Not to Represent, But to Resist: Mohamed Bourouissa Against the Visual Grain

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the evolving role of photographer Mohamed Bourouissa (born 1978) across three of his key photo series, *Périphérique* (2005-2008), *Temps Mort* (2008-2009), and *Shoplifters* (2014), and how these shifts in authorship impact the visual representation of marginalized communities. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines sociology, photography theory, museum studies, and ethics, it shows how Bourouissa positions himself respectively as a director, facilitator, and editor. Rather than aiming for perfect shots, Bourouissa deliberately refuses visual spectacle to highlight the ordinary and everyday presence of his subjects, often racialized and socially excluded groups, and thereby resists dominant representational conventions. His work focuses on visual ambiguity rather than clarity. Drawing on Tina Campt's concept of a 'Black Gaze', this thesis shows how Bourouissa disrupts the viewer's position by denying immediate recognition and forcing critical engagement. In doing so, he reframes photographic authorship as an act of resistance.
Key words: ambiguity; Black Gaze; the role of the photographer; representation; marginalized groups; *banlieue*.

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Introduction

Photography plays a crucial role in shaping how we, the viewers, perceive social groups. Visual representations influence public discourse, reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives about the photographed subjects. This is particularly evident in the photographic depiction of marginalized communities, such as the community in the Parisian *banlieues*. This *banlieue* is a belt of suburban neighborhoods characterized by poverty, violence, and ethnic segregation that originates from the city's urban planning of the nineteenth century. This and other suburban areas, often associated with poverty, crime, and social unrest, are frequently framed in the media through a lens of sensationalism and fear.[1] Photojournalism, in particular, plays a central role in the construction of a visual stereotype of the *banlieue*, as it emphasizes its supposed alienation and disorder.

Against this backdrop, the work of Mohamed Bourouissa (born 1978) offers a compelling counter-narrative. Bourouissa, an Algerian-French photographer based in Paris, challenges prevailing forms of representation by redefining the traditional aesthetics of photojournalism, portraiture, vernacular, and documentary photography. His work has received increasing scholarly and curatorial attention for its critical engagement with the visual representation of the *banlieue* and other marginalized groups. In 2022, Elizabeth Zerofsky, for instance, emphasized in her essay how Bourouissa consciously stages photographic scenes that echo media imagery to give narrative agency to marginalized subjects.[2] More recently, Andy Stafford situated Bourouissa's practice within broader debates on aesthetics and ethics, particularly concerning documentary realism, self-representation, and institutional visual practices.[3] While these studies have shed light on the affective and political implications of specific projects of Bourouissa, they do not provide an analysis of Bourouissa's changing role as a photographer within his photographic series. This thesis addresses that gap by comparatively analyzing three of Bourouissa's series to create a clearer understanding of Bourouissa's shift as a photographer. In contrast to the previous studies, which only focused on a single series, this research proposes a series-intersecting analysis of Bourouissa's work that foregrounds the way of looking across form, context, and authorship. This will be achieved by combining a visual analysis with interdisciplinary literature research, where photography theory and visual studies play a crucial role.

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[1] Angélil and Siress, "The Paris' Banlieue," 62-64.
[2] Zerofsky, "Backstory," 22.
[3] Stafford, "Dead Time," 148-149, 150.

Throughout the thesis, four interconnected analytical perspectives will be applied in each chapter to analyze Bourouissa's photographic projects. First, the photographic genre serves as a structural lens. Each chapter centers on a different genre: documentary photography and photojournalism, vernacular image-making within incarceration, and portraiture and mugshots. All of these genres combined will help in analyzing how Bourouissa manipulates and critically uses these genres to construct alternative meanings. Second, the notion of counter-visuality by Nicholas Mirzoeff and Tina Campt's concept of a 'Black Gaze,' help to explore how Bourouissa challenges dominant ways of looking at Black subjects, whether through ambiguity or recontextualization.[4] Third, framing and representation, drawing on Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, provides insights into how meaning is not inherent in images but constructed, produced and contested through framing techniques and cultural codes.[5] Lastly, this thesis draws on Clive Scott's work on the relationship between text and image, analyzing how titles, captions, or the absence thereof shape the interpretation of the photographic image across all three series.[6] Each chapter presents these perspectives differently, allowing for a cross-referential analysis, rather than treating them separately. Finally, this layered approach enables an examination of how Bourouissa's position as a photographer evolves throughout his photo series and how this influences the way marginalized groups are visually represented and perceived.

The first chapter focuses on *Périphérique* (2005-2008), a photographic series in which Bourouissa stages highly composed scenes with young men from the *banlieue* (fig. 1). Drawing on John Tagg's theory of documentary photography as a practice embedded in institutional power structures, David Bate's analysis of narrative framing in documentary images, Abigail Solomon-Godeau's critique of photography's constructed meanings, and Susan Sontag's argument on how intentions and viewer perception frame each photograph, the chapter examines how Bourouissa positions himself as a photographic director to construct a counter-visuality of the *banlieue*, and how this influences the way marginalized subjects are perceived.[7] Central to this is the concept of mock documentary, as defined by Cate Blouke,[8] which helps to understand how Bourouissa blurs the lines between fiction and documentary to destabilize visual stereotypes of the *banlieue*. In addition, the chapter

[4] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 1-24; Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," 226-229.
[5] Hall, *Representation*, 90-103.
[6] Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 46-74.
[7] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 1-9; Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts*, 70-71; Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the dock*, 176, 180, 188; Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 10-11, 18-39.
[8] Blouke, "Borat, Sacha Baron Cohen," 4-17.

addresses his strategy of deliberate captionlessness, which shifts the burden of interpretation to the viewer.

The second chapter turns to *Temps Mort* (2008-2009), a collaborative project based on image and text exchanges between Bourouissa and two incarcerated individuals via mobile phones (fig. 2). The resulting visual material, low-resolution, blurred, domestic images and videos, defies dominant conventions of visibility by offering an insider's view into everyday prison life. *Temps Mort* aligns closely with vernacular photography produced under restrictions, characterized by intimate, situational images created within a confined environment, but also with photography therapy-related 'photovoice.' Moreover, art critic and academic Nicole Fleetwood introduces the concept of 'carceral intimacy' to describe the emotional and relational ties sustained behind prison walls. This idea proves particularly relevant when analyzing *Temps Mort*.[9] This chapter explores how the collaborative authorial position affects how prisoners are portrayed and perceived visually. Campt's 'Black Gaze' offers a key lens here.[10] At the same time, this project also raises ethical questions about agency and authorship, as there is a tension between the incarcerated individuals and Bourouissa's delegated performance. This conception also ties in with Hall's theory on negotiated representation and how viewers might decode these images as non-institutional yet still mediated through Bourouissa's curatorial choices.

The third chapter focuses on *Shoplifters* (2014), a series comprised of 20 color frontal photographs of individuals apprehended for theft, which were on display in a supermarket in Brooklyn, New York (fig. 3). When visiting New York, Bourouissa rephotographed these images, inspired by their simple yet powerful visuality, and later presented them in gallery spaces, stripped of identifying information, with only a date and no names. This chapter examines how Bourouissa, in *Shoplifters*, repositions himself from image-maker to critical editor, and how this shift in authorship transforms the viewer's encounter with visual control and representation. Allan Sekula's classic analysis of the mugshot as part of a regime of identification will ground this discussion.[11] Campt's 'Black Gaze' resurfaces as a lens to examine how recontextualization creates room for alternative readings of criminalized subjects.[12] Besides, Azoulay's theory of the civil contract of photography helps to evaluate the

[9] Fleetwood, "Posing in Prison," 487-490.
[10] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 7-11.
[11] Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 6-2.
[12] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 15-17.

ethical consequences of exhibiting found imagery of vulnerable subjects, whose consent is absent.

Taken together, these three chapters analyze how Mohamed Bourouissa's role as a photographer evolved throughout these three series and how this influences the way marginalized groups are visually represented and perceived by viewers.

Chapter 1. Reframing the *Banlieue*: Mohamed Bourouissa's counter-images in *Périphérique*

In his breakthrough series *Périphérique* (2005-2008), Mohamed Bourouissa positions himself not as a passive observer and capturer, but as a director who actively and strategically stages and manipulates scenes of life in the *banlieues* of Paris. By composing images that seem to mimic the aesthetics of documentary photography and photojournalism, he intervenes in the visual regimes through which marginalized communities are typically portrayed. Bourouissa's work, therefore, opens a space for counter-visuality in the Parisian *banlieues*. This chapter examines how Bourouissa positions himself as a photographic director to construct a counter-visuality of the *banlieue*, and how his work influences the way marginalized subjects are perceived.

To unpack this issue, this chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, not only will Bourouissa's artistic practice be contextualized, providing a more detailed insight into his creative process and background, but also the visuality of *Périphérique*. The second part examines the structured nature of documentary photography, which is made visible in *Périphérique*, and how photojournalism frames the *banlieue* as a symbolic site of disorder, crime, poverty, and social exclusion. Lastly, section three will offer an analysis of how Bourouissa strategically appropriates, distorts, and thereby critiques photographic conventions within *Périphérique*, employing photography theories such as a 'Black Gaze' by Campt, 'mock documentary' by Blouke, and insights from Hall, Sontag, and Mirzoeff on counter-visuality and the influence of textual context.

§1.1: Mohamed Bourouissa as an artist-photographer

Mohamed Bourouissa was born in Blida, Algeria, in 1978 and currently lives and works in Paris. He attended the Sorbonne in Paris to study art history and the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris to study photography.[13] His style of photography, which frequently blends parts of painterly composition with socio-political critique, was influenced by his dual training in theoretical and practical visual studies. *Nous Sommes Halles* (2003-2005) was his first photographic project, where he collaborated with Parisian photographer Anoushka Shoot (born 1979) and chronicled the self-representation and fashion of young people in Paris' Châtelet-Les Halles neighborhood (fig. 4, 5). Youth identity and

[13] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."

visual expression in public spaces were the series' main themes,[14] which are also themes that returned more theatrically in his breakthrough series *Périphérique*.

Since the early 2000s, Bourouissa has developed a practice where he uses photography, film, drawing, installation, and performance to challenge and dismantle stereotypes about marginalized groups, particularly in urban contexts such as the Parisian *banlieues*.[15] Bourouissa began by exploring and challenging the way media and institutional representations create social realities, working against the grain of spontaneous street photography. He deliberately challenges established visual norms through staging within his photographs, which mostly mimicked documentary realism.[16] This method marks a deliberate break from the supposed realism of documenting photography. Rather than photographing spontaneous meetings or riots in the street, he scouted locations in the *banlieue* and invited local residents, often his friends, to participate in staged shoots. This deposition is exemplified by his photograph *La fenêtre*, a photograph that is part of *Périphérique*, which Bourouissa himself describes as the first image he consciously composed to encapsulate the tension between context, reality, and an artistic viewpoint (fig. 6).[17] It marks the beginning of his deliberate engagement with staging and framing as tools for critical representation.

Périphérique thus exemplifies this approach. Comprising around 25 photographs, the series features highly staged scenes set in the *banlieues* of Paris. According to Elizabeth Zerofsky, Bourouissa would carefully prepare these scenarios, engaging with his subjects instead of just watching them from a distance. He would prepare his images like film stills: casting participants, choosing settings, and directing gestures.[18] In doing so, Bourouissa's deliberate aesthetic choices become crucial. Bourouissa was interested in basing his photographs on the traditions of classical French historical painting.[19] In principle, therefore, this should manifest itself in his photographs as an equal photo composition in which he had used a painting, in the case of *La République* (fig. 7), *Liberté Guident Le Peuple* by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) (fig. 8), as a starting point. However, this is not completely the case. Although Bourouissa does allow parts to recur from Delacroix's painting, such as the French flag, the lighting, and a central figure, he deliberately does not show these parts in the same way. For example, Bourouissa has used the light that falls exactly behind Marianne's head in

[14] Noor, "Beauty and Uprising in the Working-Class Suburbs of Paris."
[15] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."
[16] BLUM Gallery, "Mohamed Bourouissa."; Kamel Mennour, "Mohamed Bourouissa."
[17] Ocula Magazine, "Mohamed Bourouissa Won't Take a Single Position."
[18] Zerofsky, "Backstory," 21-22.
[19] Ibid.

Delacroix's painting, which is exactly the point of escalation, differently in his photograph. People are cut off on both sides of the picture, the French flag falls in darkness, the bright light on the right side of the picture seems to be the most important, but does not actually expose anything. In addition, a question arises of who in *La République* is the central figure and whether it is as important as Marianne. This is probably also not the case. If this photograph is then composed, like all the other photographs in the *Périphérique* series, it would not have been so difficult for Bourouissa to make sure that the central figure had been positioned differently, to make the flag fly properly, and to direct the light properly to make it more meaningful as in Delacroix's painting. However, Bourouissa has done this with care; it is done deliberately not to conform to the classical compositional rules of this nineteenth-century painting. Since it goes against these compositional rules, such as a clear focus and cohesion, as a viewer, you would not expect this series to be composed and staged.

Périphérique began, according to Zerofsky, as an attempt to document the fashion presence of Bourouissa's peers in art school, as a follow-up on *Nous Sommes Halles*: young men from the *banlieue*, whose brightly colored tracksuits contrast sharply with the formal dress codes of inner-city Paris youth.[20] However, Bourouissa's idea of the project shifted from spontaneous images to carefully staged scenes in the wake of the 2005 uprisings in Paris, which were sparked by the murders of two teenagers as they escaped the police in Clichy-sous-Bois, a *banlieue* of Paris. According to Christina Horvath, these incidents were largely dismissed as apolitical riots rather than legitimate forms of protest.[21] Nevertheless, these riots reflected deep frustrations over police brutality, racial discrimination, and blocked social mobility among suburban youth of immigrant descent.[22] In response, Bourouissa embedded this emotional and spatial tension on the streets into staged photographs: to counter these upcoming stereotypes through gestures, gazes, and group formations. These photographs were not taken in a studio but on location in the *banlieue*, often in semi-public urban environments, such as rooftops or stairwells (figs. 9, 10). It remains unclear whether postproduction was involved, though the scenes do not appear to be digitally manipulated. Moreover, Bourouissa primarily uses digital photography in all his work, as seen, for example, in *Périphérique*, where the images are presented as C-type digital prints. Still, his first series, *Nous Sommes Halles,* as it was shot with a 24x36 mm Pentax camera, was likely analog.[23]

[20] Zerofsky, "Backstory," 21.
[21] Horvath, "Riots or revolts?," 194.
[22] Ibid., 195-196.
[23] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."

