



MOTION PICTURES

Steve Rood

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2014

Notes from a public lecture given by
visiting artist, Steve Rood at the
Experimental Media Art Lab
of the Department of Art & Art History,
Stanford University, California, USA.

Wednesday, 8th May, 2014.

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Steve Rood investigates photography in connection with emerging technologies, and he is particularly interested in how contemporary technologies and social contexts may enable new forms of photographic practice.

This booklet presents a body of work that seeks to expand notions of the photographic and explore a transitional place between photography and video. The project investigates Eadweard Muybridge's work by reassessing some assumptions around aspects of his work. Central to Rood's talk is the conviction that Muybridge's innovative piece, *Horse in Motion*, from the 1870s, not only provided photography's transition from still image to moving image, but also offers valuable, and as yet unutilized insights into photography's evolution to digital.

This re-interpretation of the historical work seeks to create a deeper understanding of the underlying issues in the contemporary realm between still and moving image, and provide valuable and usable revelations for further investigations.



The photographic.

“Much of the early history of still photography may be looked upon as the struggle as the art to purge itself of temporality.”

Hollis Frampton. 2009.



Boulevard du Temple. Louis Daguerre. 1838.

“Photography may have been its most paradoxical invention: a technological breakthrough for holding onto the past, a technology always rushing forward, always looking backward”

Rebecca Solnit, 2003.

Definitions of the photographic.

“photography as a separate entity might well be on the verge of disappearing forever, even as the photographic as a rich vocabulary of conventions and references lives on in ever-expanding splendor. In short, it appears we have already entered a “post-photography,” that moment after but not yet beyond photography.”

Geoffrey Batchen, 2000.



Anna Atkins,, *Chordaria flagelliformis*. 1840s

“Since the photographic medium has been digitised, a fixed definition of the term “photography” has become impossible.”

Peter Galassi, 2001.

Definitions of the photographic.

Camera Obscura

Mozi (470 BC to 390 BC)

Aristotle (384 to 322 BC)

*Aristotle witnessed
the light of a partially
eclipsed sun projected
onto the ground between
the leaves of a plane tree.*

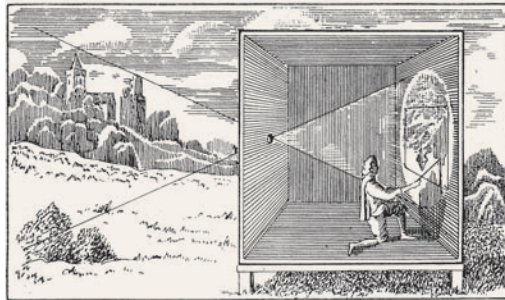


Book of Optics.

Abu Ali Al-Hasan

Ibn Al-Haitham

(965-1039 AD)



Camera Lucida

*“The Hockney–Falco
thesis ... suggesting that
advances in realism and
accuracy in the history
of Western art since
the Renaissance were
primarily the result of
optical aids such as the
camera obscura, camera
lucida, ...”*



Johannes Vermeer,
The Milkmaid. 1658.

*“Digital
technology
does not subvert
“normal”
photography
because
“normal”
photography
never existed.”*

Lev Manovich



View from the Window at Le Gras. Nicéphore Niépce. 1826.

Pewter plate coated
with Bitumen of Judea.



Daguerre Atelier ,
Louis Daguerre. 1837.

The daguerreotype
image is formed on a
polished silver surface.



Leaves of Orchidea,
William Henry Fox Talbot
1839.

Photogenic drawing
negative.
Readily reproducible.



Dandelion Seeds,
William Henry Fox Talbot. 1858.

*“The work of art reproduced
becomes the work of art
designed for reproducibility.”*

Walter Benjamin. 1955.

The image as data.

*“photography”
today is all
about the
reproduction and
consumption,
flow and
exchange,
maintenance
and disruption,
of data.”*

Fred Ritchin. 2008.



Photosynth. 2010

Analyzes digital photographs from Flickr and generates a three-dimensional model of the photos and a point cloud of a photographed object.



Other People's Photographs.
Joachim Schmid. 2010.

