

ADOPTION
IT'S ABOUT LOVE,
PAIN & JOY
SUNDAYLIFE PAGE 6

THE BOY WHO SAW A MOUNTAIN AND GREW UP TO CLIMB IT
THINK PAGES 18 & 19

John Lui asks the guru of good service:
IS SINGAPORE AIRLINES SLIPPING?
THINK PAGE 14

FRESH OPEN
MARIAGE DAY
SPORTS PAGES 31 & 32

SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY EXCERPTS BY PAUL SPECTOR THINK PAGE 5, 16 & 17

the **sundaylife!**
'I LOVE MY HATERS'
Don't miss out with Kianze MC 2.2

Family portraits across the miles
Singaporean entrepreneur John Lim is being visited by his family in Singapore. The family includes his wife, three children, and his parents. The family is shown in a group photo.



When Belmont was 146kg
The 37-year-old former professional bodybuilder is now a fitness enthusiast. He is shown in a photo.



GIRLS ON WHEELS
CHEUA MUI HOONG
Pin a blind driver. Sorry

URA amends plans for Upper Bukit Timah site

Development in the area will be limited to residential use. The plans for the site have been amended.



Same picture frame, yet miles apart

based lensman uses Skype to create portraits of overseas S'poreans and folks back home



The photographer, based in Singapore, uses Skype to create portraits of overseas Singaporeans and folks back home. The portraits are shown in a photo gallery.

Family portraits across the miles

Singapore photographer John Clang lives in New York, but his mum, dad and brother live in Singapore. It was so hard to get a photo of all of them together.

Then he had an idea to tap technology many people use to stay in touch: His family Skyped from Singapore, he flashed their image on his apartment wall, took his place in the frame and his wife snapped the family portrait.

That started a whole new creative adventure. Since then, the well-known lensman has been bringing families together for a series of portraits reuniting children with their folks back home.

Coming up next: An exhibition of his unique set of portraits, at the National Museum of Singapore, next year.

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PHOTO: JOHN CLANG

Mr John Clang poses in New York alongside his family in Singapore – father Ang Ching Seong, mother Ng Gek Choo and brother Joe Ang. Taking the picture is Mr Clang's wife, Elin (inset).

URA amends plans for Upper Bukit Timah site

There was some relief yesterday for a

announced some amendments to the

development is along Dairy Farm Road and borders the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.



PHOTOS: JOHN CLANG

Ms Dagmar Wong (fifth from left) – a content producer living in New York since 1998 – with (from left) her nephew Joshua Wong, sister Connie Wong, mother Yeo Seok Yong, father Wong Yoke Yan, brother Dennis Wong, sister-in-law Julien Wong and nephew Aaron Wong.



Mr Veeramani Krishnan (right) – who is doing his master's in Yokohama, Japan – with (from left) his sister Maligah Krishnan, mother Anjemmal Krishnan, niece Maya Nirasawa Thevar, sister-in-law Tokiko Nirasawam, nephew Asuka Nirasawa Thevar and brother K. Veerapandiyan.

Same picture frame,
yet miles apart

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Mr Veeramani Krishnan (right) – who is doing his master's in Yokohama, Japan – with (from left) his sister Maligah Krishnan, mother Anjemmal Krishnan, niece Maya Nirasawa Thevar, sister-in-law Tokiko Nirasawam, nephew Asuka Nirasawa Thevar and brother K. Veerapandyan.

Same picture frame, yet miles apart

US-based lensman uses Skype to create portraits of overseas S'poreans and folks back home

Wong Kim Hoh
Senior Writer

For some time now, New York-based Singaporean photographer John Clang has been documenting his relationship with his family in Singapore to explore the concepts of time, identity and memory.

Then he decided to shoot a family portrait using modern technology to bridge the distance between them.

So his parents and younger brother stood before their webcam-enabled computer in Singapore and called him on Internet service Skype.

He then projected the Skype image onto a wall in his New York apartment and positioned himself next to his father, as his wife Elin snapped the portrait.

