

## PRESS RELEASE

Bill Hayden  
Coconuts  
Dec 12 – Jan 24, 2010

Opening Reception:  
Sat Dec 12, 6 – 9 PM

Real Fine Arts is pleased to announce Coconuts, a new exhibition by Bill Hayden. Paired with the exhibition is the publication of Hayden's new artist book—also titled Coconuts, published by the artist's own imprint, 100%. Compiling a series of photographs taken on a Caribbean vacation, this publication casually explores the wealth of cultural associations fostered by the very trees that bear such peculiar nuts. Using these images as its locus, an immersive “beach-themed” installation is to be constructed, bringing some of the sandy surf and turf indoors just in time for winter.

The photographs in Coconuts assemble into a laconic typology of this oft-exoticised flora. Hayden's hair-in-the-breeze photographic approach easily posits this tropical form's subjection to the rigorously familiarized cultural abstractions of Corona's chillwave advertisements, Sandals' family-friendly colonialism, Zico's life-nourishing hygienics or Hedonism II's keg-stands in the sand. When displaced from such marketed contexts—and no longer soundtracked to Jack Johnson or Neon Indian—the hungover reality of these trees comes into focus. Sharply contrasting the vectorized front cover and its bejeweled back, these au naturel images often fall short of their advertised expectations. Yet this isn't quite tropical malaise or a journalistic account of Montezuma's revenge. Rather, throughout Hayden's photographs, one detects a lackadaisical ambling that repeatedly seeks to find the care-free life that these trees have come to advertise. Tourist snaps? Travel essay? Location scouting? With these photos one is left to wonder, is Hayden searching for miracles or is it simply the beer?

Specifically for this show, these decidedly unprofessional images are mounted on hand-crafted frames that ape the look of found driftwood; expanding the work into an installation that is buoyed less by sculptural or architectural traditions and more by the decorative regimes of commercial display. Carefully balancing a look that is both polished yet rustic, these unique displays feel brand new, current and/or contemporary while simultaneously evoking the comfort and charm of a time-tested favorite. Save a vitrine filled with cockle shells and conchs or a faux-barnacled ornamental buoy, the beach house pastiche of Hayden's design is certainly nothing unfamiliar: its signifiers are routinely adapted into the commodity forms of mainstream culture, finding notable apotheosis in the pre-washed Americana of Hollister Co. and its parent store, Abercrombie & Fitch. While the booming echos of these stores' cavernous mise-en-scene trickle subtly into Hayden's exhibition, they are a given sparse treatment as the bulk of the gallery's space is given over to an impromptu beach complete with rope partitions, breakwater slabs and a cooler sunk into a pile of sand. Stocked full of beer for the show's opening, it is only realistic to assume that the cooler's contents too will find a way into the show.

In pursuing the idealized norms of commercial art and mainstream design, Hayden goes the whole nine but willfully comes up short; preferring instead to let the refuse of the realistic bring consumer phantasmas down to earth. However, this is not an exercise in sacrilege—of tearing the sun from the skies, the model from the billboard. Rather such interruptions and slippages—be it palm trees sandwiching a waste basket, smoked-out beer cans in the sand, etc.—stand as revisionary propositions to the imagined lifestyles of the commercial image. Pictures of a life imagined not by focus-grouped enthusiasm but by a reality that seeks vacation from an economy of overdetermined desire.