

PRESS RELEASE

Guesswho Brings the Streets to Muziris Contemporary with Solo Exhibition ‘Stick No Bills’

- Muziris Contemporary announces the first ever solo exhibition featuring India’s anonymous street artist Guesswho.
- Guesswho uses street art as a subversive medium of expression to practice and participate in the creation of an ever-changing culture of a city’s visual landscape and experiments through wry commentary on socio-political issues.
- This will be a two-part exhibition split between the Mumbai and Kochi galleries of Muziris Contemporary. While the Mumbai segment will open in August, the Kochi segment will be exhibited in September.

About the Exhibition

‘Stick No Bills’ marks the first ever solo exhibition featuring the works of anonymous street artist Guesswho. Active since 2012, Guesswho remains anonymous to strip away biases of identity, caste, and creed, allowing the visual language to stand entirely on its own. Operating with the belief that true subversion in street art is rare and dwindling, Guesswho’s work addresses the co-optation of contemporary street art, pushing back against large-scale mural practices that frequently devolve into state propaganda or corporate marketing tools. Guesswho’s art centers on universally recognized pop culture icons and shared visual memories. Guesswho blends classic references from films, fine art, music, and dance with localized South Asian iconography. By utilizing familiar imagery, Guesswho’s work remains immediately clear and impactful even to casual viewers with no prior background in art. In a parallel approach, the pieces also recontextualize ordinary faces of popular individuals within unusual settings to disrupt what we think we know. Several of the works exhibited in this show are satirical in nature, carrying wry social commentary and political overtones to ask hard-hitting questions about society and culture. Guesswho thinks of his art as a conversation from which people can take what they want. This could be a critique, a perspective, even a provocation.

In this exhibition, Guesswho steps off the streets and into an enclosed dialogue. Guesswho’s work challenges the sanctity of high-art hierarchies by dissecting how society consumes imagery and cultural memory. An anonymous, subversive street artist like Guesswho being

exhibited in an institutional gallery space creates a powerful paradox. Placing these stencils inside the gallery confronts the gatekeepers of elite art spaces to house the very counter-culture they usually overlook or sanitize. Bringing elements of the street inside seeks to interrogate and disrupt conventional ideas of how we see and think about art: what is art, who gets to make art, and who gets to witness it.

“ Just like street art aims to reclaim our public spaces, it should also re-define the concept of so called ‘gallery standards’. Art in the gallery could also be more fun rather than being so sophisticated and serious even while addressing things that matter. Hopefully it encourages more common people and the uninterested (in art) ones to step into the white spaces of the galleries and engage with art. They don’t have to be afraid of trying hard to ‘understand’ the art here and still enjoy the viewing experience. (Yet there are pointers and subtle layers underneath for those who want to dig deeper.

— **Guesswho** on taking the practice from public spaces to a gallery

This will be a two-part exhibition split between the Mumbai and Kochi galleries of Muziris Contemporary. While the Mumbai segment, opening 22 August, will exhibit the one half of the collection, the Kochi segment in September, opening 13 September, will bring the narrative back to the coastal roots where the phenomenon first began.

The **curatorial note** for the show has been written by renown artist, writer, and graphic novelist **Appupen**.

“ If art can be a reflection of society, then Guesswho holds a most irreverent mirror, unflinching in its deeply subversive thoughts on culture, media, class, politics, and art. In the seasoned tone of a subculture master, this art doesn’t look down at us – it speaks plain truth to us, like an old friend. It whispers jokes, grunts sharp commentary and changes the subject, as you will see.

— Excerpt from the curatorial note by **Appupen**, Graphic Novelist and Artist

About the Artist



Guesswho is an anonymous graffiti artist active since 2012. Guesswho uses street art as a subversive medium of expression to practice and participate in the creation of an

ever-changing culture of a city's visual landscape and experiments through wry commentary on socio-political issues. While Fort Kochi remains a recurring site for Guesswho's interventions, the artist's work has also appeared in cities across India, including Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, and Khagaria in Bihar. Featured in prominent Indian and international media, including the BBC, Guesswho remains one of the most compelling voices in India's contemporary street art movement.

“ Though Guesswho was part of group exhibitions in the past, this is the first ever solo exhibition. It's more like retrospective of the 14 years of the practice and how it is evolved in the streets over the years. Most of the works on the streets don't stay longer and are whitewashed quickly. This exhibition can be seen as an attempt to document those efforts.

As for the title, we see the warning signs of 'stick no bills' everywhere, yet we see more bills and advertising everywhere around us. Just like the show title, most of the works at first might appear as mere parody, but the right word would be travesty, a literary device broadly falling under satire. The approach is used and redefined as a question for the viewers, asking them to critically exam the rigid cultural influences and their visual memories while having a smile on their faces.

— **Guesswho** on Stick No Bills

About the Gallery and Founder

Muziris Contemporary is a South Asian art gallery with permanent spaces in Colaba and Fort Kochi-Mattancherry, and an artist residency in Vagamon, a hill station in the Western Ghats of Kerala. The gallery seeks to create a space rooted in identity yet contemporary in spirit, serving as both a platform and catalyst to bring underrepresented art movements, voices beyond the fine art world, and narrative based contemporary practices from the region to the larger art market and beyond.

With a growing presence across key cultural locales, Muziris Contemporary showcases both emerging and established artists, fostering conversations on how cultural histories and influences continue to shape and expand contemporary art practices in the country. Through its curated exhibitions, the gallery proposes to be a space for engagement, discovery and learning for coddli-wompling travellers and new collectors alike.

Joe Cyril is a gallerist and art advisor whose experience spans the commercial, grassroots, and institutional ends of the art world. With a breadth of experience across the primary and secondary markets, he has played a pivotal role in shaping new creative economies in and around south asian art and its markets.

He was part of the founding team of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and has held leadership roles at Saffronart. Joe has a keen interest in creating new art spaces and introducing new audiences to collecting and learning about Indian art.

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