THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PAST BLACK AND WHITE:

THE COLOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1994-2004

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Back in the summer of 2006, I unfolded Guy Tillim's book *Jo'burg* for the first time while working as an intern at the St. Louis Art Museum—or to be more accurate, upon lifting up the book and opening its front cover, its contents fell out in my lap. Seeing that it was an accordion book, I gently put it down on a table and began flipping through it, pulling its pages out into various lengths. At that point in my life, I had mostly known Johannesburg through scenes of apartheid-era conflicts, from stories of my father's visit as a black officer in the US Air Force there in the 1970s, and from changing airplanes on my way to and from Botswana for a business trip. Tillim's book forced me to pause on Johannesburg, to think about the elusiveness of home and the persistent draw of that gold rush town for so many from around the world. Having just left a position working for the Department of Defense's Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, DC, I began to contemplate a future writing about photographs. That same summer, I was also helped in those efforts by spending a lot of time exploring Okwui Enwezor's *Snap Judgments* exhibition catalogue for the first time, growing more aware of the breadth of contemporary photographic practices across Africa. And before then with little real awareness, I saw Gideon Mendel's work on HIV/AIDS at Wellesley College as an undergraduate, at the time paying far more attention to the public health discourse in which it participated than its use of photography. In short, the work for this project began long before I consciously realized, through the influence of many seeds planted over time.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation investigates photographic series by Santu Mofokeng (b. 1956), Gideon Mendel (b. 1959), David Goldblatt (b. 1930), and Guy Tillim (b. 1962) that deeply influenced the production, style, and display of color photography in South Africa after apartheid's official end, 1994-2004. During this time of dramatic social and political transformation, these photographers expressed misgivings that the activist images of the prior era presented an incomplete view of life in South Africa—focusing on extreme moments of violence and clichéd scenes of protest at the expense of nuance, subtlety, and complexity. Well-known for politically progressive, black-and-white documentary-style photography, they increasingly experimented with color for personal projects in the 1990s-2000s. Their new explorations revealed a mix of anxiety, excitement, and ambivalence about color that informs ongoing discussions about the roles of photography inside and outside of South Africa. In this project, I position this experimentation with photographic form—in this case, color photography—as a way that photographers found a new direction with the medium, but I argue that in doing so, they muddied distinctions between art, reportage, and documentary practices. In this way, South Africa in the post-apartheid era provides a rich, complex example through which to explore the links between photographic practice and technologies, visual forms, and ideology.

My dissertation's introduction traces the development and popularization of color photography in South Africa. Premised on the notion of "fixing the rainbow," it addresses how apartheid society shaped individual access to photographic tools and techniques as well as approaches to representing subject matter. I discuss the technical challenges facing early enthusiasts trying to "fix," or retain, lasting color prints in colonial South Africa. I also consider "fix" in its meaning as a corrective, to examine how photographers and viewers associated color with particular politically transformative potential. The project thus becomes a platform for exploring shifting attitudes to black-and-white and color photography, especially their affective and ethical

associations, notions of their appropriateness for specific subject matter, and their roles in shaping public attitudes and in determining racial and social classifications.

The project's case studies locate contemporary South Africa as a place of high-stakes debates over and approaches to visual representation that makes claims to art, activism, and social commentary. In the project Chasing Shadows, (1996-2006) Mofokeng explored the effects of black-and-white in low light to represent sites of spiritual practice and devotion. Through spectral blurs and dark shadows, the photographs interrogate the associations of black-and-white photography with truth and the limits of visually representing human experience. Aiming to convey the dignity of his photographic subjects, Mendel used black-and-white photographs to represent aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the series titled *A Broken Landscape: HIV and AIDS in Africa*, exhibited at the South African National Gallery and published as a book in 2001. Mendel's project debuted just after photographers such as Chris Ledochowski (b. 1956) and Zwelethu Mthethwa (b. 1960) made assertive claims for the dignifying potential of highly saturated color photography in South Africa's townships; I consider these competing notions of the dignified image on the brink of Mendel's subsequent turn to color photography for his subsequent series addressing HIV/AIDS. With *Intersections* (2005), Goldblatt sought to photograph South Africa's changed landscape as a post-apartheid nation, finding color technology much improved and expressing less anxiety than in his earlier work that color's association with lyricism might override social commentary. Lastly, Tillim's sojourn in Johannesburg's inner city resulted in *Jo'burg*, (2004) as an exhibition and a book featuring muted color photographs of vulnerable black residents in substandard housing. The project served as an elegiac meditation on the urban environment after South Africa's first decade of democracy.

Works by these photographers provide significant insight into how black-and-white and color function across photographic genres and how form relates to photographic meaning and political efficacy. Demonstrating new possibilities for the medium in the post-apartheid era—with

particular attention to nuance, subtlety, and complexity—their projects unsettled traditional categories of photographic practice inside and outside the museum in ways that shed light on emerging lens-based art in South Africa. My project shows that these veteran photographers blurred traditional boundaries, from photojournalism to documentary to art, with implications reaching far beyond South Africa's borders.

PREFACE

"COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHY"

The cover of the November 1935 issue of *The Reflex* features a photograph of a man making a group portrait [Figure i]. In the outdoor scene, the man—wearing a fedora and loose-fitting suit—stands in profile to the viewer, bending over a camera poised atop a tripod that stands low to the ground, its legs splayed wide apart so that the camera matches the height of his subjects. Four smiling children stand across from the man and his camera, arranged in descending height order and squeezed closely together. The caption for the photograph reads: "Colour Photography." The photograph is in black-and-white.

The caption transforms a straightforward photograph of the making of a group portrait into a race-based joke. It is the group of mixed-race children who are "colour-ed,"[1] not the photograph itself. And yet, color is in the photograph, readily visible racially, in spite of the photograph's black-and-white reproduction. However, despite this play on race between the race of the children and the anticipated viewer of the photograph, the race of the photographer in the picture is challenging to discern. The shadows on his face and his position in profile make precise determination difficult. Is he a white photographer making a photograph of coloured children? Is he a coloured photographer making a photograph of coloured children? Does he fit any of these categories easily?

Reading race through a black-and-white photograph could also be challenging in South Africa's notorious passbooks, which featured a passport-style photograph in a booklet that categorized individuals by race.[2] Documentation that designated racial identity was a cornerstone of apartheid-era policy instituted just over a decade after this issue of *The Reflex* was published, although systems of racial segregation and white supremacy were imposed from the beginning of

[1] For the racial and cultural designation as historically used in South Africa, I will adhere to this spelling of "coloured."
[2] I am indebted to Ingrid Masondo's observations about race and passbook photos presented at a two-day symposium at the University of Western Cape, "Ambivalence," in 2014.

European settlement in South Africa. Until 1986, black people were required to carry passbooks at all times that denoted which areas they had permission to access outside of black areas. Beyond skin tone, visual indicators such as physiognomy, bodily markings, and comportment shaped readings of race through the image. In everyday life, South Africans were trained to see color in the form of reading racial identity through black-and-white photographs.

The provocative photo and caption paired on the cover of *The Reflex* generate yet further questions about photographic printing and race. Might a coloured photographer of black-and-white prints be a maker of "coloured" photographs, where his race connects him to a racially and culturally-determined genre? Or might a white photographer making a black-and-white print of a group of coloured children, be making "colour"—or "coloured," photographs, where the race of his subjects overdetermines the classification of the photograph? Endless permutations aside, the confrontation between race and the black-and-white photograph makes the joke on the journal's cover. Billed as "a monthly organ for South African Photographic Societies" based in Johannesburg, *The Reflex* was dedicated to promoting photography as an art form across Southern Africa.[3] Given that South African photographic societies had exclusively white membership under apartheid—with a few other racially exclusive groups emerging later in Chinese and black communities[4]—and that credited photographer Karel Jan Hora, a Czech émigré and prominent member of the Johannesburg Photographic Society was at the forefront of experimentation with early color techniques such as Carbro, there seems to be an inside joke here as well: as in, Jan Hora was a white, highly experienced maker of color photographs producing a black-and-white "colour" photo.

[3] The first issue of *The Reflex* appeared in 1929. It was produced regularly for the next decade until a lull in production around the time of World War II. It then resumed in earnest shortly thereafter. A comprehensive history of South Africa's photo societies that assesses the production and circulation of journals like *The Reflex* could shed important light on the story of photography as art in South Africa.

[4] In *Silver Images*, A.D. Bensusan—noted amateur photographer and one-time mayor of Johannesburg after whom Museum Africa's Bensusan Museum of Photography is named—briefly discussed the development of the Chinese Camera Club and the Progressive Photographic Society. His account of the history of photography in Africa focuses on white practitioners on the continent.

In publications like *The Reflex* and the *South African Photographic Society* journal, contributors frequently wrestled over the question of whether there was such a thing as a distinctively South African photographic aesthetic, often settling on "native studies" as the most defining feature of a national style. "Native studies" frequently featured as a standalone category for submissions to regional exhibitions, alongside "Landscapes" and "Still Lifes." Thus, despite exclusively white members, blacks featured prominently in the output of South African amateur and professional photography. South African photo societies were especially committed to international pictorialism with an ethnographic bent.[5] Photographers made soft-focus portraits of people, agricultural scenes, and picturesque landscapes showing scenes of ostensibly traditional life using a variety of printing techniques including bromide, bromoil, mezzotint, and gevaluxe [Figures ii-iv]. However, amidst the hardening of racial divisions in South Africa, there is considerable irony in the fact that white photographic societies located their national style in representations of black peoples.[6] These

[5] Arthur Elliot, Will Till, A. v. R. Van Oudtshoorn, A.D. Bensusan, and C. P. Frames were some of the prominent names in South African pictorialist circles in the early to mid-twentieth century. For a short overview of South African pictorialists, see: Kathy Grundlingh, ed., "Pictorialism and the Salon in South Africa 1906-1960," in *Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photography* (Cape Town: South African National Gallery, 2001), 34-50. South African "native studies" from the first half of the twentieth century often bear striking formal resemblance to the work of Edward Curtis in his extensive photographic project *The North American Indian*. Reminiscent of the "vanishing race" mythos of a noble traditional culture fading in the wake of modernizing influences, the "native studies" also serve narratives as part of a "usable past" in which South African identity is fundamentally tied to presence of black people. In short, South Africa was home to a mix of simple, primitive peoples and noble savages ultimately fated to succumb to the civilizing influences of white settlers. Michael Godby has explored the similarities between Alfred Duggan-Cronin's photography of 'native subjects' and Edward Curtis' project *The North American Indian*. See: Godby, "Change without Changing: The Ethnography of A.M. Duggan-Cronin's *Bantu Tribes of South Africa*," in *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive*, ed. Tamar Garb (Gottingen: Steidl; New York: Walther Collection, 2013), 97-103; Godby, "'Native Studies': Photographic Responses to the 'Native Question' in South Africa around the Middle of the Twentieth Century," in *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Eds. Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (New York: International Center of Photography, 2013), 46-65. Alfred Duggan-Cronin, described by *The Reflex* as requiring "no introduction" given that "His name has spread overseas and he is regarded as the greatest authority on the photography of natives which this country has" gave a talk to the November 1936 meeting of the Johannesburg photo society. *The Reflex* 8, No. 3 (October 1936): 13.

[6] Writing in a November 1936 issue of *The Reflex*, A. v. R. van Oudtshoorn considered the question of "whether South Africans will ever develop a distinct form of photographic art that may be labelled 'South African'," and answered by pointing to the landscape and native life as having local characteristics. However, in his estimation, it was native life that won out in the end. He wrote, "The subject matter of the country varies from dry, flat, open spaces, to mountainous regions, densely wooded; coast lines, sometimes peaceful and at other times tempestuous. Native life, with its own peculiar charm, exists almost everywhere." He continued: "Thus, apart from the natives, there is nothing absolutely distinctive and different from that in other parts of the world, hence there would appear to be little opportunity of developing a distinctive South African atmosphere or anything different from those styles which already exist." Oudtshoorn, "Photography in Africa," *The Reflex* 8 (November 1936): 6-7. Along similar lines, C.P. Frames' article, "War Dance Photography," advocated for "native war dances" as a "subject typical of South Africa," from which much could be learnt. For documenting these "primitive ballets," Frames' article advised photographers "to take every opportunity of getting pictures of these whilst our genial black friends are still sufficiently unspoiled to take a real interest in their dancing." Frames, "War Dance Photography," *The Reflex* 7, no. 7: 6.

photographers largely treated "native studies" as picturesque views of traditional, simple people in and of the land, exotic and outside the bounds of modern life.

* * *

A recent project by the artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin critically examined photography's capacity—or incapacity—to represent differently raced subjects accurately, and the ways that the medium's ability to do so emerges out of and participates in the structuring of racial norms. The project, *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light* (2012), took its name from a coded phrase Kodak used to mark the company's achievement in developing color film that was better at representing dark subjects, such as VeriColor III and Gold Max.[7] Claiming that Kodak color film in the 1960s was racist—not developed with consideration for representing darker skinned people—French new wave filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard famously refused to use it. Treating Godard's position as a prompt, the South African London-based duo took rolls of one of the widely-criticized color film-types on a visit to Gabon.[8] Using rolls that had long-since passed their expiration date, they made exposures along the way uncertain of whether they would have anything to show for their labors.

In the end, the pair reports that only one exposure successfully developed into a print [Figure v], a close-up view of a plant. However, with the green dye in the film having deteriorated, the plant appears an unnatural hot pink against a pinkish-purple and black background. The failure of the film, which was to be used, as Sean O'Toole detailed, for an assignment to photograph initiation rituals, became instructive about the limits of representation and description in

[7] Lorna Roth's research into "skin-colour balance" elicited this phrase from a Kodak executive in 1995. She interpreted the statement, stating, "With my interest in the filming techniques applicable to darker skins, I take this to be a coded message, informing the public that this is "the *right* film for photographing 'peoples of colour.'" Roth, "Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 34, no. 1 (2009): 121-122. As Roth's paper revealed and Broomberg and Chanarin's work explored, the improvements Kodak made to produce film that could better photograph dark subjects was spurred more by the needs of chocolate and furniture industries needing their products photographed, than by an impetus to better represent a range of human skin tones.

[8] In particular, Broomberg and Chanarin cite Jean-Luc Godard's critique of Kodak's 'racist' color film, and his refusal to use it, as generative for their project.

photography.[9] Broomberg and Chanarin were able to produce one print from their many exposures, making a photograph that loosely connects to the observed scene in the world, but which lacks fidelity to the colors of nature as commonly observed, and indicates nothing of the geography of its making or its historical context. Interrogating the ways in which the politics of race shaped the development of photographic film technology, the larger gesture of Broomberg and Chanarin's project, through which the documentary impulse produces an abstraction *par excellence*, highlighted the false neutrality of photographic technology as well as its fragility and instability.

For another element of *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light*, Broomberg and Chanarin produced a series of billboards featuring a modified "Shirley" card [Figure vi], a common tool for color-matching in photo printing that used "Caucasian" skin as a standard. Instituted in the 1950s by Kodak, "The Shirley" featured portraits of white female models alongside a set of test colors, notation of the film type, and the word "NORMAL." While many photographers determined their own techniques for photographing darker subjects, problems arose when trying to photograph a range of skin tones in the same photograph, especially if that range included very light-skinned and very dark-skinned subjects. In these cases, dark subjects often appeared relatively less well-defined.[10] Lorna Roth, working in the field of Communication Studies, has drawn from Joyce E. King's work to argue that these technical oversights participate in a kind of "dysconscious racism," in which whiteness is presumed as a benchmark norm in conditions in which the makers of the technology and the people advising on photo practices are predominantly white and Western.[11] Furthermore,

[9] For an extended discussion of these projects in relation to Broomberg and Chanarin's career trajectory, including their work on the Benetton-produced *Colors* magazine as well as their increasingly critical interrogations of documentary practice in the context of art, see: Sean O'Toole, "Making, Refusing, Remaking: Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's Recent Photography," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 15, 2-3 (2014): 369-382, doi: 10.1080/17533171.2014.925648.

[10] Following dominant guidelines for "normal" development of a black-and-white photograph made with a "normal" lens, Joel Snyder and Neil Wash Allen, produced a comparative example in which they developed for two figures where one subject stands in shadow next to another in bright sunlight. The results of these two photographs provide very different representations of "what was there," making for an instructive example for the operative rules for "acceptable" photographs. Depending on what the expectations are for "normal" conditions, very different results can emerge, an example that can be extended into a discussion of race. Snyder and Allen, "Photography, Vision, and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 143-169.

[11] Roth, "Looking at Shirley," 126.

Roth identified that the preference for the female figure of "Shirley" also reveals a highly masculinist culture within that paradigm of whiteness in the realms of photo technology development.[12] Broomberg and Chanarin's project exposes the labors of the darkroom, where efforts to standardize the photographic printing process adhered to a set of norms that were far from neutral. The "Shirley" highlights the "critical consciousness" lacking in the making of the technologies and practices of photography.

A project that has shown alongside *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light* draws on the troubled history of Polaroid in South Africa in the 1970s. For *The Polaroid Revolutionary Workers*, Broomberg and Chanarin brought photographs and sculpture together to pick at the scab of South Africa's notorious history of using passbooks. The historian Eric Morgan, who has written in-depth on the history of the movement in the context of the struggle against apartheid, detailed the discovery by Caroline Hunter and Ken Williams, black employees at the Polaroid's office in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that the company was selling their ID-2 cameras to the South African government for the making of passbooks.[13] The ID-2's particular feature of a "boost button" made it especially equipped for the task of photographing dark-skinned people. Broomberg and Chanarin put color film into an ID-2 camera and set off on a road trip in South Africa photographing flora along the way. The ID-2, which was intended to print a frontal portrait and a profile view of its subject side-by-side, was repurposed and directed instead at the South African landscape. Broomberg and Chanarin displayed those prints, but claim to have destroyed the equipment they used for producing the series. They did, however, bring the machine into the exhibition space by way of a "ghost,"[14] a white porcelain sculpture of an ID-2 camera [Figure vii] and a large wooden

[12] Roth, "Looking at Shirley," 116.
[13] For more on the story of anti-apartheid activism within Polaroid, see: Eric J. Morgan, "The World Is Watching: Polaroid and South Africa," *Enterprise & Society* 7, no. 3 (September 2006): 520-549. Also, Eric J. Morgan, "Into the Struggle: Confronting Apartheid in the United States and South Africa," PhD diss, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2009. ProQuest (3354618)
[14] Adam Broomberg used this term to describe the sculpture in an interview on the occasion of its exhibition at Foam Fotografiemuseum in Amsterdam in 2015. "Broomberg and Chanarin: Low Light," YouTube video, 10:41, from foam.org,

sculpture featuring the name—in cursive flourish—of the South African distributor exposed as the third-party vendor continuing to sell ID-2 equipment to the South African government against the stated wishes of Polaroid: Frank & Hirsch [Figure viii]. The discovery of Frank & Hirsch's sales of ID-2 prompted Polaroid's withdrawal from South Africa, the first American company to do so on ideological grounds. Kodak would eventually leave South Africa in 1986, returning after apartheid's end. In Polaroid's and Kodak's wake, Fuji swept in and came to dominate the photo film and processing market in the 1980s [Figure ix]. Many photographers and printers with whom I have spoken in South Africa associate Fuji color film with the production of highly saturated photographs.

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A black female domestic worker stands at a window with her back to the viewer, veiled by a lace curtain [Figure x]. She leans forward, her right arm stretched down likely latching or unlatching the window. Positioned between the window and the lacy curtain, the lace pattern of the curtain extends onto her dress, turning what is likely a simple uniform into a delicate and feminine garment. She stands next to a large television topped by long, protruding antennae, and complete with a VCR. Its convex screen reflects the room's interior.

Every time that I look at this photograph by Gisèle Wulfsohn, *Domestic Worker, Ilovo, Johannesburg*, (1986) I wonder if, when the television turns on, it is in color; as though everything in the room remains in black-and-white save for the television. I wonder if the domestic worker watches the television when her employers are there, glimpsing it while going about her work. I wonder if she watches it while her employers are out—with or without their permission. I wonder if she owns her own television. I wonder if it's a color set. I wonder if she wants one. I wonder what she wants to see and how she wants to be seen. I wonder if she likes this photograph.

"Broomberg and Chanarin, 20 March – 3 June 2015, To Photograph the Details of a Horse in Low Light," https://youtu.be/Uo9IBzscobM.

INTRODUCTION

FIXING THE RAINBOW

"Those years after apartheid were hard on all who wanted to make art in South Africa."[1]
- Adam Ashforth

"A Land of Startling Contrasts"

Apartheid has often been treated as a black and white issue. South Africa's racially segregationist policies, which opposed white with nonwhite, European with non-European, polarized people at home and abroad. In the face of the system's profound injustices and the rhetorical battles it engendered, one could not be neutral—or such was the tenor of discourse. Especially for apartheid's detractors, the demand was to be on one side of the issue or the other, against apartheid or supporting it directly or indirectly. You were for the rights, culture, and power of black peoples, or you were against it, on the side of whiteness. Photography was put to work as an evidentiary tool and persuasive medium in service of those efforts. Reflecting on that time, the photographer Gideon Mendel stated, "…photography was a way to communicate a politics and to have a voice on issues that were clearly black and white, right and wrong. That marked me. I am cursed by a desire to do good."[2] Mendel's statement aligns "black and white" with a longing to communicate clearly about two sides of what he viewed as a fundamentally moral issue.

A 1986 review in *Time Out* of the exhibition *South Africa: A Cordoned Heart* titled "In Black and White," contrasted photographs from the exhibition created in fulfillment of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa with the official images of South Africa promoted by its government.[3] The reviewer, Jon Wall, began by telling of a recent encounter he had with views of South Africa. Wall wrote, "A few blocks away from the *TO* office, in a side

[1] Adam Ashforth, "Serious Laughter: The Twisted Humour of Santu Mofokeng," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 229.
[2] Lyle Rexer, "Interview: Gideon Mendel," *Photograph* (September/October 2016): 39.
[3] Jon Wall, "In Black and White," review of *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*, edited by Omar Badsha *Time Out*, April 23-29, 1986.

window of the South African Embassy, there's a display of picture books portraying a sun-drenched 'land of contrasts' and 'cultural diversity'," an idea of the country contested by *A Cordoned Heart*.[4] As opposed to displaying "the view from a Table Mountain cable car" of a colorful Cape Town excursion, the exhibition featured "stark monochrome images of a land of shantytowns and workers' barracks, of poverty-stricken rural 'homelands' and night-long bus journeys by migrant workers" as well as "ever-hardening black political and trade union militancy."[5] Wall admired the quality of these images as "reportage," asserting that the only beauty of the country that appeared in these photographs was in the "faces" of their subjects.

The black-and-white photography on offer in *A Cordoned Heart* could also be considered a rebuttal to the boosterish vision of South Africa offered up by the national airline South African Airways (SAA) in a series of advertisements in the 1970s. Billing travel in South Africa as an adventure "To the Land of Wonderful Contrasts," SAA set up an opposition between traditional African culture and modernizing European influences on the country. One glossy ad paired a photograph of a traditionally-dressed Ndebele woman backed by a vivid wall-painting with a large-scale bronze public sculpture by Ernest Ullman called *The Playmakers* (1964) [Figure 0.1]. The accompanying text characterized the Ndebele art as imbued with the "primitive spirit" that inspired the European modernist masters "Picasso, Leger, and Modigliani." Meanwhile, Ullmann, like countryman Coert Steynberg, was presented as an example of a major artist working in the country at the time, implicitly connected to the grand European tradition of high art. Other contrasts offered by the series of ads, included: a large ostrich egg frying on a pan at a braai[6] outdoors and an elaborately plated meal of lobster on a tiled table; a tree in an unpeopled landscape at sunset and the Riviera-style coastline of Clifton Beach in Cape Town; a charging elephant in the bush and an

[4] Wall, "In Black and White."
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] This is a Dutch-derived term for "barbecue" commonly used in southern Africa.

organized horse race; and, an elaborate wooden mask and glittering diamond-emerald earrings in a velvet-lined box [Figure 0.2].

Just over two decades earlier, in a similar vein, Edward S. Bomback, author of *Guide to Good Photography in South Africa* (1949), opened the section on "Town and Country" declaring, "South Africa is a land of startling contrasts."[7] By way of illustration, Bomback honed in on KwaZulu-Natal, writing, "In Durban, for example, you can photograph scenes which might have been taken in London or in New York, and yet in less than an hour you can motor out and be in the heart of a native reserve area, where native custom and dress has hardly changed since the time of Chaka."[8] Western-style urban development was thus differentiated from rural native life as indicative of the "startling contrasts" to be found in South Africa.

In an essay on the work of David Goldblatt in 1990, Steven Watson wrote stingingly of South Africa's tendency towards extremes, figuring it as a land of jarring juxtapositions and perverse contrasts. Watson asserted:

> As in few other places, South Africa manages to juxtapose extremes of natural beauty and man-made terror, the one forever inflecting or placing the other within its own ironic quotation-marks. Almost nowhere else can there be so obvious a disproportion between natural grandeur and human smallness.[9]

By way of illustrating this point, Watson turned to a then-recent issue of a major newspaper, to compare and contrast photographs and text on its front page. He noted that next to images of and narratives about harrowing violent acts, was a blithe mention of the delightful seasonal weather the region was having. He wrote:

> Not very long ago, opening *The Cape Times*, the reader would have found a picture on the front page, in full colour, an example of what the caption termed "rough justice": a man, shoeless, apparently middle-aged, mouth misshapen with pain, was being whipped with sjamboks and sticks within a circle of laughing, onlookers at a local taxi-rank. It was apparent from the photograph that both his feet had left the ground

[7] Edward Bomback, *Guide to Good Photography in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949), 37.
[8] Bomback, *Guide to Good Photography in South Africa*, 37.
[9] Steven Watson, "A Version of Melancholy," *ADA* (1990): 37.

> under the force of the blows. Alongside it was a report from the Pretoria trial of a rightwing Afrikaner, the recent mass-murderer of black people. According to the story, his mother had committed suicide when he was an infant, his own strangely marked body having been discovered beside her corpse. Juxtaposed with this, as well as several rape stories, was a column which noted—quite correctly factually—the continuing magnificence of the late autumn weather in the Cape.[10]

In making particular mention of the "full colour" photograph of so-called "Rough Justice," Watson hinted at its particular eye-catching quality, an emphasis it placed on the drama of the image. The violence shown in that "full colour" photograph is presented as reverberating through everything else on the page, tainting a factual account of autumnal splendor, and making it unseemly.

South Africa continues to frequently be described as "a land of contrasts" and striking juxtapositions, but in its current uses, that metaphor tends to describe the country's extreme wealth gaps, varied terrain, cultural mixing, and lingering legacies of apartheid-era policies that reveal persistent patterns of racial segregation. It is a feature of the country often cited for its continuing photographic appeal, as a setting for dystopian fantasies like *District 9*, Afropolitan[11] hipsters, gritty tsotsis,[12] sprawling shopping malls, and "Africa rising" narratives.[13]

At the risk of drowning in the metaphorical connections between the language and practices of photography and South Africa's history of white supremacy, this project examines the ways that photographers and their audiences in South Africa have approached black-and-white and color photography in the context of a deeply polarized society, the so-called "land of contrasts." I am interested in how South Africans developed and attained reliable color technologies, and how the practical, formal, and ideological associations that practitioners and audiences associate with color photography shaped its production and display in the context of a newly post-apartheid country:

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[10] Watson, "A Version of Melancholy," 37. I have not yet located the copy of the *Cape Times* to which Watson referred.
[11] My use of "afropolitan" is informed by Achille Mbembe's use of the term to account for how Africa occupies the world. See: Achille Mbembe and Sarah Balakrishnan. "Pan-African Legacies, Afropolitan Futures: A Conversation with Achille Mbembe." *Transition* 120, no. 1 (2016): 28-37.
[12] *Tsotsi* is a term for a gangster popularized in mid-twentieth century South Africa.
[13] Anticipating Africa's rapid economic growth, "Africa rising" has become a common theme to advance or critique over the last decade.

what I'd like to refer to broadly as "fixing the rainbow." As South Africa made the bumpy but successful transition to democracy in the 1990s, it embraced the nickname of the "rainbow nation" symbolizing its aspirations towards a more harmonious multiracial and multicultural society. It was also at this time that color photography found a more permanent and prominent home in South Africa's arts institutions, a coincidence that I believe is generative for considering the politics of representation in South Africa's first decade of democracy.

By way of introduction, I will address the technical challenges facing early enthusiasts trying to "fix," or retain, lasting color prints in colonial South Africa. In another valence, "fix" suggests adhesion, a theme that I connect to photography's slow absorption into arts institutions in South Africa. I explore photography's journey to be taken seriously and attain staying power as a prominent fixture of South Africa's art scene. I consider what it means to make serious photography in South Africa, which refers to the cultivation of a dedicated and rigorous photographic practice, particular genres and styles of making, as well as subject matter. "Fix" is also apposite in its meaning as a corrective, relating to how photographers and viewers associated color with politically transformative potential (i.e. putting South Africa back together, or more fittingly, "newly" together). The project becomes a platform for exploring shifting attitudes to black-and-white and color photography, especially their affective and ethical associations, notions of their appropriateness for specific subject matter, and their roles in shaping public attitudes and in determining racial and social classifications.

Wealth and privilege shape access to the tools and techniques of photography, and South Africa was no exception. The expense and technically challenging labor of producing color photographs before the end of World War II, kept it out of the hands of many around the world. When color photography became more widely available through producers such as Kodak, Agfa, Ansco, and Polaroid, it had a greater footprint in white communities. Meanwhile, South Africa's

major arts institutions and art schools were slow to embrace photography focusing instead on painting and sculpture. When they did turn their attention to photography, they collected, exhibited, and instructed predominantly in black-and-white. Meanwhile, color in print publications was long the domain of advertising and not of content. This began to change in the 1950s and 1960s, but in the context of the struggle against apartheid, alternative publications on shoestring budgets printed in black-and-white. In the 1990s and 2000s, this also began to change as old publications folded and new ones emerged, and as color photography became cheaper and altogether ubiquitous throughout the media landscape. This dissertation explores the shifting approaches and responses to black-and-white and color photography during the decade following apartheid's official end.

From Black-and-White to Color

The origins of photographic technology are monochromatic. Black-and-white printing methods dominated the medium for well over a century, despite various other options such as the earthy brown tones of sepia and intense blues of cyanotypes. As it is commonly used, the terminology of "black-and-white" actually describes printing techniques that produce results that largely fall between those extremes. Shorthand for seeing truth, "black and white" also speaks to a form of apparent fact conveyed through text and image—what can be seen on the page with our own eyes, blatant and evident. This quality of truth is closely bound to traditions of reportage, where the text of reliable sources of hard news, and the images contained therein, appeared in black ink against white and off-white pages. Increasingly over the course of the twentieth century, color advertisements featured in print sources of serious journalism, forging a marked contrast between superficial commercial color and substantive black-and-white. These divisions began to blur with the addition of the color supplement for photo magazines and newspapers, but in those cases, as Michael Langford argued, this practice communicated the idea that color was a special feature to be

separated out.[14] By contrast, black-and-white was the down-to-earth workhorse of mass-media print publications.

Photography's inability to stably reproduce color was a lingering concern for early champions of its artistic potential. In 1886, although then-advocating for the recognition of photography as an art form and lauding its ability to reproduce nature, the British naturalist photographer Peter Henry Emerson declared painting to still be "the master pictorial Art, for until we can reproduce the colours of nature, we can never equal painting; but all other branches of pictorial Art we are able to surpass."[15] While in 1899, American photographer Alfred Stieglitz made note of the pictorial photographer's ability to enter "practically nearly every field that the painter treads, barring that of color."[16] In 1929, in one of the earliest publications from the Johannesburg Photographic Society, L.G. Bradshaw responded to press criticism of the landscape photography in the Society's first annual exhibition, writing, "Our medium has its limitations and, lacking colour, we must replace it by, at least, a suggestion of atmosphere. Without 'atmosphere' the print may be a perfect reproduction of a scene but not a picture to live with."[17] But beyond atmosphere, some took color into their own hands, literally. The hand-coloring of black-and-white prints and the color washes popular amongst Pictorialists, brought color to photography. And in South Africa, hand-colored photo portraits had especially strong followings and considerable longevity in coloured and black communities.[18] However, this additive method was unsatisfactory for those committed to finding a way to reproduce the colors of nature through chemical photographic methods.

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[14] Michael Langford, "Colour and Conventions," in *European Colour Photography* (London: The Photographers' Gallery, 1978), 9.
[15] Peter Henry Emerson, "Photography, A Pictorial Art," in *Photography, essays & images: illustrated readings in the history of photography*, ed. Beaumont Newhall (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 160, essay first published in 1886. Emerson would go on to change his mind about photography's artistic potential.
[16] Alfred Stieglitz, "Pictorial Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's, 1980), 122, essay first published in 1899.
[17] L.G. Bradshaw, "Our First Annual Exhibition," *Johannesburg Photographic* Society 1, No. 4 (September 1929): 13-14.
[18] For more on the tradition of hand-colored photographs, see: John Peffer, "Vernacular Recollections and Popular Photography in South Africa" in *The African Photographic Archive: Research and Curatorial Strategies*, eds. Christopher Morton and Darren Newbury (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 115-133. Ruth Sack and Lisa Espi, "Picture Perfect: A Social History of Hand-Coloured Photographic Portraiture." In 2014-2015, Paul Weinberg's exhibition "The Other Camera" on view at Commune.1 in Cape Town and

Meanwhile, just as (relatively) stable color plates became commercially available in 1907 courtesy of yet another major French photographic invention, the Lumière Brothers' autochrome, a group of powerful voices in photography came out forcefully for black-and-white as a defining element of the medium. American photographer Paul Strand wrote an assertive declaration of the conditions of "straight photography," in which he argued that color—and the means by which photographers produced color images—were "merely the expression of an impotent desire to paint" and were not part of pure photographic practice.[19] Strand laid out the issue, stating:

> The photographer's problem…is to see clearly the limitations and at the same time the potential qualities of his medium, for it is precisely here that honesty no less than intensity of vision is the prerequisite of a living expression. This means a real respect for the thing in front of him, expressed in terms of chiaroscuro (color and photography having nothing in common) through a range of almost infinite tonal values which lie beyond the skill of the human hand.[20]

In short, for Strand, a photographer who respected the medium of photography worked in monochrome. Similarly, Edward Weston asserted that "the photographer's most important and likewise most difficult task" was "learning to see photographically," which entailed learning "to translate colors into their monochrome values" as one part of the mastery of the "tools and processes" of the medium that would allow the photographer to "instantaneously translate the elements and values in a scene before him into the photograph he wants to make."[21] Weston occasionally worked with color, so this was not a prohibition on using color altogether, but it identified the mastery of techniques he viewed as essential to making good photographs.[22] Black-and-white became deeply entrenched in the practice and understanding of photography through the

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at University of Michigan also featured hand-colored photographs as part of its effort to broaden the kinds of photography commonly included in a history of South African photography.

[19] Paul Strand, "Photography," *The Seven Arts* 2, (May - October 1917): 524.

[20] Strand, "Photography," 524.

[21] Edward Weston, "Seeing Photographically," in Classic Essays on Photography, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's, 1980): 173-174.

[22] See: *Edward Weston: Color Photography* (Tucson: Center for Creative Photography, 1986).

twentieth century with its most vocal advocates championing its expressivity of tone, line, light, and shadow.

In South Africa, the British-born photographer Arthur Elliot expressed similar wariness to that of Strand's about the looming spread of color photography. In a 1908 issue of *The South African Photographic Journal*, Elliott wrote,

> I do not experiment. I have never "gummed," nor carboned, nor freaked, and have no use for autochromes, with their painful restrictions that forswear control. There are certain things that can be done in toning, with an assurance of permanency. These I employ, but I would hate to know that anything had failed to maintain the standard which it had when it left my hands. Therefore, I look askance at the gaudy brilliances which result from Vanadium or Uranium, or other agents which have not proved their stability. I look forward with great hope to carbograph, but on the colour subject in general, I may say, I find no fault with the restrictions of photography. In all art the quality and the possibilities of the medium are to be considered in their relation to the pictorial result. I have seen water colours [*sic*] which wandered out of their individual sphere of purity and transparency to seek the heavy effects of oil, and I have seen alleged photographs which sought to pose as hybrid paintings of fogs and things unseeable through a lens. There is no necessity for photography to imitate any other art process, even in monochrome. There are a number of features capable of being regarded in art, which the lens, and the lens only, can give. They can be summed up as delicacy and accuracy of atmosphere and atmospheric effects, and as the perfect rendering of form, with a true realisation of texture.[23]

Color was thus aligned with the experimentation that Elliot emphatically claimed not to do, a distraction from working on "the delicacy and accuracy of atmosphere and atmospheric effects" and "the perfect rendering of form, with a true realization of texture." The limits of the medium, as he defined them, were satisfactory for Eliot.

Similarly, in 1908 a member of the South African Photo Society writing under the moniker "Hypo Henry" in a satirical column called, "Photo Freaks," described a series of "photographic annoyances," such as taking two pictures on one plate and being tasked with making portraits of fussy babies, as well as the impending availability of color photography. Adding an "additional worry" to the work of photography, Hypo Henry wrote:

[23] Arthur Elliott, **"**Workers and Ways. An Illustrated Interview," *The South African Photographic Journal* 1, No. 1 (February 1908): 8.

> By this new process you are enabled to see your neighbor in his true colours as it were, and should the neighbor possess a somewhat flamboyant nose with a fine magenta background thatched in with red hair, it would be just as well if you kept the knowledge to yourself, as he might be inclined to have you up for defamation of countenance with a punch under the chin by way of a preface. This is where the worry comes in.[24]

Color photography risked providing unflattering honesty. Such sentiments aside, the advent of color photo was eagerly anticipated by many of South Africa's amateur photographers, even as the laborious nature of early color photographic technologies and the expense of materials required kept color out of the reach of most until the 1940s.

Working to determine when the first color photographs in South Africa were made and seen (and by whom) has taken me into the publications of South Africa' photographic societies—in particular, society "Meeting Notes" that include details about presentations, exhibitions, new texts on the subject, and visits by internationally-renowned photographers. Given the close relationship between South African photo societies and the Royal Photographic Society of Britain, it seemed likely that color would have arrived in South Africa soon after its emergence in Europe. A document that Antenie Carstens, digital archivist at the National Library in Cape Town, shared with me from November of 1907 features an advertisement for the photographic services of J.J. Van Ravensteijn, in which the photographer claimed to soon have color photo services on offer, promising to use techniques he learned in France (which suggests that he may have been acquainted with the autochrome process). However, I have yet to locate any evidence that Van Raventsteijn did, in fact, produce any color work.[25] In its earliest stages, the color technologies proffered by the Lumière brothers was viewed as unstable and cumbersome, while offering inconsistent and short-lived

[24] Hypo Henry, "Photo Freaks," *South African Photographic Journal* 1, No. 5 (June 1908): 16.
[25] The advertisement, written in Dutch, reads: "Tevens maak ik het geachte Paarlsche Publiek bekend, dat ik binnen eenige weken mijn intrede zal doen met de Kleuren Photographie, geen Schilderwerk, maar Afnemen in de natuulijke kleuren, in allen nuance, langs Photographische weg, eerst kort, na jaren zoekens in Frankrijk uitgevonden, voorlopig worden niet anders als Visite formaat op glas geleverd." J.J. Van Ravensteijn, "Afnemerij "Rembrandt," Lady Grey Straat." Paarl. 23 November 1907. Carstens came across this advertisement during his research into the history of photography in Paarl for his Master's thesis.

results, and were quickly considered primitive in the realms of color operations.[26] It appears that color photographs were shown within South African photo societies and clubs and salon competitions from c. 1908-1909, although I have not pinpointed the first instance. In 1908, the Eastern Province Herald reported that The Amateur Photographic Society's Annual exhibition in the town hall was a first for showing colored photographs in Port Elizabeth, which is the earliest mention that I can confirm at this time.[27]

The Bensusan Museum collection contains examples of color photography from members of the societies. A wall display dedicated to color photography, includes an autochrome dated to c. 1912 on the wall amid a group of examples of early-to-mid-twentieth century color processes [Figure 0.3]. Also in the Bensusan collection, a photograph of a boat in a harbor [Figure 0.4] by C. L. Van Hasselt is cited as the first color picture exhibited by a member of the Johannesburg Photographic Society,[28] and a December 1938 issue of *The Reflex* notes a demonstration by Mr. Van Hasselt showing how he printed color photographs on paper [Figure 0.5].[29] Processes in common use in the

[26] In an entry on "Autochrome Plates," R.S.T. of Salisbury and M.L. of Delagoa Bay report, "All responsibility as to the keeping powers of autochrome plates is distinctly disavowed by Messrs. Lumiere. In a recent letter to Messrs. Petersen, Ltd., on the subject they write: "Even when kept in the best condition, we ought to tell you that our autochrome plates are not of indefinite preservation. In the very best conditions, that is to say beyond the influence of heat or damp, these plates may commence to show signs of alteration at the end of two or three months. But on board ship, especially during a voyage in tropical waters, alterations may take place much more rapidly. A detention in hot or damp countries equally presents the same danger. We have, however, seen plates which, forwarded abroad, have given good results, while others have arrived completely changed and unuseable [*sic*]. Everything depends no doubt on the conditions in which they are kept during the voyage. However that may be, we clearly warn our clients of this fact in order to relieve ourselves completely of all responsibility in regard to alterations which may have taken place on the arrival of plates abroad or even after a brief retention at their destination." This is so explicit that the autochrome experimentalist has to ensure his own precautions." *South African Photographic Journal* 1, No. 4 (May 1908): 81. In June 1908, a question about autochromes was answered by B.E. in the section, "Answers to Correspondents." B.E. stated, "No absolute data as to the speed of the new Lumiere Autochrome Plate is given. In a test using the tentimes screen by the same light and subject as was used for an Imperial S.S. Orthochrome of speed 275 H. and D., the Autochrome was judged to be much less, say 175. That will be found a fair approximate, but the known absence of keeping power in the plates applies as much to the emulsion sensitiveness as to the colours. Plates of a few months' date are old, and old means beginning to be stale. See letters from Messrs. Lumiere disavowing responsibility on p. 80, in May, "S.A.P.J." *South African Photographic Journal* 1, No. 7 (August 1908): 153.

[27] Around this time, the *South African Photographic Journal* announced details of *The Dresden International Photographic Exhibition* to be held in 1909, reporting that a class on "colour photography" would be offered at the event and that a South African Committee would arrange a collection of pictorial works to send. It is unclear, who, if any members of the South African photo societies attended. But this may have been another site for sharing knowledge of color photographic processes. *South African Photographic Journal* 1, No. 8, September 1908: 162.

[28] I have not yet located a date for this print, but based on Van Hasselt's work with the photo society, this was likely made in the 1930s.

[29] The meeting notes detail, "With the sound knowledge of his process to guide him he steered us through the intricacies of separation negatives exposed on his special one-shot camera, via the subtractive bases stage and so on to the transfers and registrations for the production of the final print. I noticed him being closely questioned in different corners after the meeting and this alone is evidence enough that we have many members who are colour conscious or at least not colour blind." *The Reflex* (December 1938): 18.

early- to mid-twentieth century included Agfacolour,[30] Ansco-color, Carbro,[31] Ektrachrome (Kodak), and Dufaycolour.[32]

In April 1939, the Johannesburg Photo Society notes in *The Reflex* reported the planned formation of a dedicated "Colour Group" within the society. The entry announced, "The object…of this pioneer Group will be to place our country well to the forefront in colour, and to see that the Society, which it represents is not lagging in this great development."[33] The motivation for the group's formation also aligned with the major improvements being made in color technology at the time. The article declared,

> Agfacolour, Dufaycolour and Kodachrome represent the greatest step towards colour development for the amateur and at one blow annihilate the serious problem of the costly one-shot camera. From good colour transparencies separation-negatives can be made and used in conjunction with the many colour printing processes available.[34]

This group also provided support for the complexity and high cost of color processes.[35] By October 1939, noting the large "Colour Section" entered into that year's South African Salon, Johannesburg Photo Society member C. P. Frames declared "that colour photography has definitely progressed beyond the restricted borders of former years and that it cannot be long now before some simple workable process for the progressive amateur appears."[36] Activities around the Photo Societies then

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[30] Mr. C. L. Van Hasselt is reported to have given a talk on Agfa color processes at the April 1934 meeting of the Johannesburg Photographic Society. The group's secretary writes, "Colour Photography has always been looked upon by most workers as something too intricate to tackle. After Mr. Van Hasselt's clear and concise lecture and demonstration at this meeting most of us are now convinced that it is as easy as 'falling off a log'." "Colour Transparencies and Slides in Monochrome," *The Reflex* 5, No. 10 (May 1934): 16.

[31] The Durban Camera Club reported a demonstration from Mr. Reg. Gilzean of the Carbro process at their November 16, 1939 meeting at which Gilzean "gave a resume of the process used in Colour Carbro, but this proved somewhat complicated to persuade many members to become adherents." *The Reflex* (December 1939): 15.

[32] The Cape Town Photographic Society notes in the October 1936 issue of *The Reflex* recount a talk in the previous month by a 'Mr. Japha' about the new Duxochrom Colour Process at which "Mr. Japha assured the meeting in Spite of his being a three colour process it was in reality quite simple in practice." The meeting notes continue to discuss a slideshow that followed that lecture, featuring approximately 60 Dufaycolour slide made by a 'Mr. Blahovsky,' in which subjects ranged "from flower studies, to architectural, landscape and Genre and ended with half a dozen beautiful slides of sunsets." *The Reflex* 8, No. 3 (October 1936): 11.

[33] E. K. J., "Johannesburg Photographic Society," *The Reflex* 10, No. 9 (April 1939): 18.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] The article's author, E. K. J. states, "Every month we hear of simplified processes whereby laggards may be tempted to the fold, but apart from 'Carbro,' 'Chromatone' and 'Wash-off Relief' the majority are only shortcuts with their attendant limitations in reflection." There were major concerns *The Reflex* 10, No. 9 (April 1939): 18.

[36] C.P. Frames, *The Reflex* 11, No. 3 (October 1939).

largely slowed to a halt during World War II, resuming again in earnest in the 1950s, a point at which color photography had made major strides forward.

The World Wars were credited with generating major technical advances for photography. H. H. Rosenberg, purveyor of a camera equipment shop in downtown Johannesburg that advertised "Complete Colour Services," wrote in 1948,

> Just as the introduction of The Kodak at the end of the First World War extended the art of photography and brought it within the scope of the amateurs, so has the end of the last war brought colour photography out of the skilled technician's laboratory into the hands of every camera user. Although still in its infancy, there can be no doubt that it has come to stay.[37]

Rosenberg may have just been stumping for his own business, but his predictions were sound. What followed these technical discussions and early advocacy for color's use was more in-depth discussion of composition, in the late 1940s and through the 1950s. Those looking to make color photographs were entreated to study color, to study paintings, to observe nature, and to approach color composition carefully.[38]

Color photography increasingly appeared in print publications from the 1960s and 1970s in South Africa—but it was also only at this time that photography was finding its way into museum collections in the country. Alongside colorful international publications circulating in South Africa like *Life*, *Picture Post*, and *Look*, there were punchy, boosterish magazines like *Panorama* focused on South African art and culture. There were general interest, pop culture, and fashion outfits like

[37] A. D. Bensusan makes a similar case also in 1948, stating, "'Colour' has had a good boost since the end of the war, I have seen some recent 35mm. Slides and also some cine films, which would stand competition almost anywhere. The production of colour prints still seems rather complicated to any but the most enthusiastic amateur, and great strides still have to be taken before such processes are within easy reach of most workers—Louis Lumière--who founded the process that bears his name." Bensusan, "The Trend of South African Photography," *S.A. Photography* (September 1948): 26.

[38] In an article titled, "Ways to Better Colour," the author writes, "Pictures in colour differ from those in black-and-white because there's more to see. Something has been added; a new dimension, figuratively speaking. That is why it is particularly important, when shooting a nearby subject in colour, that objects in the background be kept to a minimum. Cars and buildings that might go unnoticed in black-and-white can be horribly conspicuous in colour pictures." In a section that entreats readers to "Use Colour Sparingly," the author writes: "A little goes a long way! If you want to keep your colour snaps from looking like the puppy dog who upset fourteen different tins of paint and then rolled in it, you had better double-check the scene before you click the shutter. When you can control such matters let only one or two bright colours appear. If Brother is wearing a brilliant red shirt, don't take him against a pink and yellow wall with a bright green shirted friend. When people are brightly clothed it is much better to snap them against more softly hued backgrounds. Or if your subject is dressed in subdued tones, such as grey or brown, add a spot of colour before shooting. A single bright flower in Mother's hand, or a sprightly carnation in Dad's lapel can give the perfect "touch" (which we call an accent) to informal portraits." *S. A.* Photography 5, No. 19 (June-July 1957): n.p.

Huisgenoot, *Outspan*, and *Fair Lady*, directed primarily at white audiences. *Drum* magazine, a popular targeting highly influential publication aimed at urban black readership, began including occasional color photographs in their issues beginning in the early 1960s.[39] However, its most iconic photo essays appeared in black-and-white. A mix of investigative reporting and general interest appeared in the likes of *Leadership* and *Vrye Weekblad* in the 1980s, which included a mix of black-and-white and color photography. But for well-known arts journals with a leftist bent that featured photo essays working on shoestring budgets like *The Classic*, *Staffrider*, and the very short-lived *Full Frame*, black-and-white dominated.

Casting a Shadow

The endurance of black-and-white photography in an era where color film and processing became more widely available speaks to the persistence of traditions of the medium and of socially-engaged photography, as well as to practical and technological factors. For "engaged"[40] photographers in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, ideas of black-and-white as more appropriate for representing serious subject matter were shaped by landmark exhibitions such as *The Family of Man*,[41] the reportage of Magnum photographers,[42] and the socially-concerned work in books, magazines, newspapers, and exhibitions by a mix of international and local photographers including

[39] Bright color covers were common, first with color applied to a black-and-white photograph, and then later, reproducing color photographs as the cover image.

