

Galerie Francesca Pia

Bruno Serralongue
Pour la vie

Opening September 2, 5–8 pm
September 3 – October 8, 2022

Galerie Francesca Pia is pleased to announce *Pour la vie*, Bruno Serralongue's third solo exhibition at the gallery. Oriented on his extensive retrospective, which opened earlier this year at FRAC Île-de-France in Paris, the current show includes works spanning nearly 25 years of his artistic career, with an emphasis on diverse forms of portraiture.

Since the early 1990s, Bruno Serralongue has accompanied both individual actors and politically engaged groups gathered together for specific events or linked by an ongoing political struggle. Often created over several years, Serralongue's photographic series are characterized by the documentary style of journalistic photography coupled by the rejection of the media logic of conventional photojournalism. As a result, his photographs do not present a singular, seemingly decisive moment, but radically unspectacular tableaux of everyday life. The images forego dramatic staging and conventional compositional aesthetics and show the typically small-scale and lengthy work of political resistance.

The exhibition at Francesca Pia begins with one of the artist's less familiar photo series, *Sunday Afternoon*, which was shot in 1999 in a park in Rio de Janeiro. For it, Serralongue stepped into the shoes of local Sunday photographers, who took commemorative photographs of families, friends, and young couples for a small fee. For his photographic service, Serralongue's only payment was the negative of the photograph, while the portrayed received the positive. The resulting images reference photography's persistent function as a medium of personal memories, while simultaneously investigating the interplay between photographers and those they portray, as well as the performative setting of the medium and the ensuing mutual dependencies. The images thus represent the violent aspects of the photographic image genesis, the shooting and capturing of images, highlighted by the schematic juxtaposition of the sitter and the camera. Serralongue, however, defuses this relationship through a mutual agreement – in this case manifested by a symbolic exchange contract. The artist's conceptual interest and sensitivity to the problematics of the photographic setting, which will remain of great importance for all subsequent series, become apparent here.

Whether it is the indigenous Zapatistas from Chiapas at the *Intergalactical Meeting against Neoliberalism and for Humanity* whom Serralongue photographed in his series *Encuentro* (1996), the refugees in *Calais* (2006–2020), the inhabitants of a settlement fighting against the destruction of their housing as documented in the series *La vie ici* (2020/21), or the ecological activists in the series *Naturalists en lutte (Naturalists strike back)*, (2016–2017) and *Water Protectors* (since 2016, ongoing): Serralongue enters into a unique relationship with all the actors in his photographs. In every picture, the artist negotiates how close he needs to be to create a sense of solidarity, or how much distance constitutes a respectful gaze. For Serralongue, these questions always have an ethical and medial foundation.

The complex production process of his large format photographs hamper the swift and immediate access to the depicted scenes. Likewise, the unique framing of the images and their distribution in the context of exhibition formats and art books underscores that the transfer of Serralongue's content from the field of media to that of fine art is an essential part of his conceptual claim.

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In a context of critical reflection, the medial abstraction of depicted events becomes more evident, opening up the narrative, personal, and existential content of the images, beyond the daily consumption of images. Thus, Serralongue's photographs are not simply views into our present; in their belief in the possibilities of creating a different world through political work and their willingness to enter into a political struggle to this end, the individuals and groups depicted in the images will always embody a future that points far beyond the moment captured in the photograph.

A comprehensive publication on Serralongue's work in Calais has just been released: *Calais. Testimonies from the 'Jungle'* with texts by Jacques Rancière and Florian Ebner.

In addition, his series *Water Protectors* is currently on view in the context of the photography festival *Les rencontres d'Arles*.

In 2022 Bruno Serralongue had an extensive solo exhibition at Frac Ile-de-France, Le Plateau, Paris; previous institutional solo exhibitions include the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the MAMCO, Geneva; Jeu de Paume, Paris; and Wiels, Brussels.