

SOUTH AFRICA BLACK & WHITE

With only a suitcase, a Leica, and a mountain of courage, German photographer Jürgen Schadeberg set off for South Africa at the beginning of the 1950s. For more than a decade he experienced and documented the anti-apartheid movement, the swinging jazz scene, and got involved in Drum, a socio-political magazine. LFI met with the “father of South African photography,” a man both brave and humble.

PHOTOS: JÜRGEN SCHADEBERG





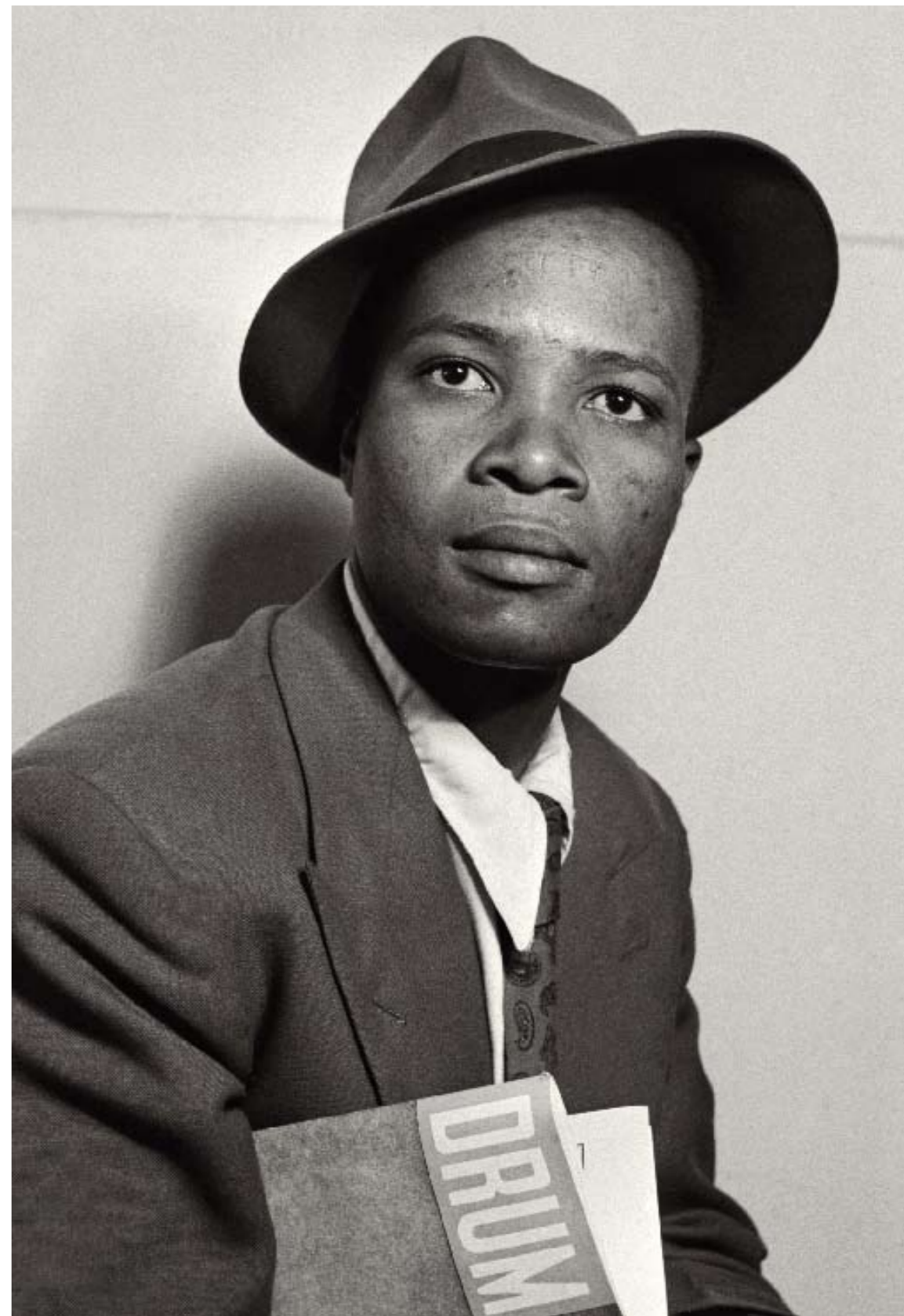
Previous page: Dorothy Masuka, singer and composer, 1952, still a diva in Africa today

