



OF SOUL AND JOY

PRESS KIT

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

John Fleetwood, photography curator, educator and director of Photo:

Of Soul and Joy, film directed by Alexander Murphy



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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 artists, 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.

For the past fifteen years, these projects have helped determine vocations and support aspiring artists.

KEY FIGURES

1st project started in 2012

3 long-term projects

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 professionals invited to share their knowledge

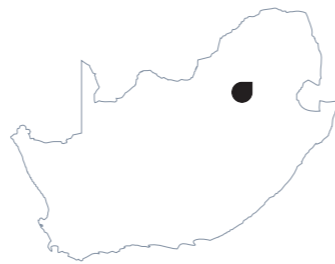
Over 50 events (exhibitions, festivals, residencies and cultural exchanges) organised in collaboration with cultural institutions: Magnum Photos, documenta, Fondation H, etc.

‘These projects train and support young people from vulnerable backgrounds through artistic practice, encouraging the transmission and emergence of new creative voices within communities that are 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.

At the same time, Of Soul and Joy conducts intensive workshops to introduce photography to people who are not typically exposed to art in rural areas and hostels in South Africa and, more broadly, across Africa (Morocco, Mali).

The project also helps discover new talent and inspire future careers: photographer Lindokhule Sobekwa is now a member of Magnum Photos, and photographer Tshepiso Mazibuko was featured at the Rencontres d'Arles for the 2024 Discovery Award Louis Roederer Foundation.



Furthermore, numerous artists and professionals are invited to conduct workshops within the project.

Location: Thokoza, township southeast of Johannesburg, South Africa

Activity: Professional training and integration via photography

Founded: 2012

Project Manager: Jabulani Dhlamini, South African photographer

Partner: Easigas

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 led in Thokoza, as well as with remote communities in South Africa and abroad

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 2013 in the township of Thokoza to raise awareness among local communities about photography and cultural actions around the project

2026 HIGHLIGHTS



Collective exhibition by the Of Soul and Joy project

Curated by Nontobeko Ntombela

06.06 – 31.07.2026
Market Photo Workshop,
Johannesburg, South Africa

“Of Soul and Joy: XIV. Assemblies of Community” is a group exhibition featuring sixteen South African photographers from the Of Soul and Joy project.

The exhibition marks a profound milestone in the fourteenth year of the Of Soul and Joy project, a tireless and vital creative pulse of communal photographic practice. Conceptualised as a gathering of many communities that come together through each photographer’s projects, the exhibition is not merely a display of technical competence

but a radical orchestration of presence. The title “Assemblies of Community” suggests more than a simple congregation of bodies. To assemble is to fit parts together; it is to construct a machinery of belonging from the disparate fragments of lived experience. It implies a deliberate architecture of the social, where the “community” is not a fixed, static entity but a breathing, evolving organism.

Exhibited photographers

Sibusiso Bheka – Jabulani Dhlamini
Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo – Vuyo Mabheka
Teboho Mabuya – Athenkosi Masikwana
Sikelela Mdilikwane – Siyabonga Mhlanga
Tadiwa Mkono – Lunathi Mngxuma
Life Ngubeni – Xolani Ngubeni
Anele Ntshangase – Hloni Sigaba
Zweli Zwane – Thandile Zwelibanzi

Initiation to cinematographic practice with Cinema TAKE

Restitution during the
“À nous le cinéma!” festival
07-11.06.2026
Wiesbaden, Germany

Every year since 2024, Of Soul and Joy invites the Cinema TAKE association to lead introductory workshops on filmmaking for the project’s participants, as part of “Cinéma,

Cent ans de jeunesse” (CCAJ), an international film education program that combines training in film appreciation with creative experience. These workshops enable a group of young Of Soul and Joy beneficiaries to produce a short film, which is screened every year to the other participants in the CCAJ program at the “À nous le cinéma!” festival, which is taking place this year in Germany.





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.”



