



A mother mourns her UDF-supporting son who was abducted and slain in the Natal war in Mpophomeni, KZN, in 1987.
PHOTO: CEDRIC NUNN



Welbedacht, Chatsworth, in 1985.
PHOTO: DESENI SOOBBEN



Organisations opposing apartheid march in March 1989.
PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

Art and oppression



One of Cedric Nunn's images, which can be seen in *Lights, Camera, Fire ...* at artSPACE durban.
PHOTO: CEDRIC NUNN

Three 'struggle' photographers are exhibiting their political and personal work of the eighties

OPENING in Durban next week is the photographic exhibition *Lights, Camera, Fire ...* It features images taken by Afrapix photographers Cedric Nunn, Rafs Mayet and Deseni Soobben during the eighties, but the participants stress that it is not a comprehensive overview of the important role Afrapix played in communicating and archiving key years in South Africa's transition. Instead, what is on show at artSPACE durban is a selection of photographs by the three photographers of images not covered by the mainstream media of the day, as well as personal photographs, making this exhibition both a personal and political narrative of a South African prior to the first democratic general elections.

"This exhibition is a small foretaste of a bigger, more comprehensive exhibition by the KwaZulu-Natal branch of Afrapix, which is happening to coincide with 20 years of democracy next year," said Mayet. "This will include the work of people such as Pax Magwaza, Billy Paddock, Omar Badsha, Jeeva Rajgopaul, Myron Peters and others."

Afrapix was a national collective of progressive photographers that had a KZN office in Omar Badsha's darkroom in the Good Hope Centre in Denis Hurley Street.

"Afrapix was a photographic collective that operated for most of the eighties and tried to cover

the stories and realities of life back then, especially that which was ignored by the mainstream media," said Mayet.

"We did a lot of work for a broad range of organisations that were opposed to apartheid — including political, religious, cultural, media, sporting and a host of others, as can be evidenced by the photo of the first march in Durban in September 1989.

"Besides this kind of work, we also had our own projects going on at the same time. This was really a form of release and relief from what we were experiencing on a daily basis. I found refuge in documenting musicians, especially at the Rainbow jazz club in Pinetown — a mission that I'm still busy with to this day.

"I'm not ashamed of the epithet 'struggle photographer' that gets applied to us and our work as I feel that we, in our own small way, contributed to the relative freedom that we all enjoy today."

Soobben is currently a lecturer in the Durban University of Technology's journalism department on the city campus.

Her work with Afrapix included photographs of the emerging United Democratic Front (UDF), the violence-torn KZN midlands, and civil protest action, which were distributed across the world.

She worked at *City Press* with S'bu Mngadi and

Fred Khumalo, and started lecturing at DUT when it was still M.L. Sultan. Her specialist areas of interest are photography, media, culture and gender — and to this end she has based her Master's research dissertation on the photographic representation of women in the print media.

Nunn was one of the prominent photographers documenting the resistance against apartheid in the eighties, and in 1994 he was part of a team of photographers documenting South Africa's first democratic election for the Independent Electoral Commission.

From 1998 to 2000, he served as director of the Market Photography Workshop in Johannesburg. He currently teaches and mentors local and foreign photography students, and serves on the board of the Bensusan Museum of Photography in Johannesburg, but has also taught at the Wits School of the Arts, the New York University Tisch School of Arts exchange programme, and the School for International Training.

Mayet has explored a myriad jobs, including producing for Capital Radio. In 1983, Badsha taught him the basics of photography and he started working on the *Daily Dispatch* in East London and the *New African* in Durban. He also became a member of Afrapix.

Over the years, Mayet has participated in nu-

merous exhibitions, both in South Africa and abroad. He also worked for the IEC during the first election in 1994, but is perhaps best known for capturing moments of musical brilliance, especially in the genre of jazz.

Lights, Camera Fire ... opens at artSPACE, at 3 Millar Road, Durban (alongside the Waste Centre off Umgeni Road), on October 7 and runs until October 26. The gallery is open Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, and on Saturdays from 9 am to 2 pm. Inquiries: 031 312 0793. — Arts Editor.
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