



BURMA



NEVER



STOPPED



DREAMING

**RANGOON**

STORIES OF **BURMESE**

**COCOON**

**BUTTERFLIES**

ANNE MURAT BRICE RICHARD



# RANGOON COCOON



Headlines claim, Burma is a land of blood and tears.  
A land of raised fists against raised batons.  
A land scarred by cyclones and drug trade.

And yet, Burma is also a land of creation, innovation, inspiration. A cocoon where a thousand metamorphoses take place and a thousand butterflies take flight - rock stars and intellectuals, journalists and bar owners, high tech monks and transsexuals, contemporary artists and daredevil entrepreneurs. Even caught in a nightmare, Burma never stops dreaming.

Filmmaker Anne Murat and photographer Brice Richard captured a glimpse of that little known side of Burma. Through 66 interviews and portraits of social, intellectual, religious and artistic pioneers, they bring forth the image of a country not chained to the past, but soaring towards the future.

More than a tribute to the enduring spirit of the Burmese people, "*Rangoon Cocoon – Stories of Burmese Butterflies*" illustrates how the faintest flapping of wings can herald the most profound changes.

## **BRICE RICHARD** PHOTOGRAPHER

Brice started his photographic career in Shanghai, quarantined in the city by the SARS epidemic. His first work focused on the destruction of Shanghai's slums, and the life of Chinese coal miners & migrants.

A graduate of Sciences Po Paris and Johns Hopkins SAIS, Brice joined the World Bank in 2006 as an economist and a photographer. Mandated to capture stories of poverty, he traveled through India from 2006 to 2009. His images were exhibited at the Bank, some permanently. His latest work, *Rangoon Cocoon*, has already been published in a national newspaper and exhibited in Paris.

## **ANNE MURAT** FILMMAKER

Anne studied Foreign Languages in 3 different countries and graduated from Sciences Po Paris in 2003. She worked for the French national centre of cinematography (CNC), before embracing a directing career.

Besides shooting corporate films and editing for TV channels, Anne directed one feature documentary on the rise and fall of a theatre company, and several video reports on daily life in Asia & Africa. To Anne, documentary is a life's work, a personal calling, a way to capture reality through the life & experiences of the people encountered.

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# WHAT IS OUR ADDED VALUE

## 1. RAW MATERIAL

The objective of Rangoon Cocoon is to provide a richer, more complex portrait of Burma - to highlight the stories of Burmese people who, in spite of the regime, have found spaces of freedom to create, innovate and care for each other.

To achieve our goal, we decided to approach the country not from its politics, but from its people, by conducting interviews with a variety of stakeholders. The questions were simple, and open: who are you? What do you do? What are your dreams? Your victories? Your frustrations?

After 3 months of research and networking, we set off to Burma in June 2009 for a 28 day photo/video shooting session in Yangon, Mandalay and the countryside around Bago. In a month we collected:

- 40 hours of videos
- 15,000 pictures
- 66 interviews

The interviewees were selected to cover a wide range of age, activities, background and gender, so as to provide as rich a sample as possible (though focused on urban areas). Interviews include:



### ARTISTS & ART DEALERS

*25 interviews*

- painters
- photographers
- poets
- cartoonists
- movie directors
- rap/rock singers
- violinists
- gallery owners
- hip hop producers
- actor

### ENTREPRENEURS & INTELLECTUALS

*23 interviews*

- vegetable sellers
- rickshaw drivers
- language students
- poli sci student
- bar owner
- studio owner
- language school owner
- music school owner
- journalists / editors
- think tank leader

### VOLUNTEERS & NGO LEADERS

*18 interviews*

- transsexual / gay NGO leader
- Karen NGO leader
- NGO beneficiaries
- head monks
- volunteer teachers
- nurse at a sanatorium
- international NGO managers
- young volunteers

Besides interviews, the videos and pictures captured a wide array of daily life scenes, including, among others, a night market, a rock concert, an art exhibition, a choir rehearsal, a meditation center, a convent, a monastery hospital, a Chinlon competition and a night soccer game. As such, *Rangoon Cocoon* provides a **wealth of information** and images on **daily life in modern Burma**, as well as **the changes** that the country is currently experiencing.

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## 2. CREATIVE CONTENT

The richness of our raw material comes not only from the breadth of voices captured, but also from the multiple media formats used to capture them. Rangoon Cocoon is composed of photography, video, music and text, which we used to create a wide variety of deliverables:

### **A WEBSITE** [www.rangooncocoon.com](http://www.rangooncocoon.com)

The website has been used throughout the project as a platform to share information as far and wide as possible. Viewers can download pictures, sounds, videos and songs, as well as request specific information on Burma. The website has allowed us to:

- Broadcast our work to places as diverse as California, Thailand, Burma;
- Put people wishing to volunteer in Burma in touch with relevant contacts;
- Use social media (blogs, online articles and networking sites) to amplify the reach of the project;
- Raise funds for specific initiatives in Burma.



### **A PHOTOESSAY** *11,000 words*

Combining pictures and interviews, the essay explores four aspects of daily life in Burma – entrepreneurship, art/music, education and civil society – through the words of Burmese people themselves. Designed for magazines / newspapers, the essay highlights success stories while stressing some of the major social, economic and political challenges to be addressed. A version of the essay was published by the French national newspaper *Libération* (01/22/2010).



### **A PHOTOBOOK** *136 pages, in French*

The photo book provides a longer, more exhaustive version of the photo essay. The text is unchanged, and is illustrated by more than a hundred pictures. The book is on display at <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1053472>. An English version and shorter version (50 pages) are currently being drafted.



### **A PHOTO EXHIBITION** *30 pictures, 20" x 30"*

Based on the photo essay, the exhibition provides an overview of the four main topics via a selection of the most striking pictures and portraits, accompanied with text. The exhibition has already been showcased in France (Paris, Reims, Beauvais, Charlesville) and in the US (Georgetown University, sponsored by Pr. David Steinberg and the Asia Studies department). An upcoming exhibition is scheduled in Marseilles by France's Research Institute on South East Asia.



### **A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY** *90 minutes*

The film completes the photo work, yet does not repeat it, since many interviews included in the documentary are not used in the photo essay. A pilot version of the movie was already screened in Washington (Georgetown University, Asia Studies Department) and in Los Angeles (UCLA, De Neve Auditorium, Burmese Students Association). Further screenings in French film festivals are planned in the upcoming months (Paris, Pau, Clermont-Ferrand...).

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