
SILVERMINE BOOKS

by Thomas sauvin

Since 2009, the French collector and artist Thomas Sauvin has salvaged discarded negatives from a recycling plant on the edge of Beijing, negatives that were destined to destruction. His Beijing Silvermine archive, one of the largest archival projects in China, now encompasses over 850000 anonymous photographs spanning the period from 1985 to 2005, thus allowing the reconstruction of a large part of the history of popular analogue photography in the country. This unceasingly evolving archive provides a visual platform for cross-cultural interactions, while impacting on our collective memory of the recent past.

Thomas Sauvin won the prize for the Exhibition of the year at Lianzhou Photo Festival in 2013. His work has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Photography of Chicago, the Beijing Central Academy of Fine Art, and the Guangdong Museum of Art.

Over the last seven years, Thomas has published 10 photo books with the Archive of Modern Conflict (UK), Jiazazhi (CH), Skinnerboox (IT), The M Editions (FR), VOID (GREECE) as well as self-published artist books. His publications has entered the collections of TATE, the V&A, the Bibliotheque Nationale de France and the Pompidou Museum.

Silvermine Books



ON THIS DAY
2021



TALK SOON
2021



17 18 19
2019



GREAT LEAPS FORWARD
2019



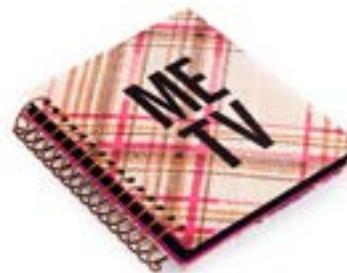
NO MORE NO LESS
2018



XIAN
2016



UNTIL DEATH DO US PART
2015



METV
2013



QUANSHEN
2013



SILVERMINE ALBUMS
2013

ON THIS DAY

2021



By Klara Kallstrom & Thobias Faldt
and Thomas Sauvin



“Silvermine is an archive of 850 000 negatives salvaged in Beijing”
“Onthisday.com is the world's largest historical events online database”
With their latest collaboration On This Day, visual artists Klara Källström & Thobias Fäldt and Thomas Sauvin orchestrate an improbable encounter between these two sources.

Photographs: Beijing Silvermine
Text: On This Day www.onthisday.com

Winner of Hasselblad Foundation Photo Book Grant 2021
Shortlisted for The Rencontres d'Arles Book Awards 2021

A project by
Klara Kallstrom & Thobias Faldt
and Thomas Sauvin
Published by B-B-B-Books &
Beijing Silvermine in May 2021
in an edition of 500 copies

25,5 x 34,5 cm
Essays: Daniel Palmer
and Johannes Wahlström
Design: Axel von Friesen &
Michael Evidon
ISBN 978-91-984705-1-2



TALK SOON

2021



Talk Soon is the wordless quarantined dialogue between Dutch artist Erik Kessels and French artist Thomas Sauvin.

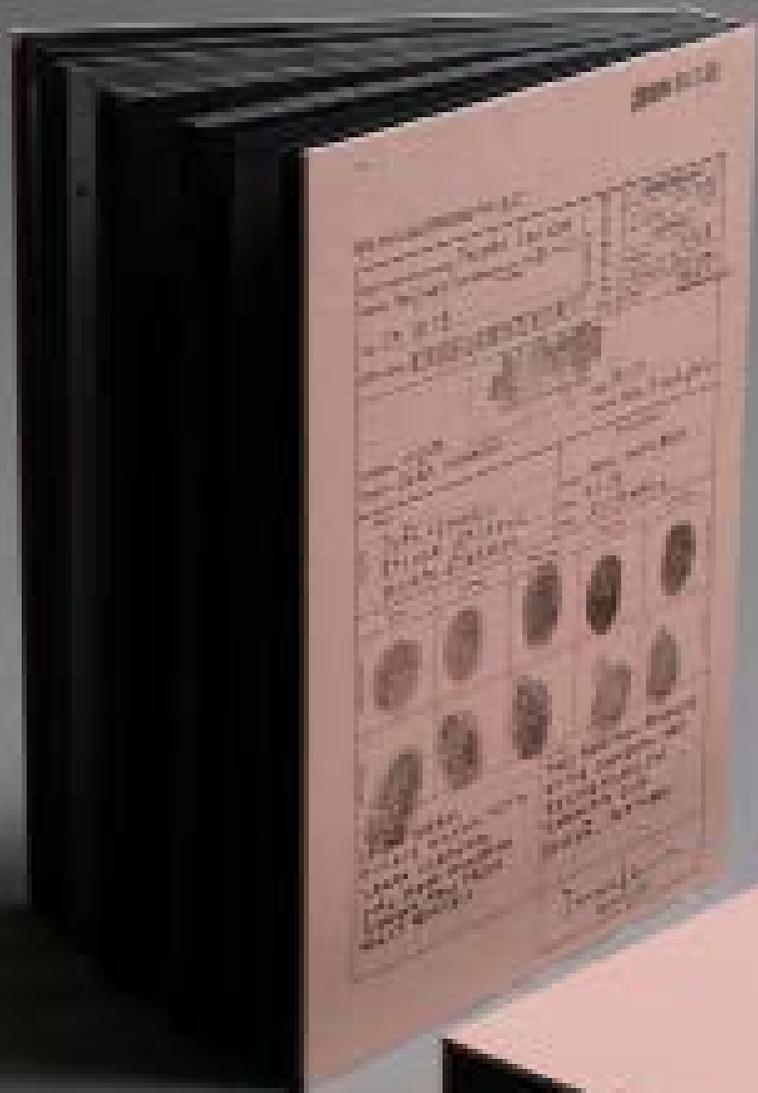
Every day, throughout that tumultuous spring of 2020, Erik and Thomas sent one another idiosyncratic, uncaptioned photographs; catalysing an organic, free-associative exchange of some 120 archival images.

Atelier Éditions' author Kingston Trinder then composed an equally free-associative, altogether-whimsical narrative with which to further entwine the duo's eclectic photographs. These two archives of vernacular photography, one from the East, the other from the West, achieve a dialogue through the recurrence of photographic practices, aesthetics, and subjects.

Talk Soon, a tearaway postcard book, allows readers to endlessly juxtapose the delightful photographs selected by the two quarantined artists.

