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Throughout the years photographic art has developed and changed dramatically, yet we still use a lot of the same methods as far back to the 19th Century. However, I feel as though sometimes we can take photographic capabilities for granted, and I feel it is important to reflect on how the art of photography has progressed and acknowledge those that have helped it do so. I am interested in the history of photography and how it all started, methods used to create the first photographs and how it has progressed and developed into an art that people use for documenting and expressing themselves. The artists that I have chosen to focus on are Louis-Jacques- Mande-Daguerre, Anna Atkins, Eadweard J. Muybridge, Pierre Cordier and Cindy Sherman, because these people have had a huge impact on how the art photography has progressed and can be recognised as important figures in the history photography.

The focus for this exhibition is to acknowledge and appreciate those that have come before us, however, not everyone will know who these people are or their significance. They are relevant, not only for their outcomes, but as an inspiration for experimentation and trying new things, as this is what made their work so successful, and why they continue to inspire the photographic arts to this day.

People sometimes fear trying new things or experimenting due to the fear of being judged or being worried about something not working and making mistakes. German theorist Walter Benjamin once said ‘The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are ‘status quo’ is the catastrophe’ (Benjamin, 2003, p. 184). Which to my understanding could imply that you must be grounded when knowing that there is a chance of catastrophe or things going wrong, you must be prepared to learn from it and move on. The catastrophe to which he is referring to is not when things go wrong, but rather the catastrophe is people being unwilling to break away from what is known as ‘status quo’ (Benjamin, 2003, p.184). Being more willing to keep things the same, in a form of comfort zone due to fear of change, is the real catastrophe because you are left stuck, not progressing, or moving forward. Things can only progress when you are willing to break the way from the status quo,

to start fixing society. The artists I have mentioned have likely come across their moments of catastrophe, that pushed them to challenge the 'status quo' (Benjamin, 2003, p.184) , before coming up with the bodies of work that they are known for today. A fear of failure did not seem to hold them back, they were prepared to learn from their success or any mistakes. Photography is all about experimentation and that's what these artists represent because despite them working in the same industry, they all chose to work differently no matter how they may have penalised for it.

Walter Benjamin also gave his views about the progression in photography during the 1900's, he said 'Photography had developed: it had become faster, more capable and yet, in some regards, less demanding of skill on the part of the photographer.'

(Benjamin, 2015, p.5). This statement is even more relevant today due to photography moving on much further from where it was then. It is even faster now, more capable, and even less demanding of the photographer. With cameras now in phones, they have become wildly accessible. This just proves even more why it is important to stay in touch with our creativity and become inspired by artists that started before us, to acknowledge those who pushed the boundaries to prove what we are capable of.

The Artwork on Display

Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre

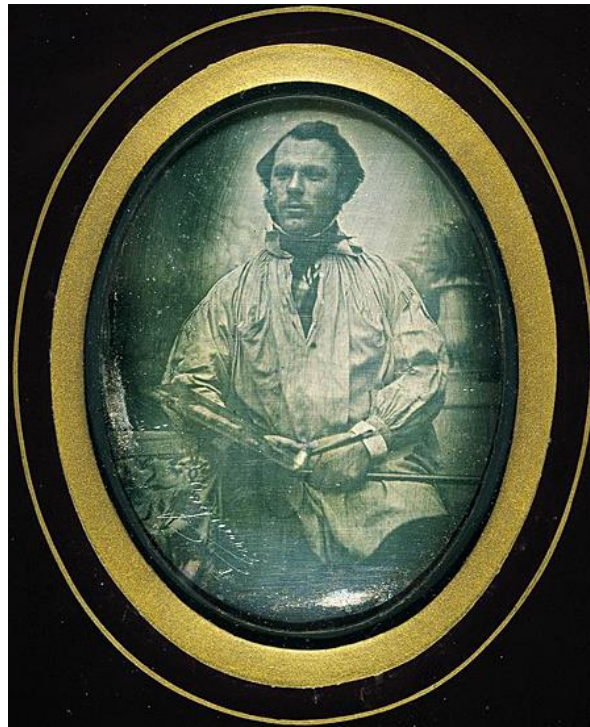


Fig 1. Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre, Portrait of an artist, ca. 1843, George Eastman House

