



Svea Josephy

SATELLITE CITIES

Satellite Cities

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This photographic project is about the names of places - places that have the same names but are often worlds apart. *Satellite Cities* looks at parallels in the naming of settlements, towns and suburbs in South Africa and other parts of the world. The photographs which comprise the project are about the relationships between these disparate places. *Satellite Cities* connects different locations, in South Africa and elsewhere, as sites of conflict and struggle, and of war, liberation and reconciliation.

Following this, the title of this exhibition *Satellite Cities*, looks to tensions and relationships between places that share the same names. The word satellite implies a connection. Planets often have natural satellites, held in orbit, a body revolving around a planet, such as a moon. Artificial satellites are objects placed in space by humans that circle the earth, beaming information, surveillance, weather, television, communication and potentially a means of war. A satellite also implies something smaller, something dependent, a follower, something under the domination or influence of another. A satellite city is a term used by urban planners and land use specialists to describe a smaller town close to a larger urban centre, but which is largely independent from the bigger city¹.

¹The satellite city is usually separated from the larger metropolitan area by green spaces, such as an are of farmland, a river or another geographical feature. Satellite cities are a way of curbing urban sprawl and preserving open space. Places like London, Stockholm, Singapore and Tokyo are surrounded by satellite cities which are connected to them through efficient public transport systems.

I use the title, *Satellite Cities* to say something about the interconnectedness of places that share similar names. For me, there is a link or a thread between these places, regardless of whether the name was intentional or random. There is a relationship and a tension, which is developed through the shared names. In some sense the one is a satellite of the other.

About 15 years ago, following an on-going interest in history, photography and the land, I began to think intently about land and how it was named in South Africa. This was precipitated by the intricate political narratives surrounding land and the identity of those who inhabit it. Since the end of apartheid the history of the land has been revisited and questioned. People are claiming and reclaiming spaces previously denied or removed from them. In claiming spaces, naming is very important. In South Africa, like in many other places, the naming and renaming of land is a profoundly political as well as emotional act – naming is, after all, inextricably bound up with claiming.

In some cases, the one who names is the one who holds authority, power and mandate to name, in other cases naming is playful and subversive – sometimes ironic.

I started to question what it means to name things and how people do this. I began to look at maps and follow buses and taxis with names such as Lost City and Kosovo. I noticed names that were interesting and sometimes bizarre: Electric City, Dark City, Black City, Butter 50 and Tsunami. Certain names seemed to contain a degree of political satire, such as Beverly Hills, Suburban Bliss, and Morkel’s Cottages. What was particularly fascinating to me were a group of settlements and suburbs, which were named after places elsewhere in the world.

These names included: Athlone, Barcelona, Beirut, Bermuda Triangle, Beverley Hills, Burundi, Congo, Cuba, Delft, Egoli, Europe, France, Green Park, The Hague, Hanover Park, Harare, Hyde Park, Iraq, Kosovo, Kuwait, Lapland, Lavender Hill, Los Angeles, Lost City, Lusaka, Malawi, Malibu, Potsdam, Spandau, Sun City, Taiwan, Vietnam and Waterfront.

These evocative place names conjure up fascinating sites in one’s imagination. They bring to mind parks, streets, cities and countries located all over the globe: in the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa and elsewhere in South Africa. Their essences are distilled into an evocative signifier, which is then appropriated by a new place, often one in marked contrast to the original whose name it carries. In South Africa many of these diverse locations are concentrated in a small area around the main cities, adding a bizarre twist to the apartheid era tourism slogan of “a world in one country” — Barcelona now exists alongside Lusaka, Europe is near to Vietnam, Kosovo is down the road from Egoli.