[40] Okwui Enwezor has used this term to designate "a whole set of pictorial attitudes and photographic production directly devoted to documenting the emancipatory confrontation of the peoples of South Africa with apartheid's political abuses," a term with a broader reach and longer timeline than "struggle photography," more closely associated with photography post-1976. Okwui Enwezor, "Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life," in *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Eds. Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (New York: International Center of Photography, 2013), footnote 38: 44. In a different vein, Ivor Powell characterized Goldblatt's relationship to the world through his photography as "engagement," he turned to the photographer's shift towards increasingly thematizing complexity. Powell, "Parallax and Parallel: The Uses of Time and Space in David Goldblatt's Pairings," in *Intersections Intersected* (Porto, Portugal: Fundaçao Serralves, 2008): 15.

[41] Organized by Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, it was first exhibited in1955 and then traveled widely, including to Johannesburg in 1958. To date, it is one of the most popular exhibitions of all time, touring to sixty-nine international venues, it was seen by over 9 million people and 2.5 million copies of the catalogue were sold. Steichen organized the exhibition over a three-year period, which included over five hundred pictures—from a mix of professionals, amateurs, and archives. Darren Newbury addresses the Johannesburg run of the exhibition in *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009).

[42] Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, George Rodger, David 'Chim' Seymour and William Vandivert founded Magnum Photos in 1947 to support and distribute photojournalistic work throughout the world. It remains one of the world's premier photo agencies.

Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Jürgen Schadeberg, Eli Weinberg, Peter Magubane, Alf Khumalo, and Ernest Cole, among many others. Projects such as *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* (1986) and *Beyond the Barricades* (1989) featuring black-and-white photographs were sensitive to these precedents and aimed to operate in a similar vein.

Omar Badsha, the editor of *The Cordoned Heart* and a founding member of Afrapix,[43] wrote a speech for the symposium organized for *The Cordoned Heart* exhibition in 1986 in which he talked in-depth about the work of documentary photography in South Africa. In a section of struck-through—but still legible—text [Figure 0.6], Badsha wrote about a shift in the international news market towards color photography in the 1980s. He claimed this change put pressure on photographers in South Africa to support that market. The suggestion was that this shift towards fulfilling international media needs by making color photographs was a problematic move away from the grassroots movement.[44] Expensive to reproduce, the alternative news sources and grassroots publications could not afford to print in color. Discussing the pressure that the international media placed on South African photographers, Badsha wrote,

> And in most cases, these photographers have been almost forced to work exclusively in colour. These same photographers have been so closely linked to the alternative press, now cannot provide their own grass root papers (community newsletters) with material. Also travelling exhibitions cannot utilize color because it is too expensive.[45]

This is replaced with handwritten text that reads instead: "This has meant a distancing from the non-racial democratic movement and from the intamacy [*sic*] of local avenues for change." But an underlying idea of this passage, even with the edits, seems to be that making black-and-white photographs was to continue to be "down" with the struggle, to be in touch with its practical

[43] Afrapix was a hub of this activism, aligning with the newly formed United Democratic Front in the early 1980s. Paul Weinberg described Afrapix as "the collective photo agency and library and, most importantly, family of like-minded photographers founded in 1982 and dissolved in 1991." Paul Weinberg (ed.), "Family Matters," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007): 5.
[44] The South African government refused to grant Omar Badsha a passport to travel to the exhibition's opening. Alex Harris delivered this speech on Badsha's behalf. At this time, it remains unclear to me who made the handwritten edits to Badsha's text.
[45] Omar Badsha, "Omar Badsha's Speech—S.A. The Cordoned Heart Symposium," Alex Harris Photographs and Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

requirements and underlying aesthetic sensibilities. Many photographers actively covering anti-apartheid efforts and documenting life under apartheid straddled different realms of photography as they worked to support themselves, occasionally made color photos, but budgets were tight for local outfits. As Peter McKenzie reflected, "Even the "bread and butter" jobs that were done were gleaned from the progressive organizations that had the budgets to pay for photographs. And resources like equipment and film were scarce, every roll had to matter."[46] These practical constraints as well as political and cultural commitments contributed to shaping photo aesthetics.

This small scribbled passage in Badsha's blistering speech about the importance of an explicitly "documentary" photography prompted my dissertation's interest in the relationship between black-and-white and color photography in South Africa, especially in how it relates to photo history and tradition, as well as to the broader field of options for photographic printing. Much has been said in thoughtful accounts of photography in South Africa about the politically transformative work that photography did through the apartheid-era—including coverage of the infamous Treason Trials, exposés in *Drum* magazine, the aftermath of Sharpeville, the frontlines of student protests during the Soweto uprisings in 1976, views of daily life within South Africa's racially circumscribed communities, images of protest made in defiance of restrictions imposed by the States of Emergency, views of snaking lines of black South Africans voting for the very first time in democratic elections in 1994—but discussion of what that work looked like, and making connections between visual evidence and political effects, has been limited.[47] My project strives to

[46] Jo Ractliffe, Peter McKenzie, Sean O'Toole, "Pre-Post: A Trajectory in South African Photography. A Conversation," *Camera Austria*, No. 100, (2007): 132.

[47] Goldblatt, in discussion with Nigel Skelsey in 1986, commented on his sense that the most influential photography being produced around that time were the images shown to outside audiences who then put pressure on the government. Goldblatt stated, "The influence has been due to images that have been published or broadcast outside South Africa which has obviously affected public opinion. This in turn has placed enormous pressure on the régime to change things. Although they continually deny it there is no question that they're moving in the direction of change. They have been influenced by pressure from outside." But in this, Goldblatt goes on to comment that television is a far more powerful medium in this way than photography, which was slower to diffuse and reach a wide viewership. Skelsey, "Private Mission," *Photography* (December 1986): 22.

make connections between what photographs looked like, how they were presented, and their relationship to ideological claims about photography's roles and effects in South Africa.

Black-and-white photography was very closely attached to the work of truth-telling during the apartheid era.[48] For Paul Weinberg, the claim that photography can and does tell the truth was central to the National Party government's efforts to deliberately misrepresent conditions for those disadvantaged by the oppressive apartheid regime. Instead, the truth to be learned from visual culture under apartheid was that images lie, that photographs can be instrumentalized to tell a story, and that this story can be controlled by the resistance as well as by the government.[49] Weinberg recounted Afrapix's statement about photography for the exhibition *South Africa through the Lens,* stating, "Social Documentary Photography is not, in our view, neutral. In South Africa the neutral option does not exist—you stand with the oppressors or against them. The question we pose is how do photographers hit back with their cameras?"[50] In his most incendiary accounts, Weinberg figured social documentary photography not merely as a tool, but as a powerful weapon to be mobilized against apartheid. Projects like *The Cordoned Heart* and *Beyond the Barricades* offered a way to internationalize those efforts. The art critic Gene Thornton, writing about *The Cordoned Heart* in a 1986 review in the *New York Times*, described the look of the exhibition at the International Center of Photography, summarizing:

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[48] Regarding the affective associations made between socially-engagement and black-and-white photography, Sally Stein's discovery in the 1970s of never-seen-before Farm Security Administration color photographs from the 1930s and early 1940s is especially instructive. Stein analyzed Lincoln Kirstein's assessment of Walker Evans' *American Photographs* series, for which "the absence of color becomes a special, transcendent virtue." While Stein noted that Kirstein's essay did not explicitly champion black-and-white over color, Kirstein's rhetoric featured many of the hallmarks of a defense of black-and-white. Stein observed, "Words such as "pure," "puritanical," "hard," "serious" and "sober" support Kirstein's argument that Evans' vision represents "…the naked, difficult, solitary attitude of a member revolting from his own class, who knows best what in it must be uncovered, cauterized and why. The view is clinical. Evans is a visual doctor…" As if prescribing good medicine, Kirstein warned the viewer that "these hard uncolored prints" do not lend themselves to easy consumption: "There is hardly ever any purchaser to the unrelieved, bare-faced, revelatory fact." Sally Stein, "FSA Color: The Forgotten Document," *Modern Photography* (January 1979): 92-93.

[49] In a well-known Afrapix statement, the photographers asserted, "The camera doesn't lie. This is a myth about photography in South Africa in the Eighties that we will not swallow. In our country the camera lies all the time—on our TV screens, in our newspapers and on our billboards that proliferate our townships." Quoted in Paul Weinberg, "Apartheid—a vigilant witness," in *Culture in Another South Africa*, eds. Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1989), 64.

[50] Weinberg, "Apartheid—a vigilant witness," 64.

> Modern black-and-white prints in stark white mats and black metal frames are hung on black walls under blood-red banners. The black and white of the prints is echoed in the text panels and blowup, and the explanatory wall texts are supplemented by statements of intention and belief blazoned across red banners.[51]

Black-and-white photographs and red banners comprised the color scheme for a hard-hitting exhibition about life under apartheid. The South African photographer Jo Ractliffe assessed the approach to apartheid-era photography—in a socially-engaged vein—as follows:

> If you consider photography during the apartheid years, its efficacy and its power was largely tied up in its deliverance of an unequivocal and (seemingly) unmediated "truth": we could "rely" on the image and we understood our world as much in terms of the conventions of social documentary—its explicit black and white clarity—as we did through its subjects.[52]

Ractliffe is rather exceptional, having engaged precisely those kinds of issues in her work from the 1980s, and for that reason, she is referred to as an artist more than a photographer. And yet, this was still her governing sense of the state of things for photography under apartheid.

Omar Badsha similarly expressed uncertainty that truth could emerge from photography, but emphasized the role of personal honesty. In the introduction to the Afrapix-produced book, *Imijondolo*, he stated, "I am not sure if one is able to tell the truth with a camera. All I can show is my involvement through the camera. Who I meet, when and where."[53] The model of photography that Badsha outlined was committed to representing the dignity of its subjects and to collective action. It did so through attesting to the sincerity of the photographer and not to a notion of the medium as a producer of fact. Peter McKenzie has insisted that Afrapix formed in an effort to correct for the "confusing truths" about South Africa in photos circulating in the international press.[54] In particular, Afrapix was directed at representing the more humane and dignified aspects of the struggle.

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[51] Gene Thornton, "Out of Africa: Two Points of View," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1986: 32H.
[52] Ractliffe et al., "Pre-Post," 130. Ractliffe later added, "We were very invested in the idea of photographic "truth" during apartheid. Given the structural violence of the system, it's [*sic*] secrets and lies, photography had to convey a clear, direct message, one that wasn't further complicated or undermined by questions about representation and the subject." Ractliffe et al., "Pre-Post," 134.
[53] Omar Badsha and Heather Hughes. *Imijondolo: a photographic essay on forced removals in the Inanda District of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Afrapix, 1985), 11.
[54] Ractliffe et al., "Pre-Post," 131.

However, while these photographs might have been successful on aesthetic grounds and this might have strengthened the image's impact, McKenzie insisted that the aesthetic must give way to the photograph's social function in order to engage in a committed form of photography that effectively communicated the struggle endured by those fighting apartheid.

Black-and-white photography was a consistent element of the visual culture of liberation in South Africa. It was the format of the most iconic photographs of the apartheid struggle, such as Sam Nzima's photographs of a mortally wounded Hector Pieterson made during the Soweto Uprising in June 1976.[55] Reproduced widely, Nzima's photographs not only showed the anguished moments surrounding Pieterson's death, but they were also suggestive of the Christian iconography of the pietà, tapping into those associations to represent the suffering of those living under the apartheid state.[56] Moreover, the restrictions on publishing and producing photos of Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and other activists, fixed their images in time, making icons of their portraits that became dated as their subjects languished in prison—portraits that were in black-and-white. Whereas David Goldblatt worked differently exhibiting his black-and-white photographs about the insidious aspects of apartheid in daily life at home and abroad more regularly than most of his fellow photographer in South Africa, and producing a series of highly influential books.

Having gained international recognition for exposing the cruel disparities of black and white lives under racial segregation, many progressive professional photographers felt adrift when apartheid ended in the early 1990s. Despite the widespread optimism of the immediate post-

[55] Greg Marinovich and João Silva describe the fate of Sam Nzima's photo stating, "Sam Nzima's picture was sold and resold thousands of times by the newspaper group that owned *The Star* (Nzima had worked for the *World*, banned for its coverage of the 1976 uprising and now defunct), but he never saw a cent until more than 20 years afterwards when he was finally granted the copyright. For Sam the stress of work and the exploitation of his images were too much: he left journalism and became a store-owner in a homeland, helping a relief agency's feeding scheme." *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 104.

[56] In the essay, "Witnesses," Neville Dubow reflected on the most impactful photographs of the apartheid era and the role for photographers including a discussion of "archetypal images" and the pietà in relation to Nzima's photograph of Hector Pieterson. See: Dubow, "Witnesses," *Leadership* 7, No. 4 (1988): 61-62. . Similarly, Nadine Gordimer reflected on the iconographical aspects of this photograph, writing, "Sam Nzima's photograph of the child Hector Petersen shot in the uprising of 1976, carried in the arms of a youth, is the pieta of apartheid's fathomless brutality." Gordimer, "Sudden Life, Never Seen or Suspected Before: David Goldblatt's Photographs," in *Fifty-one Years: David Goldblatt* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2001), 434. I explore this theme further in relation to the representation of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Chapter 2.

apartheid moment, many have described photography in this period as entering into a state of crisis over its legacy, purpose, and viability. In the catalogue for the 1997 South African National Gallery (SANG) exhibition, *Photosynthesis: Contemporary South African Photography*, Kathleen Grundligh stated that during apartheid, "the more creative applications of the medium were relegated to the sidelines. Ironically, the demise of apartheid left these South African photographers each with his or her own creative crises. Freed from their collective political purpose, photographers have to redefine their individual photographic identities and aims."[57] This was presented as a crisis borne of success—the end of apartheid and the beginning of a fully democratic state, which gave photographers the freedom to pursue personal projects, to engage more critically with photographic practice, and to experiment more with form.

In Michael Godby's introductory essay for the exhibition catalogue, *Then and Now: Eight South African Photographers*, produced for an exhibition organized by Paul Weinberg featuring his photos along with those of seven other photographers working before and after apartheid's end—Godby located the early post-apartheid crisis in the loss of subject matter, the market for documentary photography, and practitioners. He described Weinberg's emotionally conflicted experience of Mandela's release from prison in 1990, noting that although Mandela's release was a hard-fought victory for Weinberg as it was for many others, it also ushered in an influx of international journalists coming to South Africa to cover the story for just as long as it continued to be *the* story. In addition to Weinberg's sense of displacement by so-called "parachute" journalists, Godby asserted, "…the real *crisis* at this moment of joy lay in the realisation that the passing of the political conflict had effectively robbed him of his regular subject matter, and that there seemed to be nothing of importance left to photograph."[58] Compounding this was the departure of several key

[57] Kathleen Grundligh, ed., "Curator's Preface," in *Photosynthesis: Contemporary South African Photography* (Cape Town: South African National Gallery, 1997), 4.
[58] Michael Godby, "Introduction," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2009), n.p.

South African photographers active during the struggle from South Africa (like Gideon Mendel), or in some cases, from the field of photography altogether. Zingi Mkefa summarized this predicament in the *Sunday Times* in 2010, opening a review of the exhibition, *South African Photography 1950-2010*, stating, "South Africa's greatest contribution to art history is its photojournalism documenting life during apartheid. But what happens to South African photography when you take apartheid out of the picture?"[59] How were photographers to move forward after apartheid?

The notion of crisis was also central to a 2007 interview between the art critic Sean O'Toole and the photographers Peter McKenzie and Jo Ractliffe. However, the discussion of crisis in that conversation pointed to much deeper concerns within the fuller spectrum of art and visual culture than lens-based pursuits. Ractliffe argued that many photographers were anxious photography was losing its coherence as a medium. In the interview, Ractliffe recalled the debate about the "crisis in photography" in the mid-1990s, and its close ties to the loss of apartheid as subject. Photography was no longer perceived as an unimpeachable agent of truth tied to a collective political movement. Moreover, with photography's strong showing in the widely publicized Johannesburg Biennials in 1995 and 1997, photography was increasingly presented and critiqued within the realm of art. While photography as art had a long history in South Africa, it had been pushed to the margins and dismissed by many involved in the resistance as a bourgeois pursuit.

Following apartheid's end there was growing awareness of these diverse aspects of the field of photography and more opportunities for the practice of different kinds of photography for photographers from all racial and social backgrounds. Furthermore, Ractliffe argued that the crisis was broader than one of photography and afflicted all visual artists at this time. Meanwhile, McKenzie argued that to accept the narrative that South African photography "splintered" in the 1990s to produce a crisis for photography would require that one believe that photography practices

[59] Zingi Mkefa, "SA Photographers Capture Life's Colours in Black and White," *Sunday Times*, 10 October 2010.

were cohesive prior to that time. Instead, he declared that photo practices were anything but unified.[60] Both Ractliffe and McKenzie described a growing awareness among visual artists and the audiences for their work that the whole terrain of photography in South Africa was shifting. While it often seems as though photography is perpetually described as being in a state of crisis—somehow, somewhere—in looking at these examples, I contend that in addition to the loss of subject matter, the market, and some of the personnel, photography as a documentary medium became a site of anxiety and new critical attention, even though documentary was never one thing.[61]

Taking (Color) Photography Seriously

Color photography has been a product of desire and contestation, declared, in its varying forms as dignifying, redemptive, artificial, intensely real, cheap, crass, nostalgic, and utterly modern. The 1990s saw a sharp increase in the exhibition of photography in South African museums and galleries, as well as a discernible shift in attitudes toward the use of color for documentary photo projects. At that time, black-and-white had long been the format of serious photography—at first due to the technological limitations of early photographic processes that could not reproduce color, and later for its distinction from the prominence of bright, bold, and glossy forms of advertising, the punchy realism of photojournalism, and the amateur imperfections of the family snapshot.

To consider what it meant to take color seriously in South African photography, it helps to briefly reflect on what constituted serious photography in South Africa, as in, the categories, traditions, and hierarchies of photographic practice. Writing in 1983 on the occasion of a mid-career retrospective of David Goldblatt's photography at the Johannesburg Art Gallery—that city's largest

[60] McKenzie characterized a field of photography made up of a largely white group of professionally-trained photographers unconcerned with contemporary social and political issues, while the "committed" photographers were made up of a disparate and racially diverse group of professionals and freelancers working to represent different aspects of life in South Africa. Debates over the ways that "committed" photographers represented events in South Africa helped encourage the development of the Afrapix agency. Ractliffe et al., "Pre-Post," 131.

[61] Martha Rosler's addresses the notion of photography as a field in crisis in the essay, "Ethics and Aesthetics in Documentary Photography," in Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press in association with the International Center of Photography, 2004), 362-393.

art museum—South African art critic Joyce Ozynski declared, "JOHANNESBURG does not like giving recognition to its really creative citizens and this exhibition at the city art gallery is very belated indeed."[62] Ozynski expressed feeling that Johannesburg had a tendency to both overlook homegrown artistic talent and photography. She continued,

> Not only does it reflect the gallery's philistine refusal in the past to acknowledge the importance of the art of photography; it also underlines its pathetic slowness in responding to the work of someone whose contribution to our visual culture is of special significance.[63]

As a result, the field of South African photography had been sorely limited. Ozynski wrote, "South African photography was confined to camera club pictorialism and photo-journalist reportage when Goldblatt began to take photographs seriously, and over the intervening years he worked in almost complete isolation."[64] In what she figured as Goldblatt's exceptional contribution up to that point, Ozynski went so far as to claim, "There is no substantial or significant body of photographic work that came before him, and the work of the younger generation which is now beginning to appear must inevitably be predicated on his achievements."[65] This was a harsh assessment of the state of the field, but Goldblatt's position as a pre-eminent figure in South African photography underscores Ozynski's reading. Indeed, Goldblatt's own commentary about the state of the field in the prior decade was similarly bleak. In 1975, when asked about works of art he admired, David Goldblatt pointed to novelists and playwrights, such as Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* and "some of the work of Athol Fugard and Barney Simon." He then asserted, "I do not know of any photographer in this country whose work I would term art."[66] This was another harsh assessment.[67]

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[62] Joyce Ozynski, "A Pioneer Is Recognised at Last," *Rand Daily Mail*, September 27, 1983, 9.
[63] Ozynski, "Pioneer," 9.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Natalie Knight, "Images of a Realist," *The Star*, Wednesday, August 27, 1975: 18.
[67] Statement from David Goldblatt in Diane Smyth article on the occasion of 2006 exhibition at Rencontres d'Arles: 'It's kind of ironic,' he says. 'The kind of recognition that we South African photographers are getting now would have been far more meaningful and encouraging during the years of Apartheid. The Photographers' Gallery and the Side Gallery were very supportive, but in general there was very little interest.' Diane Smyth, "After Apartheid," *The British Journal of Photography* 153 (June 28, 2006): 13.

The push toward greater recognition for photography-as-art in South Africa was still coming from photo societies—the bastions of "camera club pictorialism," salon competitions, and wildlife photography. These groups were fertile grounds for debates over what photography could and should be, and staking out territory for photographic practice, although often resistant to more progressive trends and adhering to apartheid's racial strictures. A September 1975 issue of *PSSA News and Views* detailed progress following the publication of an article by a member of the Pretoria Photographic Society that appealed directly to the Secretary of Education in January 1975 to call a meeting in Pretoria to discuss treating photography as a fine art. Later, the National Cultural Council came on board with the idea.[68]

It was around this time in the mid-1970s that the Technical Photography department at the South African National Gallery (SANG) in Cape Town, a section largely tasked with photographing the collection and handling image requests for publications, began organizing small-scale exhibitions. Eventually, that department gained a curatorial position.[69] One of the important jumps forward for the establishment of a dedicated photography department came from Nigel Fogg, Senior Technical Assistant for photography at SANG in 1982, who also had close ties to the Michaelis School of Fine Arts at the University of Cape Town. In an essay called "Regarding Photographs" published for the SANG's quarterly newsletter, Fogg examined the issue of photography as "a serious art form" in

[68] The article announced, "This is a tremendous boost for photography in our country, and the field is now wide open for further promotion of photographic activities in a number of ways: for example, exhibitions—both domestically as well as internationally;--the promotion of lectures etc., to cultivate a better appreciation of and taste in photography as a plastic art, the purchase of top-quality photographic art—South African and from overseas—for permanent display in various art galleries." *PSSA News and Views* (September 1975): 4-5.

[69] According to the South African National Gallery: "The Photography and New Media Collections are amongst the 'youngest' of Iziko South African National Gallery's permanent collections' departments. Photography as a new department was set up in 1965, with the presentation by the Cape Tercentenary Foundation of a portfolio of 135 prints by Albert Newall. Obstacles to its earlier acceptance lay in ambivalence about its status as an art as well as reluctance to establish a new area of collecting without ample funds to do so. Nonetheless, the introduction of a Photographic Collection took place relatively early, given that the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, said to be the first western European museum for modern art to collect photography, did so under Willem Sandberg only slightly earlier, in 1958." The Department has faced challenges, at times having a relatively low to non-existent acquisitions budget. SANG reports, "The first photographic exhibition was held in 1975, Jansje Wissema's Cape Town, and thereafter photographic exhibitions were held virtually annually, but it was from the 1990s that the programme gained momentum." "Photography and New Media," *Iziko Museums of South Africa*, https://www.iziko.org.za/static/page/photography-and-new-media.

South Africa.[70] Turning to the likes of Aaron Scharf, A.D. Coleman, and John Szarkowski, Fogg outlined a modernist vision of photography, critical of early photographers' aping of painting who were little more than apologists for the medium. Important photography brought ideas to the medium and utilized its expressive potential. Fogg defined it as both an extractive and communicative medium, closely tied to reality but at a remove from it. Meanwhile, at Johannesburg's largest art museum, the first photographs were collected at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1978.[71]

Color photography eventually gained greater acceptance in major art institutions over the course of the twentieth century, especially in the United States and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s with work by photographers such as William Christenberry, William Eggleston, Joel Meyerowitz, Jan Groover, Stephen Shore, and Paul Graham at the forefront of this trend.[72] Digital photography's major strides since the 1990s dramatically reshaped the relationship between black-and-white and color photography for amateurs and professionals, simplifying the process for moving between black-and-white, color, and an array of filters and editing specifications.[73]

In South Africa, color was felt by many to be a choice too inappropriate and too expensive under apartheid. The curator Simon Njami has addressed the risk taken on by photographers working under apartheid, and the consciousness that demanded. Of working in that period, he argued, "Photography could not afford to be an artistic abstraction. It was both a political and intellectual commitment. It was anger, it was revolt."[74] Godby provided a similar account, writing:

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[70] Nigel Fogg, "Regarding Photographs," *Quarterly Bulletin: South African National Gallery*, No. 11 (December 1982): n.p.
[71] These were a set of photographs by the British conceptual photographer John Hilliard from his *Cut Back* series (1977). *Jagged*, (July-October 2006), n.p.
[72] Recent exhibitions of color photography in twentieth century America chart its technological development, formal and stylistic watersheds, and spread through visual culture. Kevin Moore's *Starburst: Color Photography in America: 1970-1980* (2010) focuses on the 1970s as the era in which color photography found a home in American museums, while two recent publications, Katherine Bussard and Lisa Hostetler's *Color Rush: American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman* (2013) and John Rohrbach's *Color: American Photography Transformed* (2013) take expansive looks at key moments in the emergence of color photography in America.
[73] There is a lot more to say about this that is particular to South Africa, especially the sense that the technical and aesthetic jump in South Africa was from black-and-white darkroom processing to digital color printing. John Fleetwood, personal communication with the author, January 29, 2014.
[74] Simon Njami, "A Silent Solitude," *Santu Mofokeng: A Silent Solitude, 1982-2011*, 14.

> …for a time it seemed that any expression of concern for photographic style would detract from a sense of commitment to the subject. But Badsha and others clearly worked hard to develop a formal language to communicate the precise sense of humanity they recognised in their subjects; and they clearly searched for stylistic forms to create powerful, meaningful images.[75]

Color was also challenging to produce for its continued technical difficulties, its expense, and particular to South Africa, the impact of economic boycotts that limited access to the tools of color.[76] Since the early 2000s, the pendulum has swung in the other direction. The improvements in and popularization of digital photography has reshaped the market for black-and-white film and photo paper.[77]

In reckoning with the "new dispensation" of the post-apartheid era, art increasingly became a site for experimentation with photography. In a recent interview, Gideon Mendel commented, "Given what has happened to paying outlets for documentary work, the movement of photographers into the art world strikes me a bit like all the embassy people trying to get out of Vietnam on those few helicopters in 1976. It can appear that desperate."[78] But the realm of art has become a home for many photographers as other venues for disseminating their work dissolved. In addition to moving away from foregrounding the struggle against apartheid in a social documentary mode, South Africa was also gaining more access to and interest from the international art world. Mendel has seen that shift as enabling himself and others to move beyond the "three different

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[75] Michael Godby, "Then and Now," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007), 11.

[76] John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 255. Another possibility that requires further investigation is the role of television's late introduction in shaping the look of photographs. Where mid-twentieth century photo magazines saw their readership gravitate toward television in the 1960s and 1970s, the South African Broadcasting Corporation began national broadcasts in 1976. Black-and-white photography might have operated as a counterpoint different from state television, advertising, and the publications that could afford to reproduce in color, something that grassroots and alternative publications largely couldn't do.

[77] Carol Squiers, in the context of the ICP exhibition, *The Body at Risk*, writes about the changes in photographic technology and how the decreased availability of particular films was reshaping what the field of photography as reportage was looking like at the turn of the twenty-first-century. She writes, "In 2005, Ilford Imaging of Britain, the largest maker of black-and-white photo paper, emerged from its 2004 bankruptcy and Germany's AgfaPhoto GmbH filed for bankruptcy." Carol Squiers, "Introduction," in *The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2005): 16, footnote 22.

[78] Lyle Rexer, "Interview: Gideon Mendel," *Photograph*, September/October 2016: 41.

pigeon-holes," the trio of "documentary, activism, and art."[79] As Jo Ractliffe observed, "We became part of an international art world and this expanded the field; remember the 1995 and 1997 Johannesburg Biennials and the surge of photography and video that followed? Suddenly, or so it seemed, photography had entered the realm of art." Ractliffe goes on to suggest that perhaps the significant impact of these changes on the photo scene in South Africa spurred new anxieties about a loss of "coherence" for the medium and "the distinctiveness of its project," one that would see it "simply be absorbed into the broader practice of contemporary art—because that's really what changed here then."[80] The boundaries, such as they were, blurred.

Methodology & Chapters

The four photographers who feature in this project have frequently been grouped together. Exhibitions helmed by Tamar Garb such as *Home Lands / Land Marks: Contemporary Art from South Africa* (2009) and *Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* (2011), Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester's *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and The Bureaucracy of Everyday Life* (2012), Okwui Enwezor's *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary Photography* (2006) only scratch the surface of exhibitions that have looked comparatively at the work of some or all of the photographers who are discussed here. Meanwhile, earlier projects like *A Cordoned Heart* and *Beyond the Barricades* saw these photographers working together collaboratively to produce journals, magazines, anthologies, and exhibitions. The photo circle was a small one, and spaces like the Market Theatre Gallery in Johannesburg, international conferences and festivals elsewhere in Africa and beyond, were important for showing the work of these photographers and serving as a place for discussion and social connection.

[79] Rexer, "Interview: Gideon Mendel," 40.
[80] Ractliffe, "Pre-Post," 130.

The profiles of Mofokeng, Mendel, Goldblatt, and Tillim are high at home and abroad, and their work circulates in arts institutions in major world capitals. In a way, they are the usual suspects for such a project about this era, and I may have done better to delve more deeply into the work of photographers who have received less attention for their work, such as William Matlala and Ruth Motau, or to mix in discussion of work by photographers who have only loose, if any, connections to documentary practice locating their work more in the space of art, such as Lien Botha. It is also important to note, that while discussion of race emerges frequently in relation to the subject of the photographs, this project only minimally engages with the racial and social identities of the photographers. Mendel, Goldblatt, and Tillim are white. Mofokeng is black. In expanding the timeframe from the decade that I focus on in this project would have brought in a more racially diverse range of photographers, as more opportunities for photo education and avenues for exhibition have emerged over the last decade. This selection of photographers, chosen here for their national and international profiles in contemporary art and how they have explicitly engaged—or not engaged—with color photography, also indicates the ways that access to artistic venues, photo education, and financial support shaped who could participate. But even within those constraints, there are far more stories to tell about photography being made in South Africa in the 1990s and that deserve attention not given here. It is also the case that this project engages in only limited ways with the work of female photographers. It is my hope that expanding this project in the future will bring more diversity in terms of backgrounds and points-of-view into this discussion of South Africa's history of color photography, documentary practices, and photography-as-art.

Research into the history of South African photography has grown considerably since the 1990s, and this project builds on work across disciplines into the subject, including art history, visual culture, history, communications, and anthropology. The work of Adam Ashforth, Jennifer Bajorek, Rory Bester, Okwui Enwezor, Michael Godby, Patricia Hayes, Marilyn Martin, Ingrid Masondo,

Darren Newbury, John Peffer, Sean O'Toole, Kylie Thomas, Annabelle Wienand, Hlonipha Mokoena, and many other dedicated scholars has been invaluable for the direction this project was able to take.

I conducted formal interviews with over a dozen photographers as part of my research. I recorded these interviews when possible and have drawn from them while doing my utmost to keep in mind that memories change, fade, and return over time. Much of what emerged in those discussions—most of which were conducted in person—does not make its way into the text of this dissertation, but it strongly informs my sense of the field and the research that I've brought together.

Chapter 1 looks at how black-and-white photography takes on critical, historical, and haunting qualities in Santu Mofokeng's project *Chasing Shadows* (1996-2006). Where Mofokeng previously worked against the models of photojournalism popular in South Africa during the 1980s, *Chasing Shadows* distanced Mofokeng from his prior documentary-style projects. Retaining the black-and-white format that was the standard for serious photography throughout the history of the medium in South Africa, *Chasing Shadows* saw Mofokeng playing with light, shadow, and tone in ways reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century pictorialist photography. This is work that models photography as a spiritual practice in and of itself, a pursuit of the ineffable, hinging on the notion of the "shadow" as a double-edged agent of good and bad, real and unreal. Mofokeng often represents figures as blurs or obscured by smoke and mist or floating and hovering within the dramatic, chiaroscuro landscape of the Motouleng Caves that have long been a site for diverse religious practice—a multi-purpose sacred space. I examine how Mofokeng brought the same rigors he used in his documentary practice into dark spaces where making legible, persuasive photographs became impossible.

Chapter 2 focuses on Gideon Mendel's *A Broken Landscape: HIV and AIDS in Africa* (2001), to explore how photographers represented what was arguably *the* next major crisis facing South

Africa: HIV/AIDS. *A Broken Landscape* featured intimate black-and-white photographs of people in five sub-Saharan African nations living with and dying of AIDS amidst the dramatic spread of the virus and glaring government inaction in the 1990s. I consider it in relation to Zwelethu Mthethwa's *Interiors* series (1996-2003) and Chris Ledochowski's *Cape Flats Details* (1990-2002), both vibrantly hued color photo series featuring black township life in South Africa in which color was understood to give dignity to subjects in a way that black-and-white failed to do. With a claim to dignity also at the heart of *A Broken Landscape*, I situate Mendel's project as one central to the debate over the political efficacy and ethics of representing vulnerable subjects in black-and-white and color formats. His subsequent turn to color for series such as *Framing AIDS* reveals Mendel's reconsideration of the weightiness of the dignifying potential of black-and-white against the liveliness and seductive appeal of color.

Chapter 3 begins four years after South Africa's first fully democratic presidential election and the official end of apartheid, when *David Goldblatt: Photographs from South Africa* opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1998—MoMA's first solo show for a South African artist. Featuring a selection of black-and-white photographs made over almost 30 years (1964-1993) from the series, *South Africa The Structure of Things Then*, the exhibition emphasized the ways that the forces in support of, subject to, and critical of the nation's governing ideology of white domination shaped the built environment.

Through that project and exhibitions like the one at MoMA, David Goldblatt reached a new level of international fame. Yet, just as he was finding major critical acclaim as arguably South Africa's premiere photographer of black and white lives in black-and-white with the *Structure* project, he began experimenting with and using color photography to examine the changing landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter explores Goldblatt's shift to color in the context of his *Intersections* series, begun in 1999. I argue that Goldblatt's turn to color represents a telling mix of

what became politically permissible, formally acceptable, and technologically possible and practical in the post-apartheid. Beyond crafting an easy metaphor about South Africa's transition from a nation structured by the opposition of white and non-white peoples to the polychrome promise of the "Rainbow Nation," I contend that the use of color photography is emblematic of a shift away from certain kinds of self-censorship and towards an expanded range of formal possibilities that could newly be understood to possess a critical edge and to represent socially engaged subject matter.

Chapter 4 turns to the city of Johannesburg to examine Guy Tillim's *Jo'burg*, a series that offers a close study of marginal and unstable housing for residents in dilapidated, mismanaged buildings. Tillim's project brought attention to a new wave of removals tied to the interconnected issues of white-flight, movement of investment, abandonment, neglect, immigration, and plans for re-development.[81] In *Jo'burg*, Tillim made a virtue of subtlety, that which he claimed fell by the wayside in the service of making a statement against apartheid. Using a subdued color palette of soft yellows, browns, and grays punctuated by moments of more saturated color—a crimson headscarf, a royal blue wall—he encourages us to linger and look closely. While some critics find this formal strategy to be a disingenuous affectation or mere trendiness, I suggest that the turn to muted colors evinces the freedom to speak quietly about complex issues.

Amidst official apartheid's dismantling in the early 1990s and without the clear end-goal of overthrowing an officially sanctioned oppressive system, many of these photographers began experimenting with formats beyond the gritty black-and-white documentary style that so dominated socially-engaged photography. In this context, veteran photographers of the anti-apartheid struggle deliberated over whether color photography could be a visually compelling and politically salient

[81] Key reasons cited by Alan Morris include overcrowding in the township and distancing from violence related to the Struggle. Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt. Attribute this to the end of the pass laws in 1986. Housing shortages in Indian and Coloured areas spurred the "greying" of neighborhoods closer to Johannesburg's city center. Alan Morris claimed that "less than one in five apartment dwellers was now white" in Hillbrow in the early 1990s. "Preface," in *Bleakness & Light*, n.p. According to Morris, "85 per cent of Hillbrow's population was black" in 1993.

format. Color technologies and printing techniques became an aesthetic and political battleground, one that helped solidify photography as a major contemporary art form in South Africa and revealed sharp divides over what the country's present and future should look like.

CHAPTER 1

SEEKING SPIRITS IN LOW LIGHT: SANTU MOFOKENG'S *CHASING SHADOWS*

Partially Real

Santu Mofokeng in the caves chasing shadows.

That phrase reads like the reveal at the end of a game of "Clue," an answer to a whodunit: a person, a place, and an act of transgression. Beginning by approaching Mofokeng's *Chasing Shadows* as steeped in mystery speaks both to its subjects of ritual and spirituality, as well as its treatment of photography as a suspicious medium. The idea of the photograph as the "scene of the crime" is an old one, most famously said of Eugène Atget's work by Walter Benjamin.[1] That statement suggests that Atget's photographs of Paris's exteriors and interiors, so often devoid of people and activity, looked like precursors to or the aftermaths of crimes—sites for projection and speculation haunted by evidence.[2] Explaining his reasoning for appending the word "style" to "documentary," the American photographer Walker Evans also invoked a "scene of a crime," stating,

> Well, literally, a documentary photograph is a police report of a dead body or an automobile accident or something like that. But the style of detachment and record is another matter. That applied to the world around us is what I do with the camera, what I want to see done with the camera.[3]

The "documentary-style" photograph is thus figured by Evans as having something more and less to it than mere evidentiary capture, an effect of distancing and of attention. In *Chasing Shadows*, Mofokeng's transgressions weren't criminal, but instead, were attempts to represent traces of faith-

[1] David Campany addresses the idea's origination with Camille Recht in relation to Benjamin. See: Campany, "Eugène Aget's Intelligent Documents," *Atget: Photographe de Paris* (New York: Errata Editions, 2008). http://davidcampany.com/atget-photographe-de-paris/.

[2] Patricia Hayes explores "aftermath" as a theme in Mofokeng's more recent *Poisoned Landscapes* series, noting that "…while photographic thematics often emerge as a result of political, economic or pressure group forces, there is a philosophic force emerging inexorably from this work that is about aftermath—a more difficult aftermath to read than those associated with African conflict or post-conflict scenarios. This is all much more opaque, without humanist proximity or an obvious drama." Hayes, "Poisoned Landscapes," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 205.

[3] Walker Evans, interview by Paul Cummings, December 23, 1971, transcript, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-walker-evans-11721. Cited in Jeff L. Rosenheim, *Walker Evans and the Picture Postcard*, (Göttingen: Steidl, 2009), 15.

based experience often thought to exceed or refuse the visual. Smoke, haze, reflections, blurs of movement, shadows, silhouettes, zoomorphic rock formations, and the inscrutable lives of flora and fauna are features of the series that do the suggestive and metaphorical work of straddling spiritual transcendence and the everyday.

The "chaser of shadows" is Santu Mofokeng (b. 1956), a South African photographer who started his career as a self-described "street photographer" in the 1970s. He then went on to work for newspapers, magazines, the photo collective Afrapix, university-based research projects, NGO-funded assignments, and personally-initiated essays. As a black photographer, he was largely self-taught, gaining knowledge and experience from darkrooms, colleagues, and self-directed work especially in and around Johannesburg, although more recent projects have taken him further afield. He has provided eloquent, thoughtful, and occasionally shifting accounts of his photo practice over the years and assessments of the field of photography more broadly, often with an acerbic sense of humor and reticence about photography's potential to communicate.

The place where *Chasing Shadows* coalesced is a popular site of spiritual pilgrimage in the Eastern Free State of South Africa, the Motouleng Caves. The project went on to expand from that site as "chasing shadows" developed into a highly generative conceptual framework for Mofokeng's photography, shaping subsequent projects in various sites around the world. Where his earlier photography was more preoccupied with everyday[4] life—although the *Black Photo Album* (1997) took him into the archives of turn-of-the-twentieth-century studio photography[5]—*Chasing Shadows* explored ephemeral aspects of religious experience and investigated the limits of photography's explanatory capacity. It drew on Mofokeng's earlier *Train Church* series, which he made on the Soweto-Johannesburg commuter line in 1986, when religious practice made for a somewhat dubious

[4] There is an extensive discussion of the presence and absence of representations of "everyday" life under apartheid in South Africa. See: Njabulo Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006).
[5] Mofokeng claimed: "I think the BPA was conceived as a way to get black people interested in what I was doing in my documentary work." Santu Mofokeng, written communication from the author, December 11, 2015.

subject amidst the urgency and strife surrounding the States of Emergency.[6] And yet, in the way that everything that happened under apartheid was about apartheid, *Train Church* told a distinctive story about how spirituality functioned under apartheid. It spoke strongly of how blacks endured the daily indignities of the apartheid system, making time and space on horrendously overcrowded train commutes to participate in religious services. Mofokeng turned his camera on the loud praying and singing that thwarted his attempts to rest on his journeys [Figures 1.1-1.2]. He documented cramped, intense scenes of religious fervor in the context of the daily ritual of commute.

For Mofokeng, *Train Church* was a project that held together "two of the most significant features of South African life: the experience of commuting and the pervasiveness of spirituality."[7] Mofokeng has been dismissive, curious, and critical of spirituality. Despite growing up "on the threshing floor of faith, with Christian ritual and spiritual practice," he has expressed feeling embarrassed about these practices, attributing that feeling in part to his training and education aligned with Marxist ideology in the 1970s and 1980s. Going to the caves was a way to continue thinking through and unpacking those associations. In the extended interviews Mofokeng participated in with Corinne Diserens for the *Chasing Shadows* book, he declared, "You can't say Christianity is a major religion any more. It went down with industrialization, it went down with scientism."[8] Diserens put pressure on that statement in their exchange, and Mofokeng admitted having come to see the importance that religion, and in particular, Christianity played in people's lives under apartheid. Mofokeng stated:

> When I was growing up in the 1960s, after the political organizations were banned, and people were in jail or in exile, there was little political activism. Until 1976, South Africa was very quiet. Churches became a big thing. I began to think about the role

[6] Jürgen Schadeberg's series of photographs, "The San People of the Kalahari," (1959) features a "dance of exorcism" around a fire at night that plays strongly on the contrast of intense firelight in darkness and smoke. This look at ritual dance is part of a larger series with an ethnographic bent.
[7] Santu Mofokeng, "Train Church," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 19.
[8] "Santu Mofokeng in Conversation with Corinne Diserens, Part 2," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 96.

> that religion and spirituality could have played in keeping the country from exploding. Maybe people felt that if they couldn't beat apartheid, justice would happen in the afterlife. So I began to look at spirituality as a phenomenon, and at the role religion plays in the politics of this country.[9]

Although what this meant for him personally—that religion helped people endure apartheid—appears to be something he is still working out, still chasing.

With *Chasing Shadows*, Mofokeng continued to examine "the pervasiveness of spirituality" in South Africa, but instead of the apartheid-era commute, he photographed scenes of post-apartheid religious pilgrimage. He began the project two years after South Africa's transition to democracy, focusing his attention on the inscrutable, meditative, and extraordinary. In observing the pilgrimage, he also turned critical attention on the porous boundaries of reality and fiction that can be represented through the photograph.

During his work in the 1980s, Mofokeng grew increasingly critical of the kinds of realities photography can produce. Turning a critical eye on the photos being made of township life, he became wary of excessive media attention on violence and poverty, and photography's easy ability to make its subjects into victims.[10] Reflecting on the gaps he had observed in media coverage of life in Soweto, Mofokeng explained, "It is not that the violence and squalor that we have become so accustomed to seeing in standard photographs of the township are not real—it is just that they are partial realities, which do not encompass people's lives."[11] Projects like *Train Church* have been seen as going some way to filling in the gaps and showing a more complex view of daily life for blacks in the 1980s. *Chasing Shadows* put "partial reality" front-and-center. In the low light of the caves, using available light and black-and-white film—the approach to making photos that he associated with

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[9] "Santu Mofokeng, Part 2," 96-97.

[10] A quote from Abigail Solomon-Godeau is placed in the upper right of the first page of the "Child-headed Households" essay as it appears in *Chasing Shadows*. It reads, "One danger with documentary photography, especially 'victim photography', is that it may create its victims as much as it finds them." in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 184..

[11] Santu Mofokeng, "A Letter from Johannesburg: The Soweto Documentary Project," *Happy Sad Land*, Das Bild Forum, Internationale Fototage Herten (1993). Reproduced in *Chasing Shadows*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 64.

documentary practice—Mofokeng's photographs took on spectral qualities. In these haunting images, it may also be useful to think about "partial" in its meaning of privileging, that Mofokeng is also prioritizing the question of reality in this series, that he is offering up these photographs and their attendant concerns for scrutiny.

Take, for example, *Church of God, Motouleng, Free State* (1996), [Figure 1.3] in which a figure appears as a blur, walking barefoot on the dirt ground. On the lower right of the image, "CHURCH OF GOD" is painted in large block letters amidst layers of scrawled names on the cave walls behind a simple white altar. Diagonal striations extend in streaks across the face of the rocky edifice. These are likely the effects of weathering, but they give the wall's surface the appearance of sacrificial and sacred liquids accreted onto it over time.[12] Evidence of prayers, or mere grafitti—the kinds of scrawls that Adam Ashforth called "the Sotho equivalent of 'Kilroy was here'-type graffiti"—cover the surface of the rockface near the altar.[13] The blurred figure walks towards a darkened shadow at the left of the scene; this shadow looks like an entryway to another part of the cave, or perhaps merely an illusionistic pattern on the surface of the cave wall.

On the opposite page from this image as it appears in the book *Chasing Shadows: Thirty Years of Photographic Essays*, is the photograph *Entrance to Motouleng Sanctum, Clarens, Free State* (1996) [Figure 1.4]. The entrance looks like something from outer space, a convergence of celestial bodies. It is comprised of three horizontal areas—on the bottom is a light dirt ground; on the top is a craggy cave wall pock-marked by the elements and scarred by words and names carved into its surface; and, in the middle, is darkness. Between the top and bottom is a space recessed in inky shadow, subtly punctuated by a few subtle glints, reflections on surfaces of things inside. Here, darkness and light both present as mysterious.

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[12] On accumulation in African spiritual and artistic practices, see: Arnold Rubin, "Accumulation: Power and Display in African Sculpture," *Artforum* (May 1975): 35-47.
[13] Adam Ashforth, "Serious Laughter: The Twisted Humour of Santu Mofokeng," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 229.

Chasing Shadows, as both a project and a photographic methodology, is preoccupied with the challenge of recording evidence, taking as its subject that which resists documentation: spiritual experience and past events in the landscape. It is an inquisitive method, an approach to pursuing elusive, fundamentally changeable and fleeting phenomena. But at the same time that it courts mystery, it also purposefully pursues futility and failure. What has Mofokeng captured? Whose reality matters—that of his subjects, of him, of us? In that vein, it may be that Mofokeng's "chasing of shadows" carries something of the spiritual act in and of itself. The curator Simon Njami described it as having a meditative quality, stating:

> Chasing shadows demands silence and patience. It is practiced out of doors, in towns and villages, in holy caves and sanctuaries, but also in profane places, homes, venues for socializing. Time is not important. It is suspended. While the photographer is on the look out with all his senses alert.[14]

Sensorial engagement is heightened, and Mofokeng pursues photographing the potentially un-photographable. As Michael Godby put it, Mofokeng's project aimed to both "document certain rituals and ceremonies" as well as "to develop formal means to convey a sense of the spiritual."[15] And here the "spiritual" is aligned with the "shadow." Shadows indicate a presence of sorts, but a distorted presence, imprecise, fuzzy, and impossible to fully pin down. "Chasing shadows" also references the work of photography in capturing light's effects, the successful print being said to have "secured the shadow," metaphorical language for the act of photography that continues to follow the medium around.[16]

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[14] Simon Njami, ed., "A Silent Solitude,"*Santu Mofokeng: A Silent Solitude* (Milan: Skira, 2016), 23-24.

[15] Godby points to Zwelethu Mthethwa and Andrew Tshabangu as sharing similar photographic pursuits in documenting religious ceremonies and the inscrutable and ineffable aspects of spiritual practice. Godby, "Then and Now," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007): 13. Paul Weinberg has produced multiple photo essays documenting spiritual practices in San communities in southern Africa, including *Shaken Roots* (1990), *In Search of the San* (1997), and *Once We Were Hunters* (2000).

[16] The metaphorical phrasing to "secure the shadow," meaning to produce a photographic image, emerged in the nineteenth century. As Leora Maltz-Leca notes in her discussion of the "shadow" in Santu Mofokeng's photography, influential nineteenth century invocations of the shadow included a popular advertisement as well as a famous quote by Sojourner Truth. Maltz-Leca, "Lyric Documentary," *Art South Africa* 10 (December 2011): 32. It also inspired the name of Majorie Bull and Joseph Denfield's important book on early photography in Cape Town, *Secure the Shadow: The Story of Cape Photography from Its Beginnings to the End of 1870*, published in 1970, as well as the title of Marilyn Martin's essay "Securing Shadows: The Role of Women in South African Photography," for the South African National Gallery's 2001 exhibition *Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photography*.

Begun in 1996, *Chasing Shadows* was assertively a project in black-and-white, just as most of Mofokeng's photographic output up to that point had been. What I stress here is that black-and-white is doing critical work in *Chasing Shadows* by adhering to the tenets of documentary practice that Mofokeng had absorbed and used, but which took on a dramatically different character in low light, around smoke, and rocky outcroppings in the cave environment. The work of truth-telling, or the notion that such images would serve the work of reportage, shifted in low light, despite using quintessential tools and techniques of socially-engaged photographic practice. *Chasing Shadows* has the appearance of pictorialist work, a deliberately arty effort, and yet, its blurs and soft-focus actually show more about courting the constraints of photographic technology and the artifacts of making an exposure in dark conditions.

