

Beyond the Colour Range: A reading of the photographic works of Zwelethu Mthethwa

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Hardly anything, hardly anything, no scenery or hardly any, no houses or hardly any, no objects or hardly any but women, girls, men, boys, children, thousands, millions of them looking at the lens as if it held the world, perhaps encompassed themselves in ideal form. They want to charm, or perhaps they are simply greeting the viewer, not as if waving at their own reflections in a mirror, but offering a greeting of kinship with the world, with society, their family, their culture, having no impact beyond what they think they can offer: a image of themselves in a society that gave them birth. Photography in Africa is not as exotic as it seems from Europe or America, but it is just as rich for those who can divine expressions, the positioning of hands and body, the setting- extraordinary for others, but so commonplace for themselves - quite simply men and women¹

I do not believe that poverty is equal to degradation. For me, colour restores people's dignity. I ask myself why we, as photographers, should deny these people colour while it plays such an important part in their lives. I cannot imagine how drab the photographs I am currently taking would look in black and white, and how desolate their state would be to the viewer's eye. I think these photographs preserve and show a humanness of the occupants in their private spaces. They restore their pride and affirm their ownership.²

The camera in itself is a curious tool, in that it records that which has already passed and captures a singular and elusive moment in time. Through its product, the transparent negative, and *its* by-product the photograph (the testament to that elusive moment in time) it exceeds being merely an instrument that silently and stealthily bears witness to time. In the photograph time loses its infinity and becomes a tangible reality, a place where fiction meets form and form meets fiction - perhaps where form follows fiction? Here time oddly has bounds, in that the photograph is confined by its own perimeters, having a physical edge, a border or frame. But more curious than the camera is the photographer, who plies his or her trade obsessively and ardently using this tool, the camera, in the hope of capturing that elusive moment of time.

Zwelethu Mthethwa acknowledges that he came to photography and to being a photographer by indirect means, as part of finding a roundabout route through the Bantu education system in South Africa in the 1980s. Mthethwa was born in 1960 in Umlazi, Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, the youngest of seven children. This, he insists, has no bearing on who he is today, that is, an internationally reputed artist³. His life's trajectory and artistic career has thus far has been well documented, especially by an interview conducted by Bongzi Dhlomo-Mautlou for the *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa* catalogue, an exhibition held in New York in 1999. Mthethwa decided against pursuing a medical degree after spending six months at the University of Zululand, and prompted and encouraged by an interview with SACED (South African Committee for Higher Education) official Ian McClain, instead decided upon pursuing a career within the visual arts. Thus he enrolled at Abangani Open School for art classes to build up a portfolio for further study and pursue a career in the visual arts. Bongzi Dhlomo-Mautlou

elaborately transcribes, in her interview, how Mthethwa came to study photography from 1984 onwards, at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (UCT), almost by default to get around the Bantu education system - a term used not derogatively but descriptively. At the time, one could only apply or be accepted at a whites only university or institution provided one applied for a course that was not offered at a so-called *black* university.⁴ At UCT he excelled at other visual mediums like painting, drawing and printmaking, but found photography a foreign preoccupation, as it was so alien to anything that existed within his own culture.⁵ Mthethwa admits it was his frustration with the medium of photography that inspired his interest in it, and made the pursuit of it more of a challenge. Ironically, this frustration has made him renowned worldwide, particularly achieving acclaim for his colour photographic portraits of migrant workers in their home interiors of the *Langalabuya* informal settlement outside Paarl (1996), in the Western Cape.⁶

