

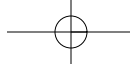
STEVENSON GALLERY / VOSSI MILO GALLERY

**Pieter Hugo (above)**  
*Johannesburg, Gauteng Province*

The South African Pieter Hugo was commissioned to take landscape

photographs and chose to focus on the Witwatersrand, the gold mining region that surrounds Johannesburg. He meandered along the city's Main Reef Road, which connects the towns that have sprung up

close to the mines. Hugo was attracted to the notion that Main Reef Road is a modern equivalent of the Roman Via Appia. "All South Africa's wealth was generated along this road," he says.



## PHOTO ESSAY

# Transition

## Contested landscapes in South Africa

*Photography by Philippe Chancel,  
Raphaël Dallaporta, Pieter Hugo,  
Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi, Jo Ractliffe,  
Thabiso Sekgala and Alain Willaume*

In Southern Africa, landscape photography is invariably political. The camera was an important tool to Europeans in the appropriation of land. In 1858, the Scottish missionary David Livingstone asked his brother Charles to photograph an expedition to the Victoria Falls (which he had “discovered” in 1855). He wanted “to extend the knowledge already attained of the geography and mineral and agricultural resources” there, in the hope that “raw material” might be “exported to England in return for British manufactures”.

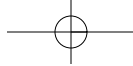
When those that followed came to depict the land for its own sake, they relied on a visual aesthetic adopted from French art. They did not record the landscape: they “invented” it. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, white salon photographers developed an iconography that aimed to reveal a virgin territory whose mountains, plains and tribal inhabitants illustrated the grandeur of the imperial project.

A century after the Natives Land Act 1913, which restricted black South Africans from legally acquiring land, a group of photographers affiliated with Johannesburg’s Market Photo Workshop, founded by David Goldblatt, and with Les Rencontres d’Arles in France has produced a body of work to interrogate this complex history.

Questions of ownership, identity, reparation and brutality are wrapped up in images of anti-fracking demonstrations in the Karoo, portraits of platinum miners taken before and after last year’s massacre at Marikana, and the annual Umkhosi Womhlanga, at which 15,000 young women are investigated, and then celebrated, for their chastity.

“South Africa is such a fractured, schizophrenic, wounded and problematic place,” says Pieter Hugo (*left*), whose contribution to the project focuses on the roads around gold mines, coming full circle on Livingstone’s hunt for “raw material”. “I am looking for images that reflect the aftermath and psychology of the failed colonial experiment.” ●

*Philip Maughan*

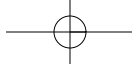


**Jo Ractliffe (above and below)**  
*Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein,*  
*Northern Cape Province*

For the past five years from her base in Johannesburg, Jo Ractliffe has focused on the aftermath of the Angolan civil war, which began in 1975. Recently she has been exploring old South African Defence Force bases. Black settlers were expelled from these small towns in the

1950s to 1970s. There were training camps here during the 1966-89 “border war”, and then the SADF relocated recruits from Angola to the sites during the transition from apartheid. “There are conflicting narratives,” Ractliffe says. “There were reports of people being forced to volunteer. But then there are other stories, saying the SADF saved them. We fled Angola, they say, as if the passage to South Africa was the passage out of slavery.”

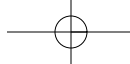




**Philippe Chancel (right and below)**  
*Magopa, North-West Province*

It is hard to determine the borders of the Magopa region precisely, as it was wiped off the map years ago. Black settlers bought the land, originally Bakwena territory, from Afrikaner farmers in the early 20th century and lived here until 1983, when the apartheid government drove them out. Large diamond and platinum mining companies have since turned the land inside out and fostered the creation of townships. Philippe Chancel visited Lonmin's concession at Marikana before and after the strike that led to the killing of 34 miners last August. "Even the South African media called it a massacre," he says. "It was impossible to remain indifferent." The grey slag churned from the earth contrasts starkly with the reddish rock.





