

MEDIA RELEASE

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM PRESENTS HIROSHI SUGIMOTO'S FIRST MAJOR SURVEY EXHIBITION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, EXPLORING FORM AND PERCEPTION

Titled *Form Is Emptiness*, the exhibition brings together over 60 works that examine material presence and perception, engaging ideas of existence and emptiness across five decades of artistic practice.



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Brush Impression, Heart Sutra* (2023), 288 unique gelatine silver prints, 49.5 x 59.7 cm each, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Singapore, 26 May 2026 — Singapore Art Museum (SAM) proudly presents ***Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness***, the first major survey exhibition in Southeast Asia by internationally acclaimed artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. Opening from 29 May to 4 October 2026, the exhibition brings together over 60 works across 11 series spanning over five decades of practice, alongside 14 fossil specimens from the artist's personal collection. Presented in Singapore at this scale for the first time, the exhibition reflects SAM's commitment to researching, engaging with and presenting leading contemporary artists, as exemplified by Sugimoto's sustained inquiries into time, perception, spirituality and human consciousness through photography, sculpture, multi-media installation and spatial design.

At its core, the exhibition draws from the *Heart Sutra*, a foundational Buddhist text, and its proposition that “form is emptiness.” This suggests that what appears fixed or tangible is contingent, shaped by conditions and perception rather than inherent permanence. This tension between appearance and reality underpins Sugimoto’s practice, which considers how meaning is constructed through ways of seeing.

Eugene Tan, Chief Executive Officer and Director of SAM, said, “Hiroshi Sugimoto is one of the most influential artists of our time, whose work has continually redefined the boundaries of image-making and perception. We are delighted to present his works in Southeast Asia at this scale for the first time. *Form Is Emptiness* brings together key bodies of work across five decades, from early photographic series to more recent explorations that extend beyond the camera. His practice continues to shape how we understand the art of our time, moving between image, object, and space, and inviting close and sustained engagement.”

Designed by Sugimoto, the exhibition unfolds as a mandala, a circular, geometric form representing the universe in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Visitors move through branching and interconnected paths, forming their own sequences and associations.

Five decades of artistic inquiry and practice

Visitors are first greeted by the artist’s most iconic series, *Seascapes*. Ongoing since 1980 and photographed in more than 250 locations worldwide, the series distills the world to an elemental and enduring image: sea and sky, held in perfect balance. Some, such as *Baltic Sea, Rugen* (1996) and *N. Pacific Ocean, Ohkurosaki* (2013), are cleaved by a sharp horizon line, whereas others such as *Tyrrhenian Sea, Scilla* (1993) and *Ligurian Sea, Framura* (1993) appear veiled in fog. By transforming the horizon into a timeless vision, Sugimoto connects the present moment to antiquity, activating an archaeological sense of time and suggesting a shared human experience across millennia.

This deep sense of time and human consciousness evoked by *Seascapes* continues in the fossil specimens from Sugimoto’s personal collection, including trilobites, ancient fish, frogs and dragonflies. These specimens existed long before humans, offering a way to think about time beyond human experience. As natural imprints of time and past existence, fossils operate like

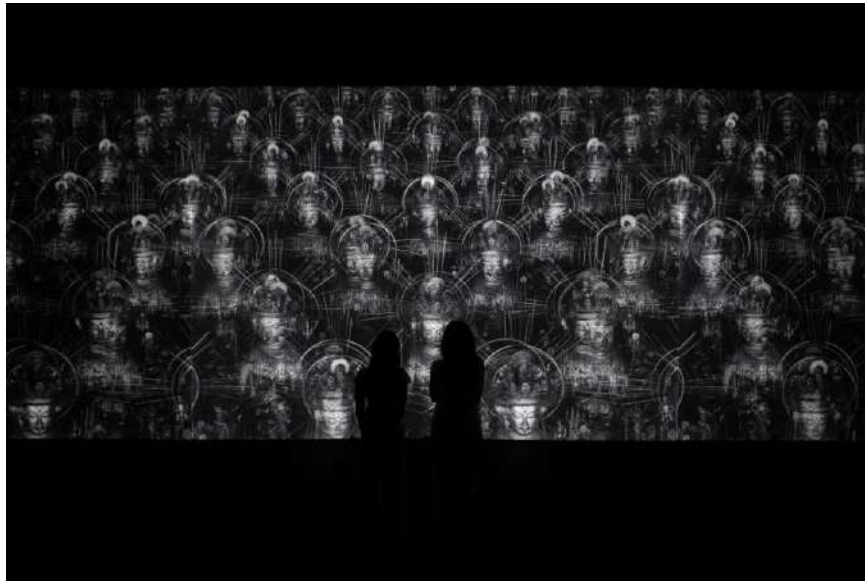
photographs and, in Sugimoto's words, can be considered "pre-photography time-recording devices."