Previous to Mthethwa's *Langalabuya* informal settlement portraits (see illustrations, figure 3-6) Mthethwa was almost virtually unheard of as a photographer, and was more widely known in art circles for his vividly colourful pastel drawings (see illustrations, figure 1&2). His photographic output till 1996 had been restricted to black-and-white imagery, and his move to colour photography suggested not merely a stylistic change to Mthethwa's artistic production and oeuvre. Indeed, it marked the beginning of an investigation into the aesthetic, visual and stylistic implications of a photographer deciding to pursue a photographic cycle either in black-and-white or in colour. After Mthethwa's time at UCT, he received a Fullbright Scholarship in 1987 to undertake a *Master of Fine Arts in Imaging Art* at Rochester Institute of Technology, in New York State in the USA, which he completed in 1989.⁷ Much of Mthethwa's stylistic change has been attributed to his sojourn in the United States and his exposure to the prolific photographic art scene in America in the late 1980s. As a modernist photographer his ideology was deeply rooted in an aesthetic of 'straight' photography and being true to the subject matter.⁸ However, in the 1980s the paradigm of what was considered photography had shifted and became defined predominantly under the rubric of postmodernism, with the move from black-and-white photography to colour being one of the characteristics of that shift. Photographic artists were interested in the growth in colour photographic practices and began experimenting with this new means of composition.⁹ Colour epitomised all that was against the modernist aesthetic of image composure, and was open to more image manipulation by enhancing the intensity of the hues. The use of colour constituted a breakaway from the 'straight' photographic ideology of not manipulating prints.¹⁰

On returning to South Africa at the end of 1989, Mthethwa reviewed his photographic production prior to 1990. In 1986 he had produced a black-and-white photographic series of the informal settlement *Crossroads* in Cape Town. It was particularly in reviewing this series that he was prompted to make the conscious decision to move to colour. Here he came to see his own injustice in having taken these images in black-and-white, as though through these images he was perpetuating a tradition of taking black-and-white images of informal settlements in South Africa. He explained his concerns in the following terms:

Photographs of informal settlements, prior to the elections of 1994, were mostly black-and-white images. The photographers weren't shooting for themselves, they were on assignment and black-and-white was used to suit the political agendas of the time. For me,

these images missed a lot of colour of informal settlements, I wanted to give dignity back to the sitters, I wanted them to have a sense of pride, and for me, colour is a dignifying vehicle. The fact they've allowed me into their personal spaces meant that I had to dignify them.¹¹

In understanding the magnitude of this shift by Mthethwa, one needs to reconsider the photographic works of the 1980s in South Africa, and recontextualise these with regards to their historical milieu. . The 1980s in South Africa has been referred to as the “Black-and-White 80s” for the reason that much of people’s knowledge of current affairs at the time was provided by the black-and-white photographic imagery in the print media. Photographers during this time, black and white alike, began wielding their cameras as weapons, and believed that through a documentary style of photography they could fight the apartheid regime and expose its atrocities to the rest of the world.¹² Before the 1980s, particularly black photographers of the Progressive Photographic Society in the late 1950s were gradually using documentary photography as means of expressing political resistance. However it was *Drum* magazine that showcased the best of black photographers’ work, prior to the 1980s, namely Peter Magubane, Bob Grosani and Alf Kumalo.¹³ *Drum* was one of the first magazines to exert pressure on the apartheid government by presenting the socio-political dynamics of the time through its images.¹⁴ Initially, the magazine functioned as means to express and illustrate the black urban experience, but by the 1970s photographers and writers alike could no longer support the proposed journalistic approach of being neutral bystanders and became actively involved in the struggle.¹⁵ *Drum*’s photographers thus began documenting the lives of the disenfranchised, the miners and migrant workers hostels, the development of trade unions and the rise of black political leaders. A younger generation of photographers followed suit, documenting the struggle and thereby becoming active participants in the struggle, namely Paul Weinberg, Gideon Mendel, Santu Mofokeng, Cedric Nunn, Guy Tillim and so on. In the late 1980s, the books *Beyond the Barricades* and *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* were published. These composite publications of ‘struggle’ photographs, illustrated the significance of these photographer’s works in terms of exerting pressure on the apartheid regime to bring about change and liberation.¹⁶ All of this photographic production was in keeping with a traditional documentary style of black-and-white photography. Originally documentary photographs were only in black-and-white, as photographers could control the reproduction of their photographs by this means. This supposedly guaranteed the integrity of the image and the honesty of the photographer’s output. The inhibiting of colour in their images made it easier for them to control the aesthetic qualities of the image, and this in turn brought a more emotive and connotative resonance to the work, by playing with the tonal value of the black-and-white image.¹⁷

