

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY · STUDIO LA CITTÀ

1 ST DICEMBER 2007 - 26TH JANUARY 2008
CATALOGUE WITH ESSAY BY ROBERTO PINTO



Samuel, Vaalkoppies (Beaufort West Rubbish Dump) - 2006 - Light Jet C print on Fiji Crystal Archive paper - 55 x 240 cm. Edition of 7

Like many small South Africa towns, Beaufort West is still highly segregated. The quiet streets of the town itself are clustered around the main road and still house an almost exclusively white population. They go their daily lives largely unaware of what goes on in the outlying townships where the majority of the population live.

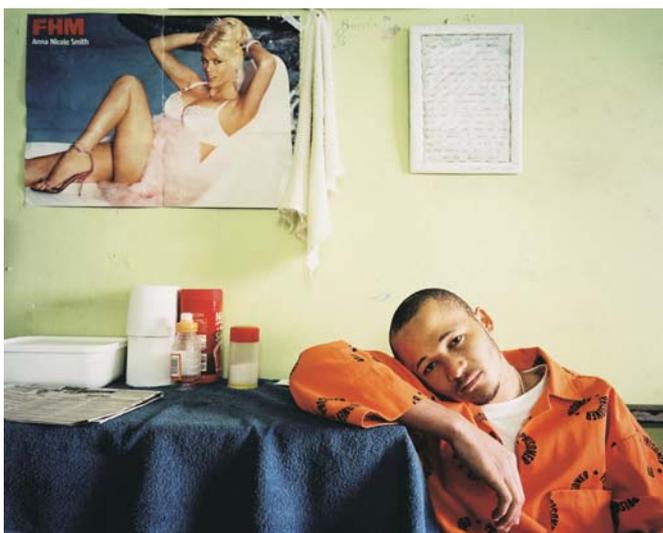
The local jail, too, is on the main road, and it is what caught Mikhael Subotzky's attention: 'I was drawn to Beaufort West because its prison is bizarrely situated in a traffic circle in the centre of the town in the middle of the N1 highway,' Subotzky says. 'Most South African prisons are hidden from view on the outskirts of our towns and cities. I was interested in this image of the prison at the centre of the town.'

The jail's location is no accident. Many of the first white people to live in these parts were banished here, nearly 200 years ago, to what was then the remotest outpost of the British Cape Colony. Out in the far reaches of the Karoo, these white outcasts clashed with souls at the fringes of southern Africa's two indigenous civilisations: bands of Xhosa who had fled war in the east, and itinerant groups of KoiSan.

No modern state is comfortable about a place within its territories that harbours people but no laws. The town of Beaufort West was established to bring law and order to the Central Karoo. Among its first structures were the rudiments of a state: magistrate, courthouse, church and jail. So the fact that the prison stands in the middle of the main road is testimony to Beaufort West's origins; it is civilisation's mark: a grim sentinel of order.

Today, the jail's main function is surely a good deal shabbier than that. It warehouses those of Beaufort West's citizens who, defeated by prolonged idleness and liquor, have assaulted family or robbed neighbours.

MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY was born in 1981 in Cape Town where he lives and works.



Tamatie, Beaufort West Prison - 2006
Light Jet C-print on Fuji Crystal Archive Paper 105.5x129 cm.
Edition of 9

SELECTED RECENT SHOWS

- 2007 Studio la Città, Verona, with catalogue
Beaufort West, FOAM (Foto Museum Amsterdam), Amsterdam,
Beaufort West, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town,
NYC Photo, Phillips, de Pury & Luxembourg, New York,
Bare Life, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem,
Says the junk in the yard, Flowers East, London,
The Loaded Lens, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town,
Lumo 07 'Us' 7th International Photography Triennale, Jyväskylä,
Lift off II, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town
Contemporary Art Photography from South Africa: Reality Check, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, 2007.
- 2006 *New Code*, Studio la Città, Verona,
Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg
T1, Turin Triennial a cura di/curated by F. Bonami e/and C. Christov-Bakargiev, Torino,
Snap Judgements: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography, a cura di/curated by O. Enwezor,
International Center for Photography, New York,
- 2006/05 Brett Kebble Art Awards
- 2005 *Die Vier Hoeke*, Nelson Mandela Cell, Pollsmoor Prison