

OF SOUL AND JOY

YE  
**10**  
RS A

YE  
**10**  
RS A

OF SOUL AND JOY

OF SOUL AND JOY IS AN ARTS  
INITIATIVE TO THINK ABOUT  
HUMANITY, FREEDOM,  
AND THE PLAY OF MAKING.  
IT INSPIRES THE POSSIBILITY  
THAT PHOTOGRAPHY  
HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ALSO  
CELEBRATE OUR EXISTENCE,  
SPIRITUALITY, AND CREATIVITY.

JOHN FLEETWOOD

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Sibusiso

# Bheka

Bheka



**Sibusiso**

# STOP NONSENSE

IN TOWNSHIP-TAAL,  
A WALL AROUND YOUR HOUSE  
IS CALLED A ‘STOP NONSENSE’  
AS IN:  
‘GO AWAY, DON’T BOTHER ME,  
STOP YOUR NONSENSE’.  
THROUGH THIS BODY OF WORK,  
I USE THE PHYSICAL BARRIER  
OF A WALL AS A CANVAS  
TO REPRESENT THE PAST  
AND PRESENT EXPERIENCES  
WHICH LED MY GRANDMOTHER  
TO BUILD THE STOP NONSENSE  
AROUND HER HOUSE,  
AS WELL AS TO EXPRESS  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
OR SYMBOLIC BARRIER  
BETWEEN ONE’S FAMILIES  
AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT.





'GO AWAY,  
DON'T BOTHER ME,  
STOP YOUR NONSENSE'





At Night, They Walk  
With  
Me



This project documents Thokoza (Zulu vocable for ‘rejoice’), a township in the southeast of Johannesburg created in the 1950’s, which has become the second biggest black township after Soweto. My work depicts a way of living and represents the way I see the township. It seeks to edify the viewer or advance the knowledge they have concerning the townships’ obscurity, or even change the way people think about the life in the townships. I created this series because I felt as if the place was abandoned even though it shares some of the narration of South Africa.





Jabulani

# Dhlamini

Dhlamini



**Jabulani**









# iTHEMBA

*Though I did not grow up in Thokoza, I found it to be the home I never knew I needed through Of Soul and Joy. The journey began in 2016 and culminated in me engaging in conversations with community members and listening to stories from the students about how its history is linked to present daily life in Thokoza. My consistent starting point for projects is influenced by the stories of the places and people I photograph.*



*It didn't take too long for me to realise how inherent and generational trauma is a similarity carried by many people who have made home in the townships, such as Soweto and Sharpeville, where I grew up.*

*It is my hope to visualise the fears, joy, hopes and dreams of the people I have encountered in this space with empathy, thoughtfulness and a mindful understanding of their experiences.*





*‘For me, the hope in these stories is reflected by these young photographers and the stories they seek to tell in this project.’*





