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DOCUMENT

# Technical Images

John Opera

DOCUMENT is pleased to present *Technical Images*, John Opera's first solo exhibition at the gallery. This exhibit continues the artist's photographic experiments with the cyanotype process.

For this series, Opera has constructed light-emitting instruments of two basic types: tube lights and lasers. Each instrument produces specific photographic marks, different patterns exposed over extended periods of time.

With the tube lights, fluorescent bulbs burn lines into the emulsion based on precise intervals set between bulb and canvas. The resulting marks shift from sharp to soft focus, resembling effects caused by shallow depth-of-field settings on a camera's lens. With the lasers, the projector lens through which the light passes becomes photographically transferred directly to the cyanotype canvas, recording both the curvature of the lens and the particles of dust present on its surface during the exposure event.

Opera subsequently builds upon this indexical foundation, adding painted layers that frame and shape the photographic material while also creating foreground/background relationships within each composition. The original cyanotype is already something of an abstraction, and becomes doubly so when organized into a hybrid of painting and photography. The photographic medium's nineteenth-century iterations enter into dialogue with painting's universalist apex—the “geometric abstraction” of the Bauhaus and beyond.

Overall, the pictorial references in *Technical Images* are based on the mechanics of light: oculi, mirrors, openings, and binocular vision. Some works directly recall Thomas Young's double-slit experiment of 1801, illustrating the wave-particle duality of light (often cited as one of the most puzzling observable phenomena ever discovered). In this show, Opera has pared complex ideas into an elemental visual vocabulary that explores the fundamental qualities of light, photographic reality, and the broader field of representational flatlands.

John Opera was born in Buffalo, NY in 1975 and earned his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. Recent exhibitions include The Suburban, Milwaukee, The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, Transformer Station, Cleveland, Higher Pictures, NYC, Michael Jon Gallery, Miami, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago. 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. His work is part of the collections of the De Paul Museum of Art, Chicago, the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY and Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago among others. Opera is currently teaching Photography at DePaul University. He lives and works in Chicago.

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