Above: The fence at the Racecourse divides skin colour: on the left black people, on the right white people – Johannesburg Racecourse 1954

From top to bottom: The first night of the Sophiatown removals when 2000 police forced people out of their homes in 1955. “We Won’t Move”. The ANC called for people to resist the enforced removal. Première of the controversial and racially charged film, “Cry the Beloved Country,” by Alan Paton, where there was a strong police presence



Right: Henry Nxumalo (Mr. Drum), the most courageous investigative journalist. Henry fought to expose injustice, cruelty, and narrow-mindedness and was murdered in 1957 while investigating a piece





Left: The annual "Durban July" horse race was the highlight of the social calendar



Right clockwise: Vy Nkosi, well-known trombonist – his horn produced tremors in the bowels of the earth. The three Jazzolomos: Jacob "Mzala" Lepers (bass), Ben "Gwigwi" Mrwebi (alto sax), Sol "Beegeepie" Klasste (piano). In the mood during a township shuffle. At the Ritz, downtown Jo'burg, the place to go for a jive come Friday night



Left top: Nelson Mandela (centre) during the Defiance Campaign Trial with Dr Moroka (left), then President of the ANC, and Jusuf Dadoo, President of the Indian Congress, (right). Below: Defiance Campaign Meeting, Freedom Square 1952. Right top: Throughout the city there was the sound of penny whistles and guitars, and pennies were flying everywhere. Below: Private golf lesson, Sophiatown, 1952



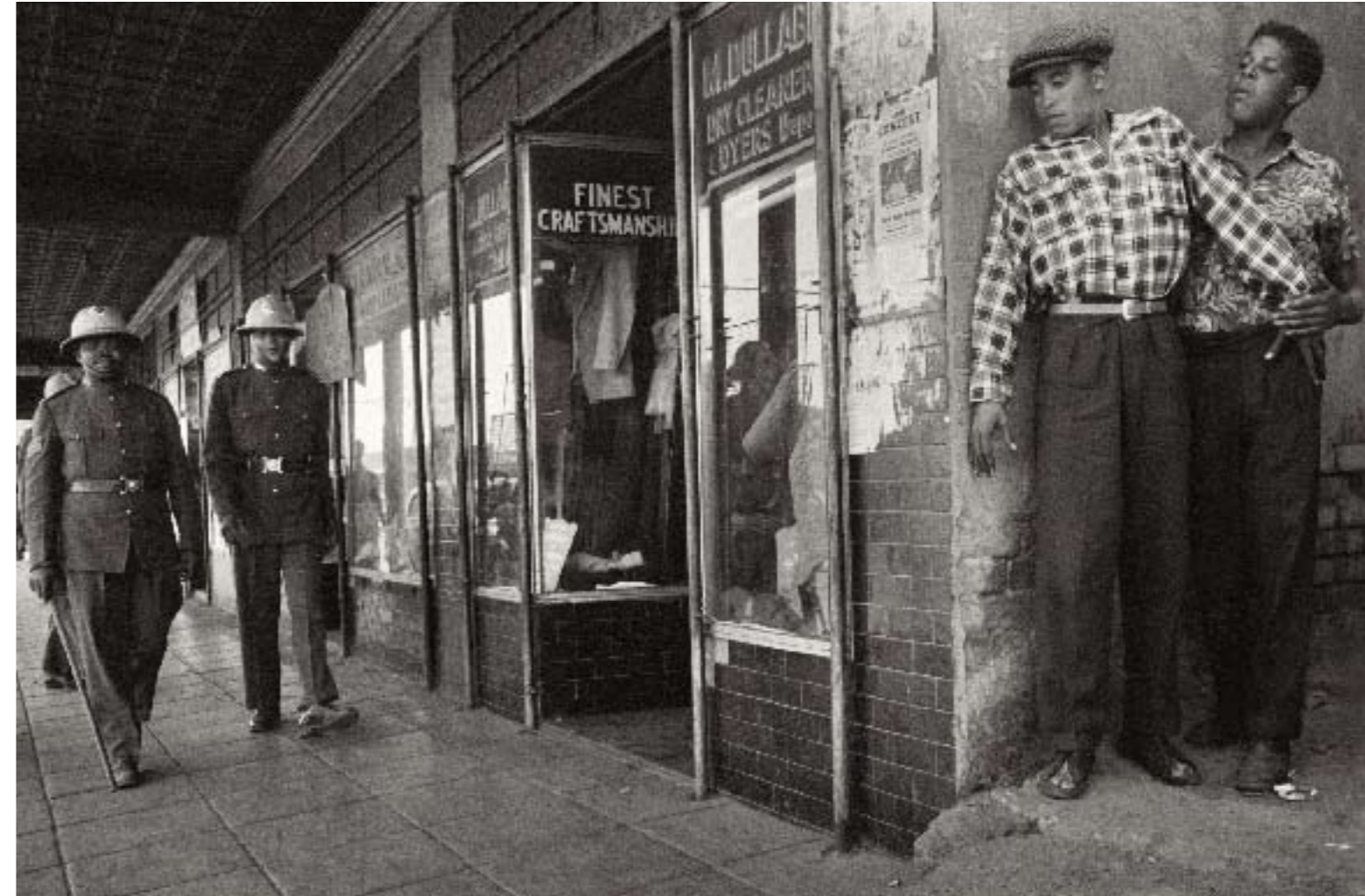
Right: The shuffling "Ducktails" arrive at the Rand Easter Show. South Africa's largest consumer trade fair is a favourite social event for young and old



