

Zwelethu Mthethwa



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Since Apartheid's fall in 1994, South African photography has exploded from the grip of censorship onto the world stage. A key figure in this movement is Zwelethu Mthethwa, whose portraits powerfully frame black South Africans as dignified and defiant individuals, even under the duress of social and economic hardship. Photographing in urban and rural industrial landscapes, Mthethwa documents a range of aspects in South Africa, from domestic life and the environment to landscape and labor issues. Mthethwa's work challenges the conventions of both Western documentary work and African commercial studio photography, marking a transition away from the visually exotic and diseased--or "Afro-pessimism," as curator Okwui Enwezor has described it--and employing a fresh approach marked by color and collaboration. "Zwelethu Mthethwa," the artist's long awaited first comprehensive monograph provides an overview of his work to date, and features the stunning portraits that have brought him

international acclaim. Born in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 1960, Zwelethu Mthethwa received his BFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, a then white-only university he entered under special ministerial consent. In 1989, he received his Master's degree while on a Fulbright Scholarship to the Rochester Institute of Technology. Mthethwa has had more than 35 international solo exhibitions and has been featured in numerous group shows, including the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005 and "Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography" at the International Center of Photography, New York, in 2006. He is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and lives in Cape Town, South Africa.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Zwelethu Mthethwa_下载链接1](#)

标签

摄影集

摄影

评论

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