

**Photo book!
Photo-book!
Photobook!**

**A research
exhibition by
Sean O'Toole**

What is a photobook?

When does a printed and bound volume composed principally of photographs qualify as a photobook?

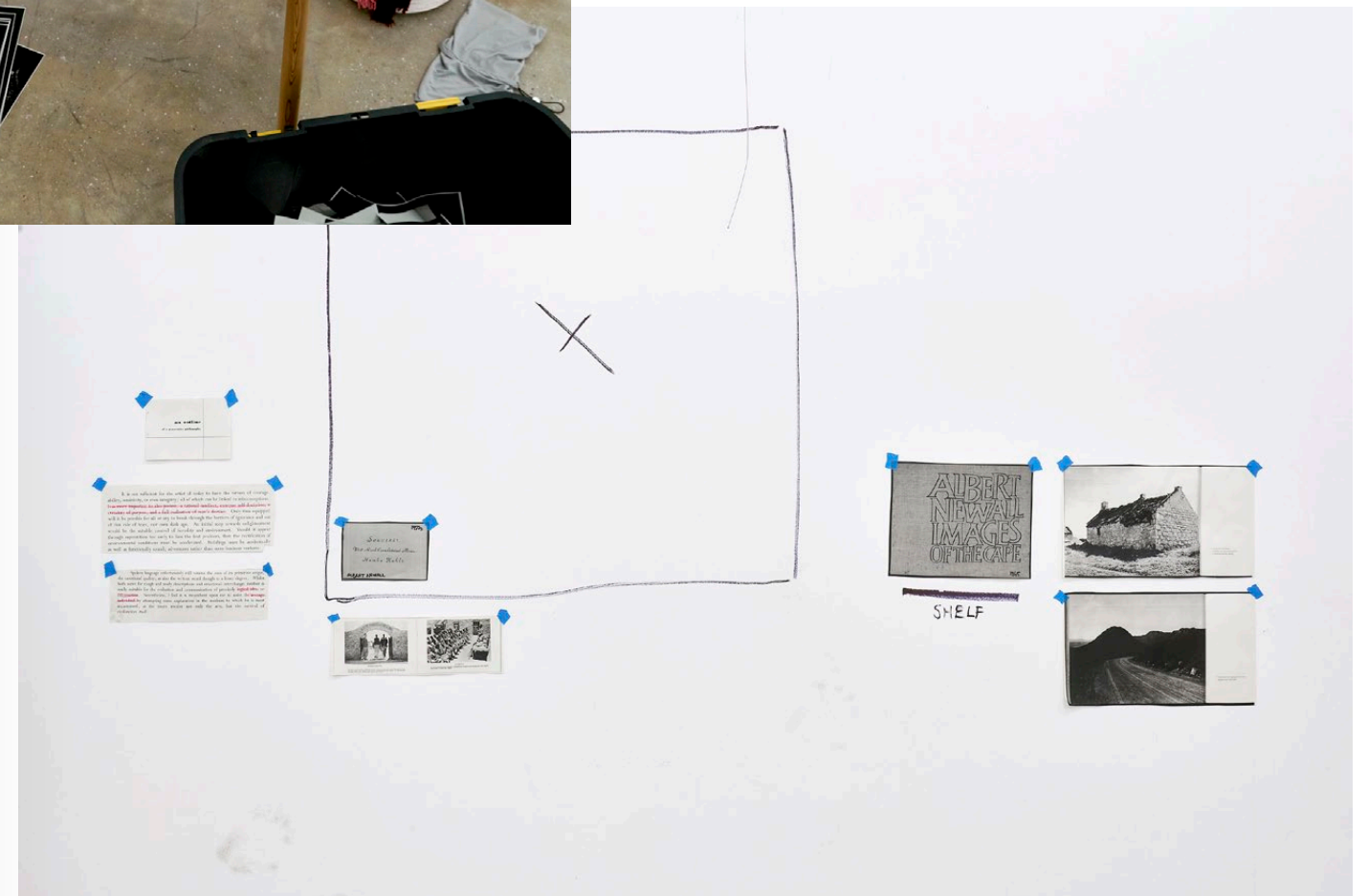
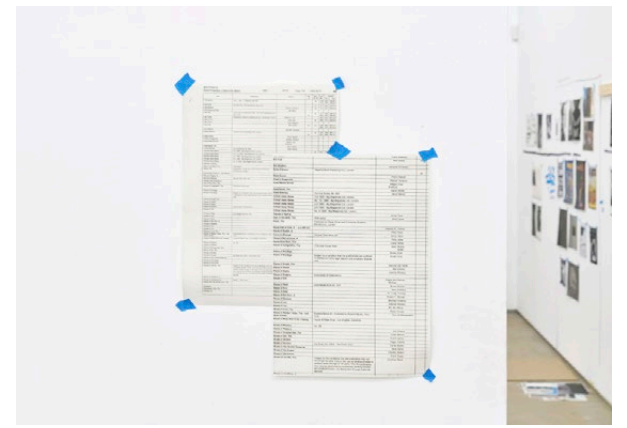
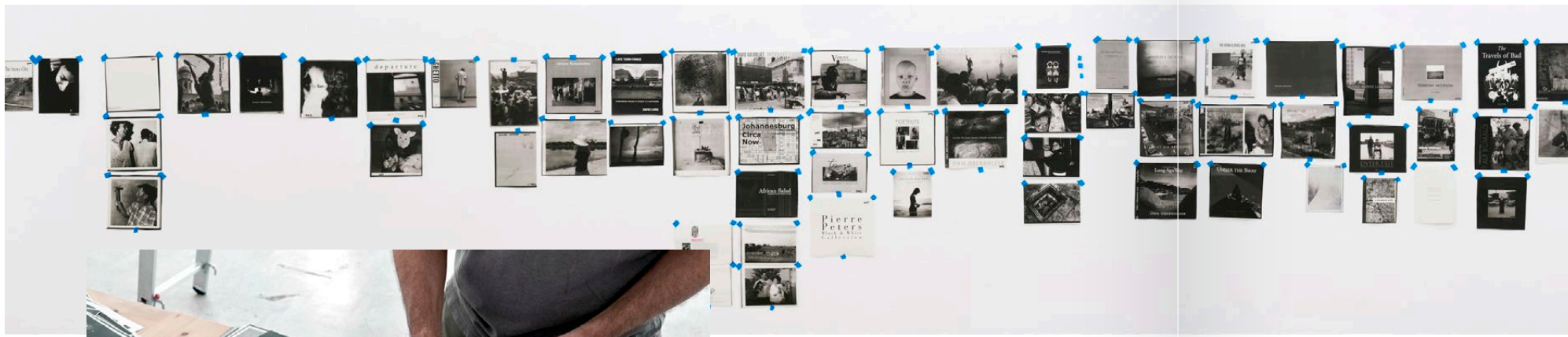
What makes it South African?

This exhibition is a continuation of an ongoing research project into the South African photobook. As the variant spelling of the exhibition's title suggests, clarity and meaning around this area of bookmaking are still fluid. Rather than sermonise about what precisely constitutes a South African photobook, this browsable exhibition, the first to discretely focus on this subject, presents a large and contradictory archive of photobooks made between 1945 and 2022.

The focus is geographic, but not nationalistic. Books published internationally sit alongside books produced locally. Citizenship is also not a criterion for participation. The archive on view does not claim to be complete; rather, it is largely composed

of books I acquired over the last two decades. I am not a book collector. If anything, I am a marginal protagonist in this archive, having contributed writing and counsel to a number of books. The bulk of the archive is chronologically displayed in a timeline that runs along the perimeter of the gallery. This timeline allows for dispassion, but in itself is not sufficient as a gesture. It is interrupted by a series of thematic interventions spotlighting important practitioners and recurring themes. These interpolations extend to a number of horizontal displays containing important, rare, singular and/or unusual books and related ephemera. Collectively, these curated displays investigate the utility of the photobook as tool of identity formation, state and corporate propaganda, political resistance and – crucially – aesthetic invention. Engage them as marginalia.

The exhibition unfolds across three distinctive periods: 1945–67, 1967–94, and 1994–2021. Distinguishing trends govern each period; these trends are elaborated further in these pages. Two freestanding walls demarcate the three ages of the modern photobook and provide further instances for curatorial digression regarding the apartheid state's uses of photography for propaganda and surveillance; book censorship; new experimental practices from the 1990s; and the renaissance in studio-based photography in the 2000s. The exhibition further includes paintings, sculpture, prints, a video work and photographs. The material diversity is important. This is not an exhibition about photography, not exclusively. It explores the convergence of photography and bookmaking during two distinct periods in recent South African history: the high apartheid years (1948–94), and the democratic years that followed (1994–present). Informed by the state repression and censorship that ensnared even photobooks, this exhibition aims to foreground the centrality of risk in bookmaking.



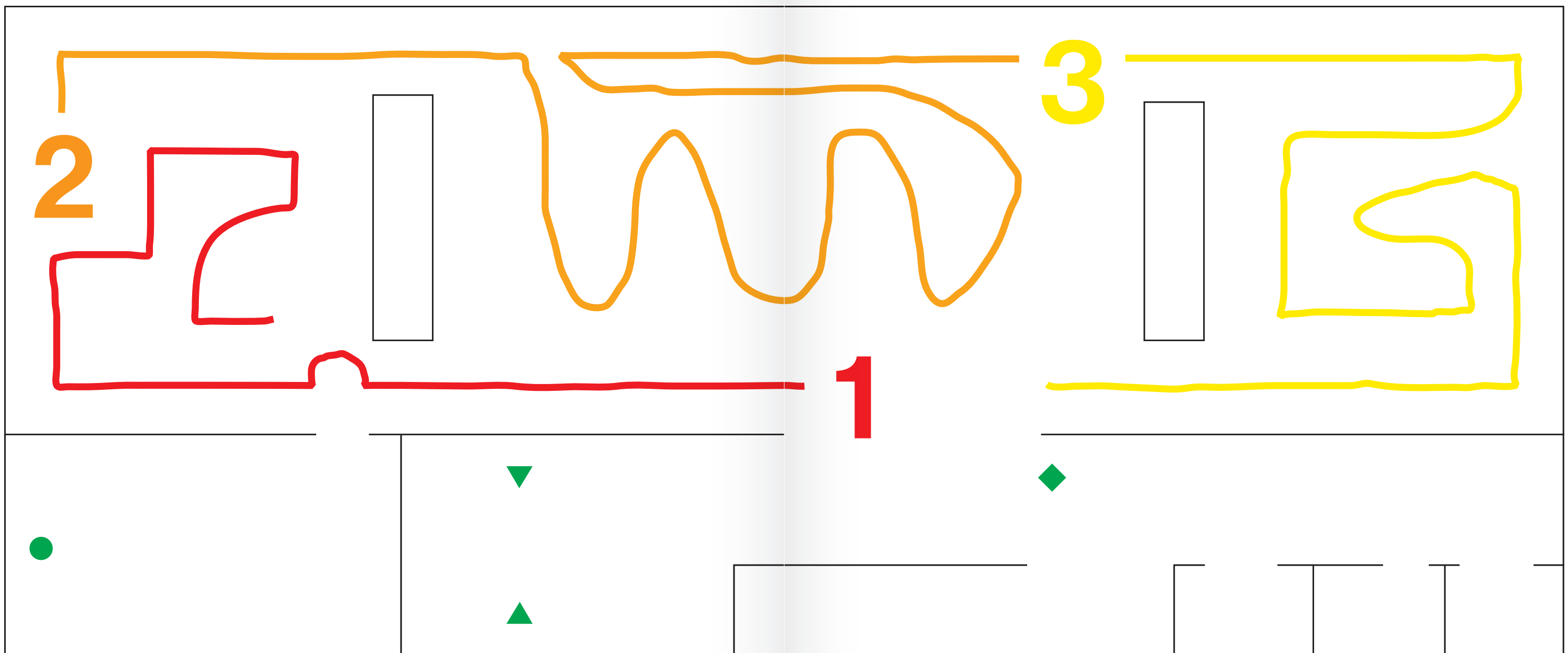
Sean O'Toole began a Course of Enquiry at A4 in October, 2020 – a form of open-ended research residency interested in finding ways to share curators' processes with practitioners and public. Sean used our Gallery in its downtimes to unpack his research library on the South African photobook. The COE values meandering, and there was no intention at the start of the project for a formal exhibition. Photo book! Photo-book! Photobook! evidences the COE's interest in documenting the journey of ideas from experimentation en-route to expression. The exhibition is browsable and does not seek to be definitive, sharing the curator's research.