By Thomas Sauvin & Erik Kessels
Published by Atelier Editions
in 2021
in an edition of 1000 copies
Price: 30€

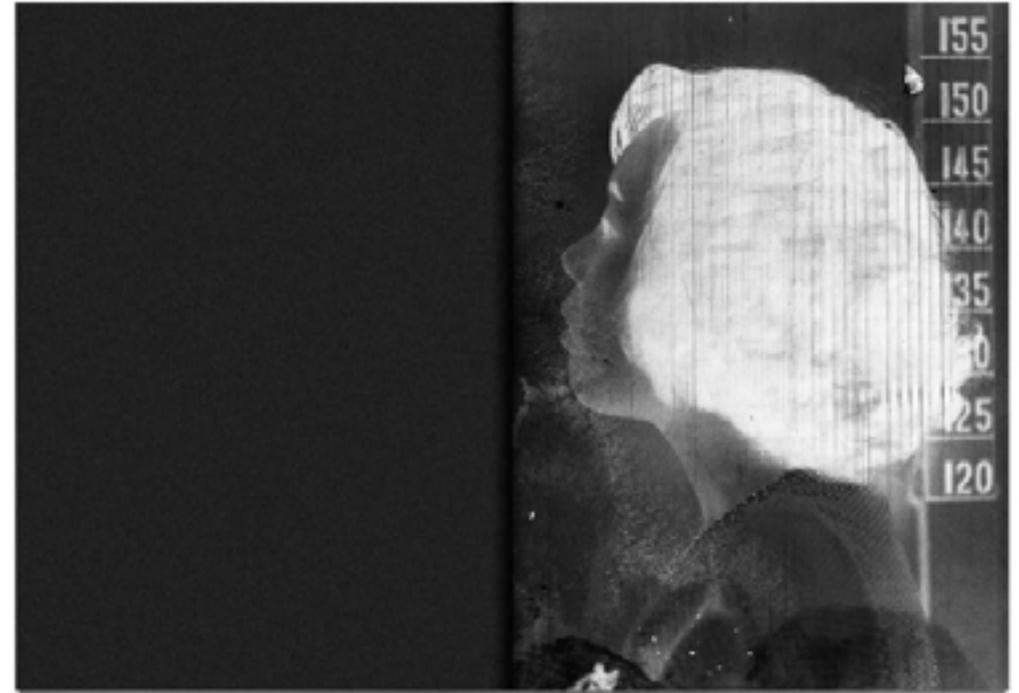
18 x 13 cm / 120 cards /
Hardcover
Tearaway Postcard Book
ISBN: 978-1-7336220-5-9



17 18 19

2019





The series 17 18 19 is drawn from a bag of negative film salvaged from a recycling plant on the outskirts of Beijing in 2010. The bag contained an archive of over 15,000 scratched black and white negatives, shot at one of the city's detention centers between 1991 and 1993. Pocket knives, screwdrivers, shovels, stolen cash, clothing, jewelry and home electronics are placed before the camera ; the photographs clearly present evidence and mugshots of the accused, but they are entirely cut off from any further information. They have survived only as inverted images, trapped on film.

Presented here in their original form as negatives, the camera behaves as an X-ray machine the objects glow in a grey void, creating daunting still lifes of an unexpected kind. Unsettling and beautiful in equal measure, every item these people have left behind, whether a weapon or an object of desire, is preserved like an artifact, a fossil for our examination. The evidence is often displayed alongside a referential three-centimeter ruler where the numbers 17, 18, and 19 appear.

Albeit utilitarian in function and form, the negatives, objects of the passage of time, distance us from the unidentified hors-champ events to which they bear witness. Slowly, compassion, emerging from personal memory, can begin to replace judgment.

Published by VOID in 2019
in an edition of 700 copies
Price: 45€

15 x 20,5 cm / 224 pages /
Hardcover
Printed with silver ink on black
paper

Design by João Linneu
Text by Holly Roussell (English &
Chinese)

Printed by Mas Matbaa, Istanbul
ISBN: 978-618-84341-4-1



Collector's Edition

Limited edition of 50 copies containing a standard edition with fingerprints and signature, 3 unique silver offset prints and one unique 35mm b&w negative from the archive.

Price: 300€

GREAT LEAPS FORWARD

2019

GREAT LEAPS FORWARD





Great Leaps Forward unveils a series of photos drawn from a plastic bag bought in a Beijing flea market in 2016. Sealed tightly with a knot, the bag had settled there unnoticed for many decades. Upon opening the bag, over 300 photos were discovered, taken by an anonymous member of the Xi'an Physical Education University's department of Photography. All the images, meticulously depicting various athletes in action, often defying gravity, were shot on the same field during a bright day of June 1960.

To date, these images are the only photographic record that collector and artist Thomas Sauvin found from the time of The Great Leap Forward (1958-1962). During these years, a chaotic industrialization campaign meant to transform China from an agrarian economy to a new communist regime rooted in industry and large-scale agricultural production led to the deadliest famine of human history. Any photographic documentation from these years remains extremely rare.

In this posthumous collaboration with an anonymous photographer, this publication invites us to contemplate a strangely metaphorical aerial ballet on the margins of history.

Published by Silvermine in 2019
in an edition of 690 copies
Price: 45€

17 x 33 cm / 128 pages
Text in English and Chinese
Design: Julia Studio
Printed by Maestro-Grafiche
Antiga
ISBN: 978-2-9570118-0-3



GLF01



GLF02



GLF03

Collector's Edition

Limited edition of 60 copies including a c-type hand print by Diamantino Labo
Silver Print Enlarger, paper baryta Ilford 1K
Size 14,5 x 30 cm / Choice of 3 images / Limited edition of 20 copies per image
Price: 240€

NO MORE NO LESS

2018



By Kensuke Koike & Thomas Sauvin



Jiazazhi Press (CH)



Skinnerboox (IT)



The (M) éditions (FR)

The series, "No More No Less", born from the encounter between Koike and Sauvin. Silver prints made from the album's original negatives from the collection of Sauvin, were then submitted to Koike's sharp imagination, who, with a simple blade and adhesive tape, deconstructs and reinvents the images. Since the collaboration resulted in such interesting output, it was difficult to accept the idea that No More No Less should end with Koike's completion of the final piece. Koike and Sauvin decided to make not one, but multiple publications. In mid-February 2018, they reached out to Italian publisher Skinnerboox, French publisher the(M) éditions, and Chinese publisher Jiazazhi Press, sending them files of Koike's completed prints, as well as scans of the original album. Providing them with no information besides these visuals, the duo gave all three publishers free reign to do whatever they wanted with the material. There were only two rules: 400 copies had to be ready for the beginning of November 2018, and the publishers could not contact Sauvin or Koike about their concept or design.

Nine months later, Sauvin and Koike arrived at Polycopies during this year's Paris Photo for the grand unveiling of the three books. To their excitement, all three publishers had created phenomenal objects, each one incredibly distinct from the next. The grand reveal was a testament to the importance of collaboration, and to the potential of trust and confidence in joining creative forces.

