

# MARCELO BRODSKY

MARCELO BRODSKY IS AN ARTIST, REVOLUTIONIST, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST USING HIS VISUAL ART TO CREATE AWARENESS AROUND THE WORLD. ART AFRICA CAUGHT UP WITH HIM IN THE LEAD UP TO THE INVESTEC CAPE TOWN ART FAIR TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HIS COLLABORATION WITH GIDEON MENDEL TO BE EXHIBITED THERE.



LEFT TO RIGHT

Marcelo Brodsky, Zimbabwe, 1972, 2018. Print with hard pigment ink on Hahnemuehle paper, 60 x 90cm.

Dakar, Sénégal, 1986, 2018. Print with hard pigment ink on Hahnemuehle paper, 60 x 90cm.

Your recent collaboration with Gideon Mendel features images taken during the Apartheid struggle era in South Africa. How did this collaboration come about?

My collaboration with Gideon started in Brussels. We were both included in the exhibition "Resist", curated by French/Cameroonian curator Christine Eyenne, at Bozar Palais des Beaux Arts. The show was about resistance in the sixties and seventies around the world and Gideon showed his work from the seventies and eighties around the struggle against Apartheid, and I showed my series 1968: The Fire of Ideas on an 18 metre long wall at the entrance of the exhibition, with handwriting on the walls and 42 images of the marches of 1968 from around the world. We both liked one another's work and became friends. That is the good thing about group shows, you get to know artists that you can work with in the future.

Gideon agreed to work with me, but his requests were interesting and challenging. He consented to the use of his images, but he wanted to be involved in the intervention process too so he could make suggestions, add information, etc. Gideon also wanted to have something in our work that differentiated it from the rest of the Africa series. I agreed to these terms, and we started our collaboration. The distinctive element would be a secondary smaller image on the right hand side of the artwork that would interact with the main photograph.

In the process of working together, Gideon told me about the recent discussion in the South African art scene about appropriation, originated when American visual artist Hank Willis Thomas appropriated an iconic photograph taken by Graeme Williams without getting permission from him to do so. Our collaboration is also a response to this issue, illustrating that collaboration between

artists and putting the story at the center of the work – besides being the correct approach, rather than pure appropriation – can also create stronger and more relevant work.

It has been said that you use visual art to create awareness of our world in a very critical and conscious way. And, the way you use text over photographs has been said to compress time between then and now. Can you elaborate on your process of working with images and text.

I want to tell a story – and I want to do it visually – through a language that is able to combine images and text. I believe they both work together very well and empower each other to extend meaning. My pieces are generally part of conceptual essays around a subject. The most recent book "1968: The Fire of Ideas" was about the 1968 movement around the world and I am working on an visual essay on African independence and social struggles as part of the series. Once my area of research is determined, I search deeply into image archives and photographers who have covered or dealt with that subject. I choose and consider the best images for the story and license them formally with the copyright holders for use in my artistic projects. Then I research the issues that are captured in the selected image, and make my interventions on the picture with colour, text and poetic captions. Each piece comes together and relates to the other pieces in the essay, by conforming to the complex, diverse, and multi layered approach.

Seeing the images of popular movements that happened many years ago are often still valid today, this helps compress time. Young people today see themselves represented in the work by other people that were young 50 years ago.

Curator Inês Valle wrote of your work: Marcelo Brodsky's works are composed of powerful and

aggressive images of strength that shake us up, challenging us to participate. Is that the primary intention of your work?

