

First U.S. Solo Show of South African Photographer
Jo Ractliffe Inaugurates New Chelsea Venue
for Walther Family Foundation

**Foundation Explores New Frontiers in Global Photography
Through Dynamic Exhibition, Publication, and Collection Program
in Germany and U.S.**



Jo Ractliffe, *Tundavala Gorge, Lubango*, 2010.

New York, NY (June 27, 2011) —The first U.S. solo exhibition of South African photographer Jo Ractliffe inaugurates the Walther Family Foundation's new exhibition space in the landmark West Chelsea Arts Building in New York City on April 15, 2011. As *Terras do Fim do Mundo (The Lands of the End of the World)* showcases nearly 60 of Ractliffe's evocative black-and-white landscapes, presenting haunting images that reflect past tragedies in the sweeping landscapes of present-day Angola. On view at the Walther Collection Project Space through August 13, 2011, *As Terras do Fim do Mundo*

complements the Foundation's forthcoming show, *Appropriated Landscapes*, an exhibition of contemporary African landscape photography and video opening at the Foundation's main exhibition venue in Germany on June 11, 2011. Both exhibitions are curated by Corinne Diserens.

Established by collector Artur Walther, the Walther Family Foundation is dedicated to supporting contemporary photography with a particular focus on the work of emerging artists from Africa and Asia. The Foundation launched its exhibition and publication program in June 2010 with the opening of its four-building museum-compound outside of Ulm, in southern Germany. The inaugural exhibition, *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*, curated by Okwui Enwezor and remaining on view through May 15, 2011, integrates the work of three generations of African artists with modern and contemporary German photography. The smaller 1,750-square-foot Walther Collection Project Space in Chelsea extends the Foundation's ambitious mission and program to New York-based audiences and helps to foster an international dialogue about contemporary photography from around the globe.

"I've been pleased to partner with Artur, a valued board member of the International Center of Photography (ICP) for the past thirteen years, as his interest in photography and

his collection has grown. His passion for international contemporary photography and emerging artists is shared with our institution,” said Willis E. Hartshorn, Ehrenkranz Director of the International Center of Photography. “Thanks to the Walther Family Foundation, *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* will expose new audiences to the poignant and powerful work of one of South Africa’s most accomplished photographers, Jo Ractliffe.”

Featuring a portfolio of platinum prints produced exclusively for the Foundation’s collection, the exhibition brings together images from Ractliffe’s journeys through the war-torn remains of Angola in 2009 and 2010. Guided by a group of former South African Defense Force soldiers on their first trip back to the Angolan countryside since the 1988 ceasefire at Cuito Cuanavale, Ractliffe documents what she terms as the “landscape of leftovers” from the country’s devastating 27-year civil war. Noted for their forensic and symbolic significance, these images capture eerily quiet countryside vistas, which, upon further inspection, reveal themselves to be unidentified memorials, unmarked mass graves, and minefields.

As the debut exhibition in the Walther Collection Project Space in Chelsea, *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* provides American audiences with an introduction to the Foundation’s broader mission and collection. The exhibitions in Chelsea will rotate seasonally, complementing the annual exhibition program in the Foundation’s main venue in Germany. Set in the quiet residential streets of Neu-Ulm / Burlafingen, the Walther Collection comprises three exhibition houses—The White Box, The Green House, and The Black House—and a fourth building accommodating administrative offices and a library. With the exception of The White Box, designed by the Ulm-based architectural firm Braunger Wörtz, each building maintains the existing vernacular architecture of the original structure, with the exteriors remaining as they were first built and the interiors transformed into white-walled gallery spaces accommodating the display of different scales of photography and video work.

About Jo Ractliffe

A preeminent South African photographer, Jo Ractliffe works in a variety of photo-based media, video, and installation, frequently focusing her work on ephemeral topics such as loss, longing, and desire. She has exhibited extensively in South Africa and has participated in select group exhibitions around the world. The presentation of *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* at the Walther Collection Project Space marks her U.S. solo debut. This body of work follows Ractliffe’s *Terreno Ocupado* series from 2007, which explored the social and spatial demographics of Angola’s capital city, Luanda, in the five years following the end of the country’s civil war. Select images from *Terreno Ocupado* were shown at the seventh Gwangju Biennale, South-Korea (2008).

Recent exhibitions featuring Ractliffe’s work include *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity* at the Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm/Burlafingen, Germany (2010); *This is Our Time* at Brodie/Stevenson in Johannesburg, South Africa (2010); *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography* at the International Center of Photography in New York (2006); and *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society* at the Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art (Biacs 2) in Seville, Spain (2006).

Born in 1961 in Cape Town, Ractliffe lives and works in Johannesburg. She obtained her MFA degree from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, in 1988. She is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts at Wits University and teaches at the Market

Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. Ractliffe is represented by Michael Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town.

About the Walther Family Foundation

The Walther Family Foundation is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to researching, collecting, exhibiting, and publishing modern and contemporary photography and video art. Founded in the traditions of European and American photography, the collection has expanded to incorporate works across regions, periods, and artistic sensibilities, giving particular focus to artists and photographers working in Africa and Asia. Through its in-depth exhibitions and vigorous publishing program, the Foundation showcases photography and video that advances the history and understanding of the medium. The Foundation has two exhibition spaces: the Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm / Burlafingen, Germany, and the Walther Collection Project Space in New York City. www.walthercollection.com

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