for an additional assistance that would supplement his father's financial support. He consulted a certain Mr Moola, a local Indian businessman at Silverstream Supermarket (which local folks called eSulumaneni, owing to the fact that the shop owner was a Muslim) who agreed to sponsor his schooling expenses provided Zulu would in turn work for him in order to be able to reimburse him. Zulu then spent almost every weekend working for this man of Allah and doing some homework afterwards.

There seems to be some inconsistency concerning the truth about the exact standard he passed before leaving school, but Florence, his widow, and iNkosi Khomba Ngubane, his former classmate and friend at secondary school, have, on the one hand, revealed that Zulu went as far as Standard Nine whereas, on the other hand, some bibliographical sources, such as The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930-1988), compiled by the Johannesburg Art Gallery, reveal that he only went as far as Standard Seven. However, if he started his art and crafts training at Rorke's Drift in 1970, then it is hard to believe that he did Standard Nine at all. Whatever the case, Zulu never completed Matric, though fellow rural folks would generally admire and consider

any person who could go beyond Standard Six a "well educated" person. People of that time generally thought that any person who could pass Standard Six was ready to go through a teacher training course the duration of which was usually only two years, depending on the level of the course. The commonplace understanding was that as long as a child could write a letter and post it to someone working in a distant, big city, there was no need for further education, unless one desperately wanted to qualify for a white-collar job, be acceptable to whites and "the exempted" and earn a better salary in the form of a cheque. Post matric education was usually either interesting or accessible to children who grew up in Christian mission stations or to children of the clergy, who were always in contact with people of European origin.

The prospects of Zulu finishing school were not there at all, no matter how much he would try; his father simply could not afford the fees. Since Zulu had distinguished himself as a young man with peculiar creative potential, he opted for art and crafts as his field of study and subsequently proceeded to Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre, near Shiyane, where he trained from 1970 to 1972. The centre had been established through the initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and was first opened at Umphumulo Lutheran Mission, at Maphumulo, in 1962, before it moved to Rorke's Drift in 1963. It is evident from the kind of work that Zulu produced after his training that he had concentrated mainly on wood sculpture, intaglio and relief printing as his major fields of study.

Whilst at Rorke's Drift, he met Judus Sabela Mahlangu from Springs, who started his training in 1972, the year in which Zulu qualified. Zulu stayed on and worked there as a resident artist and apprentice weaver from 1972 until 1974, when Mahlangu qualified. In 1973 and 1974 Zulu participated in **DAM (Art SA Today)** exhibition and **Black Art** exhibition, respectively. He acquired the **Hajee Suliman Ebrahim Memorial** award for the former. The latter was held in Diakonia House, Johannesburg, and had been sponsored by the **Programme for Social Change and Devcraft**. During this period Zulu stayed with Otto Lundbohm, a Swedish teacher of intaglio printing, who presented him with a press on his (Zulu's) departure. He used it only for a short time and sold it to Mahlangu as he felt that it was too small for him. Indeed, Zulu had exceptionally big hands with thick, threatening fingers which were absolutely tailored for wood carving. Mahlangu still uses the same press even today, as far as Dumisani Mabaso, who presently runs the Sguzu Printmaking Studio at Vreededorp, can recall. Mabaso, also a Rorke's Drift student at the time, remembers that on his (Zulu's) departure at the end of 1974 the academic year Zulu first went to work for a while from home, near Kranskop, before he joined Mahlangu in Springs, East Rand, in 1975. In 1976 Zulu participated in the **Black SA Contemporary Graphics** exhibition, at the Brooklyn Museum and Public Library, New York, USA. That was probably his first international exposure.

Zulu and Mahlangu worked together for a certain period, but did not seem to make any substantial progress. However, they later exhibited their work in 1979 at the Barclay Square Shopping Centre, Pretoria; this was a two-person exhibition. In

mid-1970s Zulu met a wealthy businessman from Pretoria, Klaus Wasserthal, who illegally offered him accommodation at his place. In fact, these two men had initially met when Wasserthal happened to visit Rorke's Drift in 1972, Zulu's year of completion there.

