

## JOHN CHIARA

### *Sea of Glass*

**Exhibition Dates:** March 15 - May 11, 2024

**Opening Reception:** Friday, March 15, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Haines Gallery proudly presents *Sea of Glass*, an exhibition of new work by San Francisco photographer **John Chiara**. Focusing on the dynamic forces that continually re-shape the city, *Sea of Glass* features a striking new body of work created during the Chiara's recent residency on Treasure Island—located in the waters separating San Francisco and Oakland—as well as images made on nearby Yerba Buena Island and elsewhere along the bay. The exhibition marks Chiara's fourth solo exhibition with Haines.

Chiara describes his creative process as “part photography, part sculpture, and part event.” Using large-scale cameras that he builds himself, he prints directly onto photographic paper, controlling the exposure time as he dodges, burns, and filters the images. The resulting works of art are luminous and one-of-a-kind, inviting us to contemplate their content while they point to the physical and chemical aspects of their creation.

In 2022, Chiara was invited by the San Francisco Arts Commission to document changes being made to Treasure Island, a 400-acre man-made island just minutes from the city. Originally constructed to host the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, Treasure Island is currently in the midst of a massive, decades-long redevelopment plan. Mirroring the conditions of its creation, the site's narrative is once again one of possibility and invention, shaped by complex socio-economic forces.

Chiara's Treasure Island works reinterpret the experience of meandering through a neighborhood that straddles the old and the new. Carefully composed images of aged and industrial exteriors draw our attention to shifting elements of the landscape and shed new light on seemingly non-descript places. *Navy Mound, Center of Treasure Island* (2023) appears at first glance like one of his oceanscapes, but the work's horizon line is marked by wire and nails, and glittering light reflects off of a crinkled plastic tarp instead of water.

Other images combine the remaining wooded areas on Yerba Buena Island with flora in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Exposing these prints for a third time, Chiara turns the paper around and exposes it to sunlight, allowing the unfiltered light to directly hit the back of the emulsion. Elements of the landscape emerge and recede from these complex, layered compositions. Dense with wildlife, they hint at how it might have



John Chiara, *Avenue of the Palms South Treasure Island*, 2023  
Camera Obscura Ilfochrome Photograph, Unique,  
49.5 x 54 inches



John Chiara, *Coral and Martin Luther King Midway*, 2023  
Camera Obscura Ilfochrome Photograph, Unique,  
47 x 38 inches

felt to have experienced the island when it was still an Ohlone fishing village called Tuchayune. They are also fictive landscapes, a place that is both and neither, speaking to the subjectivity of our memories and experience. Within these evocative, atmospheric photographs, the changing light and fog so distinctive to San Francisco parallels the story of a city in transition.

*Sea of Glass* also includes a selection of large-scale photographs of San Francisco, shot from across the bay on Treasure Island, the city's skyline bisecting a wide expanse of sea and sky. These latest landscapes capture the effects of light and its movement, as it animates the water's surface or filters through dense clouds and marine layer. Here, Chiara's inventive methods yield images that subvert and refresh our reading of these familiar, postcard-perfect vistas, as the stylistic signatures of his process—uneven hand-cut edges, subtle chemical streaking, tape marks, and the unexpected placement of recognizable landmarks—lend a sense of disorientation and discovery.

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**John Chiara's** (b. 1971, lives and works in San Francisco, CA) work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum, CO; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Museum Bürengasse, Zurich, Switzerland; Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA; Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA; Pier 24 Photography, San Francisco, CA; San Jose Museum of Art, CA; and Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA. Institutions that collect his work include the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Pilara Foundation Collection, Pier 24 Photography, San Francisco, CA; San Jose Museum of Art, CA; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA. He has completed residencies with the San Francisco Arts Commission, CA (2022-2023); Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol, Switzerland (2020); Art Factory Budapest, Hungary (2017); Crown Point Press, San Francisco (2016, 2006); and Headlands Center for the Arts, Marin, CA (2010). *John Chiara: California*, a monographic publication of his work, was published by Aperture Books in 2017

## PRESS INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Irene Fung  
[irene@hainesgallery.com](mailto:irene@hainesgallery.com) / 415.397.8114



John Chiara, *Navy Mound, Center of Treasure Island*, 2023  
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