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PALOMAR

PART 1: MAY 2—JUN 7, 2026

PART 2: JUN 10—JUL 12, 2026

Palomar is an exhibition about watching the sky, something that appears deceptively simple at first. Featuring twenty-eight artists, it unfolds in two parts, each five weeks long. Some works remain in place while others come and go, the show becoming an encounter in time, or a double exposure. Gradually, the familiar act of looking up spills over into a sense of life that is more layered and complex, or even contradictory. It turns out there is a lot at stake in the space above us.

Decades ago, after the launch of the first satellite into orbit, humans had big dreams of leaving the Earth. Politicians, poets, and scientists made public comments in this spirit. Today it's mostly billionaires who talk of escape, or of mining the planets out there. The rest of us look to the sky from the ground as life carries on. An earlier age of optimism around space exploration and human progress has given way to successive new eras, as the stars fade from view in our cities, new technologies emerge with unsettling effects, and those in power surveil from above. Through it all, the sky is a steady presence. The sun rises and sets. The moon, too. The stars come out, where you can see them. We organize our lives by these patterns. They infuse our concepts, our sense of time, and our language, even when they're not on our minds.

Part 1 of *Palomar* introduces certain celestial rhythms and cycles, while thinking about astronomy and other forms of observation in everyday life. It also begins to draw out experiences of time, as it is marked, measured, and perceived. Part 2 brings into view changing relationships with technology and the militarization of the skies. Both parts are shadowed by the question of what one sees and what one doesn't, and the roles that images play, often wrapped up with the comforts and discomforts of distance.

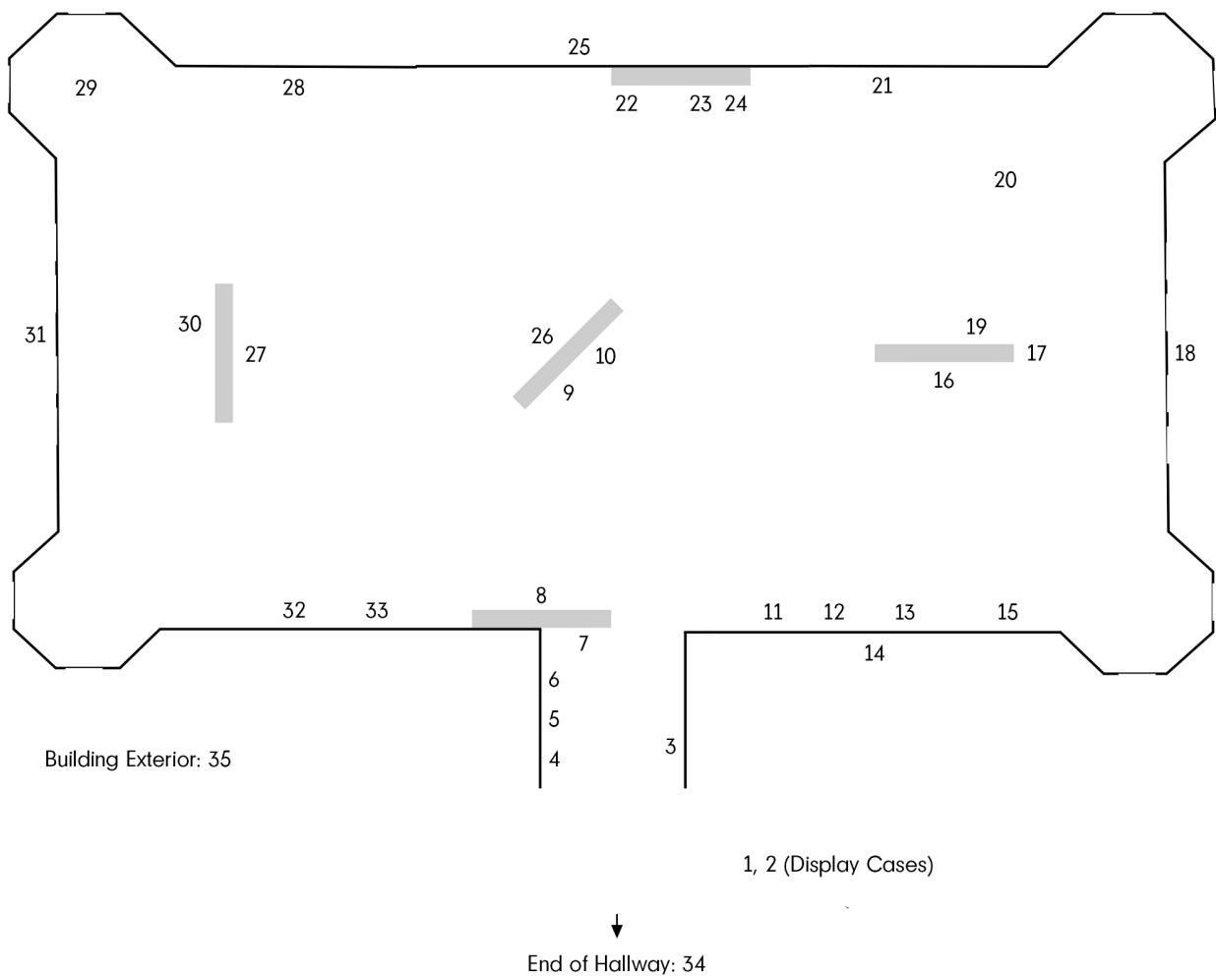
The exhibition borrows its title from the name of an observatory on a California mountaintop, which once had the largest optical telescope in the world. It lost that distinction in 1976, but it is still used to study the stars. In the eighties, Italo Calvino wrote a book about a man who shares his name with that place: *Mr. Palomar*, a seeker of the cosmic in the commonplace and an unflagging, if absentminded, observer. Together, these two touchstones evoke different kinds of observation and attention.