Whilst staying with Wasserthal in Pretoria, Zulu produced a number of prints, mainly etchings. Wasserthal recalls that he bought quite a remarkable number of those prints, including one or two wood sculptures made out of blue gum. Some copper plates from which Zulu printed his work are still with Wasserthal. While he worked in Pretoria, Zulu supported his father and sisters, and he would normally visit them whenever the circumstances allowed for that.

Since his childhood, Zulu had noticed the beauty of a girl, among others, from KwamXhosa area, but under the amaHlongwa Tribal Authority, not far from his home. His sisters had been friends with her from childhood years and were therefore aware of her good character. In 1978 Zulu left Pretoria and set out to court Florence Khanyile, the daughter of Bahehe and Laiza. She considered him a man who could make a good husband and father of her children. In 1979 he approached her parents through his representatives (**abakhongi**)* with the view to asking them if they could permit him to marry their daughter. This is known as **ukucela***. After that he paid the bride price (**ilobolo**)* and they married in October, 1980.

Their life together was marred by their failure to beget children for the first three years of their marriage. At that time Zulu was still actively working as wood carver, making human and animal figures and also utilitarian, domestic utensils which helped him make some money and provide for his wife. He would often go out to lowveld areas such as Umphise and KwaMambulu to fetch wood of a wide variety which he would use for carving. Among others, he would often use olive, **umboAdo*** and **umthombothi***, to mention only the few. The artist used the kitchen, with Zulu traditional pillar and hearth, for his studio mainly because of warmth and company of his family that it provided. Since the floor is covered with cattle dung, Zulu often would simply sit and work on a bench, using fairly modern carving tools such as chisels, mallet, knives, files and **isigwedo***.

The people who lived in the neighbourhood, also at KwaMenyezwayo village, regarded him as a crazy man because of figurative images he carved. They even thought that those figures were a bad omen and therefore the cause of the couple's apparent barrenness at the time. (To the contrary, however, the couple was blessed with their first child, Sibusiso (which means 'the blessing') in 1983). He was seen as a peculiar man with some peculiar ideas about life.

Although life was remarkably bleak, it was often characterised by moments of amusement and laughter when, over a delicious meal of **uphuthu*** and meat, Zulu's favourite dish, the couple would laugh at the fact that most artists who knew or met Pablo Picasso idolised him so much that they even wished to pick up pieces of tissue paper he had used. This is not surprising if one considers the fact

that among a wide variety of Zulu's favourite literature, there was a book titled **Picasso and Jacqueline**, by David Douglas Duncan. To keep his mind focused on the fact that his talent was a gift from God and to gain some inspiration for his work, Zulu read the Bible. On the other hand, in order to keep himself informed of current news across the country, he would read newspapers. This surely kept him sensitive to various forms of socio-political sufferings his people often endured, particularly during the late eighties and early nineties.

It was only when he carved meat platters, spoons of various functions, fighting sticks and **izigqulo*** that he was admired by his fellow country folk for his fine craftsmanship, despite his "insanity". At that stage his work of fine art would be patronised mainly by white individual collectors and, at times, by public and commercial art galleries here and abroad. Among the foreign museums in which Zulu is represented is the Museum fur Volkerkunde, in Frankfurt a.m. Main, Germany. Florence vividly recalls that Pastor Hans Blum (now in retirement) from the same city in Germany, used to purchase work from their home with the view to exhibiting it in Germany. He mainly collected work based on religious themes, given the area of his special interest as a spiritual leader. He would also use some of these sculptures as illustrations for his sermons while he was the pastor of the South Eastern Region of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa.

