

DOCUMENT

# John Opera

## *Blue Dream*

### *The Observers*

It's all right there in front of our eyes: the observable, the visible, the discernable. And this latest body of photographic work by John Opera presents itself in the summative mode as "The Observers"—even while the title calls us to attention about our fraught status as those who look, perceive, and otherwise constitute reality by means of a visual sensibility. We came, we saw, and yet . . . we missed things?

For as overt and obvious as photographs can often be (in the everyday sense, "we see what's *in* the picture"), there's so much that can be missed—if looked over, then also overlooked. You'll notice, then, the several categories at hand, roughly speaking: some suns (or are they moons? perhaps something else altogether?); a gathering of palm fronds and cacti; portraits of (disaffected? distracted?) young people; and lastly, a bunch of dynamically colored abstractions (along with black-and-white ones for good measure), which Opera names "diffraction photographs." Still, the quick taxonomy undersells both the nature and achievements of the individuals groups—and perhaps even more saliently, entirely bypasses the way these clusters alter our understanding of one another; we have noticed, thus far, nothing about their interactivity. Why is this constellation of subjects presented simultaneously, in a shared space—in a word, how do these photographs hang together? If observers are meant to look, there is on this occasion, more to meet than first introduced to the eye.

Read full exhibition essay by David LaRocca in QR code.

DOCUMENT is a commercial gallery located in Chicago that specializes in contemporary photography, film, and media based art. The gallery has organized more than 70 solo exhibitions since its opening in 2012 and actively promotes the work of emerging national and international artists. Since 2016, DOCUMENT started exhibiting historical artists and has continued to anchor its program in a conversation between emerging voices and established figures in the US. Operating conjointly as a professional printmaking studio, DOCUMENT facilitates the production of works by artists from Chicago and the US.

Contact: [sibylle@documentspace.com](mailto:sibylle@documentspace.com)  
[+1 312.259.2365](tel:+13122592365)



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