

SUCCESS STORY

"To succeed in life, God has to come first, other people follow. What you receive in the end is your reward. Only by placing yourself last can you live a blessed life." That's the philosophy which has helped make Hargreaves Ntukwana one of our greatest artists.

A GIFT FROM GOD

ARTIST HARGREAVES NTUKWANA TALKS ABOUT THE BREAKS WHICH MADE HIM FAMOUS

HARGREAVES Ntukwana is an artist, but the very word 'artist' defies the quality and beauty of his work. In there, in those paintings, lies something so intangible, something so wonderful that one's first impression is that life cannot be this beautiful.

It is hard to know what to say or where to start looking. And, behind it all sits a man, Hargreaves Ntukwana, so approachable and friendly, so happy to share his work and his feelings with everyone, it is difficult to get behind the smiling, friendly face and attempt to feel what he is able to put onto canvas.

Hargreaves is 51, but he has the freshness and enthusiasm of a teenager. His sculptures and paintings have been exhibited all over the world and his skill as a photographer has earned him the highest accolades. He is a master of many forms of art, working in terracotta, clay, plaster of paris, oils, wash, charcoal, pencil, wood and even ballpoint pen.

Add to that his early days of playing the tenor sax and the piano, starring in the original cast of King Kong as a musician and you have a most extraordinary human being.

But Hargreaves Ntukwana never felt comfortable in the world of music. He found the heavy drinking and fast way of life totally unacceptable.

It was for these very reasons that he sold his instruments and took up painting. And how he painted! Picture after picture, all filled with the gloriously rich colours of Africa in a style so uni-



Hargreaves Ntukwana: "God gives you talent, which you, in turn make good use of. Then other people are there to appreciate your God given talent."

que and contemporary. His talent was obviously worthy of notice, and the young Hargreaves was invited to study with Cecil Skotness at the African School of Art in Harare, privately under Cordelios in Toledo, Spain and with Mel Edwards in New York. He was the first black artist to attend the Adler Fielding Gallery in Johannesburg.

"In those early days," says Hargreaves, "I would paint a picture and sell it for R10. It was enough to see me through the day, when I needed more, I would paint another picture."

It was only a matter of time before he was 'discovered' — by an Anglican priest who was going overseas. "He offered to take my paintings and sculptures with him and sell them over there. I gave him about 20 paintings, black and white, and pastels. I never heard from him again, until years later, and quite by coincidence."

Quite by coincidence indeed! It was years later that Hargreaves decided to take his family down to Durban for a holiday. In fact, it was such a wonderful holiday that he was shocked to discover that he had run out of money!

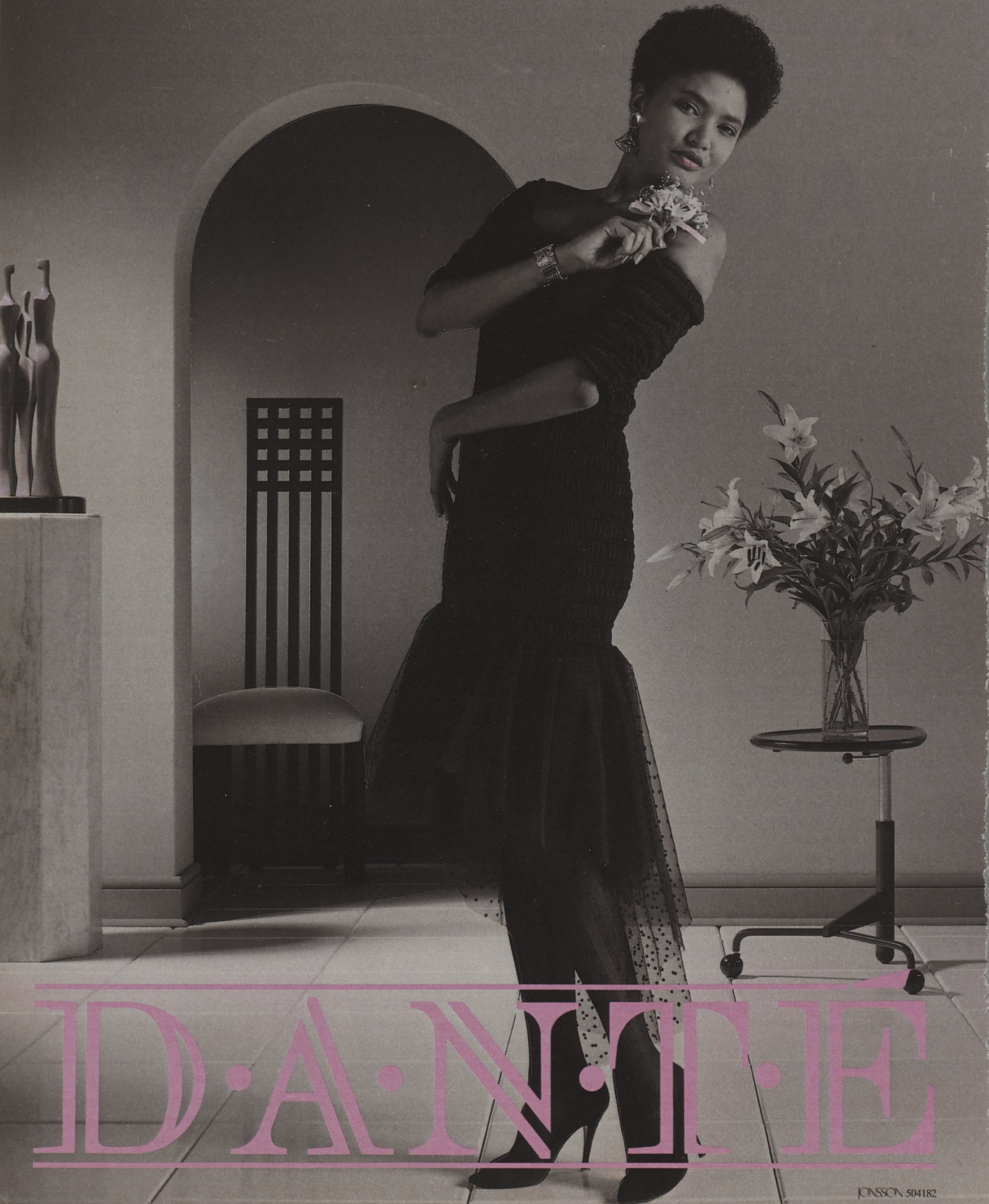
"I quickly rushed to an art shop where I purchased paints and canvas with the last of my money. My sister has a house in Durban, so I left the family in the hotel and set up a studio. I painted a few pictures and took them to an art gallery to try to sell them."

