



David Goldblatt, *Stalled municipal housing scheme, Kwezi, Lady Grey, Eastern Cape, 5 August 2006*, de la série *Intersections Intersected*, 2008, archival pigment ink digitally printed on cotton rag paper, 99x127 cm

AFRIQUE DU SUD

Cours de Nassim Daghighian

Quelques photographes et artistes contemporains d'Afrique du Sud

(ordre alphabétique)

Jordi Bieber ♀ (1966, Johannesburg ; vit à Johannesburg) www.jodibieber.com
 Ilan Godfrey (1980, Johannesburg ; vit à Londres, Grande-Bretagne) www.ilangodfrey.com
 David Goldblatt (1930, Randfontein, Transvaal, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Kay Hassan (1956, Johannesburg ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Pieter Hugo (1976, Johannesburg ; vit au Cap / Cape Town) www.pieterhugo.com
 Nomusa Makhubu ♀ (1984, Sebokeng ; vit à Grahamstown)
 Lebohang Mashiloane (1981, province de l'Etat-Libre)
 Nandipha Mntambo ♀ (1982, Swaziland ; vit au Cap / Cape Town)
 Zwelethu Mthethwa (1960, Durban ; vit au Cap / Cape Town)
 Zanele Muholi ♀ (1972, Umlazi, Durban ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Riason Naidoo (1970, Chatsworth, Durban ; travaille à la Galerie national d'Afrique du Sud au Cap)
 Tracey Rose ♀ (1974, Durban, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Berni Searle ♀ (1964, Le Cap / Cape Town ; vit au Cap)
 Mikhael Subotsky (1981, Le Cap / Cape Town ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Guy Tillim (1962, Johannesburg ; vit au Cap / Cape Town)
 Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko ♀ (1977, Bodibe, North West Province ; vit à Johannesburg)
 Alastair Whitton (1969, Glasgow, Ecosse ; vit au Cap)
 Graeme Williams (1961, Le Cap / Cape Town ; vit à Johannesburg)

Références bibliographiques

Black, Brown, White. Photography from South Africa, Vienne, Kunsthalle Wien 2006

ENWEZOR, Okwui, *Snap Judgments. New Positions in Contemporary African Photography*, cat. expo. 10.03.-28.05.06, New York, International Center of Photography / Göttingen, Steidl, 2006

Bamako 2007. Dans la ville et au-delà, Rencontres de Bamako 07, catalogue de la Biennale africaine de la photographie, Paris, Marval, 2007

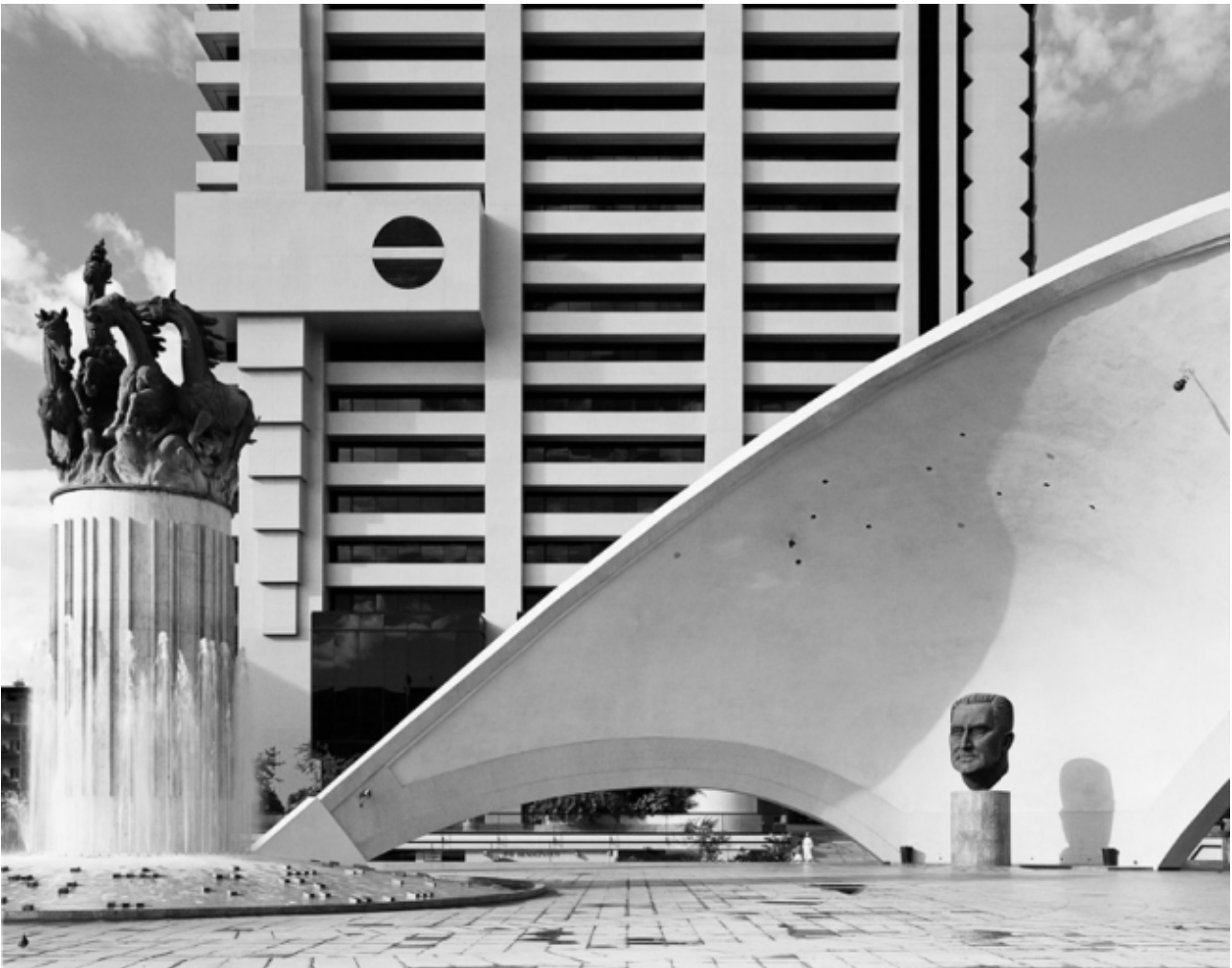
Darkroom. Photography and New Media in South Africa. 1950-present, WILLIS, Deborah (préface), GRANTHAM, Tosha (auteur), avec les contributions de : Isolde Brielmaier, Tumelo Mosaka, Roger Ballen, Ian Berry, David Goldblatt, William Kentridge, Peter Magubane, Thando Mama, etc., cat. expo, Richmond, US, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, octobre 2009, 160 pages

Frontières, Rencontres de Bamako 09, catalogue de la Biennale africaine de la photographie, Arles, Actes Sud, 2009

Darkroom. Photography and New Media in South Africa. 1950-present

This exhibition features the work of 18 photographers, new media and video artists, and highlights themes that have not been brought together in this context before in the United States or abroad. *Darkroom* addresses three aspects of photographic production in South Africa: technical—the place where images are made; actual—the artistic isolation created by the apartheid era; and metaphorical—the courage and technical excellence revealed by each artist in representing their views of intricacies and complexities of South African culture in a photo-based medium. *Darkroom* focuses on artists who primarily lived and worked in South Africa during the apartheid era (1948-1994) and younger generations of artists who have gained wide international prominence since the 1990s. Spanning four generations, the exhibition presents work by native South Africans and long-term residents from Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. Photography-documentary and pictorial—has always been a powerful tool for shaping perception and effecting change. In South Africa its role has been particularly distinguished by its cultural and political history. *Darkroom* examines recent developments including increased use of new media and video art to address issues of complex identity and multiculturalism, as well as the artists' abilities to remain connected to contemporary trends and active in the international milieu. This exhibition presents a dynamic spectrum of work from South Africa to broad new audiences.

Source au 09 09 : http://www.vmfa.museum/exhibitions_traveling.html



David Goldblatt, *Monuments celebrating the Republic of South Africa (left) and JG Strijdom, former prime minister (right), with the headquarters of Volkskas Bank, Pretoria, 25 April 1982*

David Goldblatt (1930, Randfontein, Transvaal, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud)

David Goldblatt est un photographe sud-africain né en 1930. Issu de la classe moyenne blanche de la banlieue de Johannesburg, il s'intéresse très tôt à la photographie et commence sa carrière comme photographe de presse. « I regard myself as an unlicensed, self-appointed observer and critic of South African society which I continue to explore with the camera » Son œuvre est entièrement dédiée à l'histoire de son pays, du début des années 1950 à aujourd'hui. Son travail est remarquable pour son esthétique, qui a su se renouveler au fil des années, conjointement à l'évolution de l'histoire de l'Afrique du Sud.

Source : <http://www.henricartierbresson.org/prix/ressources/CommuniqueLaureatpPrixHCB2009.pdf>



David Goldblatt, *Luke Kgatitsoe at his house, bulldozed in February 1984 by the government after the forced removal of the people of Magopa, a black-owned farm, which had been declared « black spot », Ventersdorp district, Transvaal, 21 October 1986*



David Goldblatt, *De Kol*, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 10 April 1993, de la série *Intersections Intersected*, 2008, épreuve argentique, 20x24cm



David Goldblatt, *De Kol*, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 20 February 2006, de la série *Intersections Intersected*, 2008, digital pigment ink, 99x127cm



David Goldblatt, *Johannesburg from the Southwest*, 2003, c-print, 98x122 cm



David Goldblatt, *At Kevin Kwanele's Takwaito Barber, Lansdowne Road, 16 May 2007*, de la série *Khayelitsha, Cape Town in the time of AIDS*, 2007, pigment print, 99x127cm (image également incluse dans la série *Intersections Intersected*, 2008)

David Goldblatt (1930, Randfontein, Transvaal, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud)

www.goodman-gallery.com

majorité des images sur : <http://michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/goldblatt/>

diaporama : http://www.formafoto.it/_com/asp/pageGal.asp?g=gar&s=-&l=ing&id_pag={100B62C2-E5BD-4F59-8E82-6A84CAB4C96B}

Biography

Born in Randfontein, South Africa, in 1930, the third son of Eli Goldblatt and Olga Light both of whom came to South Africa as children with their parents, to escape the persecution of the Lithuanian Jewish communities in the 1890's.

He became interested in photography while at Krugersdorp High School. and after matriculation in 1948 wished to become a magazine photographer. However the field was almost unknown in South Africa at that time and after trying unsuccessfully to enter the profession, he went to work in his father's men's outfitting store in Randfontein.

"While working in the business and taking a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Witwatersrand University, my interest in photography continued and I taught myself basic skills. After the death of my father in 1962, I sold the family business and have, since September 1963, devoted all of my time to photography. My professional work has been almost entirely outside the studio and has involved a broad variety of assignments for magazines, corporations and institutions in South Africa and overseas. My personal work since 1961 has consisted of a series of critical explorations of South African society a number of which have been exhibited and published in book form.

In 1985 the British television network, Channel 4, made and screened a one hour documentary, "David Goldblatt: In Black and White", which was subsequently shown in the USA [PBS] and Australia. I was a Hallmark Fellow at the Aspen Conference in Design, Aspen, Colorado, 1987 and the Gahan Fellow in Photography at Harvard University in 1992. In 1995 I was awarded the Camera Austria Prize for an excerpt from my essay, "South Africa the Structure of Things Then". The University of Cape Town conferred the degree of Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts on me in 2001.

In 1989 I founded the Market Photography Workshop in Johannesburg, with the object of teaching visual literacy and photographic skills to young people, with particular emphasis on those disadvantaged by apartheid. The Workshop has been successful in creating an environment in which people of all races collaborate constructively. It operates under a full-time director and part-time teachers, six days per week from premises in the Newtown Cultural Precinct of the city, qualifying about 250 students per annum, a number of whom, having completed advanced courses, are now working as professional photographers.

In 2001 a retrospective exhibition of my work, David Goldblatt Fifty-One Years co-curated by Corinne Diserens and Okwui Enwezor and produced by the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), began a tour of galleries and museums which has so far taken it to New York, Barcelona, Rotterdam, Lisbon, Oxford, Brussels and Munich. It opened in the Johannesburg Art Gallery in August 2005.

In 1998 I was the first South African to be given a one-person exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, when photographs from the essay, South Africa: the Structure of Things Then, were shown. Excerpts from my photographic essays on Boksburg and on recent developments in Johannesburg were on exhibition at Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany in 2002. In 2004 the French National Art Collection acquired some 54 of my prints.

Invited in 1999 by the Art Gallery of Western Australia to participate in an exhibition entitled 'Home' and to contribute a photographic project of my choice in Australia to that show, I photographed an essay on Wittenoom, a town that had been decimated by the mining and effects of blue asbestos.

Since 1999 I have been photographing aspects of post-apartheid South Africa and exploring the use of colour photography in my personal work.

'Intersections', an exhibition of this work opened at the Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf in June 2005 and is due tour to Austria and the United States. A book of the same title was published by Prestel, Munich, in June 2005."

David Goldblatt

David Goldblatt has won the most prestigious photography prize in the world, The Hasselblad Photography Award. He is the only South African artist to win this prize, and will receive it at an award ceremony on the 25th November 2006 in Goteberg, Sweden. For more information please visit the following link: [hasselblad foundation](http://hasselbladfoundation.com) »

Source au 09 08 : <http://www.goodman-gallery.com/goldblatt.html>

Books

- On The Mines*, with Nadine Gordimer, Cape Town, Struik, 1973
Some Afrikaners Photographed, Johannesburg, Murray Crawford, 1975
Cape Dutch Homesteads, with Margaret Courtney-Clark and John Kench, Struik, Cape Town 1981
In Boksburg, Cape Town, Gallery Press, 1982
Lifetimes: Under Apartheid, with Nadine Gordimer, New York, Knopf, 1986
The Transported of KwaNdebele, with Brenda Goldblatt and Phillip van Niekerk, New York, Aperture, 1989
South Africa: the Structure of Things Then, Cape Town, Oxford University Press / New York, Monacelli Press, 1998
David Goldblatt 55, London, Phaidon Press, 2001
David Goldblatt Fifty-One Years, Barcelona, Actar and Macba, 2001
Particulars, Goodman Gallery Editions, Johannesburg, 2003 [Awarded the Arles Book Prize 2004]
Intersections", Munich, Prestel, 2005
David Goldblatt. Hasselblad Award 2006, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2007
Intersections Intersected, essay by Ulrich Loock, Porto, Fundacao De Serralves – Civilização, 2008

Intersections Intersected : The Photography of David Goldblatt

Joseph Gergel, Curatorial Fellow, New Museum, New York

Over the last fifty years, David Goldblatt has documented the complexities and contradictions of South African society. His photographs capture the social and moral value systems that governed the tumultuous history of his country's segregationist policies and continue to influence its changing political landscape. Goldblatt began photographing professionally in the early 1960s, focusing on the effects of the National Party's legislation of apartheid. The son of Jewish Lithuanian parents who fled to South Africa to escape religious persecution, Goldblatt was forced into a peculiar situation, being at once a white man in a racially segregated society and a member of a religious minority with a sense of otherness. He used the camera to capture the true face of apartheid as his way of coping with horrifying realities and making his voice heard. Goldblatt did not try to capture iconic images, nor did he use the camera as a tool to entice revolution through propaganda. Instead, he reveals a much more complex portrait, including the intricacies and banalities of daily life in all aspects of society. Whether showing the plight of black communities, the culture of the Afrikaner nationalists, the comfort of white suburbanites, or the architectural landscape, Goldblatt's photographs are an intimate portrayal of a culture plagued by injustice.

In Goldblatt's images we can see a universal sense of people's aspirations, making do with their abnormal situation in as normal a way as possible. People go about their daily lives, trying to preserve a sense of decency amid terrible hardship. Goldblatt points out a connection between people (including himself) and the environment, and how the environment reflects the ideologies that built it. His photographs convey a sense of vulnerability as well as dignity. Goldblatt is very much a part of the culture that he is analyzing. Unlike the tradition of many documentary photographers who capture the "decisive moment," Goldblatt's interest lies in the routine existence of a particular time in history.

Goldblatt continues to explore the consciousness of South African society today. He looks at the condition of race relations after the end of apartheid while also tackling other contemporary issues, such as the influence of the AIDS epidemic and the excesses of consumption. For his "Intersections Intersected" series, Goldblatt looks at the relationship between the past and present by pairing his older black-and-white images with his more recent color work. Here we may notice photography's unique association with time: how things were, how things are, and also that the effects of apartheid run deep. It will take much more time to heal the wounds of a society that was divided for so long. Yet, there is a possibility for hope, recognition of how much has changed politically in the time between the two images, and a potential optimism for the future. Goldblatt's work is a dynamic and multilayered view of life in South Africa, and he continues to reveal that society's progress and incongruities.

"Intersections Intersected: The Photography of David Goldblatt" is organized by Fundação de Serralves, Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal and presented by the New Museum, New York. The exhibition is curated by Ulrich Loock, Curator, Fundação de Serralves, Museu de Arte Contemporânea. Its presentation at the New Museum is organized by Richard Flood, Chief Curator, New Museum. Major support provided by the Robert Mapplethorpe Photography Fund.

L'Afrique du Sud photographiée par David Goldblatt ou le récit emblématique d'une histoire locale et symbolique

Danielle Françoise Leenaerts, in "Visualizing Africa, from there to here, between now and then" panel 33, AEGIS European Conference on African Studies, 11-14 July 2007

L'histoire de l'Afrique du Sud depuis la Seconde guerre mondiale fut principalement associée au régime d'*apartheid* –« développement séparé », mis en place par le Parti national arrivé au pouvoir en 1948 et qui ne sera aboli qu'en 1991. Cette politique de ségrégation raciale s'ancre dans le passé colonial de ce territoire où se succédèrent Néerlandais, Français et Britanniques. En 1902, les Britanniques imposent leur hégémonie, au terme de ce qui fut appelé la « guerre des Boers » (1899-1902). Le pays va ensuite vivre pendant un demi-siècle dans une fédération d'Etats regroupés au sein de l'Union sud-africaine. En 1961, cette Union se transforme en République d'Afrique du Sud. Elle quitte alors le Commonwealth afin de poursuivre librement sa politique ségrégationniste. A peine deux ans plus tard, David Goldblatt entamait une carrière photographique qui allait écrire –plus que décrire- en images l'histoire de ce pays. Une histoire qu'il continue d'alimenter aujourd'hui.

Outre les principaux contenus qu'il véhicule, nous questionnerons le support de diffusion privilégié de ce travail, à savoir : le livre. Nous interrogerons aussi sa réception par le public et son basculement récent dans la sphère de l'art contemporain. De cette analyse émergera une vision historique singulière, composée en des termes strictement photographiques, qui renouvelle avec force la question du témoignage historique, en l'occurrence par l'image.

1. Pourquoi la photographie ?

Une première question qui vient à l'esprit est « pourquoi la photographie » ? Pour témoigner de la réalité de l'*apartheid* en tant que blanc, la visibilité de l'appareil photographique peut constituer une entrave au moins aussi importante que la couleur de la peau. Par ailleurs, rien ne prédestinait ce fils de commerçant textile à élire la profession de photographe, puisqu'il aurait dû poursuivre les activités familiales, ce qu'il fera d'ailleurs jusqu'au début des années 1960. Le désir d'être photographe se manifeste pourtant dès les années 1950, et accompagne la volonté de porter témoignage vers le monde extérieur de ce que Goldblatt qualifie de « folie blanche ». Une folie dont ses grands-parents et parents avaient déjà fait les frais pour d'autres motifs, puisqu'ils s'étaient exilés en Afrique du Sud suite aux pogroms qui eurent lieu sur le territoire lithuanien dans les années 1890. L'antisémitisme qui s'exprima en Afrique du Sud à son propre égard, notamment lors de sa scolarisation, a nourri chez Goldblatt une empathie profonde pour les populations de couleur victimes de l'*apartheid*.

S'il se risque à photographier la campagne de défiance des lois raciales, organisée en 1952 par l'African National Congress (ANC), il se sent pourtant démuni dans sa mission de reportage (fig. 1 « The start of the ANC Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws, Freedom Square, Fordsburg, Johannesburg », 1952). Inexpérimenté dans une pratique photographique balbutiante et autodidacte, Goldblatt renonce à photographier les événements et cherche à développer une approche de l'*apartheid*, plus indirecte, mais aussi plus analytique que celle véhiculée par l'esthétique du photojournalisme.

2. Un support privilégié : le livre

Lorsqu'il se lance comme photographe professionnel, en 1963, les visées commerciales de Goldblatt le conduisent progressivement à travailler pour l'industrie, la mode et les relations publiques. La presse magazine anglaise, avec des titres tels que *Queen* ou *Town*, de même que les périodiques sud-africains comme *Tatler* ou *Optima* comptent bientôt parmi ses commanditaires. C'est donc en marge de cette activité professionnelle qu'il va développer un travail d'auteur sur la société sud-africaine.

Nourri de références littéraires au travers desquelles se racontait alors l'Afrique du Sud, qu'il s'agisse des œuvres de Nadine Gordimer ou Lionel Abrahams, Goldblatt va entamer une série d'essais photographiques. Par la réunion d'un ensemble d'images, un récit photographique s'élabore, qui ne sera jamais conçu au départ comme un livre, mais qui en prendra toujours finalement la forme. La première série qu'il entreprend en 1965 porte sur le travail des mines, et va s'étendre sur six ans. Vues de machineries, images des conditions de travail et portraits se succèdent dans la forme finale du livre, qui paraît en 1973 sous le titre « On the Mines », accompagné d'un essai de Nadine Gordimer. La difficulté du travail est rendue presque tangible dans les images du creusement de puits, par exemple dans cette mine d'or que sont en train de déblayer les mineurs (fig.2 « President Steyn No 4 Shaft, Welkom, Orange Free State, June 1969 »). Les conditions de prise de vue justifient

cette absence de netteté, mais elle participe aussi d'une forme de refus de la description littérale, comme en témoigne le gros plan de « Boss Boy » (fig.3 « Battery Reef, Randfontein Estates Gold Mine », 1966). Portrait sans visage, le corps déploie un harnachement d'outils accrochés à des vêtements plusieurs fois rapiécés, qui disent la pauvreté de ce « boss ».

Dès 1961 et parallèlement à cette série sur les mines, Goldblatt entreprend de photographier des Afrikaners, de manière à faire le portrait de la domination blanche, par l'intermédiaire d'attitudes ou de situations de ces propriétaires terriens. Attitudes d'assurance et de défiance des membres de l'escorte du leader du National Party, Hendrik Verwoerd, dont le sentiment de supériorité s'affirme physiquement par le fait qu'ils montent des chevaux (blancs) (fig.4 « Commando of National Party men escorting their leader, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, to the party's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, de Wildt, Tranvaal, October 1964 »). Situation ambiguë de ce garçon et de sa nurse chez qui le rôle de protection semble s'inverser tandis que le rapport symbolique de domination s'inscrit aussi physiquement, sur fond de grillage de fil de fer barbelé. (fig.5 « A farmer's son and his nursemaid, Heimweeberg, Marico Bushveld, Transvaal, 1964 ») S'il n'y a rien de spectaculaire dans ces images, elles rendent pourtant de manière explicite la position sociale occupée par les Afrikaners. En intitulant son livre *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, Goldblatt souligne qu'il ne s'agit là que d'un échantillon, que l'on devine emblématique.

Prises sur une durée de sept ans, les images de cette série étaient donc prêtes pour la publication dès 1968. Il fallut cependant attendre 1975 pour qu'un homme d'affaires et ami de Goldblatt, Murray Crawford, accepte de financer l'édition du projet. Ce délai en dit long à la fois sur les difficultés à faire accepter ce travail, et sur la ténacité dont a fait preuve le photographe pour le défendre.

On retrouve cette approche quotidienne dans le projet suivant : *In Boksburg*. Publié en 1982, trois ans après les prises de vue, il donne à voir la vie d'une petite ville blanche, middle-class, à l'Est de Johannesburg : Boksburg. La quiétude, voire la banalité de certaines images conduisent parfois le lecteur à en oublier la régimes d'apartheid dans lequel ces individus évoluent (fig.6 « A Girl and her Mother at home », 22 juin 1980). Il sera rappelé avec force dans l'ouvrage suivant, *Lifetimes under apartheid*, qui associe de nouveau les images de Goldblatt aux textes de Nadine Gordimer. Le contexte dans lequel paraît ce livre, en 1986, est particulièrement tendu, puisque l'état d'urgence est alors imposé depuis deux ans en Afrique du Sud. Même les clichés plus anciens prennent alors une résonance particulière, en renvoyant comme le fait cette photo, aux conditions de vie des populations noires ségréguées. Le régime d'apartheid définit les espaces de vie et les habitations standardisées réservées aux noirs, tels ces townships de Soweto (fig.7 « Mofolo South, Soweto, Johannesburg » 1972).

La relégation spatiale des noirs dans les homelands impose une séparation entre le lieu de résidence, maintenu dans l'isolement, et le lieu de travail qui est généralement la grande ville. Cette situation a impliqué un système d'organisation de transport par bus et train qui véhiculent la main-d'œuvre noire jusqu'aux portes des villes. C'est à ce thème que Goldblatt va consacrer un livre entier, sous le titre « *The Transported* » (1989). Ces images montrent la lourdeur de ce système qui pouvait imposer jusqu'à six heures de trajet par jour. Les travailleurs, hommes et femmes, rentrent chez eux harassés de fatigue, comme en témoigne cette image (fig.8 « Going home : some on this bus will reach home at between 9:30 and 10 p.m. and rise again the next morning at between 2 :00 and 3 :00 a.m. », 1984).

C'est en 1998, alors que l'apartheid est aboli depuis sept ans, que David Goldblatt publie une forme d'anthologie photographique de l'apartheid, à travers un ensemble d'images prises entre 1964 et 1994. Son titre, *The Structures of things then*, résume à la fois la teneur du livre et la conviction du photographe, à savoir que les structures de la société sud-africaine reflètent les valeurs de ceux qui les ont élaborés. Ce dont rend compte de manière criante le paysage, qu'il s'agisse d'un horizon urbain devant lequel s'étend une zone entière de destruction, après le déplacement forcé de ses habitants de couleur (fig.9 « The destruction of District Six after its declaration as a Group Area for whites and the forced removal of its coloured inhabitants, Cape Town, 5 May 1982 ») ; de la grandiloquence de l'architecture religieuse monumentale (fig.10 « Dutch reformed church inaugurated on 31 July 1966, Op-die-Berg, Cape Province, 23 May 1987), ou du désespoir de ceux dont le foyer a été détruit (fig.11 « Luke Kgatitsoe at his house, bulldozed in February 1984 by the government after the forced removal of the people of Magopa, a black-owned farm, which had been declared « black spot », Ventersdorp district, Transvaal, 21 October 1986).

3. La nouvelle Afrique du Sud et sa visualisation en couleur

La fin du régime d'apartheid va induire dans l'œuvre de Golbblatt un bouleversement visuel : l'introduction de la couleur, une couleur qui, selon les termes du photographe, est liée au sentiment de libération de ce qu'il qualifie la « nouvelle Afrique du Sud ». Une libération qui autorise une couleur qui aurait été perçue comme anecdotique dans les images des décennies précédentes, qui aurait distrait le regard des structures que Goldblatt cherchait à mettre en évidence. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que le photographe se soit désinvesti des questions sociétales liées à l'héritage de l'apartheid. En témoigne son dernier ouvrage, « Intersections », publié en 2005. S'il salue la participation démocratique des citoyens noirs aux affaires de l'Etat (fig.12 : « Willem Mathee, acting mayor and Dan Molangoanyane, speaker of Mantsopa Local Municipality in Mahee's office, Ladybrand, Free State, 16 August 2004 »), il n'évacue pas pour autant les fléaux qui touchent encore aujourd'hui les anciennes victimes de l'apartheid.

On observera aussi le changement d'orientation qui s'est inscrit dans la démarche même du photographe. A la différence de tous ceux qui précèdent, l'ouvrage « Intersections » n'a pas été conçu comme un essai photographique indépendant, mais bien comme le catalogue d'une exposition, commanditée par le Museum Kunst Palast de Düsseldorf. C'est que les canaux de diffusion de l'œuvre de Goldblatt ont quelque peu changé. Si on a pu constater que le choix du livre comme support privilégié garantissait l'indépendance de l'expression de l'auteur et la structure narrative de ses essais photographiques, la fin des années 1990 voit le développement de la reconnaissance internationale de l'œuvre de Goldblatt par le vecteur de l'exposition. L'événement déclencheur sera l'exposition présentée par le Museum of Modern Art de New York en 1998 : « South Africa : The Structure of Things Then », suivie en 2001 par une exposition produite par le Musée d'Art contemporain de Barcelone en collaboration avec la galerie Axa de New York, « David Goldblatt : Fifty-One Years ». Elle fera le tour de l'Europe durant quatre ans avant même d'être présentée à Johannesburg. On citera encore l'exposition organisée par Martin Parr lors des Rencontres photographiques d'Arles en 2004. Cette reconnaissance internationale emprunte aussi des canaux non spécifiques à la photographie, comme en témoigne la participation du photographe à la Documenta XI de Kassel en 2002 ou à l'exposition itinérante « Africa Remix », présentée entre 2004 et 2006.

Source : <http://ecas2007.aegis-eu.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?PaperID=374>



Guy Tillim, de la série *Léopold et Mobutu*, Congo, 2003

Guy Tillim (1962, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud ; vit au Cap, Afrique du Sud)

www.michaelstevenson.com

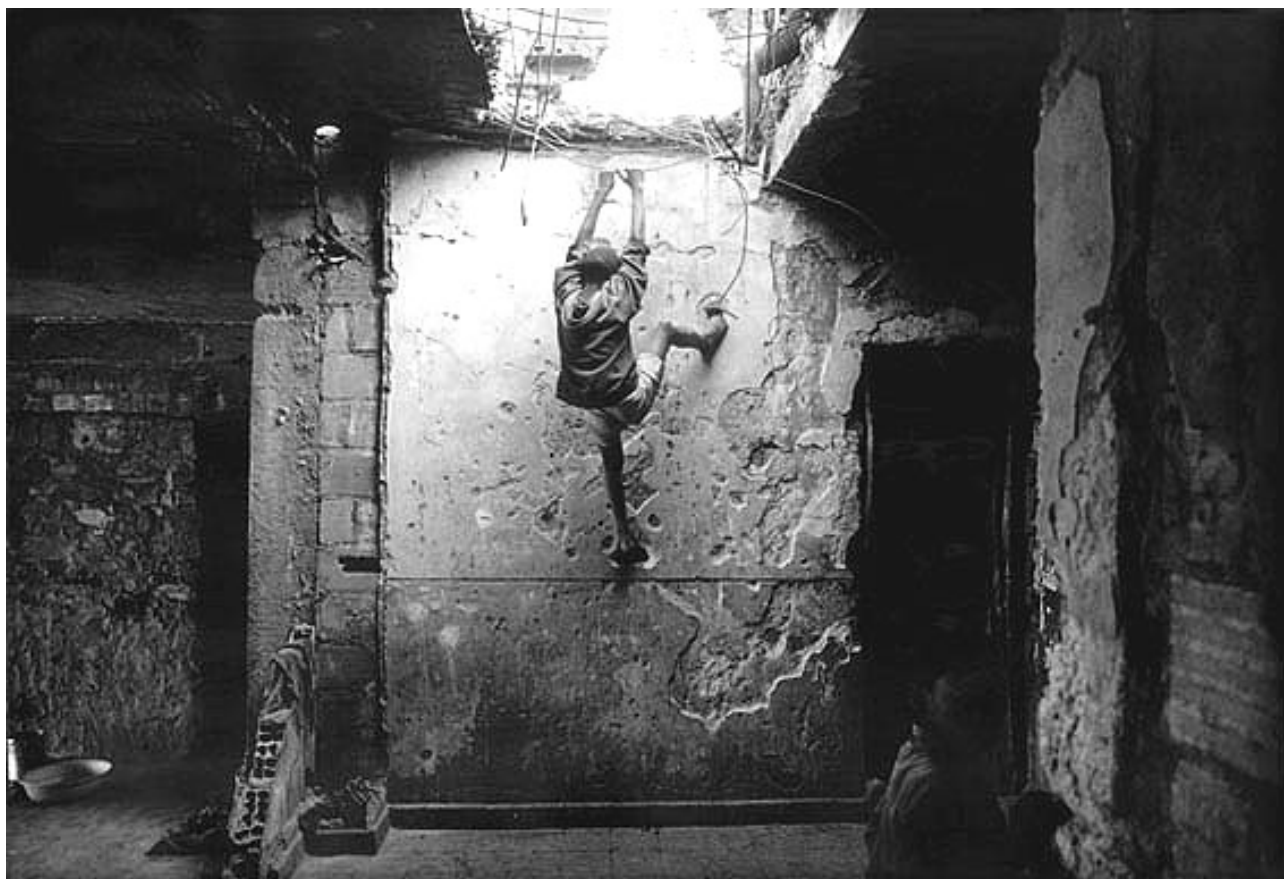
www.agencevu.com

Guy Tillim , né en 1962 à Johannesburg, est une figure majeure de la scène photographique sud-africaine contemporaine. Alors jeune reporter, Guy Tillim prit conscience dans les années 1980 que la photographie pouvait être un moyen de lutter contre le gouffre racial que l'Apartheid avait creusé dans son pays : « L'appareil photo était l'outil idéal pour transcender ces frontières, pour voir ce qui se passait dans mon propre pays ». Au fil des années, Tillim a réalisé un travail documentaire d'une force visuelle et historique indéniable, témoignant du conflit social et des inégalités qui y prévalaient. Dans ses images, des couleurs dures et sombres surgissent d'un fond gris humide, en harmonie imitative avec l'âpreté de ses sujets. Son travail a été abondamment publié dans la presse et dans de nombreux ouvrages - et exposé dans de prestigieux festivals et expositions collectives en Europe ces dernières années, notamment Africa Remix en 2004, PHotoEspaña en 2005 et la Documenta XII en 2007.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.agencevu.com/photographers/photographer.php?id=137>



Guy Tillim, *On the road between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, Afghanistan, 1996*, de la série *Departure, 2003*, 49x73 cm



Guy Tillim, *A boy climbs through a hole in the roof of the former Education Administration building, Kuito, Angola, 2000*, de la série *Departure*, 2003, 49x73 cm



Guy Tillim, de la série *Kunhinga portraits*, 2003, 49.5x66 cm



Guy Tillim, de la série *Kunhinga portraits*, 2003, 49.5x66 cm

Léopold et Mobutu, Congo, 2003



Left: Display case with a portrait of the young Leopold at the Military Museum in Brussels, January 2004
 Right: A reception hall at Mobutu's palace in Gbadolite, September 2003



The looted remains of Mobutu Sese Seko's residence at Gbadolite, September 2003



The remains of Mobutu Sese Seko's palace at Gbadolite. Mobutu began work here among his kin in the 1970s, and in later years retreated to this residence for long periods. He built an international airport nearby, and would receive foreign dignitaries and heads of state in the palace's grand reception rooms. It was his last place of residence in the Congo before he fled to Morocco in 1997, September 2003

Toutes les images : Guy Tillim, de la série *Léopold et Mobutu, Congo, 2003*



Guy Tillim, *The remains of Mobutu Sese Seko's palace at Gbadolite*, September 2003, de la série *Léopold et Mobutu*, Congo, 2003, 47.5x73cm

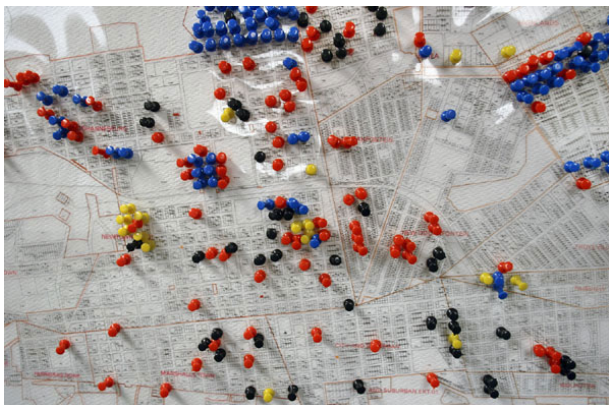


Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004 : 3. Al's Tower, a block of flats on Harrow Road, Berea, overlooking the Ponte building



Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004 : 34. Ntokozo (right) and his brother Vusi Tshabalala at Ntokozo's place, Milton Court, Pritchard Street

Jo'burg, 2004



1.



2.



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6.



16.



33.

1. A map of central Johannesburg at the Inner City Regeneration Project office, City Council, Loveday Street. The pins indicate the different states of buildings as identified by the project: red indicates "bad buildings"; blue indicates "illegal use"; black indicates "finalised"; and yellow denotes Clause 61 (ie, owners will be forced to repair the dilapidated façade of the building). There are 235 "bad buildings" in the city centre, with about 25 000 people living in them.

2. View of Hillbrow looking north from the roof of the Mariston Hotel

5. On the roof of Jeanwell House on Nugget Street. Electricity and water supplies to Jeanwell have been cut off since September 2003. The residents are in negotiation with the owner about maintenance of the building and have ceased to pay rent.

6. Tayob Towers, Pritchard Street

16. Thulisile, eighth floor, San Jose, Olivia Street, Berea

33. Mathews Ngwenya at his place in Sherwood Heights, Smit Street

Toutes les images : Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004

Jo'burg, 2004



36.



44.



47.



50.



53.



59.

36. Mbulelo at the bar he runs in a house in Joel Road, Berea. This house, typical of dwellings constructed in the 1930s, contains a kitchen, bathroom and six other rooms. Once serving the needs of a single family, they are now used as one-room homes for family units, couples or individuals.

44. Tshililo (right) and her friends share a one-roomed apartment in Cape Agulhas, Esselen Street, Hillbrow

47. Nomsa Kubheka, Milton Court, Pritchard Street. Milton Court has been declared a "bad building" and included in the Better Buildings Programme (BBP). The BBP has defined a "bad building" as one that has a market value less than the outstanding debt on the building, or has living conditions that are hazardous to the occupants, or where the city has initiated legal proceedings in an attempt to evict the tenants. Milton qualifies on all counts.