Shortlisted for the 2019 PhotoBook Awards by Aperture and Paris Photo (Aperture)

By Kensuke Koike & Thomas Sauvin
Published in 2018
Full set: 300€

Jiazazhi Press (CH)
15 x 21 cm / 48 pages / Paperback /
Softcover
in an edition of 400 copies
Skinnerboox (IT)
15 x 20 cm / 76 pages / One folded
sheet + 2 booklets
in an edition of 400 copies
The (M) éditions (FR)
21 x 27 cm / 26 pages / Hardcover
in an edition of 400 copies

XIAN

2016







"Xian" arose from the discovery of a curious folded paper sewing kit that Thomas Sauvin stumbled across in China. He developed the idea of populating this quirky object with faithful reproductions of vintage prints, which belong to the collection he has been acquiring from all over China for several years. Whenever one folds or unfolds the album, the eye and hand move back and forth across the fifty-nine boxes unveiling ninety remarkable prints. These very prints, selected from a vast archive, showcase: mentally disordered persons, coquettish women, amazed tourists and anonymous portraits among other strange celebrities who appear in black and white or in colour. "Xian" is a treasure trove of curiosities, an ideal assemblage of a memory in progress; it does not designate only the couturier's thread, it also reifies the thread of a story, the story of many aspects of Chinese modernity.

Self-published in 2016
in an edition of 200 copies
Next available copy: 123/200
Price: 1200€

25,5 x 40,5 cm / Handmade book
Composed of fifty-nine paper
boxes
made of black folded paper
90 facsimiles of vintage prints,
varying size
Design: Mei Shuzhi

雙喜牌香烟®

UNTIL DEATH DO US PART

2015



吸烟有害健康
尽早戒烟有益健康



«Until Death Do Us Part» focuses on the unexpected role cigarettes play in Chinese weddings. As a token of appreciation, it is customary for the bride to light a cigarette for each and every man invited. The bride and the groom are then invited to play some cigarette-smoking games of an unprecedented ingenuousness. This publication pays homage to a tradition in which love and death walk hand in hand. These photos come from the Beijing Silvermine project, an archive of half a million negatives salvaged over the years from a recycling plant on the edge of Beijing.

Published by Jiazazhi Press
First edition of 1000 copies, 2015
Second edition of 2000 copies, 2016
Third edition of 2000 copies, 2017
Fourth edition of 2000 copies, 2018
Fifth edition of 2000 copies, 2020
Price: 30€

5,30 x 8,30 x 2,10 cm
Hardcover, with a cigarette box
108 pages, paperback

METV

2014



By Thomas Sauvin & Erik Kessels



«METV» is publication made as a collaboration between Thomas Sauvin and Erik Kessels in Beijing. From the many pictures documenting TVs in China, these eight photographs are the best they've ever seen. Found in a market in Beijing, the images show a woman in her late sixties, always in an identical pose. In fact, the only thing that changes is her outfit. Or rather, the only thing that changes is her top, a new colourful jumper in each image. Her trousers are always the same. Even here pinkie finger remains static and strangely angled, in shot after shot.

By Thomas Sauvin & Erik Kessels
Self-published in 2015
in an edition of 300 copies

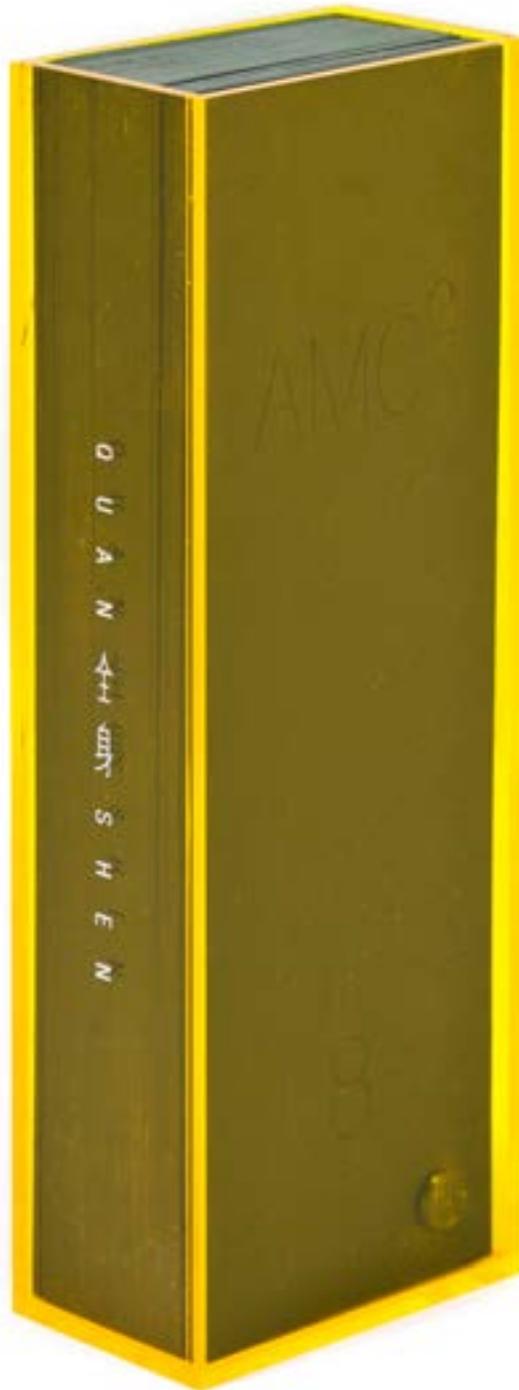
Price: 50€

SOLD OUT

13 x 15 cm / 24 pages

Hardcover

Each copy contains eight prints
inserted by hand into the pages



QUANSHEN

2013



This publication gathers a selection of portraits made in Chinese studios between the thirties and the eighties. The full-length portrait, where the subject is shot head-to-toe in front of a specific background, is as old as portrait photography itself. But in the Chinese case, in order to cut the costs of this type of portrait, photo studios would offer a previously unseen vertical format, in which the frame restricted the subject to standing straight with its arms along the body. This resulted in a silver print, a sort of tiny photographic coffin, with an average size of 7 cm high by 2.5 cm wide, either black and white or hand-colored.

Through these images, we don't discover individuals as they are, but as they wish to be perceived. Each of these portraits contain an element through which the subject asserts his place in society: the soldier and his gun, the sportswoman and her tennis racket, the nurse and her syringe, the revolutionary and his little red book, the peasant and his straw hat, the photographer and his camera, but also the modern woman and her pink purse...

This accidental reunion of 60 anonymous portraits is reminiscent of the archetypal work of August Sander in *Face Of Our Time*: an objective, non-judgemental photograph, through which we look at a society right in the eye.