Pastor Blum was also linked with Rorke's Drift and the church head quarters at Umphumulo. He had first seen Zulu's work, a crucifix, in January 1971 when he came to the Treasurer's office at the Church Centre, Umphumulo. The sculpture, he says, was quite reminiscent of Romanic style he had experienced in Germany. He bought it for R20 the following morning. However, he met Zulu at Rorke's Drift when he was a resident artist and apprentice weaver there in 1974.

Apart from general community members who bought some work, iNkosi Khomba Ngubane of the amaBomvu Tribal Territory collected quite a remarkable number of carved utensils, mainly meat platters. Zulu presented the inkosi with a meat platter as a sign of his allegiance to his old friend and new inkosi. He had just ordered some figurative images when the artist died. The inkosi aspires to establish a museum within his area of jurisdiction which will house such work for the purpose of education and tourism, using Zulu's work as the major part of the collection.

In order to gain access to printing facilities, Zulu would often go to Johannesburg. In 1991 he stayed at Sguzu Printmaking Studio, in Vreededorp, where he produced some prints. The studio was opened in 1982 and is run by Dumisani Mabaso. The now defunct Tupelo Art Gallery awarded him with a scholarship, in 1991, to go to Orebro, Sweden, with the view to expanding his knowledge and skill in printmaking, etching in particular, for six months. He left for Sweden in 1992. While abroad, he also did ceramics and stone carving. Some prints in this exhibition refer to his stay there.

When he came back in 1992 he happened to visit the late Jo Thorpe of the African

Art Centre in Durban. There he met Malcolm Christian, the Master Printer and Director of The Caversham Press Educational Trust. They later got involved in a printmaking project that had its inspiration from various stories and African folklore. The prints were first exhibited at the 1995 Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, and later travelled to other art museums in the country. The exhibition, titled **"The Spirit of our Stories"**, was a visual interpretation of well known stories and folklore characterised by some novelty and moral significance. Gcina Mhlophe, one of the best South African story-tellers, provided artists with a considerable number of stories. This was a completely new experience for Vuminkosi Zulu. He also used The Caversham as one of his marketing outlets, in addition to The South African Institute of Race Relations, the African Art Centre in Durban and a couple of others.

The year 1996 brought a dark cloud to the Zulus because the artist was diagnosed for cancer towards the end of June. From that time onwards, Zulu spent much of his time in hospitals, at times getting pass-outs in order to work for his dependants. However, he finally passed away on 14 November 1996. He is survived by his father, his two sisters, his widow, Florence and his children, Sibusiso (15), Philile (12), Nkanyiso (9) and twins Nhlanhla and Sinenhlanhla (6). His untimely death spelt misfortune to all lovers of art and to the development of his fellow up-and-coming artists that he had aspired to assist during his life-time, in terms of sharing the knowledge and skills that he had assimilated for years then.

Vuminkosi Zulu will remain etched in the memories of all who knew and admired him both in his personal and professional capacities. The world of art has been blessed with the brief, but significant, contribution of this man. He still preaches and entertains through the work he left behind.

GLOSSARY

- *abakhongi: legal representatives of a young man who negotiates the bride price with his prospective future in-laws.
- *ilobolo: bride price.
- *inkosi: the tribal chief.
- *isigwedo: a curved carving tool used for making a hollow on domestic wares such as spoons, meat platters, etc.
- *izigqulo: roughly cylindrical, hollowed wooden containers used for stamping mealies in order to produce stamp. Thick, strong sticks are used for
5.

stamping whole mealies inside these containers.

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The people who lived in the neighbourhood, also at KwaMenyezwayo village, regarded him as a crazy man because of figurative images he carved. They even thought that those figures were a bad omen and therefore the cause of the couple's apparent barrenness at the time. (To the contrary, however, the couple was blessed with their first child, Sibusiso (which means **the blessing**) in 1983). He was seen as a peculiar man with some peculiar ideas about life.