Nonetheless the significance of Zwelethu Mthethwa’s foray into colour photography, in the 1990s, is not merely marked by his breakaway from the tradition of black-and-white imagery in South Africa. It is particularly his interior portraits of 1996, his venture into the homestead (colloquially known as the ‘shack’) and his photographing of these interiors that provides another break from the South African photographic tradition of photographing indigenous people outside their homesteads. Illustrations of these can be seen in anthropological-like photographs by Constance Stuart Larrabee entitled *Ndebele Kraal* (see illustrations, figure 23) and in images from Paul Weinberg’s photographic book *Back to the Land* (See illustrations, figure 24&25). Through Mthethwa’s interior portraits he makes that which is usually *private* public. However

when confronted by the subject's personal and private space he shows a respect for them, congruent with his comment quoted above. Mthethwa's photographing the interior, as opposed to the exterior, of homesteads is not entirely unique in terms of South African photography. What is unique however is that his objectives in taking these images are no longer the same as those of earlier photographers. Throughout the liberation struggle, the 'struggle' photographers took images of interiors of the migrant workers and miners' hostels and shacks in the informal settlements, but kept to the documentary tradition of solely black-and-white imagery. By these images they attempted to highlight the over-crowded and harsh communal living conditions within these living compounds and informal settlements. These photographers documented the influx of rural people to urban centres, the establishment of squatter communities and these people's desolate state.¹⁸ The emphasis was on displaying the poverty and the desperate circumstances of these peoples' existence, in order to demonstrate the injustices of the apartheid regime's policy of cheap manual labour and the *Group Areas Act* to the international community, and thereby gain support for the anti-apartheid struggle. In trying to understand the dramatic shift of the objectives and dynamics existent in Mthethwa's interior photographs in comparison to images from compound/shack interiors from the early 20th century and 1980s, one needs to examine how the trajectory of this imagery, of black people within their living quarters, has evolved over the last century.

David Goldblatt's photograph of a mother and child in the doorway of a hut in the former Transkei, in 1956, is one of the earliest images which begins moving towards the representation of interior space in South African photography (See illustrations, figure 22). Thereafter, harrowing photographic works of compounds and hostels appeared in publications like *House of Bondage*¹⁹ and *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*.²⁰ These images emphasised the severity and inhumanity of the living conditions. Particularly notable was an image by Ben MacLennan in 1980 (See illustrations, figure 26), taken from a high vantage point which showed the concrete slabs that function as beds for the miners, reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps. Goldblatt continued to take shots of interiors in Soweto, though more propelled by illustrating the social fabric as opposed to heightening concerns around the socio-political conditions of the time, yet still subtly alluding to it. As Goldblatt stated in 2002: "Certainly politics has always been on my mind, politics in the broadest sense. *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, was certainly the most explicitly political, while *In Boksburg* was a more oblique and muted engagement with politics. In all of the work I have done though I have been engaged with the consequences of our actions and of our values."²¹ In the 1970s in a photographic cycle entitled *Johannesburg Intersections: Soweto*, Goldblatt explored home interiors further. The photograph of Margaret Mcingana in 1970 (who later became a famous singer Singan Zola) is the most striking. Mcingana is seen here sitting poised and relaxed in her living-room (See illustrations, figure 27-29); she has a self-possessed pose, similar to those of Mthethwa, conscious of the camera lens and comfortable in front it. In Roger Meintjies *Khiki Hostel* series (1987-1989) the similarities to Mthethwa's image composition is clearly visible, in particular the juxtaposition of objects in the interior environment to that of the subject. Here the object provides a means to communicate with the viewer information about the sitter and their existence, but still lends itself to being seen as part of a constructed installation of sorts. A colour photographic image by Mthethwa of two young men sitting alongside each other in tweed-like suits has an obvious similarity (See Catalogue: figure 21) to that of a black-and-white image of Meintjies', of two men sitting alongside each other (see illustrations figure 31). Another image of Meintjies entitled *Night-time, Khiki* (see

illustrations, figure 30) shows the first signs of the camera recording that which is the hostel dwellers private realm, instead of focussing on the communal aspect of the space. The intimacy and the casual poses of the sitters in this image suggests the exposure of a private domain. One can argue that Meintjies' imagery here, at the tail end of the 1980s also demonstrates the beginning of a shift in photographic approaches to documenting township life. This in turn must have influenced Mthethwa's interior images in terms of image composition and in setting the tone for his works in the 1990s.