During apartheid, settlements were usually given names by bureaucrats but more recently residents have been responsible for naming their own neighbourhoods. Naming practices of the apartheid state reveal a general tendency towards euphemism, for example, Atlantis, Grassy Park, Lotus River, Ocean View and Lavender Hill. Apartheid era names at times connect to a colonial past for example, Delft, The Hague, Surrey, Athlone, and Stratford Green. An interesting late and post apartheid development has been the naming of settlements by local residents, rather than by local authorities. These often reference current or newsworthy events (Barcelona, Lost City, Tsunami), and war zones and contested areas (Iraq, Kosovo, Burundi, Congo, Vietnam, and Beirut).

Names are neither static nor fixed. One might have a situation in which a parcel of land may have been known by several names: the original title deed designation, for example, a name given by local residents who settled there and later a name given by authorities. Thus an area such as Hyde Park, Mitchell’s Plein can be simultaneously known as Hyde Park by residents and as Kayamandi by solid waste removal services.

Land is also delineated differently by mapmakers than by local residents. An area such as Lwandle appears as one suburb on the map. However, local residents have divided it up into many smaller areas, including an area called France. When roads are not marked or are badly marked and when house numbers are hard to ascertain, specific designations, which refer to particular events, histories or local geographies help residents to navigate the area and find places within a large township, such as Khayelitsha or Mitchell’s Plein. In Khayelitsha I was told that a church was near a place named Kuwait, “just go past Taiwan and you’ll find it”.

I photographed these areas, the place in South Africa and the place after which the South African settlement had been named. The project developed and found form in large colour photographic works and related texts. The images are often function as diptychs or triptychs.

The photographs place the suburbs and areas surrounding South Africa’s cities at the heart of a network of interconnected perspectives and relationships. These branch out to reveal correspondence, difference and parallels with other places within South Africa and the world.

I began these investigations into naming with the exhibition *Twin Town 2007/8*. The exhibition, *Twin Town* made reference to some of the names that South Africa inherited from its colonial past. Colonialists named places in Africa after places they had left behind which set up dialogues and tensions between the ‘original’ place and the ‘copy’.

Third Worlds: Model Cities in 2010² followed these concerns but also diverged in that *Third Worlds: Model Cities* was largely concerned with the construction of Cape Town specifically.

As a continuation of this, in *Satellite Cities* (2016) I am now focusing on settlements in South Africa, whose names are evocative of war, disaster or are historically contested areas, for example, West Bank, Kosovo, Kuwait, Beirut and Bosnia. The names of these places connect the different locations as sites of disaster, struggle, and of war, liberation and reconstruction. The places I have chosen to photograph were not necessarily named after wars. They do however, evoke the idea of war or conflict through their names.

In South Africa land remains contested where issues around resettlement, relocation, exile, displacement, land ownership, land redistribution, the naming and renaming of the land and the effects of the land on its people remain largely unresolved. If, as I try to show in these works, land and identity are constructed through the act of naming, then it is in the naming and renaming of the land that this painful over determination becomes manifest.

In claiming spaces, naming has become very important. The practice of naming has also held much currency in both apartheid and post apartheid South Africa. Questions regarding who holds authority and power to name and to rename are being debated daily nationally and locally. Not surprisingly, the questions: ‘Who has the right to name? By what mandate?’ weigh upon contemporary public forums no less emotively or controversially than they did in during the oppressive apartheid years. It is important to recognize – not only that ‘place’ and ‘land’ may mean different things to different people, but also that it may have multiple meanings to the same person. Unless we recognize the multidimensionality of the meanings of place the attempts to engage in restitution and redress after apartheid are destined to fail.

² This exhibition was in collaboration with Noëleen Murray. Also involved in the conceptualisation and staging of this project were Harry Guruba, Carson Smuts, Tessa Dowling and Justin Brett.



Beirut, Alexandra, Johannesburg (Hostel), 2012.



Beirut, Lebanon (Hotel), 2012.



Kosovo (National and University Library of Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo), 2012



Kosovo, Cape Town (surveillance camera), 2014



Structure, West Bank, near Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2015.



