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Wembley to Soweto

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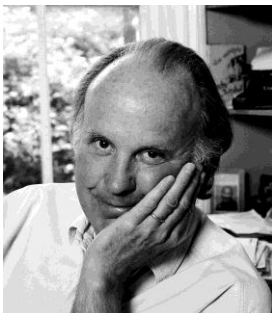
Wembley to Soweto

In 1988, more than 80,000 people attended a concert at Wembley Stadium, London to celebrate the 70th birthday of Mr. Nelson Mandela. A global audience of 600 million viewers tuned in, as the world sent many happy returns to prisoner 46664, and joined with him in spirit to demand an end to apartheid in South Africa.



This iconic photograph of that momentous day was taken by the internationally renowned photographer John Cole. It now hangs on the wall of Mr. Mandela's Johannesburg home.

In May 2010 John will run a 3 week intensive photography course in Johannesburg. The course will afford an opportunity for 8 young photographers, with varying levels of experience, to work alongside one of the world's best. Not only will John show his students how to take remarkable pictures, he will moreover teach the art of 'making a living as a photographer'. This course will not be solely about taking striking images, it will be about how to feed your family using a camera as the tool of your trade.



John was born and raised in Connecticut, USA. After studying for a degree in English literature, he did Peace Corps service in Punjab, India. It was on his journey home, that he first discovered an interest in photography.

"I stopped in Bangkok and bought a Pentax, thinking I'd just take some 'snaps'. But it was love at first sight, and I couldn't stop taking photos all the time. I returned to the USA, got a job in New York City at Newsweek as a writer, but was still taking photos incessantly. I kept applying for different writing jobs within Newsweek and they'd say, 'We thought you were a photographer...'"

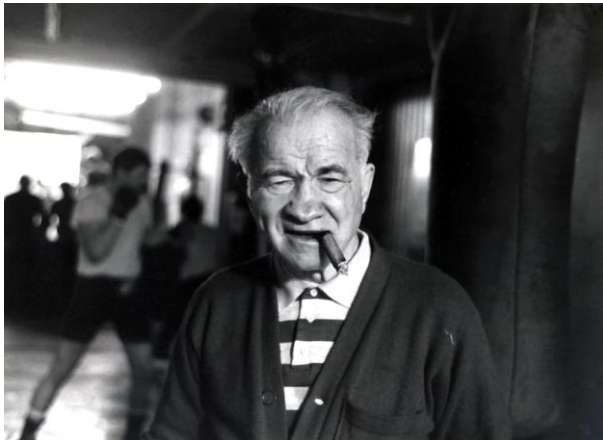
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It was while John had the day job at Newsweek that he started going to the legendary boxing gyms, Gleason's and Gramercy in Manhattan, initially to take photos – but subsequently to combine business with the dubious 'pleasure' of stepping into the ring himself.



"When I opened the door to Gleason's Gym on W. 30th Street in Manhattan, it was like walking onto the set of a Damon Runyon film. The middle class white boy from the soft suburbs couldn't believe his eyes. And he loved it! A few shots turned into a five year journey of photography and pugilism. After three years of taking photos, I was intrigued about what boxing was really like. What's it feel like? How hard is it to train? I was hopeless at sports in school and was terrified, but compulsion drove me to train and lace on the gloves. I boxed at Gleason's on Saturdays and generally got the crap knocked out of me every time. I was crowned The Great White Dope of Gleason's, a dubious distinction but one I'm still proud of."

Some of John's best-known work has stemmed from his 5 years at the hub of the Manhattan boxing world.



Since these early years, John has always had a passion for teaching and has worked with novice photographers from all over the world. The results have been nothing less than stunning, as a recent assignment in Montserrat testifies. On The Montserrat Media Project, John spent 4 weeks with local photographers, honing their skills, and ultimately enabling them to show the world the aftermath of one of the most catastrophic volcanic eruptions of modern times.



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Amid the ashes, the people also found hope and celebration, which John's young protégés documented. The response of the trainees was, as ever, universally enthusiastic –

"It was very exciting to participate in The Montserrat Media Project photography workshop. I had been studying photography on my own for a couple of years and it was worth every second learning from our tutors, John Cole and Andy Johnstone. They shared their experiences and made things very simple to understand. We covered a wide range of topics, from the basic refresher topics, through the rules of photography, to improved composition and lighting tips. Now I have a better eye for photography, and see things differently through the eye of the lens."
Wayne 'Fenty' Fenton from Montserrat.



Using his skills as a photojournalist as well as a business consultant to the photography industry John will lead his South African students through a similarly intensive, all-inclusive course. From planning a shoot, through composition and lighting, to shooting an assignment, the pupils will learn what is typically expected of the modern photographer. And, just as importantly, John will teach 'The Business of Photography' – how to sell photographs to newspapers and magazines, how to approach photo libraries, the meaning of 'Intellectual Property', and above all, how to cut the deal.