Right: Waiting for the trucks: their homes have been demolished and they're ready to be moved to the matchbox houses in Meadowlands



Right clockwise: Blacks had to carry passes. If they were caught in the city without a pass, they were thrown in jail. Haircuts were available at most rail or bus stops around the cities of South Africa. A visit to a farm





Sophiatown was a large, multi-cultural neighbourhood in the centre of Jo'burg. It was here that the progressive magazine Drum's heart beat during the fifties

Born in Berlin in 1931, Jürgen Schadeberg started studying lens and photo technology in 1946 in his home town, following it up with an apprenticeship in Hamburg at the German Press Agency. He left Germany in 1950, exchanging Berlin's ruins for the city of Johannesburg. From 1951 to 1959, he worked for Drum magazine and influenced the face of South African photography like no other,

taking photographs of black intellectuals, jazz musicians, and anti-apartheid fighters. In 1964, Schadeberg left his adopted home, and began working as a free-lance photographer in London, New York, and Hamburg. At the beginning of the eighties he returned to Johannesburg where he started making documentary films. The photographer currently lives in France.

LFI: Mr Schadeberg, what moved you to go to South Africa in 1950?

Jürgen Schadeberg: I was young, I wanted to see the world. And above all, I wanted to get out of Germany. I was naïve enough to believe that everyone outside the country was good and non racist. I didn't know anything about the situation there, about apartheid, the new government. You just didn't read about it in local papers at the time. There was simply no news about Africa.

LFI: So you just wanted to get away?

Schadeberg: Yes. I was looking for adventure, and I imagined South Africa as a wild country.

LFI: What was your first impression when you got there?

Schadeberg: When I got to Cape Town I caught a train to Johannesburg. In my compartment was an older, respectable man who spoke fluent German. I was shocked to discover he was the most extreme fascist, Nazi racist I'd ever met. His name was Dr. von Rensburg and he was the head of the "Ossewa Brandwag." That was the guerilla group that was fighting underground at the time and that later took over the government. They were closely connected with Germany and the Nazis. So I went from a rain shower into a downpour. From one end of fascism, to the beginning of another – it was ghastly. Looking back, I knew after half an hour – I couldn't stand it any longer in the compartment – what South Africa was all about.

LFI: Even so, you stayed ...

