



**For Immediate Release**

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***Once Upon An Island***

***Images of Singapore (1950-1980) through the Lens of Dr. Ivan Polunin***

Authors/Editors: Dr Ivan Polunin, Asmara Rabier

1000+ Colour Photos, Hardback, 444pp, 228 x 228 mm

ISBN 978-981-18-7369-0 Price: S\$60.00

Online Preorders: <https://www.ivanpolunin.com/preorder-book>

Once Upon An Island is the title Dr Ivan Polunin gave to his opus that has become the book of the same name. A work that captures the soul of developing Singapore, his book is over 400 pages with over 1,000 photos. Once Upon An Island shows vanished sights of 1950-80s Singapore in colour with details that bring memories of past times vividly back into the present.

Captured in photos and film over a generation ago, the Singapore of the past presented in this volume is a wondrous new multiverse to youths of the digital era. Forgotten over time while Singapore made leaps of economic success and development, these images of pioneering Singaporean life will bring back memories for many who lived through decades of both dramatic changes and growth.

***Community Life***

Action images of real life scenes in developing Singapore are published for the first time. Colour images of Singapore's diverse cultural heritages show how customs, festivals and rites of life that are still kept alive in the contemporary present were observed and celebrated in the relatively recent past. Images of the neighbourhoods, dress, practices and lifestyles that have rapidly vanished are presented to jog the living memory of all seniors and the childhood recollections of the youngsters of those days.

***Attap to HDB***

Dr Polunin understood much of Singapore's rustic areas would make way for modern development and economic growth. However he captured the essences of the disappearing landscape through his films and slides. A cross section of Singapore is presented in this book from village hut and dugout seaworthy sampan home to the first Housing Development Board flats.

***Ecology & Environment***

Dr Ivan Polunin's world was fully integrated with the natural environment and led acclaimed ecological producer Sir David Attenborough to famously say "*It was marvellous to have somebody with this incurable and irrepressible curiosity about the natural world. He seemed to know all the extraordinary sides of it, that a more conventional middle of the lane biologist would not know about. It didn't matter what it was, you could just ring up Ivan, "Have you heard of this?" And he nearly always had.*"

A fraction of Dr Polunin's deep fascination with the natural world is presented in this book, where his interests ran deep as both documentary filmmaker and scientist. The breadth of his geographic and environmental materials would be sufficient for several more specially devoted volumes on topics as diverse as fireflies and crabs.



### *Island Life & Sea-sports*

Singapore's geographic situation as an island is celebrated as a part of this book. Maritime activities beyond business are captured in show insights into life by the waters that remained part of Singapore through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While some sea sports and fishing continue to this day, the book provides a vivacious spectrum of the diverse marine interests that related to living on an island.

Get the book at the Public Book Launch with rare original film screening, talks by special guests, register your attendance at: <https://www.ivanpolunin.com/once-upon-an-island>

### **About Dr Ivan Polunin**

Ivan Polunin (1920–2010) left London at the age of 27, arriving on the P&O Liner Canton in Penang on May Day 1948. He had come to serve his British National Service as a junior doctor in hospitals in Singapore and Malaya.

What began as a two year tour of duty, turned into a lifelong passion for discovery as he settled down and then married Fam Siew Yin, making Singapore his permanent home. Besides becoming Associate Professor at the Department of Community, Occupational and Family Medicine, National University of Singapore, Dr Ivan Polunin's many interests went far beyond academia.

With his insatiable curiosity and passion for exploration, Dr Polunin extended his interests beyond medicine to cover subjects as diverse as industry, everyday life and hidden aspects of the natural world.

Up until his passing in 2010, Dr Polunin toiled at compiling one of Southeast Asia's most significant interdisciplinary audiovisual archives. His book leads us on a fascinating journey in time, weaving through the realms of science, art and nature and giving us a glimpse into a vanished world from Singapore's past.

**For more information, please visit [www.ivanpolunin.com](http://www.ivanpolunin.com)**

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### **About Asmara Rabier**

Asmara is a curator and art consultant specialising in Southeast Asian art. Previously, she worked as a specialist at a leading international auction house and as a gallery director and manager for several renowned art dealers. She graduated with a BA in Southeast Asian Studies and Social and Human Sciences from INALCO-Sorbonne, Paris, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, 1st Class Honours from SOAS, University of London. She is the proud granddaughter of Fam Siew Yin and Ivan Polunin.

### **About Suntree Media**

Suntree Media produces media with high quality original content with a focus on Singapore heritage and culture across digital and conventional platforms. With an emphasis on Singapore's national and multicultural history/heritage, Suntree has collaborated with diverse agencies and organisations. Suntree's integrated media production works aim to present the diversity of religion, race and community in Singapore's multicultural heritage with depth and



resonance through both research and engagement with Singapore's living heritage environment. Suntree's integrated media production works in a family line of print and publishing, provide the editorial input and production experience backbone for Suntree's content to be anchored in heritage as well as pushing the boundaries between genres and media platforms.

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