I have been to

A FEW PALM TREES

SUMMER LIU

2017

I have been to *A Few Palm Trees...*

In the internet era, anyone can become a curator of his or her own gallery in the form of social media feeds. We are not only trying to obtain the perfect image, but fabricating the fantasy of living within that image. Traveling is the most appropriate apparatus for the dissimilation of such ideology. A destination is captured on camera, and that moment being reworked a million times, until the most “authentic” imagery is created. The purpose of our travel has shifted from the production of the “self” to the production of a perfect image containing the self. Instead of traveling to see and experience sites in a specific way, we are traveling to a specific imagery of a site and to insert ourselves into the constructed view.

In the book, I travel to fourteen specific palm trees, scattered around los angeles. The palm trees are depicted and documented in Ed Ruscha’s photography series, *A Few Palm Trees*, in 1971. It was part of his ongoing process of exploring Los Angeles through the most mundane subject matters: gas stations, palm trees, apartments, swimming pools, parking structures, etc.

Ruscha isolated the palm trees from the contexts, meticulously cropping only to subjectively delineate the object, and presenting them on a blank page, against their respective locations. His methodology dramatises these chosen trees, transforming the non-monument into a monuments

within the reconstructed destination, the white page of a book. Then, *A Few Palm Trees* can be viewed as more than a photography, but rather as an alternative guidebook of the city of Los Angeles. While the addresses of the palm trees serve as demarcations to document the locations, the images of the palm trees serve as the "real" image of one's desired travel destinations.

In my exploration, i preserve Ruscha's images on the right side of the spread, just as it was published, but substituting the addresses on the left page with my photographs in front of the same palm tree. The photographs are subjected to digital manipulations, to show four progressive stages: the original, the cropped, the black and white, and the completely isolated- as close as possible to Ruscha's images, hence the "real" destination of contemporary traveling.

Traveling, in the context of this book, can be interpreted in three different ways. Initially, I traveled within the web domain of Google Map to map *A Few Palm Trees*. This process could be acquainted to "armchair travel" where the subject is stationary in the process. In continuation of the armchair travel, Google street view generates further understanding of this travel planning: which trees should I see in the same day, where to park, what kind of urban environment are these trees situated at?

After that I went out to the physical world to "see" and to document the moments of seeing. This was done in three separate afternoons. To physically travel is to be in confrontation with the real world. Palm tree 1 and palm tree 7 are no longer there, while palm tree 2 and 9 have grown into an army of trees. (The most peculiar thing to me in this process was the act of actually finding these trees. They all look the same!) Besides 2 and 10, which are situated at the beginning of the Walk of Fame on Hollywood Boulevard; all of the palm trees are located in the "less traveled" part of Los Angeles.

The last part of traveling was done through digitally manipulating images collected, in order to travel back in time to Ruscha's 'ideal' image of the palm trees.

Little by little, "I" went to the site of *A Few Palm Trees*, through researching, physically traveling, and digitally maneuvering.

Summer Liu

Acknowledgment

A special thanks to my instructor Sylvia Lavin for her unyielding support. It was your wonderful lectures at “Are We There Yet?” travel seminar at UCLA which made this small collection possible in the first place. I have been in constant dilemma throughout the quarter in deciding what to do, and she was always there to help me see better.

Hong Bae Yang, for driving me around and crossing Sunset and Hollywood numerous times to take pictures of me and those palm trees. I could not have done this without your generous help.

All photos taken with iPhone 7.


