

“Conch Key, A Brief Study” (a series of pictures taken from an island)

Conch Key is a very small island situated just west of Marathon, Florida. It is a crowded place especially for its size. It is a fishing village with weekly rentals scattered here and there. There are two lime stone bed roads. One circles the community. Another runs over a short distance to the island's small lobster-packing house. Everywhere, the settlement is littered with reminders of how the people who live here earn their living from the sea. There are boats, trailers, lobster traps, and floats painted and numbered so as to identify the fishermen who each day during the lobster season will leave the confines of the community for the open stretches of the near by ocean shallows. It is a place where a variety of dwellings reflect its economic history. Houses, cottages and trailer units crowd together under a lush canopy of tropical green.

I visited the island for a week during the summer of 2011. During the day the resident fishermen were mostly out to sea. They returned in the evening to process their catch and were back on the water early the next morning. During lobster season the work day begins and ends with the sun rising, then setting.

The purpose of this study is to explore the island habitation of its residents which is compact and colorful; close, but with a strong sense of pride-in-place, of boundaries, of privacy (good chain link fences make for good neighbors), and of individuality.

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