A series of ninety-six print-on-demand books explores the themes presented by modern everyday, amateur photographers. Images found on photo sharing sites such as Flickr have been gathered and ordered in a way to form a library of contemporary vernacular photography.



Google Street View.
Jon Rafman. 2011.



Twenty-six Gasoline Stations
Joachim Schmid. 2009.

“Unlike the original books it relates to, this work was made entirely at my Berlin studio. I didn't visit Los Angeles to make the book and I didn't use a camera either. The camera is out there.”

*“a database becomes dynamic and subjective.
... database and narrative merge into a new form.”*
Lev Manovich. 2001.



*Every Page of Roland Barthes's
Book Camera Lucida,*
Idris Khan. 2004.



99 Cent II Diptychon
Andreas Gursky. 2001.

The digital image.

When we encounter a moving image,
or when an photograph is presented
in a digital context;
does it necessarily becomes video?

A still image viewed in digital media
is an animation.
It is a freeze frame rather than a still image.

*“ Each
presentation
of a digitalized
image becomes
a recreation
of the image.”*

*“Looking at digital images we are
confronted every time with
a new event of visualization
of invisible data.*

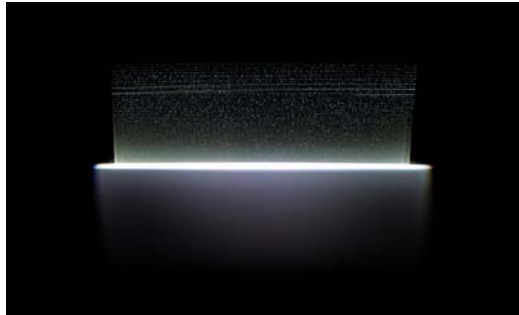
*The event of its visualization is an
original event, because the digital copy
is a copy that has no visible original.”*

Boris Groys. 2008.



*Perception over time
equals thought.*

Bill Viola. *Reasons For Knocking At An Empty House*. 1995.

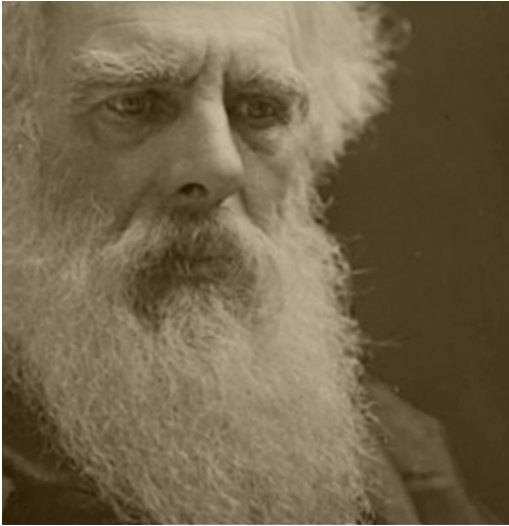


Stephan Tillmans, *Luminant Point Arrays*. 2011.



Thomas Ruff, *Jpegs*. 2006.

Eadweard Muybridge



*“Muybridge’s
work is the
body rendered
in fragments,
and the image
propelled into
fragments
... prefigures
digital culture’s
proliferations
and amassing.”*

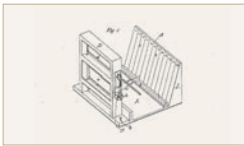
Stephen Barber. 2012.



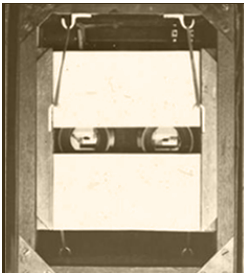
Athletes Posturing, Eadweard Muybridge. 1881.

“Muybridge’s apparent absorption in problems that have to do with what we call time.”

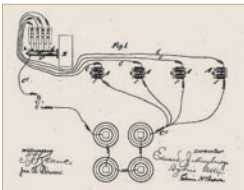
Hollis Frampton, 2009.



