Lecture summary:

This lecture examines the representation of the human body in motion in nineteenth-century European and American art. We begin around 1850 with Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet’s paintings of rural labourers. We then move to the urban metropolis of Paris in the 1860s and 70s, where we will look at the work of Edgar Degas, specifically his images of the Opéra Ballet.

The second half of the nineteenth century was also an exciting time in the development of photography as both an art and a science. We will consider the contributions of rapid motion photographers Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey. Finally we will look at the influence of Muybridge and Marey’s work on the late nineteenth-century American Realist artist Thomas Eakins, who was responsible for bringing photography into mainstream American art.

Slide list:

1. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*, 1849, oil on canvas, 165 x 257 cm, destroyed during World War II.
3. Edgar Degas, *Scene in the Middle Ages*, 1865, oil on canvas, 87 x 147 cm, Musée d’Orsay.
5. The rue Le Péletier Opéra, 1873, engraving, Bibliothèque nationale de France.
6. Michel Manzi, *Caricature of Degas as a Dancer*, 1885, pencil and ink heightened with gouache and watercolour, 53 x 43.6 cm, private collection.
8. Degas, *The Orchestra at the Opera*, c.1870, oil on canvas, 56.5 x 45 cm, Musée d’Orsay.
10. Degas, *The Dance Class*, 1874, oil on canvas, 83.5 x 77.2 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC.
12. Degas, *Préparation à la danse* (front and rear view), c.1920, Bronze cast, 56.3 cm, The Courtauld.


16. Muybridge, *Zoöpraxiscope*, c.1879, wood, photographic lens, metal, 58.8 x 27.5 x 143.5 cm, Kingston Museum and Heritage, UK.


19. Marey, *Chronophotographe Fixed-plate Camera*, 1883, wood, photographic lens, metal, 57 x 54 x 35.5 cm, National Media Museum, Bradford, UK.


21. Marey, *Flight of a Gull*, 1887, bronze, 16.5 x 58.5 x 25.7 cm, Dépôt du Collège de France, Musée Marey, Beaune.


25. François Sallé, *The Anatomy Lesson at the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris*, 1888, oil on canvas, 218 x 299 cm, Art Gallery of NSW.

*26. Thomas Eakins, *A May Morning in the Park*, 1879, oil on canvas, 60.3 x 91.8 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

27. Eakins, *Study in Human Motion*, 1880s, chronophotograph.


*29. Eakins, *Swimming*, 1884-5, oil on canvas, 70 x 92 cm, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

References:


Eadweard Muybridge, *The Human Figure in Motion* (New York: Dover Publications), 2012.


Images

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