Photo book! Photo-book! Photobook!
A research exhibition by Sean O'Toole
A4 Arts Foundation
11 Feb '22 — 29 April '22

- 1 1945—1967
- 2 1967—1994
- 3 1994—2022

- ▼ Santu Mofokeng — *Stories*, 2019
- ▲ Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse — dummies and prototypes towards the book *Ponte City*, 2014
- Santu Mofokeng — *Black Photo Album/Look at Me (1890—1950)*, 1997
- ◆ Temporary space for individual projects and/or artists



1945 —1967

The two decades after World War Two witnesses the emergence of a cosmopolitan photobook culture in South Africa marked by formal experimentation, not only photographically but also at the level of book design and printing. Pictorialism and ethnography, ways of seeing and telling refined in the pre-war decades, continue to direct the subject preoccupations of many white photographers. Nonetheless, the aesthetic regime of the salons and photo societies is in decline. The National Party election victory in 1948 cannot be overlooked. State propaganda, surveillance and censorship are pronounced hallmarks of this period, and the next.



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whiteness, pictorialism, ethnography, amnesia, statism, propaganda, surveillance, terrorist

Ezra Eliovson

Johannesburg: The Fabulous City

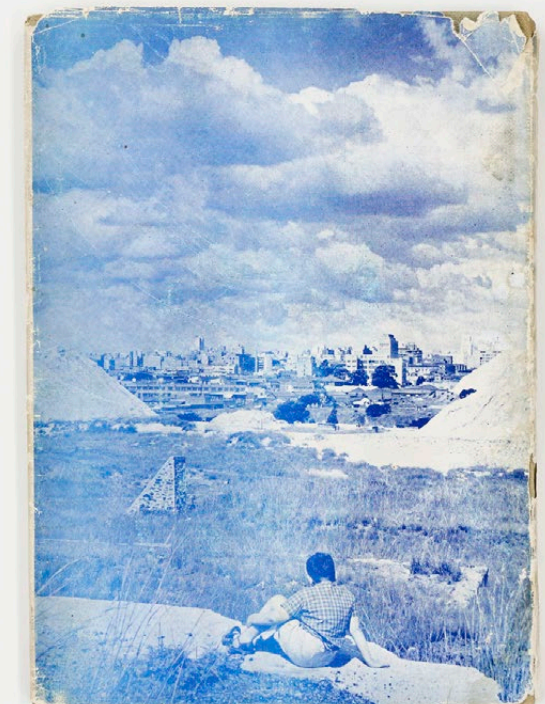
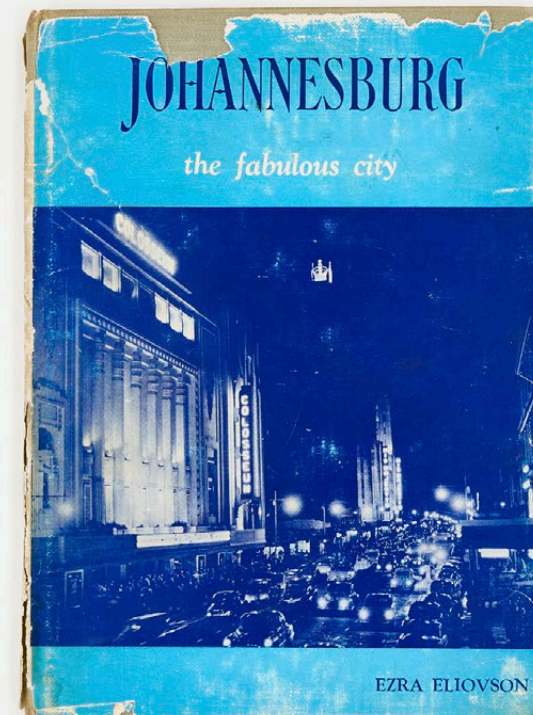
Cape Town, Howard Timmins, c. 1956

80pp

Photobooks about South Africa's wealthiest and most populous city often read the meaning of Johannesburg in its vertical buildings, mining landscapes, suburbs and slums. Four urban landscapes introduce this optimistic study of post-war Johannesburg by a prominent member of its photo clubs and salons. While labour and industry figure prominently, Eliovson's roaming camera nonetheless registers moments of pause and leisure. Johannesburg is implicitly understood to be a white city. Nonetheless, a liberal politics informs Eliovson's candid street photography featuring Chinese restaurateurs, Indian traders and black male labourers. The project is introduced and photographs described by the photographer's wife, Sima, a noted horticulturist whose 12 books on gardens and wildflowers Eliovson contributed to until his premature death at age 53.

“The impetus that has changed a mining camp into a modern metropolis within a few decades, continues to alter the face of Johannesburg almost daily.”

—Sima Eliovson, *Johannesburg: The Fabulous City*, 5



Sam Haskins

Five Girls

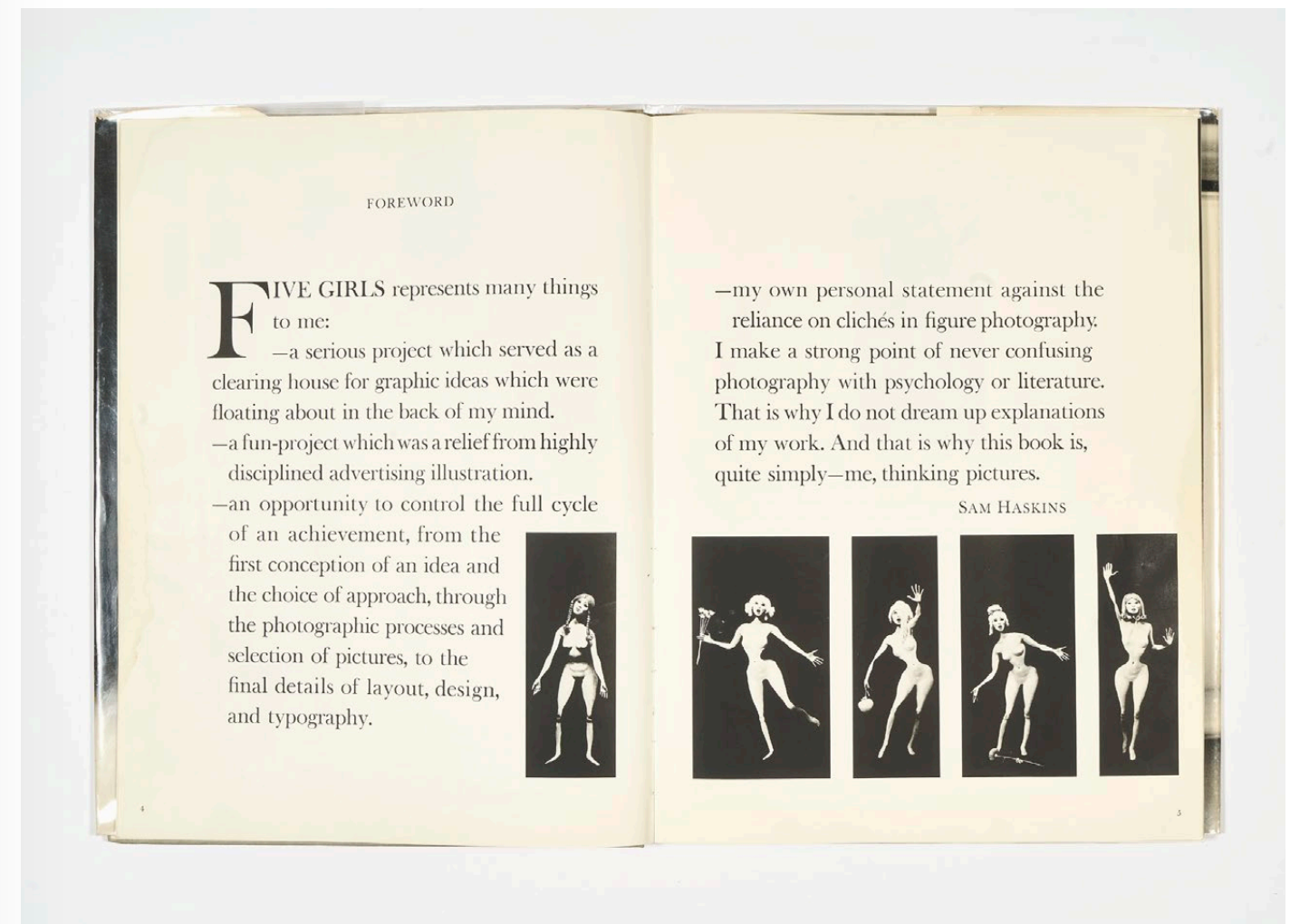
New York, Crown Publishers, 1962

144 pp

The South African photobook was a sedate vehicle for delivering photographs, until Kroonstad-born Haskins, a self-described “detrribalised Afrikaner” with a refined graphic sensibility, published *Five Girls* (1962), *Cowboy Kate & Other Stories* (1964), *November Girl* (1967) and *African Image* (1967) in quick succession. The photobook emerged as contemporary and daring. Three of his books focussed on the female nude. Produced in his Johannesburg studio, these books flirted with new aesthetic and cultural permissions, albeit within a defined gender and racial framework, and outside the censorship regime that operated in South Africa (all four books were published by English and American publishers). *Cowboy Kate*, a jazzed-up photocomic narrative about a “wild as whiskey” cowgirl, remains one of the bestselling photobooks of all time. In comparison, *Five Girls* is more tentative, but with its confident sense of editorial design it nonetheless declares the book to be a laboratory for photographic experimentation.

“I make a strong point of never confusing photography with psychology or literature. That is why I do not dream up explanations of my work.”

—Sam Haskins, *Five Girls*, 5



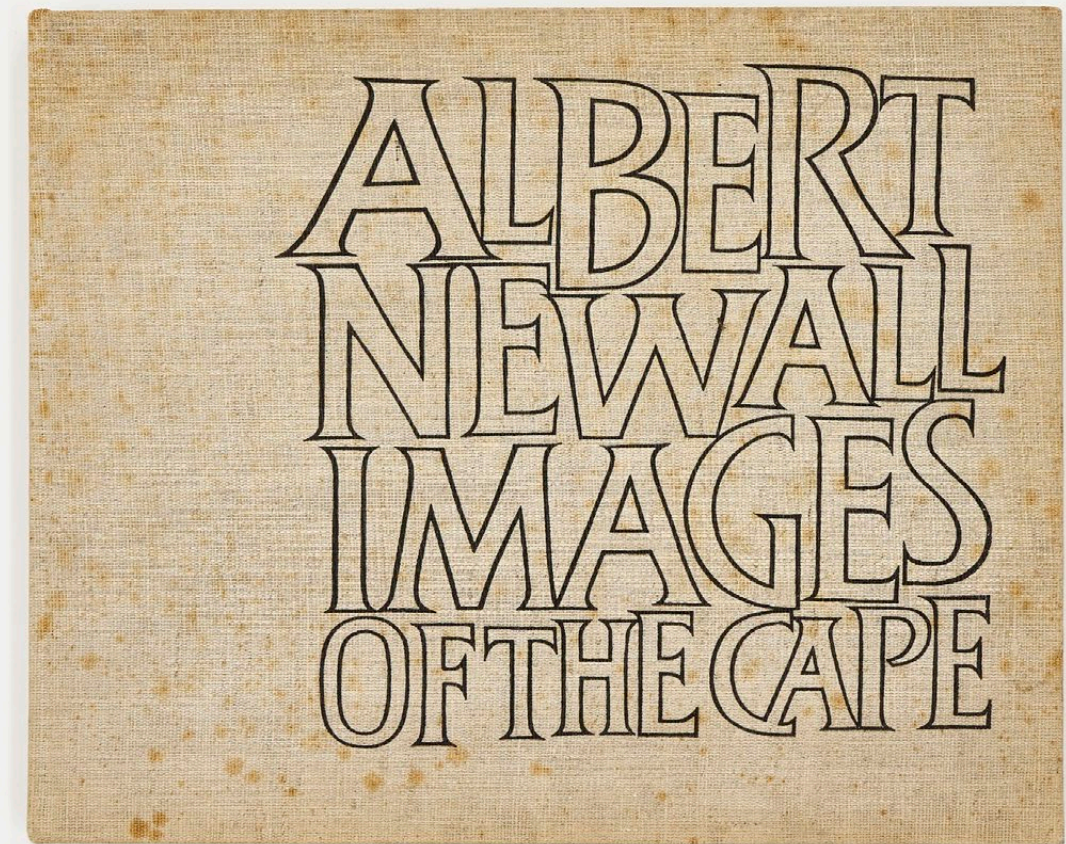
Albert Newall

Images of the Cape

Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1965

124 pp

Manchester-born Newall settled in Johannesburg in 1946 with qualifications in aerial photography and art. He initially concentrated on photographing the mining industry, at the same time also pursuing a painting career. In 1953, he relocated to Cape Town. His geometric abstractions of the 1950s were widely exhibited, notably at biennales in Venice (1956) and São Paulo (1959). Photography remained an interest. This book was enabled by a grant from the Cape Tercentenary Foundation, founded in 1950 by brothers Edward and Harry Molteno, pioneers of the Cape fruit industry. While rooted in the picturesque and landscape traditions of the Cape, Newall's photographs showcase his refined sense for composition and attraction to pattern, as well as acquiescence to a white nationalist idiom. He soon stopped producing art.



