

Michael Najjar | Biography

Michael Najjar (b.1966, Germany) is an internationally renowned artist, explorer, and future astronaut. His multidisciplinary work spans photography, video, digital imaging, sculpture, and writing. He is known for working closely at the intersection of art, science, and technology, engaging in complex and critical ways with the rapid technological developments that are shaping and radically transforming the early 21st century.

As recent innovations increasingly and profoundly influence various dimensions of our lives—often with ambivalent consequences—Najjar's work explores and visualizes potential future social structures shaped by these advancements. His art not only interrogates the impact of cutting-edge technologies but also reflects on the possibilities of a world undergoing profound transformation.

In 1993, Najjar graduated from the Berlin Bildo Academy of New Media Arts, an experimental private art college founded in 1987. The institution placed a strong emphasis on photography, video, and computer technology as forms of artistic expression. The philosophical framework was influenced by revolutionary and visionary thinkers such as Vilém Flusser, Jean Baudrillard, and Paul Virilio.

In a career spanning almost three decades, Najjar has expanded the boundaries of the medium of photography, exploring the potential of the technical image by subjecting it to a constant reconstruction of time and space, and placing the relationship between reality and simulation at the center of his image constructions. His large-format photographic works and immersive videos are generated from a highly complex digital collage of various image and data sources, and unfold their visionary power through both their captivating aesthetics and conceptual profoundness. Najjar creates pictures—some of which have attained iconic status—that think beyond what the eye can see. His comprehensive oeuvre blurs the line between temporalities and spatialities, combining historical references, current technological developments and futuristic projections to create new, ambiguous realities.

Najjar's works are grouped in thematic series that explore topics such as the transformation of global megacities through increasingly dense information networks, the alteration of the human body via biogenetic interventions, the virtualization of financial markets driven by intelligent algorithms, the impact of the latest space technologies on our future in space, and our planetary future amid climate change and geoengineering. Najjar's multidimensional practice often involves cross-disciplinary collaborations with scientists, researchers, and engineers.

The performative aspect has become a fundamental part of Najjar's artistic process. For decades, he has embarked on journeys and expeditions across the globe, with many of his projects originating from fieldwork in remote, liminal, and often difficult-to-access locations. He has climbed seven-thousand-meter peaks, scaled skyscrapers, trekked active volcanoes, crossed glaciers, descended into ice caves, traversed deserts, and undergone intensive astronaut training—with the aim of becoming the first artist to travel into space. To create his images, Najjar exposes his body to extreme conditions, pushing his mental and physical limits within challenging natural or technological environments.

Over the past 30 years, Najjar's work has been featured worldwide in numerous solo and group exhibitions at prestigious institutions, including Academy of Arts, Berlin; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Hamburger Kunsthalle – Gallery of Contemporary Art, Hamburg; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; Marta Museum, Herford; Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg; Kunsthalle München, Munich; Ars Electronica Center, Linz; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Saatchi Gallery, London; Science Museum, London; Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Geneva; Joan Miró Foundation, Barcelona; Fundación La Caixa, Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Málaga; Museo Es Baluard, Palma de Mallorca; Museo DA2 Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca; Fotografiska, Stockholm, Tallinn, Shanghai; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Tampere Art Museum; New Media Art Institute, Amsterdam; GEM Museum of Contemporary Art, The Hague; FORMA International Centre for Photography, Milan; Tuscon Museum of Art, Tucson; Ballroom Marfa; Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; National Museum of Science, Taipei; Jut Art Museum, Taipei; Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; ZheJiang Art Museum, Hangzhou; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing; ArtScience Museum, Singapore; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; 9th Havana Biennale; 7th International Moscow Biennale; 10th Venice Architecture Biennale.

Najjar's works are held in museum, corporate, and private collections around the world. Numerous international publications have been dedicated to his work.