Bourouissa's extensive international exhibition record confirms the critical recognition of the relevance of his work. His projects have featured prominently in significant institutions and exhibitions, including the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and the Liverpool Biennial (2018).[24] Bourouissa regularly combines photography with film, installation, and performance, which enables him to approach visual representation from a variety of perspectives. For example, his project *Brutal Family Roots* (2020), which explored individual and community memory connected to postcolonial histories between Algeria and France, was made for the Biennale of Sydney (2020) and expanded into sculpture, sound, and installation (fig. 11).[25] Moreover, some of his projects have a strong foundation in direct community involvement and cooperation. An example of this is *Horse Day* (2013-2017), in which Bourouissa collaborated with Black horse riders in Philadelphia to reflect on how cowboys are represented in American cinema and to restage the iconography of the cowboy (fig. 12). This project was also a compilation of different media, such as photographs, drawings, and sculptures.[26] Bourouissa's most recent solo exhibitions, *SIGNAL* at Palais de Tokyo (2024) and *Communautés. Projets 2005-2025* at Fondazione Mast (2025) further exemplify how he currently still continuously explores and critiques institutional power structures (figs. 13, 14). In these exhibitions, he shows a comprehensive overview of his practice through multimedia installations and interactive performances.[27] Through all of these diverse yet interrelated strategies, Bourouissa exposes with his work how photographic and institutional traditional conventions reinforce existing social hierarchies.

§1.2: From visual spectacle to representation of the ordinary

1.2.1 Countering dominant media imagery

For a long time, photojournalism and documentary photography, each in their own way, have contributed to shaping dominant visual codes of marginality. Whereas photojournalism relies on standardized visual formulas to provide immediate, schematic recognition of recent events,[28] documentary photography engages with its topic over time, frequently challenging

[24] He has solo-exhibited at institutions like Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London (2021), Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2021), and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016). Besides, his work is also represented in other public collections worldwide, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kamel Mennour, "Mohamed Bourouissa."; Universes in Universe, "Venice Biennale 2011."; Liverpool Biennial, "Artist: Mohamed Bourouissa."
[25] BLUM Gallery, "Mohamed Bourouissa."; Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."
[26] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."; Ocula Magazine, "Mohamed Bourouissa Won't Take a Single Position."
[27] BLUM Gallery News, "Mohamed Bourouissa: Signal."; Fondazione Mast, "Mohamed Bourouissa Communautés."
[28] Mendelson, "Effects of Novelty in News Photographs," 120; Time-Life Books, *Photojournalism*, 12-14.

the fundamental idea of visual truth and objectivity. According to Andrew Mendelson, photojournalism often employs conventions such as repetition, available light, naturalistic composition, spontaneous framing, and minimal context, aiming to create an impression of immediacy and objectivity.[29] Documentary photography is more about depicting the real world with the intent to communicate something of importance and visually representing a moment filled with meaning.[30] However, when considering how these photography techniques shape the viewer's perception, especially concerning marginalized groups, it becomes clear that the idea of neutrality is deeply constructed through specific visual choices. The *banlieues* of Paris have often been portrayed in documentary and photojournalism as symbols of ethnic segregation, poverty, and violence.[31] Images of burning cars, masked youth, and riot police engaged in confrontation were extensively made visible by worldwide media during the 2005 uprisings in these *banlieues*. Photographs from *The Guardian* (fig. 15), BBC (fig. 16), and *Le Monde* (fig. 17) frequently depicted the *banlieues* as chaotic and destroyed.[32] This has led to reinforcing narratives of social alienation, urban violence, and other stereotypes that still shape public perception of these areas.[33]

While documentary images traditionally claim objectivity, David Bate argues that the photographer's choices are subjective, such as the framing, composition, and contextualization. This results in specific narratives and ideological meanings, indicating that these photographs are constructions rather than mere depictions of reality.[34] Since documentary photography focuses on telling stories that engage viewers emotionally and intellectually, such constructed realities significantly affect viewers' perceptions and their understanding and interpretations of the depicted reality.[35] This also aligns with Abigail Solomon-Godeau, who argues that instead of objectively documenting reality, documentary-style aesthetics, such as selective framing and dramatic lighting, reinforce existing social prejudices by presenting marginalized groups through stereotypical visual codes.[36] Documentary photography pretends to depict the truth, but can in fact also be constructed and manipulated. So what documentary photography appears at first glance, *Périphérique*

[29] Mendelson, "Effects of Novelty in News Photographs," 119-120; Time-Life Books, *Photojournalism*, 12-14; Time-Life Books, *Documentary photography*, 12-15.
[30] Time-Life Books, *Documentary photography*, 12-15; Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the dock*, 169.
[31] Angélil and Siress, "The Paris' banlieue," 57-59.
[32] BBC News, "French police to go on trial for 2005 Paris riot deaths."; Le Monde, "In 2005, three weeks of rioting shook France after the deaths of two teenagers."; The Guardian, "Protesters clash with police during 2005 French riots."
[33] Angélil and Siress, "The Paris' banlieue," 57-59.
[34] Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts*, 64, 70-71.
[35] Ibid., 76-77.
[36] Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the dock*, 169-171.

responds to. Precisely through manipulating and constructing, Bourouissa confirms with this series what Bate and Solomon-Godeau argue. He visually demonstrates how documentary photography is not always reality, but can therefore be constructed.

Moreover, this direction connects directly to Winfried Fluck's notion of "aesthetic objectivism", which exposes the similar core contradiction within documentary photography that Bate and Solomon-Godeau described: while offering objective representations, it often also relies on aesthetic strategies, such as composition, framing, and staged moments, that aestheticize topics such as social suffering.[37] Fluck argues that by emphasizing visual beauty, composition, lighting, and balance, photographers risk turning poverty and marginalization into "aesthetic subjects," prioritizing visual pleasure over the ethical, which undermines the presumed directness and impartiality of documentary photography.[38] This makes Fluck's critique especially relevant to the visual portrayal of the *banlieues*. In the *banlieue*, aestheticized representations of unrest, such as images of masked youth or heavily armed police, serve as spectacles of threat (figs. 15, 16, 17). Rather than encouraging understanding of the inequalities behind such tensions, these images reduce complex realities to emotionally charged scenes that affirm existing stereotypes.

In *Périphérique*, Bourouissa complicates the viewer's perception of the images as he does not provide one obvious narrative. Instead, by providing ambiguous moments through simple and non-aesthetically staged scenes, he compels viewers to acknowledge the constructedness of the image and to engage critically with the visual codes through which the *banlieue* is represented. When talking about staged photographs, Jeff Wall (born 1946) is a significant example. It is, therefore, interesting to have a small comparison between Bourouissa and Wall. Whereas Wall frequently stages moments of everyday incidents in a tight, ordered, precisely placed, and measured way, as seen on *Milk* (fig. 18), [39] Bourouissa's photographs are exactly not like that; he cuts people off along the sides of the photographs and uses light in a non-aesthetic way.

So, while Wall's photos are perfectly staged and aligned, Bourouissa goes to great lengths to stage a 'bad' photo. He does not seem to have any ambition in making a 'winning' or 'best photo, which is the case for photojournalists and winning the World Press Photo. Such journalists want to make a perfect photo with the most powerful visual statement without manipulating or staging. But because Bourouissa visually shows how the idea of a

[37] Fluck, "Poor like Us," 82-83.
[38] Ibid., 90-91.
[39] Edwards, "Jeff Wall," 3-4.

visual truth and objectivity is challenged, he makes a powerful visual statement of his own that includes the entire perception of the marginalized group depicted. If we look back at *La République*, he does not want to portray the people as a kind of heroes from the *banlieue* in the tradition of nineteenth-century painting, as he consciously sets himself against it. There is no center, no story, no spectacle, no composition, and as a viewer, you do not know where to look. Bourouissa makes an effort here not to make a good, iconic, 'winning' photo: he goes against the grain. However, it is not surprising that Bourouissa is not interested in portraying the 'perfect,' since taking 'bad' photos nowadays fits in with the reaction to the traditions of modernism: postmodernism. [40] Artists are opposed to the 'perfect' of Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), and consciously make use of disruption, distortion, and failure. Due to this, a viewer becomes aware of the medium and that he is not looking at reality.

1.2.2 Ingeniously 'bad' visualities

So, by depicting the inhabitants of the *banlieue* in a way that is not spectacular, Bourouissa goes against the grain of their usual imagery. In this way, the photos show the 'ordinary' of these inhabitants: something that, as previously shown, was neglected by the media. At the core of the framing of the *banlieue* as a symbol of ethic segregation, poverty, and violence is a visual discourse that prioritizes sensationalism, often simplifying complicated social realities into easily digestible depictions of unrest and disorder.[41] These visual narratives of the *banlieues* have their origin in the historical patterns of urban planning in nineteenth-century Paris when Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809-1891) restructured the city. This led to distinct spatial segregation that pushed the working class from Paris' center towards its outskirts, creating socioeconomic divisions. These divides were further solidified by the development of mass-produced, low-quality public housing intended for North African migrants, resulting in isolated zones of concentrated poverty. New neoliberal economic policies heightened marginality, pushing residents of these *banlieues* into chronic social exclusion and economic vulnerability.[42]

Nicholas Mirzoeff's theory of visuality connects to this, as he posits that visuality functions through classification, separation, and aestheticization, historically serving as a technique of social control.[43] According to Mirzoeff, visuality has always been used to uphold

[40] Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," 91.
[41] Angélil and Siress, "The Paris' banlieue," 61-63.
[42] Ibid., 57-62.
[43] Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," 213.

power structures by classifying and marginalizing particular groups and communities, reinforcing social hierarchies and thus automatically excluding them. When we apply this to the representations of the *banlieue*, this suggests that photojournalism is not merely a reflection of social division, but rather one of its producers. Drawing on Mirzoeff, the *banlieue* becomes a space of exclusion through its portrayal, classifying its residents as 'the other' and separating them from normative French society.[44] Bourouissa's work directly intervenes in this system by refusing to participate in its visual logic.

To disrupt these dominant codes, Bourouissa adopts a strategy that could be described as 'ingeniously bad' photography, as he intentionally subverts the aesthetic methods of classical painting and photojournalism. Instead of using specific visual strategies, such as dramatic composition, balanced lighting, and centrally placed figures, as seen in Delacroix's painting (fig. 8), which were traditionally used to glorify the subjects in historical paintings and heroic imagery, he constructs his images that appear awkward, overexposed, and compositionally off-balance. Despite referencing the formal beauty of heroic imagery, such as Delacroix's painting, the destabilizes the visual language. He borrows the aesthetic codes of historical painting but denies their function of glorification, creating a tension and ambiguity between form and context. As I will explore in the next section, such ambiguity complicates the viewer's position and challenges how we are accustomed to seeing the *banlieue*.

§1.3: Ambiguity, captionlessness, and the politics of viewing

1.3.1 Mock documentary and visual ambiguity

In *Périphérique*, Bourouissa plays a subtle yet effective tactic, as he constructs carefully staged scenes that closely resemble spontaneous documentary images. What emerges is something that Cate Blouke calls a 'mock documentary.'[45] Like a mockumentary in film, which imitates the style of a real documentary while being fictional, Bourouissa's photographs appear to be documentary images, but are carefully staged. A mock documentary blurs the lines between fact and fiction, revealing how easily viewers can take staged performances for reality.[46] This creates an opportunity for viewers to reflect not just on what is depicted as reality, but on why they want to accept it as such.[47] Similarly, Bourouissa's photographs not only explore the idea that photography always depicts reality, but also

[44] Ibid., 226-229.
[45] Blouke, "Borat, Sacha Baron Cohen," 4-17.
[46] Ibid., 14-15.
[47] Ibid., 15-16.

highlight how heavily such realism depends on particular visual codes. A central aspect of this approach is the deliberate focus on the 'ordinary' in Bourouissa's work. In contrast to the dominant spectacular media portrayals of the *banlieue*, *Périphérique* depicts mundane scenes: people like any of us, who lead a 'normal' life and also stand and chat on rooftops, walk up and down a stairwell, and film one another with mobile phones (figs. 9, 10, 19). By intentionally subverting the expected narrative of danger and rebellion, these ordinary situations invite viewers to rethink their preconceived views.

The use of 'ordinary' imagery and intentional ambiguity is intricately linked with, as discussed earlier, the 'ingeniously bad' visuality of the photos. Often, mock documentaries deliberately adopt amateurish aesthetics, mimicking the style of an untrained, vernacular, or amateur creator rather than a trained professional.[48] Bourouissa similarly chooses to neglect conventional compositional rules, such as the off-center framing, uneven lighting, and unclear focal points, to mimic the aesthetics of vernacular photography. By intentionally embracing visual qualities that might initially seem imprecise, unbalanced, and even clumsy, Bourouissa's work disrupts aesthetic expectations, such as the stereotypes of the *banlieue*. An example of this can be seen in *La morsure*, where what appears to be a spontaneous moment of a dog attacking a man is, in fact, a staged enactment (fig. 20). Besides, there is no clear composition in the image, as well as there is no proper use of lighting, and a man has been cut off. The result is a visual ambiguity that highlights how easily perceived realism can be manufactured.

