

Mikhael Subotzky



Biography

Mikhael Subotzky's (b. 1981, Cape Town) works are the results of his fractured attempts to place himself in relation to the social, historical, and political narratives that surround him. As an artist working in film, video installation and photography, as well as more recently in collage and painting, Subotzky engages critically with contemporary politics of images and their making. "At the heart of my work is a fixation with revealing the gap between what is presented (and idealised) and what is hidden, coupled with a desire to pull apart and reassemble the schizophrenia of contemporary existence," he says.

Subotzky's first body of photographic work, *Die Vier Hoeke* (The Four Corners), was an in-depth study of the South African penal system. *Umjiegwana* (The Outside) and *Beaufort West* extended this investigation to the relationship between everyday life in post-apartheid South Africa and the historical, spatial, and institutional structures of control. *Retinal Shift* was produced by Subotzky on the occasion of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award 2012 and toured South Africa's major museums and critically engaged with his ambivalence towards the processes of representation and image construction. *Ponte City*, a collaboration with artist Patrick Waterhouse, focuses on a single 54-story building that dominates the Johannesburg skyline. The building is cast as the central character in a myriad of interweaving narratives that, through photographs, commissioned texts, historical documents, and urban myths, chart the convoluted histories of both the building and Johannesburg itself. The *Ponte City* exhibition, which consists of a single installation of thousands of photographs and documents, has been acquired by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the accompanying publication won the 2015 Deutsche Borse Photography Prize.

Subotzky's work has been exhibited in recent museum presentations *The Struggle of Memory* at Palais Populaire, Berlin (2024) and *Fragile Beauty: Photographs from the Sir Elton John and David Furnish Collection* at Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2024).

Notable solo and two-person exhibitions include *Home Building Ideas for South Africa* (or *A Cape Town Landscape*), Goodman Gallery Cape Town (2024); *Epilogue*, Goodman Gallery, London (2022); *Tell It To The Mountains*, (with Lindokuhle Sobekwa) A4 Foundation, Cape Town (2021); *Mikhael Subotzky: WYE*, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney (2016); *Ponte City* (with Patrick Waterhouse), National Galleries, Scotland, UK, then travelled to Le Bal, Paris and FOMU, Antwerp (2014).

His work was included in the 12th Cairo Biennale (2010), *The Unexpected Guest*, Liverpool Biennial (2012), *Rencontres Picha Biennale de Lubumbashi*, Lubumbashi (2013) and the 56th Venice Biennale: *All the World's Futures*, Venice (2015).

Public collections include Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington; Tate, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and the South African National Gallery, among others.

Subotzky lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Solo Exhibitions

2022 *Epilogue*, Goodman Gallery, London

2021 *Tell It To The Mountains*, A4 Foundation, Cape Town

2021 *Mikhael Subotzky & Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City*, Goodman Gallery, East Hampton, NYC

2019 *Massive Nerve Corpus*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

2017 *Yellow Bille (or work in Progress)* Maitland institute, Cape town

2017 *WYE*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2016 *Mikhael Subotzky: WYE*, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation Sydney, Australia

2015 *Ponte City*, Photography Gallery, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland

2014 *Ponte City*, Le Bal, Paris, France

2014 *Ponte City*, FOMU, Antwerp, Belgium

2014 *Ponte City* (with Patrick Waterhouse), National Galleries, Scotland, UK

2014 *Show 'n Tell*, Goodman Gallery Cape Town, South Africa

2012 *Retinal Shift*, Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Exhibition, various venues around South Africa including Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town and Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2010 *Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse: Recent Works*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2009 *Two Projects*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2008 *Beaufort West* (in *New Photography 2008*: Josephine Meckseper and Mikhael Subotzky), Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

2007 *Beaufort West*, Studio La Citta, Verona, Italy

2007 *Beaufort West*, FOAM (Foto Museum Amsterdam), Amsterdam, Holland, Netherlands

2007 *Beaufort West*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2006 *Die Vier Hoeke and Umjiegwana*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2006 *Die Vier Hoeke*, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa

2005 *Die Vier Hoeke* in the Nelson Mandela Cell at Pollsmoor Prison, Cape Town, South Africa

Group Exhibitions

2023 *Cole, Sobekwa, Subotzky*, Magnum, Cromwell Place, London

2021 *Global(e) Resistance*, Centre Pompidou, Paris

2020 *„Masculinities: Liberation Through Photography“*, Barbican, London

2019 *I've grown roses in this garden of mine*, Goodman Gallery, London

2018 *Magnum Manifesto: Guardare il mondo e raccontarlo in fotografia*, Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome

2018 *ex africa*, CCBB, Rio de Janeiro

2018 *Of Sovereignty and Safety*, curated by Daniel Rautenbach, Goodman Gallery Video Room, Cape Town, South Africa

2017 *L'exposició PLEASE COME BACK. El món com a presó?*, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia

2017 *Making Africa: A continent of contemporary design*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta

2017 *Ex Africa*, CCBB, Belo Horizonte

2017 *Up to Now*, Fabbrica photography, Fabbrica, Reggio Emilia, Treviso

2017 *Magnum Manifesto*, International Center for Photography, New York City, USA

