In the early 1990s the Dutch photographer Ad van Denderen and journalist Margalith Kleijwegt travelled to Welkom, a small mining town in South Africa, to document the last days of apartheid. The growing tensions between the white and the black community often lead to unrest. The city was seen as an example of how things could go wrong during the process of change. After multiple visits, the story was published in Vrij Nederland magazine and in the critically acclaimed photo book Welkom in Suid-Afrika in 1991. 

25 years later, the South African photographer Lebohang Tlali reached out to Van Denderen. Tlali grew up in Welkom’s neighbouring township Thabong, and discovered Welkom in Suid-Afrika while studying in Cape Town. The book was a revelation to him: for the first time Tlali could see how the white community lived during apartheid. At the same time, the photos taken in Thabong provided a feeling of recognition.

In order to think about the future, one must know the past. Taking this notion as a starting point Tlali and Van Denderen initiated a series of photography workshops at three high schools in Welkom and Thabong. Using photography to reflect on their identity, the young »born free« students became empowered participants in the project. 

Welkom Today combines new and existing photographs by Van Denderen, Tlali and their students as well as images from family albums, newspaper archives, interviews by journalist Margalith Kleijwegt and essays. In a multi-vocal, non-hierarchical way, the project opens up to multiple histories and perspectives, across generations and backgrounds. 

Welkom Today is a Paradox production and is curated by Anne Ruygt and Bas Vroege, in close collaboration with the photographers. Partners include the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, CBK Zuidoost, Atlas Contact and Kehrer Verlag. Paradox is a Dutch not for profit organisation founded in 1993 developing projects around contemporary issues with documentary authors. www.paradox.nl
Press images

1. Ad van Denderen, Acclimatization space in Steyn mine, 1991
3. Ad van Denderen, Mooi West, Welkom, 1990
4. Ad van Denderen, Land occupation on former Harmony mine site, Welkom, 2018
5. Ad van Denderen, Welkom centrum, 2017
6. Ad van Denderen, Welkom park, 2018
7 Lebohang Tlali, Linkie Tlali, 2018
8 Lebohang Tlali, Lerato Motsatse, 2018
9 Lebohang Tlali, Moses Tlali, 2018
10 Noma Nyamani, workshop participant Welkom Gimnasium, 2017
11 Thabo Modikeng, workshop participant Teto High, 2017
12 Vista krantenarchief, Welkom, 1950’s
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Fon ++49 (0)6221/649 20-25, Fax ++49 (0)6221/64920-20
www.kehrerverlag.com