Looking overhead can be a way to understand one's place in the world, as it has been for thousands of years. Given the many ways people watch the sky or look to the cosmos, from scientific study to the habits of daily life, there are just as many different things to think or feel. The movement of the heavenly bodies offers a measure of continuity in the face of destabilizing change; the view above can be a source of solace, a realm of startling beauty, a reminder of something larger than oneself. The sky can also be a dark premonition, a site of violence or grief, a reminder of what there is to lose, or for many what is already gone. Sometimes it's all of this at once.

Curated by Karsten Lund.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

PALOMAR: PART 1



1, 2. Sarah and Joseph Belknap

4 months of the sun, 2014

12 months of the sun, 2014

Archival pigment prints on metallic paper, black paint

Courtesy of the artists

The Solar Dynamic Observatory, a spacecraft launched by NASA in 2010, stares at the sun continuously, capturing high-res images across multiple wavelengths. For over ten years, Sarah and Joseph Belknap have been frequently returning to SDO's image feed online. As they go about their lives, one of them makes a screen shot every time they think of the sun. Their compilations, which merge 4 or 12 months of sunspots, turn public scientific imagery into a highly personal record of time.

3, 4, 5, 6. Vija Celmins

Untitled (Dark Sky 3), 2016

Untitled (Dark Sky 1), 2016

Untitled (Dark Sky 2), 2016

Untitled (Dark Sky 5), 2016

Mezzotints in artist's frames

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

The night sky has long been a fixture of Vija Celmins' work, rendered in meticulous drawings or prints like these. Typically she starts with found images, such as telescopic photographs, rather than direct observation of the stars themselves, a step removed from nature itself. In this series, *Dark Sky*, the printing process allows differing weights of darkness, fading at the edges or into the center, as if the sky itself was growing light.

7. John Opera

The Observer, 2022

Gum bichromate process on stretched canvas

Courtesy of the artist and DOCUMENT

Certain sky-bound motifs have recurred in John Opera's work, over time, including the sun, as in his cyanotypes in this show. This grows out a deeper consideration of what it means to be an

observer, whether using one's own senses or photographic means. Opera's portraits, like this one, are just as telling in this respect. They ask us to quietly observe other observers, to see other seers, and perhaps reconceive ourselves in turn.

8. Paul Fägerskiöld

New York. New York. USA. View east. January 1, 2100, 2022 Oil on linen

Private Collection, New York, Courtesy of Petit Art Partners

Paul Fägerskiöld's paintings see the stars as if gazing up in specific locations many years in the future, in this case New York in the year 2100. He uses a computer program entitled *Starry Night* to do the actual astronomical calculations. The painting that follows from this process achieves its own sensorial presence. With thick shimmering surfaces and the unpainted stars that reveal layers underneath, it is anchored in the here-and-now, even as it envisions what will come.

9, 10. Heji Shin

Vulcan 3 (white rocket with smoke), 2024

Polaris Dawn 2, 2024

Archival pigment prints

Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City

In the summer of 2024, Shin embedded herself in a community of photographers who follow rocket launches in Cape Canaveral, Florida, and she gained access to the launches by becoming a member of NASA's press corps. Her photographs of rockets in flight become a set of color and light studies, like impressionist paintings cut by lines of smoke. Behind most launches today are private aerospace companies, whether it's a crewed space flight like the Polaris Dawn mission, or the Vulcan rockets that deliver national security spacecraft into orbit.

