

Five drawings chosen for Sao Paulo Biennale

DUMILE IN THE NEWS

AGAIN

DUMILE, the untaught African artist, whose turbulent, haunting drawings rocketed him to fame soon after he first wandered into a city gallery with some examples of his work, is in the news again.

Five of his drawings are in the South African exhibit at the Sao Paulo Biennale and one has been chosen for a catalogue illustration.

His second one-man show in Johannesburg will open on Monday. His previous one was almost a sell-out and last year he also exhibited successfully in Durban.

Mslaba Zwelidomile Mkgaji, Mkgaji, to give him his full but rarely used name, is 25, an orphan who barely learned to read and write as he grew up. A few years ago he handled drawing materials for the first time, when he was a patient in a tuberculosis hospital.

With the paper and pencil that were given him for "occupational therapy" he produced drawings that startled the nurses and patients.

SYMBOLISM

The poverty, sickness and violence he has seen arouse in him violent emotional reactions. He draws, and sometimes models, African figures with a blend of

ART AND ARTISTS

realism, distortion and symbolism.

"But now," he says, "I have learned to control my emotions. Before, as I worked, I used to become too emotional and leave the work. I do not say this was bad; sometimes it was good. But I have learned to work to a finish. At last I know where I am going.

"I think out my drawings as I walk about. Colour has never

interested me. I tried carving such stone as I could find in the townships and modelling clay from river beds.

"White artists have helped me to find more suitable material." At least one sculpture will be in his new show.

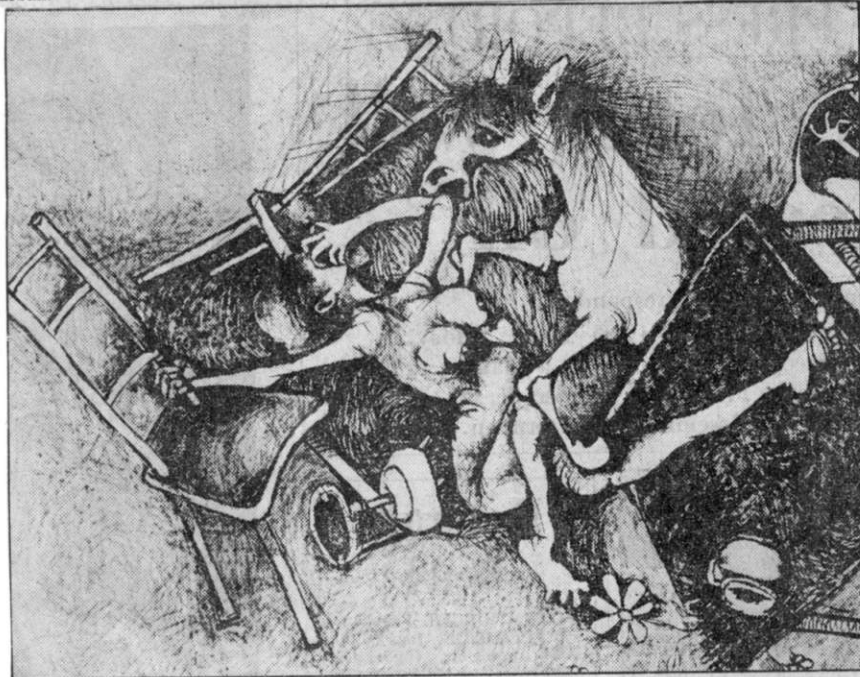
Lately he has been reading the Bible "to try to understand things — such as why there has always been trouble in the world." Some of his recent work shows this background of thought.

A White artist who has been watching Dumile's progress says there has been a tendency to romanticize him and his background and this has enabled the public

to avoid the full implications of his work.

He is a man of unusual perception and sensitivity. His drawing "The Last Supper," for instance, is a comment on the characteristic of our times, the blurring of the distinction between good and evil and the breakdown of settled standards.

Dumile's work has been bought by several South African galleries and by collectors in Europe and the United States.



A detail from one of the strange drawings by the African artist Dumile which will be on view in Johannesburg next week.