

Press Release

So this is what it feels like to be free

John Clang



John Clang, *Sans the face #90*, 2020

Exhibition Period	07 January – 04 March 2023
Artist and Curator's Talk	Saturday, 07 January 2023, 3 – 4 pm
Opening Reception	Saturday, 07 January 2023, 3 – 7 pm
Breakfast with the Artist	Friday, 13 January 2023, 10:30 – 11:30 am RSVP Required info@fostgallery.com
Reading by an Artist	45 – 60 minutes per in-person reading Limited to 1 person per reading Register your interest at info@fostgallery.com 10, 11, 13, 17, 18 and 20 January 2023: 2 – 5 pm 13 January 2023: 7 – 9 pm 08, 14 and 15 January 2023: 1 – 5 pm

About the Exhibition In conjunction with the Singapore Art Week 2023, FOST Gallery is proud to present *So this is what it feels like to be free*, a solo exhibition premiering three new bodies of work by visual artist John Clang. The presentation marks a particularly introspective and productive phase in his artistic practice influenced by his recent foray into the realm of filmmaking.

FOST Private Limited
1 Lock Road
#01-02, Gillman Barracks
Singapore 108932
Telephone 65 6694 3080
E-mail info@fostgallery.com
Website www.fostgallery.com

/Gallery
/Education
/Advisory

Ever more cognizant of the complexities in the role of an image maker not merely as a passive witness, but a roving eye strategically gathering intelligence on his subjects, or even an interventionist partaking actively in changing the course of action, Clang extends his latest artistic explorations to the frontiers of privacy, self-knowledge and surveillance.

Traversing geographical boundaries, socio-historical milieus, and conventional ways of knowing, Clang contemplates on how one's inner and outer subjectivities and realities are crystallised by an interplay between what is private, public and secret. Like majority of his past works, his new creations defy easy categorisation and stylistic uniformity, united not in similarity but in difference.

The exhibition title references a common utterance after one emerges from long periods of confined isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic to resume air travel, or even indulge in simple pleasures of taking a walk around one's neighbourhood without restriction. It seeks autonomy and agency, even when these notions of emancipation are ultimately illusory.

The presentation comprises three thematic sections. The first and largest part of the exhibition ***Sans the Face*** (2019-ongoing) features over 100 portraits of anonymous strangers whom Clang encountered spontaneously on the streets. They were then invited to select an oversized post-it of their preferred colour and pose for a photo with it obscuring their faces. Participants included people from all walks of life in various cities, with the only information of them gleaned through their outfits and backdrops. Inspired by a post-it sticker slapped over the lens of his laptop's web camera as a makeshift cover, the artist re-appropriated the stationery as a symbol of playful obliteration, calling to mind the pixilated mosaic obliterating visages of people or gestures deemed inappropriate.

"In a way I have turned into a web camera myself, peering out at people blocked by a post-it" says Clang, "This frustrates the viewing process, but it also means anyone and everyone can be underneath that square of paper. The possibilities are infinite, and in equal measure liberating and stifling."

The second series ***The Mobile Park*** (2023) takes a leap back in time to eighties to nineties Singapore, where privacy comes with a premium. The series of staged images references a social phenomenon where cars were parked along quiet areas, their windows plastered with newspapers as occupants engage in intimate affairs beyond the public eye.

The last section ***Reading by an Artist*** (2023-ongoing) glimpses into the future, in the form of the artist providing *zi wei dou shu* readings for members of the public. By computing charts based on one's birth timing, this ancient Chinese metaphysical philosophy may be used to forecast events in life, and illuminate new perspectives in surmounting challenges. The artist believes that only when armed with sufficient awareness and insight into one's life, can one truly discern and navigate the path forward with meaning and purpose. This is an artwork in the making since 2013, when he first started studying and mastering the reading technique. He has since completed several courses, including the professional

(职业) and elite (菁英) accreditations from the International Society of Zi-Wei Numerology (ISZN).

Collectively, all works serve to extend the prevailing thread of identity and connection in Clang's practice, raising salient questions about the power of oversight, hindsight and insight in an age of network culture where contemporary life is becoming exceedingly scripted and post-produced.

So this is what it feels like to be free is curated by Kong Yen Lin, an independent researcher and writer on photography.

About the Artist

The practice of Singaporean visual artist **John Clang** (b. 1973, Singapore) often straddles dual realities of global cities, unfettered by confines of time and geography. A double-sight navigator of a world in constant flux, he absorbs seemingly mundane and banal external stimuli and conveys his internal observations and ruminations through the mediums of photography and film.

He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Singapore Art Museum (2009), National Museum of Singapore (2010), CCC Strozziina, Florence (2014), Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York (2014), Pera Müzesi, Turkey (2018), ArtScience Museum, Singapore (2020), Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany (2021) and Gajah Gallery, Singapore (2021). In 2010, he garnered the *Designer of the Year* award at the President's Design Award, and remains the first and only photographer to receive this distinguished accolade.

In 2015, Clang earned his Master of Arts Fine Arts from LASALLE College of the Arts in partnership with Goldsmiths, University of London. In 2017, he made his first foray into film with *Their Remaining Journey*, which premiered at the 2018 International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) and garnered a nomination for the festival's *Bright Future Award*. He released his second feature, *A Love Unknown*, in 2020, and most recently his third film *Absent Smile*, in a world premiere at the Singapore International Film Festival in 2022.

Clang lives and works in New York and Singapore.

About the Curator

Kong Yen Lin (b. 1987, Singapore) is a photo researcher focusing on Singapore's modern photography history from the 1950s to 80s. She is particularly keen in examining the wider systemic frameworks governing the history of visual culture in Singapore.

Selected Images


John Clang
Sans the Face #147
 2022
 Fine art archival print
 H17.8 x W26.7 cm
 Edition of 6 + 1 Artist's Proof
 H67.7 x W101.6 cm
 Edition of 3 + 1 Artist's Proof



John Clang
The Mobile Park 10
 2023
 Fine art archival print
 H67.7 x W101.6 cm (image)
 Edition of 3 + 1 Artist's Proof

Location

FOST Gallery
 1 Lock Road
 #01-02, Gillman Barracks
 Singapore 108932

MRT

Labrador Park

Bus

Opposite Alexandra Point: 51, 57, 61, 93, 97, 97e, 100, 166, 175, 963 or 963e

Gallery Hours

Tue–Sat: 11am–7pm
 Sun/Mon/Pub Hol: Open by appointment

Admission

Free

Enquiries

Call +65 6694 3080 or e-mail info@fostgallery.com

NB: More images can be furnished upon request.