

Goldblatt's brilliance shines through

Exhibitions "On the mines" by David Goldblatt and "Gold in the Morning" by Alfredo Jaar. Goodman Gallery, Rosebank, Johannesburg (011) 788-1113
Until: December 14

REVIEWED BY ROBYN SASSEN

As you walk into the gallery's vestibule, you're catapulted, heart first, into a back-lit image of men quarrying in South America, in a piece revealing the land pillaged; the men, ant-like from the photographer's vantage point.

As frenetic and detailed as the approach of Dutch 15th century moralist painter Hieronymus Bosch, the work by Chilean photographer Alfredo Jaar sets the tone for a resonant exhibition, which also celebrates the publication of an updated version of "On the Mines" which David Goldblatt made with Nadine Gordimer in 1973.

While the use of light-boxes showing Jaar's photographs may vie with sensationalism, don't be misled: Jaar's and Goldblatt's work come from different sides of mining's discourse and dovetail astutely.

It's a timeous exhibition, forcing you to think of the min-

ing crisis rocking South Africa right now, and to allow your ideas to inch behind political discourse and touch the human back story.

As Goldblatt reveals in fragments he wrote about his childhood near Randfontein's mines in the 1930s, it's about embracing the core of what historically made Johannesburg the city to migrate to.

While Goldblatt presents to you the almost-detritus of old mines in the process of demolition - like the General Manager's house in New Kleinfontein, Benoni, bits of its stoep balcony already splintered away, he also presents deep personal poignancy.

Novice Miner from the Transkei, in the Fanakalo school, Hartbeesfontein Gold Mines, Klerksdorp, is a photograph Goldblatt took in 1972 of a young man wearing the protective paraphernalia for the task.

Don't just look at this subject, peer deep into his eyes, as you consider him through time and geography. The protective gear almost reads like calipers, but it is the palpable fear and hint of bravado you see in this youngster, not yet hardened by scary challenge, that brings him

to life, demonstrating the subtle brilliance of Goldblatt, which remains like a glass of fresh clear water, in a dusty state of ambiguity.

In 1969 - '70, Goldblatt went down mineshafts in Welkom to do several shoots. These images are shown in the space called "The Bolton Room"; in looking at them you can hear the rumbling catastrophe and taste the claustrophobia that being beneath kilometres of solid rock, near the very heart and guts of the planet, evokes.

A concession store owner and his assistant gaze at the photographer; and through him and through a generation, to you, amidst a price-tagged display of rough blankets, smooth suits and hats, tailored and priced to suit mining consumers, another and not-to-be-forgotten sidekick that oiled the mining industry.

This exhibition will leave you subliminally shattered and deeply mesmerised by the bigness of it all: the beautiful, intelligent photographs, the mining crisis and the infinitesimal place where they meet.

• Steidl's edition of *On The Mines* is on sale at the gallery and www.kalahari.com.



David Goldblatt's Concession store proprietor (seated) and assistant, Rose Deep, Germiston. October 1966. Silver gelatin on fibre based paper. Edition of 10. 40 x 28 cm

Photo courtesy of David Goldblatt and The Goodman Gallery

'Annie' is jolly good theatre



The baddies in the tale, Rooster (Adam Pelkowitz) and Lily (Bianca de Klerk), smarmily trying to pretend they're Annie's parents, so that they can bag the reward!

Show: *Annie Jr*, National Children's Theatre, Parktown (011) 484-1584
Until: December 23

REVIEWED BY ROBYN SASSEN

Child performers can kill a production. Armed with scant stage - let alone life - experience, they can get hooked on their own cuteness; they can make a show implode into amateur silliness.

It takes a fine blend of a wise directorial hand, a sensitive, committed child and sophisticated support and design teams to make a show starring a child really fly with the acumen of proper entertainment, without tripping on schmaltz. The National Children Theatre's *Annie Jr* does just this.