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Spacescape* (2024), pigment print on washi paper, mounted to a folding screen, 180 x 872 cm fully extended, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

Visitors will also encounter *Spacescape* (2024), a new work on view for the first time. Developed in collaboration with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the University of Tokyo, and Sony, the work depicts Earth and the moon in orbit. By shifting our view from the ground to the cosmos, the work expands Sugimoto's exploration of human perception and consciousness.

Sugimoto also examines the process of photography itself as a way to explore presence and absence. In *Brush Impression, 1547* (2024), he creates images in near darkness by dipping a brush into fixer and "writing" on photographic paper, then briefly exposing them to light—transforming a gesture into an image. Beginning with a single circle, the work invokes notions of zero, cyclical continuity, and the coexistence of presence and absence, drawing from Buddhist philosophy and mathematical thought. This camera-less process continues in *Brush Impression, Heart Sutra* (2023), an expansive installation of 288 gelatine silver prints. Together, they translate the 274 Chinese characters of the *Heart Sutra* into an immersive architectural and bodily experience, reflecting ideas about impermanence and emptiness.



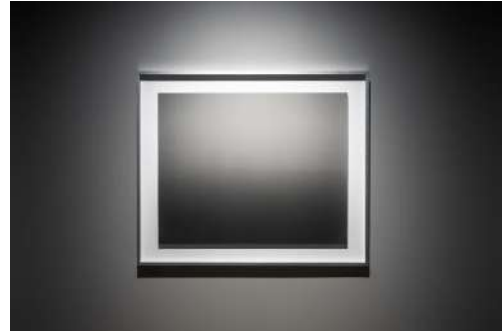
Exhibition view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Accelerated Buddha* (1997–2017), 3-channel video projection, 5:45 min, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

Sugimoto also explores how time can be compressed or stretched. In *Accelerated Buddha* (1997–2017), his first video work, images of 1,000 Buddha statues appear in an increasingly rapid sequence until they blur into a vibrating field. This acceleration echoes the growth of civilisations across time—which are all born, expand and inevitably decline—while extending the still image into motion. A similar concern underpins his celebrated *Theaters series* (1976 – 2014), in which long-exposure photographs capture entire films in a single luminous frame. Early works, such as the *U.A. Walker, New York* (1978), were shot in operating cinemas in New York. The films projected within works like *Salle 37, Palais de Tokyo, Paris* (2013) were chosen specifically by Sugimoto himself. Across the series, Sugimoto draws a parallel between cinema and life, both unfolding over time before reaching finality and disappearance.



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Theaters* (1976 – 2014), as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'.

Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Tyrrhenian Sea, Scilla* (1993), gelatine silver print, 119.4 x 149.2 cm, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'.

Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

Named after Isaac Newton's 1704 treatise on light, *Opticks* revisits his prism experiments to explore the subtle gradations of colour inherent within white light, dissolving form into immersive fields of colour. Here, light is not only the means through which the photograph is made but the subject itself, interrogating the very basis of seeing. Finally, in *Five Elements* (2011-2012), Sugimoto translates this exploration into sculptural form. Optical glass pagodas, constructed from the same material used in lenses and telescopes, house his iconic *Seascapes* images within spherical cores.

A new exhibition catalogue and short guide will accompany *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*, offering deeper insights into his practice and this major presentation at SAM. A series of public programmes will also accompany the exhibition, including an artist talk on 29 May 2026 at 7pm, where Sugimoto will share his ideas and process, as well as a performance by artist Ken Ikeda at The Engine Room at SAM. Additional programmes, including guided tours and participatory workshops, provide further points of engagement with the exhibition and its themes.

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness runs from **29 May to 4 October 2026** at SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Tickets are priced at \$20 (\$15 for Singapore Residents and Permanent Residents). Admission is free for children aged 6 and below, local/locally based students and teachers, persons with disabilities (PWD) and their caregivers. More information on the exhibition is available at <https://bit.ly/SAMHiroshiSugimoto>.

Media assets are available via this link.

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Annex A: Exhibition and Artwork Details for *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness

29 May to 4 October 2026 | Level 1, Gallery 1 and The Engine Room, SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness marks the internationally acclaimed artist's first major survey exhibition in Southeast Asia. The exhibition presents over 60 works across 11 series alongside 14 fossil specimens from Sugimoto's personal collection. A rarely exhibited three-channel video work will also be featured.