Daguerre was the first person to invent a commercially successful photographic process which was named after him, The Daguerreotype (Johnson, W. S., 2012, p. 40). After experimenting he reduced the time needed to take a photo from 15 to 20 minutes down to only sitting there for a few seconds which, at the time, was a big deal (Johnson, W. S., 2012, p. 42). The photo above is one of three Daguerre portraits still in existence, it is called *Portrait of an artist*, the artist is posed against a painted background, which people suspect was painted by Daguerre due to him originally working with drawing and painting, but we do not know for sure. I like the description for this portrait found in the book *A History of Photography* it says, 'he embodies the romantic ideal of the artist, his faraway glance connoting an artist's vision' (Johnson, W. S., 2012, p. 42). The idea of him symbolising an artist's vision compliments what the exhibition is about, how the photographers are inspirational, each one of them with their own vision making them worth remembering.

Anna Atkins

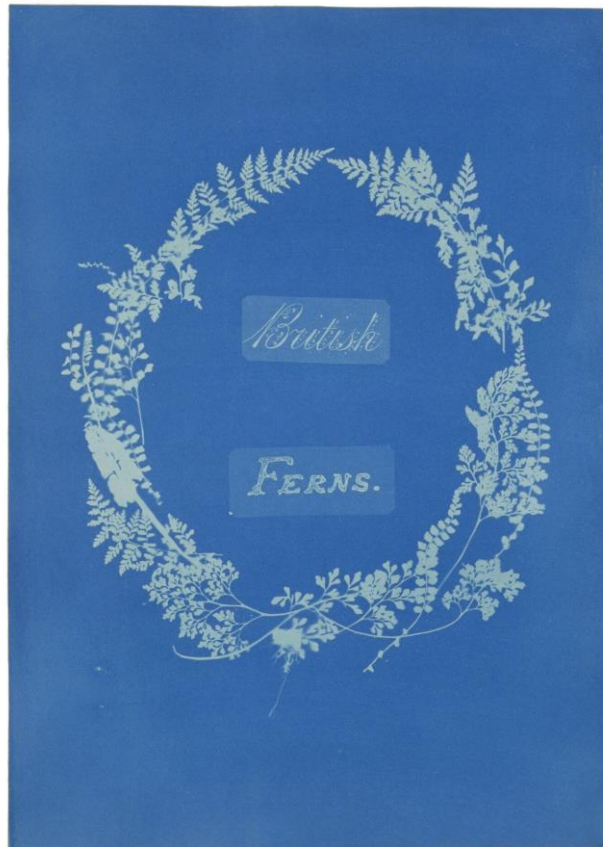


Fig 2. Anna Atkins, Cyanotype, Title page of *British and Foreign Flowering plants and ferns*, c. 1854

Anna Atkins was a botanist known for being not only the First woman photographer, but for also being the first to produce a photographically illustrated book (Barnes, M. 2018, p. 38). That book was called *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, c.1843, this was only a year after the cyanotype process was invented by Sir John Herschel (Johnson, W. S, 2012, p. 272). The photo above however is the title page from one of her later books called *British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns*, c.1854. I felt that exhibiting her later book cover not only complimented the other exhibition pieces, but it shows that no matter how she was seen for creating her first book or possibly penalized for the book as she was a woman in a traditional world, she went forward with her ideas and created more books based on documenting specimen. Atkins is inspirational showing a strength to be something more, no matter how other people might see you for doing it.