This chapter delves into *Chasing Shadows* to explore his assertive decision to use black-and-white for this series. I contend that he uses black-and-white to emphasize photography's representational mode, which is at a distance from the real, an in-between space treading in the zone between realities and fictions, a step away from how we are accustomed to seeing the world and at a remove from the everyday. While many artists radically changed the way they worked after the end of apartheid, Mofokeng went further into the rabbit hole he had been working in, expanding and exploding many of the formal strategies he used during apartheid. For Mofokeng, black-and-white was far from finished. It offered an opportunity to interrogate the representational possibilities and limits of pre-eminent documentary modes. That said, Mofokeng has worked with color photography many times before and since *Chasing Shadows*. To spend time in Mofokeng's archive at MAKER gallery is to see a lot of snapping, in color and black-and-white, and every once in a while, even with a blast of flash. But black-and-white has remained of greatest interest to Mofokeng for his personal projects, even as newer work by fellow photographers has turned to color.

Mofokeng poses a question at the end of his essay "Distorting Mirror / Townships Imagined" (1995) in which he considered the tangle of private/personal and public/political he had made in the townships, querying, "And, in the wake of fundamental political changes, shouldn't modes of representing the social reality of black people also change?"[17] Mofokeng marked that change precisely by working with similar tools and formal approaches he had used throughout his career, taking that into different spaces, and pursuing something he knew he probably couldn't find.

The Contrarian

Observing a turn to saturation, digital technology, and large-scale tableau-style prints in South African contemporary art in the 1990s, the curator Okwui Enwezor characterized Santu Mofokeng as a "contrarian."[18] While Guy Tillim, Pieter Hugo, Zwelethu Mthethwa, and David Goldblatt had become influential users of color photography, Enwezor found that Mofokeng's work contained "a certain mid-twentieth-century appeal" consisting primarily of small- and medium-scale black-and-white prints.[19] One of the key voices championing African photography from the 1990s—importantly putting it into dialogue with a global history of photography—Enwezor diagnosed a shift "toward images that advertise the values of contemporary art, and a draining of attention from the classical formats of documentary photography," in the public and curatorial reception of new South African photography.[20] Bucking more recent trends, Mofokeng's work forced a conversation with a black-and-white history of photography. It kept in close dialogue with documentary practices, but especially in a project like *Chasing Shadows*, also harkened back to nineteenth-century spiritualism and turn-of-the-twentieth-century pictorialism.

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[17] Santu Mofokeng, "Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 75.
[18] Okwui Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will: Santu Mofokeng's Photographic Ambivalence," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 37.
[19] Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 37.
[20] Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 38.

Although color was exceptional in Mofokeng's oeuvre, it has been there. Mofokeng made a series of color photographs in the New York subways in the early 1990s, featuring dark views of workers wearing hard hats, an orange glow from the fluorescent lights used underground [Figure 1.5].[21] Of that project, Enwezor declared, "With only this rare attempt at colour, any discussion of Mofokeng's work must therefore grapple with both its anachronism and its paradoxical nature within the sea of explosive, densely saturated colour images that are flooding the artistic spaces of South Africa."[22] I asked Mofokeng about this project in February 2016, and he remarked,

> Underground New York looks similar to mines at home but which I had no access to. Why colour: it is very difficult light to engage in. This is why I chose colour, because in fact the light was muted, it looked like black and white, also we got slides at school we had to use. Mine was too dark to process.[23]

This remark suggests a casual approach to a project that had some interest for Mofokeng in the moment. He claimed that he began using color from "as early as when I became a photojournalist" and "since my first camera."[24] For Mofokeng, the color issue is fundamentally about preference,

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[21] Photographs from this series were included in the exhibition *Translation/Seduction/Displacement* curated by Lauri Firstenberg and John Peffer at White Box in New York (February 3 - April 2000). In a review, Joy Garnett described encountering Mofokeng's subway photographs, writing: "It's startling to then come across Mofokeng's warmly lit cibachromes in the second gallery, showing men doing track work on the New York subway -- out of the jaws of death these soot-smeared workers seem to have arrived, tools brandished, bellies wobbling, lit by the golden glow of the underworld like messengers from Hell." Joy Garnett, "Into Africa," *artnet*, (March 10, 2000), http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/garnett/garnett3-10-00.asp. Nico Israel's review of the show at White Box in *Art Forum* also mentions Mofokeng's color series, stating, ""On the Tracks," a 1994 photographic series, features sweaty men working in dark spaces that one assumes are South African gold or diamond mines until realizing, from their titles, that the shots were taken in the New York City subway." Israel, "TRANSLATION/SEDUCTION/DISPLACEMENT," *Artforum International* 38, No. 9 (2000): 180. *Popular Magazines*. Hazel Friedman's review of the *Chasing Shadows* exhibition at Wits University's Gertrude Posel Gallery in 1997 notes the inclusion of at least one of the color photographs from the New York series. Friedman, "Catching Souls," *Mail & Guardian* (June 27, 1997), https://mg.co.za/article/1997-06-27-catching-souls. SANG photo curator Pam Warne's essay about Mofokeng's *Invoice* exhibition at that institution in 2007 also mentions inclusion of a series of images from the New York underground color series. Warne, "Shadow Chaser," *Mail & Guardian* (February 16, 2007), https://mg.co.za/article/2007-02-16-shadow-chaser. Okwui Enwezor's essay in *Chasing Shadows*, "Images of Radical Will: Santu Mofokeng's Photographic Ambivalence," is a rare instance that discusses the New York subway series in-depth. Enwezor noted that the subway photographs have had little public airing compared to Mofokeng's other work. And from my own communication with Mofokeng, it seems like a project that was more about experimentation in the context of his time spent in New York where he studied at the International Center of Photography and did workshops with Roy De Carava. For more on Mofokeng's time in New York, see: Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 43; "Santu Mofokeng in Conversation with Corinne Diserens, Part 1," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 14. The photographs also showed at Gallery MOMO in Johannesburg in 2007 in the exhibition "Invoice."

[22] Although Enwezor focuses on a range of "densely saturated colour images," arguably, most of the best-known color work in South Africa has tended toward less saturation and cool colors. Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 43.

[23] Santu Mofokeng, written communication with the author, December 11, 2015.

[24] Mofokeng has noted that the *Weekly Mail* published some of his color photographs. In future research, I would like to locate these to do more analysis of how Mofokeng has approached color photography.

"It's that I don't show colour photos because I don't like colour photos."[25] He periodically worked with color, but has been very selective about what of that work had artistic potential. One of the chief concerns Mofokeng has had is about color's tendency to make the photograph appear too much like a transparent window onto reality and to drown out seeing it as a representation. He stated, "You believe colour photographs, you don't have the space to question them. I believe colour photography adds a dimension that one has to contend with…colour photography is about colour."[26] Later, Mofokeng added, "The people look at colour and they think they know they read it as the truth. There is no space to intuit, whereas with black and white they see a photograph."[27] Color gives too much away.

The problems with color, therefore, were many. Enwezor has also stressed that color's seductive qualities and tendency toward spectacle were of particular concern to Mofokeng. Enwezor employed David Goldblatt's well-known descriptive terminology for one of the chief risks of color when reflecting on other black-and-white photo projects made in the 2000s, claiming that Jo Ractliffe's black-and-white photographs for the series *Terreno Ocupado* (2008) [Figure 1.6] and *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* (2010) [Figure 1.7] were a way to avoid "sweetness."[28] In contemporary use of black-and-white and color, Enwezor sees risks on both sides: black-and-white might relegate photographs to the past through associations with nostalgia, whereas color photographs can suggest a disavowal of the past, a perverse amnesia. For Enwezor, this turn to color reflects back on Mofokeng's work by making it an anachronism, but precisely that sense of being of a different time makes for work with which viewers can have in-depth engagement. As Enwezor put it, it invites "absorbed scrutiny." Meanwhile, color was still risky.[29]

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[25] Santu Mofokeng, written communication with the author, December 11, 2015.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] In Chapter 3, I examine Goldblatt's use of the term "sweet" to describe color photographs.
[29] Okwui Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 42.

Mofokeng told a now-notorious anecdote about a conversation he heard between colleagues at a publication for which he was working, who were discussing the aesthetic merits of the combination of "black skin and blood" in a color transparency. Mofokeng recounted:

> 'Come check at this, china![30] Isn't this beautiful?' says one very famous South African photo-journalist to an Indian account's clerk. He is referring to a colour transparency. The tranny[31] depicts a corpse, an A.N.C. cadre bleeding in death, lying on asphalt near a curb. A casualty in what is now known as the "Silverton Siege" (Pretoria).
> 'I don't get it,' responds the clerk.
> 'I see nothing beautiful in this. This is ghoulish, man!'
> You know fuck all, china! This is a masterpiece. There is nothing as beautiful as black skin and blood! It makes beautiful contrast. There's nothing like it, china!'[32]

Mofokeng was very sensitive to this callous exchange and grew increasingly circumspect about the role photography played in perpetuating stereotypes.

Mofokeng's dissatisfactions with photojournalism ran deeper than the use of color transparencies that highlighted black suffering.[33] Mofokeng took issue with what he has framed as run-of-the mill photojournalism, merely illustrative and often repetitive hack work. He remarked:

> The stuff you see in newspapers and magazines is so two-dimensional, so flat. You look at the format of the newspaper. You get your headline, it says: 'Man eats meat'. And then you see an illustration that shows you a man eating meat. And they get a lead paragraph that says, man eats at such-and-such a place. You go down and it's a repetition, to simplify, to make the story a little clearer, so that there's no confusion. You get the point pummeled into your head through repetition. I wasn't happy with that.[34]

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[30] The term "china," as used here, is a colloquial term for a friend and derives from Cockney rhyming slang, in which "China plate" rhymes with "mate."
[31] "Tranny" was an abbreviated term used by photographers for "transparency."
[32] Santu Mofokeng, "Trajectory of a Street Photographer," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* (Fall/Winter 2000): 44. Patricia Hayes references this anecdote in her examination of Mofokeng's photography in the essay, "Santu Mofokeng, Photographs: 'The Violence Is in the Knowing,'" *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 48 (December 2009): 38. David Campbell responded to this essay in "'Black Skin and Blood': Documentary Photography and Santu Mofokeng's Critique of the Visualization of Apartheid South Africa," *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 48 (December 2009): 52-58.
[33] Mofokeng had stints at The Chamber of Mines, the *Citizen*, and as a photo assistant in advertising for Thompson's Publications ahead of joining up with Afrapix and publishing work in *Weekly Mail* and the *New Nation*. He also worked at Bailey's Archives in Lanseria as a darkroom printer. Mofokeng's personal politics, the politics of papers on which he worked, and the politics of those papers' readership did not necessarily align. For instance, he has pointed out that the conservative *Citizen* became popular in the townships for its sports reporting, and in particular, its horse-racing coverage. As Mofokeng put it, "You want to see whether you won the lotto, you want information about who died, or you want to find out about your passion, like soccer or horse racing. The *Citizen* picked up on that, it didn't matter what their editorial policy was or what they stood for in the political climate of the 1980s." This suggests more circulation and potential influence of reporting content and style across political and racial lines in South Africa as the context in which Mofokeng developed as a photographer. "Santu Mofokeng, Part I," 11.
[34] "Santu Mofokeng, Part I," 16.

Repetitive work that merely supplanted existing narratives promoted silence around many important issues and risked producing historical amnesia. Mofokeng did not want to enter a situation with preconceptions. And he was not satisfied with one photograph for telling a story, citing W. Eugene Smith as one of the figures who inspired his interest in producing photo essays as ways to present more complex stories.[35]

He has resisted spectacle and a paint-by-colors approach to photography, where illustrations merely do the work of filling in existing narratives—not necessarily owning the term documentary, but trying to work beyond the one-note qualities of photojournalism that concerned him. Regarding Santu's wariness—aversion?—to spectacle, Sabine Vogel writes,

> In a more general way, the absence of the spectacle seems to ground his aesthetic. Enough silver in the chemicals. It is too easy to make postcards of a sunny day. A sky like a musty sheet is the perfect backdrop for his magnificent portraits of Robben Island. The grey boredom of rainy weather only understates the golden cut of his composition. Maybe that is why Santu doesn't trust colour too much—as he also hesitates to use a digital camera and prefers the slowness of analogue workmanship.[36]

In addition to tamping down spectacle, Vogel's statement also gets at the slowness of Mofokeng's way of working, an approach that shaped the work he produces. Even when he was a photojournalist, he was no "Johnny on the spot." He didn't drive and couldn't get to breaking news as others could. He claims that this put him in the frame of mind "to think more in book terms, not necessarily in newspaper terms. Every time I'm making a picture, I'm trying to imagine how it fits

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[35] Mofokeng recounted, "In 1986, South Africa was under the second year of a state of emergency. Apartheid was becoming desperate, it was becoming very harsh. Documentary photography was the main art form to express what was happening and most of the work was politicized. The 'story' was about repression and resistance. There were stories which were allowed, and stories which were not allowed. Black people are good guys and white people are bad guys, that was simple. And so if you come in and say, 'Black men actually beat their wives,' or 'There is too much alcohol abuse in townships', that would confuse things, it upsets their determinations, their simplifications. So you are not allowed in principle to say those things, and I found it unsatisfying, fundamentally. It went against my grain. You say, 'Documentary is about telling the truth', but certain truths are actually elided from the story. The only way I could show both the good and the bad was in an essay. It allowed for—not balance, but complexity." "Santu Mofokeng, Part I," 16.

[36] Sabine Vogel, "On a Wing and a Prayer: Notes on Beauty and Loss in Santu Mofokeng's Pictures," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 141.

into a larger scheme…."[37] His coverage was topical but not timely in the way of breaking news. Moreover, Mofokeng was working for a weekly, not a daily, paper. Reflecting on this, Mofokeng explained, "But because I couldn't make the deadlines, my pictures had never been seen before, they were fresh. Being slow became a strength for me."[38] He later added, "Because I don't drive, I also had to immerse myself in the situation I happen to be documenting. If I take on a project, I have to stay there. I go to Bloemhof for two weeks, I'm there for two weeks at a time, without going home."[39] He took time to observe and to make, slowly.

In 1985, he became a member of Afrapix but admitted to being more interested in examining ordinary life in the townships than capturing moments of unrest. It is precisely this attention to ordinary life that he has credited with more widespread attention to his work in the early 1990s, when the international market for images of unrest waned and interest in everyday life increased.[40] While projects that he made during the 1980s were criticized by some at the time for a seeming lack of commitment to "the struggle," they were later greeted in the early 1990s with great interest and excitement.[41]

Mofokeng brought similar criticality to his engagement with documentary photography. He was anxious about photography's use to skirt reality, using the photograph as a tool to sway opinion

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[37] "Santu Mofokeng, Part I," 11.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] *Ibid*., 13.
[40] John Peffer points to the discussion of the "everyday" in the writing of Njabulo Ndebele, which called on artists to give more attention to the struggle as it is lived on a daily basis and not merely on the explicit acts of government intimidation. John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 262. Patricia Hayes discussed Ndebele's notion of the "everyday" as a framework for considering Omar Badsha's photographs of downtown Durban in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hayes, "Seeing and Being Seen: Politics, Art and the Everyday in Omar Badsha's Durban Photography, 1960s-1980s," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 81, No. 4, (November 2011), 544-566, *doi: 10.1353/afr.2011.0058*.
[41] Of the newfound interest in his projects focused on scenes of everyday life in the townships, Mofokeng wrote, "This work was vindicated in the early 1990s when the overseas market, weary of 'struggle images' of sjambok wielding 'boer' policemen, began to ask for ordinary pictures of everyday life in the townships. Suddenly my pictures of quotidian African life: of shebeens, street-soccer and home life, which had been considered unpublishable in the 1980s now found commercial favour. My credentials as a 'struggle' photographer were restored." Mofokeng, "Trajectory of a street-photographer," in *Democracy's Images: Photography and Visual Art after Apartheid*, eds. Jan Lundström and Katarina Pierre (Umeå: BildMuseet, 1998), 44. From 1988-1998, Mofokeng was affiliated wit the African Studies Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. There he worked on the Oral history Project along with personal projects and Afrapix-related work. His 1991 exhibition, *Like Shifting Sand*, which focused on rural life and life in so-called 'coloured' communities, won Mofokeng the Ernest Cole Scholarship that supported travel to and study in New York. However, Mofokeng also noted that this exhibition was the occasion for some of the most stinging criticism he has received of his work.

along polarized political lines. Mofokeng characterized two extreme poles of coverage of black life in South Africa, stating:

> In this country some conservatives have insidiously sought, as an example, to portray black people as 'dangerous,' 'unstable' and 'primitive' in order to legitimate violent and unpopular policies of the State. Some radicals, by contrast, have zealously sought to show the 'simple dignity' of the blacks! To portray their lives in terms of 'lacks' or 'absences.' Both have succeeded in distorting the reality of life in the townships.[42]

The reality of things, then, was somewhere in between. But precisely that kind of recognition saw Mofokeng asking more and more questions about what kinds of photographs to make. Reflecting on adopting a documentary mode, Mofokeng stated,

> In the past, it was all about documenting, publishing and exhibiting, and there was no confusion for me. When I took to documentary, I was trying to show the horrors of life under apartheid, which was unjust, repressive and racist. The one thing I was certain of was that it was wrong. I could invade people's private spaces, I could make photographs in intimate spaces or very close up, you can even say I could be intrusive, because I thought what I was doing was bigger than the image itself. I thought that if apartheid was defeated, then something good would have come out of the work.[43]

Now, in "the new democratic, capitalistic order" as he sees it, "You can go anywhere in the world and you'll find the very rich and the very poor, it's integral to the system. If I continue to show that people are suffering or that people are poor, the benefit will accrue to me, not to the subjects of my photographs."[44] Showing more of the "suffering" and the "poor" did not necessarily translate to increased sensitivity to the subjects represented, and he worried at the potentially anaesthetizing effects of such repetition.[45] And so, what he thought of as 'documentary' photography carried was highly fraught.

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[42] Mofokeng, "Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined," 74.
[43] "Santu Mofokeng, Part 2," 97.
[44] *Ibid*., 97.
[45] Mofokeng writes, "Because of this visual pollution about the horrors in the world, we are becoming more and more insensitive to issues. Maybe it catches you for a minute, and then after that you just throw it back, because there is so much horror." "Santu Mofokeng in Conversation with Corinne Diserens, Part 2," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 97.

Enwezor and the art historian Tamar Garb have situated Mofokeng in a distinctly documentary line of South African photographers, including Goldblatt—who had a mentoring influence on Mofokeng—as well as Alf Khumalo, Peter Magubane, Ernest Cole, and Bob Gosani. In this, Enwezor and Garb are identifying mastery of monochrome and a strong eye for composition, as well as critical attention to the political and social dynamics that can be revealing of underlying systems, not mere events. In more recent series of black-and-white photographs that Mofokeng made at night on the highways of Gauteng, Garb found connections between this work and "the aesthetics of resistance and the rhetoric of objectivity associated with documentary photography."[46] At the same time, she found the blurring and reflections that result in the images "inscribe a personal viewpoint" and highlight the madeness of the photographs.[47] Of the *Billboard* series [Figure 1.8], Garb wrote,

> But the metaphorics of monotone and its sober tonalities, signifying its world through multiple greys as well as sonorous blacks and stark contrasts, remain integral to the poetic language of the *Billboard* series. While rooted in the powerful black and white photographic traditions of the 1960s and 1970s—Mofokeng's predecessors are Ernest Cole, Peter Magubane and David Goldblatt among others—the works, destined for display in art venues and exhibitions, deploy their monochromatic languages as a sign of their historicity as well as a site of resistance to the colour-rich saturation of contemporary image culture. To work in black and white in the current climate—is to make a statement.[48]

Again, Mofokeng comes off as a contrarian, but here, he is working less against art world trends than against the over-the-top colorful world in which he lives.

The touchstones for *Chasing Shadows* go beyond traditions of socially-engaged photography, reaching more broadly into the history of photography. It also had the soft focus of pictorialism and the mix of diaphanous fabrics, smoke, and technical trickery behind spiritualist photography from the nineteenth century. The pictorialist tastes popular in South Africa's photo societies from the late-

[46] Tamar Garb, ed., "A Land of Signs," in *Home Lands / Land Marks: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008), 18.
[47] Garb, "Land of Signs," 18.
[48] *Ibid.*

nineteenth-century also trafficked in many of these effects. Drawing these themes together, Leora Maltz-Leca finds Walker Evans' notion of "lyric documentary" as a way to think about the soft-focus, spectral effects of Mofokeng's photographs. Evans offers up a vision of documentary that is fuzzy around the edges—a "straight" photograph with a little something extra. Mofokeng's work takes that notion literally in Maltz-Leca's assessment.

On approaching lighting, Mofokeng first studied published photographs and learned from seeing what others were doing. He has cited Goldblatt's influence in his move towards photographing in available light. Mofokeng stated, "…first it was Goldblatt who brought this idea of documentary: you don't introduce things like lighting into a situation, that is not documentary, you don't impose your own vision or introduce something that isn't there. If you document, you take what you find."[49] Characterizing Mofokeng's black-and-white aesthetic, Enwezor writes,

> His images are defined by a stark printing technique that, though soft and unassuming, provides high contrasts between bleached whites and brooding blacks, set against a pictorialism that tends to envelop many of the images in a portentous gray haze that, in turn, pushes them to the edge of bleakness.[50]

Along these lines, Maltz-Leca registers a "scathing critique" of documentary in Mofokeng's work. She writes:

> Indeed, the authority of documentary hinges on its evidentiary claims, on producing an image in service of disclosing a certain truth, usually of social ills of one sort or another. (Documentary says: let me show you, so you can believe.) Mofokeng disrupts such confidence in the regime of the optical by troubling vision, or agitating our trust in it, so that the entire notion of visual documentation is cast as suspect.[51]

With much of the documentary photography of the 1980s couched in the rhetoric of exposé—of revealing that which the apartheid government wanted to keep invisible—there was little space for questioning photography's relationship to the real. Moreover, as Patricia Hayes has noted, along with this emphasis on fact, documentary photography often did not reflect the spiritual

[49] "Santu Mofokeng, Part 1," 14.
[50] Enwezor, "Images of Radical Will," 38.
[51] Maltz-Leca, "Lyric Documentary," 32.

preoccupations that were important to so many South Africans working to endure the repressive conditions.[52] For Hayes, Mofokeng's desire to "chase shadows" is a deeper exploration into the efficacy of spiritual practice, one that speaks specifically to South Africa, an environment in which "the secular remains in tension with everything else."[53] While diverse religious ceremonies are represented in works such as Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage* and Mofokeng's own apartheid-era project, *Train Church*, Mofokeng's photographs in *Chasing Shadows* attempt to give form to the spiritual experience itself through the photograph as a material object.

In Low Light

Mofokeng isn't sure that he found what he was after in the caves. He made photographs that he could categorize as being of "rituals, fetishes and settings," but his experience of making photographs at the caves did not necessarily go to plan and the "essence" of what he saw might not have been recorded. This has a lot to do with the notion of the "shadow" that Mofokeng claimed to be chasing, an idea with a double-edge.[54]

Mofokeng made a connection to related words in Sotho and Zulu by way of explaining the "shadow." He stated:

> 'Shadow' does not carry the same image or meaning as *seriti* or *is'thunzi*. The word in Sotho and Zulu is difficult to pin down to any single meaning. In everyday use *seriti* or *is'thunzi* can mean anything from aura, presence, dignity, confidence, power, spirit, essence, status and or wellbeing. The words in the vernacular also imply the experience of being loved or feared. One's *seriti/is'thunzi* can be positive or negative and can exert a powerful influence.[55]

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[52] In the essay, "Santu Mofokeng, Photographs: 'The Violence Is in the Knowing," Hayes contended that Mofokeng's trajectory as a photographer has been to move towards the "Africanization and desecularization of politics and photography." This 'Africanization' points to Mofokeng's attention to local cosmologies, while 'desecularization' speaks to the return to representing spiritual practice in ways that were pushed in to the background during apartheid." Hayes, "Santu Mofokeng: 'The Violence Is in the Knowing'," in *History and Theory* 48, No. 4 (2009): 44.

[53] Hayes, "Violence Is in the Knowing," 44.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] Santu Mofokeng, "Invoice" in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: Thirty Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 7. *Invoice Santu Mofokeng*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, 2 December – 2 May 2007. First published in *Next Level*, No. 16, "Autograph ABP" issue (2008): 46-47.

The historian Patricia Hayes has explored the linkages between Mofokeng's "shadow" and Walter Benjamin's concept of "aura," claiming that Mofokeng is trying to "reinsert aura"—here, the term is synonymized with *seriti*—into the photograph.[56] But while this may seem like an anti-democratic move running counter to the spirit of his earlier socially-engaged approach, Hayes suggests that the pursuit of the shadow has both descularizing and Africanizing significance.[57] She draws on AbdouMaliq Simone's account of "everyday life" in contemporary African cities as being a condition of "haunting," in which the past weighs on the present, the future tempts, but reckoning with the present is a consistent challenge.[58] Throughout *Chasing Shadows*, there is a sense that people are haunted, that shadows loom, that the past impregnates the present, and within that, there is a search for control, for meaning, for answers, for peace.

The work of the camera in the space of the caves relinquished control and let things happen, in black-and-white. Mofokeng summarized his experience of the *Chasing Shadows* project stating,

> This project has steered me to places where reality blended in freely with unreality, where my knowledge of the photographic medium was tested to the limit. While the images record rituals, fetishes and settings, I am not certain that I captured on film the essence of the consciousness I saw displayed. Perhaps I was looking for something that refuses to be photographed. I was only chasing shadows, perhaps.[59]

As mentioned earlier, Mofokeng's general preference was to make photograph in available light, however, knowing the possible challenges of the lighting conditions of the caves, Mofokeng brought a flash on his first trip there, but fate intervened. He recalled,

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[56] Hayes writes, "For if Benjamin was alert to the dangers of the mechanization of culture, of technology destroying the uniqueness of created artworks through repetition, reproduction, and distribution, with potentially fascist ramifications, then what does it mean to re-inject post-apartheid popular culture with a diffusion of enigmatic and oblique illuminations? Is this somehow an Africanizing move? In its way, his work poses a problem for secular Marxism and its cultural formulations." Hayes, "Violence Is in the Knowing," 50.

[57] Hayes asserts, "In Mofokeng's understanding, there is not really a contiguity between the visible and the real; *seriti* presents another order of things altogether." As Hayes sees it, "The term 'spiritual,' as in describing a new genre of photography, does not convey the profundity of this move. Effectively, Mofokeng was almost single-handedly and increasingly pushing for new domains in representation from the 1980s: nothing less than an Africanization and desecularization of politics and photography." Hayes, "Violence Is in the Knowing," 44.

[58] *Ibid*., 46.

[59] Santu Mofokeng, "Chasing Shadows," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 108. This statement was first produced for *Chasing Shadows*, Gertrude Posel Art Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 23 June-25 July 1997.

> I went to the caves on the Easter weekend in 1996. I remember I had two cameras, one of them with a flash, and the flash would not work. There are scientific explanations for this: the ground there is dolomitic or whatever, and that interferes with the electronics, that's the Cartesian explanation. But there is another explanation, which is that this is holy ground. Even though people posed for photographs, it's not right, it's not allowed. You are recording something secret, and so something block you from doing what you're doing. That's another explanation. I don't know which is true and which is not, and the answer is neither here nor there.[60]

There is a strong whiff of superstition in these comments. Mofokeng revealed a sense that he was in the caves trying to do something that he wasn't supposed to, and for that, his flash didn't work and he had photographs that he couldn't place on a follow-up trip to the caves.[61] As a pilgrimage site for many faiths, it was more the general holiness of the space that thwarted Mofokeng's early efforts to photograph the place. In the mix of history and myth surround this site, this was a place for the initiated and the faithful.

However, Adam Ashforth keenly identified the extent to which the stuff of everyday life subtly punctuates *Chasing Shadows*, making it somewhat challenging (and darkly comical) to draw a line between the stuff of daily life and the stuff of worship at the caves. Ashforth wrote,

> …people are living in these caves: doing their laundry (is that a symbolic flag marking sacred space or someone's knickers drying on a stick?), cooking (they'll eat that goat with two backs after the ancestors have had their share), laughing, crying and much else, too, if the Sotho equivalent of 'Kilroy was here'-type graffiti on the cave walls is anything to go by.[62]

In short, writes Ashforth, "Here is a photograph of a sacred landscape. Or is it a big rock that looks like a toad?"[63] [Figure 1.9] In the humor and surreal quality of photographs in the series, there is also a critical edge that jabs at the work of prior generations of ethnographic photographers, such as Alfred Duggan-Cronin. It asks: what, in the landscape, signifies? Who believes what they are seeing?

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[60] "Santu Mofokeng, Part 2," 95.
[61] Mofokeng recounted to Diserens, "I made the first pictures looking at different congregations and explanations about the meaning of different spaces within the cave. When I went back some months later, I could not see the pictures I made before. I could not find them. Maybe it's the light or maybe the cave opened up, I don't know, but those pictures are no longer there." "Santu Mofokeng, Part 2," 95.
[62] Ashforth, "Serious Laughter," 229.
[63] *Ibid.*

Other photographers in South Africa have notably worked in the dark, most prominently in the tradition of documenting life in the mines. Margaret Bourke-White's series of photographs for *Life* magazine from September 18, 1950, "South Africa and its Problem,"[64] begins with a high-contrast black-and-white photograph of a pair of black miners, their dark skin glistening with sweat [Figure 1.10]. A later photograph in the series from inside of the mines shows a pair of black men with shovels digging into the rock [Figure 1.11]. This easy legibility of figures falls away in Goldblatt's series *On the Mines* (1973), especially in the section dedicated to the dangerous task of "shaftsinking."[65] In a review from 1974, Neville Dubow writes of Goldblatt's project, "To a certain extent the more dynamic of his mine shots are part product of the inherently dramatic subject matter that they treat." Dubow continued: "This particularly applies to the series of underground action shots, shot in an infernal haze of dust, sweat and blurred movement. These are indeed extraordinary shots of dangerous labour; technically they must have been difficult to get, and on all counts Goldblatt is to be honoured for them."[66] In many of the photographs from this series the people underground become silhouettes amidst a fog [Figure 1.12].

In a dark area of the caves a woman sits on the ground with her back to the camera, crisscrossed with beads overlaying her bra, while a pair of figures appear as blurs of movement on either side of her in *Sangoma Sisters Gladys and Cynthia Leading Initiates in the Afternoon Ingoma, Clarens, Free State*, 1996 [Figure 1.13]. It is overexposure that leads to otherworldly effects in *Christmas Church Service, Mautse Cave, Free State*, 2000 [Figure 1.14]. Faces soften into the grain of the print, as though

[64] John Edwin Mason's writing on this series involves a compelling comparative look at the color photographs Bourke-White included of tribal people in relation to the rest of the black-and-white photos from the series. See: John Edwin Mason, "Picturing the Beloved Country: Margaret Bourke-White, *Life* Magazine, and South Africa, 1949-1950," *Kronos* 38 (November 2012): 154-176.
[65] "Shaft-sinking" is a dangerous method of using explosives to clear mineshafts to deepen underground access.
[66] Neville Dubow, "How the Ordinary Is Made Extraordinary," *The Cape Times*, March 14, 1974: 10.

bodies are disapparating into the landscape. A man in "glowing" white robes descends—floats?—down a set of stairs across from them.[67]

The project expanded beyond the caves. The photograph on the cover of the *Chasing Shadows* book is *Buddhist Retreat near Ixopo* from 2003, where a horse stands in a field, apparently headless. In *A 'Wake' in Lesotho* from 2006, a young boy appears lost in thought in the glow of a bonfire around which others are gathered. Leora Maltz-Leca has argued, "Mofokeng's embrace of the otherworldly and apocalyptic, informal religion and syncretic spiritualities functions as another means by which he disputes documentary's claims to veracity, and the rationalist tradition that subtends the genre, particularly in its ethnographic forms."[68] For Hayes, the way that Mofokeng makes photographs forces people to focus their attention, he "stretches form, plays with composition, and shrinks expectations about content. The senses are heightened because detail is often obscured (though not always by darkness), sharpening the mind, allowing for an intensified attunement."[69] Those preoccupations follow him everywhere he goes.

Conclusion

Chasing Shadows finds Mofokeng seeking out spiritual activity. He comes to terms with the present and settles on the "shadow," a term with a double-edge. Spirituality is no longer being thrust upon him in the train. Instead, he actively tracks a crisis of "spiritual insecurity" in the post-apartheid era in the dark. Drawing a line from the apartheid era into *Chasing Shadows*, Mofokeng explained, "For me, the caves are a way of closing the project I began with train churches. The train

[67] Mofokeng described his technique for photographing in low light. He wrote, "When working in low-light conditions, I expose at maximum aperture on the lens and the slowest shutter speed I can handle with the camera hand-held, which is 1/8 sec. I note the amount of underexposure from the light meter. The film will then be developed normal-plus one to two minutes regardless in straight developer. I do not get a hernia if I lose a shot. I will get it another time." Santu Mofokeng, "Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio," in *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: 30 Years of Photographic Essays*, ed. Corinne Diserens (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 47.
[68] Maltz-Leca, "Lyric Documentary," 32.
[69] Hayes, "Violence Is in the Knowing," 47.

churches were not a 'story' in the struggle years."[70] This was also a project in which he was more confident in his work. Of his technique, Mofokeng also observed:

> You will also notice how my technique evolved over the years. The early photographs are contrasty because they were overdeveloped. Then, I had no confidence in myself or my equipment. I needed to make sure I did not lose any of the exposure I had made. It is a psychological thing, I suppose.[71]

When first exhibiting the project in 1997 at the Gertrude Posel Art Gallery at the University of the Witwatersrand, Mofokeng stated, "This exhibit is an attempt to come to term with my schizophrenic existence."[72] Here, one might imagine that Mofokeng is addressing, at least in part, his own family life in which various religious practices came together, "A faith that is both ritual and spiritual—a bizarre cocktail of beliefs that completely embraces pagan rituals as well as Christian beliefs."[73] In the caves, amidst the makeshift and improvised, between plastic bags, laundry on the line, coke bottles, crosses, candles, and graffiti, Mofokeng asks, in the same breath, what does faith, and what does photography offer to people?

[70] "Santu Mofokeng, Part 2," 94.
[71] Mofokeng, "Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio," 46.
[72] Mofokeng, "Chasing Shadows," 108.
[73] *Ibid*.

CHAPTER 2

DIGNITY IN CRISIS: GIDEON MENDEL'S *A BROKEN LANDSCAPE*

"Spill-Over Effect"

In South Africa in 1994, one crisis was coming to an end as another was taking hold. At long last, the struggle against apartheid was succeeding in generating major political transformation, and the related violence that intensified in the late 1980s and early 1990s was subsiding. The nation's first democratic elections ushered in a new era promising political freedom along with major policy initiatives to redress its deeply embedded inequalities—at least, such was the feeling of the moment's potential. But just as this unfolded, HIV/AIDS seemed poised to defer the dreams of liberation by killing off young people and adults in their prime. Frequently, as Rika Allen, Annabelle Wienand, and others have noted, the literature addressing the epidemic made this point explicit, especially in advance of the widespread availability of effective anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs.[1] "HIV/AIDS has become the new scourge of the times, largely taking the place of political struggle which marred the lives of these township youth as children and adolescents," declared anthropologist Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala in positioning AIDS as "The New Enemy" in KwaZulu-Natal.[2] Similarly, Elizabeth Thomas echoed the idea that South Africa exited one crisis merely to replace it with another, claiming, "South Africa was once notorious for apartheid. Today, it is the acquired immunodeficiency virus (AIDS) epidemic."[3]

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[1] Rika Allen, "Art Activism in South Africa and the Ethics of Representation in a Time of AIDS," *Critical* Arts 23, No. 3 (2009), DOI: 10.1080/02560040903251209: 396-415; Annabelle Wienand, "Portraits, Publics and Politics: Gisèle Wulfsohn's Photographs of HIV/AIDS, 1987-2007," *Kronos* 38 (November 2012): 177-203.

[2] Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "Infect one, infect all: Zulu youth response to the aids epidemic in South Africa," *Medical Anthropology* 17, No. 4 (1997): 367. DOI: 10.1080/01459740.1997.9966146.

[3] These two sentences begin Elizabeth Thomas' essay, "HIV/AIDS: Implications for Local Governance, Housing, and the Delivery of Services," in *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City*, eds. Richard Tomlinson et al. (New York: Routledge, 2003): 185.

At the end of the 1990s, when major development challenges loomed large for the nation after apartheid's dismantling, AIDS made that project even harder as South Africa became the location of the world's fastest growing epidemic with its national epicenter in KwaZulu-Natal.[4] Both rural and urban communities struggled to cope with the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, while the needs for care, and the expense of living with and dying from the illness sank already impoverished families lower.

Slow responses from public and private sectors, and outright denial about the existence of HIV/AIDS and its seriousness compounded the physical toll of the illness and its impact on families and communities in the 1990s into the 2000s. Former President Nelson Mandela's apparent delay in launching HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment initiatives,[5] President Thabo Mbeki's hedging about the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS,[6] and then-Deputy President Jacob Zuma's apparent lack of education about the pathogenic transmission of the illness became notorious around the world.[7] And there was troubling irony in attempts to censor reporting and policy advocacy on ARV provision for treating HIV/AIDS with comparison to the dark days of apartheid-era governance not

[4] Thomas, "HIV/AIDS: Implications," 188. The tone of that article is in keeping with Channing Arndt and Jeffrey D. Lewis' World Bank working paper, "The Macro Implications of HIV/AIDS in South Africa: A Preliminary Assessment," which opened by declaring, "South Africa now stands at the brink of a full-blown AIDS crisis." Channing Arndt and Jeffrey D. Lewis, "The Macro Implications of HIV/AIDS in South Africa: A Preliminary Assessment," *World Bank, Africa Region Working Paper Series*, No. 9, (December 2000): 1. See also, Kyle D. Kauffman, "Why Is South Africa the HIV Capital of the World? An Institutional Analysis of the Spread of a Virus?" in *AIDS and South Africa: The Social Expression of a Pandemic*, eds. Kyle D. Kauffman and David L. Lindauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 17-30.

[5] Justice Edwin Cameron reflected on the timeline of Mandela's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in an interview with Renata Simone in 2009. Despite efforts by the ANC to create an action plan, Cameron argued, "What was lacking was incisive, vocal and concerted political leadership. And that could only have come from President Mandela." Mandela became a far more vocal campaigner for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment after leaving office, and in the wake of his son, Matata Mandela's, death from AIDS. An edited transcript of the interview between Cameron and Simone is reproduced in Jason M. Breslow, "Nelson Mandela's Mixed Legacy on HIV/AIDS," *PBS: Frontline* (December 6, 2013), www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/artcile/nelson-mandelas-mixed-legacy-on-hivaids/.

[6] Thabo Mbeki notoriously refuted the link between HIV and AIDS, thereby calling both the scientific research investigating the epidemic and attendant policy recommendations into question. Controversially, Mbeki has continued to put emphasis on nutrition and poverty eradication, over the use of antiretroviral drugs, to curb the epidemic.

[7] Jacob Zuma, while Deputy President, went on trial for allegedly raping Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo (also known as Khwezi) in 2005. He insisted that sexual relations with Kuzwayo were consensual. After it was revealed that Kuzwayo was HIV-positive, Zuma claimed to have been aware of this and so took a shower after having unprotected sex to mitigate risk of contracting the virus. This statement was widely publicized for demonstrating the presidential-hopeful's staggering lack of awareness of safe sex practices and callous disregard for the seriousness of the accusation. After coming forward and in the wake of Zuma's acquittal in 2006, Kuzwayo suffered frequent harassment.

far behind.[8] However, this mix of responses also helped make visible the complexities of addressing HIV/AIDS in the particular socio-cultural context of South Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Addressing the epidemic required coming to terms with the realities of the virus, from the individuals living with HIV/AIDS to its impact on local and international communities. In 2001, Justice Edwin Cameron framed HIV/AIDS as a crisis on three fronts: 1) of "illness and suffering and dying"; 2) of "leadership and management," and within that, of "truth-telling"; and 3) of outright denialism.[9] A powerful voice, Justice Cameron publicly shared his HIV positive status in 1999 and was the highest-ranking official in the country to do so. And yet, what looked so woefully out-of-touch to Cameron and many more people around the world—about the South African government's handling of the disease—indicated local bristling at the imposition of policy initiatives from elsewhere around the globe and pervasive Western stereotypes about the continent. The art historian Michael Godby identified that in "…Mbeki's insistence that the alleviation of poverty is an essential part of any campaign against the disease, and his rejection of the 'simple superimposition of Western solutions foisted on the continent'," the then-president sought to cultivate solutions particular to South Africa.[10] Amidst the troubling suggestions from Mbeki and key government officials for medically ineffectual treatments and scientifically-unproven alternative theories of the disease, were also some practicable propositions for thinking locally about fighting HIV/AIDS. These included arguments for exploring more education and treatment options, such as considering the roles traditional healers could play in addressing the disease. And these efforts insisted on the

[8] Marilyn Martin speaks to this in her essay, "HIV/AIDS in South Africa: Can the Visual Arts Make a Difference?" describing the charges of sedition brought against the radio host Tim Modise and SABS-Safm for their HIV/AIDS reporting. See: *AIDS and South Africa: The Social Expression of a Pandemic*, eds. Kyle D. Kauffman and David L. Lindauer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 122.
[9] Martin, "HIV/AIDS in South Africa," 126.
[10] Michael Godby, "Aesthetics and Activism: Gideon Mendel and the Politics of Photographing the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in South Africa," in *The Culture of AIDS in Africa: Hope and Healing through Music and the Arts*," eds. Judah Cohen and Gregory Barz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 215.

importance of tailoring new healthcare programs with the backdrop of South Africa's extreme income inequalities in mind.

Statements like Cameron's about the complexity of addressing the epidemic and the battles over the truth of HIV/AIDS that informed them, point to the layers of cultural norms that shaped and suppressed honesty and openness about the illness. In many communities throughout South Africa the risk of stigma could—and still can—be high for those who reveal their sero-positive status, potentially leading to social exclusion and violence.[11] Women in heterosexual relationships risk retaliation from male partners—both inside and outside the bounds of exclusivity—for insisting they use condoms. To talk openly about the risk of AIDS can be to potentially highlight fissures of trust, as well as to challenge expectations of what healthy, traditional, and enjoyable sexual relations should look like.

Beyond these tensions over silence and speaking out, HIV/AIDS denialism extended far beyond leadership to the level of the individual, evidenced through the large numbers of citizens who avoided medical confirmation of their HIV-positive status. Moreover, carriers could show no signs of illness for long periods of time, making the faces of illness and wellness outwardly hard to determine. And for many, what couldn't be seen didn't exist—or at the very least, was fodder for conspiracy theories and misinformation.[12] A side-effect of these dynamics was that many began facing HIV/AIDS with an air of inevitability, part-and-parcel of being a sexually active person in the time of the epidemic from which they would likely incur an early death. When the effects of AIDS were more physically apparent, it was the disease's withering effects on the body that became the

[11] One of the most notorious and harrowing tales of violence against an individual who revealed their HIV+ status to their community was of Gugu Dlamini, a 36-year-old HIV/AIDS activist beaten to death KwaZulu-Natal in 1998. This story became the motivation for Senzeni Marasela's mixed media artwork *The Invisible Martyr* (2001).

[12] While I am addressing the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS "denialism" in relation to South Africa in this chapter, I want to stress that denial of the existence of HIV and AIDS, as well as about who could contract the virus and the widespread impact of the epidemic was widespread across the globe.

most prominent association with visible evidence of infection on the continent, leading to the popularization of "slim" as a colloquial term for AIDS.[13]

Cameron's comments about HIV/AIDS as a crisis on three fronts were part of remarks delivered in 2001 at the opening of the second iteration of the *Positive Lives*[14] project to be on view at the South African National Gallery (SANG) in Cape Town—the first installment having shown in 1995. Both exhibitions featured the work of the South African photographer Gideon Mendel as their centerpieces. In its first appearance in 1995, *Positive Lives: Responses to HIV/AIDS* was a watershed, marking SANG's first major exhibition dedicated to art addressing the epidemic.[15] Mendel curated the show and included his own work as part of the exhibition before it traveled to community centers across South Africa and to other locations on the continent. As described by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the *Positive Lives* global exhibition was initiated "by a group of activists who believed that properly portrayed, the 'human story' behind HIV and AIDS could challenge the sources of ignorance and prejudice faced by those living with the disease."[16] A project initiated by Mendel's photographic agency Network, *Positive Lives* aimed to show "humanity, strength and dignity," not passivity, in the face of the epidemic.

As co-editor of the *Positive Lives* project, Lyndall Stein claimed, "We wanted to move people emotionally so they might have a better understanding of the illness, and more feeling for what it

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[13] Paula Treichler, and Roland Bleiker and Amy Kay have examined Ed Hooper's 1986 photograph of Florence and her son Ssengabi in Gwanda, Uganda, as a particularly influential photograph in shaping perceptions of "African AIDS," circulating widely in international print media at the time. Both mother and child appear visibly malnourished. See: Treichler, "AIDS and HIV Infection in the Third World: A First World Chronicle," chap. 3 in *How to Have a Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 99-126; Bleiker and Kay, "Representing HIV/AIDS in Africa: Pluralist Photography and Local Empowerment," *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (2007): 139-163.

[14] *Positive Lives* was an international project sponsored by Network Photographers and the Terrence Higgins Trust that sought to show how people were responding to HIV/AIDS in Europe and North America. The project produced a book in 1993 featuring projects by thirteen photographers, with Mendel's series of photographs from AIDS wards in London as the last entry in the series.

[15] *Positive Lives* was preceded at SANG in June 1993, by the display of the Second Memorial AIDS Quilt produced by the AIDS Support and Education Trust. In 1996, the year following their first *Positive Lives* exhibition, SANG was wrapped in a red AIDS ribbon for the occasion of International AIDS day, with the project helmed by the artist Wola Nani (Embrace).

[16] "Positive Lives: Introduction," *International HIV/AIDS Alliance*, http://www.aidsalliance.org/Pagedetails.aspx?id=380 [accessed 12 September 2012].

means,"[17] drawing on traditions of concerned and engaged photography committed to communicating deep engagement with human experience. However, for *Positive Lives*'s first viewing at an event at the South African embassy seeking support for further development of the project, Mendel recalled uncomfortable feedback from potential funders in the audience critical of Mendel's representation of vulnerable subjects. They were especially concerned about Mendel's photographs of people visibly thinned by tuberculosis infections—photographs that highlighted, for instance, "the way light plays on black, emaciated bodies."[18] Mendel remarked, "I had expected to have a lot of applause for my beautiful photographs and I got kind of roasted instead," and he found himself beginning to come to terms with the "tight rope" of showing the virus' devastating toll on the body while also representing people "living positively" and engaging with community initiatives.[19]

Continuing with that work, Mendel expanded his engagement with HIV/AIDS on the continent making the work that would become *A Broken Landscape: HIV & AIDS in Africa*. That project appeared in full in the 2001 exhibition, spurring Mendel's move to bring art and activism more closely together in his work. Comments at the opening by Justice Cameron and Zackie Achmat,[20] head of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), stressed the value of Mendel's project as a platform for bringing truthful images and narratives about the experience of living with HIV/AIDS out into the open in ways that directly countered denialism.[21] Mendel's personal experience of the exhibition, though, left him concerned about the black-and-white pictures on "the walls of the bland gallery" where the photographs could be "frightening" to people living with

[17] "Courage That Looks Death in the Face," *The Observer* (November 28, 1993). *LexisNexis*
[18] Gideon Mendel, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2016.
[19] Gideon Mendel, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2016.Mendel has referred to this "tight rope" elsewhere in his accounts of his work on HIV/AIDS, stating: "There is a real danger when photographers approach AIDS in a gratuitous way because the ramifications are potentially so extreme. For me, it's kind of walking a tightrope." Gideon Mendel, "20 Years: AIDS & Photography," *The Digital Journalist* (June 2001), http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0106/voices_mendel.htm.
[20] Zackie Achmat was a leading voice in advocating for antiretroviral drug provision.
[21] On December 1, 2001, Zackie Achmat opened a new iteration of "Positive Lives" at SANG making a speech that claimed, as Marilyn Martin noted, "that a work of art not only has the power and capacity to speak for itself, but also to speak to and for individuals and society." Marilyn Martin, "Curating HIV/AIDS at the Iziko South African National Gallery," *Kiosk* 1 (2007/08): 62.

HIV.[22] From there, he moved towards a color project for which he has described himself "trying to be much more seductive, in terms of…the color I was using and trying to find ways of bringing words and stories and testimonies…into the image, into the work in a very different kind of way," and he made those shifts during a major turning point in the fight to provide access to medication.[23] Mendel outlines the overall trajectory of his work on HIV/AIDS, stating: "I went through an evolution from using black-and-white images and text to color images to more direct activism."[24] Of the more direct activism, Mendel has pointed to the more recent project *Through Positive Eyes* made in collaboration with the UCLA Art & Global Health Center. For this, Mendel and his collaborators provided tools, training, and support to people with HIV, in an effort to shift the power dynamics of the photographic encounter and facilitate the participants' ability to tell their own stories.

This chapter examines Mendel's series *A Broken Landscape*—as a booklet, a book, and an exhibition—for what it reveals about the challenges of representing the HIV/AIDS epidemic photographically. In each iteration of the project, Mendel adjusted his approach as he continued to consider critically how best to tell stories about HIV/AIDS on the continent, wrestling with how to convey the reality of the epidemic and the dignity of his subjects. Largely comprised of studies of people, the series consists of black-and-white photographs that emphasize grain and shadow, often made in low light in homes and hospitals. Mendel made the case for his method of creating *A Broken Landscape*, stating:

> What seemed most important was to bring the human face of this disease to the fore. To do so, I tried to get as close as possible to the people and communities I was documenting. The images are all shot in black and white as this felt more emotional and compassionate in a context where there was so much fear and stigma. They also reflect the darkness of this time.[25]

[22] Gideon Mendel, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2016.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Lyle Rexer, "Interview: Gideon Mendel," *Photograph* (September/October 2016): 41.
[25] Gideon Mendel, "A Broken Landscape," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/a-broken-landscape/.

