







# California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock

3824 Main Street  
Riverside, CA 92501  
artsblock.ucr.edu

## CMP Projects: Marie Bovo

### Works in the Exhibition

Marie Bovo

*Courtyard, February 15, 2009*

*Courtyard, February 23, 2009 (detail pictured on verso)*

*Railway tracks, 5:18am, March 3, 2012*

*Railway tracks, 2:51am, May 21, 2012*

*Jours blancs, 1:29am, 2012*

*Alger, 6:59pm, November 2, 2013*

*Alger, 6:46pm, November 3, 2013*

*Alger, 6:08pm, November 9, 2013 (detail on cover)*

Chromogenic prints

All works courtesy of the artist; kamel mennour, Paris; and OSL contemporary, Oslo

**Marie Bovo** (born in 1967 in Alicante, Spain) is an artist based in Marseille, France. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at FRAC PACA, Marseille; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Institut français, Madrid; KaviarFactory, Henningsvær, Lofoten, Norway; kamel mennour, Paris; and OSL contemporary, Oslo, among elsewhere. Her work has also been included in the Venice Biennale, 2011; Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2013; Triennale di Milano, 2014; and Bienal de São Paulo, 2012; as well as group shows at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2012; and Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille, 2012, among elsewhere. *How to Survive Abstraction* is the first solo presentation of her work outside of Europe.

**CMP Projects: Marie Bovo** is on view from December 19, 2015 through April 16, 2016 at the California Museum of Photography, part of UCR ARTSblock in Riverside. CMP Projects is an ongoing exhibition series that features photo-based work by contemporary artists. This presentation is curated by Joanna Szupinska-Myers, CMP Curator of Exhibitions, with support from Kathryn Poindexter, CMP Curatorial Assistant. The exhibition is made possible with the generous support of FRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Institut français, and kamel mennour, Paris. Additional support is provided by the Consulate General of France in Los Angeles, UCR's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS), and the City of Riverside.

## HOW TO SURVIVE ABSTRACTION

Balconies, courtyards, Arctic beaches: the carefully composed photographs of Marie Bovo picture contemporary society without picturing any people. In *Jours blancs, 1:29am*, swaths of sky and sand line a narrower strip of sea. The photograph was made in the stillness of night on Lofoten, Norway, during the summer season when the sun never sets. While the beach is subject to a precise focus in which each individual grain of sand seems visible, the water is eerily smooth, its movement lost to the camera's long exposure. Marked with footsteps as well as cans, bottles, and wrappers—either discarded here or washed up by the water—Bovo's camera finds trash in a twilight and supposedly remote natural landscape. Even to the edge of this otherworldly sea, the traces of commerce have followed us.

Inside the gallery, we encounter urban scenes of Marseille, a major French city located on the Mediterranean coast. Tilting her camera straight up to the sky, in "Courtyards" Bovo captures the interior courtyards of late 19th century buildings. Located near the docks, these buildings—in slow decline since the 1960s—now primarily house immigrants from Algeria and Tunisia. Laundry lines are strung by occupants in courtyards that were destined at first for the French bourgeoisie, making the apartments functional for today's inhabitants. Detectable in these photographs is Bovo's interest in the human act of carving out a space for community within inhospitable urban landscapes, and more broadly, within the confinement of law, the logics of nations, and the systems of globalism.

In the series "Railway tracks," the photographer looks down on a scene from above. The artist's interest in minority communities has brought her to photograph this Roma camp just weeks before its demolition by city authorities. The fate of the camp is not an anomaly; every year thousands of Romani are deported from France. These pictures were shot during the dark early morning hours, while the camp was still. They are both acutely descriptive, and decisively formal in arrangement. In this doubleness, her photographs seem to acknowledge the illegibility of the task they set for themselves: of representing life lived in a set of abstractions.

Finally, the series "Alger" depicts identical balconies opening out to the city, created during the photographer's first trip to Algeria. The framing device is repeated in each case: monochromatic walls painted in pastel hues meet a patterned tile floor finished with black baseboards. Domestic space opens onto composition: a flat vertical view of the city. The wooden doors open inward, giving access to a small balcony with low wrought-iron railing. More balconies across the way fill the frame, each carrying its own narratives, conveying a densely populated urban life, and, in their repetition through an open door, suggest the possibility of a shared experience of the city. The dialectic of urbanism and escape, imprisonment and uncontainment, suddenly seems very far off. Bovo pictures a world in which the confinement of photographic space can coexist with real space in time.

Joanna Szupinska-Myers