This approach directly ties into Campt's concept of a 'Black Gaze.' According to Campt, visual culture has long positioned Black and racialized subjects as outsiders to the dominant (white) gaze.[49] In Bourouissa's work, this relation is reversed: it is now the white viewer who suddenly becomes disoriented. Faced with ordinary yet unfamiliar imagery that refuses to confirm the stereotypes they may expect, white viewers may struggle to recognize what they are seeing. The depicted figures are no longer legible as either victims or threats: they are ambiguous, autonomous, and resistant to easy categorization, which causes a kind of viewing discomfort for the white viewer; a gaze that makes room for ambiguity rather than demanding visibility on dominant terms.

This ambiguity also extends to Bourouissa's exhibition practice. The display of *Périphérique* as a grid of photographs (fig. 1), with no obvious hierarchy or narrative sequence, deprives the viewer of a linear reading. This arrangement offers fragments rather

[48] Ibid., 16.
[49] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 37-39.

than a cohesive story. Even though each image in *Périphérique* depicts a distinct situation, the series as a whole defies the creation of a logical, linear narrative. No obvious chronological or thematic development guides the viewer from one image to the next. Rather than offering a single unified story, as seen in classical historical paintings that depict collective action or revolution, *Périphérique* presents visual fragments: powerful, staged moments that do not need to be combined as a whole. While there is no cohesive narrative, the message that Bourouissa wants to bring across is clear: the images are all structured in an 'ordinary' way, where the *banlieue* inhabitants are depicted in a non-violent, mundane setting.

In this way, *Périphérique* does not offer a counter-narrative, but a counter-method of seeing. Its mock-documentary techniques, 'ingeniously bad' visuality, and fragmentary structure place the (white) viewer in an unstable position. The familiar becomes unfamiliar. Bourouissa's work rejects both victimhood and glorification by opening up a reflective space in which the viewers are confronted with their visual assumptions of the *banlieue*. Compared to artists like Wall, Bourouissa embraces imperfection and ambiguity as deliberate tools. In doing so, he not only questions how marginalized groups, such as the *banlieue,* are represented, but also how representation itself functions as a mode of power.

1.3.2 The responsibility of the viewer through captionlessness

The minimal use of captions in *Périphérique* reinforces this ambiguity, further withholding interpretation and therefore creating another fundamental aspect of his visual strategy. To begin with, the title of the series, *Périphérique*, is context in itself. The word *périphérique*, which translates to the "periphery," already has associations for the viewers. The periphery revolves around the poorer place that lies outside the richer power center of a city. Because he gives this title to his series, it indicates that Bourouissa thought it was important to show where his photos were taken in the world. In this way, Bourouissa indirectly steers the viewer in a certain direction while looking at these photos.

Besides, along with the photos, he does not give much textual framing, as he provides no more than just a title of an object as a caption with every photograph. This intentional choice creates a representational blur as it is no longer clear how the subjects should be or want to be represented. For example, the subjects in *La République* could be freedom fighters, who are protesting against the dictating government, while they could also be protesters who want to cause trouble. This is the same for photojournalism, where, for example, in 2016,

French protesters against the proposed reforms of the labor law had been depicted (fig. 21).[50] Are they just protesting, or do they want to cause more riots? Still, this both mirrors and challenges the visual consumption of *banlieue* imagery in the media. The result is images that produce interpretative uncertainty, forcing the viewer to actively work out the image's meaning while also being led towards their assumptions about the *banlieue*.

As Stuart Hall explains, interpretative texts such as captions, labels, or contextual framing, guide the viewer towards an understanding and meanings, encoding meaning while appearing only to decode it.[51] The absence of explanatory text, Hall argues, functions as an inherent element of the artwork, in this case, the photograph, underscoring the instability of meaning and the viewer's active role in interpreting it. In the next chapter, Hall's theory of preferred reading will be further developed concerning broader questions of representation, as part of the analysis of Bourouissa's series *Temps Mort*.

This strategy is evident in *La chaise*, where two guys sit in what appears to be a cafeteria or canteen, one of them sideways on a plastic chair, half-turned toward the camera (fig. 22). Around them, two standing men seem to be talking or having an argument, suggested by the falling chair in the bottom-left corner, as one man is probably standing up in the heat of the moment. The absence of an explanatory caption, limited to the single word 'the chair', a translation of *La chaise*, serves to highlight the most ordinary object in the image, yet ignores the subject. What is the viewer meant to notice? The absence of direction creates confusion, as there is no 'preferred reading' offered.

Besides, Susan Sontag deepens Hall's critiques by emphasizing ethical dimensions within photography. She argues that photographic images are always contextual and not self-explanatory; images heavily rely on external framing, such as captions and narratives, to convey their meaning.[52] This context-dependent nature illustrates how photography is vulnerable to ideological manipulation, which can alter viewers' perspectives and possibly exploit individuals by employing visual tactics that, in turn, aestheticize violence or misery. This connects to Bourouissa's choice of the series title, as it thus steers viewers in a certain direction. However, Bourouissa's lack of explanatory captions in *Périphérique*, offering only minimal titles such as *Le téléphone* or *La chaise*, can be seen as a direct challenge to this style. Therefore, Sontag argues that photographs must be accompanied by thoughtful consideration, context, and a critical stance, as the significance of documentary images can

[50] NU.nl, "Fransen massaal de straat op voor protest tegen nieuwe arbeidswet."
[51] Hall, *Representation*, 132-33.
[52] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 10, 29.

contribute to a culture of spectatorship and emotional distancing.[53] Still, in this case, the message of the photos must give some information to the viewer, because it would otherwise be interpreted in a different, non-connected way.

Bourouissa's strategy of object-related captions also connects to what Mirzoeff calls 'counter-visuality,' which is not just about showing new images, but more about changing the way we see and talk about people who are frequently excluded or misrepresented. According to him, creating a space that can link the visible and the sayable is the key.[54] With this, Mirzoeff argues that opposing dominant visual regimes demands not just producing new images, but also encouraging various discourses and interpretations of them. That is precisely what Bourouissa does in *Périphérique*. He does not attempt to tell a new story about the *banlieue*. Instead, he creates room for his subjects to be seen differently; at times through silent presence, as in *Le toit* or *Le couloir*, other moments through theatrical or symbolic action, as in *La République*, but as a whole through depicting the ordinary and mundane life of the *banlieue*. Still, the viewer must put in the effort to see this, as the image does not speak for itself.

By using these layered strategies, Bourouissa frames himself as a visual orchestrator who analyzes and reorganizes the representational codes that influence public opinion, in addition to being a photographer. He exposes the *banlieue* through photography as a contested site of power, ambiguity, and authorship by depicting the ordinary by shifting the burden of meaning of what the *banlieue* is and should look like onto the viewer rather than claiming narrative control.

In *Périphérique*, Bourouissa deliberately refuses to make a 'good', iconic, or winning photo. Instead, he embraces visual ambiguity, awkward compositions, and everyday scenes to dismantle the dominant visual codes through which the *banlieue* is typically seen. His images have no central point, no spectacle, and no narrative arc. This anti-iconic strategy challenges the visual language of photojournalism and historical painting alike, not by offering heroic counter-images, but by showing the *banlieue* as a place of ordinary life.

In doing so, Bourouissa repositions the viewer, especially the white viewer, as the outsider, destabilizing their expectations of what a photo of the *banlieue* should be and depict. His use of 'bad' visuality and minimal captions creates discomfort, forcing viewers to confront how their own gaze is shaped. The power of *Périphérique* lies not in clarity or

[53] Ibid., 97-99.
[54] Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," 226.

resolution, but in its refusal to satisfy visual norms. It is precisely this disruption, this act of going against the grain, that redefines photography as a tool of critical reflection rather than representation or documentation. Through this, Bourouissa's role shifts from documentarian to director, which allows him to reinterpret visibility itself, redefining and showing the *banlieue* as a space where the inhabitants are just like you and me, and live a 'normal', casual life, instead of the expected, spectacular chaos.

Chapter 2. Reframing Incarceration Through Carceral Photovoice: shared authorship and counter-visuality in *Temps Mort*

Temps Mort (2008-2009) is a collaborative project by Mohamed Bourouissa, created through 300 text and image exchanges (SMS and MMS) with two incarcerated individuals via mobile phones (fig. 2). The resulting material, low-resolution short videos and intimate images of everyday actions such as training, eating, and relaxing, provides a look into prison life that is far different from the dominant aesthetics of surveillance. Rather than reinforcing carceral stereotypes, it presents a perspective from within the slow, intimate time of incarceration. The project was also published as a photobook, in which a selection of the exchanged texts and images is presented.

Andy Stafford has written extensively on *Temps Mort*, examining its poetic architecture of absence and fragmentation as well as its collectivist form.[55] While Stafford primarily focuses on the interaction between text and image, this chapter builds on highlighting the changing dynamics of photographic authorship and the politics of representation. It investigates how *Temps Mort* shifts Bourouissa's role as photographer within a process of delegated performance. It explores how this change in authorial position affects how prisoners are visually portrayed and perceived, as well as how shared authorship gives rise to new kinds of agency.

To unpack these questions, the first section analyzes how visual meaning is constructed and interpreted, expanding on Stafford's insights and drawing on 'carceral intimacy' by Fleetwood and the civil contract and civil gaze by Azoulay. The second section shifts to the conditions of image production and shared authorship, drawing on Pienimäki, Bishop, Hall, and Annang et al., to analyze the roles of participative frameworks, carceral photovoice, and delegated performance. Throughout, Campt's notion of a 'Black Gaze' guides the analysis, offering a lens to theorize forms of silent resistance and different ways of looking through an insider/outsider perspective.

§2.1: Vernacular visibility and counter-gaze

2.1.1 Challenging carceral visibility through vernacular photography

Temps Mort consists of 21 photographs selected from over 300 SMS and MMS exchanges between Mohamed Bourouissa and two incarcerated acquaintances. Bourouissa was primarily

[55] Stafford, "Dead Time," 149, 151-153.

in contact with his inmate friend Al, but when he was released from prison, another acquaintance also helped. For eight months, Bourouissa and Al exchanged hundreds of text messages and photos on their cell phones, via SMS and MMS. These exchanges included both images and short, typically no more than a few words, often practical SMS messages. In one, for example, Bourouissa instructs Al to take pictures from sunrise till night time: "A partir du levee du soleil jusqu'a la nui. Merci jespere ke je tant demande pas tro. merci encore frero" (fig. 23).[56] Such minimal instructions shape the framing of the resulting photographs and contribute to the collaborative texture of the project. As most of the time, taking photographs in prisons is forbidden,[57] this informal exchange benefits from operating in a space of visual restriction. The end product is a visual language influenced by cooperation, improvisation, dialogue, and trust.

Temps Mort was also expanded into a short film in 2009, featuring moving MMS images sent by Al and Bourouissa. In 2014, the series was published as a photobook in which the SMS messages and MMS photographs appear in chronological order, starting from January to September 2007. In contrast to the photobook, the video highlights Bourouissa and Al's relationship and gives Al more freedom by including traces of direct interaction.[58] However, the project's central component, the original photobook, which consists of a large portion of exchanged images and some text messages, represents a change in Bourouissa's authorship: from staging scenes in *Périphérique* to enabling delegated image-making from within incarceration. Andy Stafford characterizes this book as a 'collectivist photobook': an example of carceral image-making based on shared agency and collaborative authorship.[59] Rather than relying on institutional and bureaucratic image-making, such as official identity photos, *Temps Mort* as a project constructs a vernacular visuality from within prison. The project, therefore, bears a resemblance to photovoice practices, in which individuals document their lived experience through photography.[60] This indicates a material as well as a visual intervention, challenging and expanding the boundaries of what can be published, seen, and circulated from within prison.

This internal carceral perspective allows Bourouissa to challenge the dominant visual conventions through which incarceration is typically represented, namely those shaped by institutional control, such as mugshots, a subject that the next chapter will discuss. *Temps*

[56] Translation: "from sunrise til nite time. Thanks hope I'm not asking 4 too much. Thx again bro."
[57] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 369; Jewkes, "Aesthetics and An-aesthetics," 34.
[58] Stafford, "Dead Time," 148.
[59] Ibid., 147, 149-151.
[60] Annang, Wilson, Tinago et al., "Photovoice: Assessing the Long-Term Impact," 241.

Mort, by contrast, focuses on fragmented moments of everyday life created outside of this control: bunk beds, a radio, or prisoners glancing at the outside world (figs. 24, 25, 26). These images do not aestheticize incarceration, but instead emphasize presence and the ordinary without any spectacle, as also seen in *Périphérique*. They align, therefore, with vernacular photography, which is defined as the everyday photographic practices that capture the ordinary or mundane life, often outside the frameworks of art and journalism.[61] While often excluded from artistic frameworks, vernacular photography encourages viewer interpretation by withholding any explanatory codes, as they are not focused on being a 'good', context-giving photograph.[62] *Temps Mort* adopts this vernacular style to portray prison life as experienced and mundane rather than forced or externally framed. This provides what Michelle Brown calls 'counter-images': not offering a comprehensive inside view, but operating outside the codes of institutional control.[63] These counter-images not only challenge dominant stereotypes, but also open space for more emotive forms of incarcerated life.

