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The House of the Raja

Splendour and Desolation in Thailand's Deep South

Xavier Comas

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Forgotten in Thailand's troubled Deep South, stands a dilapidated wooden palace once home to a Malay ruler, the last of his dynasty. Locals call it the "House of the Raja," a place suffused with loss and solitude, laden with the region's glorious past and tragic present. Intrigued by this demonized, little-known borderland, photographer Xavier Comas chanced upon this mysterious house and felt compelled to delve into its past. The caretaker, a Muslim shaman who held rituals inside, invited the author to stay and initiated him into its hidden dimensions. As Comas builds a bond of trust with the inhabitants of the house, the missing pieces of its history gently fall into place, revealing an ancient culture long hidden and the building's ties to the centuries-old struggles in this contested region.

Comas' evocative black-and-white photographs take us into a realm of hauntings, mystic powers and fading memories. His first-hand account enthralls the reader with vivid descriptions in which the real and the magical entwine. The House of the Raja provides a missing key to controversial issues of legacy, belief and identity in Thailand's Muslim South.

Xavier Comas, is a fine arts graduate of the University of Barcelona, whose work has been exhibited in Europe and Asia, where he now lives, and featured by prominent magazines such as the Japanese art magazine 'Quotation,' the Spanish La Vanguardia Sunday's Magazine, Courrier International, Asia Literary Review, USA's Time magazine, Lens Culture, NZZ of Switzerland and GUP Magazine among others. The Singapore Art Museum exhibited his installation 'Pasajero' in 2009 and acquired his 'Jiutamai' series as a permanent collection. His work 'Tokyo up, down,' a random photographic exploration in elevators, was exhibited at Noorderlicht Photofestival 2011 and by the Museum of Estonian Architecture in Tallinn, Estonia. The House of the Raja has been widely exhibited and is his first book both as photographer and writer.

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