

“As I exhibited more at fairs, flea markets, the museum, I became known as the doll-maker. In this world you become known by what you do”.

Puni’s art repertoire comprises: key rings, paintings, jewellery, cardboard magnets and multi-purpose cards of African scenes and African people. She is presently working on a collection of dolls that form part of a typical Batswana^{vi} wedding scene.

Asked about her dreams, “When you have kids, you want to be successful. I live art; it has defined me as person, I want for it to go out there, for me to share it with other people”.

When asked about her fears, “I use to have a lot of fears but my biggest fear is myself. I am the one to fight with my demons to be with my angels. We make it up in our minds (fear).”

ⁱ Cowerie beads:

ⁱⁱ Bamangwato: One of the eight principal tribes that predominates the central district of Botswana.

ⁱⁱⁱ Serowe: The capital for the Bamngwato people of Botswana

^{iv} Mafungo: One of the villages in the northeast of Botswana predominated by the Bakalanga people.

^v Sangoma: Practitioner of herbal medicine, divination and counselling in the Zulu, Swazi and Ndebele traditions of Southern Africa.

^{vi}

At 15 she moved back to Gaborone to live with her mother and English stepfather and attended Maru-A-Pula Secondary school where she studied History, Art and English for her Ordinary and Advance level General Cambridge Certificates (GCE 'O' Levels and GCE 'A' levels).

"I have always loved art." she says passionately and as a teenager, her stepfather encouraged her talent by buying her paintbrushes, paints and framing her artwork. After completing her secondary education at Maru-a-Pula, she took part in exhibitions held at Botswana's National Museum where she sold her artwork to appreciative buyers.

In 1995, Puni pursued a Bachelor of Education degree at Rhodes University in South Africa but after a year, realised her passion for art was her calling. In 1997 Puni left Botswana to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts at the Chicago Institute of Arts.

An avid reader on works from the supernatural to fiction, you can describe Puni as deeply spiritual, sometimes troubled soul in a world where her thoughts are so profound that the superficial will find her theories on life, love and human beings rather startling and unusually wise for her 36 years. This doll-maker also loves walking and gardening and has planted vegetables on her small plot which feeds her small family of three.

When anyone walks into Puni's creative space, one is taken aback by her creations on display in 'dishevelled order'. You walk into a space that tells so many stories; scraps of material strewn somewhere on the floor, twigs of unusual twists and turns sticking out of bottles, small and large paintings of naked voluptuous African women swimming and playing in a river and mobiles of miniature African men and women hanging from the ceiling.

And then, there are the dolls. More like people of all shapes and sizes, complete, and incomplete begging to tell their stories, fill the room; all handmade from recycled material. Brides, *sangomas*^v, grooms, fat women, dignified, elegant women, dancers with the most graceful arms and silhouettes of twig, found on her walks to pick her son Tshentshen from school. Then there's the grotesque whose faces are made from downturn milk bottles or some other recycled material.

"I love her dolls. When you look at each doll individually, there's a lot more that goes on", a long-time friend adds.

Puni's art is handmade and recycled. Everything she uses comes from her surroundings and this sets her apart from other doll makers. Even the thread she uses to sew is, unravelled from the sac in which oranges are packed in Botswana. "As a fine artist, your trade is expensive. I had to quickly find ways to take care of my children and myself. I started collecting bottles, twigs and scraps to make my dolls and sell them to support us." (Puni is married but has been separated for 6yrs).

Sample #2: Arts and Crafts (non-fiction)

Botswana's African Doll-maker

~profile Tebogo 'Puni' Mosinyi, "The Doll-maker" ~

"I've always liked scraps. My grandmother always had scraps in her room, bags and bags of scraps. The scraps in the Fashion Room always reminded me of home, the smell of the material- my grandmother used to sew."

Angered one day by her roommate at the Chicago Institute of Arts (CIA) and deciding against confronting her, Puni walked to the CIA Fashion Room where she knew she would find scraps to create something to unleash her anger.

This was the beginning of the African doll-makers craft. "I began to make miniature dolls the size of my palm just like we use to make from childhood". With the response she got from people who saw her dolls, she began to make dolls of all shapes and sizes from cloth scraps.

Botswana's doll-maker takes scraps and anything from her surroundings and turns them into beautiful, exotic African people with names and stories. She begins with twigs, used bottles, beads, and old nylon stockings. Buttons for eyes, cowrie beads for lips, sticks and bottles for legs, her dolls are like cloth sculptures.

Living and working from a small house made from stones taken from the hills that surround the village of Gabane, Tebogo Mosinyi fondly called by her pet name, Puni, by everyone, lives with her son Tshenolo, 6yrs and daughter Tshepi 3yrs.

Petite, slight figured with big, bright eyes, hair cornrowed away from her face to her nape; wearing a sleeveless sixties-styled faux fur and leather jacket, blue plaid shirt, blue jeans and ankle-length boots, Puni is a strikingly beautiful woman dressed for autumn in Botswana.

Born to a Mmangwatoⁱⁱ father from Seroweⁱⁱⁱ and a BaKalanga mother from Mafungo in Botswana, her early art memories are of her felt-pen drawings stuck on the walls of her maternal grandmother's house. "As a child, my grandmother hung all my drawings which were done in felt pen on her walls. My mother had me when she was very young, so my grandmother looked after me until I was three."

Puni was brought up by her maternal grandmother in the village of Mafungo^{iv} until she was 3 years, then sent to live with her maternal aunt in the capital city, Gaborone where she attended Thornhill Primary School. She moved again with her aunt to the diamond-mining town of Orapa where she stayed until she was 15yrs.