An interesting perspective on this is the concept of 'carceral intimacy.' According to Nicole Fleetwood, this is the emotional labor that sustains social ties during imprisonment.[64] Although Fleetwood does not write about Bourouissa's project specifically, she offers a valuable framework on how incarcerated individuals maintain emotional and social connections as a means of care and connection through everyday gestures, such as letter writing, photo exchanges, and phone calls.[65] Similarly, the repeated, every day, and emotionally charged actions that characterize prison life are visible within *Temps Mort*, such as lying on a bed, training, and gazing through the fence at the outside world. This displaces the prevailing stereotypes in the media that portray prisoners, particularly colored men from the *banlieues*, as either dangerous or even nonexistent. The series thus avoids dramatic staging and spectacle, and opens up to the 'ordinary' inside a prison. Still, while the images, separately but also as a whole, do not always visibly identify their setting as a prison, as some images could at first glance be interpreted as depicting life in a student dormitory or refugee shelter, the absence of any spectacle and the material constraints signal an environment of restriction. While this spatial ambiguity makes it difficult to identify right away, it also encourages viewers to think about the similarities between a carceral space and other household settings, and that these two do not differ that much.

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[61] Campt et al., *Imagining Everyday Life*, 24-30, 34-35.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Brown, "Visual Criminology," 183.
[64] Fleetwood, "Posing in Prison," 491, 501-502.
[65] Ibid., 501-502.

Moreover, when thinking of the wider context of how visual culture engages with incarceration, the distinctiveness of *Temps Mort* lies not in a more complete representation of prison life, but more in wanting to show that an incarcerated life is thus not that much different from an 'ordinary' life in the outside world. Rather than treating the prison cell as a space of disappearance, where life unfolds beyond public view and where photography is usually restricted, *Temps Mort* reimagines it through carceral intimacy, as a site of fragile but interesting visual communication. The project does not aim to reveal the prison as a spectacular space, but to reframe the incarcerated individual through presence and relational authorship, creating room for recognition without fixation.

2.1.2 Visual refusal and counter-gaze

While *Temps Mort* offers alternative visibility through carceral intimacy and vernacular photography, it is equally important to consider what kind of looking the project demands from its viewers. Not only does it depict prison life through an ordinary perspective, but it also influences how its viewers are asked to look at and receive it. Instead of providing clear narratives or explanatory images, *Temps Mort* is more structured around visual refusal: purposefully withholding information or contexts. This refusal slows down interpretation, encourages more observation, and resists the dominant logic of how viewers interpret images of incarceration. This creates an alternative or counter-gaze for viewers.

Three ways can be identified to understand this gaze. First, Campt's theory of a 'Black Gaze' offers the idea that some photographs, particularly of Black persons, resist the dominant visual expectations of legibility, protest, or pain. Instead, they canter on stillness, slowness, and quiet presence, which creates a different register. The images ask the viewer to stay with them, pause, and look at them for some time, rather than demanding to be instantly understood. Crucially, as we have also seen in analyzing *Périphérique*, Campt emphasizes that this mode of seeing makes the non-Black spectator feel like an outsider, disrupting the assumed universality of the viewing position.[66] Campt's framework shifts focus from clarity and factual explanation to attentiveness and emotional engagement.[67] Similarly, in *Temps Mort*, there is a comparable visual strategy, as dramatic action is not depicted. Bourouissa depicts a man lying on a bed, a man doing pushups, or a hazy hallway, which are moments ordinary and mundane in content, but acquire emotional weight through their lack of narrative

[66] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 37-39.
[67] Ibid., 14-17, 109-112.

explanation. As a viewer, you are asked not only to recognize this 'ordinary' but also to feel its significance.

This strategy forces the viewer into an affective and slowed engagement with the image. While still and quiet images invite the viewer to sit with their ambiguity or discomfort rather than seek direct resolution of what they are seeing, the viewer still experiences the act of looking itself, rather than searching for the meaning of an image.[68] *Temps Mort* embodies a visual rejection of the spectacular frameworks that frequently characterize representations of incarceration and racialized communities. It does not show more; it shows differently. Campt's theory is thus particularly relevant in this context, as it emphasizes the labor of looking: a 'Black Gaze' that is about learning to look critically and patiently, not just at what is being represented, but how we are made to see it.[69] In *Temps Mort*, where there is no overarching narrative beyond SMS exchanges (fig. 27), and no captions to explain who or what is shown, the viewer is drawn into a mode of engagement that resists objectification. Instead of identification, the images hold the viewer at a distance, positioning them as an outsider to experiences that remain deliberately unresolved.

Another way that clarifies how *Temps Mort* subverts dominant prison imagery through the act of looking is through the 'civil contract of photography', as proposed by Ariella Azoulay. Azoulay argues that images are more than just visual representations; they are also spaces where interactions take place.[70] Photographs are, therefore, not passive products created by the photographers alone. Rather, they are influenced by the photographed subjects, by the photographers, and by the viewers themselves. According to Azoulay, each image contains an implicit contract, a civil contract, between each of these parties.[71] In particular, the viewer is urged to participate as a civil spectator who takes responsibility for the viewing experience rather than merely observing from a distance.[72] This is exactly the central dynamic that Bourouissa lays out in *Temps Mort*. Besides, this idea also relates to Campt's notion of the (white) viewer as an outsider, as the viewer looks through their perspective as a civil spectator, and therefore tries to engage. The images depict more than simply the inside of the prison or anonymous prisoners. They are part of visual communication, built on shared authorship. They do not show self-portraits or frontal portraits of inmates; instead, they depict

[68] Ibid., 27.
[69] Ibid., 37.
[70] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 24.
[71] Ibid., 23-24, 85.
[72] Ibid., 24.

ordinary fragments of the prison environment: bunk beds, fences, pans, a refrigerator, a TV, and the gym.

Besides, when prisoners appear in the images, they are seen from behind. When partial faces appear, the graininess of the mediums renders them unrecognizable. Furthermore, there are no overview shots of the prison, only tight frames that mirror the limited view of the prisoners themselves, which can, for example, be seen in a photo that Al made of a view to the outside world from his cell (fig. 28). This visual strategy redefines being visible. Rather than functioning as representations of someone, these images articulate a perspective from within. It is this shift, from being looked at to being the one who looks, that reframes agency within a carceral context. Instead of asking the viewer to decode signs of suffering from a distanced or even 'superior' position, *Temps Mort* invites what Azoulay calls the civil gaze of the viewer, which challenges the dominant logic of passive spectatorship and invites viewers to reflect on their own role in the interaction with the image.[73] This gaze does not focus on judging the prisoner, but on acknowledging the institutional systems that shape what can be seen, and what remains hidden, such as the identities, gestures, and emotional realities of the incarcerated, which the images only partially reveal.

Another crucial aspect of how *Temps Mort* challenges the dominant visual forms is through its visual rhythm and structural logic. Stafford refers to *Temps Mort*'s photobook 'secret architecture', with which he refers to the layout that breaks traditional narrative norms and mimics the irregular, slow, asymmetrical experience of incarceration, which is intentional as it shows the 'dead time' (*Temps Mort*) in a prison, a period when nothing happens and when there is no communication.[74] This aesthetic of disorientation, reprinted images with intentionally low definition, echoes the restricted condition of the incarcerated individual. Their minimalism demands slow engagement of the viewer, not for dramatic effect, but to make the oppressive rhythm of 'dead time' visible that defines prison life. This can be seen in the photos in the physical project and exhibitions, which are frequently quiet, repetitive, and blurry, due to the quality of the MMS's, and are not arranged into a cohesive narrative but rather have a fragmentary structure that captures the monotonous rhythm of incarceration. Instead of offering a narrative, this sequencing, combined with the brief and informal texts, produces a rhythm of interruption and cuts in both text and image.[75] However, in the photobook, a selection of the series' photos and texts has been placed in chronological order.

[73] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 93.
[74] Stafford, "Dead Time," 148-149, 153, 156.
[75] Ibid., 147-149, 155.

This even includes blank pages with only a date, which recalls a day when there was no communication between Bourouissa and the incarcerated (fig. 29).

The images in the project are grainy and out of focus (fig. 30), which is a purposeful visual feature that is not simply technical, but aesthetically and conceptually significant. According to Magali Jauffret, who wrote the accompanying essay in the series' photobook, this blur reflects the fragility of identity under incarceration: the pixelation mirrors the incarcerated subject's reduced visibility and social absence.[76] Bourouissa did not want to correct or enhance these imperfections. Instead, he rephotographed the original low-resolution MMS-photographs and reprinted them as silver prints under matte Diasec, mounted on aluminum panels for exhibition (fig. 2). Also, within the book, Bourouissa intentionally laid out each image, except for the two grids, on two pages, making the blurriness even clearer (fig. 31). According to Stafford as well as Jauffret, the blur of these photos creates a form of visual distance by depicting what it means to be a prisoner in the early 2000s.[77] The blurriness acts as a buffer against spectacular visualizations in documentary and journalistic photography, and aligns with Campt's 'Black Gaze' on sensing time and presence through visual slowness and quietness, as well as on how the images are perceived by outsiders.[78] By deliberately not sharpening or clarifying the images, *Temps Mort* creates a visual wall of ambiguity to depict the 'dead time' in a prison.

§2.2: Delegated performance and the ethics of representation

2.2.1 Representation through shared authorship

Bourouissa's *Temps Mort* introduces a different mode of representation than his earlier series *Périphérique*. Rather than deconstructing dominant visual codes through staging strategies and mimicking techniques, *Temps Mort* shifts to representation, collaboration, and shared authorship. But how does representation function when authorship is shared? Instead of speaking with a single authorial voice, *Temps Mort* is the result of a dialogic process influenced by Bourouissa's guidance and how the prisoner(s) respond. This raises questions such as: Whose voice does the viewer see and hear? Is it the voice of the person in the prison? Or is it a group voice of many prisoners at once? Or is it still shaped by Bourouissa, the artist? At the same time, the open-ended structure of *Temps Mort* also raises critical questions. Are the subjects able to avoid being stereotyped because of the absence of a narrative, or does the

[76] Jauffret, "An Escaping Image," in *Temps Mort*, 2014.
[77] Stafford, "Dead Time," 109-112, 152; Jauffret, "An Escaping Image," in *Temps Mort*, 2014.
[78] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 135-136.

project risk rendering them voiceless or invisible once more when examining the final output?

Stuart Hall's theory on representation as a cultural process that produces and contests meaning offers a useful framework for understanding how this 'open-ended representation' functions.[79] His approach clarifies how *Temps Mort* constructs a mode of representation that is negotiated between the image and the viewer, as Hall argues that representation is the creation of meaning through language, codes, and context, rather than serving as a reflection of reality. Meaning, in this model, is never inherent in an image; rather, it emerges from the interplay between encoding, the place of creation, and decoding, the place of interpretation. In this model, Hall distinguishes between dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings; each influenced by the interpretive framework and social position of the viewer.[80] Thus, understanding an image demands attention not only to what is portrayed, but also to how it is shown and how that 'how' is interpreted.

In *Temps Mort*, emotional readability and narrative coherence are deliberately disrupted, which is a strategy that was also visible in *Périphérique* and will be visible in the next chapter. The ordinary scenes in the project do not aim for expressiveness or emotional drama; rather, they are what Campt refers to as 'quiet' acts of presence: small, repetitive gestures that resist spectacle yet still encourage the viewer into a mode of affective attention. Viewers listen to the 'quiet' of images by feeling.[81] This framed repetition of (interior) spaces suggests not only the physical constraints of incarceration, but also the temporal suspension that shapes the daily experience inside prison walls. Despite their simplicity, these visual patterns guide interpretation. Both the series and the photobook *Temps Mort* can, therefore, be understood as a form of negotiated representation: it does not tell a story or dissolve entirely into ambiguity, but structures interpretation through subtle visual strategies like fragmentation and rhythm. This differs in tone but not in critical purpose from *Périphérique*, which also challenges representation as a staged and coded process. Thus, in both projects, representation is positioned as a practice that determines what can be seen and how, rather than as a neutral act of depicting.

Besides shared authorship, *Temps Mort* also has a minimal use of explanatory texts or captions, which also affects representation. The short SMS messages are more practical, observational, and ambiguous fragments of the process of the whole series. For example, a message might simply read: "Ya moyen de fair d'otre video come si le phone étai t yeux" (fig.

[79] Hall, *Representation*, 1-14.
[80] Ibid., 1-14, 90-103.
[81] Campt, *A Black Gaze*, 135-136.

32), where Bourouissa asks if Al could make more photographs as if the phone were his eyes. The outcome of this would not so much invite the viewer to see through Al's eyes, but to experience a limited perspective shaped by his limited agency. This partial alignment increases the connection and sense of intimacy with the prisoners. Also, in the photobook, there were no captions included. Other than the explanatory essay at the end by Jauffret, there was no contextual information to guide the reader through the series while going through the book.

Here, as well as in *Périphérique*, Bourouissa refuses to give his images a unified interpretation through extensive titles or captions. While in *Périphérique,* there were still some indications of the image's context, such as *La chaise* or *Le groupe*, in *Temps Mort*, each image carries only the generic title *sans titre* (untitled) with a serial number, for example, *sans titre #20*, without any indication of content. As Clive Scott argues, such captionlessness activates a 'responsive gaze': viewers must engage in a reflective, interpretive process, questioning their own assumptions.[82] Just as *Périphérique*, *Temps Mort* withholds recognizability itself. Although the surrounding text exchanges and image details hint at incarceration, these signs do not give certainty that the images are actually made in a prison. This uncertainty does not lie in hiding visibility but in withholding context. In this way, *Temps Mort* foregrounds Hall's notion of decoding as a socially determined and interpretive process.[83] Besides, the choice of labeling the images as 'untitled' reinforces the series' visual ambiguity. The images have a meaning and want to be interpreted, but force the viewer to construct this meaning on their own. However, the viewer is still guided towards a certain assumption or meaning through the title of the series. *Temps Mort* as a title, though not as direct as in *Périphérique*, also contributes to the meaning and context of the photographs as a whole. It is about 'dead time' or a 'time out': time standing still in an incarcerated setting.