It is still difficult to stroll through Chinese antique markets without running into these small photographic figurines, which can individually seem strikingly boring. The deeper meaning of these images takes place when they are juxtaposed, revealing fragments of the history of Chinese society, not only its dress codes, but also its behavioral and ideological referentials.

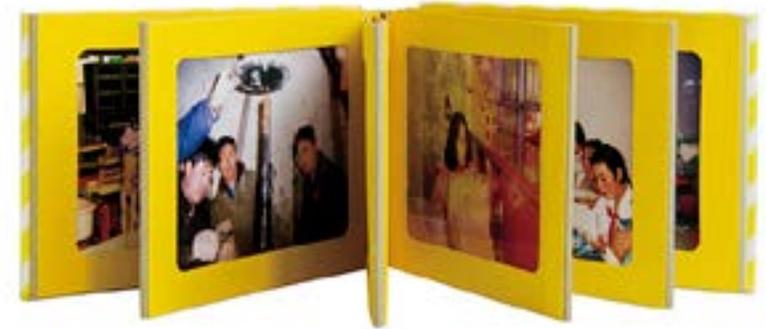
Published by Archive of Modern
Conflict in 2013
in an edition of 1000 copies
Price: 40€

Fan sampler in a PVC box
19,30 x 66 cm / 68 pages
Design: Mei Shuzhi
ISSN 2048-4135

SILVERMINE ALBUMS

2013





«Silvermine» is a set of five photo albums each containing 20 prints. The negatives have been salvaged from a recycling plant on the edge of Beijing, which Thomas Sauvin has been consistently amassing, selecting, classifying, and digitizing since 2009. The «Silvermine» albums offer a unique photographic portrait of the Chinese capital and the lives of its inhabitants covering a period of 20 years – from 1985, when silver film came into widespread use in China, to 2005 when digital photography came to the fore. In these souvenir snapshots taken by anonymous and ordinary Chinese people, we are witnessing the birth of post-socialist China. Each album focuses on a different theme: Blue album: TVs and Fridges; Green album: One and Two; Orange album: Marilyn and Ronald; Pink album: Party and Transvestites; Yellow album: Leisure and Work.

Shortlisted for the Paris Photo Aperture Foundation First Photobook Award, France, 2013

Published by Archive of Modern
Conflict in 2013
in an edition of 200 copies
Price: 450€

SOLD OUT

11 x 7,7cm
Five albums each
containing 20 prints
Design: Mei Shuzhi
ISBN 978-0-9570490-1-7