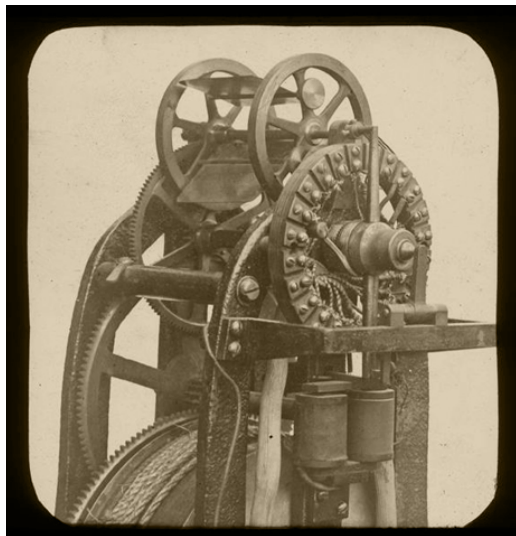
Method of and apparatus for photographing objects in motion. 1879.



Front of Electro Shutters



Method of and apparatus for photographing changing moving objects. 1883.



Electro Magnetic Timer Mechanism for Shutters



Zoopraxiscope Machine

Eadweard Muybridge

“Muybridge’s early work seems to affirm the antitemporality of the still photography he inherited.”



Panorama of San Francisco. 1878



Puntade Los Reyes. 1871



Falls of the Yosemite, Third Fall, 1868-1873

“... in some of his landscape work, seems positively to seek, of all things, waterfalls; long exposures of which produce images of a strange, ghostly substance that is in fact the tesseract of water: what is to be seen is not the water itself, but the virtual volume it occupies during the whole time-interval of the exposure. It is certain that Muybridge was not the first photographer to make such pictures; my point is that he seems to be the first to accept the ‘error,’ and then systematically, to cherish it.”

Hollis Frampton. 2009.



Horses Foreshortening. 1878.



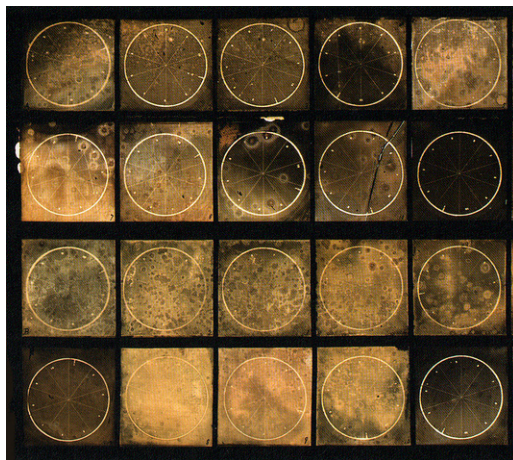
Elephant walking. 1884-1887.



*The source of Muybridges
compulsion to control and to
repeat is located in his own
damaged psyche;*

*(his) work is also marked by two traumatic events,
one of which he was subjected to, the other initiated
and inflicted by himself; in both instances, the body
stops dead.*

Stephen Barber, 2012.



Sequenced image of a rotating sulky wheel, 1887.

Eadweard Muybridge : *Stagecoach accident*



Muybridge on Contemplation Rock. 1872.

Muybridge suffered severe head injuries in a violent runaway stagecoach crash in Central Texas, 1860.

Muybridge took up photography while recuperating from this accident.

Arthur P. Shimamura, a psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley, has speculated that Muybridge suffered substantial injuries to the orbitofrontal cortex that probably also extended into the anterior temporal lobes, which may have led to some of the emotional, eccentric behavior reported by friends in later years, as well as freeing his creativity from conventional social inhibitions. Today, there still is little effective treatment for this kind of injury. Many have speculated that Muybridge became an acquired savant from this injury.

Arthur P. Shimamura, 2002.

Muybridge took enormous physical risks to make his photographs.



Medoc brave on the war path, 1872.