Although life was remarkably bleak, it was often characterised by moments of amusement and laughter when, over a delicious meal of **uphuthu** and meat, Zulu's favourite dish, the couple would laugh at the fact that most artists who knew or met Pablo Picasso idolised him so much that they even wished to pick up pieces of tissue paper he had used. This is not surprising if one considers the fact that among a wide variety of Zulu's favourite literature, there was a book titled **Picasso and Jacqueline**, by David Douglas Duncan. To keep his mind focused on the fact that his talent was a gift from God and to gain some inspiration for his work, Zulu read the Bible. On the other hand, in order to keep himself informed of current news across the country, he would read newspapers. This surely kept him sensitive to various forms of socio-political sufferings his people often endured, particularly during the late eighties and early nineties.

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sticks and izigqulo that he was admired for his fine craftsmanship, despite his "insanity". At that stage his work of fine art would be patronised mainly by white individual collectors and, at times, by public and commercial art galleries here and abroad. Among the foreign museums in which Zulu is represented is the Museum fur Volkerkunde, in Frankfurt a.m. Main, Germany. Florence vividly recalls that Pastor Hans Blum from the same city in Germany, used to purchase work from their home with the view to exhibiting it in Germany for exhibitions. He mainly collected work based on religious themes, given the area of his special interest as a spiritual leader. He would also use some of these sculptures as illustrations for his sermons while he was the Lutheran pastor in the South Eastern Region of this country. Blum was also linked with Rorke's Drift and the church head quarters at Umphumulo. He had first seen Zulu's work, a crucifix, in January 1971 when he came to the Treasurer's office at the Church Centre, Umphumulo. The sculpture, he says, was quite reminiscent of German Romanic style he had experienced in Germany. He bought it for R20 the following morning. However, he met Zulu at Rorke's Drift when he was a resident artist and apprentice weaver there in 1974.

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GLOSSARY

abakhongi:	legal representatives of a young men who negotiates the bride price with his prospective future in-laws.
ilobolo:	bride price
isigwedo:	a curved carving instrument used for making a hollow on domestic wares such as spoons, meat platters, etc.
izigqulo:	roughly cylindrical, hollowed wooden containers used for stamping mealies in order to produce stamp. Thick, strong sticks are used for stamping whole mealies inside these containers.
uphuthu:	mealie stiff porridge.
ukucela:	the process in which a young unmarried man formally introduces himself to his prospective future in-laws and negotiates the bride price.

PS. inkosi: chief.

stamping whole mealies inside these containers.

***ukucela:**

the process in which a young unmarried man formally introduces himself to his prospective future in-laws and negotiates the bride price.

***umbondo:**

a strong, indigenous tree widely used for carving.

***umthombothi:**

the other tree with the same qualities of *umbondo; this is red brownish in colour.

***uphuthu:**

mealie dry, stiff porridge.

VUMINKOSI ZULU: KWAZULU-NATAL SCULPTOR AND GRAPHIC ARTIST.

Vuminkosi Zulu was born on 24 November 1947 at Maphumulo, KwaZulu-Natal. He grew up under the jurisdiction of the amaBomvu Tribal Authority, at KwaMenyezwayo village, where he tasted both sweet and bitter sides of human life. He was the second child in the family of three children, Zulu being the only boy. His parents were Solomon and Frida. Frida's maiden name was Mhlongo. Zulu's father, the sole bread winner, supported his family through meagre earnings he acquired from the sale of fruit that he grew in his orchard. The money was not enough to enable him to provide for all his children's school needs; life simply proved to be a hopeless struggle for survival.