2017 *Please come back. The world as prison?*, Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome, Italy

2016 *New Revolutions: Goodman Gallery at 50*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2016 *After Eden: Photography from the Walther Collection*, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France

2016 *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design*, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2015 *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design*, The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain

2015 *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design*, Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany

2015 *Deutsche Börse Photography Prize exhibition*, The Photographer's Gallery, London, UK

2015 *Edge of Silence*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2015 *The Poetry In Between: South-South*, Goodman Gallery Cape Town, South Africa

2015 *All the World's Futures*, la Biennale di Venezia, Italy

2014 *From Sitting to Selfie*, Standard Bank Gallery, South Africa

2014 *Destini/Storie/Vite*, Centro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea della Spezia, La Spezia-Italy, Italy

2014 *Apartheid & After*, Huis Marseilles Museum voor Fotografie, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2014 *Surfacing*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2014 *EXPO*, Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

2014 *In Context: The Portrait in Contemporary Photographic Practice*, Wellin Museum of Art, Clinton, New York State, USA

2014 *Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa*, SF MOMA in partnership with the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA), San Francisco, USA

2014 *Contemporary Art/South Africa*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

2014 *Earth Matters*, Bowdoin Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, USA

2013 *This House in Nouvelles Vagues*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

2013 *My Jo'burg*, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France

2013 *Some Views of Africa*, Studio La Citta, Verona, Italy

2013 *Earth Matters*, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, USA

2013 *Concrete – Photography and Architecture*, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland

2013 *Structures*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2013 *A Different Kind of Order*, The ICP Triennial, International Center of Photography, New York, USA

2013 *La Chambre*, Strasbourg, France

2012 *State of the Art Photography*, The NRW-Forum, Düsseldorf, Germany

2012 *Out of Focus: Photography*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

2011 *The 6th Curitiba Biennial*, Curitiba, Brazil

2011 *Highrise – Idea and Reality*, The Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Switzerland

2011 *Appropriated Landscapes*, The Walther Collection in Neu Ulm/Burlafingen, Germany

2011 *Photography Now: Engaged, Personal, and Vital*, The New York Photo Festival, New York, USA

2011 *Figures & Fictions*, V&A Museum, London, UK

2011 *Arles Discovery Award Exhibition*, Arles

2010 *Peekaboo! Current South Africa*, Helsinki City Museum and Tennispalast, Helsinki, Finland

2010 *12th Cairo Biennale*

2010 *In Context*, South African National Gallery and Arts on Main, Cape Town and Johannesburg

2010 *Contemporary African Photography from the Walther Collection: Events of the Self, Portraiture and Social Identity*, The Walther Collection, Ulm, Germany

2009 *Still Revolution: Suspended In Time*, Contact Photo Festival, Toronto, USA

2009 *Nation State*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2009 *Armory Show*, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA

2009 *Mythologies*, Haunch of Venison, London, UK

2009 *Three Stories: Pieter Hugo, Mikhael Subotzky, Paolo Woods*, Centre National de l'Audiovisuel, Luxembourg, Luxembourg

2008 *A Look Away – South African photography today*, Kuckei + Kuckei, Berlin, Germany

2008 *Unseen, An Exhibition of International Photography*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China

2008 *ZA*, Young Art from South Africa, Palazzo delle Papesse, Siena, Italy

2008 *Art 39 Basel*, Goodman Gallery Booth, Switzerland

2006-8 *Snap Judgements: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, International Center for Photography, New York, Miami, USA; Mexico City, Mexico; Amsterdam, Holland, Netherlands

2007 *A Legacy of Men*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2007 *ArtBasel*, Goodman Gallery Booth, Miami Beach, Miami, USA

2007 *NY C Photo*, Phillips, de Pury & Luxembourg, Luxembourg; New York, USA

2007 *Bare Life*, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem, Israel

2007 *says the junk in the yard*, Flowers East, London, England

2007 *The Loaded Lens*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2007 *Lumo 07 – 'Us'*, 7th International Photography Triennale, Jyväskylä, Finland

2007 *Art 38 Basel*, Goodman Gallery Booth, Basel, Switzerland

2007 *Lift off II*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2007 *Reality Check: Contemporary Art Photography from South Africa*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany

2006 *Risk*, Exhibition of the 2006 Joop Swart Masterclass, FOAM, Amsterdam, Holland, Netherlands

2006 *Art Basel*, Miami Beach, Goodman Gallery booth, Miami, USA
2006 *The Living is Easy*, Flowers East Gallery, London, UK
2006 *Art 37 Basel*, Goodman Gallery, Basel, Switzerland
2006 *New Code*, Studio La Citta, Verona, Italy
2006 *Personae & Scenarios – New African Photography*. Brancolini Grimaldi Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy
2006 *Olvida quien soy [Erase me from who I am]*, Centro Atlantico de Art Moderno, Canary Islands
2005 *Vies Recontres Africaines de la Photographie*, Bamako, Mali
2005 *The Pantagruel Syndrome*, TI, Turin Triennial curated by Francesco Bonami and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Turin, Italy
2005 *Art 36 Basel*, Goodman Gallery booth, Basel, Switzerland
2005 *Art Basel*, Miami Beach, Goodman Gallery booth, Miami, USA
2005 *Click*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2005 *Vyf Kurators, Vyftien Kunstenaars [Five Curators, Fifteen Artists]*, Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, Oudtshoorn, South Africa

