

## Everything is Regional // Tyler Haughey

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*Phroom Magazine*, Book Review

2018

I don't know much about New Jersey. I've driven around, past, and through it. Like most, my understanding of the state is clouded by pop culture and over generalization. The Boss, the mob, Trenton makes the world takes, Jersey Shore. I know as a state it's green and often treated like the ugly sibling of New York. It's probably safe to say that the state of New Jersey has a vulnerable identity often misinterpreted by outsiders. In "Everything is Regional" by Tyler Haughey we explore motels, coastal enclaves, and parts of New Jersey that have not been frequented in mass for a long time. We see the decadence of American tourism and the subsequent abandonment of a once fantasized locale for more idyllic destinations.

One of the first things that I notice about the motels in Haughey's monograph is that they are often named, themed, or punctuated by the exoticism of another place. Malibu Motel, Caprice Motel, Caribbean Motel, Waikiki Ocean Front Inn. The irony is obvious, coastal beach towns attempting to create an identity through the fascination of another world. Trying to build a dream based around another dream. It's a model that only works for so long, why choose the fake when you could have the real thing? It's daunting to think about. How a once thriving industry could become so quiet, isolated, abandoned.

While it's no mystery that east coast winters are nothing far from treacherous, the summers can be whimsical. Drove of people are known to hit the boardwalks and find escape in swim trunks, alcohol, and a limited annual sunshine regiment. Thus, I find Haughey's images more haunting than I usually would. Besides a few portraits the human presence is largely absent from the architectural oddities we find in *Everything Is Regional*. Sprinkled amongst motel images Haughey has included scans of halftoned vernacular postcards from the regions' motel heyday. Who basks in the warm glow of a motel's neon sign? Does anyone even eat continental breakfast anymore? How many waffle irons did we lose?

Fake palm trees missing their fronds are omnipresent. It's safe to say that people who created a lot of these motels were California Dreaming. Flamboyant paint jobs counteract the blinding drab white eastern sky. When I look at these images I can't help but feel like saying, "this is America". What we are looking at is the failure of capitalism in picture form. This infrastructure was created knowing that one day it would surely be outmoded. This is what makes these images distinctly different from motel photographs of the west. These motels were created without the dream of

western expansion. They were perhaps aware of their certain failure but chose to exist for a moment we can only look back on with great nostalgia.

There is a very specific beauty here. Haughey's images of Barnegat Light, New Jersey particularly strike me. I've never been but I'd like to go there. Create new memories in a place that many including myself haven't taken the time to know. Haughey's depiction of New Jersey is one of sadness, fondness, a gentle look at a place that he loves and cares for greatly. While I wasn't sure how I would ultimately feel about Everything Is Regional I'm glad I took the time to know the northeastern coast a little bit better through the eyes of talented photographer trying to preserve and document the structures of a vanishing industry.