50. Grafton Road, Yeoville

53. Eviction by the Red Ants, Auret Street, Jeppestown

59. The Red Ants evict residents of Crest House, Main Street, Jeppestown

Toutes les images : Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004



Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004 : 60. The view from the top of the Mariston Hotel looking south



Guy Tillim, de la série *Jo'burg*, 2004 : 61. Sherwood Heights, Smit Street



Guy Tillim, *Apartment building, Avenue Bagamoyo, Beira, Mozambique, 2008*, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, pigment print, 91.5x131.5cm



Guy Tillim, *Grande Hotel*, Beira, Mozambique, 2008, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, partie d'un diptyque



Guy Tillim, *Grande Hotel*, Beira, Mozambique, 2008, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, pigment print, 91.5x131.5cm



Guy Tillim, *Athénée Royal High School*, Lubumbashi, DR Congo, 2007, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, pigment print, 91.5x131.5cm



Guy Tillim, *Typing pool*, Town Hall, Likasi, DR Congo, 2007, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, pigment print, 91.5x131.5cm



Guy Tillim, *Maputo, Mozambique, 2007*, de la série *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, pigment print, 91.5x131.5cm

Guy Tillim (1962, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud ; vit au Cap, Afrique du Sud)
www.michaelstevenson.com

Interview vidéo, FotoEspaña, juin 2005, environ 5 minutes :
<http://www.zenon.rebelle.com/?pubid=102830&pag=1&secid=3&rubid=8>

Interview vidéo, Fondation HCB, Paris, 14 janvier 2009, 17 minutes :
<http://www.photographie.com/?pubid=105335>

Conversations de la Fondation HCB Henri-Cartier Bresson, Paris, vidéo 14 janvier 2009, 80 minutes :
<http://www.photographie.com/?pubid=105328&secid=2>

Departure, 2003

Tillim's photojournalism has been widely published in the years since he started photographing professionally in 1986. At this time, he joined Afrapix, a collective of South African photographers with whom he worked closely until 1990. His work as a freelance photographer in South Africa for the local and foreign media included positions with Reuters between 1986 and 1988, and with Agence France Presse in 1993 and 1994. Tillim has received many awards for his work including the Mondi Award (South Africa) for photojournalism in 1998 (for his essay of images entitled *Congo River: journey from Kisangani to Kinshasa* and the same award in 1999 (for a series of images on the Himba people of Northern Namibia). He was also a finalist for the French Prix Care for Humanitarian Reportage, France 2001 and the winner of the Prix SCAM (Societe Civile des Auteurs Multimedia) Roger Pic, 2002 for his photographs of Kuito, Angola. His photographs also formed the basis of the exhibition and book *Amulets and Dreams: War Youth and Changing Africa* (Pretoria) 2002 which was exhibited at the launch of African Union, Durban, July 2002. More recently he was selected, among 100 photographers in the world, to photograph Africa for a book, *A Day In The Life of Africa*, to be published by Harper Collins in September 2002.

His work has been included in numerous exhibitions of South African art and photography, in South Africa and internationally. The South African National Gallery commissioned him to produce a portfolio of photographs on the Transkei, South Africa in 1990 and, more recently, in 2001 his images of Kuito, Angola, were the subject of a solo exhibition at the South African Museum, Cape Town as well as in Paris on the occasion of winning the Prix SCAM Roger award.

The photographs in the exhibition and book, entitled *Departure*, display Tillim's distinctive aesthetic. His images are often of harsh realities, but he is seldom invasive or confrontational in his approach. He tends to look at situations from a side view, as a passive but empathetic spectator, and seeks an unusual yet humane moment to provide a lingering disquiet to the image. The book *Departure* will be available in February 2003.

The images are available in an edition of 12 pigment prints on 300g cotton paper, archivally printed by Tony Meintjes, signed and inscribed by the photographer. Paper size: 58 x 83.5cm, image size: 49 x 73.5cm.

Essay from *Departure*

Enough seen. The vision was encountered under all skies.
 Enough had. Noises of cities, in the evening, and in the sun- shine, and always.
 Enough known. The pauses of life - O Sounds and Visions!
 Departure into new affection and new noise!
 Arthur Rimbaud - *Les Illuminations*.

My journeys have been idiosyncratic, often purposeless, not so much to commit journalism as to travel for its own sake. Perhaps the more successful images reflect this; perhaps a pattern can be discerned from their parts. I can describe moments, or trace a journey, by the images I am left with. They themselves form a thread. How I came to be in a certain place seems banal, often forgotten. In 1997 I was in Korneliuskondre, a village on a tributary of the Coppename river in the former Dutch colony of Suriname. My friend and I had spent some time in the forest, and we were on the way to a border town, from where we would cross into Guyana. We were invited to the village by someone we'd met further up the river, and that night he offered us a thatched shelter, that had beams from which to hang our hammocks.

In the morning I walked into a small church and found children playing there. I was impressed by the simplicity of the building: the polished concrete floor, the sparse altar, and the crucifix hanging above it. I started to take photographs, trying to include the boys in the scene without alarming

them, or making them self-conscious. Then, as if we had entered into a silent conspiracy, as if he understood entirely what I wanted, one of the boys moved behind the altar, leaned his head on it, and raised up his schoolbook. On it was a photo of Johan Cryff, a famous Dutch soccer player.

In Guyana, I photographed a dog in the middle of the road. The image made me begin to think of a collection of images – a sort of diary in retrospect. I was struck by its seemingly arbitrary and loose composition, and distant subjects. It was an ordinary scene – two cars passing on a road, but the dog caught in the traffic (he escaped) created the worthy moment. The fire on the horizon and the piece of white added an undefined menace. The image is a thing of beauty to my mind, has stayed with me for years, it always will. But the scene itself, in reality, was not. It was an instant in an uncomfortable journey, unmemorable except for this scene, which, if I had not captured it on film, would too have passed into oblivion.

These moments are elusive, alluring for being so. My brand of idealism that had its roots in the time I started photographing in South Africa during the apartheid years of the 1980s has dimmed. There was right and wrong, it seemed clear to me which side I stood. One would forego, what I might now call subtlety, for the sake of making a statement about injustice. The world's press set the tone and timbre of the reportage it would receive, and I for one was bought by it. Perhaps that is why I now look for ways to glimpse other worlds which I attempt to enter for a while. But one cannot live them all, and usually I am left with a keen sense of my own dislocation.

Of course, there is always this: to change what is ugly and brutal into something sublime and redemptive. So I have photographs I like for reasons I have come to distrust.

I learned my trade as a photojournalist but feelings of impotence in the face of others' despair led me to look away, as if catching only obliquely their reflected light. These are photographs of disparate locations, but their justification for ending up in one collection, their basis for comparison, is of another nature: disquiet, introspection, wonder."

Guy Tillim, 2003

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/departure/departure.htm>

Kunhinga portraits, 2002-2003

Taken in February 2002 in the Angolan province of Bie, near Kuito, Guy Tillim's *Kunhinga portraits* portray displaced people, who in the months before the end of the civil war, fled in advance of the Angolan government's "clearing" of regions where civilians had provided cover for UNITA soldiers. The subjects had walked for five days from Monge to seek refuge in the small town of Kunhinga in the safe havens provided by foreign agencies stationed in the area. These colour portraits are a new departure for Tillim who is best known for his black-and-white reportage.

The images are available in an edition of 12 pigment prints on 300g cotton paper, archivally printed by Tony Meintjes, signed and inscribed by the photographer. Paper size: 60 x 76cm, image size: 49.5 x 66cm. Please contact us as regards the current availability and price for each print.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/kunhinga/kunhinga.htm>

Leopold et Mobutu, 2003

Léopold, c'est le roi Léopold II de Belgique qui annexa en 1865 "un petit pays avec un petit peuple", comme il aimait à le répéter. Mobutu, c'est l'autre tyran du Congo. Entre ces deux règnes, l'anéantissement d'un pays et d'un peuple.

Guy Tillim, photographe sud-africain est allé sur les traces de ces deux fantômes qui rôdent encore dans les villes dévastées, sur les routes où se glissent des cohortes de déplacés et témoigne du legs colonial et politique, toujours visible dans le pays. Dans plusieurs images, on peut voir les références au journaliste et explorateur Henry Morton Stanley, qui « découvrit » le Congo dans les années 1880. Ce dernier fut employé, et grandement aidé, par Léopold II (1835 – 1909), Roi des Belges, qui se déclara lui même souverain du Congo en 1885. Le pays devint alors la seule colonie majeure reconnue par l'Ouest, possédée par un seul homme, capable d'exploiter à la fois ses ressources naturelles, et sa population.

Aujourd'hui, on estime que dans les quarante années qui ont suivi, la moitié de la population congolaise, peut-être près de 15 millions de personnes, a été massacrée ou a perdu la vie sous les coups du travail forcé, de la maltraitance et des maladies.

Après la fin de la période coloniale en 1965, l'autocratique Mobutu Sese Seko devint Président du Zaïre (anciennement Congo), et régna sans partage pendant 32 ans.

Guy Tillim a visité la résidence de Mobutu à Gbadolite qui, dans sa monumentalité, exprime combien ce leader Africain a pris modèle sur son prédécesseur et a à son tour exploité le pays pour son profit personnel. Ces images montrent les palaces en ruine, vides, et abandonnés : mausolées d'une histoire plus récente de l'oppression. Couplés à ces intérieurs saisissants et ces paysages, les portraits des enfants soldats Mai Mai, habillés de feuilles les camouflant, apparaissent comme la réincarnation contemporaine des jeunes troupes Africaines forcées d'intégrer l'armée coloniale dans la fin des années 1880. Sur d'autres images, les vagues de réfugiés fuient sur les routes pris entre les combats que se livrent les « seigneurs » de guerre.

Ces photographies révèlent une menace réelle et quotidienne qui pèse toujours aujourd'hui sur les habitants de la RDC. Tillim a érigé un témoignage de ces crimes contre l'humanité et du legs historique que le peuple de ce pays doit supporter. L'écrivain Adam Hochschild écrit dans la préface du livre de Guy Tillim : « Mark Twain était celui des écrivains américains et européens qui a été le plus révolté par ce qu'il apprenait des photographes et des témoins oculaires sur les atrocités perpétrées au Congo. Dans son livre, Le Soliloque du Roi Léopold, il imagine le roi jubilant à la vue de tout son argent, mais rageant contre ses ennemis, tout particulièrement l'incorruptible Kodak...le seul témoin qu'il ait rencontré dans sa longue expérience, et qu'il n'a jamais pu soudoyer. Le Kodak est toujours incorruptible, et dans les mains de Tillim, il a été un témoin éloquent de la souffrance et de l'exploitation qui continuent dans le Congo d'aujourd'hui. »(1).

(1) Adam Hochschild, Leopold and Mobutu, Filigranes Editions, 2004, France p5 Camilla Jackson, Senior Curator With thanks to Michael Stephenson In association with Africa.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.agencevu.com/stories/index.php?id=278&p=137>

Jo'burg, 2004

Jo'Burg : un nom intime pour une métropole d'Afrique du Sud. Ce n'est donc pas Johannesburg qui nous est donnée à voir, mais la vision personnelle que s'en fait Guy Tillim. Il nous entraîne dans les quartiers, les immeubles des populations défavorisées de la capitale de la province la plus riche d'Afrique du Sud.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.agencevu.com/stories/index.php?id=277&p=137>

Artist's statement

White residents fled Johannesburg's inner city in the 1990s. The removal of the Group Areas Act foreshadowed a flow into the city of black residents and owners of small businesses seeking opportunities and better lives. Former denizens looked back in self-righteous justification at a city that was given over to plunder and mayhem. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy, backed up by eyewitness reports and statistics. Everyone had their horror stories.

In amongst this turmoil existed the tower blocks occupied by tenants who were holding onto occupancy and managing the buildings in ways of their own devising. Their story had gone something like this: in the 1990s the owners absconded, leaving managing agents to retrieve what rents they could. In most cases, these agents were corrupt, did not pay the utilities, and disappeared with the money. These were tidy sums, handed over by poor people who conscientiously paid up to avoid having to go back where they came from.

The decay of Jo'burg's centre can be ascribed to many factors but perhaps none more so than the absence of Body Corporates. These had become relics of a more genteel era; the communal responsibilities that are contentious in even the most well-heeled blocks were not marked out. Windows were broken and not repaired. Lifts froze and their shafts became tips.

The relationship between tenants and owners or their agents deteriorated with disputes over the state of the buildings, and in some cases resulted in unpaid rents and dues. The buildings started looking like fire hazards, and the City Council began closing on them for unpaid utilities.

In between the needs of City Council and the aspirations of developers anticipating the bloom of an African city lies the fate of Jo'burg's residents. The outcome will decide whether or not Johannesburg becomes, again, a city of exclusion.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/jhb/jhb1.htm>

Avenue Patrice Lumumba, 2008

Ces photographies ne sont pas une histoire condensée des Etats africains post-coloniaux, ni une méditation sur certains aspects des structures coloniales de la période finale du modernisme, mais une errance au fil des avenues des rêves : celui de Patrice Lumumba - son nationalisme - est bien lisible dans les structures, si on sait en lire les traces, tout comme la mort de son idéal. Il est bien étrange que le modernisme, qui a abandonné les monuments et le passé au profit de la nature et du futur, transmette si bien une telle mémoire.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.agencevu.com/stories/index.php?id=588&p=137>

In many African cities, there are streets, avenues and squares named after Patrice Lumumba, one of the first elected African leaders of modern times, winning the Congo election after independence from Belgium in 1960. His speech at the independence celebrations in Léopoldville, in the presence of the Belgian King, Baudouin, unequivocally signalled his opposition to the West's idea of neo-colonial order that would replace overt domination with indirect control. He was assassinated in January 1961 by Belgian agents after UN complicity in the secession of the provinces of Katanga and South Kasai, and a Western power-supported military coup led by Mobutu Sese Seko. Today his image as a nationalist visionary necessarily remains unmolested by the accusations of abuse of power that became synonymous with later African heads of state.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/tillim/avenue.htm>

Peter Machen speaks to Guy Tillim about his Johannesburg series

The Natal Witness, May 2005

Guy Tillim is no ordinary war photographer. And while it would be inhuman, or at least vastly pessimistic, to even suggest that any photographs of wars can ever be called ordinary, there is nonetheless something extraordinary about the photographs that Tillim takes.

For one thing, they tend to follow in the aftermaths of wars, focussing on the physical residue and psychic ghosts that haunt the broken African landscapes of countries such as Rwanda, Eritrea and Angola. For another, they are often intensely beautiful. But it is to Tillim's eternal credit that the content of his work is never subservient to its artistic intention or execution.

In the last few years, Tillim has been recognised by some, if not all, of the fine-art establishment as an artist, crossing the divide between media, the lone photographer and the gallery. And while there are those who object to the possibly anaesthetising context of the gallery for documentary work, Tillim is more than happy for his images to find a home in such spaces, particularly since the kind of pictures he takes seldom find their way into newspapers.

Despite his lack of commercial sensibility, Tillim has been rewarded for his work in other ways, and was last year awarded the DaimlerChrysler Award for South African Photography, for which he was required to produce a body of work. He chose to both shift and narrow his focus, and set about documenting the life of people and buildings in downtown Johannesburg. Included in the images on display in the Durban Art Gallery is a town-planning map of central Johannesburg, with different coloured drawing-pins indicating buildings in varying states of decay. Many of these buildings are marked with black pins, indicating buildings whose residents are scheduled for mass eviction. Lawyers working for these residents claim these actions are unconstitutional since the municipality is not providing alternative accommodation.

When people write about Tillim's photographs, it is often suggested that a profound thread of hope that runs through his images. And while that sense of hope is intangibly self-evident in his many of his pictures, I've struggled for a while to work out from where exactly it emerges in the scarred and damaged places he documents.

And then it hit me like a cartoon lightbulb above my right shoulder. The answer is obvious, so sadly obvious. That sense of hope which lingers at the back of his images, and which shines through damaged eyes, and which appears almost religious at times, exists simply, I think, because war is over. Guy Tillim is, for the most part, a post-war photographer. So the question remains, before I launch you into our electronic conversation, as to whether Tillim's series of photographs of inner Johannesburg also contain this element of hope. But that's something you'll have to decide for yourself when you check out the exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery.

PM: For this DaimlerChrysler exhibition, you have chosen to document the lives of people and buildings in inner-city Johannesburg. You are a photojournalist who has spent much of your career documenting the aftermath and residue of war. With these shots of Jozi, I'd like to suggest that you are continuing to do the same thing. Do you agree with this?

GT: This is obviously not a war in the conventional sense, but in the sense of a war between the have's and have nots, undoubtedly. The Jo'burg images are not of the aftermath then, but the war in progress (as you suggest in your second question). Or perhaps even a prelude, though this is a dark and unfocussed thought. Maybe I am doing the same thing (as in my broader work); these are simply places that exist on the boundaries of my imaginary realm, places that affect quite profoundly the place I am from, places I feel for some reason bound to explore.

PM: I was thinking about the difference between these images and those which catalogue the violences in the rest of Africa, and I was trying to determine for myself whether there is a fundamental difference between them. And I came upon the notion that while conventional wars always end, this war, a war between the poor and powerless and a set of power structures that they can barely identify, is a war that is never going to end. And it is a war that is echoed all over the planet in different intensities from Rio to New York, from Johannesburg to Lagos. Of course, with the recent liberation of South Africa (supposedly the liberation of working class South Africa), these images have a particular resonance. So my question is, I suppose, do you think that this war between the poor and the power structures that define their lives is one that will ever end, ever be resolved?

GT: It may not ever be resolved, but in Joburg's case I think there are opportunities to tackle the problem in novel ways. For a start the constitutionality of evictions without provision of alternative accommodation is being challenged. There are attempts at government subsidised sectional title schemes. To some extent both the government and private developers see the possibility of a new

order whereby the poor are not simply got rid of and where Joburg doesn't revert to being a city of exclusion.

PM: And then, I'd also like to know if you think that 'conventional' wars do actually end in the wake of peace treaties and negotiated settlements. Or does their residue and aftermath usually continue with such substance that the war remains always rooted in the landscape and people's faces?

GT: All wars have to end. The scars emotional, physical are readily apparent. But they gradually become part of the scenery; what was foregrounded is now background. Perhaps the photographer's means of communication best rests in accepting the background for what it is, aberrant, different, brutal, and looking for a communal human thread that links us all.

PM: The last interview that I conducted with you left a deep impression on me. I remember the photographs vividly. I even remember where many of the images were hanging in the gallery, a testament I suppose to your own curatorial powers. But I also remember sitting at the top of the stairs of the NSA gallery and talking to you. And I was struck by your sense of self, your quietness and utter lack of arrogance, and by the fact that you contained both a sense of brokenness and a sense of peace with the fractured world. You are a million miles away from the stereotype of a war photographer. Of course you began with the idealism that came with documenting and opposing the atrocities of apartheid, but I'd like to know if there was ever a turning point for you; a point which utterly changed Guy Tillim? Or perhaps, in different words, was there ever a breaking point for Guy Tillim?

GT: Turning points in my life have been more subtle changes in direction, than events that have these big consequences. More of an incremental process of narrowing options (and I have been privileged with some) in the hope of broadening one's mind a little. The Jo'burg work is a consequence of that, an attempt to narrow the focus; it is not a portrait of Jo'burg. rather an attempt to move behind facades; walls as well as preconceptions.

PM: In the beautifully written essay 'Departure', you talk about the fact that you have photographs you like for reasons you have come to distrust. And the thing that makes you stand out as a photojournalist is the fact that (as Rory Bester says in the DaimlerChrysler catalogue) your aesthetic form and political (or ethical) content are at times seamless. You manage to produce exceedingly beautiful images where the content is never overshadowed by the visual treatment or composition. Is this something that comes naturally to you, or is it something that you actively try to achieve?

GT: It is something that comes naturally I suppose. At the same time, the aesthetic is gleaned from all manner or sources, converging in an approach and then a moment. But the obscure provenance of this aesthetic (coupled with the relatively mechanical process of image production) is a cause of concern and sometimes distrust. The verisimilitude of photojournalism often exudes certainty without the subtlety of doubt and degree of introspection that is crucial in establishing an author's bona fides.

PM: At the same time you admit to capturing the 'worthy moment', which also points to all the countless moments of truth which go undocumented. Are there any photographs you have taken, which beyond the notion of looking for the photographic moment, have amounted to a visual lie?

GT: Yes, but I won't tell you which ones! Perhaps in this context there are no lies, but then there is no truth either.

PM: I was told that you used a tripod for your Jozi images. Which implies both that you were sufficiently at ease to use a tripod in a city where at least one photographer has been killed for his equipment, and also that your subjects were comfortable with being photographed by you. So I'd like to know how long you spent with your subjects before you took the pictures. Did you get to know them at all, or is this simply further evidence of the gift you have as a photographer?

GT: Time with the subjects differed. Most of the time it was a lengthy process of going through a committee in the building and then meeting individuals. Whom I would visit a few times, they'd get used to me hanging around, would often invite me to take photographs. I was working with someone who knew the city pretty well. He'd introduce me and people would decide: ja, well, fine, he seems ok, or, no. On a few occasions I was shown the door quite smartly.

PM: Finally, an element of your work that is important to me is the fact that you usually supply the actual names of your subject. This is extremely unusual in the canon of photojournalism where people are more normally reduced to mere faces, almost incidental reflections in the waters of history. Is this an important part of your work for you? Renate Wiehager talks about the fact that your striking individualisation lifts your subjects out of the anonymous stream of history. I think its an extremely accurate statement but is it one with which you agree, and is this something you actively try to achieve?

GT: I got to know a little bit most of the people photographed and so taking their names down was not difficult, and I made a point of it when it seemed natural. We're all in the anonymous stream of history really, so it is more of an attempt to lend some dignity to a difficult and intrusive process.

Source au 09 03 03 : http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/artists/tillim_interview.htm

Guy Tillim. Interview

Corin Hirsch, *a magazine*, July 28, 2008

South African photojournalist Guy Tillim, born and raised in Johannesburg, began taking pictures in the mid 1980s during the last days of apartheid. Initially part of the photocollective Afropix, Tillim went on to work in some of the most notoriously challenged parts of Africa, sometimes for agencies such as Agence France-Presse and Reuters. He has photographed child soldiers in Congo, refugees in Angola ('Kunhinga Portraits') and life in the high rises of Johannesburg. But Tillim's work counters First-World expectations of these places; in between his portraits of those caught in the aftermath of war or displacement, he is apt to capture the stillness of these spaces as well. During an election rally, he might shoot toward the sky, capturing the tops of raised arms beneath a tree that fills most of the frame; or turn away from the action to shoot the rapids of the Congo River, or an empty bed under mosquito netting. In famine-stricken Malawi, Tillim chose to take classically-lit, Caravaggio-like portraits of its residents. That these moments of repose dominate a body of work shot in some of the world's most war-torn places is a testament to the quietude of Tillim's vision. His photographs have a hush and luminosity that runs counter to traditional ideas of photojournalism.

Tillim has won numerous awards for his work, which has been shown in galleries and museums throughout the world. He lives outside Cape Town.

You started working professionally in the mid 1980s, during the last decade of apartheid. How and why did you start taking photographs? Who were major influences for you as you began your career?

I started to take photographs in 1986 — it was a way to see what was happening in my own country. I left a white boarding school at 17, went to University and became vaguely aware of what was going around me for the first time in my life. I wasn't particularly interested in photographs at all. The camera was a passport—what was going in the country then was interesting to the rest of the world. It is hard to imagine the separation of the races. We [photographers] instantly had work, we had an audience—which is more difficult for fine art photographers. We sold images to the wire agencies. I worked with a collective called Afropix that was instrumental in getting photographers together and recording the news. I'm afraid that to some extent I was bought by the foreign media; there was a way to view what was happening in South Africa that was devoid of subtlety, and to some extent we bought into that. Yet there were some photographers—such as David Goldblatt—who weren't working within that idiom at all. He [David] was doing his own thing. Some of his photographs will have staying power for a long time. Others—of the barricades, of the townships, or civil strife—are not necessarily wholly indicative of the period.

You began your career as a photojournalist but your work can now be found in art exhibitions such as Documenta 12. Do you continue to see yourself as photojournalist? What is the process by which documentary photography comes to be seen as art?

I think we can't really invent labels for ourselves, though we might try to live up to them. Most of what I have been working on in the last 10 years has on my own recognizance. Whether you're a photojournalist or not seems to be straightforward, except when you challenge the notions of how images are recorded. Perhaps you ask questions of visual language, or challenge preconceptions. I'm not really sure how it happens for myself, that is, going from working for newspapers and magazines into an art gallery. But they're not mutually exclusive. In 2005, the work I did in Johannesburg [the Jo'Burg series] was published in a book and shown in galleries, as well as published in magazines and newspapers and so on. Same with thing with Documenta 12—my images of the Congolese election were also shown in Congolese daily newspapers.

Visual language is not as sophisticated as written language. There's a lot more gray area, and misconceptions about what make a good image. You have to look at a whole body of work, look at intention. I think this has gone hand and hand with the flowering of visual language in the last decade. Conversely, it has coincided with the demise of photographic essays. If you think of the picture magazine of the 1980s, they ran long picture essays; this is not happening anymore. Many big agencies have been bought by Getty and Corbis. Images are more cheaper and readily available. This conception that photojournalists are arbiters of truth is being questioned somewhat.

The idea that a photographer can stop a war—these ideas which were currency in the 80s and 90s—has somewhat dimmed.

Some of your photographs — for instance, those in the Jo'burg series — depict quite personal spaces, such as bedrooms. How do you go about gaining the trust of your subjects so that they allow you this access? How long did you spend on this project, and why did you chose this particular block of high rises?

I spent a lot of time in Johannesburg, rented an apartment there and lived there for four or five months. I got to know people, they saw me around. I would walk by their door and they might invite me in. Yet a lot of the time I was shown the door very smartly

I spent about five months working on [the project]. Those high rises are the center of Johannesburg, formerly white Johannesburg. Jo'burg is sort of the little New York of South Africa—a powerhouse. It's an extraordinary city. With the end of apartheid, black people who had been excluded from economic activity have moved into the city. And the whites became really scared, they put up high walls. For a long time Jo'burg was a lawless place and got a bad reputation. People moved in where they kind of rented out space and things were overcrowded, and crime was rife. But I knew it well, it was where I was born. It was emblematic of a city becoming an African city, its color, its darkness. It's a very vibrant place. For five months, I was the only white guy on the block. I had a sort of diplomatic immunity.

You have said that, as a photographer, 'neutrality is a luxury' and many artists working in Africa might feel similarly. Taking this statement beyond the context of the work itself: was there ever a time when you became involved in the lives of your subjects beyond the relationship of observer and observed?

Sometimes you end up helping people who are injured. In Johannesburg—one of the people I got to know quite well—their child died. You help with that. You do become involved a little bit. Over my years as a photojournalist, I've had to help people get to hospital.

You have written there is a 'dual journey' that occurs when you are working, one that is both external and internal. Can you elaborate on the interior journey that occurs for you in the course of your travels and your work?

The internal journey can become the subject of your photographs, I think, and is really important in a sense—that is the difficulty—to overcome that. Because of the nature of visual representation you're very much in danger always reinforcing preconceptions, of not really seeing things. Of reporting your idea of what you're looking at, of your own preconceived notion. You have to get beyond that, not be so concerned with your subject—that's kind of an attachment. It's a strange contradiction. The conventional wisdom that you become concerned with your subject—that's everything—and you can portray them in a way that you can help, further some idea of the human condition often it leads you into a very blind area. This kind of iconography that is so prevalent in photographs, to get away from that—that's the internal journey.

Can you recall a specific instance of this?

I went to Petros Village in Malawi for a few weeks for a commission: 'Go to Malawi and photograph famine'. So I stayed two weeks in a village to photograph famine, but I realize I couldn't because I couldn't understand famine. What did I know about famine really? I can't really know. I know what someone who is hungry should look like, and I can make people look like that too. But the other way to approach it is to move away from that, and let the subject speak for themselves. You might find that some people go about their day and you photograph that, so you might photograph famine and yet have someone smiling. You can't reinforce your ideas that everyone is a victim. It's almost down to a political position. People are not necessarily victims, but they need access to markets. Some of them are hungry, some of them are not. I'm not going to photograph in the sense that they are dying—they're not dying, they're living a precarious existence. It changes the way you photograph them. Your internal journey becomes more important in a sense. Often photojournalists use as a justification 'we can help you', but that's not necessarily the case. The only justification is really you trying to take a journey. You try and find out why you're there.

How were your images of Malawi received?

In the end it worked out well and those pictures were seen widely. The goals were realized in a sense that these pictures were seen in a lot of places. If I had just photographed famine victims, that might not have been the case. I couldn't have done it that way.

This idea you have of a place and how you might work is often not how it is—you have to overcome what seems like a bit of a void. Often in these places, people are living very hard and it's very depressing.

You were recently awarded the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography from the Peabody Museum at Harvard. How did you spend your fellowship year?

I ended up photographing buildings from the colonial period— in Angola, Mozambique, Congo, Madagascar. There's a ten year period in the late modernist world where there was this grand colonial architecture built in Francophone Africa and Lusophone Africa. It was this strange contemporary mythological time. These buildings are impressive, for all their inappropriateness they're nonetheless they form part of a contemporary African stage. If you look at them a certain way, they're just kind of floating worlds. Think of eastern Europe in the 70s and 80s—this kind of landscape and architecture was embraced, was loved, even though it represented a authoritarian vision. [The architecture] is celebrated as a kind of quirky machine. What it represented was this totalitarian power over people's lives. There, it has somehow been transcended. In Africa, that's not the case—these spaces are shunned. [that world where you can look at your space where see it as a strange and beautiful. The buildings are very much inhabited but many are decaying, so the challenge was not to become a connoisseur of decay, or come up with some sort of Havana-esque vision. I'd thought about this project for quite a kind of a number of years, wondered how I'd ever get around to it. Then the fellowship came.

If you could meet and talk with any other African artist — author, painter, sculptor, musician, singer, designer – who would it be? Why?

I really like the people I've met already. Maybe the photographer Samuel Fosso—his is the only picture I've ever bought, a self portrait. He's a young photographer working in a studio and he made a photograph at the end of a roll where he dresses up— he's got these big round sunglasses, with a 70s-style high collared shirt open at the chest. It just has attitude. He's having fun, he confounds you're expectations of Africa, and he does it well.

Source au 09 03 03 : <http://interviews.amagazine.org/?p=121>



Pieter Hugo, *Kwadwo Konado, collecteur de miel sauvage*, Techiman District, Ghana, 2005, de la série *Wild Honey Collectors*

Pieter Hugo (1976, Johannesburg ; vit au Cap / Cape Town, Afrique du Sud)
www.pieterhugo.com

Pieter Hugo est né en 1976 et a grandi au Cap, en Afrique du Sud. En 2002-2003, il a été artiste en résidence pendant deux ans à Fabrica, à Trévise en Italie.

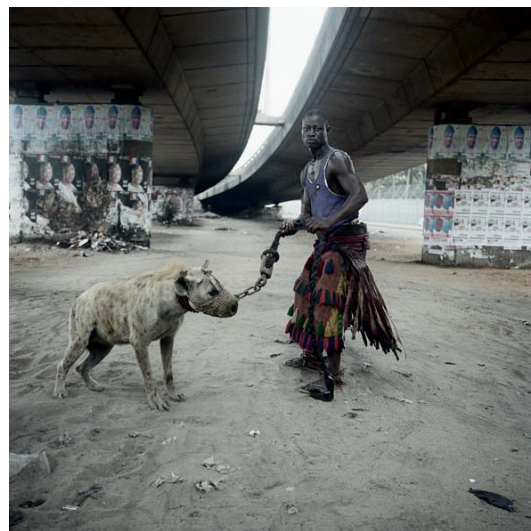
La série *Collecteurs de miel sauvage* est née d'une période que Pieter Hugo a passée dans une coopérative d'ouvriers forestiers au Ghana. Enchâssés dans des branches de manioc et du plastique pour se protéger des piqûres, les hommes procèdent à l'enfumage des abeilles pour qu'elles abandonnent le miel. La théâtralité de ces personnages déguisés posant au milieu de forêts luxuriantes les détourne avec exotisme de la rigueur de leur activité.

Source au 09 08 : http://www.rencontres-arl.com/ARL/C.aspx?VP3=Renderer_VPage&ID=ARLP70

The Hyena & Other Men, Nigeria, 2005 et 2007, c-print, 100x100 cm



Pieter Hugo, Abdullahi Mohammed with Mainasara, Ogere-Remo, Nigeria, 2007



Pieter Hugo, Abdullahi Mohammed with Mainasara, Lagos, Nigeria, 2007



Pieter Hugo, Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara, Abuja, Nigeria, 2005



Pieter Hugo, Mummy Ahmadu and a snake charmer with a rock python, Abuja, Nigeria, 2005



Pieter Hugo, Abdullahi Ahmadu with Emeka, Ibusa, Nigeria, 2007



Pieter Hugo, Abu Kikan with Frayo, Asaba, Nigeria 2007

Nollywood, Nigeria, 2008-2009, c-print, 102x102 cm



Pieter Hugo, Emilia Ibeh, Doris Orji and Sharon Opiah. Enugu, Nigeria, 2008



Pieter Hugo, Malachy Udegbumam with children. Enugu, Nigeria, 2008



Pieter Hugo, Linus Okereke. Enugu, Nigeria, 2008



Pieter Hugo, Gabazzini Zuo. Enugu, Nigeria, 2008



Pieter Hugo, Pieter Hugo. Enugu, Nigeria, 2009



Pieter Hugo, Maureen Obise. Enugu, Nigeria, 2009

Pieter Hugo (1976, Johannesburg ; vit au Cap / Cape Town, Afrique du Sud)
www.pieterhugo.com

Pieter Hugo was born in 1976 and grew up in Cape Town. He underwent a two-year residency in 2002-3 at Fabrica in Treviso, Italy. In 2008 he had solo exhibitions at Foam_Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool and Ffotogallery in Penarth, Wales. Recent group exhibitions include *Street & Studio: An urban history of photography* at Tate Modern, London (2008); *Make Art/Stop AIDS* at the Fowler Museum, UCLA (2008); *An Atlas of Events* at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (2007); the 27th São Paulo Bienal (2006); and *Street: Behind the cliché* at Witte de With, Rotterdam (2006). Hugo was included on *ReGeneration: 50 Photographers of Tomorrow, 2005-2025* (Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne, and Aperture, New York), an exhibition identifying 50 young photographers who will be considered great by 2025, accompanied by a book published by Thames & Hudson. He won first prize in the Portraits section of the 2006 World Press Photo competition, and was the Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Art 2007. In 2008 Hugo was the winner of the KLM Paul Huf Award and the Arles Discovery Award at the Rencontres d'Arles Photography Festival in France.

In 2009 Pieter Hugo has had solo exhibitions at Tinglado 2 in Tarragona, Spain, and the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney, Australia. Current group shows include *Animalism* at the National Media Museum in Bradford, UK (6 May - 27 September); *Creating Identity: Portraits today* at 21c Museum, Louisville, Kentucky (14 August - 31 December); *A Life Less Ordinary: Performance and display in South African art* at the Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham, UK (5 September - 15 November); Les Rencontres de Bamako biennial of African photography (7-13 November); and the travelling exhibition *Room for Justice* presented by Avocats Sans Frontières until September 2010. His next solo show is at Galleria Extraspazio in Rome, opening 25 November. His latest book, *Nollywood*, has just been published by Prestel (August 2009).

Source au 09 08 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/artists/hugo.htm>

Publications

The Hyena and Other Men, photographs by Pieter Hugo. Text by Adekotunbo Abiola Prestel, 2007.
Messina/Musina, photographs by Pieter Hugo. Transcript of a conversation between Pieter Hugo and Joanna Lehan. Text by Stacy Hardy. Punctum Editions 2007
Looking Aside, photographs by Pieter Hugo. Text by Antjie Krog. Punctum 2006

Source au 09 08 : <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/artists/hugocv.htm>

The Hyena and Other Men

The Hyena and Other Men est l'histoire d'hommes qui, accompagnés de hyènes, de pythons et de babouins, gagnent leur vie en faisant des spectacles de rue, face aux foules et qui vendent de la médecine traditionnelle. Captivé par une image découverte dans un journal sud-africain représentant des hommes avec leurs hyènes dans les rues de Lagos au Nigeria, Pieter Hugo décida d'aller à leur rencontre. Quelques semaines plus tard, accompagné d'un reporter local, il les rejoint à la périphérie de Abuja, dans un bidonville, pour partager leur route et mieux connaître leur univers fascinant. Peu à peu, il fait la connaissance des marchands d'animaux, de leurs rites traditionnels, et essaie de les photographier au quotidien. Il se rend compte que ce qui l'intéresse dans le sujet, c'est l'hybridation de l'urbain et du sauvage, et la relation paradoxale, parfois très affectueuse, parfois cruelle et brutale, que les marchands entretiennent avec leurs animaux. A travers les portraits extraordinaires de cette existence marginale, pris à deux ans d'intervalle (2005 et 2007), nous est révélé un monde qui se caractérise par des relations complexes et des interdépendances, un monde qui fluctue entre traditions, mythes et modernité, domination et soumission.

Pieter Hugo se sert des contrastes et des oppositions entre urbain et sauvage, affection et brutalité, beauté et atrocité, qui créent une dramaturgie émise par les protagonistes eux-mêmes et non par leurs actions. De par cette approche il élimine tout fait spectaculaire, réussit à donner une importance au non-visible et dévoile une autre – une nouvelle – image de l'Afrique, qui n'est plus celle d'un pays ravagé par la guerre, la famine ou celle d'une coulisse « safaristique » splendide.

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.cna.public.lu/pictures/photos/pictures-photo/presse/presse-3-stories.pdf>

The Hyena & Other Men

THE DOG'S MASTER

Pieter Hugo

These photographs came about after a friend emailed me an image taken on a cellphone through a car window in Lagos, Nigeria, which depicted a group of men walking down the street with a hyena in chains. A few days later I saw the image reproduced in a South African newspaper with the caption 'The Streets of Lagos'. Nigerian newspapers reported that these men were bank robbers, bodyguards, drug dealers, debt collectors. Myths surrounded them. The image captivated me.

Through a journalist friend I eventually tracked down a Nigerian reporter, Adetokunbo Abiola, who said that he knew the 'Gadawan Kura' as they are known in Hausa (a rough translation: 'hyena handlers/guides').

A few weeks later I was on a plane to Lagos. Abiola met me at the airport and together we took a bus to Benin City where the 'hyena men' had agreed to meet us. However, when we got there they had already departed for Abuja.

In Abuja we found them living on the periphery of the city in a shantytown - a group of men, a little girl, three hyenas, four monkeys and a few rock pythons. It turned out that they were a group of itinerant minstrels, performers who used the animals to entertain crowds and sell traditional medicines. The animal handlers were all related to each other and were practising a tradition passed down from generation to generation. I spent eight days travelling with them.

The spectacle caused by this group walking down busy market streets was overwhelming. I tried photographing this but failed, perhaps because I wasn't interested in their performances. I realised that what I found fascinating was the hybridisation of the urban and the wild, and the paradoxical relationship that the handlers have with their animals - sometimes doting and affectionate, sometimes brutal and cruel. I started looking for situations where these contrasting elements became apparent. I decided to concentrate on portraits. I would go for a walk with one of the performers, often just in the city streets, and, if opportunity presented itself, take a photograph. We travelled around from city to city, often chartering public mini-buses.