1867 - Yosemite Valley
1868 - Alaska to photograph the Tlingit Native Americans
1868 - 13-part 360° photographic panorama of San Francisco
1871 - Lighthouses of the American west coast
1870-1872 - San Francisco Mint, time-lapse photography
1872 - Married Flora Shallcross Stone
1872 - Hired by Leland Stanford
1873 - Modoc War
1874 - 17 October - murders his wives' lover, Harry Larkyn

*"Prior to his accident
Muybridge was a
good businessman,
genial and pleasant
in nature; but after
the accident he was
irritable, eccentric,
a risk-taker and
subject to emotional
outbursts."*



Falls of the Yosemite, Base of the first Fall, 1868-1873.

Eadweard Muybridge : *The Murder of Harry Larkyn*

His hair and beard turned white.

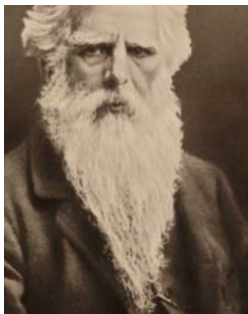
His defence attorney pleaded insanity due to the severe head injury which Muybridge had suffered in the 1860 stagecoach accident.

At least four long-time acquaintances testified under oath that the accident had dramatically changed Muybridge's personality, from genial and pleasant to unstable and erratic

Muybridge undercut his own insanity case by indicating that his actions were deliberate and premeditated, but he also showed impassive indifference and uncontrolled explosions of emotion.

*"Good evening,
Major, my name
is Muybridge and
here's the answer to
the letter you sent
my wife"*

The jury dismissed the insanity plea, but acquitted the photographer on the grounds of "justifiable homicide", disregarding the judge's instructions.



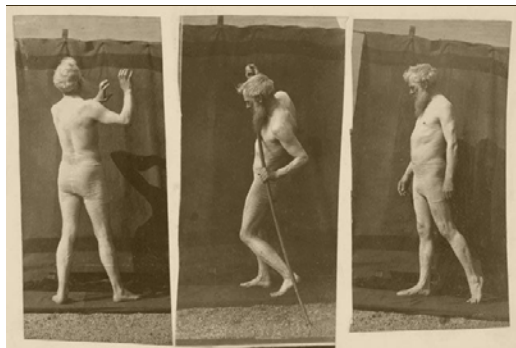
*"I have known
Muybridge to
sit up all night
reading, generally
some classical
work"*

*“Just as a camera is a sublimation of
the gun, to photograph someone is a
subliminal murder -
a soft murder, appropriate to a sad,
frightened time.”*

Susan Sontag, 2001.

*“The man is
insane.
A genius,
but completely
insane.”*

Thomas Edison discussing
Eadweard Muybridge in the
historical novel *Freezing Time:
The Autobiography of Eadweard
Muybridge*.

