

The **THEATRE AT UBC** *Companion Guide to:*

Electric Company Theatre's

STUDIES IN MOTION

THE HAUNTINGS OF EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

by Kevin Kerr



theatre
at UBC

PuSh
INTERNATIONAL
PERFORMING ARTS
FESTIVAL

Co-producers:



theatre
at UBC

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Electric Company Theatre's

STUDIES IN
MOTION

THE HAUNTINGS OF EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

by Kevin Kerr

January 19 to 29, 2006

FREDERIC WOOD THEATRE

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Director | Kim Collier |
| Scenographer | Robert Gardiner |
| Costume Designer | Mara Gottler |
| Composer | Patrick Pennefather |
| Choreographer | Crystal Pite |

This world premiere is a co-production with Theatre at UBC and the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival

In the interest of promoting our creative work and encouraging theatre studies in our community, Theatre at UBC proudly presents this Companion Guide to *STUDIES IN MOTION: The Hauntings of Eadweard Muybridge*.

WELCOME TO STUDIES IN MOTION: THE HAUNTINGS OF EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

Kim Collier

Director, Co-artistic Director – Electric Company Theatre

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Kim Collier Photo: Mark Mushet

A few years back, Robert Gardiner, the Head of the Department of Theatre, Film & Creative Writing, approached our company with his vision to experiment as a scenographer in a series of professional co-productions. As he described his interest in experimenting with video projectors as a lighting source for the stage, we knew that our future

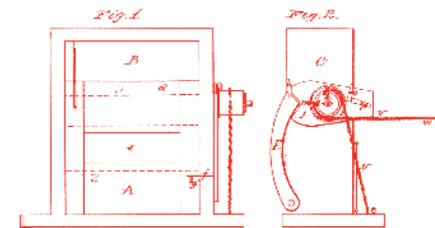
project *Studies in Motion* would be a perfect match thematically and visually for his design aesthetic. We began our joint, extended design-dramaturgy-creation process in January of 2005. It has been an incredible experience to work with Robert and the staff and students of the UBC Theatre Program and we are thrilled to have the PuSh International Performance Festival join us as a co-producer and co-presenter on this project.

The intersection of science and culture has always fascinated the artists at the Electric Company. The vision and work of Eadweard Muybridge serves as a pivot point between our contemporary media-driven culture and the late 19th century when photography was a new and fascinating technology. With the domination of media arts, film and television in our culture today, Kevin Kerr's play takes us back to a revolutionary time when photography was dramatically altering our perception of the world. Looking back to this turning point has been fascinating.

As a director working with a remarkable group of artists, as we have for this production, my job is often to get out of the way and create space for their individual and collective impulses. In addition to having the pleasure of working with several of the actors for the first time, this project is building on many established creative relationships. I have had the pleasure of working with all our design team before and this allows for a trust in the process and the efficiency of established working relationships. We are thrilled that Mara Gottler has joined us as Costume Designer, Patrick Pennefather as Composer,

Crystal Pite as Choreographer and Robert Gardiner as Scenographer. In last season's workshops, we challenged ourselves in our rehearsal process to create side by side, to allow staging to affect design and design to affect staging.

It is always remarkable to participate in the creative process of making a play where chance and circumstance are as fundamental as careful research and planning. One can never fully predict the outcomes of such an endeavor. I set myself the objectives of remaining open to radical design concepts, to revealing the complexities of the human heart, to creating a rehearsal environment that offers each artist involved the opportunity to explore, and to keep the project moving dynamically forward. My job, as Director, is to strive for a production that is visually exhilarating, to insist on precise and vibrant physicality and to communicate a clear and truthful emotional arc. I endeavor to work with my arms open, allow-



Above: Muybridge's patent drawing for his double acting slide with mechanically operated trigger. US Patent Office.