Chula Vista Wy
5900 W
STOP




Chula Vista Wy
5900 W
STOP




Chula Vista Wy
5900 W
STOP




Chula Vista Wy
5900 W
STOP




































Shoes.
Gam




Gam




Gam
























STOP




STOP




STOP





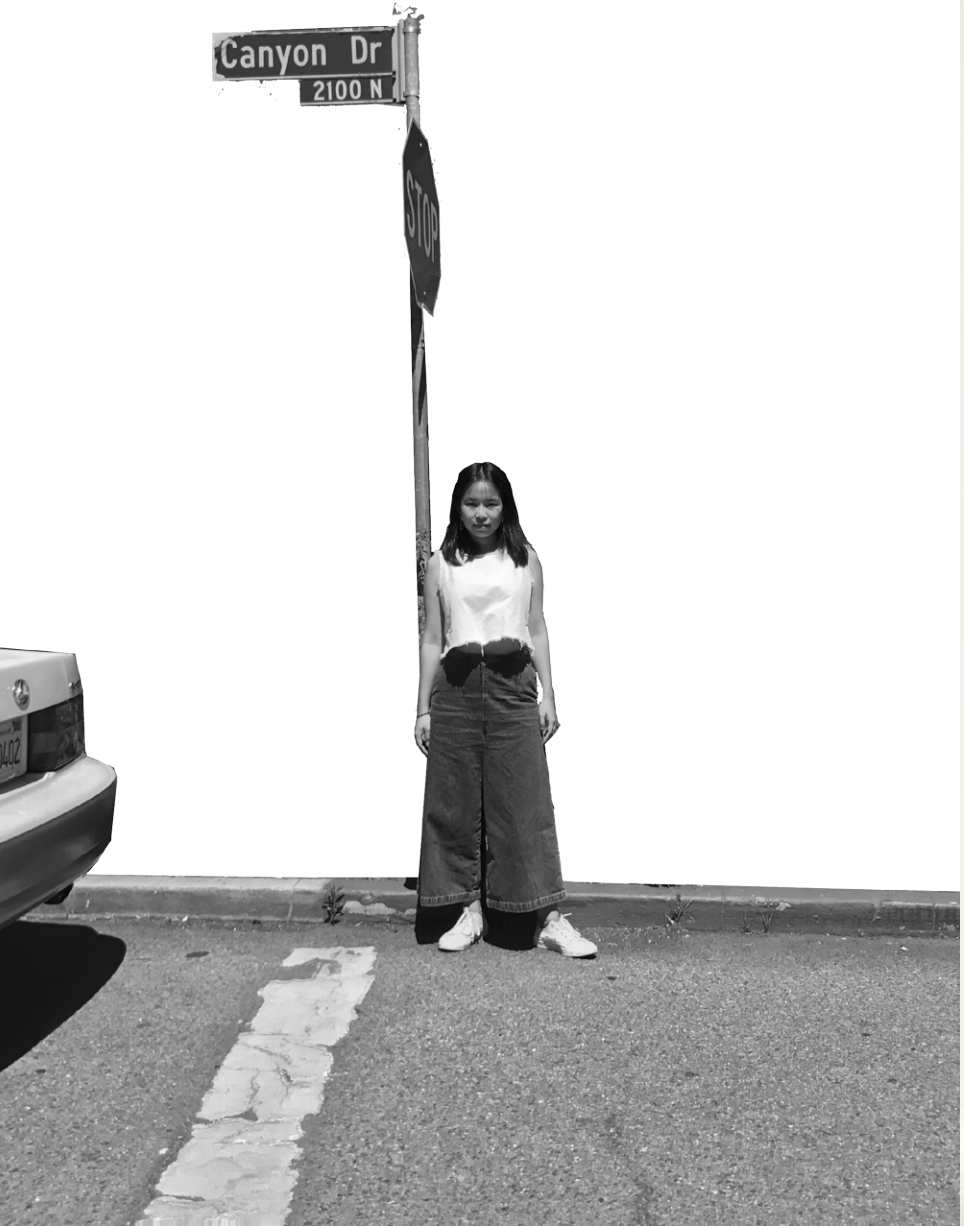



Canyon Dr
2100 N
STOP