I agreed to travel with the animal wranglers to Kanu in the northern part of the country. One of them set out to negotiate a fare with a taxi driver; everyone else, including myself and the hyenas, monkeys and rock pythons, hid in the bushes. When their companion signalled that he had agreed on a fare, the motley troupe of humans and animals leapt out from behind the bushes and jumped into the vehicle. The taxi driver was completely horrified. I sat upfront with a monkey and the driver. He drove like an absolute maniac. At one stage the monkey was terrified by his driving. It grabbed hold of my leg and stared into my eyes. I could see its fear.

Two years later I decided to go back to Nigeria. The project felt unresolved and I was ready to engage with the group again. I look back at the notebooks I had kept while with them. The words 'dominance', 'codependence' and 'submission' kept appearing. These pictures depict much more than an exotic group of travelling performers in West Africa. The motifs that linger are the fraught relationships we have with ourselves, with animals and with nature.

The second trip was very different. By this stage there was a stronger personal relationship between myself and the group. We had remained in contact and they were keen to be photographed again. The images from this journey are less formal and more intimate.

The first series of pictures had caused varying reactions from people - inquisitiveness, disbelief and repulsion. People were fascinated by them, just as I had been by that first cellphone photograph. A director of a large security company in the USA contacted me, asking how to get in touch with the 'hyena group'. He saw marketing potential: surely these men must use some type of herb to protect themselves against hyenas, baboons, dogs and snakes? He thought that security guards, soldiers and his own pocket could benefit from this medicine.

Many animal-rights groups also contacted me, wanting to intervene (however, the keepers have permits from the Nigerian government). When I asked Nigerians, "How do you feel about the way they treat animals?", the question confused people. Their responses always involved issues of economic survival. Seldom did anyone express strong concern for the well-being of the creatures. Europeans invariably only ask about the welfare of the animals but this question misses the point. Instead, perhaps, we could ask why these performers need to catch wild animals to make a living. Or why they are economically marginalised. Or why Nigeria, the world's sixth largest exporter of oil, is in such a state of disarray.



Pieter Hugo, *Escort Kama*, Enugu, Nigeria, 2008, de la série *Nollywood*, 2008-2009

Nollywood

Federica Angelucci

Nollywood is said to be the third largest film industry in the world, releasing onto the home video market approximately 1 000 movies each year.

Such abundance is possible since films are realized in conditions that would make most of the western independent directors cringe. Movies are produced and marketed in the space of a week: low cost equipment, very basic scripts, actors cast the day of the shooting, "real life" locations. Despite the improvised production process, they continue to fascinate audiences.

In Africa, Nollywood movies are a rare instance of self-representation in the mass media.

The continent has a rich tradition of story-telling that has been expressed abundantly through oral and written fiction, but has never been conveyed through the mass media before.

Movies tell stories that appeal to and reflect the lives of its public: stars are local actors; plots confront the viewer with familiar situations of romance, comedy, witchcraft, bribery, prostitution. The narrative is overdramatic, deprived of happy endings, tragic. The aesthetic is loud, violent, excessive; nothing is said, everything is shouted.

In his travels through West Africa, Hugo has been intrigued by this distinct style in constructing a fictional world where everyday and unreal elements intertwine.

By asking a team of actors and assistants to recreate Nollywood myths and symbols as if they were on movie sets, Hugo initiated the creation of a verisimilar reality.

His vision of the film industry's interpretation of the world results in a gallery of hallucinatory and unsettling images.

The tableaux of the series depict situations clearly surreal but that could be real on a set; furthermore, they are rooted in the local symbolic imaginary. The boundaries between documentary and fiction become very fluid, and we are left wondering whether our perceptions of the real world are indeed real.

Source au 09 08 : <http://www.pieterhugo.com/selected-work/nollywood/nollywoodescort.jpg/>



Hugo Pieter, *Ashleigh McLean*, 2011, 46x37 cm, tirage pigmentaire sur papier baryte aux tons chauds 56x47cm, de la série *There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends*

There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends

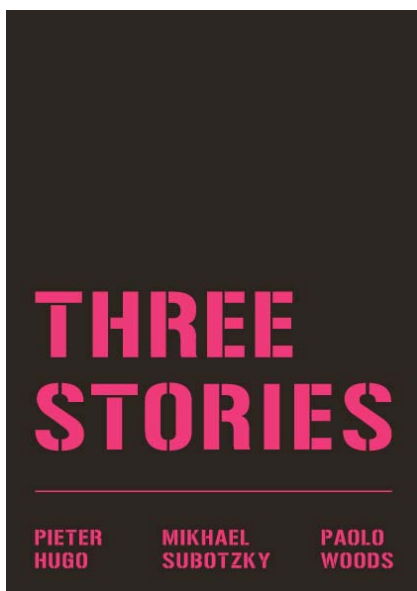
La série *There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends* (Il y a une place en enfer pour mes amis et moi) de Pieter Hugo rassemble des portraits resserrés de l'artiste et de ses amis résidant en Afrique du Sud. Par le biais d'un processus numérique permettant, en manipulant les canaux de couleur, de convertir des images en couleurs en images en noir et blanc, Hugo fait ressortir le pigment (la mélanine) de la peau de ses sujets qui présentent de nombreuses taches et brûlures dues au soleil. En exposant les contradictions des distinctions raciales fondées sur la couleur de la peau, ces portraits s'affirment comme l'antithèse des images retouchées qui déterminent les canons de beauté dans la culture populaire. Comme le souligne le critique Aaron Schuman, "si nous paraissions "noir" ou "blanc" au premier abord, les composants qui restent "actifs" sous la surface couvrent un spectre bien plus large. Ce qui nous divise à la surface est en réalité quelque chose que nous partageons tous et, comme ces photographies, nous ne sommes ni blancs ni noirs, mais plutôt rouges, jaunes, bruns, etc. ; nous sommes tous, en réalité, des personnes de couleur".

Source au 2013 07 03 : http://www.rencontres-arles.com/A11/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARL_1024_VForm&SrvRsp=1&FRM=Frame:ARL_1036

There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends est le titre d'un morceau de Morrissey tiré de son second disque solo *Kill Uncle*, 1991.

Three stories:

Pieter Hugo, Mikhael Subotzky, Paolo Woods



Trois histoires ...

présentées par deux photographes africains de la génération post-Apartheid et un photographe néerlandais-canadien, cherchant à donner une visibilité aux habitants, à la complexité et aux nuances de la culture africaine, tel est le sujet de la présente exposition. Les jeunes auteurs ne veulent pas apporter un jugement aux situations qui se présentent devant leurs objectifs, mais ils souhaitent dévoiler des faits marginaux, donner un sens aux valeurs, conditions, objets et incidents de la vie de tous les jours, tout en gardant un regard politique sur l'évolution du monde qui les entoure.

Voulant se distancier du photojournalisme traditionnel, mésestimant les règles des mass média et refusant l'application des clichés qui collent à l'image de l'Afrique et qui sont répandus depuis la période du colonialisme et de l'Apartheid, ils s'inspirent de l'approche photographique d'un David Goldblatt, d'un Roger Ballen ou d'un Guy Tillim.

Plutôt que de parcourir le continent en « shootant » - en passant - des moments instantanés, ils nouent des relations personnelles avec leurs modèles, travaillent sur des périodes de temps importantes, s'arrêtent sur les situations calmes et secondaires, basculent entre la photographie documentaire et la photographie artistique et font recours au portrait et à la mise en scène.

A côté de ces caractéristiques communes, il importe de soulever certaines particularités de ces trois travaux photographiques :

Pieter Hugo se sert des contrastes et des oppositions entre urbain et sauvage, affection et brutalité, beauté et atrocité, qui créent une dramaturgie émise par les protagonistes eux-mêmes et non par leurs actions. De par cette approche il élimine tout fait spectaculaire, réussit à donner une importance au non-visible et dévoile une autre – une nouvelle – image de l’Afrique, qui n’est plus celle d’un pays ravagé par la guerre, la famine ou celle d’une coulisse « safariesque » splendide.

Mikhael Subotzky joue avec les couleurs et la luminosité (les prises de vue de la ville sont souvent ternes et obscures, celles de la prison sont tenues dans des couleurs vives et avec une plus grande luminosité). Ainsi son discours provoque une tournure inattendue ... par exemple, la vie derrière les barreaux semble – contrairement à ce qu’on pourrait attendre - meilleure que celle des habitants défavorisés de Beaufort West. Par ces moments inattendus et surprenants, il réussit à faire monter à la surface des personnes et situations dont les mass média ne parlent pas.

Paolo Woods, le seul des trois photographes, qui n’est pas originaire d’Afrique, oppose deux cultures : celle des travailleurs et investisseurs chinois, qui viennent en Afrique pour y réaliser leur « American Dream » à celle des Africains, qui attendent une vie meilleure de cette nouvelle forme de colonisation. Il réalise des portraits – souvent mis en scène, semble-t-il, et à caractère d’icônes, dotés d’un symbolisme marquant – et les oppose à des photographies à caractère documentaire. Les portraits mettent en avant la cohabitation afro-chinoise et leurs conséquences, phénomène que les mass média négligent lorsqu’ils évoquent le sujet.

La diffusion des trois histoires se fait à différents niveaux. Pieter Hugo et Mikhael Subotzky, représentés par une galerie et une agence de photographes, voient leurs œuvres présentées dans des musées, galeries, à des festivals renommés ou dans des publications d’art. Paolo Woods, qui s’est associé à un journaliste pour la réalisation de son travail, a choisi de publier ses œuvres dans des magazines et des enquêtes journalistiques. De par ce fait, il accepte que ses photographies adoptent le statut d’illustration. Mais par cette forme de propagation, il réussit à toucher un public très large ne provenant pas exclusivement du monde de la photographie ou de l’art, lui permettant ainsi de sortir le sujet à plus grande échelle de sa marginalisation.

Les approches stylistiques et thématiques, qui mènent à ce recueil de récits, se rejoignent à plusieurs reprises, mais chaque photographe – en infiltrant sa vision personnelle, son expérience et son engagement – crée son propre univers et son propre discours. En laissant derrière eux les images choquantes - qui de toute façon ne touchent plus faute de les avoir trop vues - pour faire passer un message, ils cherchent plutôt à adopter un nouveau langage photographique par lequel ils surprennent le spectateur et l’incitent à observer plus judicieusement, à s’interroger et à se remettre en question.

Marguy Conzémus

Pieter Hugo – The Hyena and Other Men



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1 - *The Hyena and Other Men*, Mallam Mantari Lamal avec Mainasara, Nigeria, 2005 © Pieter Hugo

2 - *The Hyena and Other Men*, Les 'Hyena Men' d'Abuja, Nigeria, 2005 © Pieter Hugo

3 - *The Hyena and Other Men*, Abu Kikan avec Frayo, Asaba, Nigeria, 2007 © Pieter Hugo

The Hyena and Other Men est l'histoire d'hommes qui, accompagnés de hyènes, de pythons et de babouins, gagnent leur vie en faisant des spectacles de rue, face aux foules et qui vendent de la médecine traditionnelle.

Captivé par une image découverte dans un journal sud-africain représentant des hommes avec leurs hyènes dans les rues de Lagos au Nigeria, Pieter Hugo décida d'aller à leur rencontre.

Quelques semaines plus tard, accompagné d'un reporter local, il les rejoint à la périphérie de Abuja, dans un bidonville, pour partager leur route et mieux connaître leur univers fascinant. Peu à peu, il fait la connaissance des marchands d'animaux, de leurs rites traditionnels, et essaie de les photographier au quotidien. Il se rend compte que ce qui l'intéresse dans le sujet, c'est l'hybridation de l'urbain et du sauvage, et la relation paradoxale, parfois très affectueuse, parfois cruelle et brutale, que les marchands entretiennent avec leurs animaux.

A travers les portraits extraordinaires de cette existence marginale, pris à deux ans d'intervalle (2005 et 2007), nous est révélé un monde qui se caractérise par des relations complexes et des interdépendances, un monde qui fluctue entre traditions, mythes et modernité, domination et soumission.

Biographie

Pieter Hugo est né en 1976 et a grandi au Cap, en Afrique du Sud. En 2002/03, il a été artiste en résidence pendant deux ans à *Fabrica*, à Trévisé en Italie. Il a été inclus dans l'exposition *ReGeneration : 50 Photographers of Tomorrow*, 2005-2025 (Musée de l'Élysée, à Lausanne, et Aperture, à New York), il a remporté le premier prix dans la catégorie Portrait du concours *World Press Photo* en 2006, et a été le récipiendaire du *Standard Bank Young Artist for Visual Art* en 2007. En 2008, Pieter Hugo a été le lauréat du prix *KLM Paul Huf Award* et a obtenu le prix Découverte aux Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles.

Expositions personnelles : Galerie Michael Stevenson, Le Cap ; Galerie Yossi Milo, New York ; Extraspazio, Rome ; Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome ; Fabrica Features, Lisbonne ; Galerie Bertrand & Gruner, Genève ; Galerie Stephen Cohen, Los Angeles ; FOAM Fotografiemuseum, Amsterdam et Galerie Warren Siebrits, Johannesburg. Son dernier travail en date *Nollywood* est présenté cette année à la Galerie Michael Stevenson.

Expositions collectives récentes : 27^e Biennale de São Paulo (2006) *Street : Behind the cliché* Centre d'Art contemporain Witte de With, Rotterdam (2006) ; *Lumo '07 – 'Us'*, Triennale Internationale de Photographie, Finlande (2007) ; *An Atlas of Events* Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbonne (2007) ; *Faccia a Faccia : Il nuovo ritratto fotografico* FORMA, Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, Milan (2007) ; *Street & Studio : An urban history of photography* à la Tate Modern, Londres (2008) ; et *Unbounded : New Art for a New Century* au Newark Museum, New Jersey (2009). Son travail figure dans l'exposition itinérante *Room for Justice* présentée par Avocats Sans Frontières jusqu'en septembre 2010.

Ses publications comprennent *Looking Aside* (Editions Punctum, 2006), *Messina/Musina* (Editions Punctum, 2007) et *The Hyena and Other Men* (Prestel, 2007).

www.pieterhugo.com

Mikhael Subotzky – *Beaufort West*



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1- *Beaufort West*, Prison Beaufort West, 2006. La prison de Beaufort West se trouve au milieu d'un giratoire de la route nationale N1 qui relie le Cap et Johannesburg © Mikhael Subotzky

2- *Beaufort West*, Samuel, Vaalkoppies, décharge Beaufort West, 2006 © Mikhael Subotzky

3 - *Beaufort West*, Concours costume, Foire agricole Beaufort West, 2007 © Mikhael Subotzky

Beaufort West est une petite ville au milieu du désert, coupée par la route nationale N1 à mi-chemin entre Le Cap et Johannesburg, traversée tous les ans par des millions de voitures. Ici, comme dans la plupart des villes rurales d'Afrique du Sud, l'activité agricole a diminué considérablement d'une génération à l'autre et a donné lieu à un exode vers les grandes villes. Beaufort West est un endroit désolé, marqué fortement par le chômage, un taux de criminalité très élevé. Ceux qui restent ou sont revenus ici, ont été rejetés partout ailleurs. En quittant le centre-ville, on découvre une particularité étonnante, une scène invraisemblable : une prison installée au milieu d'un giratoire (d'un rond-point).

Mikhael Subotzky après avoir réalisé plusieurs projets photographiques dans des prisons sud-africaines, décide de s'installer à Beaufort West pour en dresser le portrait. Entre 2006 et 2008, il y retourne régulièrement, il vit avec les gens, les rencontre, escorté par Major, un garçon très populaire en ville. Il s'intéresse particulièrement aux problématiques de marginalisation, d'incarcération, et de désillusion et réalise, à partir de là, un inventaire de la réalité sociale d'une Afrique du Sud dans le contexte de l'après-apartheid.

Biographie

Mikhael Subotzky, 27 ans, est né au Cap en Afrique du Sud et est actuellement basé à Johannesburg. Il travaille comme photographe depuis qu'il s'est diplômé à l'Université du Cap en 2004. Son projet de diplôme, intitulé *Die Vier Hoëke* (Les Quatre Coins), consistait en une étude approfondie du système carcéral sud-africain. Son travail a été unanimement salué par la critique sud-africaine et internationale. Récemment, on lui a décerné le prix spécial du Jury aux Sixièmes Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie à Bamako en 2005, l'*Award for Concerned Photography F25* (organisé par *Fabrica*, Trévisé et *Forma*, Milan), le prix du Jeune reporter de la ville de Perpignan en 2007, le prix *KLM Paul Huf* en 2007, le prix *Infinity Award* (Jeune Photographe) en 2008 et la bourse *William Eugene Smith* en 2008.

En 2005, Subotzky a approfondi son enquête sur la justice pénale en dirigeant des ateliers photographiques avec des détenus et en photographiant d'anciens détenus dans une série intitulée *Umjiegwana* (L'Extérieur). Son projet, portant sur la petite ville de Beaufort West dans le désert du Karoo, a été présenté au Cap, à Amsterdam, à Vérone et à New York (2007/2008).

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www.imagesby.com

Paolo Woods - *Chinafrique*

En 2007, Paolo Woods se met en route pour raconter l'aventure des Chinois à la conquête du continent africain.

A la recherche de matières premières convoitées - cuivre, uranium et bois - Pékin a envoyé ses compagnies et ses entrepreneurs les plus aventureux.

500.000 chinois émigrés en Afrique tentent leur chance pour faire fortune dans un continent que l'Occident jugeait juste bon à recevoir de l'aide humanitaire : certains gèrent de grands conglomérats – tandis que d'autres vendent des articles bon marché le long des routes des pays les plus pauvres du monde.

Accompagné du journaliste Serge Michel, Paolo Woods parcourt quinze pays, sillonnant tout le continent à la rencontre de ces deux mondes si différents, des forêts menacées du Congo aux karaokés du Nigeria, le long des pipelines du Soudan et des chemins de fer d'Angola, des hauts ministères des capitales aux campagnes sinistrées.

Chinafrique nous parle aussi d'une ère révolue. Les Chinois n'ont rien des anciens colonisateurs – ils construisent des routes, des hôpitaux et des écoles. Pour les Africains, il s'agit d'un nouveau phénomène qui se veut ni démocratique ni transparent, une loi au-delà des régimes dictatoriaux.

Les images de *Chinafrique* sont le portrait rare et surprenant d'une actualité et au-delà, le portrait condensé d'un monde globalisé.



Chinafrique, Nigeria, Lagos, 2007 © Paolo Woods



Chinafrique, Congo, Imboulou dam, 2007 © Paolo Woods



Chinafrique, Nigeria, Lagos, 2007 © Paolo Woods

Biographie

Paolo Woods est né de parents canadien et néerlandais, il a grandi en Italie et est à présent basé à Paris.

Paolo Woods a dirigé un laboratoire et une galerie photo à Florence, en Italie, avant de se consacrer à la photographie documentaire en 1998. Il se consacre à des projets à long terme mariant photographie documentaire et journalisme investigatif.

En 2003, il produit avec les journalistes Serge Michel et Serge Enderlin, *Un monde de Brut* aux éditions Le Seuil (Paris). Prenant à bras le corps le sujet du pétrole, ce projet l'amène à travailler en Angola, en Russie, au Kazakhstan, au Texas et en Irak, entre autres.

En 2004, toujours aux éditions Le Seuil et en collaboration avec Serge Michel, il publie *American Chaos*, un reportage détaillé de la débâcle occidentale en Afghanistan et en Irak. Ces deux livres ont également été publiés en Italie, et en portfolio dans les magazines de quinze pays. Son livre *La Chinafrique* a été publié en France et sera traduit en dix langues.

Ses photographies paraissent régulièrement dans *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Stern*, *Le Monde*, *Geo* et bien d'autres publications internationales.

Des expositions personnelles lui ont été consacrées en France, en Italie, en Espagne, aux Pays-Bas et en Autriche. Ses photographies figurent à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, à la Collection de la FNAC et à la collection de Cheikh Saud al-Thani, au Qatar. Son travail lui a valu de nombreuses récompenses, il est notamment lauréat du *World Press Photo* pour son travail en Irak, ainsi que du *Prix de journalisme ALSTOM* et du *GRIN Prize*.

www.paolowoods.com

Exposition :

Commissaires : Marguy Conzémus, Michèle Walerich
Production : Département Photographie du CNA
Assistante : Mylène Carrière

Conditionnement des œuvres : Hélène Kaiser
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Avec l'aimable soutien de Michael Stevenson, Cape Town, and Yossi Milo, New York /
Magnum Photos, Foam and KLM Paul Huf Award / Paolo Woods

Mikhael Subotzky (1981, Le Cap / Cape Town, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg)

<http://www.imagesby.com/>

<http://www.goodman-gallery.com/artists/mikhaelsubotzky>

"For me, photography has become a way of attempting to make sense of the very strange world that I see around me. I don't ever expect to achieve that understanding, but the fact that I am trying comforts me"

Source au 09 09 :

http://www.magnumphotos.com/Archive/C.aspx?VP=XSpecific_MAG.PhotographerDetail_VPage&I1=0&pic=29YL53008P6N&nm=Mikhael%20Subotzky

Mikhael Subotzky, 27 ans, est né au Cap en Afrique du Sud et est actuellement basé à Johannesburg. Il travaille comme photographe depuis qu'il s'est diplômé à l'Université du Cap en 2004. Son projet de diplôme, intitulé *Die Vier Hoëke* (Les Quatre Coins), consistait en une étude approfondie du système carcéral sud-africain. Son travail a été unanimement salué par la critique sud-africaine et internationale. Récemment, on lui a décerné le prix spécial du Jury aux Sixièmes Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie à Bamako en 2005, l'Award for Concerned Photography F25 (organisé par Fabrica, Trévisio et Forma, Milan), le prix du Jeune reporter de la ville de Perpignan en 2007, le prix KLM Paul Huf en 2007, le prix Infinity Award (Jeune Photographe) en 2008 et la bourse William Eugene Smith en 2008.

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Source au 09 09 : <http://www.cna.public.lu/pictures/photos/pictures-photo/presse/presse-3-stories.pdf>

Die Vier Koeke

Mikhael Subotzky, a Magnum photographer based in Johannesburg, also explores a mostly hidden reality that he exposes to public scrutiny. The history of documentary photography, and the precedents it sets as a corollary for social justice, has a strong presence in Subotzky's work. *Die Vier Hoëke* ("The Four Corners") (2004) is a brutally frank documentary project on life in South Africa's notorious Pollsmoor Maximum Security Prison, where Nelson Mandela spent several years of incarceration during the Apartheid era. Subotzky's 360° panoramic photographs of prison life, digitally stitched together from 18 individual frames, expand upon the traditions of documentary. The visually powerful effect of the panorama, while harkening back to its origins in the 1840s, heightens the impact of the narrative to a palpably tangible, near-cinematic experience. *Cell 508* (2005) depicts a space housing 54 men that was designed to accommodate 18. It underscores the horrific living conditions of a severely overcrowded prison system, where rehabilitation is almost non-existent. Subotzky's recent series *Beaufort West* (2006-2008) is a comprehensive study of a South African town located in the desert halfway between Johannesburg and Cape Town, noteworthy for the prison that is curiously positioned in the middle of a traffic roundabout at its centre. Geographically isolated, in many ways Beaufort West has not broken away from its political and cultural past. The legacy of Apartheid is clearly visible through the racial segregation, severe poverty, rampant unemployment and criminal activity in the town. Subotzky focuses on the sociopolitical conditions of a culture that revolves around a facility where people are held captive. Isolated from the revolutionary movement that ended Apartheid in South Africa, Beaufort West is literally and metaphorically suspended between time and history.

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.mocca.ca/userfiles/file/Stillrevolutionessay.pdf>

Vidéo:

Interview with Standard Bank Young Artist Award winner for Visual Art 2012 - Mikhael Subotzky

http://youtu.be/_OBMkr8Oplk

Die Vier Koeke

Die Vier Hoeke is prison-gang terminology which refers to the inside of South African prisons. It translates directly to The Four Corners. This body of work examines issues surrounding the correctional services system within a broad socio-political and historic context. South African prisons have been brutal instruments of racism and oppression under colonialism and the Apartheid regime, incarcerating many of our political leaders. Prisons are thus firmly rooted in the consciousness of this country and continue to be a central experience in the lives of many.

Today, South African prisons are grossly overcrowded and understaffed, and many of those incarcerated are subjected to appalling living conditions. South Africa has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the world. Nationwide, 157 000 prisoners are held in facilities designed for 113 000. The prevalence of violent gangs within these overcrowded prisons fosters an environment which is unsafe for both prisoners and warders. The so-called Numbers gangs (the 26s, 27s and 28s) trace their history to nineteenth century bandits who formed the first prison gangs after being incarcerated in the old Transvaal. The Numbers gangs are powerful and widespread, having a presence in almost every prison in South Africa.

Widespread panic as a result of a rising levels of violent crime in post-Apartheid South Africa has led to calls for more arrests and more prisons. However, it is clear that the current prison system, where meaningful rehabilitation is almost non-existent, is only contributing to a cycle of crime and recidivism and a constant flow of South African youth in and out the four corners.

Umjiegwana (L'Extérieur)

In Sabela (Numbers prison gang language), Umjiegwana means "The Outside". The problems inside South African prisons cannot be seen in isolation from the broader socio-economic conditions in post-Apartheid South Africa. A severe lack of employment, housing, service delivery, and access to quality education means that crime and gangsterism attract many young South Africans. This series of photographs presents the narratives of a small number of ex-prisoners. It links their current living circumstances to their experiences inside the penal system, and examines the social conditions of deprivation and poverty that provides the backdrop to so many people's movement between the four corners and the outside.

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.imagesby.com/>

Die Vier Hoeke: The Four Corners

"The prison, that darkest region in the apparatus of justice, is the place where the power to punish, which no longer dares to manifest itself openly, silently organizes a field of objectivity in which punishment will be able to function openly as treatment and the sentence be inscribed among the discourses of knowledge."

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

"In the light of our history where denial of the right to vote was used to entrench white supremacy and to marginalize the great majority of the people of our country, it is for us a precious right which must be vigilantly respected and protected."

Chief Justice Chaskalson (from the majority judgment in the Constitutional Court case, *Minister of Home Affairs vs NICRO and others, 2004* - a case which ultimately re-affirmed the rights of prisoners to vote in South Africa)

"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."

Nelson Mandela

Source au 2012 09 12 : <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/die-vier-hoeke-text/>

Umjiegwana: The Outside

According to their myth of origin, South Africa's prison gangs were founded by two nineteenth century bandits, Nongoloza and Kilikijan. They were young and black and proud, and they become bandits because stealing the white man's gold was better than going underground to dig it up

Eventually, the myth continues, both were hunted down and captured. Together, they invented a language fit for a life of captivity. Being men of the caves and the hills, their prison language bore their fantasies of the outdoors. Everything expanded. A day was called a year. An overcrowded cell became a vast highveld plain. But to prevent themselves from being carried away into madness, they reminded themselves every day that they were in fact binne Die Vier Hoeke, and not Umjiegwana – outside. These two concepts became the touchstones of their language.

Today, in 2006, the relationship between language and place has been folded inside out. On the streets of the Cape Flats, the words of Die Vier Hoeke are used to talk of Umjiegwana. Young men describe the politics and spaces of their ghettos in prison language; neighbourhoods thus become jails, each piece of drug turf a massive prison cell of the initiated.

The reason for this inversion is simple. South Africa has become a society of mass incarceration, which means that many young men are bound to spend the first two decades of their adult lives in and out of prison by virtue of where they grew up. In their neighbourhoods, Die Vier Hoeke and Umjiegwana have been mixed up, for they have come to form equal parts of lived experience.

On the day the apartheid government ceded power in April 1994, South Africa's prisons housed 116 000 people. A decade later to the day, 184 000 people were behind bars in a system designed to hold 114 000. About four out of five of these people will spend the first half their adult lives in and out of prison, taking Umjiegwana to Die Vier Hoeke, and Die Vier Hoeke to Umjiegwana.

Jonny Steinberg

Source au 2012 09 12: <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/umjiegwana-text/>

Filling in the gaps behind the headlines. The stories of Michael Subotsky

Sean O'Toole, Interview, *FOAM* 12, "Talent", fall 2007, p.22-27

It is perhaps an understatement to say that things have happened very quickly for the young South African photographer Mikhael Subotzky. A mere two and half years ago he was a recent graduate exhibiting his university project, an extensive documentary survey of prison life in and around his native Cape Town; by July this year Subotzky had been elected a Nominee Member of Magnum Photos. The startling extent of his career trajectory is concisely explained by his breakthrough body of work, a series of documentary images first shown inside a prison and titled *Die Vier Hoeke*. The work has won him numerous international awards and catapulted Subotzky into the international art limelight. Despite all the fuss, he remains singularly committed to the difficult story his photographs tell.

How did you come to decide on prisons as the focus of your photography?

In 2004 I was doing my final year as an art student. In April I went away for a weekend to take some pictures. I came across some people from the Independent Electoral Commission doing special voting sessions at peoples' houses. They told me they were headed for Dwaarsrivier Prison, north of Cape Town, near Wolsley and Tulbagh. I had been reading about the constitutional court case around prisoners voting, so I was aware that it was quite a pertinent issue, and decided to make a phone call to see if it was possible to see the prisoners voting. I went to the prison on Election Day and took some photographs. It was the first time I had been in a prison.

What struck you about the experience?

The environment fascinated me. I had so many ideas of what it might look like and yet I hadn't seen many actual images of a currently running prison. I was also fascinated by the conversations I had with the guys I photographed. One man in particular, Peter Alexander, spoke a lot about what it meant for him to vote. He happened to be HIV positive and was open about it. He said that being able to vote made him feel the opposite of a sick prisoner left to rot in prison.

game. After the Pollsmoor work got the recognition it did I realized that actually these things weren't the case, that I was getting recognized for making what I thought was good work.

Your photographs are unashamedly couched in a documentary language. Has this presented any problems showing in a gallery system?

I was initially surprised by how my work has been taken up. Documentary photographers wanting recognition in the art world often believe that in order to make the jump one has to do something fundamentally different. When I initially went to Pollsmoor all I wanted was to become a documentary photographer. Somehow the way I worked was more engaged than someone working on a two-week assignment. Perhaps that led to the work being read differently, but my initial intention was pretty straightforward: I was trying to make a really good documentary project

How do you cope with the expectations of the art market, which can be quite fickle?

Once your work gets shown on something like *Snap Judgments* there is of course an expectation to make work that will match that and will be marketable in the same way, particularly if you are working with a gallery. I have had to work hard at not letting that get in the way of my photography, and have been very aware of the dangers of catering to market expectations. I think, to a large extent, I have tried to climb back into the work. That said, the art world has allowed me to work on my new *Beaufort West* project in a much more engaged and sustained way than would have been the case were I working as an assignment photographer.

Your debut solo exhibition at Johannesburg's Goodman Gallery last year was a mixed affair, in my view. It seemed to present many of the problems you mentioned earlier, of a documentary photography trying to make a significant statement in an art context. I know it was heavily criticized in the magazine I edit.

I want to be criticized and I welcome debate. I accept the points made in the *Art South Africa* magazine, but I do feel that the particular review that you mention failed to put that exhibition in the context of the bigger engagement with the issue of incarceration which I had been involved with for two years. The reviewer didn't bother to make

How did you make the jump from Dwaarsrivier to Pollsmoor Prison?

I read Arthur Chaskalson's judgement on the case; he was the Chief Justice of South Africa at the time – it was fascinating, touching on very interesting issues. I also read about prison gangs. I titled my university project *Die Vier Hoeke* (Afrikaans for 'the four corners'). It is a prison gang term and refers to the steps you go through as you enter prison: you get searched, you get booked in, you go to the holding cell, and finally your section. That is the literal reference, but its more metaphorical meaning refers to what happens when you go through that process. Prison is a different world where different rules apply.

Are you not concerned that your prison photographs might feed negative perceptions of South Africa's crime culture?

Perceptions of South Africa's crime culture are already extremely negative due to media hysteria. I try to tell stories which fill in some of the gaps behind the headlines. The thing that I do try to do is refute that it is just a project about prison; it was never just about prison. It was always about how the prison system relates to the broader South African social and historical landscape.

Looking back, in 2004 you were still an art student; by the end of 2005 you had been signed up by a prominent gallery, been invited onto a major American exhibition, and were also working as an assignment photographer for The Telegraph in London. In retrospect, were you prepared for your sudden uptake into the world?

Not at all. [Laughs]. It was overwhelming and incredibly exciting and difficult all at the same time. I had no idea how to approach a relationship with a gallery, a picture editor, or an international curator like Okwui Enwezor. It all really happened on top of one another.

Did sincerity help?

Yes, I think you can only be sincere. When I was at art school I had this terrifying idea of what it would like to be an artist. I thought it would be necessary to schmooze and know the right people, to play a social

the trip across town to see the concurrent exhibition I presented at Constitution Hill, in the Old Woman's Prison – an exhibition that addressed many of the issues he raised in discrediting my show.

You mention that word 'relationship' a lot. How would you describe your relationships with the people whose life stories you borrow from?

It is a very difficult and complicated thing to speak about, and it can't be anything but difficult and complicated. There is always such a huge gap between the realities of the lives I focus on and where my work is eventually consumed, be it the gallery or the lounge where a newspaper or book is read. I don't think one can ever remove that gap, but I do try to find ways to bring those two worlds together by organizing exhibitions in alternative spaces, like in Pollsmoor Prison itself. I try to focus on building relationships with people and then let the work follow from that. The quality of the relationship is important to both the integrity of the work and my own integrity.

Your uncle is Gideon Mendel, a respected documentary photographer. What role has he played throughout your career?

He has been hugely important all along. He has been like a mentor, and been able to give me a tough and informed opinion. That is the most valuable thing anyone can give you.

Looking at your Beaufort West project, how do you go from an intention, which is to document an isolated rural community that is still beset by many apartheid-era problems, to actually taking the pictures that will tell this story?

The theoretical starting point was the Beaufort West prison. It is located on an island in the middle of N1, South Africa's most famous national road. Normally prisons are on the outskirts of town and hidden away; this one is right in the centre of town, and yet it is still hidden because people who drive around it don't know it is a prison. Practically, when I first went to the town I found a place to stay and started walking and hanging out, I knew I needed someone to work with, someone to translate and also tell me where it is safe to go. I went to the prison and met a social worker; she suggested I meet Major. He is one of the most popular guys in town, having played football for a local team; he introduced me to many people. Major turned out to be a major part of the project, if you'll excuse the pun. >

How long did you work on the project?

I started in April 2006 and finished a year later, in April. I did six trips of two to three weeks at a time.

Your Beaufort West project is about picturing lingering inequality. How do you achieve this without resorting to cliché?

I noticed while editing my *Beaufort West* work that I was a lot less concerned with consciously trying to show things. I chose pictures that have a particular feeling. I think this is a really exciting step for me; I am beginning to communicate more subtly through my photographs. It isn't about a photograph showing something to make a particular point; rather, it is about presenting a particular feeling I had when I was in Beaufort West. I think it is a much better and more profound way to communicate the town's problematic social issues.

What do you mean by 'feeling'?

It is a certain atmosphere, something which comes through that isn't necessarily describable in the content of the photograph. I don't want to sound mystical or anything but I think photographs can operate very effectively on that level. I want my photographs to be subtler; I don't want to rely on drama and subject matter to make good photographs. I want to be able to make photographs that are dramatic when the subject matter isn't, and I think that can happen when one manages to transcribe one's personal feeling of being in a space into a photograph.

Concurrent with all this, you also recently took up a residency at Benetton's self-styled communication research centre, Fabrica. How did that come about?

I entered Fabrica Forma Fotografia, an international award for concerned photography launched by Fabrica and Forma, Centro Internazionale di Fotografia. I won the under-25 category prize, which included a scholarship to Fabrica.

Fabrica has played an important role in recent South African documentary photography. Adam Broomberg and Pieter Hugo, for instance, have both been residents at Fabrica; they also worked as assignments for Colors magazine. Given all this history, what were your feelings about going to Fabrica?

To be honest, I felt completely mixed about entering a place with these strong precedents and influences. Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's work represented an important development in the documentary mode, Pieter Hugo's work too, in a different way. But I don't want to work in that way.

Have you done any assignments for Colors?

Two, one in South Africa and another in Ghana. I really enjoyed my trip to Ghana. I think I took good photographs, but I somehow felt uncomfortable throughout the whole trip, that I was making work in a context so far removed from my own. One could argue the same about South Africa, but I have spent a lot of time on the Cape Flats and I understand the background to the area and why it is like it is. Ghana was just so far away and the people so different.

Isn't assignment photography an expectation if you are a part of the Magnum collective?

No. I made very certain before I applied to the collective that joining Magnum wouldn't blow me off the course that I am on. I am completely committed to continuing with long term personal projects and there is a misconception that being represented by Magnum necessarily entails something different.

What prompted you to apply to Magnum?

I applied to Magnum to get my work seen in more varied contexts. I was also attracted to the idea of being a part of a collective with many photographers who I admire greatly. Contrary to what many believe, I think that my work with Magnum can be very complimentary to my work with galleries.

How did you feel when you were accepted?

I wasn't expecting to get in, despite the support of the people I had met. It was quite a shock to suddenly find oneself standing in a circle of people talking to Martin Parr, Josef Koudelka, Jim Goldberg and Elliott Erwitt. I think despite me thinking that I can take it in my stride and I can get used to all these things, it is still remarkable for me when I remember that I am 25. +

A Conversation with Mikhael Subotzky

Jörg Colberg, blog *Conscientious Extended*, 18.02.2009

Mikhael Subotzky is one of Magnum's youngest and newest members, and his first book *Beaufort West* was one of my favourite photography books last year. I got interested in talking to Mikhael after seeing the book and reading a comment he had left on Magnum's blog, under a post about photojournalism.

Jörg Colberg: A lot of your work so far has dealt with crime and punishment. You portrayed the conditions of prisons in South Africa, and your first book "*Beaufort West*" opens with an aerial shot of the little town, in whose very center there is a prison. How did you get interested in this subject matter?

Mikhael Subotzky: In 2004 we had our third democratic election in South Africa, and there was a prominent Constitutional Court case going on which was to decide whether prisoners could or couldn't vote. This question interested me in relationship to our history of disenfranchisement, but also in relation to the experience of living in South Africa at a time when crime levels were supposedly peaking.

JC: Has your thinking about the topic evolved as you worked on the project, and if yes how?

