

An African Odyssey

Abseent member Richard Dobson's stunning photographs of the wild desert region of central South Africa have been published in a coffee table book, *Karoo Moons, A Photographic Journey*. The dramatic shots range from close-ups of rusted railway undercarriages, like abstract paintings, to dramatic landscapes and shots of local characters, reports **Garry Marchant**.

Dobson, born in Yorkshire in 1963 and educated in South Africa between 1975 and 1983, developed his interest in photography in London in 1984. After four years assisting London advertising photographers, he began his career as a freelance photographer.

Dobson lived in Hong Kong from 1989 to 1996, working for several *Emphasis* magazines, *Asialnc*, the former *Business Traveller Asia* and a number of other publications. He produced a guidebook to Macau and contributed to *Return to the Heart of the Dragon*, a



Hong Kong coffee table book.

The photographer now divides his time between Cape Town and Paris, shooting advertising and editorial photography. He contributes to major European travel publications, including *Condé Nast Traveler*, German and French *GEO*, as well as the *New York Times* and *The Guardian*. Commer-

cial clients include Vietnam Airlines, Nokia, Barclays Bank, Honda, Volkswagen and Jeep.

Struik Publishers produced the book, with a foreword by South African playwright Athol Fugard and text by short story author and journalist Ruben Mowszowski. However, the comments and captions by the photog-

rapher are more relevant and intriguing than the overwrought prose.

Besides comments on the photographs themselves, Dobson includes titbits of information on the history of the Karoo (originally Garoob or dry thirstland) and its wildlife such as ostriches, black eagles, meerkats, rookats (wild cats), rock scorpions and turtles. He also introduces us to local folk – farmers, eccentric wanderers, *karretjie mense* (itinerant donkey cart labourers), mystics and artists.

He captures the sense of loneliness and emptiness with shots such as tumbleweed rolling across a long, straight road disappearing into the horizon, of a dusty, white abandoned farm labourer's hut in an immense, flat sandscape, of vast skies and intriguing rock formations.

The project started in 2002 when French *GEO* magazine commissioned Dobson to discover the Great Karoo and produce a road-style photo essay. He took a three-week photo safari, covering 6,000 kilometres in his Toyota Land Cruiser. Dobson worked under harsh conditions of the dry open reaches on the road between Johannesburg and Cape Town, with summer heat exceeding 30 degrees

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HIGH DEGREE OF ATROCITY
Jay Scott Kanes

Gunshots disrupt a street protest in Hong Kong and unleash tragedy on a lowering scale.

A High Degree of Atrocity

Reviewed by **Saul Lockhart**

This book is not Politically Correct, and that's why I liked it. It is definitely Politically Incorrect. The author, Jay Scott Kanes, has done well for his first try. And innovatively, for offering the book electronically as well as in the traditional print version.

Kanes, incidentally, is a pseudonym for a for a well-known Canadian journo, now turned novelist, who

has done his time in Hong Kong over the past years, writing and editing for all and sundry, including government departments and quasi-government organisations. He enjoys the outlying island life instead of the hurly-burly of Kowloon or Hong Kong.

Set in 2009, Kanes pulls no punches when writing about who really rules Hong Kong a dozen years after the handover. His prelude sums up the book's viewpoint: "The year is 2009. In Hong Kong, seven million

people endure a cruel charade: the façade of political freedoms where few exist."

Hong Kong does not seem to be moving into this doomsday scenario, it must be said, but that does not stop a good yarn from being spun. Read from afar, it is another thriller which might titillate certain prejudices. Read in Hong Kong – well every so often I had to stop and look around to see if any warning signs pointing to this type of scenario were visible.

The novel did activate those long held fears in me that "something like this might happen" – and the 50,000 or so Hong Kongers who emigrated annually to other, more democratic climes, in the lead up to 1997, must have felt this way. (To be fair, the

trend is in the other direction now as Hong Kongers return, albeit with their foreign passports.) And any of those reading this the book that remember or covered the riots of the fifties and sixties, can visualize the chaos on streets that Kane has penned.

"One country, two bullets and three eventful days..." Enjoy. Even if it is a little close to the bone at times. **CCC**

High Degree of Atrocity

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