

PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY • NAMA
THE SOUTH AFRICAN

David Goldblatt

IN BOKSBURG

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IN BOKSBURG

These photographs are about life in a small-town, middle-class, white community in South Africa.

That I took them in Boksburg is from one view almost incidental, for there is an increasing tendency towards the 'homogenisation' of such communities in South Africa. Photographs from numerous other towns of comparable size would not, I think, have been very different from these, taken in Boksburg.

This proclivity of our towns and their people to become more alike is something I have noticed in many parts of South Africa, though some seem more resistant to the change than others. It starts when the big banks, building societies, chain stores, hypermarkets, property developers and so on move into town. They soon dominate the place, absorbing, displacing and destroying much of what is idiosyncratic, perhaps unpolished, but essentially individual and local about the town's business life and architectural style. They replace it with their national and highly sophisticated way of doing business.

When Barclays, Volkskas, Standard, Checkers, OK, Edgars, Foschinis, Truworthe, Wimpy, Kentucky and so on, have taken over the prime sites in town, put up their standard styles of buildings or fascias, their uniform signs, colours et cetera, then one town centre comes to look pretty much like another.

When the new housing developments that are spreading with such voracity across the veld are promoted by large groups with minor variations on a few stock plans, the suburbs that result are predictably similar.

And when women countrywide are buying the same spring, winter or whatever fashions from the same chain stores, then, not surprisingly, they too, come to look alike.

So give or take variations largely to be explained by local differences in topography, climate and industry, our smaller towns — not to mention our cities — are becoming more uniform.

If, in one sense, it was not too material which community I photographed, then in another, it *had* to be Boksburg's.

There are differences between the West Rand, in which my hometown, Randfontein, is situated, and the East Rand, where Boksburg lies, which, when I was a boy, were of great importance to me.

The West Rand is distinctly on that famous ridge, the Witwatersrand. It is on high ground that drops sharply to the north and more gradually to the south. When my teachers told me that rainwater which runs off the northern slopes ends up in the Indian Ocean, while water running off to the south goes to the Atlantic, I knew that we lived on a most significant watershed.

True, the ridge tends to peter out into a slight rise above the surrounding plateau at Randfontein and some imagination is needed to see the town as part of the great Ridge of White Waters. Nonetheless, I was assured by my elders, our waters divide (along the bisecting of the town by the rail to the Cape?), as surely as any down the spine of Africa.

The East Rand however, is quite without any bold topographical features. It lies on flat veld and conveys no sense at all of the Witwatersrand.

As a boy therefore, I saw the East Rand as an amorphous spread of towns haphazardly connected by unmarked roads that meandered across its featureless veld. I professed, disdainfully, not to know one of its towns from another, so lacking in distinction did they seem. Indeed, something of this feeling persisted well into adulthood, when I spent much time on the East Rand photographing the remains of its gold mines.

However, a few years ago I felt the need to explore something of my own background in the life and values of middle-class, white, urban society. I had earlier done work in this direction in Hillbrow and the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. But I wished now to go to a smaller place: Randfontein and what I remembered of more than thirty three years there, were really at the heart of my new quest. Randfontein though, was still too painfully close to photograph with the intimacy and dispassion I sought.

Perhaps free now of parochial prejudice, I began to look at the towns of the East Rand and was increasingly excited by what I found. Benoni, Brakpan and Boksburg particularly drew me. Soon I learned that Benoni was too big and diffuse for my present interest. Brakpan had great charm for me in its Voortrekker Road, a long ribbon of 'Reef' architecture and surely a disappearing classic of its kind. But somehow, people and buildings there did not quite cohere. Boksburg held me.

Literally for days on end, I stood rivetted to street corners, parking lots and sidewalks. I was completely engaged by what I saw and tried to penetrate and hold with the camera, of the wholly uneventful flow of commonplace, orderly life.

It was as though I had known the place for a very long time and was yet discovering it now for the first. The spaces and roads and the lines painted on them; the low buildings and sky; the veld and the way the town sat on it, with the people, white and black, moving in their separate but tangled ways: all of these were there to be seen in the cutting sharpness of the highveld light.

