

Contemporary African Photography
from The Walther Collection
Appropriated Landscapes

Press Kit



David Goldblatt, *Structures: Speculative investment by a property developer in a house which he claimed was 'authentic Cape Dutch' but which was, in fact, a grossly corrupted version of that form, Agatha, Tzaneen district, 10 April 1989*

© David Goldblatt. Courtesy The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

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Jane Alexander, Mitch Epstein, Ângela Ferreira, Peter Friedl, David Goldblatt, Christine Meisner, Sabelo Mlangeni, Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi, Jo Ractliffe, Penny Siopis, Mikhael Subotzky/Patrick Waterhouse and Guy Tillim

Curator

Corinne Diserens

Dates

June 16, 2011 – May 13, 2012

Opening Hours

Thurs. – Sun. 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

By appointment only.

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The exhibition: Appropriated Landscapes

Appropriated Landscapes explores landscape typologies, mainly of Southern Africa, presenting works by fourteen artists: Jane Alexander, Ângela Ferreira, Peter Friedl, David Goldblatt, Christine Meisner, Sabelo Mlangeni, Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi, Jo Ractliffe, Penny Siopis, Mikhael Subotzky/Patrick Waterhouse, Guy Tillim, and—with his North American landscapes—Mitch Epstein.

The concept of landscape in *Appropriated Landscapes* is not exclusively linked to the historical perception of the picturesque and the sublime but considers landscape as a prism of experience, a reflection of ideology, and an embodiment of memory. It looks at built structures and monuments. To borrow the words of Santu Mofokeng, this use of the word “landscape” stretches it to “its fullest in order to invoke literal, colloquial, psychological, philosophical, mystical, metaphysical and metonymic meanings and applications.” *Appropriated Landscapes* invokes landscapes in South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and Mozambique, containing traces of the region’s history and its geopolitical configuration, through wars, migration, colonialism, and industrialization. Many of the artists presented here have created images through topographical studies, explorations of nomadic peripheries and in-between spaces, or chronicles of social geography altered by divisive spatial planning and modern architecture. The exhibition captures multiple possibilities of constructing and reading different landscapes, in both their contexts of production and their reception. As a result of shared systems of beliefs and ideologies, these landscapes are a construct of the mind—“built up as much from the strata of memory as from layers of rock.” The narrative of the exhibition also investigates architecture and spatial planning not only as the image of the social order, but also as that which preserves or even imposes the social order.

Green House

The cornerstone of the exhibition is a dual presentation in the Green House of works by South African photographers David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng. For more than sixty years, Goldblatt has been documenting the changing landscape, giving particular attention to the ways in which architecture and spatial planning reflected the ideology of apartheid, and how the land bears its legacy in post-apartheid South Africa. His examination of the complexities of the built environment and the deeply divisive structures of spatial planning of South Africa is, in part, about actual structures—bricks, mortar, mud, and corrugated iron—but it is also about ideological structuring. Goldblatt charts in his photographs of these buildings the mental constructs that underpinned the structures of South Africa in its colonial era and the apartheid years to reveal the many ways in which ideology has shaped our landscape.

Santu Mofokeng’s photo essays afford insights into the Soweto of his youth, everyday life on farms and in townships, religious rituals, and landscapes. They constitute a genuine archive of rural life in South Africa and of the images of the personal and family histories of black South Africans, beyond the stereotypical news pictures of Soweto depicting violence or poverty. In 1996, Mofokeng began to photograph rituals performed in caves for his ongoing photographic essay *Chasing Shadows*, which inquires into the relationships between landscape, memory, and religion. With his more recent essays *Trauma Landscapes* and *Landscape and Memory*, Mofokeng went further in the exploration of landscapes and photographed places imbued with historical significance and memories such as concentration camps and graves. Mofokeng’s paradigm of landscape as the mute witness to history, imbued with spiritual meaning, in turn resonates with Christine Meisner’s video works on view on the lower level of the Green House. In “. . . , ‘can you turn back?’”, Meisner conceives the Congo river as a stream of time, which absorbs stories while traveling through the land disemboguing in a circular flow of past and present. Her newly commissioned video *Disquieting Nature* explores the historical relation between landscape and sound, violence and its resistance in the Mississippi River region.