MS: Well, 5 years later, I still feel like I am working on the same project. But within the sections of work that make up this project, there have definitely been distinct changes. Initially I thought of the work in traditional documentary terms whereby I sought to make visible that which is hidden - an aspiration that I think is particularly relevant to state institutions such as prisons. However, as I spent time in situation, I began to think of the work more broadly and contemplatively... having read some academic writing on South African penal history, and Foucault. I tried out different types of images, set up workshops with prisoners, and then expanded the project in the *Umjiegwana* series to look at the lives of ex-prisoners. At this point the work became much more personal as I established and built up relationships with a group of disparate people who inhabited the same city as me, but very different worlds. I began to see the work as my own exploration of my surroundings - a part of my attempts to make myself as conscious as possible. I also saw the work in relation to my gradual acknowledgement of how much the effects and fear of crime affected my own life. By engaging with these very different groups of people, I sought to cross the new lines that continued to divide people in a country which for so long has been defined by all the things that can possibly keep people apart.

As I continue with the work, I see some of the approaches converging, and perhaps heading to something of a more mature approach. On a primary level, I still very much see my work as being about myself, and my place. It is photographs of my personal experience of my surroundings. But as I learn more about the power of images, or perhaps the power of all texts (including photographs), and the power of narrative, association and imagination, I get more and more excited about making work. There are some image makers out there who manage to combine looking at the world in a serious way with a sense of magic that harnesses these powers. I hope to emulate them.

JC: I don't know whether one would have the same impression living in South Africa, but looking from the outside - and from far away - it seems like South Africa had such a bright moment of hope when apartheid was dismantled and when Nelson Mandela was elected President, and so much has gone wrong since then, for whatever reason. Do you see it as your responsibility (if that's a word you'd be comfortable with) to record what's going on? To preserve this moment in time, maybe to foster some awareness and change?

MS: I am not sure if I believe that photographers can effectively take responsibility for such things. I do believe in the power of bearing witness, but I see it more as responsibility to ourselves - that we each have a responsibility to try and make ourselves as conscious as possible. Looking at the world around me through photography has become my way of doing that. While I am very happy that I can share images with others and try and show them things that they haven't taken in, that isn't the primary motivation for doing what I do.

JC: This sounds almost like the opposite of what photographers like James Nachtwey would say, who recently spent \$100,000 to spread a message about some underreported disease. I'm wondering to what extent your approach to photography is also part of a reaction to seeing other people "preach" (for a lack of a better word). Given you are now also a member of Magnum you surely must have come across photographers who are very passionate about showing things that many people wouldn't have noticed otherwise?

MS: I think it is great to show people things they choose or are conditioned to ignore, and I admire those who can effectively do that. But I do have a real problem with the assumption that photographers can change the world by telling these "truths". Some photographers have precipitated amazing change with their images. But it cannot be assumed - especially when the medium for this "preaching" is the traditional western media. As for me, I want to do many things with my work... sometimes I do want to try and show people things that they ignore, sometimes I do want to make a political point, but sometimes I also just want to express myself and try and qualify my experiences.

JC: And how much of what you do with your work do you see as universal? How much would you say applies equally well to any other country?

MS: I don't think any of it does. It's about where I am, or perhaps where I happen to be. I am greatly inspired by David Goldblatt's life project of photographing his surroundings in South Africa. Different projects that he has done vary greatly, but they all feel like they are part of a very deep engagement with his surroundings.

JC: I'd be curious to learn how you place your work in the context of some of the other photography from South Africa that has somewhat recently gained a lot of international exposure.

MS: I look at a lot of work, and feel inspired in some way by most of it. I am glad that quite a bit of South African photography has been receiving exposure, and I hope this happens more.

JC: And how would you put photography from South Africa in a larger African context? I realize this is a bit of a big question, but with South Africa being part of Africa, I'm sure that's how many people would view the subject.

MS: Well we definitely have a very particular history of photojournalism and documentary photography here that relates to the polarized politics of apartheid where it was very clear who the bad guys were. And I was very much initially inspired by this tradition. But there is a huge variety of photographic traditions in the continent as a whole, and I would like to think that we can soon stop looking at the photography and art produced here purely in terms of this "African context". There have been a number of very important survey exhibitions which have served to highlight that which is produced here. But now I think it is time to take the geographic context from the degree to which it is present in the work, rather than from that which is presumed by where it was made or who made it.

JC: You recently became a Magnum nominee, and I'm a bit curious about your experiences and about what you see as your (potential?) role as a member. Is joining Magnum something you have always wanted to do?

MS: My experience has only been good. I wanted to join Magnum because I saw it as a community of people who, despite their huge differences, are all interested in looking at the world around them in a serious way. Magnum is full of strange individuals, almost all of whom have found very interesting and unique ways of working with images. I feel right at home with that and hope to do the same over time.

JC: The pressure is on, though, isn't it? Not just on you, since you will have to do whatever it takes to become a full member at some stage, but also on Magnum, which is widely seen as an agency that has got to find a way to orient itself in a drastically changed photography world. Photography is now increasingly disseminated over the web, and multimedia appears to be where things are heading. Whenever I'm in New York, almost inevitably someone mentions Magnum and how - supposedly - the agency seems to be in a bit of a flux. I'm sure there are as many ideas about the future of Magnum as there are members; so what are yours?

MS: The pressure is on, but I don't see this as a unique situation. I think one of the strengths of Magnum has that it has always been in flux. Since 1954, when Capa and Bischoff died within days of each other, Magnum has always faced huge challenges and had to be constantly re-evaluating its practice and place in the world. There are many specific pressures in these times, including the ones that you mention, and Magnum does need to develop and adapt in its way of operating. But I don't think the future of Magnum needs to diverge at all from its past - its about being a place where strong images are made and about trying to support those who make them.

Source au 2012 09 12 : http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/extended/archives/a_conversation_with_mikhael_subotzky/

Beaufort West

Beaufort West est une petite ville au milieu du désert, coupée par la route nationale N1 à mi-chemin entre Le Cap et Johannesburg, traversée tous les ans par des millions de voitures. Ici, comme dans la plupart des villes rurales d'Afrique du Sud, l'activité agricole a diminué considérablement d'une génération à l'autre et a donné lieu à un exode vers les grandes villes. Beaufort West est un endroit désolé, marqué fortement par le chômage, un taux de criminalité très élevé. Ceux qui restent ou sont revenus ici, ont été rejetés partout ailleurs. En quittant le centre-ville, on découvre une particularité étonnante, une scène invraisemblable : une prison installée au milieu d'un giratoire (d'un rond-point). Mikhael Subotzky après avoir réalisé plusieurs projets photographiques dans des prisons sud-africaines, décide de s'installer à Beaufort West pour en dresser le portrait. Entre 2006 et 2008, il y retourne régulièrement, il vit avec les gens, les rencontre, escorté par Major, un garçon très populaire en ville. Il s'intéresse particulièrement aux problématiques de marginalisation, d'incarcération, et de désillusion et réalise, à partir de là, un inventaire de la réalité sociale d'une Afrique du Sud dans le contexte de l'après-apartheid.

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.cna.public.lu/pictures/photos/pictures-photo/presse/presse-3-stories.pdf>

Two pieces of Beaufort West stand between its unemployed citizens and isolation: the national freeway and the local prison. For some two or three kilometres, the N1, the great highway that traces South Africa's north/south axis, becomes Beaufort West's main street. About a million people pass through each year, and in the evenings an assortment of the town's 37 000 residents come out to meet them. They offer all the commodities a night traveller might want: food, drink and petrol, a place to stay, an hour's worth of sex. In exchange for their wares, Beaufort West's people are preserving a frail connection with the world. Without its national road, this town, some three-quarters of its residents unemployed, would surely be lost unto itself. The local jail, too, is on the main road, and it is what caught Mikhael Subotzky's attention:

'I was drawn to Beaufort West because its prison is bizarrely situated in a traffic circle in the centre of the town in the middle of the N1 highway', Subotzky says. 'Most South African prisons are hidden from view on the outskirts of our towns and cities. I was interested in this image of the prison at the centre of the town.'

The jail's location is no accident. Many of the first white people to live in these parts were banished here, nearly 200 years ago, to what was then the remotest outpost of the British Cape Colony. Out in the far reaches of the Karoo, these white outcasts clashed with souls at the fringes of southern Africa's two indigenous civilisations: bands of Xhosa who had fled war in the east and itinerant groups of Khoisan. No modern state is comfortable about a place within its territories that harbours people but no laws. The town of Beaufort West was established to bring law and order to the Central Karoo. Among its first structures were the rudiments of a state: magistrate, courthouse, church and jail. So the fact that the prison stands in the middle of the main road is testimony to Beaufort West's origins; it is civilisation's mark: a grim sentinel of order. Today, the jail's main function is surely a good deal shabbier than that. It warehouses those of Beaufort West's citizens who, defeated by prolonged idleness and liquor, have assaulted family or robbed neighbours. And so all the unemployed, it seems, are drawn to the main road, some to hawk what they can sell, others to do time in the cells, listening to the thousands of cars that circle the prison before heading on.

Jonny Steinberg

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.goodmangallerycape.com/pdf/subotzky.pdf>

In describing this latest Beaufort West series, Subotzky says: "Despite being originally established to bring law and order to the central Karoo, Beaufort West is now a transit town. Situated at the intersection of two of the busiest national roadways, it serves as a food and overnight stop for travelers of all kinds. Every day, the town's population doubles with those who pass through it. Beaufort West has recently been described by the South African Human Rights Commission as 'an isolated town that has not broken away from the shackles of South Africa's apartheid past, [where] economic and social integration is severely limited.' "

Subotzky continues: "I was drawn to Beaufort West when I came across its prison. It is bizarrely situated in a traffic circle in the centre of the town in the middle of the N1 highway. Most South African prisons are hidden from view on the outskirts of our towns and cities. I was interested in this image of the prison at the centre of the town and the irony that it is still hidden as most of those who drive around the traffic circle don't realize that they are passing the prison. This image thus became a locus by which to explore the town and its margins."

Source au 09 09 : http://www.magnumphotos.com/Archive/c.aspx?VP=XSpecific_MAG_ExhibitionDetail_VPage&pid=29YL5300853E

Beaufort West

Jonny Steinberg: Afterword from Beaufort West book.

I must have driven through Beaufort West a dozen times, perhaps two dozen, before coming across these photographs, but I had never seen it. That there was a prison in the middle of the traffic circle at the edge of the town centre, that there was a traffic circle at all: I did not recall these things.

I was hardly alone in this. South Africa's longest highway, the 1,200-mile road that joins the northern provinces of the country to the south, slices right through Beaufort West, becoming its main street for a short time. Mine was one of several million cars that pass through each year.

Coming from Johannesburg, as I invariably was, two hundred miles of the Great Karoo lay behind me. By the time I got to Beaufort West I carried in my head mile upon mile of scrub-swept desert: a still, empty landscape beneath a vast sky. I was always at the beginning of a holiday, on the way to the coast or the mountains; and the Karoo was something of a foretaste of what lay in store, an early promise of slowing rhythms, of the idea that an entire day might pass without anything in particular to do. Always, somewhere in the Karoo, I would pull off the highway, drive along a dirt road far enough to kill the sound of the traffic, and get out of the car. I'd take in this huge, still space, its receding power lines, its sudden, sharp-edged hills, its benign indifference to me.

Beaufort West was a scruffy, ugly interruption, a brief absence of landscape, rather than the presence of something else. Traffic circle, prison: these I did not see. My mind had slammed itself shut on the edge of town.

And yet, when I first saw Mikhael Subotzky's photographs, they were instantly recognisable. My first thought was 'Of course'. The prisoners in their orange overalls, the hunter's corpses strung up on his truck, even the anarchically coloured debris on the rubbish heap and the huddle of figures who live there: it all seemed utterly familiar. For these photographs give expression to something one understands – even while choosing to forget – whenever one passes through a distant rural town: that the South African countryside has lost the discrete identity it once possessed; that it is becoming a repository for the people and things the cities cannot contain.

Rural South Africa has emptied over the last couple of generations. The number of commercial farmers has declined by almost a third. More and more of those who remain have mechanised their work and employ fewer and fewer people.

As for the rural poor, everyone goes to the city. Whether with their family's consent or on the sly, whether alone or with others, scores of young people leave sometime in their teens. It is unusual these days for a person to reach adulthood with visions of spending the rest of their life in the countryside.

And so towns like Beaufort West are increasingly inhabited only by the young, the old, and those who haven't made it elsewhere. The lives of these last follow an endless loop as they move from rural town to city, city to rural town. Drifting from one to the other, they find traction in neither.

To spend the better part of one's adult life in rural South Africa is, for many, to have lost control over one's trajectory. These photographs thus represent a place in which far too many people do not possess the basic structure of what we regard as an inhabitable life: a sense of life as a project, or at any rate as some sort of progression; the notion that one might leave a legacy, or build something that survives one's death. Not long ago, the South African countryside did play host to many such inhabitable lives. Its emptying of people and meaning has coincided, more or less, with the end of apartheid. This is no accident. The economy of the countryside was hardly built to last. It was always an illusion that black South Africa could be confined to a perpetually rural existence, an illusion invented by people who did not bother to think more than a generation ahead. That apartheid has bequeathed to democracy a rural landscape in deep, probably irreversible, decline is no surprise.

You can see the trouble Beaufort West lives with in the thin abstraction of statistics. Two-thirds of its adult residents have no work. And in this town of 37,000, more than 20 people have been murdered in a year: a hair-raising homicide rate of 60 in every 100,000. That's nearly 10 times the New York rate, 20 times that of London, and one and a half times that of Johannesburg, among the most dangerous places on earth.

Which brings us back to the prison on the traffic circle. Thousands of travelers like me may not have seen it, but this was the spectacle that initially caught Subotzky's eye, giving him cause to stop in Beaufort West and take out his camera. Once you think about it, the very idea of this prison, slap-bang in the middle of South Africa's most traveled national highway, is so bracing you're not sure whether to find it funny, tragic, or simply insane. It seems less a piece of reality than the work of a comic artist straining to capture this town's relation to the world that passes through it. For here is

somewhere increasingly forgotten by post apartheid South Africa. And yet those who inhabit the country's metropolis pass through in their millions; and those who are failing most miserably here, who wind up again and again in the town's jail, get to rotate between a life in the township and a life in the middle of the highway, quite literally listening to the traffic of an economy in which they can find no place. It is as if a never-ending jamboree is passing through Beaufort West, and those most embittered by the spectacle have been sentenced to sit in front-row seats.

If the image of the prison in the road is indeed so sharply burlesque, and the story it tells so instantly complete, why did I never notice it? I guess because I was always on the way to the mountains or the sea, and because the Karoo is so deeply beautiful. We urban South Africans are very proud of our countryside. We rejoice that our cities skirt the edge of a great wilderness, that there are mountains and oceans and deserts just out of sight. I do not know anyone in Johannesburg or Cape Town who isn't a part-time fisherman, or a mountain climber, or the owner of a kayak or a canoe, or who does not spend a part of each year in a house looking out over the ocean. The countryside and the sea live in each one of us. That we have just been there, or will soon go, to empty our minds, is a part of who we are.

The hinterland is thus sacred space, after a secular fashion: out there one communes with whatever passes in one's mind for the spirit world. It is not an easy space in which to imagine the lives of the poor and the struggling. You can know that they inhabit it, but imagining them there is a different matter. It is easier to think of South Africa's wretchedness as something that has been deposited in the cities. And so after several hours of the Karoo, this great desert all around you, you do not have a place in your mind for Beaufort West.

Which is partly why Subotzky's photographs give you the sense that you are looking at something you have always known and yet have never seen. It is not just that the Karoo landscape in his pictures is inhabited. It is that the landscape is so patently a backdrop to the imaginings of the people in the photographs. They are using it: to transport themselves, to elevate themselves, to re-describe themselves. In picturing them Subotzky does more than simply stitch the desert and the people back together. He takes us on a sometimes disquieting adventure, asking us to imagine how the desert is imagined by those who live there.

Almost every photograph carries a suggestion of theatre, and almost every theatre uses the desert as its stage. The boy on the rubbish heap who has donned the Spider-Man mask he found in the trash; the children launching the white sheet into the wind; the screaming man and the princess on their manicured horses; the white girl with the competition tag and high heels on the black-floored stage, posing for an audience off-camera; the snake and the elephant staring so very sweetly at the ill man on the bed; the prisoner lying beneath a massive mural of cacti and sand and stone, like a giant bubble representing the inside of his mind.

In each photograph the subjects transport themselves elsewhere: where, precisely, we are not sure. For one photograph it seems possible to imagine quite vividly what its subjects are imagining: the panorama group portrait of the prisoners in their orange inmate overalls. This is also the photograph I find most affecting. It is not just the obvious delight they take in the portrait, evidenced in the warmth and playfulness of their inscriptions. Beyond that, the picture is striking because there is little to suggest that it was taken in Beaufort West. The cartoonish iconography of the sunrise, the number '28', the way the two men next to Dogg and Tamatie wear their woolen hats: this photograph could have been taken in a big Cape Town prison, the inmates all men from the ghettos on the city's south-eastern periphery, the desert mural behind them representing the longings of urban men for open space. They could easily be Capetonians imagining themselves in Beaufort West.

It would be foolish, of course, to get carried away by this idea. Amidst the levity in the photograph there is a whiff of something forlorn and unhappy: this small prison in the middle of a traffic circle in a one-horse transit town, its inmates modeling themselves so studiously on the fearsome rulers of Cape Town's bleakest ghettos.

And yet, since the icons they have chosen are so stark, their meanings so widely shared, it can be conjectured with some certainty that in their minds if not on their lips is a man called Nongoloza, the part-historical, part-mythical figure on whom all of South Africa's great urban prison gangs base the story of their own beginnings.

In the tale the gangs tell of him, Nongoloza is a young black man who finds himself at the fount of modern South African history. Gold has just been discovered, and the whites who own the mines are sending blacks deep into the ground to fetch it. Nongoloza refuses to do that. He recruits a band of followers, retreats to a cave on the outskirts of the mining town, and comes out at night to steal and pillage the very gold the whites have accumulated. And so Nongoloza becomes an

outlaw, the most wanted and most dangerous man in the land. As his fame grows, so young black men start seeking him in droves, and the ranks of his bandit army swell and swell. From the names they have chosen and the icons they have drawn, it is clear that this story plays in the minds of everyman in the photograph. Sitting for a group portrait in a prison in unremembered Beaufort West, they have imagined themselves into a central seam of South African history. They are free and dangerous, with vengeance on their minds and justice in their hearts. Jonny Steinberg, New York, 2008

Source au 2012 09 12: <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/beaufort-west-text/>

Ponte City, 2008-2010

The fifty-four-storey Ponte City building dominates Johannesburg's skyline, its huge blinking advertising crown visible from Soweto in the south to Sandton in the north. When it was built in 1976 – the year of the Soweto uprisings – the surrounding flatlands of Berea, Hillbrow and Yeoville were exclusively white, and home to young middle-class couples, students and Jewish grandmothers. Ponte City was separated by apartheid urban planning from the unforgettable events of that year. But as the city changed in anticipation and response to the arrival of democracy in 1994, many residents joined the exodus towards the supposed safety of the northern suburbs, the vacated areas becoming associated with crime, urban decay and, most of all, the influx of foreign nationals from neighbouring African countries.

Ponte's iconic structure soon became a symbol of the downturn in central Johannesburg. The reality of the building and its many fictions have always integrated seamlessly into a patchwork of myths and projections that reveals as much about the psyche of the city as it does about the building itself. Tales of brazen crack and prostitution rings operating from its car parks, four storeys of trash accumulating in its open core, snakes, ghosts and frequent suicides have all added to the building's legend. Some of these stories are actually true, and for quite some time most of the residents were indeed illegal immigrants. And yet, one is left with the feeling that even the building's notoriety is somewhat exaggerated – that its decline is just as fictional as its initial utopian intentions were misplaced and unrealized.

In 2007 the building was bought by developers, but by late 2008 their ambitious attempt to refurbish and revitalize Ponte had failed spectacularly. They went bankrupt after promising to spend three hundred million rand on their vision for the building. Their aim was to target a new generation of aspirant middle-class residents – young, upwardly mobile black professionals, business people from across the African continent, and all those seeking chic Manhattan-style inner-city living. The developer's website still describes how 'In every major city in the world, there is a building where most can only dream to live. These buildings are desirable because they are unique, luxurious, iconic. They require neither introduction nor explanation. The address says it all.'

The developers emptied half the building and stripped the apartments of everything, throwing all their rubble into the structure's central core. They started to redesign the flats with a variety of exotic themes – 'Future Slick', 'Old Money' and 'Glam Rock' – but their financing required sales up front and these, it seems, failed to materialize in sufficient numbers for the construction costs and occupational rental to be maintained.

When we started our work there in 2008, the development was in full swing. The building felt like a shell, its bottom half completely empty, and the top half sparsely populated. Former residents moved out in a hurry to make way for the developers. Many of their apartments were then burgled and trashed. Months later, when the development had failed, we entered room after room where the floors were covered in piles of broken possessions, torn photographs and scattered paperwork. We would walk the corridors, through whole floors of empty flats, and then suddenly hear children shouting, the fizz and smell of frying fish, and then, briefly, voices and running water as we passed the bathroom and kitchen windows that face the passageways. But these spectres disappeared as quickly as they had come, leaving us to wander through wrecked apartments, corridors and dark stairwells. We met many of the remaining residents in the lifts where we asked to make portraits of those who were willing. When we brought copies back to their apartments, doors opened to all kinds of living arrangements – whole families in bachelor flats, empty carpeted rooms with nothing but a mattress and a giant television consol, and penthouses divided up with sheets and appliances into four or five living spaces.

By the end of 2008, Ponte's old owners had repossessed the building and started the mammoth task of cleaning it up and refitting the stripped apartments. Another cycle in the building's life had begun before the last illusions of a grand future could be erased. The posters and graphics

advertising 'New Ponte' still hang in the hallway, passed daily by many residents who still think that this is what their building will become. We started to work systematically, visiting each apartment to request a picture of the door and of the windows – we will eventually stitch these images into giant internal and external panoramas. As we proceeded with this task, we noticed that almost everybody was watching their television sets, seemingly ignoring the spectacular views that attracted us to their windows. So we joined them, and would spend hours in front of old Rambo movies, Congolese sitcoms, music videos and Nollywood dramas. All the stories from Ponte's past were there before us – the druglords and the gangsters, the shootouts and the prostitutes, the ghosts and the voodoo magic – not in the building itself, where young people and families went about their lives calmly, but on the hundreds of screens that were stacked above each other, flat by flat and floor by floor.

Ponte has always been a place of myth, illusion and aspiration. This is what we seek to evoke in these preparatory pages. Perhaps this task is best left to the images that we have found there – both in the abandoned flats, and in the marketing material and advertising that we have collected from 1976 and 2008. When these documents are seen next to the dystopian appearance of the building and its surroundings, one begins to project an image of this city during this time. It is a place of dust and dreams, befitting the land on which it sits, which has attracted millions of migrants since gold was discovered in the 1880s. People are still drawn here from all over the continent in search of better lives for themselves and their families. But the gold, in all its incarnations, inevitably fulfills the dreams of so few. All around them, those who service this passion are scattered in a modern metropolis – pinning their dreams to the flashing signs which crest the city and some of its buildings.

Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse, Johannesburg, 2009

Source au 2012 09 12 : <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/ponte-city-text/>

Ponte City Windows, Televisions, Doors - Three Lightboxes

Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse spent much of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 engaged in the quixotic task of taking a photograph out of every window, of every internal door, and of every television-set in Ponte City. This circular 54-story building has been the subject of their three-year investigation of its structure and its position as the crucible of Johannesburg's urban mythology.

The result is three light-boxes, each measuring almost four meters, which tower above the viewer in similar proportions to the building itself. The photographs, taken with as much formal consistency as was possible in a chaotic building, are presented exactly in order, floor above floor and flat by flat.

The first light-box, featuring the internal doors that open from the circular corridors into each apartment, at first looks like a giant stained-glass window - a seemingly composed arrangements of reds, pinks and blues. But in fact, the photographs are arranged accurately and truly to the building. The different colours are dictated by the building's history - the old pink paint from its 1970s heyday still remains near the top, while recent renovations which started near the bottom included blue neon lights which cast a strange glow onto the black doors. Punctuating the closed doors of these various colours, one periodically comes across a door thrown open to reveal a portrait of that apartment's residents. Working at night, the artists knocked on each door in the building to request this portrait, and then photographed the closed door if it was refused, or if the apartment was empty. Where a portrait was taken, the glare of the raw electric bulbs in the apartments is accentuated by backlighting of the light-boxes. These small squares of light and life jump out towards the viewer, giving the work a sense of depth which strains against the many closed doors that pull the eye back to its surface.

If one studies closely the striations of light and colour of the work, an archaeology of the building reveals itself. The ornate patterns of the doors and security gates on the higher floors are in stark contrast to the plain black wooden doors installed lower down during the building's last failed renovation in 2007 and 2008. Floor 32 was photographed during this period when it housed the show apartments that were being used to advertise the renovated building. On some of the doors, the decor schemes that investors could choose from are clearly marked. "Future Slick", Moroccan Delight", "Glam Rock" and "Zen Like" are all at odds with the visions of the building that surround them. The comprehensive methodology of the photography reveals both these layers of history as well as individual fragments of interest. Right at the bottom, on the very last floor that the artists photographed, they came across the doors to what used to be the building's public restrooms. Amazingly, these were still clearly marked with the exclusions of Apartheid - "European Here" and "European Dame" (European Gentleman and European Ladies).

The next light-box, featuring photographs of the building's windows, is a fragmented landscape. One can trace the structure of adjacent buildings upwards, photo by photo, from their foundations which are seen through Ponte's parking-floor windows, to the point where their pinnacles disappear from view as Ponte towers above them. Horizontally, the twelve photographs of each floor roughly stitch together an overlapping panorama as seen from this centre-point of Johannesburg's skyline. But it is when the windows are blocked that the most interesting details emerge. The bright colours of closed curtains, the stacked furniture of an overcrowded apartment, and the silhouettes of many residents all interrupt the fragmented landscape, turning the exterior gaze of the work in on itself. The 'windows' work unfolds the building onto a flat surface which maps its internal structure and the relationships between lives' lived stacked together and on top of each-other.

While the artists were drawn at first to photograph the windows and their spectacular views, they soon noticed that the residents of the building were much more pre-occupied with their television screens. So soon these alternative windows were included in Subotzky and Waterhouse's list of typologies, and this third light-box becomes another colourful mosaic of light and colour. Local soap operas, Congolese music videos, and Nollywood movies dominate the screens. Every television reveals a different fantasy - both the real and the mythical places where these images come from trace the journeys of the residents from their homelands to the building, and then perhaps onwards to the places to which they aspire.

These three towering light-boxes present three distinct yet overlapping directions of view. The internal, the external, and the imagined are separated by the typological method that made the three works, but confused in each instance by the richness of detail that each one includes in its 600-odd photographs. But step back from each, and they become almost completely abstract, fractals of colour and light that make it hard to believe that they are organized true to the building rather than the artist's design.

Source au 2012 09 12 : <http://www.subotzkystudio.com/ponte-city-text-2/>



PONTE CITY

AUTOPSIE D'UN RÊVE ARCHITECTURAL EN AFRIQUE DU SUD (1975-2013)

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY
& PATRICK WATERHOUSE

PREVIEW PRESSE
MERCREDI 22 JANVIER 2014
15H30 - 17H

COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE



LIVE YOUR LIFE

PONTE CITY

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY ET PATRICK WATERHOUSE

DU 23 JANVIER AU 20 AVRIL 2014

LE BAL PRÉSENTE LE DERNIER PROJET DU PHOTOGRAPHE SUD-AFRICAIN MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY EN DUO AVEC PATRICK WATERHOUSE: L'ÉPOPÉE VISUELLE SUR QUATRE DÉCENNIES DE LA TOUR QUI DOMINE JOHANNESBURG, PONTE CITY.

Symbole de la prospérité de Johannesburg au temps de l'apartheid et de la domination blanche, puis de l'effondrement du centre-ville dans les années 90 et enfin du renouveau multi-ethnique en ce début de XXI^e siècle, Ponte City incarne depuis 1975 les aspirations et failles de la société sud-africaine.

Pendant cinq ans, Mikhael Subotzky et Patrick Waterhouse ont mené une enquête sur les visages multiples et parfois contradictoires de la tour. Par l'accumulation de signes, leur travail s'est ainsi constitué par touches, par strates pour s'inscrire dans le tout d'un long processus. Point d'aboutissement de cette immersion, l'exposition confronte plusieurs récits: données historiques (plans, brochures, coupures de presse...), typologies d'éléments architecturaux sur les 54 étages, images abandonnées dans les appartements par des migrants de passage, personnages qui donnent une voix au bâtiment, scènes poétiques de la vie quotidienne.

«Aujourd'hui la vie continue à Ponte avec son lot de faits ordinaires et extraordinaires, comme n'importe où ailleurs. Mais le bâtiment reste le support de projections contradictoires: point de focalisation des rêves et des cauchemars de la ville, vu comme un refuge ou une monstruosité, un lieu idyllique ou dystopique. Un paratonnerre captant les espoirs et les peurs de toute une société.»

(Ivan Vladislavic)

L'exposition est co-produite avec le FOMU à Anvers est accompagnée d'un livre, PONTE CITY, édité par Steidl.

PONTE CITY, PAR MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY ET PATRICK WATERHOUSE

«CERTAINS DE CES RÉCITS SONT BIEN RÉELS, POURTANT, LA NOTORIÉTÉ DE LA TOUR AMPLIFIE TOUTES LES PROJECTIONS ET LA MALÉDICTION DE PONTE CITY EST AUSSI FICTIVE QUE L'UTOPIE QUI LUI A DONNÉ NAISSANCE.» MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY ET PATRICK WATERHOUSE

Ponte City surplombe la ligne des toits de Johannesburg. Ses immenses lumières publicitaires sont visibles depuis Soweto au sud et Sandton au nord. Construite en 1976, l'année des émeutes de Soweto, la tour est située au milieu des flatlands de Berea, Hillbrow et Yoeville, des quartiers alors exclusivement blancs où vivent des jeunes couples de la classe moyenne, des étudiants et des grand-mères juives. L'urbanisme de l'apartheid a mis Ponte City à l'écart des événements marquants de ces années mais l'avènement de la démocratie en 1994 provoque l'exode des blancs vers les banlieues Nord réputées plus sûres. La zone abandonnée autour de Ponte devient synonyme de crime, de décrépitude urbaine et connaît un afflux massif d'immigrés des pays africains voisins.

Ponte City, emblème de l'essor de la ville au temps de la prospérité, s'effondre dans l'imaginaire collectif et la tour en vient à symboliser le déclin du centre-ville de Johannesburg. La réalité de l'édifice et les multiples fictions qui l'entourent se sont toujours entremêlées pour former un patchwork ininterrompu de mythes et de projections qui en dit autant sur le psychisme de la ville que sur le bâtiment lui-même. Sa légende s'enrichit au fil du temps de nombreuses visions de cauchemar : réseaux de trafic de crack et de prostitution qui opèrent à découvert dans les parkings, ordures qui s'amoncellent dans le vide central jusqu'au quatrième étage, serpents, fantômes et nombreux suicides. Certains de ces récits sont bien réels, pourtant, la notoriété de la tour amplifie toutes les projections et la malédiction de Ponte est aussi fictive que l'utopie qui lui a donné naissance.

En 2007, la tour est rachetée par des investisseurs immobiliers. Fin 2008, leur ambitieux projet de réhabilitation connaît un échec retentissant. C'est la faillite pour des promoteurs qui avaient promis d'investir trois cents millions de rands dans la renaissance de Ponte. Leur cible était une nouvelle génération de résidents aspirant à grossir les rangs de la classe moyenne, de jeunes professionnels noirs prêts à se hisser sur l'échelle sociale, des hommes et des femmes d'affaires originaires de tout le continent africain, et tous ceux attirés par un modèle de vie urbaine chic. Les promoteurs avaient entrepris de vider la moitié du bâtiment et de débarrasser les appartements de tout ce qui les encombrait. Les gravats ont été jetés dans la cour centrale. Les architectes ont commencé à plancher sur le réaménagement des espaces, en travaillant sur une série de thèmes exotiques (« Moderne chic », « Dynasties dorées » ou « Rock glamour »). Le plan de financement supposait de conclure quelques premières ventes sur plan. Or cela, semble-t-il, n'a pas été le cas, tout du moins pas en nombre suffisant pour faire face aux coûts de rénovation.

Lorsque nous avons démarré notre projet en 2008, le chantier des travaux allait bon train. Le bâtiment ressemblait à une coquille, dont la moitié inférieure avait été entièrement vidée tandis que les étages supérieurs accueillent une population clairsemée. Les anciens résidents avaient déménagé à la hâte, pour céder la place aux promoteurs. Le plus souvent, leurs appartements avaient été cambriolés et saccagés. Quelques mois plus tard, lorsque le projet immobilier a fait long feu, nous avons pénétré dans chaque pièce, l'une après l'autre. Le sol était jonché des restes d'effets personnels, de photographies déchirées et autres papiers épars. Nous avons sillonné les couloirs, parcouru des étages entiers d'appartements vides. Puis, soudain, on pouvait entendre des enfants crier, percevoir l'odeur d'une friture de poisson, saisir des voix furtives ou le bruit de l'écoulement d'eau dans les canalisations. Mais ces ombres s'évanouissaient aussi vite qu'elles étaient apparues.

Nous avons rencontré dans les ascenseurs les ultimes résidents de l'immeuble et leur avons demandé de faire leur portrait. Lorsque nous les avons retrouvés chez eux pour leur remettre un tirage, les portes des appartements se sont alors ouvertes sur des modes de vie insoupçonnés : des familles entières logées dans un appartement de célibataire ; des pièces avec, pour seul mobilier, un matelas à même le sol et une gigantesque télévision ; ou encore d'immenses appartements «de standing» divisés en quatre ou cinq espaces à vivre avec, pour seules cloisons, des draps ou des appareils électroménagers.

EXPOSITION

Fin 2008, les anciens propriétaires de Ponte City ont repris possession de leur bien. Ils se sont alors attelés à la monstrueuse tâche de nettoyage des lieux et de réaménagement des appartements dépouillés de tous leurs équipements. Une nouvelle page dans la vie de l'édifice s'est alors ouverte, avant que les dernières illusions d'un avenir radieux ne soient définitivement balayées. Les affiches vantant les mérites de la « Nouvelle Ponte » ornent encore le hall d'entrée. De nombreux résidents passent devant tous les jours, convaincus que leur immeuble ressemblera un jour à ces clichés fantasmés.

Nous avons entrepris de répertorier systématiquement les éléments architecturaux de Ponte City en prenant une photo de chaque porte et de la vue extérieure de toutes les fenêtres de chaque appartement. Puis nous avons juxtaposé ces photographies les unes aux autres pour en faire de gigantesques panoramiques de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur, en suivant la structure exacte du bâtiment. A mesure que nous avançons, nous nous sommes rendu compte que la quasi-totalité des habitants avait les yeux rivés sur leur écran de télévision et nous avons ainsi passé des heures avec eux à regarder de vieux films de Rambo, des sitcoms congolaises, des clips musicaux et des comédies de Nollywood. Toutes les histoires qui circulaient autour de Ponte City ont ainsi défilé sous nos yeux : gangsters et barons de la drogue, règlements de compte et prostituées, fantômes et magie vaudou. Mais les scènes ne se déroulaient pas dans l'immeuble lui-même, où de jeunes gens et des familles vauquaient à leurs occupations, mais sur les centaines d'écrans empilés, d'un étage à l'autre, d'un appartement à l'autre.

Ponte City a toujours été un lieu propice aux mythes, aux illusions et aux aspirations ce que nous avons voulu saisir par ces typologies visuelles. Mais peut-être cette vocation s'illustre-t-elle le mieux dans les images trouvées dans les appartements laissés à l'abandon ou sur les supports publicitaires de 1976 à 2008 glanés ici et là. Dans toutes ses contradictions, la ville surgit de ces documents tel un lieu de poussière et de rêves, qui sied à la terre sur laquelle elle est posée et qui a attiré des millions de migrants depuis la découverte d'or dans les années 1880. Les migrants continuent d'y affluer, venus du continent entier, en quête d'une vie meilleure. Mais cet eldorado fatalement ne permet de réaliser que les rêves d'un petit nombre. Tout autour d'eux, ceux qui ont cru en leur destin se retrouvent éparpillés dans une métropole moderne – épinglant leurs rêves sur les enseignes clignotantes qui dominent la ville et certains de ses gratte-ciel.

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY ET PATRICK WATERHOUSE

L'exposition est réalisée en collaboration avec la Goodman Gallery, Cape Town et Magnum Photos.

Le projet Ponte City a reçu le prix de la découverte des Rencontres Internationales d'Arles en 2011.

BIOGRAPHIES

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY

Né en 1981 à Cape Town, Afrique du Sud, Mikhael Subotzky vit actuellement à Johannesburg.

Il travaille depuis 8 ans sur l'intérieur et l'extérieur des principales prisons d'Afrique du Sud, la petite ville de Beaufort West et la tour de Ponte City. Mikhael Subotzky a été exposé dans de nombreuses galeries et musées dans le monde et ses photographies sont notamment entrées dans les collections du Museum of Modern Art (New York), du Victoria and Albert Museum (Londres) et de la South African National Gallery (Cape Town). Sa première monographie, *Beaufort West* (Chris Boot Publishers), a été le sujet d'une exposition en 2008 : *New Photography: Josephine Meckseper and Mikhael Subotzky* au MoMA de New York. Il publie *Retinal Shift* en 2013 (éditions Steidl).

PATRICK WATERHOUSE

Né en 1981 à Bath, Royaume Uni, Patrick Waterhouse a été diplômé du Camberwell College of Art en 2003.

Son travail une variété de medium : dessin, photographie, livre d'artiste. Il a récemment travaillé sur une version illustrée de *l'Enfer* de Dante. Il est également actuellement co-rédacteur en chef du magazine *COLORS*.

Les œuvres de Patrick Waterhouse ont été exposées dans de nombreux lieux tels que la South African National Gallery, la Goodman Gallery à Cape Town, Art Basel, le Design Museum London, la Walther Collection.



PonteCity
www.newponte.co.za

LIVE YOUR LIFE







Jo Ractliffe (♀ 1961, Le Cap, Afrique du Sud ; vit à Johannesburg, ZA)
www.stevenson.info

BAFA and MFA degrees at the University of Cape Town

Jo Ractliffe est née en 1961 au Cap (Afrique du Sud) et vit actuellement à Johannesburg, où elle enseigne à l'université du Witwatersrand et au Market Photo Workshop. Elle est diplômée d'un master de l'université du Cap. Ses expositions personnelles les plus récentes sont *Terreno Ocupado* (Terres occupées) à la Warren Siebrits Gallery, Johannesburg (2008) et *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* (Terres de la fin du monde) à la Michael Stevenson Gallery au Cap (2010). Elle a récemment participé aux expositions de groupe suivantes, parmi d'autres : la septième Biennale de Gwangju en Corée du Sud (2008), *Snap Judgments : New Positions in Contemporary African Photography*, International Centre of Photography, New York (2006) et *The Unhomely : Phantom Scenes in Global Society*, à la deuxième Biennale d'Art contemporain de Séville (Biacs 2), Séville (2006).

