

Svea Josephy

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Svea Josephy is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art (Photography) at the Michaelis school of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (in Fine Art) at UCT and completed a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Stellenbosch. Josephy has held a number of exhibitions of her creative work, nationally and internationally. Her work has been included in numerous international group exhibitions such as Crossing Boundaries: Contemporary Art and Artists from South Africa in Qatar, Format International Photography Festival: Photocinema, United Kingdom, Chobi Mela V International Festival of Photography, Bangladesh, The Position of South African Photography – Today, Germany, Shuttle 99, Finland and DAKART 2010 9th Biennial of Contemporary African Art, Senegal, where she was a prize winner in 2010.

Josephy's research interests include Southern African Photography, documentary photography, contemporary South African lens based practice and colonial photography. Her writing on these areas has been published in various books, journals and catalogues on contemporary art and photography. Josephy's research is concerned with the politics of post apartheid photography, particularly as it connects to the politics of the land and its representation in relation to identity. Her research has followed a history of South African photography, focussing initially on the documentary imperative and 'struggle' photography and tracing this back through colonialist and modernist photography. Her current research is concerned with demonstrating shifts in photography, which have taken place in a post apartheid context. She is interested in 'new documentary' forms that have emerged in post apartheid South Africa.

Ponte City: city portrait

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“The building is a metaphor for the city, which is a metaphor for the South African condition in the last 30 years,” (Mikhael Subotzky)

The Ponte tower in Johannesburg, is the tallest residential block in the southern hemisphere. Ponte was built in the spirit of apartheid modernism, to accommodate young upwardly mobile white people. Today it houses largely black South Africans and immigrants from the rest of Africa.

Ponte City is a project by Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse that uses photographs, architectural diagrams, text, interviews, fiction, found material, oral history and archival material to critically explore a particular urban landscape in Johannesburg. The exhibition and book, which comprise this project, manifest in different ways, but both work together to cut across disciplines and incorporate the languages of fine art, photography, architecture, urban planning, history, economics, popular culture and literature. Located in a humanities based approach, the publication comprises of a book of photographs and 17 pamphlets, in which the artists have collaborated with former and current residents, gathered personal stories, delved into the archive, invited authors to contribute essays on a variety of topics and worked with material found at the site.

This paper looks at the notion of a “portrait of a city” in relation to the *Ponte City* project by Subotzky and Waterhouse. The Ponte building has opened up a series of critical moments for consideration in the contemporary city of Johannesburg. These form the conceptual underpinning for the creative works produced. From the detached and abstracted architectural diagrams, to the contextualizing eye of the photographer; the slippage between the imaginaries of the city by planning and architectural professionals, and the words and dreams of its residents; Subotzky and Waterhouse have created a set of markers which conceptually highlight the cutting contrasts in the way in which Johannesburg has been imagined and lived.