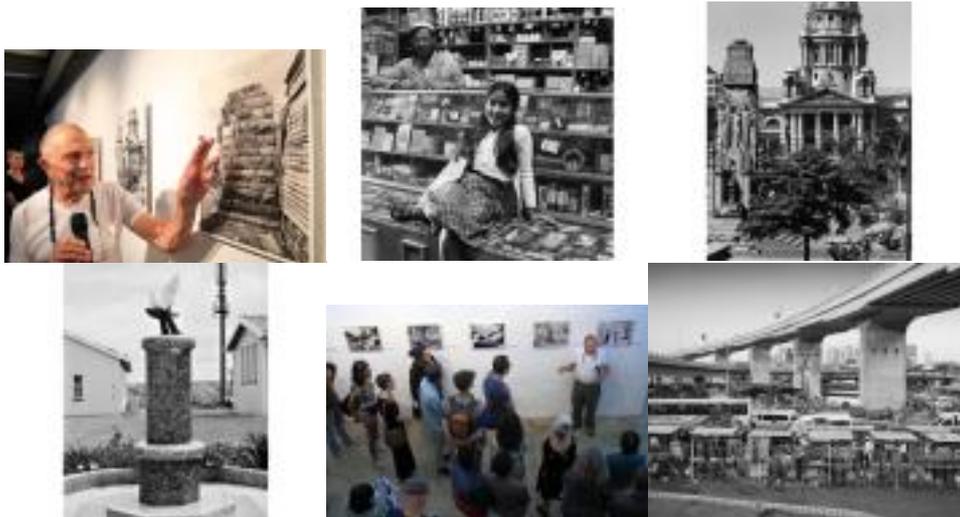


*Daily*News

Africa

Seeing ourselves in structures





April 8 2015 at 01:14pm

Durban

KAMCILLA PILLAY

Structure have the power to edify a nation's democracy and help tell its story.

This was the rationale behind the focus of internationally-acclaimed photographer David Goldblatt's latest exhibition entitled Structures of Dominion and Democracy currently on show at the KZN Society of Arts gallery.

"In the belief that in what we build, we express much about what we value, I have looked at South African structures as declarations of our value systems, our ethos," said Goldblatt.

The colonialist narrative of the series by Goldblatt begins, historically, with his 1993 image of the deceptively picturesque remnants of a wild almond hedge planted in 1660 to keep the indigenous Khoikhoi out of the first European settlement in South Africa.

Other images, taken throughout the 1970s and 1980s, show the human cost of the turbulence of the times as people of colour were forcibly removed from their homes and shops.

Elsewhere, workers were housed in conditions of impoverishment; and the contrast between the monumental and the shameful shows the inherent contradiction of the apartheid ideology.

"Over the years I have photographed South African structures which I found eloquent of the dominion which whites gradually

came to exert over all of South Africa and its peoples ... The time of domination ended on February 2, 1990, when, on behalf of the government and the whites of South Africa, President FW de Klerk effectively abdicated from power.”

Speaking of structures, Goldblatt weighed in on the debate raging around the country related to statues of colonialists on university campuses.

“I want people to engage more effectively with each other. I want them to realise that change can only come about by talking, not by throwing sh** all over a statue. What does that achieve?”

He said that offensive statues should be rounded up and placed in an area, so that people could learn about that part of the country’s history.

“There’s a sculpture garden in Hungary where all the statues of the communist regime, a dark time in their history, are kept. It’s like a museum of sorts.”