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FIGURE STUDIES

DAVID MICHALEK

EXPERIENCE 15

OCTOBER 5, 2012

JANUARY 6, 2013

From 5 October 2012 to 6 January 2013, Le Laboratoire presents its 15th experiment: *Figure Studies* by American artist David Michalek. The work applies the technology of high-speed HD video toward capturing scenes and subject matter reminiscent of the famous Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey photo-studies of human movement. Both of these bodies of work, which constitute some of the greatest achievements of 19th century photography, are also considered early progenitors of cinema. *Figure Studies* was developed with the collaboration of Harvard biologist, Dan Lieberman.

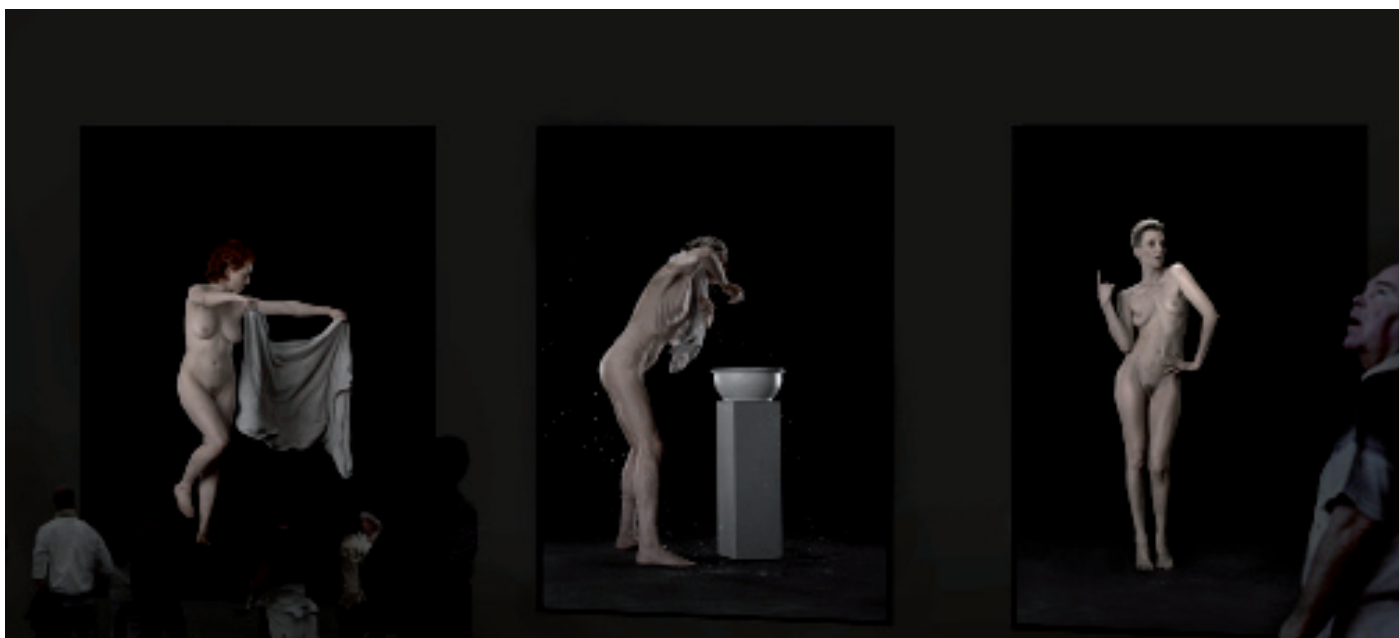
Figure Studies builds on a past work of Michalek's from 2007, *Slow Dancing*. The core premise of that project was quite simple: record a small slice of time (a mere five seconds of dancing) at extremely high frame rates (3000 frames per second), so that when played back in real time, the seconds would stretch to a glacially-paced ten minutes. *Slow Dancing* has now been shown in 17 international cities, both as an indoor installation and out-of-doors work of public art (often on a large scale).

Figure Studies applies a similar methodology to a much broader range of human subjects: specialized bodies shaped by athletics, dancing, and physical labor, as well as non-specialized bodies. Within each group, there is a broad range of ages and body-types as well as ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Each subject is seen executing a particular movement sequence or concept that was arrived at through both artistic as well as scientific considerations -- the latter in conjunction with Harvard Biologist, Dr. Dan Lieberman. He helped to define a variety of biomechanical categories that were explored in project rehearsals; he also advised on strategies for displaying and evoking those categories. *Figure Studies* premiered at Summerhall in the Edinburgh Festival co-commissioned by the Demarco European Art Foundation.

Work by both Muybridge and Marey provided rough starting points, which were then redefined or reconsidered during rehearsal. Other movements were arrived at through interviews with the subjects (which sometimes revealed a present or past physical practice), as well as improvisation. In the end, a single movement idea was crystallized into five-second sequence and then recorded during film production. The resulting films, which typically feature subjects without clothing, are roughly ten minutes in length.

Figure Studies will be displayed on several large projecting screens. The visitor discovers the captivating force of gestures decomposed by slow motion, which places them somewhere between phantasmagoria and scientific analysis, inviting the gaze to settle in a space where time is suspended.



DAVID MICHALEK

David Michalek is an artist who takes the concept and techniques of portraiture as the starting points for the creation of his works, on both a large and small-scale, in a range of mediums. While earning a B.A. in English Literature from U.C.L.A., Michalek worked as an assistant to noted photographer Herb Ritts. Beginning in the mid-1990s, he began his professional photographic career working as a portrait artist for publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Interview*, and *Vogue*. Concurrently, Michalek began to delve into performance, installation, and multi-disciplinary projects. Since giving up commercial photography in 1998, his work has been shown nationally and internationally with recent public art and solo exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, Sadler's Wells, Harvard University, Serpentine Gallery, Trafalgar Square, Opera Bastille, Venice Biennale, Yale University, The Kitchen, and Lincoln Center. He has collaborated on the visual art component of two staged works with Peter Sellars: *Kafka Fragments*, presented as part of Carnegie Hall's 2005-06 season; and *St. François d'Assise*, presented at the Salzburg Festival and Paris Opera. Other film and video work for theater includes collaborations with The Tallis Scholars; John Malpede and L.A.P.D., and with the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a project for The Brooklyn Museum's "Music Off the Walls" series. He is a visiting faculty member at Yale Divinity School, where he lectures on religion and the arts. David Michalek lives in New York with his wife Wendy Whelan, principal dancer of New York City Ballet.

DAN LIEBERMAN

Dr. Daniel Lieberman is a Professor in the Department Human Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University. He was educated at Harvard (AB, MA, Ph.D.) and Cambridge University (M. Phil). His research combines experimental biology and paleontology to ask why and how the human body looks and functions the way it does. He is especially interested in the origin of bipedal walking, the biology and evolution of endurance running, and the evolution of the human head.

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David Michalek

October 5, 2012 - January 6, 2013

OPENING HOURS AND ADMISSION PRICES

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday

from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Normal: 6 euro

Reduced: 4.50 euro

Groups: 3 euro (8+ people)

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