Source au 2012 09 25 : https://secure.rencontres-arles.com/a11/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARL_40

In 2010 she was a Writing Fellow at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (Wiser), Johannesburg, and an invited artist at the Phillips Exeter Academy, New Hampshire, USA. Ractliffe was nominated for the 2011 Discovery Prize at the Rencontres d'Arles photography festival, and *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* was nominated as best photobook of 2010 at the International Photobook Festival in Kassel (June 2011). Group exhibitions include *New Topography of War* at Le Bal, Paris (2011); *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*, The Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm/Burlafingen, Southern Germany (2010); the seventh Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2008); *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography*, International Centre for Photography, New York (2006), and *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society*, Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art (Biacs 2), Seville, Spain (2006).

Source au 2012 09 25 : <http://www.stevenson.info/artists/ractliffe.html>

A leading South African artist working in photography, Ractliffe received the premier national art prize, Vita, in 1999. An eloquent and perceptive monograph on her work and practice, *Jo.Ractliffe* by Brenda Atkinson, was published in 2000. Jo Ractliffe probes photography for fragments, interstices, and absences, rather than for capturing presences and decisive moments. Many of her series evoke loss, and its relationships to identity, memory, desire, and death.

For Ractliffe, "Photography is a very resistant and resisting medium to work with, a medium of non-disclosure. Despite this, we retain a certain belief in the truth of appearances; we conflate the real with its representation. I'm interested in that space of slippage between photography and the real, and in the notion of trace. But I'm also interested in the things that happen outside of the frame - the not so obvious, the furtive things that are not easily imagined." Ractliffe often mines the apparently banal for evocation. In Ractliffe's *Guess who loves you* series, she iconizes and aestheticizes toys chewed by her dog, Gus. These become metaphors for the gnawing of desire, which is never satiated, and "a desire to please that shifts uneasily from love, to ingratiation, to abjection" (Atkinson p.40).

Vlakplaas is the name of the farm where an apartheid-era death squad tortured and murdered pro-democracy activists. Ractliffe's images at the site reveal no evidence of the horrors that occurred here. The photograph as an evidentiary document fails; it is silent. Instead the images bespeak the unspeakable that lurks behind banal mask of horror. Ractliffe's influence as a leading practitioner of photo-based art in South African art has been extended through her teaching and publications.

Source au 09 09 : <http://www.axisgallery.com/photographers/ractliffe/index.html>

La photographie de Ractliffe est profondément ancrée dans le paysage et particulièrement les lieux marqués par la mémoire de la violence et de la disparition. Ses paysages documentent ce qu'on ne remarque généralement pas, ce qui n'est pas pris en compte : un passé qui ne laisse plus de traces visibles, qui demande à être imaginé, qui est contingent au regard du spectateur. Ses images, mystérieuses, mythologiques, transcendent l'apparence immédiate du quotidien.

Artur Walther

NO FINAL DA GUERRA (À la fin de la guerre)

Nombreuses sont les légendes au sujet de la guerre en Angola – un des conflits les plus complexes et les plus longs de l'histoire africaine. Au-delà des déterminants locaux, ce conflit a pris la forme d'une guerre froide faite par procuration, soumise à des interférences extérieures, des partenariats secrets et des programmes politiques et économiques tacites. Cela s'est traduit par diverses violations des accords internationaux, opérations illégales, financements secrets, approvisionnements en armes. Il s'agit d'une guerre du subterfuge, une fiction tissée de semi-vérités et de dissimulations. J'ai découvert l'Angola en lisant *D'une guerre à l'autre* de Ryszard Kapuscinski, un livre qui retrace les événements ayant conduit à l'indépendance de l'Angola et à la guerre civile qui a suivi. C'était au milieu des années 1980, une époque où l'Afrique du Sud traversait une période de mobilisation de plus en plus importante contre les forces du gouvernement de l'apartheid, qui était par ailleurs en guerre avec l'Angola. Auparavant, l'Angola avait pour moi quelque chose d'abstrait. Dans les années 1970 et jusqu'au début des années 1980, c'était simplement « la Frontière », une zone mystérieuse où nos frères et nos petits amis étaient envoyés pour accomplir leur service militaire. Le pays restait, à mes yeux, un mythe, alors même que l'on commençait à entendre parler des Russes, des Cubains et de la Guerre froide. En 2007, je me suis rendue à Luanda pour la première fois. Cinq ans s'étaient écoulés depuis la fin de la guerre et je désirais étudier la démographie sociale et spatiale de la ville à la suite du conflit. Durant mon séjour, un deuxième projet émergea peu à peu, projet qui détourna mon attention de la manifestation urbaine des séquelles de la guerre vers « l'espace » de la guerre elle-même. Du point de vue photographique, ces oeuvres examinent et autopsient l'influence symbolique ou non des traumatismes passés dans le paysage du présent. Nous vivons dans un espace présent, mais qui, comme l'écrit Jill Bennett dans *A Concept of Prepossession* (Un concept de préjugé), « porte les traces indélébiles et éphémères de son histoire. Et si nous occupons des espaces, ils ont la capacité de nous pré-occuper ». Jo Ractliffe

Source au 2012 09 25 : https://secure.rencontres-arles.com/a11/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARL_40

La photographe sud-africaine Jo Ractliffe (née à Cap Town en 1961) a découvert le drame angolais au milieu des années 80 en lisant *D'une guerre à l'autre* du grand reporter Ryszard Kapuscinski. La guerre d'hier, dont la photographe cherche les traces dans le paysage qui lui est contemporain, a ravagé le pays entre la proclamation de l'indépendance par Agostinho Neto en 1975 et la mort de Jonas Savimbi, leader de la faction rebelle de l'Unita en 2002. Trente ans de massacres qui coûtèrent la vie à environ 1,5 million de personnes. Que vient-elle voir de ce qui a disparu ? Que lui reste-t-il à prélever sur ces champs de bataille abandonnés par l'action, livrés au « rien » ? Il y a, cachés dans ce vide, un certain nombre d'indices estompés : de discrets cercles de pierre à même le sol, des abris creusés à moitié recouverts, des forêts minées, de mystérieux tracés.

“ Ces cartes sont comme une langue disparue : des endroits encore identifiés par leur nom colonial portugais, recouverts par de nombreuses annotations, les scénarii occultes de la guerre (...) Je lutte pour trouver dans la réalité ce qui est représenté sur la carte. Parfois, je ne suis même pas sûre de ce que je vois (...) je suis là, sans parole. Les signes ne se laissent pas lire.” Jo Ractliffe

Ces photographies de la série *As Terras Do Fim Do Mundo* témoignent d'une tradition de l'artiste comme documentariste topographe selon laquelle il n'existerait pas de différence entre la chambre noire de Roger Fenton photographiant *The Valley of The Death* pendant la guerre de Crimée en 1855 et un géomètre documentant un paysage à l'aide de son théodolite. Non plus qu'entre l'étude menée par Jo Ractliffe en Angola et un topographe visant derrière son tachéomètre. Tous instruments de vision et de captation rendant compte d'une aspiration à un degré zéro de l'image, cette fameuse « image pure » à l'histoire bien plus complexe que sa seule définition.

Source au 2012 09 25 : <http://www.le-bal.fr/fr/mh/rencontre-avec-jo-ractliffe/>

In Search of the Border (1985-2010)

Jo Ractliffe

There are many myths about what is known to white South Africans as the 'Border War'. Fought primarily in Namibia and Angola from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, it engaged a series of conflicts that merged into one of the most complex and protracted wars ever fought in Africa. Alongside its local *raison d'être*s, the war in Angola also unfolded as a proxy Cold War, mobilised by external interferences, secret partnerships and undeclared political and economic agendas. All of these manifested in a range of deceptions, from the violation of formal international agreements to illegal operations, secret funding and the provision of arms. It was a war of subterfuge; a fiction woven of half-truths and cover-ups. Even now, over twenty years later, many of its stories have yet to be told.

For most Namibians it was a war of liberation, a war fought to gain independence from South African rule, which had been ongoing since 1920 when the League of Nations granted administration of Namibia (then South West Africa) to South Africa under a Class C Mandate. While apartheid policies, strictly speaking, were not applied till the late 1960s in Namibia, the territory was subjected to harsh forms of segregation and a colonial labour system that later fed into a growing nationalist movement. After decades of pressure and various legal disputes, the United Nations (UN) revoked South Africa's mandate in 1966 - a decision South Africa ignored. In 1970, the UN Security Council declared South Africa's presence in Namibia illegal and later, in 1978, passed Resolution 435, which proposed a ceasefire and democratic elections supervised by the UN. On both occasions, when instructed to withdraw from Namibia, South Africa refused to do so.

It was against this backdrop that SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) and its military wing, PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia), launched an armed struggle against South African forces in Namibia. In what is generally considered to be the beginning of this 23-year conflict, the first major clash between SWAPO and a South African police unit, supported by the SAAF (South African Air Force), occurred on 26 August 1966.

However, the 'Border War' involved more than South Africa's attempts to prevent SWAPO coming to power in an independent Namibia. It also involved conflicts between South Africa and many of its frontline states as South Africa attempted to curb the liberation struggle that was happening within its borders. Portugal's withdrawal from Angola added another layer to the perceived threats against the apartheid state. The possibility of a Marxist government, sympathetic to the ANC (African National Congress) and SWAPO, propelled South Africa to involve itself in Angola's civil war. South African forces had ventured into Angola as early as 1967, sending air force helicopters to support Portuguese troops against UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). Less than ten years later, with the launch of Operation Savannah, the SADF (South African Defence Force) and UNITA - with covert support from America - began a strategic and somewhat expedient alliance. Their intention was initially to prevent the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) from taking control of Angola at independence, but later the alliance focused on trying to maintain control of southeast Angola against the MPLA and SWAPO. South Africa's 1975 invasion into Angola was a crucial factor in Cuba's decision to support the MPLA in Luanda. Contrary to the belief that Cuba was acting on Soviet recommendation, Fidel Castro launched Operation Carlotta in response to a direct request from a besieged MPLA in Luanda. The arrival of 7 000 Cuban troops effectively halted the SADF advance, and on 11 November 1975, Agostinho Neto declared independence. In January 1976, the SADF was compelled to withdraw from Angola.

South Africa's 1975 invasion into Angola was a crucial factor in Cuba's decision to support the MPLA in Luanda. For the remainder of the 1970s, the SADF directed its efforts primarily towards keeping the war north of the 'cut-line', clearing a 'free-fire' buffer zone along the Angolan border and displacing thousands of people in the process. It also conducted counter-insurgency raids and pre-emptive strikes on SWAPO bases, including the controversial raid on Cassinga on 4 May 1978, in which over 600 people were killed. But the 1980s marked a shift in South Africa's presence in Angola. In an undeclared war with the government forces, FAPLA (People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola), the SADF began to mount continuous large-scale military operations inside Angola. The strategic aim was to maintain UNITA's dominance in the region and thus also undermine SWAPO's ability to launch attacks from Angola into Namibia. On 16 February 1984, South Africa and Angola signed the Lusaka Accord, a ceasefire agreement aimed in part at resolving the issue of Namibian independence in terms of Resolution 435. But in 1985 when FAPLA launched a successful attack on UNITA and threatened to capture its stronghold town of Mavinga, the SADF with support from the SAAF came to UNITA's rescue. The war escalated and for the first time, the South African government admitted it was supporting UNITA.

In 1987 the war reached its final and decisive turning point with the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, one of the most significant battles ever fought in Africa. As Fidel Castro proclaimed: "From now on the history of Africa will have to be written before and after Cuito Cuanavale". The events leading to the battle were set in motion when FAPLA attempted to break UNITA's hold over southeast Angola and regain control of the region. Launching a major assault from Cuito Cuanavale, FAPLA targeted the UNITA stronghold of Mavinga and began to drive UNITA south, inflicting heavy casualties in the process. But in a series of debilitating skirmishes at the Lomba River, FAPLA was repelled by the SADF, which had come to UNITA's rescue. Forced to retreat back to Cuito Cuanavale, FAPLA was then besieged by the combined forces of the SADF and UNITA. It was a critical moment, and one that many believe presented an opportunity for the SADF to overrun FAPLA and take the town. The consequences of this were unthinkable for the Angolans and once again they appealed to Cuba for assistance. But the SADF failed to seize the initiative: and with Cuban reinforcements, despite heavy bombardment from the SADF and UNITA, Cuito Cuanavale did not fall. The battle continued for months with neither force gaining the upper hand, and on 23 March 1988 the SADF launched a final unsuccessful assault. Cuito Cuanavale remained secure despite long distance shelling from the SADF over the following few months.

In 1987 the war reached its final and decisive turning point with the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale

During this time, Angolan and Cuban troops opened a second front to the west. Mobilising a force of 40 000 Cuban, 30 000 Angolan and 3 000 SWAPO troops with some 500 tanks and 1 000 anti-aircraft weapons, supported by MiG-23 fighter jets, they advanced towards the Namibian border. Castro drew on a boxing combination for this strategy: the defensive left fist blocks the opponent at Cuito Cuanavale in the east, while the force of the right fist strikes in the west. Over the next few months a series of clashes with South African forces occurred, including the bombing of the dam at Calueque by the Cubans. As the SADF retreated into Namibia, the Cubans withdrew and the war ended.

In May 1988 the South Africans returned to the peace negotiations, which they had abandoned for two years. In a series of talks mediated by US Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker, Angola, Cuba and South Africa agreed to the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from the region and the implementation of Resolution 435. On 22 December that year, all parties signed a final peace accord in New York. Namibia celebrated its independence in March 1990.

But the war in Angola was not over.

After Cuito Cuanavale, in an attempt to reach peace within Angola, the MPLA government and UNITA signed the Bicesse Accord in 1991. The agreement set out the principles for a ceasefire, the demilitarisation of UNITA troops and the formation of a national army. It also laid out the process for the creation of a multi-party democracy with an elected government. But when the incumbent president and MPLA leader, José Eduardo dos Santos, defeated UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in the 1992 presidential elections, Savimbi contested the process and rejected the results. The peace process unravelled and once again the country was subjected to war. Alongside bitter fighting countrywide, the post-election period also saw an unprecedented rise in violent attacks on the national population, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians in ideological cleansings - known as *limbeza* - carried out by armed civilians and special police in service to the MPLA and UNITA. In an endeavour to end the post-election conflict, both sides agreed to sign the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994, which effectively reinforced the principles and implementation of the Bicesse Accord. But despite international monitoring and peacekeeping, the fundamental mistrust between the MPLA government and UNITA led to the collapse of the protocol and war resumed.

In the late 1990s the war reached its most brutal and destructive phase and threatened to reduce the country to a state of chaos. During this period, much of the country's infrastructure, including schools, factories and medical centres, was destroyed. Scorched earth tactics and the continuous laying of mines resulted in the death and displacement of millions of Angolan citizens. A final political settlement and peace was achieved only after Savimbi's death in 2002.

I first read about Angola in *Another Day of Life*, Ryszard Kapuściński's book about events leading up to Angola's independence. This was during the mid-eighties - some ten years after it was written. At the time, South Africa was experiencing a period of intense resistance and increasing mobilisation against the forces of the apartheid government, which was also engaged in the war in Angola. I was photographing in the townships around Cape Town - taking images that would form the material of a series of apocalyptic photomontages of urban wastelands, resettlement camps and dogs (this body of work was titled *Nadir*). At the same time, amongst other books on landscape, dispossession and war, I was reading about Angola. Until then, in my imagination, Angola had been an abstract place. In the seventies and early eighties, it was simply 'the border', a secret, unspoken location where brothers and boyfriends were sent as part of their military service. And

although tales about Russians and Cubans and the Cold War began to filter back - all of which conjured up a distinctly different image from the one portrayed by the South African state - Angola remained, for me, largely a place of myth.

In 2007, I went to Luanda for the first time. Five years had passed since the war had ended - and it was the year of Kapuściński's death. I entered the myth.

Source au 2012 09 25: http://jwtc.org.za/volume_4/jo_ractliffe.htm

Article complet avec images : http://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-4/Salon_Vol4_RACTLIFFE.pdf

Reshooting Diana, 1990-1995

I started photographing with my Diana camera in 1990, after losing all my photographic equipment in a burglary - initially, simply to continue photographing. But even after replacing my equipment, my 'archive' of Diana photographs continued to grow alongside my other work. Sometime later, I read a wonderful essay by Richard Avedon - *Borrowed Dogs* - where he talks about his family album pictures. He observes that in every photograph - and family photographs were important events - they were in front of a house or car that wasn't theirs, and always with a dog. In one year of pictures he counted 11 different dogs, none of which belonged to them. They had never owned dogs. He says that all the photographs in his family album were a fiction, a lie about who they were, but the truth about who they desired to be. That interested me and I started thinking about photography more critically - its different practices, different conventions, all in service to different interests and different 'truths'.

Diana was intended to raise questions about what we expect from photographs, particularly in relation to how history and memory have been constructed in South Africa through documentary photography, which privileged ideas of objectivity and truth. In *Diana*, both the subject matter - the incidental, the everyday of ordinary life - and the mode - seemingly random 'snaps' - challenged some of the conventional notions of how photographs should look and function. Ironically (one does not usually associate the snapshot with any degree of photographic skill), the Diana, with its fixed focus, plastic lens, light leaks and no exposure controls save 'sunny' and 'cloudy' dials, was not an easy camera to use. My first pictures were terrible and I had to rethink how I saw the world, also in photographic terms, and find a new approach to making images.

The installation contained 50 photographs (each 50 x 50cm) suspended back to back between sheets of glass. These 25 double-sided 'frames' were suspended from the ceiling in five rows, each one metre apart.

A second work, *A Sunny Day* (taken from an instruction in the 'manual' which says: "It is advisable to take pictures on sunny days"), explored the notion of the photograph as souvenir. Five 'postcard racks', each containing 12 'postcards' (cut-up postcard-size fragments of the larger images, screenprinted on the back with postcard demarcations), were installed on the gallery wall. Viewers were invited to take a postcard away with them - a souvenir, and literally a piece of, the exhibition. Individually, the postcard images were often indecipherable, nothing more than a wash of grey sky or piece of earth. But collectively, in the grid format, they made up a relatively coherent image, one that constantly shifted as exhibition viewers selected out a postcard and a new one took its place.

In 2004, a selection of 25 images from the '*Diana* archive' was published in a portfolio by Warren Siebrits in a limited edition of 10. The images were quadtone pigment prints on cotton paper.

Source au 2012 09 25 : http://www.stevenson.info/exhibitions/ractliffe/index_diana.html

IN SEARCH OF THE BORDER

A SELECTION OF IMAGES PRODUCED BETWEEN 1985 AND 2010

The frontier is never somewhere else, and no stockades can keep the midnight out.

—Norman MacCaig, *Hotel Room, 12th Floor*



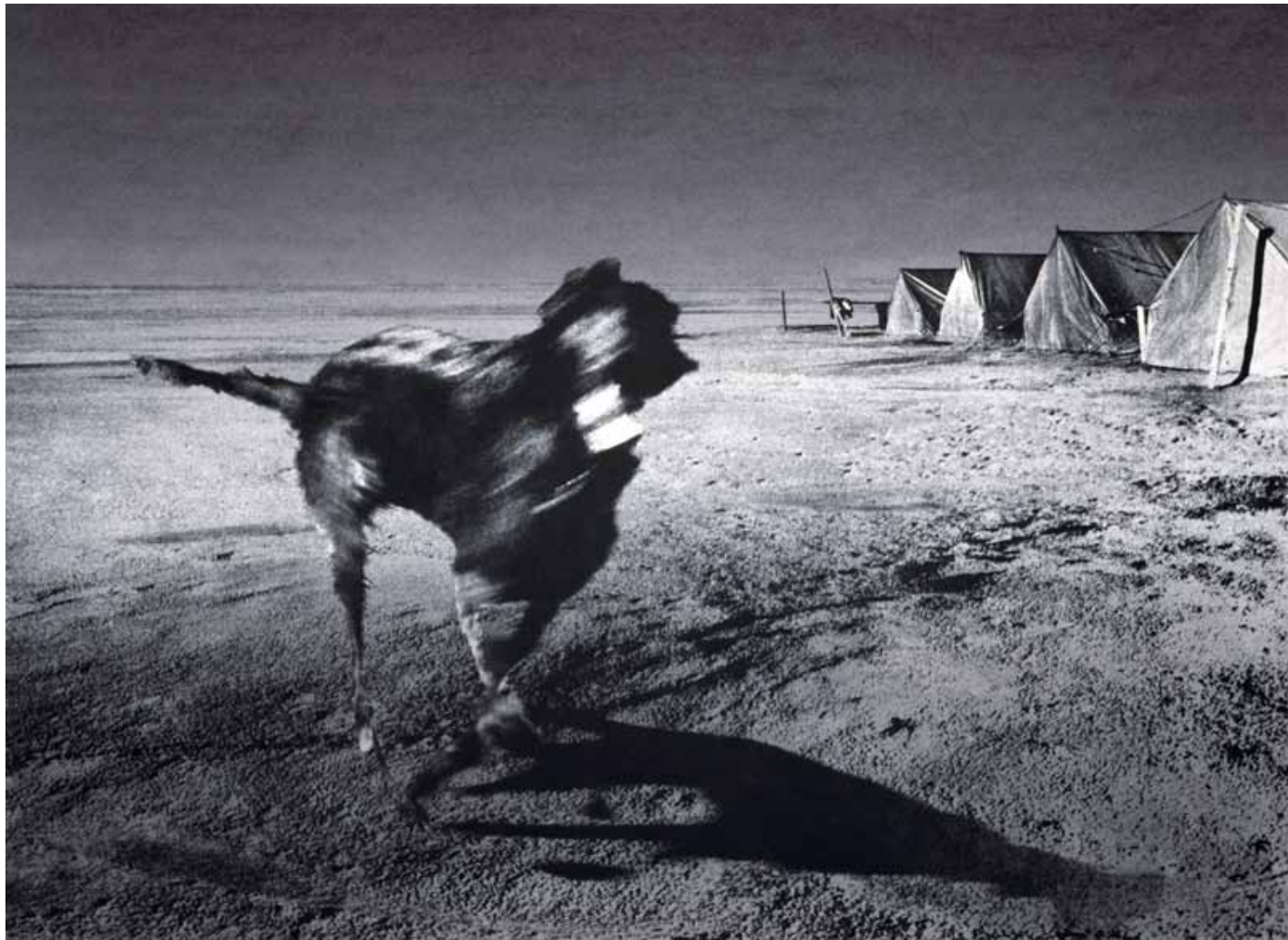
Crossroads, 1986



Crossroads, 1986



Vissershok, 1988



Nadir, no 2, 1987



Nadir, no 3, 1987



Nadir, nos 14, 15, 16, 1988



Vacant plot near Atlantico Sul, Luanda, 2007



The beach at Ilha, Luanda, 2007



Roadside stall on the way to Viana, 2007



On the road to Cuito Cuanavale, 2009



On the road to Cuito Cuanavale, 2010



Unmarked mass grave on the outskirts of Cuito Cuanavale, 2009



On the road to Cuito Cuanavale, 2009



Mined forest outside Menongue on the road to Cuito Cuanavale, 2009



The battlefield at Cuito Cuanavale, 2009



Field with eucalyptus trees at Cassinga, 2009



Mass grave at Cassinga, 2010



Ambush site near Mupa, 2009



Minefield near Mupa, 2009



Deminer near Cuvelai, 2009



Mine pit near Mucundi, 2009



On the road to Jamba, 2010



Woodland near Cassinga, 2009



Mural, FAPLA base, Lobito, 2010



Parade ground, FAPLA base, Lobito, 2010



'Comfort Station', FAPLA base, Lobito, 2010



Mural in an abandoned schoolhouse, Cauvi, 2010



Burning field, Dombe Grande, 2010



Mural, FAPLA base, Chinguar, 2010



Stone map of Angola, Cuban base, Namibe, 2010



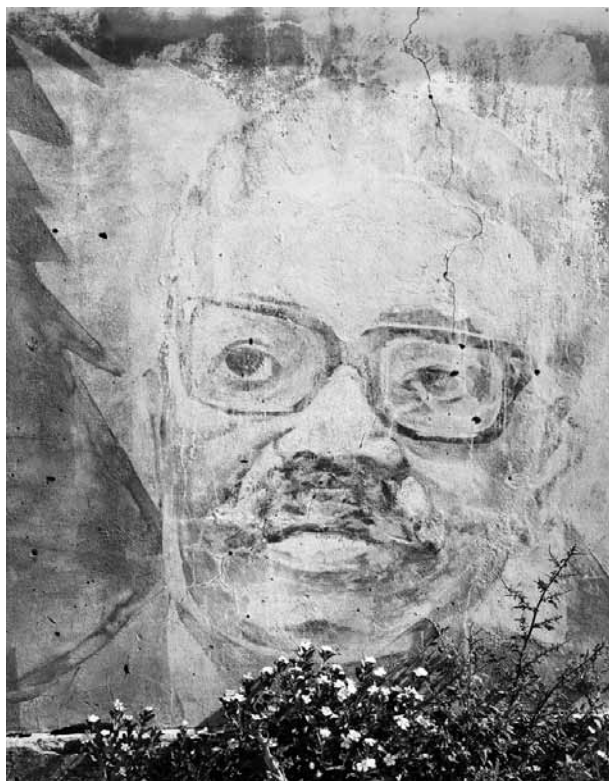
SAM missile bunkers, Cuban base, Namibe, 2010



Turning circle, Cuban base, Namibe, 2010



Remains of the trench system, Cuban base, Namibe, 2010 (triptych)



Mural depicting Fidel Castro, Agostinho Neto and Leonid Brezhnev, painted circa 1975, Viriambundo, 2009



Unidentified memorial in the desert, south of Namibe I, 2009



Unidentified memorial in the desert, south of Namibe II, 2010



Soldiers training in the desert, near Namibe, 2009



My tent at Longa, 2009



dossier de presse

MY LA SCÈNE ARTISTIQUE
DE JOHANNESBURG
JOBURG

à la maison rouge du 20 juin au 22 septembre 2013

vernissage presse mercredi 19 juin de 9h30 à 11h

vernissage mercredi 19 juin de 18h à 21h



Jodi Bieber, *Orlando West Swimming Pool, Orlando West, Soweto, 2009*

contact presse

claudine colin communication

Laure Jardry, Pénélope Ponchelet

28 rue de Sévigné – 75004 Paris

laure@claudinecolin.com, penelope@claudinecolin.com

t : +33 (0)1 42 72 60 01

f : +33 (0)1 42 72 50 23

la maison rouge

fondation antoine de galbert

10 bd de la bastille – 75012 Paris

www.lamaisonrouge.org

info@lamaisonrouge.org

t : +33 (0)1 40 01 08 81

f : +33 (0)1 40 01 08 83

my joburg

My Joburg s'inscrit dans un cycle d'expositions que la maison rouge consacre aux scènes artistiques de villes dites « périphériques », cycle initié à l'été 2011 avec la ville de Winnipeg dans le Manitoba au Canada. L'exposition présentera un panorama de la scène artistique de Johannesburg, en mettant plus particulièrement l'accent sur une jeune génération d'artistes, encore largement méconnue en France.

Johannesburg, couramment appelée par ses habitants Joburg ou Jozi, mégalopole de plus de 6 millions d'habitants avec ses townships environnants dont le plus connu, Soweto, compte à lui seul presque 2,5 millions d'habitants, se révèle comme une « métropole insaisissable », selon l'expression de l'historien et chercheur en sciences sociales, Achille Mbembe.

Une communauté artistique féconde, rassemblant peintres, photographes, vidéastes et plasticiens, s'y est développée. A travers ses travaux, elle décrit une ville en pleine mutation, chargée d'histoire sociale, politique, urbaine. Le projet de cette exposition est de tenter d'en capter certaines facettes. Sans prétention d'exhaustivité, mais avec leur regard neuf et curieux, Paula Aisemberg et Antoine de Galbert, respectivement directrice et président de La maison rouge, ont choisi pour construire l'exposition et le catalogue qui l'accompagnera, de s'entourer des protagonistes et spécialistes de la scène artistique de Johannesburg que sont Nechama Brodie, Dorothee Kreuzfeldt, John Fleetwood, Bettina Malcomess, Molemo Moiloa et Sean O'Toole.

Ville tentaculaire et cosmopolite, Johannesburg est composée d'un maillage de districts hétéroclites : des quartiers « branchés », comme Melville, avec ses multiples restaurants, bars et boutiques « vintage », ou Sandton, à l'aspect de ville nouvelle avec ses résidences gardées et ses gigantesques galeries marchandes construites à la fin des années 1990, aux townships où règne une misère et une criminalité que les vingt années de démocratie de la nouvelle Afrique du Sud ne sont parvenues à endiguer. L'injustice sociale n'a pas disparu avec l'Apartheid supprimée en 1994, et la tâche semble immense dans le domaine politique et social pour que toutes les voix soient entendues.

La ville poursuit pourtant sa mue. Des habitants se sont déplacés transformant certains quartiers, comme le centre ville autrefois déserté, en des zones fréquentées, parfois à la mode (comme Arts on Main); des migrants originaires des pays limitrophes comme le Zimbabwe ou le Mozambique, s'y sont installés.

Cette disparité urbaine et sociale est prise à bras le corps par nombre d'artistes qui, selon leur âge, leurs origines, leurs mediums rendent compte différemment de ces problématiques et essaient de saisir les changements de leur pays et de leur ville.

L'activité artistique connaît aujourd'hui un réel dynamisme soutenu par un réseau actif de structures privées et publiques.

Des galeries d'art diffusent le travail des artistes sud-africains hors du pays et du continent africain, notamment à travers les foires auxquelles elles participent. A Johannesburg, la Joburg Art Fair, foire d'art contemporain organisée chaque année, est devenue un lieu de référence en Afrique pour les spécialistes. Des entreprises privées soutiennent aussi les artistes à travers leurs achats, commandes et attributions de prix. Les institutions publiques ou semi-publiques, comme le musée de la ville, la Johannesburg Art Gallery, ou le nouveau musée WITS de l'université du Witwatersrand, en plein centre de Johannesburg participent du même élan. Des collectifs d'artistes et des associations à but non lucratif, comme le Center for historical re-enactments, la Trinity Session,

la Bag factory, ou encore l'August house, se sont créés en quelques années renforçant le réseau artistique de la ville. Un enseignement d'art et d'histoire de l'art de qualité dispensé dans plusieurs universités de Johannesburg laisse présager la constitution d'un terreau fertile pour l'avenir artistique de la ville.

Aujourd'hui Johannesburg occupe une place essentielle pour l'art contemporain africain.

L'exposition rendra compte de la diversité et de la richesse de sa création artistique en dévoilant les récentes créations de plus de 40 artistes couvrant les trois dernières générations Joburgeoises.

Ce parcours sera complété par des propositions d'acteurs du milieu artistique de Johannesburg. Ont ainsi été invitées Bettina Malcomess, commissaire indépendante, et Dorothee Kreuzfeldt, artiste, qui proposent un accrochage en écho à leur ouvrage *NOT UTOPIA* (à paraître en avril 2013) – une vision très personnelle de leur ville.

Une salle sera aussi confiée au Market Photo Workshop, fameuse école de photographie de Johannesburg fondée en 1989, entre autres, par David Goldblatt et dirigée aujourd'hui par John Fleetwood dans laquelle sera exposée une sélection de travaux réalisés ces dernières années par les photographes qui y ont étudié.

Tout au long de son ouverture, l'exposition sera ponctuée de nombreux événements. Artistes, commissaires et critiques de Johannesburg, ont été invités par La maison rouge à décrire leur ville et commenter l'activité artistique qui s'y déploie. Le programme des manifestations (conférences, concerts, performances) sera consultable sur le site Internet de la fondation : www.lamaisonrouge.org

liste des artistes

Jane Alexander, Wayne Barker, Jodi Bieber, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Willem Boshoff, Candice Breitz, Kudzanai Chiurai, Steven Cohen, Delphine DeBlic, Paul Emmanuel, Kendell Geers, David Goldblatt, Simon Gush, Nicholas Hlobo, Stephen Hobbs, William Kentridge, David Koloane, Dorothee Kreuzfeldt, Donna Kukama, Moshekwa Langa, Lawrence Lemaona, Winston Luthuli, Zen Marie, Gerardt Marx, Titus Matiyane, Sabelo Mlangeni, Nandipha Mntambo, Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi, Brett Murray, Marcus Neustetter, Sam Nhlengethwa, Serge Alain Nitegeka, Jo Ractliffe, Robin Rhode, Tracey Rose, Johannes Segogela, Mary Sibande, Mikhael Subotzky et Patrick Waterhouse Guy Tillim, Andrew Tshabangu, Kemang Wa-Lehurele, Sue Williamson, Billie Zangewa.

Les artistes du Market Photo Workshop :

Akona Kenqu, Mack Magagane, Thabiso Sekgala, Musa Nxumalo, Chris Stamatiou, Matthew Kay, Jerry Gaegane, Lebohang Kganye, Dahlia Maubane, Romaen Tiffin, Madoda Mkhobeni

Scénographies Urbaines

Le projet des Scénographies Urbaines a pour enjeu d'interroger les complexités et les changements des villes contemporaines dans le monde. C'est en observant les pratiques quotidiennes dans un espace donné, en vivant et travaillant dans ce territoire, en construisant des relations avec les communautés locales et en partageant des expériences que se structurent les projets des artistes participant aux résidences. Les Scénographies Urbaines de Johannesburg sont nourries par un cadre conceptuel construit à partir du quartier de Doornfontein au centre-ville et de ses liens avec le reste du monde. Le projet a été co-réalisé entre Paris et Johannesburg par ScU2 (Jean-Christophe Lanquetin & François Duconseille) et the Joubert Park Project (Joseph Gaylard & Dorothee Kreutzfeldt). La résidence de quatre semaines a réuni au Drill Hall et dans ses alentours, de février à mars 2009, 23 artistes visuels, performers et écrivains ainsi qu'une compagnie et une école de théâtre et a débouché sur cinq journées de présentations publiques dans les espaces publics du quartier. Une vidéo, présentée dans l'exposition, rend compte d'une sélection de ces propositions artistiques (Donna Kukama, Zen Marie, Ingrid Mwangi Robert Hutter).

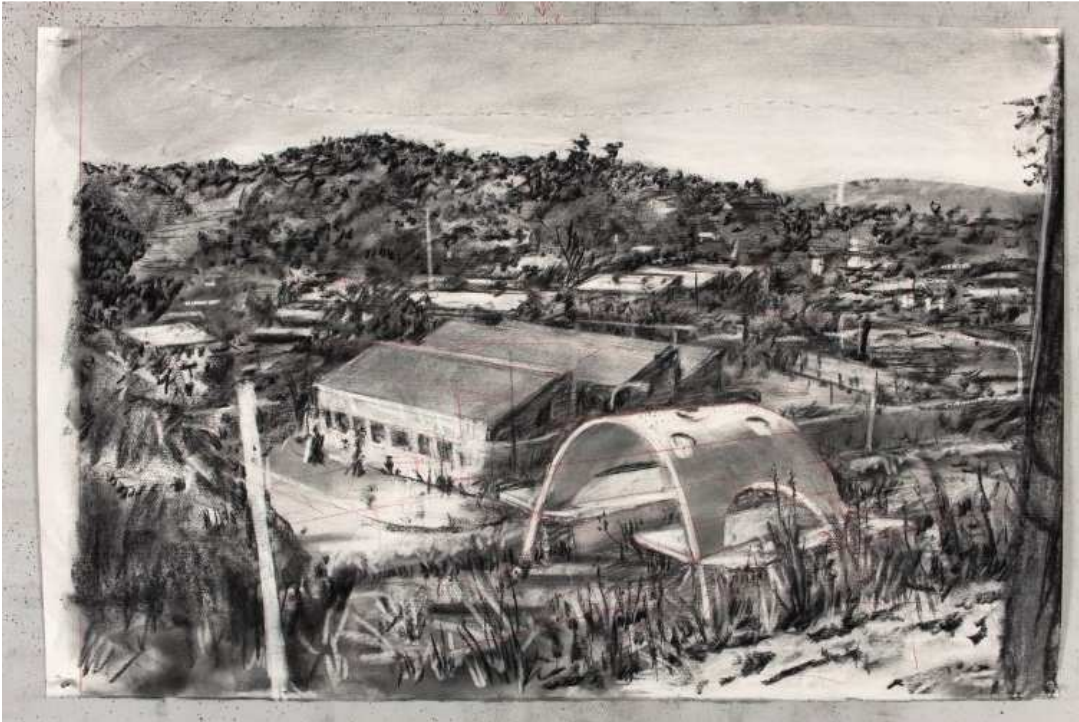
www.eternalnetwork.org/scenographiesurbainescatalogue de l'exposition

Catalogue de l'exposition

A l'occasion de l'exposition, un catalogue sera édité sous la forme d'un guide de voyage, rassemblant une équipe d'experts, historiens de la ville et critiques d'art, qui exploreront la richesse et la spécificité de cette scène.

Auteurs: Nechama Brodie, John Fleetwood, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt et Bettina Malcomess, Molemo Moiloa, Sean O'Toole, Ivan Vladislavic.

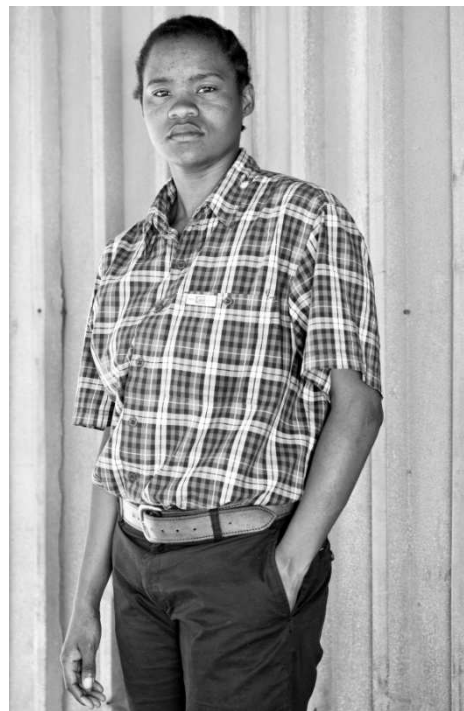
quelques œuvres



William Kentridge, *Drawing for Other Faces (Landscape and building with arched roof)*, 2011



Zanele Muholi, *Asanda Mbali, Nyanga East, Cape Town*, 2011



Zanele Muholi, *Ayanda Msiza, KwaThema Community Hall, Springs, Johannesburg*, 2011.



Kudzanai Chihurai, *Last Supper*, 2011 (videostill)



Simon Gush, *Prayer (16 12 1926)* in collaboration with Lea Lagasse, 2011.



