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MAN 000-000 â\200\224x5]

ORIA
MABASA

Like her fellow Venda artist, Dr Seoka,
Noria Mabasa dreamed her way into
realising her creativity. Trained in the
traditional methods of making pottery,
her first attempts at figuration came in
1974, at the age of 36. â\200\230I get sick, solam
sleeping. In my dream that old lady
came to me and showed me what I
must do and told me I must make just a
little one.â\200\235 That first small sculpture
Mabasa modelled from clay was of a
young girl hitting a drum. Others fol-
lowed. â\200\230Just small girls. My sculpture is
not so much for men.

â\200\230I didnâ\200\231t want to sell them because I

UNTITLED
CLAY, PAINT

: APPROX. 80 CM

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"was shy. I put them nice in a big paper

bag, and my cousin she came, she sell
all those little ones. She brings back
R20. I'say, â\200\234You see!â\200\235 Then I'm making
sculptures every day.â\200\231

Mabasa lives in Tshino, in the
troubled bantustan of Venda which re-
ceived its â\200\230independenceâ\200\231 from the
South African government in 1979. Be-
fore that, political authority had been
vested in the traditional chiefs and
headmen, who in turn were account-
able to some degree to the people. The
constitution given by the Nationalist

ca Willllawnn: BR ASH

sovernment to the fledgling state changed all that. Corruption and nepotism have become rife. The large and hitherto unseen tribe of bureaucrats, politicians, and the military which the sew order brought to Venda, caught â\200\234labasaâ\200\231s attention, and she first be- â\200\234ame known to the art world for her ironic and amusing painted clay figures of this new breed.

But it is through her wood sculpture that Mabasa has really come into her full power as an artist. Wood carving is traditionally menâ\200\231s work in Venda, but

ce again Mabasaâ\200\231s dreams showed lc way. â\200\230In 1976, I am sleeping in morning. I see the river Luvuba, I sce the wood rolling in the river like this . . . a big wood. I asked someone,

â\200\234Is it yours?â\200\235 He said â\200\234no.â\200\235â\200\235 On awaken-

ing, Mabasa went down to the river and found the log she had dreamed about on the bank. Getting it home with some trouble, she began at once to work it, knowing already from her dream what the form was to be. Mabasaâ\200\231s dreams were to lead her on from piece to piece. She is an intensely dedicated worker, and although physically slight, seems undaunted by mas-

sive pieces of wood, attacking them with sureness and vigour. She works at home, her studio one of a small complex of round thatched huts which surround a central courtyard of packed earth.

Carnage II is an extraordinary and powerful piece in which six people, a snake, a lamb, a lion and a crocodile

surge forward locked in combat. The

tensions are perfectly balanced, the strength of the loosely worked forms and the purity of line are breathtaking. With this seminal piece, the visionary Mabasa emerged as a major figure in

South African art.

A CARNAGE II

WOOD

79 xX 197 X 219 CM

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