Spanning more than five decades of sustained practice, the exhibition reflects Sugimoto's ongoing inquiry into form and perception, informed by the *Heart Sutra*. This foundational Buddhist text considers emptiness as inseparable from form and the act of seeing itself. Extending photography into script, sculpture and architectural design, his practice explores ways of seeing that move between the visible and unseen.

Designed by the artist himself, the exhibition unfolds within a carefully structured, mandala-like spatial layout influenced by Buddhist cosmological thinking, guiding visitors through interconnected paths that consider the relationship between material form and its inherent emptiness.

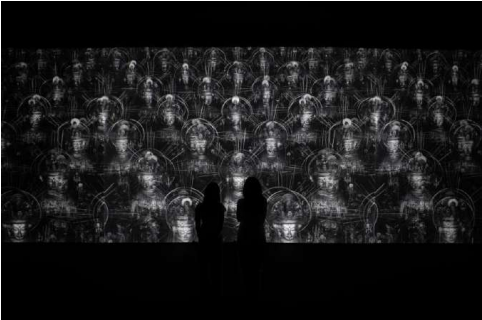
About Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1948. He graduated from Rikkyo University in Tokyo in 1970 and from the Art Centre in Los Angeles in 1974. He currently splits his time between Tokyo and New York.

A multidisciplinary artist, Sugimoto's practice encompasses photography, sculpture, installation, architecture, garden design, writing, calligraphy, culinary arts and directing/producing performing arts. His practice bridges Eastern and Western ideologies while examining the nature of time, perception and the origins of consciousness.

In 2008, Sugimoto founded the New Material Research Laboratory, an architectural design office that incorporates new uses for traditional materials and techniques. A year later, he established the Odawara Art Foundation, a charitable nonprofit organisation to promote traditional Japanese culture and performing arts. In 2017, Odawara Foundation opened Enoura Observatory, a land art complex set between the foothills of Hakone Mountain and Sagami Bay.

SAM previously presented *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Portraits* in 2002, a focused exhibition centred on the artist's *Portraits* series. *Form Is Emptiness* marks his first major survey exhibition in Southeast Asia, bringing together over 60 works across 11 series alongside 14 fossil specimens from the artist's personal collection.

Artwork	Description
<p><i>Accelerated Buddha</i> 1997-2017 5 x 6.5 m projection per channel, 5:45 min 3-channel video projection</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>  <p>Exhibition view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, <i>Accelerated Buddha</i> (1997–2017), 3-channel video projection, 5:45 min, as part of '<i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>	<p><i>Accelerated Buddha</i>, Sugimoto's first video work, extends the <i>Sea of Buddha</i> series into sound and motion. Within five minutes, 48 images of 1,000 buddhas appear in succession—slowly at first, then with increasing speed—until the forms blur into a vibrating field. The acceleration reflects Sugimoto's meditations on the cyclical history of civilisations across time: they are born, expand and inevitably decline. Drawing parallels to our present era, Sugimoto notes that our mass expansion and growth cannot continue indefinitely, and that civilisations often accelerate as they near their demise.</p>
<p><i>Brush Impression, 1547</i> 2024 Image size: 93.6 x 75 cm Frame size: 104.1 x 7.6 cm</p>	<p>Working in near-darkness, Sugimoto dips a brush into a fixer and "writes" on photographic paper. A brief flash of light then fixes the brushstroke's trace. <i>Brush Impression, 1547</i> marks Sugimoto's conceptual exploration of the intersections between presence and emptiness, which begins with a single "circle" that invokes</p>

Unique gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Brush Impression, 1547 (2024)*, unique gelatine silver calligraphy print, 93.6 x 75 cm, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

notions of zero and cyclical continuity. Pointing to Asian philosophical and mathematical ideas—especially the Buddhist concept of “emptiness”—the circle symbolises continuity without origin and a space where presence and absence coexist. Through photography, Sugimoto creates an image that attempts to give form to the idea of emptiness itself.

Brush Impression, Heart Sutra

2023

Image size: 49.5 x 59.7 cm (each)

Frame size: 50.165 x 60.325 x 3.8 cm
(each)

288 Unique gelatine silver prints

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Brush Impression, Heart Sutra* (2023), 288 unique gelatine silver prints, 49.5 x 59.7 cm each, as part of 'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Brush Impression, Heart Sutra is a monumental convergence of photography, calligraphy, and spiritual reflection. Comprising 288 unique gelatine silver prints, the work transforms the *Heart Sutra*'s 274 Chinese characters into an architectural and bodily encounter.

Embracing impermanence, Sugimoto intentionally employs expired photographic paper. In his darkroom, he undertakes a meditative ritual: with a brush dipped in fixer, he writes the sutra in the dark, guided only by rhythm and memory.