Walter Battiss (1906–82)

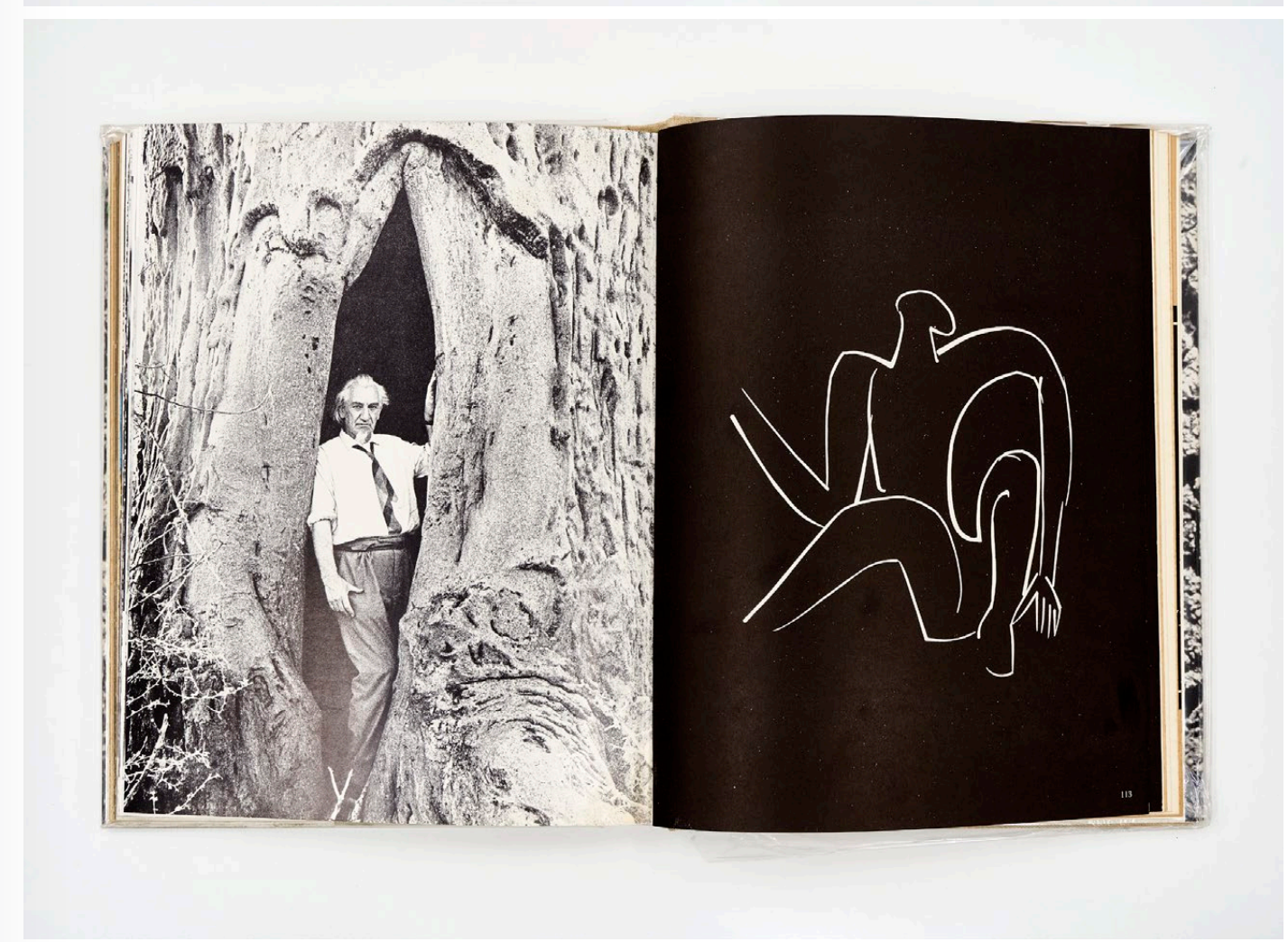
Limpopo

Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1965

128pp



Walter Battiss – archaeologist, painter, printmaker, teacher, publisher, critic, anti-censorship advocate and pensioner avant-gardist – was a committed photographer from his teens. D. R. Beeton in 1973 described photography as Battiss’s “most eloquent hobby” and his “second art”. This is evidenced both in his early self-published books, notably *South African Paint Pot* (Red Fawn Press, 1940), as well as this eccentric book. Equal parts memoir, travelogue, catalogue and artists’ book, it includes 42 black-and-white and ten colour photos by Battiss occupying a third of the book. They impressionistically describe his encounters with people and places across southern and East Africa. Although often blandly pictorial and notational, his frank and intimate portraits of young boys and snakes point to artistic impulses beyond the documentary.



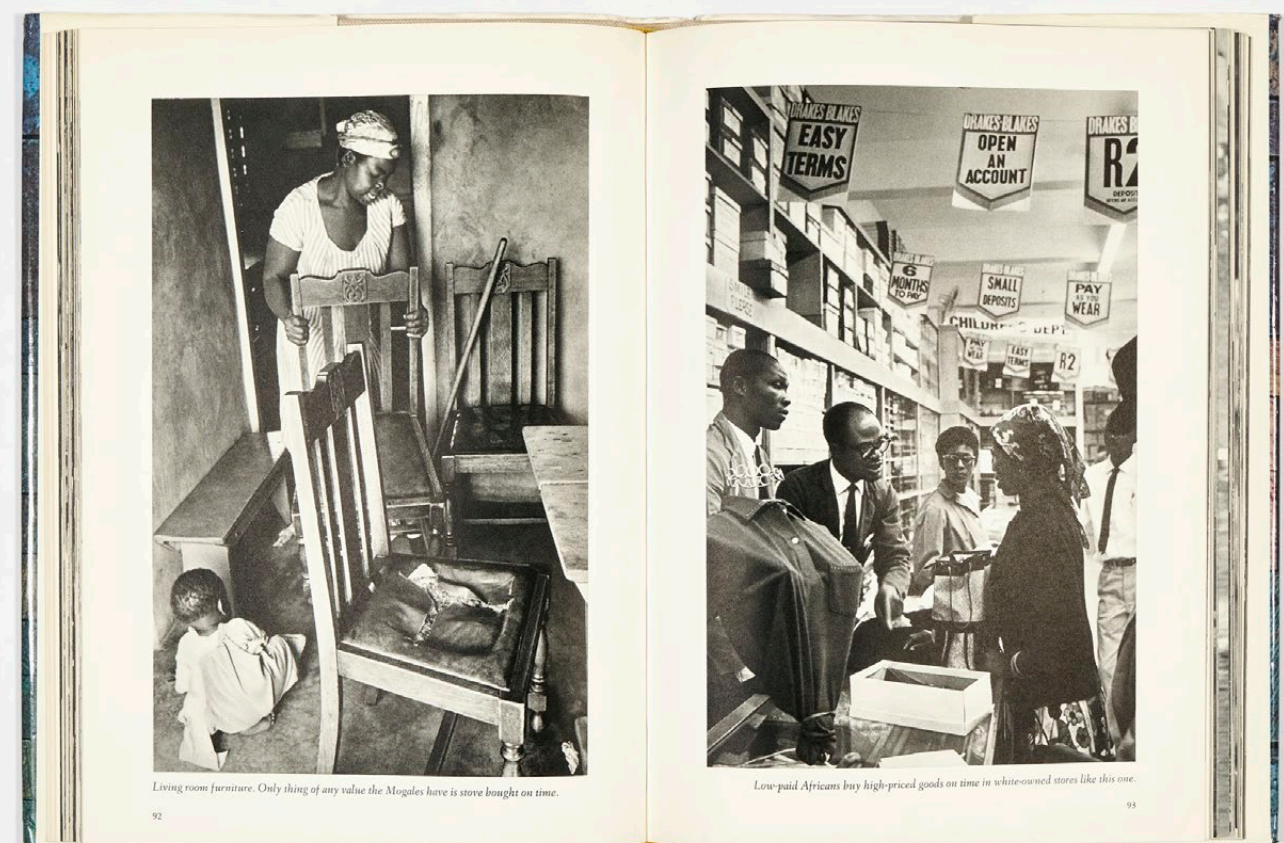
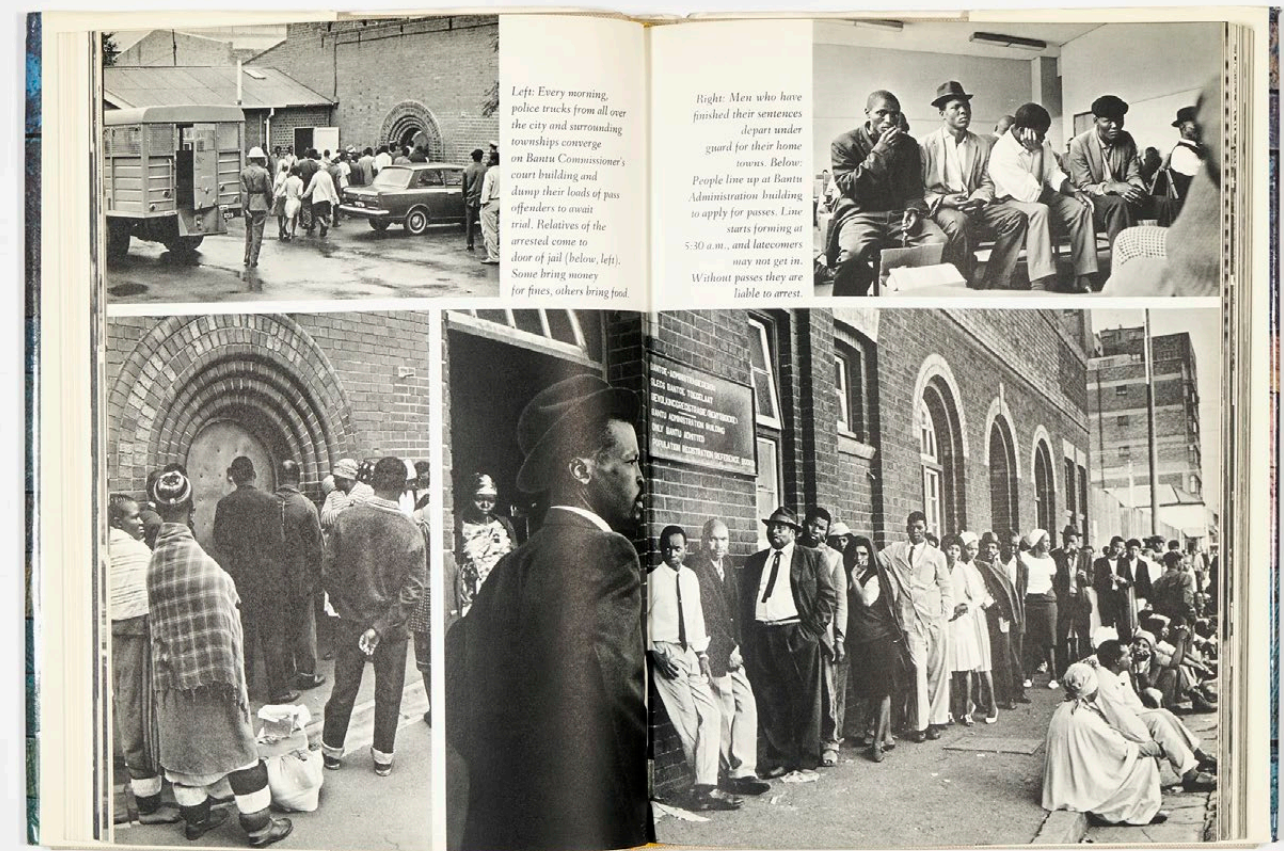
Ernest Cole

House of Bondage

New York, Random House, 1967

192 pp

What is the risk of making a photobook? In 1959, a year after joining *Drum* magazine in Johannesburg, 19-year-old Cole was gifted Henri Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* (1952). "I knew then what I must do," wrote Cole in 1968. "I would do a book of photographs to show the world what the white South African had done to the black." This decision changed the course of Cole's briefly luminous but ultimately tragic life. Cole worked on his book project for nearly seven years. Published in October 1967, *House of Bondage* comprises 183 photos organised into 14 chapters, each introduced by an explanatory text. Cole's photos depict crowded train commutes, brutal work circumstances, impoverished schools, police harassment and bullying municipal signage. The book received favourable reviews in the American press. Cole was invited to contribute his photos to *Ebony*, an important magazine pitched at African-American readers. Published in February 1968, his photos were accompanied by a personal testimony. "I knew that if an informer would learn what I was doing I would be reported and end up in jail," writes Cole. "I knew that I could be killed merely for gathering the material for such a book and I knew that when I finished, I would have to leave my country in order to have the book published. And I knew that once that book was published, I could never go home again so long as the whites, Boers or Englishmen, Nationalists or Progressives, remain in power." In May 1968, *House of Bondage* was banned in South Africa. Cole was also refused permission to return home. He hustled for assignment work in New York, initiated new projects, but gradually became disillusioned and stopped photographing. He died in exile in 1990, shortly before restrictions on his book were partially qualified.