EVENTS

2025

*I Put My Hand
On My Chest
To Feel My Heartbeat*
collective exhibition
Constitution Hill
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator: Lesole Tauatswala

*What's the Word?
Johannesburg!*
collective exhibition
Fondation A, Brussels, Belgium
Curator: Émilie Demon

*Of Soul and Joy
Photo Fest #5*
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
Curator: Audrey Illouz

FNB Art Joburg art fair
Johannesburg, South Africa

*Ubukunemini
(Day and Night)*
exhibition by
Tshepiso Mazibuko
& Sibusiso Bheka
PhotoSaintGermain

Paris, France
Curator: Valérie Fougeirol

2023

uHambo
collective exhibition
Umhlabathi gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator: Jabulani Dhlamini

2022

iHubo – Whispers,
exhibition by
Jabulani Dhlamini
& Thembinkosi
Hlatshwayo
festival PhotoSaintGermain
Paris, France
Curator: Valérie Fougeirol

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

2021

Daleside, exhibition
by Lindokuhle Sobekwa
& Cyprien
Clément-Delmas
Festival PhotoSaintGermain
Paris, France
Curator: Valérie Fougeirol

Inganekwane,
Of Soul and Joy
collective exhibition
Constitution Hill
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator: Teboho Ralesai

2020

Of Soul and Joy
collective exhibition
Arles, France
With Foundation
Manuel Rivera-Ortiz
*Investec Cape Town
Art Fair*
Capetown, South Africa

2019

*Of Soul and Joy
Photo Fest #3*
Thokoza, South Africa
Le Grand Chemin
La Cité des Arts,
Saint-Denis, Reunion Island

2018

Place of Peace,
collective exhibition
Stop Sign Art Gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator: Thato Mogotsi

2017

Of Soul and Joy panel
discussion within the
frame of the exhibition
*The House
of the Ballenesque,*
Roger Ballen
Les Rencontres d'Arles, France
Hosted by Roxana Azimi

2016

Of Soul and Joy

Photo Fest #2
Thokoza, South Africa

Free From My Happiness
Sibusiso Bheka,
Tshepiso Mazibuko and
Lindokuhle Sobekwa
Johannesburg Art Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curators: Tjorven Bruyneel
and Bieke Depoorter

2015

Free from my Happiness,
exhibition by
Sibusiso Bheka,
Tshepiso Mazibuko
& Lindokuhle Sobekwa
Photo Festival Ghent
Ghent, Belgium
Curators: Tjorven Bruyneel
and Bieke Depoorter

2014

Visions of Africa,
Addis Foto Fest
Addis-Abeba, Ethiopia
Curator: Aida Muluneh

2013

*Of Soul and Joy
Photo Fest #1*
Thokoza, South Africa
In Thokoza, collective
exhibition
Ithuba Arts Gallery
Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator: Lavendhri Arumugam

The House of Story

Haneem Christian, Litha Kanda,
Tshepiso Mabula ka Ndongeni,
Tshepiso Mazibuko
Texts by Lindokuhle Sobekwa
& Candice Jansen
Magnum Photos
2024

Of Soul and Joy 10 Years

Text by John Fleetwood
Rubis Mécénat
2022

Daleside: Static Dreams

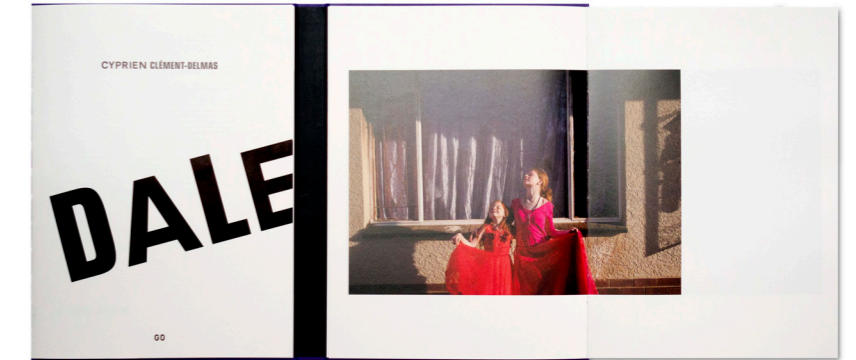
Lindokuhle Sobekwa
& Cyprien Clément-Delmas
Text by Sean O'Toole
GOST Books and Rubis Mécénat
2020

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 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

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Project Assistant
and trainer,
photographer

Thandile Zwelibanzi
Trainer, photographer

Émilie Demon
Public relations and
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**Nomthandazo
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English and life
skills teacher

Bekithemba Ntini
Business of art teacher
and professional
training

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– Magnum Photos

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(in memory of)
Photographer

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Photographer
– NOOR

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Film director
and musician

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Photographer

Rolihlahla Mhlanga
Arts project
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