

# Mikhael Subotzky

## Biography

Mikhael Subotzky's (b. 1981, Cape Town, South Africa) film, video and photographic works are concerned with the structures of narrative and representation, as well as the relationship between social storytelling and the formal contingencies of image making.

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. *Beaufort West* (Chris Boot, 2008) was Subotzky's first monograph and the series was included in the exhibition *New Photography 2008: Josephine Meckseper and Mikhael Subotzky at the Museum of Modern Art* (New York, 2008).

The exhibition *Retinal Shift* was produced by Subotzky on the occasion of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award 2012 and toured South Africa's major museums. *Retinal Shift* includes two large photographic and video installations that critically engage with the artist's own ambivalence towards the processes of representation and image construction. *Retinal Shift* (Steidl, 2012) was published to accompany the exhibition. *Retinal Shift* also includes Subotzky's first major film installation, *Moses and Griffiths*, which uses four screens to narrate the contrasting and conflicting institutional and personal histories of two seventy-year-old tour guides in the small South African town of Grahamstown. *Moses and Griffiths* has subsequently been exhibited at Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2013) Yale Art Gallery (New Haven, 2014) and Art Unlimited (Basel, 2014).

A third monograph, *Ponte City* (Steidl, 2014) is the product of a six-year collaboration with the British artist Patrick Waterhouse. This project focuses 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is cast as the central character in a myriad of interweaving narratives that, through photographs, commissioned texts, historical documents, and urban myths, chart the convoluted histories of both the building and Johannesburg itself.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 exhibited at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (Edinburgh, 2014), FoMU (Antwerp, 2014) and Le Bal (Paris, 2014). Excerpts from the series have been shown at the Liverpool (2012), Lubumbashi (2013) as well as the South African National Gallery (Cape Town, 2010). *Ponte City* won the 2015 Deutsche Borse Photography Prize.

Subotzky's most recent body of work, *Show 'n Tell* was initiated while on residency at the Musée MAC/VAL (Paris, 2013). *Show 'n Tell* looks to the relationship between images, the various instruments of their construction, and both the politics and physiology of their reception. The works in the series use a variety of methods to explore the vicissitudes of perception and how the construction of images relates to the history and vulnerability of both their materiality and their narrative content.

*Pixel Interface*, a multi-component video installation from this body of work was included in *All The World's Futures*, the main exhibition curated by Okwui Enwezor at the 56th Venice Biennale.

*WYE*, Subotzky's first fictional film installation, was commissioned by the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (Sydney) and premiered there in March 2016.

## Solo Exhibitions

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

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\_CCB*, 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 *NYC 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, Jyvaskyla, 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*, T1, 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 Vles Recontres Africaines de la Photographie, Bamako, Mali  
2005 South African National Arts Council Grant  
2005 Goethe Institute Grant

## Academic Record and Residencies

### 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

### 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 Africa

South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

International

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

### 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 Ufieda 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/](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](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/p13s03-1gn.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

2008 *Beaufort West*, Mikhael Subotzky Chris Boot Ltd, London