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# Art centre links Natal and Sweden

NINETY-SEVEN years ago — the  
sound of battle. Today ... hands work  
the brush and the loom.

Now working and teaching in Sweden, one of South Africa's most popular artists may never return to Natal and the country he loves most.

He is Azaria Mbatha, who learned his craft at the Rorke's Drift art centre, site of the famous battle between Cetshwayo's impis and a small garrison of soldiers.

Perhaps the centre's best known artist, Mbatha has had

his wife Ulla, who, with his wife Ulla, was in charge of the centre for several years, noticed that people in Europe liked the new approach to fabric designs which was apparent in African tribal work. It was the beginning of the era when woven rugs and curtains, hand-made pottery and carved wood were being used extensively in homes.

Karakul wool is brought to Rorke's Drift where it

two of his lino-cuts hung in New York's museum of Modern Art and has painted murals in Stockholm and Natal.

He has a large wall painting in egg-oil-tempora in the Lutheran Church at Vosloorus township, south of Alberton.

His interpretations are of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible shown in the African idiom.

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Students today study methodics, English, music and psychology, knitting, weaving, art and design.

One branch of the school spreads knowledge of arts and crafts and helps Africans to market their work. The other trains arts and crafts advisers for occupational therapy in hospitals. The Rev Peter Gowe-

is teased, spun and then dyed in large vats. Weaving follows with colours and designs being composed entirely by the students. Roads, people, vehicles and even houses are incorporated in the theme.

Woven goods made in the heartland of Natal were exhibited at the modern museum in Stockholm and at the Louisiana Museum outside Copenhagen.

The centre was repre-

sented at the 1968 Biennale in Venice; at the World Biennale in Sao Paulo in 1973; and at the International Arts and Crafts Fair in Venice in 1974.

Between 1969 and 1970 products from the centre formed a travelling exhibit in Canada.

In charge of the centre at present in a supervisory capacity are Otto and Maili Lundbohm.