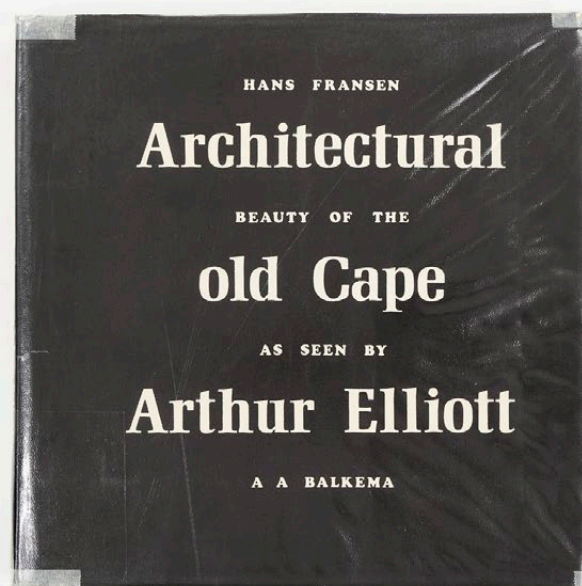
Arthur Elliott

*Architectural Beauty of the Old Cape as seen
by Arthur Elliott*

Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1969

344 pp

The image of the Cape winelands as a series of bucolic white-walled redoubts framed by vineyards has been endlessly rehearsed in photobooks. Arthur Elliott, an American refugee who parlayed his initial successes photographing Boer prisoners of war into recording historic landmarks, largely formalised this evergreen genre. Committed to exhibiting rather than publishing, Elliott's archive of ten thousand negatives, a fifth of them architectural scenes, was acquired by the state following his death in 1938. Various repurposed by publishers as illustrations, this book was the first time Elliott's architectural photos, 162 in this book, received prime billing.



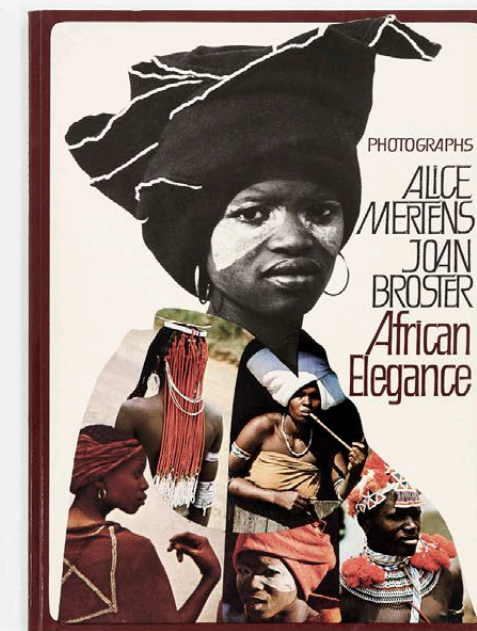
Alice Mertens

African Elegance

Cape Town, Purnell & Sons, 1973

168 pp

Born in Namibia, trained in Berlin, and for two decades a photography lecturer at Stellenbosch University, Mertens published 11 photobooks between 1959–75, of which five were devoted to her birth country. This portrait-rich study of eight tribal groups from the Transkei (Eastern Cape) was produced in collaboration with bead expert and long-time resident of the region Joan Broster. The book aims to record “fast disappearing” markers of traditional culture, notably ritual and belief, and how they are expressed through dress and beadwork.



1967 —1994

Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage*, published in 1967, marks a rupture. The white story about black life in South Africa is shown to be a lie. The book is banned, as are a number of photobooks with an evidentiary focus issued during this period. "Photography can't be divorced from the political, social and economic issues that surround us daily," argue the curators of a 1983 photography exhibition organised by *Staffrider*, part of a vigorous alternative press committed to disseminating documentary photography. Partisan engagement characterises many books from this period. The advent of democracy in 1994 is prefaced by a confused sense of purpose as the image economy shifts. Artists explore other forms of risk in the photobook.

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evidence, political risk, censorship, quotation, interregnum, aesthetic risk, conscience, facsimile

Peter Magubane

Soweto

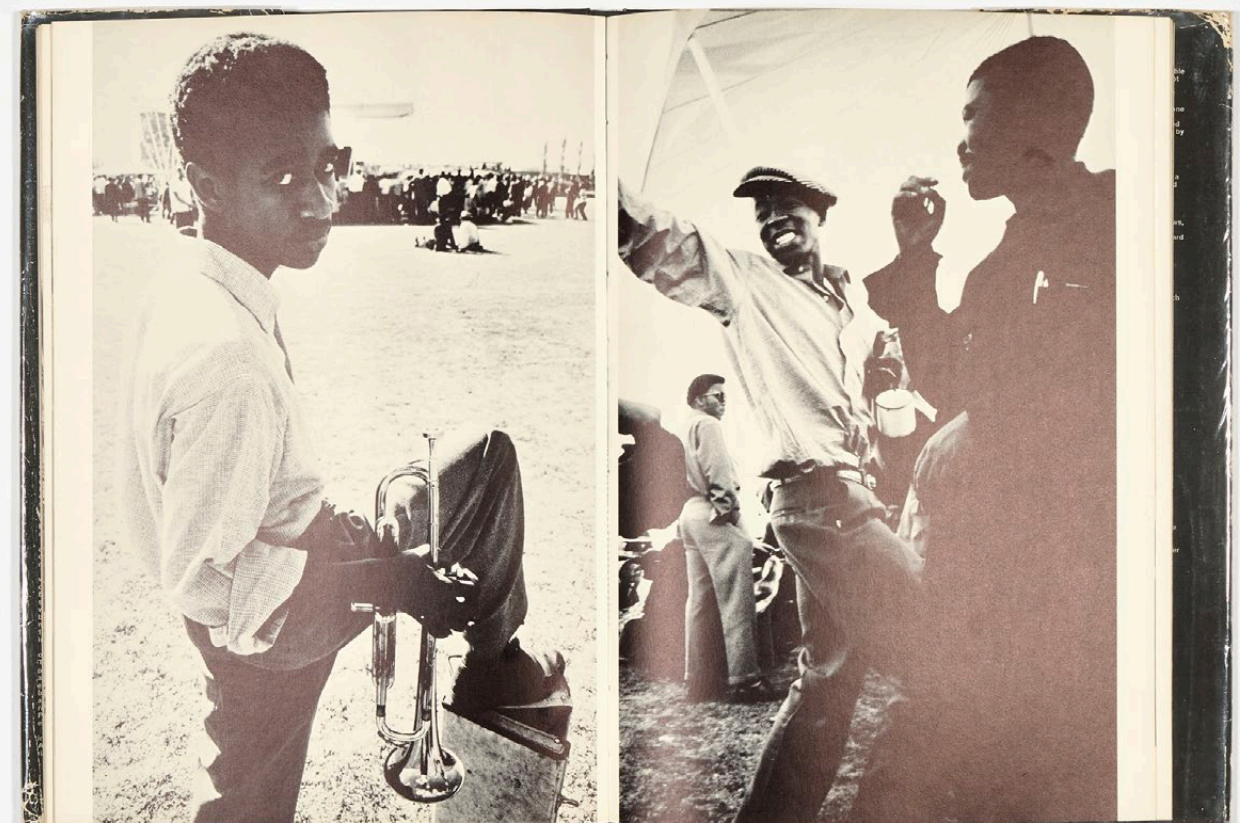
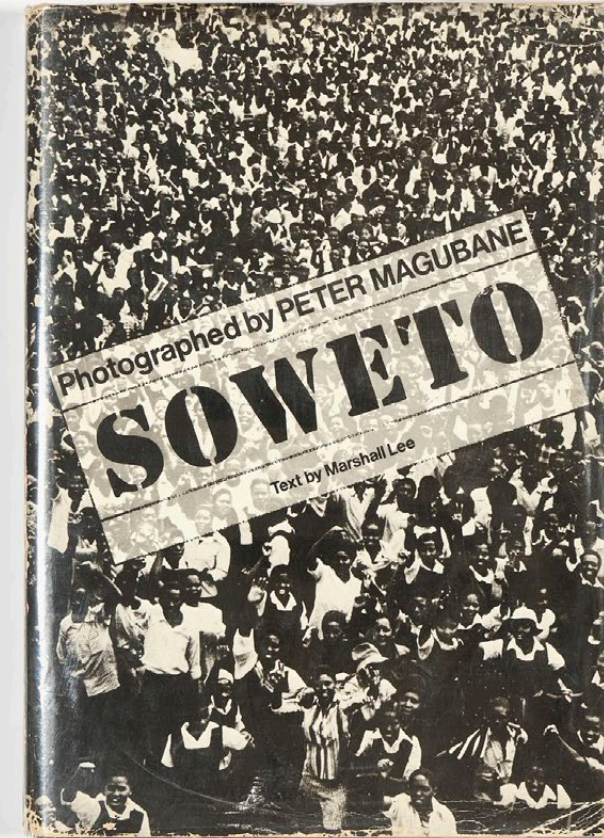
Cape Town, Don Nelson, 1978

190 pp

A prolific publisher, Magubane issued his first three photobooks in 1978. Two were published in the United States: *Black As I Am*, a text-image collaboration with poet Zindzi Mandela, and *Magubane's South Africa*, which documents black resistance to apartheid rule from the first Treason Trial of 1956 to the Soweto student rebellion two decades later. Unflinching in its portrayals of violence, the latter book includes a first-person account of Magubane's various arrests and long prohibition from working; it was summarily banned in his homeland. Mindful of censorship, Magubane's South African publisher opted for a sweeping pictorial sociology of place, as opposed to an anatomy of a revolt. The text in *Soweto* is by white journalist Marshall Lee. Picture editor Dawn Lindberg, better known as a folk singer, organised the photos into thematic clusters focussed on youth, labour, ritual, social status and survival. The grim outcome of the 1976 student rebellion is lightly detailed, a lacuna corrected in Magubane's local photobook *16 June: The Fruit of Fear* (1986).

"If they [the police] don't want you on the scene, it's either that they manhandle you or assault you or take your cameras away. Whereas with a white photographer they just go to him and talk to him and ask him to go away."

—Peter Magubane, *The New York Times*, 14 May 1978, 48



David Goldblatt

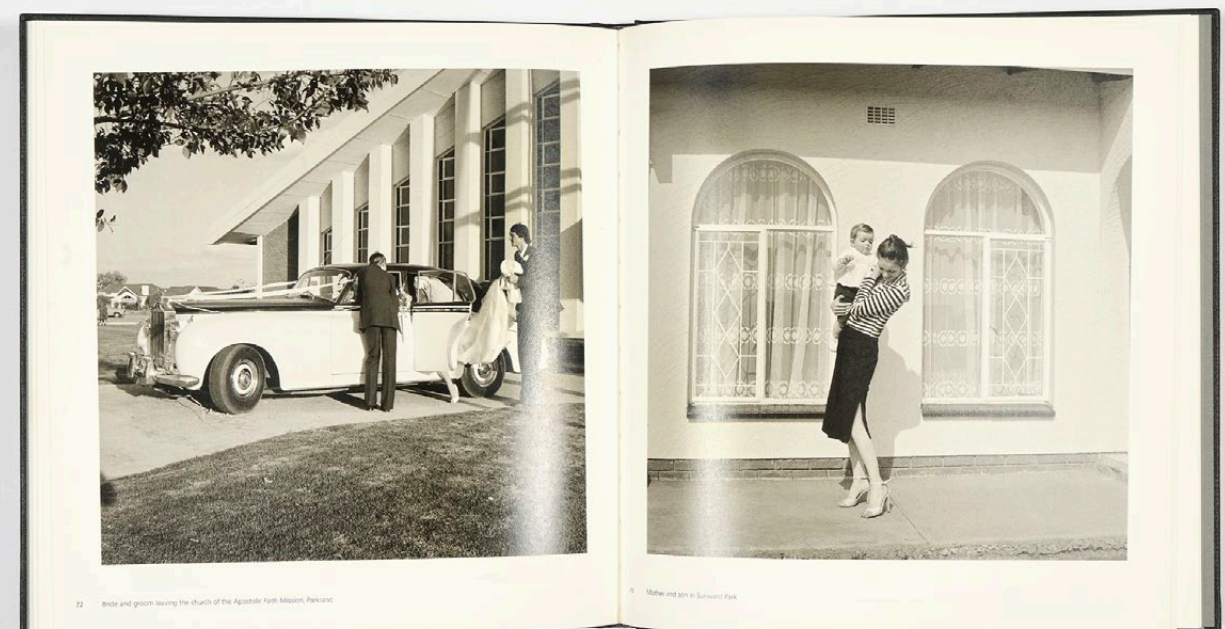
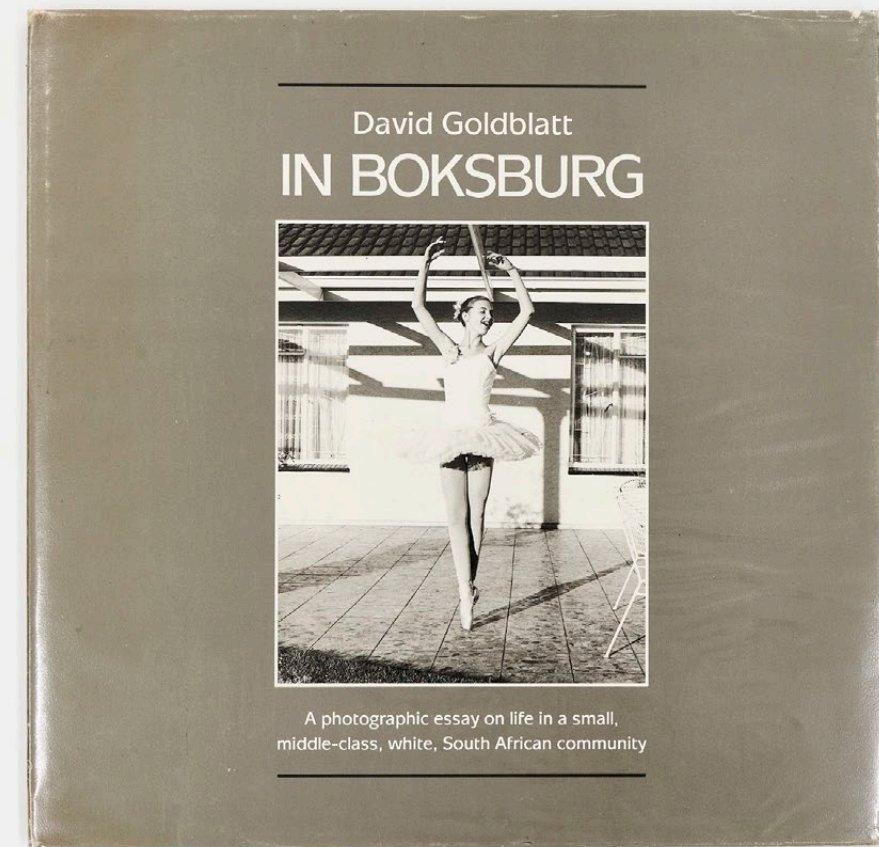
In Boksburg