Black House

In the *Black House*, Jo Ractliffe presents the portfolio *As Terras do Fim do Mundo*, her ongoing photographic engagement with Angola's war-torn countryside and "landscape of leftovers." She first read about Angola in *Another Day of Life*, Ryszard Kapuściński's book about events leading to Angola's independence and subsequent civil war. Her reading was ten years after the book was written, a time when South Africa was experiencing increasing mobilization against the forces of the apartheid government, which was also fighting its own war in Angola against the Namibian liberation movement, SWAPO. As Ractliffe writes, "In the 1970s and early 80s, it was simply 'The Border,' a secret location where brothers and boyfriends were sent as part of their military service. And although tales about Russians and Cubans and the Cold War began to emerge—all of which conjured up a distinctly different image from the one conveyed by the South African state—it remained for me, a place of myth." Ractliffe went first to Luanda in 2007, five years after the end of the war, to work on her project *Terreno Ocupado*. Over the two ensuing years, she traveled with South African and Angolan ex-soldiers through what Portuguese colonials referred to as "As Terras do Fim do Mundo"—the lands of the end of the world—exploring how past trauma manifests in the Angolan landscape of today. Remarkable 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.

White Box

Central to the exhibition in the White Box are narratives and images of South African and Mozambican man-altered landscapes, architecture, social rituals, and migration. It embraces images of African industrial urban disfigurement, poisoned landscapes, ecological or natural disaster, and brings them into dialogue with Mitch Epstein's project *American Power*. His large scale color photographs depicting energy production sites related to American society's rapacious culture, the repercussions of westward expansionism on the landscape, and a general depletion of natural resources provide context in which to consider the relationship between African and American pictorial strategies with regard to the landscape.

In South Africa, the apartheid regime was busy distributing the black population into ethnically defined *homelands*, and maintaining these sites as reservoirs of cheap labor for white industry and mines. With her photomontages composed of photographs of Cape Town and its surrounding environment, and images of her sculpted figures that follow geographical trajectory from the country to the city, Jane Alexander fully addresses those issues. Sabelo Mlangeni's photographs from the *At Home* series, subtle images of forgotten land and villages, don't speak of the many problems that plague these villages such as poor sanitation, teenage pregnancy, lack of basic information and the increasing number of orphans but show them in a distinct tranquility and spaciousness. With his *Country Girls* series, Mlangeni gives an intimate portrait of gay life in the countryside apart from violence and discrimination. Zanele Muholi's work is a visual exploration of women loving women. She employs the landscape of the physical body to interrogate how one claims ground on a land where one's identity is negated or reviled. Based on the telling of individual and exile stories, legendary figures or myths, Penny Siopis, and Peter Friedl's lyrical film and video works transport the viewers to the sites of historical constructions, and to a history, in which the dialectic of coloniality and modernity reverberates.

These images of man-altered, social, or imaginary landscapes resonate with Guy Tillim's investigations of modernist architecture's utopian claims. His photographic series *Avenue Patrice Lumumba* portrays the crumbling institutional buildings—post offices, schools, hotels, and offices—that were built by colonial governments. These images of modernist architecture in decay are not merely documents of collapsed histories of post-colonial African states, but a walk through avenues of (lost) dreams. Whereas Mikhael Subotzky's and Patrick Waterhouse's 12-channel digital slide

projection provides a multitude of perspectives on the contemporary skyline of the city of Johannesburg from the point of view of the residents of its monolithic Ponte City Tower, the second-floor gallery will present eight color panoramas of Jo Ractliffe's series *Johannesburg Inner City Works*, each of which capture multiple images of a neighborhood within the city and stitches them together into one expansive frame.

Through her project *For Mozambique* (ongoing since 2008), Ângela Ferreira investigates the cinema workshops that anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch held between 1976 and 1978 in post-independence Mozambique, both in Maputo at the Eduardo Mondlane University and in rural areas throughout the country. With *Political Cameras*, her three-dimensional mobile device installed on the ground floor and inspired by the maize silo built by the peasants participating in the filming in rural areas, Ferreira renders the immediacy of the processing and screening in Maputo and in communal villages during Rouch's Super-8 film workshops.

About Corinne Diserens

Over the last twenty-five years, art historian and independent curator Corinne Diserens has curated more than fifty exhibitions, including shows on photographers David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, and Nan Goldin, and artists Eva Hesse, Dieter Roth, and Dan Graham. She has previously served as director and chief curator at Museion-Bolzano in Italy, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes and Les Musées de Marseille in France, and IVAM-Institut Valencia d'Art Modern in Spain. Diserens has also published monographic publications on a number of artists, including Lygia Clark, Francis Alÿs, Trisha Brown, and Oskar Schlemmer. She currently holds the Jury Chair at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany. She lives in Berlin and Paris.

