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Local News

21 Icons reveals their 14th icon

JOHANNESBURG – 21 Icons, the incredible short film and photo series has revealed its 14th icon of its third season – contemporary visual artist and photographic social activist, Mikhael Subotzky.

21 hours ago



Photo: Adrian Steirn LAY OF THE LAND: Leon Visser takes photographs behind the scenes as Mikhael Subotzky and photographer Gary Van Wyk discusses the details of the portrait. Subotzky's portrait was shot in Cape Town for 21 Icons South Africa.

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21 Icons was created by Australian, Adrian Steirn, in order to trace South Africa's history. And now, the third season is a tribute to the country's future and focuses the spotlight on young South African icons.

Subotzky's three-minute film shows how he came to create a series of visual and spatial constructs that capture the ideas of human segregation and incarceration of the post-apartheid era.

The 34-year-old, living in Cape Town, was selected for the 21 Icons South Africa Season III because of his open-ended photo-journalistic narratives that tell the stories of characters against the backdrop of architectural structures portraying the historical, spatial and institutional structures of the time.

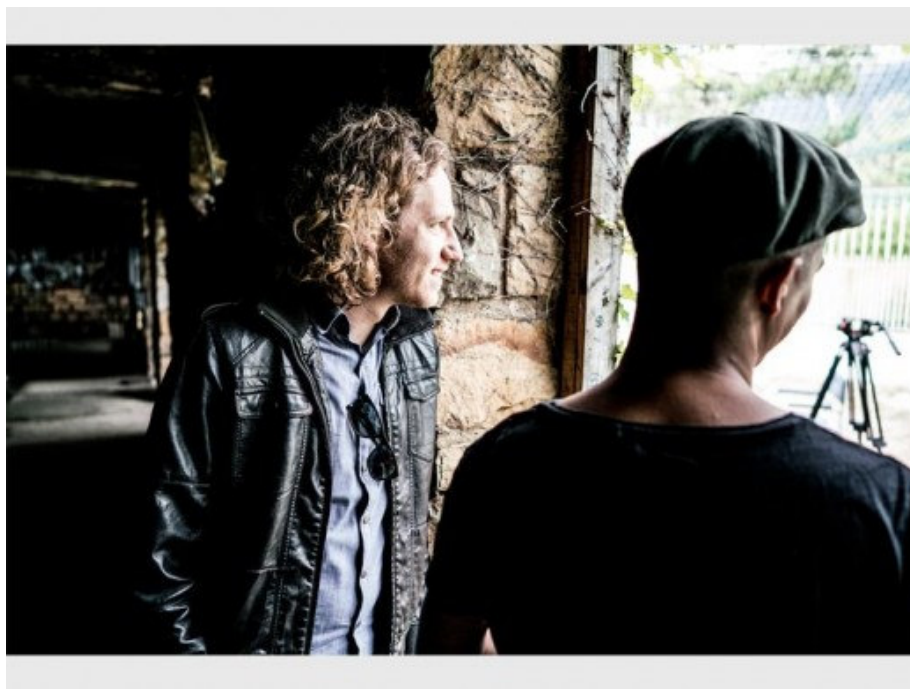


Photo: Adrian Steirn

CONTEMPLATIVE: Mikhael Subotzky and photographer Gary Van Wyk at the old abandoned zoo below Rhodes Memorial for Subotzky's portrait shoot in Cape Town for 21 Icons South Africa.

His thesis and first body of work, titled Die Vier Hoeke (The Four Corners) was a photographic enquiry into crime and punishment in South Africa. He captured the public's attention with his depiction of the unseen lives of prisoners. During his portrait sitting with principal photographer, Gary Van Wyk, he stated that the question of whether those incarcerated should have the right to vote first came to his attention during the 2004 elections

and the 10th year of our democracy, a time when social issues such as crime, poverty and unemployment were on the rise.

“People were realising that 10 years on we still have such huge social problems,” said Subotzky.

“At the same time, incarceration is so much a part of our history and many South Africans, including our political leadership, have been imprisoned. I was interested to learn how that experience shapes our society.”

When speaking about the future of South Africa, Subotzky stated, “I find South Africa an incredibly wonderful, dynamic and interesting place to live. It is also a difficult place to live, and rightly so because of our history. But I’d rather be here, engaging with that than somewhere else.”

His portrait is titled What Meets The Eye and was shot inside an abandoned zoo below Rhodes Memorial in Cape Town. Van Wyk revealed that the location was chosen because of its prison-like appearance and served as a reference to Subotzky’s famed Die Vier Hoeke series.

“Subotzky is photographed seated and staring directly into the camera. Making a rare and brief switch to the front of the camera, his stare is intense but his pose is kept simple,” explained Van Wyk.

Subotzky’s short film and portrait will be aired on SABC 3 on 6 December at 7.27pm with a repeat the next day at 5.57pm on the same channel.

Details: www.21icons.com

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