Cape Town, The Gallery Press, 1982

84 pp

“[A] few years ago I felt the need to explore something of my own background in the life and values of middle-class, white, urban society. I had earlier done work in this direction in Hillbrow and the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. But I wished now to go to a smaller place: Randfontein and what I remembered of more than thirty years there, were really at the heart of my new quest. Randfontein though, was still too painfully close to photograph with the intimacy and dispassion I sought... I began to look at the towns of the East Rand and was increasingly excited by what I found. Benoni, Brakpan and Boksburg particularly drew me... Boksburg held me... Like Randfontein, only more so, it was nondescript and elusive, yet strongly drawn and pungent. From the unexpected softness of its man-made lake, to the tight circumscription of its pre-cast concrete walls, Boksburg is shaped by white dreams and white proprieties. Most of its townspeople pursue the family, social and civic concerns of respectable burghers anywhere, while locked into a deep and portentous fixity of self-elected, legislated whiteness.”

—David Goldblatt, quoted from *In Boksburg*, 8

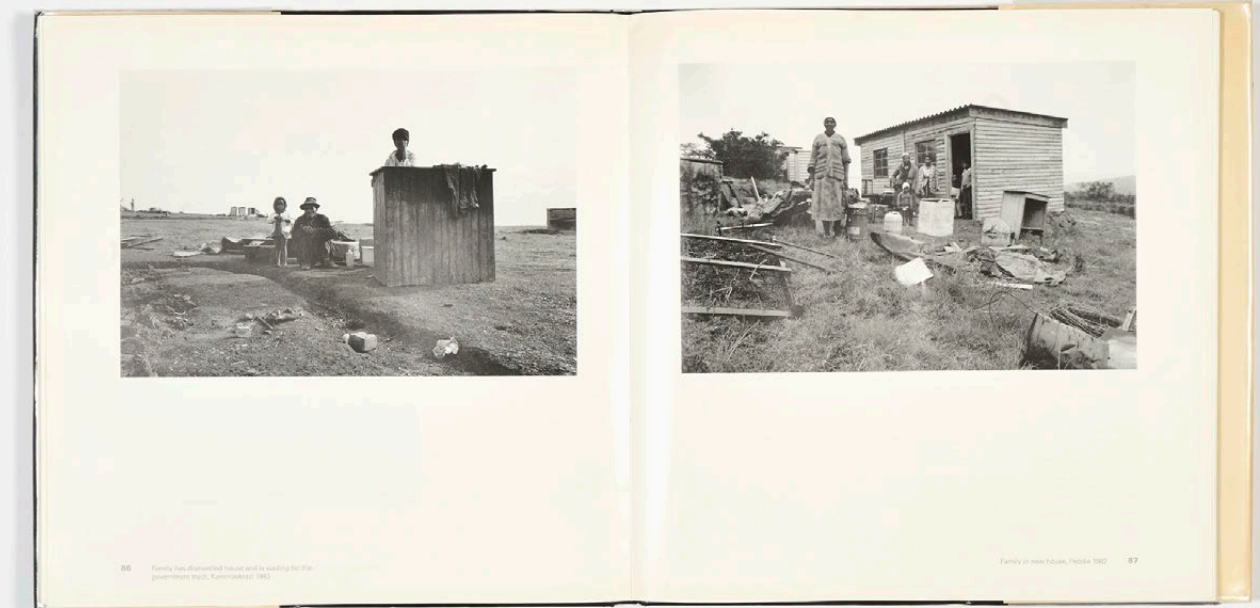


Various photographers

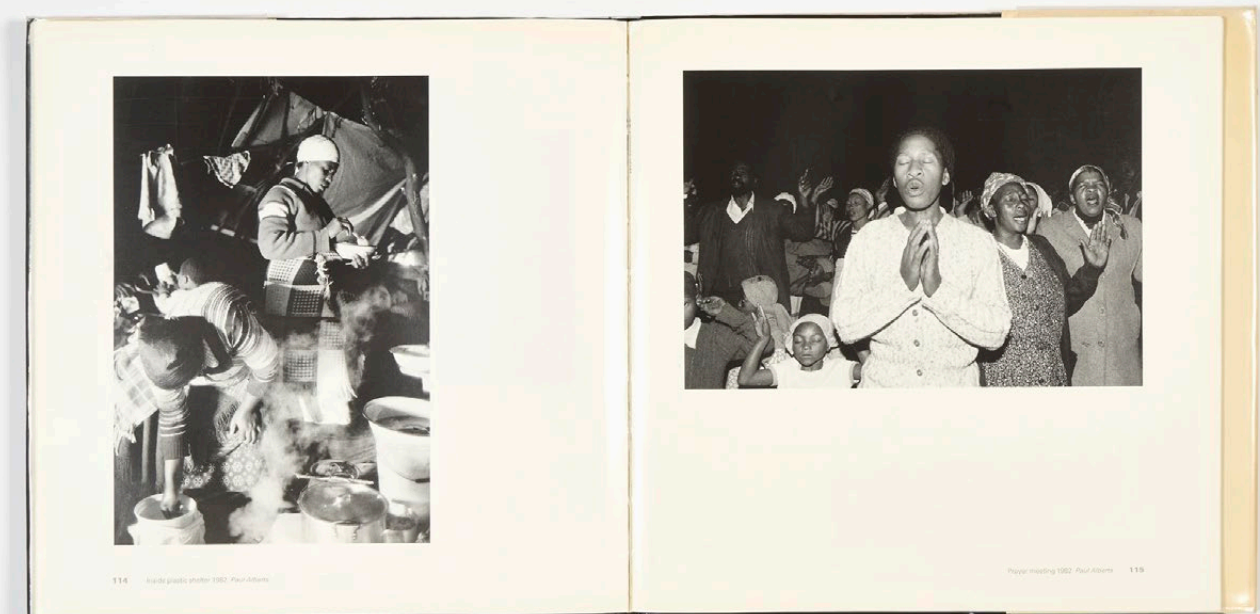
South Africa: The Cordoned Heart

Cape Town, The Gallery Press, 1986

186 pp



This book compiles 28 photo essays by 20 photographers (three women) who participated in an exhibition at the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, a conference held at the University of Cape Town in 1984. Many of the essays derived from completed bodies of work, although some photographers were either assisted to complete works in progress or commissioned to collaborate with academics in the field. The project gave visibility and impetus to a socially engaged mode of practice actively censured by the state and largely supported by the alternative press, notably Ravan, which from 1978 sponsored exhibitions and published work. In his preface, editor Omar Badsha cites Eli Weinberg and Ernest Cole, both of whose books were banned at the time, as influential ancestors to the partisan praxis spotlighted in this book. “Apartheid is violence,” writes Badsha – “no one can remain neutral”.



Roger Ballen

Platteland

Johannesburg, William Waterman Publications, 1994

136pp

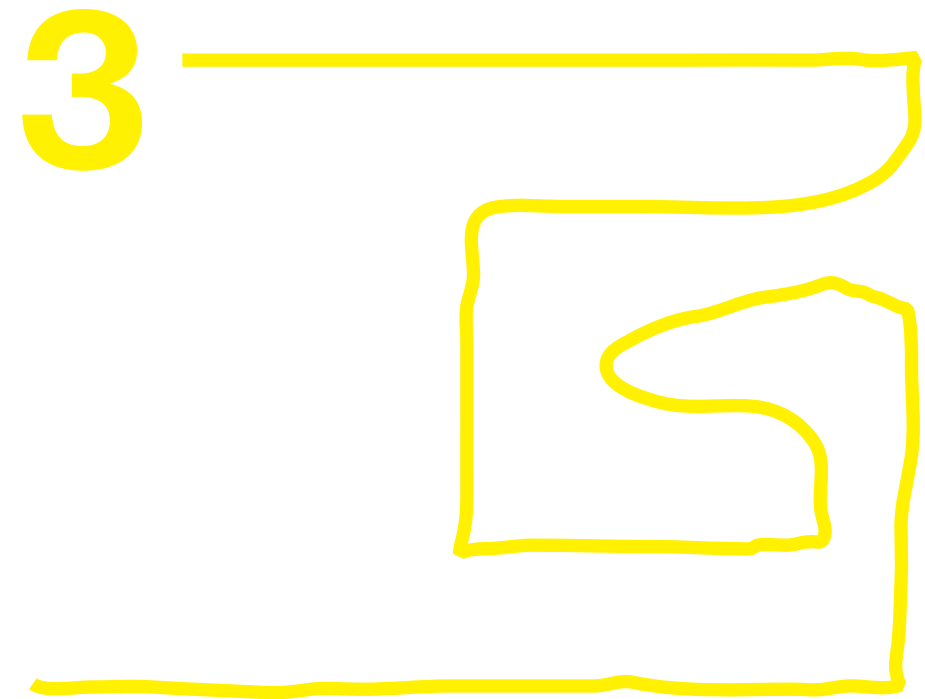


Ballen's second photobook, *Dorps* (1986), a study of rural South African townfolk and the vestigial structures that informed their identities, is a coda to a defined way of looking, one in which a complex social phenomenon, white poverty, is critically parsed in the naturalistic language of documentary photography. While still motivated to document rural impoverishment, *Platteland*, a book comprised of only portraits, dispenses with the Walker Evans politesse. Ballen's harsh flash starkly etches his "poor white" subjects, many photographed indoors. "Until recently the platteland mentality assumed that supremacy was the natural providence of whites," Ballen writes in the introduction. The book's publication and accompanying exhibition provoked a storm. Ballen, an émigré from New York and full-time geologist at the time, was accused of exploitation; he even received death threats. Ballen's subsequent book projects transmogrified these impoverished habitats into psychological sets and his subjects into Beckettian actors.



1994 —2022

The early years of South Africa's democracy see a meagre output of photobooks, followed by a remarkable flourishing. The increasing use of photography by artists, coupled with the emergence of a vibrant international art market, sponsors a proliferation of photobook publishing. It also muddies the fuzzy boundaries distinguishing the artists' book, photobook and promotional catalogue. The internet, now a dominant presence in daily life, also qualifies the book's apex position as primary store of distributed knowledge. Vivid experiments and bland rehearsals typify the books of this period. Colonial and apartheid history is a site of frequent excavation. Identity remains an abiding concern of photobook practitioners.



Internet, freedom, art, new/post/anti-documentary, studio, seriality, memory, identity

Jane Alexander

PHOTO-BOOK

Cape Town, self-published, 1995
48pp

Published in the year Alexander received the Standard Bank Young Artist Award, this book with purposefully hyphenated title reproduces 46 black-and-white photomontages made by the artist in 1981–86 and 1994–95. Inspired by Berlin Dadaist John Heartfield, Alexander’s photomontages explore the potential for visual information to be a dominant form of communication, unmediated by textual explication. Her book aims to honour this ambition as much as possible. Individual works are minimally captioned. There is no introduction or elucidating essay. The juxtaposed pairings of images, some containing Alexander’s figure sculptures, stage their own narratives.