Interrogating these claims, I unpack the assertions about the humanizing, emotional, and compassionate valences of black-and-white photography, and Mendel's sense of its poetic connection to the "darkness" of that time. I outline the shape of Mendel's project, and consider his formal and technical approaches. In doing so, I argue that Mendel's photographs importantly leaned on black-and-white photography's popular associations with truth-telling, dignity in portraiture, and social concern. And yet, through the process of producing the photographs for *A Broken Landscape* and presenting it in exhibition at SANG, Mendel dramatically shifted his approach to representing HIV/AIDS, seeking more avenues for turning narrative and visual representation over to those who would have been his subjects in the past, and beginning to make color images for subsequent projects on this subject. Therefore, this chapter asks: what was so right about black-and-white for *A Broken Landscape*, and what changed?

In working to answer that question, I turn to the township photography of Chris Ledochowski and Zwelethu Mthethwa[26] to consider how and why—during this same period of the 1990s and early 2000s in which Mendel made *A Broken Landscape*—both photographers made assertive claims for the dignifying qualities of bright and saturated color photography. Ledochowski's and Mthethwa's use of vibrant color explicitly countered traditions of black-and-white social documentary and photojournalism dominant in the struggle-era and saw them advocating for color as a form more sympathetic to and identified with their subjects. In their own ways, both photographers argued that to make color photographs was also to give the people what they wanted, to show their subjects how they wanted to be seen and to furnish them with images they would actually want to own. Through asking how it was that at the turn of the twenty-first

[26] In March 2017, Zwelethu Mthethwa was found guilty in the beating death of twenty-three year old Nokuphila Kumalo in 2013. In June 2017, he was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Mthethwa's insistence on representing the dignity of the people he photographed stands in shocking contrast to the extreme brutality of Kumalo's murder. In this chapter, I address Mthethwa's work in its historical context in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in particular, considering the impact of its use of saturated color in depicting township residences on the contemporary art world. While making the case for its influence in that context, it is not my aim to skirt or downplay the gravity of Mthethwa's actions. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address those more recent events, which deserve expanded consideration for how to address the fuller legacy of his work.

century, these photographers—Mendel, Ledochowski, and Mthethwa—made such strongly opposing claims about the formal qualities that best conveyed photographic dignity, I show the entrenched associations photographers have had with the politics of black-and-white and color photography, and the powerful effect of those ideas on how photographers make decisions.

Furthermore, this chapter addresses the ways that *A Broken Landscape* finds Mendel reckoning with the lessons of engaged photography specific to South Africa during the apartheid era, as well as the debates over visual representation of HIV/AIDS. As the remarks of Justice Cameron at the opening of *A Broken Landscape* suggest and as Michael Godby has explored, the national art institution served to officially validate Mendel's project, enhancing the photograph's value as a truthful document. Much like Afrapix's emphasis on using photography to expose the apartheid government's brutality during the censorship enacted under the States of Emergency,[27] the denial of HIV/AIDS by several government officials motivated many photographers and other image-makers to seek out strategies for rendering the disease visible. In trying to create that visibility, many works have—with varying levels of intention—referenced iconic images of the struggle, in what Rika Allen (drawing on the work of Steven Epstein) has called "the social movement spill-over effect"[28] between anti-apartheid resistance and AIDS activism. But visibility has presented its own challenges spurring debates over privacy, sensitivity, and exploitation of vulnerable peoples, as well as the limits of photography's descriptive potential.

Michael Godby and Kylie Thomas have crafted nuanced and in-depth explorations of Mendel's projects focused on HIV/AIDS, attending to their methodological development, funding sources, critical reception, and how they relate to traditions of representing illness. Godby's essay, "Aesthetics and Activism: Gideon Mendel and the Politics of Photographing the HIV/AIDS

[27] For an account of media censorship's impact on photographers in the 1980s, see: Paul Weinberg, "Apartheid—A Vigilant Witness: A Reflection on Photography," in *Culture in Another South Africa*, eds. Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1989), 60-70. For an extended account of South Africa's media landscape in the 1970s, see: James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media, 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London: F. Cass, 2000).
[28] Allen, "Art Activism in South Africa," 401.

Pandemic in South Africa," explored Mendel's shifting approaches to representing the epidemic over time. Thomas examined Mendel's *A Broken Landscape* in relation to the broader history of HIV/AIDS' spread in South Africa, the cultivation of the visual conventions of "African AIDS," and a commitment to show the liveliness of HIV/AIDS activism in the essay, "Photographic Images, HIV/AIDS, and Shifting Subjectivities in South Africa." And in the chapter, "Traumatic Witnessing: Photography and Disappearance," in her book *Impossible Mourning*, Thomas delved further into the themes of visibility, truth-telling, agency, and subjectivity that *A Broken Landscape* elicits, including careful readings of particular images and essays in that project. While both Godby and Thomas mention Mendel's use of color as a way to gauge the photographer's evolving approach to representing the epidemic, my chapter makes that shift a central concern to explore the intersection of form and politics in photography of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Out of the Darkness

Despite his relocation to London in 1991 and working as a photojournalist in other reaches of the world, by all appearances, Mendel seamlessly transitioned from representing one crisis in southern Africa to another, covering the mix of despair and resilience of individuals facing extreme hardship. Mendel's approach to representing HIV/AIDS in Africa showed marked continuity with the dominant subject matter of the best-known socially-engaged photo projects of the apartheid era in which he took part: portraiture, funerals, protests, labor organizing, underfunded and overstretched healthcare systems, and poverty in rural and urban settings [Figures 2.1-2.3]. In his association with Afrapix and work as a photojournalist, Mendel was highly active in photographing the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s, contributing to both *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* (1986) and *Beyond the Barricades* (1989). In the latter project, Mendel's photograph of a dramatic confrontation between white police and black student protesters appears on the cover [Figures 2.4].

The political urgency of resistance activities of the 1980s placed a premium on forms of photography that could convey—or be seen to convey—the actual experiences of people living under apartheid's brutal infrastructure of racial separation to the wider world.[29] This, in turn, emphasized documentary photography and photojournalism as key formats for making and sharing those images. Much like the efforts to use photography to expose the apartheid government's violent crackdowns during the States of Emergency of the 1980s, in the face of HIV/AIDS denialism and inaction by government officials, photographers and other image-makers committed to rendering the disease more visible and bringing truths to light.

While black-and-white photography dominated Mendel's output in his coverage of the struggle, black-and-white was not necessarily a given for Mendel's work and that of his colleagues during that era. This was especially the case for Mendel's work as a photojournalist. When I interviewed him in February 2016, he remarked, "I think I was always a good color photographer, but I definitely felt that I had to be doing kind of black-and-white certainly" in the context of the struggle, although he described a common photojournalistic practice of carrying two cameras with him, one with black-and-white and one with color film.[30] He would then switch between the two cameras as he worked.[31] Mendel felt that black-and-white offered a more interpretative means of engaging reality that "conveys more feeling," whereas color was "professional" and "precise."[32] He was not averse to these qualities in color photography—it was more that he used them to inform decisions about how to photograph projects, shifting between black-and-white and color

[29] The time during which resistance activities gathered momentum—the late 1970s and early 1980s—was also a period in which television and video gained prominence for journalism in South Africa. Although photography was a key aspect of representing life under apartheid, especially as international activist organizations reproduced iconic photographs in international publications and informational pamphlets, on t-shirts and posters, this should be understood as happening at a time in which photography's role in visual culture was changing relative to the broader media landscape.
[30] A common practice at the time for photojournalists, Susan Meiselas described using a similar practice to produce her photographs for her book *Nicaragua* (1981).
[31] A pair of Mendel's color photographs appear as illustrations to Steven Sack's article in *Culture in Another South Africa*, showing children playing in parks. One is of a group of white children in a playground, while the other is of black children a "people's park."
[32] Gideon Mendel, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2016.

photography for international and local publications over the course of his career. But for *A Broken Landscape*, Mendel turned assertively to black-and-white photography.

In 1998, Mendel produced a special insert for an issue of the Dutch magazine, *Reportage*, showing the HIV/AIDS epidemic's impact on individuals and communities in Zambia and Tanzania as well as in South Africa. Including many of the same photographs that would later be part of the 2001 book and exhibition, this very first iteration of *A Broken Landscape: HIV and AIDS in Africa* consisted of a slim black, white, and red booklet. On its cover, above a blood red banner featuring the project and publication title in black-and-white typeface, is a black-and-white photograph showing the angular neck and upper back of an emaciated black body turned on its side and resting on a bed [Figure 2.5]. The figure's right shoulder blade stands perpendicular to the bed, its bony ridge catching the light. Like an asymptote, the shoulder blades curve and diverge from one another, as the bones of the figure's spine are all too visible running down the middle of the back, indicating the individual's emaciation. Gender is challenging to discern. Where musculature and suppleness could provide clues in a healthier body, the figure's taut skin and frailty give nothing away. Moreover, there is no caption for this image, no name for this individual. But in the curve made from the shoulder to the head of the figure, we see a nurse in the background, out of focus. The setting is a hospital. The booklet begins by emphasizing AIDS' physical effects, offering up the frail and ailing body itself as a landscape, broken down.

A few images further into the booklet—after the striking portrait of Placidia Karugendo enduring a fungal infection on her skin, the heart-wrenching story of Joseph Gabriel and his family, and scenes of homecare in Tanzania and Zambia—the message conveyed through images and text is that South Africa had lurched from one crisis directly to another, from the struggle against apartheid to the fight against a deadly epidemic. An extended caption to a photograph printed at full bleed across two pages, "A bed bath at Edendale Hospital in Kwazulu/Natal," reads, "Having struggled

against apartheid, South Africa faces a new nightmare—HIV infection is increasing at a rate unparalleled in any other country"[33] [Figure 2.6]. In this image, a man lays on his back on a bed as a female nurse soaps his weakened body. We see the white uniform and gloves of the nurse, and the white soap she applies to the patient's dark body, but nothing of her face. Her gloved hands lift the man's left arm, and his position in bed and frailty indicate that he requires assistance—he can no longer lift his own limbs. Through her positioning, the nurse obscures the man's face. In this scene of profound vulnerability and medical care conveyed through touch, crumpled sheets extend over the man's lower section affording him a modicum of modesty, while the nurse's obstructive arm offers him an anonymity he may or may not want. The caption does not name him.

In the next photograph in the booklet, the figure of a female nurse is presented solely as forearms and gloved hands cradling the head of an infant drinking milk from a bottle. The caption tells us of a place and a mission: "Nazareth House Orphanage in Cape Town, which cares for abandoned children with HIV or AIDS" [Figure 2.7]. In a clinic committed to making time for caring touch for infants—in this case, through aromatherapy massage—the nurse only uses gloves due to the baby's fungal infection. From there, the extended caption speaks to national efforts to address care for children living with HIV and AIDS. Returning to this specific photograph, we see a singular child around whom white gloves, a white treatment table, a white blanket, and white milk, contrast sharply with his darker skin and that of the nurse. A sharp shadow is cast by the nurse's right hand over his face, covering his left eye. The baby's right eye is wide open and dark, looking out attentively, calm in body while his tiny right hand reaches up curiously. Between the two photographs, the vulnerability of an adult man and an infant are linked through the white gloves of the nurse—but in the photograph of the infant, his tiny hand shows more vitality than the whole

[33] The caption includes statistics on HIV prevalence, stating: "In 1990, 1.6 per cent of pregnant women in Kwazulu-Natal tested HIV positive; today the figure is 27 per cent. UN officials predict that, without decisive government action, 25 per cent of South African adults will soon be infected." Gideon Mendel, "A Broken Landscape: HIV and AIDS in Africa," *Reportage* 3 (Summer 1998): n.p.

body of the man being bathed. While suggesting that HIV/AIDS drains life, both photographs show moments where caregivers make concerted efforts to provide comfort and where life shows some spark, if not in being cared for, at least in caring for others.

Mendel provided technical details on the back page of the booklet about how he produced *A Broken Landscape*, detailing the films he selected to contend with the "harsh and varied light conditions" he encountered. He stated that he sought film that allowed him to work without a flash in low light, so as to "be as unobtrustive as possible," and which could convey the feelings he wanted to capture. He connected those emotional effects particularly to formal qualities of contrast and texture.[34] Certainly, Mendel's gesture of detailing the films he used was a rather standard acknowledgment of his sponsors, Kodak, for furnishing him with the materials he used to make the project. But this statement also made a direct connection between the tools of black-and-white photography and the capturing of effects that Mendel believed could convey something more of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa.[35]

In moving from the emaciated back of the body on the cover to the pair of photographs from hospitals in South Africa, and to various other sites on the continent, the booklet eventually ends with a series of photographs showing educational campaigns about HIV/AIDS, the final pair of images were made in rural Hlabisa district in Kwazulu-Natal [Figure 2.8] and in the central business district of Johannesburg, respectively. In total, the series constructs a didactic arc, from treatment and care to community outreach and education, highlighting the stories of particular individuals and speaking more broadly about systems of care. It is a project about showing the scope

[34] Mendel, "A Broken Landscape," n.p. Mendel wrote: "Shooting this project in Africa presented its own particular technical challenges, but Kodak Professional's Tri-X 400 and T-Max P3200 films really helped. Tri-X allowed me to work in harsh and varied light conditions, both maintaining contrast and providing an intense and grainy texture which conveyed the feelings I wanted to capture. T-Max P3200, exposed at ASA 1600, maintained fine grain but gave me absolute freedom to work in extremely low light without flash, so I could be as unobtrusive as possible. Kodak has contributed film to support the continuation of this project and has helped fund this publication."

[35] Mendel makes a similar claim about using black-and-white photography for a series of photographs on the subject of homelessness in London in 1992. He wrote, "The use of black and white seemed to allow for images that were more emotional, graphic and intimate." Gideon Mendel, "Homeless London," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/london-homeless/.

of HIV/AIDS' impact and insisting on its effects on family life, communities, medical services, and educational institutions, as well as the body. But Mendel's and the journalist Andrew Hawks' words in the booklet loom large, while many of the subjects of the photographs go unnamed, and images that contextualize a life beyond the disease are limited.

In a marked shift from the booklet in *Reportage*, the cover of *A Broken Landscape: HIV & AIDS in Africa* in its book form features a view into a landscape [Figure 2.9], as opposed to the back of a body depleted by illness. We do, however, still encounter an individual whose back faces the camera. A woman in a patterned dress carries packages of grain on her head, demonstrating the rigidity of perfect posture required to do so while also carrying a plastic bag in her right hand. Just ahead of the woman to the left, a shadow of a more carefree female form appears against the exterior surface of a roundavel.[36] With a thin leg slightly bent and an arm raised, likely steadying parcels carried atop her head, the shadow appears as if dancing. The book begins with a view of a distinctly rural geography in which the epidemic resides, a place of rolling hills, modest homes, and individuals doing the work of everyday living, repeating the photograph on the front and back covers of the book as a single image spread across two-pages in the frontispiece.

The flow of the book's narrative retreats from the harrowing view of an extremely thin black figure on its cover, placing that image instead in a section titled, "Hospitals. KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." It appears about a quarter of the way through the book, in a section that shows a series of photographs of life in medical wards. The book begins, instead, with ten images of caregiving in which no person with HIV or AIDS appears alone. As opposed to the second page of the *Reportage* booklet that featured the portrait of young Placidia, the book waits to introduce a solo portrait until its eleventh image. There, the portrait appears as part of a series of four images focused on the story of an individual, Samkelisiwe Mkhwanazi.

[36] A traditional housing type in southern Africa that is circular in shape and constructed from a mix of earthen materials, sticks, and grasses.

These photographs show Samkelisiwe in moments of energy and exhaustion, beginning with an image of her and her mother, Nesta, sharing a laugh at her bed in a brightly lit hospital ward [Figure 2.10]. The next photograph finds the pair at home, along with a small boy; Samkelisiwe sleeps and Nesta sits by her bed [Figure 2.11]. The following picture—the portrait of Samkelisiwe—shows her lying on a tattered sofa, her back propped up by a pillow, her thin arms cutting sharp angles over her chest and against a delicate lacy white nightgown and the soft fabrics that surround her [Figure 2.12]. Samkelisiwe's wide-set, large eyes stare out at the viewer. This portrait is paired with text from Samkelisiwe addressing how she came to know about her illness, the love she has for her mother, and the fear that she has for the future of her child who she knows she will soon leave behind. She strikes an ironic note about the reversal of roles she has experienced with her mother, saying, "I was born in 1973 and normally I would be the one taking care of my mother, but now I am the baby again."[37] The last photograph from this series, shows Samkelisiwe again on this sofa, but sitting up and appearing utterly exhausted [Figure 2.13]. In an image that stretches across two-pages at full bleed, shadows are darker and contrasts higher than in the prior photos. Samkelisiwe looks weak, her thin forearms slumped on her lap, her nightgown worryingly loose. Her head is slightly turned in the direction of her gaze, and the light catches her left cheekbone. A boy sits next to her on the sofa, this may be her own son or one of her nephews cared for by Nesta, now that Samkelisiwe's sister has also passed away. The boy leans back on a pillow, arms raised above his head as he holds a thin piece of string between his hand, taut. He rests his head in the crook of his right arm, as he looks out directly at the viewer.

Another series focused on an individual's story of living with AIDS in South Africa, also begins with a formal portrait before then showing scenes of energy and exhaustion [Figure 2.14]. However, the story of Mzokonah Malevu goes beyond photographs of exhaustion, ending with

[37] Gideon Mendel, *A Broken Landscape: HIV & AIDS in Africa* (Barcelona: Blume in Association with ActionAid, 2002), 28.

views of his funeral and the activities of mourning that surround the event [Figure 2.15]. In a photograph of the funeral, Mzokonah's portrait appears for a second time in the series used in a space of memorial. The dignity of Mzonkonah's black-and-white portrait appears to be underwritten by this scene, a moment that shows that Mendel's project was seen in the communities in which he was working and that it was sanctioned for the work of remembrance. However, the use of Mzokonah's portrait in the series concerned Kylie Thomas who saw it as establishing "Malevu as a man condemned, a young man but one who has glimpsed his own death, a tragic portrait, perhaps only made tragic by what is, inevitably, to come."[38] The dignity typically associated with this mode of three-quarter-view portraiture in black-and-white is overshadowed by the narrative arc of the series, of which Thomas writes, "The sequence of images depicting Malevu's life and illness reinforces the notion that his premature death is inevitable."[39] The series of photographs, and the project as a whole, put pressure on the formal approaches and genres of photography associated with dignity and compassion.

Two-thirds of the way through the book of *A Broken Landscape*, we find the photograph of the infant at Nazareth House, but as opposed to the booklet, we learn the child's name: Josaphat.[40] Through the voice of Sister Margaret, Housemother at Nazareth House, we learn of their efforts to see that children in their care "die with dignity in familiar surroundings and not in a hospital."[41] She adds that doing so involves the presence of "the caregiver with whom the child has the strongest bond," who is there "to hold him or her during their last moments."[42] From here, we can turn the

[38] Kylie Thomas, *Impossible Mourning: HIV/AIDS and Visuality after Apartheid* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), 77.
[39] Thomas, *Impossible Mourning*, 77.
[40] Thomas views the inclusion of personal narratives and the naming of individuals as part of the importance and success of Mendel's project, as opposed to James Nachtwey's *Time* feature from 2001 and Geert van Kesteren and Arthur van Amerongen's *Mwendanjangula! AIDS in Zambia* in 2000, which tend toward more anonymity. Thomas argues: "The absence of narrative that would serve to situate images like Nachtwey's and van Kesteren's in time and place makes the causes of the epidemic appear inexplicable and positions people living with HIV/AIDS outside of Western modernity. Casting the epidemic in Africa as a natural disaster elides the possibility for the medical interventions that have transformed AIDS into a chronic manageable condition in the West." Thomas, "Photographic Images, HIV/AIDS, and Shifting Subjectivities in South Africa," in *HIV/AIDS: Global Frontiers in Prevention/Intervention*, eds. Cynthia Pope et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009): 358.
[41] Mendel, *A Broken Landscape*, 136.
[42] *Ibid.*

page to a scene of soft grays in which Josaphat sleeps peacefully surrounded by delicate fabrics [Figure 2.16]. Based on Sister Margaret's statements and what we can glean of Josaphat's surroundings, we can assume that Josaphat died soon after—this was the site of dying with dignity. But, if the bedding, drapes, and presence of a caregiver are part of dying with dignity, what of the presence of the photographer and his camera? What was photography doing to and for the representation of HIV/AIDS?

Dignity in Truth

For Justice Cameron, Mendel's *A Broken Landscape* delivered truth and dignity in black and white through black-and-white images. Cameron stressed the importance of the project in 2001, remarking, "In all of this the artist is depicting a truth. But his work also makes a call to action. The exhibition challenges those who view it to take a position on the lives and the deaths of those it represents."[43] Tying truth directly to the dignity of people living with HIV/AIDS, Cameron asserted that deniers disallow "us the dignity of our suffering. They deny us the dignity of our struggle for life against the workings of a viral agent."[44] He continued, "Most importantly, they deny us the dignity of the truth, and the power and hope, and the opportunities for action, that acceptance of the truth brings."[45] But showing the truth of AIDS photographically was a complex and challenging undertaking, and there were risks that in telling the story of the epidemic in images and words could reinforce "Afro-pessimistic" views of the continent as perpetually plagued and without hope.[46] Photographs of some of the earliest cases of AIDS diagnosed on the continent had many of the hallmarks of humanitarian crisis photography from the continent, where skeletal, unnamed people in dusty settings resign themselves to a sad fate. And yet, denialism, as earlier discussed, had real

[43] Edwin Cameron, "Remarks: A Broken Landscape," *The Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine* (February 2003): 45.
[44] Cameron, "Remarks: A Broken Landscape," 46.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Okwui Enwezor, "The Uses of Afro-Pessimism," in *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2006), 10-19.

impact. This section reflects on the notion of dignity as applied to photographs of human subjects to consider what Cameron saw in Mendel's photographs and why this value was stressed.

Dignity has often been framed as a cornerstone of the successful portrait and has been of particular concern as a litmus for the power relationships that shape the making of a photograph. Dignity is especially stressed in evaluating colonial-era photography in Africa, strongly connected to discussions of agency. The central questions seem to be: who wanted the photographic encounter, and what about the appearance of the photograph indicates willingness or unwillingness to be photographed? Numerous harrowing examples of intrusive and unsanctioned photographs abound, especially in the cases of ethnographic projects and national identification schemes.[47] In the cases of reluctant subjects and unauthorized photography, lack of eye contact, signs of visible anger, distress, and/or discomfort, and intrusive studies of the body, especially sexual organs are especially notorious.[48] Stressing dignity in relation to people living with HIV is a way to acknowledge the vulnerability of people publicizing their status. Precisely in conditions of denialism, publicly owning one's HIV-positive status courted hypervisibility, a truth that must be shouted to be heard, but which could entail grave personal risk.

As a central provision of the nation's constitution, dignity also factors into the framework of human rights and in the making of a democratic South Africa. The first of the "Founding Provisions" in the Constitution of South Africa holds that the country is "one, sovereign, democratic state," and the first of the values listed as foundational is "(a) Human dignity, the

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[47] An issue of *The Reflex* journal, features an elegant pictorialist-style portrait of a young black boy accompanied by the caption "Dignity." Perversely ironic, a discussion of the selection of this cover photograph by the editors of the journal, both provides a succinct articulation of the themes of dignified portraiture, while also being dismissive about racial characteristics. The entry reads, "In the present instance [the photographer] has selected an opportune moment for making his exposure and the subject far from being camera-conscious rather fives one the appearance of enjoyment in posing for picture." The author then continues, "It is a study of a piccanin in pensive mood, so different from the roystering [*sic*] little hoboes who frequent the city streets." "The Illustrations," *The Reflex* 8, No. 2 (September 1936): 11.

[48] Examples for these practices are numerous. See, for instance, Janane Al-Ani's discussion of Marc Garanger's photographs of forcibly unveiled women during the Algerian War of Independence in "Acting Out," *Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*, eds. David A. Bailey and Gilane Tawadros (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 88-107. Andrew Putter examines the complex legacy of Alfred Duggan-Cronin's *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa* through his project "Native Work." The project wrestles with the ways that the photographs often exceed the boundaries of typological collecting for which they were intended. See: Putter, "*Native Work*: An Artwork by Andrew Putter Consisting of 30 Portrait Photographs," *Kronos*, No. 38 (November 2012): 249-261.

achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms."[49] This informs the Bill of Rights, which "enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom."[50] Described further within the bill, "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."[51] The document holds that ensuring dignity is a way to redress the diminishment of peoples that occurred under apartheid.

To convey the dignity of his subjects, one of Mendel's key shifts in his coverage of HIV/AIDS has been to feature the voices and actions of his subjects more prominently, a change that can be seen in the evolution of *A Broken Landscape*. Mendel approached the book's narrative by including more personal testimonies and statements from activists than appeared in the booklet. Meanwhile, the voices of "outsiders" retreat. Where the booklet in *Reportage* featured essays written by Mendel and the Andrew Hawks with descriptive captions featuring quotes and statistics, the book features an introduction by Noerine Kaleeba, a community activist who lost her husband to AIDS, and an afterword by Reverend Gideon Byamugisha, Director of the HIV Prevention and AIDS Care Project in Kampala and "the first practising priest in Africa to declare publicly that he was living with HIV," as stated in the book's contributor biographies. Mendel's textual voice retreats, and the voices of people living with AIDS, communities of care and support, and activists come to the fore, as well as a flurry of statistics and grave predictions from international governmental agencies about the risks of inaction and missteps in responding to the epidemic.

In his essay in *Reportage*, Mendel stated, "Despite the horrifying statistics, the true face of HIV in Africa is little known. It is all too easy to depict the drama of death; far harder to show the

[49] The following foundational values are: "(b) Non-racialism and non-sexism. (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law. (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness." "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996," Act No. 108, *Government Gazette*, No. 17678 (December 18, 1996): 5.
[50] "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996," 7.
[51] *Ibid*., 8.

quiet suffering of entire communities which will never be the same again."[52] The implication was that Mendel's project went some way to showing that "true face." The book allowed for more depth in that coverage, and black-and-white was part of fulfilling that agenda, aiming to convey emotion more potently. Especially in representing illness, the high contrast projects of W. Eugene Smith seem like the lineage that supports Mendel's model.[53] It is perhaps helpful to pause for a moment on Smith's commentary about color because he ties his own reluctance to using color to how it conveys emotion. Smith asserted,

> I think that color—in the form that it is in now, and in the lack of control that I would have over it—has a great tendency to vulgarize the kinds of emotions that I'm trying to express. Now, color should not vulgarize emotions because it should be a marvelous tool for underlining them and intensifying them, but I just cannot stand most of the color I see, especially in reproduction.[54]

Smith, like many photographers of his generation, expressed concern about what could be done well with available tools in a given moment. For Mendel, scenes of high contrast thematize the notion that the period of the late 1990s and early 2000s was a time of "darkness."[55] Although, some of Mendel's prints show subtler contrasts in the book than in the booklet suggesting that this impulse was refined along the way.[56]

By the time of *A Broken Landscape*'s exhibition at SANG in 2001, the series' efforts to show the "true face" of the disease was heightened by the exhibition's display within a prominent state institution, even as its display and reception would see Mendel significantly shifting his approach to addressing the epidemic thereafter. In addition to displaying black-and-white photographs from the

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[52] Mendel, "A Broken Landscape."
[53] In its inky blacks, grainy grays in low light, bursts of high contrast, Mendel's work recalls that of W. Eugene Smith. In his photo essays and book projects, healthcare was a common theme, such as his photo essays "Country Doctor" from 1948 and "Nurse Midwife" from 1951, his series of photographs made in a Haitian psychiatric facility in the late 1950s, and his more extended project *Minamata* produced in collaboration with his wife, Aileen M. Smith, as a book in 1975.
[54] "W. Eugene Smith" in *Photography within the Humanities*, eds. Eugenia Parry Janis and Wendy MacNeil (Danbury, New Hampshire: Addison House, 1977), 108.
[55] I'd suggest here that Smith's influence in sticking with black-and-white, which didn't "vulgarize" emotions in the way color tended to, cast a shadow over socially-concerned photography. It helped to cultivate the idea that high-contrast can, for instance, convey the idea of *A Broken Landscape* being produced in a time of "darkness."
[56] The reason for this may be wholly practical, and I hope to pursue this in follow-up inquiry with Mendel.

A Broken Landscape series on the walls, for the exhibition at SANG in 2001, the Liberman Room of the museum became what Mendel termed a "live documentary space," a site of dialogue, activism, and community where Mendel, along with members of TAC and an anti-retroviral drug (ARV) pilot program in Khayelitsha presented new work from an ongoing project throughout the duration of the exhibition. As then-SANG Director Marilyn Martin detailed, the exhibition's closing event featured "songs, announcements and testimonies interspersed with 'Viva!' and 'Amandla! Awethu!'" translating tactics and rhetoric from struggle protests in a call-to-action for the government and for society more broadly to seriously address HIV/AIDS."[57] Martin continued, "For him the status of the national art museum and its location near the South African parliament offered a remarkable opportunity to create a radical, stimulating and newsworthy project."[58] Of Mendel's photograph from the series showing a scene from the TAC march at the XIII International AIDS Conference, *Treatment Action Campaign. Durban, South Africa*, TAC Chair Zachie Achmat, stated, "The image of AIDS in Africa is usually one of powerless people, emaciated and dying [Figure 2.17]. What the march showed is that there are many of us who are healthy and fighting to stay healthy."[59] Mendel represented "the energy and vitality" of local activism.[60]

The exhibition also showed less preciousness in how Mendel produced the photographic print. Speaking directly to Mendel's work, Godby stated: "While hinted at in *A Broken Landscape*, in his later work Mendel deliberately abandoned the aesthetic criterion on which much of his career as a documentary photographer has been based. Images were printed digitally on canvas screens; control was relinquished to the subjects of his portraits; and text was prioritized over images."[61] But, Godby points out, "…Mendel depended on the context of the gallery, and the idea of "art" that it

[57] Mendel, "20 Years: AIDS & Photography."
[58] Marilyn Martin, "Curating HIV/AIDS," 62.
[59] Mendel, *A Broken Landscape*, 194.
[60] Thomas, *Impossible Mourning*, 80. In future research, I would like to further draw out the important points of connection and divergence between activist groups such as TAC and ACT UP. International coordination and collaboration has been essential to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as developing local initiatives.
[61] Godby, "Aesthetics and Activism," 219.

promotes, to introduce these changes."[62] Godby argues that Mendel "in radically changing his methods of photography, was actively engaging with both his medium of representation and the institutional frameworks within which he is working. But taking his canvas screens out of the gallery context and using them in installations and the march against Parliament, for example, Mendel actually transformed the institutional space of the gallery or museum from a repository of "relics" to an active political platform."[63] In making the exhibition space one of active dialogue and a platform for political engagement, Mendel affirmed the legitimizing efforts of the national museum and popular support for this approach.

Dignity in Color

Conveying dignity through the photograph was also a major preoccupation of projects centered on township life by Chris Ledochowski and Zwelethu Mthethwa. Stressing color photography's particular ability to communicate the dignity and liveliness of their subjects, Ledochowski and Mthethwa each singled out color's affective qualities for motivating their use of it.[64] They championed color as a way to move beyond the dour and austere appearance of the black-and-white photography of most reportage. For Ledochowski, the township presented in black-and-white photography was a "bleak and colourless environment," whereas the place that he—a frequent visitor to townships—and the subjects of his photographs actually experienced was full of color.[65] In his rhetoric advocating for the use of color in projects such as *Cape Flats Details* (2003), [Figures 2.18-2.19] he figured "dignity," in particular, as the ideal characteristic of the portrait of a person or a place. Similarly, for the *Interiors* series first exhibited at the Second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997,

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[62] Godby explains, that Mendel's reliance on support from commissions through NGOs and not on gallery sales allowed Mendel "to use the contradictory criteria of art, and its ability to endorse simultaneously aesthetic and anti-aesthetic forms, to validate different aspects of his project." Godby, "Aesthetics and Activism," 220.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] Michael Godby, "Color in the Representation of the South African Townships," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, No. 24 (2009): 72-81.
[65] Chris Ledochowski, *Cape Flats Details: Life and Culture in the Townships of Cape Town* (Pretoria: SAHO/UNISA Press, 2003), 8.

Mthethwa argued, "I do not believe that poverty is equal to degradation. For me color restores people's dignity," dignity expressed through "humanness," "pride," and "ownership."[66]

From both Ledochowski and Mthethwa, there was a sense that black-and-white photography had not only done a disservice to black township dwellers, it was not the type of photography they liked or wanted.[67] In a similar vein, historian Patricia Hayes has argued, "…there are local discourses of denigration of black-and-white 'documentary' photographs of social conditions in the townships. The issues that transpire are colour, as in race, and colour (or lack of it) in the photograph," noting that class is a further factor compounding shaping these dynamics.[68] She asserted, "There is something crucial here, even if we consider a number of black photographers who were doing the same kind of work. As many township-dwellers see it, whites photograph blacks in black-and-white."[69] Hayes notes that these are sentiments that can be heard from "older township residents," some of whom may have been the subjects of black-and-white documentary photographs from the struggle, in addition to "first-generation university students" and "critically aware photographers."[70] Such claims speak to important layers of reception within different communities in South Africa that could be a fruitful space for further research, especially in the realms of social science, where more commentary across varied racial, class, and gender groupings could provide more substance for claims about patterns of taste and preference for image-types.

Anxieties over black-and-white photography's tendency to heighten the abject state of black and or impoverished bodies are closely connected to critiques of the violence of the photographic

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[66] Bongi Dhlomo, "Zwelethu Mthethwa Talks about His Photographs," in *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, eds. Frank Herreman assisted by Mark D'Amato (New York: The Museum for African Art, 2000), 75.
[67] Most recently, Patricia Hayes has made claims along these lines in "The Colour of History: Photography and the Public Sphere in Southern Africa," in *The Public Sphere from Outside the West*, edited by Divya Dwivedi and Sanil V (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). This draws from largely anecdotal accounts that could be enriched by engaging methods from social science to research patterns of production and reception of photographs. John Peffer's suggestions for how to expand on standard narratives of South African photography also indicate some fruitful points for departure. See: Peffer, "Remarks on South African Photography and the Extraphotographic," *Africultures*, October 28, 2012, www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=11101.
[68] Patricia Hayes, "The Colour of History: Photography and the Public Sphere in Southern Africa," in *The Public Sphere from Outside the West*, edited by Divya Dwivedi and Sanil V (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 156.
[69] Hayes, "The Colour of History," 156.
[70] *Ibid*., 155.

act and photographic representation. These critiques center on the notion of photography as a medium that reproduces scenes of violence and victimization while often disregarding how its subjects want to be seen and who will view these images. As such, photography has been taken to task for being "doubly" violent or "doubly" victimizing—a form of representation that compounds unfortunate circumstances, instead of alleviating them or serving as a neutral window onto them. Discussing English photographer Don McCullin's photographs from the Vietnam War, the art critic John Berger declared,

> The camera which isolates a moment of agony isolates no more violently than the experience of the moment isolates itself. The word *trigger*, applied to rifle and camera, reflects a correspondence which does not stop at the purely mechanical. The image seized by the camera is doubly violent and both violences reinforce the same contrast: the contrast between the photographed moment and all others.[71]

Here, McCullin's photograph of a violent encounter is seen as both stopping the moment of trauma in time, and then extending its agony through reproducing that moment and opening it up to repeated viewings.[72] Moreover, Berger, as many others have done, makes a point of connecting camera technology with that of the firearm, aligning these as tools of violence.[73] Whereas, it was documentary photography's tendency to display impoverished and beaten down people to more socially and economically powerful audiences that troubled Abigail Solomon-Godeau. She argued,

> We must ask, in other words, whether the documentary act does not involve a double act of subjugation: first, in the social world that has produced its victims; and second, in the regime of the image produced within and for the same system that engenders the conditions it then re-presents.[74]

Although approaching their projects differently, there is some alignment in Ledochowski's and Mthethwa's critiques of black-and-white. They position black-and-white as further compounding

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[71] John Berger, "Photographs of Agony," in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 39. The essay was first published in 1972.
[72] Bronwyn Law-Viljoen examines Ariella Azoulay's notion of "torture photography," which also explores a condition in which photography compounds a violent moment in "'Bang-Bang Has Been Good to Us': Photography and Violence in South Africa," *Theory Culture Society* 27, (2010): 214.
[73] Paul Landau expands on the close relationship between cameras and firearms in the colonial context in "Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa," in *Images & Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Paul Landau and Deborah Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 141-171.
[74] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography," in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 176.

victimization, forming what might best be described as "triple" victimization—the actual moment of violence, the representation of that violence through a photograph to many and varying audiences, and its representation in the austere form of black-and-white. This "triple victimization" then exacerbates something like Okwui Enwezor's notion of "Afro-Pessimism"—what he has defined as a pervasive and persistent idea about Africa that he claims, "…proceeds by first invalidating the historical usefulness of African experience. This is often based on the idea that "nothing good ever happens in Africa"; that her peoples possess nothing of value for the advancement of humanity."[75] For Ledochowski and Mthethwa, black-and-white is burdened by legacies of photography that has emphasized deprivation and gloom, and in so doing, gone a long way to negatively shaping perceptions of township life.

The South African urban "township" is notorious around the world, not only as a locus of political strife, endemic poverty, and rampant crime, but also as a hub of vibrant cultural production and innovation.[76] Ledochowski claimed that color photography was better able to convey that dynamic world as he experienced it, but added that it also importantly reflected the desires of his subjects for how they wanted to be seen, which was in color. Learning of the tradition of hand-colored black-and-white portraits in the Cape Flats encouraged Ledochowski to make his own in the late 1980s. Those hand-colored works gesture at the earliest means of bringing color to photographs originating in the nineteenth century before a way was found for "fixing" color through chemical

[75] Enwezor, "The Uses of Afro-Pessimism," 11. And yet, as a counter to "Afro-Pessimism," the championing of dignity as the benchmark for positive subjectivity is also fraught. For instance, in the existing discourse around Seydou Keïta's photography—and African studio photography more broadly—Jennifer Bajorek sees the tendency to read "dignity," often in the poses of his subjects, or the "disappearance of colonial subjectivity"—as Okwui Enwezor's has claimed—as a problematic turn to yet again attempt to find some kind of "essential truth" in the subject of a photograph, a tendency that she aptly suggests could "run the risk of being taken in, yet again, where we least expected it, by the colonial and ethnological gambit." It would seem that in the move to position Keïta's oeuvre as counter to colonial image-making and utterly dignifying, many critics and curators essentialized the African subject all over again using the fact of the sitter's self-presentation to indicate a personal subjectivity that is in every iteration something other than colonial. Jennifer Bajorek, "(Dis)locating Freedom: The Photographic Portraiture of Seydou Keïta." *Critical Interventions* 3/4 (Spring 2009): 111.

[76] Recently, township culture has been featured in the realms of fashion and dance. Johannesburg townships serve as the setting for Solange Knowles' "Losing You" video, as well as local traditions of dandyism. The controversial trend of *izikhothane*, sees fashionable groups of young people face off against one another often on township streets. The dancing and performance styles of *pantsula* and *swanking* also have their roots in township culture.

processes. This was a deeply nostalgic format, right down to mimicking the pastel palette of hand-colored photographs that have aged over time. For this work, Ledochowski wrote,

> I sought to create a tension between the original, sometimes hardcore intentions of the black-and-white image, and the effect that this added colour would have on its overall meaning. It was while exploring ways of making more positive images which could still be of documentary value that I began to focus on the significance of colour and its creative use in people's lives and cultural expression.[77]

Moreover, from his experiences with photography in the townships, he was concerned with issues of consent, he set out to make photographs "for" people as opposed to taking "from" them, which saw him being sure to give his subjects a copy of the photograph to keep as a way to fulfill that ambition.[78] Photographs from Ledochowski's hand-colored series include works such as *Rampies Sny* [Figure 2.20], which features a scene from a religious festival in the Cape Malay community celebrating the Prophet Mohammed's birth for which women cut citrus leaves for the making of scented pouches. Pastel greens, pinks, and blues dominate the image that is mixed in with patterned fabrics and the brown skin of the women. Ledochowski also applied hand-coloring to photographs from some of his most widely seen documentary work, such as a view of the KTC squatter camp that appeared in *The Cordoned Heart* with the title *Plastic Shelters* [Figure 2.21]. The color brings warmth to the view, adding yellow to the flames in the perforated canister in the foreground, and orange to the dirt ground.[79]

The hand-coloring of documentary-style photographs also appealed to Walker Evans, not as a maker but a viewer. In an essay about the work of Santu Mofokeng, the art historian Leora Maltz-Leca recounted Evans' development of the idea of "lyric documentary," beginning by recounting a story in which Evans spoke of his fascination with a set of hand-coloured postcards of scenes of

[77] Ledochowski, *Cape Flats Details*, 10.
[78] Ledochowski, *Cape Flats Details*, 10.
[79] Ledochowski made these photographs as special objects, collaborating with the ceramicist Joe Faragher to make colorful ceramic frames for the photograph. "Chris Ledochowski," *South African History Online*, http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/chris-ledochowski. Chris Ledochowski, personal communication with the photographer, January 20, 2016.

small towns from the turn of the twentieth century.[80] These images had a certain documentary quality in black-and-white, but the addition of color provided a lyrical effect. In a very different lyrical turn from the one that Maltz-Leca convincingly identified in Mofokeng's work, we might consider Ledochowski's move beyond portrait photography to hand-coloring photographs from his documentary work in the 1980s, such as a view of a KTC squatter camp from 1984, as a "lyrical" turn. This is a shift away from a "dismal" scene to something "quite beautiful."[81]

Instead of the cool pastels and jewel tones of his hand-colored works, Ledochowski turned to a bold color palette for the series *Cape Flats Details*. Working with "slow, fine-grained films,"[82] Ledochowski highlighted the details in and around the townships of Cape Town, where one could find, according to Ledochowski,

> …individual and collective expressions of creativity and resilience that give positive meaning and definition to people's lives. They present public and private images of hope that bring together and convey tradition and modernity, stability and change, faith and despair.[83]

Showing these details was a way, so Ledochowski has claimed, to represent the dignity of township life by showing the domains over which residents had the greatest control: self-presentation and personal touches in domestic spaces.

Although less forceful about the signifying role of color in later projects, such as his *Sugarcane* series (2003), Zwelethu Mthethwa made the point for *Interiors* that color was the chief distinction between his work representing township life and that of the photographers working in black-and-white in earlier eras [Figures 2.22-2.23]. According to Mthethwa, his subjects wanted to be seen in color and color promoted prolonged and engaged looking.[84] Trevor Smith for the *Home*

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[80] As Maltz-Leca noted, Evans' canon of "lyric documentary" is not exclusive to photography, but draws on various art forms including painting, drawing, and literature.
[81] Quoted in Patricia Hayes, "Colour of History," 157. From an interview with Chris Ledochowski by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Cape Town, 27 September 2002.
[82] David Goldblatt, "Foreword" in *Cape Flats Details: Life and Culture in the Townships of Cape Town*, (Pretoria: SAHO/UNISA Press, 2003), 3.
[83] Ledochowski, *Cape Flats Details*, 8.
[84] Godby, "Color in the Representation," 76.

exhibition that included the work of Goldblatt, Mofokeng, and Mthethwa, spoke to Mthethwa's subject as one "that has been held hostage by a genre of (often black-and-white) documentary photography that uses the images of people as victims, ciphers of a larger social problem—one that always somehow seems too large or too unfathomable to actually address."[85] Color is part of countering those tendencies. Best-known for photographs showing dynamically-patterned spaces evincing what Enwezor described as "a kind of candy-tinted jubilation," the *Interiors* series also featured "settings with a cooler, more subdued effect" in addition to those more saturated, glossy portraits of people inside of their homes. Their printing on plexiglas further heightened their sheen. For Mthethwa, color was seductive and did particular emotional work to draw viewers in.[86]

But in ostensibly giving his subjects portraits in the style of what they wanted, Mthethwa also confronted the problem of feeding into stereotypes of poverty kitsch, where brightly colored domestic spaces featuring improvised design become mere spectacle for Western audiences. Engaging Michael Taussig's study of color, Hayes claims that there is a powerful and divisive hierarchy around color, in which desaturation and more monochromatic treatments of color are part of an elite, high art aesthetic.[87] By contrast, saturated color's associations with advertising, it could tend to read as commercial and low. Mthethwa's treatment of color explicitly courted its seductive potential, not only for viewers but also for the subject(s) of the photographs to whom Mthethwa would furnish a copy of the work. He expressed an effort to counter a mode of stereotyping through photography that had—in his mind—done realm harm. He stated,

> As a photographer, I have seen most of the photographs that come out of South Africa, whether from photojournalists or from artists. I have found that the common objective is to sensationalize and to draw attention in a distasteful manner. When I view some of these photographs I cannot help but think of these people who have been photographed as victims of abuse. The choice of photographing in black and

[85] Trevor Smith, "Form and Fiction," in *Home*, eds. Gary Dufour, Thomas Mulcaire, and Trevor Smith (Perth, W.A.: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2000), 21.
[86] Michael Godby connects these ideas both to Mthethwa's work in pastels and his experiences in art school and the art world in the essay, "Color in the Representation of the South African Townships."
[87] Hayes, "Colour of History," 158.

> white by most photographers gives an acute political angle of desertion and emptiness.[88]

For Mthethwa, what followed was the idea that a color photograph could counteract those effects or negate them, and that black-and-white photography had already done plenty of sensationalizing.

As Okwui Enwezor has noted, there is something troubling about the idea of Mthethwa or the color photograph as conferring dignity onto others, making the photographer into a veritable "white knight" who doles out "dignity" to his subjects.[89] Although photography can be as Lee Friedlander described "a generous medium,"[90] that generosity often manifests in ways that are challenging to control. Arguably, photography, especially portraiture, is more commonly associated with extractive and draining tendencies, the photograph as "taken" from the world. Furthermore, Mthethwa discounted the fact that not even "color" can control the use and reception of the photograph, such as in cases where the "dignity" of an individual might be lost on viewers more interested in the kitschy, improvised design of township homes, such as the reception of Craig Fraser's *Shack Chic*, as addressed by Michael Godby.[91] And yet, whether Mthethwa's argument is overblown or misguided might be less interesting than why he felt the need to make it. In what Sean O'Toole has characterized as a "space-clearing" gesture, Mthethwa made a claim for his photography as art full-stop—pushing against the dominant South African legacy of photojournalism where black-and-white resulted in the "triple victimization" of its subjects.

In practice, photographs from Mthethwa's series show a diverse range of subjects within the townships occupying different social arenas. None of the subjects are named, and all of the

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[88] Dhlomo, "Zwelethu Mthethwa," 75.
[89] Okwui Enwezor, "Photography after the End of Documentary Realism: Zwelethu Mthethwa's Color Photographs," in *Zwelethu Mthethwa* (New York: Aperture, 2010), 102-103.
[90] Lee Friedlander stated: "I only wanted Uncle Vern standing by his new car (a Hudson) on a clear day. I got him and the car. I also got a bit of Aunt Mary's laundry, and Beau Jack, the dog, peeing on a fence, and a row of potted tuberous begonias on the porch and 78 trees and a million pebbles in the driveway and more. It's a generous medium, photography." Friedlander, quoted in Peter Galassi, ed., *Lee Friedlander*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art: 2005): 14. The statement originated in Lee Friedlander, "An Excess of Fact," in *The Desert Seen* (New York: D.A.P., 1996), 104. This quote inspired the title of Wellesley College's exhibition, *A Generous Medium: Photography at Wellesley, 1972-2012* (2012).
[91] Enwezor, "Photography after the End," 102-103.

photographs from the series appearing as *Untitled*. In a few photographs from the series, men appear alone in their homes, laying across their beds, sexually suggestive or at the very least, presenting a side of their more intimate selves [Figure 2.24-2.25]. Several other photographs from the series show people in clothes from their spiritual lives, presenting for the camera as devout bodies [Figure 2.26]. Other subjects of the series present pensive faces looking somewhere beyond the camera, though most make direct eye contact with viewer. With migrants to the region as the subjects of many of these photographs, they suggest another layer of vulnerability for the camera.

Staying Committed

Having first photographed people living with and receiving treatment for AIDS in London in 1993, Mendel then turned his attention to HIV/AIDS in Africa, but in doing so, quickly registered major differences in how the epidemic presented in these varied contexts. Where his London-based series, *The Ward*,[92] showed a hospice-style model of palliative care for predominantly gay, white men, his work in Africa focused on the intersection of poverty with the rapid spread of the epidemic across overwhelmingly black communities [Figure 2.27]. Mendel described *The Ward* as his "first encounter with HIV/AIDS, one that greatly impacted the course of my life and subsequent photographic journey."[93] In this time before the widespread availability and increased affordability of ARVs, AIDS was a death sentence. Describing the work as different from any other he performed as a photojournalist, Mendel came to understand *The Ward* as "only 10 percent photography and 90 percent communication and connection with people, dealing with issues of confidentiality, considering how people should be projected, being sensitive not to portray people as victims."[94] Wards like the ones Mendel visited in London were sites of essential care, as well as family and

[92] Mendel's photographs for *The Ward* were produced at London's Middlesex Hospital.
[93] Gideon Mendel, "The Ward," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/the-ward/.
[94] Gideon Mendel, "20 Years: AIDS & Photography."

community engagement, but they also were spaces of profound loss. As Mendel observed: "All of the patients in these photographs died soon after the pictures were taken. They were the unlucky ones, who became sick just before treatment became available."[95] Thus, the photographs had a strong memorial function both for their subjects, as well as this era of AIDS-as-terminal-diagnosis.

