

SINGAPORE PIONEER

Marjorie Doggett was the first female photographer to capture Singapore's architectural heritage

👁️ TAY SUAN CHIANG



SEARCH #SINGAPOREARCHITECTURE ON Instagram, and over 38,000 posts will pop out at you, covering iconic buildings such as the State Courts, People's Park Complex and many HDB flats.

If Marjorie Doggett were alive today, her photographs might have been there, standing out from all the rest. After all, Doggett, who passed away in 2010, made her name as an architectural photographer in Singapore in the 1950s, and a new exhibition showcases some of her work that hadn't been published before.

Born in Britain, she was still a teenager when a local chemist taught her film development and printing skills. During the Second World War, she trained as a nurse, but continued to pursue photography.

She arrived in 1947 with her husband, Victor. Armed with her Rolleicord camera, she captured many of Singapore's historic buildings, including Clifford Pier and the Fullerton Building, which is now The Fullerton Hotel Singapore.

The exhibition now on at The Arts House showcases 134 photographs, and is accompanied by her book of photographs, simply titled *Marjorie Doggett's Singapore*. The book builds on her 1957 photobook, *Characters of Light*, which was considered the first book to capture Singapore's urban landscape and the first local photographic book by a woman.

In *Marjorie Doggett's Singapore*, photographer, writer and curator Edward Stokes presents Doggett's photographs in their historical and architectural context. This new book also lets today's readers appreciate the tonal quality and effective composition of Doggett's original negatives and prints, reproduced in much greater detail than was possible in the 1950s.

An exhibition of photographs by Marjorie Doggett is now on at The Arts House, Gallery 1, till Feb 2020. Marjorie Doggett's Singapore, S\$70, is available at leading bookstores.



(1) Fullerton Building seen from Clifford Pier in 1957. (2) Marjorie Doggett in 1957. (3) Clifford Pier seen from the Asia Insurance Building in 1956. (4) Raffles' Statue and Fullerton Building in 1957. (5) Exhibition of Marjorie Doggett's photographs. (6) Intersection of Cross and Amoy Streets in 1955.