

**#54 October 2020 Cameraderie
David Goldblatt (1930-2018)**



South African photographer David Goldblatt passed away just two years ago. Through the times of apartheid, he photographed the context and conditions that created apartheid, although not overt apartheid, leading his contemporaries to opine that he lacked commitment, whereas he felt he was pursuing the same goal, but more subtlety. His work is represented in museum collections throughout the world; he has had major exhibitions; and he has published several books of documentary photographs.

See the Wikipedia article on Goldblatt here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Goldblatt.

Here is a link to an artists website, directly to Goldblatt's page, which has fine survey of his work: <https://art21.org/artist/david-goldblatt/>.

Here is some more detail from the Wikipedia article:

Throughout his years as a photographer, Goldblatt never saw himself as an artist, and he was uncomfortable being seen as one. Many agree that he was a **documentarian** more than he was an artist. Goldblatt had an innovative approach to documentary photography. *He made a life of photographing the issues that went beyond the events of apartheid and documented the conditions that led to them* [italics mine]. Goldblatt was never comfortable with the fine art world. He went to exhibition openings but secretly hated the attention they threw upon him. He got around the label of artist by simply calling himself a photographer. He said: "I am a self-appointed observer and critic of the society into which I was born, with a tendency to giving recognition to what is overlooked or unseen."

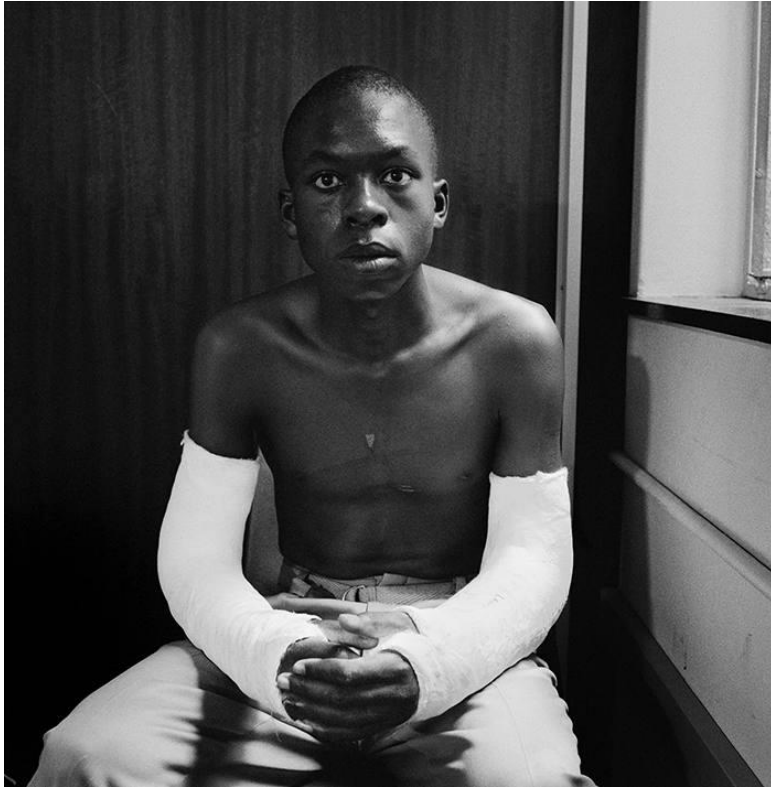
Goldblatt's photography was not obviously politically charged. He claimed he was not an activist, unlike the majority of his friends and other photographers during this time. He in turn was looked down upon and disrespected for not involving himself in activism, on which he commented: "I wasn't prepared to compromise what I regarded as my particular needs."

During Apartheid, Goldblatt in his work *The Transported of KwaNdebele* documented the excruciatingly long and uncomfortable twice-daily bus journeys of black workers who lived in the segregated "homelands" northeast of Pretoria. The conditions had not changed that much for workers by 2007: "The bulk of people who live there still have to travel to Pretoria by road. It's still a very long commute for them every day – two to eight hours. . . . It will take generations to undo the consequences of Apartheid."

In the work Goldblatt created during apartheid he never photographed in colour. Goldblatt observed that: "the use of colour during apartheid would have been inappropriate. It would have enhanced the beautiful and the personal, whereas black and white photographs ... more effectively documented the external dramatic contradictions that defined this earlier period."

After apartheid, Goldblatt continued to photograph within South Africa, particularly its landscapes.

I cannot find the title or story of this image.



This poignant image speaks for itself. Note the excellent use of available side-lighting from the window.

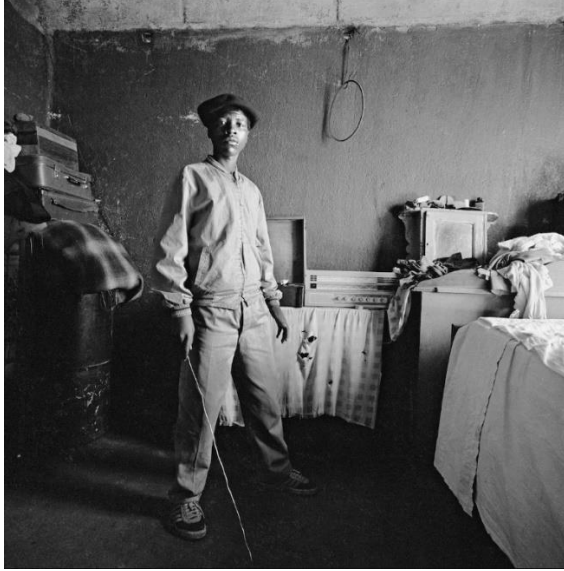
This is an image of the rigors of commuting long distances on public transportation in order to get to/from work, when the races are drastically separated.



We have a chance here to see the image as shot, and a cropped version of a nearly identical shot. Which do you prefer to tell the burden of apartheid on commuting workers?

A tsotsi [street thug] with his draad (shortened wire for street fighting), 1388A, White City, Jabavu Soweto, September 1972.

Young man at home, White City, Jabavu, Soweto, 1972.



Here are two more images making use of side-lighting from open windows.

Note: The South African term, “tsotsi,” for street thug, was also the title of a 2005 film that won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film.