

**EXHIBITION  
FREE FROM MY HAPPINESS**

**By South African photographers**  
Sibusiso Bheka  
Tshepiso Mazibuko  
Lindokuhle Sobekwa

**AT THE INTERNATIONAL  
PHOTO FESTIVAL GHENT 2015**  
Sint-Pietersabdij (Saint Peter's Abbey), Ghent, Belgium  
**12 JUNE TO 30 AUGUST 2015**

# FREE FROM MY HAPPINESS

Curated by Belgium photographers  
Tjorven Bruyneel and Bieke Depoorter

**Exhibition within the framework of the *Of Soul & Joy* project**  
A Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund initiative

Exhibition

# FREE FROM MY HAPPINESS

At The International Photo Festival Ghent 2015

**12 June to 30 August 2015**

“Free from my Happiness” is a group show by South African photographers **Sibusiso Bheka, Tshepiso Mazibuko and Lindokuhle Sobekwa** who grew up in the township of Thokoza in South Africa. They got introduced to photography in 2012 through the *Of Soul and Joy* project initiated in the township by Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund.

They use photography to **portray their environment**, telling stories they feel close to. **Invited by the first International Photo Festival in Ghent, their works are shown for the first time in Europe in the exhibition** “Free from my Happiness” curated by Belgium photographers Tjorven Bruyneel and Bieke Depoorter.

Thokoza is a forgotten, yet still struggling township located in the southeast of Johannesburg in South Africa. The township was created from scratch by the apartheid government in the 1950's and built according to the theories of the racist “separate development” policy introduced a few years before. In the early 90's Thokoza faced a period of increasing “black-on-black” violence.

Today, the urban living areas in the peripheries of the cities have not changed. The living conditions remain the same, only the slum areas, where people live in shacks, have tripled.

In the exhibition “Free from my Happiness”, the 3 photographers document their surroundings. In *At night, they walk with me*, Sibusiso Bheka takes us through his childhood memories that often seem surreal. While Tshepiso Mazibuko with her series *Encounters* photographs the intimate space of people, Lindokuhle Sobekwa documents the life of young people using nyaope, a highly addictive drug popularized among young black South Africans. *Nyaope. Everything you give me my Boss, will do* relates to the slang drug users say when they beg.

Belgian photographers Tjorven Bruyneel and Bieke Depoorter have guided the 3 young photographers into their creative journey.

In zulu, Thokoza means happiness. Cameras in hand, Bheka, Mazibuko and Sobekwa decided in 2012 to “bear witness” to their everyday life as an escape and in the search of freedom: born after 1994, at the same time as democracy, they are part of the “Born Free” generation, as they are called in South Africa.



## Sibusiso Bheka

### *AT NIGHT, THEY WALK WITH ME*

The work of Sibusiso Bheka documents his environment by night. In his series, *At night, they walk with me*, Bheka captures moments of life in his native Thokoza which has been his playground since his childhood and where he likes to wander. He also refers to the stories of spirits recounting that when a child plays at night, he is playing with ghosts; a reason for adults to take the kids off the streets late at night. Bheka gives us to see his reality of Thokoza, his playful moments almost surreal just before light disappears.

Sibusiso Bheka was born in 1997 in Thokoza, South Africa. In 2012, he was introduced to photography in high school through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. He then joined Live magazine as a part time photographer. In 2013, Bheka was part of the group show “In Thokoza” organised by Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund within the frame of the *Of Soul and Joy* project at the Ithuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg. His work was exhibited in 2014 at Addis Foto Fest in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



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Sibusiso Bheka

2015

*At night, they walk with me*

Thokoza, South Africa

© Sibusiso Bheka





## Tshepiso Mazibuko

### ENCOUNTERS

Tshepiso Mazibuko is inspired by her immediate surroundings. She documents Thokoza by telling stories of people who live close to her.

With her series *Encounters* she raises questions on the divisions within her community, the lingering apartheid stigma, the misconceptions around the hostels\* and free-households in her area. Mazibuko features portraits of people in their homes.

\*Hostels are dormitories for migrant workers reserved for men until recently. The living conditions are very difficult. They are located in the township areas in South Africa.