In traveling to South Africa in support of *Positive Lives* in the mid-1990s, Mendel was one of the first artists to address HIV/AIDS so directly and centrally as the subject of a body of work to show in a major art institution in South Africa, but many other efforts to represent the impact of the epidemic visually were already happening. In the first decade of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, activism around the issue began in queer communities with the illness primarily associated with white homosexual men. In fact, there was a short-lived chapter of ACTUP in Cape Town circa 1991. Organizations like the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), Township AIDS Project, National Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Equality, and Treatment Action Campaign have been vital for generating awareness, support, and policy initiatives. Simon Nkoli, a powerful voice in the fight against apartheid and gay rights, participated in awareness campaigns before succumbing to an AIDS-related illness in 1998 at the age of 41. He appeared in a poster campaign for the Township AIDS Project notable for its frank portrayal of male-male intimacy across racial lines [Figure 2.28-2.29]. Nkoli's "commitment" bridged the struggle, HIV/AIDS, and LGBT advocacy, with his efforts helping to garner protections in the constitution for gays and lesbians—the first country in the world to do so. A poster in the collection of the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) archives also draws a link between Steve Biko and the HIV/AIDS struggle as the cause of "all freedom fighters" [Figure 2.30].

[95] Mendel, "The Ward."

Mendel's photography of HIV/AIDS draws on iconography of the struggle—it "stays committed."[96] Following Noerine Kaleeba's "Introduction," in which she declares, "*A Broken Landscape* gives us an insight into real lives," the book's first photograph shows an ailing man named Joseph Gabriel being carried by his mother, Dorika, in the town of Mwanza in Tanzania [Figure 2.31]. The photograph faintly echoes Sam Nzima's image of a lifeless Hector Pieterson carried through the streets of Soweto [Figure 2.32], arguably the most famous photograph of the anti-apartheid struggle. In Mendel's project, that struggle is echoed in a portrait made in Tanzanian village. The historian Patricia Hayes has argued that the "appetite of the west for similar images during the 1980s" helped create a tradition of images heavy on Christian iconography, such as the pietà.[97] Similarly, Tamar Garb has identified this tendency beyond photography in works such as William Kentridge's *Tide Table*, [Figure 2.33] which includes a scene in which a drowned man is carried out of the ocean to the beach.[98] A cartoon from South Africa's most famed—and notorious—satirist Zapiro [Figures 2.34-2.35], as well as a poster campaign made a direct comparison between the loss of Nkosi Johnson, an outspoken young boy who powerfully shared the story of his illness publicly, with a slain Hector Pieterson [Figure 2.36]. A similar composition to the famed Nzima photo appears in the series of photographs featuring the story of Mzokonah Malevu. In the late stages of his battle with AIDS, we see Malevu carried through the dirt streets of a squatter camp in KZN while a young boy looks on [Figures 2.37-2.38]. These photographs draw on

[96] Peter McKenzie characterized a field of photography made up of a largely white group of professionally-trained photographers unconcerned with contemporary social and political issues, while the 'committed' photographers were made up of a disparate and racially diverse group of professionals and freelancers working to represent different aspects of life in South Africa. Debates over the ways that "committed" photographers represented events in South Africa helped encourage the development of the Afrapix agency. Ractliffe et al., "Pre-Post," 131.

[97] Patricia Hayes, "Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography," *Kronos*, No. 33 (November 2007): 144. *JSTOR*. John Peffer notes that Nzima published five photographs of Pieterson being carried through the streets, but that the photograph that aligned most closely with Christian iconography was seized on and reproduced. He contends, "As it passed in front of Nzima's camera, because *it fit* an already existing pattern, it became the *right* image." Peffer, "Remarks on South African Photography."

[98] Garb, "Land of Signs," 14.

associations with images that have a long history of being taken seriously in South Africa, and speak to themes of suffering, sacrifice, and love.

Photographs from the Ford assembly plant in Silverton, South Africa, and the Lonmin Mine, Rustenberg, South Africa also harken back to photography of the struggle years that addressed labor organizing and life in and around mines, from the conditions at men's hostels to scenes of men toiling underground. At the Ford assembly plant, one photograph shows men seated and standing—one woman seated off to the side—near posters detailing some of the tell-tale symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases [Figure 2.39]. While another shows rows of seated men in the factory, their attention focused beyond the camera to what the text suggests is an AIDS education and prevention event [Figure 2.39]. At Lonmin Mine—a platinum mine where approximately 24% of miners were HIV positive according to a survey in 2000—a Team Supervisor named Ntobeko Ngwenze provides an account of where he is from, his family life, and what he is doing to protect himself from HIV/AIDS [Figure 2.40]. Across from this textual account is a photograph of a muscular man in a close-fitting tanktop, pants, rubber boots, and hardhat, walking through a dark area of the mine. The next photograph printed at full-bleed across two pages shows three men in bed in the hostels [Figure 2.41]. One man, clad only in his underwear, looks toward the camera in calm repose. Bicycles, metal rails of the bunk bedding cast shadows around the room, in a photograph highly suggestive about the sexual bodies of the laborers residing therein.

Black-and-white reinforces the elegiac and stark qualities of these spaces, and it reaches back to make the connection from one struggle to another. As addressed by both Godby and Thomas, these photographs contain few or no indications of the colonial legacies that shape the scenes they depict. So that, for Thomas, photographs of resource-stretched hospitals "depict crumbling outposts on the margins of bio-power, yet the part played by colonization and its legacy in structuring relations between the hospital as institution and the institutionalized African body is never overtly

stated."[99] Instead of countering denial, they reinforce powerful stereotypes while elucidating little about underlying systems. This risks supporting narratives of African "backwardness," underscored by the insistence by Mendel and the project's influential supporters of its commitment to truth-telling.[100]

However, Mendel's project circulated internationally in a way that suggests that Godby's and Thomas' concerns, although warranted, may have been somewhat overblown. Mendel's *A Broken Landscape* was one of 16 included in *The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing* curated by Carol Squiers for the International Center of Photography. Working beyond tropes of victimhood, much of the work included in this exhibition treaded the blurry line between documentary and photojournalism.[101] Squiers described Mendel's *Broken Landscape* photographs as "searing but also hopeful."[102] 13 photographs from the series were selected for the exhibition. Squiers adds, "[Mendel] has helped map out a number of ways that photography can be used in this fight, providing a model for those who will have to take up the cause."[103] Squiers acknowledged, "Photographing people who showed visible signs of the opportunistic infections that affected AIDS patients was controversial and required care and tact" in all settings around the world.[104] She detailed the activism of groups such as ACTUP and Gran Fury, as well as the push back against projects like Nicholas Nixon and Bebe Nixon's *People with AIDS*. She holds that Mendel operated with an awareness of these debates seeking strategies to mitigate concerns over victimizing voyeurism, and pointed to Mendel's commitment to show organization and activism at local levels to combat the

[99] Thomas, *Impossible Mourning,* 68.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] In the "Introduction," Squiers writes, "Most of the photographs in *The Body at Risk* fall under the rubric of documentary photography or photojournalism, although rigid categories break down in the fluid image environment of the twenty-first century." Squiers, *The Body at Risk: Photography of Disorder, Illness, and Healing* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2005): 9.
[102] Squiers, *The Body at Risk*, 171.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] Squiers notes, "Whether to photograph people with AIDS and, if so, *how* to photograph them, inspired passionate debate and protest starting in the mid-1980s, especially in the U.S. and Britain." Squiers, *The Body at Risk*, 15.

virus' spread. Strategies of struggle-era activism shaped the battle for prevention education and affordable treatment options.

Although Mendel's projects had a very high profile, I do not want to overlook an array of other photo-based projects that responded to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Graeme Williams's series of photographs made at the Sacred Heart House AIDS Hospice were exhibited at the Market Theatre Gallery in 1990. Pushing black-and-white into moodier territory, some of the most moving and best-known works from the *Chasing Shadows* series are of Santu Mofokeng's brother Ishmael who was in the late stages of AIDS when the photos were made. Goldblatt's photograph of Victoria Cobokana and her two children draws heavily on Christian iconography, Victoria appearing haloed by a light fixture hanging from the ceiling behind her, accompanied by her two children [Figure 2.42]. The color of this photograph intensifies the sting of the caption's revelation, that all three died soon after the photo was made. With their skin so flushed with color, they appear perfectly healthy for the camera. Meanwhile, Goldblatt's series, *In the Time of AIDS*, shows signs and symbols of the disease, often appearing as odd ciphers in a sparse, or seemingly indifferent, landscape.

Gisèle Wulfsohn photographed in color frequently in her work in the 1980s [Figures 2.43-2.44],[105] but turned to black-and-white for a series of portraits featuring HIV+ subjects. In *Living Openly*: *HIV Positive South Africans Tell Their Stories*, disclosure and personal narratives were key. Photographs and stories of sharing their status from public figures like Justice Edwin Cameron, Zachie Achmat, and the young boy Nkosi Johnson [Figure 2.45]. The project circulated widely in South Africa. Annabelle Wienand argued that "The only other photographer to have documented the epidemic for such an extended time during this time period, and with equal dedication, Gideon Mendel." But she identified major differences between the two. Wienand wrote:

[105] Wulfsohn worked for *Style*, a South African lifestyle magazine in the 1980s. Quoted in *Then & Now*, Wulfsohn stated, "I was criticized for working at *Style*; this was the mid-1980s, when a lot was happening, and people were joining the UDF and the End Conscription Campaign. My response was, 'While you are busy documenting the poor, I'm documenting the rich, and you can't pretend they're not here; they are also part of South Africa." "Gisèle Wulfsohn: Then," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007), 145.

> Wulfsohn's work on HIV/AIDS predated Mendel's by five years and was focused only on South Africa and did not include other African countries. Whereas Mendel worked primarily as a photojournalist for the British media and also for international aid organizations addressing mostly a European viewership, Wulfsohn's images were produced with a local South African audience in mind. An exception for Mendel was his work with the TAC which was used locally by the organization. Wulfsohn's engagement with documenting the epidemic was also much broader than that of the other photographers in terms of the diversity of racial, socio-economic and cultural demographics of the South Africans she photographed. Her work is singular in this regard and thus powerfully subverts stereotypes of AIDS as an exclusively 'black' or 'poor' disease.[106]

Wienand's sense that Wulfsohn's work has been overlooked may have something to do with the kind of visibility that Mendel's project had with its championing by SANG.

Justice Cameron's speech at the opening of *A Broken Landscape* stressed "commitment." He asked, "What does it mean to say that an artist or an art gallery 'shows commitment'?" He answered," It means that he or she brings not only an engagement to the subject of the display, but an involvement in it that transcends mere observation or representation."[107] And yet, just as Cameron claimed this commitment of Mendel's work, Mendel changed tack. And those changes emerged from his experiences making and presenting *A Broken Landscape*. Until this time, he writes:

> I had been a concerned photojournalist, working in black and white. However, with this project I became a visual activist, keen to create images that might impact the struggle more directly. I began to work in colour, to make images that were more accessible and positive.[108]

Working with TAC, he created the collaborative installation work *Framing AIDS* for SANG. He created a space, a rectangle made with gaffer tape applied to the wall, in front of which people could choose a way to present themselves or something important to them [Figure 2.46]. Collaborators could determine the visibility with which they felt comfortable. Mendel asserted, "This process of relinquishing some of my own control over the photograph empowered the HIV-positive activists

[106] Wienand, "Portraits, Publics and Politics," 203.
[107] Martin, "Curating HIV/AIDS," 63.
[108] Gideon Mendel, "Framing AIDS," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/framing-aids/.

who filled the frames, and they became collaborators in the process."[109] He shifted terminology—the people in his photographs were collaborators—and he turned to color. Mendel now claims that in the context of the shift to digital photography, black-and-white now has an air of contrivance.[110] It is an option one can select from as opposed to a commitment with a deliberate selection of camera and film. As Mendel put it, "…whereas shooting black and white, in the eighties and nineties, was like a decision, like you're putting black and white film in your camera and there's no possibility of it ever becoming color."[111]

Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the ways in which representing a crisis intersected with a crisis of representation. Although Mendel's photographs bore strong formal and conceptual ties to struggle – era photography, Mendel's experiences of producing photo essays and exhibiting at SANG influenced Mendel's shift toward projects that offered participants more control over their visual and textual representation. Referring to the space of the museum as a "live documentary space," Mendel sought to expand the project of documentary beyond the photograph itself.[112] Where the art museum was once disregarded as a bourgeois entity not in keeping with the social concerns of the resistance, it could now help affirm Mendel's project of documentary to show a version of things as they were and to encourage audiences to acknowledge the impact of the disease on the lives of those photographed.[113]

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[109] Mendel, "Framing AIDS."
[110] Gideon Mendel, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2016.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] Godby expands on the activation of SANG to shore up the documentary claims of Mendel's project in his essay, "Aesthetics and Activism."
[113] Dismissing art galleries in a way that suggests a broader attitude toward official art institutions, Afrapix member Peter McKenzie stated, "What good is documenting if we're going to hoard these documents in photo archives or display them for liberals in photo galleries. There are other avenues of service for the committed photographer through which he must advertise the struggle." McKenzie then referred to street exhibitions, public advertisements for resistance-related events, publishing subversive images in 'responsible media' outlets, and community slideshows. Peter McKenzie, "Bringing the Struggle into Focus," *Staffrider* 5, No. 2 (1982): 18.

CHAPTER 3

IN THE TIME OF COLOR: DAVID GOLDBLATT'S *INTERSECTIONS*

The Past Hasn't Passed

In 1998, David Goldblatt's photographs appeared in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. With *David Goldblatt: Photographs from South Africa*, Goldblatt became the first South African to feature in a solo show at MoMA [Figures 3.1-3.2].[1] His exhibition included 46 photographs from his project, *South Africa The Structure of Things Then* (from here on, *Structure*),[2] a series that combined image with heavily researched text to examine the relationship between architecture, history, and cultural values underpinning South Africa's lengthy era of *baaskap*, or "white domination."[3] In the final paragraph of the essay introducing the book, Goldblatt—a white, Jewish South African—boldly declared,

> The period 1652 to 1990 was the time of the White in South Africa. White power prevailed. That time has now passed. We are in a new time. What its values and spirit will be and how these will be expressed and evidenced in the structures brought forth has hardly begun to emerge.[4]

In this framing, the *Structure* series presented as an opportunity to explore South Africa's past as this "new time" arrived and new structures were "brought forth." *Structure* also offered Goldblatt a chance to delineate "the DNA of his own work," as critic Sean O'Toole phrased it—as in, the

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[1] William Kentridge's film *Stereoscope* featured in MoMA's *Projects* series in the following year.

[2] "A Subtle Portrait of South Africa Emerges in a New Photography Exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art," MoMA Press Release Archives (July 16, 1998). http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS_RELEASE_ARCHIVE/sa_photo.pdf. When *Structure* was exhibited just over a decade later at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2009, the show grew to feature approximately 120 black-and-white photographs from the series.

[3] On bringing the *Structure* project to fruition, Goldblatt states, "I completed the photography in 1991/93 (the structures of what I called the Era of Baaskap were still in place), and then set about writing the supporting text. This proved to be a huge job. It seemed that no one had looked at the structure of structures in quite this way. The conventional view was that of the aesthetics and history of architecture. My interest was not in architecture but in what we expressed and how we expressed it in the structures that we built. To support and clarify this view, I wrote an extensive introduction and then did a considerable amount of research and writing on the structures I had photographed in order to put them into the context of our value-systems and explicate what and how they expressed those values. This took about five years and the work was finally published in 1998." Quoted in Baptiste Lignel, *David Goldblatt* (Paris: A Photographers' References, 2014), 129-130.

[4] David Goldblatt, "Introduction," *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), 20.

connective strands of his interests.[5] Goldblatt's exhibition at MoMA puts us four years after South Africa's first fully democratic elections, which took place after many cycles of protest, resistance, and bloodshed in anti-apartheid activities and political power struggles.[6] And the exhibition closed just weeks before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established to investigate acts of violence committed during apartheid issued its report.[7] A public airing of grief and grievances—and in many instances, spectacle—the TRC featured numerous tales of the apartheid era's darkest hours from all sides of the conflict.

"For most people outside of South Africa," wrote Susan Kismaric, "any understanding of apartheid and its history has been largely determined by accounts in newspapers, magazines, and on television. These accounts tended to focus on the journalistic and dramatic, revealing little about the system's origins, complexities, or nuances."[8] It is against this backdrop of what Americans knew or thought they knew about South Africa in 1998, that Kismaric—then-curator in MoMA's Department of Photography—positioned Goldblatt's work as a more nuanced view of the way things had been. MoMA's press release declared the exhibition "an unusual series of photographs documenting the social history of apartheid,"[9] and argued that Goldblatt was showing viewers a different side of South African life than they were accustomed to, an antidote, perhaps, to the popular press' overdetermination of the country's political situation. Yet, in their "deceptive simplicity"—as also claimed by the press release—and their emphasis on architecture, signage, monuments, and landscape, Goldblatt's photographs could readily call to mind works long-familiar

[5] Sean O'Toole, "David Goldblatt, Structures under Baaskap," in *Apartheid & After* (Amsterdam: Huis Marseille, Museum voor Fotografie, 2014): 187.
[6] Sporadic, brutal violence marked the political power struggles between African National Congress supporters, Inkatha supporters, and the police in the early 1990s up through the 1994 elections. Photographic coverage of some of the most intense periods of conflict in the so-called "Hostel Wars" is at the center of Greg Marinovich and João Silva's book *The Bang Bang Club* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
[7] The TRC addressed incidents occurring between the years 1960-1994. The Commission presented its report on October 28, 1998. Transcripts of testimony and records of the commission's major findings are available through the Department of Justice Website: http://www.justice.gov.za/Trc/.
[8] Susan Kismaric, "Introduction," Museum of Modern Art (1998). http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/goldblatt/.
[9] MoMA, "Subtle Portrait."

to visitors at MoMA by the likes of Walker Evans,[10] Robert Adams, and Lee Friedlander, among others. So if they were "unusual," it seemed to be less for their formal characteristics, and more for how they approached their subject matter. In short, they defied local expectations of what apartheid looked like, providing a distinctive South African accent on a well-known formal language of black-and-white photography.

Meanwhile, back in the pages of South Africa's *Sunday Independent*, the journalist Pippa Green identified Goldblatt's MoMA exhibition as especially noteworthy for its understated, specialized content. "But what is most remarkable about Goldblatt, now 67," wrote Green, "is not that he's the first South African photographer to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, but that it is on something as apparently esoteric as 'structures'."[11] As Green indicates, the photographs from the *Structure* series require considerable local knowledge and/or the reading of lengthy captions to delve into the layers of history represented therein, to see and think with Goldblatt-the-photographer. They might have looked familiar to audiences weaned on John Szarkowski's 1967 MoMA exhibition *New Documents*[12] or William Jenkins' 1975 George Eastman House show *New Topographics*[13]—arguably, two of the most influential photo exhibitions in the US in the latter half of the twentieth century—but they were undergirded by rhetoric insistent on the politically fraught nature of its subject matter, and its historical and geographic specificity. "Extravagantly banal" was how the long-time University of Cape Town art historian Neville Dubow described some of the subjects of Goldblatt's *Structure* series—and did so, in his essay for the book.[14]

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[10] Sally Gaule explored this connection in her essay, "Photographs of Walker Evans and David Goldblatt: Seeing through Different Prisms," *De Arte* 54 (September 1996): 19-31.
[11] Pippa Green, "Grand Old Cameraman Shows Us Our Missing Teeth," *Sunday Independent*, 1998.
[12] *New Documents* appeared at MoMA in 1967, curated by John Szarkowski. Featuring the work of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand, it placed emphasis on personal, highly subjective use of the photograph as document.
[13] *New Topographics* showed at George Eastman House in 1975, curated by William Jenkins. It became influential in its emphasis on no-frills views of landscapes punctuated by common, non-descript man-made structures.
[14] Neville Dubow, "Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye," in *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), 22.

However, it is through that quality of extravagant banality that Goldblatt's photographs and texts ask viewers to look closer to find points of interest. Often, the subject of the photograph is an absence. As the government forcibly moved black, coloured, and Indian South Africans away from city centers and into strictly racially circumscribed zones to bulldoze neighborhoods to fulfill apartheid spatial logics, Goldblatt's photographs became documents of profound loss. They also documented monuments to old conflicts, remnants of early colonial developments, or merely, a series of rudimentary holes encircled with concrete in an untended field far off in a distant field. For this last example, *Lavatories, Frankfort Resettlement Camp, Ciskei (now Eastern Cape). 12 July 1983* [Figure 3.3], we are aided by the book's extended caption, which explains that the small excavations were intended to serve as latrines on the grounds of a failed apartheid-era resettlement scheme. Through the *Structure* series, Goldblatt's photographs demonstrate the devils of apartheid are as much in the details, in the footprints of people, in holes in the ground, in the bones of things, as on their skins and surfaces. The ordinary is tainted and everything is suspect.

For a sense of where Goldblatt's approach fit in relation to the genres most represented *within* South African photography over the era that *Structure* covered, we are helped by this summary from Nobel Laureate and frequent Goldblatt collaborator, the writer Nadine Gordimer. Speaking on the occasion of the 1983 exhibition at the South African National Gallery (SANG) in Cape Town featuring thirty-five years of Goldblatt's work—which was also one of the museum's earliest exhibitions dedicated to photography—Gordimer assessed South African photography in a breathless passage inspired by a similar meditation on the medium by Susan Sontag:

> Out of the language of photography in South Africa can be made, to be local and particular, dompas photographs, beauty-spot photographs for *Flying Springbok*,[15] the South African Airways magazine, a smuggled photograph of the body of Steve Biko

[15] This is the title of the former South African Airways magazine. The current SAA publication is *Sawubona*, taking its title from the Zulu word meaning "Hello."

> after he had died in detention, happy Polaroids of crowds at Sun City and news photographs of families being evicted from their homes.[16]

Unpacking that passage: dompas photographs were the notorious black-and-white identification photos included in passbooks—frontal, expressionless headshots.[17] Subversive shorthand derived from the phrase "dumb pass"—dompas were key tools to restrict the movement of black people throughout the country, part of the system euphemistically referred to as "influx controls" applied to major urban spaces like Johannesburg. Blacks had to carry these identification books at all times; to be stopped by the police without a passbook was to risk imprisonment.[18] In Goldblatt's work, a dompas appears most memorably in the gelatin silver print, *Young Man with a Pass, Soweto, South Africa*, from 1972 [Figure 3.4]. Here, the cover of a passbook is turned towards the camera, held in the hands of a young man, while he slouches and leans into the body of another man near the center of the image. All five men in the photograph direct their gazes to the camera, their demeanors a mix of toughness and tenderness.

In stark contrast, the next item on Gordimer's list, the "Beauty Spot" commonly featured in magazines offering tips on skin care, makeup, and the latest hairstyles—a glossy, breezy standard column targeted at women appearing in magazines such as *Fair Lady* [Figure 3.5]. And *Flying Springbok*, which was then the South African Airways (SAA) magazine, served as a tourist's guide to

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[16] Nadine Gordimer, "David Goldblatt: So Far," *South African National Gallery Quarterly Bulletin* (June 1983), n.p. With this statement, Gordimer was riffing on and adapting Susan Sontag's assertion that both language and photography are media through which art can be made but is not guaranteed. In her essay, Gordimer quotes Sontag as follows: "Although photography generates works that can be called art, photography is not, to begin with, an art form at all. Like language, it is a medium in which works of art (among other things) are made. Out of language one can make scientific discourse, bureaucratic memoranda, love letters, grocery lists, and Balzac's Paris. Out of photography, one can make passport pictures, weather photographs, pornographic pictures, x-rays, wedding pictures, Atget's Paris."

[17] John Peffer's recent work has shown black South Africans would use a passbook-type photograph for the making of airbrushed wedding and family portraits, turning an aesthetic of black-and-white social control into a colorful, tender keepsake. See: Peffer, "Vernacular Recollections and Popular Photography in South Africa" in *The African Photographic Archive: Research and Curatorial Strategies*, eds. Christopher Morton and Darren Newbury (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 115-133.

[18] The long history of pass laws in South Africa reach back to the mid- to late-eighteenth century and were used to restrict movement on the basis of race as well as class, in addition to creating ready labor pools, especially for farming and mining concerns. The use of passbooks became more common in the 1930s, in the context of the Great Depression and an emphasis on the protection of white employment against black competition, and then a widespread national policy in 1952 with passage of the Native Act. Burning passes—and photographs of pass burning—became a well-known means of protest, especially when the pass burners were black political leaders. Initially, a law directed at men, women were required to carry passbooks beginning in 1955. See: Michael Savage, "The Imposition of Pass Laws on the African Population in South Africa 1916-1984," *African Affairs* 85, no. 339 (April 1986): 181-205, http://www.jstor.org/stable/723012; and Ellison Kahn, "The Pass Laws," in *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa*, ed. Ellen Hellman (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1949), 275-291.

the country complete with colorful spreads featuring beach getaways, wildlife adventures, and art in "the land of wonderful contrasts" as SAA's ads insisted [Figure 3.6]. Again, an entry in Goldblatt's work seems to reference and critique one of Gordimer's themes. In *Saturday Morning at the Hypermarket: Semi-final of the Miss Lovely Legs Competition, Boksburg, June 28, 1980* [Figure 3.7], entrants in a beauty contest stand on a catwalk. With their carefully feathered hair, heavily made-up visages, and flattering one-piece swimsuits, numbers 11, 12, 16, and 15 could readily feature in a "Beauty Spot." However, instead of covergirl smiles, the women are all directing their attention elsewhere or between moments of composure. The spectacle of the event—in particular, the relationship between "lookers" and "lookers"—serves as Goldblatt's subject. The expressions on the faces of the mixed race crowd reveal disinterest, aspiration, incredulity, and desire.

Steve Biko, a central leader of the Black Consciousness movement, follows in Gordimer's inventory. Although having risen to prominence as an outspoken advocate for black culture in South Africa, Biko arguably became better known for the circumstances surrounding the brutality of his death in detention at the young age of 31 and the subsequent inquest. Images of his post-mortem body and the scene of his funeral circulated widely in South Africa and internationally. These consisted of both actual and simulated representations of Biko-after-death, examples of which include photographs of his rigid body in a casket at his wake published in *Drum* magazine, which was a popular publication directed at urban black audiences [Figures 3.8-3.9], in a morgue in Pretoria reproduced in *The New York Times* [Figure 3.10],[19] as well as photographs of a re-creation of Biko's death in detention made by police for the inquest, which were published in the Johannesburg-based *Rand Daily Mail*.[20]

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[19] "1977 Abroad: The Camera's View," *New York Times*, December 29, 1977: 37. The photograph appeared in the *New York Times* in an article featuring important photographs from around the world in 1977. The article describes the event of Biko's death thusly, "a South African black leader died in imprisonment." The caption for the photograph of Biko reads, "The body of Stephen Biko lies in Pretoria. An inquest into his death exonerated police."

[20] Shannen Hill examines photographic representations of Biko in life and death in *Biko's Ghosts: The Iconography of Black Consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015). In particular, see the chapter "Of Icons and Inquests," 47-86.

Next: Sun City, the setting for many "happy polaroids"—as Gordimer tells us—remains a popular entertainment hub: a taste of Las Vegas in South Africa [Figure 3.11].[21] When first constructed, it existed in the black homeland—or *Bantustan*—of Bophuthatswana, a territory recognized as a separate state only by the apartheid-era South African government and one of the other ten black homelands, Ciskei. Where gambling, stripteases, and racial mixing were forbidden next door in South Africa, Sun City was a holiday to a far more permissive culture. Lastly, left-leaning scenes of forced removals often featured recently-bulldozed residences and people surrounded by a few essential items that constituted their remaining earthly belongings [Figure 3.12]. By contrast, right-wing publications often presented removals as sanitation, modernization, and betterment schemes. A headline from *South African Panorama* in November 1960 announced, "From Slums of Mere Existence to Comfort of Ordered Life," while *South African Scope* championed "New Chances for Self-Rule" in June 1958 [Figure 3.13-3.14]. In both cases, the narratives laud the apartheid state's magnanimity and the opportunities for blacks provided by this system.

Certainly, there was much more to the world of images in South Africa than these examples, but Gordimer's list seized on the extremes of the popular, indelible, celebratory, and traumatic photographs that dominated visual culture in the 1980s. For Gordimer,

> Because of this drama of environmental association, photography has become the most emotive language of the several dozen spoken to us South Africans. It has at the same time tended to make enormities and beauties equally commonplace, less and less capable of rousing differentiated response. Because of the immediacy with which photographs rouse an emotional response and the concommitant [*sic*] blunting of response that follows over-exposure to that immediacy, what makes a work of art, in the language of photography, is a quality that neither depends upon associative sensationalism nor can be blocked by blunted sensibility.[22]

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[21] Summarizing some of the incongruities that Sun City had to offer in its early days, the *New York Times*'s South Africa correspondent, Joseph Lelyveld, reported, "…Sun City opened with a man-made lake next to an eighteen-hole golf course that boasted Gary Player as its pro; southern Africa's biggest casino; slot machines; soft-porn movies, and lavish shows with white, brown and black chorus girls, attired mainly in sequins and plums. The chorus girls were said to be especially popular with white Afrikaans-speaking farmers from communities in adjacent parts of the Transvaal that are notoriously staid and right-wing, even by South African standards." Lelyveld, "Bringing a Bit of Vegas to South Africa's 'Homelands,' *New York Times*, July 19, 1981, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, F7.

[22] Gordimer, "David Goldblatt."

Whether subject matter featured the frontlines of conflict or the breathtaking landscapes of tourism ads, Gordimer—à la Sontag—identified a tendency for the sum total of photography in South Africa to result in a collapse of the extreme, the pretty, and the everyday into troubling equivalency. This stew of images flattened the divisions and disparities that marked daily life in South Africa, with Goldblatt's work offering up something else—an example of photography as art. Despite concerted efforts by National Party's propagandists to show the need for and successes of apartheid rule, the spectacle of extreme segregation policies and their contestation often dominated abroad in exhibitions such as the widely travelled *South Africa The Cordoned Heart* organized for the International Center of Photography in New York in 1986 and books like Ernest Cole's heart-wrenching *House of Bondage* published in 1967 and the Afrapix-helmed *Beyond the Barricades* published in 1989.

Pitching Goldblatt's photographs as a corrective to photojournalistic stereotypes of violence and protest from the anti-apartheid struggle, in the way Kismaric did, was apt. However, for far-flung audiences, MoMA's positioning of Goldblatt's work skirted the specificity of Goldblatt's practice in South Africa: his particular formal take on "the system's origins, complexities, or nuances" as Kismaric put it, his insistence on locating the past in the present, his distinctive attention to detail, and his tendency to revisit and reconsider his own photographic archive.[23] These interests set Goldblatt apart from many of his contemporaries as well as the younger generations of documentary photographers and the work of Afrapix. MoMA's take on Goldblatt also overlooked the neutralizing and flattening effects of image culture within South Africa that Gordimer described—however fairly—impacted as it was by state censorship, the propaganda of the right and left, and the varied world of national and international mass media publications. For Kismaric at

[23] Goldblatt recounted moving toward a system of archiving that "worked »geologically«," as he sought to organize his photographs in a way that could acknowledge the complexity of their contents and also evade possible searches by the security police. David Goldblatt, "A South African's Archive," *Camera Austria* 51-52 (1995): 60-66.

MoMA and many in the West, the *Flying Springbok* and "the happy polaroids of crowds at Sun City" barely registered, obscured by representations of the most extreme aspects of life under apartheid.

Goldblatt's project was driven by a personal pursuit to document the habits, activities, and structures that qualified as the stuff of ordinary life[24] under white-minority rule in South Africa with a South African audience in mind.[25] For viewers beyond those borders, like the ones at MoMA, Goldblatt chalked their interest up to the fundamental curiosity people have in other people and what they make.[26] But there was also an important story here about South Africa in particular, of what things were like "then," a claim to the past, albeit a very recent one underscored by black-and-white prints. This was a past still very much living in the present, indicating the official end of apartheid while many of its vestiges remained. *Structure* afforded viewers the opportunity to see and to think about the spaces marked by physical—and by implication, social—structures over time.[27]

With *Structure* and exhibitions like the one at MoMA, Goldblatt reached a new level of international fame. Although his quiet and contemplative mode could appear too understated and even suspicious during the 1980s—indeed, Goldblatt was the subject of a short-lived boycott by the

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[24] Reflecting on Goldblatt's approach to the ordinary, the Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Greg Marinovich remarked, "When David has a concept of the ordinary, he applies his whole life experience and it becomes something wonderful. He tries to pull himself out of the picture but succeeds instead in displaying his personality." Maureen Isaacson, "An unflinching eye that avoids the obvious," *The Sunday Independent*, 2004.

[25] Alex Dodd writes of Goldblatt's special attention to South African audiences, "Although his work has been widely published and appreciated in Europe and the United States, Goldblatt has always made his photographs with a South African audience in mind. His work is proudly parochial yet deeply universal in its concerns." Alex Dodd, "The Humanity of Forms," *Mail and Guardian*, 3. Goldblatt himself has said, "I realised a long time ago that it's very difficult indeed to convey to overseas people who don't have our kind of knowledge, the knowledge that we almost get by osmosis; it seeps into our skins by being subjected constantly without being aware all the time that we are looking at things that make us part of this peculiar society. All our perversions, obsessions, graces and everything else that goes into being South African. I find it extremely difficult to put these photographs to overseas people and feel that they are going to know what they're about, whereas I know I'm reasonably sure when I show a set of my photographs to a group of South Africans that they'll understand what they're about." David Goldblatt quoted in Sally Gaule, "Photographs of Walker Evans and David Goldblatt: Seeing through Different Prisms," *de arte* 54 (September 1996), 23. From Marlene Kapita-Meyer and Federico Freschi (1987), unpublished transcript of an interview with David Goldblatt, Department of History of Art, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[26] Green, "Grand Old Cameraman."

[27] Accessing these various communities could often prove challenging. Goldblatt's efforts to turn his attention to suburban life were somewhat stymied by limited access to willing subjects, especially in certain parts of town like the northern suburbs. The article's author suggests, "Quite possibly, one of the reasons for the lack of response from middle-class people is their pathological horror of exposing themselves emotionally, visually or verbally—a lapse they equate with sleazy "tell all" interviews in the Sunday papers." Goldblatt's solution was to try to photograph subjects closer to home in terms of upbringing and lifestyle. Goldblatt explained: "For years I thought in conventional terms. I had to seek interesting people and these were not the people of my own background because I knew it too well." He then added, "Now I want to come to grips with the essential qualities of these people—those that perhaps I am closest to in my own upbringing and background and education." "Turning the Camera on Suburban Life," *Star Woman*, 1974.

African National Congress in London[28]—his approach was more widely celebrated in the 1990s. Where Goldblatt struggled to publish earlier books—labor-of-love projects that were hard sells to publishers only to later became collector's items—*Structure* was a success.[29] There was mixed reception to his earlier work, with *Some Afrikaners Photographed* the most polarizing entry,[30] whereas *Structure*, as it appeared in 1998, received widespread praise. However, just as Goldblatt found increased international attention and acclaim as arguably South Africa's premiere documentary photographer of black and white lives in black-and-white with *Structure*, he began experimenting with and using color photography to examine the changing landscape of post-apartheid South Africa.

This chapter examines Goldblatt's turn-to-color for his "personal" projects in the late 1990s, understanding "personal" as work motivated by Goldblatt's own interests and over which he has claimed full authorial and editorial control. For his personal projects—which his professional

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[28] Addressing the boycott, Goldblatt explained, "My exhibition that started at the Side Gallery toured Britain. When it was due to go to Liverpool, the council there asked the ANC if it was okay to exhibit my work and the London office of the ANC said no. They put out a boycott call on David Goldblatt because he'd defied the cultural boycott and because he did work for the Anglo American Corporation. A couple of key ANC supporters in South Africa sent a message to London that the boycott was ridiculous and it was relaxed. But it was a very intense period of total control and I realised that work such as mine could become critically important simply as documentary evidence, so I donated that whole exhibition to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London." Alex Dodd, "A Chronology," in *Photographs*, eds. David Goldblatt and Martin Parr (Rome: Contrasto, 2006), 244. South African art critic and curator, Sean O'Toole tells the story of the boycott, "After appearances in Newcastle and London, it arrived in Liverpool. The ANC, belatedly, weighed in and said Goldblatt wasn't kosher because of his relationship with Anglo-American, as well as his disregard for the cultural boycott at the time. [Omar] Badsha weighed in—on Goldblatt's side." Sean O'Toole, "Artist Profile: Total Recall," *Wanted*, 24.

[29] Of the relative success and growing importance of Goldblatt's photo books, Rory Bester stated, "…a consideration of his demands on the production process make it quickly apparent that these small, independent presses were not able to finance the quality of printing that Goldblatt demanded in his books. Goldblatt's early books were financial disasters, which again might go some way to explaining the wide range of publishers who have been associated with his work." Bester, "David Goldblatt, One Book at a Time," in *Photographs*, eds. David Goldblatt and Martin Parr (Rome: Contrasto, 2006), 23-24. Bester's footnote provides further details about sales, stating, "*On the Mines* and *Some Afrikaners Photographed* had to be remaindered at R3 and R2.50 respectively. *In Boksburg* and *The Transported of KwaNdebele* hardly sold. *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* and *Intersections*, both published by international companies, provided Goldblatt with a royalty (but one that bears little relation to the cost of making the photographs. The entire print-run of *Structures* sold out," *Ibid*., 24. As Anél Powell tells it, "Veteran photographer David Goldblatt struggled so to sell copies of his first book, *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, that the publishers were forced to slash the selling price from R25 to R2.50 a copy. Now, three decades later, Goldblatt's books sell for thousands of rands and are in demand in bookshops around the world." Powell, "Fringe Visions Revisited," *Cape Times*, October 31, 2006. That said, a report from Goldblatt's show at The Photographer's Gallery in London in 1974 notes, "Mr. Goldblatt's book in collaboration with Nadine Gordimer, "On The Mines," is selling well at the exhibition," but that may have meant little in the grand scheme of the print run. The Star Bureau, "Goldblatt takes SA to UK," *The Star Johannesburg*, September 5, 1974: 22.

[30] Reflecting on the strong response against *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, Goldblatt recounted, "In 1968 the Swiss magazine *Camera* published some of my photographs of Afrikaners. An Afrikaans newspaper picked up the story and came out with a front page piece that said »Blood will boil over these photographs. Action must be taken against photographer David Goldblatt (…)«." Goldblatt, "South African's Archive," *Camera Austria* 51/52 (1995): 62-63.

assignments for publications like Anglo-Gold's *Optima* magazine, *South African Tatler*, and *Leadership S.A.* helped pay for—Goldblatt has explained:

> the imperatives were my own and the objective driving the work was not directed to bringing an income. The objective was to photograph aspects of the world in which I lived in ways that were personally satisfying and, for the most part, 'relevant'. Relevance related to the values, ethos, politics in the broadest sense, of the society in which I live.[31]

Even as Goldblatt, now aged 86, continues to revive elements of his archive that make his category of "personal" an increasingly unstable one, I contend his "personal" turn-to-color is significant rhetorically, historically, and practically. It marks a period of making differently and of heightened urgency to reckon with the role(s) of photography in the post-apartheid era.

Considering the turn-to-color, I focus on Goldblatt's exhibition *Intersections Intersected* at the New Museum in 2009, an iteration of the broader project titled *Intersections*. I explore how Goldblatt figures the relationship between his black-and-white and color photographs. I then examine how color impacts our sense of the time of these photos—when they were made, what they represent, the eras they evoke. In what follows, I show: 1) how and why curators, critics, and art historians positioned Goldblatt as a counterpoint to stereotypes of South-Africa-in-crisis and as a model for South African photography as art; 2) the practical aspects of Goldblatt's turn-to-color and its relationship to the larger field of color photography in South Africa at that time; 3) how Goldblatt's sense of personal creative freedom shaped his approach to photography; and 4) what focusing on color in Goldblatt's work helps us understand about the altered politics of form in post-apartheid South Africa.

[31] Baptiste Lignel, *David Goldblatt* (Paris: Photographers References, 2014), 9.

Then, and Then

We might easily mistake it for a trash heap—a contorted mass of dark plastic on a hard dirt ground littered with detritus [Figure 3.15]. Looking past this object in the foreground helps us begin to make sense of its scale, as we see similar uneven forms repeated in the landscape. A black woman stands at the far left edge of the photograph facing away from us with a bare-bottomed baby clutching her back. A few birds hover over their heads. We make out another figure just right of center standing near the horizon line, again, near one of these irregular forms. And we can look past that figure to catch a glimpse of the landscape beyond—all of this under a sky filled with gray clouds, pillowy and dense in the distance. Yet, from reflections on the slumped heap in front of us and from the darkness of the clearly articulated shadow it casts on the ground, we can tell the sun is shining. Looking closer at this object, we can better observe the plastic's rigidity; dark, but appearing almost white in areas reflecting sunlight, and also revealing a translucent tarp on the lower interior. We see that the structure is taut, arranged with purpose, supported by an underlying skeleton. We discern thin plastic improvised into walls for a home within, secreted in shadow in the photograph *Plastic Shelters, KTC, Squatter Camp, Cape Town* (1984).

25 years on from that view of a KTC squatter camp on the outskirts of Cape Town,[32] we could encounter that photograph paired with another image of improvised housing on the walls of the New Museum in New York [Figure 3.16]. In 2009, that black-and-white photograph of informal dwellings hung next to a substantially larger color view of yet another squatter camp in Western Cape, *Squatter camp, Woodstock, Cape Town, 22 August 2006* [Figure 3.17]. In this color photograph, we view a settlement far closer to the city center—although there is little in the image to indicate this

[32] KTC was a squatter camp located near the Cape Town airport that has since become a formal settlement.

geographical fact. The caption for the photograph tells us we are in the neighborhood of Woodstock [Figure 3.18].[33]

In the distance, a row of structures stretches out in a line just below the horizon. Dark plastic joins with cardboard, wood, and various other salvaged materials to form this settlement—one that's proximity to downtown Cape Town would have been unfathomable during apartheid. These homes appear marginally sturdier but less self-contained than the structure of the earlier photograph. They continue on in both directions, seemingly without end. A sea of yellowing grass occupies the space between the dwellings and us, while a short green incline rises up behind the homes leading up to a highway made evident through the blur of cars and the thin slivers of towering lampposts—all of this also under a gray sky, but here tinged with hints of smoggy warmth.[34] Despite the sense of motion indicated by hazy streaks in the background and windblown grass—hinting at the presence of the swirling, relentless gusts so common to this region of Western Cape—the line of homes is dominated by a feeling of stillness and quiet, a segment of landscape seemingly unpeopled and at a remove.[35]

To the side of, or under the surface of, or behind the photograph—however we might address the reality of the environment represented by this image—is a cycle of homes built and overturned, displaced people, and the shadow of uncertainty. Joining the photo to its caption, lets us add to the stillness, the sound of rushing wind and passing cars, the search for a place to stand amidst the tall grass that also doubled as a toilet, and the fact that, according to Goldblatt, the site

[33] Woodstock is a neighborhood of Cape Town located close to the water just east of the city center, notable for its mixed race demographics maintained in spite of the strictures of the Group Areas Act.
[34] Gordon Bleach has remarked on the ways in which "the sky tones and their ground reflectance are given extraordinary diction in Goldblatt's prints." He added, "Time after time, the aerial greys in his pictures compose a vaulted space whose seamless unity points up and supplements the disheveled states below. At other time, skies mutate and lower. Then one is in the presence of a more forbidding atmosphere: a particulate space, blocked up and grained." Bleach, "Between the Fine Print and a Hard Place: David Goldblatt's South African Artifacts," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, No. 9 (Fall/Winter 1998): 55.
[35] Of the sense of quiet in Goldblatt's photographs, Okwui Enwezor writes, "There is a quality of melancholy that can be described as an aura of silence that pervades Goldblatt's highly reflexive images." Okwui Enwezor, "The Indeterminate Structure of Things Now: Notes on Contemporary South African Photography," in *Home Lands / Land Marks: Contemporary Art from South Africa* (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008), 32.

was raided and destroyed four months after the photograph was made.[36] Where in the image of the KTC squatter camp, we see something of the unstable lives of migrants to Cape Town from the apartheid-era Bantustans in black-and-white, in the photograph from Woodstock, we see something of the unstable lives of recent illegal immigrants to Cape Town from across the continent—or, more accurately, those believed to be foreign—in cool color.[37] Where the focus in the former photograph is the heap, the structure that identifies a type of makeshift home, in the latter, the divides between grass, residences, road, and sky—the textures of all of these things—become the subject.

On view in the exhibition *Intersections Intersected* were not only the changes in the South African landscape, so profoundly marked by the instantiation, maintenance, and dissolution of apartheid, but also the changes in Goldblatt's materials and practices over the span of 50 years. A clear shift had taken place in Goldblatt's photography: to begin using color consistently, to make larger prints, to say slightly less with captions, but to show a lot more detail of textures, to experiment more with the exhibition presentation of his photographs, and to further dramatize the darkly comic aspects of South Africa's often stark juxtapositions. But beyond these changes in Goldblatt's approach to photography, the display of his photographs alternating in a staccato line between black-and-white and color photographs, move us back and forward in time: the dominating

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[36] Goldblatt's extended caption details how Goldblatt settled on photographing at this location. He states, "Wanting to photograph their encampment and seeking their agreement, I hired Freddie, a 'fixer' who spoke some Swahili and was highly recommended by my colleague, Guy Tillim. Together one morning we walked carefully across the grassy space between the railway lines and the shacks. Carefully because the ground was scattered with turds: the squatters had no toilets. We asked to speak to the captain, the leader, and were directed to the shack of a man named John. In Swahili Freddie explained that I wished to photograph from a distance and that no individual faces would be featured in the photograph. Permission was granted." He added, "Rain spoiled the first attempt. On the second there was a lot of wind, but Freddie and I sheltered the camera with our bodies and I managed a couple of sharp exposures, although they were too long to stop the movement of the early morning traffic on the N1." Goldblatt, *Intersections Intersected* (Porto, Portugal: Museu Serralves, 2008), 118.

[37] If it looks like hedging to include these "something of" this and "something of" that statements, it is in fact a nod to Goldblatt's own unease with photography that purports to sum up too neatly and completely, an unease that informs the naming of his major projects including—most famously—*Some Afrikaners Photographed.* As Goldblatt stated in the introduction to the first edition of that collection, "For a while, I thought of photographing *the* Afrikaner People. It took time to understand that for me such a project would be grossly pretentious and probably impossible to achieve in any meaningful sense—in any case it is not what I wanted. I did not have the encyclopaedic vision that might enable me to achieve an acceptably 'balanced' picture of a people. I was concerned with a few minutiae of Afrikaner life, with a few people. I needed to grasp something of what a man is and is becoming in all the particularity of himself and his bricks and bit of earth and of the place and to contain all this in a photograph. To do this, and to discover the shapes and shade of his loves and fears and of my own, would be enough." See: David Goldblatt, *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (Sandhurst, South Africa: Murray Crawford, 1975).

effect being that black-and-white was then and color is nearer to now. For the exhibition, color photographs all made in South Africa between 2003 and 2007 were matched—save for one exception addressed later—with earlier black-and-white works spanning Goldblatt's career in segments of the exhibition,[38] and systematically throughout the exhibition catalogue [Figure 3.19].[39]

The confrontation between then and now that *Intersections Intersected* foregrounded had kinship with the exhibition literally titled, *Then & Now*, at Duke University in 2007. That show brought together work by eight South African photographers produced before and after their country's transition to democracy, including Goldblatt as well as Guy Tillim (whose *Jo'burg* series is the subject of the following chapter). Paul Weinberg, who organized the exhibition, identified the disjunctures and continuities revealed by the project's premise. As he explained:

> The notion of 'then and now' that underpins this project conjures up the relatively simplistic opposites of struggle and liberation; justice and injustice; war and peace. The apartheid period gave us a simple construct that was easy to respond to: humanity and inhumanity, for and against, black and white, right and wrong. Of course, while these juxtapositions remain meaningful, our country and society are also considerably more nuanced and complex than this.[40]

In setting up the confrontation between "then and now," the exhibition used the nuance and complexity more associated with "now"—the sense of possibility and uncertainty in the post-apartheid era—to suggest that the hard binaries of right and wrong that so shaped life under apartheid deserved more critical examination.

The conceit of past and present photographic pairings also directed attention to the fact that living in a post-apartheid time involved continuing to contend with political and social strife. In the text he contributed to Goldblatt's *Intersections Intersected* catalogue, South African writer and art critic

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[38] Prior to its appearance at the New Museum, *Intersections Intersected* appeared at Michael Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town in January-February 2008 and in solo exhibitions that followed in Europe at Museu de Serralves in Portugal (July 2008), Galerie Paul Andriesse in The Netherlands (October 2008), the Open Eye Gallery in England (December 2008), and the Malmö Konsthall in Sweden (February 2009). Goldblatt adopted a similar strategy for a 2009 exhibition of *In Boksburg* at Michael Stevenson Gallery, pairing new color photographs from Boksburg with works from the original series taken in 1979-1980.

[39] Ulrich Loock notes that Michael Stevenson was the first to suggest that Goldblatt pair older and more recent work, supporting this with a show of 27 such pairings at his eponymous Gallery in 2008. Ulrich Loock, "History in Motion," in *Intersections Intersected* (Porto, Portugal: Fundação Serralves, 1998), 16-17, note 2.

[40] Paul Weinberg, ed., "Family Matters," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers* (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007): 6.