By the end of the three weeks training, the photographers will have 'ins' to a range of established 'buyers', as well as a portfolio of unique photographs to which the students themselves will own the copyright.

Ultimately a selection of the photographs will be shown at two simultaneous 'Wembley to Soweto' exhibitions at The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith and The Market Theatre in Johannesburg, to coincide with the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. And given that it all started 22 years ago with a photograph of an event taking place in a packed football stadium, the project will come full circle as one of John's students will be given the opportunity to take an iconic still image of another event in a soccer arena in 2010 – the opening of South Africa's World Cup at Soweto's Soccer City.

'Wembley to Soweto' - two packed stadia, two very different events, a 22 year journey and a vibrant 'Rainbow Nation' celebrating the greatest sporting festival on earth.



The budget for this project is £24,000 and will be funded by two contributions - one from the UK and one from South Africa, for which the respective sponsors will benefit from all the attendant press and publicity.

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'Wembley to Soweto' is part of the wider 'Maakbet Project' currently being run by *Wilton Pictures* in the UK and South Africa – a series of skill-sharing enterprises changing the working lives of people from both countries.

People already actively involved in the project include:

Welcome Msomi, Emily Watson, Stockard Channing, Luzuko Nteleko, Mark Graham, Tsolwana B Mpayipheli, Jeni Rouse, BTV, Frank Stirling, Emma Lewis, David Magliano, Stephen Poliakoff, David Blair, Sharon Palmer, Luzuko Nkqeto, The Gauteng Film Commission, The Cape Film Commission, Ginger TV, Runway, Annie Symons, Aiden Keating, Sally Hope, Graham Cox, Lucy Wilcox, Alana Hurd, Dipolelo Elford, David Weiland, Sally-Ann Wilson, Nick Lom, Heidi Holland, Matt Bardock, Andy Crossan, Andy Serkis, Dorothy Ann Gould, Satwant Gill, Amaka Ugwunkwo, Helen Loveridge, Michael Maxwell, The National Film and Video Foundation (SA), The South African High Commission, The United Nations (UNICEF), Met Film at Ealing Studios, Sean Holmes, Ed Stobart, Kath Mattock, Danny Bishop, Craig Pickles, Shelly Nel, Kweku Mandela, Jonny Persey, Richard Green, Letebele Masemola-Jones, The British Film Institute, The Gulbenkian Foundation, Manuel Costa Cabral, Joanne Gatefield, Sharon Palmer, The British Council, Alethea Selway, The Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, Wendy Spon, Zacharia Selo, Peter Benjamin, Luke Price, Elaine Steel, Michael Attenborough, John Cole, Taylor Milsal, Jem Wall, Matthew Byam Shaw, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, DFID, Gina McKee, Nolitha Ntsodo, Janet Suzman, Lynn Hirshfield, Bonnie Abaunza, Marie-Claire Meisels, Billy Connolly, Bob Pugh, Martin Dennison, Paul Webb, Lyndsey Efejuko, Lisa Ashun, Tracey Burt, Billy and Alfie Westhead, McCoy Oniwe, Owen the Cab, Joy and Maya Sapieka, Jo Noero and Mary Selo and her amazing family...



We look forward to welcoming our new colleagues on board!

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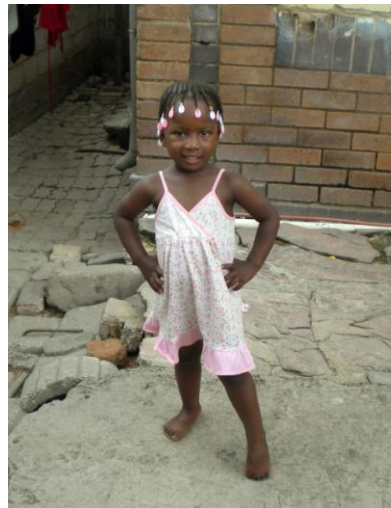
Finally, as proof that a little teaching goes a long way, filmmakers from Wilton Pictures spent a day with a group of historically disadvantaged schoolchildren from Alexandra Township, Johannesburg in January 2010. They worked on the hoof with an enthusiastic bunch of 4–12 year-olds! These are the trainee photographers...



... and these are some of their photographs...



None of these kids had ever touched a camera before taking these photographs. The results are quite simply a gift from their world to ours.



If this is what can be achieved in one day, with 4-12 year olds, just imagine what John Cole will look to accomplish with 18 – 25 year olds over a three week period. A wonderful opportunity for all concerned.

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