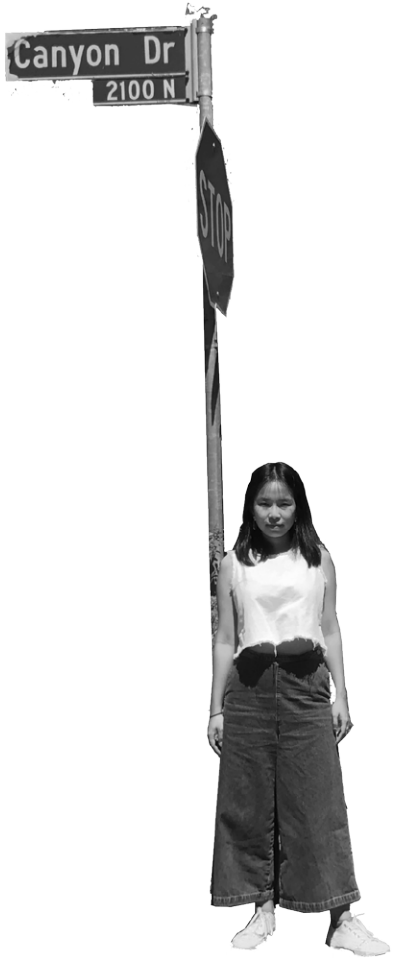



Canyon Dr
2100 N
STOP




Canyon Dr
2100 N
STOP




Canyon Dr
2100 N
STOP











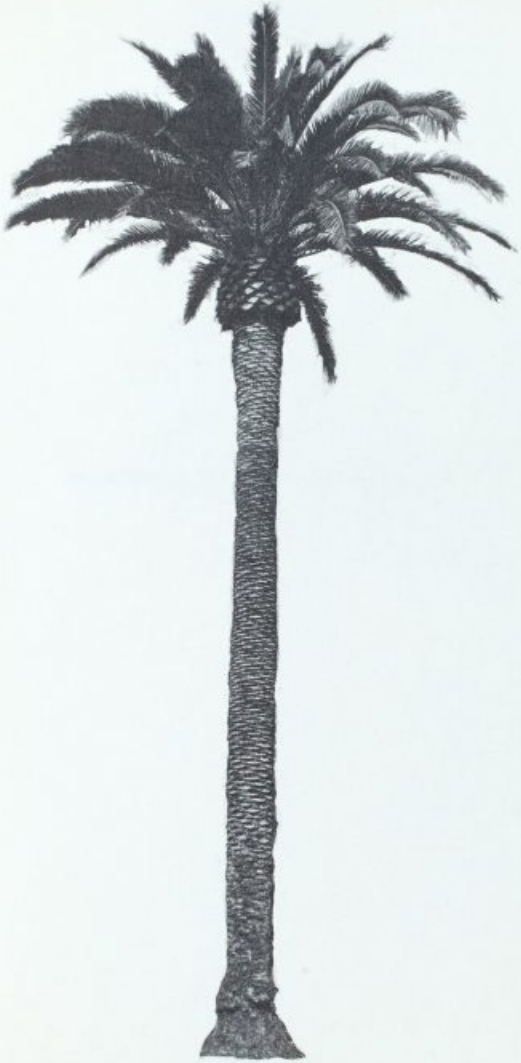




