

Shange's work is fresh, clean joyous

THE bulk of painting, drawing and graphics by black artists of the 'fifties and early 'sixties tended to emanate from the townships around Johannesburg and because it usually depicted their surroundings acquired the label, "Township Art".

The more accomplished artists broke through this barrier to develop personal styles, and Bongani Peter Shange is one of this new wave. Shange's first one-man exhibition is now showing at Gallery 709, Burg St.

On show are 14 large black and white artist's proof linocuts, with a limited edition of 25 each.

Shange, a Zulu, was born in Maritzburg in 1951, where he matriculated and later worked for two years in litho printing to earn money to finance a term at the Rorke's Drift Art Centre, where he studied graphics, paintings, sculpture and weaving.

After a testing year, and through the efforts of Miss Thorpe of the Institute of Race Relations in Durban, he was awarded a scholarship for his second year.

Shange has participated in a number of group shows in Durban and Pretoria, but this is his first appearance in Cape Town. His work depicts rural life, dancing, folklore, hunting, showing his people as a happy people, not the usual sad faces of the townships.

"Virgin Dancers" shows eight nude maidens dancing and the figures have the rhythm and sculptural form that reflect his studies in this medium. Another pleasing work is "Collecting Wood", also three nude figures displaying the same rhythm and excellent sense of composition.

"Hunting a Black Bird" draws on folklore and my attention was also attracted by "Rejecting a Young One" and "Mother Saves the Babies".

For the duration of this exhibition Shange will be demonstrating the art of lino-cutting during the lunchtime and all are welcome. This exhibition has a fresh and clean, rhythmic and joyous approach and supports the paraphrase of the Biblical saying, "In the mansion of art there are many rooms." A visit is highly recommended.

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