Like Randfontein, only more so, it was nondescript and elusive, yet strongly drawn and pungent. From the unexpected softness of its man-made lake, to the tight circumscription of its pre-cast concrete walls, Boksburg is shaped by white dreams and white proprieties. Most of its townspeople pursue the family, social and civic concerns of respectable burghers anywhere, while locked into a deep and portentous fixity of self-elected, legislated whiteness.

Blacks are not of this town. They serve it, trade with it, receive charity from it and are ruled, rewarded and punished by its precepts. Some, on occasion, are its privileged guests. But all who go there, do so by permit or invitation, never by right.

That is much the way it has been since the town was founded in 1887. They do say though, that things are changing.

Here, for the record, is a glimpse of how things were in Boksburg, in the autumn and winter of 1979 and of 1980.

David Goldblatt
Johannesburg, March 1982

No. 117, 1961

DECLARATION OF GROUP AREAS AT BOKSBURG, DISTRICT OF BOKSBURG, PROVINCE OF THE TRANSVAAL.

Under the powers vested in me by section *twenty* of the Group Areas Act, 1957 (Act No. 77 of 1957), as amended, I hereby declare —

- (i) that the areas defined in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f) of the Schedule hereto shall, as from the date of publication hereof, be areas for occupation and ownership by members of the White group; and
- (ii) that the area defined in paragraph (g) of the Schedule hereto shall, as from the date of publication hereof, be an area for occupation and ownership by members of the Coloured group.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the Republic of South Africa at Pretoria on this Eleventh day of October, One thousand Nine hundred and Sixty-one.

C. R. SWART,
State President

By Order of the State President-in-Council.

P. W. BOTHA

SCHEDULE

WHITE GROUP

(a) Beginning at beacon lettered X on the diagram of Portion 69 (Jan Smuts Airport) (Diagram S.G. No. A.1281/48) of the farm Witkoppie No. 64—IR; thence eastwards and generally north-eastwards along the boundaries of the said Portion 69 so as to exclude it from this area, to beacon lettered O on the said diagram; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to the north-western beacon of Holding No. 25 (General Plan S.G. No. A.5418/50) of Caro Nome Agricultural Holdings; thence north-eastwards along the boundaries of the said Holding No. 25 and Holding No. 26 so as to include them in this area, to the north-eastern beacon of the latter; thence north-eastwards in a straight line across Geldenhuys Road to beacon lettered F on the said general plan; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to the southernmost beacon of the farm Rietfontein No. 31—IR; thence south-eastwards along the boundaries of the farms Rietpan No. 66—IR and Kleinfontein No. 67—IR, so as to exclude them from this area, to the point where it is intersected by the middle of Paul Smit Street; thence westwards along the middle of the said Paul Smit Street to the point where it is intersected by the western boundary of Portion 10 (Diagram S.G. No. A.3823/19) of Portion M of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—I.R.; thence north-westwards along the said boundary and the boundaries of Portion A (Diagram S.G. No. A.9637/37) of Portion 11 of Portion M, Portion 11 (Diagram S.G. No. A.3824/19) of Portion M and Portion 12 (Diagram S.G. No. A.3825/19) of Portion M, all of the said farm Klipfontein No. 83—I.R., so as to include them in this area, to the north-western beacon of the latter portion; thence westwards along the boundaries of Holding No. 31, Boksburg Small Holdings, so as to include it in this area, to the north-western beacon thereof; thence in a straight line across Middle Road to beacon lettered D on the diagram of Portion F (Diagram S.G. No. A.4888/38) of Portion of the said farm Klipfontein No. 83—I.R.; thence along the boundaries of the said Portion F and Portion E (Diagram S.G. No. A.4887/38) of Portion so as to include them in this area, to beacon lettered D on the diagram of the latter portion; thence in a straight line across Main Road to the southernmost beacon of Holding No. 3, Boksburg Small Holdings; thence north-westwards to the north-western beacon of the said Holding No. 3 on the boundary of Portion 250 (Diagram S.G. No. A.1011/56); thence north-westwards along the boundaries of Portions 250 (Diagram S.G. No. A.1011/56) and 249 (Diagram S.G. No. A.6400/55) and the said Portion 250, both of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR, so as to exclude them from this area, to