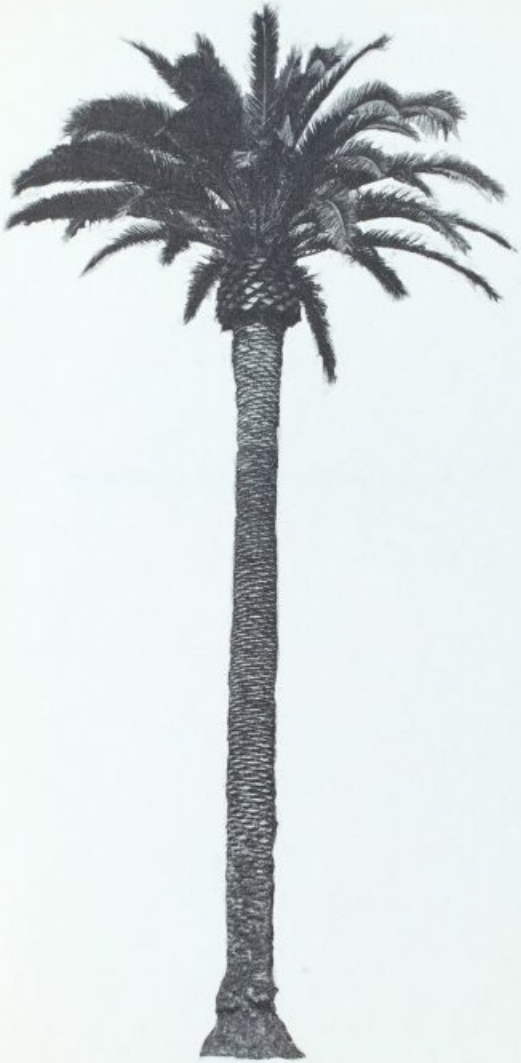




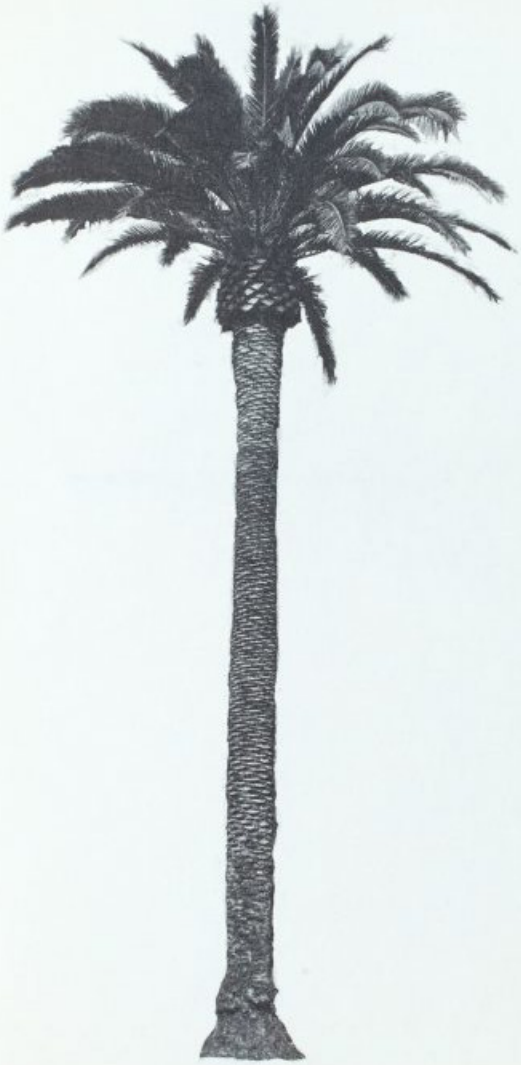




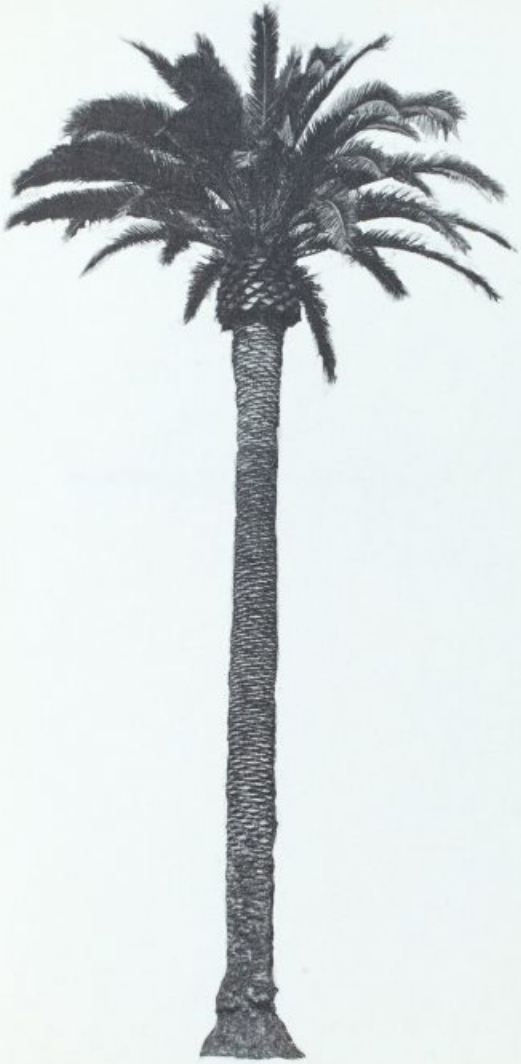