Arafat's tomb, West Bank, Ramallah, Palestine, 2015.



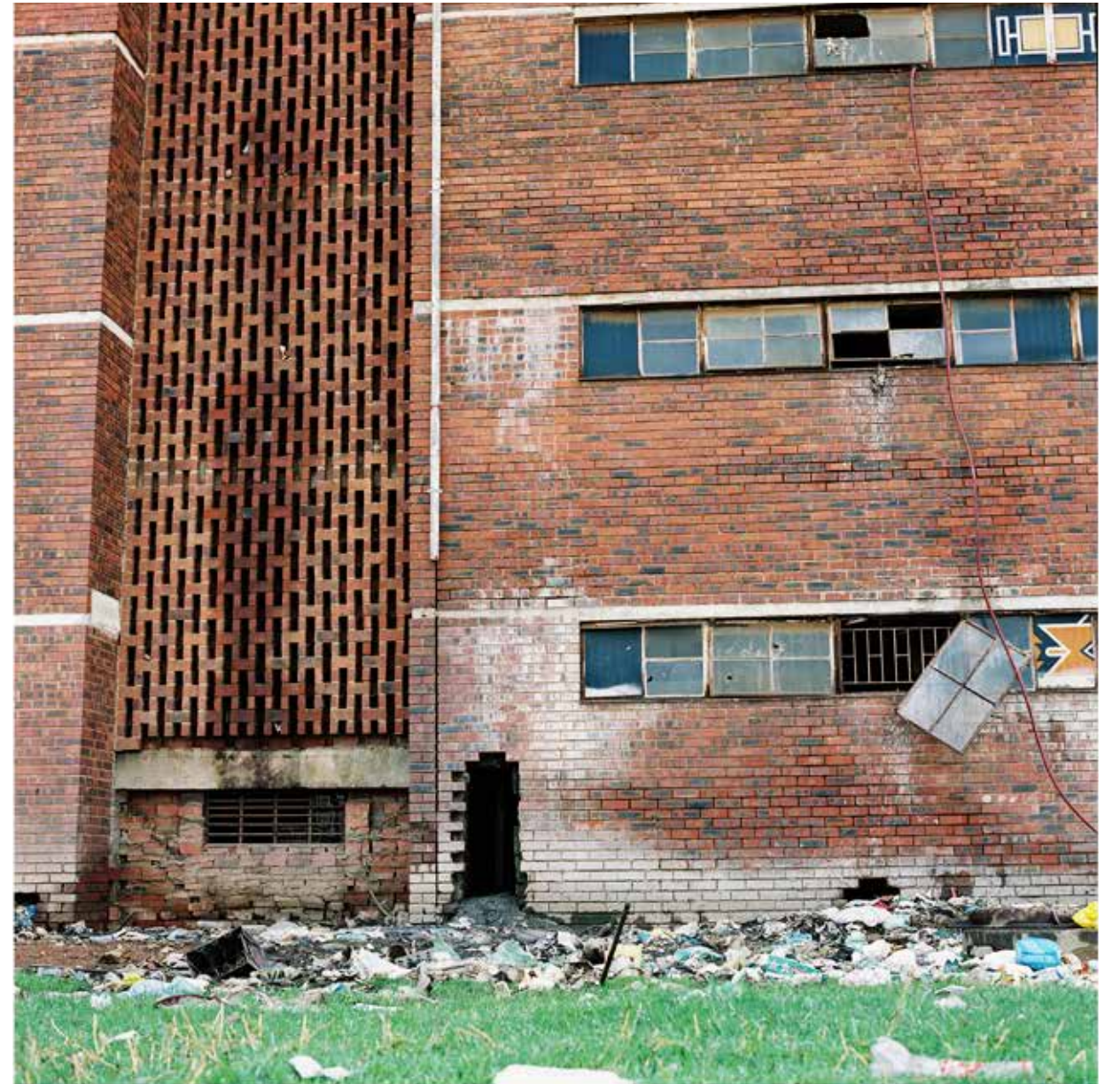
Kosovo, Cape Town (remove), 2010.