Ivor Powell emphasized that the moment from which he wrote in 2008 involved nothing less than a battle over the country's soul as a wave of xenophobic violence swept the country, making for both "a national crisis" and "disgrace."[41] In "Parallax and Parallel: The Uses of Time and Space in David Goldblatt's Pairings," Powell begins: "As I write this—in May 2008, 14 years and a few days after the advent of democracy—there are terrible things taking place in South Africa."[42] The description of violence that follows sounds straight out of the Hostel Wars of the early 1990s, with reports of brutal attacks, looting, and arson emerging. For Powell, the paired photographs of *Intersections Intersected* become a locus for reflecting on a moment of troublingly familiar violence, in which 'now' wrestles with 'then' and the prospect of becoming 'then again.'

Beyond the political crisis of that moment, Powell declared a more pervasive existential crisis of uncertainty facing South Africa—a country in which, he contends, "nothing hangs together."[43] And yet, a project like *Intersections Intersected* forced the "hanging together." It insisted on it. For Powell, coming to terms with contemporary South Africa required exploring the conditions of a country that "no longer understands itself, even in the fractured way it once did in the years of colonialism and apartheid."[44] Referring directly to this time as "then," Powell continued, "Then at least you knew what the issues were, you knew which side you were on, and you knew the way you wanted things to be in the future."[45] The present did not offer that conviction of rightness, that same sense of clear purpose, but the pairings prod at whether that was ever really true. The photographs of "now"—Goldblatt's large-scale, tonally even, color photographs with sharp detail throughout push viewers to determine what is interesting, what is important. Juxtaposed with high-contrast smaller-scale black-and-white photographs, they emphasize the tension between what we choose to see and what we are able to see at any given time.

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[41] Ivor Powell, "Parallax and Parallel: The Uses of Time and Space in David Goldblatt's Pairings," in *Intersections Intersected*, 11.
[42] Powell, "Parallax and Parallel," 11.
[43] *Ibid*., 12.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid*.

Punishing Film

Although Goldblatt produced color photographs for commercial assignments beginning in the 1960s, he deemed color inappropriate for "personal" work, and the print, film, and paper quality problematically "limited." In an interview I conducted with him in October 2015, he recalled,

> At that time—and I'm talking now about the '60s, '70s, '80s—early '80s—if you worked in transparency material, which had a very limited latitude, you either hit it right or you hit it wrong. It was either overexposed or underexposed. Generally speaking, underexposed was better than overexposed—it was very rich. And if the repro house that was using your pictures for a magazine or a corporation knew their business, they could pull out, from an underexposed transparency, a great deal of information.[46]

However, the process was very unforgiving and ultimately best handled by a team of professionals like the one at a "repro house," less so, an independent photographer of meager means. The photographer had little control over the final result. Goldblatt continued,

> But if it was overexposed, that was it. Kaput. So it was a limited medium. I experimented occasionally with color negatives and it was a very inferior medium at that time. It tended to have a colorcast, it often went blue or green.[47]

The technical inferiority that Goldblatt found in color negatives at that time had to compete with Goldblatt's skill and experience handling black-and-white negatives. Goldblatt acknowledged, "I was used to using the negative in my black and white photography and pulling out of a good negative, a well-exposed negative, all kinds of things that were not immediately apparent to the eye."[48] He worked with a strong sense that he could make the images he wanted through black-and-white.

In addition to Goldblatt's greater technical dexterity with black-and-white negatives, they also appealed to him for their expressive potential. Goldblatt believed he could better communicate

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[46] David Goldblatt, personal communication with the author, 25 October 2015. Goldblatt has pointed to the "quite limited" technical aspects of color photography of that earlier era on many occasions, including most notably, in his interview with Mark Haworth-Booth for *Intersections*. See: Haworth-Booth, "Interview with David Goldblatt," in *South African Intersections* (Munich: Prestel, 2005): 94-99.

[47] David Goldblatt, personal communication with the author, 25 October 2015.

[48] *Ibid.*

his antipathy towards apartheid through them, embedding or, at least, dramatizing his feelings about the system through the printing process. However, this approach also had drawbacks. Goldblatt recounted,

> I literally punished my film then…There was something about apartheid and what was happening here… So, many of the negatives were extremely dense and difficult to print because I had this kind of fixation on wanting to inject this revulsion that I had into the film. And so the prints that I made from those negatives were often unspeakably bad. Now I look at them with fresh eyes, and I go back to the negatives, and suddenly I've got a revelation, because I see things that I never knew were there.[49]

Goldblatt acknowledged that working with black-and-white negatives could find him overdoing it, as if too easily answering his own questions. The integrity of the image with their potential for unexpected discoveries is something to continue to manage, review, and reconsider—as many of Goldblatt's exhibitions and book projects[50] over the last twenty years indicate.

Certainly, "black" and "white" were also key terms in the rhetoric and logic of the apartheid state, ones that readily mapped from racial description to photographic representation. Beyond those metaphorical resonances, black-and-white photographs were a staple of the conventions of "serious" photography—the informative kind that occupied news publications, the persuasive kind at the foundation of activist efforts, and the artistic kind of museum collections.[51] By contrast, color technology was unreliable and expensive in South Africa. Black-and-white was tried and true, and widespread. But the post-apartheid was the launch of a color-filled present—or so it has seemed.

In this narrative, we might be inclined to think of color as a belated, and even delayed, arrival there. After all, color's big splash—or steady road to prominence—in North America and Europe came in the late 1970s and early 1980s. And yet, as Sean O'Toole points out, many Afrapix photographers used color on occasion, but it didn't cause a fuss, this included Paul Weinberg,

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[49] Lore Watterson, "Of Love and Loathing: a conversation about the 'City of Gold,' *CF*, February 2011: 69.
[50] These projects include: *Some Afrikaners Revisited* (2007), *Intersections Intersected* (2008), *Regarding Intersections* (2014), *TJ* (2014), and *The Pursuit of Values* (2015).
[51] Tamar Garb attends to the connection between black-and-white in reportage and art in "A Land of Signs," in *Home Lands / Land Marks* (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008), 8-27.

Gideon Mendel, and Guy Tillim working on photojournalism assignments.[52] This is despite vocal, oft-repeated claims by photographers such as Zwelethu Mthethwa that the use of color was a dignifying move in the 1990s for poor black subjects long-done disservice by black-and-white photography, or Chris Ledochowski that color photographs were what the people in the townships wanted to have and to see. There was a sense that color had been, if not absent, overshadowed by black-and-white. Moreover, the dominance of black-and-white in representations of the lives of black people in South Africa fed into old narratives that black people weren't contemporary subjects, but instead stuck in unchanging circumstances. O'Toole views those arguments as "space-clearing" moves by artists like Mthethwa to stake claims to the field of photography as art, historically inaccurate but rhetorically powerful.[53] But the sense of color's novelty also speaks to how photographers wrestled with how to represent what South Africa looked like at the turn of the twenty-first century.

For Goldblatt, control was paramount, and subtlety was the cornerstone of his photo practice, lauded by fans as incisive and decried by critics as lacking in commitment to the struggle. He resisted the front lines of conflict to stick with the everyday, the toxic ordinary to the side of, or under the surface of, or behind the spectacle of violence. We might think of Goldblatt as pursuing not the ordinary or everyday so much as "normalization," what the art historian Colin Richards described as "a form of invisibility—the taken-for-grantedness," adding that "in perverse ways apartheid's supreme visibility worked to create its own normalization. Habit and repetition corrode the real."[54] In these conditions, Goldblatt waited. In his personal work after apartheid's end, he moved beyond a preoccupation with documenting apartheid's normalization to see if color could

[52] Sean O'Toole, "Caught Between: South African Photography after 1994," in *Apartheid & After*, ed. Els Barrents (Amsterdam: Huis Marseille, 2014), 11.
[53] O'Toole, "Caught Between," 11.
[54] Colin Richards, "Retouching Apartheid: Intimacy, Interiority, and Photography," in *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*, eds. Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (New York: International Center of Photography, 2013), 234.

become an appropriate means for representing an altered South Africa, the establishment of new norms against the rigidity of older structures.

Finding Crossroads[55]

Goldblatt's work on *Intersections*—a collection of color photographs looking at the South African landscape, and the people who shape and are shaped by it—began in 1999. Moving from the new designer suburbs of Johannesburg to the heart of the city's often frenetic central business district into the offices of municipal officials in various towns and into expansive views of wide open vistas in the Northern Cape and Western Cape provinces, it doesn't ask us to make sense of what we see so much as to see more of it and observe more in it. Where to look and how to look became more central questions. Experimenting with color photography and new technologies, Goldblatt turned to digital modes of adjusting saturation levels in the photographs scanned from color film produced from a 4x5 field camera[56] subduing the intensity of blue skies, sunshine, and verdant expanses towards what the curator Ulrich Loock described as "democratic" views of the landscape, that appear as a "*tableau* on which things are strewn-evenly, non-hierarchically, without any order imposed by a particular visual organization, independent of compositional considerations."[57] Powell emphasized the "overallness" of light in Goldblatt's photographs for conveying this non-hierarchical quality.[58] The aim for Goldblatt was not to match how the eye sees *per se*—understanding this as the eye seeing one area in focus with the surroundings out of focus—

[55] Beyond its synonymity with intersections, Crossroads was also the name of an informal settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town that was a locus of violence and unrest during the '70s and '80s, as the government attempted to force residents to relocate. It is now an official township.
[56] Goldblatt discusses his additional use of a 6x6 Hasselblad for aerial photography for the series in his Haworth-Booth for *Intersections*.
[57] Ulrich Loock, "History in Motion," 22.
[58] Ivor Powell, "Parallax and Parallel," 12.

but "how we tend to think of reality," everything sharp, clear, perceptible.[59] For Powell this approach offered "a kind of photographic super-realism."[60]

Goldblatt's initial plan for *Intersections* shared a sensibility with conceptual modes of art production popularized in the 1960s and 1970s, creating a set of rules to set up conditions for chance. He planned to make photographs at all 122 intersections of latitude and longitude in the country in an attempt to see the landscape anew, to explore the post-apartheid terrain, and to upset personal habits and expectations.[61] Traveling to sites in a caravan, he walked around, looked, and photographed on these often-solitary trips. But the locations that his system brought him to very often provided little of visual and critical interest, ending up often in what he termed "FASes" or "Fuck All Situations."[62] The parameters of the project as first conceived did not hold, but they prompted Goldblatt to extend the idea of "intersection" into more metaphorical arenas, into various points of convergence between people, places, and things. As it took shape, *Intersections* was also driven by Goldblatt's encounters with Johannesburg in the first years of democracy, a place profoundly transformed by the repeal of measures that strictly circumscribed the city along rigid racial lines.[63] The changes afforded a new set of interactions between people in urban spaces that permitted—perhaps even demanded—new approaches to representation.

Drawing on the potency of our cultivated associations with black-and-white and color photographs, *Intersections Intersected* places us in the tangle of past, less past, nearer present, present, and future. Certainly we also read and identify the historical registers of a photograph from details within it, from titles and captions, but black-and-white takes on the quality of the archival in this

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[59] Loock, "History in Motion," 22.
[60] Ivor Powell, "Parallax and Parallel," 13.
[61] Dodd, "Chronology," 248.
[62] *Ibid.* Goldblatt explained, "As a start I went to 14 of these points and many of them were FASes (Fuck All Situations). I found myself trying to 'create' photographs, which is what I'd had to do a lot of the time in my professional work, so I decided simply to drive around the country and explore whatever took my interest."
[63] The Group Areas Act was repealed in 1991. Passed in 1950, it—along with a series of other measures delineating who could work and reside in specific places in South Africa—strictly circumscribed the city along rigid racial lines, resulting in mass removals from areas such as District Six in Cape Town and Sophiatown in Johannesburg.

project—this is even more assertively the case in Goldblatt's more recent project, *TJ*.[64] Along these lines, the historian Patricia Hayes has written: "The way Goldblatt came to photograph the large post-apartheid series called *Intersections* is very suggestive…. The inference is that—with an entire historic phase shift with the ostensible end of apartheid—ways of seeing can fade, can become undone, can lapse."[65] Addressing Goldblatt's shift to color, she writes "This also brings us to Goldblatt's transition between the 1980s with its black and white photography and the texture of the post-apartheid. In fact photographically, apartheid is in black and white, and freedom is in colour."[66] The metaphorical pull of this work is strong, maybe even irresistible. But as art critic Mary Corrigall observes, "Though Goldblatt is interested in how the past impacts on the present, one senses he would like to be able to draw a line between them—his inability to do so is a source of frustration and disillusionment."[67] The photographs, therefore, show an interest in reflecting on past-and-present but do not resolve the meaning of either. For Loock, the medium of the pairings "is the time created by the distance between the various states of recorded reality and the changing dispositions in both the photographer and the kind of photography he adopts."[68] As he posited:

> The juxtaposition of two pictures in a book or their arrangement side by side in an exhibition is a device that is employed to create a place for the differing or even contradictory meanings that may be suggested by the temporal gap between situations and conditions photographed prior to and after the watershed in South Africa's history.[69]

The pairings—often tinged with irony, as Shaun de Waal has observed[70]—ask viewers about what is historical and how we read history.[71] More than representing freedom full stop, the color

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[64] A collaborative project with the famed South African writer (and long-time friend of Goldblatt's) Ivan Vladislavic, *TJ* features Goldblatt's photography of greater Johannesburg. Goldblatt returned to the sites of earlier photographs made in black-and-white to make new color photographs. The earlier photograph is shown on the opposite page of the more recent image, putting then-and-now into direct confrontation.
[65] Patricia Hayes, "Photography of Value," in *The Pursuit of Values: David Goldblatt* (Johannesburg: Standard Bank, 2015), 219.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] Mary Corrigall, "Haunted by the past," *The Sunday Independent*, October 17, 2010: 3.
[68] Loock, "History in Motion," 24.
[69] *Ibid.*, 17.
[70] Shaun de Waal, "Ghosts of the Past," *Mail & Guardian*, February 28, 2009, https://mg.co.za/article/2009-03-05-ghosts-of-the-past.
[71] For Gideon Mendel, revisiting his archive allowed him to see that he had documented ways in which the system of apartheid began to show cracks in ways he was unable to see at the time. He writes, "Coming back to these photographs initiated a curious dialogue

photograph helps throw into question what exactly is past, while also demonstrating an entry into a period of time in which color felt possible for making serious photographs.

Some things, though, have changed profoundly even while the promise of black prosperity remains largely unmet. In post-1994 South Africa, black African migrants could live in the city as we saw in Woodstock in *Squatter camp* (2006). However, how many of them were actually doing so in a modicum of comfort? Did anti-apartheid activists push for the city's de-segregation merely to bring the township into the city and for whites to flee to enclaves that stay white—or light gray—through pricing out most people of color, absolved by claims of deliberate racial exclusion by the profound income gap concretized through apartheid-era policies? In 1991, amidst anticipatory post-apartheid euphoria, the writer Stephen Gray assessed, "The new can no longer be aborted. It is being born. Its advent is unstoppable. The morbidity may persist, but a way out of it is foreseen; please, may it come after a lifetime, before we all die of longing for it."[72] He declares, "…we call on re-visioning the past to forge a future in spite of the present."[73] *Intersections Intersected* is one view of this new, ostensibly democratic, baby.

On the wall of the New Museum, we could find to the left of the photographs of Cape Town squatter camps, the black-and-white, *Monuments celebrating the Republic of South Africa and J.G. Strijdom, former prime minister, with the headquarters of the Volkskas Bank, Pretoria, 25 April 1982* [Figure 3.20]—featuring the honorific presentation of Strijdom against the rigid and elegant geometries of modernist architectural triumph, or what the journalist Jeremy Kuper called "modernist totalitarian style."[74] It was paired with a color photograph of an upscale shopping district, *Mother and child. Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton, Johannesburg, 8 March 2005* [Figure 3.21]. In the first image, we see the 12-

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with own my [*sic*] past, a rediscovery of the texture of that moment in history. I looked again at every image on the 344 rolls of film I had taken at that time and saw in them something that I was unaware of then: ten years before liberation, the bureaucratic edifice of apartheid was in the process of crumbling and this was played out in the lives of the people of Yeoville." Mendel, "Yeoville in the 80s," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/yeoville-in-the-80s/.

[72] Stephen Gray, "An Author's Agenda: Re-visioning Past and Present for a Future South Africa," in *On Shifting Sands: New Art and Literature from South Africa* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001), 25.

[73] Gray, "An Author's Agenda," 27.

[74] David Goldblatt, *Intersections Intersected* (Porto, Portugal: Fundação Serralves, 2008), 127.

foot tall head of Strijdom, who—to borrow Goldblatt's own description—was the "militant protagonist of *baaskap* […] and advocate of Afrikaner leadership in a republic free of British liberalism and empire."[75] The oversized head sculpted by Coert Steynberg appears across from a monument to the fifth anniversary of the Republic by Danie de Jager and in front of the Volkskas (People's) Bank.[76] Giving the appearance of a mise-en-scène, a sweeping concrete structure creates an arc in the lower center of the photograph where we see a woman and child, who appear tiny in comparison to Strijdom's head, and to their left, the phrase, "The Rendezvous." The idea that this is a meeting point, as that term indicates, is offset by the almost entire lack of human presence. When he updated the caption of this photograph for the *Intersections Intersected* project, Goldblatt informed us that the monument to the former Prime Minister Strijdom went crashing through the supporting ground in 2001, irrevocably smashed to bits into the parking garage below injuring two men sleeping rough nearby—a literal fall for a stony fixture of apartheid.[77]

In the latter image, *Mother and Child*, the monument of Mandela, representing a figure so internationally symbolic of the triumph of democracy and a new order, oversees a high-end shopping district preoccupied with both commerce and security. A billboard for Old Mutual Asset Managers announcing, "Where There's Growth We're On It," dwarfs the monument, which in turn dwarfs[78] the fleet of shiny Audis in front of the shopping center. Goldblatt's caption directs us to the moment of a mother and child crossing the square, difficult to see as they stand near a sharp shadow—pushing us to seek out the telling details or "elements of grotesquerie"[79] (as Goldblatt

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[75] David Goldblatt is quoted from a caption for the *Intersections Intersected* at the New Museum in 2009, on page 13 of the exhibition checklist. http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/6986

[76] As Goldblatt's caption explains, the bank was established in 1934 "to mobilize Afrikaner capital and to break the monopoly of the 'English' banks." David Goldblatt, *South Africa The Structure of Things Then* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998).

[77] The square has since been renamed after the black anti-apartheid activist Lilian Ngoyi, and de Jager's sculpture of the horses, moved to the campus of the University of Pretoria. For more on the sculpture's move, see: Brenda Schmahmann, "Symbols Trailing Tyrannies of the Past," *Mail & Guardian*, May 10, 2013, https://mg.co.za/article/2013-05-10-symbols-trailing-tyrannies-of-the-past.

[78] This section is inspired by John Van Zyl's description of viewing *Monuments celebrating the Republic of South Africa and J.G. Strijdom* in 1985 and is discussed later in this version of the chapter.

[79] Lignel, *David Goldblatt*, 81. As Goldblatt details: "…the mother with the child on her back are part of an ancient African tradition in which the child is protected and enabled to grow within the security of its close physical contact with the mother. This simple, small, unspoken, yet fundamental relationship is contrasted with the vast boast to growth of the corporate financial giant involved in a

termed it) that reflect the relationship between people and the economy in contemporary South Africa. It is also a sly dig at Sandton for all its trappings of richesse—a site of aspiration for many city residents, but also of derision for its vapid, beige-colored, faux-Tuscan commercial excess in the face of glaring poverty. This extends into a broader critique of the ANC's efforts to address the country's extreme gap between rich and poor: did Mandela's willingness to speedily "reconcile" with the perpetrators of apartheid—his world-renowned magnanimity—merely help usher in changes that permitted non-white South Africans to freely consume goods as full participants in a system of international capitalism that does little to improve the lives of those living in abject poverty? "Where There's Growth We're On It" reads like both a boast and a threat: What is growing? Who is benefitting? And who is being crushed underneath?

Another pairing: *Funeral with military honours, Boksburg, Gauteng* [Figure 3.22], hung next to *Memorial to the White conscripts of the South African Army killed in action against anti-apartheid forces in the 1980s. Villiers, Free State* [Figure 3.23]. In the black-and-white photograph, solemn mourners for a pair of friends killed in South African military activities against Namibian independence fighters. Underscored by South Africa's policy of forced conscription,[80] this was a conflict that sent young white South African men into harm's way. To the question posed by the twangy 1982 David Kramer song "Hekke Van Paradise," "Hoekom blaf die honde / by die hekke van paradise" ("Why are the dogs barking at the gates of paradise")—the lyrics of which are reproduced in the epigraph of Goldblatt's *In Boksburg*[81]—Nadine Gordimer finds an answer in this photograph. For her, Kramer's

property development. The elements of grotesquerie are further developed in the fact that the square in which mother and child stroll is called the Nelson Mandela Square. Mandela was our dearly beloved 'Father of the Nation'. It is probably (I cannot say for certain), that the property company that own the square paid a large sum of money for the right to use the great man's name, and commissioned and erected a hideous sculpture of Mandela…which dominates the square and with which tourists love to photograph each other."

[80] South Africa required military service for white males until 1993, a policy challenged intensely as part of the anti-apartheid struggle.

[81] Musicologist Michael Drewett highlights another lyric from the satirical song that provides an even more telling metaphor for all that is nice on the surface but hiding something rotten: "Like a clean white shirt / With gold cuff links / It looks quite clean / But the armpits stink." Kramer's music was also subject to occasional banning. Drewett, "Remembering Subversion: Resisting Censorship in Apartheid Era South Africa," ed. Maria Korpe, *Shoot the Singer!: Music Censorship Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 89.

question points to that which could not be contained by the strictures of apartheid.[82] The gentility of white South African suburban life hinged on violence for its maintenance, a violence that could still reach directly into the heart of polite white communities.

In the color photograph, *Memorial to the White conscripts of the South African Army killed in action against anti-apartheid forces in the 1980s. Villiers, Free State*, mourners are wholly absent at a memorial site. Instead, we see a decrepit monument emblazoned with the lyrics of the apartheid-era South African national anthem *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, although as seen here, many letters of the anthem's central refrain, "Ons vir jou Suid Afrika" ("We for you South Africa") have fallen or are askew. The lyrics that spoke to a future and present commitment to live and die for the nation appear in the past tense on the monument's pillars, "Ons het gelewe" ("We lived") and "Ons het gesterwe" ("We died"). The memorial stands near gravestones on parched ground, a site all at once remembered and forgotten. Loss, so fresh in black-and-white, has grown stale in color.

Through pairings like these, we might see *Intersections Intersected* as presenting an easy metaphor about South Africa's transition from a nation structured by the opposition of white and non-white peoples to the polychrome promise of the "Rainbow Nation"—albeit in rather bleached color. After all, in Goldblatt's own oft-quoted words, he did not use color for personal projects during apartheid because it was "too sweet a medium to express the anger, disgust and fear that apartheid inspired."[83] But "sweet" is a curious and oblique term, challenging to pin down. It seems to indicate concern for how color might prettify, thereby soothing viewers with harmonious palettes, softening the intended critical impact and subtle complexity of photographs.

[82] Gordimer, "David Goldblatt," n.p. Gordimer suggested that "Why the dogs bark is answered by the photograph of a military funeral for two boyhood friends of that small town killed in action where the Group Areas Act that guards the civic and church-going virtues, the cultural and home-owning satisfactions of white South Africa, could not protect those two boys."
[83] Mark Haworth-Booth, "Interview with David Goldblatt," 94-95.

We could also interpret Goldblatt's notion of "sweetness" in line with personality traits, contrasting the synonym of "saccharine"[84] with terms like "biting," "caustic," or "cutting." But "sweetness" also contains a sense of delectability—that which one lustily desires to consume. When the artist Martha Rosler assessed Susan Meiselas' controversial use of color for the 1981 photo project *Nicaragua* [Figure 2.24], Rosler claimed, "Color photography is most widely used in advertising, signifying commodification, a certain culinary appeal."[85] Color photography's delectability is thus associated with its dominant mode of circulation: advertising. For "sweetness" in that valence, we might imagine easy consumption, the spoonful of sugar to help us take the medicine—in this case, a hefty dose of representations of the violences perpetrated and endured in a specific place and time. For Goldblatt, a color landscape risked too much. His photographs might become all "sunny skies and Chevrolet,"[86] only to be appreciated for formal and scenic interest, mere prettiness, an amuse-bouche, an advertisement to attract tourists—in all of these associations failing to prod viewers sensitive to the underlying politics, and failing in the service of commentary and critique.

In a recent article, Jennifer Bajorek argues that, in Goldblatt's photographs, "The choice 'for' or 'against' colour was for the photographer guided by a desire for *technical* precision and *not* by a desire to change the frames of social and political analysis in his work."[87] She emphasizes that the technological and practical side of digital color photography shaped Goldblatt's embrace of its use, and that the declaration of "sweetness" is more a rhetorical aside deriving from the fact that "Everyone likes a felicitous correspondence between the aesthetic qualities of an image and its

[84] Patricia Hayes in *The Pursuit of Values* aligns Goldblatt's notion of "sweet" with "saccharine." Hayes, "Photographs and Value," in *The Pursuit of Values: David Goldblatt* (Johannesburg: Standard Bank, 2015), 211-223.
[85] Martha Rosler, "Wars and Metaphors," *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 249.
[86] Dodd, "Chronology," 247.
[87] Jennifer Bajorek, "On Colour Photography in an Extra-Moral Sense," *Third Text* 29, No. 3 (2015): 225. DOI: 10.1080/09528822.2015.1106136.

theme."[88] However, I'm not ready to sideline "sweetness" just yet because I think a sense of what was appropriate matters—however loosely conceived, even if it does suggest a lazy short-hand for, as Bajorek put it, "a new, post-apartheid optics."[89] As Goldblatt's juxtapositions of black-and-white and color photographs highlight, the ways that color itself can serve an evidentiary function or posses a certain kind of symbolic resonance also matter.

The Responsibilities of Photography

The terrain of South Africa has always been present in and vital to Goldblatt's work, but in so much as it was a vehicle for the study of people, ideology, and social dynamics—there was nothing of the dramatic, radiant sunsets of coffee table books or tourist posters of the kind we can see on the wall of the office in *Municipal Officials Eliza Klaaste, Senior Clerk, Loeriesfontein, Northern Cape* (2004) [Figure 3.25]. There was very little of the dramatic, at all. His subject matter featured in black-and-white is easily recognizable for its masterful tonal control, deft treatment of cutting, bright South African light, and attention to subtle details in the rhythm of everyday activities.[90] However, for Goldblatt, photographing the landscape exclusively would have been "self-indulgent," especially amidst the intensification of political violence in South Africa during the 1980s.[91]

In the novels of renowned South African writers Nadine Gordimer, Herman Charles Bosman, Lionel Abrahams, Ivan Vladislavic, and others, Goldblatt read about the landscape in compelling, evocative ways that laid bare the beauty and anguish that so marked the country's terrain. But he remained concerned that his photographic study of how ideology shaped South Africa's built environment would be lost on viewers accustomed to other artistic traditions of the

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[88] Bajorek, "On Colour," 226.
[89] *Ibid*., 229.
[90] Neville Dubow addresses the treatment of light across various examples from the *Structure* series in the essay, "Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye," in *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 22-34.
[91] Michael Stevenson, "Markers of Presence: David Goldblatt's Intersections with the South African Landscape," *Intersections* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), 102.

landscape. And so where his photography was concerned, the landscape, like color, would have to wait. As Goldblatt told the curator Okwui Enwezor,

> I often wished during those years that I could be a lyricist with a camera. I would look at Edward Weston's work and envy the freedom to be lyrical. I took great delight in his and many other photographers' work. I envied them the freedom to photograph a landscape apparently without concern for the implications of its possession. In other circumstances I might have become more poetic and less rigid.[92]

Had conditions been different, we might have been treated to work more in keeping with what Cécile Whiting has identified as "the sublime and the banal in postwar photography of the American West," as in the majestic wilderness of Ansel Adams' mountain landscapes [Figure 3.26] or the straightforward documentation of repetitive, mundane Southern California architecture of Ed Ruscha [Figure 3.27].[93] Feeling as he did about the context for his "personal" work, Goldblatt made photographs of the landscape that he put into essays ostensibly about other things or that went, in some cases, unpublished and unseen until the 1990s.

To consider Goldblatt's sense of a lack of "freedom" to be lyrical—as he put it—and the stakes of adhering to particular forms and formats of photography, we are helped by exploring Goldblatt's pedagogical stance toward the Market Photo Workshop. Founded by Goldblatt in 1989, the Workshop is a school of photography established in the Newtown neighborhood of Johannesburg to provide training in the tools and techniques of photography, promote visual literacy, and increase awareness of the moral and ethical questions that impact the making of photography. It caters to students who were or would have been barred from this level of formal study in South African universities under apartheid, either on racial grounds or through a lack of financial means. Goldblatt had major reservations about the use of photography as a weapon in the struggle as was often articulated as an underlying mission of photographic activist efforts, like

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[92] Okwui Enwezor, "Matter and Consciousness: An Insistent Gaze from a not Disinterested Photographer," in *Fifty-One Years: David Goldblatt*, eds. Corinne Desirens, Okwui Enwezor, and David Goldblatt (Barcelona: MACBA, 2001), 39.
[93] Cécile Whiting, "The Sublime and the Banal in Postwar Photography of the American West," *American Art* 2, Vol. 27 (Summer 2013): 44-67. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/673109.

Afrapix.[94] Instead, he directed his practice towards depicting the day-to-day of how the system functioned, examining the perversity of the pretense of ordinary life under apartheid. To the side of notions of a kind of classical social documentary and concerned photography, was a call for as he termed it, "responsibility," an approach to photography that emphasizes the power of the medium to represent reality but does not dictate form or content in a wholesale way.[95] Could color be responsible?

However, even though Goldblatt casually claims that his personal work was exclusively in black-and-white until the late 1990s—and most scholars repeat this unquestioningly—he did make a color photograph of the Berg-en-Dal monument that he included in early exhibitions of what would become the *Structure* series.[96] The photograph, *The Berg-en-Dal Monument, Dalmanutha, Mpumalanga, December 1983*, features light purple and white flowers arranged in a wreath on the surface of a granite monument to mark a key battle in the Anglo-Boer War [Figure 3.28]. As it appears in *Intersections Intersected*, it is the sole instance of color photographs from apartheid and post-apartheid eras respectively, showing side-by-side as it is paired with a more recent view of the same monument [Figure 3.29].

John Van Zyl, Drama professor at Wits University and art critic, honed in on the anomalous inclusion of this singular color photograph in *Structures Here*, Goldblatt's exhibition at the Market Photographic Gallery in 1985. First, Van Zyl described encountering other photographs in the series, observing, "So we find the huge Fascist monument to Strydom in Pretoria consisting of a disembodied head, dwarfing the two tiny human figures, and dwarfed in its turn by the bureaucratic

[94] Founded in 1982, Afrapix was a photographic agency focused on documenting South African society for local and international audiences and on training the next generation of photographers. Set up to function like a 'mini-Magnum' photo agency, it was closely linked to resistance activities against apartheid, including the United Democratic Front founded in 1983. Afrapix ceased operations in 1991.

[95] Goldblatt added, "No one has ever written these things down as a set of precepts for the Workshop, but I think, by and large, that the people who have taught there have been imbued with the spirit of these ideas." "Introduction," in *Sharp: The Market Photography Workshop*, eds. Brenton Maart and TJ Lemon (Johannesburg: Market Photography Workshop, 2002), 11.

[96] Color photographs from Goldblatt's archive from this period of time are included in *TJ*, and Goldblatt's color photography regularly appeared in *Leadership* magazine.

office block in the background. Significantly, the surface decorations of the building look like No-Entry signs,"[97] referring to the photograph *Monuments celebrating the Republic of South Africa and JG Strijdom, former prime minister, with the headquarters of Volkskas Bank*. Van Zyl continues, "Then there are the Dutch Reformed churches that look like power-stations or giant vices or bunkers. Modern design gone mad as roofs lurch at Heaven at 45 degrees. These pictures make one ask "if there is so much piety, why so much aggression in the church design?"[98] These churches, featuring in photographs such as *Geredormeerde or "Dopper" Church, Waverly, Pretoria, 25 September 1986* [Figure 3.30] and *Dutch Reformed Church, Quellerina, Johannesburg, Gauteng (Transvaal)* (1986) [Figure 3.31], that fascinated Goldblatt often resembled industrial or military structures, or oversized clamps—something to trap, squeeze, pierce, or crush. Van Zyl then concluded by considering the singular color photograph in the show of Berg-en-dal. "Then there is that coloured print," he declared. "Why? Quite simple, it shows that Fascist monuments look even worse in colour, especially when there is a purple and white artificial posy in the foreground."[99] For Van Zyl, fascism is not prettified by color or flowers, but instead, becomes tackier and more garish.

When I asked Goldblatt why he chose to make and display the one color photograph of the Berg-en-Dal monument in *Structures Here*, he recounted a darkly comic story that affirmed its appropriateness for him. He explained,

> …in that particular case, that was the only photograph I took in all of those years in which I very deliberately used color to talk about something that was so innately and inherently part of the apartheid thinking apparatus. […] At one stage, in the 1960s, when I was photographing Afrikaners, I thought I must include in my coverage…the cultured and…materially…emancipated, and even in their thinking, emancipated people from, say, the…leading people in Pretoria. So I made it my business to become acquainted with some of these people…and I became friendly with this lady Madeleine van Biljon who was this…kind of socialite […] Anyway, she told a story about a minister who was moving, one of the National Party ministers, who was moving into a ministerial house. And his wife, the minister's wife, spoke to

[97] John Van Zyl, "Aggression looms over 'silent' forms…," *Star Tonight*, December 2, 1985.
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] Van Zyl, "Aggression Looms."

> Madeleine about what kind of curtains to install. And then she disclosed to Madeleine the kind of curtains that she really lusted after. She said, "You know those, those purple curtains in the crematorium, when the coffin goes into the, into the crematorium, and they, these, there are these purple curtains" and she wanted those purple curtains.[100]

Goldblatt then added: "So that, that wreath, to me, embodied that whole story."[101] Goldblatt's use of color here might merely be an inside joke that found its way into a photograph: a startling purple at the gateway of where a dead body becomes ash—perhaps, a different take on "the gates of paradise" where Kramer finds barking dogs. But Goldblatt seems to also be suggesting that viewers need not know the story of the minister's wife to recognize the perverse beauty of the flowers on the monument. It's represented by this distinctive kind of purple.

For Goldblatt's major turn-to-color in the 1990s, the art historian Michael Godby has suggested that "colour signals perhaps a certain joy" on the part of Goldblatt "in the new dispensation," in the post-apartheid—and perhaps we might connect this with something like Goldblatt's own statement about the freedom to be lyrical. But that "certain joy," if that is what it is, is a measured joy. As Goldblatt explained to Alex Dodd,

> Colour has been an added dimension, a way of looking at things with a more, relaxed kind of approach. It has to do with the sense of liberation that came with post-apartheid South Africa, a sense that I didn't any longer have to feel guilty every time I looked at something that wasn't immediately relevant to the struggle. Not that I ever did 'struggle photographs', but I was always acutely aware of the need somehow to penetrate to the roots of the system. Today I don't feel anger and I don't feel fear in the sense that I did at that time. Obviously I'm concerned and depressed by many things that have happened, from Dainfern through to Mr Zuma, but it's generally not the same kind of concern. Yes, I'm afraid of men with guns and knives, but I'm not afraid of the security police. I'm not afraid that we're going to collapse into some appalling cataclysm.[102]

Color has afforded Goldblatt a way of assertively looking at other things, things that might have made him feel guilty during apartheid, irresponsible. A stanza from the black South African poet,

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[100] David Goldblatt, personal communication with the author, 25 October 2015.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] Dodd, "Chronology," 247. Dainfern is a gated, exclusive suburb of Johannesburg. President Jacob Zuma has been the subject of several corruption probes in recent years and faced waves of public protests in the last two years calling for his ouster under the hashtag movement ZumaMustFall.

musician, and activist Mzwakhe Mbuli's poem "The Crocodiles" is especially telling about that tangle of guilt and interest in looking at the landscape:

> How hard and tormenting it is
> To write about the pain and not the joy
> How hard and tormenting it is
> To write about the slavery and not the freedom.
> When shall I write about the daffodils?
> How can I write about the beauty of nature
> When the ground is daily soaked with the blood of the innocent?[103]

If Goldblatt was wishing for Weston, Mbuli seems to have been daydreaming about Wordsworth.

We find in Goldblatt's turn to color for his *Intersections* series, a formal convergence of what became politically permissible and technologically possible and practical in the post-apartheid. In exploring the relationship between black-and-white and color, a sense of political and historical responsibility, and representations of the South African landscape in Goldblatt's *Intersections* project, I want to suggest that color in this context—and more broadly, for photography as art in South Africa in the first decade of democracy—is emblematic of a shift away from self-censorship denying the lyrical and towards an expanded range of formal possibilities that could be understood to still possess a critical edge and represent socially-engaged subject matter. If the end of apartheid was a "sweet breath" as Goldblatt has described it, Goldblatt's color seems "bittersweet," revealing the lines between past and present that Goldblatt cannot draw.

In the Time of Color

Although this chapter has emphasized reading Goldblatt's turn to color in his personal work through the pivot between black-and-white and color photography in *Intersections Intersected*, this last section turns primarily to the first iteration of the *Intersections* series that consisted entirely of color photography. Here, I want to consider Goldblatt's choice of color in relation to his subject matter

[103] The poem is included in the anthology *On Shifting Sands: New Art and Literature from South Africa*, eds. Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (Sydney: Dangeroo Press; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1992.

and its relationship to the period of their making. I also examine how the choice of color—and a sense of freedom to make that choice—also connects to post-apartheid time. I consider *Intersections*' photographs both within its book and exhibition presentations, to attend to how Goldblatt structured the series, the experience of viewing images at larger and smaller scales, and the effects of color conveyed.

The frontispiece for *Intersections* in book form features the photograph, *San Raphael 'Tuscan' townhouse complex, Fourways, Johannesburg. April 2002* [Figure 3.32], where stacks of gray bricks stand in the foreground, in front of the activity of a new neighborhood under construction. In entering the main section of the book, we start by looking at a photograph of an improvised sign typical of those used by workers to advertise services in affluent areas in the search for clients [Figure 3.33]. On a black sign in white letters, we see a skill, in this case "Painter," a name, in this case "Tymon," and mobile phone number.[104] Shadows and the petals from jacaranda trees—which flank the streets of Johannesburg's tonier suburbs—appear on the ground by the sign. And this sign is an example of a change that Goldblatt began to notice in the city, an object that would not have been permitted to be where it was under apartheid. The style of the sign also highlighted the importance of the popularization of the mobile phone and the new ways people were trying to connect to new opportunities. Goldblatt observes,

> The homemade ads on sidewalks and poles for painters, builders, tilers, handymen etc, some of which I have photographed, are highly significant indicators of post-apartheid freedom. And in the materials of which they are made, in the ways of their lettering and wording and in their messages they are remarkably rich cultural artifacts.[105]

The photograph then goes some way towards preserving that kind of "cultural artifact."

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[104] The extended caption for this photograph reads, "Previously unthinkable, a post-apartheid advertisement on a suburban sidewalk. Oaklands, Johannesburg. 20 November 1999." Goldblatt, *Intersections* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), 121.
[105] Lignel, *David Goldblatt*, 31.

Beyond its close connection to the *Structure* series, *Intersections* came on the heels of work photographing a blue asbestos mine in Australia, a project for which color was a necessity to tell the story [Figure 3.34]. The town of Wittenoom in Western Australia, from which the series derives its name, was the site of a major asbestos mine. The Wittenoom mine, as one of Goldblatt's extended captions tells us, "Started in 1953, it closed in 1966 after running out of payable ore. While the buildings are about to be demolished, no cleanup of the tailings has been announced."[106] To convey the mine's legacy in the landscape, the blue of the tailings dump, so telling of the product the mine produced and which continues to color the terrain and sicken residents in the area, needed to be seen. Beyond the evidence of the asbestos mine itself, Goldblatt included the abandoned buildings in its surroundings, gravesites of individuals who died of asbestosis, the soil, the plant life taking over where the mine left off, stretches of open but environmentally compromised spaces, and the town's few remaining residents. Made for the exhibition *Home* at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, these photographs encouraged Goldblatt to reconsider what color could show about life back in South Africa.

The curator Ulrich Loock has argued that the evidentiary need for color in the Wittenoom project in Australia helped Goldblatt legitimize its use as a valid format for representing what he was seeing in the South African landscape.[107] As Loock contended:

> In a curious way this form of legitimizing colour photography, which previously he had denied himself in keeping with a political aesthetic, is connected to a metaphor of nature with which the new society was trying to conceive of itself, the metaphor of the 'Rainbow Nation'.[108]

In *Intersections*, the evidentiary element of color to represent the blue residue of asbestos mining returns, but where the blue tailings hid in the lower left of the photograph at Wittenoom with its relationship to the mining operation readily visible, the blue asbestos fibres at Owendale Mine in

[106] "David Goldblatt," in *Home*, eds. Gary Dufour, Thomas Mulcaire, and Trevor Smith (Perth, W.A.: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2000), 117.
[107] Loock, "History in Motion," 20.
[108] *Ibid.*, 21.

Northern Cape appear to glisten in the bright sun, covering over rocks, on display, stretching out in all directions [Figure 3.35].[109] As it appears in the book, it is followed by a view of the mill, dark gray, and imposing, clearly abandoned but still visited as we see a group of boys walking together just in front [Figure 3.36]. Although the mill closed in 1986, it continues to tower over the landscape.

Later in the *Intersections* series, we are reminded again of those who are at risk from the legacy of blue asbestos mining when we see a trio of boys standing in a pool of water inside of an abandoned mineshaft [Figure 3.37]. At lower left, a man in blue pants bends forward, presumably washing something. That blue is echoed in the wet shorts of the boy standing in the center, arms crossed over his chest like those of his friends. From the extended caption,[110] we learn that the man is a veteran of a mercenary army attached to the South African military in the war against SWAPO given shelter by the South African government in the village of this mine. The boys are the sons of veterans. Returning to the image is to see the practicalities of daily life trumping health concerns, as is so often the case. In the series, we can also turn to an image of a map of a town in North West also impacted by a blue asbestos mine [Figure 3.38].[111] Hand-drawn by a local villager, color seems almost irrelevant to this image of thin black lines and small scribbled notes against a white

[109] Goldblatt related Witenoom's experience with blue asbestos mining to that of South Africa. He stated, "In South Africa we have our own festering sores consequent upon the mining of blue asbestos and you might, with justice, say that I should look critically at them before presuming to comment on the Australian experience. I hope to do so. Meanwhile, however, in my brief stay in Wittenoom, I became aware of anomalies in government policies about which I find it difficult to remain silent." David Goldblatt, "Acknowledgments," in *Home*, eds. Gary Dufour, Thomas Mulcaire, and Trevor Smith (Perth, W.A.: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2000), 123.

[110] The extended caption reads, "The man washing his clothes, Fernando Augusto Luta, is a veteran of a mercenary army formed from remnants of Angola's FNLA guerilla movement. This mercenary group was attached to South Africa's 32 Battalion, notorious for its savagery in the war against SWAPO. The boys, August Mokindo, Ze Jono and Ze Ndala, are the sons of veterans. In 1992 the mercenaries and their families were granted South African citizenship and 'shelter' in the village of this remote, decommissioned asbestos mine." Goldblatt adds, "This pool of water in an abandoned mineshaft is much used by the children of Pomfret for swimming. It is almost certainly contaminated by blue asbestos fibres. 25 December 2002." Goldblatt, *Intersections*, 122.

[111] The extended caption reads, "Drawn by Mokolomela Mohurutshi, a villager of Henuningvlei, North West Province, the map shows the occurrence of blue asbestos mine workings and waste in his area. Photographed at the Moffat Mission, Kuruman, Northern Cape. 21 December 2002." Goldblatt, *Intersections*, 122.

background—that is, until we see where blue pen shades in the area of the dump site. Color conveys evidence, and blue signals a health crisis unfolding in slow motion.[112]

In the desaturated color of Goldblatt's *Intersections* photographs, Okwui Enwezor sees evidence of the underlying crises—from environmental degradation to the rise of HIV prevalence.[113] The coolness of color becomes suggestive of the "…deferment of the post-apartheid sunshine," and the sunshine we do get illuminates "scenes of catastrophe."[114] But it is catastrophe without the drama, or the taste for the post-apocalyptic postcolonial seen in the work of Guy Tillim and Mikhael Subotzky [Figures 3.39-3.40]. It may in fact have a closer formal connection to projects by Ed Burtynsky and Richard Misrach featuring large-scale color photographs of landscapes in distress.[115] This work is insistently quiet. The subjects of his earlier photographs remain—makeshift houses, politically fraught monuments, juxtapositions of stark economic disparity—but they often hide in the landscape represented in the large photograph, blending in or on the margins in a cool palette. Everything in the photograph could be the subject. But in thinking about the relative silence of these photographs, captions remain vital as a means through which they also communicate.

Consider a pairing from *Intersections Intersected* featuring text within the photographs and captions of very different lengths for two views of the landscape. The first is a beachside in black-and-white [Figure 3.41]. The scene is flanked by two signs: on the left we see "BEACH AND SEA / ALL RACES," and on the right, "BEACH AND SEA / WHITES ONLY," just left of center, a smaller sign can be seen amidst beacons of alternating black and white, that states, as if it weren't already clear, "BOUNDARY BETWEEN WHITE AND ALL RACES AREA." In the photograph

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[112] Maureen Isaacson reported that Goldblatt "donated the R50 000 he received for his photographs of asbestos mines in the Northern Cape to sufferers of asbestosis and illnesses resulting from this mining." Isaacson, "An unflinching eye that avoids the obvious," *The Sunday Independent*, 2004.

[113] Enwezor observed, "…the way colour is literally drained from them serves as a kind of surrogate for some of the crises that mark the settings." Enwezor, "Indeterminate Structure," 32.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] My thanks to Andrea Nelson for her suggestion that I consider the landscape photography of both Misrach and Burtynsky for their environmental concern, as well as their use of large format cameras, large prints often using destaturated palettes. A comparative look at these tendencies in contemporary photography across the globe merits further consideration.

itself, there is no visual indication of the logic prompting this separation and no observable qualitative difference between these areas. The signs and how they delineate space is the subject. The critic Kate Maxwell observes of this photo and others from the early development of the *Structure* series "a sense of ironical humour" common in Goldblatt's practice. As Maxwell describes, this photograph "shows the boundary between the beaches for 'all races' and 'whites only'. The divide consisting of posts leaning in different directions, is a wasteland of scrubby plants clinging to sand with a retreating sea in the background."[116] She continues, "Much of Goldblatt's skill lies in his careful selection of foregrounds," and pushing us towards the question of: what is all the fuss about?

The second photograph is dominated by a ground of browns, yellows, and faded green, below a hazy, pale gray sky [Figure 3.42]. A road separates the open grassland. On a low hillside on the right side of the photograph, we see letters spelling out the location, "HANOVER ROCKS." Although in the style of Los Angeles's famous sign for "HOLLYWOOD," there is nothing glamorous about this location—in fact, it appears as if the white letters are beginning to droop, threatening to sink down into the ground. At the left side of the image, three brown horses graze near a sign noting the distance to Cape Town and Johannesburg, from which the town of Hanover is equidistant. And then if we squint, we can observe a sign next to it telling visitors to "Keep Our Town Clean" under another sign featuring two red AIDS ribbons.

To turn to the extended captions that accompany these photographs is revealing of the ways in which Goldblatt's photo practice has also changed between the *Structure* and *Intersections* series [Figure 3.43]. The caption for the black-and-white photograph, *Racially segregated beach areas and the boundary between them. Strand, Western Cape. 16 April 1983*, is lengthy, detailing the history of when the signs appeared on this site and how the area was used. This includes observations from conversations with people in the area, a feature common to Goldblatt's captions that so often mix

[116] Kate Maxwell, "A stark world without people," *Sunday Express*, October 2, 1985.

hard facts with anecdotes. We learn that the "ALL RACES" side was too rocky for swimming, but that whites would walk their dogs there[117]–yet another place doubling as an unofficial toilet. The detail of this note contrasts sharply with the information accompanying the photograph at Hanover Rocks: its title standing alone, *Hanover Rocks on the N1 highway in the time of AIDS. Hanover, Northern Cape. 19 October 2006*.

The *Hanover Rocks* photograph featured in a series within a series called "…in the time of Aids," a subsection of the *Intersections* project. In these photographs the inclusion of the phrase "…in the time of Aids" acts as a prompt to do a certain kind of looking in the photographs, as we are told a location, such as "*Hanover Rocks on the N1 highway*" followed by the phrase "in the time of AIDS." As the *New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson remarked, "Studying the series is like a game of Where's Waldo?"[118] The label, especially as integrated into captions has the effect of getting viewers to seek out a sign of the disease in the photograph often through its most prominent symbol, what art historian Tamar Garb has called the "over-determined ribbon."[119] But it also connects us to a sense of the present and its slow-moving crises, what Jennifer Bajorek has characterized as the "risk factors" dogging the fledgling democracy made more apparent through color. The photograph of *Hanover Rocks* encourages us to look, to take our time, and to acknowledge the duration of that looking.[120]

In considering *Intersections* and Goldblatt's journey to making it, I wonder if we might add to the photographs from the series the appendage "in the time of color," speaking less to format and more to a temporality for a new kind of creative freedom. The art historian Rory Bester writes, "It is only in *Intersections* that it becomes clear that Goldblatt has completely shaken the "self-indulgent"

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[117] David Goldblatt, "Extended Captions," in *Intersections Intersected*, 117.
[118] Ken Johnson, "Silent Cries from a Beloved Country," *New York Times*, August 21, 2009.
[119] Garb, "Land of Signs," 16.
[120] Ivor Powell claimed of another photograph from the series, but I think the statement holds here, "What becomes clear is that what Goldblatt has made in the image is a record of *looking* over time, as opposed to the *moment* of perception that lies at the heart of the classic discourse of photographic interpretation." Powell, "Parallax and Parallel," 16.

tag from this category of image,"[121] but perhaps we can see in that move not that Goldblatt has shaken off personal concerns about being too lyrical, too poetic, too indulgent—but that the politics of form have altered. Associations with memory, a shift towards critical interrogations of apartheid era visual culture, the rise of new "struggles" such as HIV/AIDS—in that space, Goldblatt's work operates in the time of color, in which not everything is photographed in color, but it can be.