Besides, when talking about the framing of the images, texts are produced by both the incarcerated individuals and Bourouissa himself. Still, it is ultimately Bourouissa who controls the sequence and the presentation of the images. In the photobook, he controlled the layout, order, and overall look of the images. Moreover, for an exhibition, he controls the rhythm through which short messages are combined with the fragmented images, echoing the suspended temporality and restricted repetition that define daily life in prison. There is no clear storyline, only isolated, repetitive, and routine moments. Without explicitly stating it, this framework serves to reaffirm the series' sequence and slowness. It is up to its viewer to

[82] Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 9-17.
[83] Hall, *Representation*, 132-133, 149.

examine the images carefully, since *Temps Mort* uses this textual and contextual ambiguity to portray prison life as something intimate and resistant to simple external understanding.

While this analysis has so far mostly approached *Temps Mort* as a series, the photobook version offers a slightly different experience of viewing. The artist's decisions in sequencing, layout, and structure significantly shape interpretation. The book does not begin with images of the incarcerated subjects, but with a sequence of photos showing Al's view from his cell, which creates an opening perspective that centers spatial and emotional distance. Afterwards, as mentioned earlier, there is a chronological order of images and text messages combined. Besides, the absence of messages on certain days becomes part of the rhythm of the narrative. Unlike the exhibition presentation, which may appear random at first glance, the photobook reveals a carefully considered flow. The final pages contain two grids presenting 30 photos each in one sequence, reinforcing the work's emphasis on repetition and fragmentation (fig. 31). Notably, there are no captions or titles placed with the individual photos, and the accompanying essay text is withheld until the very end. This invites the viewer to first construct their own meaning before being offered context, raising the question of what one's understanding was at the beginning of reading the book, and if that has changed after reading the text. Such editorial decisions highlight the photobook as an authored object in itself, one that subtly guides perception without explicit framing.

2.2.2 Participatory photography, photovoice, and delegated performance

While *Temps Mort* constructs meaning through fragmented images, minimal context, and indirect forms of representation, it is equally crucial to examine the conditions of its production. Who makes these images, under what circumstances, and how much agency do they have? The project is based on a collaborative approach whereby Bourouissa has delegated making images to two incarcerated individuals; first, his friend Al, and later another acquaintance. However, this act of delegation occurs within a framework that Bourouissa created himself, which creates a tension between control and autonomy. This places *Temps Mort* in line with Claire Bishop's concept of 'delegated performance', which involves artists assigning creative tasks to others while maintaining conceptual authority over the final work.[84] Thus, *Temps Mort* reframes authorship rather than merely transferring it. The participants inside the prison contribute and participate, but always within the restrictions set by Bourouissa.

[84] Bishop, "Delegated Performance," 92.

Participatory photography is the use of photography by participants to reflect on and document their surroundings and lives, as Mari Pienimäki emphasizes.[85] While this often happens in group settings involving discussion, the key element she stresses is autonomy: participants visually expressing their experiences that otherwise would be ignored.[86] However, as Pienimäki warns, this autonomy is always situated, which makes it necessary to recognize and handle the particular social context in which participatory photography usually occurs.[87] Participation in *Temps Mort* unfolds under strict conditions: since cameras are not allowed in prison, photos must be shot secretly, and content must follow Bourouissa's SMS guidelines (fig. 32). These restrictions do not remove the participants' agency, but rather reshape it, defining the boundaries within which visual expression can still emerge. Thus, autonomy is present in *Temps Mort*, but is conditional: Bourouissa's instructions, the legal risk, and technological limits shape and influence Al's aesthetic decisions and outcomes.

Giving an inmate explicit instructions to create images is also a participatory approach that aligns with photovoice, a visual research method that empowers marginalized groups by allowing them to document their lived realities with a camera.[88] Photovoice, originally developed within public health and community research, challenges this exclusion by giving visual and narrative agency to those whose voices are often ignored in policy and cultural discussions.[89] The basic idea of photovoice, giving non-professionals visual agency in limited settings, remains applicable even if it usually involves group reflection. This participative logic connects to *Temps Mort*, where Bourouissa creates what could be referred to as a 'carceral photovoice': a limited, fragmented type of visual witnessing that simultaneously conveys structural constraint, rather than to record pain or suffering.

Stafford's reading of *Temps Mort* as a 'collectivist photobook' further illuminates this dynamic.[90] While the project allows the perspective of the incarcerated individuals to be shown, it does not grant full autonomy, as it is always in a format that Bourouissa controls. He redistributes authorship rather than giving it up. Bourouissa selects, edits, and sequences the images that Al and his prison acquaintance sent him, shaping the project's rhythm and tone. Yet, the perspectives that are embedded in these images, such as the low, often restricted viewpoints as seen in the image of the fence (fig. 33) and the intimate focus on everyday

[85] Pienimäki, "Participatory photography," 1181.
[86] Ibid., 1182.
[87] Ibid., 1183.
[88] Annang, Wilson, Tinago et al., "Photovoice: Assessing the Long-Term Impact," 241.
[89] Ibid., 242-243.
[90] Stafford, "Dead Time," 147-148.

details, reflect the lived realities of incarceration. Rather than autonomy or complete control, *Temps Mort* creates a shared visual space where the limitations themselves become a part of the authorship, enabling the perspective of the incarcerated to emerge inside Bourouissa's conceptual framework.

This form of restricted agency can also be explained through Campt's theory of a 'Black Gaze,' particularly her emphasis on minor gestures and everyday acts of presence. According to her, being visible does not have to be loud or expressive; it can emerge through quiet persistence.[91] In *Temps Mort*, agency is found in the way an individual claims visual space in the way he wants it, even if that means being minimally independent, such as the simple act of photographing a man doing push-ups (fig. 34). Even a small amount of inside photography creates a presence of that individual and thus enabling Al to assert presence and participate in how incarceration is seen.

Yet, looking back at delegated performance, it also carries complexities. Bishop observes that it frequently outsources authenticity while still preserving curatorial control, as the artist both relinquishes and reclaims power.[92] *Temps Mort* operates precisely within this tension, as the images, while being mediated through Bourouissa's central vision, reflect a perspective shaped from inside prison. However, this creates a productive tension between control and contribution. Even when authorship is shared, meaning is always formed at the time of creation, as Hall's theory of encoding tells us.[93] What Al chooses to capture, how he holds the camera, and the rhythms of his visual communication, all subtly influence the final work.

One striking example is the recurrent imagery of windows and barriers, often framed from a low, compressed perspective, which gives glimpses of the outside world framed by prison architecture (fig. 33). These images communicate the participants' situated experience of imprisonment through a narrow, obstructed view of the outside world. Similarly, the hazy image of the deserted hallway depicts the slow passage of time and the restricted spaces of carceral life (fig. 35). The participants inscribe their reality into the project's visual structure. Besides, when exhibited, the photos are hung at 'real height' to show at what height each element was shot.[94] Through this, Al is given more life through this photo exhibition and is giving more meaning through his making of the images. The viewers also have a better sense

[91] Campt, *Black Gaze*, 8-10, 87, 109-143.
[92] Bishop, "Delegated Performance," 110-111.
[93] Hall, *Representation*, 90-92.
[94] Bourouissa, Mohamed, "Official Website."

of the real situation when the photos were taken and can empathize more because they are confronted with it on another level than just looking at the images.

As a result, *Temps Mort* neither completely empowers nor silences its participants. Participation becomes not a seamless fusion of artist and participant, but a site of productive tension. This stands in contrast to Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics, which defines democratic participation as harmonious co-existence and non-hierarchical collaboration.[95] Where Bourriaud imagines art as an equal space without hierarchies, *Temps Mort* resists such closure. Instead of making asymmetries, Bourouissa makes them visible. His work does not create consensus, but foregrounds the politics of representation and participation under constraint.

Temps Mort initially appears to document prison life from within, through a quiet photobook that emphasizes fragmentation and repetition. While Stafford interprets the work as a poetic and collectivist photobook with a 'secret architecture,' the project ultimately goes further. It redefines photographic authorship and shifts Bourouissa's role from director to facilitator and collaborator. Rather than visualizing incarceration through spectacle or mugshots, the work foregrounds carceral intimacy, 'dead time,' and visual ambiguity. Crucially, Campt's concept of a 'Black Gaze' is key to understanding this shift. *Temps Mort* positions the white viewer as an outsider, as they sit with images resisting dominant expectations. The incarcerated subject is no longer decoded, but positioned with a quiet presence. This discomfort displaces passive spectatorship and redirects how prison is seen and who is allowed to be visible. Additionally, the photobook differs from the 'loose' series. While the series may appear fragmented or even random on the wall of an exhibition, the book reveals a rhythm and structure shaped by chronology. This contrast reinforces how authorship and meaning are formed not only by the image-maker but also by the material and editorial choices through which their images circulate.

[95] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16, 31, 109.

Chapter 3: Reframing Visual Control: appropriation, authorship, and visual ethics in *Shoplifters*

Mugshots are a distinctive type of visual discipline in contemporary visual culture; it is an instantly recognizable form that appears in the media, on the internet, and in many other spaces (fig. 36).[96] Unlike traditional portrait photography, it is intended to classify rather than celebrate. It represents a visual system that reduces the subject to categories of control and criminal behavior. The 2014 series *Shoplifters* by Mohamed Bourouissa both references and subverts this visual tradition of the mugshot, but does so through rephotographed images. Consisting of twenty color photographs, all rephotographed Polaroids, the images are taken out of their original context of public shaming and social control and reframed in the art gallery space, stripped of identifying information, with only a date and no names. Here, Bourouissa takes on a new role as image-curator and editor, rather than only a photographer. This raises questions about authorship, power, agency, and the ethics of representation. Therefore, this chapter explores how Bourouissa, in *Shoplifters*, repositions himself from image-maker to critical editor, and how this transformation reshapes the viewer's encounter with visual control and representation.

The chapter begins by examining how *Shoplifters* employs aesthetic and generic ambiguity to contest the visual conventions of portrait and mugshot photography. It then examines how these tactics lead to moral conflicts concerning authorship, appropriation, and the politics of looking and visibility. It draws on surveillance and photographic representation theories, particularly Gail Baylis's exploration of visual control, Tagg's notion of the disciplinary frame, and Allan Sekula's critique of the photographic archive. In the next section, it engages with Roland Barthes and Clement Chéroux on the role of the author, Azoulay's concept of the civil contract of photography, Campt's idea of a 'Black Gaze', Scott's insights into text-image relations, and Bate's exploration of portrait photography.

§3.1: Ambiguous portraits of surveillance through recontextualization

3.1.1 From supermarket wall to museum space

In 2014, Mohamed Bourouissa rephotographed twenty Polaroids of thieves in a small supermarket in Brooklyn's Lefferts Garden neighborhood in New York, resulting in the photographic series *Shoplifters*.[97] Serving as a visual mechanism and surveillance tool, these

[96] Lashmar, "How to humiliate and shame," 56.
[97] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."

images were displayed publicly at the store's entrance next to the security guard to warn other shoppers about the consequences of stealing.[98] The depicted subjects hold their stolen items in their hands, which are frequently essentials like fruit, eggs, milk, or bread (fig. 37). The original Polaroids, heavily damaged and marked with tape and creases, were digitally retouched by Bourouissa to restore visibility and clarity to the faces and forms, before being printed as inkjet photographs and exhibited in galleries and museums.[99] Each print measures approximately 32 x 32 cm, though dimensions vary slightly.

The produced images' visual characteristics, such as their centralized composition of the subject, intense use of flash, simple settings, and direct gazes, are unchanged from the original Polaroids from the supermarket (fig. 38). The individuals are depicted within the store's setting itself: cluttered shelves and refrigerated sections are visible in the backgrounds (fig. 39). However, Bourouissa's images have a different presence in their new material form. Reprinted as inkjet prints and exhibited on gallery walls, the images now occupy the museum space of contemporary art rather than that of public surveillance. This is a crucial shift, as where the original images were initially meant to warn as part of a visual strategy of shame, their recontextualization aligns them within the genre of portraiture as well, because of their new museum setting. In a museum, a space typically reserved for the celebration and memorialization of people with high status, viewers are used to seeing portraits of the powerful. By contrast, the figures in *Shoplifters* are anonymous and ordinary, even captured after their criminal act, which shows that they are not regarded as 'high status.' Still, in the museum context, what once functioned as low-resolution surveillance now seems like high-definition portraiture.

This transformation places the images in an ambiguous space between two visual genres. On the one hand, the gaze, forensic style, and direct flash lighting echo the visual codes of the mugshot, a form embedded in institutional control, as Tagg argues.[100] The mugshot, rather than being a neutral document, functions as a signifier within a visual regime of classification, both describing and constructing a person's social identity as 'the other' or 'the lesser'.[101] On the other hand, the isolated presentation and the quality of the print reference the traditions of photographic portraiture. According to Bate, the photographic portrait as a genre has historically been associated with identity and self-representation, as a

[98] KADIST, "Mohamed Bourouissa *Unknown #17*."; Ocula Magazine, "Mohamed Bourouissa Won't Take a Single Position."
[99] Mohamed Bourouissa, "Official Website."
[100] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 76.
[101] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 37; Lashmar, "How to humiliate and shame," 68-69.

portrait used to be a luxury image that granted value through pose, expression, and context.[102] However, the mugshot serves as a visualization of someone's criminal behavior, robbing the subject of their uniqueness in favor of categorization.[103]

Besides this distinction, it is important to look at this through the historical change of portraiture. Tagg argues that portrait photography changed from being a commissioned private luxury to an instrument of government bureaucracy in the nineteenth century, used to document, control, and identify those who often sought to remain unseen.[104] State institutions, such as the police, wanted to keep track of who was doing what, what they did wrong, who was who, what was wrong with them, and who looked like what, mostly for administrative purposes. Photography provided a systematic imaging system with which the police could identify suspects and criminals. Allan Sekula further illuminates this historical trajectory through the distinction between the 'honorific' portrait, which is used to celebrate bourgeois identity and to represent the 'self', and the 'repressive' portrait, which is used by institutions such as the police to control rebellious subjects and to delimit the terrain of the 'other'.[105] The portrait evolved as a tool for visual classification, encoding identity based on social categories and obvious indicators.

