

October 17, 1969

THE S.A. FINANCIAL GAZETTE

## GALLERIES

# Mbatha is a sincere craftsman

Seen simply as another exhibition, AZARIA MBATHA work at the Gallery 101 make pleasant viewing. As an example of a dedicated technician working simply and sincerely through the medium of the woodcut, it represents a high point in African art.

There is a mediaeval taste for display in a great deal of Mbatha's work, an almost theatrical sumptuousness in his naively humorous excursions into Biblical storytelling.

His imaginative black and white prints show something of the wonderment of the simple—not simple—mind exposed to an epic that is usually Nationalised by the more superficially sophisticated European, viewing the legend of Old Testament literature with tongue-in-cheek scepticism.

This artist is also showing a small selection of etchings and a smaller group of monotypical items. They are not in the developed class of the woodcuts, but the promise underlying these technically ambitious works, is considerable.

I think this exhibition is easily the least demanding of any I have reviewed this year. No massive demands on the intellect or on one's intuitive powers of analysis. Just simply designed vignettes of the storyteller's art, handled by a sincere craftsman in a manner as old as time itself.

Kenelm Everard