

# DRY LIGHTS

A FILM BY

XAVIER CHASSAING



ANTIVJ is a visual label

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*Dry Lights* is an experimental film that lies somewhere between a site-specific installation and a performance, where choreographed lights meet organic landscapes.

It is independent artist Xavier Chassaing's first fully computer-generated project which began in 2013 when he was invited by the visual label Antivj to Proyecta Festival at the ethnobotanical garden in Oaxaca, Mexico. For the occasion, several artists on the Antivj label conceived of four site-specific installations, including [Onion Skin](#) and [The Ark](#), which were inspired by the garden's vast spaces and which acted as the starting point for *Dry Lights*.

Using Oaxaca's dense and varied vegetation as a living canvas, the artists created an imaginary journey experienced by navigating through the different sound and light artworks installed in the garden. An hour-long night walk through cacti - an illuminated, dream-like exploration - was intentionally disorienting, allowing visitors to lose themselves, consumed by the different artworks. Joining the experience, Chassaing spent a week filming, absorbing the complexity of this special environment to subsequently infuse *Dry Lights*. Rising to the technical challenge of creating the foundation for this 3D film almost entirely on his own, Chassaing partnered with musician Thomas Vaquié to set the stage for a singular universe to emerge.



## Credits

Producers: Nicolas Boritch, Xavier Chassaing.

Executive producers: Antivj, Mathematic.tv, Xavier Chassaing, Guillaume Marien, Proyecta.

Xavier Chassaing: Editing, Lighting, Clarisse rendering, Compositing, Environment TD designer, SFX.

Thomas Vaquié: Music, Sound design.

Dor Shamir: Artistic Director

Xavier Leconte: Houdini Artist, Compositing

Thomas Van Maele: Houdini Artist

Ilana Shamoon: Artistic adviser

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Xavier Chassaing's particular manner of observing his surroundings, as evidenced in his 2009 debut *Scintillation*, gave way to *Dry Lights*, a four-minute fantastical trip through an imaginary electric desert of cacti and canyons. As viewers' eyes move from hidden caves to lonely cliffs along pulsating rivers of light and energy, an environmental choreography occurs. Moving without a destination in the dead hours of night, mesmerising, intermittent apparitions illuminate their surroundings, allowing personal narratives to breed. Chassaing brings nature to life to reveal the borderline relationship between the visible and the hidden, the real and the imaginary. "Meditation and self-hypnosis are central to my work," he says. "When working through an idea, it is like trying to sleep when you have a fever: the same dream or nightmare repeats again and again, but eventually a lot comes from that; our dreams encompass visions and concepts."

This in-between dimension is characteristic of Chassaing's work, where fabricated universes remain closely connected to the physical world. Carefully selected visual references prevent viewers from perceiving the works simply as psychedelic environments; it is not the final images that are abstract but perhaps the situation itself. Through his realistic 3D construction of space, he suggests that surrealistic fantasies can exist in real life. In the case of *Dry Lights*, this was made possible through the use of Clarisse IFX, software by Isotropix that allows one to render trillions of polygons instantly without knowledge of engineering or mathematics.



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Like an imaginary city flickering in the dark, *Dry Lights* beacons fragments of vague memories - faded moments, experiences, and topographies. A world in an erratic state of flux that seems to evade any grasp of clear control plays host to constantly alternating physical and mental landscapes. Xavier Chassaing's visions are anchored in his childhood in the French countryside, where he spent a lot of time in the forest. The boredom that ensued invited imaginary worlds as tools to combat this monotony. Tricking the mind was a daily occurrence, and led him to eventually become a magician. He utilizes his flair for illusion in the immersive desert land of *Dry Lights*, invigorating a place often associated with the absence or negation of living things. "I literally spent a year and a half alone in a cold desert at night trying to bring billions of cacti to life in an intricate choreography. And with 3D rendering, nothing exists on its own, there are no happy accidents. I had to navigate through a lot of painfully disappointing images before getting to what I love about 3D – its endless potential for creation."



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**Project page:** [www.antivj.com/drylights](http://www.antivj.com/drylights)

**Photos:** [http://www.antivj.com/press/dry\\_lights/photos](http://www.antivj.com/press/dry_lights/photos)

# XAVIER CHASSAING

## BIOGRAPHY

Xavier Chassaing (b. 1975, Toulouse, France) is a self-taught video artist who started to experiment with chemicals and electronics at the age of 8.

Having suffered a serious accident at the age of thirteen that eventually led him to quit school, he became a professional illusionist at 16. Several years later, he moved to Toronto and worked as a graphic designer, simultaneously developing an artistic practice grounded in experimental videos. When he returned to France in 2004, he continued this exploration and released *Scintillation*, his first major artistic video, in 2009. In parallel, he started working as a commercial director based in Paris, mainly for luxury brands.

As a viewer, Chassaing is passionate about painting, photography and video works that explore the aesthetic found in real life. However, his own practice is rooted in the invention and construction of imagined worlds that he is subsequently able to capture through his virtual lens, like a photographer in new territory.

Previous work by Xavier Chassaing:  
*Scintillation*, 2009



*Scintillation* is an experimental film made up of 35 000 photographs that combines an innovative mix of stop-motion and live projection mapping techniques.

<https://vimeo.com/3114617>

# THOMAS VAQUIÉ

## BIOGRAPHY

Musician and composer Thomas Vaquié (France - 1982) dedicates most of his time composing music and sound design for moving image, in particular for Cinema and documentary.

Over the last 8 years he has specialised in music experimentation for audiovisual work with the Antivj visual label, creating site-specific pieces for France's Centre Pompidou Metz designed by Shigeru Ban, the Old Port of Montreal's metallic conveyor tower, in Songdo (South Korea's futurist city project), a permanent piece in Poland's Hala Stulecia (Unesco listed 70m diameter concrete dome).

Thomas also creates very modern compositions for immersive audiovisual installations (Onion Skin, 3Destruct, Light Sculptures v2 and Cityscape 2095 projects). With a strong sense of composition and narrative (he has co-directed certain projects with Antivj visual artists), sound designer skills and a capacity to project an image sonically, Thomas produces striking, emotional and physical pieces and tries to extend visual experiences into physical ones.

Previous work by Thomas Vaquié:



- Installation work

3Destruct: [http://antivj.com/3Destruct\\_v2/](http://antivj.com/3Destruct_v2/)

Onion Skin: <http://antivj.com/onionskin/>

Cityscape 2095: <http://antivj.com/cityscape/>

- Site specific work

Paleodictyon: <http://antivj.com/paleodictyon/>

Omicron: <http://antivj.com/O/>

St Gervais: [http://antivj.com/st\\_gervais/](http://antivj.com/st_gervais/)

Tour des convoyeurs: [http://antivj.com/mutek\\_09/](http://antivj.com/mutek_09/)

# ANTIVJ

## A VISUAL LABEL

ANTIVJ is a visual label initiated by a group of European artists whose work is focused on the use of projected light and its influence on our perception.

Clearly stepping away from standard formats, artists on the Antivj label create immersive experiences, providing to the audience a senses challenging experience.

Antivj was originally created by Yannick Jacquet, Joanie Lemercier, Olivier Ratsi and Romain Tardy around 2006. Thomas Vaquié has been composing music for most projects since 2008, with visual artist/creative coder Simon Geilfus joining in in 2009.

The label was co-directed by Joanie Lemercier and Nicolas Boritch until 2010, and is since then being managed by Nicolas Boritch.



Director:

*Nicolas Boritch*

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