THE STORY BEHIND THE IMAGES

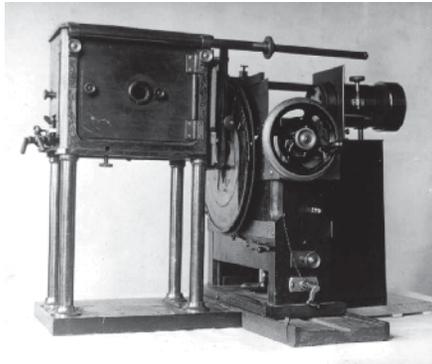
Kevin Kerr

Playwright, Co-artistic Director – Electric Company Theatre

One never understands anything from a photograph, only that which narrates makes us understand. –Susan Sontag

ing the surprise of the creative impulse to enter the room and then to be ferocious in tying it all together. Most importantly, it is my responsibility to listen to the Playwright; to actively discover and support the vision and themes embedded in the script by the remarkable Kevin Kerr.

On behalf of the Electric Company; I hope you enjoy our production and thank you so much for coming.



Above: Muybridge's Zoöpraxiscope, 1879
Kingston Museum and Heritage Centre

Many years ago when working on the first Electric Company play, I stumbled upon a video where an animator had assembled a large number of Eadweard Muybridge's motion study photographs into short looping animations. These were not unlike what Muybridge himself would have shown with his clumsily named "zoöpraxiscope": a souped up magic lantern that would project photographs in rapid succession and create the illusion of movement.

Muybridge's images on the video were haunting. As they played out in complete silence I was privy to living moments of time that predated the advent of cinema. His cameras examined the movement of horses, livestock, dogs and cats, birds, wild animals, and most compellingly, humans. Women and men, usually nude, were presented performing "everyday" actions alongside movements that were ritualistic, comic, sensual, absurd, and even diseased and pathological. The variations seemed endless. There was a tension in the collected images: scientific, classical, elegant, erotic, startling, disturbing, and grotesque. And all were undeniably compelling especially as they were in fact short film clips that were one hundred and twenty years old.

And then in the middle of it all appears the man himself: Muybridge, naked and walking. He's in stark contrast to the predominately young and

beautiful bodies surrounding him: a shock of white bushy hair, enormous beard, muscular but still with the body of a man nearing sixty. In the video he's walking up an inclined plane and down again. And up... and down. Over and over like Sisyphus, the character from Greek mythology doomed for all eternity to roll a stone to the top of a hill only to have it roll down the other side where he would follow it to begin the task all over again. Who was this guy?



Kevin Kerr
Photo: Alex Waterhouse Hayward

The **THEATRE AT USC** *Compassion Leads to*
**STUDIES IN
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These little one second movies were deliberately designed to be without narrative. The backdrop was a mathematical grid, an abstract non-space with no defining feature to give a sense of “setting”. The actors were anonymous models, identified in the records only by a number so that there was nothing to indicate “character”. In fact most of the time the models appear nude so that there isn’t even “costume” to help us understand their social status or the period in which they live. The actions are limited to a single gesture or movement phrase – so short and isolated that they couldn’t be imbued with a specific “intention” or “goal”. There was no context to give the actions meaning - no place, no time, no costume, no character, no intention or goals. As these elements of narrative were missing, it must be assumed that narrative was not intended. But as they accumulated in front of me like the individual scenes of a longer movie I began to ask questions. I started to look for meaning, for story. I asked again, “Who was this guy?”

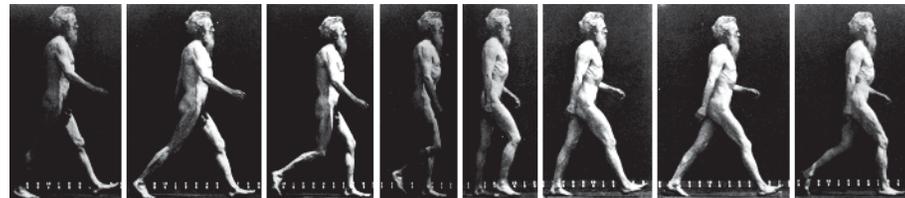
On the surface, the photos indicate a person committed to the emerging culture of modern science: understanding through controlled observation and rational analysis of our world, using the potential of technology to surpass the limits of our own senses to enhance our powers of perception. But stacked together they seemed to say something else. This search for meaning not through the content, but through the context, defines our modern viewing culture. I began to think about our contemporary obsession with the image, our mediated culture where our information comes to us in isolated fragments that are arbitrarily juxtaposed with more isolated fragments. What was the missing narrative?

