

NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: John Opera

Dates: October 8 – November 7, 2015

Opening: Thursday, October 8, 6 – 8pm

Higher Pictures debuts *Radial Compositions*, a new series of unique cyanotype-on-linen prints by Chicago-based photographer John Opera. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Here, Opera uses tube lights and a turntable setup to create his composition, a precise double fan pattern that appears as lines emanating in opposite directions from a single point. The canvas height is the same length as the bulb and reciprocally defines the full arc of the bulb's possible rotation within each frame. At a glance, the works look like identical screenprints on variously colored grounds, but close inspection reveals differences that hint at Opera's process: variations in the patterns at the composition's center, where the bulbs overlap, and blurring along the edges of the bars that vary with how far each bulb sits from the surface of the linen. Opera defamiliarizes the cyanotype while operating firmly within its photochemical parameters: instead of objects glowing white against a telltale cyan background, dark forms are set graphically on textured linen grounds tinted with acrylic paint to colors in the visible light spectrum—red, yellow, blue, blue-violet, red-violet, grey and "white" (raw linen). Even the liberties Opera appears to take with his medium are based firmly in a photographic logic.

Opera has been working with the cyanotype-on-linen process since 2011, rigorously exploring the visual and conceptual possibilities opened up by the elision of photography and painting. His thinking and art-making are also informed by the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser's description¹ of the metaphysical and mechanical apparatus of photography, positing that the photograph both generates and reveals the circumstances of its own making. Another touchstone is German photographer and theorist Gottfried Jäger's writing on concrete photography, defined as fundamentally self-reflexive—photography about the photographic process.² Firmly tethered to the fundamentals of photography, Opera throws his work into a dialogue with the tradition of painting without disavowing his primary medium's most essential properties.

John Opera was born in Buffalo, New York in 1975 and earned his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. His work has been the subject of a two-person exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and is featured in the second volume of *MP3*, co-published by Aperture and the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago. Opera is currently teaching Photography at DePaul University. He lives and works in Chicago.

For more information please contact Patrick Lloyd at 212-249-6100.

¹ Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 65–75.

² Gottfried Jäger, "Concrete Photography," August 1, 2004, <http://concrete-photography.org/credo-eng.html>.