

# Badsha's lens doesn't lie 638/235

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## PHOTOGRAPHY

LETTER to Farzanah is the title of a book by the Durban artist and photographer Omar Badsha, his first.

To launch the book and to co-incide with its publication, an exhibition of the original photographs has been mounted at the Hermit Gallery.

Badsha has been part of the art scene here for a number of years, and we have seen isolated examples of his photographic work on exhibition and in publications, but it is only now, with this fine collection of pictures, that one is able for the first time to form a full assessment of his talents.

It is immediately clear that he has at last discovered his medium.

**LETTER TO FARZANAH:  
An Exhibition of Photographs,  
Hermit Gallery  
Reviewed by ANDREW VERSTER**

His photographs have insight and an identifiable personality. From the expressions on the faces of his subjects it is obvious that he is not a predator on their privacy, but a welcome visitor.

He has a gift for establishing an atmosphere of trust that gives to each picture a warmth and humanity so often absent in documentary photographs of this kind.

Part of the reason for

this must of course lie in his intimate association with the world that he is recording and his love and understanding of it. He sees it from within and is thus able to isolate with an informed eye its pertinent aspects.

And part of it must come from his instinctive feeling for the medium he is using. He is a very gifted photographer. His work is completely free from gimmicks and easy effects.

Our particular political and social situation is one which has produced much comment and documentation in the various visual fields that is superficial, cliched and ephemeral.

Other people's poverty and deprivation has been sentimentalised and trivialised, their genuine distress cheapened into mere

theatricality so that as viewers it has been impossible to respond in anything but the most superficial way too.

This is not the case with these photographs. Badsha does not set out to dramatise or moralise. He sees himself rather as a recorder of facts, one who exposes the truth and allows us to form our own conclusions.

If what we are presented with is not a pretty picture, it is because the facts do not warrant this. It is, however, ultimately better to be aware of what is going on in our midst than to act as ostriches forever.

The book takes its title from a short letter he has written to his infant daughter telling her something about the society into which she has been born.

The tone is set by the dedication, "to Farzanah and the children who walk through this broken landscape," our landscape scarred with racial thinking.

This collection of work to commemorate the International Year of the Child, establishes Badsha as a photographer of substance and authority.

## CRITICS' CHOICE

"AUTUMN SONATA", O'Connor. A characteristically sensitive study of human relationships. (S.M.)

"ROCKY II", Kine 600, is a satisfying, if contrived and commercial, re-match. (C.C.)

"THE CHAMP", Umbilo Drive-In and Umhlanga Drive-In. A five-tissue weepie. (S.M.)

"MOONRAKER", Cineland 2. James Bond takes off for the inter-galactic stellar circuit in another unlikely but entertaining yarn. (J.v.d.M.)