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# STYLE

## AK47s, ammo, and art: The unsettling allure of South Africa's beaded guns

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More than 100 million small arms and light weapons are currently circulating in Africa. These weapons stir fear in the masses, but they also inspire reverence. Armed men command status and respect. Freedom songs connect AK-47s with liberation. Mozambique's flag even features the silhouette of the Kalashnikov assault rifle.

South African artist and photographer Ralph Ziman explores the horror and awe of the African arms trade in "Ghosts." Working with local bead artisans and street vendors, he created hundreds of mock bullets and AK-47s. Ziman later traveled with the artists to one of Johannesburg's most crime-ridden neighborhoods, where they posed with their fantasy weapons.

"They have lived around crime and violence both in their adoptive South Africa and their native Zimbabwe," Ziman says. "There is a sadness about the pictures—a loneliness and distance."

The works will go on show at Cape Town's Muti Gallery from April 24.

- Interview by William Lee Adams



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