

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 technological 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 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 video installations 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 His comprehensive oeuvre blurs the line between temporalities and spatialities, combining historical references, current technological developments and futuristic projections to create new, ambiguous realities.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 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; Academy of Arts, Berlin; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Ars Electronica Center, Linz; Eikon im Museumsquartier, Vienna; Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich; Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Geneva; Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne; New Media Art Institute, Amsterdam; Kunstmuseum Den Haag, The Hague; Museum Belvédère, Heerenveen; Saatchi Gallery, London; Science Museum, London; 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; FORMA International Centre for Photography, Milan; Gallerie d'Italia, Vicenza; Museo Palazzo del Monte, Padua; Musei San Domenico, Forlì; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; Art Stations Foundation, Poznan; Fotografiska Museum, Stockholm, Fotografiska Museum, Tallinn; Tampere Art Museum; Tampere, Borusan Museum for Contemporary Art, Istanbul; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington; Tuscon Museum of Art, Tucson; Ballroom Marfa, Marfa; Berman Museum of Art, Collegeville; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; ZheJiang Art Museum, Hangzhou; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing; Fotografiska Museum, Shanghai; National Museum of Science, Taipei; Jut Art Museum, Taipei; ArtScience Museum, Singapore; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; 9th Havana Biennale; 7th International Moscow Biennale; 10th Venice Architecture Biennale, 2nd Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, 3rd Meta.Morf Biennale for Art and Technology, Trondheim, 4th Zero1 Biennale, San José, 1st Convergence Biennale, Beijing.

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