**CITATION: SANTU MOFOKENG**

Santu Mofokeng is recognised internationally as one of South Africa’s foremost photographers for the extraordinary photographic images he has produced over the last four decades. In addition he has contributed to our cultural landscape as a curator, writer and researcher.

Santu Mofokeng was born in 1956 in Johannesburg, South Africa. He began his career as a street photographer and in the 1980s, while working for various newspapers as a darkroom assistant, began to record events taking place in South Africa. In 1985 he joined the Afrapix Collective and documented the anti-apartheid struggle. Two years later, in 1987 he was appointed at the *New Nation* newspaper. From 1988 to 1998 he worked as a documentary photographer and researcher for the African Studies Institute’s Oral History Project, at the University of the Witwatersrand, and focused on producing images representing the lives of people in their homes and other aspects of daily life.

His first solo exhibition, *Like Shifting Sand*, for which he received an AA Vita Award Nomination, took place in 1990 at the Market Theatre Galleries in Johannesburg. This was followed in 1991 by the Ernest Cole Scholarship to study at the International Center of Photography in New York, USA, the world’s leading institution dedicated to the study of photography.

While working at Afrapix in 1992 he received the 1st Mother Jones Award for Africa - a grant made to outstanding world photographers covering social issues. The award marked the beginning of international recognition and critical acclaim for Mr Mofokeng’s work.

In 1997 he exhibited the *Chasing Shadows* body of work at the Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, and was subsequently short-listed
for the FNB Vita Award for the Visual Arts. Further international recognition followed in 1998 with the Künstlerhaus Worpswede Fellowship in Germany. The ground-breaking *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me* body of work was exhibited in Rotterdam, Holland, in the same year and then again in Paris, France, in 1999. Further recognition followed in 1999 when he was awarded the Contre Jour Residency, in Marseille, France. Two DAAD Fellowships, one in Worpswede and the other in Berlin were awarded to Mr Mofokeng in 1999 and 2001 respectively. In 2007 he received the Ruth First Fellowship. While recognition on an international stage continued it was not until the *Invoice* exhibition at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, in 2007, that a wider South African audience became more familiar with his work. In 2009 he was awarded a Laureate by the Prince Claus Fund, Netherlands. His first international retrospective, *Chasing Shadows/Santu Mofokeng, thirty years of photographic essays*, took place at the Jeu de Paume Gallery in Paris, France in 2011. The retrospective then travelled to the Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, the Bergen Kunsthall, Norway, both in 2011, and the Wits Art Museum in 2012. In 2015, Mr Mofokeng’s contribution to arts and culture in South Africa was recognised by the City of Joburg at an Arts Alive tribute event hosted by the City of Johannesburg Community Development Department. Most recently, in March 2016, Mr Mofokeng was awarded the International Photography Prize 2016. The international award, established by the Fondazione Fotografia Modena and Sky Arte HD, recognises a living photographer whose artistic research has made a significant contribution to the development of the language of imagery.

Coinciding with the award ceremony, the Fondazione Fotografia Modena hosted Mofokeng’s most recent solo exhibition *Santu Mofokeng. A Silent Solitude*, curated by Simon Njami, at the Modena Foro Boario, Italy.

In addition to twenty five one person shows between 1990 and 2016, Mr Mofokeng has exhibited on numerous group shows across the world, including Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany and the 25th Sao Paulo Biennial, Brazil, in 2002, and the Venice Biennial in 2007 and 2013. His work has featured at further biennials and exhibitions in many countries including South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan and China.

Over four decades, Mr Mofokeng has developed a unique visual language that has had significant impact both on the African continent and globally. This visual language traverses portraiture and the political and spiritual meanings of landscape. As his work has become more widely known in South Africa, he has had a major influence on a younger generation of South African photographers. It is more particularly the lived experience present in the work, an embodied vision for photography, and his ongoing interrogation of the documentary photography genre that has had this profound impact.

Inherent to Mr Mofokeng’s understanding of the photograph is its power to probe, reveal, provoke and challenge. In his practice the photograph becomes an incisive, yet compassionate, index and icon for the times in which we have lived.

Mr Mofokeng’s intellectual and creative contribution to an understanding of a deeply nuanced and textured human condition is one that is both entirely original and unsurpassed. His oeuvre marks him as one of the great photographers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Given Mr Mofokeng’s distinguished contribution to the field of photography and his contribution to photography both in South Africa and internationally, we believe he is worthy of being awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.