A night scene of a community gathering in a village. In the foreground, several women are seen from behind, wearing traditional blue and purple Burmese dresses. They are looking towards a group of people in the background. The background group consists of many people, some in traditional clothing and others in modern attire. A few modern light poles with glowing blue and white lights are visible among the people. The scene is illuminated by a warm, reddish-orange light, possibly from a fire or a large lamp. The background features traditional wooden buildings with corrugated metal roofs and some trees.

marc lathuillière

the fluorescent people

+ studio tang daw

*« I am sure Marc Lathuillière's experience is a contribution to the anthropology of globalization. He empowers the people he works with. He places them in situations where they by themselves create the conditions of his dreams. »*

**Marc Augé**, conversation with Pascal Beausse on the exhibition

*The Anthropologist and the Photographer, a dialogue between Marc Augé and Marc Lathuillière,*  
La Friche La Belle de Mai, Marseille, July 2017

# the fluorescent people

(2007-2016)

A tibeto-burman hilltribe settled down in Northern Thailand, the Lisu wear clothes whose fluorescent shades invite us to consider they might not be as traditional as we fancy they are. This simple observation was the starting point of *The Fluorescent People*, a project attempting a critical rereading of ethnographic photography. Built on participative situations, it mixes two usually opposed worlds: the inhabitants of a remote village, Ban Sam Kula, are confronted with an invasion of strange installations made of colourful mass consumption products. Pvc pipes, plastic balls and jelly pots design a futuristic outer space in which the Lisu pose or interact, dressed in their daily flashy attires.

Though their society experiences the mutations brought about by globalization, making them our true contemporaries, « exotic » minorities like the Lisu are still depicted by photography as if they were living in an indeterminate past. A framing in time and space akin to a reservation, this imagery is still pervasive in media and museums alike. In order to challenge it, Marc Lathuillière uses photography, not as an archive-producing machine documenting a passing way of life, but as an interactive tool to project the Lisu in the fictional future to which they aspire.

The product of ten years of exchanges and weeks of solitary immersion in the village of Ban Sam Kula (Chiang Rai province), this project associates staged and performed photographs with pieces accounting for the artist's participative interventions during the 2010 and 2016 Lisu New years: a performance, a fluorescent lights sculpture, and *Studio Tang Daw*, an open air photo studio. The project also includes tridimensional pieces: a led-lit headdress and a woman's robe transformed with the help of a local dressmaker.





*Anakot (The Fortune Teller)*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*The Fall*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*The Hunt*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*Fashion*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*The Meal*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*The Shop*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*Communication*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010





*The Midnight Dragon*  
Lambda print, 60x90 cm, 2010



*The Anthropologist and the Photographer – a dialogue between Marc Augé and Marc Lathuillière*  
La Friche La Belle de Mai, Contemporary Art Spring, Marseille, production Centre photographique Marseille, 2017





*Situation #1 - The Sky Fire Tree*  
Wall of projected images, 2 mn 30, 2010





*The Anthropologist and the Photographer – a dialogue between Marc Augé and Marc Lathuillière*  
La Friche La Belle de Mai, Marseille, 2017





*Situation #2 - Exorcising Ghosts*  
Slideshow of 36 images documenting a performance, 2010



MARC AUGÉ

<sup>64</sup> C'est le sentiment que les artistes contemporains jouent formellement vis-à-vis du monde dans lequel ils vivent, dans lequel nous vivons, et dont les bouleversements accélérés ébranlent les idées reçues et les références admises. Un rôle comparable à celui des responsables traditionnels des activités rituelles : c'est pourquoi leur rencontre avec les anthropologues, lorsqu'elle se produit, ne tient peut-être pas du hasard. Comme les agents du rite, ils éprouent un léger décalage par rapport aux évidences que l'on croyait acquises. [...] Lorsque des artistes, aujourd'hui, s'interrogent sur leur identité [...], sur le sens de la filiation ou celui de la relation, ils retrouvent des questions universelles (car c'est toujours du côté des questions qu'on rencontre l'universel). Mais, à la différence des ensembles culturels étudiés par les ethnologues, leurs questions sont explicites et leurs réponses incertaines. Leur originalité se situe du côté du parcours qu'ils accomplissent pour retrouver ces questions. Si leur parcours apparaît alors à celui de l'anthropologue, c'est dans la mesure où ils interrogent le monde qu'ils ont sous les yeux et traversent les évidences qui nous entourent sans s'y arrêter ni s'y laisser prendre. Souvent, ces évidences, justement, ont maintenant la forme d'images. Ce délit est considérable : comment rendre compte par l'image, ou la mise en scène, d'un monde qui se construit dans et par l'image, un monde où plus que jamais nous croyons connaître quand nous reconnaissons. Comment mettre en image la société de l'image ? Ce que les artistes adressent aujourd'hui à leur public, qui ne les entend pas toujours, c'est une sorte d'appel à besoins, une invitation à prendre la parole pour proposer leurs réponses. [...] [L'artiste, comme l'anthropologue, découvre le culturel et l'artifice sous le masque de la nature. <sup>65</sup>

