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## Daido Moriyama

★★★★★

**Luhring Augustine**, through Mar 13  
(see Chelsea)

A lone, hunched figure—Van Gogh’s *Sorrow* draped in a beach towel—opens postwar Japanese photography legend Daido Moriyama’s show about Hawaii, but its brooding mood is misleading. In contrast to a selection of his photos from the ’70s and ’80s in the back gallery, Moriyama’s recent work is literally and figuratively lighter, departing from his trademark rough, blurred and out-of-focus style in a redemptively upbeat portrayal of the islands.

With refreshing honesty, Moriyama doesn’t pretend to be anything other than an outsider, sticking to themes of sun, sand and tourism. Apart from a few shots—weeds engulfing an abandoned car or a hula girl mural in a grubby yard—he’s less interested in exposing life behind the scenes than transforming stereotypical subject matter, which he does with mixed success. A grainy shot of fog rolling in over tropical vegetation and blurred images of palms are nothing new, but a fast-food joint made radically strange by dramatic sunlight or a still close-up of a highly erotic conch shell render the overly familiar strange.

Instead of mounting a critique of crass commercialism, Moriyama portrays tourists as intrinsic to or respectful of the landscape—a kid crawls turtlelike on the beach, and poncho-wearing lava watchers resemble pilgrims—while uncommonly pleasant tourist-shop mannequins portray commerce as low-key. Lest the series come across as too feel-good, Moriyama adds an excremental pile of lava here, a grotesque sunbather there. But with the exception of a kitschy image of a dog wearing sunglasses—a far cry from the artist’s iconic 1971 depiction of a menacing stray—the series’s positive tone is striking evidence of Moriyama’s sensitivity to Hawaii’s mutability.

—Merrily Kerr



Hawaii