

Mohamed Bourouissa

«Pour Noubia»



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Saturday, 13 June to Sunday, 6 September 2026

Mohamed Bourouissa is an artist and a storyteller. His work is about people. But Bourouissa does not talk about people we already know. He talks about people we often do not see. His exhibition “Pour Noubia” is dedicated to his aunt Noubia Meyer, who had an unusual life.

«Pour Noubia» is French. It means “For Noubia.”

«Pour Noubia» is Mohamed Bourouissa's first own exhibition in Switzerland. There are films, photographs, objects and AI animations. Bourouissa invites you on a journey from Blida, his place of birth in Algeria, via Paris to Osnabrück.

First room: Blida

Blida is a city in northern Algeria. Mohamed Bourouissa was born there, and his family is from there.

Photo series «Blida» from 2007 to 2008

Frantz Fanon also lived and worked in Blida. He was a doctor and philosopher. And he fought against colonialism. From 1953 to 1956, he was the director of the psychiatric clinic at Blida's hospital. He looked at how racism and colonialism influence people's minds.

Bourouissa visited the clinic in 2008 and took photographs. The «Blida» photo series shows patients of the clinic. But you can also see what life is like in Blida, you can see local people and the Bourouissa family.

The portrait of Mohamed's aunt Nassera is the largest photo in the series. With that portrait, Bourouissa shows how important Nassera is for the community. With a calm face, she is watching over the events in Blida.

The photos express the personality of the portrayed people. On the one hand, the persons in the photos appear to be close. On the other hand, we learn little about them.

Video installation «Le murmure des fantômes» from 2018 to 2025

This video deals again with Frantz Fanon and the psychiatric clinic. Bourouissa shows a patient called Bourlem Mohamed, who stayed at the clinic for a long time. The patient thinks back to the time when Frantz Fanon was the director of the clinic. Mohamed says that in his life, he has suffered violence. He talks about the healing methods at that time. The clinic used medicinal plants and a garden for therapy.

The wooden structure in this room looks like the clinic's floor plan. Maybe you can feel it: This is how it feels to be controlled and to control others.

Second room: Paris

Bourouissa lives in the suburbs of Paris, which are called “banlieue” in French. Many of the people who live there are from other countries.

Photo series «Périphérique» from 2005 to 2008 and 2022

In this series, Bourouissa reproduces scenes from historic paintings. But the persons in the photos are people from the Paris banlieue.

Bourouissa is saying that the Arabic community in France was invisible. This is why he chose to portray these people in his photographs. The people are like him: They do the same graffiti and listen to the same music. With his photos, Bourouissa has made these people visible.

The new photos in the series were mainly taken in Gennevilliers, a town in the northwestern suburbs of Paris. Bourouissa lives and works there. Many Muslim communities and people from northern Africa live in Gennevilliers. They can all be seen in these photos.

In the photo entitled “Alyssia”, a young woman is posing for a selfie. The photo is deliberately exaggerated. It shows how artificial selfies can be. But it also shows how the woman wants to see herself. The background shows some strange details. These details challenge us to see the photograph in a different way.

Film «Généalogie de la violence» from 2024

This film is about a young man. The police are checking him for no reason. Bourouissa shows how the man feels: speechless, ashamed, humiliated and suffering. This discrimination is also a form of violence. This violence is not visible. But the film shows that the victims will remember such an experience forever.

Upper floor: Osnabrück

Another of Mohamed Bourouissa's aunts was called Noubia Meyer. Before she died, she lived in Osnabrück. Noubia was born in Blida and left Algeria when she was young. She worked in the sex industry where she set up her own business at a later stage. Noubia and Bourouissa share the same passion: photography. There are many photographs of Noubia's life.

Noubia Meyer's picture archive

Before she died in 2022, Noubia left Bourouissa all her photos. The photos show her life in Algeria's French brothels. And they show the European sex industry in the decades following World War II. Such pictures are very rare, especially pictures taken by a sex worker herself.

Video project «Noubia» from 2025

This video is projected onto a curtain. In this film, Noubia tells her story. Shortly before her death, Bourouissa interviewed his aunt and filmed the interview. In a calm and open way, Noubia talks about her life and her sex work. The film also shows photos from her archive: pictures from Algeria, with relatives in Germany or from her everyday life. Bourouissa has edited the photos with AI. As a result, the people on the photographs are moving.

Room installation

- In this room, the floor is covered with gravel and looks like the ground in a cemetery or in a park.
- The sculptures in the room remind us that every life comes to an end. One sculpture shows a huge tooth made of aluminium. The tooth shows tooth decay. When France colonised Algeria, eating habits in Algeria changed. People consumed more sugar. As a result, their teeth started to decay. The tooth is a symbol of violence. It shows the impact colonialism had on people's health.
- In the lightboxes, Bourouissa shows photos of his aunt's friends. Bourouissa has edited the photos with AI to protect the friends' identity. We cannot recognise the friends' faces – but they still stick in our memory.

Information on the exhibition

- The exhibition has been curated by Yasmin Naderi Afschar. Mirta Gianocca and Pauline Herrmann have helped with the organisation.
- For the exhibition «Pour Noubia» we worked together with the «Marta Herford» Museum in Germany. The exhibition was first shown from 13 September 2025 to 18 January 2026 in Herford. That exhibition was curated by Oriane Durand.
- There is a book published on the exhibition with many photos and texts in German, English, French and Arabic.