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HE'S a gentle giant of a man, **Bongani Peter Shange**. Bongani, explains Peter, an impressive two metres in blue jeans, means "gratitude." It's a name his mother chose "possibly because there were two of us."

He has twin, equally tall, who sculpts. Peter, who took his first steps in art in the studio of his uncle, sculptor **Sydney Kumalo**, now does more graphics and painting. He is in Cape Town for a year, teaching at the Community Art Project at Mowbray and, till Wednesday, is exhibiting at Gallery 709 in Burg Street.

Night before the opening, says Peter, he was so excited he worked through the night.

He talks slowly and with a slight stammer. Each word is chosen with care.

He tenses before a camera but when he's talking art, his smile is generous and spontaneous.

His first contact with art, he explains, was his uncle. "To begin with because as a child I could never understand why when everyone was going to work he would lock himself up in a room and stay home. I had to find out what he was doing."

Gradually the mysteries of carving were shown to him and, occasionally, his uncle would give him guidance as he tried to imitate him.

As a schoolboy he enjoyed biology because it gave him scope for drawing.

"When I was a student art was an outlet for political expression. Now I am more lyrical. I like to express what I see around me.

"I prefer art for art's sake. I don't see it as a form of



Bongani Peter Shange, exhibiting at Gallery 709.

political expression." When there is music coming from the room he uses as a studio it's an indication that he is working. "The rhythm of traditional African music encourages a flow of ideas."

Peter has ambitions to go overseas, but the way he feels now he will always come back to South Africa.

"I am teaching now for the first time. I find it rewarding. There is a lot of talent among the children I work with and I like to feel I am giving something back to the community."