

Photos: © Heinrich van den Berg

His book encompasses a series of more than two hundred pages of striking images, beginning with starkly contrasting black and white prints in a section marked 'Contemplation', and ending in a triumphant series in shades of red entitled 'Strength'. The journey in between is a flow of colour, with tones subtly graduating in warmth. As you take in the images and read the words that accompany them, you find yourself paging back to try and figure out exactly when the tones changed from sepia to pink, or from pink to blue.

The Creative Process

For van den Berg, taking the photograph is only the first step in the creative process that leads to the final product, in this case, the compilation of carefully selected photos into a book that is a reflection on change. He maintains that there is an art to editing a photo so that it is not only eye-catching, but also is a physical representation of what he saw, when he pressed the shutter. With traditional developing of pictures, one had a positive that could be matched by the printers, but in the age of digital photography, the image is not a direct rendition of what was seen.

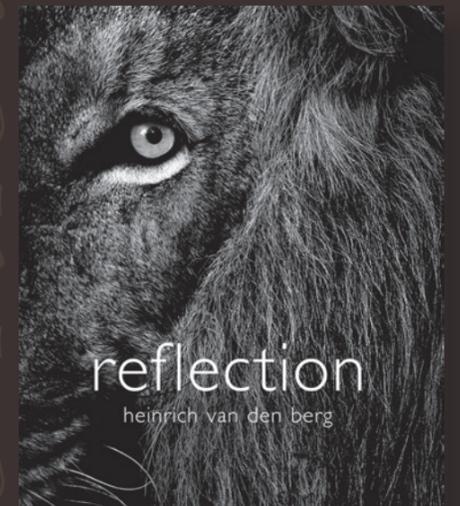
"You have to take a digital image and correct it, to bring it back to the place in your mind when you saw it," he says.

Having his own publishing company, means that he is fully in charge of the artistic process, and in this way, he avoids what he calls 'printing by numbers' - where pictures are produced formulaically, rather than each being individually considered.

Van den Berg particularly enjoys black and white photography, saying that the images require interpretation because of what they do not show, versus colour photographs, which leave less to the imagination. He alludes to the work of Ansel Adams, whose work is not so much about the subjects of his photos, but about the feelings that they evoke.

Van den Berg's advice to amateur photographers looking to capture the quintessential bushveld experience is to trust your instincts, and not to pay too much attention to what others say about your pictures. He also advises to take photos that have a longevity - the kind that will hang on your wall and be contemplated for years to come - rather than the ones that enjoy fleeting success with lots of social media thumb-ups, only to be forgotten a short while later. He maintains that there is a great difference between photos taken to evoke an immediate response on Facebook, and those that are meant to be looked at and enjoyed over a long period of time.

With more than twenty years of photographs from which to choose, internationally acclaimed wildlife photographer, Heinrich van den Berg, approached his latest book, Reflection, not just as a photographer, but as an artist and a poet, weaving reflective words into a series of photos that take the reader on a journey of change.



Reflection (ISBN No. 978-0-620-61111-4) is available for purchase at Exclusive Books



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A Reflection of Change

Van den Berg has experienced many changes in his life, most recently the arrival of two children. What triggered the process of change for him was his near fatal brush with malaria, many years ago when he was studying to be a civil engineer. The illness had him in intensive care, and he says that for a while it was a touch and go situation, explaining: "It put me in touch with my own mortality and if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't have had the courage to make the change," he said of his career change from civil engineer to photographer. Today, he continues to support the fight against malaria, and a percentage of the proceeds from *Reflection* will go to Goodbye Malaria, an initiative that seeks to eliminate malaria with practical programs in Mozambique.

Understanding where the inspiration for *Reflection* came from, adds a further dimension of enjoyment as you turn the pages of van den Berg's latest collection. As he says in the prologue of this book, ... "the knuckles of our thoughts go white from holding on." Van den Berg's interpretation of the changes he has gone through is a combination of subtlety and sincerity, which makes this collection a timeless one, to be enjoyed and contemplated for a long time to come. ■ Dominique Phohleli



Africa