

# **BLOCKS**

## **Photography by Dustin Shum**

Public housing in Hong Kong has recently been portrayed as a carrier of good neighbourhood that is vanishing in our society and the public has romanticised its image. However, the public has neglected the many real problems faced by people living in these flats: low income, jobless, disability, family problems, new migrants, ageing population and so on. Meanwhile, meaningless renovations have been carried out in old public housing estates but no improvements have been made on facilities that are really in need. Since taking over the management of shopping malls from the government, the Link REIT” (a real estate investment trust), has bought in many giant chainstores and chain restaurants that many small shops have been forced to be closed. The living standard of people living in these estates has failed to be improved after all.

All these phenomenons became the catalyst for Dustin to work on this project. Wandering in the public space of the various public housing estates through these years, he showcased to us many scenes that looked ridiculous and surreal. Dustin instilled his own experiences and memories in public housing into the many images of concrete that appeared deadpan and cold, similar to the introduction of Civilization and Its Discontents by Sigmund Freud. The “Eternal City” in Ancient Rome, where buildings from different historical periods co-existed and overlapped in disharmony, was used as a metaphor of the mental lives of human beings.

“BLOCKS is perhaps my Ancient Rome, through which I look back to my past. Rather helplessly, I watch people being forced to invest feelings of "home" in these buildings and to explore the bizarre living conditions inside these artificially engineered residences of happiness.”- Dustin Shum

*<http://dustinshum.com/blocks>*

## About Dustin Shum

Dustin Shum was born and currently lives in Hong Kong. He graduated from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Photographic Design. A photojournalist for more than ten years, he now works as an independent photographer. Shum has received many awards for outstanding documentary photography over the years, including those by the Newspaper Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Press Photographers Association, World Association of Newspapers and Publishers, and Amnesty International.

In his work, Shum focuses on the relationship between individuals and urban spaces, the living conditions of local disadvantaged groups, and the transformation of Chinese cities and towns in rapidly developing economy. His works have been exhibited in solo and group shows locally and internationally.

Past solo exhibitions include Alias: Xianggang (2003), Photogenic Olympians (2009) and BLOCKS (2011). He also participated in many local and international joint exhibitions including Imaging Hong Kong (2008), Hong Kong Contemporary Art Biennial (2010), City Flâneur: Social Documentary Photography (2010), Pingyao International photography Festival (2008 & 2011), Photography Now: China, Japan, Korea (2009, organized by SFMoMA), Savignano SI Fest (2010) and Asolo Art Film Festival (2011) in Italy. His works have been collected by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, and private collectors.

Shum has also published and co-published several photobooks including Live Alone a Life: People with Mental Illness (2007), Themeless Parks: Photographs by Dustin Shum (2008) and Mahjong (2009-2012).

In Jan 2013 he co-founded The Salt Yard, an independent, artist-run exhibition space dedicated to photography, where he curated a number of exhibitions by overseas and local photographers. Shum also writes frequently about photography under the name of "Fotopiggie," which can be found on his personal blog (in Chinese): [fotopiggie.blogspot.com](http://fotopiggie.blogspot.com)

(For the previous media coverage of the exhibition BLOCKS please visit: <http://dustinshum.com/interviews-and-media-coverage>)

## Book information

### BLOCKS

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Afterword by Dr. Edwin K. Lai and Dustin Shum

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The Salt Yard

<http://www.thesaltyard.hk/#!/bookstore/c1tf>

Shashasha

<http://www.shashasha.co/en/book/blocks/>

Asia One Book Store

[http://www.aophotobook.com/bookshop\\_xsearch.php?action=search&sc\\_keyword=blocks&search\\_atp=abstract&search\\_cate](http://www.aophotobook.com/bookshop_xsearch.php?action=search&sc_keyword=blocks&search_atp=abstract&search_cate)

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