With a burst of light, the invisible script then becomes an image emerging through chemical revelation. This ceremonious process enacts and makes manifest the Sutra's central insight, inviting viewers into a space where matter, time, and void coexist and dissolve.

Series: Dioramas

Ordovician Period

1992

Image size: 119.4 x 185.4 cm

Frame size: 152.4 x 218.4 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Dioramas* (1975 – 2025), as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

In *Dioramas*, what at first seem like spectacular wildlife photographs are, in fact, images of natural history displays. When Sugimoto encountered these dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, he noticed that closing one eye caused perspective to collapse. What had seemed artificial suddenly became uncannily lifelike.

This revelation became the conceptual foundation of the *Dioramas* series. Through careful framing and controlled lighting, Sugimoto transformed stuffed animals and painted backdrops—imitations of life—into images that feel alive. The works reveal the fragile boundary between appearance and reality, and the camera's power not only to still life but to instill it.

Devonian Period

1992


Image size: 119.4 x 185.4 cm

Frame size: 152.4 x 218.4 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist

<p><i>Wapiti</i> 1980 Image size: 119.4 x 210.8 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 243.8 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Hyena-Jackal-Vulture</i> 1975 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Alaskan Wolves</i> 1994 Image size: 119.4 x 210.8 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 243.8 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p>California Condor 1994 Image size: 119.4 x 185.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 218.4 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Mathematical Model 002: Dini's Surface 2005 Dimensions: Model: 262.2 cm (H); base: 16 × Ø 25 cm; Total: 278.2 cm (H) Aluminium and steel Collection of the Artist</p>  <p>Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, <i>Mathematical Model 002: Dini's Surface</i> (2005), aluminium and steel, 2782 mm in height, 250 mm in diameter, as part of 'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>	<p>In this work, Sugimoto transforms the mathematical equation for Dini's surface into a tangible object made of aluminium and steel. Inspired by pioneering mathematicians and artists who crafted plaster models by hand to visualise complex geometric forms, Sugimoto continues this investigation into how abstract knowledge can be made visible through material means. In doing so, he draws attention to a long-standing affinity between art and mathematics: both seek to understand structure through pattern and form, and both position themselves at the forefront of human inquiry. In this sense, they emerge from a shared impulse—one which seeks to render visible unseen realms.</p>

Series: *Five Elements*

S. Pacific Ocean, Maraenui

1990/2012

Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm

Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm

Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood

On loan from Odawara Art Foundation



Exhibition view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Five Elements* (2011-2012), as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Five Elements consists of small, gleaming pagodas made of optical glass. This same material is used for lenses, prisms, telescopes and more, allowing us to see both the furthest reaches of the universe and the most microscopic of mysteries. This is the material through which Sugimoto has spent his life observing and understanding the world.

Each pagoda is composed of five geometric forms symbolising earth, water, fire, air, and void. The sphere represents water, and within each, Sugimoto enshrines one of his iconic *Seascapes*, also on display in this exhibition. He has described the experience of gazing at the sea as one of his earliest memories, a formative moment that revealed to him the origin of consciousness itself.

Tasman Sea, Ngarupupu

1990/2011


Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm

Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm

Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood

<p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>Yellow Sea, Cheju</i> 1992/2011 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>East China Sea, Amakusa</i> 1992/2012 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>Boden Sea, Uttwil</i> 1993/2011 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	

<p><i>Lake Michigan, Gills Rock</i> 1995/2011 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>Gulf of Bothnia, Holic</i> 1996/2011 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Japan, Rishiri Island</i> 1996/2011 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p><i>Bay of Sagami, Kaikoh</i> 2011/2012 Image size: 15.5 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm Pedestal dimensions: 134 x 35 x 35 cm</p>	

<p>Optical glass, black-and-white negative, steel, wood</p> <p>On loan from Odawara Art Foundation</p>	
<p>Series: <i>Opticks</i></p>	
<p><i>Opticks 076</i> 2023 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>  <p>Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, <i>Opticks</i> (2018 – ongoing), as part of '<i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.</p>	<p>Rooted in the study of light, <i>Opticks</i> takes its name from Isaac Newton's 1704 treatise, which demonstrated that all colours exist within white light, but are only perceivable when absorbed, reflected or transmitted by external objects. In this series, Sugimoto focuses on light itself, turning photography away from objects and toward the source of perception.</p> <p>Revisiting Newton's experiments, Sugimoto placed a prism in his studio and focused not on the familiar seven-colour spectrum but on the subtle "intracolours" within it. Using a mirror he designed, he further divided each band of colour into countless gradations. Originally photographed on Polaroid film, then digitised and enlarged, each photograph immerses us in fields of colour that seem to dissolve form, inviting us to encounter light itself.</p>

