

BRUNO SERRALONGUE

Air de Paris, Paris, France

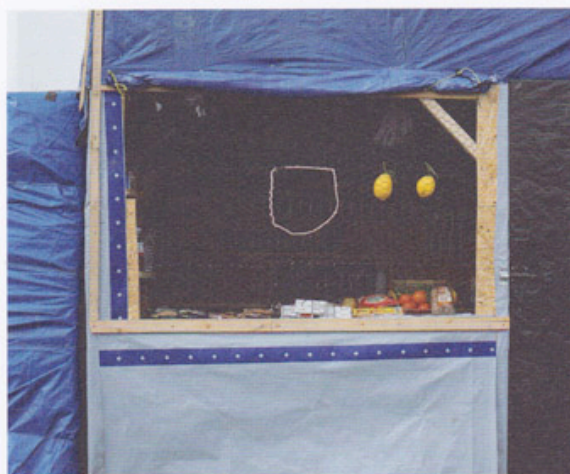
French photographer Bruno Serralongue is fascinated by the communities formed by people on the margins. From protesters in Paris (*Les Manifestations, The Protests*, 1995) to activists in Mumbai (*World Social Forum*, 2004), Serralongue engages with those whose political actions frequently outlast the fleeting attention of the world's news media.

Yet, it is through the media that Serralongue first discovers such groups, reading about them in newspapers, magazines and on websites. If a story piques his interest, Serralongue will spend time with these diverse communities. He works slowly – developing no more than two or three series per year and still shoots on film.

'Chemins cherchés, chemins perdus, transgressions' (Paths Looked For, Paths Lost, Transgressions), at Air de Paris, comprises two bodies of work that continue the artist's established working pattern. In the first room is a series of photographs from the migrant camp in Calais, northern France. Serralongue has been here before; in fact, this is the first time he has returned to cover the same community more than once. His previous series, 'Calais' (2006–08), consisted mostly of sparsely populated landscapes. The focus was on temporary shelters made of shipping palettes and tarpaulin suspended among the trees. These precarious structures stood in stark contrast to the boundaries erected by the state: concrete walls and chain-link fences.

The new series is quite different. Serralongue's return visit followed the government's decision to demolish these makeshift homes and forcibly relocate their inhabitants to a single camp. Huts and tents are ablaze; riot police stand in formation as smoke rises in the background. Elsewhere, a group of men gather to recharge their mobile phones and two kids fly a kite from a sand dune.

Across the series, the high-visibility vests of the assembled press stand out. We look on as they conduct interviews or take photographs. One work shows a close-up of the shorthand in a journalist's notebook. As Serralongue observes in one of his characteristically precise accompanying texts, some 800 members of the world's media received accreditation to cover the event.



The violence evident in the exhibition's second body of work is more subtle: a possible threat rather than a recent reality. The images form part of Serralongue's ongoing documentation of the campaign against a proposed airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes in western France. Despite official approval, the project has ground to a halt following sustained opposition from local farmers in collaboration with activists from across France. Serralongue shows us a community thriving against the odds, trying to forge new ways of living together. One image shows the science historian Jean-Baptiste Fressoz giving a talk. Another depicts two men tending to a horse-drawn plough.

Central to Serralongue's work is his approach to time. Instead of the immediate spectacle of the event, he touches upon the boundless complexity of context. This is deftly demonstrated in a series of images entitled 'Naturalists Strike Back' (2014–ongoing). Dozens of photographs have been mounted directly onto the gallery wall in four horizontal lines. They are placed in small groups, punctuated by spaces that replicate the exact size of the images themselves. One trio of shots shows a man leaning towards an algae-coated pond, his hand reaching into the water and, finally, a close-up of the small black creature he has taken out to observe. Such techniques create little moments of filmic narrative within an overall presentation that resists the allure of straightforward chronology.

Serralongue suggests that our ability to understand the world is limited by our constant need to select and exclude. But this is not a justification for inaction: selection can also be embraced as an agent of change. The naturalists gather information on biodiversity as a weapon against the imposition of the airport. Serralongue's photographs are part of the fight.

Tom Jeffreys

Bruno Serralongue, *Citrons, 'bidonville d'Etat' pour migrants, Calais, 25 mars 2016* (Lemons, 'State Slum' for Migrants, Calais, 25 March 2016), 2016, inkjet print on Canson Baryta photographic paper mounted on aluminium and Perspex box, 51 x 63 x 5 cm