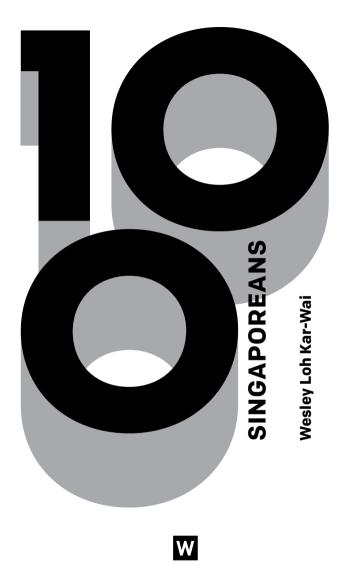
Wesley Loh Kar-Wai

SINGAPOREANS





WEE EDITIONS / SINGAPORE

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To all Singaporeans

Without Masks Introduction by Raphaël Millet

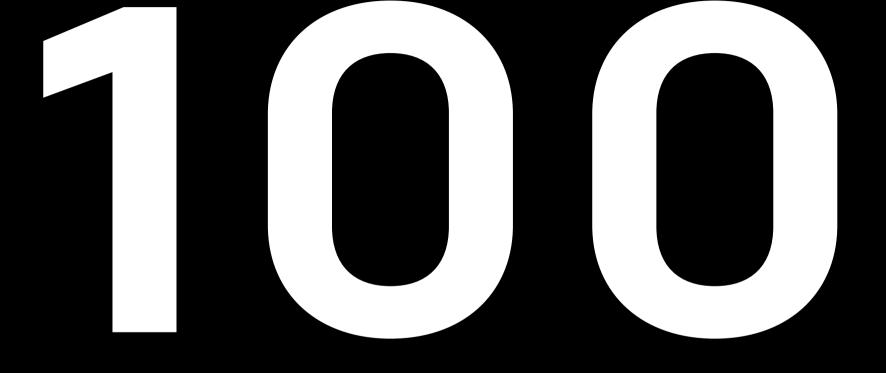
Since the emergence of both photography and sociology in the early 19th century, photographers have more or less consciously taken the documentation of the society they live in as one of their main tasks. Some have used especially methodical, almost clinical, approaches to portraying their fellow citizens. German photographer August Sander perhaps first best exemplified the use of portrait photography to document society in times of change; in his 1929 book *Face of Our Time* he documented post-WWI Germany hit by economic depression and about to enter the dark years of Nazism. Another influential reference that comes to mind is Robert Frank's seminal series *The Americans*, published in 1958, for which he photographed American society at all social strata.

This is the tradition that Wesley Loh Kar-Wai's 100 Singaporeans partakes of. The fact that Loh has felt the urge to pursue this project now is a sign—it must be that the times they are a-changin'. In a few years, it is very likely that this series will be considered a milestone in the history of Singapore photography. The premise of 100 Singaporeans black-and-white close-up portraits, almost full frame, doing away with any background and context—seems simple. But the project offers a very rich and complex portrait of Singaporean society by focusing on what is at its very core: the Singaporean people. The subjects could almost be naked. (No, maybe not...the times they are not a-changin' so fast in Singapore, yet!) But they could almost be on a white background, in the manner of some of Richard Avedon's most famous portraits in his book *In the American West*.

Looking at Loh's photographs, it is obvious that there is nothing simpler and richer than a face when stripped of all effects and affects, poses and postures, stances and pretences. The Singaporeans featured here are almost expressionless, as if the photographer wanted to leave us clueless about them. What do their faces tell us? Why are they so familiar? Why do we feel we know this auntie that we don't know? And this guy with the nondescript look? And this girl with no distinguishing mark? Have we met before? I am reminded of *You Have Seen Their Faces*, a seminal series shot by Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell in 1930's USA. The title applies to these 100 Singaporeans too; we *have* seen their faces. Where? Just around the corner. And lest we forgot to look, Wesley Loh Kar-Wai did it for us.

Look carefully, look them in the eye, and you'll see the photographer. He too is just one of them. And look again; look even deeper, and perhaps you'll see yourself.

Raphaël Millet is a writer and visual arts critic who has produced and directed for cinema and television. He has programmed several film and photography events including the Month of Photography Asia, an international photography festival held in Singapore.



