







Galerie Francesca Pia


Texts about Bruno Serralongue's series in the exhibition *Pour la vie*, Galerie Francesca Pia, 2022


- 1  **World Summit on Information Society, Geneva, 2003**
More than 16'000 representatives of the civil society and the private sector from 176 countries met from 10 to 12 December 2003 in Geneva for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. The goal of the summit was double. On the one hand and according to the first and ambitious paragraph of the "Final Report", the aim is, from now on, to start building a new type of society, a "development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in [...] improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". On the other hand, the "Plan of action" strives to evaluate and follow-up progress in bridging the digital divide between rich and poor countries, and to ensure that until 2015 "more than half the world's inhabitants have access to Information and Communication Technologies within their reach".
-

- 2 
 **Korea, 2001**
Park Jun-kyu and Hwang Yi-min are trade unionists. Yu Man-hyeong was an assembly line worker at a Daewoo Motors plant. They came to France in February 2001 to extradite Kim Woonchong, the former head of Daewoo who had been on the run since the group's bankruptcy. When Serralongue traveled to Seoul in November 2001 for a new job, he met the three and they agreed to pose for a photograph. Their portrait forms the central element of this series.
-

- 3 

 **Water Protectors, 2017–ongoing**
In April 2016 the Sioux of the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, together with other tribes and activists, set up camp on the banks of the Missouri next to the Lake Oahe dam, which borders on their territory. Their intention was to oppose the burying of the Dakota Access Pipeline, scheduled to pass under the riverbed: the indigenous people living downstream from the lake feared that leaks from the oil pipeline would render the water unfit for consumption. The Oceti Sakowin ("Seven Council Fires") camp was home to some 10,000 people in late November 2016, at the time of the showdown with the army and the police, the upshot being a halt to the works decreed by President Obama pending a fresh environmental impact study. Since then the former president, Donald Trump, has issued a new decree ordering the army – whose engineering corps is handling the project – back to work. Even if Oceti Sakowin is being dismantled, the Inhabitants' determination to fight the destruction of their «sacred land» remains undiminished. Resistance will take other forms on other fronts.
-

Galerie Francesca Pia

- 4  **Encuentro, 1996**
From 27 July to 3 August 1996 the mountain region in Southeast Mexico was home to the "Intergalactical Meeting against Neo-liberalism and for Humanity". Summoned by the Zapatista Indians through the voice of Subcommandante Marcos, some four to five thousand people from all over the world headed towards the Chiapas Mountains. Forums were held in the five specially built villages (Oventic, La Garrucha, Morelia, Francisco Gomez, La Realidad), followed by a closing full assembly in la Realidad, the Zapatista army base camp.
-

- 5  **Sunday Afternoon, 1999**
For this series, which was shot in 1999 in a park in Rio de Janeiro, 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.
-

- 6  **Tools, 2016–2021**
The objects in these four photographs can have opposite meanings: from construction or gardening tools to defensive or offensive weapons.
-

7



La vie ici, 2020/21

The Olympic Village, currently under construction in Saint Ouen, entails the demolition of a large number of buildings, mainly businesses and factories, but also the demolition of a hostel for guest workers managed by the ADEF (The ADEF was created in the 1950s on the initiative of companies to house workers, especially guest workers in the construction sector). Some of the 224 residents arrived in the 1980s when the home was built. They had to move out in April 2021 and are currently housed in prefabricated homes until their new homes are built, which will not be for another four or five years. They have tried to negotiate reasonable resettlement terms, but the residents' committee, headed by Boubacar Diallo, fears that this will fundamentally change and worsen their way of life. The series, which began in January 2020 when opposition to the move hit the press, will continue until tenants move into their new apartments, which will be far from this new part of town, which real estate developers dream will attract young white professionals with bicycles who have little to do with the immigrant workers (and the reality of the streets in this part of 93), whose only horizon is a descent to the edge of the city.

8



Calais, 2006–2020

On 5 November 2002 the refugee camp at Sangatte, in France's Pas-de-Calais département, was closed by Nicolas Sarkozy, with the French and British governments hailing the event as a great victory in the fight against illegal immigration and the crime it was said to be generating. First opened in September 1999 and run by the Red Cross, the centre — in what was originally a depot for the machines used to dig the Channel Tunnel — housed up to 1200 migrants at a time, mainly Afghans, Kosovars, Iraqis and Iranians in search of a passage to England.

Neither the closure of the camp nor the intensified police repression that followed did anything to stem the flow of migrants. Between 2008 and 2014 numbers in Sangatte remained stable. Local community associations estimated that there was a permanent population of 400–600 people living on vacant lots and in the woods around the city. Police response remained stable too: there were regular incursions into the different camps, where the shelters were demolished and the migrants arrested, only to be released a few days later. The camps then reformed a little further out, always following the rule of small groupings — mostly according to nationality — scattered around the outskirts or in abandoned buildings.

In 2015, however, the authorities came up with a fresh strategy aimed at emptying the city of its migrants and controlling them more effectively. This strategy involved forcibly regrouping all migrants from in and around Calais near a day centre opened on 15 April. Since then, most of the associations concerned have drawn attention to the dangers of this kind of regrouping, and in particular the violence it gives rise to. In September 2015 the associations calculated that between three and four thousand people were being forced to live in the new camp. The shantytown is at saturation point and violence an almost daily affair. The police do not intervene inside the camp.

9



Jardins Ouvriers des Vertus, 2021

As the climate crisis worsens and biodiversity collapses, more than 10'000m² of allotments are threatened by the construction of a solarium for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, a Grand Paris Express train station and an office and hotel district. The bulldozers of Spie Batignolles are preparing to destroy one of the most beautiful examples of allotments still existing in Ile-de-France. These allotments, which have become JAD (Jardins à défendre), are located less than two kilometers from Paris, in Aubervilliers in Seine-Saint-Denis.

10



Working groups, China, 2004

The photographs made in China adopt the conventional codes of group photography, which efficiently links one individual to their community, company, or their family. The people on the picture had to stop their activities in order to pose in front of the camera. Their attitudes reveal some embarrassment as well as feeling of amusement and pride.



11



Naturalists en lutte (Naturalists strike back), 2016–2017

Starting from his series *Notre-Dame-des-Landes* (2014–2018) in which Serralongue documented the political battles around a forty-year project to build an airport on agricultural land, initiated by the national and regional authorities but vehemently opposed from the beginning by local residents and farmers, his series *Naturalists en lutte* (Naturalists strike back) takes in focus the ecological activists fighting to prevent the project from another perspective.

The developers of the airport project are aware of the site's ecological interest, having hired the Biotope agency to carry out an inventory. The agency's final report demonstrated the site's value in terms of batrachians (frogs and toads) and birdlife and listed the presence of 74 species protected under French law. The developers' argument in response was that they would be able to compensate for the enormous loss of biodiversity resulting from the project; environmental protection bodies, on the other hand, contend that there is no possible way of making up for this loss. Given the implicit danger, a group of professional and amateur naturalists decided to join forces as "Naturalistes en lute" (Naturalists strike back), providing a second expert evaluation in the form of a systematic inventory of the site's habitats, flora and fauna, and making the results available for legal purposes to the environmental protection bodies concerned. The findings of their three-year investigation (2013–2015) are unchallengeable: over 2,000 species were inventoried, of which 130 (and not 74) are protected, 5 were hitherto unknown in France, and dozens more unknown in the surrounding Loire Atlantique département.