

MEDIA ADVISORY

Shadow Spaces: Photographs of the Old Supreme Court 24 March to 16 September 2012 at the Asian Civilisations Museum



A new photography exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum presents two iconic Singapore buildings in a different light. *Shadow Spaces: Photographs of the Old Supreme Court* showcases a series of photographs by Los Angeles-based photographer Sean Dungan that capture spaces within the old Supreme Court and a large hangar at Kallang Airport. An enduring part of Singapore's landscape since the 1930s, these spaces are now in transition. The photographs document a stage between abandonment and alteration.

The old Supreme Court is now being rebuilt as the National Art Gallery of Singapore, while there are plans for recreation, retail, and entertainment developments at Kallang Airport. Dungan's photographs reveal the ephemeral beauty of these empty spaces and convey a nostalgic stillness. The photographs are not concerned with the past, but rather acknowledge that the empty spaces exist in their own time and have a completely separate identity.

Artist's Statement:

Vacant interiors reveal signs of wear and the sediment of the past. We can read these places as texts, with multiple interpretations. Well-used public buildings possess this

multivalence more deeply, while their architecture asserts how their makers wished to see themselves. When the fabric of a building is disturbed, stories begin to appear. Through these photographs, I attempt to convey what a place feels like to me, and also to engage its history.

When I first visited the old Supreme Court in December 2010, few rooms contained furniture and those that did seemed to be storage areas. Walking alone through the empty halls, in the heat and dust, was an eerie experience. The particles in the air could have been stirred up by people who had left only moments before.

Such a grand structure standing empty is a rarity. The building's electricity had been turned off, but the absence of artificial lighting seemed perfectly natural, as if the spaces had been made for it. The greenish aquarium glow cast by skylights was calming, and gave the wrinkled surfaces of the old rubber floor tiles the appearance of skin. The darkness, especially in the prison cells, necessitated very long exposures, up to 45 minutes, and to lessen any chance of shaking the camera, I sat still on the floor, listening for any sounds the building might make. It was absolutely silent.

Sean Dungan, photographer

About the artist:

Sean Dungan is one of the most versatile and respected artists working today in Los Angeles. A graduate of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Dungan has exhibited widely in the Los Angeles area. A collection of his short stories, *Unwelcomeness*, illustrated with his photographs, was published in 2007. He works entirely with natural light, often in low-light situations, and specialises in capturing the atmosphere and emotion of historic spaces. His photographs of the galleries and furniture of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, enliven the recently published *Furnishing A Museum: Isabella Stewart Gardner's Collection of Italian Furniture* (2011).

General Information

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| Title: | <i>Shadow Spaces: Photographs of the Old Supreme Court</i> |
| Duration: | 24 March to 16 September 2012 |
| Venue: | Shaw Foundation Foyer, Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555 |
| Opening hours | Monday: 1 to 7pm, Tuesday to Sunday: 9am to 7pm, Friday: 9am to 9pm |
| Admission charges | Free admission |
| Enquiries | 6332 7798 / nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg . |
| How to get there* | By MRT - Raffles Place By Bus - 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167 By Car - parking is available at New Parliament House, Connaught Drive, The Fullerton Hotel, One Fullerton and Six Battery Road |

** Visitors are also advised to use public transport. The Asian Civilisations Museum can be reached from a road in front of Victoria Theatre, from Fullerton Road (Anderson Bridge). Old Parliament Lane is now closed.*

For more details, visit www.acm.org.sg.

For more information and images, please contact:

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

The Asian Civilisations Museum is dedicated to exploring the rich artistic heritage of Asia, especially Singapore's ancestral cultures. Through a collection of works of art and a varied exhibition programme, we hope to deepen understanding of Southeast Asia, China, South Asia, West Asia, and the Peranakan world. Rare among museums in Asia, the ACM connects audiences with many cultures.