Kosovo, (Hotel Victory, Pristina), 2010.



Beirut, Lebanon (Holiday Inn), 2012.



Beirut, Alexandra, Johannesburg (Men's Hostel), 2012.



View of Sarajevo, Bosnia, 2013.



Flats & view towards Bosnia/Bosonia, South Africa, 2015.



Near Bosnia/Bosonia, South Africa (stop), 2014.



Bosnia, Sarajevo (flats), 2013.



Flowers on grave of martyr, Sarajevo, Bosnia, 2013.



Roadside memorial, Bosnia/Bosnia, South Africa, 2015.



Structure and braai, Bosnia / Bosonia, Cape Town, 2013.



Structure on hillside, Bosnia, 2015.



Beirut, soccer field, Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2015.



American University, Beirut, Lebanon (soccer field), 2013.



Entertainment Centre, Kuwait City, Kuwait, 2010.



Landsdown Fire Station, near Kuwait taxi rank, Khayelitsha, Cape Town, 2010.



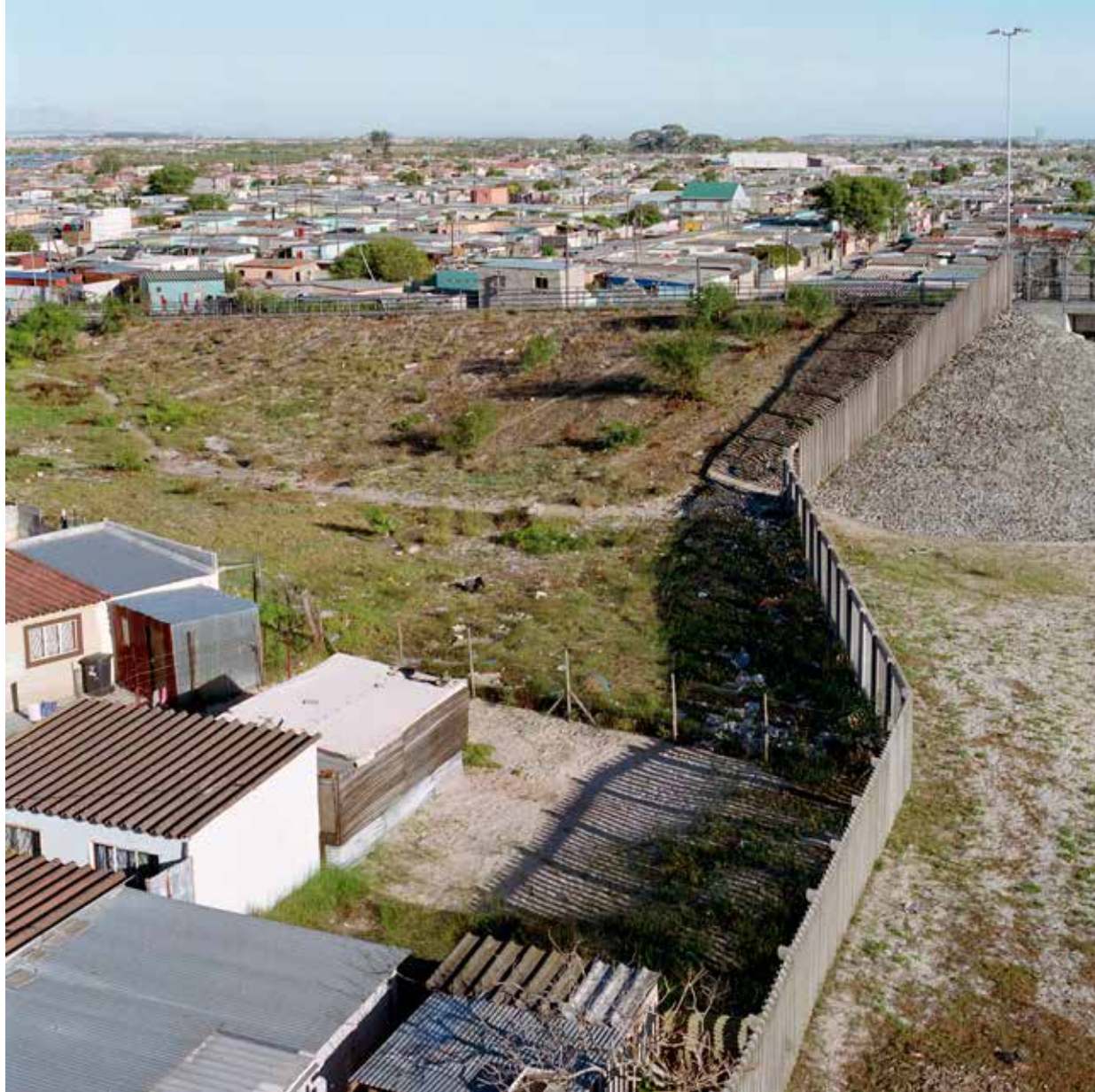
Kosovo, martyrs memorials, 2010.



