

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Williams College Museum of Art Presents
Photography at the Frontier of Physics and Art

June 5–December 12, 2010

Photos available upon request.

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Williamstown, Mass. — The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is pleased to present ***Photography at the Frontier of Physics and Art***, an exhibition that brings together the work of four major photographers—Eadweard Muybridge, Harold Edgerton, Berenice Abbott, and Man Ray—who have changed the popular understanding of physics while expanding the creative possibilities of photography. On August 10 at 2:00 pm, exhibition curator and Deputy Director/Chief Curator John Stomberg will give a gallery talk highlighting the exhibition. This is a free program and all are invited to attend.

Photography at the Frontier of Physics and Art examines the ways in which scientists using photography engage artistic issues, such as composition and color, while art photographers often work to create images of the physical universe that serve as or celebrate scientific research. In addition to the four photographers, the exhibition features two contemporary scientists—biologist

Joan Edwards and astrophysicist Karen Kwitter, both professors at Williams College—whose work is deeply engaged with the photographic representation of physics.

About the Artists

Eadweard Muybridge started his photographic career on the creative side, making artistic landscapes for sale in his San Francisco gallery. By the turn of the century he had devised a technique to photograph the stages of motion by using a sequential imaging method that led directly to the development of cinema. The American expatriate artist **Man Ray** created his portfolio of photogravures, *Electricité*, as an interpretive scheme for understanding the meaning, rather than the functioning, of electricity. **Berenice Abbott** turned to photographing representations of physics late in her career. She argued that physicists needed the aid of an artist to fully explain their work and joined a team at MIT who wrote the new standard text book for high school physics in the late 1950s. **Harold Edgerton**, a brilliant MIT electrical engineer, pioneered the use of strobe lights in understanding the mechanics of motion. Imaging for him became an end in its own right and he produced portfolios of his photography for sale during his lifetime.

About the Scientists

Biologist **Joan Edwards**' super slow motion studies of flower blooms have led to new understandings of the process involved with the entire reproductive cycle of plants. Astrophysicist **Karen Kwitter** works to understand the composition of bodies in space through the study of the light they emit—her work parallels the interpretive strategies used in the Hubble Telescope images on display. Edwards and Kwitter demonstrate the ongoing use of photography in the practice of science and the contribution that aesthetics often makes to the reporting of data in their work.

“Beauty informs our experience of nature deeply,” explains exhibition curator John Stomberg, “and our definitions of aesthetics grow out of, sometimes even push against, forms discovered in the natural world. Not surprisingly, then, we identify as “beautiful” photography that seeks the essential patterns inherent to our universe. This exhibition presents artists and scientists engaged with the photographic revelation of both the visible and invisible actions of the physical universe.”

This exhibition was curated by John Stomberg, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, with Nina Cochran, Class of 2011.

Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, and on Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible. Contact: Suzanne Silitch, Director of Communications and Strategy, 413.597.3178; wcma@williams.edu; www.wcma.org.