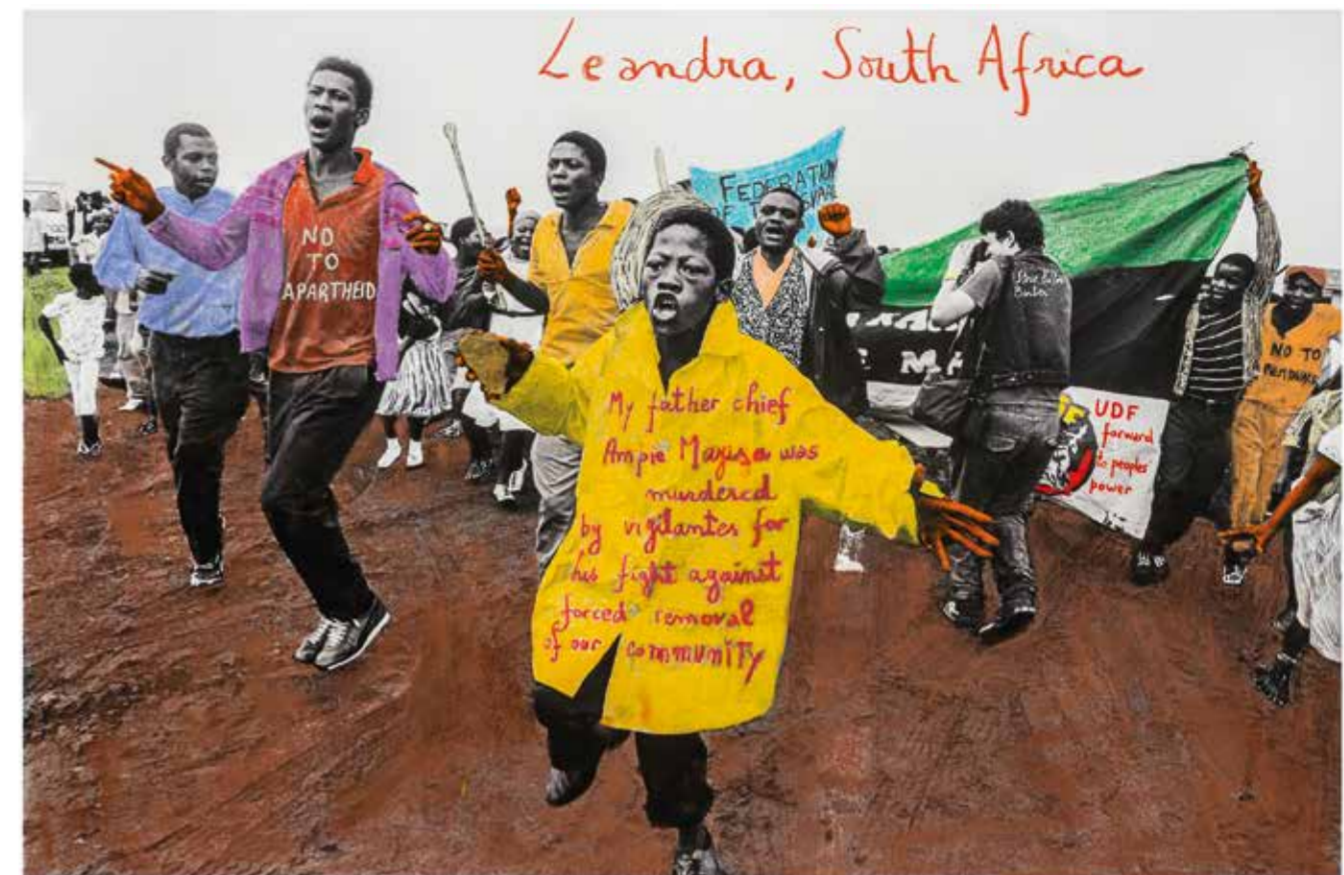
Presenting historical images that focus on social issues that were meaningful in the past, show social movements in action, and present people in the streets fighting for their rights – can be inspiring to future generations in defending their rights.

The social movements of the sixties, the African independence, and the fight against Apartheid in South Africa had important consequences in society. But these movements did not necessarily complete what they set out to do. Africa may not yet be totally independent, racism is still strong despite the end of Apartheid. My work is intended to make people think about this.

