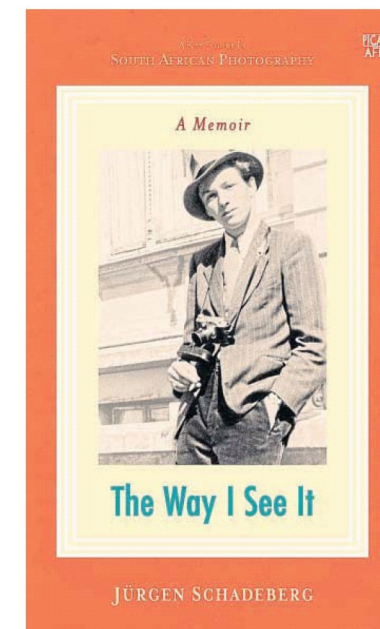


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**ICONIC MAGAZINE:** Covers of Africa's Leading Magazine – Drum from the 1950s (above) when Jürgen Schadeberg was chief photographer, picture editor and art director

Pictures: PINTREST

**ICONIC IMAGES:** Clockwise, from far left, the funeral procession of the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 in which 69 protesters were shot dead by police and 180 were injured – Schadeberg hired a small plane to capture the moment; Nelson Mandela outside the Old Synagogue in Pretoria in 1958 where the Treason Trial was being held; the mesmerising Miriam Makeba performing; the cover of Schadeberg's book, *The Way I See It*; and an almost painterly and hauntingly beautiful photograph taken in 1955, titled 'Sophiatown gambling quartet'

Pictures: Jürgen Schadeberg

# Feeling the African beat

## Photographer's black and white record of the evolution of Drum magazine and the 1950's hurly-burly

By NADINE DREYER

JÜRGEN Schadeberg's photographs are as familiar as they are iconic: Nelson Mandela gazing through the bars of his prison cell on Robben Island; a young Miriam Makeba smiling and dancing; Hugh Masekela as a schoolboy receiving a trumpet from Louis Armstrong; Henry "Mr Drum" Nxumalo; the Women's March of 1955; the Sophiatown removals; the funeral of the Sharpeville massacre victims...

Schadeberg was the man behind the camera literally recording in black-and-white history as it unfolded in apartheid South Africa.

But his personal story, told in his recently released book *The Way I See It*, is no less extraordinary.

Schadeberg grew up in Berlin during World War 2. His mother had an elastic interpretation of parental responsibilities, to say the least. While the model-actress flitted from one romantic intrigue to the next, young Jurgen was left to navigate the horrors of war on his own.

It's tempting to conclude that the quick-witted instincts a youth requires to dodge fanatical Nazis, murderous Russians, terrifying bombings and looming starvation were excellent training for the dystopian world of apartheid SA.

Whatever the truth, after a stint as a rookie photographer in Hamburg, Schadeberg fell down the rabbit hole and into an adventure that would see him document some of the most important moments in SA history – and the characters who shaped it.

In 1950 with only a little experience as a news photographer – mostly in sport – he arrived at Johannesburg train station on a cold winter's morning. He had a piece of paper with his mother's address on it, all his worldly possessions in a small, cheap suitcase, and his Leica camera, as always, around his neck.

About a year later he heard that a magazine called the *African Drum* was looking for a photographer.

"I was told they had no money and that it would be an unsatisfactory position for me because the magazine was 'about natives'," he writes.



"Everyone told me it would be disastrous for my career. It was totally unacceptable for a European to be working with natives. Well, I disagreed. In fact, I thought 'working with the natives' was an excellent idea so I went to the *African Drum* and offered my services."

Former cricketer Bob Crisp was the proprietor and magazine editor, and employed him at a rate of 10-shillings per picture used.

And so it was that Schadeberg

joined *Drum* with its staff of three – Crisp, Henry Nxumalo – the chief journalist who went on to become the pioneer of investigative journalism in South Africa, and "an Italian lady who was the secretary and spoke poor English".

Schadeberg became not only, the chief photographer, but picture editor and art director, and in doing so he played a double role – revealing the dynamic black culture of the times and pioneering the iconic

brand.

In his dry, understated style Schadeberg reveals the anecdotes behind some of his iconic photographs. Working closely with Nxumalo, their most famous exposé was the notorious potato farms in Bethal where workers were treated like slaves.

The background to this assignment was the murder of a farm labourer in 1929. A farmer had been found guilty of hanging the man by

his feet from a tree and flogging him to death. More than two decades later nothing had changed.

Nxumalo went undercover as a labourer and Schadeberg had to track him down (his German accent was a handy weapon against suspicious Afrikaners).

Eventually he traced Nxumalo to the potato fields on Sonneblom farm in the Bethal district.

There the "boss boy" was cracking his whip while weary workers

stooped to gather the crop.

Schadeberg surreptitiously snapped photographs with his telephoto lens until Nxumalo dropped his basket and ran to the car.

Schadeberg covered many political moments. At the ANC conference in 1951 he encountered Nelson Mandela, a young charismatic leader tipped for great things.

In 1960 he hired a small plane to cover the funeral of the victims of the Sharpeville massacre.

On a lighter note there's the day he got arrested with Dolly Rathebe on a mine dump.

After looking for a Johannesburg backdrop that would resemble a beach, the bikini-clad bombshell posed for him on top of a dump.

After finishing the shoot they were accosted by four cops accusing them of contravening the notorious Immorality Act.

"Wat doen jy hier, seuntjie? (What are you doing here, boykie?)" a sergeant demanded.

He then turned to Rathebe: "Ek wil jou broek sien! (I want to see your panties.)"

After lifting her dress to show that she was in fact, wearing panties, Rathebe was thrown in the back of a pick-up van. Schadeberg was pushed into a police car.

At the police station a cop lectured him: "We don't mix with these people. You should know, as a German, they are different."

Jim Bailey, *Drum's* financier and proprietor after Crisp ran into difficulties, was pathologically loathe to hand out money, despite being one of the wealthiest men on the continent. Bailey was the son of Randlord Sir Abe Bailey and Lady Mary Bailey.

He'd leave his poorly paid subordinates to pick up the tab for a night's binge drinking with township Mafia bosses.

Editor Anthony Sampson was a Jeykl and Hyde character – and his Mr Hyde side could be horribly creepy (read the book).

The *Drum* world was full of characters who still loom large today. Driving with the magazine's music editor Todd Matshikiza was a terrifying experience, writes Schadeberg, because Matshikiza was so short he almost disappeared behind the wheel of his Morris Minor.

The two of them hung out with Kippie Moeketsi in an underworld where "gangsters danced with guns and knives and thought gambling, shooting and stabbing were normal".

Abnormal times that produced both the best and the worst. Definitely worth a read.

Schadeberg left South Africa in 1964 to work and teach abroad. He returned in 1985 and stayed for another 22 years.

His body of work spans more than 70 years and incorporates a collection of some 200 000 negatives – a wealth of timeless and iconic images, many of which have been widely exhibited. — *With additional editing by Dawn Barkhuizen*

**Jürgen Schadeberg's *The Way I See It*** (Picador Africa) retails at R310 and is available at good bookstores nationwide or online