### **Thabiso Sekgala (above)**

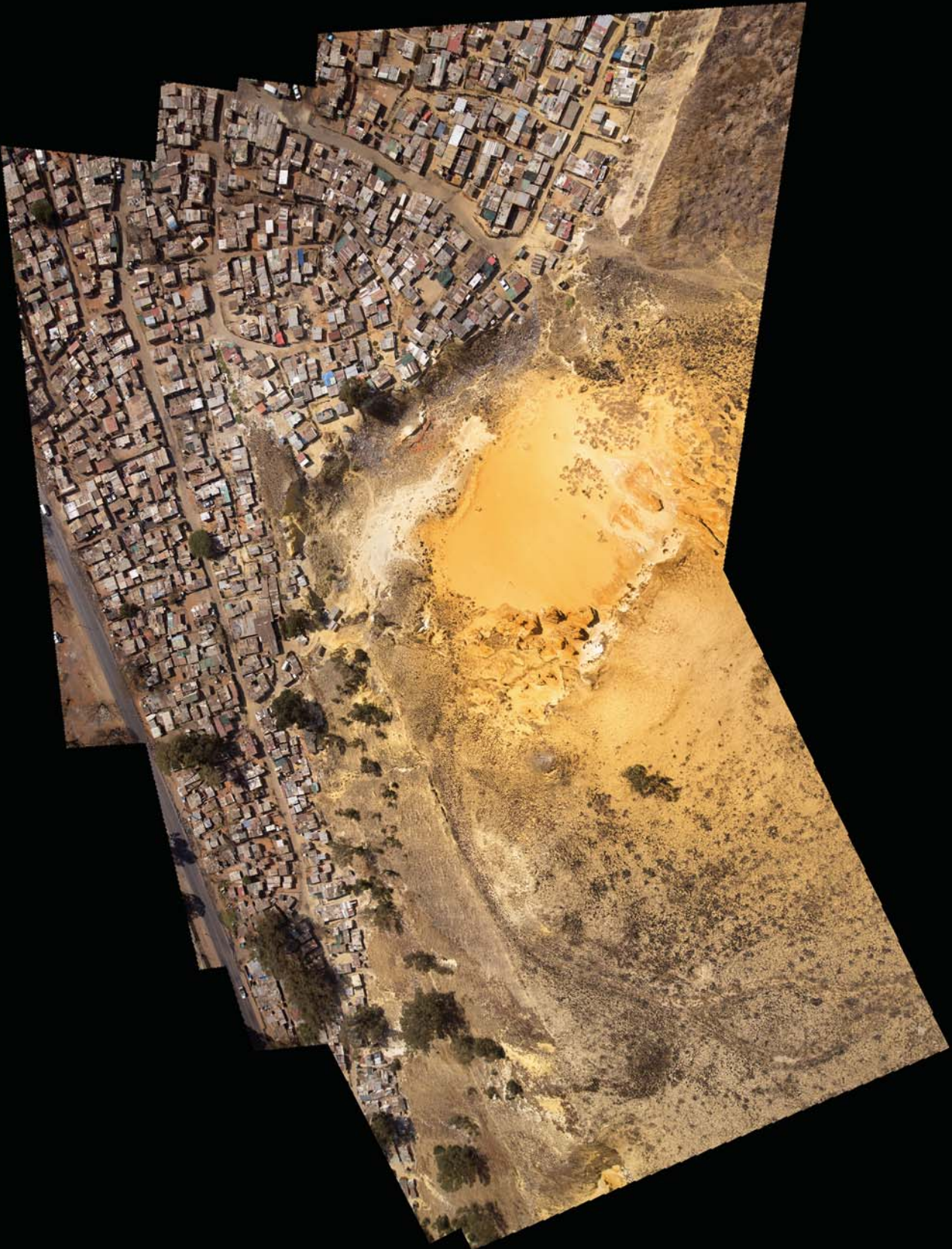
*Magopa, North-West Province*

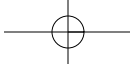
Thabiso Sekgala was born in Soweto in 1981. In 2012 he and Philippe Chancel travelled to Magopa to investigate the problem of contemporary restitution of land in the so-called Black Spots, from which black South Africans were expelled under the apartheid-era “forced removals” programme. He took these photographs around Marikana, where the inhabitants live in rudimentary shelters, without electricity, dwarfed by the cables and pylons that power the mines.

### **Raphaël Dallaporta (right)**

*Johannesburg, Gauteng Province*

Raphaël Dallaporta worked in Afghanistan before coming to South Africa. There he collaborated with archaeologists in remote areas and found that standard documentary techniques were unsuitable. Instead he developed an “inhuman”, aerial point-of-view, which conceives of the land in terms of resources or from the perspective of a military strategist. The photographs were taken using a remote-controlled helicopter with six propellers – a “drone”.





### Alain Willaume (above)

*Karoo*

The Frenchman Alain Willaume travelled to the semi-arid Karoo to document new interest in the region, spurred by the presumed large underground reserves of shale gas and prospects of exploiting them by fracking. “It’s like a wandering black hole,” Willaume says. “A landscape living on borrowed time, the unreal sucking in the real.” No fracking sites exist yet, so it took time to decide what to photograph.



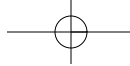
### Santu Mofokeng (left)

*Karoo*

Santu Mofokeng’s meditations on landscape concern areas of the Karoo under investigation by Shell, which plans to exploit local reserves of shale gas. “Whose land is this anyway? There’s going to be fracking everywhere you have shale,” Mofokeng says. “It does not matter if the government is corrupt or weak – the only way to stop fracking in this country is if all people speak with one voice. It can be used as an opportunity to bring together different peoples in a fight against this scourge and use the unifying energy to pursue nation-building.”

● “Transition” is at the *Atelier de Mécanique, Parc des Ateliers*, in the *Rencontres d’Arles* photography festival in Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, France, until 22 September.

(MOFOKENG) TITLE: ACID MINE DRAINAGE, CROWN MINES, JOHANNESBURG, 2011  
LUNETTA BARTZ, MAKER STUDIO (WILLAUME), TENDANCE FLOUE (MUHOLI), STEVENSON GALLERY



### Zanele Muholi

*KwaZulu-Natal Province*

The artist and visual activist Zanele Muholi was born in a township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. She returned to her home province in the east of South Africa to take pictures of the annual Umkhosi Womhlanga (or Reed Dance), at which 15,000 young women gather for a ceremony to recognise their virginity. “The young women must be checked to ascertain that they are virgins in order to join the celebrations,” Muholi explains. “Tradition puts value on a woman who is still a virgin upon marriage. This event is a source of pride for young mothers and the women raising them, but it is also criticised.” She also attended the funeral of Mandisa Mbambo (*far right*) in Durban. Mandisa, a 33-year-old football player who was a lesbian, was found at her home in August 2012. She had been raped and murdered.



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