Tshepiso Mazibuko was born in 1995 in Thokoza, South Africa. In 2012, she was introduced to photography in high school through the *Of Soul and Joy* project, which, in 2014, awarded her a scholarship to pursue her photography studies at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. In 2013, Mazibuko's work was exhibited in the group show "In Thokoza" organised by Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund within the frame of the *Of Soul and Joy* project at the Ihuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg.



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Tshepiso Mazibuko  
2015  
*Encounters*  
Thokoza, South Africa  
© Tshepiso Mazibuko



## Lindokuhle Sobekwa

*Nyaope. Everything you give me my Boss, will do*

The work of Lindokuhle Sobekwa documents social issues that affect the communities of the townships. In his *Nyaope* series, he offers the viewer a glimpse into the world of the nyaope users, a highly addictive drug that can contain anything from detergent, rat poison and crushed Anti-Retroviral drugs. Nyaope has gained popularity among young black South Africans and only recently South African Authorities classified it as a drug. Sobekwa documents the life of the nyaope users and the impact it has on their community.

Lindokuhle Sobekwa was born in 1995 in Katlehong Johannesburg, South Africa. He currently lives and works in Thokoza. In 2012, he was introduced to photography in high school through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. He then joined Live magazine as a part time photographer. His work has been exhibited, among others, at the Kalashnikov gallery in South Africa and at the No Man's Art Gallery in the Netherlands, in South Africa and in Norway. In 2013, Sobekwa was part of the group show "In Thokoza" organised by Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund within the frame of the *Of Soul and Joy* project at the Ihuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg. His essay *Nyaope* was published in 2014 in South African newspaper the *Mail & Guardian*.



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Lindokuhle Sobekwa

2015

*Nyaope, everything you give  
me my Boss, will do*

Thokoza, South Africa

©Lindokuhle Sobekwa

## THE CURATORS

### **Tjorven Bruyneel**

Tjorven Bruyneel (born 1983) is a Belgian photographer. She received a Master's degree in Photography from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent (KASK) in 2007. Her work reflects the desire to analyse her surroundings, to dissect a feeling that she is not able to put into words. It allows her to construct piece by piece as a puzzle her story. Her observations display society and invisible shifts in time, which question our identity.

Bruyneel has been an active photographer of the *Of Soul and Joy* project since 2012 leading several workshops in Thokoza as a mentor for the learners.

Bruyneel's photo essay, *Untitled Happiness*, was commissioned by Rubis Mécénat in 2012.

### **Bieke Depoorter**

Bieke Depoorter (born in 1986) is a Belgian photographer. She received a Master's degree in Photography at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent (KASK) in 2009. Her colour photography work is the result of a unique approach: she captures the privacy of people whom she meets by chance and gets invited into their homes. She captures indescribable, fragile and intense moments, always with kindness. Her *Ou Menya* series for which she spent three months in Russia was published in a book in 2011. Two years later, her second book *I am about to call it a day*, with photographs taken in America was printed and her third and most recent book *Sète#15*, a result of a residency for Images Singulières in France, was published in May. She is currently working on the series *In Between* in Cairo where she went for the first time during the protests in Tahrir Square. Depoorter won several awards, including the Magnum Expression Award in 2009. She joined the Tendance Floue collective in 2011. She then joined the Magnum agency, of which she became an associate member in 2014.

Depoorter's photo essay, *Thokoza*, was commissioned by Rubis Mécénat in 2012.

## **80 DAYS OF SUMMER. STORIES OF IDENTITY INTERNATIONAL PHOTO FESTIVAL GHENT 2015 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION**

From June 12<sup>th</sup> up and until August 30<sup>th</sup> – the Historical Houses of the City of Ghent are for the very first time entirely in the hands of photography. The oeuvre of national and international photographers will be displayed at unexpected and imaginative venues, in gardens and buildings that are still to be discovered. Photography and heritage meet in a refreshing manner.

Since several years, Historical Houses Ghent (HHG) has been staging cultural-historical exhibitions as well as photography exhibitions at Saint Peter's Abbey. HHG intends to function as a platform for photography in Ghent, thus creating opportunities for talented photographers in cooperation with existing actors. Saint Peter's Abbey is the effervescent heart of the festival.