Thembinkosi

# Hlatshwayo

oy6wnh2t6JH



**Thembinkosi**

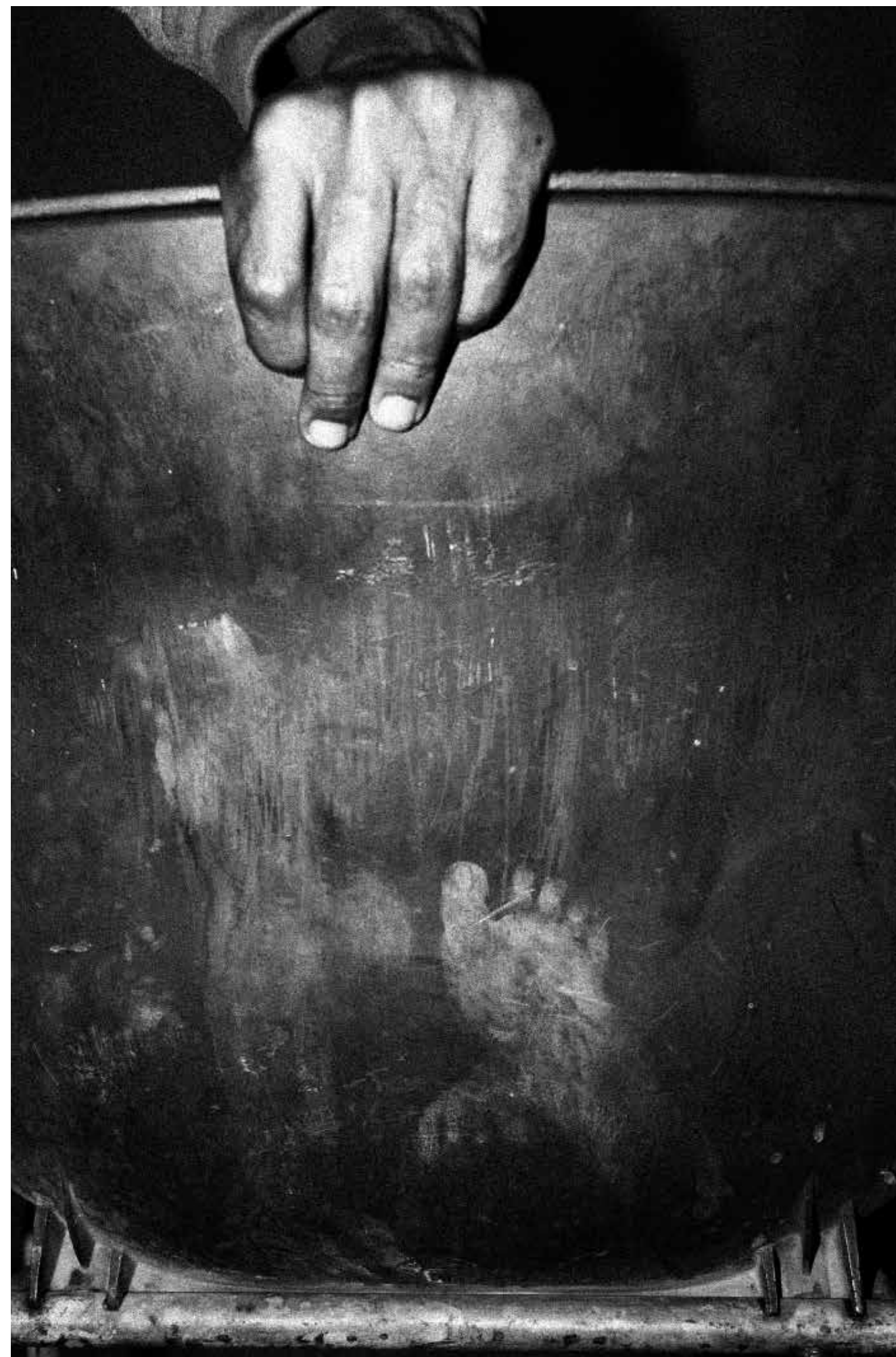


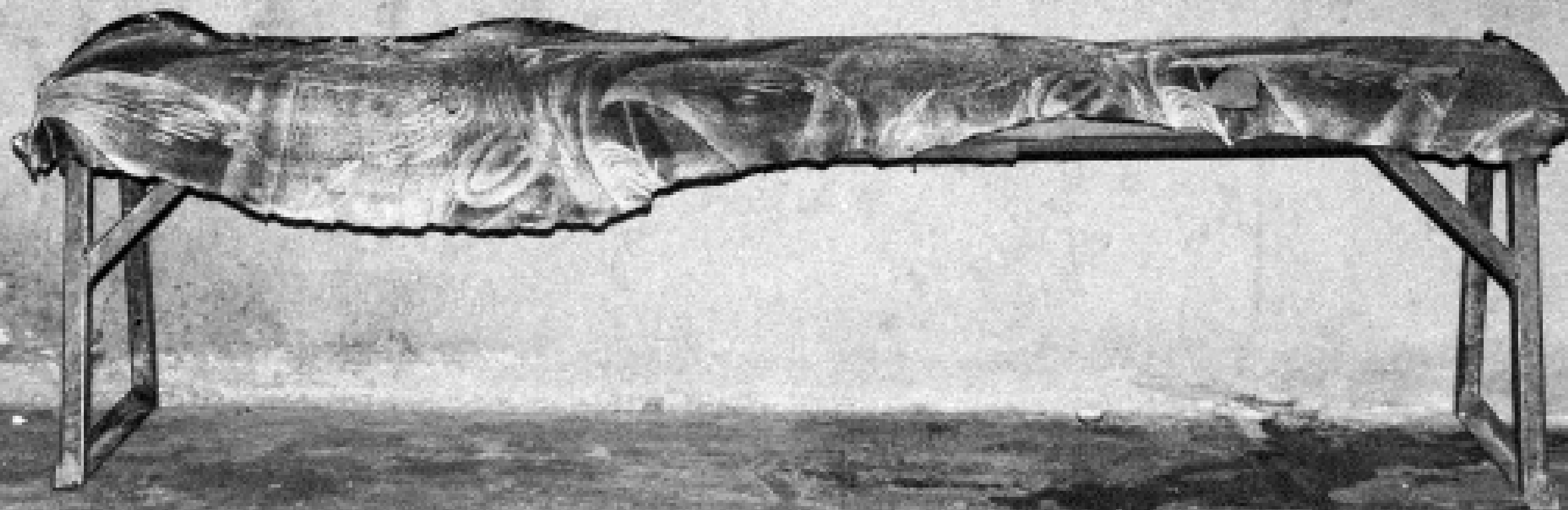


## SLAGHUIS II

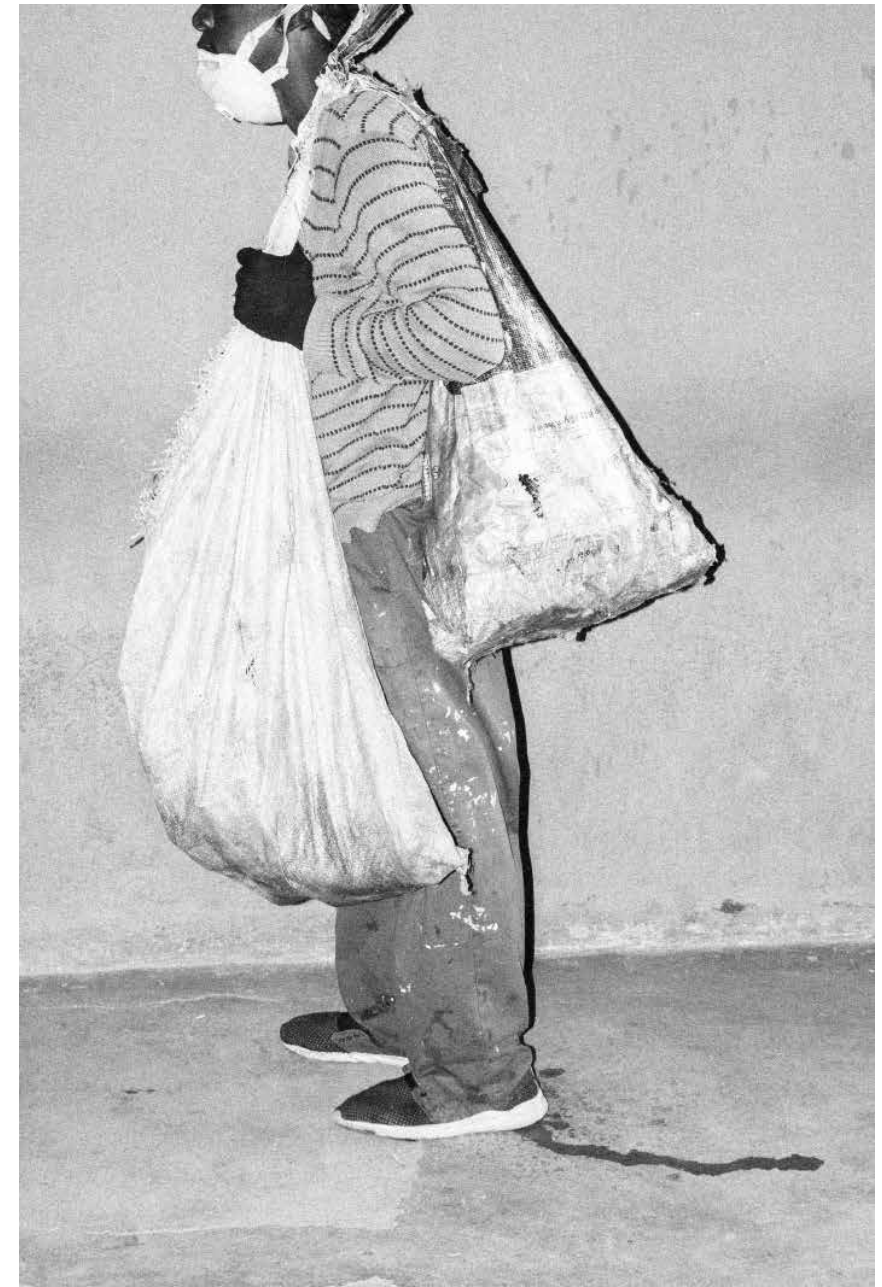
*'Slaghuis' is an Afrikaans word for 'butchery' and a vernacular expression for a place of violence that had come to identify the tavern where I grew up. In the means of my wild search for relief and resolve I transform this space of trauma; the tavern, into my studio. Where I lay bare my anger and turmoil, and use the process of physically exerting myself on the tactile image as a method of catharsis.*

*The markings on the images also draw from the tavern having marked me, and the customers having marked the tavern. Not only am I continuing the chain of aftermaths but perhaps also fighting for and against their erasure. Caught between the discomforts of remembering and Ali Cobby Eckermann's words: 'don't forget 'em story, night time tell 'em to the kids, keep every story live'. The telling and retelling of my story consequently serves as a means of perpetual renewal.*