Artists in the Exhibition

Jane Alexander

Born 1959 in Johannesburg, South Africa
Lives and works in Kapstadt, South Africa

Mitch Epstein

Born 1952 in Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA
Lives and works in New York

Ângela Ferreira

Geboren 1958 in Maputo, Mozambique
Lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal

Peter Friedl

Born 1960 in Oberneukirchen, Austria
Lives and works in Berlin and New York

David Goldblatt

Born 1930 in Randfontein, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Christine Meisner

Born 1970 in Nürnberg, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin

Sabelo Mlangeni

Born 1980 in Driefontein, South Africa
Lebt und arbeitet in Johannesburg

Santu Mofokeng

Born 1956 in Johannesburg
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Zanele Muholi

Born 1972 in Umlazi, Durban, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Jo Ractcliffe

Born 1961 in Kapstadt, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Penny Siopis

Born 1953 in Vryburg, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Mikhael Subotzky

Born 1981 in Kapstadt, Cape Town, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg

Patrick Waterhouse

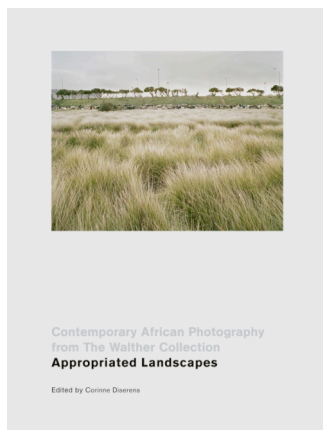
Born 1981 in Bath, England
Lives and works in Venice

Guy Tillim

Born 1962 in Johannesburg
Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa

Publication

A comprehensive book, published by Steidl, will accompany the exhibition, featuring the work of Jane Alexander, Mitch Epstein, Ângela Ferreira, Peter Friedl, David Goldblatt, Christine Meisner, Sabelo Mlangeni, Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi, Jo Ractliffe, Penny Siopis, Mikhael Subotzky / Patrick Waterhouse, and Guy Tillim. With a curatorial essay by Corinne Diserens, an essay on Mitch Epstein by Brian Wallis; textual contributions by each artist— including historical and literary reprints—unique narrative artist “portraits” by Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, and full-page color reproductions.



Contemporary African Photography from The Walther Collection
Appropriated Landscapes
Edited by Corinne Diserens

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The Collection

The Foundation supports a rapidly growing collection of more than 1,100 works of photography and video, spanning geographic regions and ranging in date from late-19th century through the present. The collection began with American and European photography, particularly that of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*New Objectivity*) movement in Germany, and has expanded to include one of the most important private holdings of African and Asian photography. The ongoing growth of the collection is informed and animated by the Foundation's curatorial research and exhibition program, which endeavor to create dynamic juxtapositions between the work of Western and non-Western artists and to present different regional and thematic perspectives.

With over 100 artists represented, the collection includes extensive holdings of select international photographers, allowing exploration of how singular works relate to the sustained discourse of each artist's oeuvre. Highlights include works by some of the most prominent modern and contemporary photographers from Africa, such as Seydou Keïta, Malick Sidibé, David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, Samuel Fosso, J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, Jo Ractliffe, and Guy Tillim; noted Asian artists, such as Ai Weiwei, Yang Fudong, Zhang Huan, Lin Tianmiao, Wang Qingsong, and Song Dong; prominent German photographers August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Dieter Appelt, Candida Höfer, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Ruff; and American artists, including Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Emmet Gowan, Bruce Davidson, and Mitch Epstein, among others.

Each year, the Foundation's exhibition program examines a new topical aspect of the collection. Major thematic and group exhibitions rotate annually at the Walther Collection in Germany, and will be complemented by smaller, more focused exhibitions that are presented seasonally at the Project Space in New York. The Walther Collection's inaugural exhibition, *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*, launched the Foundation's ongoing three-year exploration of its extensive African holdings. In addition to full-scale annual exhibition catalogues, the Walther Collection/Steidl will produce unique monographs of artists whose work is significantly represented in the collection.

Location

The Walther Collection's Neu-Ulm / Burlafingen

The Foundation's main exhibition venue is a four-building museum compound set in the quiet, residential streets of Neu-Ulm / Burlafingen in southern Germany. Three principal buildings—the White Box, Green House, and Black House—provide 10,000 square feet of gallery space to present the Walther Collection's annual exhibition program. A fourth building on the campus accommodates administrative offices and a library. With the exception of the newly commissioned White Box, each of the buildings maintains the existing vernacular architecture of the area, while the interiors have been transformed into spare white-walled gallery spaces, proportioned to accommodate different scales of photography and video.

