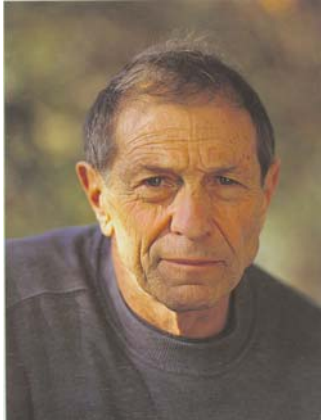


## P r e s s   R e l e a s e



### David Goldblatt – the 2006 Hasselblad Award Winner

The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation has selected South African photographer David Goldblatt to receive the 2006 Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography. The prize, consisting of SEK 500,000 (approximately USD 70,000) and a gold medal, will be presented at a ceremony held in Göteborg, Sweden, on November 25, 2006. A new exhibition of David Goldblatt's work, curated and organized by the Hasselblad Center, will be opened in conjunction with the ceremony.

The Foundation's citation in conjunction with the decision to award the 2006 prize to David Goldblatt was as follows:

*David Goldblatt's work is a life long observation of the social and political developments within South African society. He has been concerned to explore the relationship between individual subjects and the structures within which they live. His interest in the violent history of his country, and his awareness of the symbolic significance of architecture, form an extraordinary statement both personal and socio-political. Photography, in the words of David Goldblatt, reveals "something of the subtlety and ambiguity of our shifting and frequently contradictory perceptions of reality."*

*His acute historical and political perception provides a sense of the texture of daily life, and an important piece of missing information regarding life under apartheid in South Africa."*

This year's prize committee, which submitted its proposal to the Foundation's board of directors, comprised:

Marta Gili, (Chair) Head of Photography and Visual Arts Department, Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, Spain, Judy Annear, Senior Curator Photography, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Miriam Bäckström, Photographer, Stockholm, Sweden, Christine Frisinghelli, Director of Camera Austria, Graz, Austria and Ulrich Pohlmann, Director of the Fotomuseum, Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich, Germany.

In the last fifteen years the photographs of David Goldblatt have been exhibited around Europe, the United States, Australia and South Africa. Today, many of those images are part of collections as relevant as the South African National Gallery, in Cape Town; the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris; the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London; the Museum of Modern Art, in New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Barcelona. But, David Goldblatt has been photographing South Africa for over 50 years now, exploring with a critical view the context in which evolve both the life of its people and the construction of its landscape. For Goldblatt, photography is an instrument that allows him to analyze the social and cultural structures of his country, making possible to sketch a documented and testimonial journey of the evolution of colonialism and apartheid.

David Goldblatt was born in 1930 in Randfontein, a gold mining town near Johannesburg in South Africa, the son of Lithuanian parents, who fled the persecution of Jews in the late nineteenth century. Eli Goldblatt and Olga Light had three sons, David being the youngest. Eli Goldblatt ran a prosperous and well respected menswear business. The Goldblatts were a middle class family, moderate orthodox, who raised their children emphasizing tolerance and antiracism.

He became interested in photography while at Krugersdorp High School. While taking a Bachelor of Commerce degree, his interest in photography continued. He dreamed of becoming a magazine photographer. As a young man, he admired the great days of magazines such as *Life*, *Look* and *Picture Post*. In 1963, following his father's death, he sold the family business and devoted all his time to photography. Gradually, David Goldblatt concluded that his photographs would not illustrate headlines, rather they would be abstract fragments of reality with which he had to build meaning.

Goldblatt is not so much interested in events, in the news as subjects of his photographs, as he is in the critical observation of the conditions of the society he lives in, before they emerge in the form of events. His photographs are concise, but they are not self-explaining, thus the artist's interest in writing very precise captions. To a non-South

African observer, these texts are of vital importance to contextualize the wide range of social and cultural meanings that each one of Goldblatt's images contains.

Almost all of Goldblatt's photographs have different layers of interpretation through which the viewers, according to their experience and previous knowledge, unravel a tale. Indeed, behind each one of Goldblatt's images there are several stories, most of them related to vital questions, which affect in a direct or tangential way the values by which the country moved and moves. Throughout his career, Goldblatt has been searching for a photograph that would discover, probe, reveal or clarify some of these values.