"HILARIOUS AND INS
THE BOOK OF MORMON
wewor
MORMON




THE BOOK OF MORMON
wewor



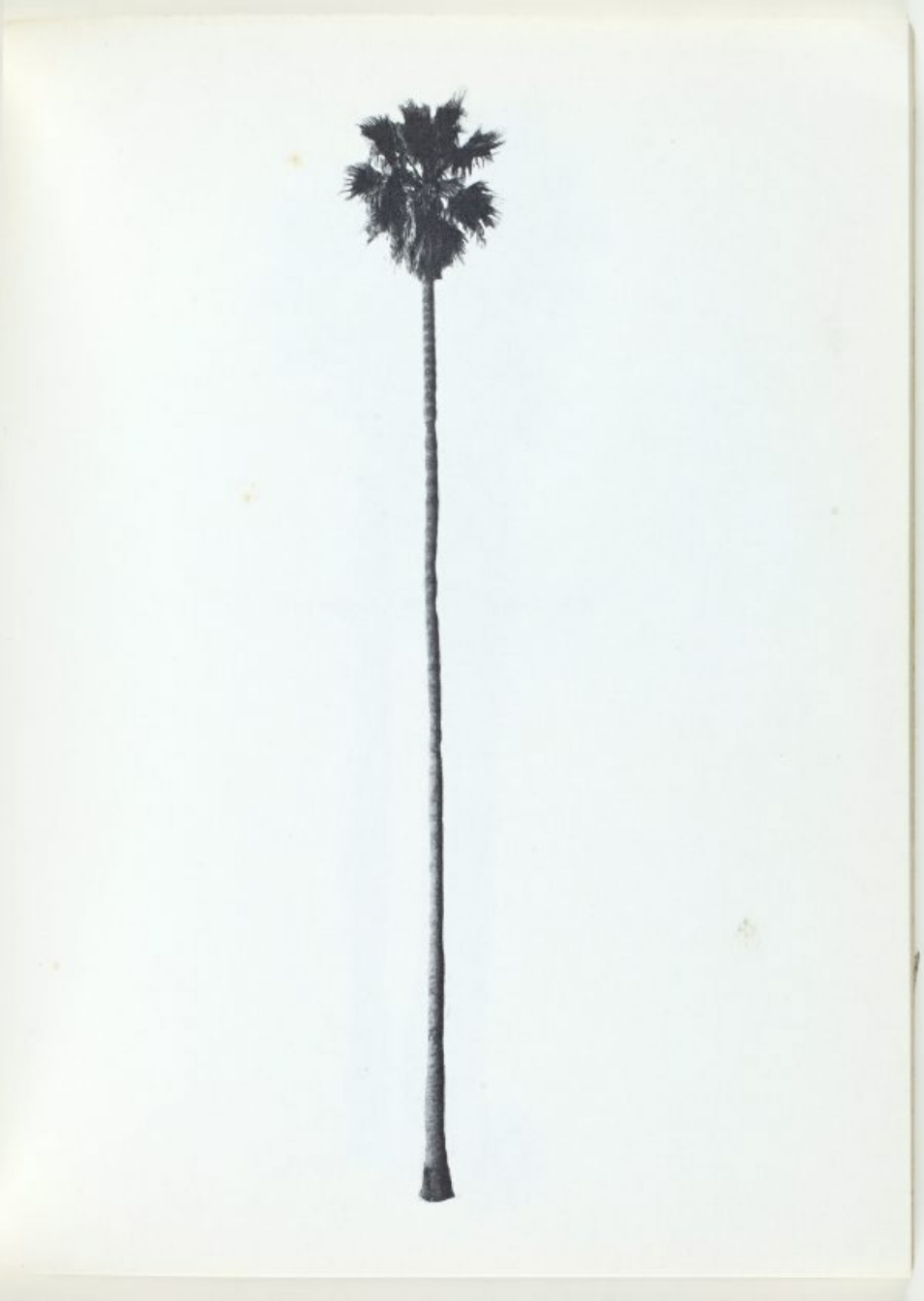

THE BOOK OF MORMON
wework