Schadeberg: Yes, in Johannesburg I looked for work as a free-lance photographer. It wasn't easy. South Africa had no history of documentary photography. I went for an interview at The Star, one of South Africa's biggest daily papers. The picture editor looked at me and my Leica and said, "If you've come to South Africa with that miniature camera, you haven't got a hope in hell of ever getting a job."



The Drum office was an island in Apartheid South Africa where blacks and whites met on an equal basis. The magazine team was influenced by Hollywood fifties movies and a Raymond Chandler style of dressing, talking and posing

LFI: So documentary photography was completely unknown in South Africa. There were no reportage on social matters ...

Schadeberg: ... or on black people.

LFI: But Drum changed all that. It became the mouthpiece for black South Africans during the apartheid era. How did you hook up with them?

Schadeberg: It was just chance. I shared a dark room in Johannesburg with another photographer. One day, he told me about this black magazine that was looking for someone. I said, 'Great!' went to see them, and found three people there.

LFI: That was the whole team?

Schadeberg: I was the fourth. The office was in one room. But it expanded very quickly over the next two years. Already in the first six months, it began to draw very good journalists and writers. But there were no photographers. Black photographers never had a chance to work in this field. This meant I was a white photographer accompanying black journalists when they worked

on their stories. I also trained black photographers. Art directors didn't exist at the time, so I did that work, too.

LFI: You photographed countless anti-apartheid fighters including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. How did you meet the founders of the African National Congress?

Schadeberg: The first time I met Nelson Mandela was in December 1951. I had travelled to Bloemfontein in the middle of South Africa. Mandela was very demure and staid. There was a whole aura about him; he was very relaxed and peaceful. There was a normal atmosphere at the meeting. It was the early days of apartheid. It got a lot worse a couple of years later.

LFI: Would you say your life was in danger because you were working at Drum?

Schadeberg: It could be unpleasant every now and then. The police were often after me. And a policeman did once put a gun to my head, and told me that he wanted to shoot me and that one day he would. He was a very angry young man, very hot blooded.

LFI: Did you ever get arrested?

Schadeberg: Yes, a couple of times. Once it was at the Treason Trial in 1955. I had trained a black photographer named Peter Magubane. He was with me. The police didn't like to be photographed, especially not when they were beating people up with clubs. And if it happened to be a black man taking the pictures, that was even worse. So they hustled poor Peter down into an alleyway and beat him up. And I – and I must tell you this doesn't happen to me often – I was furious and I went after them. Then I was arrested.

LFI: Because you helped a black man?

Schadeberg: Precisely. They arrested us and threw us in jail. I was let out quite soon. Someone from the German Press Agency let the German embassy know.

LFI: Would you say that your situation as a white man amid black resistance



Photo: Ian Berry/Magnum

fighters and considering your work for Drum was rather unusual?

Schadeberg: Oh yes. From the point of view of white people, I wasn't quite right in the head.

LFI: Were the blacks afraid of their contact with you?

Schadeberg: No, on the contrary. They were happy that someone showed interest in their problems, someone who asked questions, reported on their situation, and took photographs.

LFI: You also photographed the Johannesburg jazz scene which was closely linked to the anti-apartheid movement. What's your relationship to music?

Schadeberg: In South Africa at the time, music was one way to oppose the government. Music represented the idea of freedom. Listening to American jazz music, people believed everything in America was free. Music created a positive and

Top: Jürgen Schadeberg being arrested during the Treason Trials, Johannesburg, 1955. **Right:** State of Emergency, Johannesburg, 1960. The army moves into the city after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. **Far right:** Gamblers in a smoky corner of Sophiatown

dynamic atmosphere, also the belief that everything was better somewhere else. Exactly like I believed when I left Germany to go to South Africa.

LFI: Music was an important part of the resistance, but the situation in South Africa deteriorated.

Schadeberg: Yes, things just got worse. We weren't allowed to use any pictures where, for example, a white boxer was fighting with a black one. The white

police became very brutal – very openly so – and it wasn't fun to work there any more; it actually became impossible.

LFI: In 1964 you left South Africa like so many other people.

Schadeberg: I decided to leave of my own free will, before they threw me out.