In reviewing Mthethwa's first interior portrait series *Untitled* 1996 (see illustrations, figure 3-6), one is first struck by the over-saturated hues in play in these images and how the colour brings to life, that which is usually overlooked in these environments when recorded in black-and-white. Here the sitters informally decorate their homes with the debris of everyday life, by using tin food wrappers, print media advertisement posters, and political parties' canvassing campaign posters which is used as impromptu wallpaper. References to consumerism are made here with the repetitive pattern of the wallpaper.²² This is the personification of creating something out of nothing, or of finding and creating beauty from the simple and the mundane, with references to our 'throw-away' culture. The beautifying of the home environment refers back to the reclaiming of dignity in sitter – that despite being poor, they are able to display more than merely poverty and destitution. These home interiors are reminiscent to the assemblages erected in the peace parks in South African townships in the 1980s, a symbol of hope in times of adversity.²³ Essentially, in non-derogatory terms, this showcases the culture of inventiveness, which is prevalent in most third world countries. Furthermore, in these images the viewer is confronted with the sitter's personally constructed space and reality. This in itself presents a means to further situate Mthethwa's artistic production in the postmodern era.

In attempting to map the postmodern condition Jean-Francois Lyotard asserts that grand narratives have disappeared.²⁴ In terms of Mthethwa's interior portraits the mere fact that the viewer is presented with the sitter's private realm, he/she is presented with the sitter's individual narrative. Through the sitter's means of decorating their environments and the arrangement of their personal possessions in the space, they relate to the audience/ viewer information about themselves. Often in these images an inter-relationship between the subject and object exist, which makes the subject and object inter-changeable at times, as the object might relay information about the subject/sitter's needs. As in the *Untitled* (1996) series (see illustrations, figure 4) which shows a print media advertisement, with a luxury goods item on it, this inextricably presents the sitter's desire to possess such items, and suggests that they are driven by consumer culture. Here the object of desire represented in the print media decorating the home interior expresses the desires of the subject/ sitter and supplies more information about the subject/ sitter, thus the object can also be seen as the subject on occasion. Therefore, what is presented here is a reference to the individual and a narrative that attaches itself only to that individual (although the shack dwellers are not physical consumers in this instance as the advertising media operates as décor). Postmodernism's obsession with personal narrative, memory and the negating and re-writing of history comes from the need to hear the former disenfranchised voices and encounters; the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* hearing is evidence of that.²⁵ During the apartheid years, the 'struggle' photographers were concerned with documenting the collective concerns of the nation and the grand narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle. With the fragmentation of the narrative structure in Postmodernism one can say that

what is presented in Mthethwa's images is that each image functions as a trope (tropes being individual detached signifiers or metaphors referring to say a narrative), but this narrative can never exist as one congruent whole, and thus one is never supplied with a complete rendering of this apparent narrative leaving the images open to equivocal interpretations.²⁶

In Mthethwa's imagery one can argue that the two major genres of African photography, documentary- and studio-photography, merge. The influence of studio-photography is apparent in the backdrop-like interiors of the rooms and the poses of the sitters who appear to be completely aware of the camera. In essence both home interiors and studio interiors are constructed spaces, as objects/ props are placed in a particular arrangement. The difference is that the home interiors are private realms and the studio is a public space. Mthethwa's images, however, also function as documentary photography as they record the living environment and daily existence of the subjects. On numerous occasions Mthethwa has been compared to the late West African photographer Seydou Keita (see illustrations, figure 36), because of his framing and composition of the images and the poses of the subjects. Mthethwa's photographs also work in a similar vein to that of photographers Philip Kwame Apagya and Samuel Fosso (see illustrations, 32&37), and particularly the former's images have a similar visual aesthetic to Mthethwa's (his painted studio backdrops bear a distinct likeness to Mthethwa's personally decorated homes). Though the one is a real environment, they both appear like fictional realities. In Mthethwa's images the sitter constructs his/her interior as part of their everyday life, whereas in the Apagya's images the sitter chooses how they want to be depicted and against what backdrop, thus constructing a fictional image of themselves and their circumstance. In the Apagya's image *Frances in Manhattan* (See Appendix: Illustrations figure, 11), the sitter stages and constructs a reality of wealth and success, and sees himself arriving in the 'new world' in search of his fortune. Of studio photography Clare Bell has stated in the catalogue for the exhibition *In/Sight: African photographers, 1940 to the present*:

Portrait photography, in general, creates the illusion of fixed, immutable presence of images rendered as real bodies. When we pose, we either imagine what people see when they look at us and then try to act out this image, or we want to look like someone else and imitate that appearance. We imitate what we think the observer sees, or what we see in someone else, or what we wish to see in ourselves. The process of reconfiguration and the acting out of an ideal is what is fascinating in the character study of African studio portraiture. It evidences not only a social transformation but a structural and ideological one, in which the complex negotiations of the individual desires and identities are mapped and conceptualised.²⁷

Though Mthethwa does not construct the image in his photographic works, which is congruous with postmodern photography, the sitter brings that element of a 'construct' to the image. Yet, Mthethwa's work still has elements of documentary and 'straight' photography within, as he still finds the subject matter for his images in the external world.

In recent years there have been many forms of cannibalism and exploitation of Mthethwa's original interior portraits. The term '*shack chic*' (used in popular interior decorating magazines in South Africa) and the publication of the book, *Shack Chic* (2002) by Craig Fraser is evidence of this, as are the numerous postcards which have sprung up around Cape Town for the tourist

trade, displaying black people within their home interiors. Originally Mthethwa envisioned these images as returning dignity to the sitter.²⁸ In publications like *Shack Chic* this process of photographing has reverted back to a colonising eye. People are exoticised and ‘othered’ once again, by the scrutiny of the lens. There is an element of spectacle in these images by Fraser, as if these people are expected to entertain, and their living quarters are looked upon and perceived as curious and strange. The hyper-real colour in these images suggests an untrue depiction of reality, with the ‘truth’ element from Mthethwa’s quasi-documentary style erased. Further Mthethwa found his images, documenting that which already existed; Fraser’s *Shack Chic* images appear staged and manufactured. This phenomenon of the fabrication of the ‘real’ can be explained by the writings of the French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard and his simulacrum theory. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Baudrillard developed a whole social theory around the notion of the simulacrum; he speaks of the ‘cybernetisation’ of society, where a simulacrum is a copy of the real. With the proliferation of the copy of the real in the mass media, the cybernetic image takes on an independent status divorced from the real and reality. This cybernetic image is considered ‘real’ by audiences, through its reverberation in the media.²⁹ Baudrillard suggests that this brings about a society that is no longer governed by the logic of representation, but instead produces a culture of hyper-reality characterised by reproductions of the real³⁰. Thus, this hyper-real environment presents itself as a spectacle, by which a society can to be entertained. This provides a way of understanding the fundamental difference between Mthethwa’s interior portraits and those of Fraser’s.

In reviewing Mthethwa’s artistic production, one can comment that there are two thematic veins which reoccur in his photographic works: his quasi-documentary imagery, as previously discussed, and imagery that deals mainly with the questioning of the black male identity, as seen in the series *Men and Masculinity* (see illustrations, figure 8&9), *Men in Hostels* (see illustrations, figure 7, 14&15), and more recently in his video work entitled *Flex*, which was exhibited at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, in the latter half of 2002. This questioning of African identity, Kathleen Grundlingh states, is one of the characteristics of post-apartheid photography.³¹ Here Mthethwa means to investigate the black male body as a site of conflict and crisis, similar to the work of the Nigerian photographer Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé who deals with issues relating to sexual politics within a postcolonial paradigm. Bamgboyé has notably said:

I assert the freedom to attempt the deconstruction of Black Myths, to correct the voyeuristic perspective, and to attack prejudices which are constructed and maintained by fears of Black sexuality. I often employ the genre of self-portraiture, recognizing that my work is challenging and risky, my presence signals that I am ultimately responsible for the statements I make.³²

Here both Mthethwa and Bamgboyé, with their similar approaches in investigating the black male body “look” from the place of the ‘other’. Seminal post-colonial theorists Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha have noted, to look from the place of the ‘other’ he/she becomes no other self then, a self that is “fashioned”, a self that is “othered”, which is in effect an alienated self-image.³³ Thus their work can also be seen as similar to the early post-colonialists texts. The colonized ‘write back’, at their colonizers, subverting the cultural forms/tools of their oppressors i.e. the camera, to create a mode of resistance.³⁴ Thus it is through the recording of their own

history, that artists such as Mthethwa can relate history from the standpoint of the subject, and present an alternative to the stereotype, which situates his production as an extension of postcolonial theoretical discourse.