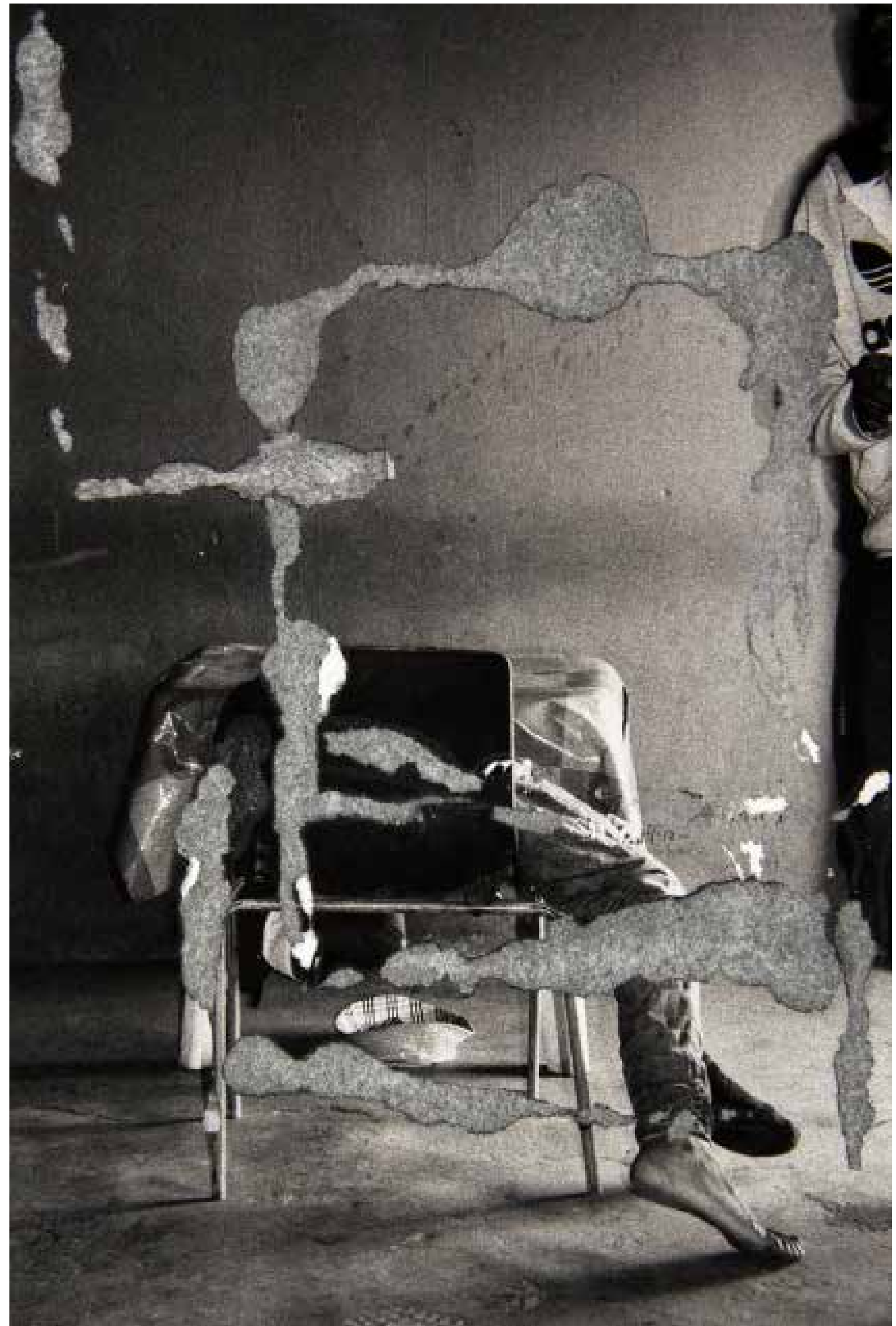








*Where I lay bare  
my anger and turmoil,  
and use the process  
of physically exerting  
myself on the tactile  
image as a method  
of catharsis.*





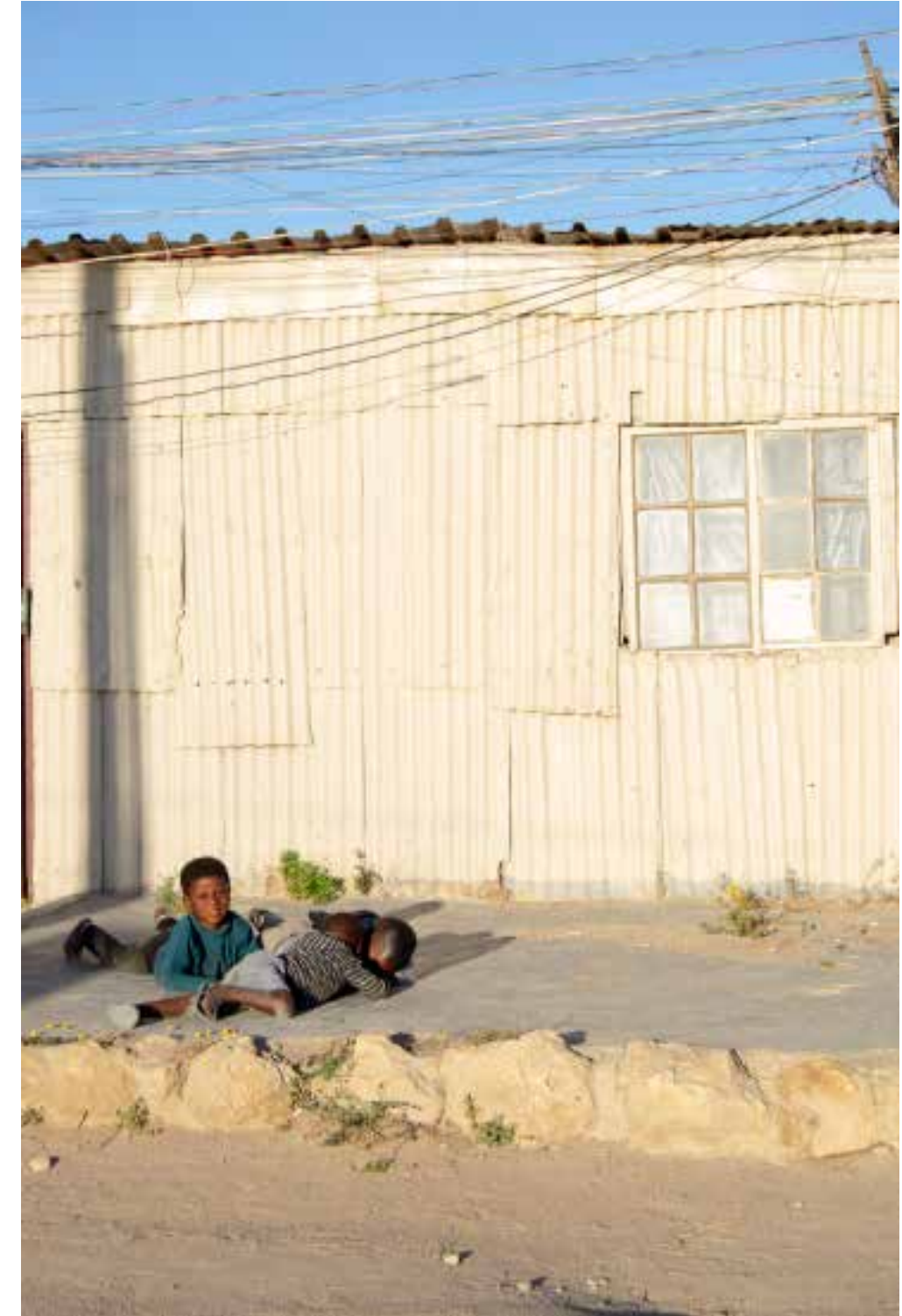
Litha

# Kanda

Kanqa

Litha

*‘A better life  
for all’*











## REMNANTS



*The post 1994 South African government made promises, one of those promises included decent housing. 'A better life for all' was their political campaign slogan, but the people of Phola Park in Thokoza are still waiting for their houses. My work focuses on the people of Phola Park who are still living in informal settlements. I am particularly interested in the external aesthetics of the shacks and how the owners have made improvements to their homes.*