<p><i>Opticks 597</i> 2023 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Opticks 033</i> 2023 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Opticks 131</i> 2018 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p>Opticks 050 2018 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Opticks 064 2018 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Opticks 163 2018 Image size: 119.4 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Chromogenic print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Series: <i>In Praise of Shadows</i></p>	
<p><i>In Praise of Shadows 980806</i> 1998 Image size: 149.2 x 119.4 cm</p>	<p>Titled after Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's 1933 essay on the beauty of shadow and subdued lighting, <i>In Praise of Shadows</i> consists of long-exposure photographs of candles burning through the night. Some flames burnt out quickly; others lasted for hours.</p>

Frame size: 182.2 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm
Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *In Praise of Shadows 980806* (1998), gelatine silver print, 149.2 x 119.4 cm, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

In Praise of Shadows 980728

1998

Image size: 149.2 x 119.4 cm

Frame size: 182.2 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist

Each photograph records the full life of a candle, charting time through the slow accumulation of light.

Like Tanizaki, who valued shadow over the harsh glare of modern lighting, Sugimoto turns to the soft glow of candlelight. The flickering flame recalls one of humanity's earliest tools—fire—while quietly marking the passage of time and the perpetual cycle of life and death.

<p><i>In Praise of Shadows 980809</i> 1998 Image size: 149.2 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 182.2 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>In Praise of Shadows 980812</i> 1998 Image size: 149.2 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 182.2 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>In Praise of Shadows 980821</i> 1998 Image size: 149.2 x 119.4 cm Frame size: 182.2 x 152.4 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Series: <i>Portraits</i></p>	
<p>Sugimoto's <i>Portraits</i> appears at first to be a conventional series of historical portraiture. Yet none of these individuals stood before his camera. Instead, Sugimoto photographed hyperreal wax figures from the wax museum Madame Tussauds in London.</p>	

Removed from their display environments and lit with dramatic light and shadow, the figures look surprisingly real. Their skin, eyes and expressions seem convincing, even though we know they are made of wax. In fact, many of the historical wax figures at Madame Tussauds today were not cast directly from the original individuals, but modelled after existing portraits by artists such as Holbein, van Dyck and Vermeer. They are therefore three-dimensional renderings of paintings, already several steps removed from the original subjects.

The series thus becomes an inquiry into the history of visual representation and the ways we perceive reality, asking how images mediate our understanding of what we take to be real.

Series: *Sea of Buddha*

Sea of Buddha 025

1995

Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Sea of Buddha* (1995), as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Sea of Buddha captures the 1,001 gold-leaf statues of Guanyin, the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion. The statues are enshrined at the Rengeō-in temple in Kyoto, rebuilt in the 13th century. They stand within the temple's Kannondō hall—better known as Sanjūsangendō, the Hall of Thirty-Three Bays. After seven years of negotiation, Sugimoto was finally granted permission to photograph them. Working at dawn using only natural light and removing modern additions from the temple, he recreates a vision of how they might have looked when they were first installed 800 years ago.

Arranged in dense rows, the statues extend beyond the limits of the frame and appear to recede to infinity. Each photograph repeats frame by frame like prayer beads turning in a ceaseless loop, inviting sustained, meditative looking.

<p><i>Sea of Buddha 026</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 027</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 028</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 029</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p><i>Sea of Buddha 030</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 031</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 032</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p><i>Sea of Buddha 033</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Medium: Gelatine silver print Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Buddha 034</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Series: <i>Seascapes</i></p>	

Tyrrhenian Sea, Scilla

1993

Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Tyrrhenian Sea, Scilla* (1993), gelatine silver print, 119.4 x 149.2 cm, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'.
Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum

For more than four decades, Sugimoto has photographed his seminal *Seascapes* across over 250 locations worldwide. Each image follows the same compositional structure: sea and sky meet at a perfectly centred horizon line, with subtle variances in light, weather and atmosphere. By stripping away markers of place, Sugimoto reveals sea and sky as shared conditions across time and geography, revealing the fundamental unity of our planet—and, by extension, the shared history of humankind.

Sugimoto traces his lifelong interest in *Seascapes* to an early childhood memory of looking out at the ocean. For him, the sea is a reminder of the long span of human history, while the horizon—where water, air and light converge—holds the primordial beginnings of life.