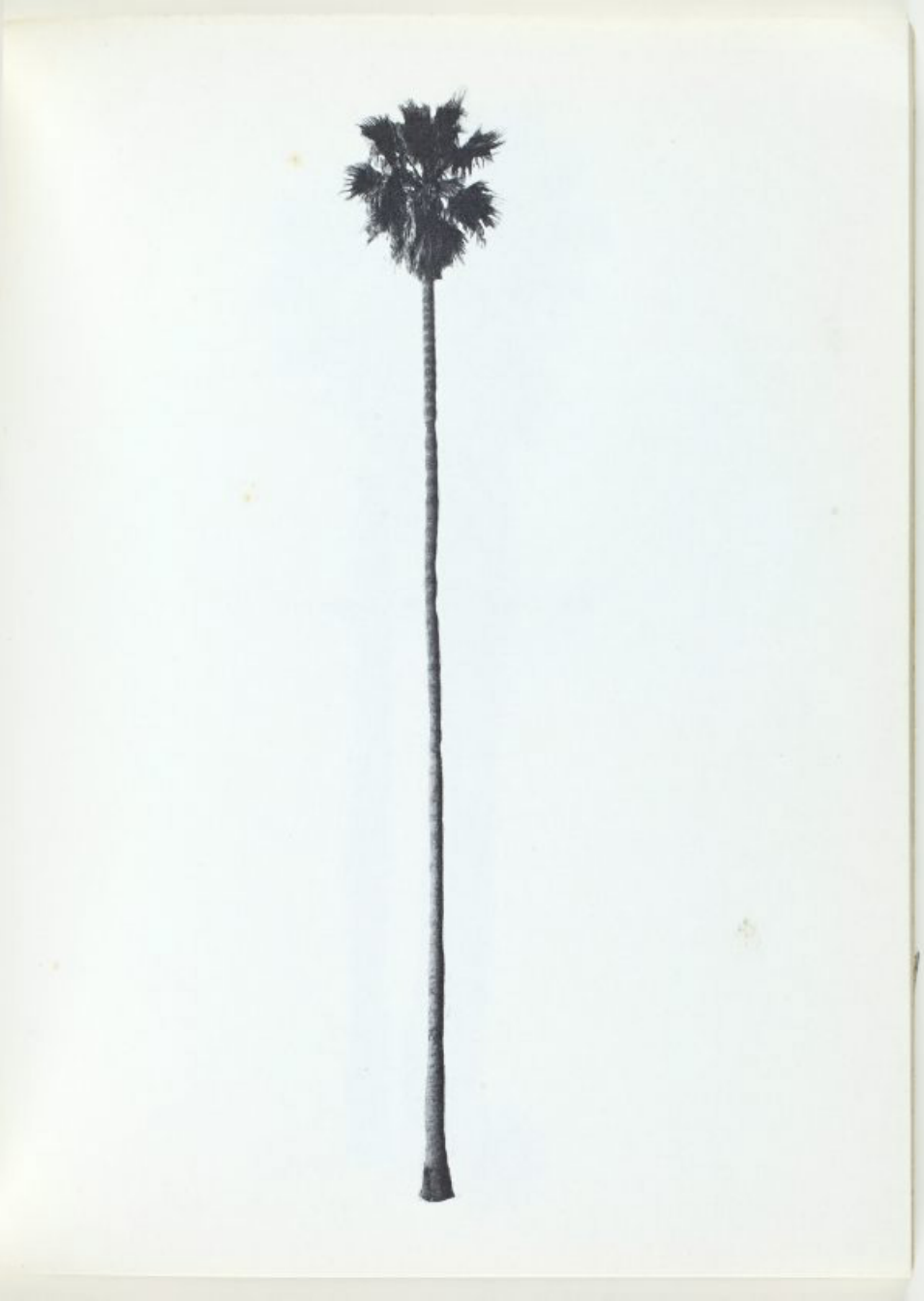




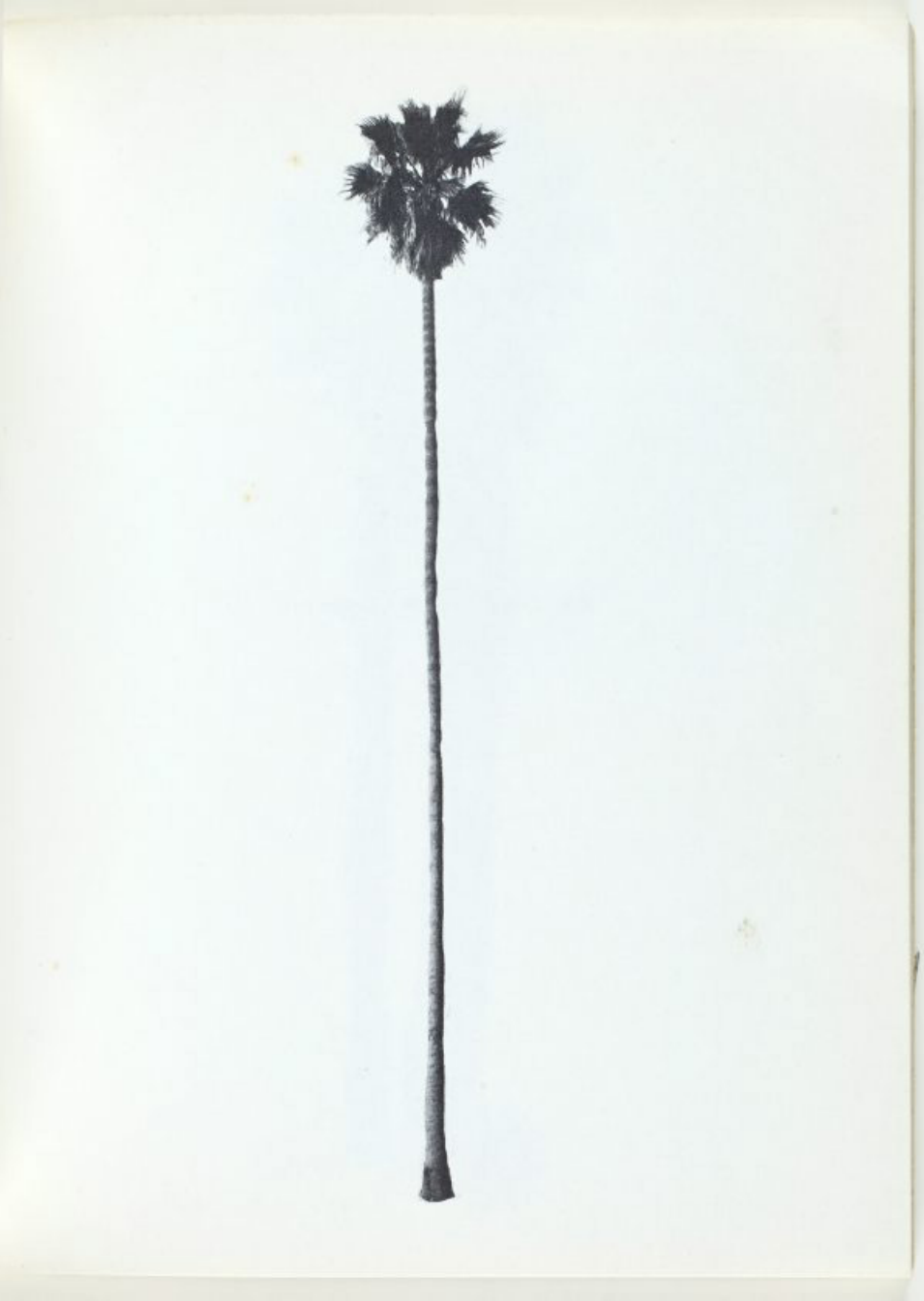

































SE RAM





























