# Unite Joburg Photographer Interview 3: Chris Saunders

Representing his own neighbourhood of the Maboneng Precinct, and the third photographer in the adidas Originals Unite Joburg Exhibition photographer series is Chris Saunders. High above the streets of Maboneng (with an incredible view of the Joburg CBD) is where Chris lives and works. He took some time to tell us about his experience with Unite Joburg and about taking it to the streets of his own neighbourhood.

**AREA3:** Joburg is a melting pot of cultures and diversity. As a photographer in this city, how does this diversity affect your work?

**Chris:** Almost all of my work is affected by this, it is the reason I shoot images and document my surroundings. I’m trying to understand them better. Also, a good reason to meet people and make conversation is via taking images. Johannesburg is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. There is always something new to document, especially in an area like Maboneng and its surroundings.

**AREA3:** Portraiture is such a subjective thing, and that’s what makes it interesting. When you’re doing portraits what do you try to capture?

**Chris:** I try to make a point of getting to know my subject while shooting, chatting to them before hand and making a point that it’s not only about the image but also some kind of human connection to the person I am shooting. I don’t want the camera to be a barrier, but a conduit.

**AREA3:** Do you have a special connection with the neighbourhood that you chose to shoot in?

**Chris:** I do, I live in Maboneng and see and interact with some of the people in my shots on a daily or weekly basis. It was a pleasure to photograph and document the people in my surroundings, creating a new link to them and a documentation of the people around me at this point in my life.

**AREA3:** In working with adidas Originals, how have you represented originality in your portraits?

**Chris:** I think the diversity in the people that I shot and the spontaneous manner that shots were photographed in makes them original. In this day and age everything has been done, but many of the subjects in my portraits for this series have never been photographed before. In an area like Maboneng, which is new in its own right, it is one of the first documentations of the people that help make it exist as a village in the inner city.

**AREA3:** How does it feel to be part of such a multifaceted campaign like Unite Joburg?

**Chris:** It’s a pleasure to be part of this project, to be put together with other amazing young photographers from Johannesburg and to be able to contribute to a great documentation of the people that makes this city.

**AREA3:** You had the opportunity to meet and spend time with Danny Brown in person. Any pearls of wisdom?

**Chris:** It was a rather strange experience actually, we never really chatted but it was cool to see that we are all the same: Flesh and blood.

The Unite Joburg Photography Exhibition, featuring portraits by [Hanro Havenga](http://whyhelloclarice.wordpress.com/), [Chris Saunders](http://www.whatwasparadise.com/), [Anthony Bila](http://www.anthonybila.com/), [Justice and Innocent Mukheli](http://iseeadifferentyou.tumblr.com/) and [Stephanie O’Connor](http://www.connervarinblog.com/), will be up in [AREA3](http://www.area3.co.za/blog/)  from 3 December until 9 February 2014. (Closed for the holidays from 20 December 2013 to 13 January 2014.)

Photograph by: Adriaan Louw

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