Envelope series



#1 Fengli
2017



#2 Fengli
2018



#3 Fengli
2019



#4 Fengli
2020



#5 C-H. Bédoué
2020

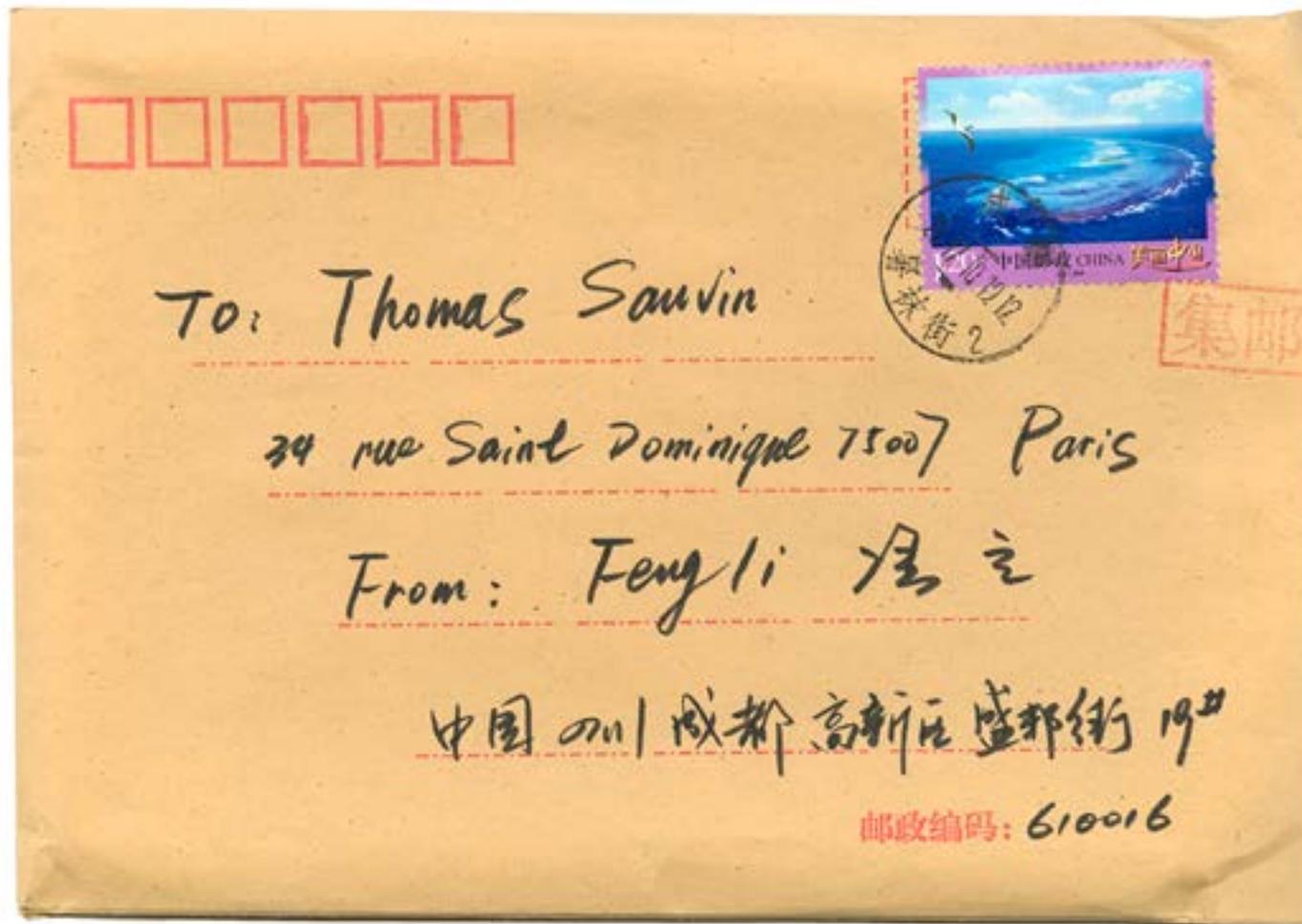


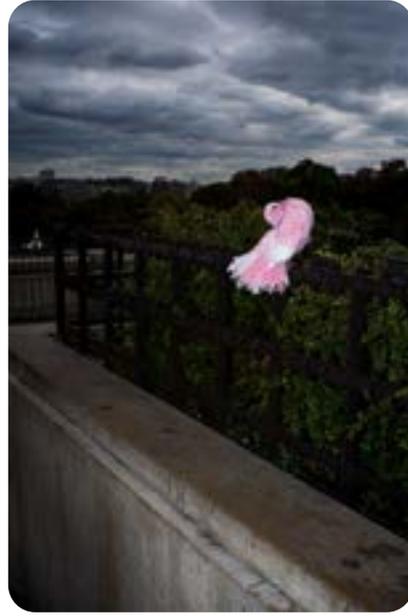
#6 M. Marić
2020

Envelope serie

#1 Fengli - White night in Paris

2017



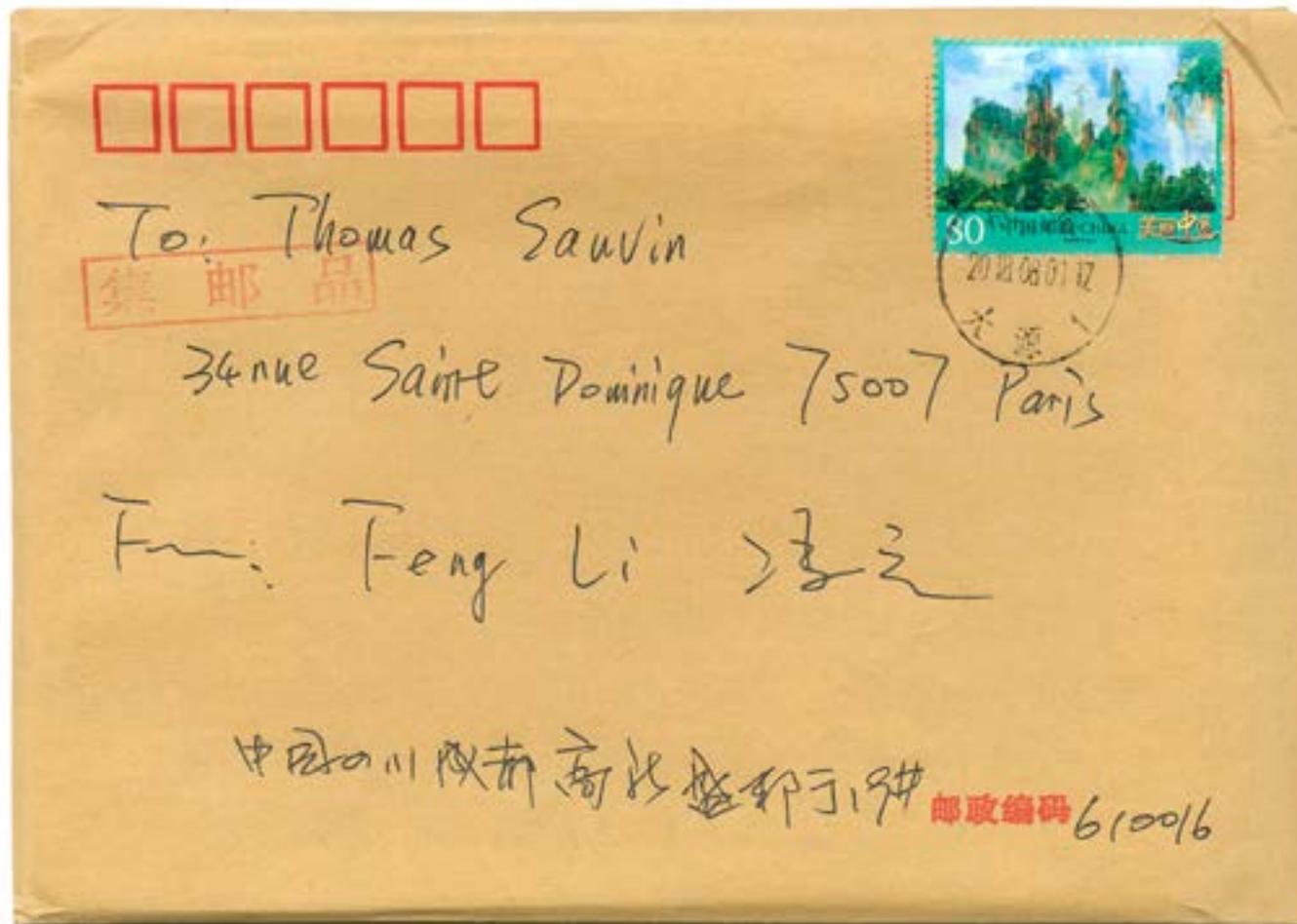


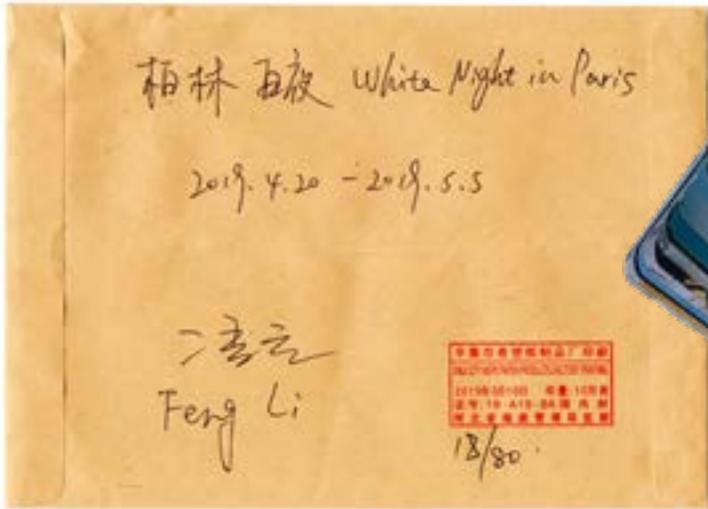
By Fengli
 Published by Silvermine in 2017
 in an edition of 40 copies
 Price: 90€
SOLD OUT

Set of 24 (6''x4'') prints,
 supplied in an envelope signed,
 numbered and mailed from
 Chengdu to Paris
 Dimensions: 17,5 x 12 cm