Besides situating Mthethwa's work within postcolonial Africa one needs also to locate it in post-apartheid South Africa. In series like his *Mother and Child* (see illustrations, figure 10) of 2000, one can see the further shift in Mthethwa's rendering of photography – moving beyond photography of the apartheid era. This becomes evident in comparing Mthethwa's *Mother and Child* image to that of an image by Peter Magubane of a Diepkloof mother and child (see illustrations, figure 33). In Magubane's image, the mother is unperturbed by the camera and is half within the frame, while on the other extreme of the photograph the baby child lays on the cement floor. The image speaks more of deprivation than of an intimate moment between a mother and child, with the mother staring into space contemplating her circumstance. In contrast, in Mthethwa's image the mother returns the gaze of the viewer and allows the frolicking play of the toddler, who runs towards the camera. Within the history of art there are a plethora of images relating to the iconography of mother and child imagery, yet Mthethwa's image does not merely add to that genre, but breaks away from traditional photography's rendering of mother and child. In contrast, Magubane's image simply adheres to the status quo with regards to mother and child imagery in traditional photography. There are similarities in this image to one of Dorothea Lange's famous images, the *Migrant Mother* (see illustrations, figure 34), taken as part of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) project³⁵, an image which epitomised the Depression in America. Instead, Mthethwa's image presents a candid moment with a mother and child, and shows the observer that which they are not accustomed to seeing, as a result of the over-saturation of imagery which exists depicting township mothers' hardships rather than their relationships with their offspring. Another move away from traditional 'struggle' photography in Mthethwa's work can be seen in his series *Sacred Homes* (See Catalogue: figure 11-13). Here Mthethwa shows black clergyman within their home-cum-church interiors. This sort of imagery in the apartheid years was restricted to the showing of white priests within the township community, on a humanitarian mission aiding the poor and the dying, as seen in the 1969 photograph by Ernest Cole of Catholic priest giving communion to a sickly woman (see illustrations, figure 35). Mthethwa instead gives the viewer insight into the black urban and township experience, and presents us with images that redefine black spirituality. This is in keeping with other of Mthethwa's works like *Crossings* (1996), of the *Christian Zionist Church* baptisms.

Mthethwa's recent works show a move away from the photographing of interiors with a series of portraits of sugarcane workers, photographed within the landscape in KwaZulu-Natal, under the working title of *Lines of Negotiation* (see illustrations, 18-20). Mthethwa insists that these images do not fall under the rubric of landscape photography, as the landscape forms a backdrop to the portraits of the workers here.³⁶ Thus they are rather environmental portraits, similar to the rest of his photographic oeuvre - people within different settings. In a series entitled *Environmental Portraits* (1999) exhibited at the *Blank: architecture, apartheid and after*³⁷ exhibition in Rotterdam, Mthethwa gives an indication of the significance of this opening up of his interior portraits into the landscape. As in his interior images where he frames within the composition the view of the township streets as seen through the window, in *Lines of Negotiation* the sugarcane workers stand majestically in front of the landscape, with the colour in these

images crisp and clear. Mthethwa insists that there is no localisation in these images and that they are more about the sitters.³⁸ Thus he states that they could have been taken anywhere in the world, as sugar is an international commodity. But it cannot be denied that the glare of the South African sun is evident here and one needs to situate these photographs within a South African context. Of the KwaZulu-Natal landscape Mthethwa has stated:

When I was in KwaZulu-Natal recently I saw landscapes of incredible colour and texture, but I couldn't lift up my camera and take photographs. I don't know why. I have a historical relationship to the land. When one lives off the land, one appreciates it, but I couldn't photograph it.³⁹

With this series Mthethwa manages without initial intent and realisation to photograph the landscape, something he felt unable of doing as a result of his historical relationship to KwaZulu-Natal. He does so via the people he photographs.

