



Factory with Elephant, 2014

# DISPLACED

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
NICK BRANDT

*Portraits of East  
Africa's animals in  
a changing landscape*

**F**OR A DECADE, Nick Brandt traveled throughout East Africa to photograph the region's magnificent wildlife. The resulting trilogy—*On This Earth* (2005), *A Shadow Falls* (2009), and *Across the Ravaged Land* (2013)—featured unforgettable portraits of animals that dominated their surroundings but still appeared vulnerable within them. Humans, with a few exceptions, were kept out of the frame, but they were never out of the picture. Through poaching, mining, pollution, and urbanization, they were the biggest threat to the ecosystems these animals relied on.

For his newest project, *Inherit the Dust*, Brandt took his camera to the towns and cities that were expanding into the savannah. In places where wild



Road to Factory, 2014

animals once roamed freely, he found trash heaps and slums, factories and highway overpasses. He didn't travel alone—with him he brought life-sized prints of savannah wildlife mounted in aluminum frames, some of them more than thirty feet tall. He installed these never-before-seen photographs in the landscape and then took new photographs, creating a panorama of urban blight and animal observer together.

In some cases, Brandt positioned the prints so that their horizons matched those of the landscape. In others, the animal is embedded in the foreground. Thus we see a chimpanzee hanging his head among the rubble of an alleyway, an elephant calf covering behind his mother as giant trucks approach, a lion staring impassively at the barren expanse of a quarry.

These panoramas carry an implicit critique of human encroachment on the natural world, but they stop short of condemning their human subjects. There is sympathy for the people

in these pictures, many of whom are doing whatever they can to survive. In photographs like *Wasteland with Lion* and *Underpass with Elephants and Glue-Sniffing Children*, it's clear that people are as much the victims of rapid development as the animals are.

Brandt has said that he was shocked by how quickly the wildlife of East Africa was disappearing: "Places where zebras roamed only two years earlier, now whole new towns had risen out of the ground at extraordinary speed." He spent three months shooting the project, using black-and-white medium-format film, which he stitched together digitally to create the panoramas. The result, in the words of art critic Vicki Goldberg, shows a "collision between Bruegel and an apocalypse in waiting." Like Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, Brandt's photographs dramatize the disconnect between a tragedy that's still unfolding and the need to continue business as usual. But unlike Bruegel, Brandt seems to be urging us to bridge that divide.



"Behind the Scenes"



*Quarry with Lion, 2014*



*Wasteland with Cheetahs and Children, 2015*