Subotzky & Waterhouse, *Ponte City from Yeoville Ridge*, 2008

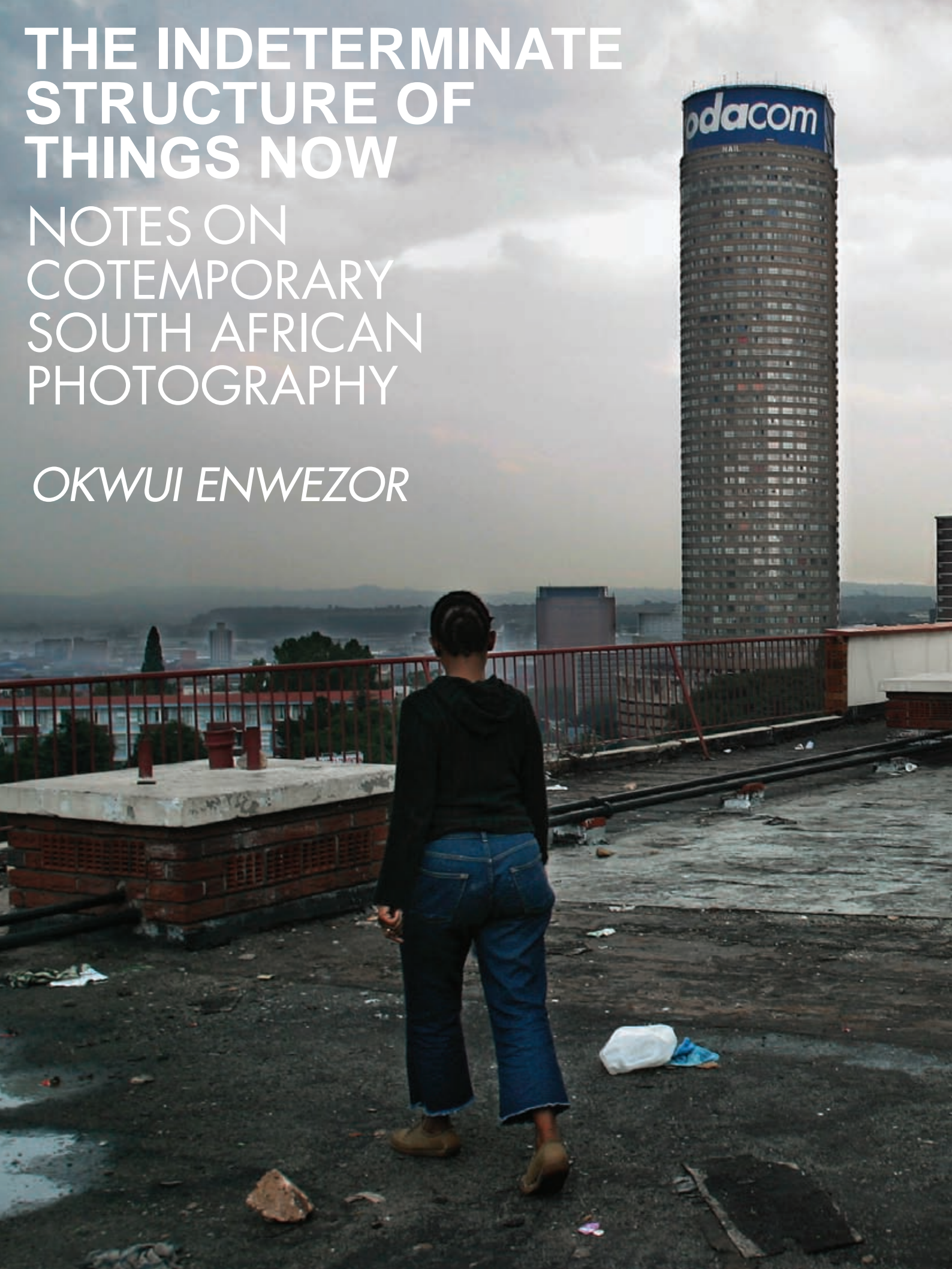


Nandipha Mntambo, *Enchantment*, 2012

THE INDETERMINATE STRUCTURE OF THINGS NOW

NOTES ON
COTEMPORARY
SOUTH AFRICAN
PHOTOGRAPHY

OKWUI ENWEZOR



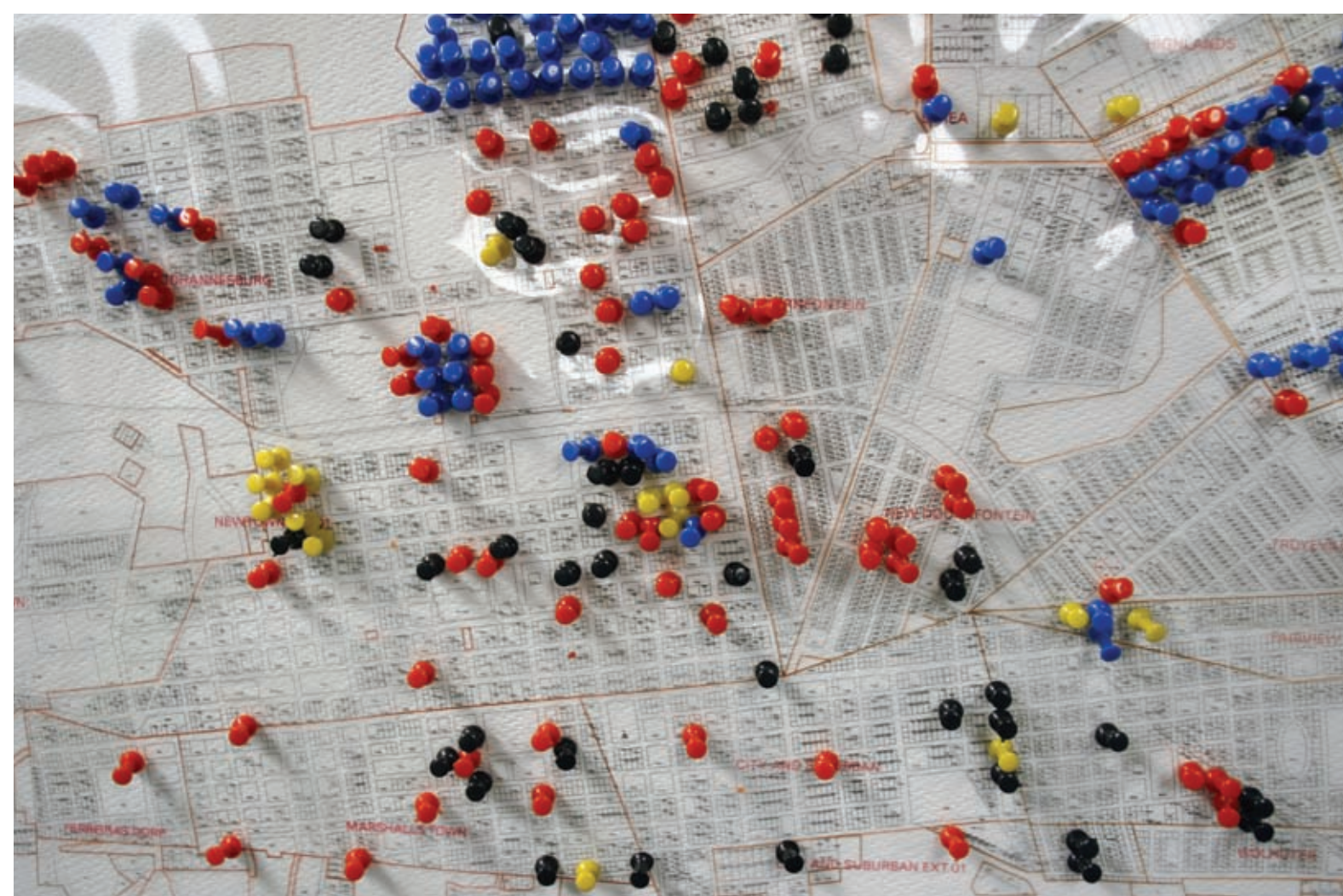
















Guy Tillim Nomasanto's room, Jeanwell House, Nugget Street, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

The Indeterminate Structure of Things Now: Notes on Contemporary South African Photography

OKWUI ENWEZOR

In 1998 David Goldblatt published *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, a series of black-and-white photographs depicting and reflecting the South African landscape, architecture and other formal elements of the built environment. At the time South Africa was barely four years into the formal end of apartheid, making the book less a view into the past, and more a part of reckoning with the shifting shape of the contemporary realities of place. With the sweeping views of mountainous vistas, arid, scraggy, rock-strewn expanses of the Karoo Desert, desolate farmsteads, ponderous and portentous postmodern-style Dutch Reform churches, war memorials and apartheid monuments, walls scrawled with anti-apartheid graffiti, desolate townships, squatter camps, etc, the images in the book inscribed pictures of a society whose stark racial contrasts were not only marked by the brutal politics of segregation, but were etched into the very rock and fabric of the structures of the entire country. It is difficult to reduce the

searching, analytical photographs through which Goldblatt illuminated the dark contours of his country's politics of dispossession to an image, not least because each image is a fragment of a larger aggregate which exposes, in both the subtlety of evocation and directness of observation, the building materials that make up the sum out of which a system was constituted. South Africa looks much different –in the superficial sense of present architectural ethos –than it did during the austere and bleak years of apartheid. Yet the aftermath of apartheid in the 1990s remains bracketed by the social forces of that era. The fledgling post-apartheid transformation that continues to reshape the entire system of more than 300 years of white domination has yet to eradicate the stark distinction between black and white social lives.

In the post-apartheid era new narratives have been deployed to address these distinctions; different accounts and modes of testimony have been employed to explore the legacy

of apartheid. The most dominant of these is the protracted Truth and Reconciliation process. Artists, writers, social historians, civic groups, business lobbies, trades unions, legislators and churches have all in one form or another addressed the nature of the post-apartheid transition and its cultures. But there was something unique about Goldblatt's book at the moment it appeared, which cast a kind of grey light on the half life of the apartheid topography still visible everywhere around the country. By referencing South Africa and its structures, he was more than setting the terms on which a view of the nation's architectural archive could be inventoried, he was suggesting that South Africa as we know it, despite inhabiting one of the most breathtaking natural environments, was the most unnatural of places. He was proposing that the legacy of its structures was purposefully engineered, ideologically conjured into the state of unnatural stasis that had overtaken the built environment through attempts by both colonial and apartheid ideologues to use the architecture and the architectonics of civil engineering to construct a limit world, a boundary constituting the sheer face of the separation between the white and black world, between superior Europe and inferior Africa.

Everything known to the world as South African was defined by the simple Manichaeian scheme of the emblematic division wall, the cut line of irreconcilable apartness, separateness and radical difference. To segregate is to deny recognition. It is also to define and illuminate an existential insecurity that builds from the lack of a desire to recognise the sovereignty of the other. Logically then, the foundational issue which apartheid sought to inscribe and which Goldblatt's photographs expose frame by frame was the European's existential insecurity in the attempt to settle Africa. The Afrikaans usage of the compound Dutch terms *apart* (separate) and *heid* (hood) is a device engineered not merely to keep two neighbourhoods apart, to bifurcate the cultural worlds that link them, but to answer white anxiety and insecurity towards otherness. Examining the fabulist notion of apartness, the idea that the white and black worlds were fundamentally separate spheres of social, spiritual and civilisational existence, is at the core of Goldblatt's search for the inscrutable meaning of his country's social identity.

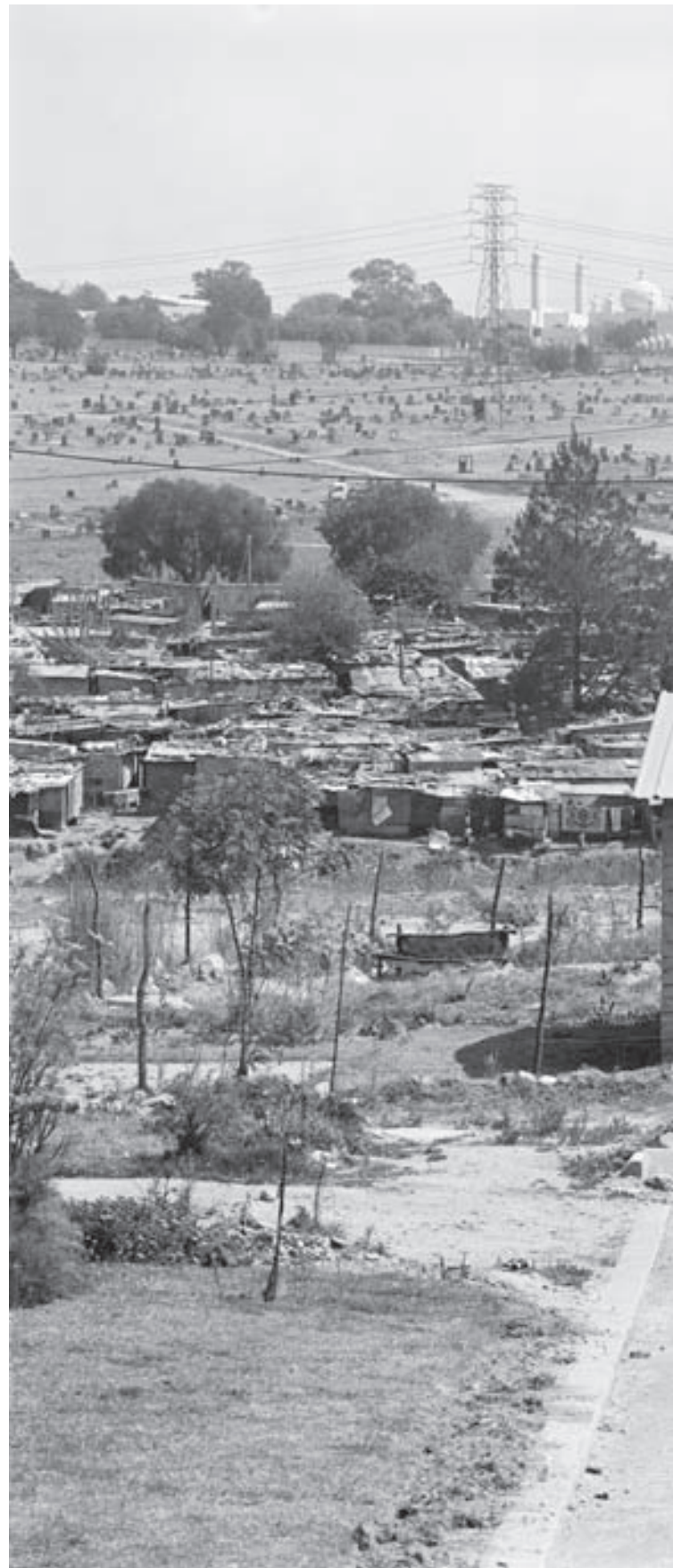
South Africa: The Structure of Things Then draws from a collection of photographic images of the most intense, piercing, analytical examinations of the legacy of colonial and apartheid spatial practices, as they are literally carved into the limed and mortared structures of the nation's architecture. This architecture was as much about unbuilding as it was about building, literally using the law to expropriate and destroy countless neighbourhoods deemed 'black spots' in the mapping scheme of segregationist policies. Set against land and sky are the various structures: towering, edifying, postmodern Dutch Reform churches, Hindu temples, Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, make-shift temporary altars of the African Pentecostal Church of Zion, cemeteries, the *karamat* (tomb) of a Muslim leader exiled to Robben Island in the eighteenth century. Many of these structures sit restlessly on rutted land-

scapes littered with broken memories of past dwellings and settlements. The ugliness of some of the built forms becomes even more clear in the squat, cramped, miserable township architecture; or the informal settlements of the dispossessed cobbled together with nothing more than sheets of plastic, scraps of corrugated metal and rough planks pounded into loamy soil; or the thatched-roof rondavels set in scraggy bushveld that designate a Zulu village or Xhosa homestead. This overview is extended to impressions of purpose-built white suburban housing and cultivated lawns that are unnaturally manicured; a detail of a carved, whitewashed stairway -perhaps the handiwork of slaves in the Cape- that forms part of an exclusive estate; the skylines of the modern city industriously filled with skyscrapers suggesting the utopian realisation of a modernist fantasy. In addition are sheep farms in an unforgiving desert environment where white farmers eek out a living, and desolate roads traversed by bands of semi-nomadic Khoi; houses destroyed under the Group Areas Act and such other places where the brutal practice of segregation was manifested through violent expulsions and seizures of property. Of these, the most exemplary reveal two photographic takes, spanning ten years -1976 and 1986- of a former Islamic butchery in Johannesburg and the razed District Six neighbourhood in Cape Town. But the most pronounced and compelling of the structures is the surfeit of colonial and apartheid monuments: from the impressive towers of the Voortrekker Monument on the outskirts of Pretoria, to gigantic sculptures, busts and other statuary commemorating important Afrikaners and British settlers. One depicts a gridlock of ox-drawn wagons and cannon representing a spot where the Boers defeated a Zulu army in the nineteenth century. The triumphalism of the monuments is both impressive and distortive. The sheer ubiquity of these forms can only begin to suggest the extent to which colonial and apartheid structures sought to invent a wholly new social memory for South Africa. Goldblatt describes the basis of his inquiry:

'I am mainly concerned here with structures of public life. That most of the photographs relating to the lives of black people come from the private rather than the public domain reflects circumstances during the Era of *Baasskap*. It was in black homes that the struggle to retain values and traditions, to survive and transcend dispersion, dispossession, humiliation and brutality was mostly evidenced. The public structures of African polities were destroyed by the conquerors. Public structures in contemporary Black communities were generally put there by the state or by missionaries, or were those of which the state approved - any expressing ideas the state did not approve of were invariably attacked.'¹

Goldblatt's seminal book can be used to frame the larger agenda that has been pervasive in the work of a number of South African artists, such as William Kentridge, Zwelethu Mthethwa, Jo Ractliffe, Santu Mofokeng and Guy Tillim, whose contemporary concerns about South African space and landscape owe a great deal to the legacy of his photographic output. Understanding Goldblatt's current pictures and those

¹ David Goldblatt, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998) p.15





David Goldblatt Miriam Mazibuko watering the garden of her new RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) house, Extension 8, Far East Alexandra Township. It has one room. For lack of space, her four children live with her parents-in-law. Johannesburg. 12 September 2006

of the two artists who I will be discussing later -Mofokeng and Tillim- requires examination of this singularly illuminating collection of images, because it is only through the deliberate scansion of the South African topography that the crop of recent work on landscape and architecture associated with, say, Mthethwa's series on workers in sugarcane plantations in KwaZulu-Natal, Mofokeng's haunting *Chasing Shadows* series, Tillim's nervous *Jo'burg* series and Ractliffe's foreboding *Vlakplaas* as scenes of historical incident can be productively described and analysed. However, though the marks of Goldblatt's influence suffuse the work of these artists and photographers, his photographic vision differs from theirs in one significant way: for the most part, Goldblatt's images tend to veer towards the eventless, a feeling that sometimes may suggest a state of inertia, as if the landscape and things and people in it are suddenly fixed and immobilised. The reason for this is his fundamental avoidance of incident. Like a geographer, the lines of his images are precise. Yet his principal interest in any subject matter is basically humanist not scientific.

The recent turn towards colour, after 40 years of avoiding it in his personal work², may seem to detract from the dry, eventlessness of the early black and whites, but the images are not incompatible, they merely reflect the changed conditions both in the country and in the medium of photography. Until the late 1990s Goldblatt had avoided colour except for magazine assignments because he felt it was too sweet, too mechanical, and lacked the sharpness and modulation of black-and-white images. He also preferred the latter because he produced and processed his own prints in such a way so as to come as close as possible to the prevailing conditions under which a given image was made. The shift to colour occurred as changes in photographic technology entered the South African market. At this time the making of colour photographs allowed him to find a printer with whom he could work, but also permitted him to retain control of the decision-making process on how the colour spectrum fits into each image. This ability to mediate the experience of his messages convinced him that there was something worthwhile to explore through the medium. While the colour work may seem more relaxed, the photographs, like his black and whites, still appear compressed within a clear and controlled intellectual logic. They may have a certain warmth and less austerity, but they remain emotionally fugitive.

There is a quality of melancholy that can be described as an aura of silence that pervades Goldblatt's highly reflexive images. The titles of the pictures continue his methodology, tending to incorporate lengthy captions that not only set explanatory contexts for each image, but also define the eerie sense of emotional devastation deeply imbricated in the prevailing conditions of each site. In the group of images shown here, the way colour is literally drained from them serves as a kind of surrogate for some of the crises that mark the settings. These are images of bleak moments, reflecting times of mourning, loss, the Aids pandemic, the deferment of the promise of the post-apartheid sunshine. Here, instead, the sunshine that falls

on the landscape seems to illuminate scenes of catastrophe. One such scene can be found in the diagonal composition of a grouping of brownish boulders arranged against a bare rock peak and clear blue sky, with a memorial outlined in a white drawn shape on the largest of them. The photograph, *BHJ in the time of AIDS, Richtersveld National Park, Northern Cape. 25 December 2003*, is Goldblatt's method of addressing the state of post-apartheid landscape not as an Edenic endless open space, but as spaces blighted by the presence of human suffering. The image of a blooming green field littered with the remains of pit toilets and a cluster of children playing beneath a canopyless tree shows us the merging of apartheid and post-apartheid landscapes. The lengthy caption provides the contrast between the scene and the events that preceded it: *Remains of long-drop lavatories built for the 'closer settlement camp' of Frankfort, Eastern Cape. The 5,000 members of the black farming community of Mgwali were to have been forcibly moved and resettled here after their land was declared a 'black spot' by the apartheid government in 1983. However, the people of Mgwali resisted strongly and in 1986 the removal scheme was dropped. The lavatories were gradually stripped of their usable building materials by people in the area and all that is left now are concrete bases over some 1,500 anatomically shaped holes in the veld. 22 February 2006.*

Entrance to Lategan's Truck Inn, Laingsburg, Western Cape. 14 November 2004 or the pitted site shown in Remains of households in a children's game called onopopi, and the shells of incomplete houses in a housing scheme that stalled, Kwezinaledi, Lady Grey, Eastern Cape. 5 August 2006 focus our attention on the starkness of contemporary spatial practices. The other landscape images carry the same charge, a feeling of harshness that resolutely avoids the sentimental. These are views of unforgiving judgment, images of doubt and circumspection. The later photographs reveal the extent to which Goldblatt has assumed a rather surprising, intimate mode of working rather than the detachment of his previous analytical approach. They are neither ambiguous nor are their social reflections ambivalent. But at the same time traces of his earlier approach in *The Structures of Things Then* remain: the images do not represent statements of the given -an approach that most describes the documentary- rather in the counter-documentary mode which Goldblatt favours, his photographs are more emblematic of states of things, a process of accretion that builds towards a more encompassing meaning than the reduction of a picture into an autonomous iconic image.

In reflecting on these new colour images, I am still intrigued by why Goldblatt subtitled his book *The Structure of Things Then*, given his predilection towards keeping his photographic options open. Was the title a way to mark a closure, which may betray an aspect of the euphoria that swept through the country after the official end of the brutal institutions of apartheid? This way of placing in remand, in the past tense (*The Structure of Things Then*), seems to me antithetical to the kind of frank, naked scepticism that otherwise ruled

² This is an important distinction because Goldblatt did make photographs in color that were generally for commissioned work or the occasional magazine assignment. He stringently distinguishes between those kind of work and the ones that he makes based on his own personal interest.

much of his dry, direct and luminous colour photographs. He is usually given in his photographs to a kind of ascetic but modulated formal description, a mode of working that produces images that tend to seem detached and isolated. Despite the appearance of detachment, he is anything but distanced from his subjects, as these new works clearly show. These photographs have an emotional clarity, and a formidable sense of intellectual forethought, different from the complicated moral narrative that gave J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* - a novel set in the tension between farm and city, the country and the urban - its creepy, enervating sense of brutal realism.

Goldblatt is notorious for studying a subject for years before making up his mind on whether it merits photographic scrutiny. The photographs are never ahistorical. The consistent quality of all his work is its historicity. In every image, he begins with a single challenge: how does one produce an image that allows both photographer and viewer to think historically about a given subject? Despite the fatigue of post-apartheid chronicles, Goldblatt's photographic choices are never overarching, generalising, or moralising. He pinpoints and isolates inchoate moments, dissociating the critical gaze from the dependency on the apartheid past. While his photographic vision always apprehends a constantly shifting, evolving landscape, it nevertheless seeks to remind the viewer that even when constructed in the present tense, that landscape has memory. *Shacks and the Helen Joseph Women's Hostel, which was built during apartheid to house female workers, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg. 11 September 2006* is one such image in which the new situation refers back to an earlier situation depicted in *The Structure of Things Then* of the same hostel without the surrounding shacks. The mode of ceaseless return is not a photographic habit, but instead a method of comparative analysis. Thus, he writes that his work is the apprehension of the South African topography as a kind of magma 'congealed in the particulars of innumerable structures and not a few ruins... our land is evidence of much of this. Like geological accretions in the cooling crust of the earth, they tell of the long era out of which we have come.'³ This current work poses similar challenges, and thus demands always fresh perspectives in reckoning with the South African environment as an entirely unique specimen of the historical failure of moral imagination.

Ecology of fear

A city such as Johannesburg exemplifies the brutal asymmetry of the social condition of urban architecture. Its urban environment is marked by sharp contrasts: in the outlying northern suburbs, for example, pleasure palaces are hidden from view by high, electrified fences, a device employed less for privacy than for security. Johannesburg is a microcosm of South Africa as a fortress society. Though apartheid is officially over, social segregation is just as deeply resilient. This is revealed in Johannesburg as a city framed by palpable fear of violence. In the northern suburbs, some streets feel like the Green Zone in Baghdad, with checkpoints ringing neighbourhoods and public roads while private armies and uniformed guards are posted

everywhere. In Johannesburg, the universal issue that bedevils everyday life centres around issues of safety and security. This feeling of insecurity has spurred its own lexicon of architectural and spatial distortions that have become naturalised within the iconography and structures of urban design, transforming the spatial context of the city into one under siege, what Mike Davis describes as an ecology of fear with regards to Los Angeles.

The obverse of this sense of fear, at a superficial glance, obtains in the image of the bustling downtown area which frames the old business district and the surrounding neighbourhood of modernist high rises between Braamfontein and Joubert Park. If the northern suburbs display in their architecture a fortress sensibility, downtown Johannesburg exhibits all the evidence of precariousness and vulnerability. The overcrowded streets are filled with hawkers and hucksters, with petty criminals and violent gangs, and choked with traffic, with minibuses and taxis. Hardly any whites can be found downtown anymore, except those in transit, barricaded in cars for fear of carjacking. The quality of domestic living conditions appears to have lapsed into an almost apocalyptic zone of urgency and desperation. Entire families often share a one-bedroom apartment, sometimes subdivided further to accommodate tenants. There is hardly any sense of privacy in these overcrowded buildings. Peopled by poor migrants from the rural areas and economic refugees from surrounding countries such as Mozambique, Congo and Zimbabwe, downtown Johannesburg is marked by its large deficits of social and economic amenities. In the heyday of apartheid, this part of the city was a bustling cosmopolitan hub of activities for white inhabitants. However, since the end of apartheid, after all the juridical constraints of segregation were outlawed, the area was marked by rapid decline in the early 1990s, and by the end of the decade whites had moved out, while poor black migrants without housing moved in. In the ensuing exodus, services normally found in these neighbourhoods began disappearing, as landlords abdicated their responsibility to tenants. The spiral of neglect and apathy accelerated into decay. Riddled with crime, and with an uncontrollable influx of new residents seeking work and shelter, the fine modernist post-war apartment architecture has all been overtaken by both civic neglect and absence of economic investment. This canyon of high rises is the epicentre and subject of Guy Tillim's mesmerising *Jo'Burg* photographs. The series takes the approach of a photographer constantly on the move, darting between buildings and apartment complexes, between degraded domestic spaces that reveal the depths of privation: makeshift barbershops and illicit bars where one wall's surface is papered over with a carpet of tabloid newspaper headlines declaiming on the city as the very landscape of hell and infamy.

In the grid of images brought together here, colour photographs full of chiaroscuro effects, the photographer seems to revel, in almost lurid delight, in recording the decrepitude and the primitive conditions of the miserable high-rise towers, many of them with blown out windows, burned out rooms, habita-

³ TK



David Goldblatt Shacks and the Helen Joseph Women's Hostel, which was built during apartheid to house black female workers, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg. 11 September 2006

tions filled with still-life compositions of garbage, mildewed walls, shattered crockery, or displaying apartments cordoned off with metal gates from which frightened tenants peer out as if from a prison cell. Shots of spaces between buildings either reveal vertiginous views as the camera descends down alleyways damp with putrefaction, or otherwise iconic shots of skyscrapers photographed from below in haunting, looming fashion. Even the traces of small-scale economic activity – a barbershop, a shebeen, for example – do not alleviate the sense of lurking danger, the misery one feels when glancing down long, deserted corridors, or watching young men sleeping on the roof of a building. The contrast is striking as the camera turns from details of dingy apartments to panoramic views of the city looking towards a skyline that gives an artificial impression of modern architecture. What the images actually show in intimate clarity is merely the mutation of the high rises into a planet of slums in the sky, a veritable architecture of entrapment and dystopia. However, what is generally lacking are views of what is on the ground, outside the apartments, the street, the very possibility that there is air somewhere beyond the frame.

In viewing many of these images taken by Tillim over the

course of a six-month sojourn in an apartment of one of the towers, one is tempted to reflect on the ethical nature of this type of documentary practice such as has been the hallmark of his roving photographic style over the past decade. Is it possible to read these images as a measure of Tillim's immersive style, or merely as a product manifesting the sensationalistic frisson inherent in living dangerously, but only temporarily, in situations where the odds of social visibility are largely elusive for the inhabitants? Do these images exploit the subjects? Is the photographer taking ethnographic liberties with the state of the communities embedded in this context? Is the photographer, through his cosmopolitan access, exploiting the situation? In asking these questions, it is worth observing that one striking thing about even some of the portraits is that they tell us precious little about the inner lives of the individuals; instead, many come across as merely specimens in a larger social landscape. Questions such as these tend to be asked of images that make us uncomfortable, images that do not depict their subjects in *faux* heroic style, or employ manufactured empathy to paper over the photographer's ambivalence. Tillim's images do not appear to me to be motivated by attempts at exploitation, nor does he employ his access to stigmatise his

subjects. This group of works falls into the tradition of the long arc of photographic inquiry detailed in Goldblatt's book. The difference between them is that Tillim's takes a more subjective, microcosmic view of things, while Goldblatt's is fundamentally macroscopic. In this sense, it is necessary to examine the stated motivation of Tillim's project as part of an unfolding narrative and documentary mode being used by South African photographers and artists to capture the current moment of urban transition.

Tillim in this project is not only interested in documenting the fascinating politics between tenants and landlords and their surrogates, he is concerned with the hidden mechanism behind the relationship between the city council and developers, and the looming future battle on the fate of the city. *Jo'burg* is therefore a study both of the aftermath of apartheid and the impending reversal of the post-apartheid hopes of displaced communities existing in the shadow of social amnesia. The outcome of the future arrangements between the tenants, developers, landlords and the city council does not favour those who have both resisted eviction and persevered to maintain a semblance of normalcy in these buildings. What Tillim shows us is literally the forces assembled together to remake the face of this African metropolis. Will it be a city that reverts back to old exclusions of the past as a 'whites only' enclave of luxury social amenities, or will the future Jo'burg finally fulfil its unrealised cosmopolitan appeal as a city of multicultural mixture? As Tillim writes in a short introduction to the project:

'White residents fled Johannesburg's inner-city in the 1990s. The removal of the Group Areas Act foreshadowed a flow into the city of black residents and owners of small businesses seeking opportunities and better lives. Former denizens looked back in self-righteous justification at a city that was given over to plunder and mayhem. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy, backed up by eyewitness reports and statistics. Everyone had their horror stories... In between the needs of city council and the aspirations of developers anticipating the bloom of an African city lies the fate of Jo'burg residents. The outcome will decide whether or not Johannesburg becomes, again, a city of exclusion.'⁴

Geographer of the margins

Santu Mofokeng began in the 1970s as a street photographer working on the sidewalks and corners of apartheid South Africa, specifically in the crowded neighbourhoods of black townships. His early images generated a mode of working that extended beyond the everyday clichés of deprivation and poverty commonly found in pictures of black South Africans by photojournalists. He wished to explore the normality of the everyday, because there were other stories and images on the streets of the townships which he believed worth capturing. Mofokeng was by no means denying the impossible situation of township existence. Rather, he was concerned with how to represent the humanity of the brutalised black community. However, to work as a street photographer under apartheid was to traverse the interstices and crevices of South Africa's

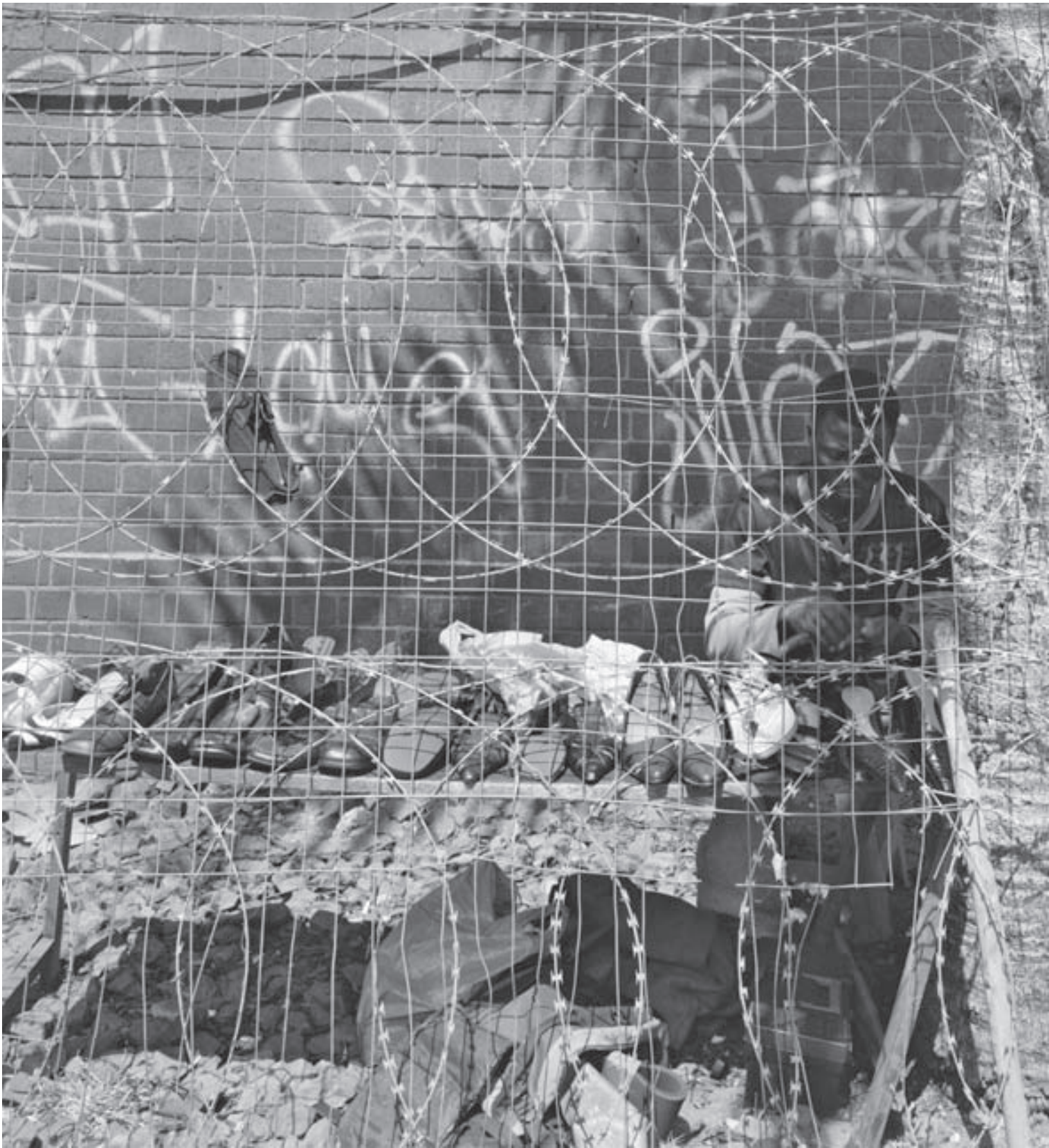
complicated moral geography, one whose lethality for black subjects all but contested the notion of the street as public space. Pass laws which prohibited travel by blacks beyond certain parts of the city and country were a *de jure* document that confined millions of subjects to spaces of literal incarceration, thus mitigating the extent of the black street photographer's geographic coverage. In the mid-1960s, the black South African photographer Ernest Cole, in order to circumvent the draconian pass laws, invented a wholly new social and racial identity by changing his name and having himself racially reclassified as 'coloured'. This gave him minimal rights and freedom of movement normally denied blacks, enabling him to work on the streets and sidewalks of downtown Johannesburg without being harassed or expelled. The result of Cole's legal subterfuge became the celebrated book *House of Bondage*, a publication containing images that were literally located on the streets of the apartheid city.

The drastic measure taken by Cole is important to recall, not least because it illuminates the obstacles that lay in the path of a young street photographer such as Mofokeng, working under the exclusionary pass laws of apartheid. The same laws that limited the movements of blacks and blocked access to social amenities available only to whites, also restricted the range of what the street photographer could hope to document beyond the legal boundaries of his confinement. The street photographer under apartheid was thus a geographer of the margins, of the in-between and the fugitive. Against the edicts of the apartheid state, two important projects by Mofokeng, *Train Church* in 1986 and *Chasing Shadows* in the mid-1990s, underscore the critical stakes involved in making radical photographic work under the shadows of exile and confinement. Train churches were a phenomenon that developed at the height of the state of emergency imposed throughout South Africa in the 1980s. Millions of black workers travelled long distances between home and places of employment, and churches on the trains were both a response to constant harassment by the authorities and a way of occupying a zone impossible to police. As Bronwyn Law-Viljoen noted, the liminal spaces of the commuter churches 'may also be seen as an attempt to appropriate the in-between of the journey to and from work, to recast the repetitive hardship of commuting'⁵, and thus transform these itinerant moments into powerful examples of sovereignty. Mofokeng's *Train Church* is analogous to Goldblatt's *The Transported of Kwa Ndebele*, a photographic project focused on the arduous commuting culture of black workers.

The powerful restraint of Mofokeng's approach to image-making, his refusal to photograph the sensational events of turmoil under the state of emergency, even after joining the photographic collective Afrapix, reveals both a political and photographic choice. *Chasing Shadows* is the most insistently non-documentary of his projects. Because he was literally chasing shadows -presences that are hard to capture photographically, but are seen to be revealed in the spirit of the subjects- the pursuit of the real is always thwarted by the acknowl-

⁴ Guy Tillim, *Jo'burg* (Trézélan: Filigranes Éditions and Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2005) unpaginated.