Kosovo, Pristina (ghetto), 2010.



Kosovo, near Philippi, Cape Town, South Africa. 2014.



West Bank, Cape Town, South Africa, 2015.



West Bank, Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2015.



Separation Wall, West Bank,(East Jerusalem) (left), 2014.



Separation Wall, West Bank(East Jerusalem) (right), 2014.



West Bank, near Alexandra, South Africa (cement blocks), 2015.



Settlement, West Bank, Israel, 2014.



Football Field (ASAB) Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine, 2014.



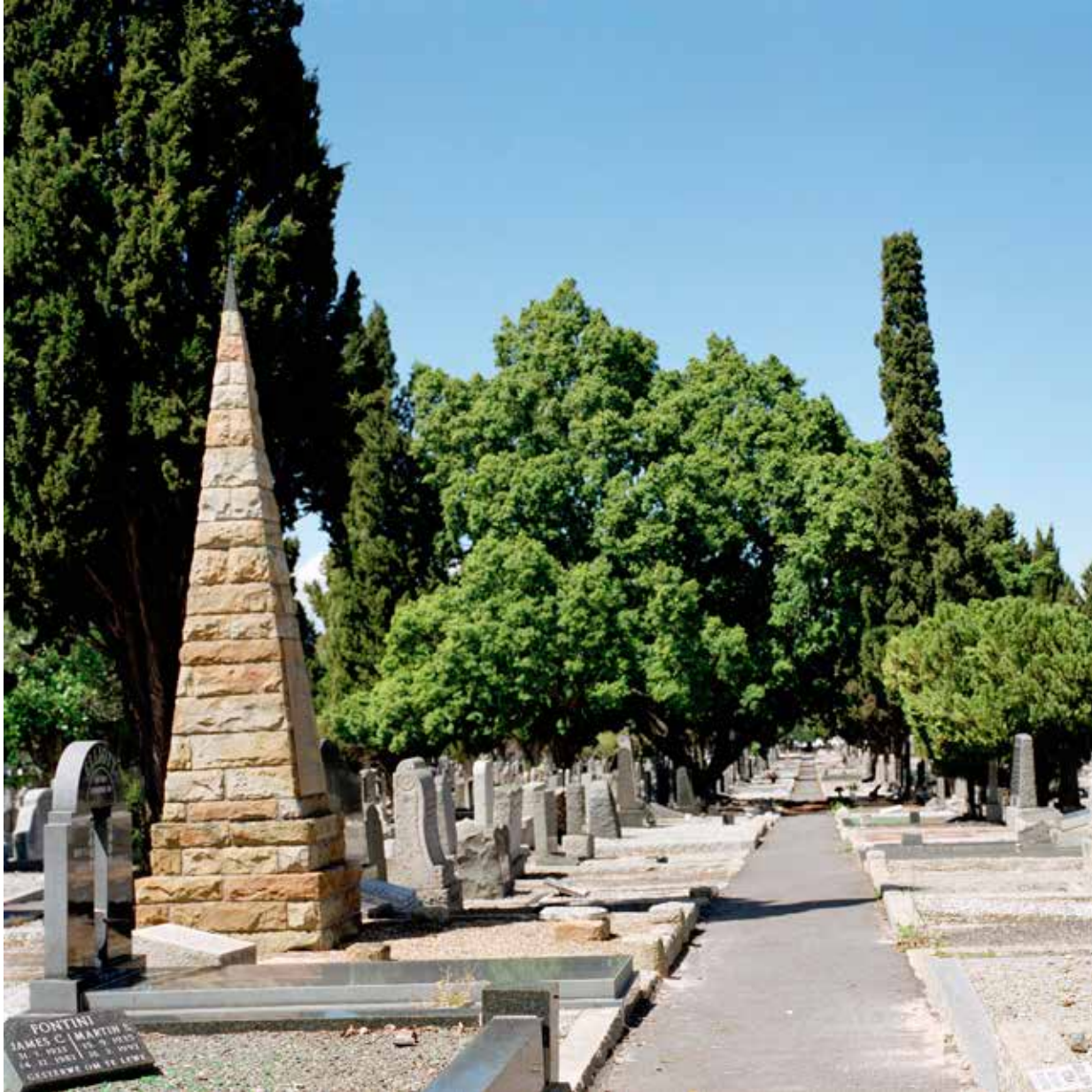
Soccer Field (FIFA) East Bank, near West Bank, Alexandria, South Africa, 2012.



