



David Goldblatt

No Ulterior Motive

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The grandson of Lithuanian refugees, David Goldblatt was born in Randfontein in 1930 and spent most of his life in Johannesburg. From a very young age he showed an interest in photography and took his first images when he was only eighteen. After the death of his father, in 1963 he decided to become a professional photographer.

David Goldblatt scrupulously examined the history and politics of South Africa, where he witnessed the rise of apartheid, its brutal segregationist policies and its eventual disappearance. His sensitive photographs offer a vision of daily life under this regime and in the complex period that followed, when he moved from black and white to colour in his work.

Employing great objectivity, Goldblatt photographed dissidents, settlers and victims of apartheid, the cities where they lived, their buildings, the interior of their homes, etc. His images configure a wide-ranging and moving visual record of this racist regime, a record which, while never explicitly showing its violence, clearly reveals everything it represented, as the artist himself pointed out: "I avoid violence. And I wouldn't know how to handle it as a photographer if I found myself caught up in a violent scene [...] But then I've long since realised - it took me a few years to realise -



Lulu Gebashe and Solomon Mlutshana, who both worked in a record shop in the city, Mofolo Park, 1972

that events in themselves are not so interesting to me as the conditions that led to the events. These conditions are often quite commonplace, and yet full of what is imminent. Immanent and imminent.”

In 1998 David Goldblatt was the first South African to be the subject of a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. His work has been recognised with the Hasselblad (2006) and Henri Cartier-Bresson (2009) prizes and the International Center of Photography award (2013). In 2016 he was made a knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government. He died in Johannesburg in 2018 at the age of eighty-eight.

David Goldblatt: No Ulterior Motive brings together around 150 works from several of the artist’s series with the aim of revealing the continuity of his work while also and for the first time establishing a dialogue with the work of other South African photographers of between one and three generations subsequent to Goldblatt, such as Lebohang Kganye, Ruth Seopedi Motau and Jo Ractliffe. Also on display are three mock-ups of books by Goldblatt, an aspect of his work to which he gave great importance.



Saturday morning at the hypermarket: Semifinal of the Miss Lovely Legs Competition, 28 June 1980, 1980



Miriam Diale, 5357 Orlando East, Soweto, 18 October 1972, 1972

The works on display are from the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Art Gallery and include important recent acquisitions of photographs by Goldblatt. Having been shown at The Art Institute of Chicago between December 2023 and March 2024, Fundación MAPFRE is now presenting the exhibition at its venue on Paseo de Recoletos, Madrid, until August this year. It will then be seen next year at Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (Connecticut).

David Goldblatt: No Ulterior Motive is curated by Judy Ditner (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven), Leslie M. Wilson and Matthew S. Witkovsky (The Art Institute of Chicago).

Key themes in the exhibition

Apparent tranquility: Throughout his career Goldblatt avoided the most difficult and shocking incidents that were a daily reality under apartheid. Rather, he considered that depicting everyday life, “the quiet and commonplace where nothing ‘happened’”, allowed the viewer to draw their own conclusions. The content was implicit in the apparent tranquility and in the very precise captions that

accompany these images, which show ongoing, daily expressions of racism and the economic, social and political exploitation of the Black population under white rule.

Goldblatt, No Ulterior Motive: Goldblatt's status as a white man allowed him greater freedom of movement and he took advantage of that privilege to document life in South Africa in the most honest and direct way possible. In the early 1970s he published a classified ad which read: "I would like to photograph people in their homes [...]. No ulterior motive." Nonetheless, this impartiality concealed a critical perspective towards his country's people, history and geography.

Apartheid: In 1948 the National Party, one of the most visible entities representing Afrikaners (a European, colonizing ethnic group mainly comprising descendants of the Dutch, North Germans and French), came to power in South Africa. This minority of European origin then proceeded to institute apartheid as a State policy while promoting the ideology that people of different racial origins could not live together in equality and harmony. Successive governments reinforced the legacy of racist oppression against non-white peoples (indigenous Africans, people of Asian origin and those of mixed race), who made up more than 80% of the population. In 1990 segregation laws began to be eliminated, the activity of the African National Congress was legalised and its most important leader, Nelson Mandela, who was elected president of South Africa in 1993, was released from prison.



The dethroning of Cecil John Rhodes, after the throwing of human feces on the statue and the agreement of the university to the demands of students for its removal, the University of Cape Town, 9 April 2015, 2015

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Fundación MAPFRE

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Curators

Judy Ditner, Leslie M. Wilson
and Matthew S. Witkovsky

Dates

From May, 30 to August 25, 2024

Opening times

Mondays (except public holidays):
2 pm to 8 pm
Tuesdays to Saturdays: 11 am to 8 pm
Sundays and public holidays: 11 am to 7 pm
(Last access: 30 minutes before closing time.
Visitors must leave the galleries 10 minutes
before closing time)

Ticket prices

Standard: 5 €
Reduced: 3 €
Free entry: Mondays
(except public holidays)

Commented tour

Brief explanation of the main artistic
aspects of the exhibition and its most
outstanding works.

Hours:

Wednesdays and Thursdays: 5 pm to 8 pm
Fridays and Saturdays: 12 am to 2 pm
and 5 pm to 8 pm
Sundays and holidays: 12 am to 2 pm
No additional cost upon entry. Information
at reception desk. Not available in August.

Audio guide

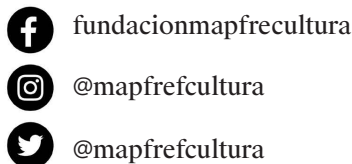
4 €. Spanish and English

Bookshop

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<https://www.fundacionmapfre.org/en/art-and-culture/exhibitions/recoletos-hall/david-goldblatt/>

Cover:

*The son of an ostrich farmer waits with
a labourer for the day's work to begin,
near Oudtshoorn, Cape Province
(Western Cape), 1966*

All images:

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The exhibition is co-organized by the Art Institute of Chicago
and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, in collaboration
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Fundación MAPFRE