⁵ Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, "Sacred and Profane Ground: The Work of Santu Mofokeng" *Artthrob*, www.artthrob.co.za, June 2004



David Goldblatt Shoemaker on Raleigh Street, Yeoviulle, Johannesburg. 14 September 2006



edgment that the image is never fixed, that the subject is in a state of perpetual transformation. Thus, the fugitive elements are constantly the signature elements of his pictorial analysis, an indirect, non-invasive way of signalling important markers on the landscape, streets and interiors of black South African subjectivity against the prohibitions of citizenship and belonging placed on Africans during the heyday of apartheid.

The shift from apartheid to post-apartheid culture requires negotiating anew spaces of interaction between the socially dispossessed and the politically empowered. Post-apartheid transition, as is clear in Goldblatt and Tillim's works, continues to be bedevilled by all sorts of problems -healthcare, crime, inequality, joblessness, poverty, homelessness- to which few answers have been adequate. In his recent series on billboards, Mofokeng takes a wry, ironic look at the media emblems -mostly images of billboard advertisements- that almost obviate the difficult trajectory of transition. In these photographs the line between euphoric consumerism and the dark shadow of the pestilence of Aids stalking the depths of black townships are juxtaposed, almost as if asking viewers to weigh the trade-off between the two zones. Mofokeng sees the billboards as sites of power and coercion, as a medium of communication between the state and black subjects. The billboard in his view cannot be dissociated from the township landscape as a tool of coercive indoctrination, a space both for the manufacture of desire and announcing the threatening presence of the law. In one image, *Democracy is forever* (2003), the billboard on the right towers over a street vendor pushing a cart of goods past the looming message of a glittering diamond proclaiming 'Democracy is Forever'. The correlation between democracy and flashy diamonds is hardly clear, but as with the billboard on the left displaying Coca-Cola's message that the beverage makes a meal real, the idea is to equate consumerism with freedom. However, Mofokeng tends to photograph the township denizens traversing the spaces where the billboards are fixed at intersections and on highways, from which they can be easily seen through commuter bus windows, in the shadow, as phantoms making only a fleeting appearance on the landscape before retiring back into anonymity.

The figures display their featurelessness, defined only by their hulking outline against the well-lit backdrop of the billboards. Some of the images are shot at night on high-speed film from commuter minivans travelling between the city and townships. They capture the traces of other speeding cars against the dense, black background of the darkness that contrasts the bright orbs of street lights that illuminate the roads. The billboards carry various messages: from caution against unsafe sex, to the beckoning enticement of Robben Island as a tourist destination, to mobile phones as synonymous with freedom. To Mofokeng, the newly acquired black power may remain the political base for the foreseeable future, but just as obvious is what accompanies the prosperity of the post-apartheid nation: the growth of black poverty and dispossession sitting cheek by jowl with spectacular forms

of wealth and primitive accumulation. This observation is detailed in the way he has photographed the scenes, where the black figure is always receding, disappearing from view, cast into the deepest darkest shadows, almost into invisibility. The metaphor of invisibility lends a political charge to these images, confronting us not with products of desire, democracy and freedom, but with spectres that haunt the difficult journey between apartheid and post-apartheid cultures.

Conclusion

In preparation for this essay I wanted to reassess the foundational claims to locality and place in the work of Goldblatt, Mofokeng and Tillim through the specific discourse displayed by these two generations of South African photographers, whose common themes around the built environment and spatial practices overlap in telling ways. Yet they depart from each other in many others. If I began with what Goldblatt sought to inscribe in his book as marking the end of the 1990s in South Africa, we may need to ask the question of what he might have meant when he subtitled his book *The Structures of Things Then*. Does he mean that these structures belong only to the past, and can be read only as part of the twilight of a terrible inheritance? Why *then*? I can't imagine that what he meant by that adverb was about putting the past in the past. Nor do I think he was framing the object of his photographic practice in purely historical terms, in which the architecture, monuments and other vestiges of the built environment are bracketed outside the purview of the contemporary moral imagination. Tillim and Mofokeng's works open up new avenues for reconsidering the historical past and the contemporary present, not only in how the structures of the past remain resilient markers of identity in the politics of dwelling in the present, but how the residues of the past remain visibly inscribed in spatial practices.

Given the history of strife in South Africa, a great deal of the nation's art traffics in the examination of the pathos surrounding the immediate historical experience. Some critics would even claim that the artists wallow in it. Coetzee's *Disgrace* for some was a form of antidote to that kind of 'craven' attitude. The novel was literally designed as a narrative whose ethical dimension was premised on stalking the South African landscape, with the patchy Western Cape farm as the brutal terrain on which its meaning is worked out. For some, Coetzee's unforgiving, almost sadistic novel poured cold water on any idea that post-apartheid culture has produced a normal society. His treatment of the land after apartheid is surmounted by a lethal revanchism. It describes a scenario that could be interpreted as the end of the holiday surrounding Mandela's *Rainbow Nation*. This is the direction Mofokeng's billboard imagery points us towards. And the novel, likewise, is a view into how deep-seated social pathologies give rise to everyday brutality and depravity. Here, the moral environment is darkened by the coarse instincts of the victim's revenge and the settler's shameless attempt at survival. That this tale plays out between the city and farm is no accident, as is the

case between black townships and white suburbia, the two modes being the opposite of each other in South Africa's politics of settlement, dwelling and dispossession. Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's sense of this shift are less graphic than, say, Coetzee's and Tillim's. They are all social analysers, however. Unlike Coetzee, Goldblatt, Tillim and Mofokeng do not occupy a judgment seat when they peer into the landscape. Rather like archaeologists, they excavate the sedimented terrains of the South African landscape from urban to rural, between the pictorial and the documentary, to reveal the deeply embedded structures lying beneath, all the more to make us aware that their analyses are part of an inquiry into the moral imagination of space and its related ideological dependencies. It is in this sense that the formidable yet radical simplicity and directness of the images speaks.

Regarding the structure of things now, post-apartheid South Africa is today no less a contradiction than apartheid South Africa was then. Contemporary South Africa is ringed by congeries of prosperity and calamity. Spectacular economic growth has spurred monstrosities such as shown in the gaudy architecture in Goldblatt's *On Fifth Avenue, Sandton, Johannesburg. 26 December 2006*, and in the shadow of this new architecture of prosperity lies *On Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg. 10 December 2003*, a dusty patch of territory that bears no semblance to the opulence being celebrated on Fifth Avenue. Though a successful economy has enriched some, the workforce supporting the economy is in crisis, as is shown in the picture of a woman standing in front of her one-room government development housing against the backdrop of a sprawling cemetery. Goldblatt in his inimitable descriptive style uses the lengthy caption to distil the scene: *Miriam Mazibuko watering the garden of her new RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) house, Extension 8, Far East Alexandra Township. It has one room. For lack of space, her four children live with her parents-in-law. Johannesburg. 12 September 2006*. Against this backdrop, the sharp, steely grey tonalities of Mofokeng's black-and-white prints of highways lit up with flashy pronouncements have given way to a saturated, dusky series of digital colour prints by Tillim that reveal the desperate status of urban citizens and the looming struggle for a place in the democratic city that is just beyond the horizon. These changes and their various aporias expose the current state of spatial forms as predicated on the indeterminate structure of things now.

Photographs:

pp. 80-81: Guy Tillim **Al's Tower, a block of flats on Harrow Road, Berea, overlooking the Ponte building**, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

pp. 82-83: Guy Tillim **View of Hillbrow looking north from the roof of the Mariston Hotel**, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

pp. 84-85: Guy Tillim, **Members of Wozani Security, known as the Red Ants, enter the Chelsea Hotel in Hillbrow during a clean-up operation**, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

p. 86 top: Guy Tillim **A map of central Johannesburg at the Inner City Regeneration Project office, City Council, Loveday Street**, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

p. 86 bottom: Guy Tillim **Yonela Kwaza, Grafton Road, Yeoville**", archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

p. 87 top: Guy Tillim **Tayob Towers, Pritchard Street, Tayob Towers, Pritchard Street**", archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

p. 87 bottom: Guy Tillim **Ntokozi (right) and his brother Vusi Tshabalala at Ntokozi's place, Milton Court, Pritchard Street**, archival pigment inks on 300g coated cotton paper, 2005

All Guy Tillim images (c) and courtesy of Michael Stevenson Gallery, South Africa

All David Goldblatt images courtesy of Haunch of Venison Gallery, London

Haunch of Venison-London gallery will be presenting the group exhibition "Home Lands - Land Marks" (29 May -5 July 2008), a group show of contemporary South African artists, curated by renowned art historian Tamar Garb. Artists included in the exhibition are David Goldblatt (photographs), William Kentridge (film and drawings), Vivienne Koorland (paintings), Berni Searle (film) and Guy Tillim. For contact details, please check the 'Contacts' section, p. 148.

Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography

Victoria & Albert Museum, Londres, 12 avril au 17 juillet 2011, www.vam.ac.uk

Vidéos: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/figures-fictions/videos/index.html>

This exhibition presents the vibrant and sophisticated photographic culture that has emerged in post-apartheid South Africa. It features works by some of the most exciting and inventive photographers living and working in South Africa today. The photographs on display respond to the country's powerful rethinking of issues of identity across race, gender, class and politics.

The exhibition features 17 photographers who question what it is to be human at this time in South Africa with politically-engaged images arising from a challenging period in the country's history. The photographs depict people within their individual, family and community lives, practicing religious customs, observing social rituals, wearing street fashion or existing on the fringes of society.

Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography highlights the work of 17 South African photographers, all of whom live and work in the country and whose images were made between 2000 and 2010. Each photographer is represented by one or more projects that are linked by the depiction of people and a self-conscious engagement with South Africa's political and photographic past.

Photographs showing figures raise pertinent issues of identity: how the gaze of the camera, photographer and viewer is returned by the subject, and the balance of power which that interaction implies. The 'figure' also implies not only the human figure but also the metaphorically figurative. Photographs can be like a 'figure' of speech, composed of familiar words but containing an ambiguity between literal and figurative interpretation.

As the Fictions part of this exhibition's title suggests, it points not just to the geographical and social specificity of these photographs but also to the enigmatic relationship with the 'real' world that they seem to depict. A photograph is always a translation, distillation or filter of reality seen from the physical and conceptual standpoint of the person creating the image - as well as that of the viewer.

Many of the works shown in the exhibition are extracts from extended essayistic sequences, but can nevertheless be understood as fragments containing the essence of the whole. Many of the photographers' series address, among other concerns: the threshold between documentary photography and fine art practice; the balance of the specific and the universal and the dialogue between the local and the global.

The excitement and urgency surrounding photography in South Africa today is partly explained by its local context: embedded in colonial history, ethnography, anthropology, journalism and political activism, the best photography emerging from the country has absorbed and grapples with its weighty history, questioning, manipulating and revivifying its visual codes and blending them with contemporary concerns. Post-Apartheid, complex and fundamental issues - race, society, gender, identity - remain very much on the surface. This is reflected by image makers who harness the resulting scenes as a form of creative tension within their personal vision. Here, distinctive photographic voices have emerged: local in character and subject matter, but of wider international interest because of their combined intensity.

The Figures & Fictions exhibition and related publication is a project conceived by Tamar Garb, Professor of Art History at University College London in collaboration with V&A Senior Curator of Photographs, Martin Barnes.

Curator's Biographies

Tamar Garb

Durning Lawrence Professor in the History of Art at University College London (UCL). She graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town with a BA (Art) in 1978. In 1980 she was awarded an MA in Art Education from the Institute of Education, University of London and in 1982 graduated with a MA in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art, was appointed as Lecturer (1988), and completed her PhD there 1991. She was appointed Lecturer at UCL in 1989 and was promoted to reader in 1995 and professor in 2001. Her research interests have focused on questions of gender and sexuality, the woman artist and the body, as well as race and representation, and she has published extensively in these fields. In 2008 she curated an exhibition on landscape and language in South African Art, Land Marks/Home Lands; Contemporary Art from South Africa at Haunch of Venison Gallery, London and was recently external consultant for Tate's Gauguin exhibition (2010-11).

Watch a video of Tamar Garb as she reflects on her Cape Town upbringing and the forthcoming show

Martin Barnes

Senior Curator of Photographs at the Victoria and Albert Museum, (V&A) London which he joined in 1995. Previously, he worked for the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool and studied at the University of Leicester and the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. He has curated numerous exhibitions at the V&A, including, *Twilight: Photography in the Magic Hour* (2006); *Something That I'll Never Really See: Contemporary Photography from the V&A* (2008 and touring) and *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less*

Photographers

Jodi Bieber, born 1966

Bieber, a Johannesburg-based photographer, began her career as a photojournalist and remains engaged with the documentary tradition. *Real Beauty* relates to the culture of advertising and Western ideals of female body shape, increasingly influential in South Africa. Rejecting the cult of perfection and the use of Photoshop to produce it, Bieber advertised for volunteer female sitters with whom to collaborate.

Dressed in their underwear and photographed in their own homes, in the poses of their choice, each subject was invited to project her own personality and fantasy into the photographs. The results reveal a complex relationship between self-image and body identity and their relationship to fashion, photography and the media.

' "Real Beauty" has been inspired by a number of events, the primary being my own life. My forties have brought a feeling of more comfort within my own skin than when I was younger even though my body shape has shifted. This project is an extension of a Dove billboard advertising campaign in London showing ordinary women in their underwear advocating and speaking up for Real Beauty. Advertising campaigns don't usually draw my attention, but this one did. A model sitting next to me on the way from London to Paris emphasised the extent to which Photoshop is used to enhance beauty. She was not in the least bit concerned about the rings under her eyes as these imperfections would easily be erased after her photographic shoot. A BBC radio documentary spoke about an increase in the cases of black anorexic women in South Africa, as the full figured body which was once more favourable is no longer as desirable as Western body shapes. I felt a strong need to create a body of work that goes against what the media has depicted as beautiful. Even within a complex society such as South Africa, across all communities, women hold unnecessary perceptions of self doubt around themselves and their beauty from an early age.'

Jodi Bieber

Watch a video of Jodi Bieber talking about her portraits of women that examine 'Real Beauty' from a distinctly multicultural South African perspective.

Kudzanai Chiurai, born 1981

Chiurai was born in Zimbabwe and his early work focussed on the political, economic and social situation of his homeland. Now living in Johannesburg, he is an activist and artist (painter, designer, editor and photographer) who addresses issues such as xenophobia, displacement, consumerism and black empowerment in his work.

His satirical series *The Parliament* depicts the fictitious characters of an imaginary government cabinet in a parody of media representations of masculinity and political power. The series draws upon the conventions of African studio portraiture, dramatised magazine features, hip-hop, film and fashion as well as the story lines, stereotyped characters and plots of soap operas. These mediations also inform his decorative portraits of young Jo'burgers seen against cloth backdrops imprinted with political logos and figures.

'The person I use for many of these portraits is essentially a performer; he's a pop icon in South Africa who everyone knows from television and radio. His name is Siyabonga Ngwekazi and it was important to use him as he works in popular culture - he is part of that collective consciousness and a South African audience would immediately recognize him. He is a popular icon himself and people look at him as a model for style and fashion. So to see him outside of that TV context is to be aware of the artifice of the roles he adopts, of his performance of black masculinity and popular culture as image... I wrote the briefs for the series and started working with stylists and a photographer and borrowed clothes from people.'

Kudzanai Chiurai, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Husain and Hasan Essop, born 1985

The Essops are twin brothers based in Cape Town who create staged photographs depicting aspects of local Muslim life. In the series Halaal Art they show the preparation and serving of a Halaal meal as a ritual process of purification and cleansing.

Each scene is performed for the camera and later digitally reconstructed. In Islam, depicting the figure is controversial or prohibited and the artists are careful about limiting figural representation to their own bodies, for which they alone assume responsibility. Their work refers to the potential contradictions between modernity and tradition, Islam and the West, and the space that young Muslim men occupy and negotiate in a secular environment.

' "Halaal Art" was something that started during our trip to Cuba. It was about the way we were living, the challenges we faced as Muslims in a country that didn't have Islam. It started with finding meat, a lamb, and sacrificing it Halaal; making something that's impure, pure for your body to eat. We tried to explore that: what does that mean? We take where our food comes from so for granted. We went to the abattoir in Cape Town where we get our Halaal meat and we shot in a kind of alley, to show the abundance of nutrition here. It is horrific to some extent, but it is also a beautiful ritual if you understand it and you respect it and you respect the animal...These photographs are tricky because they take a lot of planning. At the scene we set up the tripod. I will test the light, see how the light is working. I will look at Husain and say, 'do you like this angle?' and he's like, 'maybe you shift it like this' and we have that discussion. This happens so quickly you know, because that's the beauty of the work, it has to happen quickly, the light changes all the time and you want to stay true to what you are photographing and then he will do a series of acts [which] I will photograph.'

Hasan and Husain Essop, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa 2010

David Goldblatt, born 1930

Goldblatt has photographed his native South Africa since the late 1940s, acutely observing its social, cultural and economic divides, and becoming a powerful influence on those who have followed him. Working in the documentary tradition, Goldblatt has noted: 'It's the attempt to be intensely engaged with the particular that propels me.'

Recent projects shown here include Ex-Offenders, depicting former criminals posing at the scenes of their crimes alongside texts narrating their life stories. Another project, Tradesmen, sees artisans photographed at their work-places next to the hand-painted roadside signs advertising their services. Refugees from Zimbabwe sheltering in the Central Methodist Church, Johannesburg, shows a bird's eye view of a displaced mass of sleeping bodies, taking temporary refuge from xenophobic attacks. (A display of Goldblatt's earlier work from the Apartheid years is featured in the V&A Photography Gallery, room 38A).

'In post-Apartheid South Africa I became acutely aware that little signs were mushrooming on our sidewalks and on our trees and poles advertising all kinds of services: painting, building, tilling, carpentry. Often these were very crude but there was no question of what was happening. Suddenly black people were able and willing to offer their services within the suburban life of Johannesburg in ways that were not only [previously] unknown but forbidden because black people were not allowed to trade within white group areas. And so to me this was an indication, at a very day-to-day level, a very mundane level, that liberation had come. And so I started photography some of the signs and the obvious move then was to phone these people who offered services and asked if I could come take photographs. Again there was this unspoken relationship that existed or was carried over if you like from the years before, where I could I suppose exert a certain 'rights of the manor' as a white. But these people were not in this market, they asserted their own independence and one or two of them refused me, which they had every right to do.'

David Goldblatt, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Pieter Hugo, born 1976

Hugo, based in Cape Town, began his career as a photojournalist. For him documentary photography is: 'a type of ecstatic experience where one looks at the pictures and one experiences truth, even if it's not the truth of an accountant'.

The selection here includes a group portrait from the series Messina/Musina that raises questions about race and the nature of the family. Another work shows young Xhosa men in tweeds, the customary dress for initiates, after circumcision. An image from The Hyena and Other Men represents one of the travelling sellers of traditional medicines from Nigeria who tame hyenas for

street performances. In an image from *Wild Honey Collectors*, set in Ghana, a figure poses wearing makeshift protective clothing. And a worker at a technology waste dump, also in Ghana, is shown against a toxic landscape, with the words 'Sun City', the name of a South African holiday resort, imprinted on his vest.

'There's something very condescending in assuming custodianship of other people's representation. Of course, that's the nature of photography, the photographer has the final say in which picture goes out but I question whether there's no reciprocity between subject and portraitist. In a way it's a recording of a collaborative event. So you can't assume that the subject of a photograph is passive and has no agency. And the way power is played out in photographs is complicated. If one looks at the "Permanent Error" series, and "The Hyena and Other Men" and "The Honey Collectors", one of the themes that keeps coming through is the issue of power and submission and domination. Whether it's to do with the geopolitics between the first and so called third world, whether it's man and animal with "Hyenas", or man and environment with "Honey Collectors".'

Pieter Hugo, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Terry Kurgan, born 1958

Kurgan, a Johannesburg-based artist, is interested in the nature of photographic transactions and she often collaborates with people and communities in her work. For *Park Pictures*, she dealt with the culture and economy of over forty street photographers who take portraits in Joubert Park, one of the few green spaces in inner city Johannesburg. Kurgan has plotted their positions numerically on a map, which provides a key to the project.

Her portraits are accompanied by texts that list the personal details of the photographers, invoking their life stories. Alongside Kurgan's own portraits is a selection of unclaimed photographs by the park photographers left by their sitters and bought by Kurgan herself.

'I started walking around the park and discovered, to my delight, that the park was full of street photographers. At that time I had become very interested in the theme of migration and how migration was transforming the city. I was trying to find a way of showing those demographic shifts and I remembered that the photographers held on to photographs that were never claimed by their clients. Looking back at photographs unclaimed over ten years, one would get a sense of who was coming to the city in 1990 and who was coming to it in 2000 and in 2005. Another part of the project was to map each photographer's position in the park, because I was so stuck by how inviolable those positions were. You couldn't just walk into the park pick up your camera and work there. You had to find your way there through very complex networks that in many cases began far away from Johannesburg: Zimbabwe, Ghana. Mozambique. I was interested in how life moves past these photographers very quickly in the park'.

Terry Kurgan, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Sabelo Mlangeni, born 1980

Mlangeni lives and works in Johannesburg. Describing himself as a 'camera man', he is engaged with the documentary tradition and produces visual essays, gaining access over long periods to overlooked subcultures and communities.

The *Men Only* series focuses on the run-down George Goch hostel, Johannesburg. Built in 1961 to house migrant mineworkers, today it is still open only to men, typically taxi drivers and security guards. Mlangeni uses soft focus shots and close-ups to move beyond this stereotypical image of it as a violent and unlawful place and to convey glimpses of male intimacy and daily life. The *Country Girls* series was taken over a period of six years. It is a personalised portrait of gay life in rural areas. The 'girls' are cross-dressing men whom Mlangeni photographs clothed as he finds them, and who perform self-consciously for the camera.

'Most of the people and spaces that I work with are forgotten in our fast-moving society. I look at those things that people shy away from in the world, and use that to tell my stories. The "Country Girls" started in 2003; it was the wedding of my friend Arthur and Thando, his boyfriend, in Ermelo. When I was invited there, I saw there was a group of gay guys living in different small towns in Mpumalanga, from Piet Retief to Ermelo, Standerton and Secunda and Bethal. From 2004 sometimes I would go visit them once a year, but from 2008 I started to visit them more. Because in the time that I've spent with them, the one thing that I've noticed is their "togetherness". They are very close to each other; it's like a small community of gay men where even if they have problems and issues from the community about their sexuality they are still able to push it! Because for me, coming out as a gay man with a dress, is a very political thing.'

Sabelo Mlangeni, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Zanele Muholi, born 1972

Muholi's work addresses the reality of what it is to be LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) in South Africa. She identifies herself as a visual activist, dealing with issues of violation, violence and prejudice that she and her community face, despite South Africa's progressive constitution.

In *Faces and Phases*, she sets out to give visibility to black lesbians and to celebrate the distinctiveness of individuals through the traditional genre of portraiture. The portraits are taken outdoors with a hand-held camera to retain spontaneity and often shown in a grid to highlight difference and diversity. In the series *Beulahs*, she shows young gay men, wearing Zulu beads and other accessories usually worn by women, who invert normative gender codes in both costume and pose. At the same time her photographs evoke tourist postcards and recycled stereotypes of Africans and recall traditional anthropological and ethnographic iconography.

' "Faces and Phases", is a group of black and white portraits that I have been working on from 2006 until now - it has become a lifetime project. The project is about me, the community that I'm part of. I was born in the township: I grew up in that space. Most of us grew up in a household where heterosexuality was the norm. When you grow up, you think that the only thing that you have to become as a maturing girl or woman is to be with a man; you have to have children, and also you need to have lobola or "bride price" paid for you. For young men, the expectation for them is to be with women and have wives and procreate: that's the kind of space which most of us come from. We are seen as something else by society - we are seen as deviants. We're not going to be here forever, and I wanted to make sure that we leave a history that is tangible to people who come after us.'

Zanele Muholi, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Santu Mofokeng, born 1956

Mofokeng lives in Johannesburg where he began his career as a photojournalist. But he has long been engaged with the poetic and symbolic potential of black and white photography. As he has noted: 'My approach has always been based on poetry and philosophy, in standing back. I don't believe in one truth: I like to look at things from many sides.'

The series *Chasing Shadows* documents a set of caves used both as a Christian prayer site and a place of traditional healing. Mofokeng's concern with the rituals, costume and ceremonies is balanced with personal interest, in a portrait of his brother, seeking a cure for AIDS. Another series, *Child-Headed Households*, registers the blight of AIDS without depicting it directly. Here, Mofokeng frames the new reality of families formed of sibling communities who fare for themselves in impoverished circumstances.

'When I began working on "Chasing Shadows", I was working on metaphorical biography about what life was like under apartheid. My first project with a camera was to look at people praying in the church, on the trains, on their way to and from work. So I've been interested in religion and spirituality for sometime. That was 1986. After 1994, I wanted some kind of closure about the work I was doing in the townships; basically saying "I'm done with social documentary". I could not continue to justify invading other people's spaces, because if you show social maladies the benefit accrues to the photographer but it doesn't change anything. Looking at this consciousness, which is religion, it makes me wonder about the reasons that apartheid lasted so long, but this kind of sensibility could help sustain people even during hard times. This series and the "Child Headed Household" series are related because both have to do with AIDS in some way'.

Santu Mofokeng, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Zwelethu Mthethwa, born 1960

Mthethwa, a painter and photographer, is based in Cape Town. His series *The Brave Ones* shows ceremonially dressed Zulu boys and men from the Shembe religious community. The costume they wear is usually reserved for ritual dancing and worship at annual festivals. Here, however, Mthethwa isolates his subjects from the context of the festival and poses them against the Arcadian landscape of Kwa Zulu Natal.

The mixed visual code of Shembe ceremonial dress (shirts and ties, football socks, and skirts worn as kilts) combines references to Scottish Highlanders, once stationed in the region, with traditional African costume, while blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine fashion.

'What fascinates me is how and why people clothe themselves in these different ways. That's why the setting is a forest, the landscape, because I love the KwaZulu-Natal landscape, I love the greens, I love the hills. For me, by separating them from the ritual and anchoring them in that landscape, I am telling you a story. Photography for me is all about editing. When you edit you

retell stories and create new stories. I am not interested in the church per se, or in the ritual; that's why I found the women very boring because they are wearing their traditional stuff and I am so used to traditional hair, traditional skirts. For me the young men were just amazing because of the clash of identities. You know, where does the bowtie come from, why are they wearing the bowtie during the day? Because in my western thinking it's very formal evening attire. Why do their shirts look like women's blouses with frills? It's fascinating.'

Zwelethu Mthethwa, Interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Guy Tillim, born 1962

Tillim, who started out as a photojournalist, now often works in African locations affected by war and poverty. For Petros Village, Malawi, he spent one week photographing a rural village in central Malawi.

His portraits of the villagers seek to convey not so much their poverty as their sense of dignity. These are interspersed with fragmentary views of scenes linked by threads, limbs or leads, and which are shot from oblique angles and a high vantage point. Little of the sky or surrounding landscape is shown. Tillim's visual language is lyrical, suggestive and personal, capturing the spaces between events and the intricacies of daily experience.

"Petros Village is about 50 kilometres north of the capital Lilongwe. Rural, but not remote, the villagers rely on a local market for sale of tobacco and beans for cash, and grow maize as a staple food. The village takes its name from its chief, Petros James. I met Petros with Dr Piero Bestagini and Moses Chigona from the Saint Egidio feeding centre and laboratory at nearby Mtengawantenga. Within a few minutes of meeting him, he had agreed that I could spend a week in the village. Piero asked where I would stay and without hesitation Petros took us to his homestead and showed us his sleeping quarters. He and his wife would move into the room where they prepared food. It was only a day or two later that I realised the significance of this concession. The hospitality I received is so open-handed, so otherworldly, that it's almost impossible to imagine it in the place I come from. I try to place it, this generosity of spirit. I think in clichés of traditional, rural hospitality, custom, things time-honoured and unmolested by city life. But the sense of it is elusive, muted by prejudice, obscured by ignorance."

Guy Tillim, 2006

Berni Searle, born 1964

Searle, a Cape Town artist, works with sculpture, installation and video, using photography as part of her practice. Her works often feature her own body, suggesting autobiographical narratives, as well as focusing more broadly on issues of gender, race, memory and classification in relation to South African and colonial history. Once Removed consists of two triptychs that present Searle's semi-naked body gradually being stained by dye dripping from a floral paper crown.

'The work is informed by ideas of veneration and ways in which we remember and commemorate, in this case through the incorporation of flowers and garlands. The material that I used is wet paper pulp, a heavy material that hugs and shapes and defines the contours of the body, emphasising the three-dimensionality of the body. I am interested in the transformation of the body through strategies of revealing and concealing - and in this work the idea of the veil facilitates that interest. We tend to think of the veil only in a Muslim context but it has a tradition in Christianity and in various ancient Roman civilisations where garlands and heavily draped headdresses and headgear were common. Christ's crown of thorns also comes to mind with this body of work. I have worked very strongly with colour, not only on a formal level in the way the bleeding and the seeping of colour is absorbed by the body and the garment, but also on a conceptual level so that the black flowers seem ominous. Although these are quiet works, there is a suggestion of suffocation, particularly as the hands are clasped, searching for comfort.'

Berni Searle, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Mikhael Subotzky, born 1981

Subotzky, based in Johannesburg, draws on the history of documentary photography, though his large-scale images adopt a more monumental and spectacular aspect. Much of his recent work takes crime and violence as its subject, capturing the structures and rituals of surveillance.

The series Security takes as its subject the guards employed for protection by the middle and upper classes in wealthy districts of Johannesburg. It includes a watched-over street party and a visual catalogue of the garden sheds or 'Wendy houses' that guards sit in to defend the houses and properties of their employers.

'I have first experienced, then worked in, and now lived in the suburbs. When I was a child, Wendy Houses lived in suburban backyards for children to play in and imagine themselves in a castle or a mansion. By 2007, they had found their way past the houses and out through the front walls onto the suburban pavements. Stationed there like little models of the real houses behind them, they are a constant shelter to a succession of guards who travel from far-off places to inhabit them and watch the night through. These "Wendy's" or "Zozo's" as they are known are simple in design, just as a child would draw the most essential of houses. They are also one of the few direct visual manifestations of the fear that is implicit in the surroundings.'

Mikhael Subotzky, 2010

Jo Ractliffe, born 1961

Ractliffe took up photography in the early 1980s, forging an approach in dialogue with traditional documentary practice. She has long been interested in the capacity of photography to register the residual effects of traumatic events from the past onto representations of places and populations.

Her series *Terreno Ocupado* traces the aftermath of the Border War fought by South Africa in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s. Known to South Africans as 'The Border', this was a place of mystery and myth to which family members and friends were sent during Ractliffe's youth. In 2006 she travelled to this area and among the ruins she found tiled murals mapping Portuguese explorations of Africa, echoes of a former colonial presence. Her photographs also depict the migrants that survive in the landscape and the traders in the sprawling market of Roque Santeiro.

'The work is really looking at Luanda and Angola five years after a civil war that went on for 30 odd years... [During the project] I had an argument with an Angolan general's wife who said, "I know people like you, you're not going to photograph the bank, you're not going to photograph these beautiful new complexes, you photograph the terrible parts of the city". But I don't want to do the sanitised picture of the oil high rises you know, because that's not it. I find what's very inspiring about Luanda and what I'm hoping to get in these pictures is a kind of enterprise, you know, the business of life. People are extraordinarily enterprising and people make [something] out of nothing.'

Jo Ractliffe, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Roelof Petrus Van Wyk, born 1969

Van Wyk lives and works in Johannesburg. A member of the Afrikaner community, descendents of the original seventeenth-century Dutch settlers, Van Wyk is part of a generation concerned with questioning the historic roles of their parents and redefining their identity as 'Africans'.

Young Afrikaner - A Self Portrait, a collection of iconic images of Van Wyk's peer group, draws on anthropological conventions once used for cataloguing 'racial types' by subjecting them to photographic display and measurement. The series also invokes formal studio headshots and painted portraiture.

'The project documents changing ideas of Afrikaner identity. I am interested in the transformation from what used to be a singular, government sanctioned identity, to something more personal and plural. It's about mapping that and seeing how much we've changed as a "tribe" really. Collaborating with individuals and listening to their stories, you start to weave a narrative. It's the relationship between species and specimens that interests me. That's the kind of logic I am working with. If I talk to a stranger and say I am from Africa - and I often get this when I travel abroad - they look at me and they say: "that's just weird because you don't look African". Yet I am African. I belong to Africa. Afrikaners are Africans. We have a very specific history as the oppressor here.'

Roelof Petrus Van Wyk, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Nontsikelelo Veleko, born 1977

Veleko is a Johannesburg-based photographer who explores the inventive dress, style and confidence of South Africa's 'born free' generation that has grown up after the end of Apartheid. Playing with the language of fashion photography and media representations of street culture, Veleko's images question how personal style and individuality are perceived and assumed in a post-modern African city.

Her series *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* spotlights young people who creatively construct their identities with colourful and flamboyant clothes, positioned against different urban backgrounds.

'My journey in photography arose from an interest in exploring identity. In earlier ongoing projects, I have profiled prejudice and reductive stereotyping. More than just documenting fashion and style,

I am interested in how we read fashion, and how my subjects use their clothes to construct, and often deconstruct, their guises of identity. My subjects are rarely mainstream individuals. Many of them are characters that take risks in the ways that they declare themselves in the world, and in so doing are often vulnerable within the domains they inhabit, often at the edge of society.'

Nontsikelelo 'Lolo' Veleko

Graeme Williams, born 1961

For The Edge of Town series, Williams developed the language of street photography in order to move beyond the documentary approach that he and others had previously used so systematically in the Apartheid era. Over a four-year period, he travelled to more than 100 towns around the country, seeking to capture a feeling or a mood rather than any particular event.

Williams worked only in early morning and evening light to create the long shadows and vibrant colours of his multi-layered images. Each image is skilfully framed, often close up and off-kilter, to create unexpected juxtapositions between its subjects. As Williams has noted: 'I wanted viewers to be slightly unsure of what was going on in each photograph and this reflects how I felt about change in South Africa at the time.'

'My approach was to "hit and run". I chose never to photograph in the same place twice. I would drive to a town in the evening and photograph there and then I would drive to the next town so I could be there in the morning. I was interested in strong early morning or evening light. Harsh light, long shadows, so I was only able to photograph for about two or three hours a day. The demands were physically difficult but the most demanding thing was that there wasn't a set of parameters for photographing a particular thing each day. I had to find a situation that made visual and emotional sense. Days would go by without getting anything that approximated what I was feeling and that's why I think it took four years. I started the project in black and white but I wasn't able to get the feeling I wanted. Then I moved on to colour and then after another few months I worked out that I could only photograph in extreme light conditions in order to get the right emotion. Then I realised that I wanted to break down the distance and the "objective" feel of documentary photography and I wanted to break the barrier that photographers often set up between themselves and their subjects. This demanded that I get incredibly close to my subjects. So, some of the figures are very close to the lens. My modus operandi would be to drive around until I found something that resonated for me. I would wander into people's homes and environments and it was so amazing how people just let me in.'

Graeme Williams, interviewed by Tamar Garb, South Africa, 2010

Watch a video of Graeme Williams as he explores his mission to find a new character for his work after the trauma and bloodshed of 'the struggle' era.

Sources au 20110414 : <http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/figures-fictions/>
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/figures-fictions/exhibition/index.html>
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In Defence of Social Documentary Photography

Jon Soske

It's an art world cliché. During the final decade of the anti-apartheid struggle, photographers allegedly embraced a social documentary mode that subordinated the image to the propagandistic needs of the moment, embraced naïve literalism over aesthetic experimentation, and reduced the complexities of interior experience to the mute fact of African suffering. Content merely to record spectacular instances of repression or deprivation, documentary photography, the paradigmatic form of 'struggle art', ironically codified a one-dimensional and thus dehumanising image of black life: it peddled in legibility, easy hits for an overseas market, the fungible stereotype. Political reportage straight-jacketed the artist. Realism trumped self-reflection. High politics eclipsed the importance of everyday life. Engagement suffocated the pleasures of form and play. The medium itself, one renowned curator informs us, became 'myopic'.¹

So the story goes. Perhaps it should be added that historical research into the photography of the apartheid period, and especially the 1980s, has just recently gained significant momentum.² We are only beginning to have a fuller picture of the archive of widely-recognised figures like Ernest Cole, Jürgen Schadeberg, Alf Khumalo and Santu Mofokeng; dozens of other significant photographers, many of them from black communities, await sustained critical attention. Perhaps we should also note that this critique largely focuses on news or agency photographers whose images circulated in the liberal and international press. It conflates the Bang Bang Club and their ilk with a collective like Afrapix, which promoted a much broader range of photographic idioms and staged dozens of exhibitions (many in black areas) during the 1980s. And perhaps one might add that there is a long tradition of photographers, including Ernest Cole (1967), Peter Magubane (1978), and Omar Badsha (1979 and 1985), who have challenged reductive images of black life by exploring the everyday realities of their communities without abstracting these sorrows and joys from the overarching political context of apartheid.³ Critical reflection on the 'politics of representation' did not, as some writers rather brashly assume, begin in the mid-1980s.

Documentary photography is not primarily concerned with capturing the real 'as it actually is' or establishing the veracity of events. That is the provenance of the photojournalist. As American photographer Walker Evans famously maintained, documentary is a style, a way of depicting the present as if it were already past: a self-conscious reflection on the historical meaning of people, events, and objects.⁴ Its mode is narrative rather than index. It abstracts from the raw flux of the

¹ Okwui Enwezor, 'Photography after the End of Documentary Realism: Zwelethu Mthethwa's Color Photographs' in Zwelethu Mthethwa (New York: Aperture, 2010), p. 101

² A new body of work significantly qualifying the current picture of photography during the 1980s is beginning to appear. See the invaluable essays on South African documentary by Patricia Hayes, including 'Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography', *Kronos* 33 (2007) and Santu Mofokeng's, 'Photographs: "The Violence is in the Knowing"', *History and Theory* 48 (December 2009); and two recent books, Darren Newbury, *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (UNISA, 2009) and John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

³ Ernest Cole, *House of Bondage* (New York: Random House, 1967); Peter Magubane, *Soweto* (Cape Town: Dawn Lindberg, 1978); Omar Badsha, *Letter to Farzanah* (Durban: Institute of Black Research, 1979) and Imijondolo: *A Photographic Essay on Forced Removals in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal* (Johannesburg: Afrapix, 1985)

quotidian. It explores significances beyond what is strictly visible. Sometimes, the narrative is conveyed through the choreography of elements within a single image. More often, a photographic essay develops a set of ideas from frame to frame, building an argument at the levels of content and form, exploiting the possibilities of visual echoes, resonances, repetitions, juxtapositions, absences and discontinuities. In other cases, the photographer assembles an essay by returning to his or her archive, editing images from different contexts together in order to reflect on broader events and questions. Within the context of an essay, an individual photograph can assume multiple significations: literal and allegorical, didactic and conceptual. And underlying every photographic essay is the parallel, if sometimes obscure, story of the photographer's relationship to the subject matter; a practice, a distinctive manner of building connections and negotiating social spaces, an itinerary, an ethos.

