



OF SOUL AND JOY

PRESS KIT

20
25

PHOTOGRAPHIC
PRACTICE AS A TOOL
FOR EMANCIPATION
SOUTH AFRICA

*Of Soul and Joy
is an arts initiative
to think about
humanity, freedom
and the play
of making.*

John Fleetwood, photography educator and curator, co-head of Photography at KABK

Film *Of Soul and Joy* directed by Alexander Murphy, South Africa, 2023



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CREATION

SUPPORT

TRANSMISSION

ABOUT RUBIS MÉCÉNAT

The Rubis Mécénat endowment fund, created by Rubis in 2011, carries out committed artistic and social projects. Their aim is to promote contemporary creation, support emerging artists, and empower disadvantaged youth through art.

Since its inception, Rubis Mécénat has been committed to highlighting contemporary creation —both exacting and democratic— by providing production assistance to emerging and mid-career artists to create new work. The resulting artworks are exhibited in France, in partnership with public-oriented cultural institutions and events.

Aware of the importance of emerging and new creative voices, as well as unequal access to an artistic career, the fund also supports aspiring artists through several professionalisation and awareness-raising programmes. This includes the Rubis Mécénat Prize with Beaux-Arts de Paris, as well as support for the Young Creation workshop led by the Ateliers Médicis and the associated Young Creation Grant.

Moreover, Rubis Mécénat —driven by its conviction in the social role of art— develops artistic and cultural education projects in some countries where Rubis operates. Their goal is to empower disadvantaged youth and contribute sustainably to their training and integration by using artistic practice as a means of emancipation and positive engagement. In 2012, Rubis Mécénat established Of Soul and Joy, its first project centered on photography in the township of Thokoza, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The fund then developed InPulse, a project around visual arts, in Kingston, Jamaica. Most recently, in 2018, it created the Ndao Hanavao laboratory around social design in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

The ensemble of these actions meets Rubis Mécénat's desire to promote contemporary creation in all its diversity, encouraging transmission and exchange while creating the essential conditions for new artistic forms and discourses to emerge.

OUR ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL EDUCATION PROJECTS

Rubis Mécénat develops artistic and cultural education projects in order to sustainably contribute to the training and integration of young people from underprivileged backgrounds, using art and culture as means of emancipation and positive engagement.

In 2012, Rubis Mécénat established Of Soul and Joy, its first project within the township of Thokoza, in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is dedicated to young people from local communities and uses photography as a tool for integration, positive education and emancipation. In 2015, the fund developed the InPulse project in Kingston, Jamaica, around visual arts. Most recently, in 2018, the Ndao Hanavao laboratory was created in Antananarivo, Madagascar, promoting innovation and training in social design.

The aim of these projects is to help young people by providing them with professional skills in different artistic fields. They are based on knowledge transmission between mentors and students and are organised around weekly workshops led by local artists, encounters with professionals, allocations of academic scholarships, and cultural events.

Over the past decade, these projects have helped determine vocations and support aspiring artists.

KEY FIGURES

1st project started in 2012

3 long-term projects in 2024

Over 500 beneficiaries

Nearly 100 academic scholarships attributed to access higher education in the arts

Over 200 workshops led by invited artists

Over 200 artists and art professionals invited to share their knowledge

Over 50 events (exhibitions, festivals, residencies and cultural exchanges) organised in collaboration with cultural institutions: Magnum Photos, documenta, Hakanto Contemporary, etc.

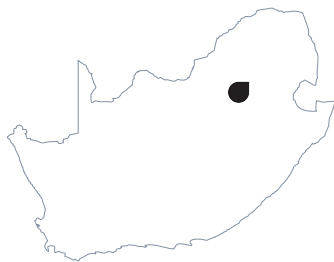
These projects make it possible to train and support young people from underprivileged backgrounds through the arts, by promoting transmission and the emergence of new creative voices within communities often excluded from traditional platforms.

Lorraine Gobin, director of Rubis Mécénat



OF SOUL AND JOY

THOKOZA
JOHANNESBURG
SOUTH AFRICA



When I see the impact that the project has on the young people of our township, I find hope for a better, more radiant future. My wish is to see more spaces like this created, where young people have the chance to express themselves freely, to become what they want to be in life.