Designed by the Ulm-based architectural firm Braunger Wörtz, the White Box is a light-filled, three-story minimalist structure that houses the Walther Collection's main exhibition galleries. Featuring a glass-fronted foyer overlooking the surrounding landscape, the White Box echoes the size and shape of the other buildings on campus, with its main gallery extending underground to preserve the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. The expansive 5,000-square-foot space on the lower level, which is visible from a first-floor balcony, hosts thematic exhibitions; and a smaller, 1,500-square-foot gallery and reading room on the second floor presents new acquisitions and single-artist commissions.

The intimate scale of the Green House, a former residential home, provides gallery space for small-format works, either for a comprehensive single-artist presentation or for comparative exhibitions between the works of two artists. Except for the remodeled interiors, consisting of two small-scaled galleries on each floor, the two-story house remains exactly as it was built more than half a century ago, with its façade covered in ivy, giving it its name.

The Black House is a one-level, bungalow-style structure used for the presentation of serial, performance, and conceptually based photography. Without windows on three sides of the building, the interior space is divided into three separate galleries, lit by a glass curtain wall that allows natural light into the rooms.

The Walther Collection Project Space – New York

Located in the landmark West Chelsea Arts Building in New York City, the Walther Collection Project Space serves as an experimental exhibition space that extends the Foundation's mission and program to American audiences. The 1,750-square-foot space, which opened to the public in April 2011, hosts three focused exhibitions per year drawn from the collection, complementing the annual thematic exhibition in Germany and helping to foster an international dialogue about contemporary photography from around the globe.

About Artur Walther

Artur Walther was born in Ulm, Southern Germany, studied in Regensburg and Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ever since his retirement from Wall Street in 1994, Artur Walther has been involved with and supported a number of cultural and educational institutions that share his interests. He is among others on the Architecture and Design Committee of The Museum of Modern Art, the Photography Committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Photography Committees of Vassar College and Bard College. He serves as a Member of the Board of the Storefront for Art and Architecture and the International Center of Photography (ICP), where he chaired the exhibitions committee for many years. He spearheaded the launch of the ICP Triennial of Photography, which saw its third edition in 2009.

Over the past ten years Artur Walther has devoted his time collecting and working with modern and contemporary photography and video. His collection has its historical foundation in the Neue Sachlichkeit and expanded from there. Today it includes the most significant body of contemporary Chinese and African works of photography in the world.

Artur Walther lives in New York.

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.

Exhibition Program 2011–2013

The Walther Family Foundation is currently engaged in an ongoing three-year exploration of its extensive holdings in African photography and video. Subsequent programming will explore various conceptual and artistic approaches used by the artists in the collection to highlight cross-cultural, conceptual and formal affinities.

The Walther Collection's Museum – Neu-Ulm / Burlafingen, Germany

Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity

June 17, 2010 – May 15, 2011

Curated by Okwui Enwezor, this inaugural exhibition of the Walther Collection integrates the portrait photography of three generations of African artists with that of modern and contemporary German photographers. The combination of African and German photography and video serves as a model for the Foundation's curatorial program, which strives to broaden the history and understanding of photography.

Appropriated Landscapes

June 16, 2011 – May 13, 2012.

This major exhibition of landscape photography from southern Africa explores the complex layers of meaning embedded in the physical attributes of a place. Bringing together the photography and video of fourteen contemporary artists, including David Goldblatt, Ângela Ferreira, Santu Mofokeng, Jo Ractliffe, and Guy Tillim, the exhibition examines the effects of war, migration, colonization, industrialization, and ideology on the landscapes of South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and Mozambique..

African Photography of the 19th – Early 20th Century (working title)

June 16, 2012 – May 12, 2013

On view in the Green and Black Houses, the exhibition will expand the Walther Collection's exhibition focus to the 19th and early 20th centuries and examine issues of identity, colonialism, anthropology, and ethnology, and the role of the photographer and the sitter.

The Walther Collection Project Space – New York

As Terras do Fim do Mundo (The Lands of the End of the World)

April 15, 2011 – July 15, 2011

The inaugural exhibition of the Project Space, *As Terras do Fim do Mundo* is the first U.S. solo exhibition of South African photographer Jo Ractliffe. Showcasing nearly 60 of Ractliffe's evocative black-and-white landscapes, the exhibition presents haunting images that reflect past tragedies in the sweeping landscapes of present-day Angola.

August Sander and Seydou Keïta: Selected Works from The Walther Collection

September 22, 2011 – January 7, 2012

An exhibition exploring the work of Seydou Keïta and August Sander, drawn from the 2010–2011 presentation in the Walther Collection's Green House of Sander's *Anlitz der Zeit* and a selection of Keïta's refined black-and-white portraits of the residents of Bamako during the late 1940s to mid-1950s in colonial Mali.