

There is an undeniable irony in dropping dead while digging a hole in the ground. Almost every biography of the 19th century photographer Eadweard Muybridge concludes by mentioning this fact, albeit in a variety of ways¹. Muybridge had retired and, after an early career as a bookseller and later on as a successful photographer in the United States, had returned to England, passing his time reading and gardening. Despite the fact that no photographs or conclusive evidence exists to support the Lakes myth, it is almost certain that it is true (2).

Beasley's works have often dealt with minimal, existential conditions within small, closed environments – the space of a room, a book, a box - presenting them as banal theatres of the human condition. The particular starting point for P.A.N.O.R.A.M.A. is Muybridge's former garden in Kingston, as it is maintained and adapted by its current owners. A panoramic series of twelve photographs, Beasley's first digitally produced colour works, were taken by Beasley in the garden in the winter of 2009. Inspired by Muybridge's seminal 360o panorama of San Francisco (3), her series' full titles were made by mapping the orientations of descriptions of the views (4) in the panels of Muybridge's work onto those of the Kingston garden. For Beasley, the overwhelmingly empty centre of a 360o panorama - the original camera position - is suggestive of the missing Lakes project. However, she does not reveal the spatial view of the sequence, but fragments them, revealing their individual frames, highlighting an otherwise invisible, anti-photographic aspect to

(1) Beasley's research to trace the origin of the rumour has revealed that writers have invented a variety of verbs to describe his activity ranging from planning or designing, to constructing, building or digging. The only footnoted claim leads only to a ponderous p.s. to a letter in the archives in Kingston: "I have read, somewhere, that he was drawing to scale, a replica of our Great Lakes, at the time of his passing." (Janet Leigh, 1949).

(2) The artist will be publishing the full findings of her research at a later date.

(3) Panorama expert David Harris wrote that the 1878 panorama "represents one of the supreme conceptual and technical achievements in the history of architectural photography."

(4) These descriptions come from the Haas biography (see above).

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the panorama: due to being a systematic procedure, the photographer does not frame the individual photographs. The photographs are absolutely equivalent to each other. This fragmenting of a

‘whole’ is central to Beasley’s practice.

Beasley’s work has dealt elsewhere with particular forms of going from one place to another. In 2007, a photo series of small sculptural objects was titled *As I Lay Dying*, after Faulkner’s novella. It featured minimalist objects crafted in American walnut and black glass, floating in low-key sfumato environments. Beasley’s Malamud series of 2008 opened up an imaginary around a most common object, a wooden plank, bent under the weight of the body.

The pale green linoleum floor work, *The Great Lakes*, is a further development in Beasley’s research into the garden, and of her interests in pattern, horizontality and threshold spaces. The work alludes to an illusionist portal, a kind of negative, transforming a space through which we pass into one symbolic of our passage to an other- or afterlife. With *The Great Lakes* Beasley has constructed a space on the hinge of inside and outside, a clean domestic environment that opens up to a heterotopian elsewhere (5).

In the last room is a series of five large, gelatin-silver prints of black, tabular objects. The linoleum floor templates were re-used here to design these metal tables. They were individually photographed from the same distance, rotated at a high angle in front of the camera to produce various views and printed onto matt photo paper at a scale of about 80%. The aerial view that dominated *The Great Lakes* is gradually turned into an oblique vision from elsewhere. Occasionally the decorative shapes call to mind floral motives, smoke or islands. Beasley’s photographs of the lakes sculptures are at a tipping point, from which Muybridge’s (photographic) project of mapping movement and landscape topples into an alternative state of animation.

Another rotation is to be found in *P.A.N.O.R.A.M.A.*, a revolving rack, filled with postcard versions of the same twelve panoramic views of the garden. The viewer is welcome to take cards away. One could potentially make up the full 360o panorama. This work references not only a Victorian optical toy, the zootrope, but also Duchamp’s bottle-rack ready-made.

Beasley’s visits to the archives and to Muybridge’s garden have fuelled a narrative fantasy about his late sculptural project, allowing her to pair a fiction about him - his gardening project and his death - with a meditation on photography itself. The biographical tale and the reflection on the medium unfold as parallel stories, overlapping not on a symbolic level, but through analogies between technical manipulations, such as scale and projection, wetness and photography, the figure and the ground. Each of these analogies features a movement upon one and the same complex axis of laborious manipulations.

Eadweard Muybridge was born and died in Kingston, England. Shortly before his death, he bequeathed the professional materials in his possession to the forthcoming Kingston Local History Museum archives, where they were Willed to remain in perpetuity. Beasley's period of research in the archives was commissioned by the Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston. A reconfiguration of P.A.N.O.R.A.M.A. will be on view there from

(5) Linoleum, a naturally hygenic material, was invented in Staines, England, in 1855. After a period of decline, it is currently having a renaissance due to being 100% renewable.

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November to February under the title 8th May 1904, Kingston. This will be Beasley's first solo institutional exhibition.

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