Jabulani Dhlamini, Of Soul and Joy project manager

Of Soul and Joy is a social and artistic mentoring programme created in 2012 by Rubis Mécénat to enable young people aged 13 to 30, from the township of Thokoza and surrounding areas of Johannesburg, to benefit from a framework and training in the field of photography. This tailor-made support system allows them to cultivate artistic expression and access new professional paths, so that they can in turn have a positive impact on their communities.

In addition to artistic training, the project offers its beneficiaries further training (professional practices, English, life skills, etc.) and access to a network of key players in the local and international cultural scene. Each year, the project awards academic scholarships

to the most promising students for higher education programmes in photography at a university of their choice, including the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg.

The project also allows new talents and vocations to emerge: South African photographer Lindokhule Sobekwa, introduced to photography via the Of Soul and Joy project, is today a member of the Magnum Photos agency; South African photographer Tshepiso Mazibuko received the Public Prize for the 2024 Discovery Award Louis Roeder Foundation and the Madame Figaro Prize at the Rencontres d'Arles.

Within the project, numerous artists and professionals are invited to share their



experiences, including Roger Ballen, Bieke Depoorter, John Fleetwood, David Goldblatt (in memoriam), Mikhael Subotsky, Sabelo Mlangeni and Andrew Tshabangu.

Location: Thokoza, township southeast of Johannesburg, South Africa

Activity: Professional training and integration via photography

Founded: 2012

Project Manager: Jabulani Dhlamini, South African photographer represented by Goodman Gallery

KEY FIGURES

Over **500** beneficiaries

2 weekly workshops led by South African artists

Over **50** academic scholarships awarded for higher education in photography

Over **100** intensive workshops and special projects in Thokoza, as well as with remote communities (rural zones, townships)

Nearly **200** artists and art professionals invited to lead workshops and pass along their knowledge

Over **50** exhibitions, residencies, educational and cultural exchanges organised with cultural institutions in South Africa and abroad: Magnum Photos, Rencontres d'Arles, Rencontres de Bamako, etc.

5 festivals organized since 2016 in the township of Thokoza to raise awareness among local communities about photography and cultural actions around the project



INTERVIEW

JABULANI DHLAMINI

South African photographer and Of Soul and Joy Project Manager

Art activism is not just about creating beautiful images, it's about engaging communities, fostering dialogue, and creating spaces for healing and growth. In the heart of Thokoza, a revolution in storytelling is unfolding. At Of Soul and Joy, we're equipping the young people of our community with the tools to create alternative mediums of expression. Our mission extends beyond just giving underprivileged kids the chance to take photographs — it's about storytelling, capturing lived experiences, and confronting societal issues head-on.

Can you describe Of Soul and Joy in 3 words?

The first word that comes to my mind when I think about Of Soul and Joy is “home” because we allow and encourage the students to be themselves and explore their individual creative side, while ensuring the project is a safe space for them.

The second word is “community”, because we are building a community of support where students can belong.

The third word is “mentoring”, because the beneficiaries of the project receive ongoing training in photography with weekly workshops and are supported by a highly committed team of photographers and professionals who come to share their expertise and offer a critical and inspiring eye. We are not an ‘academic’

programme, we have our own pedagogy that allows us to adapt our training to each individual and to listen to all our beneficiaries.

Why did you choose to set up the project in the township of Thokoza and what impact has Of Soul and Joy had on this community?

Thokoza, a township located in the Gauteng region of South Africa, boasts a rich and complex history that spans over six decades. Established in 1955, Thokoza was the first Black township in southern Johannesburg, created to accommodate the Black population of Alberton who were forcibly relocated to make way for the exploitation of gold mines by settlers. The name Thokoza, meaning “place of peace” in Zulu, is a poignant irony given the tumultuous history of the township

The early years of Thokoza were marked by the development of a new urbanism, characterised by one-room cabins, two-room cabins, and hostels for migrants. The hostels were notorious for their overcrowding, with 2,500 places accommodating 13,000 people in the 1980s. Despite these challenging living conditions, the community of Thokoza thrived with the main street, named after Jacon Khumalo, a Zulu migrant and worker who led the community in the 1960s, becoming a hub of activity.

However, the peace was short-lived, and Thokoza was plagued by violence in the early 1990s, as supporters of Inkatha and the ANC clashed in a power struggle. The township, along with Soweto, was a hotspot of political unrest causing displacement, loss of life, and destruction of property, which left a scar on the community.