Within *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa highlights how this disciplinary power remains, even when it is stripped of its obvious institutional markers by appropriating these images and putting them into the context of modern art. The series not only continues Bourouissa's interest in marginalized visibility but also reinterprets his photographic practice. The project transforms archival mugshot-like photos into contemplative objects by trading photographic creation for editorial intervention. As there is not much narrative or context, especially in the museum setting where Bourouissa placed the images, viewers now go through visual and cognitive steps, moving from recognition of a supermarket space to recognition of a mugshot-like photo, or lingering there.

3.1.2 When portraits imitate surveillance

Rather than producing new images, *Shoplifters* is made out of Bourouissa's careful selection, rephotographing, and printing of existing mugshot-like Polaroids. This choice marks a significant artistic shift, as the photographic act becomes one of editing rather than capturing.

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[102] Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts*, 81-86.
[103] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 75-77.
[104] Ibid., 37.
[105] Sekula, "The Body and The Archive," 6-7.

Still, the images keep their original visual characteristics, such as harsh flash lighting conditions, frontal framing, and a central composition. These photos are not portraits, nor are they official mugshots. Rather, they correlate more with vernacular photography, which is defined as the everyday photographic practices that record the ordinary or mundane life.[106] This is why I suggest that they should be considered as vernacular mugshots, as they combine the vernacular portrait photography taken by the store manager and the appropriation of the convention of the mugshot.

The images' visual ambiguity becomes particularly evident when seen in the historical contrast between two important photographic traditions: the standardized mugshot criminal identification system of Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914) and the expressive portraiture of Nadar (1820-1910). While Bertillon's method was designed for institutional classification, Sekula argues that it also introduced a new visual logic: a photographic style built around standardization, repetition, and biometric legibility, something that was already evident in nineteenth-century state-sanctioned photography, as seen earlier.[107] Nadar's portraits from the nineteenth century contributed to the development of a bourgeois visual identity, where the subject was made visible through gaze, facial expression, and aesthetic presence. [108] Nadar's portrait of Charles Baudelaire is a prime example of this (fig. 40), where its lighting, pose, and subtle facial asymmetry all contribute to the highlighting of Baudelaire's identity, but mostly to a way intended to evoke the reflection of the viewer.

In contrast, Alphonse Bertillon's development of the anthropometric mugshot, which back then he called the *portrait parlé*, in the 1880s aimed to eliminate any individuality, interpretation, or uniqueness, through biometric scientific standardization rather than the subject's emotional presence. To enable accurate identification and facilitate institutional control, front and profile views, measured facial angles, and physical characteristics, such as the size of the ear, were used. Besides, the format was a double image (fig. 41).[109] Interestingly, while the Bertillon system relied on the combination of frontal and profile views for biometric accuracy, this visual logic shifted throughout the twentieth century. In official identification photography, such as passports, the profile image disappeared in favor of a single, standardized portrait. Moreover, modern ID regulations have increasingly enforced

[106] Campt et al., *Imagining Everyday Life*, 24-30, 34-35.
[107] Sekula, "The Body and The Archive," 10.
[108] Cadava, "Nadar's Photographopolis," 62-63.
[109] Smith, "The Mug Shot: A Brief History," 31-32.

front-facing images with neutral expressions and minimal backgrounds, establishing directness as the primary standard of legibility, while still echoing the legacy of Bertillon.[110]

Nevertheless, as opposed to Nadar's portraiture, Bertillon's structure completely denies the subject's agency, as he framed the subject not as a person, but as evidence. This system did not emerge on its own; it was part of a broader nineteenth-century movement to visually categorize people, intersecting with fields such as criminology, physical anthropology, and ethnographic research. This visual system demonstrated that identification needed institutionalization and instruction through images, text, and public display because photographs alone were insufficient, as Shawn Michelle Smith highlights. Photography became an instrumentalized way of seeing due to *Bertillonage* as it facilitated institutional control, but also contributed to what a criminal looked like, also reinforcing racial and class-based stereotypes through visual classification.[111] A standardized mugshot from the Bertillon system, with neutral face and expression, stark lighting, and minimal framing, indicates a total break with the aesthetic visuality of portraiture (fig. 41).

In contrast to Sekula's earlier distinction, Gail Baylis suggests that the photographic portrait cannot be reduced to either an honorific or repressive function; instead, it operates within a changing field of power and even potential subversion.[112] *Shoplifters* shows this tension as it replicates the visual codes of mugshots while subverting their institutional meaning. Moreover, this format still functions today in media and police databases as a means of spectacle, shame, and punishment, as it turns people into observable symbols of guilt and strips them of dignity.[113] In this context, *Shoplifters* resists both Nadar's idealization and Bertillon's reduction. As discussed earlier, Bourouissa preserves the structure of the mugshot, a frontal angle, flash, although overly used, and direct gaze, but alters its function. *Shoplifters* creates a third hybrid zone in which subjectivity is left open-ended and judgment is suspended, which I have called the vernacular mugshot. Through this reframing, the series moves towards a small restoration of the dignity of the depicted individuals by resisting the spectacle of exposure. The 'mugshot,' therefore, turns into an unknowable portrait.

The lack of context adds even more uncertainty to this. For example, according to Bate, a portrait's meaning results from an interplay of props, location, clothing, facial expression, and a pose.[114] These elements structure an identity rhetoric. *Shoplifters*

[110] Rijksoverheid, "Eisen aan de pasfoto voor paspoort of ID-kaart."
[111] Smith, "The Mug Shot: A Brief History," 32.
[112] Baylis, "The photographic portrait," 5, 20.
[113] Lashmar, "How to humiliate and shame," 78-79.
[114] Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts*, 89-90.

experiments with this language: the location, a supermarket, is obvious yet unresolved, the clothing is ordinary, and the poses are involuntary. In *Shoplifters*, the viewers are invited to look, yet are not given the means to observe everything.

§3.2: Framing, appropriation, and the ethics of looking

3.2.1 Reframing and appropriating without consent

Within *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa wanted to show the tension between context, reality, and an artistic viewpoint, as he remarked in an interview with *Ocula Magazine* in 2023.[115] He also mentioned: "Because I didn't know the people in the pictures, the most complicated thing about Shoplifters was whether I had a role or a right to take those images and work with them in the first place."[116] This hesitation captures the series' central ethical dilemma: what does it mean to appropriate and reframe found photographs of vulnerable, anonymous people? In addition to bringing attention to the question of artistic role and authorship, Bourouissa's remark also highlights the ethical implications of using images that were initially created without the subject's permission and for a completely different objective, namely, public shaming and warning. Unlike traditional portrait photography, as discussed earlier, where the photographer is often in direct relation with the subject, *Shoplifters* disrupts the dynamic completely. There is no interaction or moment of contact between Bourouissa and the subject; the image functions merely as an impersonal visual record: there is no clue in knowing the identity of the persons (fig. 39).

According to Tagg, photography, particularly in its bureaucratic forms, is never just a tool for taking pictures. Rather, it is a mode of inscription that is deeply embedded in social regulations and structures of power, such as the police, courts, and carceral bureaucracy.[117] Similarly, Sekula emphasizes that photos are tools in classification and discipline systems rather than only neutral outlets.[118] Perhaps this combination of ideas is the source of Bourouissa's difficulty that he mentions: by reusing and appropriating images created within a system of everyday surveillance, he runs the risk of supporting this logic, even as he tries to undermine it.

Bourouissa's editorial stance echoes ideas expressed by Roland Barthes, who argued for the decentering of the author in meaning-making.[119] As will be discussed later, Bourouissa

[115] Ocula Magazine, "Mohamed Bourouissa Won't Take a Single Position."
[116] Ibid.
[117] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 3-5.
[118] Sekula, "The Body and The Archive," 6-10.
[119] Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 128-129.

neither fully embraces nor rejects this logic. Through the selection of existing images, rephotographing them, and presenting them in a different context, Bourouissa implicitly asks the viewers the question: Who is the author of an image? This practice also raises questions of ownership and authorship. Who owns these images in *Shoplifters*? Is it the original creator, who was the store manager in Brooklyn, or Bourouissa, who redesigned them? Or do they belong to those depicted, whose consent is missing and whose identity is absent?

This aligns with Azoulay's theory on how photography suggests a civil contract since there is always an ethical and political contract between the photographer, the subject of the shot, and the viewer. Displaying images without consent not only raises legal issues, as Azoulay argues, but also denies the subject the ability to shape their public identity.[120] Given this, Bourouissa's anonymization of the images bears a dual meaning: on the one hand, shame is suppressed, on the other, the subject remains silenced. Besides, as a criticism of how easily an image can be used to exercise power and authority, Bourouissa's work seems to seek precisely this discomfort, as he places the images within the conventions of the museum, positioning them in a context or aesthetic contemplation rather than public warning, yet without reestablishing agency for the subjects. This gives criticism on how institutional photography often erases the subject's voice while still asserting control over their image.[121] Yet, because of the title *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa still refers to the function of 'shaming' the depicted. So this title gives the series a context. He could have given the series another title, such as 'people' or 'in the supermarket.' That would then give a different context or idea around the pictures. At the same time, his position remains ambiguous. He distances himself from direct responsibility, which becomes clear in interviews where he describes his hesitation to even use the images at all, while he also draws attention to his appropriation as problematic, as he raises questions to the audience on consent, ownership, and representation.[122]

The appropriation of art has long been used as a critical but contested strategy. It is not only the practice of artists creating new meanings from the artworks of others, but also the challenging of the system in which they originally functioned.[123] In this case, Bourouissa creates meaning by displacement rather than asserting originality through image production. Famous ready-mades by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) were early instances of how

[120] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography,*, 18-20.
[121] Sekula, "The Body and The Archive," 10-11.
[122] Ocula Magazine, "Mohamed Bourouissa Won't Take a Single Position."
[123] Boon, "On Appropriation," 2-3; Young, "Art, Authenticity and Appropriation," 458.

relocating an object may drastically change its artistic status.[124] By relocating a usual everyday object into the museum space, Duchamp disrupted its everyday function and exposed the institutional power structures that determine the artistic value. Bourouissa used a similar technique in *Shoplifters*, reinterpreting the significance of the vernacular mugshots by displaying them in galleries, without changing their design or content (fig. 42); thus altering the image's context rather than the image itself. Such acts of appropriation and relocating the original object into a new system of meanings, according to Carolin Köchling, are not just repetitions but rather acts of semiotic transformation, thus changing how the viewer reads and understands the object.[125] This process of semiotic transformation aligns as well with what James Young describes as innovative appropriation: the use of pre-existing material to produce new aesthetic and critical meaning.[126] Besides, Marcus Boon's view on appropriation also aligns with both these descriptions, as he describes it as an ontological action that demonstrates how meaning is constantly borrowed and contextual, rather than just cultural.[127] Through reframing and displacement, Bourouissa offers a new interpretative framework as opposed to simply copying or paraphrasing. Accordingly, appropriation involves more than just the transfer of images. Drawing on Köchling, it also entails changing the visual context in which those images can be viewed, understood, and experienced.

This suggests that the goal of appropriation is not originality or newness, but rather the intensity of the process. Clément Chéroux argues in the 2011 manifesto 'From Here On' that in current modern times, it is no longer so much about artistic making, but more about choosing. Instead of constantly adding new images to the ever-growing visual landscape, artists work within what Chéroux calls an ecology of images, where pre-existing materials are recycled and reframed. In this model, the artist does not disappear completely, but rather stages a form of simulated suicide. No death of the author, but a deliberate act of creative disappearance.[128] This stance can be contrasted with Barthes' argument on the death of the author, in which he argues that meaning arises from the interaction of words and the reader's interpretation, making the author's identity irrelevant. He writes, "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text", which shifts the responsibility of meaning-making from the author to the viewer.[129] Bourouissa's editorial position in *Shoplifters* fluctuates between these

[124] Krauss, "Notes on the Index," 78.
[125] Köchling, "Appropriation and Demarcation," 19-21.
[126] Young, "Art, Authenticity and Appropriation," 458-461.
[127] Boon, "On Appropriation," 3-5.
[128] Chéroux et al., *From Here On*.
[129] Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 128-129.

two poles. On the one hand, he distances himself from conventional photographic authorship, letting the pictures speak for themselves through their context and displacement. On the other hand, he has significant curatorial control and power over how people perceive them. He does not erase himself, as Barthes would encourage, nor asserts himself fully as a new creator, but instead works in a conceptual space where meaning emerges by repositioning.

In *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa's distance from the creative process has clear implications for how the photos work and are interpreted. Unlike *Temps Mort*, where Al worked with Bourouissa in the making of the images, there is no personal involvement here. The people in the photos remain anonymous, no consent is given, and the vernacular mugshot style means that they are presented primarily as evidence, not as individuals. Because no story, personal characteristics, or extended context, other than the title, are provided to help the viewer understand their situation, these faces remain unrecognizable, but precisely because of this, they also confirm their status as part of a system of control. Although the photos are no longer in their original context, but in a museum, they remain trapped in a visual language that once made them suspects. Bourouissa changes not the content, but only the context, exposing mechanisms of visual criminalization without fully undoing them. For the viewer, this creates a tension: while you are pushed in a direction of context through the title, you are also forced to look critically, while receiving no further context from those portrayed. Thus, the ethical charge of these images persists, not despite Bourouissa's intervention, but precisely because of it.