British child Barclay Wright debuted in 1995 in a Channel Four TV mini-series, created by Alan

Bleasdale, called "Jake's Progress". It's black and funny and sinister and shocking; the seven-year-old highlights its idiosyncrasies because he is bright and so capable of nuance.

Similarly, Emma Rogers, one of the two reprising the eponymous role (the other is Lintle Lesela), manifests a bell-clear singing voice, understated confidence and ability to express behavioural nuance in the tribulations of a Depression-era American orphan.

She convinces you without forcing the role; the touch with which she transitions into it is light and ordinary-seeming. She may have orange curls like Aileen Quinn who made the role famous on the silver screen in 1982, but the character she embraces is far from a dated saccharine sweetheart. She's real.

To think of this production as good feel-good theatre, is an under-

statement. From its construction, featuring choreography by Genna Galloway and set by Stan Knight that spontaneously brings out gasps of wonder in audiences and is smartly bare of gimmick in its representation of 1933 America, the play is honed and crafted within the unforgiving ambit of a small stage, with such skill and guts, you leave with a new perspective on hope.

There are two child casts of seven little girls each, and an adult cast of nine, featuring several stage debuts and highlighted by the inimitable Adam Pelkowitz opposite Bianca de Klerk as society-driven 1920s crooks.



Emma Rogers is Annie.

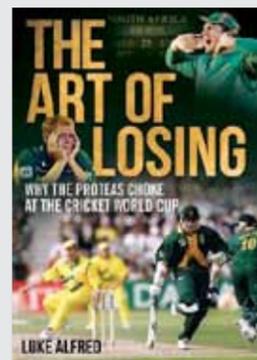
The cast is headed by Sean McGrath as the generous mogul who gives Annie her chance; and Chantal Stanfield, as the bitter orphanage manager.

Director Francois Theron continuously raises the bar in this theatre. More than an incubator for young actors as children's theatre is traditionally, it's incubating audiences, effectively serving as a meaningful tool to turn over a new leaf in the whole industry.

Some very good reads

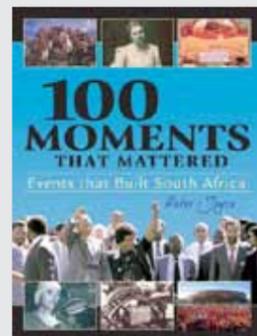
REVIEWED BY GWEN PODBREY

***The Art of Losing: Why the Proteas Choke at the Cricket World Cup* by Luke Alfred (Zebra Press, R226)**



Since South Africa's readmission to global cricket in 1991, the Proteas have acquired a reputation for playing like champions in the opening stages of a World Cup, only to choke at the last minute. Though they unquestionably have the talent and technique to win, this cricketing version of early ejaculation has placed an immense psychological burden on the team, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy which they seem unable to break. Behind-the-scenes personality clashes between players, captains, selectors and coaches, as well as financial scandals at Cricket SA, haven't helped either. Alfred analyses the many dynamics within the team and offers insights into the problem. The thing is: will any of the Proteas (particularly Graeme Smith, AB de Villiers and coach Gary Kirsten) actually read the book, or is it purely fodder for exasperated, Twittering fans?

***100 Moments That Mattered: Events That Built South Africa* by Peter Joyce (Zebra Press, R200)**



Joyce begins with an overview of claimants to and role-players in the country, from its indigenous peoples (including the "Black Jews" - the Lemba) to colonists, and chronologically identifies seminal events which steered its course. From the Boer/British/tribal wars and crucial battles like Isandlwana and Majuba to the arrival of "that bloody woman" Emily Hobhouse, the Bambatha Rebellion, Sol T Plaatje's conceptualisation of a resistance movement (later to crystallise as the ANC), the gold rush, the Rand Revolt, the rise of the National Party and apartheid, the Sharpeville massacre, the Rivonia Trial and - of course - the events marking the ultimate demise of the regime: Nelson Mandela's release, the new constitution and the first democratic elections. While the book offers no new information, it is nevertheless an unusual and refreshing approach to SA's socio-political history.