

Dave Robertson

I am a self-taught visual artist, born in Zimbabwe and based in Cape Town.

My photographic work is primarily a form of social commentary. 'Plakkerskamp, Bonnievale 2003 -2012', my first photographic book, was recently published by a humanitarian organisation in Luxembourg, Europe. The book spans nine years and documents a group of marginalised people living in an informal settlement a few hours drive from Cape Town.

A career highlight for me, was winning an award at Spier Contemporary 2010 for a documentary photographic project focussing on informal recyclers in Johannesburg. Prior to this, I was best known for a series of expressionist, hand-painted photographs of township scenes in Southern Africa which were exhibited at galleries in Germany, the Netherlands and at "Photo LA 2004" in Los Angeles, USA.

More recently my work has been exhibited by several galleries in South Africa including the Irma Stern Museum, the Bell-Roberts Gallery, Kalk Bay Modern, Focus Contemporary and the Kim Sacks Gallery.

For the past 15 years, I have also been working as a freelance art director in the film industry and have recently retired to focus on becoming a full-time visual artist.

Worldart gallery, Cape Town hosted my first exhibition of large-scale abstract paintings in 2011. Entitled 'concrete trails, urban tails', the show was surprisingly successful and sold out in a few weeks.

Recent Exhibitions

2016 "Ephemeral Pleasures", group show, Moor Gallery, Franschoek.

2016 "Muse Montage", Eclectica Modern Gallery, Cape Town.

2016 "Materialisation", group show, Art in the yard gallery, Franschoek.

2016 "A tribute to Rose Korber", group show, AVA Gallery, Cape Town.

2015 Twenty: "Art in the time of Democracy", University of Johannesburg.

2015 Twenty: "Art in the time of Democracy", Pretoria Art Museum.

2015 "Partially Nomad", THATARTFAIR, Woodstock , Cape Town.

2014 "Twenty years of Democracy", Appalachian State University, North Carolina.
2014 "Urban Wonderland", Kalk Bay Modern, Cape Town.
2014 "Great stock", group show, AVA Gallery, Cape Town.
2014 "Partially Nomad", Solo show, Res Gallery, Johannesburg.
2013 "Artreach", group show, AVA Gallery, Cape Town.
2013 "Plakkerskamp, 2003 - 2012", award winner, Luxembourg Book Awards 2013.

2012

'Plakkerskamp, Bonnievale 2003-2012', Chateau de Wiltz, Luxembourg

2011

'concrete trails urban tales', (abstract paintings), Worldart Gallery, Cape Town

2010

"Point of Focus", (Group photographic show), Kalk Bay Modern, Cape Town.
"Bonani Africa Festival", (Group photographic show), Cape Town.
Spier Contemporary 2010 : Award Winner for 'Paper Trails' documentary series.

2009

"Spirit of Ubuntu", (Group photographic show), Exposure Gallery, Cape Town.

2008

"Rain", Focus Contemporary Gallery, Cape Town.

2007

"Abstract Egypt", Focus Contemporary Gallery, Cape Town.
"CT 24", (Group show), Focus Contemporary Gallery, Cape Town.

2005

"Remember", Irma Stern Gallery, Cape Town.

2004

"De Dependance", Smelik & Stokking, Den Haag, Netherlands.
"PhotoLA 2004", The Perfect Exposure Gallery, LA, USA.

2001

"Collaborative art", The Upstairs Gallery, Cape Town.
"Absolut Cape Town", (Group show), Pinnacle Building, Cape Town.

2000

"Metaphysical photography", Upstairs Gallery, Cape Town.
"Collaboration", (Group show), Bell-Roberts Gallery, Cape Town.

1999

"Colour Spirit", Jazz Radio Station, Berlin, Germany.
Exhibition of lithographs: Kim Sacks Gallery, Johannesburg.

1998

"Colour Spirit", Marzahn Library, Berlin, Germany.
"Colour Spirit", ARTCO, Leipzig, Germany.
"Colour Spirit", Jojo Centre, Berlin, Germany.
"Colour Spirit", Ariadne Gallery, Pamos, Cyprus.

An interpretation of life on the streets of Cape Town in the winter of 2008, captured from the interior of my car during persistent rainy outbursts. Throughout the process of capturing these images there was a strong sense of the rain-splattered windows of my vehicle acting as a barrier separating me, the protected insider from the outsiders whose lives were in disruption.

This experience increased my awareness of the divide between the life of an insider and an outsider.

Photographed entirely through the windows of my car, the images are not digitally manipulated apart from the obvious adjustments of colour and contrast.

African hand-painted photographs

These images depicting aspects of marginalised lifestyles in Southern Africa, originated as black and white photographs to which I added colour. An approach that had its roots in the pre-democratic period of South African history and reflects my belief that the addition of vibrant colour offered an antidote to what was often a dark and volatile period.

Informal Recyclers

A body of work entitled: 'Paper Trails'

Every day, a number of men and woman sort through unwanted material that accumulates at urban outlets. Informal recyclers, the so-called "trolley people" load up their makeshift carts with wastepaper and cardboard and push their cargo to recycling depots, where their collections are sorted and weighed and they are paid a small fee for their labour. From there, the material undergoes recycling processes and is transformed so that it can re-enter the formal economy, until it ends up once again on the refuse heaps of South Africa's cities and the process begins anew.

Although their main ambition is to survive, the "trolley people" have for many years been inadvertently helping to raise awareness about recycling possibilities.

As such they are accidental pioneers in the recycling trend in our country. Yet the more proactive the public becomes about sustainable living, the less opportunity there will be for these informal recyclers to continue exchanging waste for cash to ensure their daily survival. These images, photographed over a few years, offer a glimpse into the fragile existence of recyclers operating in Newtown, Johannesburg.