



MAKING FAMILIAR THE UNFAMILIAR

By Harold Gess

Photographic souvenir books of towns and cities around the world were very popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

These volumes, printed to a high standard and bound in a superior quality binding, showed off commercial and civic buildings, churches, schools and views of the surrounding natural environment.

Grocott and Sherry, a firm of Grahamstown printers and publishers, published a number of these souvenirs of Grahamstown, the last one appearing in 1898.

Earlier this year an exhibition was mounted in Grahamstown's Albany Museum to celebrate 140 years since the founding of the *Grocott's Mail*, a newspaper published until 2003 by the firm of Grocott and Sherry and since then owned and operated by the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies.

As part of this celebration, photojournalism students from the School were challenged to produce two series of photographs for the exhibition.

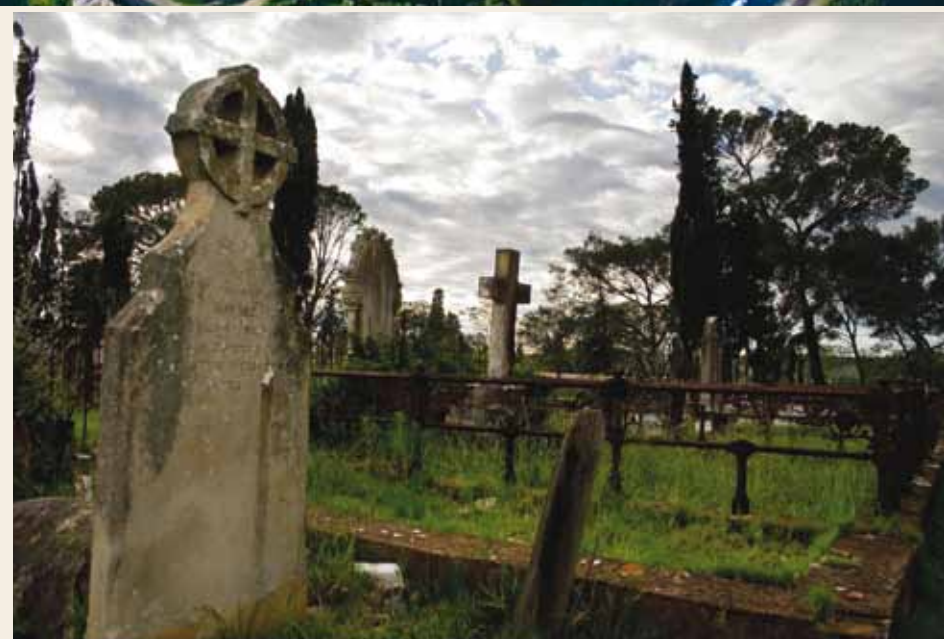
Firstly they set about reproducing, as closely as possible, the images from the 1898 Souvenir, showing how much (or little) things have changed but also the extent to which Grahamstown's historical architecture has remained intact.

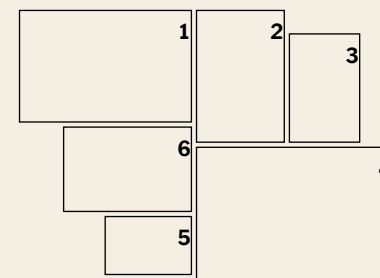
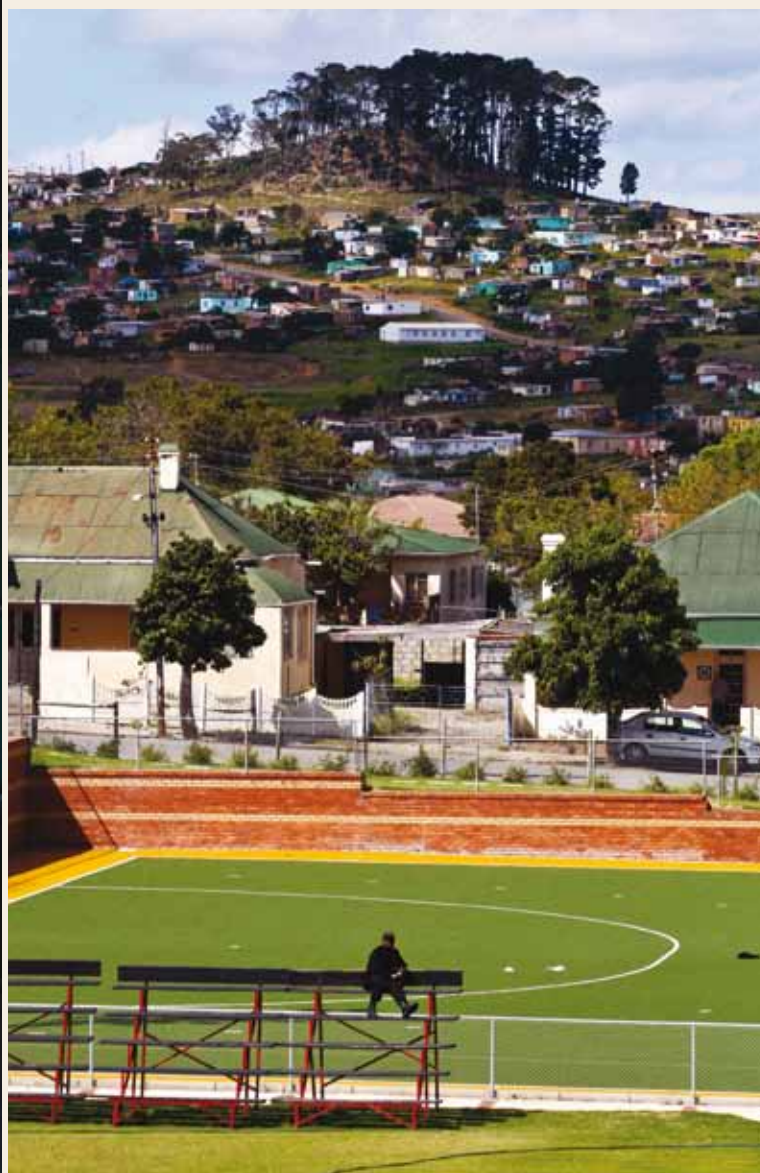
The second series of photographs that the students produced was a current view of Grahamstown, moving away from the "traditional" look at a city and seeking new ways to represent it.

Rising to the challenge, students found themselves on rooftops, around the back of well-known buildings, exploring the towers around the city, using telephoto lenses to juxtapose different areas, and rendering the familiar unfamiliar with the aid of a microlight aircraft.

This second series of images resulted in the display of 56 views of Grahamstown at the exhibition, many of them startling in the way in which they shed a different light on the otherwise very familiar forms of the city.

The editors of RJR have chosen six of these images to reproduce here.





1. A view from the Grahamstown commonage (Karen Crouch).
2. Moses Dlamini views Grahamstown through the camera obscura at the Observatory Museum (Karen Crouch).
3. A view from the Kingswood College Astro turf to Makana's Kop (Kelly Rae du Plooy).
4. Looking down on Fort Selwyn at the 1820 Settlers' Monument (Amy Attenborough).
5. The old graveyard from Roberts Street (Sarah Pickering).
6. Makana's Kop from above (Amy Attenborough).