Ligurian Sea, Framura

1993


Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist

<p><i>Ionian Sea, Santa Cesarea</i> 1990 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Baltic Sea, Rugen</i> 1996 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Sea of Japan, Rishiri Island</i> 1996 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>N. Atlantic Ocean, Cape Breton Island</i> 1996 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print</p>	

<p>Collection of the Artist</p> <hr/> <p><i>N. Pacific Ocean, Ohkurosaki</i> 2013 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 152.4 x 182.2 x 7.6 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Spacescape</i> 2024 Dimensions: 8 panels, 180 x 109 cm each; 180 x 872 cm fully extended Pigment print on washi paper, mounted to a folding screen</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>  <p>Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, <i>Spacescape</i> (2024), pigment print on washi paper, mounted to a folding screen, 180 x 872 cm fully extended, as part of</p>	<p>On view for the very first time, <i>Spacescape</i> takes the form of a folding screen and depicts Earth and the Moon at multiple points in orbit, seen from the omniscient vantage of outer space. The work emerged from a collaboration with Sony, the University of Tokyo, and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), who together launched EYE—an ultra-compact satellite with a Sony camera—into orbit in 2023.</p> <p>If <i>Seascapes</i> locates its horizon on Earth, <i>Spacescape</i> relocates it to the cosmos, extending Sugimoto’s inquiry into perception and scale. The work shifts the viewer from a terrestrial perspective to one shaped by satellite vision, prompting us to reconsider where and how human consciousness is situated. Through <i>Spacescape</i>, Sugimoto moves from observation towards speculation, expanding vision beyond sight alone.</p>

<p>'Hiroshi Sugimoto: <i>Form Is Emptiness</i>'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum</p>	
<p>Series: <i>Theaters</i></p>	
<p><i>Goshen, Indiana</i> 1980 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm Gelatine silver print Collection of the Artist</p>	<p>Spanning more than four decades, Sugimoto's celebrated <i>Theaters</i> series features empty cinemas illuminated solely by their glowing screens. By keeping the shutter open for the full duration of a film—about two hours—he compresses hundreds of thousands of projected frames into a single luminous rectangle.</p> <p>Early works were made at operating cinemas such as St. Mark's Cinema in New York, USA. He later expanded his repertoire to include <i>Abandoned Theaters</i> and <i>Opera Houses</i> where he could choose the films that were being projected. Each photograph</p>



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Theaters* (1976 – 2014), as part of *'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness'*. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

collapses a film's "lifespan" into a single image, reflecting his recurring comparison between cinema and life—it begins, unfolds, and ends in disappearance.

U.A. Playhouse, New York

1978

Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist

U.A. Walker, New York

1978

Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm

Gelatine silver print

Collection of the Artist

Metropolitan L.A., Los Angeles

1993

Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm

<p>Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Avalon Theatre, Catalina Island</i> 1993 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>AL. Ringling, Baraboo</i> 1995 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p><i>Salle 37, Palais de Tokyo, Paris</i> 2013 Image size: 119.4 x 149.2 cm Frame size: 155.3 x 185.1 x 10.1 cm Gelatine silver print</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Hiroshi Sugimoto's fossil collection</p>	

Fish, *Mene rhombea*

Eocene

35 x 24.5 x 3.7 cm

Fossil

Place of origin: Monte Bolca, Verona, Italy

Collection of the Artist



Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto's fossil collection, as part of '*Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness*'. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

In addition to his artworks, this exhibition includes Sugimoto's fossil collection, among them trilobites, ancient fish, frogs, and dragonflies.

For many of us, photography is said to have begun in 1826, when the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce found a way to fix an image with a camera obscura. Sugimoto proposes a longer view. He suggests that fossils are pre-photographic, time-recording devices.

What is a photograph, if not a fossilisation of time? And what is a fossil, if not time's own imprint?

Oviraptorid egg clutch, *Elongatoolithus*

sp.

Late Cretaceous

48 x 33 x 14 cm

Fossil

Place of origin: Central Asia

Collection of the Artist

<p>Brittle Stars, Class: Ophiuroidea Ordovician 74 x 47 x 2.5 cm Fossil Place of origin: Lkaidrami, Messeu, Southern Morocco</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Trilobites, <i>Asasphellus sp.</i> Lower Ordovician 96.5 x 119.4 cm Fossil Place of origin: Zagora, Morocco</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Dragonfly, <i>Libellulum longialtatum</i> Jurassic 15.2 x 20.3 cm Fossil Place of origin: Solnhofen, Germany</p> <p>Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p>Dragonfly, <i>Protolindenia wittei</i> Jurassic 35.5 x 30.5 x 1.2 cm Fossil Place of origin: Solnhofen, Germany Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Dragonfly, <i>Protolindenia wittei</i> Jurassic 35.5 x 30.5 x 1.2 cm Fossil Place of origin: Solnhofen, Germany Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Stonecrab, <i>Cycleryon propinquus</i> Jurassic 43 x 35.5 x 2.8 cm Fossil Place of origin: Solnhofen, Germany Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Shrimp, <i>Aeger tipularus</i> Jurassic 38 x 33 x 0.6 cm Fossil Place of origin: Solnhofen, Germany Collection of the Artist</p>	