School cricket nets in Bosnia / Boscopia, Western Cape, 2015.



Bosnia, Winter Olympic Stadium, 2013.



Graveyard near Bosonia / Bosnia, Cape Town, South Africa, 2014.



Martyr's graves, Sarajevo, Bosnia, 2015.



Beirut, Lebanon (pool), 2012.



Near Beirut, near West Bank, Alexandria, Johannesburg, 2014.



New settler developments, West Bank, Israel (basketball court), 2014.



Basketball court, near West Bank, Alexandra, South Africa, 2015.



Kosovo, (stadium, Pristina), 2010.



Kosovo, Cape Town (stadium), 2010.



West Bank, Western Cape, South Africa, 2015.



West Bank, East Jerusalem, 2014.



View from Kuwait Towers, Ad Damsa', Kuwait City. 2010.



Near Kuwait taxi rank, Site C, Khayelitsha, Cape Town. 2010.



Excavations, West Bank, Palestine (Jerrico), 2014.



West Bank, Alexandria, Johannesburg, South Africa (River Bank), 2015.

Satellite Cities: Naming Worlds

Noëleen Murray

Svea Josephy's exhibition entitled *Satellite Cities* is the latest of her exhibitions of artistic works which offers suggestive alternative visions of architecture and cities. Through continuing her work of tracing the naming of sites, settlements and places she considers questions of space, place, and the genres of architectural and spatial production in a myriad of ways. Never overt, the visual clues and connections she draws upon offer not simply a glimpse into places and spaces but the works also contain a critique of the standardized modes of production in the spatial disciplines. In *Satellite Cities* she confronts the often traumatic sites of origin contained in the places she has visited in South Africa and this has taken her into zones of violence and destruction from Johannesburg to Beirut to Kuwait and beyond.

