

## Playing Field | Play ground

by Samuel Ab

The World Cup sweeps across the globe. Its playing ground is paradoxical: a space of communion as much as of strict separation. Its lines pierce as much as they connect: neighborhoods, generations, cultural origins, social classes.

And yet sport is far from apolitical. It reveals a grammar of power.

On one side, it is financed by states, exploited by multinational corporations, used by institutions as proof of cohesion. On the other, it organizes the representation of nations, hierarchizes bodies, rigidifies identities.

It is not mere entertainment either: it imposes rules and makes arbitrariness acceptable.

The World Cup is an apotheosis of simulacrum: the dream seems within reach, everyone has — in theory — a chance to win, by proxy. Some nations arrive already victorious, others already defeated; inequalities do not disappear on the field — they are aestheticized there. This great game does not correct the order of the world, it re-enacts it.

What does this game reveal about our democracies, their contradictions and their imaginaries? What forms of solidarity or coexistence emerge around its fields?

### Winning by Losing

It is urgent to examine carefully the terms of the equation: who wins what?

To do so, we must look behind the image, between the sounds, beyond the bodies. We must imagine subterfuges to observe victory as a political fiction — the kind that justifies the means, erases the losers, and ultimately teaches us how to lose without contesting the system.

- There is an urgency to examine the equation more closely: who gains, and who is left behind?
- To do so, we must look behind the image, listen between the sounds, and move beyond the bodies. We must imagine ways of seeing victory as a political fiction—one that justifies its means, erases the defeated, and teaches us how to lose without ever questioning the game.
- Can we tell stories other than those of the winner?
- What happens when we refuse to play, or refuse to win?
- What if the stands became spaces for whispered counter-narratives?
- Could defeat become a place of resistance, a site where other meanings take root?
- Might celebration itself become an act of poetry, politics, or quiet subversion?
- And what if the World Cup shifted into a Mood of the World—a mirror of our shared, fragile condition?



### Decisive Game

*Bodies and Rules in the Age of the World Cup*

The 2026 World Cup is approaching. Suspense reaches a planetary climax even though the outcome seems written in advance. A final whistle, a golden trophy, a winner...then a return to the march of worlds.

Every gesture becomes a sign, and bodies sign through screens: a fall cries failure, effort embodies dignity, victory becomes moral proof, defeat expiation.

We are told that sport brings people together, that it soothes. We are told it is only a game.

The game is never neutral. It is an active mythology, a theater where often contradictory affects are replayed: national pride and critique of nationalism, collective joy and latent violence, a sense of belonging and a logic of rivalry.

A collective exhibition seeks to welcome artistic proposals that question what the sporting game says about us, about our relationship to power, about our capacity to live together.



### Personal Introduction

In my film *One, Two, Three Viva l'Algérie*, I borrow the grammar and collective imagination of football in order to question the relationship between France and Algeria.

I tried to create an object that offers a calm, slightly displaced perspective on a tumultuous history, in order to open a field of encounter and discussion.

2010 World Cup. At first, I was interested in a paradoxical situation: the Algerian national team was almost entirely composed of Franco-Algerians, born and trained in France.

I traveled there for the first time, to Algiers. I discovered a city and people struggling to recover from civil war. The ball rolls. The matches follow one another.



Samuel AB - Coréalisateur / Coproducteur

The Fenecs do not shine; they lose all their matches. But the important thing is not to lose face. To have made a shared face exist. That year, Algeria loudly celebrated a sporting defeat — a victory over the past, over a promise of the future, over a fear of the present.

<https://www.onetwothreefilm.fr/>

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