



# RUSSIAN PROJECT

## VIK MUNIZ

1 November 2007–30 January 2008

Vik Muniz is an internationally acclaimed artist and photographer based in Rio de Janeiro and New York. Known for his inventive use of materials and conceptual rigor, Muniz explores how images are constructed, circulated, and perceived in contemporary culture.

Drawing on postmodernist aesthetics, Muniz reimagines iconic works from art history and popular culture, emphasizing the primacy of concept over material preciousness. Using unconventional media—including dust, sugar, chocolate syrup, caviar, diamonds, garbage, toy soldiers, and magazine clippings—he reconstructs familiar images, which he then photographs in high resolution, resulting in

large-format prints that offer a new, layered visual experience.

In the **Pictures of Pigment series**, Muniz recreates masterpieces by Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Gustav Klimt, Piet Mondrian, and Henri Matisse by evenly distributing dry pigment across a flat surface. These ephemeral compositions are preserved only through photography, merging painterly tradition with photographic finality.

For the **Gordian Puzzles series**, he assembles intricate collages from jigsaw puzzle pieces printed with their original images but cut at different angles.

The resulting compositions appear complete but remain visually unresolved, prompting the viewer to question perception and coherence.

**The Pictures of Caviar series** employs black caviar—a symbol of opulence and a perishable medium. To preserve the raw intensity of color and texture throughout the process of image creation, Muniz works with extreme speed, completing each composition in a matter of minutes while maintaining formal clarity and affinity with the original.

*The Russian Project* exhibition brings together a selection of Vik Muniz's works, executed across different series and techniques, all united by a shared focus on the legacy of iconic Russian artists: Kazimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Vasily Vereshchagin, Mikhail Vrubel, and Ilya Mashkov. From the stark Suprematism of Malevich to the graphic force of Rodchenko's Constructivism, Muniz underscores how these avant-garde movements anticipated later developments in American Minimalism and Geometric Conceptualism. His tributes to 19th-century painters such as Vereshchagin—particularly *The Apotheosis of War*—as well as works inspired by Vrubel and Mashkov, anchor the exhibition in a dialogue between historical gravitas and contemporary technique.

*Time* magazine named Vik Muniz one of the leading artists of the new millennium, while *The New York Times* described his work as “an idea wrapped in a shell of humor and surprise,” recommending it as “a reliable antidepressant.”

Muniz's practice consistently engages with the popularization of art, driven by the belief that art should not be confined to an elite domain but serve as a catalyst for social and cultural dialogue. His playful yet meticulously crafted works bridge the gap between viewer and image, between the immediacy of material and the complexity of representation. Accessible, imaginative, and grounded in a deep knowledge of visual history, Muniz's art functions as both spectacle and reflection.

#### **Selected Museum Exhibitions**

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA  
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY, USA  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, Canada  
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA  
Seattle Asian Art Museum, Seattle, WA, USA  
Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland  
MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy  
The Menil Collection, Houston, TX, USA  
Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne, Switzerland  
International Center of Photography, New York, NY, USA

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