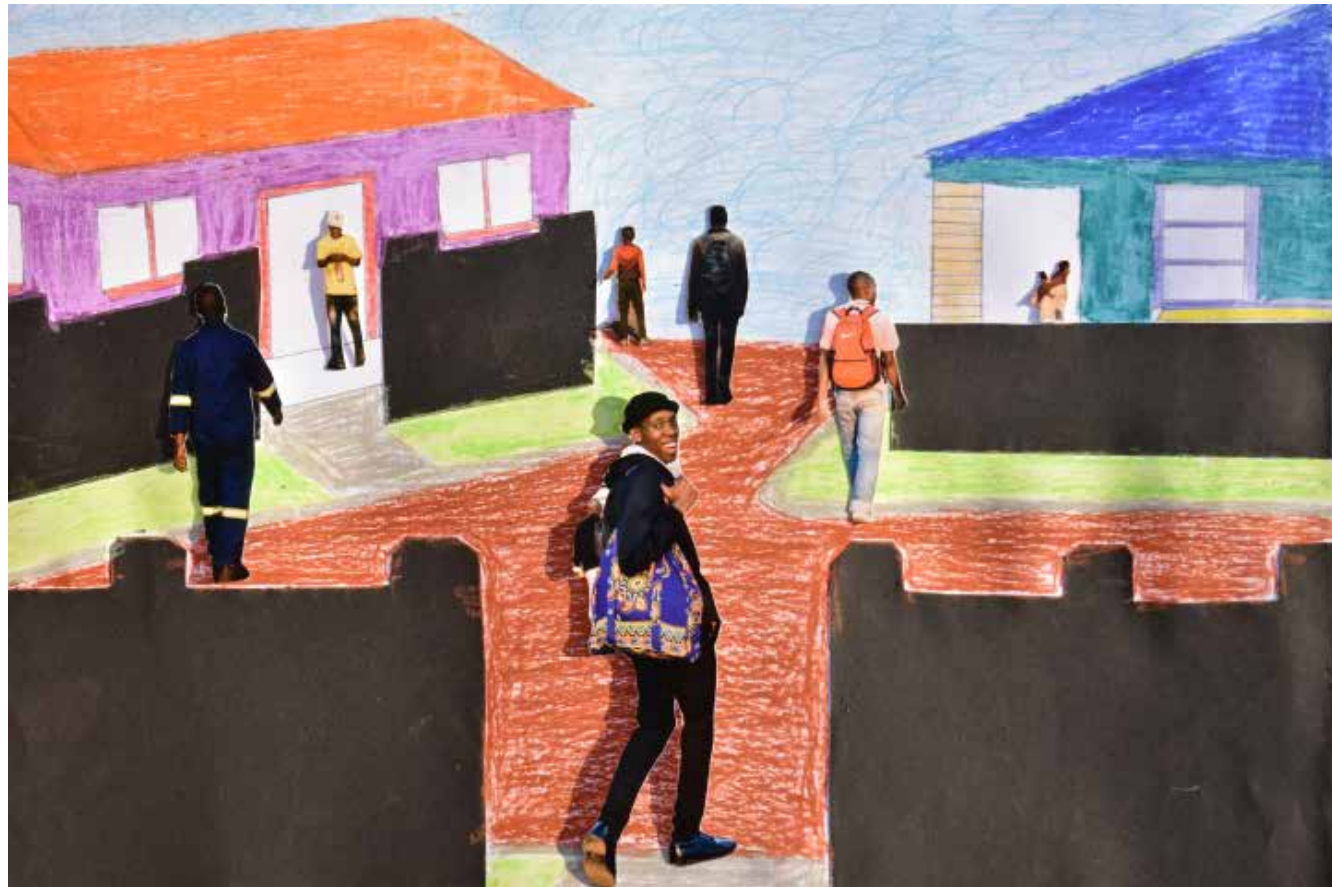
Vuyo

# Mabheka

Mappheka

Vuyo

# POPIHEIS

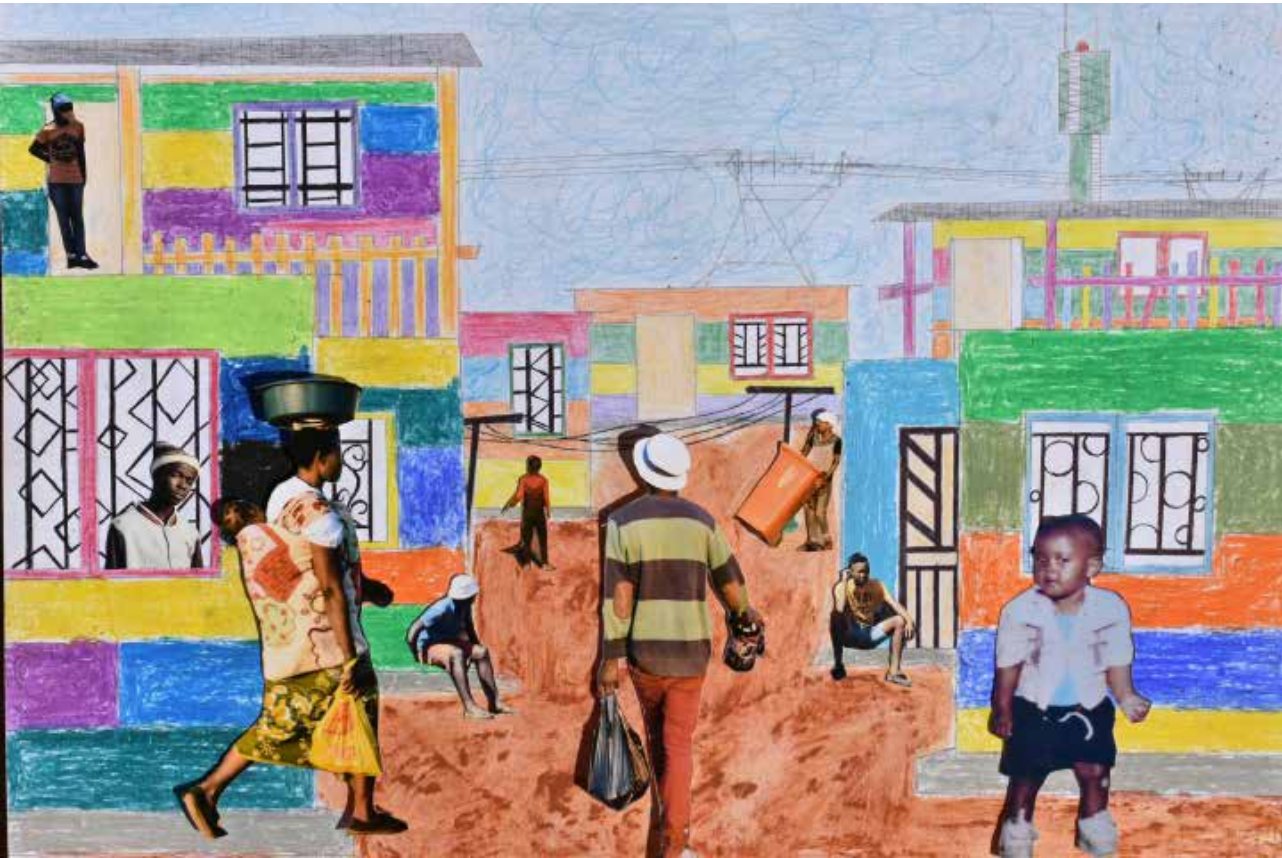


THROUGH THIS ONGOING PROJECT,  
I EXPLORE THE ABSENCE OF A FATHER FIGURE,  
THROUGH MY SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE  
OF THE INFAMOUS TRAGEDY AMONGST BLACK  
FAMILIES. MY MOM ASSUMED THE ROLE  
OF A PROVIDER, AND AS A RESULT I HARDLY SAW  
HER. MY PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE  
A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF NOT HAVING  
A STABLEHOME AND THE DYSFUNCTIONAL  
DYNAMICS THAT COME WITH IT.  
TO ADAPT, I THEN BEGAN TO BUILD NEW  
RELATIONSHIPS FOR HOWEVER LONG MY STAY  
WAS GOING TO BE, PART OF THE PROCESS  
I ADOPTED CHAMELEON TENDENCIES.  
AND PERHAPS LOST THE 'SELF'.  
PERHAPS THIS WORK IS A CONFRONTATION  
WITH MY NEED TO BELONG AND ESTABLISH  
A SENSE OF 'TRUE SELF', IF SUCH EXISTS.