At the tender age of four, Zulu lost his mother, MaMhlongo. When his father took a second wife, MaGumede, life turned out to be a nightmare since he started school only at the age of thirteen, in 1960, at Mthombeni Primary School, also at Maphumulo. He displayed wonderful, intrinsic talent in art and crafts while still at Standard Four, probably in 1965, at the age of eighteen. In that year he was voted the best artist at an inter-school art and crafts competition. He had submitted a ceramic cow. The work was a combination of ceramics and collage since "foliage" was stuck on a piece of plank with an adhesive. He continued drawing and carving both as a matter of necessity and also as his recreational activity. After completing Standard Six, Zulu proceeded to Kranskop Secondary School, near Ntunjambili, a hill that features prominently in some traditional Zulu tales. It was at this stage that he became a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As he realised that the school fees and stationery expenses were even becoming less affordable than before, he had no option but to look for an additional assistance that would supplement his father's financial support. He consulted a certain Mr Moola, a local Indian businessman at Silverstream Supermarket (which local folks called eSulumaneni, owing to the fact that the shop owner was a Muslim) who agreed to sponsor his schooling expenses provided Zulu would in turn work for him in order to be able to reimburse him. Zulu then spent almost every weekend working for this man of Allah and doing some homework afterwards.

There seems to be some inconsistency concerning the truth about the exact standard he passed before leaving school, but Florence, his widow, and iNkosi Khomba Ngubane, his former classmate and friend at secondary school, have, on the one hand, revealed that Zulu went as far as Standard Nine whereas, on the other hand, some bibliographical sources, such as The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930-1988), compiled by the Johannesburg Art Gallery, reveal that he only went as far as Standard Seven. However, if he started his art and crafts training at Rorke's Drift in 1970, then it is hard to believe that he did Standard Nine at all. Whatever the case, Zulu never completed Matric, though fellow rural folks would generally admire and consider any person who could go beyond Standard Six a "well educated" person. People of that time generally thought that any person who could pass Standard Six was ready to go through a teacher training course the duration of which was usually only two years, depending on the level of the course. The commonplace understanding was that as long as a child could write a letter and post it to

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someone working in a distant, big city, there was no need for further education, unless one desperately wanted to qualify for a white-collar job, be acceptable to whites and "the exempted" and earn a better salary in the form of a cheque. Post matric education was usually either interesting or accessible to children who grew up in Christian mission stations or to children of the clergy, who were always in contact with people of European origin.

The prospects of Zulu finishing school were not there at all, no matter how much he would try; his father simply could not afford the fees. Since Zulu had distinguished himself as a young man with peculiar creative potential, he opted for art and crafts as his field of study and subsequently proceeded to Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre, near Shiyane, where he trained from 1970 to 1972. The centre had been established through the initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and was first opened at Umphumulo Lutheran Mission, at Maphumulo, in 1962, before it moved to Rorke's Drift in 1963. It is evident from the kind of work that Zulu produced after his training that he had concentrated mainly on wood sculpture, intaglio and relief printing as his major fields of study.

Whilst at Rorke's Drift, he met Judus Sabela Mahlangu from Springs, who started his training in 1972, the year in which Zulu qualified. Zulu stayed on and worked there as a resident artist and apprentice weaver from 1972 until 1974, when Mahlangu qualified. In 1973 and 1974 Zulu participated in **DAM (Art SA Today)** exhibition and **Black Art** exhibition, respectively. He acquired the **Hajee Suliman Ebrahim Memorial** award for the former. The latter was held in Diakonia House, Johannesburg, and had been sponsored by the **Programme for Social Change and Devcraft**. During this period Zulu stayed with Otto Lundbohm, a Swedish teacher of intaglio printing, who presented him with a press on his (Zulu's) departure. He used it only for a short time and sold it to Mahlangu as he felt that it was too small for him. Indeed, Zulu had exceptionally big hands with thick, threatening fingers which were absolutely tailored for wood carving. Mahlangu still uses the same press even today, as far as Dumisani Mabaso, who presently runs the Sguzu Printmaking Studio at Vreededorp, can recall. Mabaso, also a Rorke's Drift student at the time, remembers that on his (Zulu's) departure at the end of 1974 academic year Zulu first went to work for a while from home, near Kranskop, before he joined Mahlangu in Springs, East Rand, in 1975. In 1976 Zulu participated in the **Black SA Contemporary Graphics** exhibition, at the Brooklyn Museum and Public Library, New York, USA. That was probably his first international exposure.

