

Mikhael Subotzky



Biography

Mikhael Subotzky (b. 1981, Cape Town) is a Johannesburg based artist whose 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 2012*, 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is cast as the central character in a myriad of interweaving narratives that, through photographs, commissioned texts, historical documents, and urban myths, chart the convoluted histories of both the building and Johannesburg itself.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) and Lubumbashi (2013) Biennales, as well as the South African National Gallery (Cape Town, 2010). *Ponte City* has won the 2015 Deutsche Borse Photography Prize.

Show 'n Tell was initiated while on residency at the Musée MAC/VAL (Paris, 2013). This body of work looks to the relationship between images, the various instruments of their construction, and both the politics and physiology of their reception. *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. *Yellow Bille* (or *Work in Progress*), his first exhibition of paintings and performance, took place at Maitland Institute in September 2017.

Subotzky's work is collected widely by international institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Solomon R Guggenheim Museum (New York), the National Gallery of Art (Washington), Tate (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the South African National Gallery, among others.

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_*, Fabrica photography, fabrica, 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 *Art Basel*, 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, 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

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/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 Hoeko*, 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