*Popiheis –  
is an Afrikaans term for ‘dollhouse’*

*Where I come from,  
this game was used  
solely for the purpose  
of building your dream  
home and imitating  
or playing it as you’ve  
already reached  
your life aspirations.*





Katiso

# Mabuza



Mapud6M

**Katiso**



# SOBONA SENZENI

*‘Sobona Senzeni’ meaning, ‘what more options do we have?’ is referring to the circumstances that are faced by a majority of people in South Africa, especially because of the high unemployment rate. The COVID-19 pandemic left many jobless with no means to survive, they had to convert their residences into a fast-growing business spatiality in a short space of time to provide for their families.*

*These photographs were created in Thokoza, in an area that I frequent, and those immense changes on the residences captured my attention. They also attest to the predicament that is experienced by the community and how these challenges have encouraged the community to participate in micro businesses, with no experience and barely any capital to finance those businesses. This leap of faith in home-based businesses has transformed the lives of many families, as they have been equipped with the ability to make ends meet.*

*These conditions have also promoted local businesses, sustainability and convenience in the community. This brings hope for success in the township of Thokoza because even in the turmoil of a pandemic, the residents have found a breakthrough.*





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WHATSAPP

WHATSAPP ME

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GETTY'S

7-5-2020

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WHATSAPP

WHATSAPP ME

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GETTY'S





# Of Soul and Joy Ten Years Celebration

By **John Fleetwood**

Photographs are gifts from the past so that we can see, remember, and perhaps understand and even make better. Sometimes unwanted gifts. But photographs are also reflectors of now. A necessary moment of looking at self. The beauty of photographs lies in their sharing.

Over the last decade, Of Soul and Joy has continued this journey of sharing. More than 100 young photographers have been given the chance to experience photography as a way of making, of looking, of thinking. High school students and young adults from Thokoza, a township southeast of Johannesburg have had the opportunity to work with photographers as their mentors through workshops, ongoing encounters with arts practitioners, exposure to artistic institutions and events. In time, this cohort of photographers has become a community more and more visible, in South Africa, on the continent, and internationally.

Much of the work that comes from the Of Soul and Joy photographers, stream from the documentary tradition of South Africa. Important generations of photographers who resolutely sought answers to their questions about this world, and the brutal systems of Apartheid, like David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, and Ernest Cole. To tell their stories, and the stories of those around them. To show us our imperfect world; sometimes harsh and unforgiving.

When Of Soul and Joy started in 2012 through Rubis Mécénat and Easigas (Rubis Group's South African subsidiary), the students were almost as old as South Africa since its new democracy – 18 years since 1994. Most students grew up in what was referred to as a post-Apartheid South Africa. And documentary photography in South Africa, shifted towards questions of identity politics, for instance in the work of Nontsikelelo Veleko, Zanele Muholi, and Thabiso Sekgala. Within this ambit, it was a time for experimentation of new urban cultures, and eventually visual cultures that became possible through social media and new technologies.

Part of this play was understanding the creative and conceptual possibilities of photography and visual vocabularies: access to mobile cameras and the increasing potential of selfies as staged portraits of reality, performativity, and the fictions of virtual societies. It presented opportunities to move beyond the socio-economic



realities that lingered in the backgrounds of the photographs and lives of the young photographers, offering evolving narratives of making. This is the critical task as documentary makers: to find a form of portraying reality as a metaphor for our times.

The intersection of the histories of photography, documentary and protest, or struggle, continues to play an important role in shaping intentions of making. For many of the photographers, their stories are contributions to a collective struggle against complicated, inherited systems of oppression, and that photography can be a tool for freedom.

Much of these strategies also have to do with affirmations of culture, of belonging, of histories now ignited. These stories are often self-reflective, with auto-ethnographic approaches, and quite personal. By originating stories from the personal, there is the possibility of self-directing the writing of history and rewriting of history, and self-representation. But there is always a tension between socially engaged practices and power; complicity, and authority of the image that can simply be contested by the contexts in which these representations are circulated within.

As is embodied through the name, Of Soul and Joy is an arts initiative to think about humanity, freedom, and the play of making. Moreover, it inspires the possibility that photography has the potential to also celebrate our existence, spirituality, and creativity. When making portraits we also deal with humans, souls. Photography is not only about the image that is created but that photography is a convention of rituals of making images with others, acknowledging the collaborative nature of the medium.

Much of the learning of photography has to do with the conditions set out in the platforms of learning. It is about how we come together in groups to think about our society that sets the terms of engagement when photographers later photograph. Since 2015 Jabulani Dhlamini has been the project leader and with others like Andrew Tshabangu, Thandile Zwelibanzi, have established rhythms of engagement, regard, and concern, with students, and by drawing in many photographers and arts practitioners to think about collective care. And over time, there has been many collaborators. Of Soul and Joy also has established relationships with the other photography learning institutions in South Africa, like Market Photo Workshop, Photo:, Through the Lens Collective and further across the African continent like with Yamarou Photo (Mali).

Annually, the 20 participants of the programme are aged between 15-30 years old. They are high school students from the Buhlebuzile Secondary School or young adults, sometimes from different townships surrounding Johannesburg. During their studies, students acquire artistic skills through the two weekly workshops.

Often, these skills also extend to social skills, and skills around citizenship. This opens up other opportunities for further learning and professional consideration. Through scholarships, promising Of Soul and Joy students are encouraged to further study photography at other tertiary institutions and universities.

One of the successful activities of the programme is the Of Soul and Joy PhotoFest in Thokoza – a local photography festival showcasing the work of the students to a local and broader public. This festival offers the opportunity for many school kids and their parents to attend a visual arts exhibition in their own area, that also deals with subject matter that is accessible, opening up discussion about society, art, generations, youth cultures, and other contemporary issues. Through this, local audiences are developed, which is of growing importance for a self-sustaining creative industry in South Africa.

Thokoza, of course, is a township of historical importance. In the early 1990's it was the place of great violence between local residents, affiliated to opposing political movements. Violence erupted regularly and hundreds of people were killed at the time when bans on political parties were removed, in preparation towards democracy. This was also the time of the conflict photographers, photojournalists, that photographed this intense moment of history known as The Bang Bang Club.

Several photographers from the Magnum Photos Agency and NOOR have mentored and worked with the photographers from Of Soul and Joy. This has enabled students an opportunity to learn from experienced photographers, and has also brought new dimensions of thinking to the visiting photographers. It also opened doors for local photographers to be connected with these international agencies. Lindokuhle Sobekwa, who was introduced to photography through Of Soul and Joy in 2012, became an associate member of Magnum Photos in 2019.

The Of Soul and Joy photographers and their work have quite consistently received public attention. Sibusiso Bheka and Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo have had their work exhibited at the Bamako Encounters, African Biennale of Photography, Mali. They have exhibited at the Investec Cape Town Art Fair, also with Lunathi Mngxuma. Tshepiso Mazibuko exhibited her work at the Addis Foto Fest in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo was a winner of the CAP Prize Contemporary African Photography Prize, and a winner of the Blurring the Lines Award. Collectively their work has been shown in exhibitions across international spaces including Denmark, Dubai, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Mali, Reunion, Switzerland, and all-over South Africa. This exposure also brings focus and attention back to their activities in Thokoza, and to sharing it with their colleagues.