3.2.2 Constructing meaning from repetition

Another striking feature of *Shoplifters* is its lack of textual information. Except for the categorizing title *Shoplifters*, there is no textual context associated with the photographs. The location is clear, though, as the images were all made in the same supermarket. Occasionally, a date is included as a caption, such as *10.12.09* or *9.26.13* (figs. 43, 44), but no caption provides background information or guidance on each subject. This absence is deliberate. Bourouissa's work, while steering the viewer in the direction of viewing the subjects as shoplifters, shifts the burden of who is being represented to the viewer, who must interpret the image through mostly personal and cultural assumptions.[130] As Scott argues, photographs are never really silent; they are always interpreted through genre, context, and supplementary text, if accessible. Withholding such text does not neutralize the meaning of the image; it

[130] Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 20-21.

rather forces meaning to emerge somewhere else, such as in the viewer's gaze, in the setting, or in what is not shown or said.[131] This strategy disrupts the vernacular mugshot's didactic function, not simply to affirm guilt, but to identify the depicted person. Through the series' new museal context, but also its repetition of images, the images gain force.

This strategy also marks a significant shift from *Périphérique*, in which the name of an object was used to label almost every image that included such an object, such as *Le téléphone* or *La chaise* (figs. 19, 22). While these objects were not the core subject of the image, their naming nonetheless offered a subtle interpretive cue and direction for the viewer. In *Temps Mort*, Bourouissa still incorporated text into the visual content of the project: direct communication and narrative clues were provided by SMS messages between the artist and his incarcerated partners. This also gave guidance to the viewer for interpretation. By contrast, *Shoplifters* presents no dialogue or voice, but only a little context through its title. The result of this is not a complete form of captionlessness; instead, the viewer is left with a sequence of isolated yet similar images, all linked to shoplifting. Their serial repetition does not tell one story but rather reinforces a sense of structural ambiguity. By looking at the displayed images, the viewer becomes part of the surveillance structure as it was intended. The act of viewing echoes the original function of the images.

Deliberately withholding textual information creates a second layer of discomfort, one that centers on the limits of recognition and identity. According to Bate, a photograph can identify a person visually without ever revealing their identity or who they are. He makes a distinction between identification, which requires a context or narrative to understand who someone truly is, and recognizability, which is the ability to register a face or body.[132] *Shoplifters* intensifies this tension by showing recognizable human figures without explanation. Despite recognizing a person, the viewer is left in a kind of ethical vacuum, where there are no clues or guidance for understanding or empathy. This creates an uncomfortable confrontation with one's own assumptions. Do we try to construct stories about them? Do we make assumptions about someone based on their clothing, posture, facial expression, or the object they are holding? This process of interpretation resonates with Barthes' distinction between *studium* and *punctum*. According to Barthes, *punctum* is the detail that strikes the viewer emotionally and personally, whereas *studium* is the field of cultural knowledge through which the viewer understands an image.[133] The *studium* functions

[131] Ibid.
[132] Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts*, 81.
[133] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26-27.

in the instance of *Shoplifters* through the viewer's recognition of mugshot conventions, the visual cues of shame, and their familiarity with racism. However, when coupled with personal visual cues, such as an awkward smile or gesture, the absence of explanation might result in a *punctum*, a moment of emotive disturbance that causes ethical discomfort.

Bourouissa's aesthetic decisions heighten this discomfort; by redefining the images as works of art when exhibiting them in a gallery context, he does not reduce their impact or provide a counter-narrative, as he does not completely remove their context through his addition of the title, which gives a direct indication of the original context. The faces in the images continue to be trapped between anonymity and visibility, between portraiture and surveillance. The viewer does recognize but not identify, drawing on Bate, and sees the moment their visibility was transformed into vulnerability. In that way, *Shoplifters* questions the ethics of gazing itself as well as the ethics of photographic authorship.

Campt's concept of a 'Black Gaze' offers a third layer and a useful lens to interpret how *Shoplifters* challenges the viewer to engage ethically with this vulnerability in the images. Campt refers to a slowness in the act of looking, a method of prolonged, emotive observation that opposes the rapid manner of visual consumption that predominates in modern media culture. This slow gaze does not define the subject, but instead, opens up space for ambiguity and reflection.[134] In *Shoplifters*, the subjects are anonymous, frozen, and silenced, yet they are not perceived neutrally. Most appear to be people of color, particularly Black individuals, though not exclusively: a few white individuals are included as well (figs. 38, 45), suggesting that poverty and marginalization cross racial lines. However, because the images are repeated and all shown in the same way, the viewer may see the group as one specific racialized category. This can make it seem as if the diverse reality of poor communities in America is reduced to a single, negative image.

Nevertheless, Campt's framework and the title of the series encourage the viewer to remain with this stillness, to look for not what is explicitly shown, but for what is withheld: the silent presence of someone whose image was never meant to be seen in a museal context. Bourouissa's act of appropriation thus becomes not only a shift in visual framing but also a temporal disruption that reveals how visual control functions and how its meaning may be rejected by sustained attention. In this suspended space between ethics and aesthetics, *Shoplifters* refuses photographic closure, affirming, as Baylis suggests, that within repressive

[134] Campt, *The Black Gaze*, 109-112, 130.

formats like the mugshot, visual agency can persist through framing, posing, and critical reuse.[135]

In *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa's role shifts drastically from directing photographic scenes to appropriating and repositioning found images. Bourouissa now takes on the role of a critical editor rather than a photographer who creates images. He is an author who curates rather than captures, who reframes rather than creates. Instead of producing new portraits, Bourouissa activates existing ones through curatorial choices such as selection, reframing, and spatial relocation. The chapter has shown that *Shoplifters* aligns with Chéroux's vision of the artist as a selector, a form of critical authorship that neither disappears, as Barthes suggests, nor asserts full curatorial control. Images that were previously part of a punitive visual regime are appropriated by Bourouissa, who reorients them through institutional contrast and aesthetic ambiguity in a museal context. Still, their shaming function remains through the categorization of the title.

The series constructs what I have termed vernacular mugshots: images that visually resemble criminal photography but resist its function. By withholding textual cues and embracing serial repetition, Bourouissa invited not identification but hesitation. Drawing on Bate's recognizability and identification and Barthes' *studium/punctum* dynamic, this chapter has argued that the viewer is not asked to interpret who the subject is, but to reflect on the conditions of their visibility, on how these individuals came to be photographed without consent and relocated into a space of aesthetic contemplation. Bourouissa's intervention thus reveals that visibility is not a neutral state but a product of social control, institutional framing, and curatorial decisions. In this way, *Shoplifters* reframes photographic authorship as an ethical and critical practice, not over what is seen, but over how and why something becomes visible at all.

[135] Baylis, "The photographic portrait," 4-5, 10.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how Mohamed Bourouissa's position as a photographer evolves across three of his key photo series, *Périphérique* (2005-2008), *Temps Mort* (2008-2009), and *Shoplifters* (2014), and how these shifting roles influence the visual representation and perception of marginalized subjects. Rather than tracing a linear artistic development, this selection of the three projects has revealed that Bourouissa moves between different modes of photographic authorship, acting as a director, facilitator, and editor. The comparison of these positions does not simply reveal Bourouissa's changing practice; it more importantly illuminates how the photographic act, whether staged, participatory, or appropriated, can be used to destabilize dominant ways of visibility and offer alternative modes of representation.

Surprisingly, what connects these very different practices is not a unifying aesthetic, but a consistent commitment to representing the 'ordinary' life of the marginalized groups. Whether by deliberately staging *banlieue* scenes that resemble everyday tensions in *Périphérique*, co-creating home-like images from within prison walls in *Temps Mort*, or reframing and appropriating found images of shoplifters in *Shoplifters*, Bourouissa's photographs resist the spectacle, suffering, and the sensationalism of crime. This quiet, everyday presence forms his most powerful counter-strategy: showing that the marginalized are not 'others' but people like you and me. This visual refusal to mark them as fundamentally different is what gives his work a disruptive force.

While one would expect incompatible results from his shift in authorship, it reveals a cohesive visuality grounded in ambiguity, collaboration, and ethics. Bourouissa does not aim to make the perfect image; he redefines what powerful photography can be by breaking with dominant expectations. As Campt's 'Black Gaze' showed, this places the white viewer as an outsider, looking at images they do not understand. Similarly, Mirzoeff's notion of counter-visuality situated Bourouissa's work as a visual refusal, not in the production of alternative content, but of alternative ways of seeing. Throughout the thesis, concepts such as Hall's encoding/decoding, Scott's captionlessness, Barthes' *studium* and *punctum,* and the death of the Author, vernacular mugshots, and the participatory nature of photovoice clarified how authorship, gaze, and viewer responsibility are continuously renegotiated. Bourouissa's refusal to provide narrative clarity or compositional harmony forces viewers to reflect on their ways of looking and interpreting.

This thesis has shown that Bourouissa's shifting photographic positions not only reshape his role as photographer but fundamentally transform how marginalized subjects are

seen and understood. It also underscores the value of interdisciplinary analysis in visual culture studies for seeing the complexities of representation. By combining photographic theory with sociology, carceral studies, ethics, and museal discourse, it has shown how authorship and representation are deeply entangled. Ultimately, by going against the visual grain, Bourouissa's work does not offer resolutions against representation within dominant media imagery, but resistance. It challenges not only how marginalized communities are represented, but also how we learn to look at them. His photographs do not speak *for* their subjects, but ask: what does it mean to see, when seeing is never neutral?

Illustrations

Figure 1. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Périphérique* (2005-2008), 2021-2022, exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, photograph: David Stjernholm.

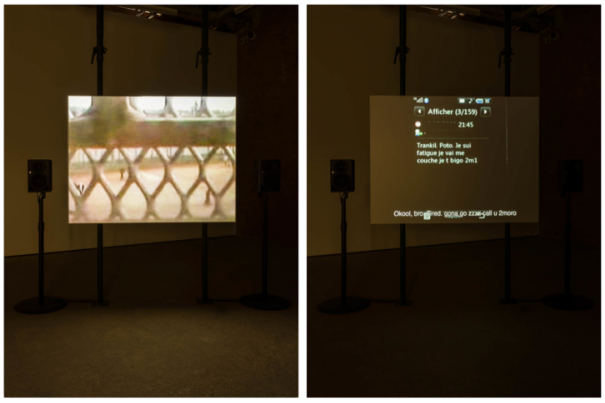

Figure 2. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Temps Mort* (2008-2009), 2021, exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Goldsmiths CCA, London, photograph: Mark Blower.

Figure 3. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Shoplifters* (2014-2015), 2021, exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Goldsmiths CCA, London, photograph: Mark Blower.

Figure 4. Mohamed Bourouissa, *untitled* (*Nous Sommes Halles* series), 2002-2005, lambda print, variable size and medium.

Figure 5. Mohamed Bourouissa, *untitled* (*Nous Sommes Halles* series), 2002-2005, lambda print, variable size and medium.

Figure 6. Mohamed Bourouissa, *La fenêtre* (*Périphérique* series), 2005, 90 x 120 cm.

Figure 7. Mohamed Bourouissa, *La république* (*Périphérique* series), 2006, C-print, 137 x 165 cm.

Figure 8. Eugène Delacroix, *Le 28 juillet 1830. La Liberté guidant le peuple*, 1830, oil on panel, 260 x 325 cm, (Paris, Louvre, inv. no. RF 129).

Figure 9. Mohamed Bourouissa, *Le toit* (*Périphérique* series), 2007, C-print, 120 x 160 cm.

Figure 10. Mohamed Bourouissa, *Le couloir* (*Périphérique* series), 2007-2008, C-print, 120 x 160 cm.

Figure 11. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Brutal Family Roots* (2020), 2021-2022, exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, photograph: David Stjernholm.

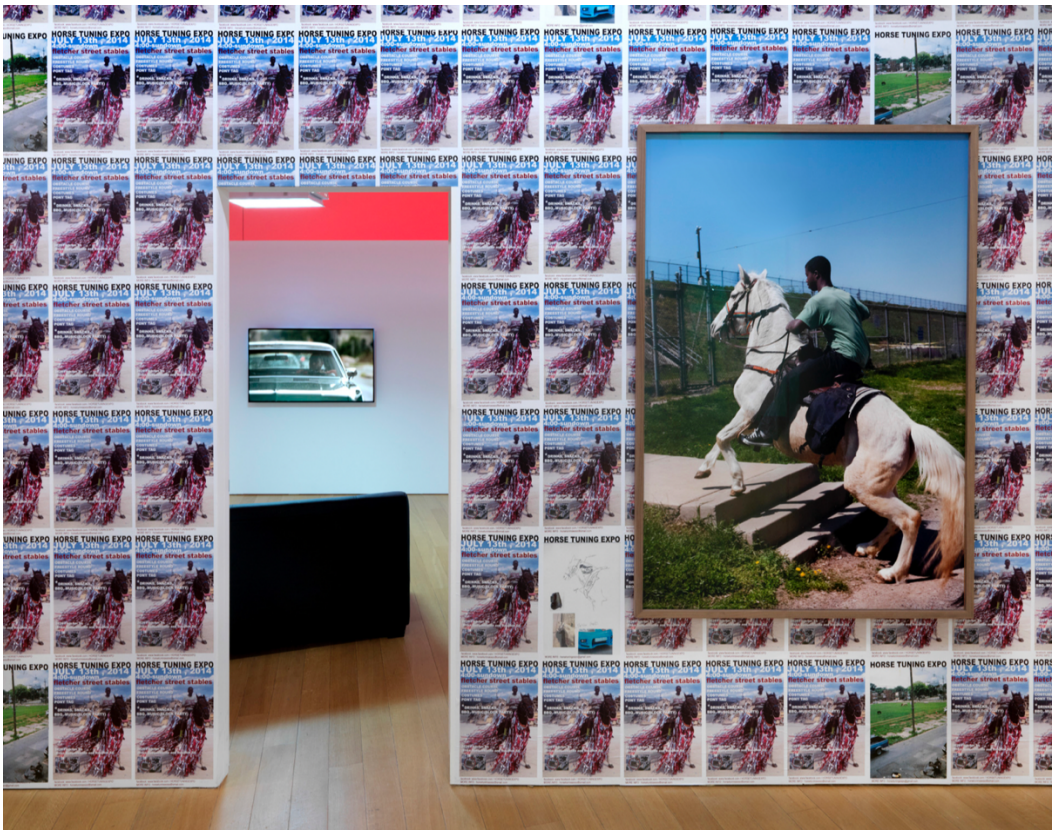

Figure 12. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Horse Day*, 2016, exhibition *Mohamed Bourouissa: Horse Day*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, photograph: Mohamed Bourouissa ADAGP.