Thokoza is among other South African townships that have a great need for art platforms like Of Soul and Joy to promote positive education, culture and emancipation among young people, thereby helping to have an impact on the community. Through our program, we present alternative images of the township, challenging dominant narratives and empowering people to record their own stories. This intentional approach to storytelling ensures that future generations inherit a rich, authentic narrative that they can build upon.

Of Soul and Joy also regularly organises events, exhibitions and workshops in which the township's residents are invited to take part, including the photography festival held every three years in the heart of Thokoza. These exchanges help us to stay close to the township's inhabitants and are also living testimony to their evolution. We ensure that the images and stories are brought back to the people who inspired them, facilitating ongoing dialogue and connection.

What can you bring to the South African youth, especially the “born free” generation, through this project?

A “born free” is as a person that was born or grew up after the end of Apartheid era. This best defines our students as they were born

after 1994, the first democratic elections in South Africa.

Through Of Soul and Joy, we hope to provide them with skills that will ultimately enable them to obtain professional opportunities and achieve financial independence, while developing their creative capacity. We see photography as a form of activism, offering our young people the means to engage meaningfully with their communities. Our program nurtures confidence and encourages active participation by our students to become more involved and committed members of their communities. We've seen how this engagement is helping create a greater sense of belonging and responsibility.

Through photography, our students are learning to cope with and escape from their realities, creating worlds that reflect their personal struggles as well as their passions. This process of creation is not only healing for these young artists but also for the members of the community who are given the chance to see themselves reflected in new or original ways.

Our work also aims to foster inter-generational dialogue. Many of our students are using their art to express thoughts on issues that affect them, sparking conversations with older generations who might find these

“Using art as a tool for empowerment and healing.”

topics difficult to discuss. This dialogue is crucial for bridging gaps and creating a more inclusive community.

Lastly, we hope to inspire the archiving of history as it unfolds through the lens of the born frees.

To you, what are the best achievements of the project so far?

The best achievement is the impact it has made on the students, industry, and community at large. It brings a special dynamic to the creative industry by encouraging collective work and collaboration with all the local players.

Some of our beneficiaries have become successful professional photographers with work that has won awards and been exhibited internationally. We support them over the long term by sharing their work, encouraging them and celebrating their successes, and they in turn get involved by becoming mentors for the project.

We are also proud to offer our resources and workshops to an increasingly wide and varied audience, particularly through our outreach programmes in rural areas and hostels. These programmes have a positive impact, as they enable the populations furthest from art to discover photography, learn to read and

understand an image and develop their personal creativity.

This is why the work we're doing in Thokoza is so important, and something that we hope can spread to other townships and communities across South Africa. We are moving towards a more democratic art space, creating infrastructure and resources for schools and community centres to foster this kind of social work. Our work is a testament to the power of art activism in creating positive change, and we are committed to continuing this journey.

“The project brings a dynamic to the local creative industry.”





2025 HIGHLIGHTS

OF SOUL AND JOY PHOTO FEST #5

**Festival celebrating
the Of Soul and Joy project
and its photographers**

**18.10.2025
Thokoza, South Africa**

In October 2025, the Of Soul and Joy project is organizing the fifth edition of its photography festival in the township of Thokoza, near Johannesburg, South Africa.

This public event celebrates the creativity and dynamism of the project's photographers and the local art scene, while raising awareness of art and culture in the Thokoza community.

During this new edition, the public will be made aware of the activities carried out by the Of Soul and Joy project in various South African communities. They will be able to discover exhibitions showcasing the work of the project's photographers, attend talks by artists and professionals, and enjoy performances and concerts.

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP IN MOROCCO

**With Jabulani Dhlamini,
Marouane Beslem,
Abdelhamid Behlamidi**

**30.04 – 17.05.2025
Sidi Bernoussi orphanage,
Casablanca, Morocco**

For several years, Of Soul and Joy has been running workshops on photographic practice and image awareness for populations far removed from the arts, in South Africa and abroad.

In 2025, the project is running a workshop that will enable some twenty children from the Sidi Bernoussi orphanage in Casablanca to discover photography through an immersive and creative training program, led by South African photographer Jabulani Dhlamini and Moroccan photographers Marouane Beslem and Abdelhamid Behlamidi.