[121] Bester, "David Goldblatt, One Book at a Time," in *Photographs*, eds. David Goldblatt and Martin Parr (Rome: Contrasto, 2006), 21-22.

CHAPTER 4

A WAKING CITY: GUY TILLIM'S *JO'BURG*

"Without the One…"

Red, black, blue, and yellow pushpins dot the surface of a map of the city of Johannesburg [Figure 4.1]. The primary colors sit against an off-white background cast in irregular shadow where we see the city rationalized diagrammatically into housing units outlined as discrete black squares. Skinny red lines delineate boundaries. Streets are the off-white negative space between the square units, and neighborhoods are identified by name in red capital letters. Pushpins scatter and cluster over Newtown, Hillbrow, Berea, Braamfontein, New Doornfontein, and their surrounding areas of the inner city, demarcating the City Council's plans circa 2004 for Johannesburg's many problem buildings. The pushpins fan outwards, extending—we must assume—beyond the borders of the photograph, gesturing at the immense scale of the city's challenge to improve housing standards for low-income residents in the early 2000s.[1] The photograph—*A map of central Johannesburg at the Inner City Regeneration Project office, City Council, Loveday Street*—serves as the introduction to *Jo'burg*, Guy Tillim's series of photographs focusing on urban housing thirteen years after the end of the Group Areas Act,[2] and the major shifts of demographics in the city that followed.

The end of Group Areas dramatically altered the racial optics of the city, as whites moved to the suburbs where big walls and security gates obscured their homes and home-lives, while blacks

[1] Tillim's extended caption for this photograph, which appears as an appendix at the end of the book reports: "There are 235 'bad buildings' in the city centre, with about 25 000 people living in them."

[2] The Group Areas Act was repealed in 1991. Passed in 1950, it—along with a series of other measures delineating who could work and reside in specific places in South Africa—strictly circumscribed the city along rigid racial lines, resulting in mass forced removals of black, Indian, and coloured peoples from areas designated as white or newly designated for another one of these racial groups. Especially notorious examples include District Six in Cape Town and Sophiatown in Johannesburg. The act also saw the strict division of service provision healthcare along racial lines. As more people challenged the law, the end of the group areas act was a time in which "the city became dappled with gray areas, black spots, and illegal residences," as the team of Richard Tomlinson, Robert A. Beauregard, Lindsay Bremner, and Xolela Mangcu put it in their book, *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City*, published just a year before Tillim's project. Richard Tomlinson et al. "Introduction," in *Emerging Johannesburg: Persepectives on the Postapartheid City* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xii.

visibly moved to the city-center in large numbers.[3] They were no longer merely residents of the crowded urban outer ring or atop high-rises in domestic quarters that architectural historian Clive Chipkin referred to as "the dormitory slums of the black proletariat,"[4] but were more commonly known as 'locations in the sky,'[5] and were documented by photographers like David Goldblatt in prior decades [Figure 4.2]. Although areas zoned exclusively for white occupancy such as Hillbrow began mixing racially in the late 1970s with the addition of a mix of coloured and Indian residents, the end of Group Areas sparked major influxes of blacks into neighborhoods previously officially off-limits to them.[6] The flight of whites to Northern suburbs, sparked by resistance to these demographic shifts, accompanied narratives of a city in decline—dangerous, dysfunctional, and beset with blight. And although blacks had come to the city in droves in search of opportunity from the nineteenth century, they long lived on its margins. Moving to the heart of Johannesburg after apartheid's end, many blacks found themselves, much to their disappointment, in tough neighborhoods where service delivery left a lot to be desired.

Returning to the city of his birth in 2004 after spending much of the previous decade traveling abroad working as a photojournalist for the likes of Reuters and Agence France-Presse, Tillim documented buildings in Johannesburg's inner city motivated by concerns over whether it was once again turning into "a city of exclusion,"[7] a place where persistent economic inequalities and new initiatives for redevelopment would do the work that the legal strictures devised under apartheid once did—displace the poorest black residents and push them further and further from

[3] The walling off of Johannesburg residences has seen it referred to, as Martin J. Murray notes, as a "garrison city," "citadel city," and "carceral city." See: Murray, *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.
[4] Clive Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style: Architecture & Society* (Cape Town: D. Philip Publishers, 1993), 228.
[5] "Locations in the sky" were also subject to crackdowns with the government wary that they encouraged black settlement in the city, despite their typical rudimentary furnishing. Restrictions were placed on the number of rooftop residents. C. Mather, "Residential Segregation and Johannesburg's 'Locations in the Sky'," *South African Geographical Journal* 69, No. 2 (1987): 119-128.
[6] Alan Morris, *Bleakness & Light: Inner-City Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999). In Tillim's assessment, this population shift gave way to "the bloom of an African City." As he summarized, "The Group Areas Act, which under apartheid times and established where people of different races could live, had recently been abolished, and, for the first time in a very long time, black people in general could have access to spaces close to the economic opportunities afforded by the city centre. This prompted a white flight to decentralized economic zones. I moved into an apartment downtown and started working." Tillim, *O Futuro Certo* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015), 238.
[7] Guy Tillim, *Jo'burg*, (Paris: Filigranes; Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2005), n.p.

the heart of the city. The precedents for Tillim's concern harken back to scenes like the one in Eric Miller's 1987 black-and-white photograph from Hillbrow, *A mother and child look on as black residents are evicted from a block of flats reserved for whites* [Figure 4.3]. Reminiscent of the evictions Tillim would document 17 years later in the same neighborhood, a black man carries a striped armchair above his head near household belongings strewn on the sidewalk. Amongst floral cushions, luggage, and blankets, rests a conspicuous tote bag emblazoned with a large confederate flag above the letters "USA"—a disturbingly fitting import featuring the symbol of another system of white supremacist governance. Instead of government officials or security services enforcing the evictions—figures that would be central to Tillim's series—a white woman and child watch the removal from the doorway of a shop, while a pair of black figures stand obscured in a darkened hallway. The scene speaks to the relationship between South Africa's system of segregation and the people it ostensibly serves—those who do and do not have to lift a finger to enforce and comply with apartheid. Adding a touch of biting irony, a small sign on the wall between the black man and white onlookers reads, "TRY IT—YOU'LL LOVE IT!" as a backdrop to this unhappy upheaval.

Tillim's *Jo'burg* documents yet another series of removals, but one generated by a much-altered bureaucratic and social order within Johannesburg, evidenced especially through the rapidly changing conditions for black presence and visibility in the city center.[8] Crisscrossing class hierarchies during South Africa's long history of *baaskap*, whites largely relegated blacks to spaces of invisibility within the city despite the absolute necessity of their inexpensive labor as the engine for the nation's economy.[9] White and black residential areas may have been located far apart from one

[8] For more on the politics of visibility and invisibility in Africa's urban areas, see: AbdouMaliq Simone, "The Visible and Invisible: Remaking Cities in Africa," in *Under Siege: Four African Cities: Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos*, eds. Okwui Enwezor et al. (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2003). Although my emphasis here is on black residential patterns, coloured and Indian communities similarly faced devastating forced removals and strict regulation of their presence in the country.

[9] Preceding apartheid's formalization and continuing through to its end, as Clive Chipkin claimed: "The superior persons on the Ridge or in the lesser white suburbs relied on the principles of impermanency and invisibility to cope with their reliance on cheap black labour." Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, 200. Refining this further, Chipkin contended that blacks became transparent, perhaps more so than invisible through apartheid's formalization. As Chipkin argued, "The cultural invisibility of large portions of Johannesburg's

another—excepting non-white domestic quarters in white areas—but the gritty mining hostels for black laborers on the outskirts of town and the mansions in affluent white suburbs were fundamentally tethered. As Chipkin put it, "without the one there could not be the other."[10] In proximity and distance, lives across the racial and social boundaries of apartheid were profoundly entangled. Following apartheid's end, the black influx into Johannesburg's inner city in the later half of the 1990s was significantly accelerated by what Tillim has characterized as the dawning of an "African city." This was a time when blacks not only from across South Africa, but from across the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa—especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria—moved into neighborhoods such as Berea, Hillbrow, and Yeoville. *Jo'burg* looks at the people, places, and experiences that exceed what the map of bad buildings describes, and in doing so, speaks to the city's deeply transformed social dynamics at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Opening *Jo'burg* in book form reveals an inner cover where the *Map of Johannesburg at the Inner City Regeneration Office* serves as the backdrop for a compact stack of white pages [Figure 4.4]. The orderliness of the map and the array of primary colors it features is at first a strange complement to the moody urban landscape that a reader pulls out of an accordion-fold book into one long, continuous strip. The first photo is an expansive look at the cityscape [Figure 4.5]—a *View of Hillbrow Looking North from the roof of the Mariston Hotel*, under dense grey sky and heavy cloud cover, a city cool and calm. From the looming Hillbrow Tower[11] appearing just off-center, we move to the Ponte City building[12] as seen from another rooftop, that of *Al's Tower, a block of flats on Harrow Road, Berea* [Figure 4.6]. With the Hillbrow Tower[13] and Ponte City, we are introduced to *Jo'burg* by the two

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population is the counterpart of the social invisibility formed initially by segregation and then consummated by apartheid after 1948. The result is a transparency where people who are there are looked through as if they are not." Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, 205.

[10] Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, 199.

[11] Hillbrow Tower, as it is commonly known, was first named after the former Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom and more recently, after Telkom. It was completed in 1971.

[12] Ponte City is a large cylindrical residential building that became notorious as it fell into disrepair and became a hub of illegal activity in the 1980s and 1990s. It was completed in 1975.

[13] Now sponsored by Telkom, the state telecommunications company, the tower is more commonly known as the Telkom Tower today.

structures that Loren Kruger identifies on the first page of her book *Imagining the Edgy City* as having defined the Hillbrow skyline since the 1960s.[14] Beyond association with Hillbrow, they are essential elements of the cityscape as a whole, the landmarks that distinguish Johannesburg locally and internationally in the popular imagination.

Key symbols of Johannesburg's efforts to showcase itself as a modern, world-class city, Hillbrow Tower and Ponte City have become frequent subjects for studies of African urbanism, and fodder for artists across media, including Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse's *Ponte City* that won the Deutsche Börse prize in 2015 [Figure 4.7]. The cover of Alan Morris' sociological study *Bleakness and Light: Inner-City Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (1999) [Figure 4.8] prominently features a photograph of a man in silhouette looking out from a balcony facing the Hillbrow Tower taken from the archive of *The Star* newspaper, while Ponte City dominates the cover of Martin J. Murray's *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (2008) [Figure 4.9]. As literally two of the continent's tallest structures of their kind, they represent an ascendant, cosmopolitan African city, as well as an African city's glaring failures to provide safe and reliable housing and community spaces for low-income residents. As places to start in Tillim's *Jo'burg*, they are arguably the most iconic elements of the city's skyline, sites of achievement and disappointment in turn and turn again. Remote, forbidding, and gray-on-gray—we must work to remind ourselves that what surrounds these structures are spaces denoted by the red, black, blue, and yellow pushpins on the wall of a nearby administrative office.

Tillim's *Jo'burg*'s emphasizes the condition of being "in between"[15]—individuals soon-to-be evicted, a tower block almost empty, a local City Council waiting to make way for development. And

[14] Loren Kruger, *Imagining the Edgy City*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), ix.
[15] Martin J. Murray describes "in between-ness" as persistent, unrelenting precariousness of daily life in relation to employment and housing. Murray writes, "Unable to secure regular work or to find affordable housing close to the city center, the urban poor are compelled by economic necessity to eke out a daily existence in the in-between, marginal spaces that have proliferated on the metropolitan fringe." Murray, *City of Extremes*, 3. Fringe here connotes not merely the geographic outskirts, but squatting and other unstable living throughout the city center.

Tillim focuses on this over following the experiences of particular individuals or documenting evidence of urban blight in the systematic vein of a sociological study or in the photojournalistic standard 'portrait of a city'—a conventional model he began to question strongly in the 1990s. As Tillim tells us in the book's introduction, "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."[16] Thematizing the condition of being "in between" is Tillim's restricted color palette as employed in the photo book and exhibition prints produced for the project. Grays, soft yellows, pale blues and greens, and bleached browns dominate the series, and are only occasionally punctuated by a detail of deep blue or the bright red of the uniforms worn by the so-called "Red Ants,"[17] members of the Wozani Security Company charged with enforcing the City Council's eviction notices [Figure 4.10]. The colors of *Jo'burg* show us an inner city in a coma, or perhaps, a waking dream. The writer Ashraf Jamal has suggested that South Africans "traffic in somnambulism," sleepwalking, not fully awake to all of the senses that could better take in the world, and better explain it.[18] Instead of "explaining" the city, the project pushes viewers to think about how they look Johannesburg's city center—what they do and do not see, new visibilities and invisibilities. In that vein, this chapter approaches Tillim's *Jo'burg* as a waking city, somewhere between blight and regeneration, groggy, coming to, on the edge of consciousness in which color plays a key, but often overlooked role. To explore those

[16] Tillim, *Jo'burg*, n.p.
[17] The members of companies such as Wozani Security and MacLegal Security became internationally notorious not only for their distinctive bright red coveralls, but also for their tactics of clearing high-rises and informal settlements, often showing complete disregard for personal belongings, breaking them dumping them on to the street, and intimidating residents with threats of violence. Maano Ramutsindela, 'Second Time Around': "Squatter Removals in a Democratic South Africa," *GeoJournal* 57, no. 1/2, (2002): 49-56, DOI: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41147697. Carolyn Dempster, "Eyewitness: Evicted and Homeless," *BBC News*, July 12, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1436069.stm.
[18] Ashraf Jamal examined the lack of color in contemporary South African art in the essay "Colours of Wakefulness: Speculations of the South African Palette." Jamal's essay seized on notions of "wakefulness" addressed in the work of Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche. Ashraf Jamal, "Colours of Wakefulness: Speculations of the South African Palette," September 12, 2010, http://frontiercountry.blogspot.com/2010/09/it-is-necessary-to-strain-ones-ears.html. Jamal's paper was presented at a symposium addressing color—and the lack thereof—at Rhodes University hosted by the Fine Art Department from March 27-28, 2010.

themes, I focus on *Jo'burg*'s presentation in book form, examining its narrative arc and thematic development in relation to its use of color.[19]

Seeing *Jo'burg*'s Insides

Muted. Faded. Dull. Curators and critics have frequently used these terms to characterize the overall appearance of *Jo'burg*.[20] However, these words tend to obscure the slight but important variations of color appearing throughout the series, in particular, how the "red ants" and other primary colors occasionally, but potently, punctuate scenes occupied by craggy grey bricks and pale concrete. In its restraint, Tillim's use of color risks being overlooked, and purposefully so, in its deliberate cultivation of the feeling of sober, quiet views onto the city.[21] As Gerry Badger has identified, the "quiet" photograph produces "the illusion of transparency, but not a dumb or mute transparency," instead it opens up onto a world that appears to speak for itself in a measured voice. Color's seeming negligibility in *Jo'burg* deserves further consideration, precisely for its apparent irrelevance and transparency when in fact it is a key element in the project's meditation on the city. Tillim's *Jo'burg* series tightly controls the volume of color throughout, cultivating realism in hushed tones.

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[19] For a comparative assessment of *Jo'burg*'s exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and in Cape Town at the South African National Gallery, see Sally Gaule's review, "Guy Tillim: *Joburg Downtown*," *de arte*, No. 27 (2006): 43-50. Andrew da Conceicao of Michael Stevenson Gallery (Cape Town) curated the exhibition, in dialogue with Tillim.

[20] Along these lines, Michael Godby wrote, "The medium of colour, albeit both muted and somewhat manipulated in the digital printing on cotton paper, appears more direct than Tillim's black and white transcription of reality and somehow less capable of carrying the metaphorical significance he attributes to much of his African work." Godby, "Guy Tillim," *art south africa* 3, No. 3 (Autumn 2005). John Hogg wrote, "The colours are muted but not without impact. For Tillim, such colours are closer to the truth than the colour we are used to viewing in many publications. These are photographs of the ordinary; he purposefully avoided waiting for iconic moments." Hogg, "This Living City," *Mail & Guardian*, November 4 to 10, 2006. Sally Gaule referred to "faded colour" together with the textures of scarred walls in Tillim's photograph *Manhattan Court, Plein Street* as referring to the building's past. Gaule, "Guy Tillim," 49. Jeanne Mercier spoke of "la tonalité sourde" of *Jo'burg* in "L'univers fantomatique de Guy Tillim," *Afrique in visu* (January 21, 2009), http://www.afriqueinvisu.org/l-univers-fantomatique-de-guy,200.html. Mercier reported, an exhibition of Tillim's *Jo'burg* and *Avenue Patrice Lumumba* at the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation was the first occasion that institution showed color photography. Brigitte Ollier refered to "couleurs sourdes" in both *Jo'burg* and *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*. Ollier, "L'Afrique sans fard de Guy Tillim," *Libération*, Monday 9 February 2009.

[21] Of the practice and quality of "quiet photography"—so often overlooked—Badger wrote, "It is so fundamental as to be taken absolutely for granted, largely disregarded, and certainly little remarked upon. It is a characteristic that is invariably in fashion, but is inherently unfashionable." Badger's concept of "quiet photography" was influential to the notion of realism underpinning the Tate's *Cruel + Tender* exhibition, "disarmingly simple" work produced through a balance of 'engagement' and 'estrangement.' Badger, "Without Author or Art: The "Quiet" Photograph," in *The Pleasures of Good Photographs: Essays by Gerry Badger* (New York: Aperture, 2010): 210.

The studied production of quietude in *Jo'burg* connects to traditions of the understated photographic presentation of modest subjects, in that it paradoxically asks viewers to pay attention to images that seemingly do not draw attention to themselves. The subject matter of *Jo'burg*'s photographs does not shout or scream, not showing major events of distress or elation seized by the shutter's click. The color palette conveys general fidelity to what is observable in the world, and in the context of the series, serves as the color scheme for a project explicitly claiming to investigate the lived experiences of vulnerable people in unstable housing. That claim to documentation underwrites the truth-value of color we see, and the realism we accept. Moreover, there are no disorienting extreme angle views using the camera's technology to see detail or close-up portraits of people that feel intrusive, coerced, or mercenarily taken—photographic picturing appears to mimic what we would observe with our own eyes. The *Jo'burg* project is also in dialogue with other "quiet" photography, produced in black-and-white and color that produces similar effects: locally, most influentially by David Goldblatt in his *Structure* and *Intersections* projects, and internationally by *New Topographics* photographers such as Robert Adams and Joe Deal, in which the photographers view the inclusion of the details of everyday life in the context of particular projects as revealing the underlying systems that shape society. Discussing their work, photographers such as Goldblatt, Adams, and Deal largely eschew claims to self-conscious concerns with style, instead speaking about their interest in opening up ways to look thoughtfully onto the world—as it is—through photography.[22]

[22] Speaking in the context of *New Topographics* in June 1975, Robert Adams made the case that photographs should look as if "easily taken" so as not to make beauty in the world precious. He stated: "By Interstate 70: a dog skeleton, a vacuum cleaner, TV dinners, a doll, a pie, rolls of carpet…. Later, next to the South Platte River: algae, broken concrete, jet contrails, the smell of crude oil…. What I hope to document, though not at the expense of surface details, is the Form that underlies this apparent chaos." Joe Deal spoke to the idea of maintaining consistency between the appearance of his series of photographs included in *New Topographics*, "The elimination of the vagaries of sky and horizon is partly an attempt to fill the frame and create a self-contained, undifferentiated space, and is also the elimination of a familiar clue to scale and orientation, and to that extent indicates the degree of ground-directedness of these photographs. Beyond that they are pure subject matter." *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (Rochester: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975), 7.

Discussion of color often relies on metaphors of sound, so that beyond the 'quiet' I am associating with Tillim's project, photographic palettes are often described by terms like loud, screaming, muted, dull, harmonious, and discordant. Tillim's use of color in *Jo'burg* is often described as muted, but it shows more nuances and variation than muting suggests. Leaning on the descriptive potential of musical metaphors, photographs in the *Jo'burg* series hold notes of deep primary colors and diaphanous secondary colors, repeat strains, and move into gentle crescendos and diminuendos. Also reaching to themes of orchestration and musicality, Sally Gaule has observed of *Jo'burg*, "Like a composer, Tillim has restrained his use of colour to a few particular moments: inflections that are rendered more powerful because they are so rare."[23] Using color—along with Tillim's approach to its presentation as a photo book and as a gallery exhibition of large-scale prints—became a means to assert a different way of making photographs, conveying more open-ended narratives, and calling attention, in particular, to a break with photojournalism. Tillim tunes the series to emphasize close engagement with what the inner city reveals and conceals of black lives in the contemporary built environment.

In its study of buildings gone bad, Tillim's use of color directs our attention to context and atmosphere—the look and feel of these spaces and their surroundings—over exceptional event. The shift to quiet atmosphere and context is a tendency that Tillim gravitated toward as he undertook new projects while reflecting on his earlier approach to photography as a member of Afrapix [Figures 4.11-4.12] and later as a freelance photojournalist. Addressing this earlier work for his *Departure* project made in 2003—his last project entirely executed in black-and-white—Tillim stated,

> 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

[23] Gaule, "Guy Tillim" 47.

> 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.[24]

In *Jo'burg*, Tillim makes subtlety a central concern. In that attention to subtlety, color distances this project not only from the black-and-white of Tillim's earlier work but also from a mode of printing that long-dominated photography in the realms of photojournalism, documentary, and art. Though Tillim worked with color occasionally for earlier photojournalism assignments, he turned to color in his personal projects when digital technologies finally offered the level of control, ease of production, and affordability that allowed a color photograph to represent the world as he saw it.[25]

The art historian and curator Tamar Garb has observed that in South Africa color has long been "tainted with the smear of make-believe and the vulgarity of commerce and consumerism." Moreover, she asserts that "the ubiquity of black and white photography" is tied to the misguided notion that it is the format of deepest or transcendent truth.[26] The gravitas of black-and-white—seen in photographs such as Sam Nzima's iconic image of a mortally wounded Hector Pieterson carried through the streets of Soweto in 1976 [Figure 4.13] or Cedric Nunn's scene of a funeral procession for two youths killed in political violence in 1987 [Figure 4.14]—served to expose the ills of the apartheid state and the activities of activists. Harnessing the expressive potential of black-and-white photography to portray the stark conditions of imprisonment, Ernest Cole's photograph of boys behind white and black bars achingly conveys the broader repressive structure of South African society [Figure 4.15]. The caption states in passive voice, "These boys were caught trespassing in a white area" [Figure 4.16], as we see them staring out of the darkness of the cell. Three boys stand in the foreground, one looking up with eyes open wide, another looking directly out, and another

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[24] Tillim, "Departure," n.p.
[25] Guy Tillim, telephone interview with author, March 30, 2014. Much of Tillim's work in the 1990s was in black-and-white, although he also undertook color commercial assignments. In the early 2000s, he began personal photo projects in color. In his first color projects such as *Kunhinga Portraits* (2003) and *Leopold and Mobutu* (2004), Tillim worked between black-and-white and color photographs. The muted treatment of color that we see in *Jo'burg*, carries over in to later projects such as *Petros Village* (2005), *Congo Democratic* (2006), and *Avenue Patrice Lumumba* (2008), but each project has a distinct chromatic sensibility.
[26] Tamar Garb, "Figures and Fictions: South African Photography in the Perfect Tense," in *Figures & Fictions: contemporary South African photography* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), 59.

looking down, while yet more figures stand behind them extending back into the darkness. Appearing through the oppressive grid, the boys' hands and arms clutch and grasp the black and white bars of the cell door.[27] Cole's photograph traffics in high-contrast black-and-white photography's associations with the gravitas of 'serious' photography, as the boys' pleading eyes shine from the dark cell calling for attention to the daily injustices in the lives of black South Africans.[28]

The great predominance of black-and-white photography despite greater access to color technology in the 1980s and early 1990s, speaks to traditions of its use—its associations with socially-concerned movements—as well as taste, habits of perception, and distinctive formal qualities. As Garb suggested, for Tillim and for others, color photography was a way to get distance from these tendencies and to challenge "the historical conventions of documentary."[29] Experimenting with color for a project about the politically divisive and emotionally fraught subjects of housing and re-development, was a key element in Tillim's effort to make images differently. Trying to escape what he saw as the strictures of photojournalism, he moved away from black-and-white, assignment-based projects and into a mode that resisted easy categorization in terms of style and genre.[30] And he embraced the space of the museum, gallery, and photo book in the post-apartheid era to carry over a photojournalistic sensibility—representing scenes from daily life in some of Johannesburg's toughest neighborhoods—but with a more open-ended approach to narrative structure. Tillim put pressure on his own history of photojournalistic practice and pursued

[27] Akin to the wide circulation of Nzima's photograph of Hector Pieterson, Cole's photograph would go on to be reproduced in posters, even serving as the basis for drawings.
[28] Gerry Badger's observation that the photographs of Bill Brandt and W. Eugene Smith often "bellow for attention," seems applicable to the clear plea of Cole's photograph. However, this is not a criticism of their work so much to articulate the registers in which these images speak. As Badger wrote, "Brandt and Smith, *despite* and not *because* of the graphic ebullience of their work, were clearly major photographers, their work evincing psychological complexities and subtleties way beyond the many who would propose that stark chiaroscuro equals profundity." Badger, "Without Author or Art," 213.
[29] Garb stated, "It is, in part, through a personal palette and chromatic manipulation (facilitated by digital printing) that [Pieter] Hugo and Tillim counter the language of photojournalism with which they both began their careers." Garb, "Figures & Fictions," 59.
[30] For *Jo'burg*, Tillim wanted to move away from "looking for the same kind of drama" that was required of his photojournalism assignments, and to "be in a freer space" with subject matter. Guy Tillim, telephone interview with author, March 30, 2014.

different ways for making and presenting new work. Pushing at photojournalism's conventions, he found an art world more receptive to his practice. "I can't really say at what point I started to evolve from covering news," Tillim has said, "but at that point life became more interesting. It also coincided, after a while, with the art world beginning to show some interest in photojournalism."[31] Tillim's approach to color underscores his process of expanding, critiquing, and blurring categories of his photographic oeuvre.

In headlines from 2003 such as "Lensman's skeptical eye bridges gap between art and journalism" in *The Sunday Independent* [Figure 4.17] and "Finding the Art in Photographing Africa's Wars" in *This Day* [Figure 4.18], and from 2005 with "Tillim's Journalistic Eye Wins Leica Award," in the *Cape Times* [Figure 4.19], three of the country's major papers—writers emphasized the convergence of photojournalism and art in Tillim's practice as the entry point for contending with his newer work. In part this was to make sense of Tillim's receipt of the DaimlerChrysler Award for Creative Photography in the same year, a period of time when Tillim was still very much associated with his work for major news publications. Famed South African art critic Ivor Powell acknowledged in an e-mail exchange with Tillim in the wake of the award's announcement, Tillim's receipt of the award made waves in the art world, having put "out of joint," in Powell's words "a whole lot of delicately chiselled [*sic*] fine art noses."[32] For those "fine art noses," what Tillim made was not art but "just photojournalism."

As Powell goes on to explore in an essay reflecting on that e-mail exchange and critical attitudes to Tillim's photography, Tillim's photographs were precisely the kind that would find difficulty making their way past the editors of mass media publications at the same time that they

[31] Guy Tillim, in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld, 2007), 99. Tillim's receipt of the DaimlerChrysler prize afforded him more international exposure, including an exhibition in Berlin organized by Renate Wiehager, curator of the DaimlerChrysler award. Guy Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 238. *Congo Democratic* appears at the Bienal de São Paulo, documenta 12, and a Kinshasa newspaper at the same time. Of the mix of venues for displaying and circulating the project, Tillim surmised, "I guess photojournalism or photo image making is at the forefront of a new vocabulary, and if it examines itself to some degree, looks at itself looking, it'll find its way into the art environment." Guy Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 242.
[32] Ivor Powell and Guy Tillim, "An Email Discussion," in *Guy Tillim* (Pretoria: DaimlerChrysler, 2004), 106.

were finding an uneasy home in the institutions of fine art. They were more about atmosphere and context than breaking news event, but they had the subject matter of sober journalism. For Tillim, *Jo'burg* was also a project that allowed him—through the prize's financial remuneration—to focus exclusively on a personal project without also seeking and executing magazine and newspaper work.[33] Moreover, Tillim's restrained palette would have been challenging to reproduce in newsprint. It was in the gallery that Tillim's newer work got an airing, and in that exhibition context, it worked to "deconstruct the languages of photojournalism, manipulating our learned responses to visual reportage and placing those languages at risk."[34] And for the noses "out of joint," Powell borrows from Bill Bryson to emphatically say, "Fuck them!"[35]

In undertaking *Jo'burg*, Tillim had an opportunity to critically engage with just which subjects he deemed worthy of photographic attention. Reflecting on that process, Tillim stated:

> *Jo'burg* was the first body of work that I really followed through as a cycle. I lived there for four or five months. The moment was a relief, a release. Very often in that time I wouldn't make photographs, but on the other hand many things that I wouldn't previously have regarded as being worthy of making into an image became significant.[36]

Tillim described a more deliberate and deliberative way of working, observing his surroundings and taking his time. Through that approach, he also spoke to growing especially aware of his own subject position, his whiteness as well as his higher socioeconomic background than the inner city high-rise dwellers that appeared in his photographs. He observed:

> Paradoxically, the more conspicuous I was with my tripod and being white and so on, the more invisible I seemed to become. I learned that there's something about a kind of visibility that, tied to a sureness of what you're doing, communicates a confidence, and people trust you, leave you alone to go about your work. At a certain point, working in Johannesburg in 2004, I found that in myself, that way of being.[37]

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[33] Guy Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 238.
[34] Ivor Powell, "Stories from Beyond," in *Guy Tillim* (Pretoria: DaimlerChrysler, 2004), 117.
[35] *Ibid*., 110.
[36] Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 240.
[37] *Ibid*.

Tillim has claimed that approach then translated into subsequent projects as he brought his take on reportage into venues and modes of display more identified with art. Again, Badger's diagnosis of "the quiet photographer" who "is totally assured of the fact that a 'simple,' 'straightforward' act of recording is anything but,"[38] seems relevant.

Art historian Erina Duganne has questioned the assumption by many contemporary photographers and critics that photojournalism and art are different from and even opposed to one another. She has argued that if photography has been a way of getting outside of or around art to get at art—to think critically about medium-specificity, categories of practice, and emerging social concerns—art has also been a way for photographers to get outside of or around photography in order to confront assumptions about the photographer's role and the photograph's authority as evidence in the work of photographers such as Andres Serrano and Luc Delahaye. For Duganne, "the evidentiary and testimonial authority of the medium depends on complex habits of observation and a set of assumptions and beliefs that continually shift according to the culture and interests of those who use and read them, as well as those who make them."[39] So that the editorial quality of "Serrano's torture photographs" [Figure 4.20] produced for *The New York Times* in June 2005 to accompany a news story on the subject of torture's use as an interrogation technique in the war on terror highlight the "ambiguity between the real and the fabricated."[40] Detractors at the time, including *The New York Times*' own Public Editor Byron Calame, took particular issue with the article's failure to use clear captioning to indicate the staged aspects of the images.[41] Whereas Delahaye's "large-scale, panoramic"[42] photographs of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan [Figure 4.21] on museum walls approximate the dimensions and drama of a history painting more readily than an

[38] Badger, "Without Author or Art: The 'Quiet' Photograph," 216.
[39] Erina Duganne, "Photography after the Fact," in *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, eds. Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne (Williamstown: Williams College Museum of Art, 2006), 59.
[40] Duganne, "Photography after the Fact," 72.
[41] Byron Calame, "Pictures, Labels, Perception and Reality," *The New York Times*, 3 July 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/03/opinion/pictures-labels-perception-and-reality.html.
[42] Duganne, "Photography after the Fact," 58.

article in *Newsweek* or *Time*—even when they spread across two pages of a magazine [Figure 4.22]. Artistic and photojournalistic conventions bristle against one another exposing the porosity of both categories.

Extending Duganne's argument to South Africa, photography's use as a an explicitly 'documentary' medium—as presented in exhibitions and print publications—in the 1980s, was affirmed as a way to create distance from the perceived problems and limitations of photojournalism in the context of the struggle. In particular, documentary offered photographers an alternative to photojournalism's tendency to privilege sensational, sentimental, and extreme, yet frequently superficial coverage, and to cede control to editors over photographers. As opposed to assignment-driven work, photography generally termed 'documentary'[43] in South Africa supported collective work under the auspices of organizations such as Afrapix and the International Defence and Aid Fund, as well as more personally-motivated and personally-directed projects. These sustained, often longer-term engagements with communities and with particular issues could enable a photographer to produce deeper, more complex investigations, often bringing image and text together. However, 'documentary' presented its own set of challenges—definitional fuzziness, repetitive themes, unsustainable claims for unimpeachable truth, and emphasis on predominantly non-white subjects in conditions of suffering and poverty. These challenges further provoked questions over what kinds of photographs socially-engaged photographers should be making and became the subject of major critical discussion in the 1990s and 2000s. As South Africa transitioned out of an apartheid society, many photographers began confronting the perceived deficiencies of documentary and did so increasingly in the art museum and gallery, laying claim, if not to art as such, then to photography without other labels or categories. With *Jo'burg*, Tillim turns to the space of art for an opportunity to

[43] Interviews from *South Africa The Cordoned Heart* speak to the varied definitions and practices falling under this heading. "Conversations with Cordoned Heart Photographers," c. 1985, Alex Harris Photographs and Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Also see: Patricia Hayes, "Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography," *Kronos*, No. 33 (November 2007): 139-162; Darren Newbury, *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009).

re-imagine the form of the photo essay for Johannesburg, one that can be in color and combined in different sequences in the concertina-style book and for varied gallery settings.[44]

Something Lacking?

Almost halfway through the series as presented in book form, we see a photograph of a sparsely furnished room cast in shadow, save for the light streaming through a window, which projects a bright, interrupted rectangle against the wall to the right [figure 3.23]. On the other side of a hazy window, patched in parts with what appears to be a mix of wood and cardboard, we see the back of a man looking out from his balcony. Of the man, Kenny Ncube, Tillim tells us: "He is from Zimbabwe and is unemployed." Indications of the man's meager circumstances sit within the room. An overhead lamp has a lone lightbulb, where there should be two. A desk chair faces the wall instead of a table. A small pot for cooking sits on the floor. A small dark rug lies on the well-worn hardwood floors at a slight angle, one edge curling upwards. A small bed rests against the far wall, topped with an unruly combination of blankets, pillows, and personal belongings—here we spy a small pop of lime green fabric, a bright entry amidst an interior dominated by browns, grays, and off-white hues. Paint peels off of the walls. And only an old-fashioned clock set inside of a dark wood frame adorns a wall. Tiny comforts appear in a small room where Mr. Ncube may have no legal claim to be or few resources to maintain. But in this moment, it is a home.

Throughout *Jo'burg*, we are left to study the textures of walls, window frames edged with broken glass, shirts hanging from clotheslines, and beds in varying states of composure in order to make sense of what constitutes a deficient building—the spaces that merit a City Council pushpin. The structure of *Jo'burg* in its book format reminds us we are seeing further and further inside of buildings where claims to intimacy and privacy are in dispute, places found wanting. We are not

[44] As opposed to the modest black-and-white prints of earlier projects, Tillim's larger-scale color prints for exhibition were presented in discrete and imposing grids (scale varied; ±16 x 23 in.).

following the stories of specific people, but instead walking in and around buildings, seeing their colors and shifting geometries, observing their occupants, and traveling with Tillim as he—a white male photographer—negotiates entry into the homes of black residents.

Jo'burg's photographs show us the forms of the city's troubled buildings: how they relate to the cityscape and how people live in and interact with them. They are somewhat removed from the moods and sensations often identified with the dynamic, bustling area of Highpoint and the pulsating rhythms of reggae and horns of vuvuzelas on game nights emerging from bars on Rockey Street—key hubs of the neighborhoods that Tillim documents.[45] Instead they are quiet and spare. Tillim's careful compositions allow viewers to study spaces that appear to have little interest individually in terms of extraordinary incident or "decisive moment."[46] Through 61 photographs, Tillim takes us from rooftop views of the city, into the surfaces and shadows of façades, stairways, and corridors, and finally into the intimacy of living rooms and bedrooms that may soon be overturned, contents vomited onto the street, their residents literally 'sent packing.' The concertina-style form of the book that one pulls out into a long stream of images functions more like a filmstrip than a traditional text to be flipped through [Figure 4.24]—although the photographs do extend across the fold, alternating between full-bleed and images with a thin white border. But overall, the form of the book emphasizes that this is not a project easily summed up by a singular image as is often the demand placed on hard photojournalism.

Tillim has claimed that the concertina form of *Jo'burg* was more of a formatting solution than a conceptual move, but its format differs significantly from previous photo books made by him and

[45] Highpoint is a hub of activity in Hillbrow and Rockey Street is the commercial heart of Yeoville, neighborhoods just northeast of the city center.

[46] The eponymous essay was published as a preface to Henri Cartier-Bresson's photo album, *The Decisive Moment* in 1952. Cartier-Bresson was a founding member of Magnum photographic agency, and his notion of the "decisive moment" has been highly influential for generations of photographers, especially photojournalists. The concept speaks to the ability for a photographer to capture the crux of an event, an ability that requires technical mastery of the medium and a commitment to represent "things-as-they-are" in their most compelling form. He writes, "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give the event its proper expression." Henri Cartier-Bresson, "The Decisive Moment," in *On Photography: A Source Book of Photo History in Facsimile*, ed. Beaumont Newhall (Watkins Glen, NY: Century House, 1956), 192.

his generation of photographers in South Africa. The format of the book, published by Filigranes in Paris, produces a more self-conscious viewing experience, as a reader can shift between flipping through and pulling out the series of images. Indeed, Tillim recounted meeting with Michael Stevenson and Okwui Enwezor for their viewing of the "foldout book" of *Jo'burg*, which they pulled out in its entirety to view. Stevenson then went on to purchase 24 prints from the series based on that experience of seeing the book. Tillim describes the impact of that encounter, saying that it "changed my perspective on things somewhat, changed my life really, in the sense that it consolidated that freedom to work without having to look for assignments."[47] The encounter also suggests that Enwezor and Stevenson observed a turn in Tillim's work, qualities in his project that would see them increasingly place his photography in an art context. And this support enabled Tillim to pursue more personally-directed projects in which he printed in larger scales, varied book formats for which he repeated the concertina on multiple occasions, present photographs for exhibition in grids and diptychs, shift palettes, and continue to work in color.

When I interviewed Tillim in March 2014, he told me that the colors of *Jo'burg* are more muted than he'd now prefer[48]—indicating that perhaps he overdid it by underdoing it. And yet, the subdued palette of the series is suggestive of the slow pace of the bureaucracy governing the city's development plans, the instability that underlies the lives of those affected, and the lack of financial means that makes permanent housing elusive. *The Roof of Sherwood Heights, Smit Street* [Figure 4.25], seems to speak directly to the somnabulatory city, as we see a rooftop where men literally sleep during the day, in bright sunshine. Meanwhile, several photographs in the series feature individuals and groups seated on or lying in beds, such as in *Zimbabwean Innocent Mazeka's place, 402 Al's Tower, Joel Road, Berea* [Figure 4.26] or *Grafton Road, Yeoville* [Figure 4.27]. The beds of *Jo'burg* are made and

[47] Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 240.
[48] Guy Tillim, telephone interview with the author, March 30, 2014.

unmade, tidy and disheveled—suggestive of quietude and refuge, as well as social interactions when it serves as the only seating in a room. Sleep is seemingly possible anywhere, at any time.

Tillim's treatment of color dramatizes the conditions of instability and uncertainty in Johannesburg during the winter of 2004. However, Tillim is now often lumped in with a tendency toward "desaturated" palettes in contemporary South African art—one that extends beyond photography.[49] Critics of this approach question whether this is an art market trend (one certainly not exclusive to South Africa, since similar palettes feature in the work of many major contemporary photographers around the world) or part of a deeper cultural undercurrent encompassing boredom, disappointment, unhappiness, and drowsiness. As in: does South Africa really look this way, or are many of contemporary South Africa's visual artists just really, really sad and tired?

Tillim—along with photographers such as David Goldblatt[50] (with whom Tillim has shared a printer, Tony Meintjes), Pieter Hugo, and Mikhael Subotzky—has been closely associated with this trend of desaturation. Critics often align this formal tendency with a pervasive mood of post-apartheid malaise, the palette of a sleepwalking people (per Jamal). Reflecting on the propensity to

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[49] Ashraf Jamal figures the treatment of color in the art practices of Cecil Skotnes and William Kentridge as different strains of nostalgia weighed down by conceptual preoccupations, conveying "the lackluster, muted or disingenuous nature of the visual dialogue." As Jamal summarized, "Both…have chosen a palette or medium which is intrinsically dry, desiccated, conceptual; both, in other words, are moved by an idea." Jamal, "Colours of Wakefulness." Addressing the distinct form of David Goldblatt's approach to color photography for its "sheer muted tonal range, as if the world is dying slowly, like a quietening memory," Matthew Partridge asserted that Goldblatt is not alone in this trend adding, "Guy Tillim's Jo'burg series (2004), Pieter Hugo's 'Gadawan Kura'—the Hyena Men series I-II (2005-07), even the recent work of Michaelis prize winner Rob Watermeyer's Points of Entry (2008) all spring to mind. Colourfully dry with a hard light." Partridge, "The Digital Taboo: The De-saturation of the Common Place," September 12, 2010, http://frontiercountry.blogspot.com/2010/09/matthew-partridge-digital-taboo-de.html. Tamar Garb linked Kentridge's black-and-white drawings to a wide range of media associated with the development of technologies of vision and representations of memory. She wrote, "Kentridge's is a drawn world—whether still or moving—seen through the lens of inherited conventions and contraptions, but reinvented and newly imagined in the blacks and whites, the half tones and grey grounds particular to contemporary South Africa. While his work is predominantly tonal, he occasionally inserts some colour, allowing a wash, a red line or residual coloured haze to enter the picture. But such careful and minimal incursions, often connoting the linear techniques of scientific diagrams and technical drawings of the underlining and corrective overwriting of schoolteachers and authority figures, serve to emphasise the monochromatic intensity of the rest of the work." Tamar Garb, "Land of Signs," in *Home Land / Land Marks: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008, 20.

[50] The curator Ulrich Loock described Goldblatt's photograph *Crosses in protest against and commemoration of farm murders. Rietvlei, Limpopo. 19 June 2004* as "in some ways desaturated of colour—in particular the intense blue of the African sky has been leached while creating the scans for colour prints—that goes on forever, and lacks all drama." Loock, "History in Motion," 22.

desaturate, the art critic Matthew Partridge claimed, although "it is not unique to South Africa…it has come to define what contemporary South African photography looks like."[51] He added,

> There is something so seemingly ordinary about this type of South African colour—a pale aesthetic, a distinctive lack, as if the acknowledgment of the full presence of the spectrum would be too extreme for our eyes. Yet this is a choice, done very deliberately and hardly spoken about. Is it because South African photography is dying internally, or is the light merely not strong enough to indicate the possibility of life?[52]

But what are we really talking about when we talk about "desaturation"? On a technical level, this is the digital manipulation of color channels bringing the hues towards grey, but in its descriptive usage often means washed out, bloodless, cool, and sad. After persistent questions during the struggle years about the place of subtlety in the visual arts,[53] desaturation might well be the result of the hard-fought for right to subtlety run amok—or at least, pushed to the edge of tedium, and perhaps, past it. It is something like seeing the world without punctuation—emphasizing nothing. And yet, desaturation may not always represent a lack. Instead, the kind of color that irks or bores critics perhaps as often as it is overlooked might in fact reveal the effort to find a way to carry the gravitas historically associated with black-and-white into color. It operates in the register of something like "serious" color, as opposed to spectacular, seductive, or banal color.[54]

Discussions of color in the literature about Tillim's *Jo'burg* tend to stop at a generalization about it, along with subsequent projects such as *Congo Democratic* (2006)*, Petros Village* (2006), and *Avenue Patrice Lumumba* (2008), as worlds with the sound turned down, leeched and bleached—the

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[51] Partridge, "The Digital Taboo."
[52] Partridge, "The Digital Taboo."
[53] Rory Bester highlights an exchange in the question-and-answer for a discussion of Gideon Mendel's project *Beloofde Land* in 1989. Facing questions about the perceived ambiguity of the project's representation of right-wing subjects, Bester notes, "When Mendel responded to these positions by stressing the importance of subtlety in photography, a member of the audience asked the question: 'Is there a place in South Africa for subtle art?'" Pointing to the AA Life Vita Award subsequently won by Mendel's project, Bester leaves it to us to determine if the answer is then a "yes." Bester, "The Politics and Aesthetics of the Fall of Apartheid," in *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 513.
[54] My suggestion is that "serious color" would be different from something like "banal" color, that which saw highly saturated photographs of American everyday in the work of the likes of William Eggleston and Stephen Shore entering, albeit controversially, major museums in America and Europe in the 1970s.

stuff of post-apocalyptic daydreams.[55] But perhaps this isn't about the viewers' or the critics' attention, but instead, about these colors in particular. And if so, why? Is this color difficult to see and to describe? Is it uninteresting, the color of boredom, of "meh"? Or is Tillim bored? Are we somewhere in the middle of what the late Museum of Modern Art curator of photography, John Szarkowski set up—albeit unevenly—as the "mirrors and windows" dichotomy, in which photos are either about the photographer's self-expression (i.e., showing us something about him/herself, looking in the mirror) or exploring the world (i.e., looking out the window)?[56] Or is this the color of plain fact, pure description. Is the Johannesburg cityscape really so washed out and faded?

Yet, these questions about the photograph's ability to convey something like the 'real' colors of Johannesburg's cityscape sidestep the particular look of Tillim's *Jo'burg* with its deliberate use of cool colors and cultivation of a distinctive realism. Instead, we might ask: at a moment when new digital technologies revolutionized the making, editing, printing, and disseminating of color photographs allowing for far more control and many other possibilities than ever before, at a moment when Tillim was stepping away from the labels of photojournalism and documentary but cautious about art, at a moment when South African photography was increasingly finding a home in museums and galleries—nationally and internationally—how might we understand the palette of *Jo'burg* and its effects?

[55] Jeanne Mercier refers to the *View from the Mariston Hotel* as showing an "apocalyptic sky." She writes, "Une vue au ciel apocalyptique qui laisse présager l'ambiance sourde due reste de l'exposition." Mercier, "L'univers fantomatique." Of *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*, Leora Maltz-Leca eloquently assessed: "What results is complex photographs of bleached beauty and dampened light woven through with tight juxtapositions of grace and decrepitude. Eschewing postcard blue skies for smoggy grays, the luminescence and sun-drenched color associated with the African landscape gives way to tapestries of brown, soot and ash, while the lush verdure of the subtropical countryside is largely jettisoned in favor of views of gritty African metropoli." Leora Maltz-Leca, "On Street Names and 'De Facto Monuments': Guy Tillim's Avenue Patrice Lumumba," *Arte East* (Autumn 2011).

[56] The concept of "mirrors and windows" served as the foundation for an eponymous exhibition that Szarkowski organized at The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1978. The show featured a selection of American photography created after 1960.

Choosing Color

Largely well-received in 2004,[57] *Jo'burg* was a project whose formal approach might have stirred up controversy when Tillim began his career as a photographer in the 1980s. Its careful study of urban poverty and the daily lives of marginalized peoples has kinship with the best-known projects of the apartheid era, such as Cole's *House of Bondage* (1967) [Figure 4.28] and the photo essays produced for The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa brought together in the book and exhibition *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* (1986) [Figure 4.29]. Unlike those projects, however, *Jo'burg*'s modes of presentation and circulation differ dramatically. Instead of a carefully sequenced march of single images paired with explanatory text, Tillim offers an accordion-style book, a model that permits the reader to collapse the continuous line of images thereby bringing images far apart from one another in the overall sequence side-by-side.

Where many of the best-known documentary-style projects in South Africa often provide a formal introduction followed by black-and-white photographs captioned with extensive descriptive text giving straightforward social science statistics and/or first-person narratives—Cole's *House of Bondage* is exemplary in this regard—Tillim's *Jo'burg* offers a looser narrative trajectory. Tillim introduces *Jo'burg*'s images first before providing extended captions at the end of the book [Figure 4.30] as well as a short statement about the motivation for, and substance of, the project. The book's distinctive format allows one to pull the images into one very long, continuous page—approximately 50ft in length—moving horizontally from photograph to photograph, while also enabling new juxtapositions as one can recombine the images thereby alternating their order between the first and last pages.

In *Jo'burg*, Tillim privileges showing over telling. Our ability to modify the book's sequence opens up the reading of the series, allowing us to play with how its photographs relate to and inform

[57] In addition to the reviews addressed in this chapter, see: "Selected Writings," in *O Futuro Certo*, 272-303.

one another. And yet, in that flexibility, the images also risk being too ambiguous in their narrative and social commentary, presenting what might be read as mere moments of unexpected beauty in poverty for the mindless delectation of coffee table book readers and gallery-goers rather than giving a critical view of housing problems and the city's persistent social inequalities. In reflecting on Afrapix and his own photojournalism, Tillim has expressed wariness of their tendency to make claims to hard truths and to dwell on and prettify despair. He acknowledged photography's ability to "change what is ugly and brutal into something sublime and redemptive," indicating that it was for this reason he now had "photographs I like for reasons I have come to distrust."[58] For Tillim, the truth of the photographs wasn't something he could contain, dictate, or even fully know himself. Instead, he tried to find ways to demonstrate his awareness of the open-endedness of the photo essay and commentaries on a rapidly changing city, risking questions of his political stakes and personal sensitivities in the project.