the south-westernmost beacon of the latter portion; thence south-westwards along the boundary of Portion O (Diagram S.G. No. A.151/16) of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR so as to exclude it from this area, to the point where it is intersected by the straight line joining the south-eastern beacon of Holding No. 101, Ravenswood Agricultural Holdings and beacon lettered K on the said diagram of Portion O; thence south-eastwards along the said straight line to the said beacon lettered K; thence south-eastwards in a straight line to the south-western beacon of Holding No. 160 of the said Ravenswood Agricultural Holdings; thence northwards along the boundaries of the said Holding No. 160 and Portion 1 (Diagram S.G. No. A.423/32) of Portion A of portion of the Klipfontein No. 83—IR so as to include them in this area, to the point where it is intersected by the railway (Portion 2) (Diagram S.G. No. A.424/32) of Portion A of portion; thence south-eastwards along the said railway to the point where it is intersected by the middle of Main Road; thence southwards along the middle of the said Main Road and Dam Road to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation of the eastern boundary of Portion 217 (Diagram S.G. No. A.2473/47); thence southwards along the said prolongation and boundary and the eastern boundary of Portion 3 (Diagram S.G. No. A.688/37) of Portion A of portion and the prolongation of the latter boundary to the middle of Bottom Road; thence westwards along the middle of the said Bottom Road and Fifteenth Avenue to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation westwards of the northern boundary of Portion d (Diagram S.G. No. A.4401/10) of portion of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR; thence eastwards along the said prolongation and boundary and the boundaries of the said Portion d of portion and the prolongation of the southern boundary thereof to the middle of the said Fifteenth Avenue; thence southwards along the middle of Fifteenth Avenue, Main Reef Road, Fourteenth Avenue and Champion Street to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation of the south-eastern boundary of Portion 77 (Diagram S.G. No. A.1168/51) of the farm Vogelfontein No. 84—IR; thence south-westwards along the said prolongation and boundary and the boundaries of Cason Township (Diagram S.G. No. A.4089/38) so as to include it in this area, to where it is intersected by the prolongation of the middle of Third Avenue; thence northwards along the said prolongation to the northern boundary of the said Cason Township; thence westwards along the said boundary to beacon lettered A on the diagram of Cason Township; thence north-westwards along the boundaries of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR and Comet Township (General Plan S.G. No. A.5314/36) so as to include them in this area, to beacon lettered S on the diagram thereof; thence northwards in a straight line to beacon lettered V on the said diagram; thence north-eastwards along the boundaries of the said Comet Township and Boksburg West Township (Diagram S.G. No. A.3868/24) so as to include them in this area, to beacon lettered A on the latter diagram; thence north-westwards along the south-western boundary of Portion 190 (Diagram S.G. No. A.160/23) of the farm Driefontein No. 85—IR to the south-westernmost beacon of the said portion; thence north-westwards along the boundaries of Morganridge Township (General Plan S.G. No. A.5773/56) and Witfield Township (General Plan S.G. No. A.716/23) so as to include them in this area, to beacon lettered V on the latter general plan; thence southwards along the boundary of General Plan S.G. No. A.5683/47 of Lilianton Township to the point where it is intersected by the middle of the pipeline servitude (Diagram S.G. No. A.1271/50); thence south-westwards along the middle of the said pipeline servitude to the point where it is intersected by the middle of Gild Road; thence south-eastwards along the middle of the said Gild Road, Gail Road, Lorant Road, Bird Road and Lilian Avenue to the point where it is intersected by boundary X-Y on General Plan S.G. No. A.716/23 of Witfield Township; thence south-westwards along the boundaries of the said Witfield Township so as to include it in this area, to the point where it is intersected by the middle of Main Street; thence south-westwards along the middle of the said Main Street and Main Reef Road to the point where it is intersected by the easternmost boundary of the farm Driefontein No. 87—IR; thence north-westwards along the boundaries of the said farm Driefontein No. 87—IR so as to exclude it from this area, to the point where it is intersected by the eastern boundary of the Railway Reserve; thence generally northwards along the said eastern boundary of the Railway Reserve to where it is intersected by the south-eastern boundary of the farm Rietfontein No. 63—IR.; thence north-eastwards along the said boundary to beacon lettered F on the diagram (Diagram S.G. No. A.1625/34) of the overhead electric power line servitude of the said farm Rietfontein No. 63—IR; thence north-eastwards along the said overhead electric power line servitude to beacon lettered D on the said diagram; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to beacon lettered A on the