Eadweard Muybridge’s life was filled with the events of Victorian melodrama: adultery, jealousy, betrayal, murder, and an abandoned child. These events pre-date his obsession with stopping time and freezing motion and become the ghosts that haunt him in the

fictional world of the play. He attempts to absolve himself from the dark and tragic consequences of his past actions by inventing a new world where action is neutralized by scientific analysis. He uses instantaneous photography to dissect time into its smallest possible fragments to reconstruct his life, his identity, and his legacy. Through photographs he wants to reveal a world hidden from the naked eye and, paradoxically, he hopes to erase the past images that have been burned into his memory.

It’s in our nature to search for meaning, and narrative is the framework in which we attempt to understand experience. Muybridge’s struggle to overcome the demons of his private history, led him to a place of obsession which seemed to exist outside narrative altogether. However, this obsession was the beginning of our modern mode of understanding – a narrative where the stories of science and art begin to diverge; where information is fragmented, mediated, and where observations through the filter of technology are trusted more than those that come directly through our physical senses. But ultimately the story will remain the same. Muybridge’s quest for understanding his physical world was ultimately a quest to understand his place in it; to understand the meaning of the actions in his life he turned his camera on the human animal in motion.

Right: Reverse of a stereo card by Muybridge, ca. 1867 - 1868. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.



Above: Man [Muybridge]walking. Photo by Eadweard Muybridge. Dover Publications.

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Clockwise from top left: ◊ Yosemite Creek, Crest of Waterfall in Low Water. Oakland Museum ◊ Stanford Residence, San Francisco
 ◊ Cemetery, Guatemala City ◊ Flora Muybridge, ca. 1874 ◊ Detail from reverse of stereo card. Stanford University Libraries ◊ Cloud
 Study. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley ◊ Detail from Muybridge's patent drawing for an electrically triggered shutter device. US Patent
 Office ◊ Running High Leap. Stanford Museum of Art. ◊ All photos by Eadweard Muybridge.

HELIOS IN MOTION

Robert Brain

Department of History, The University of British Columbia

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Nothing about Muybridge stood still, beginning with his name. Born Edward James Muggeridge in Kingston-on-Thames, England, on April 9, 1830, he changed his name to Eadweard James Muybridge, believing that this was the original Anglo-Saxon form of the name. In 1852 the restless Muybridge emigrated to California, where the discovery of gold in 1847 and the nearly simultaneous Bear Flag Revolt against Mexican rule had unleashed a boom for adventurers and fortune-seekers from around the world. In 1860, Muybridge sustained injuries in a coach accident that forced a six-year return to England. Back in San Francisco in 1866, Muybridge apprenticed himself to the photographer Carleton E. Watkins, and quickly built a reputation under the pseudonym “Helios” (the Greek sun-god; photography was often called “heliography” or “sun-drawing”). Muybridge’s stock-in-trade was photographs of Yosemite and San Francisco. These images, many of them stereographs, celebrated the sublime grandeur of the West, and became part of the identity and allure of California.

Helio’s photos drew the attention of Leland Stanford, a railroad baron, horse breeder, and former governor of California. Stanford commissioned Muybridge to settle a question that had bedeviled horsey folk since antiquity: is there a point or points when all four of the trotting or galloping horse’s hooves are off the ground at the same time? It was a question that could not be answered with naked eye observation, and had even eluded attempts to resolve it with photography. Muybridge pursued the question at Stanford’s farm south of San Francisco, now Stanford University.

