

# THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AND THE PHOTOGRAPHER

A dialogue between Marc Augé and Marc Lathuillière

Within our globalized world, the Other, the Foreign, will never be the same. How can we understand and picture it then? How does it modify our own identity? At the heart of Marc Augé's thoughts — particularly known for his texts on globalization and the Non-Places — those questions have influenced the work of the artist Marc Lathuillière.

Orchestrated by the writings and video works by the anthropologist, the exhibition reveals the link with the artist in the form of a one-on-one with Musée national — a photographic series about France — and the stagings, portraits, and performances that the artist produced with the Lisu tribe in Thailand.

## A meeting on identity

According to Marc Augé, our 'Supermodernity' era is characterized by a shrinking planet and a media staging that slowly replaces our living spaces by 'Non-Places': circulation spaces dedicated to communication and consumption such as airports, superstores, and social media. Within this context, what does our relationship to others, to ourselves, and to our own identity become?



*Exorcising Ghosts,*  
(From a slideshow : 36 images of a performance,  
Serie : *The Fluorescent People*, 2007-2010)

Marc Lathuillière has been claiming those issues raised by Marc Augé as his very own from the first stages of his work. Those issues regulate the exhibition and create a dialogue between *Musée national* - encyclopaedic picture of a France rooted in its 'places of memory' - and *The Fluorescent People* and *Studio Tang Daw* - two photographic series produced in a Thai village, staging the world changes and the relationship to the Other. A one-on-one show orchestrated by texts and videos by Marc Augé. The exhibition explores the process of this identity/alterity construction through the image. Foreigners photographed as our contemporaries are confronted to French people pictured in their indigenous role.

Marc Lathuillière - who shares the critical reflections of Marc Augé on the 'spectacle of the world' - prefers a more fictional reinterpretation of the trip reporting to a mere documentary approach. Thus, he manages to subvert the political and identity stereotypes that structure the representation of modern societies. His approach is rooted in the mission that Marc Augé assigns to the anthropologist: to observe what changes in societies rather than what disappears. For Marc Augé, humanity is not dying, it is under construction.

## **The anthropologist: Marc AUGÉ**

One of France's most eminent anthropologist and ethnologist, particularly for his studies on globalization and his theory on the notion of Non-Places, Marc Augé is Director of Studies at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris, which he chaired from 1985 to 1995 and where he co-funded the Centre for Contemporary Worlds Anthropology.

He flew many missions in Africa, mostly in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, but also in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela...). Since the mid 1980s, he diversified his fields of observation by including his immediate environment (France, Italy, Spain...), meanwhile directing documentaries and literary pieces. Marc Augé wrote more than forty works («Genius of Paganism», «In the Metro», «Non-Places», «Time in ruins», «The Future»...) widely translated abroad. In those works he develops a wide reflection on the image societies create about themselves in these times of globalization. Transcending the field of anthropology, his concepts - among which 'Supermodernity' and 'Non-Places' - are widely spread within the field of contemporary creation, from photography to urbanism. His interest for the image gave birth to a written collaboration with the photographer Gabriele Basilico, of whom he commented the exhibitions about the urban transformations. He recently wrote an essay entitled «The Future» published by Albin Michel, and is a guest lecturer throughout the world.

## **The photographer: Marc LATHUILLIÈRE**

The work of Marc Lathuillière examines the representation of contemporary societies through their origins/fate relation. His studies of political science led him to conduct projects with an anthropological dimension in France and Asia. Questioning the cultural frontiers, his approach challenges the limits of representation: by means of visual interventions of the artist (maskings, lights) and their reception by the public (screenings, mirrors), but also with performances and installations.

Since 2004, his work has been presented in many solo shows at L'Imagerie in Lannion (2016), the Gare d'Austerlitz (2014), with Le Centre Intermondes for a program which invested four museums and national monuments of La Rochelle (2012), the Museum Siam in Bangkok (2011), and the French May in Hong Kong (2004). He has participated in several group shows, among which *L'oeil du collectionneur* at Musée d'art moderne et contemporain of Strasbourg, *Self-Reflection* during Kolga Tbilisi Photo and Photoszene (Cologne) this year, *Face à faces* at Galerie Eric Mircher in 2008, and *Hype Gallery* at Palais de Tokyo in 2004.