11, 12, 13. Tony Lewis

Blur, 2026

Always, 2026

Cog, 2026

Graphite and rubber cement on paper copy

Courtesy of the artist and Olney Gleason, New York

Five new drawings by Tony Lewis (see also **32, 33**.) which appear like simple gestural abstract marks, each feature a single word in stenographic script—distinct shorthand markings that compress the usual time span of writing. While they formally echo the dynamic lines and upward trajectories of other works in *Palomar*, they also ground the show; each drawing bears the mark of the artist's feet across them on the studio floor, even as Lewis reaches toward vaster concepts and realms of human emotion.

14. John Opera

Sun/Sky 14, 2026

Cyanotypes on linen in artist's frames

Courtesy of the artist and Document, Chicago

Four cyanotypes are hung high on each of the gallery's four walls (see also **18, 25, 31**.) Newly produced for this exhibition, they return to a larger series that Opera began in 2011, in which he uses a cardboard telescopic pinhole lens to take photographs of the sun. Across his practice, including his other works in this show, he uses custom-built photographic apparatuses and alternative printing processes to cultivate "environments where subject, light, and matter continuously meld and separate." Here, photosensitive linen was then exposed by the sun to create the final print.

15. Darren Almond

Perfect Time (16 x 2), 2011

Thirty-two synchronized digital clocks

Private Collection, Denver, Colorado

For over thirty years, Darren Almond's work has dealt with our vexed understandings of time, and not least of all the "existentialist mechanics of

man-made time," to quote his 1999 exhibition at the Renaissance Society. The flipping clock faces of *Perfect Time (16x2)* announce every passing minute and hour, but the mechanical march of time, in its even units, becomes scrambled.

16. Rinko Kawauchi

Untitled, from the series *Ametsuchi*, 2013

Courtesy of the artist and Rose Gallery

In a series of photographs from 2013 (see also **26, 27**), Rinko Kawauchi draws out multiple elemental cycles of time, from the rise and fall of day and night to the seasonal regeneration of traditional field burning in Japan (*yakihata*). The title *Ametsuchi* means "heaven and earth" and it evokes a connection between the constellations above and the smallest things below. In one photograph, embers from a fire dance in the night sky, as if carrying one realm to the other.

17. John Opera

Solar Eye, 2025

Gum bichromate process on stretched canvas

Collection of Aron Gent and Betsy O'Brien

John Opera first made *Solar Eye* for an exhibition that drew inspiration from philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's notion of "solar collapse": the eventual dissolution of the sun's energy. For this work, and others, Opera merged portraits and diffraction patterns. The gum bichromate process he uses here, a 19th century technique, involves a pigmented emulsion that hardens under sunlight or other ultraviolet light.

18. John Opera

Sun/Sky 07, 2026

Cyanotypes on linen in artist's frames

Courtesy of the artist and Document, Chicago

See **14**. for details.

19. Pierre Huyghe

Cerro Indio Muerto, 2016

Photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

Pierre Huyghe took this photograph in the Atacama Desert, in Chile, at a location named for the human skeleton found there, which still rests at the spot of its death. One of the most inhospitable places on earth, this area is used as a testing ground for the prospect of living on distant exoplanets. Farther into the desert are some of the world's premier astronomical observatories, as well as massive open-pit copper mines and enormous lithium reserves.

20. Kathleen Ryan

Satellite in Repose, 2018

Glazed ceramic, aluminum, steel

Courtesy of Collection Majudia

Previously shown in a solo show she called *Seven Sculptures at Sunset*, Kathleen Ryan's skeletal satellite dish is occupied by a group of huddled birds, perhaps asleep. But the title suggests it is also the satellite that has come to rest. Each of the roughly-hewn glazed ceramic forms bears the imprint of the artist's hand, while the color spilling across them suggests more falling night more than avian feathers.

21. Chantal Peñalosa Fong

Untitled, 2017

Diptych of inkjet prints on photographic paper, maple frame

Courtesy of the artist and Proyectos Monclova Gallery

In an ongoing series of photographs, which she sees equally as "performance actions," Chantal Peñalosa Fong looks to the sky from either side of the Mexico/U.S. border. The first photo is taken in the city of Tecate and the second after the artist passes over to the California side. A timestamp on each photograph separates them by nine minutes. A lot is contained in that missing time and the space that goes with it.

22, 23, 24. Carrie Schneider

Moon Drawing #245, 2014

Moon Drawing #253, 2014

Moon Drawing #120, 2014

Unique gelatin silver print made from one negative

Courtesy of the artist and David Peter Francis, New York

In the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, Carrie Schneider took her camera out every night to photograph the sky during a twenty-eight-day lunar cycle. To create her layered *Moon Drawings*, she exposed the same thirty rolls of film repeatedly by rewinding and reshooting. The result is both systematic and improvisational, a sustained nocturnal ritual at once internally and celestially aligned.

