

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is cast as the central character in a myriad of interweaving narratives that, through photographs, commissioned texts, historical documents, and urban myths, chart the convoluted histories of both the building and Johannesburg itself.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