<p>Frog, <i>Rana latonia</i> Miocene, Burdigalian Stage 20.3 x 25.4 x 1.7 cm Fossil Place of origin: Bosnia Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Frog, <i>Rana latonia</i> Miocene, Burdigalian Stage 20.3 x 25.4 x 1.7 cm Fossil Place of origin: Bosnia Collection of the Artist</p>	
<p>Fish, <i>Mioplosus labracoides</i> Eocene 15.2 x 25.4 cm Fossil Place of origin: Green River Formation, Wyoming Collection of the Artist</p>	

Fish, *Diplomystus dentatus*, *Mioplosus labracoides*, *Notogoneus osculus*

Eocene

122 x 83.8 cm

Fossil

Place of origin: Green River Formation,
Wyoming

Collection of the Artist

Reptiles, *Claudiosaurus germaini*

Upper Permian

50.8 x 104 cm

Fossil

Place of origin: Madagascar

Collection of the Artist

Annex B: Complementary Programmes

Programme Details	Description
<p>[Listening Station] Between Orbits and Sleep by Hiroshi Ebina</p> <p>29 May 2026 – 4 October 2026 10am – 7pm Level 1, The Engine Room SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>Immerse yourself in a sonic layer commissioned to serve as the atmospheric pulse for <i>Spacescape</i>. This curated electronic accompaniment is designed as a sensory bridge to the imagery of Hiroshi Sugimoto, drawing specifically from sound artist Hiroshi Ebina's evocative album, <i>Into the Darkness of the Night</i>.</p> <p>(Courtesy of KITCHEN. LABEL)</p>
<p>[Talk] Artist Talk by Hiroshi Sugimoto</p> <p>29 May 2026, Friday 7pm–8.15pm Level 1, The Engine Room SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free with Registration</p>	<p>Join us for an evening with renowned artist Hiroshi Sugimoto as he discusses his practice and enduring contributions to contemporary art and photography. Held in conjunction with the exhibition <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>, this talk offers a rare opportunity to hear directly from the artist about the philosophies and technical rigour that define his work.</p> <p>The session will be moderated by exhibition curators Amy Cheng and Angelica Ong, who will guide a conversation through Sugimoto's explorations of time, light, and the "Void."</p> <p>Please stay tuned for registration details on our website and social media channels.</p>
<p>[Performance] Improvised Soundtrack for Hiroshi Sugimoto's Video Works by Ken Ikeda</p> <p>29 May 2026, Friday 8.20pm – 9pm Level 1, The Engine Room</p>	<p>In this live performance, artist and composer Ken Ikeda returns to Hiroshi Sugimoto's video works, moving away from the composed soundtrack of their previous collaborations toward an improvisational approach. Forgoing the traditional use of pre-recorded electronic soundscapes, the artist will generate sound in real time.</p>

<p>SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>As the artist watches the moving image alongside the audience, the performance becomes a live act of interpretation – a process of “placing” sound onto light and motion as it unfolds, mirroring the immediacy that resonates with Hiroshi Sugimoto's work.</p>
<p>[Tour] Curator Tour of Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</p> <p>6 June 2026, Saturday 3 – 4pm Level 1, Gallery 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>Step into the world of Hiroshi Sugimoto in his first major Southeast Asian showcase. Led by SAM Curators Amy Cheng and Angelica Ong, this tour dives into five decades of artistic inquiry – spanning landmark photography, rare fossils, and architectural design.</p>
<p>[Audio Guide / Description] See the Silence. Hear the Light: An Accompanied Audio Walk</p> <p>8 June 2026 – 4 October 2026 10am – 7pm Level 1, Gallery 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>Experience the stillness of Hiroshi Sugimoto's world through an auditory connection. In a unique collaboration between SAM and Centre 42, this audio guide features an evocative response to the artwork by playwright Joel Tan. We invite you to journey together through Sugimoto's explorations of time, ephemerality, and transcendence.</p> <p>Accompanying you as you move through the gallery, this voice-- part ekphrastic essay, part cinematic audio description-- will immerse you in the exhibition's play on light and shadow. Put on your headphones and enter this meditative space where the art becomes visible for everyone.</p>
<p>[Tour] Docent tour with Singapore Sign Language interpretation</p> <p>4 July 2026, Saturday 3pm – 4pm Level 1, Gallery 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>How does form and emptiness exist in interdependence?</p> <p>Join our friendly docent and Singapore Sign Language interpreter on a tour of <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>.</p>

