

The Swiss brand of Reporters Without Borders is presenting a travelling exhibition focused on two major themes: environment and crises and conflicts in the world. The work of six renowned Swiss photo-reporters gives the visitor an exclusive opportunity to gain a better understanding of difficult situations, often ignored by mainstream media. Didier Ruef, Meinrad Schade, Christoph Bangert, Thomas Kern, Reto Albertalli and Oliver Vogelsang delivered the best and finest photojournalism thanks to their perseverance, courage and passion.

When LuganoPhotoDays 2013 hosted the exhibition, Deluxe met **Didier Ruef** and gained a very personal perspective of his career that covers more than 25 years and about the purpose and challenges of photography.



RECYCLE

Guiyu is a municipality combining four villages on the banks of the Lianjiang river in South China, 200 kilometres from Hong Kong. It is both one of the world's main dumping grounds for obsolete computer hardware and an ecological disaster. Most of the 100 000 inhabitants of the region earn their living dismantling equipment brought in from around the world – as contraband. Officially the Guiyu computer dump doesn't exist.

...himself

Born in Geneva, Didier Ruef (www.didieruef.com) settled in Ticino and now works all over the world. After obtaining a degree in economics at the University of Geneva, he studied photography at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York. He is committed to portraying people surrounded by environmental and ecological problems caused by mankind. Among the awards he has received are Yann Geoffroy, King Albert Memorial Foundation and three times the Swiss Press Photo Award for international photo-reporting. Didier Ruef has published five books: *Paysans de nos montagnes* (Editions Monographic 1998), *Afrique Noire* (Infolio 2005), *Enfants Prisonniers* (DiDé 2005), *Recycle* (Labor et Fides 2011), *Bestiarium* (QTI 2012).

... Reporters Without Borders

In countries with authoritarian regimes or in conflict situations, the press is often censored or at least manipulated. Quite often the news must fulfill financial and political goals, rather than the purpose to inform. For Didier Ruef supporting RWB was a logical step and a necessary thing to do. Without press freedom, there is no independent information and there can

be no democracy. Supporting RWB is about solidarity with reporters living and working in repressive countries – and it is also reassuring to know that, if in distress, there is a solid organisation that will back him up and maybe even save his life.

... RECYCLE

Didier Ruef has made it his key priority to share the reality surrounding recycling in the hope of triggering in each of us the desire to make a personal effort in the bid to protect the planet.

The first chapter of *Recycle* was written in 1993 when Didier Ruef made a report on FIAT and how the car manufacturer took the first steps towards recycling. FIAT introduced the concept that a car is not only assembled but also dismantled, already thinking about how to facilitate its recycling at the stage of building a vehicle.

Recycling of nuclear waste also being a main subject, it was unfortunate timing that the promotion of the book took place shortly before the Fukushima disaster. Didier Ruef would have liked to include what he considers to be the result of "human absurdity" in *Recycle*.

The selected works presented in the RWB exhibition (four of which in these pages) relate to the ecological disaster in Guiyu, in Southern China. The city hosts one of the biggest illegal dumping grounds of obsolete electronic equipment such as printers, keyboards, phones or faxes. The majority of the population makes a living by dismantling the equipment in the hope of recovering tidbits of precious metals. The activity is performed without any protection of the environment or the workers. The ground water is contaminated, the rivers reek, and the soil contains extreme concentrations of heavy metals. Many inhabitants suffer severe injuries to their nervous and renal systems, lung diseases or cancers.



... being a photographer

Rule number one: never leave home without a pair of good shoes, appropriate clothing, sun lotion (ed.: Didier's hair has been thinning over the years), reading material, medication and some Swiss chocolate to lift your spirit. This is in addition to the photo equipment and a good computer.

Second rule number one: measure the risks and know when to stop. There is no picture for which it would be worth dying! Good preparation and an excellent translator are also musts.



... luxury

Didier Ruef considers luxury to be the most beautiful of things, though it is rather difficult to combine luxury and photojournalism. The Omega Constellation he inherited from his grandfather and which he wears all the time represents the world of watchmaking: a world of precision, which he finds so fascinating because of the passion that is required to build the timepieces. But true luxury for Didier Ruef is the freedom to be able to leave anytime to complete projects he really treasures.

LuganoPhotoDays

LuganoPhotoDays is an international photo festival in the heart of Europe. Every year the high-level program offers opportunities for visitors to gain a wide-angled perspective on the world of photography. During its past editions LuganoPhotoDays hosted guests such as Nikos Papadopoulos, Alex Maioli, Moises Salman and René Burri.

LuganoPhotoDays 2014 will take place from 9th-19th October 2014 (www.luganophotodays.ch).