

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is cast as the central character in a myriad of interweaving narratives that, through photographs, commissioned texts, historical documents, and urban myths, chart the convoluted histories of both the building and Johannesburg itself.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