

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR S RAJARATNAM, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AT THE OPENING OF THE 32ND SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL  
SALON OF PHOTOGRAPHY HELD AT THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
EXHIBITION HALL ON FRIDAY, 31 JULY 1981 AT 5.30 PM

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I am always pleased to open your Annual Salon partly because of my interest in the art of photography and partly to show my appreciation of the encouragement your Society has given to making this art more popular. I am aware that your Society's annual International Salon enjoys world-wide reputation as evidenced by entries by outstanding photographers from so many countries. Since the number of camera owners in Singapore has been steadily increasing and will continue to increase your exhibition should make Singaporeans aware that to use their cameras just to take snapshots for the family album is to be oblivious to the real potentialities of the camera. The snap shooter is one who believes the advertising slogan: "You press the button and let the camera do the rest."

But the photographers you see here got the camera to work for them and not the other way round. The photographer was the master and the camera the servant and that is why no camera, on its own, can produce photographs like these. A snapshot is the camera's creation, a great photograph that of the thinking man behind the camera.

I do not want to repeat what I said to you on previous occasions about the art of photography. What I want to do today is to draw your attention to a new area of photography which is relatively unexplored except by a few highly specialised professionals. Unlike most other art forms the photographic media is rooted in science and technology. Like television and the cinema photographic art styles change with advances in technology.

Hitherto the ..... /2.

Hitherto the art of photography was expressed through single images and in this respect was closer to traditional painting. As you will see at this exhibition individual photographs are hung for us to study and admire. They are one-shot, carefully composed and isolated images. This is the traditional way of presenting photographs. Of course we enjoy such exhibitions but we also crave for something new.

So photography is moving away from the single, static images to a new kind of dynamic photography. In this it is closer to television and cinema. Instead of the photographer expressing himself through a single image, he weaves together a succession of pictures reinforced by music, sound and human voice to create a totally different kind of photography - to make a different kind of impact.

It is called audio-visual and the impact made by an audio-visual presentation is of a different order from that made by the display of single images, however arresting and however significant each may be. The techniques required for audio-visual and traditional photography are different. It is the difference between writing a short story and an elaborately structured novel.

In audio visual shows the images are not static but dynamic. They convey movement and change, unlike in the cinema and television, by weaving into a pattern what are basically still images.

In short audio visual photography occupies a mid-way position between traditional, single image photography on the one hand and the cinema and television on the other.

This has made it a very valuable educational medium. Through audio visuals you can convey information and instruction on any subject far more cheaply and quickly than through the cinema or television and more effectively than through display of photographs. That is why schools, industry and others are turning more and more to audio-visuals to instruct, persuade and amuse. Some audio-visual presentations are pretty elaborate, involving a multiplicity of projectors, integrated with music and sounds but a good and imaginative photographer can be just as effective with more simple equipment.

Audio visual photography is different from traditional photography. You do not concentrate on one good image but on a succession of photographs, each of which may not be arresting, but which collectively, in the hands of a skilled photographer, can make a powerful impact.

Here then is a new field for Singapore photographers to explore and exploit. As an educational medium its potentialities are considerable. There is no dearth of subjects in Singapore for the audio-visual photographer and I see no reason why Singapore photographers should not put together audio-visual programmes on subjects for use in our schools or for mass education. They could be just as effective in schools as text books. Audio-visual shows can bring to us the sights and sounds of Singapore more vividly than can text books provided of course they are put together by a photographer who is well informed on the subject he is presenting, has imagination and has mastery over his camera.

The nearest your Society has got to recognising audio-visual photography is in the slide presentation with which you supplement this exhibition. But I suggest to you there is a world of difference between a slide show of unrelated, single, static images and an audio-visual symphony of images, music and sound.

In my view I think both amateurs and professionals can derive new satisfactions and even profit by venturing into the field of audio visual photography and may be your Society can give some encouragement to it as it has so successfully to traditional Salon photography.

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