Zulu and Mahlangu worked together for a certain period, but did not seem to make any substantial progress. However, they later exhibited their work in 1979 at the Barclay Square Shopping Centre, Pretoria; this was a two-person exhibition. In mid-1970s Zulu met a wealthy businessman from Pretoria, Klaus Wasserthal, who illegally offered him accommodation at his place. In fact, these two men had initially met when Wasserthal happened to visit Rorke's Drift in 1972, Zulu's year of completion there.

Whilst staying with Wasserthal in Pretoria, Zulu produced a number of prints, mainly etchings. Wasserthal recalls that he bought quite a remarkable number of

those prints, including one or two wood sculptures made out of blue gum. Some copper plates from which Zulu printed his work are still with Wasserthal. While he worked in Pretoria, Zulu supported his father and sisters, and he would normally visit them whenever the circumstances allowed for that.

Since his childhood, Zulu had noticed the beauty of a girl, among others, from KwamXhosa area, but under the amaHlongwa Tribal Authority, not far from his home. His sisters had been friends with her from childhood years and were therefore aware of her good character. In 1978 Zulu left Pretoria and set out to court Florence Khányile, the daughter of Bahehe and Laiza. She considered him a man who could make a good husband and father of her children. In 1979 he approached her parents through his representatives (**abakhongi**) with the view to asking them if they could permit him to marry their daughter. This is known as **ukucela**. After that he paid the bride price (**ilobolo**) and they married in October, 1980.

Their life together was marred by their failure to beget children for the first three years of their marriage. At that time Zulu was still actively working as wood carver, making human and animal figures and also utilitarian, domestic utensils which helped him make some money and provide for his wife. He often go out to lowveld areas such as Umphise and KwaMambulu to fetch wood of a wide variety which he would use for carving. Among others, he would often use olive, umbomdo and umthombothi, to mention only the few. The artist used the kitchen, with Zulu traditional pillar and hearth, for his studio mainly because of warmth and company of his family that it provided. Since floor is covered with cattle dung, Zulu often would simply sit and work on a bench, using fairly modern carving tools such as chisels, mallet, knives, files and **isigwedo**.

The people who lived in the neighbourhood, also at KwaMenyezwayo village, regarded him as a crazy man because of figurative images he carved. They even thought that those figures were a bad omen and therefore the cause of the couple's apparent barrenness at the time. (To the contrary, however, the couple was blessed with their first child, Sibusiso (which means **the blessing**) in 1983). He was seen as a peculiar man with some peculiar ideas about life.

Although life was remarkably bleak, it was often characterised by moments of amusement and laughter when, over a delicious meal of **uphuthu** and meat, Zulu's favourite dish, the couple would laugh at the fact that most artists who knew or met Pablo Picasso idolised him so much that they even wished to pick up pieces of tissue paper he had used. This is not surprising if one considers the fact that among a wide variety of Zulu's favourite literature, there was a book titled **Picasso and Jacqueline**, by David Douglas Duncan. To keep his mind focused on the fact that his talent was a gift from God and to gain some inspiration for his work, Zulu read the Bible. On the other hand, in order to keep himself informed of current news across the country, he would read newspapers. This surely kept him sensitive to various forms of socio-political sufferings his people often endured, particularly during the late eighties and early nineties.

