

Lucky Sibiya  
*Sangomas, 1975*



## Who is the artist?

Lucky Sibiyi was born in a country called **South Africa**, at the very southern end of the African continent.



A system called **Apartheid** became law in South Africa in 1948, when Lucky was 6 years old. Apartheid separated white South Africans from all other racial and ethnic groups. Black South Africans were treated very badly, and life for Lucky and his family was very hard.

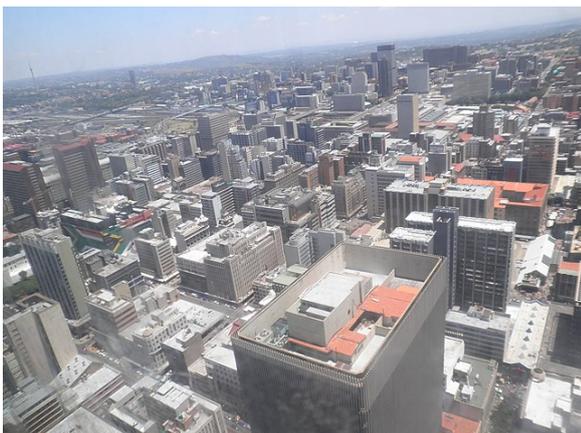
Black South Africans couldn't go to the same schools as white people, live in the same neighbourhoods, or even go to the same beach.

Before Lucky finished school, he met the famous South African artist **Cecil Skotnes**, who gave him art lessons.

Cecil was the head of the **Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg**. At the time, black South Africans, like Lucky, could not go to university or to art school. **Polly Street** became an important place where they could learn and make art from artists like Cecil.



This is South Africa, with Johannesburg marked on the map.



Johannesburg is a very big city with over 5 million people.

Lucky Sibiyá grew up in a township in Johannesburg called Soweto.

# Making Prints

Lucky learned to make **woodcut prints**.

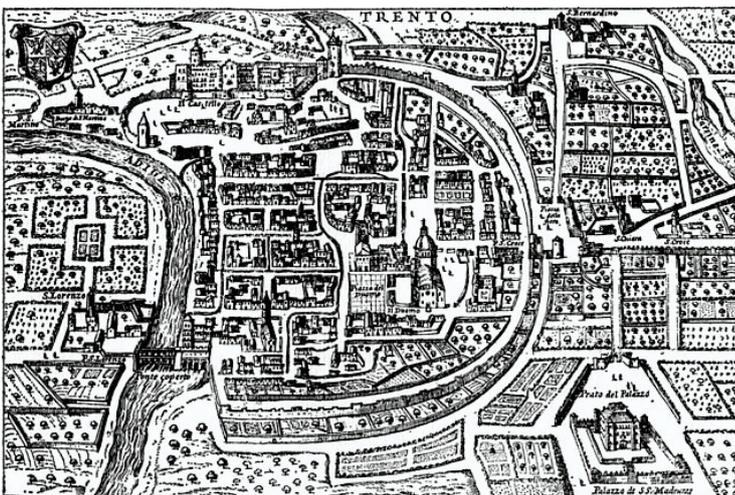
A **print** is a type of picture that you can make lots of copies of. There are different ways to make a print.

A **woodcut** is an example of a **relief print**.

In a **relief print**, the areas where the artist doesn't want ink is cut away: for example the lines that will stay the same colour as the paper. For a woodcut, you carve your image in a block of wood and, once you apply ink or paint, you can print the design on paper. It will be a mirror image.

Woodcuts have been made for hundreds of years. They have been used in books, for posters and artworks. Sometimes they have sharp edges, and you can see where the wood texture. Other times, the design is so detailed a it is hard to image how it was cut into a piece of wood.