Envelope serie #2 Fengli - White night in Paris

2018





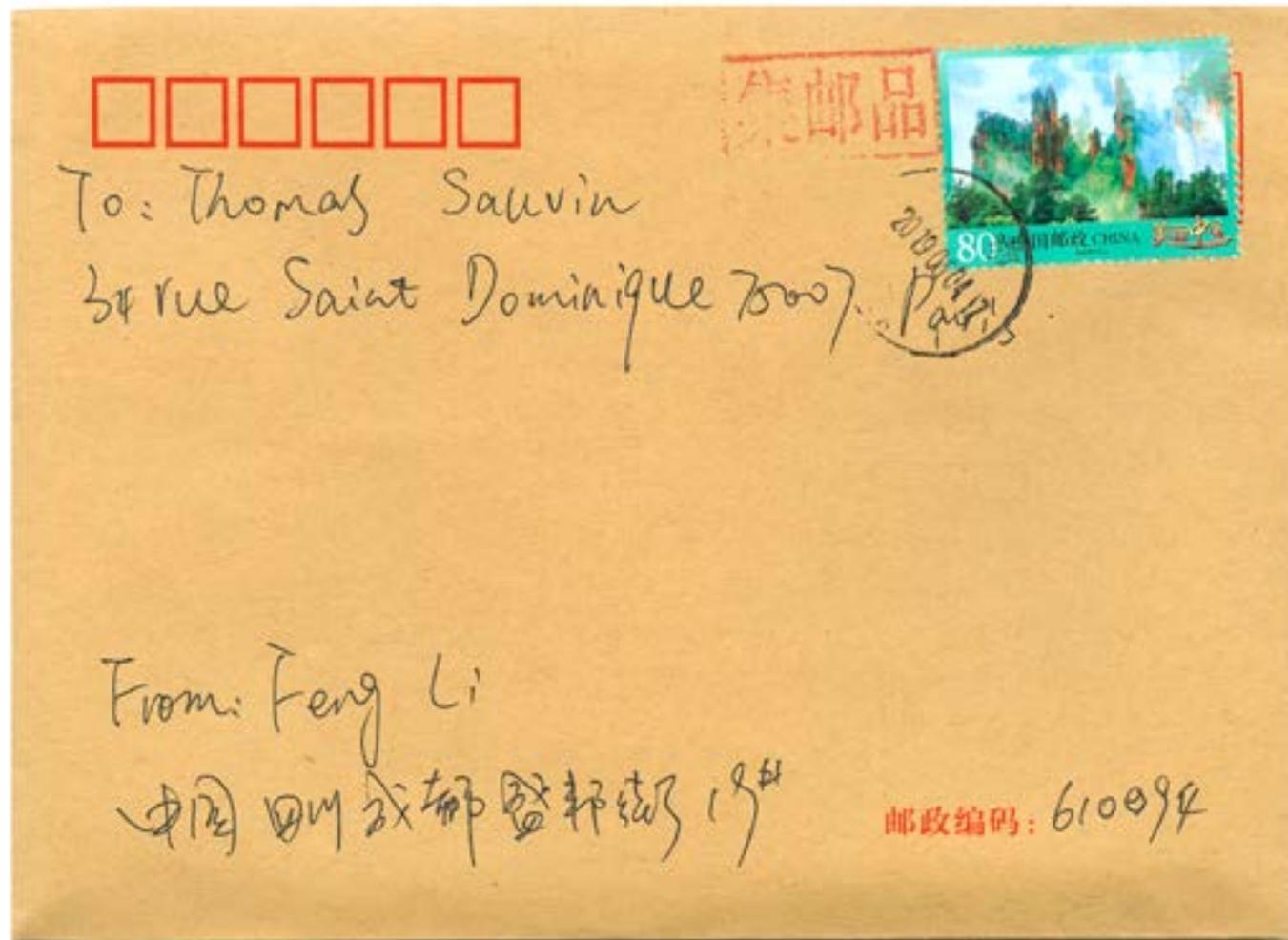
By Fengli
 Published by Silvermine in 2018
 in an edition of 80 copies
 Price: 90€
SOLD OUT

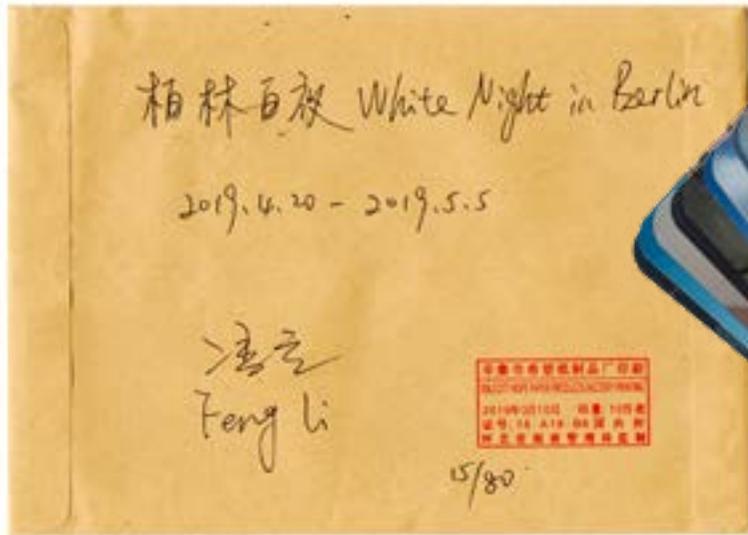
Set of 24 (6''x4'') prints,
 supplied in an envelope signed,
 numbered and mailed from
 Chengdu to Paris
 Dimensions: 17,5 x 12 cm