"The process was very moving for me. It's bittersweet to see my mother so in awe of the technology she never knew existed until now," said the 39-year-old lensman whose real name is Ang Choon Leng (or C.L. Ang, as he was known in national service).

He decided to share this emotional experience with other separated families. After all, an increasing number of Singaporeans now live abroad for work and other reasons.

"The entire process will become an important memory for those who participate. As time passes, these images will become even more iconic and important," he said.

By involving them as participants instead of passive spectators or consumers, he believes the process will also help the families have a deeper understanding of contemporary art.

Mr Clang and his wife started approaching friends and embassies for help in rounding up families willing to participate. It was harder than one would imagine.

"Not many people like having strangers in their apartments," he said.

He plans to shoot between 40 and 45 such portraits, which will be exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore early next year. So far, he's nearly 80 per cent done.



Twenty-nine-year-old Chen Peiqi (right) – who works for Bloomberg in Hong Kong – with (from left) her sister Racquel Tan, father Richard Tan and mother Vivien Hong. Her family is one of the separated families photographed by Mr John Clang. The portraits will be exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore early next year.

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The project has taken the couple to more than a dozen cities including New York, Washington, Paris, London, Yokohama, Taipei, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

To retain the intimacy he wanted, the photographer did away with a professional crew.

He got his godsons and close friends to help set up the webcams of families in Singapore, while he and his wife did all the portraits themselves in the different cities.

"We didn't even take tripods, preferring to find household items to prop up our equipment," he said.

They have had more than their share of headaches.

They arrived at some cities only to receive e-mail from their subjects saying they were withdrawing from the shoot because their family members were not comfortable with the idea.

"Some places were so small that Elin had to be under a table while I got on a



Twenty-nine-year-old Chen Peiqi (right) – who works for Bloomberg in Hong Kong – with (from left) her sister Racquel Tan, father Richard Tan and mother Vivien Hong. Her family is one of the separated families photographed by Mr John Clang. The portraits will be exhibited at the National Museum of Singapore early next year.



New York-based art director Mark Yeo, 44, (front row, third from left) with a picture of his partner William Wells (extreme left) and his extended family: (front row, from left) nephew Asher Ng, niece Sara Ng, mother Lily Goh, nephew Reagan Yeo, niece Rachel Yeo and sister Clancy Yeo; standing behind them (from left) are brother-in-law Vincent Ng, sister Michelle Yeo, nephew Joel Lim, niece Beatrice Lim, sister Jaclyn Yeo, brother-in-law Jimmy Lim, sister Belinda Yeo, nephew Jared Lim, sister-in-law Jerena See and brother Lloyd Yeo.

ledge outside the window to capture the image," he added.

The project has cost him more than US\$60,000 (S\$77,000) so far.

"More than US\$50,000 was spent on travel, accommodation, transport and equipment rental," he said.

He is currently footing the bill himself, but hopes to get grants and sponsors.

One of his subjects was Mr Veeramani Krishnan, 44, who is doing his Master in Media Design at Keio University in Yokohama. He learnt of Mr Clang's project from another Singaporean student.

"I felt it was a good way to document an important point in my life," said Mr Krishnan. He rounded up his siblings on one of their Sunday visits to his parents.

He is glad he agreed to the shoot. "My family members and I are in the same frame and yet, we are miles apart."

Ms Dagmar Wong, 38, readily agreed to the project because Mr Clang's reputation as a top photographer preceded him.

"I had no idea what to expect but was really excited to be a part of his work, and to see him at work with my ageing parents," said the content producer who has been living in New York since 1998.

She added she wanted the family portrait even if it would be an unconventional one.

"The last time we had a proper family portrait was when I made a surprise visit on my dad's 70th birthday during the Sars period in 2003," she said.

She experiences different emotions each time she looks at Mr Clang's photograph.

"Sometimes I feel warm, knowing our close-knit family can be connected despite the distance. Yet sometimes I feel fear and anxiety because my parents are getting old and there aren't many opportunities for us to get together.

"This portrait of augmented reality makes it even more apparent that while we are connected, there's still an ocean between us."

kimhoh@sph.com.sg