

PALAS[®]

Mohamed Bourouissa, SEUM, 1st February – 15th March 2025

SEUM is Mohamed Bourouissa's first solo exhibition in Australia, and centres around the film *Généalogie de la Violence* (2024) which was recently presented in the artist's exhibition SIGNAL at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

In his multi-disciplinary practice spanning photography, film, installation, sculpture, drawing, music, and theatre, Bourouissa consistently locates the human condition within political and aesthetic dimensions. He eschews the documentary gaze, instead empowering his subjects to narrate their own lives. The staging becomes an act of liberation, challenging preconceived representations to reassert agency.

Généalogie de la Violence (2024) explores the internal sensations and oppressive forces that shape the experience of marginalized bodies. By navigating around and through his subjects with haunting fluidity, Bourouissa's lens reveals hidden vulnerabilities and resistances.

Bourouissa's aesthetic approach bridges the real and the virtual, interweaving seamless transitions between live-action footage and computer-generated imagery. Using photogrammetry and point cloud renderings, space and identity dematerialize. Captured in this dynamic interplay, his characters seem stretched beyond their physical boundaries, their bodies merging with the fractured urban fabric.

While the exhibition's title evokes a deeply felt bitterness¹ – a bitterness born from systemic injustice and everyday racism – what unsettles most is a lack of overt resistance. Bourouissa's subjects do not fight back. Instead, they internalize the encounters, reflecting the numbing effect of dehumanization. As his protagonist observes, "At that point, I stopped listening. I switched to autopilot like my body was no longer mine." This dissociation underscores the film's central thesis: when physical escape is impossible, the mind retreats into unreality.

The photographs, like the film, offer tender depictions of French Arab subjects, and expand upon Bourouissa's acclaimed *Périphérique* project, which began in the early 2000s. Initially capturing his friends and acquaintances in the Paris banlieues through the lens of art historical painting, the project's 2022 evolution situates itself in Gennevilliers, where Bourouissa now lives. In highlighting the everyday lives of Muslim families and French Arabs, Bourouissa's photographs provide a sensitive counterpoint to the media's oversights, amid a political and social trend of rising Islamophobia.

In his work, Bourouissa confronts us with the unseen violence embedded within the conventions that govern our actions and representations. Despite addressing the seismic shifts of societal and political turmoil, his gaze captures the subtle, almost imperceptible currents of aggression that quietly shape our world. It is not the subject alone that holds significance, but the way it is explored and revealed. He invites us to truly witness.

¹ *seum* n. French from Arabic, anger, frustration, bitterness.