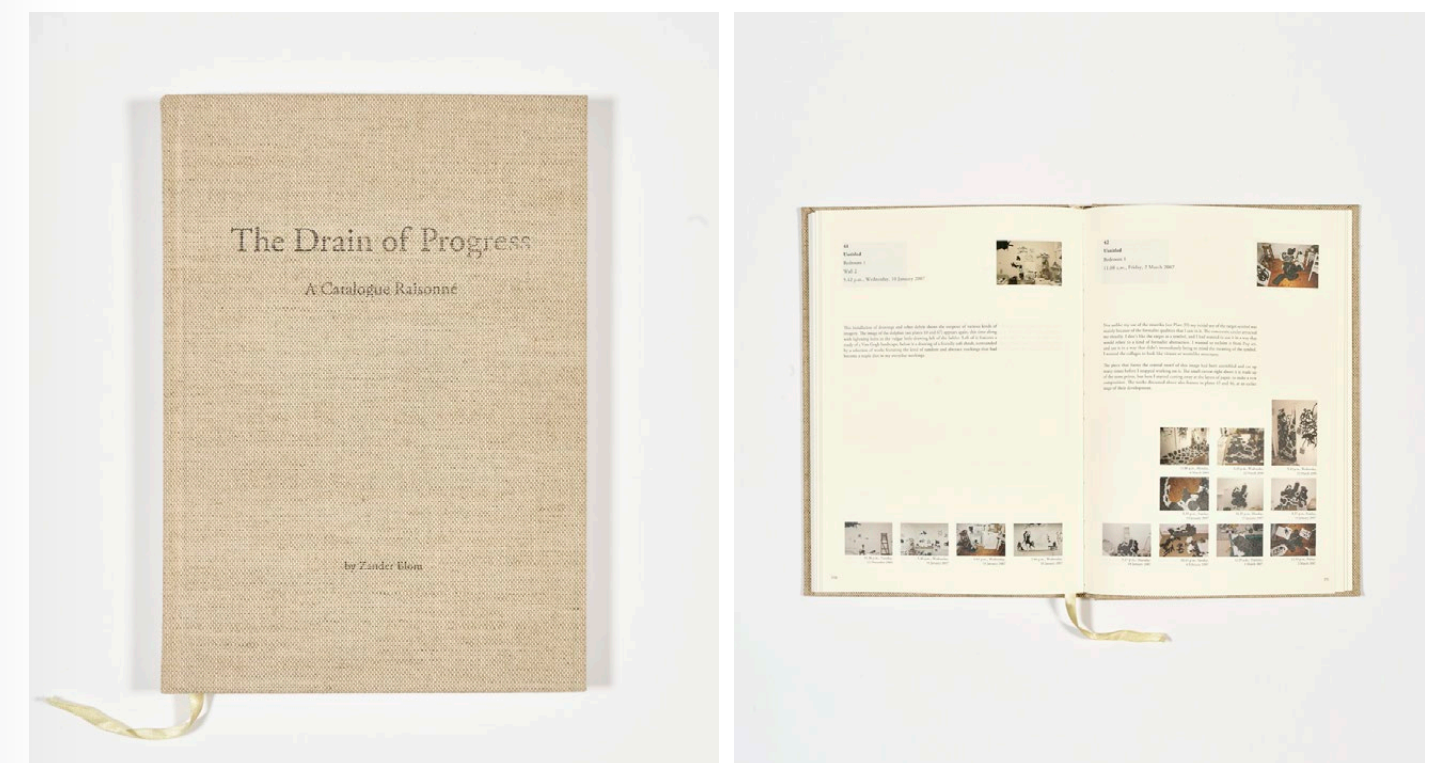


Zander Blom

The Drain of Progress

Johannesburg, Rooke Gallery, 2007
206 pp

Best known for his process-based explorations and rehearsals of painterly abstraction, Blom first achieved notice with his studio photographs of drawings, prints and temporary constructions installed in his Johannesburg home between 2004–07. Many of these objects quoted works from the canon of western art. Blom’s interest in documenting his “ambitionless productivity” stemmed from a charged understanding of photography and its relationship to the real. “My visual experience of most of the artworks I have come to know and admire, has been a mediated one,” Blom writes in the introduction. “Like most South Africans my early education in art was primarily based in books... My interest in these reproductions led to a desire to mimic the photographic mediation evidenced in these publications.”



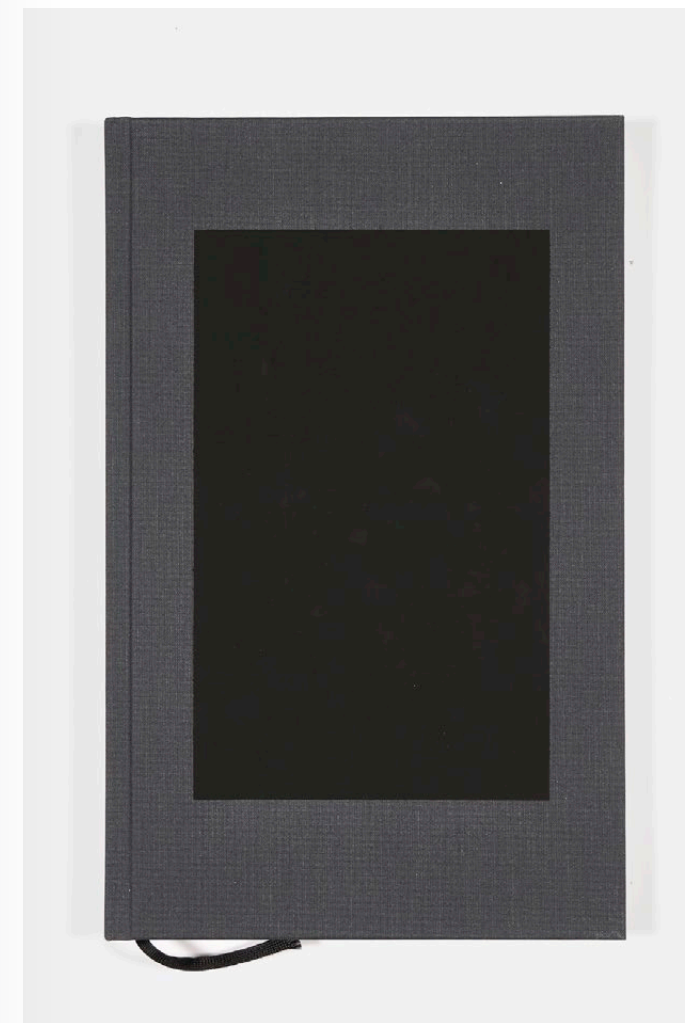
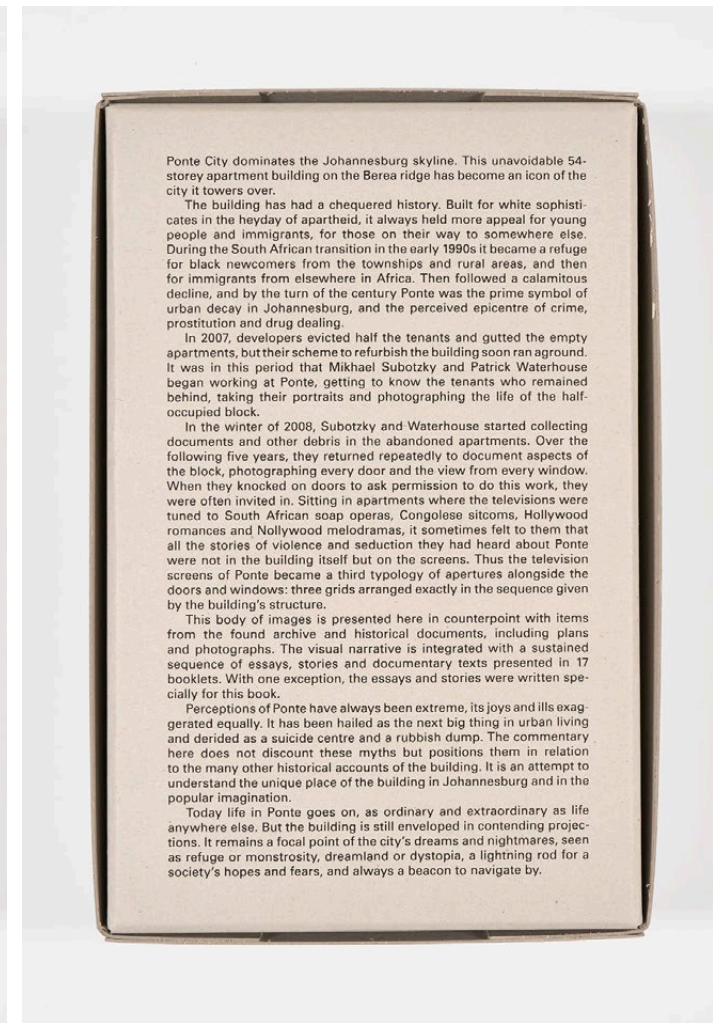
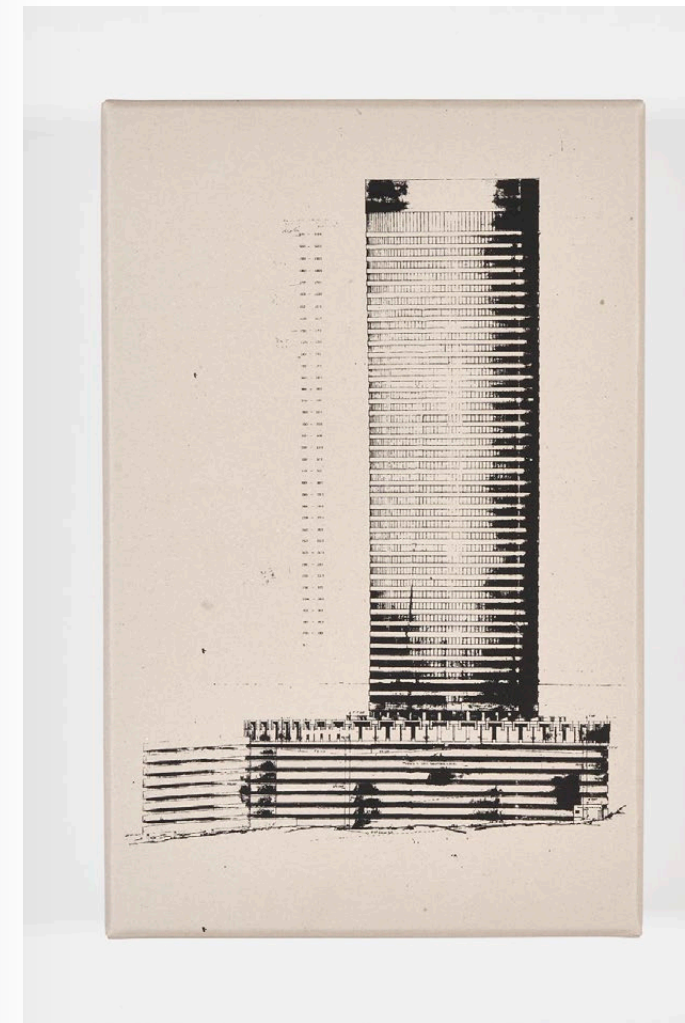
Mikhael Subotzky & Patrick Waterhouse

Ponte City

Göttingen, Steidl, 2014

192 pp (plus 17 booklets)

The 54-floor Ponte City residential block in central Johannesburg was built in 1976, the year of the Soweto uprisings. Initially occupied by white lodgers, social and economic changes saw the tenant profile shift to majority-black by the end of the 1990s. In 2007, developers initiated an ambitious upgrade project. A year later, Subotzky and Waterhouse began documenting aspects of life in and around the gutted and hastily evacuated block, including photographing every door and the view from every window. The book was preceded by numerous exhibitions, and generated abundant book dummies, all of them rehearsals for possible resolutions to their ambitious project. Edited by author Ivan Vladislavić, *Ponte City* comprises a discrete photobook and is accompanied by 17 booklets containing essays, stories and documentary texts. It is equally a materialist sociology of place and conceptual engagement with impossibility and absence. A reconceptualised second edition is forthcoming.