SINGAPOREANS











In Order of Appearance

NAME	OCCUPATION	NAME	OCCUPATION
2. Michelle Wong Yu Jin	Teacher	27 Martin Lim	Art Director
3. Balasingam-Chow Yu Mei	Writer	28. Joseph Nair	Student
4. Nur Diana Yau Bte Shech Rizal Yau	Sales Associate	29. Joshua Nair	Public Servant
5. Nurshaqira Binte Raimi	HR / Studio Manager	30. Wei Leng Tay	Photographer
6. Aaron Yeo	PR Consultant	31. Low Qing Yuan	Accounts Assistant
z Ho Chin Ann	PR Consultant	32. Roger Winder	Senior Lecturer
8. Donn Tan Zheng Yu	Student	33. Koh Eng Song	Businessman
9. Ivan Koh Wei Ming	Lawyer	34. Liyana Dali	Student
10. Masi Binti Sufi	Housewife	35. Nadia Dali	Student
n. Patricia Lock	Retiree	36. Lim Min Yu	Doctor
12. Ling Sing Yu	Doctor	37 Jimmy Sng	Consultant
13. Ho Swee Geok @ Aw Swee Geok	Housewife	38. Lynne Huang	Civil Servant
14. Zhou Caiying Hazel	Circus Arts Instructor	39. Janice Koh Yu-Mei	Actress
15. Joyce Lim	Teacher	40. Abby Chua Hui Kim	Administrator
16. Vernie Alison Oliveiro	Researcher	41. Oehlers Kristine Ann	Teacher
17. Tan Mingwei Eric	Accountant	42. Ho Yim Tee	Writer-Pastor
18. Smith Fiona bte Mohd Irwan	Senior Communications Manager	43. Lawrence Ellesia	Engineer
19. Sophina Smith	Business Director	44. Lennard Low	IT Product Manager
20. Annabel Lim	Client Executive	45. Mark Gerald Ng Chih-Yuan	Teacher
21. Elizabeth Tan	Student	46. Rasimah Jar	Managing Director
22. Dali Bin Meskam	Art Director	47 Lim Weixiang	Teacher
23. Hoh Min-Kean Guy	Company Director	48. Er Ker Jia	Civil Servant
24. Mun Qin Jie Ian	Student	49. Xu Jian Yi	Fruit Stall Worker
25. Joel Ang Xing Zhi	Student	50. Tien Cheng Hee	Retired Teacher
26. James Teo	Creative Director	51. Lim Su Min	Doctor

In Order of Appearance

NAME OCCUPATION

52. Tan Chioh Hong 53 Ruth Tan Gek Neo 54 Tan Boon Liat Daniel C. 55 Gilbert Quek 56. Ang Nee Soon 57. Wong Kok Choung Johnny 58. Tan Ngiap Heng 59. Ng Keng Gim 60 Lee Wuan See Vivian 61. Rebecca Khew Ming Chu 62. Kevin Ang Keng Jin 63 Tan Wah Jiam 64. Jupri Arshad 65 Edmund W. Rezel 66. Karen Ng 67 Lim Phuay Ee Sharon 68 Chia Shi-Lu 69 Kenneth Joel Phua Zayao 70. Stefanie Jane Francis 71. Dawn Chin Wei Peng 72 Muhammad Hafiz Azhari 73. Deanna Ng 74. Effendi Baba 75. Koh Tena Koon 76. Eq Ah Choo

Housewife Music Teacher Pastor Chief Creative Self-Employed Freelancer Photographer Sarong and Textile Dealer Artist Student Teacher Teacher Soft Skills Trainer **Executive Training Manager** Teacher Hawker Doctor / Member of Parliament PR Consultant PR Executive PR Consultant Co-Curricular Programme Executive Photographer Project Manager Bank Officer Housewife

NAME OCCUPATION

77 Chia Kok Sip Housewife 78 Melissa Luo Shuhui Auditor 79 Oon Shu An Actress Corporate Affairs Director 80 Lim Ee Guan Chief Executive Officer 81. Lim Khay Tham Nehemiah Student 82 Lee Kwan Lim 83 Lee Mun Wai Dancer Senior Accounts Manager 84. Tay Jiamei 85 Danielle Tan Student 86. Chua Yong Sheng Ryan Arts Manager 87 Amanda Lim Student 88. Inderjit Singh Teacher 89 Prvacki Milenko Artist 90 Nabeel Azhar Student 91 Issac Phoa Teck Shuean National Serviceman 92. Sabrina Sng Student 93 Julie Ho Boutique Manager / Buyer Housewife 94 Loh Mei Loh 95 Su-En Chua Student 96. Lim Swee Lian Sylvia Lawyer / Member of Parliament 97 Goh Shi Yun Jasmine Retail Assistant 98. Len Jean Peen Phebe Consultant 99. Amelia Lim Student 100. Tan Wei Ping Bank Clerk Civil Servant 101. Poh Ling Yin

Author's Note

My photography is driven by a curiosity about people—who they are, what motivates them and what their fears and dreams are.

When I first took up photography, the camera was a bridge between a shy 17-year-old and the people he wanted to understand. The camera made me feel safe, and at the same time, empowered to peer into somebody's soul without wincing, or feeling shy about staring.

In portraiture, this authentic soul of a person is precisely what I seek, and the photographic portrait is the tool I use to seek it. I look into the subjects' eyes and wonder who they really are; I find I have a need to strip away the walls of identity that people construct, and to peer into them. I want to go to the place where they are really themselves where they are most deeply human, in the most individual and personal sense of the word. In this manner, I see the camera as a bridge between people, the lens connecting the photographer and subject in one act of empathy.

And so with 100 Singaporeans, I have turned to looking at what it means to be Singaporean, particularly with the rapid state of flux that Singapore is in today. I want to capture the people-scape that I remember, before it disappears or evolves into something very different.

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Abby Chua for providing all the logistical and administrative support for this project.

Jodie, my wife, for believing in me.

All the Singaporeans who have gladly participated in this project. Thank you for being on the other side of the lens and for believing that it really is something to be a Singaporean.

What does it mean to look Singaporean? Is there a unique quality to our faces that transcends our ethnic differences and immediately identifies us as Singaporeans? In 100 Singaporeans, award-winning photographer Wesley Loh Kar-Wai takes on these burning questions. Forgoing posed pictures and special effects for stark black-andwhite close-ups, he documents Singaporeans from all walks of life. The result is a stunning collection of intimate portraits whose subjects bravely invite us to meet their unwavering, direct gaze. In so doing, we begin to discover commonalities that can be conveyed without the need for words.