Envelope serie

#3 Fengli - White night in Berlin

2019



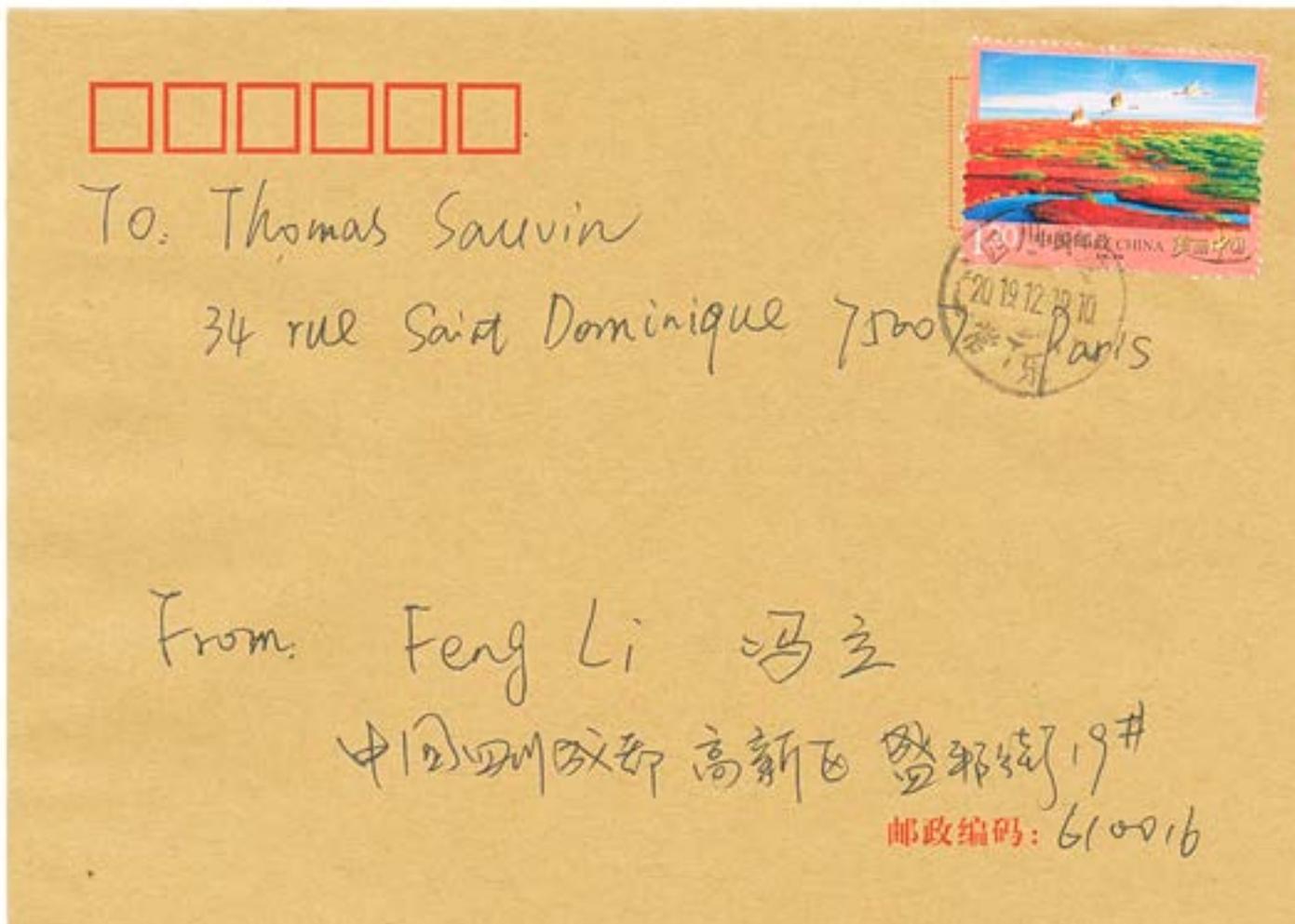


By Fengli
 Published by Silvermine in 2019
 in an edition of 80 copies
 Price: 90€
SOLD OUT

Set of 24 (6''x4'') prints,
 supplied in an envelope signed,
 numbered and mailed from
 Chengdu to Paris
 Dimensions: 17,5 x 12 cm

Envelope serie #4 Fengli - Pig

2020





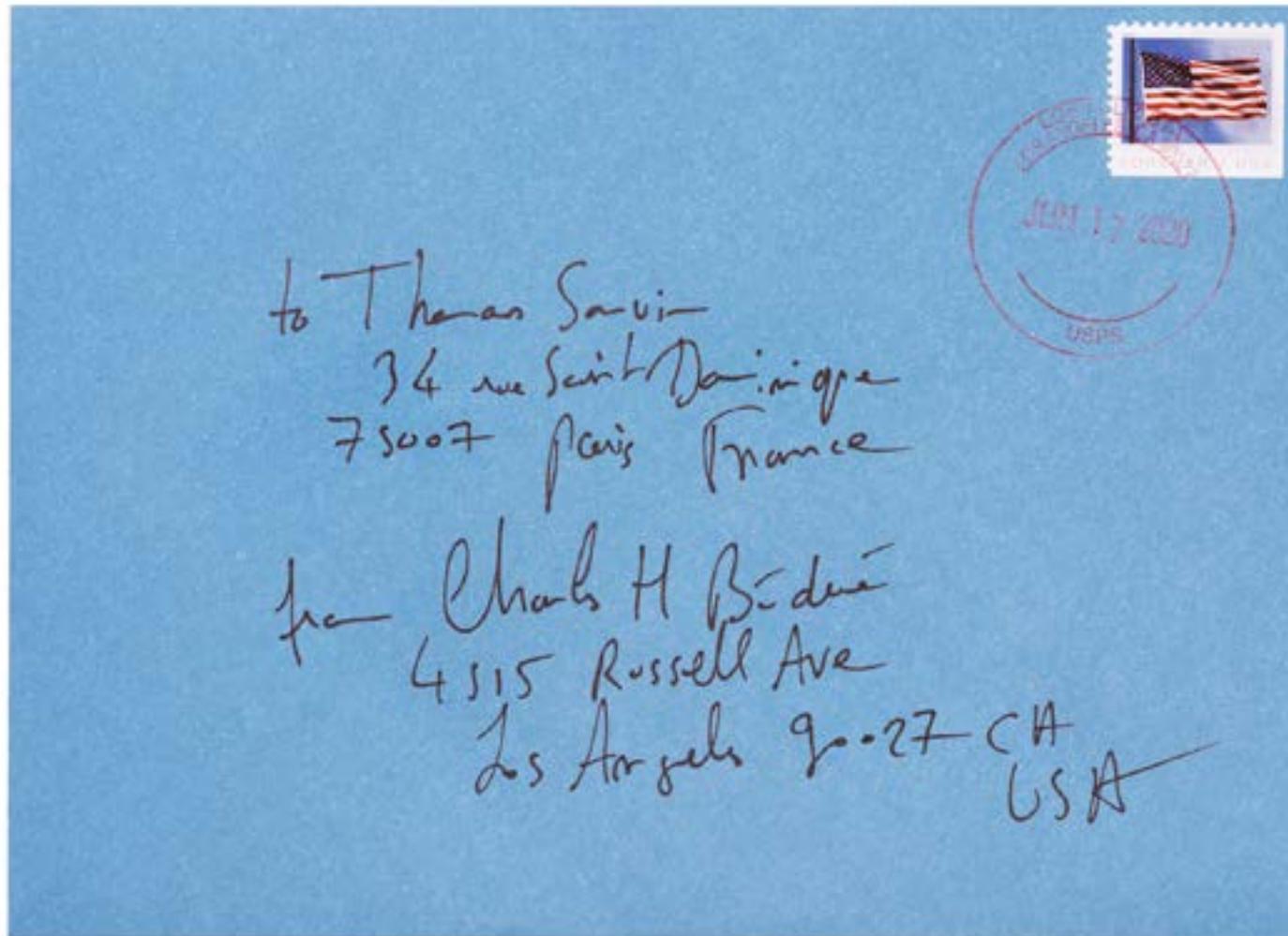
By Fengli
Published by Silvermine in 2020
in an edition of 80 copies
Price: 90€