The struggle against white minority rule involved a battle of images as well as arms. In its efforts to control what could be seen and how, apartheid created a visual regime predicated on the invisibility of black South Africa, the state adamantly denied the very existence of such an entity, within areas reserved for whites. This system sought to render the larger structures of oppression and control invisible; it also fragmented the social conditions of vision along racial lines and atomised the collective imaginary by regulating movement and access not only to 'white South Africa', but also within black areas. The apartheid propaganda apparatus, Afrikaner cultural establishment and sections of the academy worked to normalise so-called Separate Development and refute the historic claims of the liberation movements. An entire media landscape depicted blacks as the beneficiaries and willing collaborators of white trusteeship. Race infected every aspect of vision. A generation of photographers, many sympathetic to or active within the mass democratic movement, sought to challenge this visual regime by creating alternative photographic narratives. Responding to the political exigencies of a country on the verge of civil war, many of these counter-images were unapologetically Manichaean, spectacular, brutal: testimony to the state's murderous acts and celebrations of mass revolt and defiance. Other narratives, however, avoided the exclamatory and explored the everyday effects of oppression. And some of these same photographers turned to subaltern histories, Omar Badsha's studies of the Grey Street ghetto, Chris Ledochowski's Cape Flats project, Paul Weinberg's work on the San, Santu Mofokeng's explorations of African township life, in order to record aspects of society and the past erased by the official narratives of both the regime and the liberation struggle. They began to reflect on the role of photography in creating a new South African culture and transformed ways of seeing.

In some respects, the end of formal white supremacy radically shifted the social and political terrain of image production. A post-apartheid generation of photographers has greatly enriched the visual idiom by experimenting with aesthetics and the medium itself in order to forefront questions of identity, sexuality, subjectivity, and persona. But the afterlife of apartheid's hierarchies

and the persistence of a sharply-divided society continue to pose the basic question of social documentary with intensified force. How does one narrate stories of shared concern in ways that challenge the viewer to see differently?

two

The photographic essays in this catalogue are evidence to the undimmed force of this question. The organisers of Bonani Africa 2010 Festival invited photographers working in South Africa to submit images produced during the last three years which address issues of broad social or political relevance. Fifty six participants entered over sixty essays. Their range of subject matter, plurality of aesthetic strategies, and raw visual urgency surprised even the organisers. They include Santu Mofokeng's widely-celebrated series *Let's Talk*, which deciphers the vast consequences of global climate change in the dramaturgy of landscapes and ordinary objects; Sabelo Mlangeni's flirtatious yet unnervingly poignant studies of gay black men in rural Mpumalanga; Alexia Webster's grim look at the state of dysfunctional schools racked by violence on the Cape Flats; and Tracey Derrick's courageously tender record of her changing relationship with family, body, and personal objects during her battle with breast cancer. Collectively, these projects express a drive towards an expanded visual language, a hunger for representations of a South African reality which refuses easy partition by inherited social categories, a set of perspectives reaching beyond the racial lens. These stories are often incomplete. Their power is alchemical.

This collection of photographic essays captures another important, and in many ways unique, aspect of contemporary South African photography: the power of a highly contested, yet fundamentally cumulative, tradition of photographic practice from the 1950s to the present. At the current moment, four distinct generations of photographers continue to produce work, exhibit, publish, and significantly influence one another. Although not included in the Bonani exhibition, pioneer figures of the fifties like Schadeberg, Magubane, and (beginning a decade later) David Goldblatt developed aesthetics sharply inflected by a self-conscious modernism drawing on a number of European and American predecessors. In quite different ways, Schadeberg and Goldblatt both promoted a strong emphasis on the composition of images and general questions of design. Through their own work and energetic mentorship of others, they established exacting standards that challenged and inspired subsequent generations even when, as was almost always the case with black artists, younger practitioners lacked the considerable resources necessary to produce prints or books of equivalent material quality. The following two generations (the struggle photographers of the 1980s and the fine arts photographers of the next decade) not only shared a critical engagement with this earlier body of work, they both understood the responsibilities of the photographer in profoundly ethical and political terms. Even as artists like Zwelethu Mthetwa, Zanele Muholi, Nontsikelelo Veleko and Jo Ractliffe moved away from the

documentary mode of the 1980s, they largely assumed its broader imperative of grounding photographic practice in the representation of the social.⁵

As the Bonani festival establishes, a fourth generation of photographers has started to emerge. Immediately striking is its diversity. The opportunities for photographic education have substantially expanded in the last twenty years. In addition to university art departments and technical colleges, the Market Photo Workshop and a burgeoning number of township-based collectives like Iliso Labantu, whose bold and discerning series on women appears in the show, have nurtured an unprecedented number of younger black photographers. The digital revolution has expedited this shift. Photographic technology is cheaper, easier to master, and far more accessible than any time in the past. Some of the most impressive submissions came from largely self-taught photographers working on their own and outside the world of the galleries. Another notable presence is a small but important group of foreign photographers living and working in South Africa who have eschewed the characteristic genres of the outsider: the sensationalist, the journalistic, the picturesque, the exotic, the sentimental. The work of several younger photographers evinces a similar quality: almost sociological exactitude combined with an unabashed, and even fierce, sense of empathy.

three

The most significant essay reproduced in this catalogue is almost certainly Chris Ledochowski's Petros Mulaudzi of Nthabalala Village. Beginning in the late 1970s, Ledochowski began to photograph Mulaudzi, a migrant worker employed in his parent's household who became a family member, an intimate, an adopted father. After Mulaudzi retired in 1980 and returned to his home in rural Venda, Ledochowski made the first of four trips to visit and photograph Mulaudzi and his family in the village of Nthabalala, a project which would slowly develop over the next three decades until his most recent visit in February 2010. Nothing quite like this undertaking exists in the history of South African photography. Genuinely epic in both scope and narrative structure, Ledochowski has produced a meticulous and unsentimental account of ordinary experiences that continue to shape the lives, either directly or indirectly, of most South Africans: the longings and heartbreaks of migrant labour, the changing countryside and its daily rituals, the struggle to build and preserve a home. South African photographers have often depicted change in essentially nostalgic terms. George Hallet's pictures of District Six exemplify this tendency: they capture a world on the threshold of disappearance. In contrast, Ledochowski's photographs concern the endurance of loss, its impact on a group of people, and their ability to persevere. They explore the relationship between generations, the evolving nature of skills and knowledge, economic dependency, and the threatened obsolescence of village life. If the narrative proceeds through an almost obsessive accumulation of detail, the resulting portrait is anything but fragmentary. It is a catalogue of one

⁵ For a similar argument, see Patricia Hayes, 'Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography', *Kronos* 33 (2007), 159

community's meanings, the things that an individual, a family, and a village have managed to preserve and endow with value.

Although no other project approaches the same enormity of scale, a number of other participating photographers share Ledochowski's commitment to building long-term relationships with the individuals and communities whom they photograph. Reciprocity and engagement, rather than journalistic or aesthetic compulsion, animates some of the most compelling photographic storytelling in the Bonani exhibition. One example is Angelo Kalmeyer's unusually vivid essay on the Delft pavement dwellers. Expelled from local backyards by the city council, the pavement dwellers rebuilt their shacks on the side of the immediately adjacent Symphony Way. Photos of residents battling the police splashed across front pages for weeks. In response, Kalmeyer decided to spend a month living with this community in order to document the process of reconstruction. While unquestionably a record of displacement and extreme poverty, the resulting photographs also portray the pavement dwellers' diversity and cosmopolitanism, their public moments of shared celebration and play, the central role of spirituality in their lives, and the private spaces that they manage to claim for themselves. The photo of the name 'Louise', painted on a recently built wall, powerfully asserts place and ownership in the midst of true powerlessness. Given the formulaic manner in which black communities are often photographed, the sheer range of perspectives, distances, and compositional strategies is itself significant. Kalmeyer's achievement is that he conveys the ways in which the pavement dwellers assert dignity in their own terms without reducing their experiences to predictable, and therefore depersonalising, images of suffering or resilience.

In terms of unexpected iconoclasm, perhaps no other contribution matches Oupa Nkosi's sympathetic portrayal of the new African middle classes in *Black Diamonds*. This story is central to the country's future; few developments have transformed South African society as radically. Nevertheless, the discourse regarding the emerging black elites remains divided between a utilitarian and moralistic extreme: the Diamonds either represent the unique vehicle of black empowerment or creatures of corruption and gross opulence. And rarely does it seem that the material successes of white elites, particularly English-speaking liberals, provoke equivalent censure. Subverting both frameworks, Nkosi's stylish and concurring portraits exalt the experience of achievement itself: its performance, its embodiment, its personae and its pleasures. His self-conscious and closely shot photos echo the intense self-awareness of his subjects. Nkosi shares Veleko or Muholi's fascination with identity and subjectivity, but he examines these issues in the context of a reconstituted cultural vernacular. This is African refinement, swank, easy and unapologetic. The framing of his shots also reveals some of the ironies of this world: it is inhabited as much by objects, crystal glasses, designer watches, oversized handbags, jewellery, as people. In many respects, it is a world built through and around the power of images.

four

The enthusiastic response by photographers to the Bonani Africa 2010 Festival of Photography more than demonstrates the need for an ongoing platform for the exhibition and critical discussion of photographic work that explores the intersecting questions of narrative and social engagement. Of course, none of these categories, narrative, engagement, or the social, are simply fixed: their changing meaning insures that they remain sites of theoretical reflection and political intervention. New forms of telling stories, of challenging how we see, must accompany transformed circumstances. In the name of rejecting a narrow realism, South African critics of documentary photography and struggle art in general have installed a mind-numbing opposition between aesthetics and politics in its stead. In content, this critique resurrects the bourgeois-liberal and (within the South African context) historically white conception of artistic autonomy: the belief in a space of cultural or intellectual production that somehow lies outside existent power relations. But in practice, it has mainly provided ideological cover for an uncritical entry into the cultural industry of the art world: an acceptance of its exclusionary modes of valuation, distribution, and determining relevance.

In going forward, Bonani, which plans to adopt an enlarged biennial format, faces two decisive challenges. First, it must develop alternative spaces and exhibition practices that move towards expanding and desegregating the audience for contemporary visual arts. The vocabularies that photographers create and employ have often been intimately related to publics, whether the nearly insatiable foreign market for (certain) images of South Africa that first emerged in the 1940s or the revolutionary impact of mass black audiences on photography in the 1950s and 1980s. Today, documentary has largely entered into the art world and few venues exist for exhibition outside commercial galleries and museums. This near monopoly should be challenged. But it will necessitate a sustained rethinking of the politics of audience and, particularly, the ways in which new publics are created and sustained. Second, the South African debates need to be de-centred and re-contextualised through an expanded dialogue with African and, especially, southern African photography. The next Bonani festival will be continental in scope and travel outside of South Africa. In this respect, it will seek to build on the groundbreaking work of projects like the Bamako Photography Biennial and Maputo's PhotoFesta. But this expansion must be mindful of the historic and present-day asymmetries between South Africa and the surrounding countries. Future initiatives should not only provide opportunities for photographers from north of the boarder to show work and participate in discussions. They must also build new infrastructures of collaboration and critique. Otherwise, the movement into Africa, so visible in current South African photography, risks enacting the oldest of colonial scripts.

I am indebted to Chris Ledochowski for giving me access to his unpublished manuscript and Chris and Omar Badsha for sharing some of their thoughts on questions of documentary photography

Jon Soske is a historian and curator. He is currently a Post Doctoral Fellow based at the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa (CISA), University of the Witwatersrand



Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa

David L. Krantz

Resistance or struggle photography is a term describing the photographic documentation of conflict between oppressed and oppressor from the perspective of the subjugated. An example of this genre is explored in the context of apartheid South Africa during the 1980s through the work of a collective called Afrapix. This group's images of the repression of Black and Coloured populations by the apartheid regime, although largely curbed in South Africa, found an extensive international reception. These photographs contributed to the worldwide condemnation and sanctions that ultimately led to the collapse of the apartheid government. Whether photographs should be used as weapons in the political struggle, a position fostered by the African National Congress (ANC) and accepted by Afrapix, is explored through the divergent views of the photographer David Goldblatt. The decline of Afrapix is examined in relation to shifting market and aesthetic considerations following the end of apartheid.

Keywords: *Resistance or struggle photography, Afrapix, African National Congress (ANC), apartheid, Southlight, Omar Badsha (b. 1942), David Goldblatt (b. 1930), Albie Sachs (b. 1935), Guy Tillim (b. 1962), Paul Weinberg (b. 1956)*

Resistance or Struggle Photography is the term used by South African anti-apartheid photographers to describe a genre of photography that is political in its stance. Its intention, beyond the aesthetic, is to document the conflicts between oppressors and their victims so as to alert, persuade and elicit support for the oppressed. The reality captured by the photograph is from the vantage point of the subjugated person. Important examples of resistance photography are provided by the work of the Afrapix collective. During the 1980s Afrapix photographs contributed to the culture of struggle that played such an important role in mobilizing local and international response against repression of the country's vast majority Black population by the apartheid regime. Afrapix's images ranged from documenting violence and confrontations (figures 1, 2) to recording everyday situations, especially as lived by South African Blacks under apartheid (figure 3). Generally they appeared in photo essays, magazines, newspapers, and public exhibition spaces, and, to a lesser extent, in commercial galleries or museum archives. The story of the evolution of this group provides insight into an important episode in the history of photography, while also raising some important issues regarding the relationship between photography and politics.¹

The Apartheid Regime

With the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948, the long-standing segregation and domination of Blacks was increasingly legitimated, codified

1 – The following narrative is based on the general consensus among those ten respondents I interviewed in Johannesburg from October to December 2006 concerning the evolution and impact of Afrapix. Although there are divergences, disagreements and details that are not included in this account, they do not detract from the general narrative I have developed.

Figure 1. Paul Weinberg, *Workers leaving May Day meeting find riot police*, May 1985. Courtesy Aperture Press.



and enforced. The laws defining this racism were subsumed under the term 'apartheid'. Among these regulations was the requirement for the relocation of Blacks, often forcibly, to segregated, isolated townships. The aim was to limit and control the number of Blacks in white urban areas to the minimum required for labour. The rest would reside in highly restricted ethnic Homelands that would eventually become independent states. Whereas approximately 80% of South Africa's population was black, the Homelands represented only approximately 13% of the land area of the country. Within white areas, the activities of Blacks were highly controlled and restricted. They could not reside in their work areas, nor could they migrate into white areas from their vastly overcrowded, underdeveloped, remote townships. Similar but less extreme restrictions were applied also to the smaller Indian and mixed-race Coloured populations. The requirement that Blacks have a passbook controlled their activities to limited, specified locations. Separate, but far from equal, facilities and opportunities determined virtually all the Blacks' existence. In

Figure 2. Paul Weinberg, *A lone woman protests as soldiers occupying her township roll by in large armoured vehicles called 'hippos'*, Soweto, July 1985. Courtesy Aperture Press.





Figure 3. Omar Badsha, Teacher with her class of eighty students, 1985. Courtesy of the artist.

short, the labour, land and activities of the Black majority were to be almost totally controlled and structured by the regime's predominantly small minority of White Afrikaners (largely descendants of the Dutch white settlers).

These policies were maintained through the tacit consent of the country's far smaller White population, by their very living within this system of racism and repression and through curbing dissent from Black activists largely in the African National Congress along with a number of Whites and Coloured. Depending on the potential threat of the dissenters, the government used such measures as fines, intimidation, harassment, censorship, incarceration, torture, exile and murder. The control of defiance even extended to invading nearby neutral countries to destroy banned resistance movements based in exile.

One episode that especially highlights the power of the photographic image as a means of opposition is represented by images showing the Soweto uprising of 1976. There, unwarranted violence by the police against black schoolchildren's non-violent protest was documented and distributed worldwide. One particular struggle picture, showing a dead child being carried away from the conflict, became iconic of the brutality of the apartheid regime. The photographs of the earlier Sharpsville massacre of 1961 provided one of the initial alerts to the regime's excesses.

Impelled by the Soweto uprising, the anti-apartheid struggle became more sustained, with heightened levels of open confrontation and resistance. The attempt to make the country ungovernable by using sabotage, large-scale demonstrations and open flaunting of the law led the government to respond by instituting further restrictions under a series of state-of-emergency decrees. These laws worked against the system, however, by generating international indignation and censure regarding these gross curtailments of fundamental human rights. Aparix's photographs contributed to this condemnation through their powerful documentation of the events and of the outcomes resulting from the government's racist policies.

Resistance Photography and Censorship

Creating and distributing such images could be problematic and dangerous. Film and cameras were sometimes confiscated during government operations in the townships, with film being fogged. Aparix members were sometimes harassed, with their facilities being raided. Photographers ran the risk of being

beaten or even shot by police during conflict situations, as well as sometimes being threatened and attacked by the local communities, which mistrusted the photographers' intentions and political affiliation. Although there was no censorship or illegality applied to photographs (except for those showing sensitive government settings), there existed a pervasive climate of fear, created by the Security Police's surveillance and by awareness that this could easily lead to detention without legal recourse. Despite all these difficulties, photographs were taken and attained public exposure. Some were smuggled out of the country, using a variety of inventive subterfuges (as with the often-noted case of Ernest Cole's 'House of Bondage' of 1967). Some images appeared in alternative literary magazines such as *Staffrider* or in independent, underground news publications. A larger number of photographs were shown in galleries of community-based organizations.

Resistance photographs became increasingly available in the 1980s, when censorship restrictions became more readily evaded and less consistently enforced. This apparent relaxation of restrictions was due in large part to increasing international pressure, by means of severe sanctions, towards reinstating civil liberties. In this climate of greater openness and increasing White involvement in anti-apartheid political engagement, Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg, two photographers, spearheaded a decision to extend the availability of such images beyond the more vulnerable individual photographer's initiatives by organizing Afrapix to archive and distribute resistance photography.

Afrapix's Principles and Goals

The following position statements clearly project Afrapix's intentions and objectives:

Photography can't be divorced from the political, social issues that surround us daily. As photographers we are inextricably caught up in those processes – we are not objective instruments but play a part in the way we choose to make our statements.

[...] [T]he photographers in this collection do not look at our country through the lens of the rulers. They show South Africa in conflict, in suffering, in happiness and resistance.

[...] The images [...] locate these themes [sadness, dignity, power,] in a divided, struggling South Africa. These South African photographers project a vision of the realities they confront.²

Afrapix can be viewed as a kind of mini-Magnum. For it stands squarely with the tradition of collaborative, social concerned photography most familiar to Americans through the work of Eugene Smith, Dorothea Lange and Robert Capa among others.

Afrapix members resist being defined by the [markets'] daily whims. A large number of local photographers [...] move to satisfying international media needs [...]. Thus, the photographer becomes a citizen of the international news network. This has meant distancing from the non-racial democratic movement and from the intimacy of local avenues for change [...]. The social documentary photographer's commitment to alternative values frees him or her to continue working in a community

Even when it is not the focus of violence. [...] By having their itinerary shaped by those who define what is newsworthy, these photojournalists tend to come in at the end of the process and therefore are unable to record and account for the logic of the confrontations.

[We] strive not only to advance social documentary photography but also to help in a small way redress the grossly inequitable distribution of skills and unequal access to information, both legacies of apartheid education [via workshops, local exhibitions].³

[...] [T]o overcome the blind spots resulting from an internalized apartheid ideology. To see what had not hitherto been seen; to make visible what had

2 – Paul Weinberg, *South Africa through the Lens: Social Documentary Photography*, Braamfontein, S. A.: Ravan Press 1983.

3 – Paul Weinberg and R. Nixon, 'Taking Sides in South Africa: Afrapix's Democratic Documentary', *Our Times* (August 1986), 23-26.

been invisible; to find ways of articulating, [...] a reality obscured by government propaganda and the mass media.⁴

Afrapix's philosophy and aims received strong independent support at an ANC-sponsored conference concerning the arts and liberation that was held in 1982 in Botswana. The clear message of the conference was that art was to be used as a weapon in the struggle against apartheid. Out of this conference twenty photographers created the first collective exhibition of anti-apartheid images that would be brought to South Africa (published in 1983 as *Through the Lens*). As Paul Weinberg put it, 'Participants learnt a new language – participants were not above the struggle for change, but part of it'.⁵

A Dissenting Voice

While praising Resistance photographers as idealistic, talented and courageous, David Goldblatt, South Africa's preeminent documentary photographer, voiced the contrary position at the Botswana conference observing that 'the camera was not a machine-gun and that photographers shouldn't confuse their response to the politics of the country with their role as photographers'.⁶ Photographers required a degree of dispassion. They should not deliberately seek to be positive or negative, but should attempt to convey the reality of things, with all its attendant complexity. Goldblatt's insistence on detachment, in contrast to Afrapix's endorsement of subjectivity, reflected his underlying perspective on political engagement. 'My dispassion was an attitude in which I tried to avoid easy judgments', he affirmed. 'This resulted in a photography that appeared to be disengaged and apolitical, but which was in fact the opposite'.⁷ By probing the immediate, everyday world he lived in, he could illuminate South African life with its underlying values and structures. In his documentation of the daily life in the white town of Boksburg, for instance, he was portraying a quite different reality from that of the Blacks. 'To ascribe these different realities to madness was too easy,' he acknowledged, 'I probed the phenomenon of society much concerned with ordinary decencies yet based, it seemed to me, on fundamental immorality'.⁸

Goldblatt intends, in this and in a number of other works, that the viewer should come to understand those underpinnings of the South African life that led to apartheid's overt repression (the Struggle photographers' primary subject matter) and to highly diverse aspects of South African life. There were explorations of poverty, forced removals, Blacks' long commute to their generally menial work for the Whites, church architecture, among others. Goldblatt's images range in their political explicitness: There is an implicit political position involved in his images of Soweto's everyday life (prior to the uprising) in restoring the humanity and individuality to those defined by apartheid's racist view of Blacks as non-persons. His political stance is more evident, but rarely blatant, for example, in his collaborative photo essays with the writer, Nadine Gordimer. For instance, their 1986 book *Lifetimes Under Apartheid* was an anthology of excerpts from Gordimer's novels and Goldblatt's photographs of Soweto and Transkei's Coloured residents and gold miners, among others.

Whether showing workers labouring in the gold mines or Blacks commuting to employment from the distant segregated homeland (*On the Mines*, 1973; *The Transported of Kwandebele*, 1989), Goldblatt exposes the hardships, poverty and often the courage involved in Blacks' lives under the government's repressive policies. In contrast, his pictures of South African buildings seem to have little obvious political reference; they could be misread as well-done architectural documentation. But there is a political statement that

4 – J. Ozynski, 'Staffrider and documentary photography', in *Ten Years of Staffrider 1978-1988*, ed. Andreas Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavic, Johannesburg: Raven Press 1988.

5 – Paul Weinberg, 'Beyond the barricades'. *Full Frame* 1 (1990), 6.

6 – David Goldblatt, 'Interview with Obwui Enwezor', in David Goldblatt, *Fifty-One Years*, Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona 2001.

7 – David Goldblatt, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, New York: Monacelli Press 1998.

8 – *Ibid.*, 31.

the viewer is led to understand, not from any single image but via the presentation of an extended, deliberately sequenced number of images accompanied by apolitical clarifying texts. For example, comparing the openness of an earlier church to the closedness of a later church (figures 4, 5), Goldblatt alludes to regime's growing insularity and defensiveness. Goldblatt's photographic essays, through the images' sequencing and related written material, transform seemingly neutral images into a complex and subtle portrayal of what underpins South Africa's many worlds. For Goldblatt, it is the images that communicate the political, in contrast to the Resistance photographers whose political position is intertwined with the images thus providing a more subjective portrayal of reality.

Goldblatt chose not to join Afrapix. Moreover, some of the collective's members were suspicious of what they considered his limited political posture, of his being a sell-out to the regime. Whether this concern was one of a number of Afrapix's 'healthy' debates, or Goldblatt's perception, or actual mistrust is difficult to determine. The tension within Afrapix regarding Goldblatt's political stance dissipated over time, with, among other involvement, his active support and training of photographers through the Market Photo Workshop (a well regarded, continuing setting for training documentary photographers and photojournalists, both Blacks and Whites). Goldblatt's approach was not well received by the ANC. They considered his work as insufficiently weapon-like to further the struggle. This suspicion led to their instituting a boycott, in 1986, of his exhibition in England. Not only had Goldblatt breached their cultural boycott, but also they considered his images too limited in portraying the struggle. ANC's boycott was removed with the intervention of South African based members of the resistance movement.

Afrapix's Development

From its initial founding in 1982 until its closure in 1990, Afrapix grew from five to over twenty-five members. Membership was largely open to any photographer who wanted to join. Amateurs and professionals, Blacks and Whites made up the organization. (The mixing of the races was intentional, both as a confrontational political act as well as a means to further their explicit

Figure 4. David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reform Church. Inaugurated on 31 July 1966. Op-die-Berg, Kove Bokkeveld, Cape, 23 May 1987.* Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

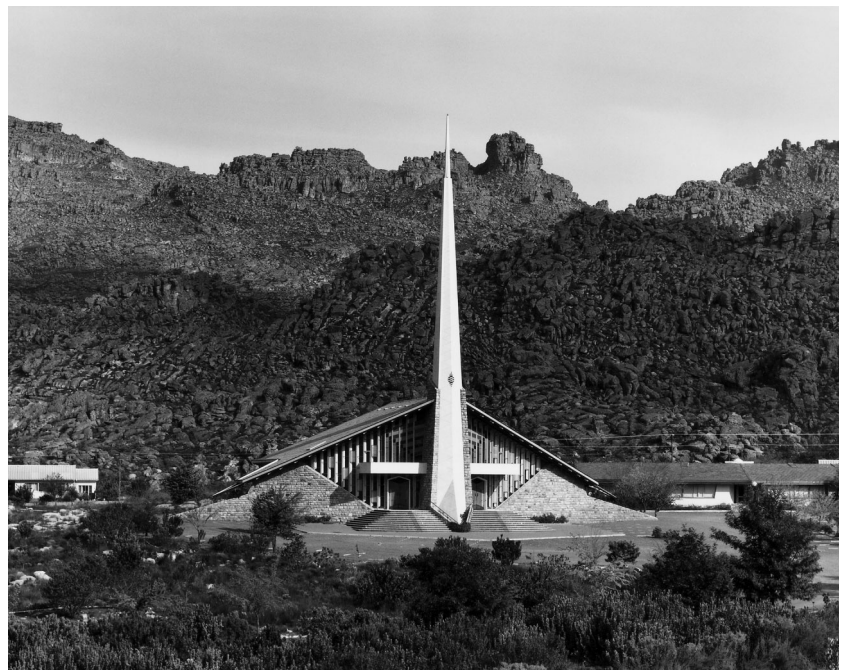




Figure 5. David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reform Church, Completed in 1984. Querlerina, J'burg. Transvaal.* 1 November 1982. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

aim of supporting and training black photographers.) Considering Afrapix as a unitary entity, whether in terms of subject matter, level of training, race, ideological leaning, would obscure the free form, highly diverse character of the collective.

In general, their photographs were characterized by 'styles that were both legible and highly expressive in their representation of oppression and resistance; [...] [the] use of expressive devices [such] as strong tonal contrasts, dramatic perspectives, sudden changes in scale, and a sense of violent movement – a movement that is sometimes implied to continue beyond the limits of the picture format; [...] As well as communicating the urgency of the moment; [it] attributed a sense of urgency to the subject. Tended to be [...] declamatory, dictating specific readings of the image. [...] to use the subject as evidence in someone else's argument'.⁹

Among the major exhibitions, with associated catalogues, involving many Afrapix members were: *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* (1989); *Beyond the Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s* (1989); *Hidden Camera: South African Photography Escaped from Censorship* (1989). *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*, in particular, represented a significant break with past documentary photography. Sponsored in 1983 by the Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development, it not only recorded the poverty created by resettlement, migrant labour, but, 'in a significant break with the past, it also documented organisation and resistance as a way out of the plight of poverty.

9 – Michael Godby, 'After Apartheid: 10 South African Documentary Photographers', *African Arts* 37 (Winter 2004), 36-41.

10 – Paul Weinberg, 'Apartheid – A Vigilant Witness', in *Culture in Another South Africa*, ed. Willem Campscreur and Joost Divendal, London: Zed Books 1989.

This conceptualization is significant in the consciousness of the documentary movement at the time 'since Photography [...] needed to [...] take sides'.¹⁰

The collective's first patron was the South African Conference of Churches, headed by Desmond Tutu. This organization provided the collective with office space and financial support through its purchase of their photographs. The demand for Afrapix's photographs grew with the increasing levels of struggle and repression with anti-apartheid NGOs and with such news services as Associated Press and Reuters being among the clients.

This success also provided one source for the collective's eventual disbanding. As the call for photographs increased, more photographers, with divergent views, joined. Santu Mofekang, for instance, a black photographer, originally supported and trained within the collective, considered the resistance images as reducing the richness of township life into one of perpetual struggle. His work, while maintaining a political posture, moved toward depicting a broader range of Black experience and activities.

Moreover, being that the organization was non-hierarchical, without clearly defined organizational roles, this developing diversity allowed for clashes between perspectives. Afrapix began to fracture due partly to an internal personal conflict that transmuted into arguments as to whether the collective should maintain and intensify its political engagement, particularly its involvement with training and bringing photography to Black communities as a form of empowerment, or become more concerned with a broader, less confrontational range of documentations created by selected professional photographers.

Eventually, Afrapix's two broad factions split, with the more political group pursuing individual initiatives and the documentary faction developing as a non-collective agency (modelled on Magnum). This new organization, called Southlight, was less confrontational in relation to apartheid, with a broader range of work being featured in its archives.

Albie Sachs's Controversial Claims

Almost coincident with Afrapix's breakup, but not causally related, was a growing sentiment within ANC and parts of the arts community regarding the limitations of struggle photography. Albie Sachs, a well known, exiled White ANC activist, gave voice to this emerging view in a controversial paper that appeared in 1990. He questioned the value of maintaining that art and culture are weapons of struggle. Although he had originally supported this view, as pronounced in the 1982 Botswana Conference, in this paper (delivered in 1989 to the ANC Cultural Committee in exile), Sachs recognized that the identity of the future South Africa must be shaped by a greater diversity of expressions and explorations, in resistance art would play one necessary role. Although Sachs does not specifically mention Afrapix's resistance photography in the claims quoted below, he considered them to be a relevant, successful and needed element in the essential variety of the arts (interview with Albie Sachs, 28 November 2006):

Our members should be banned from saying culture is a weapon of struggle [...]. Our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work; it is enough to be politically correct. Ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future.

In the case of a real instrument of struggle, there is no room for ambiguity: a gun is a gun is a gun, and if it were full of contradictions, it would fire in all sorts of directions and be useless for its purpose. But the power of art lies precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions [...].

There is nothing that the apartheid rulers would like more to convince us that because apartheid is ugly, the world is ugly. [...] It is as though our rulers stalk every page and haunt every picture; nothing is about us and the new consciousness we are developing.

Culture is not something separate from the general struggle, an artefact that is brought in from time to time to mobilize the people or else to prove to the world that after all we are civilized. Culture is us, who we are, how we see ourselves and the vision we have of the world'.¹¹

These observations produced a great deal of controversy, as can be seen from the extensive comments published along with the Sach's paper. Sach's view that future art should be questioning, broader ranging, more nuanced and less ideological was interpreted, mostly by cultural workers, as extolling aesthetically-oriented art for art's sake. Sachs responded: 'I regret that my paper came as a shock to many people working in the field of community arts, who saw it as implying that their work was of no value, because it failed to meet high aesthetic standards. Art and artistic endeavour need no justification. Perhaps we should not even try to define art, just do it and respond to it and argue about it'.¹² A second issue, raised by some resistance art practitioners, was that Sachs considered their contribution as no longer having worth. Sachs answered: 'Simply repeating the statement [that art is an instrument of struggle] [...] does not take us any further. It impoverishes both culture and the struggle. Our artists have a much more profound task, a more political one, if you like, than merely providing decoration or stimulation for those in combat. The artists, more than anyone else, can help us discover ourselves. Culture in the broad sense is our vision of ourselves and our world. This is a huge task [...] something that goes well beyond mobilizing people for this or that activity, important though mobilization might be'.¹³ In short, Sachs saw resistance art as part of a complex, diverse set of expressions that would help define the new South Africa. He was critical of the way resistance art was increasingly being used as a form of sloganeering rather than contributing to a nuanced, challenging perspective on the struggle and on the nation's evolving identity.

11 – Albie Sachs, 'Preparing ourselves for freedom' in *Spring is Rebellious*, ed. Ingrid De Kok and Karen Press, Cape Town: Buchu Books 1990, 21-22.

12 – Ibid., 148.

13 – Ibid., 146.

Struggle Photography in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Neither the dissolution of Afrapix nor Sach's position was critical in contributing to the decreasing role of photography in South Africa's transition to democracy (1990-1994). In this period, the resistance photographers' sharp distinction between oppressed and oppressor became blurred. The wrestling for power between Black political groups was gradually displacing the earlier struggle between the government and the Blacks.

Although some former Afrapix members documented the often-violent conflict between these factions, most photographs were taken by international news organizations' photojournalists. One South African group of photographers, calling themselves the Bang Bang Club, represents an extreme form of this documentation. "They were addicts of the adrenalin of hard news", observed Goldblatt in an interview conducted by Mark Haworth-Booth in 2005.¹⁴ Two of the four members of the Bang Bang Club died in the process of making their hallmark photographs, which captured the most immediate, shocking images. The photojournalistic focus on conflict and violence as a supplement to a news narrative thus constituted a highly selective portrayal of the multifaceted national developments during this period.

Beginning in 1990 and continuing through the 1994 election, struggle photographers lost much of their subject matter and their audience. In this changing political climate, with fewer repressive situations to document, along with declining international interest in a country that, with its moderating

14 – David Goldblatt, 'Interview with Mark Haworth-Booth', in David Goldblatt, *Intersections*, Munich: Prestel 2005.

drama, conflict and violence, was becoming less newsworthy, many of the Afrapix photographers (particularly those who continued doing documentary work) had to find different themes, ones that could appeal to the different clientele, with the art market of galleries and museums being the most contemporary sources. Although discussing the subsequent individual careers of some 1980s resistance photographers is beyond the scope of this paper, a few general observations can be made.¹⁵ Afrapix's resistance photography legacy does continue in the current work of some the 1980s photographers, particularly Guy Tillim in his images Africa's various civil conflicts. Not only have the locales and topics changed in this post-apartheid work, but also the depiction of conflict and violence has more aesthetic subtlety and depth. In *Amulets and Dreams: War, Youth, and Change*, for instance, Tillim replaces the stark imagery of human devastation of earlier resistance photographs with an indirect representation of the conflict's residues, such as an image of a school building wall showing with children studying in the lower portion, which is riddled by the war's bullet holes. Tillim's dramatic compositions contribute aesthetically to a deeper rendering that extends beyond documentation. But Tillim's work also includes everyday living topics, as in his recent study of urban life in Johannesburg (2005). These photographs reach beyond the earlier representations of suffering created by the apartheid regime to highly diverse aspects of life emerging in contemporary South Africa. He shows the vibrancy, energy, adaptations and courage in these overcrowded, often meagre and problematic environments. As in Tillim's civil conflict photographs, the Johannesburg images have a powerful aesthetic dimension, especially in their subtle use of available light to define the character of situations and individuals.¹⁶

15 – See Godby, 'After Apartheid', for some initial considerations.

16 – See Sally Gaule, 'Guy Tillim: Jo'burg Downtown', *De Arte* 73 (2006), 43-50, for a detailed analysis of Tillim's urban photographs.

A similar range of content and aesthetic involvement can be found in other 1980s Afrapix photographers' post-apartheid work. Paul Weinberg's *In Search of the San* (1996), for instance, a portrayal of the indigenous San people's profound difficulties with encroaching contemporary 'civilizing' forces, has strong aspects of his political engagement and social conscience. But other aspects of Weinberg's work are concerned with everyday situations, as is the case with his recent photographs of South Africa's diverse spiritual traditions in *The Moving Spirit* (2006). Weinberg's images, like Tillim's, have strong aesthetic features which create subtle and complex pictures, and Weinberg's dramatic use of lighting produces an evocatively personal quality. Also there has been an increasing use of colour in post-apartheid photography, this change was not only promoted by advancing technology. As Goldblatt has observed, the use of colour during apartheid would have been inappropriate. It would have enhanced the beautiful and the personal, whereas black and white photographs more effectively documented the external dramatic contradictions that defined this earlier period.¹⁷

To what extent the increased aesthetic concern and changed subject matter of the 1980s resistance photographers was shaped by the replacement of their former newspaper and magazine clients with those in the art market is difficult to determine. While the impact of the market can be important in shaping the work of photographers, it is only one of the multiple determinants that shape these artists' contemporary activities. There are also such factors as: increasing involvement with international styles and trends that were largely unavailable with the international boycotts and sanctions during apartheid; the disappearance and emergence of a variety of subject matters; new sources of support, such as commissions and corporate funding; and a host of individual artistic and personal decisions. Whatever remains of the political and social orientation that informed their former resistance art likely finds fewer artistic outlets for expression in South Africa's current political climate.

Afrapix's legacy is multiple: it provided a body of powerful photographs documenting a significant period in South African history (although some images have less force, since their intelligibility depends more upon knowing specific historical moments and political issues); it helped to establish a South African tradition of documentary photography; and it trained and supported a newer generation of photographers, Black as well as White, who are now active contributors to the local and international art world. Although the issues addressed by Struggle Photography of the 1980s have less relevance in contemporary South Africa, it continues, as a genre, to have a compelling role in those emerging settings where there are still oppressors and oppressed.

Thesis to read :

- Paula Alexandra Horta, 2011
Portrait and documentary photography in post-apartheid South Africa:
(hi)stories of past and present
http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/6491/1/CCS_thesis_Horta_2011.pdf

- Michelle Fiona Mountain, 2010
The Secret Rapport between Photography and Philosophy:
Considering the South African Photographic Apparatus through Veleko, Rose, Goldblatt,
Ractliffe and Mofokeng
<http://eprints.ru.ac.za/2086/1/MOUNTAIN-MA-TR11-66.pdf>