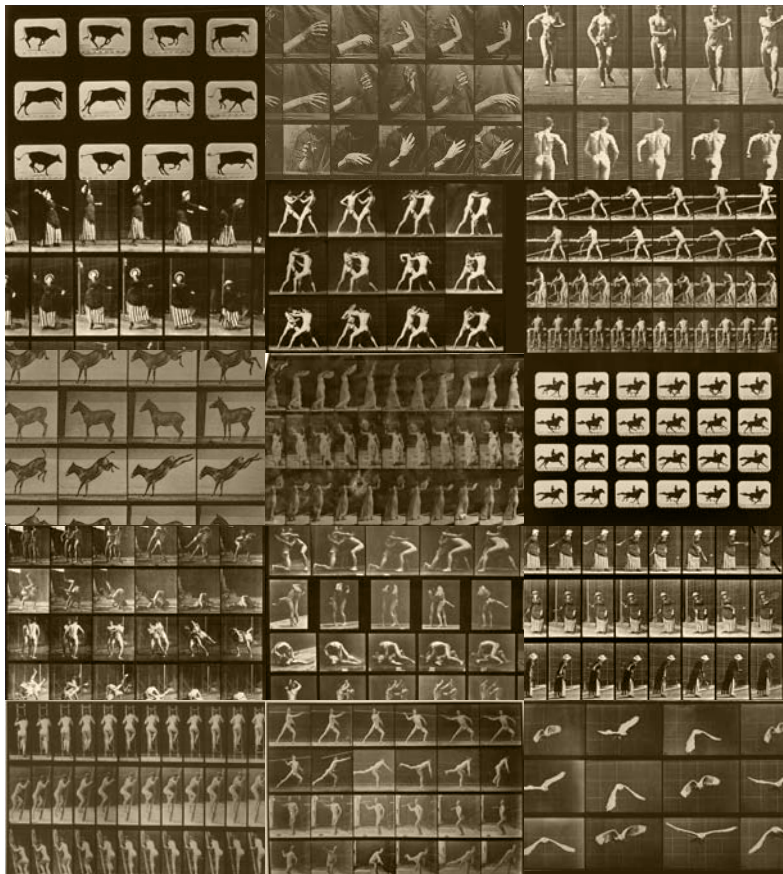


Self Portrait, 1885.

Chronophobia

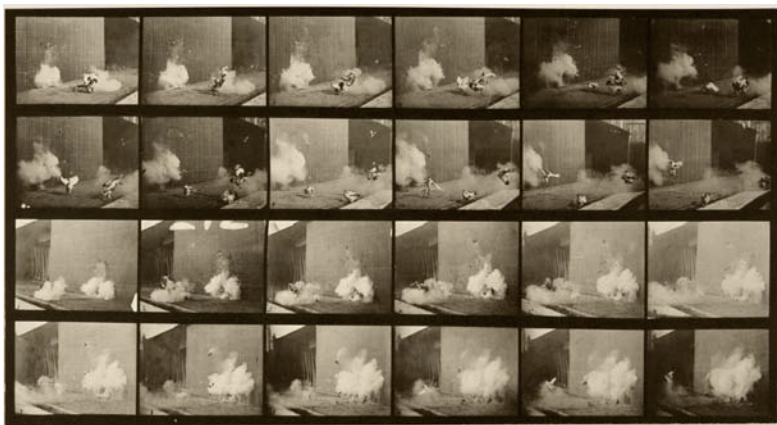
1883 - 1886 - more than 100,000 images in Philadelphia at University of Pennsylvania.

1887 - published as a massive portfolio, 781 plates comprising 20,000 of the photographs,



“His zeal for such images appears to border on the obsessive compulsive side.”

Arthur P. Shimamura



Chickens Scared By Torpedo. 1886.



Hand Drawing a Circle. 1887.



Crater of Volcano, Quetzaltenango-Guatemala, 1875.
Eadweard Muybridge

*“I do not distinguish between inner
and outer landscapes,”*

Bill Viola, 1995.

Red Barn Stables

In the 1870s, Leland Stanford had hired photographer Eadweard Muybridge to test his theory that at one point in its fastest gait, a trotter has all four feet off the ground. Muybridge used 24 cameras with electrically controlled shutters tripped by the horse, and devised a machine to project the images in quick succession.



“Stanford supplies the obsessions, and Muybridge, with concurrent obsessionally, transformed them into images.”

Stephen Barber, 2012.

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This project re-assesses Muybridge's work by re-placing his investigation, and obsessions (with time) into an age of data and one with contemporary expressions of what we call time.

Muybridge's work investigates *motion over time*; this project asks questions about the representation of time and so investigates *light over time*, or that light and time are same.

“‘Time’ is our name for an irreducible condition of our perception of phenomena; therefore, statements which would separate the notion of time from some object of direct perception, are meaningless.”

Hollis Frampton, 2009.

WORKS



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BOX, Headlands.
2014
HD video
1:00 minute

.....





Bay District Race Track Location, San Francisco.

2014

HD video

45 Seconds







Tunnel, Point Bonita.

2014

HD video

50 Seconds







Doorway, Headlands.
2014
HD video
45 Seconds





Descender, Headlands.

2014

HD video

1:00 Minute





All feet off the ground, Stanford

2014

HD video

Duration: 30 seconds







Harry Larkyns Tree (Murder Scene), Calistoga.
2014
HD video
45 Seconds







Plinth, Headlands.

2014

HD video

45 Seconds







The Horse in Motion, Red Barn, Stanford.

2014

HD video

Duration: 45 seconds





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EJM Statue, Presidio. 2014.

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