These great achievements sometimes wither away when you are a young photographer in a tightening local South African economy where creatives and artists

operate within thin layers of industry, have very little support from government and where there are precarious futures due to the disproportioned distribution of resources in our world. Suddenly, photographers experience similar conditions as their colleagues of previous generations did. Suddenly the distance between the past and present, is awkwardly narrow.

It also speaks of the maze of internationalisation of photography: that photography production is more and more done for an international stage, rather than for a local understanding. In this, the concerns are that photographers' futures economically become more and more dependent on this international centre, where their audiences might grow. Until now, South Africa has had a serious discourse in photography. One that has clearly set it apart from other traditions, and through this, have made a considerable contribution to the world's understanding of photography as a medium and a practice. Perhaps at its core of this conversation, is the duality of the photograph. On the one hand photography is a tool of the oppressor: photography of colonialisation and bureaucratic authority of race, gender, class, identity. On the other hand, photography is a tool of the emancipator; decades of photography of the structural failures of these systems; through struggle photography; through relooking and appropriating the archive; through the work that the Of Soul and Joy photographers do.

However, the discourses of representational wounds that ironically fuelled the conversation, have been integrated into an aestheticized middle-class consumption in neat galleries and museums, out of sight for many South Africans. Further, social media and new technologies have appropriated practices of activism, even of identity politics.

The challenge for photographers in South Africa is to remain critical to how and where their images circulate, and to find ways to articulate their work in public and private institutions and platforms, while knowing the limitations of these struggling institutions and platforms. Essential in this, is to understand that the digital world is also one that is local and global, and that the local audience is critical to sustain discourses that matter. Think about South-South.

How then, does a small platform based in a peripheral Johannesburg township contribute to its local crowd of photographers? Well. Photography is about sharing. Photography is a conversation that starts with curiosity, exchange, and engagement. In our common places we find the courage to talk about things that matter. By defining a local practice of things that matter, a community of practitioners develop a common sense. A sense of belonging.







**Tshepiso**

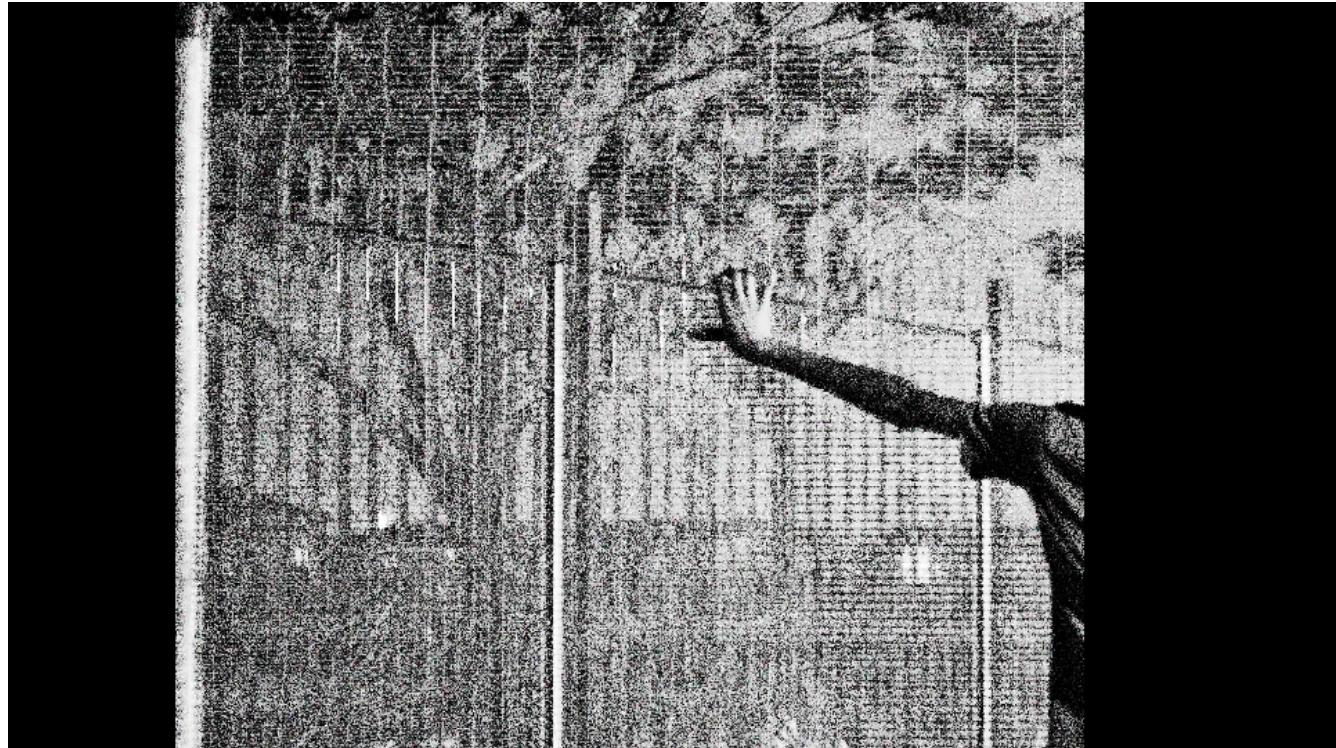
# UNTITLED PROJECT

*Throughout my photographing career I've searched for myself through people, spaces that seemed familiar and perhaps familiar faces too. This search for the self was not perhaps the typical quest where one feels lost and needs to re-align themselves. Growing up in big family household, the dysfunctionality, the chaos, the happy and sad times, the ideology of memory. Only as an adult I realized I needed to go back to that place. This work is a continuation of the project Black Mampatile which directly translates to 'hide and seek'. For me this work is an autopsy of my dead childhood. And perhaps to some extent it is also about my relationship with photography in a sense of how I often feel the urge to subvert from the traditional conventions of photography.*