diagram of Portion 343 (Diagram S.G. No. A.4919/54) of the farm Rietfontein No. 63—IR; thence north-westwards along the boundary of the farm Rietfontein No. 63—IR to beacon lettered A on the diagram of Portion S.1 (Diagram S.G. No. A.3967/38) of Portion 4 of portion of the farm Witkoppie No. 64—IR; thence north-eastwards along the boundaries of the said Portion S.1 so as to include it in this area, to beacon lettered D on the said diagram thereof; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to beacon lettered C on the diagram of Portion h (Diagram S.G. No. A.1985/38) of Portion 7 of portion of the farm Witkoppie No. 64—IR; thence along the south-eastern boundary of the said Portion h so as to exclude it from this area, to beacon lettered B on the diagram thereof; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to beacon lettered F on the diagram of Portion 95 (Diagram S.G. No. A.660/52) of the farm Witkoppie No. 64—IR; thence north-eastwards long the boundaries of the said Portion 95, Portion 96 (Diagram S.G. No. A.661/52) and Portion 97 (Diagram S.G. No. A.662/52), all of the said farm Witkoppie No. 64—IR, so as to exclude them from this area, to the beacon first named.

(b) Beginning at beacon lettered A on General Plan S.G. No. A.2301/11 of portion of Boksburg Township; thence south-eastwards along boundary A-B on the said plan and the prolongation thereof to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation of the straight line connecting beacons V.G. 321 and V.G. 403 on Mining Compilation 84—IR; thence southwards along the said prolongation and straight line and the prolongation thereof to the point where it intersects the southern boundary of Portion 61 (Diagram S.G. No. A.1537/41) of the farm Vogelfontein No. 84—IR; thence eastwards along the said boundary and the southern boundary of portion (Diagram S.G. No. A.2208/10) of the farm Vogelfontein No. 84—IR, to the point where it intersects the middle of Kruger Street; thence southwards along the middle of the said Kruger Street to the point where it intersects the north-eastern boundary of General Plan S.G. No. A.5117/11 of portion of Boksburg Township; thence south-eastwards and southwards along the boundaries of the said general plan to where it is intersected by the middle of Commissioner Street; thence eastwards along the middle of the said Commissioner Street to where it is intersected by the prolongation of boundary E-F on Diagram S.G. No. A.1891/61 of Portion 102 of Vogelfontein No. 84—IR; thence southwards along the said prolongation and boundary to where it intersects the northern boundary of General Plan S.G. No. A.487/32 of Boksburg South Township; thence eastwards along the boundaries of the said general plan and Portions 24 (Diagram S.G. No. A.7232/48), 20 (Diagram S.G. No. A.6860/45) and the said General Plan S.G. No. A.487/32 so as to include them in this area, to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation north-eastwards of boundary Q-P on General Plan S.G. No. A.3579/49 of Parkdene Township; thence south-westwards along the said prolongation and the boundaries of the said general plan so as to include it in this area, to where boundary A'-B' thereon intersects the middle of Rondebult Road; thence generally northwards along the middle of the said Rondebult Road to where it intersects the southern boundary of General Plan S.G. No. A.1904/1898 of Boksburg Township; thence westwards along the boundaries of the said general plan so as to include it in this area, to beacon lettered V.G. 22 thereon; thence northwards in a straight line to the south-eastern beacon of Stand No. 55 on Railway Street; thence westwards along the northern boundary of the said Railway Street to beacon lettered L on the said General Plan S.G. No. A.2301/11; thence north-eastwards in a straight line to the beacon first named.

(c) Beginning at beacon lettered A on General Plan S.G. No. A.2347/57 of Libradene Township; thence south-eastwards along the boundaries of the said general plan and the boundaries of General Plan S.G. No. A.3233/38 of Cinderella Township so as to include them in this area, to beacon lettered H on the latter general plan; thence south-eastwards along the boundaries of Portion 38 (Diagram S.G. No. A.3193/59) of the farm Leeuwpoort No. 113—IR and the boundaries of the said General Plan S.G. No. A.2347/57 of Libradene Township so as to include them in this area, to the beacon first named.

(d) The area comprising Portion of the farm Vogelfontein No. 84—IR as represented by Diagram S.G. No. A.2585/14.