LFI: Was Drum forbidden in 1965?

Schadeberg: Mmm yes, though it kept going for a bit. But they'd lost their teeth. I'd already left Drum in 1959 and was working free-lance.

LFI: In the sixties and seventies you worked as a photo journalist in Europe and America. What was that like?

Schadeberg: I did lots of different things. I lived mainly in London. I also worked as a teacher and then as a free-lance photographer for ZEIT, ZEIT-Magazin, The Telegraph and Paris Match.

LFI: But you went back to South Africa in 1985. Why?

Schadeberg: I had to find my negatives.

LFI: You'd left them all behind?



Schadeberg: I couldn't take anything with me. They would have definitely taken it all away from me. I haven't got them all back, but most of them. I also wanted to make a couple of films there with my wife. Then we just got stuck there. And I published a dozen books. What was interesting, coming back after twenty years, was the feeling of emptiness. South Africa was cut off from the world. The fifties were forgotten. No

one knew what Mandela looked like. It was forbidden to publish pictures. There were a couple of book stores where you could get information, but it was difficult. My wife Claudia and I considered it was important to let people know the political and social story, also in connection with music. At the end of the eighties, after I'd published the first books, white people were totally amazed and said, "We had no idea that such a culture existed." South African jazz musicians were completely



cut off from the general public during the apartheid era.

LFI: Are you a political person?

Schadeberg: No, I'm just a human being. I may be interested in social and human conditions, but I'm not political. If I'd been political, then I wouldn't be able to criticise the ANC today. But I can.

LFI: Why did you become a photographer?

Schadeberg: I would have also liked to have been a musician, but I'm not at all musical.

LFI: But why did you pick up a Leica?

Schadeberg: That's very hard to say. I also studied painting in Spain for a while. I really liked that as well.

LFI: Both mediums, painting and photography, produce pictures ...

Schadeberg: Yes, but painting is all about time. The process can take ten minutes, a day or a few hours. Time changes things and one is influenced by the change. When you photograph, you see. You don't go through time. You shoot with the camera and it just takes a brief moment. So you can't really compare these two disciplines. Some photographers want to paint with photography. That

doesn't really work with the nature of photography.

LFI: So the documentary moment is important to you?

Schadeberg: And also to try to bring something new into the picture, something you don't see.

LFI: What do you think is the photographer's most important task? Back then and nowadays?

Schadeberg: Back then, it was important to be a concerned photographer, aware of the lives and the situations of people. And I think it still applies today. A photographer should study people and life. As we go through the world, we don't note the changes – because they're

slow and we're slow to accept them. But photography can document those changes.

LFI: You cover a variety of themes. Which is the most important one for you personally?

Schadeberg: The most important one is what's most important for humanity.

LFI: We're presenting photographs all the way from the fifties to present day. Has your photography changed throughout your life?

Schadeberg: That's interesting. An Italian magazine once published a photo that became very famous. On the other side was the contact sheet with 35 pictures of which probably about 20 were good shots, right? Even so, at any given time they would probably choose a different picture: a picture that fits in with the current zeitgeist ...

LFI: So it's not through taking the picture, but through the choice?

Schadeberg: Yes, that's often the case but not always. A photographer always hopes to choose something timeless, but that's hard. If I were to look through my pictures today, I'd probably choose ones that I ignored before, because at the time they didn't cause such a strong impression

LFI: That means that you took photos which you thought were right to take at the time, and not just what people wanted.

Schadeberg: Yes, I hope so.

2008 Exhibitions: 7.5.–29.6. Würzburg, Afrika Festival. 15.–18.5. Photo London with book presentation. 18.6.–12.7. Cosmopolis Centre, Nantes. 1.–30.6. Leica Gallery, Solms. 28.6.–End of August Sylt, with Drum film and talk with Schadeberg. Juli Leica Gallery, Frankfurt.

7.–28.7. with interview appointments on the 17./18 and talk by Schadeberg. August Buenos Aires, Festival de la Cruz. Starting 21.9. Wittlich, George Meistermann Museum

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Further Information: www.jurgenschadeberg.com