	<p>This tour will be delivered in English with Singapore Sign Language (SgSL) interpretation provided by Equal Dreams. This tour is suitable for participants aged 6 and up; children must be accompanied by an adult.</p>
<p> [Screening Series] <i>Cinematic Voids</i> August 2026 – October 2026 Filmhouse Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road, #05-00, Singapore 199589 Ticketed </p>	<p>In collaboration with Filmhouse at Golden Mile Tower, we are pleased to present <i>Cinematic Voids</i>, a curated film series appearing alongside the exhibition <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>.</p> <p>Taking its cue from the exhibition’s focus on the five elements, this programme explores the concept of the ‘Void’—a space that, in Sugimoto’s world, is never truly empty, but rather brimming with potential, time, and light. The series serves as a moving-image extension of Sugimoto’s meditative practice, inviting viewers to find depth in stillness and the unseen.</p> <p>The selected films are structured around the five fundamental elements: Void, Wind, Earth, Fire, and Water. Through these pairings, the programme creates a visual dialogue between the stillness of the gallery and the rhythmic flow of cinema, exploring how light and time manifest across different landscapes and narratives.</p> <p>This series is held in partnership with Filmhouse at Golden Mile Tower, offering a unique atmosphere for audiences to engage with these cinematic works.</p> <p>Please stay tuned as we will be releasing the full film selections on social media soon.</p>
<p> [Talk & Book Signing] <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i> 8 Aug 2026 3pm – 5.30pm Level 1, The Engine Room SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free with Registration </p>	<p>This programme features an in-conversation and book signing held in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue, <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i>.</p> <p>Join the publication’s key contributing writers, Mami Kataoka and Dr Yukio Lippit and the exhibition curators, Amy Cheng and Angelica Ong for a panel</p>

	<p>discussion as they share insights into the research and essays within the book. The session will conclude with a book signing with the guest speakers.</p> <p>For more updates and registration details, please follow our social media channels.</p>
<p>[TOUR] Singapore Sign Language Tour of Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness.</p> <p>5 September 2026, Saturday 3-4pm Level 1, Gallery 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>How does form and emptiness exist in interdependence?</p> <p>Join a Deaf facilitator on a tour of <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i> to discover the artist's contemplation of time and space.</p> <p>This tour will be delivered in Singapore Sign Language (SgSL) with interpretation by Equal Dreams. This tour is suitable for participants aged 6 and up; children must be accompanied by an adult.</p>
<p>[SAM Late Nights] Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</p> <p>3 October 2026, Saturday SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark</p>	<p>How does sound occupy the space between form and emptiness?</p> <p>Join us for a special edition of SAM Late Nights, where the depths of <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i> are brought to life through an evening of sound and site-specific response.</p> <p>Please stay tuned for more information.</p>
<p>[Tour] Curator Tour of Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</p> <p>4 October 2026, Sunday 3 – 4pm Level 1, Gallery 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free</p>	<p>Step into the world of Hiroshi Sugimoto in his first major Southeast Asian showcase. Led by SAM Curators Amy Cheng and Angelica Ong, this tour dives into five decades of artistic inquiry – spanning landmark photography, rare fossils, and architectural design.</p>

<p>[Self-guided Resource] Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness Mini Guide</p> <p>June – 4 October 2026 10am – 7pm Level 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark Free, while stocks last</p>	<p>Designed for discovery and wonder, this self-guided resource for <i>Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</i> is available onsite and recommended for young visitors ages 7 and up.</p>
<p>SAM&Schools: Bartley Secondary School Artwork Response to Hiroshi Sugimoto: Form Is Emptiness</p> <p>June – 4 October 2026 10am – 7pm Level 1 SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark</p>	<p>This collaboration between SAM and Bartley Secondary School transforms students from passive observers into visual storytellers.</p> <p>Featuring a series of photographs taken by 15-year-old students across a series of classes, discover how they interpreted and experimented with black-and-white photography inspired by Hiroshi Sugimoto’s artworks!</p>

Annex C: Ticketing Details

Categories	Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents)	Tourists and Foreign Residents
Adult	\$15	\$20
Concession ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior (60 years old and above) • Full-Time National Servicemen (NSFs) excluding foreign personnel • Overseas student/teacher 	\$10	\$15
Children 6 years and below Local/locally-based students/teachers Persons with disabilities (PWDs) and accompanying caregiver ²	Free (Not required to purchase a ticket) Please present valid proof of identity (e.g. NRIC, school pass) at SAM's ticketing counter to enjoy free admission.	

Tickets are available for purchase via <https://bit.ly/SAMHiroshiSugimoto>. All ticket prices are inclusive of booking fees.

¹ Valid proof of identity (e.g., passport, school pass) must be presented at the ticketing counter to enjoy concession admission.

² One caregiver accompanying visitors with disabilities will enjoy free admission, regardless of the caregiver's nationality.