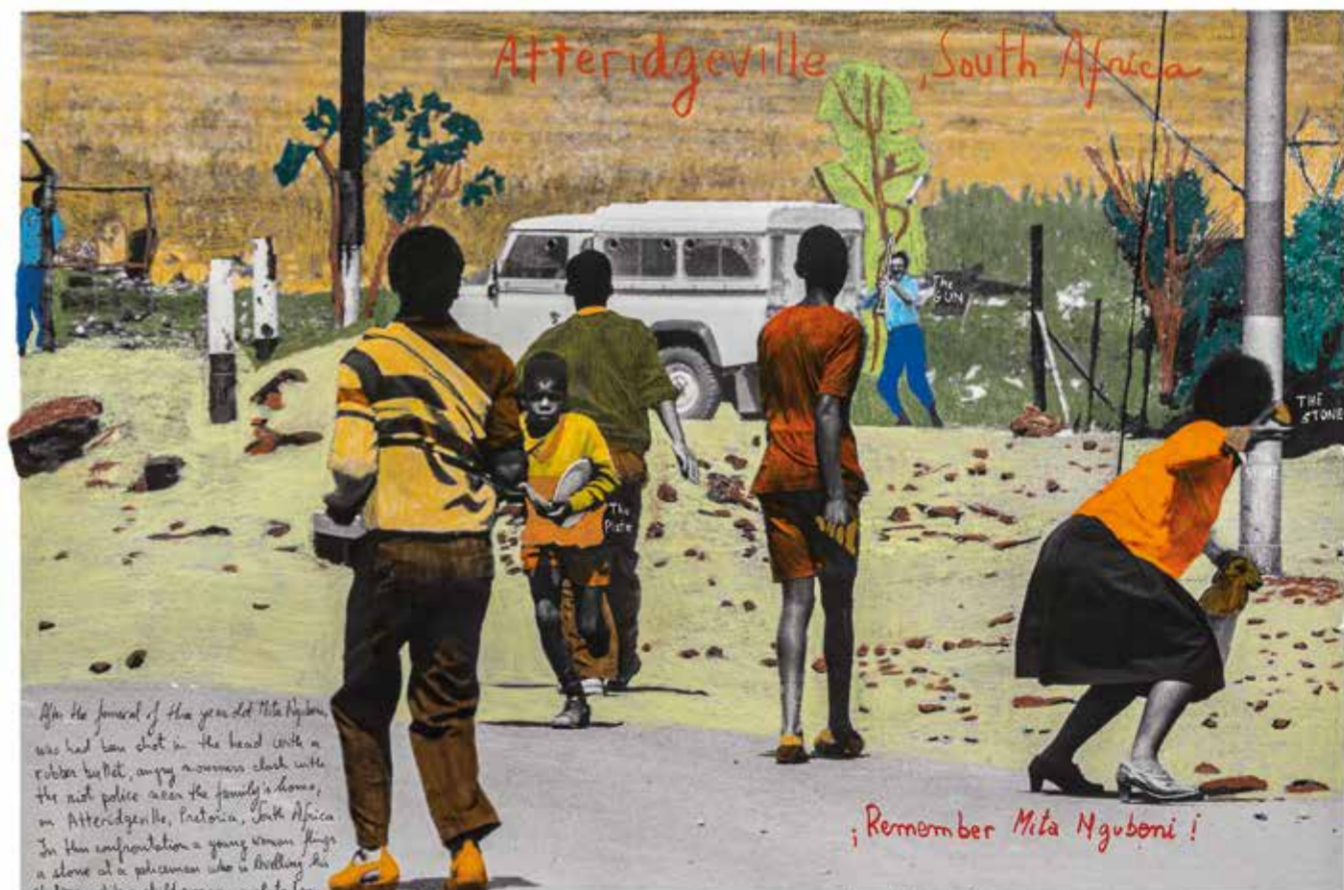
Your work challenges hegemonic structures on six continents with images of riots, marches, and protests being dominant themes. What have some of your collective experiences been working across such diverse geographies and cultures?

I believe that when people are out in the streets protesting or defending their rights there is something fundamentally wrong in that society. This was the case internationally during the social and student movements of 1968 around the world – in the fight for independence and against racism in Africa, in the resistance against the dictatorships in Latin America, and in the feminist movement today.

To show historical images of people fighting in the streets for their rights can be provocative, and I hope they make the viewer challenge issues of today, and how to deal with them. Images are emotional, they reach the gut, and my mission as an artist is to make work that generates emotion and thought.



The son of Chief Ampie Maysa leads his father's funeral procession, holding a book to defend it from a crowd. His father, who was active in a local campaign against forced removals, was killed by a group of vigilante who had been encouraged by police. During the funeral service, one of the vigilantes was dragged near the event was attacked and killed in retaliation, leading to a riot on the funeral procession. In the townships of Leandra, South Africa. Photo by Gideon Mendel, January 1986. March Book by Gideon Mendel. Africa Series. 1986/2018



After the funeral of the grand old Mita Ngubeni was had her shot in the head with a rubber bullet, many mourners clank into the riot police near the family's home, in Afterridgeville, KwaZulu, South Africa. In this confrontation a young woman plays a stone at a policeman who is killing his children, while a child carrying a plate from the funeral head runs away. Two weeks after the shot, Philip Mlambo, another school, was wounded in the leg when a soldier was killed by the boy's pet dog, which he responded with a volley of shots. The dog was killed. A popular school of South Africa's school of emergency was its devastating impact on the country's children. The school was the first of the thousands detained under the State of Emergency. The school was a big place of resistance and action during the anti-apartheid rebellion. The shot was in September 1985. Photo by Gideon Mendel. Africa Series. March Book by Gideon Mendel. 1986/2018

TOP TO BOTTOM

Marcelo Brodsky in collaboration with Gideon Mendel, Leandra, South Africa, 1986, 2018. Print with hard pigment ink on Hahnemuehle paper, 65 x 100cm.

Afterridgeville, South Africa, 1985, 2018. Print with hard pigment ink on Hahnemuehle paper, 65 x 100cm.

All images courtesy of the artist & ARTCO.