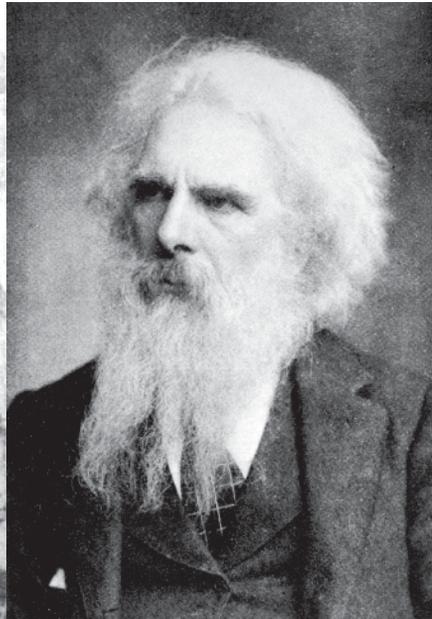
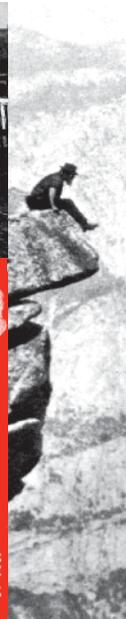
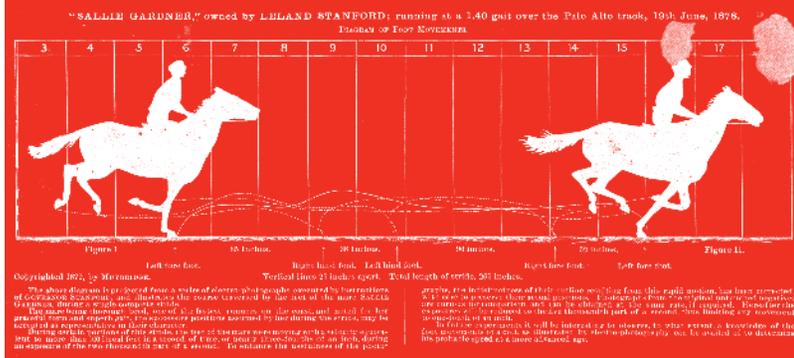
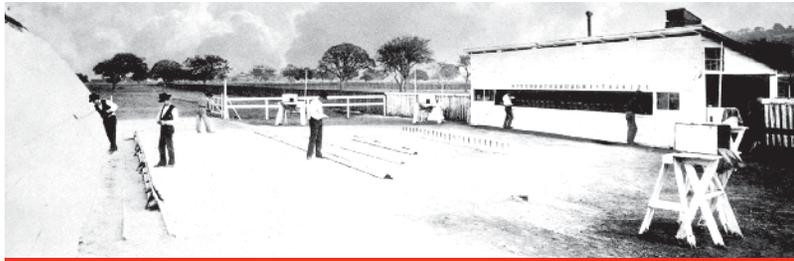
But the West was still wild. Muybridge interrupted his labours when, in 1874, he discovered that his wife had a lover, Colonel Larkyns. Muybridge presented himself to Larkyns, saying, “Good evening Major, my name is Muybridge and here is the answer to the letter you sent my wife,” shot and killed him. He was tried for the murder but acquitted for “justifiable homicide”.

After a few year’s hiatus in Central America, Muybridge returned to Stanford’s farm and resumed his researches, this time with an ingenious set-up. He arrayed a series of twelve cameras attached to trip wires laid out at equal distances, set off the shutters in sequence as the horse passed, each making images at 1/200 of a second. Beyond the horse was hung a sheeting vertically marked in numbered lines to indicate each picture’s place in the series. Muybridge’s image revealed that the horse’s four hooves do in fact leave the ground. Just as the railway superceded animal locomotion, Muybridge’s photography marked a triumph of mechanical perception over human vision.

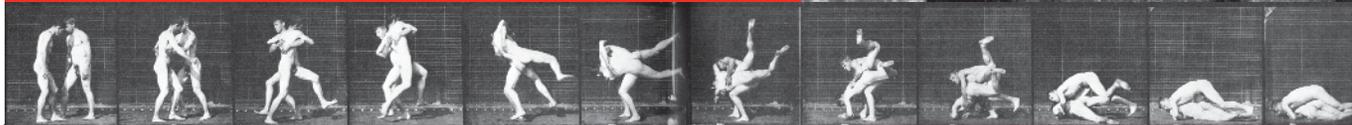
After 1878 Muybridge’s images were published around the world, and he became an international celebrity attracting attention in Europe, where scientists and artists had been engaged in experiments in representing movement and other forms of mechanical vision. The French physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey had long experimented with mechanical techniques for making graphic images of the heartbeat, respiration, vocalization, and especially, animal locomotion. Upon seeing Muybridge’s images, Marey immediately

invited him to Paris, where in 1881 he was feted by scientific and artistic luminaries from around Europe. Marey showed Muybridge how to animate his images with a zoetrope. Muybridge soon developed his own method of projecting moving images on a screen with a phenakistoscope and magic lantern. Calling his device a zoöpraxiscope, Muybridge showed natural movements of humans and animals to dazzled audiences around the world. Contacts with European savants inspired Muybridge to pursue further research in visualizing animal and human motion. From 1883 to 1887, Muybridge conducted serious research into animal and human locomotion at the University of Pennsylvania, while privately making images of great artistic and erotic power.

