

APR 30 AMIR ZAKI: NO DUST TO SETTLE | DIANE ROSENSTEIN GALLERY

REVIEWS (/CULTURE/CATEGORY/REVIEWS)



Amir Zaki, *Newport Beach Public Library #17*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 8¼ x 10¼ inches 21 x 26 cm | © Amir Zaki

Written by Emily Satterthwaite

He photographs to remember. Amir Zaki's *No Dust to Settle*, at the Diane Rosenstein Gallery until May 9, serves as an archive of Southern California architectural history. The exhibition focuses on Zaki's photography of modernist libraries in Orange

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County, California. During the artist's lifetime, these spaces have shifted in meaning and function—from utilitarian community centres to architectural landmarks. The libraries have become relics of the past, inviting contemplation on cultural memory and the indexicality of the photographic medium.

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Amir Zaki, *Fullerton Public Library, Hunt Branch, #5*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 24¼ x 29½ inches 61.6 x 74.9 cm | © Amir Zaki

Amir Zaki was born in California in 1974 and still lives there today. He received his BA from UC Riverside and MFA from UCLA. His work concentrates on Southern California iconography, which can be classified into two groups: “built” landscape and “natural” landscape. Throughout his body of work, a flat, documentary style disrupts the sensationalization common in iconographic photography. *No Dust to Settle* serves as a synthesis of “built” and “natural” landscape, revealing how architecture and nature can coexist.

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Amir Zaki, *San Juan Capistrano Library #13*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 16¼ x 19½ inches 41.3 x 49.5 cm | © Amir Zaki

There is a human impulse to contextualize images—from the year a photograph was taken to the mechanics of its making. Often thought of as places of community that house books and language, the libraries in *No Dust to Settle* intentionally lack both human subjects and text. By removing these contexts, Zaki photographs the familiar while subtly disrupting its authenticity, rendering the subjects quietly unsettling. At first glance, it's impossible to place these photographs temporally. After words and people are removed, what remains is the form of the structures themselves, displayed in a faintly abstract light. There are no distractions from the design elements, so lines, reflections and shadows come to the foreground.

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Amir Zaki, *Buena Park, La Palma Library, #14*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 37 x 29¼ inches 94 x 75.6 cm | © Amir Zaki

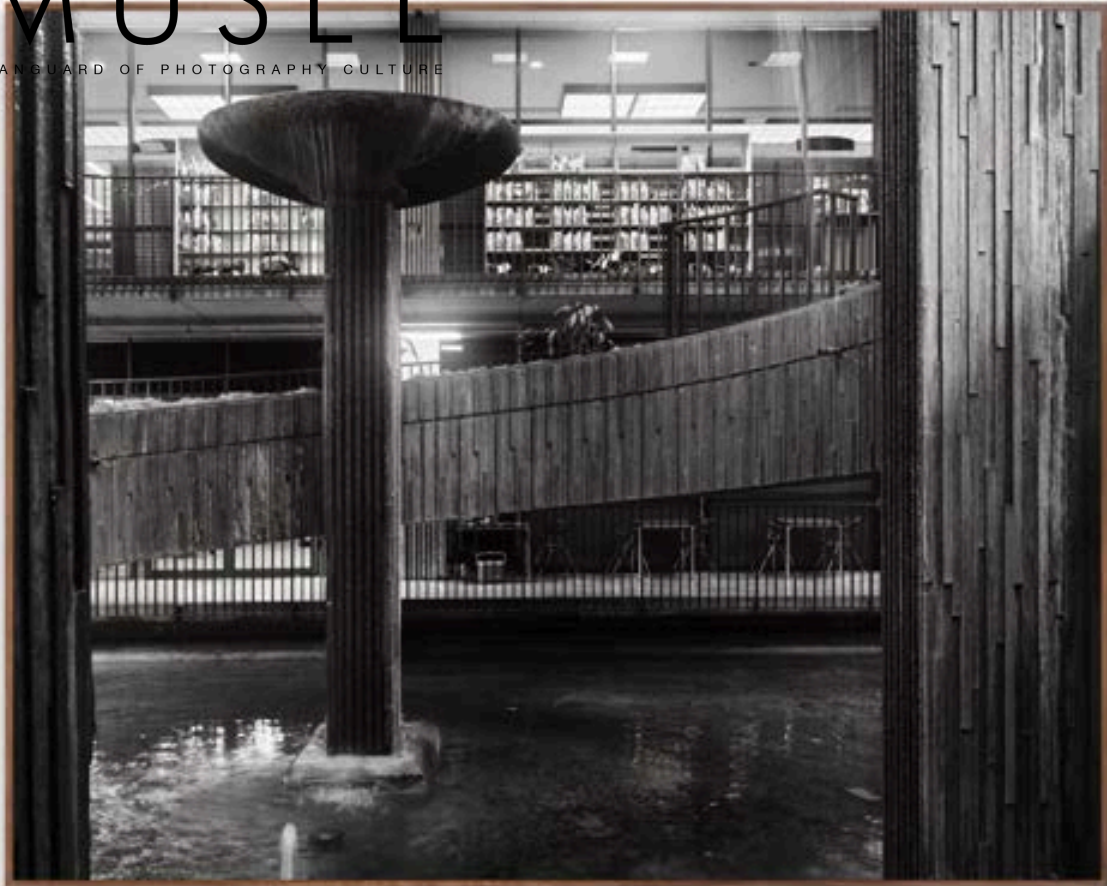


Amir Zaki, *San Juan Capistrano Library #1*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 37 x 29¼ inches 94 x 75.6 cm | © Amir Zaki

“Fullerton Public Library, Hunt Branch, #5” depicts a tree growing from inside the library. With this *mise-en-scène*, the building almost seems part of nature too. The stark contrast between the straight lines of the modernist building and the nonuniform tree branches makes this photograph visually striking. The landscape and the building are harmonious, their roots intertwined.

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Amir Zaki, *Huntington Beach Central Library #1*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 16¼ x 19½ inches 41.3 x 49.5 cm | © Amir Zaki

In an era where historic buildings are at risk for demolition to make room for modernization—particularly in Southern California—*No Dust to Settle* makes a case for preserving these spaces. The photographs reflect on how architectural landmarks should remain untouched. Zaki seeks not just to archive these places, but to contemplate them.

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Amir Zaki, *San Juan Capistrano Public Library #10*, 2025. Framed archival photograph 36¼ x 45¼ inches 92.1 x 114.9 cm | © Amir Zaki

Amir Zaki (/culture/tag/Amir+Zaki), Diane Rosenstein Gallery
(/culture/tag/Diane+Rosenstein+Gallery)

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