

M+B

ARTFORUM

Matthew Porter INVISIBLE-EXPORTS

By Claire Lehmann
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In the years after New Hollywood cinematographers popularized lens flare as an acceptable filmic glitch, a certain strain of color photography—as seen on moody LP covers and ad pages for muscle cars or cigarettes—seemed to dwell almost exclusively in the magic hour, that pre-twilight moment when the sun emanates diffraction spikes and gentle melancholy. Roughly the same period marked the apex of utopian design's perfusion in popular culture, as geodesic domes materialized everywhere from Expo 67 in Montreal to Colorado's legendary Drop City commune.

Matthew Porter mines and merges these aesthetic strains in the exhibition "Sunclipse," titled after Buckminster Fuller's non-geocentric term for sunset. Taking contemporary photography's genre eclecticism as a given, Porter sets off hazy, image artifact-laden pictures of nature and decay in equatorial zones with ambiguous fashion shots and cinematic cityscapes, generating a productively inscrutable mix that implies civilization's impending dusk. A series of late-afternoon photos ("Cape Romano," 2016) taken in southern Florida features a quirky coastal vacation home composed of bubble-shaped pods on stilts—vaguely space-age structures that are being reclaimed by the rising sea, their futuristic curves defaced by graffiti sporting distinctly American appellations: KAYLA, KC, and COBI were here. In *Frigatebird*, 2014/16, sun shrouds the perched avian subject with the golden mist of a veiling flare, more typically applied to glossy editorials as a dreamy postproduction effect, while Porter's actual editorial-esque shots depict a female model shielding her eyes from bright light or fringed by tropical plant fronds.

The exhibition's fulcrum, however, is Porter's photograph of the United Nations headquarters at nightfall, *UN*, 2016, which exposes an inadvertent, possibly divinatory ghost: The contour of the camera's aperture blades is doubled in the form of a crimson pentagon—sly metonym for American militarism?—suspended in midair, haunting the monolith to global peacekeeping in the dying light. Ascendant darkness has never looked more radiant, or more terrifyingly apt.



Matthew Porter, *Frigatebird*, 2014/16
archival pigment print
20 x 25 inches