The aim of the workshop is to give these vulnerable young people the technical and creative tools to tell their stories and establish a visual dialogue between South Africa and Morocco through photography.

EVENTS

IN 2025

I Put My Hand On My Chest To Feel My Hearbeat
collective exhibition
01.02 – 31.03.2025
Constitution Hill, Johannesburg,
South Africa

Ubusukunemini (Day and Night)
exhibition by Tshepiso Mazibuko
& Sibusiso Bheka
12.07 – 21.09.2025
L'été photographique de Lectoure, France

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #5
18.10.2025
Thokoza, Johannesburg, South Africa

2024

Ho Tshepa Ntshapedi Ya Bontshepe, exhibition
by Tshepiso Mazibuko
for the Discovery Award 2024
Louis Roederer Foundation
Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France

Participation to the FNB
Art Joburg art fair
Johannesburg, South Africa

Ubusukunemini (Day and Night)
exhibition by Tshepiso Mazibuko
& Sibusiso Bheka
PhotoSaintGermain, Paris, France

2023

uHambo
collective exhibition
Umhlabathi gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa

2022

Residency with NOOR agency
Amsterdam, Netherlands
iHubo, exhibition by
Jabulani Dhlamini
& Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo
festival PhotoSaintGermain
Paris, France

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #4
Thokoza, South Africa

2021

Daleside, exhibition
by Lindokuhle Sobekwa
& Cyprien Clément-Delmas
Festival PhotoSaintGermain
Paris, France

Inganekwane, Of Soul and Joy
collective exhibition
Constitution Hill, Johannesburg
South Africa

2020

Of Soul and Joy
collective exhibition
Arles, France

Investec Cape Town Art Fair
Capetown, South Africa

2019

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #3
Thokoza, South Africa

Le Grand Chemin
collective residency
La Cité des Arts,
Saint-Denis, Reunion Island

Workshop with the
Yamarou Photo collective
Rencontres de Bamako, Mali

2018

Place of Peace
collective exhibition
Stop Sign Art Gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa

2017

Of Soul and Joy
panel discussion
Les Rencontres d'Arles, France

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #3
Thokoza, South Africa

2016

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #2
Thokoza, South Africa

Free from my Happiness
collective exhibition
Johannesburg Art Gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa

2014

Visions of Africa
Addis Foto Fest
Addis-Abeba, Ethiopia

2013

Of Soul and Joy Photo Fest #1
Thokoza, South Africa

In Thokoza
collective exhibition
Ithuba Arts Gallery, Johannesburg
South Africa

Of Soul and Joy 10 Years

Text by John Fleetwood
Rubis Mécénat
2022

Daleside: Static Dreams

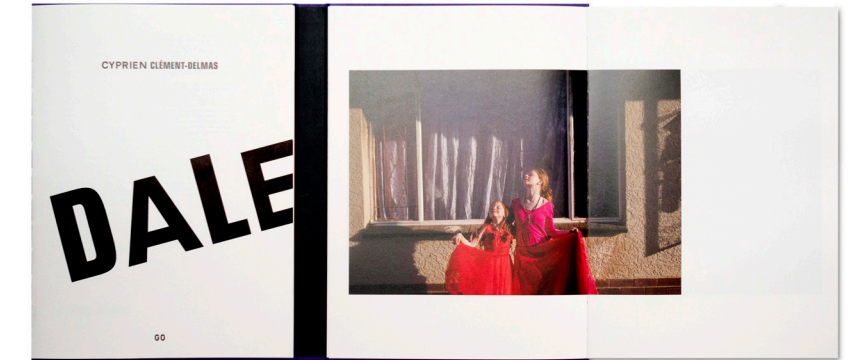
Lindokuhle Sobekwa
& Cyprien Clément-Delmas
Text by Sean O'Toole
GOST Books and Rubis Mécénat
2020

The Of Soul and Joy Photo Collective

Rubis Mécénat
2017

Free From My Happiness

Sibusiso Bheka,
Tshepiso Mazibuko,
Lindokuhle Sobekwa
Text by Sean O'Toole
Rubis Mécénat
2015



PUBLICATIONS

TEAM



JABULANI DHLAMINI PROJECT MANAGER

Jabulani Dhlamini (b. 1983, Warden, South Africa) is a documentary photographer represented by Goodman Gallery, whose practice reflects on his upbringing in the post-apartheid era alongside the experiences of local South African communities. Dhlamini's most celebrated bodies of work have focused on key moments in South African history, such as *Recaptured* which looks at cross-generational recollections of the Sharpeville Massacre, and *Isisekelo* which documents the familial impact of land dispossession and *iQhawekazi*, which mapped the shifting legacy of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela at the time of her death in 2018.