Her interest in the naming and representation of buildings in cities can be traced back to her major solo exhibition *Twin Town* which literally twinned places in the local context with those from (most often) European metropolitan worlds. Through her photographic approach in which she carefully selects views, details, light and angles, her work speaks powerfully to modes of architectural photography as a recognized genre in photographic studies. Many photographers specialize in producing images of buildings for architects for the promotion, documentation and especially the publishing of their buildings in the glossy architectural magazines that profile architects and their work. Architectural photography is also a specialization which is lucrative and, for some photographers, this becomes a sideline commercial specialization alongside their more creative or documentary work. For others, architecture is their profession and photography is a hobby. Architectural photography has a series of conventions which

are adhered to in order to produce images for its audiences which include other architects and people who appreciate the nuances of architectural and spatial design. For the architectural magazines and journals the trick is to show the architectural qualities of buildings, and celebrate architecture as a spatial and formal art. Typically images are styled and aestheticized. Furniture is placed in appropriate places to enhance an interior for instance. People are excluded from the frame of the architectural photographer and the architectural image seeks to show pure form. Very often unsightly surroundings are excluded from the images which appear as decontextualised objects in space.

Josephy's work presents a systematic counter approach to this standardized mode and the series of images that are part of *Satellite Cities*, somehow complicate the stylized perfection of the architectural photograph further. Buildings in often ruined states form the selection of works produced with this in mind, and offer a set of conversations with both Josephy's own work, focused on cities, presenting a set of images of buildings, cities and places through a fine art or new documentary mode and an approach that speaks to the abstractions of the sanitized, genre of stylized photographs. Reflecting on the work, she is quick to point out how she approached taking the images, and how they represent 'another point of view' to the conventions of the representations in the spatial disciplines. These works are however not a reactionary 'darker' counter view. Rather, they present instances of considering 'moments' in the present - in context, in the aftermath or violence or in the post-apartheid - instead of being decontextualised through the lenses of the architectural photograph.

Similarly, the *Third Worlds: Model Cities* exhibition which held in 2010 was an interdisciplinary collaboration considering the production around the theme of architectures of urban South

African landscapes. The exhibition comprised a multi-media installation of models, sculpture, video, sound and photographs that investigated how urban land is constructed. The project investigated the broad historical and contemporary terrain of South African landscape representation with particular attention to urban landscape photography and the architecture of the urban landscape, within the broader framework of discourse of the land. It investigated the archives of ‘language’ contained in local architecture and planning in the making of South Africa’s and in particular Cape Town’s urban landscapes.

The images on display in *Satellite Cities* invoke what Josephy describes as ‘tensions and relationships between places that share the same names’ connected through the orbital notion of the satellite. Her reference to planets and their ‘natural satellites, held in orbit’ as well as ‘artificial satellites’ placed in space that circle the earth, ‘beaming information, surveillance, weather, television, communication and potentially a means of war’ points to the interconnectedness of places that share similar names. For Josephy there is a link or a thread between the places she photographs beyond the simple tensions provided by the twinning of their names.

Large in scale and variously presented as diptychs or triptychs the images in full colour in the exhibition entice the viewer to think of cities such as Johannesburg in new and different ways. Places we call home, in which we live and work and lead our lives, can be thought of despite the images of destruction and violence that circulate and have come to symbolize our city. Josephy chronicles the city beyond the everyday and reminds us of the incompleteness of space after the utopian moment has passed.

Svea Josephy is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art (Photography) at the Michaelis school of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. Josephy has held a number of exhibitions of her creative work, nationally and internationally. She has curated a number of group exhibitions.

Josephy's research interests include Southern African Photography, documentary photography, contemporary South African lens based practice and colonial photography. Her writing on these areas has been published in various books, journals and catalogues on contemporary art and photography. Josephy's research is concerned with notions of post apartheid photography, particularly as it connects to the politics of space and the land and its representation in relation to identity. She is interested in 'new documentary' forms that have emerged in post apartheid South Africa. Josephy is a Research Associate of the WITS City Institute.

http://www.wits.ac.za/academic/17919/city_institute.html

<http://www.michaelis.uct.ac.za/staff/svea-josephy/>

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