Muybridge’s images unleashed a welter of photographic experiments that resulted in important techniques of scientific measurement and artistic representation. His sequential images inspired Marey and others to develop methods of recording image sequences in a single device called “chronophotography”, culminating in the invention of cinematography in just over a decade. Many artists viewing these images saw not scientific phenomena, but stories—in fragments, fantasies, or jokes—that could be rendered in painting, sculpture, drama, or poetry. Muybridge’s sequential images can thus be said to have provided a medium for rendering much of the subliminal experience of modern industrialized life in both scientific and artistic representation.



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Clockwise from top right: ♦Eadward Muybridge, from the frontispiece of *Descriptive Zoöpraxography*, 1893. UCLA ♦Wrestling Lock. USC Library ♦Ticket for a public lecture. Eastman House ♦Detail from Muybridge's *Panorama of San Francisco from California Street Hill*, 1877. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley ♦Yosemite Valley: *Pi-Wi-Ack* (Shower of Stars). Oakland Museum ♦Diagrammatic analysis of the stride of "Sallie Gardner" prepared for the use of Thomas Eakins. ♦The "experiment track" at Palo Alto. Stanford Museum of Art ♦Detail of Yosemite view showing Muybridge on a precipice. Robert Haas Collection. ♦All photos by Eadward Muybridge.

TECHNOLOGY LAID BARE: MUYBRIDGE AND THE MACHINERY OF VIEWING

Dorothy Barenscott, PhD Candidate
Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory, The University of British Columbia

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When we look at moving pictures today, we seldom think of how they are constructed. Inviting and sometimes seducing us into a kind of total absorption, the world of fabricated imagery does little to draw attention to the means of its production. Instead, silently broadcasting its role as “mediator of the real,” a majority of the visual forms with which we are daily inundated present themselves as naturally and unproblematically as the eyes with which we see. To be sure, we live in a world where the proliferation and ubiquity of visual media operate hand in hand with expanding technological precision in the manufacture of “seeing tools.” Be it through the detail-capturing capability of digital cameras with their dizzying vocabulary of megapixels and microlenses; the craze for high definition televisions, and gargantuan movie screens; or the sophisticated computer simulators on which scientists and doctor’s increasingly rely to see inside our bodies, there is a remarkable and unquestioned faith in, and concurrent reliance upon, the machinery of viewing.

For a nineteenth century figure like Eadweard Muybridge, our contemporary environment is no doubt one that would have intrigued him. As a creative inventor and curious experimenter/entrepreneur, Muybridge actively took part in shaping the social milieu that would eventually accept and embrace the new medium of photography and its later descendants—film, video and computer graphics—in more scientific, and therefore ‘legitimate’ terms. He accomplished this in the face of critics who associated early photography with a kind of trickery and

mysticism on the one hand and mere spectacle and theatrical illusionism on the other. In contrast, Muybridge was among a growing international movement of individuals who approached the camera specifically in terms of its modernity and the photograph as a representative index or trace of modern life. Through his various motion studies, which increasingly took up the language and appearance of scientific experimentation, Muybridge worked with the cutting edge technology of his day to study animal and human locomotion. His most famous invention, the zoopraxiscope, was a machine that projected a series of images in successive phases of movement obtained through the use of multiple cameras. The result was to create an illusion of action from an accelerated succession of static pictures.

