

High fashion in honour of her mom

■ One-time tomboy to show off her flair at expo

Kolosa Vuso

HERALD REPORTER

vusok@avusa.co.za

HER beaded accessories have been on the Sanlam Fashion Week ramp. Stoned Cherrie has used her work at the 2007 Audi Fashion week in Johannesburg. Now Port Elizabeth designer Bongiwe Magongo will set the inaugural Eastern Cape Fashion Week ramp alight next month.

Her Hunter Avenue, St George's Park home boasts exquisite decor ranging from the souvenirs of her travels to colourful beaded decor.

"It describes who I am and the road I have travelled."

Magongo said she had never dreamt while growing up of going the fashion route.

"There were 'hints' that I missed. In high school I would watch fashion or style shows on CNN.

"While studying towards my public relations degree at the University of Port Elizabeth, I would always make my way to the art department but I ignored all these hints."

But after her mother's death, she found her calling.

"Creativity was part of my healing process. I started designing jewellery using beads and joining women's groups for support.

"If my late mother could see me now she would be proud because she was always so stylish and

classy. I was always a tomboy," she said.

In her mother's memory, Magongo has started her own fashion line called Imma 51. "Imma is a Hebrew word meaning mother. My mom was born in 1951."

Magongo's love for travel has encouraged her to meet new people and make friends along the way. She has seen the Victoria Falls. She has travelled to Hong Kong, the Philippines, New York, Namibia and Kenya.

"It's so overwhelming. Sometimes I would stick out like a sore thumb.

"New York was the best because there are so many diverse cultures and I could just be myself."

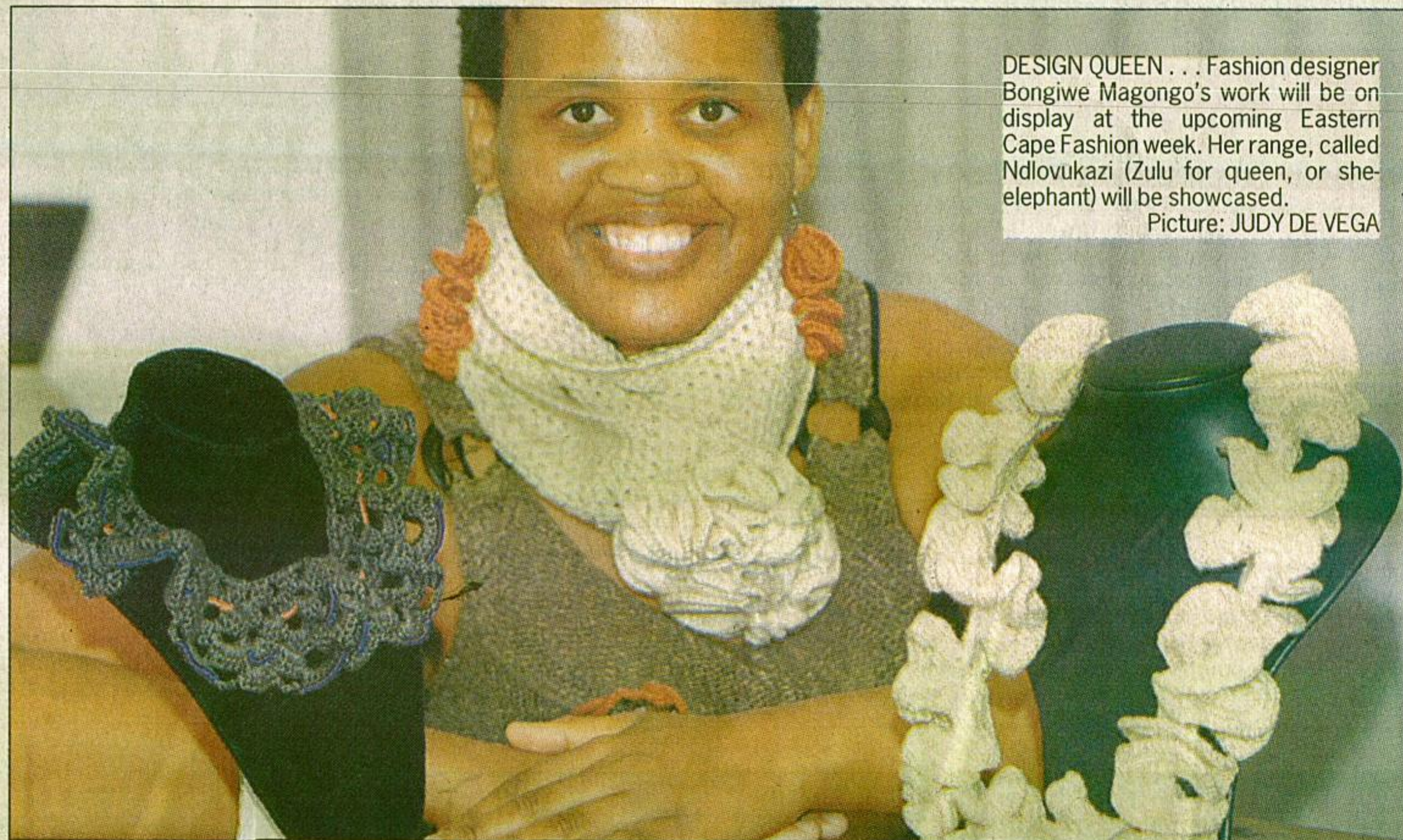
Her ultimate goal is to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. "I'm even going to the gym for that challenge."

Magongo said her creativity was "unearthed" by the Hope Factory, a non-profit project owned by the SA Institute of Chartered Accountants. It was founded in 2001 and, besides Port Elizabeth, has branches in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Hope Factory Port Elizabeth production manager Bronwyn Derman said she was pleased with the growth her "factory" had had since it was established in 2005.

"We have seen so many of our graduates take part in fashion weeks and become businesswomen," she said.

"We have more than 600 graduates who are empowered with skills such as sewing, beadwork,



DESIGN QUEEN . . . Fashion designer Bongiwe Magongo's work will be on display at the upcoming Eastern Cape Fashion week. Her range, called Ndlovukazi (Zulu for queen, or she-elephant) will be showcased.

Picture: JUDY DE VEGA

papercraft, business and entrepreneur skills, as well as HIV/Aids awareness classes.

"Our preference is any unemployed South African citizen who has passed at least Grade 10. It's a free 15-week programme where we encourage business skills and we empower individuals so they be-

come entrepreneurs," Derman said.

Eastern Cape Fashion week chairman Xoliswa Hudson said 50 designers would showcase their designs from October 14 to 17. Thereafter 10 will be chosen to show launch their designs at Hemingways (East-London), where a boutique

will be opening soon," she said.

Among the sponsors are the Boardwalk, Hemingways, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation, Nelson Mandela Bay municipality and the SABC.



Duly instructed
SA (P&A) L