

You are cordially invited to the opening of an exhibition of photographs by Iris Dawn Parker on Saturday 27 July at 6.30 pm.
The exhibition will be opened by Prof Norman Duncan, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria.

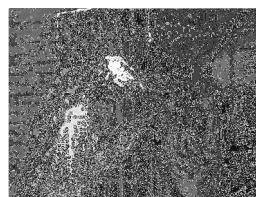
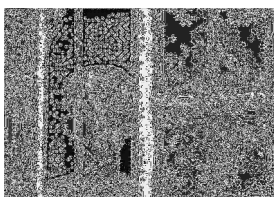


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gallery hours:
tues - fri 9 am - 5 pm
sat 10 am - 2 pm



Iris Dawn Parker was born in North Carolina and now lives in Johannesburg. Her work as an artist and as a teacher and mentor to youth has explored issues of identity formation, gender, family and community. Since moving to South Africa, she has been active as a volunteer with the Rivers Foundation working on projects in communities such as Alexandra Township and Soweto. She is the Manager of the Photojournalism and Documentary Photography Programme at Market Photo Workshop, Johannesburg. Her curatorial work has included projects for Wits University, the Africa Gender Institute, and exhibitions in the United States. In 2010 she curated an exhibition by celebrated photojournalist Peter Magubane entitled: *Mandela: Man of the People*, at Primitive Gallery in Chicago. Her current projects includes a multimedia installation entitled *WeaveWoven: notions of beauty in a colonized head*, in which she uses photography and other media to explore subjects of societal interest such as image, identity formation and displacement through a personal and provocative lens. And she continues to work on her photo series, *Quotidian life: the importance of small things*, an ongoing series of portraits and stories reflecting everyday life in South Africa. Iris has just completed work on a feature length documentary film, *Portraits from South Africa*, 2012. Her other exhibitions in the United States include at the American Photography Institute, New York City; Three Rivers Arts Festival, Pittsburgh; and the ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Chicago.

Artist statement

Quotidian life: the importance of small things

This project and these images are part of a Visual Journal that shares a personal engagement between me and the numerous South Africans I have met, and continue to meet, daily since immigrating to this country in 2009. The style in which each portrait is shot reflects the intimacy I experienced with the people I met, with whom I exchanged stories with, and photographed.

Quotidian life: the importance of small things is an ongoing photographic series that I began in 2009 shortly after moving to Johannesburg. Upon my arrival in SA, I moved into a home on a panhandle in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg that did not allow for much viewing outside of a gated wall. I was informed by South Africans and others that this was the safest way for any foreigners in SA to live. Other advice included 'staying away from townships and never talking to strangers.' Oh, and to 'not make eye contact, ever'.

How exactly was I to live I wondered? How to live and not see beautiful people walking to and fro, or see children playing and running around. How to live without saying good morning to the people I passed selling sweets? By my second week of living behind walls and gates, I knew that my work and I would suffer severely if I did not get out and engage with the everyday people of South Africa. To test out this safety net that others spoke of, I began taking daily walks and taxi rides to different areas in and around Johannesburg. Although I was advised against it, I carried my camera everywhere with me too. I am a photographer. This is when this series began.

It took very little time before I realized how often my quotidian adventures would land me in areas and communities that I was not familiar with, nor were the people occupying these spaces familiar with me. I guess at times I stood out like a sore thumb, either from the way I look or spoke. There were even times that I found myself walking, talking and shooting in places that would perhaps not be occupied by a woman, especially one with a camera. Not because they were dangerous places, but that these were gender sensitive spaces, so to speak.

Sometimes my photographs are focused on a specific subject or are contextualized in the style of a photographic installation. But my day to day love of photography is about making images of what I like. However, my approach to making images is the same one I imagine other documentary photographers may have used in approaching their work. And that is to never allow fear of people or places to dictate or rob me of making the images I like. So daily, I would go out with the intention to meet and engage people with my camera, to photograph the everyday life of the strangers I encountered in my day to day living in Joburg. Regardless of whether I ventured into the no go areas for unveiled females in a mosque in Bertrams, or into informal garage workshops in the townships, I found the people I encountered welcomed both me and my camera.

I chose to shoot close, intimate portraits. While the idea of portraiture is as old as the practice of art itself, I choose to document my quotidian adventures in this manner – through portraits of people and spaces - because of what photography offers. Photographs allow the viewer access to a specific a moment in time. Although personal narratives and short stories are presented with some of the images, I desire my photographs to speak to the viewer with or without written accompanying stories.