In 2014, he led with Valérie Fougeirol a project entitled *Le produit France* during the Mois de la Photo in Paris: a dialogue between the first photographic exhibition by Michel Houellebecq - which he curated - and his own solo show at Galerie Binôme, emphasized with a text by the author.

The series *Musée national* initiated a Tour de France with the shows, in 2017, *L'anthropologue et le photographe* in Marseilles and *Fabrique nationale* at Creux de l'enfer, the contemporary art center of Thiers.

The photographs by Marc Lathuillière are part of many collections, among which the BNF and the Neufville Foundation.





*La ruelle végétalisée, Arnaud Bedos, informaticien, Le Panier, Marseille (Bouches-du-Rhône) - Série Musée National, 2004-2017*  
*(The vegatal lane, Arnaud Bedos, computer scientist, Le Panier, Marseille (Bouches-du-Rhône) - Serie National Museum, 2004-2017)*

## **Identity: «Musée national» (National museum)**

*Musée National* - an ongoing long-term project initiated in 2004 - is an inventory, consisting so far of seven hundred portraits of people from all backgrounds, all of them wearing the same mask and photographed in their living condition everywhere in France. The apparatus establishes a critical view on French people's relation to their places of memory. The mask highlights and questions the off-face representation: costume, furniture, architecture, landscape, professional or domestic moves.

It expresses the movement of 'museumization' on display in the French society, as well as the more universal role of the image in the classification of identities. It is the photographic translation of a world spectacle as analyzed by Marc Augé in his texts.

As part of a residency program at the Photographic Center of Marseilles, Marc Lathuillière started in 2016 a new chapter of *Musée National*. He realized portraits with masks in the Panier and Joliette popular neighborhoods where an urban reclassification - including the establishment of cultural venues such as the MuCEM - is generating a gentrification process. The exhibited portraits provide an opportunity for Marc Augé to comment on the 'spectacular' evolutions of our metropolises, and on the influence of tourism on our identities.



## Alterity: a Lisu village

«Today, the planet has shrunk; information and images circulate readily, and because of this the others' mythic dimension is fading. (...) The other stripped of the prestige of his exoticism - of a belief in exoticism - is simply a foreigner, often feared more for his proximity than his difference.»

Marc Augé, *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds*, Aubier, 1994.

According to Marc Augé, within the globalized world the 'other' changes: it resists the uniformisation by recreating differences through the hybridization of their traditional culture with the global standards. To take account of those mutations leads the anthropologist to address as his contemporary the one who used to be defined as indigenous.

Marc Lathuillière embraces this approach in the photographic series he has been working on since 2007 during his trip to Ban Sam Kula, a village of the Lisu minority in the North of Thailand. The artist explains that it was about «dealing with the representation of the 'other', in their projection into the future rather than in their traditions». It is the purpose of the two series which have been realized with the active participation of the inhabitants: *The Fluorescent People* and *Studio Tang Daw*. Both series mock the ethnological photography, whether with the documentation of the everyday life and its rituals in the first series, or with studio portraits in costume of the inhabitants in the second one.



From the stars #E4  
Serie Studio Tang Daw, 2010-2016

## LES ATELIERS DE L'IMAGE: Photographic Center of Marseille

Initiated in 1996 in the Panier neighborhood, Les Ateliers de l'Image has settled in a former printing plant at La Joliette in 2015, becoming the Photographic Center of Marseille. His rehabilitation in 2017 provide Marseille with a venue dedicated to photography. International art center, education in the visual image, resource center, artists residency, it is devoted to the exhibition, experimentation, hybridation, sharing, discovery, education, His artistic line is to place the photographic image at the heart of a set of links and reflections with other artistic practices, as well as human and social sciences.

[www.ateliers-image.fr/](http://www.ateliers-image.fr/)