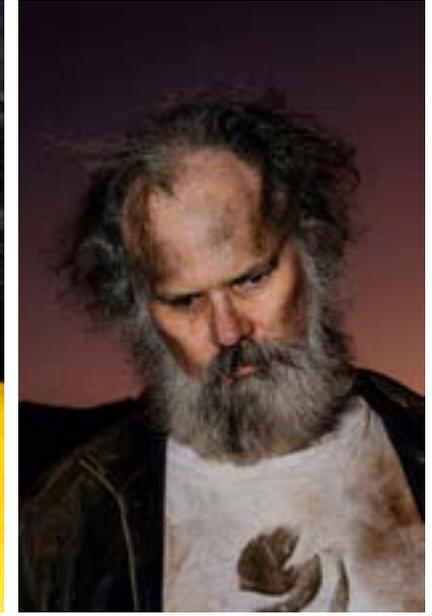
Set of 24 (6''x4'') prints,
supplied in an envelope signed,
numbered and mailed from
Chengdu to Paris
Dimensions: 17,5 x 12 cm

Envelope serie

#5 C-H. Bédué – LA Lockdown

2020





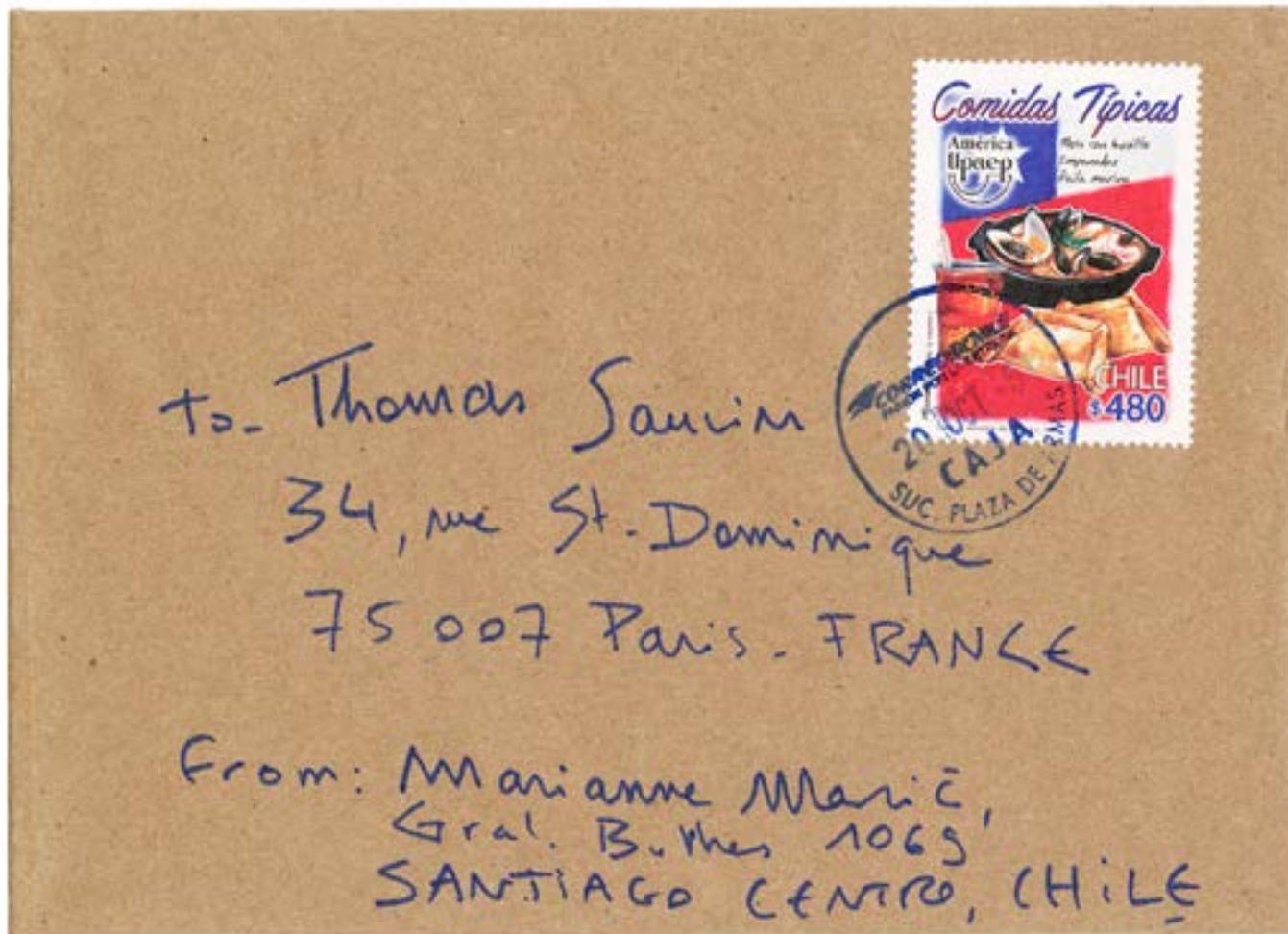
By Charles-Henry Bédoué
Published by Silvermine in 2020
in an edition of 80 copies
Price: 90€

Set of 24 prints (6''x4'')
supplied in an envelope signed,
numbered and mailed from
Los Angeles to Paris
Dimensions: 18,3 x 13,4 cm

It's been three months now since French photographer Charles-Henry Bédoué was locked down in Los Angeles, an infernal paradise infused with Covid19 and the BLM movement. Here is some fresh news from him, in the shape of 24 prints, clearly proving that he doesn't excel in the art of social distancing.

Envelope serie
#6 M. Marić – Last Dance in Santiago

2020





In November 2019, Marianne Marić is invited to the Valparaiso photography festival. When she arrives there, Chile has just fallen into chaos and riots are firing up around the country. Tear gas, gunshots and fires follow one another in an end-of-the-world atmosphere. It is in this context that Marianne Marić and some young women met on the spot during an evening marked by curfew to improvise a strange cathartic ritual on the roof of a building in Santiago. Masked, as a sign of distrust, protection and play, they released the fear and tension accumulated during days of riots and delivered themselves in front of the photographer. These 24 prints reflect the intensity of that night crossed with the motionless smile of the masks, the silent presence of plants and the throbbing bodies of the dancing girls.

By Marianne Marić
Published by Silvermine in 2020
in an edition of 80 copies
Price: 90€

Set of 24 prints (6''x4'')
supplied in an envelope signed,
numbered and from
Santiago de Chile to Paris
Dimensions: 16 x 11,5 cm



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