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Eadweard Muybridge: Building an Atlas

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Equinox Gallery, Vancouver

Photography is a form of magic – or to put it another way, the photographic provides cerebral experiences for the viewer that are equivalent to magic.

- Charlotte Cotton, 2015

Equinox Gallery is very pleased to present ***Eadweard Muybridge: Building an Atlas***, an exhibition of over 45 collotypes by one of the most influential artists in the history of photography.

Born in 1830, Eadweard Muybridge is best known for his pioneering work in photographic studies of motion, which began in the early 1870s, when Leland and Jane Stanford hired him to help demonstrate that during a particular moment in a galloping horse's gait, all four legs were off the ground simultaneously. Adapting the very latest technology of the time, Muybridge affirmed this theory by using a galloping horse to trigger the shutters of a bank of cameras. Following his initial success with horses, Muybridge expanded his methods to capture the human and animal figure engaged in over 700 different movements and actions, resulting in the images that make up *Human and Animal Locomotion*. Together these images comprise a veritable atlas of imagery about movement and time and, viewed from a 21st century perspective in which ideas of photography and time are continuously affected by technological fluctuations, Muybridge's desire to stop time and put it back in motion has particular resonance. In the new world that Muybridge envisioned and created, the depiction of moving things was freed from the limitations of memory or perception, bridging the gap between scientific thought and artistic practice. Whilst Muybridge's influence is most notably felt in relation to coming developments in cinematic technologies, the impact of his work extends far beyond his time to the artistic practices of Francis Bacon, Andy Warhol, Thomas Eakins, U2, Marcel Duchamp, Edgar Degas, and many others. Eadweard Muybridge died in 1904.

The prints in the Muybridge exhibition are all collotypes made in the late 1880s. The collotype is a dichromate-based photomechanical process that allows for high-quality prints from continuous-tone photographic negatives. Used in the late 19th century, the process involves coating a glass plate with a sensitized gelatin and exposing it under a negative. Light passing through the negative hardens the gelatin on the glass plate, leaving the unexposed gelatin absorbent to water whereas the exposed gelatin repels it.