*‘For me  
this work  
is an  
autopsy  
of my  
dead  
childhood’*









Lunathi

Mngxuma





Lunathi

## TANGLED (UKUXINANA)

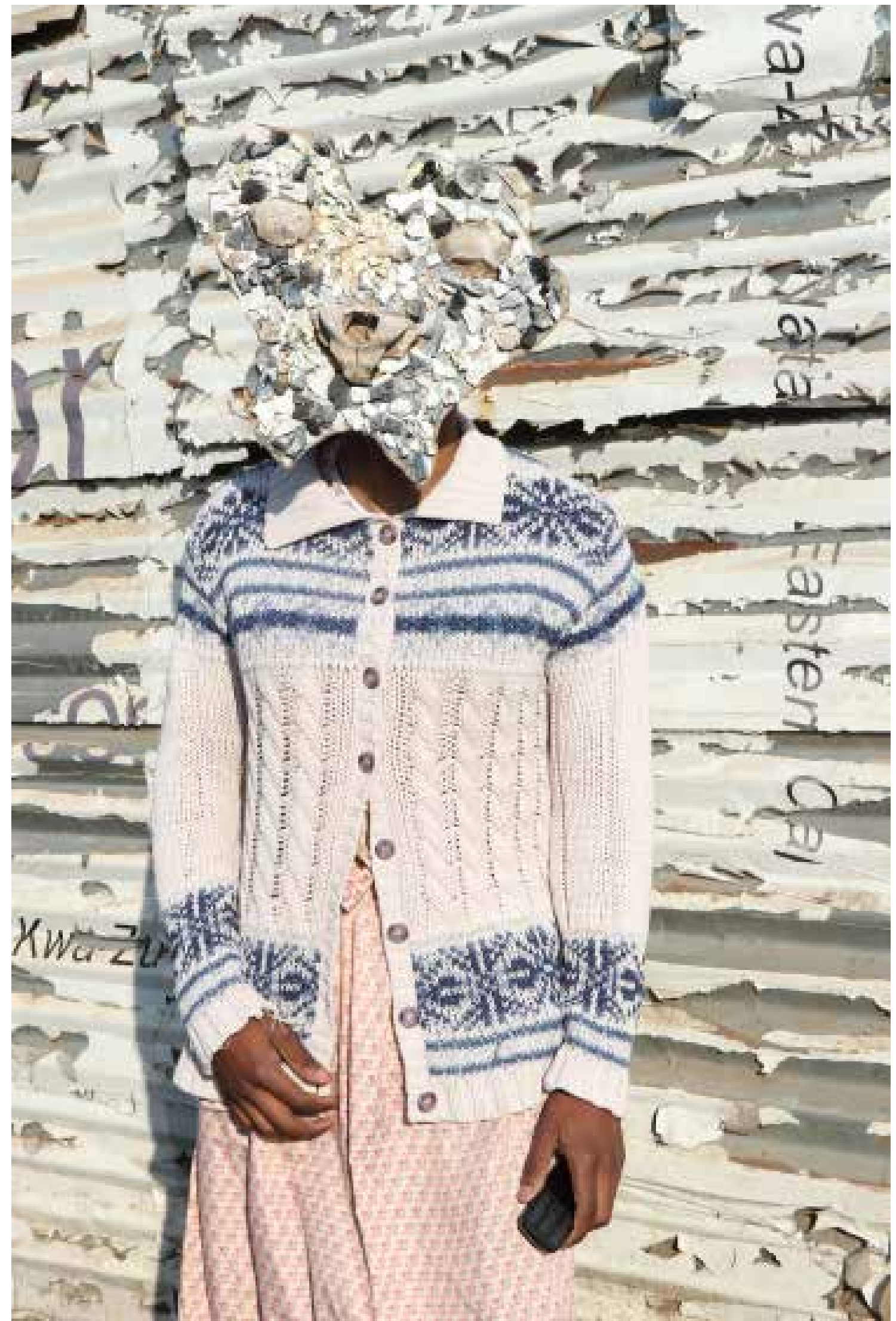


‘GIVE A MAN A MASK AND HE WILL SHOW YOU HIS TRUTH’.  
 BUT AT TIMES, HE IS GENUINELY HIDING FROM IT. I’VE HAD  
 TO DEVELOP A TENDENCY OF WEAVING PERSONAS (MASKS)  
 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MANY REALITIES THAT I EITHER  
 WANTED TO BE IN OR ESCAPE.  
 THE EMOTIONS AROUND THE PASSING OF MY MOTHER  
 WAS ONE I WANTED TO ESCAPE.  
 ...I CREATE A MASK, I DRESS IN WOMEN’S CLOTHING,  
 I PHOTOGRAPH.  
 IRONICALLY, THE CREATION OF THE MASK HAS BECOME  
 A SPACE AND PROCESS OF GRIEVING AND A MOMENT  
 OF HONESTY WITH SELF.  
 A SPACE OF REMEMBRANCE AND RELEASE.  
 THE APPARELS OF WOMEN FIND THEMSELVES  
 IN MY CREATION AS MEMORIES OF MY MOTHER,  
 AND AS INFLUENCES OF THE MANY WOMEN  
 IN MY HOUSEHOLD THAT GROOMED ME.  
 ...I FEEL, I CREATE A MASK, I REMEMBER, I PHOTOGRAPH.  
 ...I SURRENDER, I FIND RELIEF.



*...I create a mask,  
I dress in women's  
clothing,  
I photograph.*

*...I feel,  
I create a mask,  
I remember,  
I photograph.*









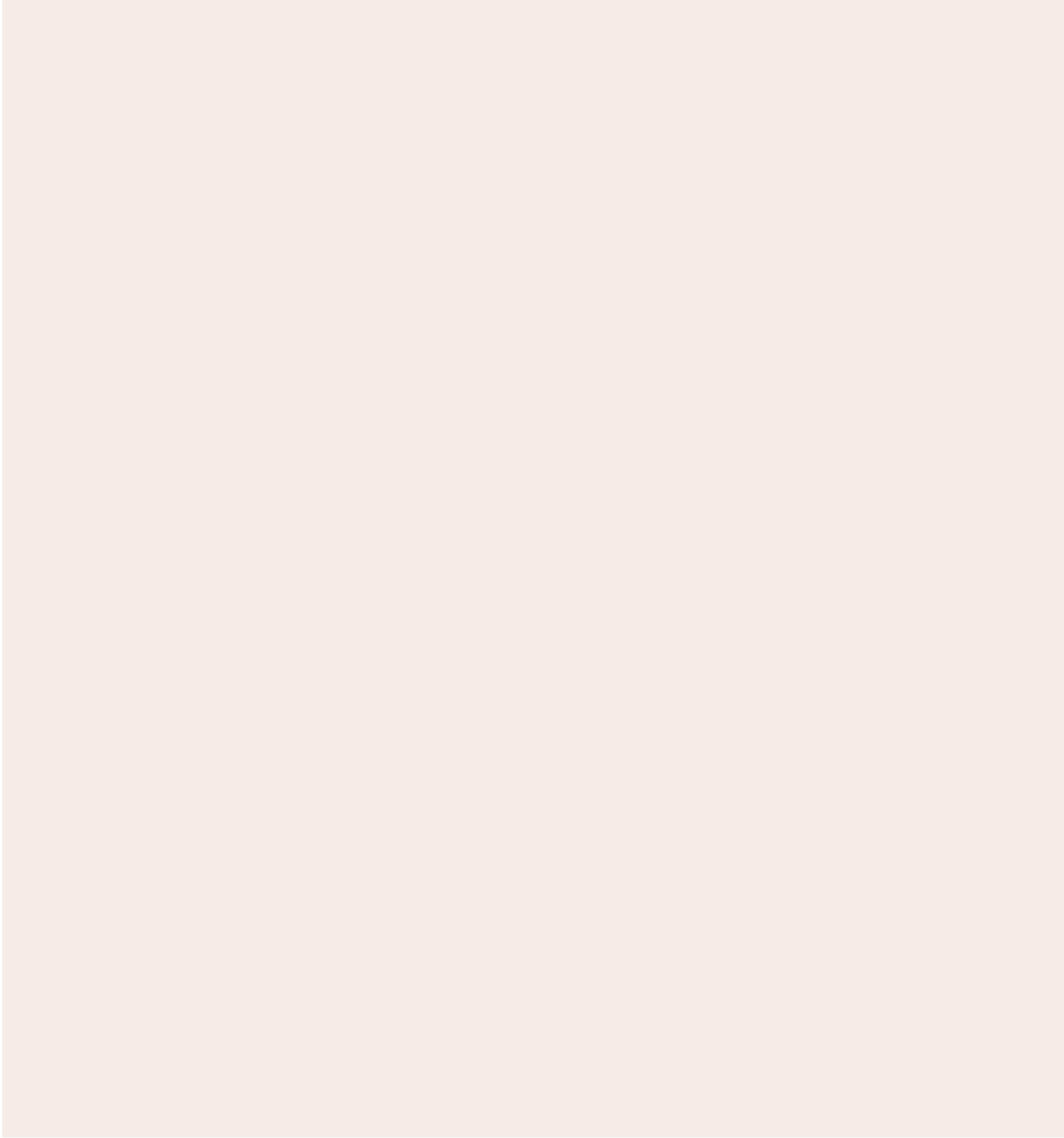
*...I surrender,  
I find relief.*





Fuwe

# Molefe



**Fuwe**

## DIKARABO

*‘Dikarabo’ is a Sotho word which directly translates to ‘answers’, perhaps the influence to the title is my own exploration of belonging and looking for answers. Ironically, I found it in churches, although I wouldn’t really consider myself a religious person. Perhaps this is also a personal quest to uncover lost traces of myself in that space. Churches were also a special space during the early 1990’s, when the township of Thokoza experienced political clashes that resulted in people losing their lives. I took it upon myself to look for traces or remnants of that time if any.*





*'I am alive today because  
of that church...'*





*'That's where community meetings were held...'*





*'We used to sleep  
there for days...'*

*‘This was  
the only safe  
building  
in our street...’*



Lindokuhle

# Sobekwa





Lindokuhle









‘IT TOOK A LOT OF ENERGY  
AND PATIENCE TO GET PEOPLE  
TO TRUST ME, TO OPEN UP  
THEIR HOMES AND LIVES.’





