

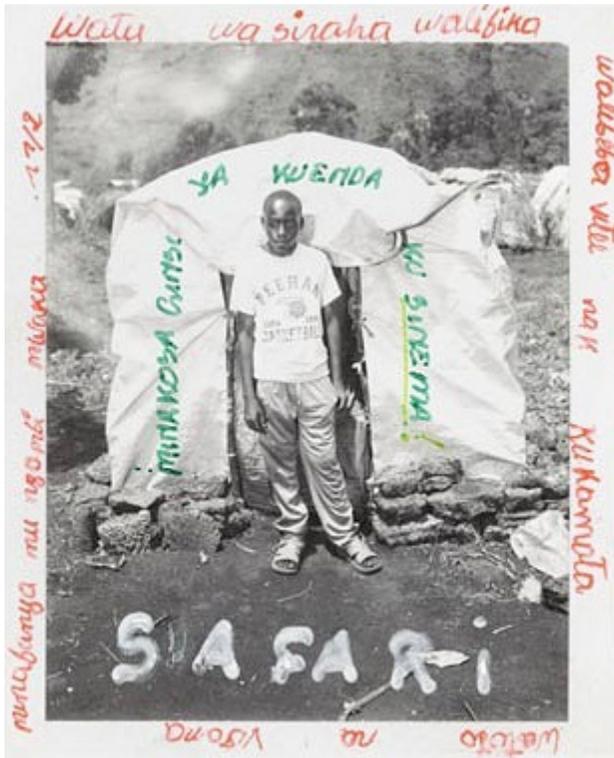
The Telegraph

Jim Goldberg's talking pictures

Jim Goldberg's photographs of refugees, featuring his subjects' hand-written hopes and fears, have made him a contender for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize

By Lucy Davies

7:00AM BST 04 Apr 2011



Democratic Republic of Congo, 2008. 'The soldiers came and took away most of the boys in my village, so I escaped and now live in a refugee camp,' 15-year-old Sakari says. 'I miss watching movies all the time' Photo: Jim Goldberg/Magnum Photos

touched a seam stretching far further than he had imagined. Three years in, he was awarded a grant from the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, which enabled him to expand the assignment, and it has occupied him ever since.

The photographs and scrawled, smudged comments reveal the aspirations and fears of people who might otherwise remain faceless statistics. 'All I want is a bed to sleep in,' writes one. 'I make one dollar a day,' says another, 'and I have despair.'

'I am in the unique position of relaying a story as it unfolds,' Goldberg says. 'Every single immigrant is part of a larger history that needs to be communicated in all its ambivalences and complexities.'

My only agenda,' says the photographer Jim Goldberg, 'is to bring attention to otherwise ignored and shunned lives.' The 57-year old California-based professor of art and longtime member of the illustrious Magnum photo agency has spent some 30 years immersing himself in the tangled lives endured by those on the margins.

His interest was pricked while picturing the grisly surroundings of the welfare population for his 1970s series Rich and Poor and developed with Raised by Wolves, when he documented teenagers living on the streets in San Francisco and LA. 'I had a sense that their perceptions were not being observed and considered,' he says, and so he began asking his subjects to annotate the pictures he took, ensuring his photographs existed as 'thoughtful encounter, rather than knee-jerk reaction'.

His nomination for this year's Deutsche Börse prize comes in the form of Open See, a study of refugee, trafficked and migrant populations fleeing wartorn and economically devastated homelands to forge a new life in Europe. It is a curious mix of Polaroids and large-format photographs featuring his now signature use of handwritten comments, combined with archive snaps and drawings to form a multi-dimensional story.

The project began as a Magnum commission for the Athens Olympics in 2004. Greece's location on the south-eastern tip of Europe makes it one of the busiest transit hubs for illegal migrants, but Goldberg realised he had