

# VISUAL STUDIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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FALL 2023 EVENTS

## Images Out of Time Seminar



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

12:30-2pm PST  
SOS 250

*Bousbir, Casablanca's Colonial Red Light District*

JEAN-FRANÇOIS STASZAK

Professor, Department of Geography,  
Université de Genève

Readings and links for Images Out of Time events will be made available when you RSVP to [vsri@usc.edu](mailto:vsri@usc.edu).

Bousbir was the red light district of colonial Casablanca. Built in a neo-Moorish style by order of the French administration for the purposes of urban hygiene and to meet the "needs" of the colonial troops, the district was inaugurated on May 1, 1924. For thirty years, Bousbir was the only place where street prostitution was allowed in Casablanca. The district was a tourist attraction, embodying an orientalist, exotic and erotic dream. The 12,000 (very) young women who lived and served there had a different experience. If for visitors Bousbir was an erotic theme park, for them it functioned as a more or less forced labor camp. The district remained active until the end of April 1955, when sex workers were expelled from it to house Moroccan auxiliary forces returning from the Indochina war. Staszak will discuss the exhibition he curated, which was supposed to open in Casablanca in November 2022. The show was canceled the night before the official opening.

In this lecture, Staszak will analyze how Bousbir and Bousbir's sexworkers have been visualized and how and why – and for which audience – telling the history of Bousbir and showing its images became so difficult today.

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