Indeed, at a time when rapid urbanization, industrialization and train travel caused people to experience time and space in a more compressed way, there was a growing awareness among modern-minded thinkers of how photography had enabled individuals to see faster while simultaneously raising questions about what had been hidden by the mechanisms of speed. It was this dynamic of representation that arguably drove public fascination and artistic interest in Muybridge’s images of leaping horses and nude bodies exercising well into the twentieth century. But as much as Muybridge’s motion studies have been celebrated by film and media historians as a locatable bridge between still and moving pictures, what remains more potent and arguably relevant about his body of work within the context of our current image-obsessed environment, are the ways in which Muybridge’s in-

famous and instantly recognizable proto-scientific photo sequences worked and still work today to reveal the constructed and calculated nature of the moving image. Divided into isolated and static frames that are placed together or projected, these images produce the illusion of continuous time and movement. Muybridge’s photographic series thus not only remain as residues of a technology of vision that reveals its own means of production, they are also arrangements that confront viewers with the mechanism of moving pictures in their most primal and charged form. In turn, these sequences call attention to their technologically mediated and manipulated nature, asking questions about where and to what ends the lines between artistry, illusionism and science blur.

Seen another way, Muybridge’s photographic experiments give form to the enigmatic gap between still frames that parcel bodies, space, and time into discrete and measurable units. This is a decidedly modern construction that draws on nineteenth century notions of faith in capital and industrial efficiency. Muybridge’s images, as a kind of conceptual tool, offer a valuable insight into our contemporary moment—positing critical questions and revealing stakes in the proliferation of still and moving images; making things visible in all of their calculated and sometimes contradictory ways; and baring the techniques of fabricated visual forms for all to savour and see.

THE PERFECT SOUND SCORE: COMPLETE IMMERSION IN THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

Patrick Pennefather Composer

As I write this contribution to the Companion Guide on my compositional process of for *Studies in Motion*, I have only just begun writing the music. I have no doubt that my ideas will evolve until the perfect sound score is found on the very last day of the production.

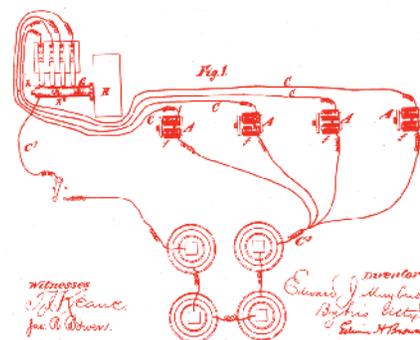
There are many elements in the process of designing all the aspects of sound to support a theatrical work and while it would be fantastically convenient if every project were the same, it would be incredibly boring. From where a speaker should be placed in the theatre to trying out a particular sound effect or sound underscore during a scene—these elements constantly shift once you are in the rehearsal process. In terms of content, many times I am inspired by the text, although at other times I have to see the text being performed by actors in a rehearsal before an idea hits me. Sometimes I am asked to compose a piece of music ahead of time for a scene that will involve movement or choreography. For this particular process I will probably be improvising with a palette of prepared piano samples (these are sounds made from manipulating the strings on inside of the piano), along with other abstract percussion sounds that don't really sound like a known instrument.

The design of the soundscape usually begins with preliminary meetings with the creative team - in this case the writer, Kevin Kerr; the Director, Kim Collier; and Jonathon Young who serves as both co-artistic director of Electric Co. and is an actor in the production. These meetings have revealed that the overall sound design for the work will encompass

four sub-categories: sound effects to support the environments in which certain scenes will occur (a dog barking in the distance, a hammer, a horse galloping); underscoring certain scenes using thematic music borrowed from film (a 'love' theme); live 'miking' of the actors in specific scenes; and music-driven scenes which involve choreography and are predominantly non-verbal.

The 'score' will be primarily pre-recorded cues, in combination with some live sounds created by the actors. Although this is not always the case, in this particular production the elements of sound that will best serve the work are sounds that cannot be created live. Much to my disappointment, the company was not able to provide me with a real horse that I could 'mike'. Instead, I will be sourcing and possibly recording horses, from their whinnies to their gallops.

The 'score' in this work will also feature the audio speakers as special guests. Most theatrical productions, due to time, resources, and the emphasis of the spoken word, usually have two to four main speakers that pump out the sound cues in stereo or in left/right combinations. *Studies in Motion* will rely on the strategic placement of ten to fifteen speakers, both wired and wireless, that will be able to distribute the sound cues anywhere in the theatre, including above, behind, to the side, and underneath the stage and audience areas. This will bring the space alive with sound and allow the audience members to be completely immersed in the theatre experience.



Top: Muybridge's patent drawing for an electrical timer. US Patent Office.

Above: The Zoöpraxographical Hall built for Muybridge at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, 1893. Stanford University Library.