(e) The area comprising Delmore Township as represented by General Plan S.G. No. A.8550/51.

(f) Beginning at the point where the prolongation westwards of the southern boundary of Portion

169 (Diagram S.G. No. A.1863/59) of the farm Klippoortjie No. 110—IR intersects middle of the Germiston-Heidelberg Road; thence eastwards along the said prolongation and boundary and the prolongation thereof to the point where it intersects Cossins Road; thence south-eastwards along the middle of the said Cossins Road, south-westwards along Boundary Road and north-westwards along the said Germiston-Heidelberg Road to the point first named.

COLOURED GROUP

(g) Beginning at beacon lettered A on General Plan S.G. No. A.3393/50 of Zindabad Township; thence eastwards along the boundaries of the said general plan and the boundaries of Portion 21 (Diagram S.G. No. A.7498/45) of the farm Leeuwpoort No. 113—I.R. so as to include it in this area, to beacon lettered D on the said plan of Zindabad Township; thence south-westwards along the boundaries of the said Zindabad Township to the beacon first named.

No. 118, 1961:

APPLICATION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE GROUP AREAS DEVELOPMENT ACT, 1955, AS AMENDED, IN AREAS AT BOKSBURG DISTRICT OF BOKSBURG, PROVINCE OF THE TRANSVAAL.

Under the powers vested in me by sub-section (1) of section *thirty-eight* of the Group Areas Development Act, 1955 (Act No. 69 of 1955), as amended, I hereby declare that the provisions of sections *twelve bis* to *thirteen bis* inclusive, *fifteen* to *twenty-three* inclusive and *thirty-four* of the said Act shall, as from the date of publication hereof, apply in the areas defined in the Schedule hereto.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the Republic of South Africa at Pretoria on this Eleventh day of October, One thousand Nine hundred and Sixty-one.

C. R. SWART,
State President.

By order of the State President-in-Council.

P. W. BOTHA

SCHEDULE

- (a) Beginning at the point where the middle of Fourteenth Avenue is intersected by the middle of All Black Street; thence eastwards along the middle of the said All Black Street, southwards along Fifteenth Avenue to the point where it is intersected by the prolongation westwards of the northern boundary of Portion d (Diagram S.G. No. A.4401/10) of Portion of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR; thence eastwards along the said prolongation and boundary and the boundaries of the said Portion d and the prolongation of the southern boundary thereof to the middle of the said Fifteenth Avenue; thence southwards along Fifteenth Avenue, westwards along Main Reef Road and northwards along Fourteenth Avenue to the point first named.
- (b) Stands Nos. 1218, 1219, 1220, 1424, 1425, 1560, 1561, 1564 and 1565, Boksburg Townships, as represented by General Plan S.G. No. A.1904/1898.
- (c) The area comprising Portion 21 of the farm Leeuwpoort No. 113—IR as represented on Diagram S.G. No. A.7498/45.
- (d) The area comprising a portion (Diagram S.G. No. A.2347/11) of the farm Klipfontein No. 83—IR.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY

The South African Photographic Gallery is an ambitious publishing programme which aims to seek out and publish at low cost fine South African photography.

The books in the series are published by The Gallery Press (Pty) Ltd, a company formed specifically for the purpose by two Cape Town photographers, Paul Alberts and Brian Gannon. The printing specification for the South African Photographic Gallery's books demands the highest production standards, and yet, through direct marketing and direct distribution, the high overheads of commercial publishing are avoided, and the direct benefit of this — books costing well below one-half of the expected price — is passed on to the purchaser.

The Gallery publishes a number of portfolios and collections each year, and in addition to commissioning certain work, invites all serious photographers to submit prints for consideration.

The original prints of all portfolios and collections published are included in the South African Photographic Gallery Permanent Collection, which has its own Trustees.



DAVID GOLDBLATT

David Goldblatt, considered by many to be South Africa's leading photographer, grew up in Randfontein, a mining town on the Witwatersrand. There he worked in the family business until 1963 when he began to devote all of his time to photography, in which he had been active since the late 1940's.

His work has been published in South Africa, Europe and the United States, and exhibited in South Africa, Britain, Germany and Australia. He is represented in the photographic collections of the SA National Gallery, Cape Town, the Durban Art Gallery, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.