

# John Divola: Notes on the Observer

*Throughout his career, Divola's work has been an address to how photography, as a medium seemingly static in its portrayal of momentary reality, can be realized. Opens January 14 at Gallery Luisotti.*

Highlighted by the first presentation of Divola's large-scale Gigapan images, the exhibition will also display works from the artist's *As Far as I Could Get* series, as well as a selection of work from a series not previously exhibited, *Subject Observations*. In conjunction with Divola's early works currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art and LAXART, *Notes on the Observer* casts a tracing view to the present, bridging the decades-long concerns of time, place, and the effective manipulation of the captured image central to Divola's practice. Throughout his career, Divola's work has been an address to how photography, as a medium seemingly static in its portrayal of momentary reality, can be realized. Often, as in his *Vandalism* and *Zuma* series from the 1970s, it is a reduction of the viewpoint to a particular staging of light and the painted interventions. The specified view that Divola offers in *Vandalism* is then two-fold in meaning: a highlighting of a past action as it is a finished image of photography. In this regard, Divola's Gigapans makes the index of timed duration an equivalent figure to himself in the self-portraits. By using the robotic camera base and software to stitch multiple time-lapsed, discrete images into a single massive unified image, these works portray an uncanny, subtle strangeness. Light shifts in blocks of movements, in accordance to the tens of minutes it takes for the Gigapan to finish rendering. Divola, either sitting impassively in his lawn chair or staring from the hilltop through binoculars, remains figuratively unchanged through it all: Divola is sublimated into the nature of the stage. It is photography as a performative event.

Also on view is a key series from the 1990s, *As Far as I Could Get*. Like the Gigapans, these works are embedded in the act of performance. Divola runs from his camera set on a self-timer at 10 seconds, generating multiple shots from varying areas of urbanity and outskirts of civilization. The attitude of self-portrait is blurred with activity; it is at once a gesture of an event finishing as it is that of Divola following the self-imposed rule of capturing himself in the series. The performance of this work is reduced into a figurative focus in the little-seen *Subject Observations* series also on display. Using archived stereo negatives from the *Keystone-Mast* Collection housed at the UCR California Museum of Photography, Divola

focuses a circular exposure upon the human element in the photograph, highlighting their presence in the field. The effect is a Cartesian dilemma: you are here – though as to no reason why. They are lone players magnified by Divola's reworking of the image, into an altogether new agency.

John Divola has had numerous solo and

group exhibitions nationally and internationally, including currently in the Pacific Standard Time exhibition John Divola: Vandalism at LAXART and Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Divola's works are in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; J. Paul Getty Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; among many others. Divola has been a Professor of Art at the University of California at Riverside since 1988.