

Freestyle: Abandoned places of Voortrekker Road

Photography by Auriane Lamy

I chose to focus my freestyle project on the ruins and abandoned places of Voortrekker Road. I shot in three different locations: Maitland station and two abandoned buildings between Salt River Station and Koeberg station. I had already explored one of the abandoned buildings several times and decided to go there in the early morning to capture the special light of the sunrise over the mountain. Later, as I was shooting another abandoned building further in the street, the security guard of the building approached me and we started having a conversation. He offered to open the gate for me so I could shoot inside; it was a unique occasion to capture the place which is normally inaccessible. The atmosphere was really particular as it was just before a storm, which rendered the place even more apocalyptic. I am very intrigued by those buildings: how did they end up like this? Who used to live here? Why were they destroyed? What is going to be built next and when?

Exploring photography gives me the opportunity to use my imagination to answer these questions. I tried to pay attention to all the details: the empty milk bottle, the dirty shoe, the graffiti... The graffiti is a core part of the site; it is often colourful and expresses the desire to escape. These abandoned buildings also challenge the willingness to situate oneself in certain spaces. Indeed, when looking at this apocalyptic scene, it could be anywhere, in a country destroyed by war or by a natural disaster. However, when photographing it, the surrounding mountains appear, reminding us that we are in Cape Town.

These pictures can be seen as a political call for action. It is obvious that people have lived there, which raises the question: How can the City of Cape Town allow people to live in such conditions, on a dangerous site? Moreover, these buildings have been abandoned for several months even though there is an urgent need for affordable housing near the city centre. The old train of Maitland station could also be transformed into houses. The use of containers to build houses is widespread so why not the train carriages?

I strongly believe that providing social housing near places of employment is an essential and urgent step in challenging Cape Town's spatial apartheid.

IMAGE 1: ROUND



IMAGE 2: TRAPPED TRAINS



IMAGE 3. LINES

