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ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce *People, Places, and Things*, new works by John Opera in Gallery One.

Chicago, IL, September 21, 2012– ANDREW RAFACZ begins the fall 2012 season with *People, Places, and Things*, new works by John Opera. This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. It continues through Saturday, October 27, 2012.

John Opera has long been interested in the camera's relationship to the empirical world, especially the natural world, in which it exists. For the artist, the act of experiencing and the act of observing are simultaneous and, in the process of recording them, they are also constantly acting upon each other. The act of being in the world with a tool or process for recording is a privileged ontological position, but it is also not without its own inherent dilemmas. With his new body of work, Opera continues to move from a reliance on the photograph as pure image to an examination of the threshold between image and surface and its metaphorical equivalence to the relationship between observation and imagining.

The artist has also spent much of his career examining the history of photography, especially the earliest experiments that have led to the image making of today. Previously, he investigated the anthotype, an image made directly in sunlight, which is linked to the earliest experiments with the photographic process. Similar to the process of creating an anthotype, the cyanotype arrives at an image through liquid chemical processes that were discontinued early on in photography's history, except to be repurposed in the 20th century for architectural blueprints and the language of schematics. The results, for Opera, are works that are certainly photographic, but possess an unusual visual quality that directly connects to their inherent chemical properties. The final images are all rendered in the deep blue that is immediately recognizable in blueprints. They are also produced on linen-stretched canvases, further separating them from the traditional experience of a photograph.

Part photographic allegory and part autobiographical in its content, the subjects of the artist's new works are both generic in their selection and targeted in their specificity. The references are broad and varied—ropes, chains, bottles, hands, fossils. In many ways the lack of strict categories within the collection of subjects reflects back onto the ontological state of the pieces themselves—they are not exactly photographs and not exactly paintings, although their appearance and presence owe much to both photographic space and the less stringent qualities of painting space.

The images contain references to seeing, time, memory, and representation. The fossils reference the unfathomable registers of geologic time and death. The bottles and hands are direct references to observational drawing exercises usually given to students, the ropes and chains are just as much about connection and linkage as they are references to restraint and limitation—their forms seem impossible to untangle. The collection of subjects simultaneously feels like broad signifiers for the human experience, while remaining mysteriously personal and intimate to their author.

JOHN OPERA (American, b. 1975) lives and works in Chicago. He received his M.F.A. from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. He had a two-person exhibition with Amir Zaki at Shane Campbell Gallery and a solo exhibition at Macalester College Art Gallery, St. Paul, Minnesota in 2007, and was part of the three-person exhibition *MP3*, at the MOCP, Chicago, in 2009. He had a solo exhibition (with Matthew Sheridan Smith) at CAM St. Louis, curated by Dominic Molon. Recent publications include *Location Books Volume 6*,

Minneapolis, MN and issue 07 of Fantom Photographic Quarterly, Milan/New York. His work has been exhibited at art fairs in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami. This is his fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.