An apparent lack of political clarity led to heated debate over Gideon Mendel's exhibition of *Beloofde Land* ("Promised Land"), a color photographic series that looked at the competing festivities surrounding the re-enactment of the Great Trek[59] in honor of its 150th anniversary in 1988 [Figures 4.31-4.32]. It was also presented as a photo essay in the corporate-minded publication *Leadership*, where its punchy colors were more at home in its magazine format that also featured extensive captioning [Figures 4.33-4.34].[60] However, it was *Beloofde Land*'s exhibition at the Market Photo Gallery in 1989—one of the few spaces that showed photography consistently throughout the

[58] Tillim, "Departure," n.p.
[59] For the 150th anniversary, the main three right-leaning political parties—the National Party, the Conservative Party, and the Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging (AWB)—sponsored three separate re-enactments of The Great Trek. Despite intending to celebrate an originary moment of Afrikaner nationalism, the competing treks instead dramatized deep fissures in the South African right in the late 1980s. Other coverage of Afrikaner cultural life…
[60] Mendel's photo essay appeared in *Leadership* 8, No. 2 (April 1989): 32-49.

1980s—and plans for this work to travel to Afrikaans-language universities around the country that riled up many viewers.[61]

For the exhibition of *Beloofde Land*, there was no prescribed sequence for the photographs and no text, a gesture previously more common to heady conceptual art, in which the troublesome complexity of the relationship between text and image was often central. This approach seemed to fly in the face of the agenda of collective organizations such as Afrapix—of which Mendel was a founding and highly active member—organizations that were established in large part for photographers to gain *more* control over how their images were used locally and internationally than traditional photojournalism would allow, and to communicate clear and persuasive messages about life under apartheid.

In all of this, Mendel's use of color was a focus of critique. For audiences as well as photographers, taking color seriously—especially bright color—required a break with deeply entrenched traditions. One observer described the color of the photos as "dramatic, beautiful and grandiose," veering towards glamorizing its subject matter.[62] Art historian and curator Rory Bester has argued that the color of this series was a challenge to "audiences more accustomed to the apparent gravitas of black-and-white images."[63] Meanwhile, Mendel has claimed that he used color to show the perverse contemporaneity of the festivities—the anachronism of the trek portrayed in gaudy color. So that, in addition to the theater of the competing treks, color added another layer of "artificiality" to the proceedings.[64] However, for some, Mendel's overall approach to the project—

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[61] A footnote for the photoessay in *Leadership* makes mention of the exhibition plans for the project.

[62] Both Michael Godby and Rory Bester have explored the response to the use of color in Mendel's project. See: Godby, "Dismantling the Symbolic Structure of Afrikaner Nationalism: Gideon Mendel's 'Beloofde Land,'" *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* (Fall/Winter 2000): 72; Bester, "Politics and Aesthetics," 512. John Perlman's article in the *Weekly Mail* covered the content of the debate over the project. See: Perlman, "Beloofde Land: No Consensus, But Debate Sure Beat the Scissors," *Weekly Mail*, April 14-20, 1989; 23.

[63] Bester, "Politics and Aesthetics," 513.

[64] Mendel claimed, "I wanted the artificiality of color…I wanted to approach the trek in a deeper way than does news photography to get to the basic elements of the structure of society." Cited in Rory Bester, "The Politics and Aesthetics of the Fall of Apartheid: Or, the Translatability of Witnessing," in *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, eds. Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (New York: ICP, 2013), 513. These statements first appeared in Andrea Vinassa, "The Quest for the Promised Land—in Colour," *The Star Tonight*, March 15, 1989.

his use of saturated color, Afrikaner nationalism as subject matter, and minimal narrative to accompany the images—made it worryingly unclear on which side he stood.

Several critics charged Mendel's project for failing as a critique of the right, reproducing instead of subverting the propaganda of Afrikaner nationalism, while others went so far as to view it as the lamentable, yet successful endorsement of fascism. Mendel described the mixed reception of *Beloofde Land*, stating:

> An exhibition of this work in 1989 sparked controversy, particularly after the framed prints were ceremoniously removed by a group of black actors who were performing in a play to commemorate the 1976 Soweto massacre. A debate raged about whether the proper role of photography should be in documenting the white establishment, and whether this work was glorifying white right wing groupings or whether it was oppositional.[65]

Mendel's sense of the merits of that project has since shifted. Although he withdrew the photographs from public view for a time, he now sees their "significance" in portraying "a last grasp at a mythology that could no longer sustain a violent and brutal regime."[66] The controversy suggested that viewers found Mendel's use of color indicative of a rather perverse hubris, too unseemly for the time of *Beloofde Land*'s making. Three decades later, *Beloofde Land* is more suggestive of dramatic irony—exposing cracks in the façade of white minority rule in ways not yet recognizable to apartheid's opponents. It examined a celebration of Afrikaner nationalism at war with itself, on the verge of implosion, which required the passage of time and the confirmation of apartheid's end to see.

At the heart of the relationship between black-and-white and color for photographs that carry even the whiff of reportage are deeply influential, opposing—yet similar—arguments about the realism and usefulness of black-and-white and color photography. On one hand, black-and-white is a faithful recording, a clear and sober representation of a thing in the world, whereas color is akin to

[65] Gideon Mendel, "The Promised Land," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/the-promised-land/.
[66] Mendel, "Promised Land."

a bad cover version, one that runs the risk of tricking the less observant into taking the representation for the real thing.[67] On the other hand, once color becomes readily available, black-and-white is considered the artificial format, demonstrating a hollow nostalgia out-of-step with how we actually perceive and experience the world in daily life.[68] Both formats have been accused of degrading subjects, further impoverishing them either through the lack of hue or cheapening them with the vulgarity of the full spectrum.[69]

The art historian Michael Godby, reflecting on turns to color by Tillim and fellow South African photographer Eric Miller, writes that they "are experimenting with colour," in the post-apartheid context, "not to make their work appear more realistic but rather as a vehicle for some form of poetic content."[70] I'd suggest that both tendencies are importantly in play. Tillim's *Jo'burg* photographs look both like the world and like their own world, not making a claim to more reality so much as portraying a particular realism. They trade on fidelity to the appearance of Johannesburg, through which they register as authentic. In addition to the poetic qualities Godby identifies—which seems to mean the emotional register of the colors used—he also finds more immediacy in Tillim's color work, having stated that Tillim's *Jo'burg* series and his prior *Kunhinga* series, which also included color photographs, "suggests an unusual immediacy of experience."[71] Godby continued, observing:

> Tillim talks in terms of capturing the quality of light in stairwells and courtyards but these photographs also document the dirt and grime of neglected communal spaces.

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[67] The art critic Max Kozloff recounts the art historian Edgar Wind contrasting a black-and-white photograph of a painting as a "conscientious piano transcription of an orchestral score" with a color photograph "like a reduced orchestra with all the instruments out of tune." Kozloff, "The Coming to Age of Color," *Artforum* 13, No. 5 (January 1975): 33. Ansel Adams made a similar case, although he did occasionally work with color phtography.

[68] As Kozloff writes, "Surely we must concede to the best black-and-white in recent times, a presumptive controlling artificiality, a rhetoric of contrasts that opposes itself, on a symbolic plane, to the gauche factuality of life." Kozloff, "Coming to Age," 33.

[69] In "Omar Badsha's Speech—S.A. The Cordoned Heart Symposium," a section of crossed over but legible text speaks to a shift in the international news market towards color photography, arguing that color is a problematic move away from the grassroots movement. Expensive to reproduce, the alternative news sources and grassroots publications could not afford to print in color. Discussing the pressure that the international media was putting on South African photographers, Badsha wrote, "And in most cases, these photographers have been almost forced to work exclusively in colour. These same photographers have been so closely linked to the alternative press, now cannot provide their own grass root papers (community newsletters) with material. Also travelling exhibitions cannot utilize color because it is too expensive." Alex Harris Photographs and Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

[70] Michael Godby, "Then and Now," in *Then & Now: Eight South African Photographers*, ed. Paul Weinberg (Johannesburg: Highveld Press, 2007): 14.

[71] Michael Godby, "Guy Tillim, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town," *Art South Africa* 2, No. 3 (Autumn 2005): 84.

> The medium of colour, albeit both muted and somewhat manipulated in the digital printing on cotton paper, appears more direct than black and white transcription of reality and somehow less capable of carrying the metaphorical significance he attributes to much of his African work.[72]

This differs from Sally Gaule's reading of *Jo'burg* series against the prior *Kunhinga* project, in which she finds: "In Tillim's earlier work, titled the *Kunhinga portraits* of 2002, the faded colour creates a metaphoric register that renders the scenes with a certain gravitas; here [in *Jo'burg*] the colour creates a mood of transcendent melancholy."[73] For Gaule, instead of immediacy, color conveys transcendent emotion—in this case, sadness. These varied takes speak to the difficulty of settling on the connection between formal characteristics and their possible effects of immediacy, realism, expressivity, and metaphor—the possible answers to the question of what color does in the series.

In choosing color for *Jo'burg*, Tillim created a muted palette that emerged out of experiments with color printing, and as he emphasizes, an effort to show what he saw without passing judgment. Color was a way to provide more information, and maybe even *mere* information, so as to let the city speak for itself. But despite Tillim's tendency to locate his treatment of color as mere description, one must acknowledge that these colors live just apart from the everyday—as in, they occupy their own world in the project while gesturing at some reality of Johannesburg's cityscape.

An African City, in Bloom

In making *Jo'burg*, Tillim identified his interest in documenting "the bloom of an African city." And yet, Johannesburg had long-before risen to the heights of an international metropolis, courtesy of mining and industrial booms that spurred population growth and major infrastructure development. Accordingly, the city boasted major architectural achievements like the Carlton

[72] Godby, "Guy Tillim" 84.
[73] Gaule, "Guy Tillim," 47.

Centre,[74] [Figure 4.35] an imposing 50-story skyscraper completed in 1972, helmed by the American architectural firm Skidmore, Owings, Merill,[75] in addition to structures like the previously discussed Ponte City Tower and Hillbrow Tower. So what did Tillim mean by suggesting that Johannesburg was becoming an African city in a new way? And, how did his approach to documenting the city connect to that claim, as well as to a broader history of photographing Johannesburg's inner city?

In a 2008 interview, Tillim reflected on the *Jo'burg* project stating that Johannesburg had acquired a "bad reputation," but that its more hectic, cramped, and dangerous aspects were part of what he recognized as the vibrancy of an African—Africanizing?—city. Moreover, the demographic shifts in Hillbrow were so profound that the exceptionality of Tillim's whiteness afforded him more ease of movement when he undertook the project. As Tillim put it:

> 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.[76]

There is perhaps an unsavory colonial tinge to Tillim's association of "darkness" with the Africanizing of Johannesburg, suggestive of exotic danger and primitivist narratives. However, Tillim's approach to the project's subject largely resists those historically exploitative approaches and fascinations, in which subjects go unnamed and are instead associated with ethnic origins, or where a slum falls into stereotype, represented by extreme overcrowding in small space, devoid of a sense of humor or any evidence of meaningful social interactions.

If the project does veer into stereotype, it is distinctly postcolonial—the broken promises of development and prosperity for blacks after liberation. For buildings that provide shelter along with

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[74] Coincidentally, the Carlton Centre was also the site of David Goldblatt's first exhibition, "People and Things," in 1974. From June 4-17, his work was exhibited at Panorama 50, the viewing area on the buliding's 50th floor. "Photograms," *Photography and Travel*, July 1974: 33.

[75] As of 2017, the Carlton Centre remains the tallest office building on the African continent. A major project, the building was home to offices, a hotel, shopping, restaurants, and entertainment venues. As Martin J. Murray argued, the Carlton Centre "represented the crowning achievement of the metamorphosis of downtown Johannesburg into 'a city of competing towers'," although he also describes it as "unwieldy and unattractive," dominating its area of downtown. Murray, *City of Extremes*, 72.

[76] Corin Hirsch, "Artist: Guy Tillim," a.magazine's African Interview Series, July 28, 2008.

extreme risk, such as high-rises where fire has come and gone yet remain inhabited like *San Jose, a block of flats in Olivia Street, Berea* [Figure 4.36], the failures and disappointments are especially glaring as evidenced in its soot covered, fire-eaten windows. Tillim's extended captions detail in the several photographs produced there that appear in the series, the San Jose was a 16-storey home to an estimated 322 residents facing eviction orders who were also unclear about who owns the flats—thus with little recourse to contest their impending expulsion. Even more urgently, in *A fire threatens the Miller Weedon building on Twist Street* [Figure 4.37], billowing smoke partially obscures the façade of a high-rise, while a pair of onlookers point towards an unfolding emergency around which we see no other activity. If, *San Jose*, the prior photo in the series is any indication, the building might swiftly be re-inhabited after the fire—with no repairs or improvements made to make the space safer. This is especially worrying for the fate of "NENNY DAY CARE," a small sign for a crèche that appears on a window of the building's top floor. Photographs throughout the series subtly point to these extreme vulnerabilities.

In the face of these genuine risks, removals were not merely malicious endeavors targeting blight without concern for residents. Many buildings were extremely dangerous and not fit for habitation. However, as *Jo'burg*'s extended captions show—and as numerous news articles from the early 2000s explored—the Better Buildings Programme could designate structures as 'bad buildings' and conduct evictions without providing alternative accommodation. Facing further displacement and potential homelessness, many residents resisted the evictions enforced by the 'Red Ants,' resulting in scenes like 'Red Alert' [Figure 4.38] in the 15 September 2002 issue of *The Sunday Independent*. In the color photograph by TJ Lemon, three men carry an injured colleague bleeding from the head from a confrontation with recently-evicted Sebokeng hostel dwellers who reoccupied the compound. The injured man and two of the men assisting him, wear the distinctive crimson coveralls of the "Red Ants." During the last decade of the struggle, hostels were centers of conflict

between African National Congress supporters, Inkatha Freedom Party supporters, and state security services. Yet again, hostels became dangerous spaces, but in the early 2000s, it was a battle between squatters and evictors.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhoods of Berea, Hillbrow, and Yeoville, along with Johannesburg's Central Business District were highly desirable commercial and residential zones undergoing major building booms and population growth.[77] The National Party government marketed Hillbrow internationally as a hip and edgy destination, popular with young urbanites and a mix of European immigrant communities. A cover story in *Perspective* (The South African News Monthly) in December 1967 billed Hillbrow as the place "Where Jo'burg Swings" [Figure 4.39]. The article painted Hillbrow as an "African bohemia," that shares the take-it-or-leave-it, love/hate reactions that many visitors have to the city as a whole.[78] It is "where what matters most is to be young and 'with-it,' and where its reputation as a 'Den of vice, sex and sin, hide-out for druggists and Leftists' kept more conservative elements away.[79] In March 1973, the Information Services of South Africa's publication *South African Scope*, highlighted Hillbrow's shops and nightlife with the article, "Hillbrow—the 24 Hour Shop Window" [Figure 4.40]. The story declared, "It is after dark when the streets come to life," with its photos showing young white couples out and about.[80] Three decades later, it became an area that many avoided after dark.

In January 1967, the Department of Information-sponsored publication, *Panorama*, handed over the reins of a photo essay about South Africa to a recent German immigrant to the country, August Sycholt. "Eyeview of a New Country" positions Sycholt's photographs as those of a

[77] There is extensive literature on urbanism in Johannesburg. This chapter highlights a few examples of magazine and photo essay coverage of the city to speak to the shifting character of particular neighborhoods. Further exploration of Tillim's *Jo'burg* in relation to other projects documenting the city is warranted.
[78] *Perspective* 5, No. 3 (December 1967): 3.
[79] *Ibid.* "Stand in the middle of Johannesburg, on the City Hall steps if you like, and look north towards Pretoria and the Magaliesberg, and there it is, The Hill, a great jagged concrete cliff of flats and petrol-stations, hotels, hospital, cathedral, synogogue [*sic*], bottle-store and 'boozer,' Greek café, Portuguese grocer, German delicatessen, Italian Pizzertia and anything you like in kosher. It's a great crucible, a melting pot of influences of a dozen countries and several civilizations confused with those of Mother Africa upon whose gaunt, mis-shapen lap it perches."
[80] "Hillbrow—the 24 Hour Shop Window," *South African Scope* (March 1973): 8. This publication was directed at American audiences.

newcomer thoroughly impressed by the country's development, where Sycholt's images of city streets crowded with cars and of factories releasing smoke into the air champion its hubs of industry and prosperity. The article opens with a photograph of congested city streets spread across two pages [Figure 4.41], below which are a pair of images: one of a pitcoal factory in a haze of smoke and one of a group of Xhosa men on horseback in the Transkei that evinces both a "vanishing race" aesthetic and narrative, emphasizing traditional rural life for black peoples in contrast to the ascendant modernity of Johannesburg and Pretoria.[81] Sycholt's views of blacks living closer to the cities, are of happy people, content with the policies of separate development, gainfully employed, and free from want. Underlying this, Sycholt's essay stresses South Africa as a thoroughly civilized country where white Europeans fought and tamed 'darkest Africa.' This is symbolized most clearly in the final photograph in the series [Figure 4.42], a public monument viewed in silhouette showing a male figure wrestling with a horse. The caption details:

> Grace and sinew and muscle are gathered in sculpture in front of the Union Buildings across Pretoria to the statement, unequivocal and assured, of the Voortrekker monument. It personifies two Zulus encumbered with the horse of civilization.[82]

Thus, a grainy black-and-white photograph of skyscrapers that "rise above a concrete labyrinth of streets and crown the achievements of steel and sand and gold and dust," boasts of the urban development that taming the region made possible.[83] In the 1970s, projects like Laurence Hughes' *Johannesburg: the cosmopolitan city*, gave a sleeker, more commercial treatment of the city addressing Johannesburg's past, present, and future in saturated color, the style of which would be reproduced in popular magazines like *Panorama* and *Huisgenoot* as they shifted to color in the 1970s.[84]

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[81] The caption reads: "Way down in the Transkei near Umtata, capital of the homeland of the Xhosa people, real horses are eager on the road home before the might of the storm breaks and the waters flood that green and pleasant land. The Xhosa are the most advanced of the Bantu peoples of the Republic and received self-government in 1963 in terms of the policy of separate development." "Eyeview of a New Country," *Panorama* 12, No. 1 (January 1967), 26.
[82] "Eyeview of a new country," 33.
[83] *Ibid*., 29.
[84] Laurence Hughes, *Johannesburg: A Cosmopolitan City* (Johannesburg Ad. Donker, 1978), 6.

Countering the National Party government's boosterish views of the city, work by photographers such as David Goldblatt and Gideon Mendel looked altogether more critically at Johannesburg, seeking out the qualities that shaped everyday life, showing a mix of struggle and resilience, humor and anguish. Goldblatt undertook projects in neighborhoods across the city, from "the dormitory townships of the Africans who work in Johannesburg"[85] of Soweto to white area of Hillbrow and the northern suburbs. In 1976, for a photo essay in the Canadian literary journal, *Exile*, featuring those two neighborhoods in particular, Goldblatt expressed concern about the legibility this work would have as it circulated internationally. He introduced "Soweto and Hillbrow," stating:

> I have little faith in the strength of these photographs to stand unaided in Winnipeg, Ottawa or Saskatoon, or for that matter in London, Wollongong or Berlin. Not that I think them to be without merit. But because, I wonder, how can anyone not steeped in the life, ways, obsessions, graces, laws and particulars of this place and people, discern what is embedded of us even in these pale rubbings?[86]

He continued:

> It would be beyond me to convey in any number of words, yet I wish that I could so concentrate these few that you would have the same intimate grasp of these images as any child or adult from Naledi or Dube, Yeoville or Pageview.[87]

The photo essay presented the Soweto and Hillbrow photographs largely comparatively [Figure 4.43], a page from one neighborhood paired with one from the other. This includes many images better known for belonging to other series, such as close-up views of people Goldblatt encountered in public spaces that comprised the project, *Particulars* [Figure 4.44]. Instead of focusing on the built environment or portraits as the conceptual thread of the photo essay, Goldblatt turns to people and places to explore the character of these neighborhoods.

Gideon Mendel's photo essay "Encounter" for *Leadership* magazine in 1987, explored the racial graying of Hillbrow during the 1980s [Figure 4.45].[88] Mendel declared:

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[85] David Goldblatt, "Soweto and Hillbrow," *Exile: a literary quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1976: 31.
[86] Goldblatt, "Soweto and Hillbrow," 31.
[87] *Ibid.*

> The influx of black people into Hillbrow and other areas in central Johannesburg has been one of the most important—and most controversial—social developments in South Africa in recent years. Today, more than 60 000 blacks live there in defiance of the Group Areas Act. While their presence is now more generally accepted as irreversible, it remains marked by conflict.[89]

Many resources in these areas remained off-limits to blacks who were also highly susceptible to exploitation because of the precarious legality of their residence in the neighborhood. In an effort to grapple with the challenges, the article reported that a group of 50 whites participated in a 'life swap' style experiment called "Inner City Encounter" in which they "spent two and a half days living with black families in the area, and experienced at first hand the circumstances in which inner city blacks live," where they endured a wide range of experiences from warm and comfortable stays to overcrowded, broken down spaces described in terms that look like the "Bad Buildings" of Tillim's series.[90] Mendel found in Hillbrow—and the "Encounter" experiment—that the neighborhood "remains a critical meeting ground where both the tensions and conflicts of South Africa, and the possibilities of reconciliation, are being acted out."[91] Hillbrow served as a litmus for the state of integration in the country.

The "Encounter" essay's effort to document the ways that blacks and whites in the city related to each other in the few permeable spaces of apartheid boundaries shared a similar sensibility with another project Mendel made around that time, *Yeoville in the 80s*. However, in the case of Yeoville, Mendel pivoted to using black-and-white and embarked on a more self-conscious pursuit of the tenor of everyday life in the neighborhood, as opposed to the story of the mixed housing phenomenon. Reflecting on his motivations for the series, Mendel stated:

> When the government declared a State of Emergency in 1986, under which any photography of political protest or violence was outlawed, my work in Yeoville took on an added urgency. I redoubled my efforts to explore the everyday encounters of

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[88] During this era, Mendel's photographs about housing in Hillbrow appeared in other publications such as *The New York Times*. See: John F. Burns, "South African Blacks Moving to White Areas," *The New York Times*, 24 December 1987.
[89] Gideon Mendel, "Encounter," *Leadership* (1986/1987), 89.
[90] Mendel, "Encounter," 89.
[91] *Ibid*.

> black and white people that took place in Yeoville's public spaces. I was searching for the small, often intimate moments that could reflect the divisions of apartheid.[92]

Akin to Mendel's relationship of historical distance to his *Beloofde Land* series, when Mendel later revisited the Yeoville project, he could see that his photographs were especially revealing of how apartheid divisions were breaking down in and around Johannesburg's inner city. Commissioned by Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester, the curators of the *Rise and Fall of Apartheid* exhibition, the film *Living in Yeoville* featured a slideshow of black-and-white photographs made in the 1980s along with ambient sounds recorded in the contemporary neighborhood and music by The Dynamics.

Like Mendel's projects in Yeoville, Goldblatt's work in the *Structure* and *Intersections* series as discussed in the previous chapter, gauges major demographic shifts in Johannesburg's neighborhoods as well as architectural change over time. It is in that context that we can examine *Jo'burg*'s attention to the melancholic qualities of buildings that had become much like ghost towns, residents illegally sticking around in building's 'afterlives.' In *Johannesburg Style*, Clive Chipkin assessed the mode of how Johannesburg does things, as a "dustbin of discarded styles"[93] following the boom cycles of a gold rush town, "a town on the make."[94] *Jo'burg* is especially revealing of how city residents were able to make-do, turning commercial spaces residential, transforming residences into businesses. The subtle color palette, especially in its more muted iterations, seems to anticipate but not recognize the full flush of an African city in bloom, but instead speaks to potential yet to be realized.[95]

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[92] Gideon Mendel, "Yeoville in the 80s," http://gideonmendel.com/yeoville-in-the-80s/.
[93] Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, vii.
[94] *Ibid*., 7.
[95] Here, I am indebted to Okwui Enwezor's thinking about the "yet to be" efflorescence of the African post-independence construction boom represented in decay and disrepair in *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*. Enwezor, "Modernity and Postcolonial Ambivalence," *Altermodern: Tate Triennial* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009). Reprinted in Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 278-289.

Waking *Jo'burg*

Returning to Tillim's opening image of his project, *A map of central Johannesburg at the Inner City Regeneration Project office, City Council, Loveday Street* [Figure 4.1], we find the color photograph as a means through which to understand the map's logic and the visual language of city bureaucracy, as color itself is part of the City Council's operation for identifying Johannesburg's blight.[96] The map, Tillim's extended caption explains, depicts a system in which "red indicates "bad buildings"; blue indicates "illegal use"; black indicates "finalized"; and yellow denotes Clause 61 (ie, owners will be forced to repair the dilapidated façade of the building)."[97] Color also helps us identify the "Red Ants," who derive their name from the their crimson jumpsuits and the style of their work they performed when sent en masse to clear and clean-up "bad buildings," the map's red pushpins. As such, the color photograph is a gateway to the rationale guiding city planning. Tamar Garb has noted,

> Over the measured design of the city, the colour-coded pins wreak havoc, symbolizing decay, dissolution and the collapse of a pre-given plan. Deciphering the map requires insight which differs from that gleaned through the lived experience of the buildings' occupants. The map is not intended for them. Instead it maps their fate.[98]

Color is then part of a system of control—in terms of administrative logic and the legacies of racial segregation that continue to shape where people live. And so for Tillim, color itself becomes something to examine and explore. As it appears on the map, it directs him to the spaces he photographs, but as a formal aspect of the photographs, color conveys the look and feel of the battle over home in Johannesburg. That it is also a place to begin in Tamar Garb's exhibition

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[96] A detail of this photograph serves as the frontispiece for the *Home Lands – Land Marks* exhibition catalogue edited by Tamar Garb (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008). The exhibition featured photography by Tillim, David Goldblatt, and Santu Mofokeng, as well as works by William Kentridge, Nicholas Hlobo, Vivienne Koorland, and Berni Searle.

[97] Tillim, *Jo'burg*, n.p. Insufficiently circumspect to be wary of invoking a "black spot" notation after this was a key designation for the apartheid government in implementing the group areas act, where black spots were marked for forced removals and demolishing. The problem was rights to ownership, and not living conditions. See Chipkin, "Destruction of Sophiatown," in *Johannesburg Style*, 218-219.

[98] Tamar Garb, "The Land of Signs," n.p.

catalogue for *Home Lands / Land Marks* where it serves as a frontispiece [Figure 4.46] speaks to the conceptual purchase of Tillim's isolation and emphasis of this map segment.

In the exhibition print of the map, we are invited to closely study the details of these plans, since we see not only the locations on the map more clearly, but also the details of the paper on which the map was printed. The ink on cotton paper lends softness to the surface of the print. As Sally Gaule eloquently assessed,

> …small islands of light flicker across its surface, creating a counterpoint to the rigidity of the grid and boundary lines of the city. It prepares the viewer for a reduced palette of colour; for ambiguous spaces that defy categorization; and a subtlety of selection, motivated by visual and intellectual considerations. Paralleling the lives of the individuals he documents, Tillim's photographic style is likewise terse, economic: it counters excess and self-indulgence.[99]

In the book, the map appears more impressionistic, a constellation of primary colors. Countering color's tendency to make an image a "bad cover version" of the thing in the world, the uneven shadows on the map and the frame of the photograph help remind us that we are indeed looking both at a map and a representation of a map.[100] The abrupt slice of the edges of the photograph into the space of the map shows us that Tillim's view of Johannesburg and its problem buildings is always a partial one, a framing device that calls attention to an inherent aspect of photography and the experience of spectatorship. Even the project's title, the name of the city as a contraction, refers to this partial view—Jo'burg, not Johannesburg. We see not a portrait of *the* city, but *some* views of *some* parts of the city.

In reflections in broken mirrors, in slivers of windows, through diaphanous curtains, through clouded and scratched windows, spied from behind, obscured as a blur in a long-exposure shot of a hallway—we see *some* views of *some* people of the city. Speaking with Peter Machen in 2005, Guy Tillim asserted that *Jo'burg* was "an attempt to move behind facades; walls as well as

[99] Gaule, "Guy Tillim" 46.
[100] The photograph of the map dramatizes the recourse to what Roland Barthes described as a "secondary action of knowledge or reflection," the viewer's challenge to "perceive the photographic signifier" and to separate the photograph from that which it represents. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 5.

preconceptions."[101] Partial and obscured views help make those literal and metaphorical façades more apparent. *Barber's shop, Hillbrow* [Figure 4.47] exemplifies these tendencies in the project with a heightened, surrealistic touch. A man in a gray shirt stands at the left edge of the photograph facing the viewer, while at the center of the photograph, a portrait of the head of Jesus with his eyes upturned rests atop a mirror through which we see the torso of a man wearing a bright orange jacket. The man in gray looks at the viewer, stolid, seemingly unmoved or unaware of the humorous incongruity of a white Jesus sporting a windbreaker, and black hands holding an electric razor. The brightness of the jacket stands out against the whitewashed walls, while the body of the titular barber and that of his client are obscured behind the crisscrossed lattice bars of a metal gate. We are both seeing and not seeing beyond layers, surfaces, reflections, and the picture's edges.

Tillim's photographs of exterior and interior details of locations that are often dismissed as slums, appear to shift back-and-forth in the space of the photograph. We occasionally find a place to linger in the series—the stoic guard in the red suit holding the white handkerchief, the evictee carrying a mattress like a shield, the right hand holding the rifle upright in *Eviction by the Red Ants, Auret Street, Jeppestown* [Figure 4.10]. Like so many of Tillim's photographs in this series, spaces appear to recede and flatten out, pushing and pulling our gaze as we observe the tense relationship between order and disorder in the inner city. The predominantly muted tones do not dazzle or seduce. Instead, they nudge us toward the details in the photographs, especially the occasional primary colors that recur in the series, reminders of the pins covering the orderly map, echoes of the "red ants" carrying out the evictions. As opposed to the tonal contrasts of black-and-white, we see moments of saturated color playing off more muted hues, taking advantage of the effects of minor color adjustments against predominantly subdued scenes.

[101] Peter Machen, *Natal Witness* (May 2005). Posted on *americansuburbx.com* as "An Interview with Guy Tillim," June 22, 2009, http://www.americansuburbx.com/2009/06/interview-peter-machen-with-guy-tillim.html.

We can follow Tillim's particular attention to the color red in photographs from the series such as *San Jose, Olivia Street, Berea* [Figure 4.48].[102] On the left of the photograph, are four vertical lines: first a slim, black strip, followed by a matte orange line, then a thick black band that catches the light and appears slightly out of focus, and to its right, a strip of pale beige. These hard, geometric forms appear structural, but we struggle to separate the function of the flat, vertical forms from the steep zigzag of a staircase and the thin black vertical lines of its railings in the background. In trying to look back into that space, we are met with the slightly out-of-focus background as the sharp diagonal of the lower banister directs our attention to the red scarf tied to the back of a woman's head, represented in clear focus. Set off in the lower right of the photograph, we see the outline of the woman's right cheek and neck and her bluish-grey sweater, but learn no more details about her frontal appearance. The fabric's color, its loose folds and casual knot, and its lacy texture are positively sumptuous and full of information when compared to these surroundings. The red of the scarf then becomes a significant red in the series—its richness contrasting with the otherwise flat colors of the scene.

Similarly, red appears at the extreme lower edge of *Manhattan Court, Plein Street* [figure 4.49], in the form of a bright red shirtsleeve barely visible above the wrist of a hand cautiously, delicately touching the base of a windowsill. The frame of the window bears some evidence of the glass that once formed a barrier between inside and outside. And through these now permanently open windows, we glimpse a courtyard where clothes dry on the line and the other side of the balcony where a young person looks down at something below. The space looks like an observation deck, where children look and listen to the building's activities, all the spaces open to one another.

As opposed to the seemingly fleeting encounter with the red sleeve, we see the terribly ordinary red lid of a tub of baby wipes resting on a windowsill near a small, white plastic horse, in

[102] John Hogg identifies red as an "underlying theme" of *Jo'burg* in his *Mail & Guardian* review from November 4-10, 2005.

the photograph *Masala Kwinda's place at Jeanwell House, Nugget Street* [Figure 4.50]. The horse, Tillim's caption tells us, belonged to Masala Kwinda's young daughter who died of tuberculosis close to the time when Tillim made this photograph—an anguished detail amidst the stuff of seemingly banal daily life. Red becomes a line of connection from the denotation of "bad building" and predatory "ants" to the lid on the tub of baby wipes for the lost child.

Red also punctuates images as accents stressing particular details, and in some cases, as caesurae—places to stop and to focus attention on a pause. A bright red duffle bag hangs on the wall behind Yoneda Kwaza and her child, seated in profile in the shadowy room for the photograph *Yoneda Kwaza, Grafton Road, Yeoville* [Figure 4.51]. Over in the San Jose building, a bright orangey-red bucket hat appears on the head of a man seen reflected in a mirror in *San Jose, Olivia Street, Berea* [Figure 4.52]. Surrounding the mirror is a graffiti-filled wall featuring names and numbers, as well as pronouncements including "BE GOOD TO THE PEOPLE" and "LOVE AND PEACE." Red also appears as the color of the titles for *The Star* and *Sunday Times* headline posters papering the walls in the photograph *Ntokozo and his brother Vusi Tshabalala at Ntokozo's place, Milton Court, Pritchard Street* [Figure 4.53]. Ntokozo's red shirt echoes the posters announcing stories that tell of "FURY OVER HIJACK HOAX," "MOB JUSTICE SPREADS," "SUSPECT SAVED FROM NECKLACE," or that ask, "DO WOMEN NEED OWN VIAGRA?'

A range of intense blues also appear in the series, anchored by the iconic royal blue of domestic labor. 'Domestic' blue can be seen most clearly in *Milthred Court, Kerk Street* [Figure 4.54], through doorways on either side of a wall that bisects the picture. Black figures appear alone, occupied with their own tasks and demonstrating no apparent awareness of the camera's presence, wearing the blue uniform associated with housekeeping, gardening, and odd-jobs. A similar blue shows up in small and large ways throughout the series, from under a blanket near the head of a sleeping figure at the lower right of the photograph of *Al's Tower, Joel Road, Berea* [Figure 4.55], or as

the wall of the room at *Export House, Bree Street* [Figure 4.56] highlighted by the light pouring through a window.

'Domestic' blue also features prominently in the work of other contemporary artists in South Africa. More recently, in sculptures, installations, and photography, the artist Mary Sibande has monumentalized the body and uniform of the female domestic through the character of *Sophie*. A superheroic figure constructed with fiberglass with a dark black, obsidian surface, Sophie wears excessive iterations of the uniform, featuring ruffles, bustles, extensive trains, and even the "S" insignia of Superman [Figures 4.57-4.60]. In a photograph from 2002, the laborer's blue coveralls appear on several members of a group traveling together in David Goldblatt's photograph, *Swerwers between Beaufort West and Loxton, Northern Cape* [Figure 4.61]. Lightened by dust and sunlight of hard work and nomadic living, the blue of their coveralls harkens to the blue asbestos mining that features as a subject in the *Intersections* series (as explored in the previous chapter).

The intense red and blue of the series come together forcefully in a pair of photographs made of *Mbulelo's Bar, Joel Road, Berea* [Figures 4.62-4.63]. Four figures are gathered in a room operating—much as in the *Barber's Shop, Hillbrow*—as yet another informal business in a high-rise. Near the center of the photograph, a young girl clad in a school uniform appears between a woman wearing a red, blue, and white winter hat, with a bright red ABSA[103] bag at her feet and a man seated in profile with a blue, red, and white patterned cap. That man looks down at a plastic food container modified into a cup, likely filled with beer. In the next photo in the series, the woman in the red, blue, and white hat remains, while a few other figures have come and gone, indicating the space's use as a venue for socializing. Here, in the background on the right side of the photo, a man wears an oversized blue jacket, although he appears somewhat out of focus, having moved during the exposure—an indication of Tillim's approach to photographing the series in which he often used a

[103] ABSA, was formerly Amalgamated Banks of South Africa, and is now owned by Barclays Africa Group.

tripod "and just let things happen, I wasn't running around with a camera."[104] He continued, "I would sit in a particular place, and people would pass by or gather in front of the camera in some haphazard way. Often I didn't move for hours, allowing myself to be in a space."[105] The project bears traces of that languid process of watching spaces and people.

Summarizing how color operates in *Jo'burg*, Gaule claimed: "Where Tillim shows public or communal spaces that are neglected; sites of refuse and squalor, images of interiors give way to accents of intense colour, reds and blues that are emphatic against the dreary greys of the corridors."[106] However, the photographs don't behave quite so systematically. Although wintry cool grays, red, and blues, along with hats, blankets, and curtains to keep colder elements at bay feature prominently in the *Jo'burg* series, there are some warmer moments. Pink flowers and yellowing green leaves fill a windowbox at sunset in the photograph, *Oupa's geraniums* [Figure 4.64]. A narrow, yellow hallway at *Manhattan Court, Plein Street* [Figure 4.65], leads down out of the shadows towards a light-filled stairwell. Patterned, sheer orange curtains are drawn across a large window in a living room in *Thulani Magrem and Sheila Thabang's place in Al's Tower, Joel Road, Berea* [Figure 4.66]. A cozy, cluttered, thoroughly lived-in place, it also presents a trio of fire risks that are also household necessities: an unattended iron face-down on an ironing board, an electric heater at the center of the room with its coils orange with heat, and an electric kettle on a table.

In a common trope of architectural photography, especially in modernist towers, a few photographs show views into stairwells, repeating the building's geometry into apparent infinity, albeit dotted with detritus. Without captions, it would be hard to differentiate between which spaces are and are not inhabited, such as the occupied *Cape Agulhas, Esslen Street, Hillbrow* [figure 3.66],

[104] Tillim, *O Futuro Certo*, 240.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] Gaule, "Guy Tillim," 47.

contrasted with *Eviction aftermath, Noverma Court, Paul Nel Street, Hillbrow* [figure 3.67]. Bits of paper, discarded plastic bottles, and magazines litter steps, ledges, and handrailings.

As the series comes to a close, rooms appear emptied or in disarray, belongings are scattered on the floors of spaces hastily abandoned. A pressed white dress hangs from a wire hanger, the sole item in a white closet for perhaps the series' most anemic photograph, *Eviction aftermath, Noverna Court, Paul Nel Street, Hillbrow* [figure 3.68]. Turning to the chaos of the eviction, red ants occupy a courtyard filled with belongings as viewed through a slightly clouded window in *The Red Ants evict residents of Crest House, Main Street, Jeppestown* [figure 3.69]. Lastly, we return to the roof of the Mairston Hotel for *The view from the top of the Mariston Hotel looking south* [figure 3.70], but this time looking south towards the central business district, a view dominated by grays and tans of concrete, cool blue glass, and scattered clouds descending into haze.

Conclusion

Confronted with windows, mirrors, imposing facades, and shadowy hallways, *Jo'burg* reminds of the process of our own looking. At the same time, the windows and mirrors are often broken, and the facades show signs of extreme wear and the occasional evidence of a fire. *Jo'burg* shows us the "in between" lives led in tough conditions, its use of muted color encourages us to linger on the photograph, to look closely—to think about what we're seeing and what we're not seeing. While *Jo'burg*'s muted palette might now be desaturated and depressive for some, it represents through a quietude and preoccupation with detail what the urgency of the anti-apartheid struggle largely drowned out.

CONCLUSION

BEYOND THE PALE

The photographers addressed in this dissertation have dedicated much of their careers to representing life lived "beyond the pale." They have documented scenes of precarious lives on the margins, of people making do amidst oppression and antagonism, and of the organizing of political will to realize profound change. They have also turned their attention to the character and experience of white supremacy in South Africa, and the ironic contrast between the society's rigidities and the rezonings, removals, and transience it produced. Their work—along with that of many other visual artists—resisted the apartheid government's efforts to make black people and their opposition to white supremacy invisible. After the official end of apartheid, these photographers have looked critically at what has changed for South Africa and for the field of visual art—revisiting, reconsidering, and remixing their approaches to making photographs.

My use of the punning phrase, "beyond the pale," is inspired by Joseph Lelyveld's description from the 1980s to describe the absurd and grueling conditions for black people living within the Bantustan system under apartheid. Reflecting on the extensive system of busing from KwaNdebele to Pretoria and Johannesburg, he wrote, "I did another quick calculation: the fifty-two buses represented roughly one-fifth of the homeland's daily convoys to the white areas; the number of 'commuters' who were thus being subsidized by South Africa to live beyond the pale—the pun was inadvertent but hard to erase—came to roughly 23,000 on the KwaNdebele run."[1] I found myself thinking about Lelyveld's discussion about living "beyond the pale" on a visit to David Goldblatt's exhibition *The Pursuit of Values* at Johannesburg's Standard Bank Gallery in 2015, where,

[1] Joseph Lelyveld, "Forced Busing," *Granta* 17 (1985): 120. See also: *Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black and White* (New York: Time Books, 1985).

along with Goldblatt's well-known photographs from his series *The Transported of KwaNdebele*[2] (1989), there appeared a color photograph of a bus traveling at daybreak. Made in 2012, the extended caption for the photograph titled, *5:52a.m. Going to Work in 2012*, reads: "The buses and taxis from former KwaNdebele homeland continue to stream down the road to and from Pretoria, and are likely to continue to do so far into the future" [Figure 5.1]. It shows a line of buses with their lights on as they travel in the pinkish-gray light of dawn, making a very similar journey to the sort that Goldblatt documented in the 1980s. This color photograph functions as a coda for the series, showing that many black South Africans continue to live "beyond the pale," in black communities where economic conditions have little changed since the end of apartheid. Yet again, Goldblatt remixed his archive, confounding past and present to consider just what had really changed in post-apartheid South Africa.

However, in his most recent work, Goldblatt's has returned to black-and-white photography, but the scale of this work and its subject matter do not perform easy nostalgia. Similarly to how Mofokeng characterizes the appeal of black-and-white photography, Goldblatt has turned to black-and-white for the way that it announces its madeness, its status as a representation. Goldblatt made the black-and-white photograph, *The Dethroning of Cecil John Rhodes, after the Throwing of Human Faeces on the statue and the agreement of the University to the Demands of Students for Its Removal. The University of Cape Town. 9 April 2015*, at the feet of a national controversy mobilized through social media. In the image, a group of spectators look at the event of the removal of the Rhodes statue from the campus of UCT through their screens, raising their camera phones into the air—the same phones that were engines of the statue's removal through popularizing the hashtag *rhodesmustfall*. The photograph has a whiff of the disgruntled elder, an image made out of frustration with how "kids" experience the world's major events these days, but it importantly pauses to look at how many people are making

[2] Photographs from this series were included in the exhibition *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*.

images and looking at the world around them right now. It is less a negative judgment about social media than a look at a media life cycle, the dynamics between outrage and action in the twenty-first century.

Goldblatt's choice to produce this photograph in black-and-white disrupts our sense of the time when this photograph was made, clearly recent for its inclusion of recent models of smart phones and tablets, and yet trading on the historicizing effects of black-and-white. The fleeting quality associated with the sharing of images on social media contrasts with the archival associations viewers may have with black-and-white photography. Tamar Garb has reflected on Goldblatt's return to making black-and-white photographs after primarily working in color for many years, stating:

> It is interesting in this context to note that David Goldblatt, in some of his recent work, has felt it necessary to return to the sobriety and stillness of tonal imagery—his preferred medium for personal work throughout the apartheid years—while deploying the scale he has come use for large-format colour photography. Somehow, it is this medium which best registers, for him, the on-going hardships of life for the majority of South Africans in black and white photography, light and shadow, as it plays on surfaces, joins structures and scripts to reveal the physical conditions and material textures of life, while rooting these in visual and social economies which are both freighted with history.[3]

In Goldblatt's work, it is often more obvious where we are in the world than when.

Gideon Mendel has also remixed his archive having returned to the subject of the Johannesburg neighborhood of Yeoville in 2010. He first began work in Yeoville as a respite from the intensity of photojournalism in the late 1980s. Revisiting Yeoville for a new series of color photographs to consider what changes happened in the neighborhood over the intervening twenty years, Mendel remarked,

> The Yeoville I returned to has changed immensely over the last two decades. It faces great challenges, including widespread poverty and a decline in public infrastructure, but it also has a remarkable vibrancy, energy and creativity. Most of the white community for whom the area was once reserved have left. Instead the community is

[3] Tamar Garb, *Home Lands / Land Marks*, 18.

> now made up of a predominantly African Diaspora, with large Francophone West African, Ethiopian, Nigerian and Zimbabwean populations.[4]

The photographs are markedly colorful, especially revealing of the crowded, vibrant, at times chaotic and claustrophobic feeling of the neighborhood now home to a mix of residents from across the continent. And yet, as Mendel also observed, "While many positive changes have taken place since the 1980s, South Africa remains filled with apartheid's echoes.[5] Overcrowding is common in many buildings, and the neighborhood, once a white working and middle-class enclave, is now overwhelmingly black and notorious for crime.

Whereas, for *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* exhibition, which began its international run at the International Center of Photography in 2012, Mendel returned to the black-and-white photographs that he made in the 1980s for the "Living in Yeoville" series. But for a more lyrical take on that earlier work, Mendel cultivated ways to evoke sensory memories of that time and place, for himself and for viewers making a slideshow backed by music. Over time, Mendel has come to see more in the photographs that he made there in the 1980s than he could see at the time. Mendel stated,

> Coming back to these photographs initiated a curious dialogue with own my [*sic*] past, a rediscovery of the texture of that moment in history. I looked again at every image on the 344 rolls of film I had taken at that time and saw in them something that I was unaware of then ten years before liberation, the bureaucratic edifice of apartheid was in the process of crumbling and this was played out in the lives of the people of Yeoville.[6]

Where in returning to Yeoville in 2010, he saw some of the lingering vestiges of apartheid, in looking back at the 1980s, he can see the ways in which apartheid was beginning to fracture in ways that he could not fully absorb in the moment.

Guy Tillim has also recently returned to Johannesburg to explore the city center. In 2014, Tillim's *Jo'burg: Points of View* opened at Michael Stevenson Gallery, featuring a series of large-scale

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[4] Gideon Mendel, "Yeoville Today," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/yeoville-today/.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Gideon Mendel, "Yeoville in the 80s," *gideonmendel.com*, http://gideonmendel.com/yeoville-in-the-80s/.

diptychs. Notably, the project showed a far brighter, more saturated and altogether livelier city than the ashen cityscape of 2004's *Jo'burg*. The springtime scenes show jacarandas in bloom, people in short sleeves walking through the streets, the palette expanded far beyond the dramatic primary colors of *Jo'burg*. The scale of the book produced for the project also grew, although it is also an accordion, where works that were exhibited in the gallery as diptychs can be recombined in the book, and pulled out into a long line. As much as Tillim's own commentary about the project emphasizes his presence in the city and point-of-view as photographer—which the use of diptychs served to highlight—the series as a whole conveys a sense of the hustle of city residents, moving through the city and making it work for them.

Although this dissertation is a project ostensibly about color photography, the first chapter glaringly features an extended discussion of a black-and-white photo series. Why? To begin there was part of an effort look at the kinds of critical gestures that a photographer sought to make through continuing to work with black-and-white photography in the mid-1990s, arguably at the height of post-apartheid euphoria. And yet, as addressed in that chapter, despite Mofokeng's insistence that black-and-white photography is more interesting to Mofokeng than color and that he has not cultivated a color aesthetic, Mofokeng very recently turned to color in large-scale, tableau photographs of the landscape for the series *Graves* from 2012. The project examined the continuing land disputes between black people removed from particular areas and the bodies of their ancestors buried in these vicinities. As opposed to the inky mystery of the caves, these landscapes are bleached and devoid of event. There are few, if any, indications of the disputed claims to these spaces. On the heels of this project in color, Mofokeng has been working to produce a series of books through the German publisher Steidl to revisit his archive from over the course of his career having begun with *Train Church* in 2015.

In continuing to remix their archives and to move between different approaches to making and displaying their photographs, Mofokeng, Mendel, Goldblatt, Tillim demonstrate a persistent effort to think critically about what they have seen, what they couldn't see, and what they think should be seen. Through delving into their work in the 1990s and 2000s, and the questions that I have asked in this project about how they approached photographic form, I largely jumped back into the history of the development of color photography in South Africa and the story of how photography has come to be treated as art in South Africa. But through this project, I have also been looking forward—in my own mind—to the next generations of contemporary South African artists using photography, often moving freely between black-and-white and color, and across various media. Zanele Muholi's *Faces and Phases* (2006) series has embraced black-and-white portrait photography to make claims for the visibility of LGBTQI people in South Africa, while her more recent project, *Somnyama Ngonyama*, (2012-2016) features a series of self-portraits that often play with the sheen of her skin, varied tonal registers, and costumes to dramatic effect. In the series, *There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends* (2011-2012), Pieter Hugo adjusted the color channels of digital photographs, which darkened and emphasized the texture of his subjects' skin, creating a legion of post-production zombies. And Mohau Modisakeng series of untitled photographs from 2010 featured a series of self-portraits produced in low light, color photographs that harken to Mofokeng's photographs from the caves in *Chasing Shadows* and Goldblatt's photographs from underground in *On the Mines*. A black man stands in the dark, in and out of shadow, touched by dust, and perhaps, something otherworldly.

In what Zen Marie has referred to as "post-post-apartheid" South Africa, I am still thinking about Gisèle Wulfoshn's photograph of the domestic worker that I mentioned briefly in the "Preface" as always in my mind. I think about the photographs that people want and the photographs that people need. Through the work of Mofokeng, Mendel, Goldblatt, and Tillim, the

up-and-coming generation of photographers, and the stories still to be told, these are questions that should keep us looking and producing more robust, and altogether, more vibrant histories of photography in South Africa.

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