

DOWNTIME

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COMPILED BY RICHARD GOLLER



Inspired by the life and work of the late Nelson Mandela, *21 Icons* celebrates those individuals whose achievements reflect Madiba's legacy.

AN EYE FOR GREATNESS

Driven by the need to capture "the essence of a person's story", photographer Adrian Steirn is about to take his acclaimed *21 Icons* series to the world stage

WRITTEN BY AIMEE CARELSE

Australian-born Adrian Steirn certainly did not plan on becoming a photographer; in fact, he started out studying law. When he tinkered with his father's camera on a trip to SA, he had no idea of the impact the experience would have on his future.

Steirn first fell in love with SA at age six, an affection that endured as he kept coming back until eventually, during what was meant to be a two-week stay in 2008, he decided to make Cape Town his permanent home. Now, as the director of content-creators Ginkgo Agency, Steirn produces engaging visual narratives for clients looking to communicate with a global audience.

For Steirn, the most important thing in any photograph is the narrative behind it, no matter who is in front of the camera. "If I can say that I've captured the essence of a person's story, then I feel that I've done my job," he says. It is this affinity for narrative that has informed his latest project, *21 Icons*, a photographic exploration of iconic figures who have had a positive impact on the world. The first part of the project includes images of Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Zackie Achmat, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Nadine Gordimer.

Inspired by the life and work of the late Nelson Mandela, *21 Icons* celebrates those individuals whose achievements reflect Madiba's legacy. Steirn, who believes that success is defined



PHOTOGRAPHY

TOP: Frene Ginwala. BELOW: Albie Sachs with Adrian Steirn, Herman Mashaba, Albie Sachs and Francois Pienaar

through collaboration, says: "To truly honour everything that his legacy represents meant photographing other men and women as well – Mandela knew that positive change required collective effort and communities working together." Season I contains Mandela's last official photographic portrait and on-camera interview.

Steirn is currently releasing Season II, which features Francois Pienaar, Albie Sachs, Frene Ginwala and Herman Mashaba. The season will come to a close on 14 December with the release of the final portrait and a short documentary film, after which Steirn will spend time exhibiting and auctioning off signed prints for charity.

At the end of the year, he will begin shooting *27 Icons Global*, which will feature international icons.

Steirn's efforts have seen him honoured with the Portrait Photographer of the Year accolade at the Africa Photographic Awards in 2010 and the Nikon Africa Professional Photographer of the Year award in 2009.

For more on Adrian Steirn, visit: www.adriansteirn.com,
www.ginkgoagency.com and www.27icons.com