In recent years, Mthethwa has spent a vast amount of time photographing in KwaZulu-Natal. The series *Lines of Negotiation* and the *Men in Hostels* series (photographs taken in a male-only hostel in Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal) are a testament of his time there. Ironically, a man who has spent a large part of his life documenting the lives of migrant workers, has become one himself. As the migrant worker/ photographer he continues to search for that which begs to be documented, recorded and eventually decoded and dissected by an audience, with the earnest hope of capturing that elusive moment in time and that which is normally hidden from prying eyes.

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¹ Anonymous

² Zwelethu Mthethwa, 1999

³ Author interview with Zwelethu Mthethwa Cape Town, 21 August 2003

⁴ F. Herreman & M. D'Amato *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa* (New York: Prestel, 1999), 65-67

⁵ Author interview

⁶ O. Zaya, "Identity Webs: On the Portraits of Zwelethu Mthethwa," in T. Macri, *Zwelethu Mthethwa* (Torino: Marco Noire Editore, 1999), 1-3

⁷ C. Brown, *Male Order Catalogue*, (Durban: Durban Art Gallery, 2002), 30

⁸ M. Kohler, *Constructed Realities: The Art of Staged Photography*, (Munich: Edition Stemmler, 1995), 36

⁹ M. Kohler, 37

¹⁰ M. Kohler, 18-19

¹¹ J.E. Lundström and K. Pierre, *Democracy's Images: Photography and Visual Art after Apartheid*, (Umea: Bildsmuseet, 1998), 82

¹² K. Grundlingh, "The Development of Photography in South Africa," in P. M Saint Leon and N. Fall (eds) *Anthology of African and Indian Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 243

¹³ K. Grundlingh, 1999, 244-246

¹⁴ K. Grundlingh, 1999, 244

¹⁵ K. Grundlingh, 1999, 246

¹⁶ K. Grundlingh, 1999, 248

¹⁷ D. Price, "Surveyors and Surveyed: Photography Out and About," in L. Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 111

¹⁸ K. Grundlingh, 1999, 248

¹⁹ E. Cole, *House of Bondage*, (London: Penguin Press, 1969)

²⁰ O. Badsha, *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*, (Cape Town: South African National Gallery, 1986)

²¹ S. O'Toole, "Artbio: David Goldblatt," *Artthrob*. <http://www.artthrob.co.za/02dec/artbio.html>, 2002. Accessed: 23 March 2002

²² M. Godby, "The Drama of Colour," in T. Macri, *Zwelethu Mthethwa* (Torino: Marco Noire Editore, 1999), 4

²³ S. Williamson, *Resistance Art on South Africa*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), 88-89

²⁴ S. Josephy, "Post-apartheid South African Photography," in K. Grundlingh, *2nd Cape Town Month of Photography*, (Cape Town: South African Centre of Photography, 2002), 13

²⁵ S. Josephy, 13

²⁶ V.E. Taylor and C.E. Winquist (eds) *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 407

²⁷ C. Bell, O. Enwezor & O. Zaya, *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the present*, (New York: Guggenheim Museum, c1996), 33

²⁸ J.E. Lundström and K. Pierre, 82

²⁹ V.E. Taylor & C.E. Winquist, 368

³⁰ V.E. Taylor & C.E. Winquist, 369

³¹ K. Grundlingh, *Photosynthesis: contemporary South African Photography* (Cape Town: South African National Gallery, 1997), 4

³² Cited in O. Oguibe, "Cross/ing: Time, Space, Movement" on the *Contemporary Art Museum of South Florida/Museum of African American Art website*, available: http://www.camwood.org/Cont_Africa/crossing1.htm, accessed on 13 May 2002

³³ A. Read, *The fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and visual representation* (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1996), 17

³⁴ E. Cornwell & M. Kelly (eds) *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52

³⁵ L. Wells, *Photography: a critical introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 35-45

³⁶ Author interview

³⁷ See the publication, H. Judin & I. Vladislavić, *Blank_Architecture, apartheid and after* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998)

³⁸ Author interview

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