

16 Ways of Looking at a Photograph

Class Exercise: Chapter 4, Time

Pair with a partner and find a space either in a hallway or an outdoor corridor. Each person takes turns walking, normally, while the other person watches carefully. Return to the classroom and write down a general description of how the other person walks—smoothly, briskly, whatever it is. Now write down exactly how the other person's feet touch down on the ground while walking— toes first? Heels? At exactly what angle are their arms in relation to their torso mid stride?

This exercise gets at photography's eerie capacity to change the way we see by 'stopping' time. We don't see exactly how and when another person's feet, or for that matter our own, touch the ground, instead we see a general arc of movement. It is this difference between our way of seeing and the camera's that fascinated Muybridge.