Zanele Muholi

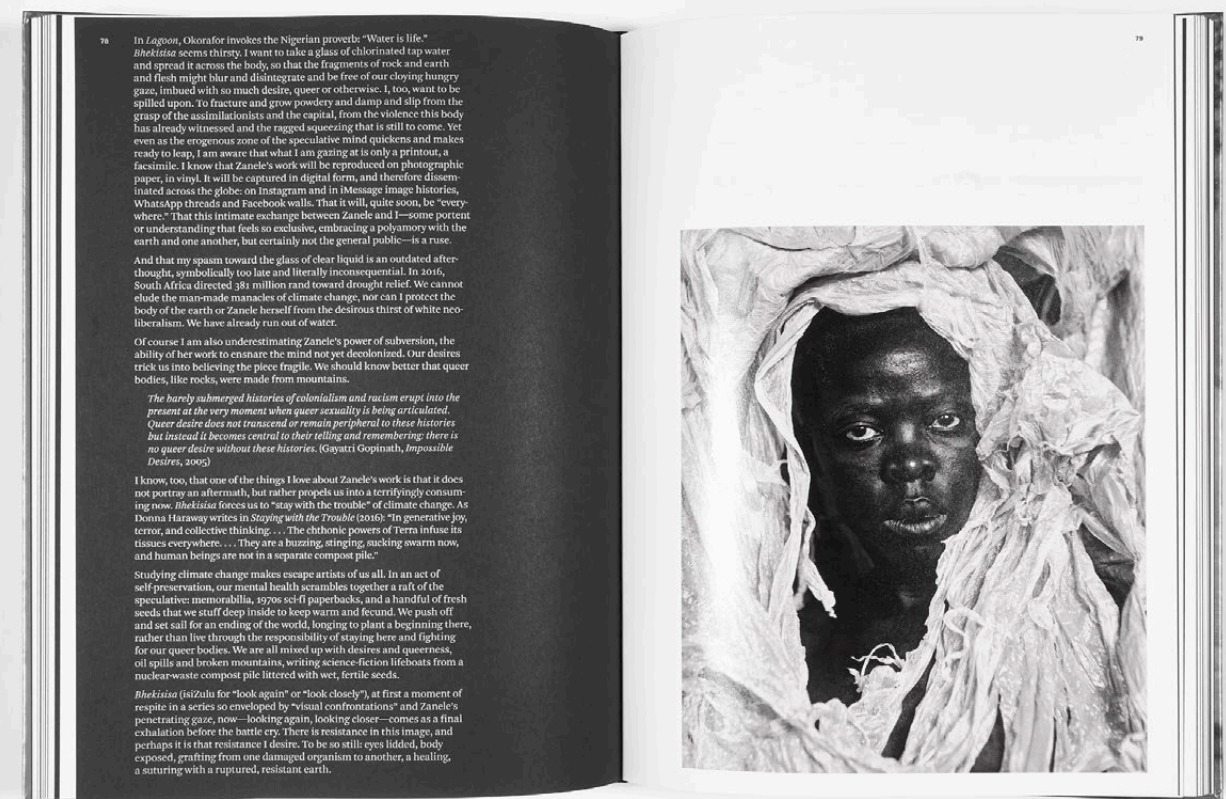
Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness

New York, Aperture, 2018

212 pp

“My practice as a visual activist looks at black resistance – *existence as well as insistence*. Most of the work I have done over the years focuses exclusively on black LGBTQIA and gender-nonconforming individuals making sure we exist in the visual archive... *Somnyama* is my response to a number of ongoing racisms and politics of exclusion. As a series, it also speaks about occupying public spaces to which we, as black communities, were previously denied access – how you have to be mindful all the time in certain spaces because of your positionality, because of what others expect you to be, or because your tradition and culture are continually misrepresented. Too often I find we are being insulted, mimicked, and distorted by the privileged ‘other’... I needed it to be my own portraiture. I didn’t want to expose another person to this pain... A majority of the photographs in *Somnyama Ngonyama* are based on my personal experiences. On their own, they might not appear extreme, but they accumulate; all those minor irritating questions add up to something. Sometimes it feels as if you’re inside a web – a web covering your face that you have to constantly peel back in order to breathe.”

—Zanele Muholi, quoted from an interview with Renée Mussai, ‘Zanele Muholi On Resistance’, *Aperture*, 11 September 2018



Santu Mofokeng

Stories

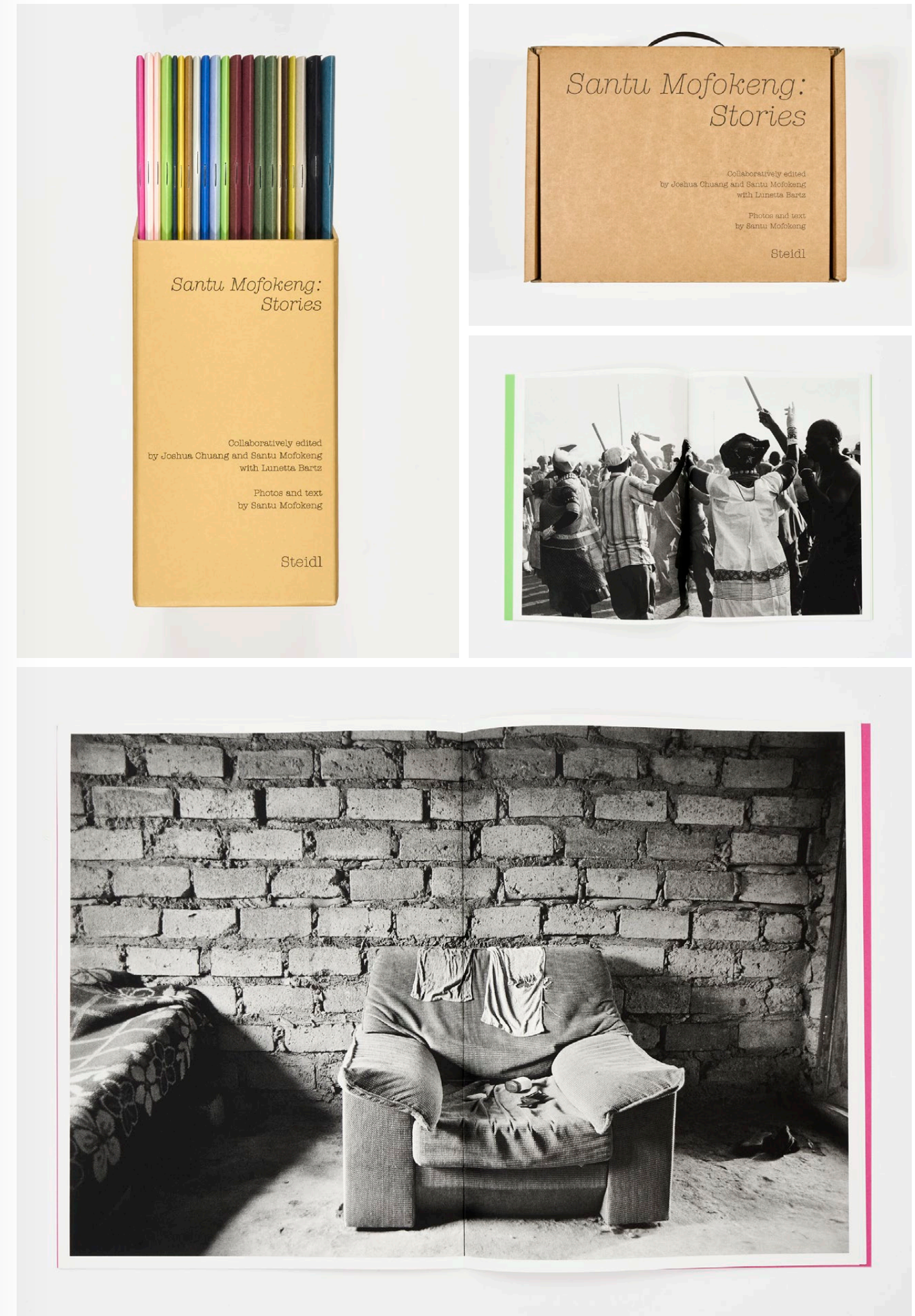
Göttingen, Steidl, 2019

1046 pp

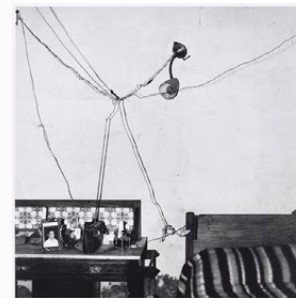
A collaboration between Mofokeng, bookmaker Lunetta Bartz, editor-curator Joshua Chuang and German publisher Gerhard Steidl, this 21-book anthology presents a selection of 551 photos drawn from an archive of approximately 30 000 frames made between 1985 and 2011. The work is organised into 18 essays or “stories” that capture the full ambition of Mofokeng’s projects documenting political resistance, democratic voting, labour tenancy, faith and cultural practice. The book project was a major restatement of Mofokeng’s already heralded career. It clarifies the temporal context of his photography, as well as makes clear its origins in photojournalism and rootedness in documentary. Mofokeng introduces each book. “Most of the time, when I’ve looked at catalogues or exhibition texts in which experts come in and talk about my work, I don’t like it,” Mofokeng told curator Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2002. “I’d like to be the interpreter of my work.”

“Santu’s individual pictures – previously understood as exceptional scenes plucked from his idiosyncratic peregrinations – [have] been scored into a more complex composition, substantially deepening the mystery and ambivalence that had long been the hallmark of his work.”

—Joshua Chuang, *Apollo*, 21 February 2020



Artworks and Boundary Objects



Roger Ballen (b.1950, New York, United States)
Bedroom of Railway Worker, De Aar, 1984
Gelatin silver print, 40 x 40 cm
Courtesy of Scheryn Collection

"Dorps was probably the most important project in my career because I started using a flash," Roger Ballen said in conversation with Sean O'Toole. "I went inside and never really took pictures outside again. I went inside the psyche rather than staying on the street... I found the place of the mind, found something that struck a real chord in those interior spaces." *Bedroom of Railway Worker, De Aar* is one such image, pictured in the four-year period from 1982 to 1986 during which Ballen was working as a geologist in South Africa, travelling to far-flung, rural towns or 'dorps'. Among his earliest still lifes, this photograph offers a prelude to the distinctly graphic and unsettling style for which he is now known.



Walter Battiss (b.1906–1982, Somerset East, South Africa)
My Typewriter, c.1960s
Oil and mixed media, 37.5 x 33 x 25.5 cm
Courtesy of private collector

Walter Battiss remains an enduringly enigmatic figure in South African art history. In pursuing a new African modernism, he experimented with such seemingly incongruent styles as Post-Impressionism and Pop Art, paired with formal elements borrowed from San rock paintings, Arabic calligraphy and Ndebele beadwork. While the artist described himself as the "first neo-primitive in South Africa", others variously classed Battiss as a "gentle anarchist", "amateur anthropologist", "paunchy painter-poet", and "wandering nude". *My Typewriter's* genre-bending form signals the beginning of Battiss's more conceptual pursuits. Made in the mid-1960s, the painted object is contemporaneous with the artist's *Limpopo* (1965), a book included in this exhibition.



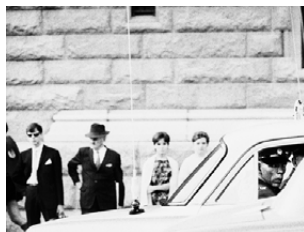
Zander Blom (b.1982, Pretoria, South Africa)
Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. Bedroom 1, Corner 3, 7.00 pm, Tuesday, 7 August 2007
Ultrachrome ink on cotton rag, 56 x 81 cm
Courtesy of Stevenson

"I initially used the medium of photography to record subjects for drawings, prints and paintings. Later, I photographed the drawings and paintings to keep track of what I was making," Zander Blom writes in the introduction to his first catalogue raisonné, *The Drain of Progress* (2007), included in this exhibition. The book offers an overview of the artist's propositional practice of the time, which explored the after-image of European Modernism in installations composed of paper, tape and household objects. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* extends a punky, DIY imagining of Picasso's masterpiece, the precarious composition photographed against a domestic (and somewhat derelict) setting.



David Goldblatt (b.1930–2018, Randfontein, South Africa)
Climbing into kibbles at the shaft-head, the shift gets ready to go down. President Steyn No.4 shaft, Welkom, Orange Free State, 1969
Gelatin silver print on fibre-based paper, 49.5 x 33.5 cm
Courtesy of private collector

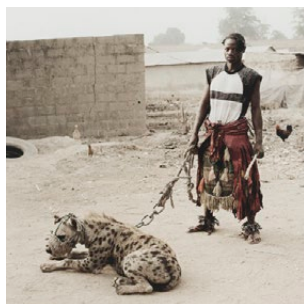
A pre-eminent chronicler of South African life under apartheid and after, David Goldblatt bore witness to how this life is written on the land, in its structures or their absences. Unconcerned with documenting significant historic moments, his photographs stand outside the events of the time and yet are eloquent of them. Even in those images that appear benign, much is latent in them – the values and conditions that have shaped the country; those structures both ideological and tangible. *Climbing into kibbles at the shaft-head, the shift gets ready to go down. President Steyn No.4 shaft, Welkom, Orange Free State* is taken from his photobook *On the Mines* (1973), included in this exhibition.



