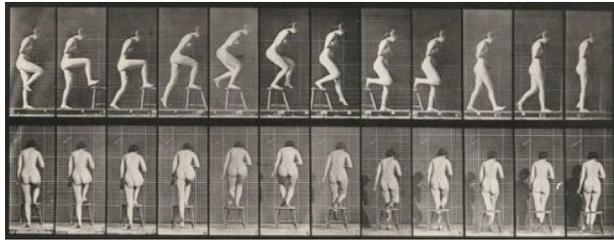


At the National Gallery of Art, A Careful Blending of Photography From the NGA and The Corcoran

The NGA's acquisition of The Corcoran's collection proves to be a bit messy in this exhibition.

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JULY 13, 2016 10:41 A.M.



Eadweard Muybridge, "Plate Number 188. Dancing (fancy)"(1887).

Think of “Intersections: Photographs and Videos from the National Gallery of Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art” as a coming-out party after a shotgun marriage. It's meant to follow the NGA's messy acquisition of the Corcoran's collection in 2014 by trying to move forward as one big family. The fusion of the art proves a bit turbulent, it turns out, but less so than the institutions themselves.

“Intersections” plays off the two galleries' core photographic acquisitions—the Corcoran's collection of “Animal Locomotion” images by **Eadweard Muybridge**, acquired in 1887, and the National Gallery's 1,600 works by **Alfred Stieglitz**, a gift from Stieglitz and **Georgia O'Keeffe** in 1949. But these collections prove to be just a starting point; the exhibit of 85 works includes both early and contemporary pieces as well as a mix of genres.



Thomas Annan, "Old Vennel, Off High Street" (1868–1871)

The exhibit includes a number of iconic works, including **Harold Edgerton**'s strobe-lit experiments and **Ed Ruscha**'s "Every Building on the Sunset Strip." But it also offers some unfamiliar images that are not of obvious institutional provenance—**Shomei Tomatsu**'s wispy portrayal of a Tokyo rush hour, for instance, and **Harry Callahan**'s rare 1943 color abstraction of neon signage.

A number of works in the exhibit have aged less well than the curators might think, including an example of the dreary, post-*The Americans* work by **Robert Frank**, a performance-art documentation by **Vito Acconci**, and a series of **Robert Heinecken**'s composite images of newscasters; Heinecken's, in particular, seems passé in an era of omnipresent media and visual manipulation. The exhibit also suffers from sub-par offerings by such major figures as **Minor White**, **Vik Muniz** and **Jeff Wall**. With other works, though, the exhibit's eye is inspired. **Larry Sultan**'s documentation of his faceless parents engaged in humble domestic routines offers a concise and convincing depiction of marital compromise, while selections from the works of African-American artists **Hank Willis Thomas** and **Lorna Simpson** offer quietly searing depictions of race in America. (For a bit of comic genius, meanwhile, it's hard to beat **Mike Mandel**'s 1978 baseball card set of prominent photographers, which the exhibit samples generously.)

Perhaps the most unexpectedly poignant piece in the exhibit is **Victor Burgin**'s 2000 video that slowly circles the walls of a gallery in the Corcoran. In this context, it proves to be less a

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statement by the artist and more of an elegy for a fine artistic institution that, with this exhibit, no longer exists.