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Amir Zaki: No Dust to Settle

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Amir Zaki: No Dust to Settle marks the debut of Diane Rosenstein Gallery's new Hollywood space and offers a compelling look at California's modernist past through the lens of one of its most meticulous photographers. The exhibition gathers fifteen new black-and-white images of postwar public libraries across Orange County, photographed by Amir Zaki, who has spent nearly three decades studying how California's architecture expresses both idealism and dislocation.

Zaki's imagery centers on mid-century library buildings designed by icons such as Richard Neutra and William Pereira. What makes this series distinct is what it leaves out: every trace of readable text. Removing signage, titles, and legible markings, Zaki constructs sterile yet poetic tableaux where architecture becomes mute. This act of erasure shifts the viewer's attention toward proportion, texture, and structure, turning the library into a silent sculpture—a paradoxical monument to language without language.

The photographs evoke Southern California's civic optimism of the 1950s and 1960s while acknowledging how those ideals have since eroded. Once public sanctuaries for learning, these libraries now stand as relics in transition, their relevance contested in an era of digital information. Zaki's cool precision—capturing glass, shadow, and concrete with near-clinical distance—draws out both their beauty and abandonment.

Born in Beaumont and now based in Huntington Beach, Zaki has exhibited widely, including at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His continuing focus on the state's built and natural environments underscores his interest in how memory embeds itself in place. In *No Dust to Settle*, his lens documents not just the architecture of learning, but the cultural shift that leaves knowledge itself floating in suspension.

Image: Amir Zaki, "San Juan Capistrano Library, #1", 2025. © Amir Zaki

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