25. John Opera

Sun/Sky 09, 2026

Cyanotypes on linen in artist's frames

Courtesy of the artist and DOCUMENT

See **14.** for details.

26, 27. Rinko Kawauchi

Untitled, from the series *Ametsuchi*, 2013

Untitled, from the series *Ametsuchi*, 2013

Chromogenic prints mounted to Dibond

Courtesy of the artist and Rose Gallery

See **16.** for details.

28. Aspen Mays

The Sun 1957, 2020

25 gelatin silver prints

Courtesy of the artist and Higher Pictures

In an abandoned darkroom at the University of Chile's Astronomical Observatory, one of the oldest in South America, Aspen Mays discovered a collection of film negatives from a mid-century survey of sunspots, labeled only by the month. They happen to be from 1957, the same year the first satellite was launched into orbit. Assembling them chronologically,

she printed them on vintage photo paper. Some months have many entries, others far fewer. There is no record of November.

29. Gibeon Meteorite

4.5 billion years old

Iron, fine octahedrite

Private Collection, New York, Courtesy of Pettit Art Partners

Gibeon meteorites, made of iron from the molten core of an asteroid, are thought to have been formed 4.5 billion years. Having traveled across interplanetary space to rain down above the Kalahari Desert, they are named for the town in Namibia where the first ones were found in 1838.

30. Jason Lazarus

Eric Becklin, first human to see the center of our galaxy, 2010

Archival pigment print

Collection of Aron Gent and Betsy O'Brien

In this portrait by Jason Lazarus, we are looking into the eyes of someone who saw something never seen before. Eric Becklin is a pioneering astrophysicist who use infrared astronomy to identify stars orbiting the invisible black hole at the heart of our galaxy. Given the vast distances involved and the speed of light, this also amounts to seeing back in time.

31. John Opera

Sun/Sky 08, 2026

Cyanotypes on linen in artist's frames

Courtesy of the artist and Document, Chicago

See **14.** for details.

32, 33. Tony Lewis

Unasked, 2026

Attachment, 2026

Graphite and rubber cement on paper copy

Courtesy of the artist and Olney Gleason, New York

See **11.** for details.

34. Eadweard Muybridge

Animal Locomotion-Plate 755, 1887

Inkjet print from scan of archival negative

Public domain

Muybridge's pioneering studies of animal location, made between 1884 and 1885, use a "chronophotographic" technique to break down movement into a sequence of discrete moments. Turning fluid time into observable, regimented fragments, his practice was also an important precursor to cinema. Among the different species he photographed, were pigeons.

35. Sarah and Joseph Belknap

Solargraphy camera

Courtesy of the artists

The process of solargraphy uses a long photographic exposure to make an image of the sun as it moves across the sky, capturing both its daily rise and set and its shifting trajectory across the seasons. For *Palomar*, Sarah and Joseph Belknap have installed a handmade pinhole solargraphy camera—made from a metal tea box and a precisely designed aluminum armature—on the outside of the building. (It's just barely visible from the window in the gallery's southwest corner.) It will stay there for the next year, making a single image.

Office

Erin Shirreff

Moon, 2010

SD video, 32 minute loop

POSTER

Myriam Boulos

Beirut, Lebanon. 2 July 2020

© Myriam Boulos | Magnum Photos

The photograph by Myriam Boulos on the front of the exhibition poster is a trace of the artist looking up in a particular place and time. Boulos is a member of the international photographers' collective Magnum Photos. She took the photo in the summer of 2020, as Lebanon was facing economic and political collapse, and state power utilities supplied electricity for as little as a few hours a day. Both protests and pandemic lockdowns were ongoing. The photo echoes the iconic "Blue Marble" image of the Earth in the black void of space, but in reverse. It is not an astronaut's view; instead, we see the moon above in a field of stars, like Boulos saw it then.

ONLINE VIDEOS

Viewable online through July 12 at
<https://renaissancesociety.org/publishing/955/palomar-online-videos/>

Allora & Calzadilla (in collaboration with Ted Chiang)

The Great Silence, 2014

HD video

16 min 22 sec

Chantal Peñalosa Fong

The Weather Watchers, 2021

HD video

25 min

Simon Starling

Black Drop, 2012

35 mm transferred to HD video

27 min 42 sec

Alice Wang

Space Analogs, Pyramids and Parabolas III, 2024

16mm transferred to HD video

16 min 51 sec

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