One of his first publications was *On the Mines* (1973), a project in which he portrayed his environment, the people that lived near him, in his community, and who worked in the mines. At the height of the apartheid period, he published *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (1975) in which he explored the values of the, increasingly dominant Afrikaner nationalist culture. In this book, the photographer reveals his concern about the complexity and the ambiguity of the experience of living together with this group, in many cases these people were his own neighbors. Hence his need to make photographs that would not imply a one-dimensional evaluation, but a critical and precise one.

In the early seventies Goldblatt photographed in Soweto, Transkei and Pageview, analyzing daily life under apartheid. Little by little, the cartography of the different social and political realities of the country took on a very personal shape, in agreement with his particular way of conceiving the social use of photography; which avoided the stridency of protest to focus on the silence of observation and analysis.

In the eighties Goldblatt photographed workers on their daily KwaNdebele-Pretoria-KwaNdebele bus ride. Many of them traveled eight hours every day to get to work and return home. Images of packed bodies on the bus, surrendered to sleep, and with faces worn by tiredness, shape the moving story, published in 1989, under the title *The Transported of KwaNdebele*. This essay and book were an attempt to spell out the immediate, daily effects of apartheid on people who were forced to live out its 'dream', the physical separation of the races. Black people in supposedly independent tribal homelands, which were anything but independent, had to go to the 'white' cities to earn a living.

One of the most outstanding features of the work of Goldblatt is his ability to discover the plights of a society by observing its constructions and its landscape. From the sixties until now, Goldblatt has crossed his country photographing architectural structures that altogether reveal the ways in which ideology designs the landscape. Houses, governmental buildings, public housing, churches, monuments, ornamental elements, resettlements

become, under the scrupulous gaze of Goldblatt, essential pieces to rebuild the complex mosaic of values of the South African society.

Since 1999, Goldblatt has examined, through color photography, the various aspects of the post-apartheid society. His renewed interest in the elements of the construction of the South African landscape that reveal the complexities of this country continues to be the driving force of his work.

### Books

*On The Mines* (with Nadine Gordimer). Cape Town: Struik, 1973

*Some Afrikaners Photographed*. Johannesburg: Murray Crawford, 1975

*Cape Dutch Homesteads* (with Margaret Courtney-Clark and John Kench). Cape Town: Struik, 1981

*In Boksburg*. Cape Town: Gallery Press, 1982

*Lifetimes: Under Apartheid* (with Nadine Gordimer). New York: Knopf, 1986

*The Transported of KwaNdebele* (with Brenda Goldblatt and Phillip van Niekerk). New York: Aperture, 1989

*South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*. Cape Town and New York: Oxford University Press and Monacelli Press, 1998

*David Goldblatt 55*. London: Phaidon Press, 2001

*David Goldblatt. Fifty-One Years*. Barcelona: MACBA and Actar, 2001

*Particulars*. Johannesburg: Goodman Gallery Editions, 2003 [Awarded the Arles Book Prize for 2004]

*David Goldblatt. Intersections*. Munich: Prestel, 2005

### The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation

The Erna and Victor Hasselblad Foundation was instituted by a bequest from Erna and Victor Hasselblad. The purpose of the Foundation is to promote scientific education and research in the natural sciences and photography. One of the awards, the annual international award for outstanding achievement in photography, which is being given this year to David Goldblatt, has come to attract a great deal of media attention. In 1989 the Foundation opened the Hasselblad Center in Göteborg, Sweden. The Center maintains an ongoing exhibition and lecture program. In January 1996, the new exhibition hall housed at the Göteborg Museum of Art was inaugurated. A photographic research and reference library, open to researchers and students, is being established, as is a collection of photographs including photos by all the Hasselblad Award winners and others. The exhibit

of David Goldblatt's work to be opened on the occasion of the award ceremony on November 25, 2006 will be organized by the Hasselblad Center.

Göteborg March 8, 2006

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