

Fashion is art for her

TRACY HANCOCK

FORMER Hope Factory student Bongiwe Magongo will be showcasing her designs at the Eastern Cape's first ever fashion week later this year.

It was at a function in 2005 that 35-year-old Bongiwe Magongo first became aware of the Hope Factory when an unusual programme on her table, made by the Hope Factory, caught her attention.

She wrote down their contact number and phoned them hoping to learn how to make beautiful things.

At the national organisation which aims to improve the lives of the unemployed and previously disadvantaged, she learned how to sew and crochet and about business and life skills over 15 weeks and in 2006 was ready to start her new career.

The NMMU public relations B-Tech graduate said crocheting was something her mother used to do a lot.

"I didn't pay attention. I thought it was old-fashioned but when I started crocheting at the Hope Factory I got lots of ideas."

She realised a talent that had been dormant for years and turned it into a lucrative business.

Magongo has designed a collection of crocheted earrings, bags, belts and bangles in which some beading has been incorporated.

Through her business her mother's memory and love for crocheting lives on. As a tribute Magongo has called her

company Imma51.

"My mother, who died eight years ago, had a unique dress sense. I also love the Jewish culture – *imma* is the Hebrew word for mother. The 51 in my business's name comes from 1951, the year my mother was born."

Magongo said Africa was not her only muse when it came to her crocheted cre-

ations. She drew inspiration from different cultures.

However her inspiration for her East Cape Fashion Week collection came while washing dishes. Taking the Zulu word for queen, *ndlovukazi*, and the Xhosa for elephant, *ndlovu*, she is designing pieces that represent grace, strength, African distinction, royalty and dignified style.



At Hope Factory Bongiwe Magongo learned to turn her talent into a successful business, crocheting fashion accessories.

Picture: Tracy Hancock