The gallery owner was talking to an English tourist called Bill Robinson, who had a small black and white sketch in his pocket. He had bought it in London

along with a few other paintings and had spent much of his holiday in South Africa trying to find this "wonderful artist Hargreaves Ntukwana!" And, the art gallery in London where he had bought the pictures belonged to none other than the former Anglican priest!

Bill Robinson was to become Hargreaves's mentor, flying him over to London to exhibit his work and to help seek out the man who had been making money on his work! Hargreaves recalls those moments with his characteristic kindness, bestowed

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THE INTERNATIONAL
FRAGRANCE

SUCCESS STORY



An example of Hargreaves' work from Gcina Mhlope's book, *The Snake With Seven Heads*.

on the man who had stolen his paintings, "I spoke to him, and he was very embarrassed to see me. I told him that I understood his need was greater than mine and that I wished him well in his business. He offered to pay me back, every last cent, and a strange friendship began which exists even to this day."

His first exhibition which was held in Kensington ended on a triumphant note. All 80 paintings on exhibition were sold. It was the start of his international success — Hargreaves has held 15 solo exhibitions and has participated in exhibitions in Germany, the United States, the Netherlands, Switzerland as well as here in South Africa.

He has lectured on South African art in New York and Switzerland, and has designed labels for wine bottles, painted designs for Lesotho rugs, designed album covers, *Underground In Africa* for Dollar Brand, and *Plum And Cherry* for Basil Mannenberg and Lionel Pillay. His illustrations for Gcina Mhlope's children's books are a delight of colour and fantasy.

Hargreaves Ntukwana is a deeply religious man. He is a lay preacher for his church and believes that his talent for painting is a God-given gift. He believes strongly in giving his time to community work and is the chairman of the Zionist Christian Church's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He has a deep commitment to people.

"I believe that if you have a successful business, you must include your family to share in the success. When all is going well, it is then time to invite someone from the outside to share in

the good fortune. This way you help someone who is in need. Never look down on people, they are so important!"

It goes without saying that Hargreaves is a family man. His sons Justice, Eugene, Ephraim and Halifax are of great importance in his life. Father of five sons, his talented soccer playing son Jacob was murdered in 1987.

Hargreaves and his wife are in the process of setting up a picture framing business from home. He has imported the equipment from Europe and is ready to roll. Every picture framed will undoubtedly have that special Hargreaves Ntukwana feel about it.

As he says, "Each picture must have its own quality. People must see that it has not only been painted by an artist, but that an artist has framed it." He spent quite a lot of time with a picture framer in Brooklyn, New York, who taught him the tricks of the trade.

It comes as a great shock to hear that Hargreaves is reluctant to paint anymore. He feels strongly that South African artists are exploited beyond description. He is the victim of much of that exploitation.

"I would rather not paint my pictures not knowing where they are going to land up," he says. After hearing his life story one can understand his reasoning behind this decision. But, it would be one of the greatest tragedies in this country if he carries out his threat.

Without Hargreaves Ntukwana, so much of the colour of South Africa would be sadly lacking.

THE FAMOUS SHAPE



BUT IN SOME WAYS I STILL HAVEN'T CHANGED.

When I was 13 my father bought me a pair of gloves. They were too big for me, and to keep them on I had to tie the laces real tight. They were red and shiny and I loved them.

And when we had neighbourhood tournaments I'd strut around and put those gloves to good use. But I didn't want to be a boxer. I wanted to be a lawyer.

Things have changed since then. Not only have I become a boxer but I've become the South African Junior Lightweight Champion, taking the crown away from Mbaduli in his home town, Port Elizabeth.

Since then I've fought and beaten world ranked International fighters. I beat Daniel Londas of France, and knocked out Brian Roche of the U.K. and Mike Fernandez of the U.S.A. In fact, I'm heading for the World Title.

Being a champion has changed me, I'm more sophisticated, better dressed, and a lot surer of myself. But that doesn't mean I've neglected my family. Or my traditions. King Korn will always be part of my life, even when I become World Champion.



THE HEART AND SOUL OF AFRICA.

Thobela

DINGAAN THOBELA



Above:
The richly-
illustrated record cover
for Dollar Brand's
record,
*Underground In
Africa*.

Right:
Hargreaves Ntukwana:
"Share your success
with others — people
are so important."