### **Stories about Identity**

The theme of this year festival is Identity, in all its appearances. Not all pictures are portraits, but they all reflect the notion of identity, its construction or its quest. Is our identity determined by our personal, social, genetic, sexual, geographical or cultural components?

## ***OF SOUL AND JOY***

### **A RUBIS MÉCÉNAT CULTURAL FUND PROJECT**

*Of Soul and Joy* project is a long-term social art initiative undertaken in 2012 by Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund in Thokoza, located in the southeast of Johannesburg in South Africa, to pass on artistic skills in Photography to a fragilised youth growing up in the townships. The project aims to expose the students of Buhlebuzile Secondary School to Photography as a new way of expression, as a vocational skill and as a means of engagement for future opportunities. A visual platform and a skills development programme, it gathers workshops led by renowned photographers.

Furthermore, this opportunity gives a platform to connect with people in the art market and to participate in artistic events nationally and internationally.

Every year, the project awards scholarships to the three most promising learners to study at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg.

#### **Photographers of the project:**

Bieke Depoorter, Tjorven Bruyneel, Cyprien Clément-Delmas, Neo Ntsoma, Jabulani Dhlamini, Thandile Zwelibanzi, Kutlwano Moagi, Jason Larkin, Thabiso Sekgala (in memory)

Project initiated with Easigas, the South-African subsidiary of Rubis Energy and in partnership with Nikon South Africa.



## **RUBIS MÉCÉNAT CULTURAL FUND**

The Rubis Group created the Rubis Mécénat Endowment Fund in May 2011 in response to the significant broadening of the Group's international operations.

The Fund's premise was to assist in the consolidation of the company's relationship with its subsidiaries through an ongoing socio-cultural engagement which would in turn become a unique aspect of the Group's culture.

The Fund enables the Group's involvement in each of its territories to extend beyond an industry player and to facilitate artistic and philanthropic dialogue within the communities of the countries in which it operates.

Its primary focus is intervention in developing countries where the Group has operations. In partnership with international artists, Rubis Mécénat works with local subsidiaries to develop humanitarian and cultural projects in disadvantaged communities by developing young adults' understanding and exposure to art. These projects receive long-term investment, which provides sustainable support and enables activities to be monitored locally.

In parallel, Rubis Mécénat supports new talents by setting up projects with emerging artists in France and around the world.

Creating gateways between its social activities and the artists supported by the Fund generates real commitment to a new flourishing art scene in order to give birth to long-term actions and creative projects.

Lorraine Gobin is the managing director and art director of Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund.

### **Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund's focus:**

- To support a new generation of emerging artists, in France and abroad, by organizing exhibitions as well as commissioning and acquiring works of art.
- To give birth and develop social and cultural projects in a number of countries where the Rubis Group operates in association with the Group's local subsidiaries and international artists to provide sustainable development with a view to offering new perspectives, improving the environment and the lives of selected youngsters from local communities through the discipline of visual arts.

**[www.rubismecenat.fr](http://www.rubismecenat.fr)**

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Exhibition

**“Free from my Happiness”**

**At The International Photo Festival Ghent 2015**

Sint-Pietersabdij (Saint Peter's Abbey), Ghent, Belgium

12 June to 30 August 2015

### By South African photographers

Sibusiso Bheka – *At night, they walk with me*

Tshepiso Mazibuko – *Encounters*

Lindokuhle Sobekwa – *Nyaope. Everything you give me my Boss, will do*

Curated by Belgium photographers

Tjorven Bruyneel and Bieke Depoorter

**Exhibition within the framework of the *Of Soul & Joy* projet**

**A Rubis Mécénat Cultural Fund initiative**

A book will be published on the occasion of the exhibition, with essays by South African art critic and journalist Sean O'Toole

### Address:

Sint-Pietersabdij (Saint Peter's Abbey)

Sint-Pietersplein 9

B-9000 Ghent

Belgium

**[www.80daysofsummer.be](http://www.80daysofsummer.be)**

### Opening Times:

From Tuesday to Sunday

10am – 6pm

## COMMUNICATION AND PRESS CONTACTS

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