

LISA BLAS

The Jump, after E.M. / 2009 – present

In the spring of 2008, I began a long-term project based on a motion study by Eadweard Muybridge, *Woman Jumping Over Barrier*. I found this work during a research trip to the photography collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and was immediately taken by its title. This image then became a point of departure for a project that was equal part performance and portraiture, in a location specific to my daily movements. Using the red brick façade of an historical building in Washington, DC, as my backdrop, I repetitively jumped over a barrier made from a stack of books on art, history and culture chronicling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: *Young America: the Daguerreotypes of Southworth & Hawes; Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War; Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: American art from the Yale University Art Gallery; Eadweard Muybridge and the photographic panorama of San Francisco, 1850-1880; The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*, and others.

After photographing myself in motion, I decided to include my immediate community of neighbors, former students, and friends in the work. I paired one male and one female together and asked them to walk toward one another from opposite ends of the brick façade while I photographed them. I was interested in capturing the moment their paths crossed, drawing communication (or non-communication) from body language. This work is nurtured by reflections on how location and community play a role in the formation of one's art, as was the case during Muybridge's time.

In a subsequent journey to San Francisco, I located the address of Muybridge's original Helios Studios on Montgomery Street, now occupied by a hotel in the center of the financial district. It was the summer of 2009, and the aftershock(s) of the global financial collapse continued to make headlines. The resonance of that collapse with the Great Depression led me to visit Coit Tower-----a monument containing murals of social justice commissioned by the Public Works of Art Project. In another era and a different configuration, a local community of artists had been galvanized, this time, through the California School of Fine Arts (which later became the San Francisco Art Institute), with which Muybridge was affiliated. This project is still open-ended, as it continues to feed on current events.

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Image below: Time Magazine, November 1, 2010