# DALESIDE



*Daleside is a place Sobekwa has many unresolved issues with, as well as a deep curiosity about.*

*Previously a white-dominated neighbourhood, it is now a mixed community. Sobekwa first visited the place as a child; his mother was a domestic worker there. The complicated feelings about Daleside relate to the idea that the place took his mother away from him on a regular basis, but also shut him out. He felt denied entrance into what he imagined was paradise.*

*This project was a way to confront those feelings and to find a way into the community of Daleside. It was not what he expected.*

*Daleside is a community like many others in South Africa. Most of the people who live there work (or used to work) on the mines or farms and in many ways it's like the countryside has come into the urban environment there. This was Sobekwa's first project outside the townships and this pushed him outside of his comfort zone: 'In Daleside I had to constantly be very careful how I approached people and their personal space. It took a lot of energy and patience to get people to trust me, to open up their homes and lives. I came up with certain strategies to help develop that trust. I would attend church services, for example, and carry a photo album of the photographs I was making, to show them I was not there to harm them. As an outsider, most of the time I was mistaken as someone looking for a job, or people would think I was a criminal. One family once asked me to sign a document before taking any photograph. This didn't happen when I was with my French, white collaborator, Cyprien Clément-Delmas, or at least if it did it was silent.'*





Siphiwe

# Vilakazi



Siphiwe

## FACE TO FACE

MOVING SLOWLY THROUGH THE SPACE  
OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD LOOKING FACE TO FACE  
AT SKIN PROBLEMS OR DISEASES EVOKES  
EMOTIONS FROM WHEN I WAS YOUNG, AND  
PEOPLE USED TO JUDGE ME BECAUSE OF MY SKIN.  
STREET HISTORY FED ME QUESTIONS  
AND FUELED CURIOSITY AROUND SKIN:  
HOW HUMANS GAVE BIRTH TO THE STITCHES  
OF PREVIOUS STRUGGLES WITH SKIN DISEASES,  
LONELINESS, AND THE EXPERIENCE  
OF 'IMPERFECT' SKIN.









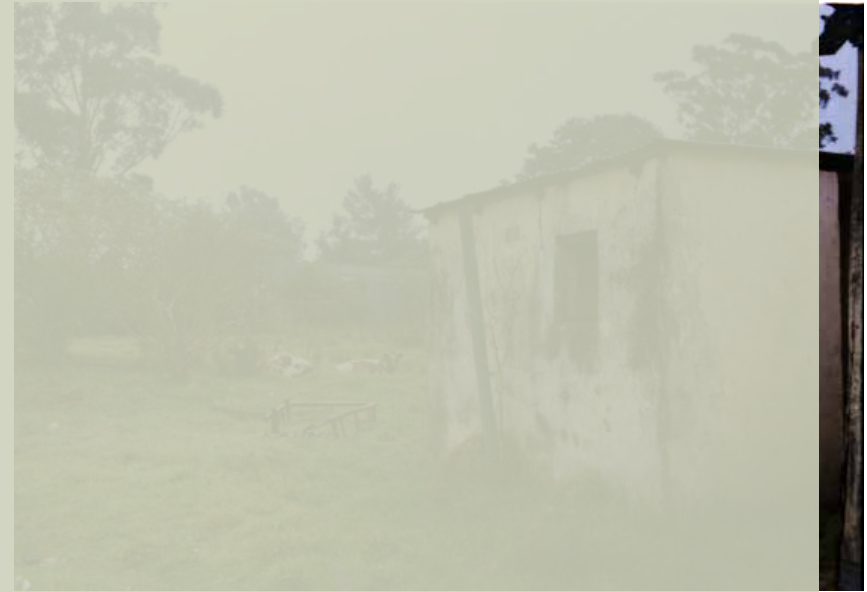






[...] I AM PORTRAYING A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE AND POETIC VISUAL ELEMENT OF HOW WE SEE BEAUTY AROUND SKIN.

COLORFUL PHOTOGRAPHS PROJECT DIFFERENT MOODS, TO EXPRESS BOTH THE WARM SIDE AND COLD SIDE, WHEREAS PORTRAITS SHOW THE CHARACTER OR THE EXPRESSION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, SHOWING POLITICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS THAT MADE AN IMPACT ON THAT PARTICULAR SKIN CONDITION.



Thandile

# Zwelibanzi



Thandile



# UMPHEFUMLO

*The title of this body of work is informed by George Floyd's murder and words and cry 'I can't breathe'. The title opens us to more than just being subjected in being the other, breathing itself become almost impossible. This work point of interest comes from the idea of fighting to write our own history, narrative and archive in ways we better understand. The work represents fighting to breathe as a black body. In my work, I work with analogue camera using film. The process of developing the films gives the work a space to breathe, and allows for a certain ritual to take place before I see the work. The project engages in discourses that will promote social change and encourage building a socially cohesive South African society.*





















Rubis Mécénat would like to thank the Of Soul and Joy project team: Jabulani Dhlamini, our project manager, Sibusiso Bheka, Thandile Zwelibanzi, Katiso Mabuza, Normthandazo Nkwanyana, Cheryl Freudiger, Moenirah Daniels and Emilie Demon.

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© Reproduced artworks:

Sibusiso Bheka  
Jabulani Dhlamini  
Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo  
Litha Kanda  
Vuyo Mabheka  
Katiso Mabuza  
Tshepiso Mazibuko  
Lunathi Mngxuma  
Fuwe Molefe  
Lindokuhle Sobekwa / Magnum Photos  
Siphiwe Vilakazi  
Thandile Zwelibanzi

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OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

Of Soul and Joy is a lasting social art initiative undertaken in 2012 by Rubis Mécénat and Easigas in Thokoza, South Africa. It's goal is to develop photographic skills amongst the township's vulnerable youth and its surroundings by providing an understanding of photography as a means of expression, in order to open up new personal and professional horizons.

As a creative platform, Of Soul and Joy offers workshops led by photographers, encounters with art professionals, collaborations with cultural institutions and organizes artistic events.

Over the past 10 years, the programme has awarded some fifty scholarships to its most promising young photographers to access higher education in photography at a university of their choice, including the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. Of Soul and Joy extends its support by providing young photographers with access to a network of key cultural players on the local and international scene – a tailor-made support for the emergence of a new generation of South African photographers.

In its 10 years of existence, the programme has helped reveal young photographers who are now building an international career. Their work is exhibited in numerous festivals and fairs, awarded prestigious prizes, and represented by agencies and galleries.

The project is led locally by South African photographer Jabulani Dhlamini.

***Of Soul and Joy,***  
**10 years**

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