*Anthropologie et le monde global, 2013*



*The Anthropologist and the Photographer, 2017*  
Text by Marc Augé, *Exorcising Ghosts* slideshow





*Les Fluorescents*, Museum d'Histoire naturelle, La Rochelle, *Ithaque* art walk, 2012  
*Artefact #1 - The Jelly Dress* (left), *Situation #1, The Sky Fire Tree* (right)





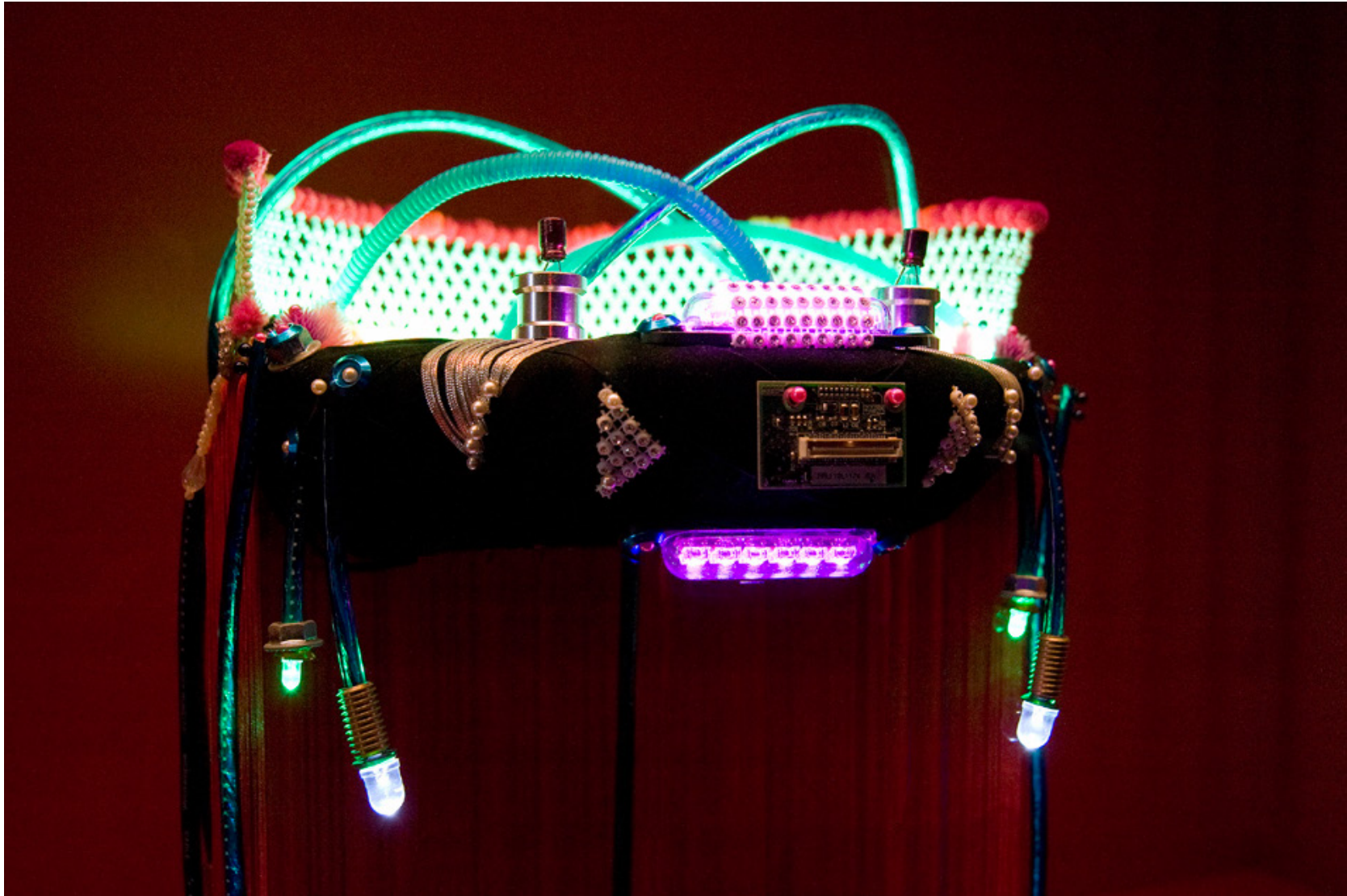
*Artefact #1 - The Jelly Dress*

Lisu dress, jelly pots, produced with seamstress Asw-ma Ta-mi, 2010



*Artefact #2- The Communication Headdress / The Fluorescent People*, Museum Siam, 2011  
Lisu headdress, speaker cables, LEDs, mechanical parts, computer circuits, 12 V adapter, 30 x 30 x 50 cm, 2010