It was only when he carved meat platters, spoons of various functions, walking

sticks and izigqulo that he was admired for his fine craftsmanship, despite his "insanity". At that stage his work of fine art would be patronised mainly by white individual collectors and, at times, by public and commercial art galleries here and abroad. Among the foreign museums in which Zulu is represented is the Museum fur Volkerkunde, in Frankfurt a.m. Main, Germany. Florence vividly recalls that Pastor Hans Blum from the same city in Germany, used to purchase work from their home with the view to exhibiting it in Germany for exhibitions. He mainly collected work based on religious themes, given the area of his special interest as a spiritual leader. He would also use some of these sculptures as illustrations for his sermons while he was the Lutheran pastor in the South Eastern Region of this country. Blum was also linked with Rorke's Drift and the church head quarters at Umphumulo. He had first seen Zulu's work, a crucifix, in January 1971 when he came to the Treasurer's office at the Church Centre, Umphumulo. The sculpture, he says, was quite reminiscent of German Romanic style he had experienced in Germany. He bought it for R20 the following morning. However, he met Zulu at Rorke's Drift when he was a resident artist and apprentice weaver there in 1974.

Apart from general community members who bought some work, iNkosi Khomba Ngubane of the amaBomvu Tribal Territory collected quite a remarkable number of carved utensils, mainly meat platters. Zulu presented the inkosi with a meat platter as a sign of his allegiance to his old friend and new inkosi. He was still planning to purchase some figurative images as well when the artist died. Ngubane aspires to establish a museum within his area of jurisdiction which will house such work for the purpose of tourism, using Zulu's work as the major part of the collection.

In order to gain access to printing facilities, Zulu would often go to Johannesburg. In 1991 he stayed at Sguzu Printmaking Studio, in Vreededorp, where he produced some prints. The studio was opened in 1982 and is run by Dumisan Mabaso. The now defunct Tupelo Art Gallery awarded him with a scholarship, in 1991, to go to Orebro, Sweden, with the view to expanding his knowledge and skill in printmaking, etching in particular, for six months. He left for Sweden in 1992. While abroad, he also did ceramics and stone carving. Some prints in this exhibition refer to his stay there.

When he came back in 1992 he happened to visit the late Jo Thorpe of the African Art Centre in Durban. There he met Malcolm Christian, the Master Printer and Director of The Caversham Press Educational Trust. They later got involved in a printmaking project that had its inspiration from various stories and African folklore. The prints were first exhibited at the 1995 Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, and later travelled to other art museums in the country. The exhibition, titled "The Spirit of our Stories", was a visual interpretation of well known stories and folklore characterised by some novelty and moral significance. Gcina Mhlophe, one of the best South African story-tellers, provided artists with a considerable number of stories. This was a completely new experience for Vuminkosi Zulu. He also used The Caversham as one of his marketing outlets, in addition to The Institute for Race Relations, the African Art Centre in Durban and a couple of others.

The year 1996 brought a dark cloud to the Zulus because the artist was diagnosed for cancer towards the end of June. From that time onwards, Zulu spent much of his time in hospitals, at times getting pass-outs in order to work for his dependants. However, he finally passed away on 14 November 1996. He is survived by his father, his two sisters, his widow, Florence and his children, Sibusiso (15), Philile (12), Nkanyiso (9) and twins Nhlanhla and Sinenhlanhla (6). His untimely death spelt misfortune to all lovers of art and to the development of his fellow up-and-coming artists that he had aspired to assist, in terms of sharing the knowledge and skills that he had assimilated for years then.

Vuminkosi Zulu will remain in the memories of all who knew and admired him both in his personal and professional capacities. The world of art has been briefly blessed by the brief, but significant, contribution of this man. He still preaches and entertains through his work even now.

GLOSSARY

- abakhongi:** legal representatives of a young men who negotiates the bride price with his prospective future in-laws.
- ilobolo:** bride price
- isigwedo:** a curved carving instrument used for making a hollow on domestic wares such as spoons, meat platters, etc.
- izigqulo:** roughly cylindrical, hollowed wooden containers used for stamping mealies in order to produce stamp. Thick, strong sticks are used for stamping whole mealies inside these containers.
- uphuthu:** mealie stiff porridge.
- ukucela:** the process in which a young unmarried man formally introduces himself to his prospective future in-laws and negotiates the bride price.

inkosi: chief.