**Here are some examples:**

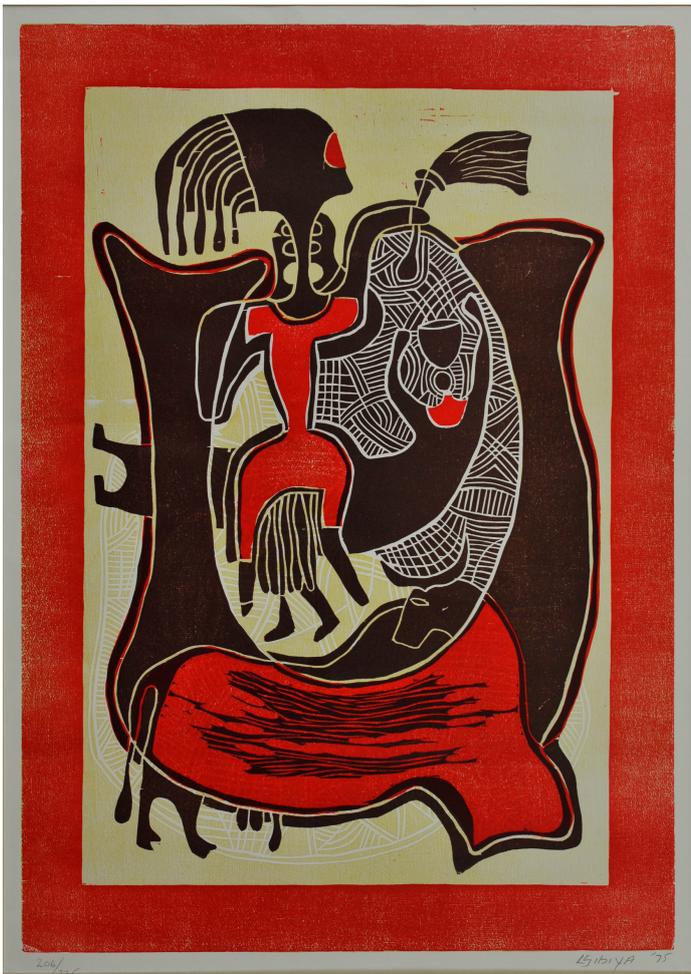


**A woodcut map  
of Trento, Italy  
from 1761**

**How long do you  
think it would take  
to carve a picture  
like this in wood?**

**An abstract woodcut from 1940 by American artist Sam Glankoff**

**Can you see different textures, and where Sam cut his wood block?**



This is Lucky's print, *Sangomas*.

To make a multi-colour woodcut, artists can either use different colours on the same block, or they can carve different blocks and print them in layers.

**Can you see where Lucky has added layers of colour here?**

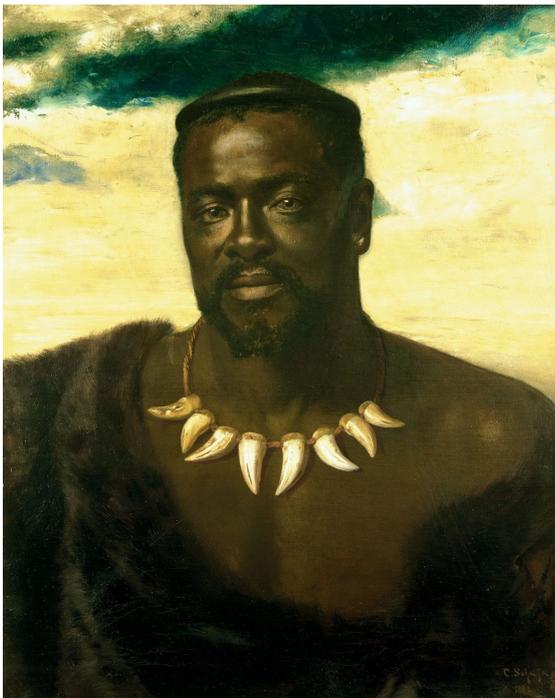
**What are some of the shapes and objects that you can see in Lucky's print? How has he used different colours in different places?**

## uMabatha and Shakespeare

Lucky's print is one of a series of prints about a play. The play is **uMabatha**, written by **Welcome Msomi**, who is also South African.

**uMabatha** takes a famous play by the English playwright William Shakespeare and adapts it to tell the history of the Zulu people. Shakespeare's play is called **Macbeth**. Have you heard of it? It is a play all about a famous Scottish General, who murders the King of Scotland so that he can become king. It is a play all about rivals and betrayal, and battles to become the most powerful. Welcome Msomi thought that it told a similar history to the battles of the Zulu kings in the South Africa in the 1800s.

Here is Cetshwayo, one of the Zulu kings in the 1880s.



The Zulu people are South Africa's largest ethnic group.

Lucky Sibiyi was a Zulu. His father was a Zulu healer, a man who communicated with the spiritual world. A Zulu healer is called a **Sangoma**, and this is the subject of Lucky's print.

In **uMabatha** the Sangomas help to predict the future for the Zulu kings. This is a photo of the three Sangomas performing in Welcome's play.



Can you spot some of the different tools they are using? The **Sangomas** use tools like **fly whisks (a stick, with animal hair to whisk away flies)** and a **large pot** to conduct their healing ceremony.

**Can you see some of these tools in Lucky's print?**

**How has Lucky created the sense of movement, of the whisk swooping from one side to the other? Does the print look like some magical is happening?**

The Sangomas advise the kings on how they should behave.  
**What do you think the Sangomas here are saying?**

Lucky's works are all slightly **abstract**, meaning they don't picture things exactly as we see in real life. Lucky uses shapes to show people and animals. **How has does he show a cow? What shapes does he use in this print? Does he use sharp pointy shapes? Does he use curvy shapes?**

Now that you've got to know Lucky's print, here are some ideas for things for you to do:

1. **Make a potato print.** Potatoes are a good way to learn about what prints are. A grown up can help you to cut a potato in half and make a picture by scratching or cutting on the inside. Dip the cut potato in paint, and print it on some paper. Remember you can make lots of prints using the same potato, by just painting over your design and printing again. How many prints can you make? How do they look different from each other? Does the paint make the exact same mark on the paper every time?
2. **Make an abstract picture.** Find something near you, or something you like, or something you see everyday. It can be a thing, a person, or an animal! Think about how you can simplify it into shapes, like Lucky has in the print. What is the simplest way you could show it in your picture?
3. **Make a picture of your favourite story.** Lucky made this print because he thought Welcome Msomi's play was very important. What is your favourite story or movie? Is there a particular part of that story or a scene in the movie that you love the most? How could you make a picture about it? Perhaps it is a scene that is very exciting and has lots of energy: could you make a picture that has lots of energy? How could you use colour to show something exciting? If it is a scene that is quiet and serious, how could you show that using shapes and colours?