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CANADIAN THEATRE AS CLASSROOM AND LABORATORY

Robert Gardiner
Scenographer, Head – Theatre, Film and Creative Writing, The University of British Columbia

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On behalf of the UBC Department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing, I would like to thank you for joining us in the Frederic Wood Theatre. Theatre at UBC's performance spaces are not only seats and a stage, but laboratories for research and classrooms for learning. Studies in Motion is a collaborative production by some of Canada's most talented theatre professionals, Theatre at UBC students and faculty artist-researchers.

Studies in Motion was made possible by a Research/Creation Grant in Fine Arts from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. SSHRC is an independent federal agency that promotes and supports university-based research and training in the social sciences and humanities. In October of 2000, SSHRC sponsored a conference on the future of the humanities in Canada. Attendees discussed the potential available in the work undertaken by artist-researchers in an academic setting, and the difficulty these artist-researchers had in accessing traditional academic research funding. SSHRC responded with a five-year pilot program to support and develop excellence in research and artistic disciplines.

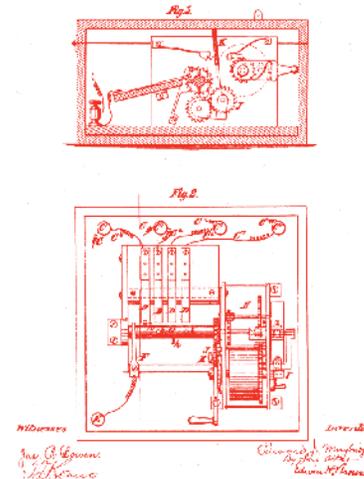
The Research/Creation Grant in Fine Arts program supports projects that increase knowledge in the fine arts and should lead to innovation and new knowledge in artistic practice at Canadian postsecondary institutions. These projects also develop the skills and knowledge of students and allow student artists to learn from the collaborations of university- and college-based artist-researchers and professional artists from Canada's talented cultural community.

Electric Company Theatre and the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival are excellent partners for Theatre at UBC's SSHRC research projects. The Electric Company has brought their groundbreaking brand of theatrical magic to audiences around the world, showcasing Vancouver's vibrant theatre scene. The PuSh Festival has in turn brought some of the world's most innovative and challenging new performance projects to eager Vancouver audiences. Theatre at UBC has enjoyed past partnerships with both the Electric Company (*The Fall*, 2003) and PuSh (*K.*, 2004) and welcomed the opportunity to bring the world premiere of *Studies in Motion* to the stage.

My research deals with the emergence of new technology in multi-media, digital imaging, and video projection in theatre and performance. This new technology brings with it an opportunity to change the traditional model of scenography. The scenographic artist is able to transform the performance space through the creative application of cutting-edge software and the manipulation and projection of vivid digital imagery—not as an addition to the performance but as an integral part of it, developed in collaboration with directors, designers and performers. This research takes a significant amount of resources and would not be possible without a far-sighted agency like SSHRC. It also would not be possible without the sincere dedication and imagination of artists like Kim Collier, the wonderful Kevin Kerr and the entire cast and creative team that brought this project together. Most importantly, it would not be possible without you: the theatre patron eager to see work that broadens our understanding, tells sto-

ries that capture the imagination, and takes the risks that push the boundaries of what is possible in artistic practice. Thank you again for coming and I hope to see you again in the "lab".

(18x Mujel) E. J. MUYBRIDGE. 3 Sheets—Draws 7.
METHOD OF AND APPARATUS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING CHANGING
OR MOVING OBJECTS
No. 279,076. Patented June 19, 1888.



Above: Muybridge's patent drawing for a mechanical picture-feeding device. He used the device for slide and motion picture exhibitions in Europe and California.

CREDITS:

***Studies in Motion: The Hauntings of Eadweard Muybridge* premiered January 19, 2006
at the Frederic Wood Theatre at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada.**

Cast **Ryan Beil, Lara Gilchrist, Kai James, Shane Kolmansberger, Allan Morgan,
Dawn Petten, Joel Redmond, Kyle Rideout, Juno Ruddell, Erin Wells,
Jonathon Young and Andrew Wheeler as Eadweard Muybridge**

Stage Manager **Jan Hodgson**

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