Figure 13. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of the exhibition *SIGNAL*, 2024, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, photograph: Aurélien Mole.

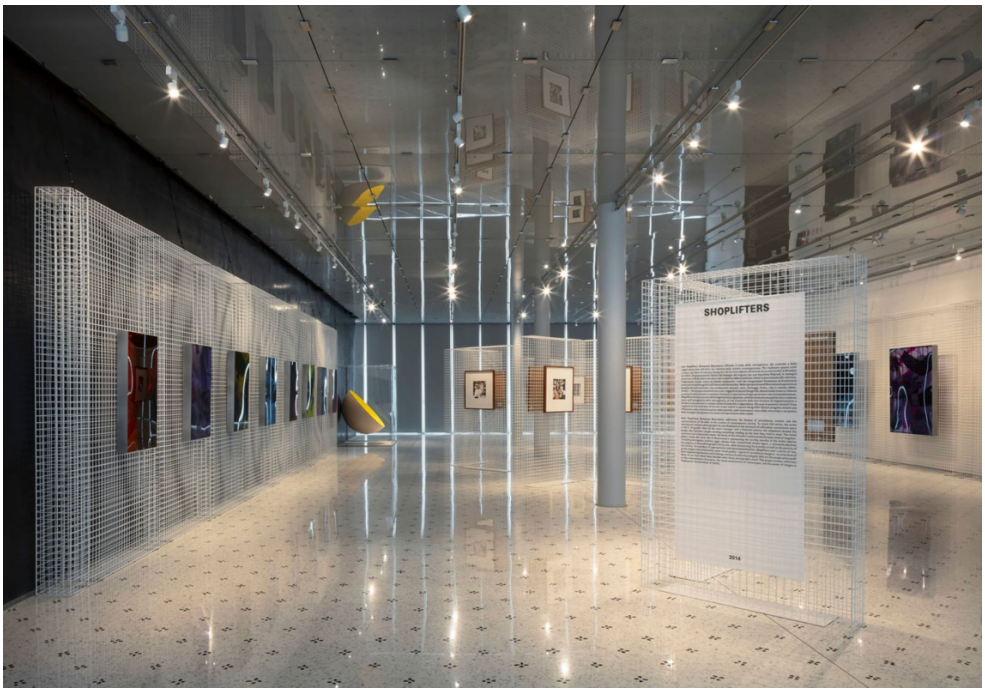

Figure 14. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of the exhibition *Communautés. Projets 2005-2025.*, 2025, Fondazione MAST, Bologna, photograph: Mennour.

Figure 15. *The Guardian*, Protesters clash with police during 2005 French riots (still), 2005.

Figure 16. *Le Monde*, Clichy-sous-Bois in 2005, 2023.

Figure 17. *BBC News*, Youths vented their anger after the deaths in Clichy-sous-Bois, 2010.

Figure 18. Jeff Wall, *Milk*, 1984, silver dye bleach transparency, 189.2 x 229.2 cm, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, inv. no. 480.2004).

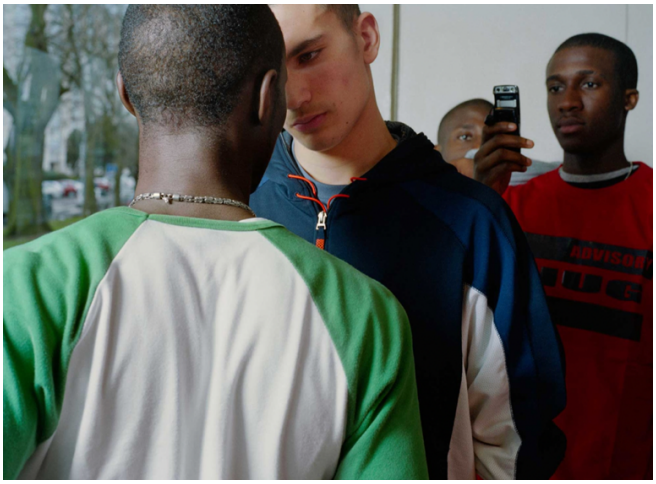

Figure 19. Mohamed Bourouissa, *La téléphone* (*Périphérique* series), 2006, C-print, 90 x 120 cm.

Figure 20. Mohamed Bourouissa, *La morsure* (*Périphérique* series)*,* 2007, C-print, 90 x 120 cm.

Figure 21. NU.nl, *Fransen massaal de straat op voor protest*, 2016, photograph: ANP.

Figure 22. Mohamed Bourouissa, *La chaise* (*Périphérique* series), 2007, C-print, 120 x 90 cm.

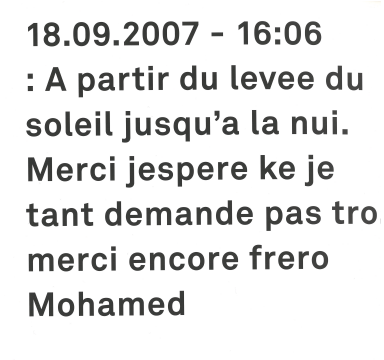

Figure 23. Mohamed Bourouissa to Al, text message, 18 September 2007, 16:06.

Figure 24. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *untitled* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, variable dimensions.

Figure 25. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *untitled* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, variable dimensions.

Figure 26. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *sans titre #20* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, 86 x 106.4 cm.

27.08.2007 - 23:24
: Ok apel moi 2m1 soir
histoire 2 parler.
Mohamed

Figure 27. Mohamed Bourouissa to Al, text message, 27 August 2007, 23:24.

Figure 28. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *untitled* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, variable dimensions.

Figure 29. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, blank page with date, *Temps Mort* photobook, 2014.

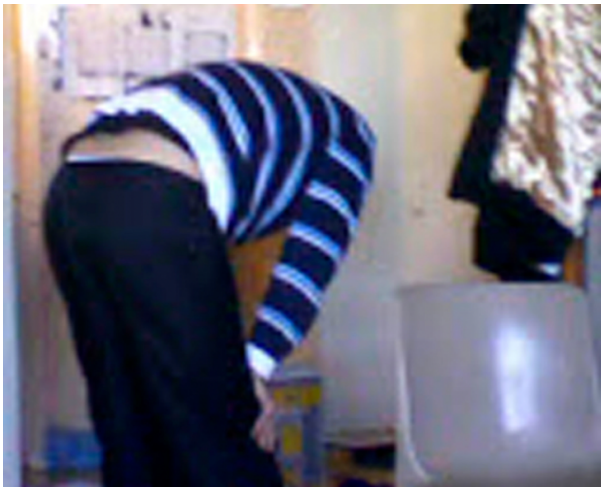

Figure 30. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *sans titre #7* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, 109 x 135 cm.

Figure 31. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, photogrid of 30 photos, *Temps Mort* photobook, 2014.

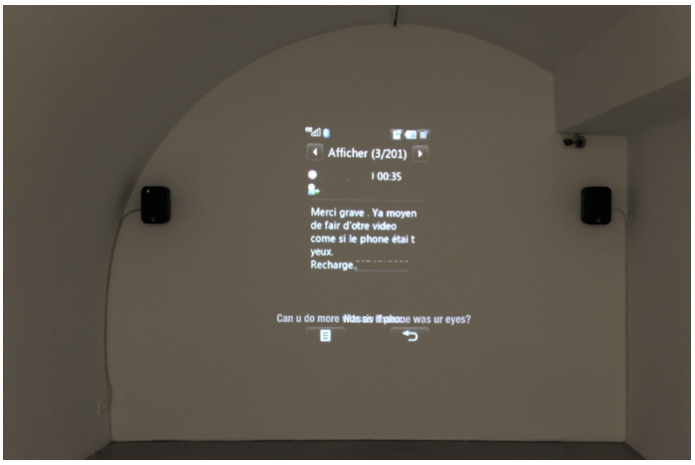

Figure 32. Mohamed Bourouissa to Al, text message, view of the exhibition *Temps Mort* in the kamel mennour gallery, Paris, 2010.

Figure 33. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *sans titre #18* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, 80 x 98.5 cm.

Figure 34. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *sans titre #5* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, 95 x 116.9 cm.

Figure 35. Mohamed Bourouissa in collaboration with Al, *sans titre #2* (*Temps Mort* series), 2008, silver print under matte Diasec mounted on aluminium, 79 x 105.3 cm.

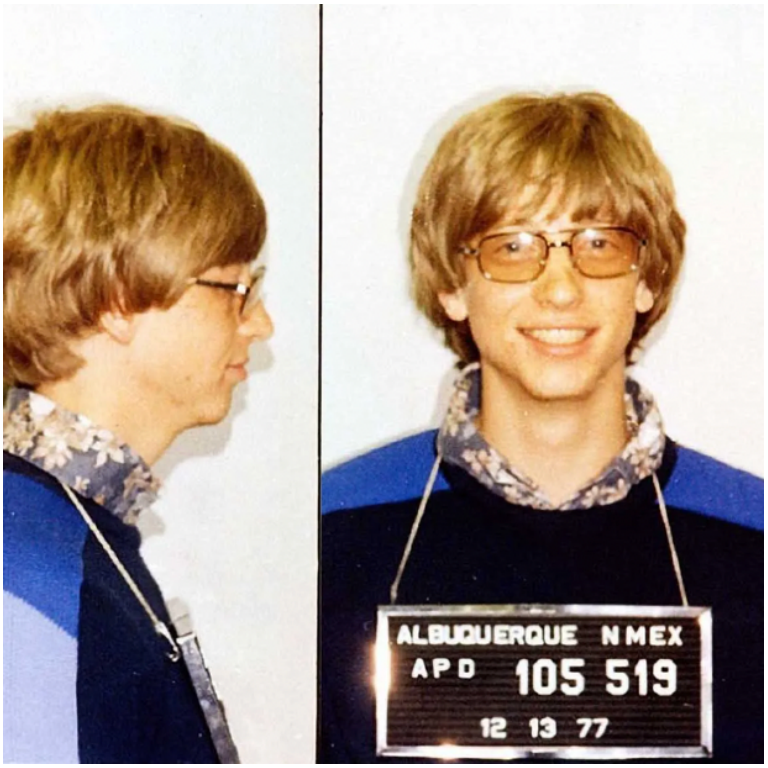

Figure 36. *Bill Gates mugshot*, 1977, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Figure 37. Mohamed Bourouissa, *12.11.12* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 24 cm.

Figure 38. Mohamed Bourouissa, *10.03.09* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 24 cm.

Figure 39. Mohamed Bourouissa, *Unknown #17* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 32 cm.

Figure 40. Nadar, *Charles Baudelaire au fauteuil,* c. 1855, salt paper print from a collodion glass negative, 21.2 x 16.4 cm, (Paris, Musée d'Orsay, inv. no. PHO 1991 2 1).

Figure 41. Alphonse Bertillon, *Fiche anthropométrique d'Alphonse Bertillon, 14 mai 1891*, 1891.

Figure 42. Mohamed Bourouissa, Exhibition view of *Shoplifters* (2014-2015), 2021, exhibition *Höhenrausch - like in paradise*, OÖ Kulturquartier, Linz, photograph: Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger.

Figure 43. Mohamed Bourouissa, *10.12.09* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 24 cm.

Figure 44. Mohamed Bourouissa, *9.26.13* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 24 cm.

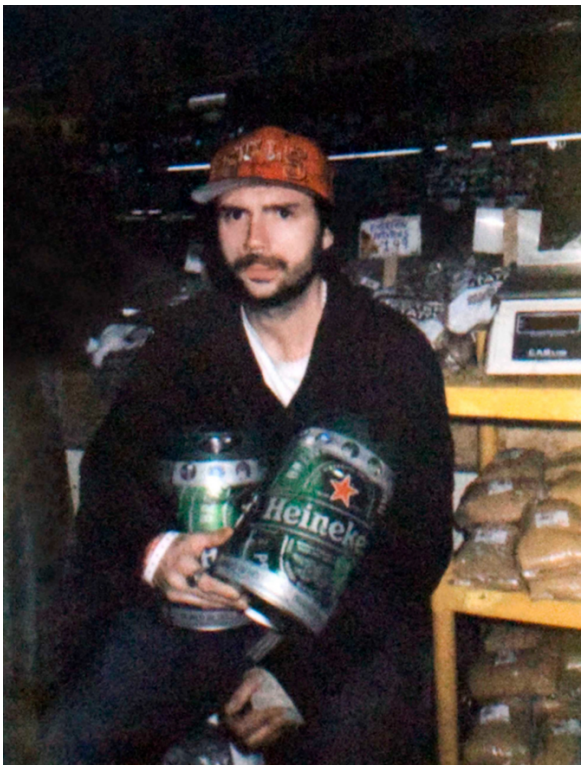

Figure 45. Mohamed Bourouissa, *Unknown #6* (*Shoplifters* series), 2014-2015, color photograph, 32 x 24 cm.

Illustration credits

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Fig. 22. Downloaded 16 May 2025. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/peripherique/
Fig. 23. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

Fig. 24. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

Fig. 25. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

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Fig. 27. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

Fig. 28. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

Fig. 29. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

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Fig. 31. Scan from *Temps Mort: Études Books No. 7*, 2014.

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Fig. 35. Downloaded 25 April 2025. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/temps-mort/

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