

# ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

## New York

**Simryn Gill**

TRACY WILLIAMS LTD.

521 West 23 Street

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View of "My Own Private Angkor," 2012.

"My Own Private Angkor," Simryn Gill's ethereal series of ninety photographs taken between 2007 and 2009, is a project as serendipitous as it is rigorously crafted. Gill, who will represent Australia at the 2013 Venice Biennale, shot this series in Port Dickson, Malaysia, where she found herself living near a large postcolonial housing development that has been sitting abandoned since the 1980s. In the series, she methodically and meditatively investigates the interiors of this complex, depicting leaning plate glass windows and gouged walls that have been stripped of their precious metals by looters.

The product of Gill's investigation, exhibited here by way of a tight grid of two horizontal columns of black-and-white gelatin silver prints, stylistically falls under rubrics as disparate as photojournalism and Minimalism. Shadowed quadrilaterals of various shapes, arranged in various configurations, dominate these square frames, while ornamental details such as painted tiles and columns attest to the jilted ambitions of past investors. Excavated copper wires leave behind hastily carved angles on many of the walls, exposing the keen urgency of our human survival instinct. Vines slither inconspicuously on the floor

with cast-off rubber tubing, as the ever-present jungle vegetation (always seen lurking out of open windows and doorways) gradually reclaims these divested structures.

Gill allows the story to work for her; she subtly frames and arranges these compositions in a way that lets the viewer ponder the morality of human enterprise without ever being shown a single person. Despite the restrictive format, each successive photograph brims with odd and disquieting imagery, as Gill wondrously unlocks a rare beauty from this uniquely modern circumstance.

— *Ryan Steadman*