*Artefact #2- The Communication Headdress*

Lisu headdress, speaker cables, LEDs, mechanical parts, computer circuits, 12 V adapter, 30 x 30 x 50 cm, 2010

## **studio tang daw**

(studio from the stars) / 2010-2016

For the Lisu New Year in 2010 and 2016, Marc Lathuillière offered the villagers of Ban Sam Kula to have their picture taken in a makeshift open air studio: they were invited to pose in front of a star stud cloth, a fabric then highly fashionable amongst the Lisu. The portraits document the evolutions in their clothing, as they adapt their traditional outfits to global trends, showing a real sense of style in the way they mix them with western ones.

One of the many hill tribes who migrated from Southern China to the north of Thailand in the last century, the Lisu identify themselves with their elaborate and colorful attires. Adjusting to new times and climates, they shifted from leather and fur outfits to richly embroidered cotton ones, and in the last decades to brightly coloured synthetic fabrics. Making this ability to develop a hybrid modernity visible, the photographs present them not as natives stuck in the past, but as contemporaries connected to our networks.

On two occasions, *The Anthropologist and the Photographer* solo exhibition at La Friche La belle de Mai in Marseille in 2017, and the *French Connection* group show at the Bangkok University Gallery (BUG) in 2018, the series was shown as a tridimensional cloud of images on a wall. Suggesting how the Lisu visual identity is now influenced by internet and social medias, the installation attempts to reverse the ideology underlying the imagery of the ethnic other: here, a so-called “traditional” community is depicted as a mutant, almost extra-terrestrial people (*manhut tang daw*, in Thai).





*Studio Tang Daw # 1 / The Anthropologist and the Photographer* , La Friche La Belle de Mai, Marseille, 2017  
Two 120 x 180 cm blue back posters, 28 inkjet prints including six mounted on dibond, 250 x 1000 cm





*From the Stars # E 4*  
2010





*From the Stars # B 103*  
2010





*From the Stars # D 25 (Jaem)*  
2010





*From the Stars # 74*  
2016





*Studio Tang Daw #1*  
*The Anthropologist and the Photographer*, La Friche La Belle de Mai, 2017



*French Connection*, Bangkok Photo Festival, Bangkok University Gallery, 2018



**documents**  
(2007-2016)



*Thanawart's Dragon*  
Various sizes, 2010





*Building the Dragon*  
Various sizes, 2010





*Avanity*  
Various sizes, 2010





*Approaching Avanity*  
Various sizes, 2010



*The Anthropologist and the Photographer – a dialogue between Marc Augé and Marc Lathuillière, La Friche La Belle de Mai, Marseille, 2017*  
Views of the document walls



## marc lathuillière

A photographer and multimedia artist, Marc Lathuillière explores the representation of contemporary societies in their roots and mutations. Shaped by his studies in Political Sciences, his series often show strong anthropological contents, and are developed through immersions in national or local cultures. Probing cultural boundaries, his approach also plays with the limits of representation: through interventions into images (masks, lights...) or through installations modifying the way we perceive them (projections, mirror effects, image-text associations...).

Since the beginning of his career in 2004, he has shown his work extensively in France and abroad: in 2018 at Bangkok Photo, Photoszene in Cologne, Galerie Binome in Paris, and in 2017, at Paris Photo, the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg, Le Creux de L'enfer contemporary art center in Thiers and La Friche La Belle de Mai in Marseille. In 2012, with the *Ithaque* project, he invested with photographs and installations four museums and monuments of the city of La Rochelle. Other important exhibitions to date: Austerlitz Train Station in 2014, Museum Siam in Bangkok in 2011, California State University in San Bernardino in 2009, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Lotte Art Gallery in Busan and the French May in Hong Kong in 2004.

Based in Paris but a frequent traveller to other continents, Marc Lathuillière has also developed independent curatorial activities. In 2014, he curated Michel Houellebecq's first large exhibition for the Month of Photography in Paris. He is also a writer, presently working on an essay on globalization and landscape photography for which he was in residence at the Jan Michalski Foundation in 2017. His work is featured in important collections: FRAC Auvergne, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Neuflyze Vie Foundation, Musée Français de la Photographie and Musée de la Photographie André Villers.

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