David Goldblatt (b.1930—2018, Randfontein, South Africa)
Policeman in a squad car on Church Square, Pretoria (Tshwane), Transvaal (Gauteng), 1967

Gelatin silver print on fibre-based paper, 30 x 38 cm
Courtesy of private collector

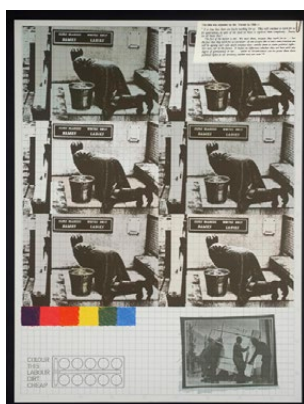
Of this work, *Policeman in a squad car on Church Square, Pretoria (Tshwane), Transvaal (Gauteng)*, Goldblatt said: "I was photographing in Pretoria, on Church Square, when into my viewfinder came a police squad car. The policeman sitting in the back glared out at me. I almost instinctively photographed him. But at the same time, I was very aware of people behind the policeman, a row of solid white citizens standing in a bus queue. And I see myself in that bus queue being protected by that very policeman's gun."



Pieter Hugo (b.1976, Johannesburg, South Africa)
Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara, Abuja, Nigeria, 2005

Archival pigment ink on cotton rag, 51 x 51 cm
Courtesy of private collector

"My eye is drawn," Pieter Hugo has written, "to the peripheral, particularly in Africa, and I negotiate contexts where the cultural nuances of our time are amplified." *Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara* appears in *The Hyena and Other Men*, a photographic essay that documents the Gadawan Kura, an itinerant family of traditional healers and entertainers. "The motifs that linger are the fraught relationships we have with ourselves, with animals and with nature." Hugo said of the series, "the hybridisation of the urban and the wild, and the paradoxical relationship that the handlers have with their animals – sometimes doting and affectionate, sometimes brutal and cruel...".



Gavin Jantjes (b.1948, Cape Town, South Africa)
Colour These Blacks White (A South African Colouring Book), 1974—5
Screenprint on card, 60.2 x 45.2 cm
Courtesy of Iziko South African National Gallery

Produced in the style of a children's activity book, Gavin Jantjes' *A South African Colouring Book* offers readers a radically simplified view of apartheid, reducing its everyday absurdities and cruelties to instructions like "Colour this Whites Only" and "Colour this Labour Dirt Cheap". Jantjes was banned from South Africa as a result of the work's publication. Living in Germany and shocked by his German peers' inability to understand the reality of apartheid, *A South African Colouring Book* relays information as if – in Jantjes' words – "one were explaining something to a child." Images for *A South African Colouring Book* were sourced from the archives of the

African National Congress and the International Defense and Aid Fund, and several of the photographs come directly from Ernest Cole's seminal photobook *House of Bondage*. Four of the eleven *Colouring Book* images are included in this exhibition.



Peter Magubane (b.1932, Vrededorp)
Give peace a chance, Soweto, 1976
Gelatin silver print, 29.5 x 44 cm
Courtesy of Goodman Gallery

Peter Magubane is recognised for his fearlessness in documenting apartheid's subjugation of black South Africans. He was arrested on numerous occasions and sentenced to nearly 600 days in solitary confinement. In Magubane's words: "I did not want to leave the country to find another life. I was going to stay and fight with my camera as my gun. I did not want to kill anyone, though. I wanted to kill apartheid." Magubane was influential in persuading youth in Soweto to allow journalists to cover their protests and the weeks of violence that followed, telling schoolchildren, "A struggle without documentation is no struggle". *Give Peace a Chance* is such a document.



Peter Magubane (b.1932, Vrededorp)
Mine recruits humiliated by being forced to strip naked for tuberculosis examination, Witwatersrand, 1968

Gelatin silver print, 29.5 x 45.5 cm
Courtesy of Goodman Gallery

The mistreatment of black mineworkers was a compelling subject for many photographers in South Africa. New recruits were employed for only 18 months at a time, and lived in overcrowded hostels. This photograph, in which workers are stripped and humiliated, illustrates the extent to which black labour was exploited in service of white South Africa's economic prosperity. Formally and thematically similar to a photograph by Ernest Cole in *House of Bondage*, the two photographers reportedly came to blows over their identical subjects.



Santu Mofokeng (b.1956—2020, Soweto)
Concert at Sewefontein, Bloemhof, 1989

Gelatin silver print, 100 x 150 cm
Courtesy of private collector

There is to all Santu Mofokeng's works a quietude – the artist looking not to political drama but to life's minutiae. The tumult of the times, Mofokeng believed, need not be made explicit in photographs. Rather, he suggested, "the violence is in the knowing"; latent in the very places and people he pictured. In 1988, Mofokeng began documenting the lives of tenant labourers in the township of Bloemhof, North West Province. The resulting series of three interconnected photo-essays offers intimate insight into a small and poverty-stricken community and their participation in South Africa's first democratic election. These essays form part of a larger project, Mofokeng's *Stories* (1986-2004), a photobook of 18 parts, which is included in this exhibition.



Zanele Muholi (b.1972, Umlazi)
Hlanzeka III, Vineyard Hotel, Room 153, Cape Town, 2017

Gelatin silver print, 80 x 56 cm
Courtesy of private collector

Zanele Muholi's photographic project address the absence in the image-archive of black, queer South Africa, which is all but rendered invisible in national histories. In *Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness)*, a series of self-portraits to which these works belong, Muholi gives themselves to be seen as subject. Each photograph is an insistence of selfhood, each a gesture of historical restitution. In referencing the conventions of ethnographic imagery, colonial photography and classical paintings, Muholi reflects not only on past politics of representation but on contemporary images of blackness. Three works from *Somnyama Ngonyama* appear in this exhibition, including *Bangizwenkosi*, *The Sails, Durban* and *Qiniso, The Sails, Durban*.



Albert Newall (b.1920—1989, Manchester, United Kingdom)
Harmonic Development within a Square, 1958

Oil on board, 60 x 60 cm
Courtesy of SMAC Gallery

Albert Newall was best known for his abstract paintings – among them *Harmonic Development within a Square* – but also worked as a photographer. Immigrating to South Africa following his service as an aerial photographer in the Royal Air Force during World War II, Newall often remarked that his paintings were informed by a view of the world seen from the air. His photobook *Images of the Cape* is on display in this exhibition. Produced seven years after this painting, *Images of the Cape* demonstrates Newall's attraction to rhythm, pattern and geometry in nature, as well as his reticence to engage with the politics of South Africa at the time.



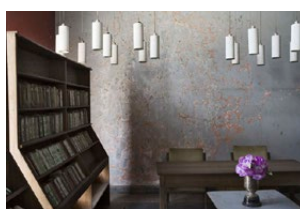
Robin Rhode (b.1976, Cape Town, South Africa)
Catch Air, 2003
 Chromogenic prints, 26.4 x 34.3 cm each
 Courtesy of Stevenson

In all Robin Rhode's work, line is primary. Distilling performance, drawing and photography into images, Rhode considers himself more a formalist than social messenger, an artist concerned with the many tensions between image and object; the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, represented and real. A playfulness colours all his images, as too does an improvisational sense of making do with the materials at hand. "We use humour as a mode of survival," Rhode says of South African youth culture, which informs his work's street-wise sensibility. "We use play as a means to destabilise various dominant structures." Creating sites of engagement within the city, the sidewalk becomes a stage; an actor, always anonymous, appears. Rhode's work more often persists as a document, the original offering only transitory.



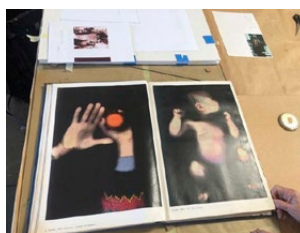
Gerard Sekoto (b.1913—1993, Botshabelo, South Africa)
Street Musician in District Six, c.1943—44
 Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm
 Courtesy of private collector

"All that I do, even outside of South Africa," Gerard Sekoto wrote, "is still with the eye, the heart and the soul of the land of my birth." Counted among the country's first black modernists, Sekoto's paintings transcribed everyday life into images of profound humanity. He took as subject the scenes around him, more often set in Sophiatown, District Six, and Eastwood. By the 1950s, all three suburbs had been razed under the Group Areas Act. Sekoto had left for Paris in 1947, a year before apartheid became state legislation. While he returned often to township scenes in his paintings, Sekoto would never again return to South Africa. He died in exile in 1993, shortly before the country's first democratic election. *Street Musician in District Six* dates from 1942, shortly before the Cape Town municipality mandated the demolition of the neighbourhood; the same in which A4 opened to public in 2017.



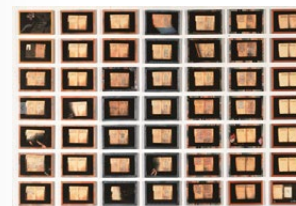
Guy Tillim (b.1962, Johannesburg, South Africa)
Library, sports club, Kolwezi, DR Congo, 2007
 Archival pigment ink on cotton rag, 49.7 x 71.4 cm
 Courtesy of Stevenson

Guy Tillim's photograph of a sports club in the Democratic Republic of the Congo speaks to the flexibility and ubiquity of libraries. His particular fascination with the postcolonial on the continent informs his approach: "My journeys have been idiosyncratic, often purposeless, not so much to commit journalism as to travel for its own sake. Perhaps the more successful images reflect this; perhaps a pattern can be discerned from their parts. I can describe moments, or trace a journey, by the images I am left with. They themselves form a thread."



Sue Williamson (b.1941, Lichfield, United Kingdom)
Demonstration book showing the working of the colour photocopier acquired by Sue Williamson in 1990, c.1990
 Laser prints, glue, hardcover book, 47 x 32 x 3,5 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

In this, a bound book of colour photocopies of various subjects, Sue Williamson's commitment to historical veracity and her archival inclination for accumulation are apparent. Trained as a printmaker and journalist, Williamson's practice found particular affinity in the photocopier: part printing press, part tape recorder. Acquiring the device in 1990 for a residency at the South African National Gallery, the photocopier was one of only three such copiers in Cape Town. To the artist, the luxury of its immediate results stood in sharp contrast to the long wait of shooting with film or making a screenprint. *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart*, Williamson's record of the passbook of John Ngesi from the same year, is also on display in the exhibition.



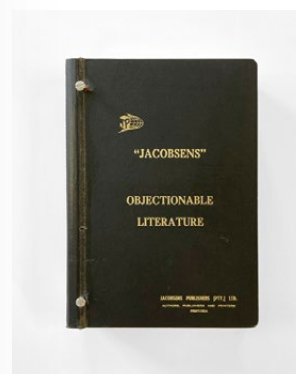
Sue Williamson (b.1941, Lichfield, United Kingdom)
For Thirty Years Next to His Heart, 1990
 Colour laser prints in artist's frames, 196 x 262 cm
 Courtesy of private collector

Sue Williamson's *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart* is a photographic portrait of John Ngesi told in forty-nine parts: from the inside pocket of a blazer and hand to the many pages of a passbook, filled with stamps and signatures. Central to Williamson's practice is a preoccupation with "people's exact words and precise narratives." Trained as a printmaker and journalist – two disciplines that necessitate exactitude – there is to all her work a formal and conceptual rigour. *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart*, which proceeds the 1986 repeal of the Pass Law, is a precise record of movement over time documenting the trap that apartheid legislation held fast around black bodies.



Alana Blignaut (b.1992, Calvinia)
Mary, Recitation, 2019
 Single-channel video, dimensions variable
 Courtesy of private collector

Extending the genre of photographic portraiture to forensic imaging, Alana Blignaut's *Mary, Recitation* uses facial averaging techniques towards poetic ends. The digital video piece features the faces of South Africans deemed "known or suspected activists" by the apartheid-era Security Branch. As a restorative gesture, the work, in the artist's words, "embodies a desire to make archival facial imagery relating to traumatic historical events open to public consideration without revealing personal information of those imaged; and the interface as a historiographic intervention into the archive."



Jacobsens Publishers
"Jacobsens" Index of Objectionable Literature, 1956—1991
 Loose-leaf sheets in hardcover binding, 31 x 22.2 x 5.2 cm
 Courtesy of Stellenbosch University Library

An unofficial, loose-leafed publication, the "*Jacobsens*" *Index* listed printed matter banned each month in accordance with the apartheid-era Government Gazette. It was used primarily by librarians and booksellers to ensure no illicit materials made it onto their bookshelves. Those books found guilty of "offensive intermingling", "loose morals" and "subversive propaganda", while removed from public circulation, found unlikely company in the pages of "*Jacobsens*", from anti-apartheid flyers to a manual on Czechoslovakian sewerage systems. "It was, in a sense, the Book of Books, whose word is set up against that of others," said Nadine Gordimer, describing it as the "bible of censorship in South Africa." Photographers listed in the *Index* include Ernest Cole, Omar Badsha, Peter Magubane, and Eli Weinberg, all represented in this exhibition.





What is the risk of producing a photobook?

How is that risk expressed?

Is political and aesthetic risk mutually exclusive?

How does the internet inflect our understanding of risk, now, in 2022, when the book is no longer the apex form of distributed knowledge?

Photo book! Photo-book! Photobook! — Wayfinder (2022)

Written by Sean O'Toole

Design — Ben Johnson

Editor — Sara de Beer

Texts for 'Artwork and boundary objects' — Lucienne Bestall and Margot Dower

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**11 Feb '22 —
29 April '22**