Solo exhibitions include: *Casa/iKhaya Lami*, Mitre Gallery, Brazil (2023); *Isisekelo*, Goodman Gallery Johannesburg (2019); *Recaptured*, Goodman Gallery Cape Town (2016); *uMama*, Market Photo Workshop, Johannesburg (2012). Group exhibitions: *Inganekwane*, North West University Gallery, South Africa (2022); *iHubo - Whispers*, PhotoSaintGermain festival, France (2022); *Five Photographers. A tribute to David Goldblatt*, Gerard Sekoto Gallery, French Institute of South Africa and the Alliance Française of Johannesburg. Dhlamini is an alumni fellow of the Edward Ruiz Mentorship programme and the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. He is a founding member of Umhlabathi, a collective of South African photographers.

MENTORS

Sibusiso Bheka
Project Assistant
and trainer

Thsepiso Mazibuko
Trainer, South African
photographer

Thandile Zwelibanzi
Trainer, South African
photographer

Katiso Mabuza
Trainer, South African
photographer

Émilie Demon
Public relations and
professional training,
co-founder of the
Afronova gallery

**Nomthandazo
Nkwanyana**
English and life
skills teacher

Bekithemba Ntini
Business of art teacher

CONTRIBUTORS

Roger Ballen
American
photographer

Ian Berry
British photographer
– Magnum Photos

Jodi Bieber
South African
photographer

Matt Black
American
photographer
– Magnum Photos

Tjorven Bruyneel
Belgium photographer

Nocebo Bucibo
South African
photographer

Natasha Christopher
Lecturer at Wits
University, South Africa

**Cyprien
Clément-Delmas**

French film director
and photographer
– Caviar

Yann Delacour
French photographer

Jérôme Delay
French photographer

Bieke Depoorter
Belgian photographer
– Magnum Photos

Thomas Dworzak
photographe allemand
– Magnum Photos

Dr Cheryl Finley
Associate Professor
of Art History
at Cornell University,
United States

John Fleetwood
photography educator
and curator, co-head
of Photography at the
Royal Academy of Art
(KABK, The Hague)

Stuart Franklin
British photographer
– Magnum Photos

David Goldblatt
(in memory of)
South African
photographer

Tshepo Gumbi
South African
photographer

Richard Kalvar
American
photographer
– Magnum Photos

Phumzile Khanyile
South African
photographer

Mpho Khwezi
South African
photographer

Lebohang Kyange
South African
photographer

Anthony Kaminju
Kenyan photographer

Jason Larkin
British photographer

Emma Laurence
South African
curator at the
Goodman Gallery

Sebastian Liste
Spanish photographer
– NOOR

Chris Littlewood
Photographer
and curator

Bongani Mahlangu
Head of Market
Photo Workshop

Alice Mann
South African
photographer

Mpumelelo Mcata
South African
film director
and musician

Buyaphi Mledle
South African
photographer

Gideon Mendel
South African
photographer

**Madoda
Mkhobeni**
South African
photographer

Sabelo Mlangeni
South African
photographer

Kutlwano Moagi
South African
photographer

**Olebile
Mocoancoeng**
South African
photographer

Thato Mogotsi
South African
curator

Zanele Muholi
South African
photographer

Neo Ntsoma
South African
photographer

Cedric Nunn
South African
photographer

Mark Power
British photographer
– Magnum Photos

Teboho Ralesai
South African
curator
Whitney Rasaka
South African
photographer

Rijasolo
Malagasy
photographer

Mujahid Safodien
South African
photographer

Thabiso Sekgala
(in memory of)
South African
photographer

Lindokuhle Sobekwa
South African
photographer

Mikhael Subotzky
South African
photographer
– Magnum Photos

Scheherazade Tillet
Trinidadian
photographer
and curator

Andrew Tshabangu
South African
photographer

**Nontsikelelo
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South African
photographer

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