Teaching, Lectureships and Workshop

2004-6 Part-time lecturer in photography at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
2005-8 Set up and ran photographic workshops inside Pollsmoor Prison, Cape Town, South Africa

Awards and Merits

2012 Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award for Visual Arts
2011 Discovery Award at Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles
2009 Lou Stouman Award, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, USA
2009 Leica Oskar Barnack Award
2008 W. Eugene Smith Memorial Grant, New York, USA
2008 ICP Infinity Award (Young Photographer Award), New York, USA
2008 Goethe Institute Grant
2007 City of Perpignan Young Photographer Award, Perpignan, France
2007 KLM Paul Huff Award, Amsterdam, Holland
2006 F25 Award for Concerned Photography, Fabrica, Italy
2006 Participated in the 2006 Joop Swart Masterclass, World Photo Press, Amsterdam, Holland
2005 Special Jurer's Prize at the Vies Recontres Africaines de la Photographie, Bamako, Mali
2005 South African National Arts Council Grant
2005 Goethe Institute Grant

Academic Record and Residencies

2007-8 Civitella Ranieri fellowship, Italy
2007 One-year residency at Fabrica, Treviso, Italy
2006 Participated in the 2006 Joop Swart Masterclass, World Photo Press, Amsterdam, Holland
 h2. Undergraduate
2004 Graduated with a distinction, BA of (Fine) Arts Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Collections

South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
 Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
 Foam (Fotomuseum Amsterdam), Amsterdam, Holland
 21C Museum, Kentucky, USA
 Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, USA
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
 Elton John Private Photography Collection
 A4 Arts Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa

Selected Articles and Reviews

2013 Chris Thurman, *Looking Back in Anger to be Seen*, Business Day Live, South Africa
2013 Eugene Reznik, *Ponte City: An Apartheid-Era High Rise Mired in Myth*, Time Lightbox, <http://lightbox.time.com/2013/05/20/ponte-city-an-apartheid-era-high-rise-mired-in-myth/>, May
2013 Francis Hodgson, *Marrakech's Museum for Photography and the visual arts offers Surprises*, Financial Times, United Kingdom
2012 Anthea Buys, *Observers of the Settler's Town*, Mail and Guardian, Johannesburg, South Africa
2012 Blake Andrews, *Book Reviews: Retinal Shift*, 8 November
2010 Camilla Peus, „Schwartz, Weiss, Und Alle Fabren, Art Magazine
2010 Anthea Buys, *Sprawling Tales of Home*, Mail and Guardian, Johannesburg, South Africa
2010 Ufrieda Ho, *A Nose and a Box To Draw Art Lovers*, The Star, Johannesburg, South Africa
2010 Kei Wakabayashi, *Visions of South Africa*, GQ Japan
2009 Charles Schultz, *The Subotzky Trajectory*., Vewd, http://vewd.org/index.php/news/article/the_subotzkytrajectory/, January
2009 Joerg Colberg, *Beaufort West by Mikhael Subotzky*., *Conscientious*, http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/2008/11/review_beaufort_west_by_mikhaelsubotzky.html, November.
2009 Alex Hawgood, *The Insider | Mikhael Subotzky*, The Moment, <http://themoment.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/10/the-insider-mikhael-subotzky/>, November.
2008 Raffaella Delle Donne, *Documenting and Inhabiting the Contradictions*, Mikhael Subotzky., *The Sunday Independent*, South Africa
2008 *The White/Nonwhite Divide*, Carol Strickland, The Christian Science Monitor, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1003/pi3s03-align.html>, October.
2008 Karen Rosenberg, *Splitting a Gallery in Half to Focus on Social Strife*, The New York Times, New York
2008 Ivor Powell, „Mikhael Subotzky, NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art, Issue 22/23, Spring 2008, p114 – 121.
 2008 Sean O'Toole, *Die Vier Hoeke*, Foam Magazine, Amsterdam
2008 Joshua Mack, *Mikhael Subotzky: In His Images of South Africa's Fractured Communities*, *Photographer Mikhael Subotzky Dissolves the Barrier*

Between Us and Them, Art Review, London

2007 Michael Godby, *Mikhael Subotzky: Inside South Africa's Prisons*, Aperture Magazine, Issue 188, Fall 2007

2007 Melvyn Minnaar, *Subotzky captures Beaufort West prison again*, Cape Times (Life), September.

2007 Leo Benedictus, *Mikhael Subotzky's Best Shot*, The Guardian, London

2007 Sue Williamson, *Mikhael Subotzky*, Artthrob, South Africa

Publications

2014 _Ponte City, in collaboration with Patrick Waterhouse_, Steidl, Germany

2012 _Retinal Shift_, Steidl, Germany

2008 _Beaufort West_, Chris Boot Ltd, London