Eadweard J. Muybridge

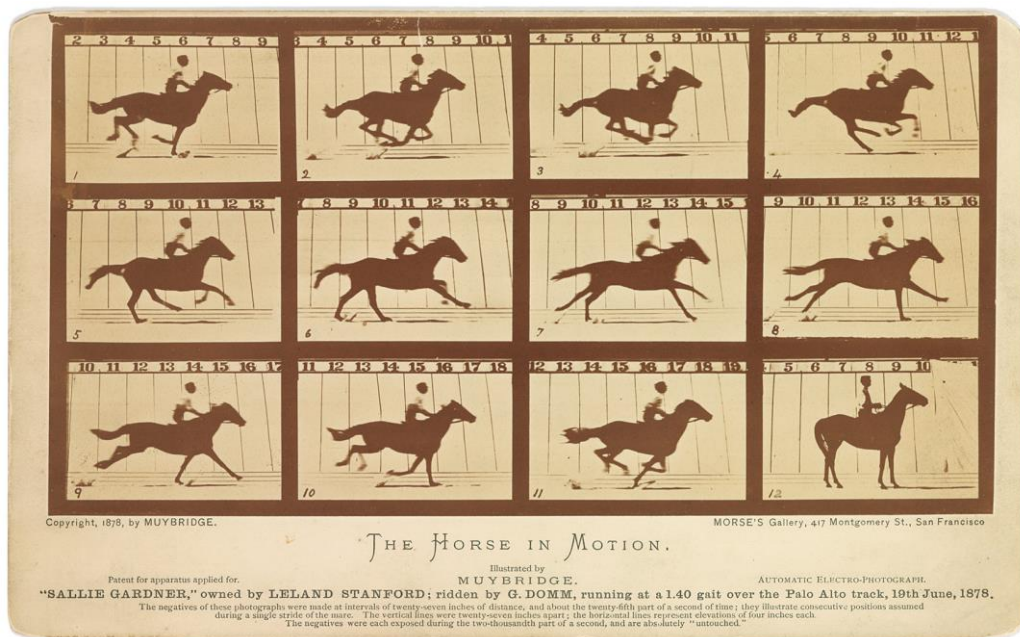


Fig 3. Eadweard J. Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, ca. 19th June 1878

Eadweard J. Muybridge is credited for being the first person to capture a sequence of moving photographs. A man called Leland Stanford bet that when a horse gallops all four feet would leave the floor at the same time, this led to Muybridge and Stanford working together during the 1870's to capture a moving image (Johnson, W. S, 2012, p. 295). He successfully captured his first moving image sequence on 15th June 1878, this was of a man in a horse drawn carriage ((Johnson, W. S, 2012, p. 294). A few days later he produced the above sequence, from the series *The Horse in Motion* were instead of working with a horse and carriage Muybridge decided to capture a faster moving, man ridden horse. This piece of work is not only one of his most famous, but it shows how experimenting and trying new things can lead to a project that you are passionate about. He is an example of how having an idea that is considered strange can work out by just trying it.

Cindy Sherman



Fig 4. Cindy Sherman, Untitled A, 1975

Cindy Sherman is an American artist who is known best for her Untitled film stills series, where she captured cinematic imagery of herself playing different women characters during 1979 and 1998 (Tate, 2021). This was after she finished her education where she made the piece of artwork shown above. Sherman went into education working in the style of painted self-portraits and painting realistic copies of found photos, such as in magazines. However, the work above shows her combining her love of painting with photography, she says 'I was merely interested in the use of make-up on a face as paint used on a blank canvas', (*Contemporary Art*, 1998, p.98). The reason I chose to use one of her first photographs is because it represents how one simple idea led her to creating further work that not only inspires other peoples work, but at times takes away the idea that a woman must look perfect in every photo to be seen and appreciated, an example of breaking away from the status quo.

Pierre Cordier



Fig 5. Pierre Cordier, Auto-Chemigram 10/2/81, 1981

Pierre Cordier is credited for inventing the photographic process Chemigram in 1956 and has continued to discover its further potential since then (Barnes, M. 2018, p. 114). This process can be done by using different resistant materials such as wax or oil to create prints on photographic paper in full light instead of a dark room (Barnes, M. 2018, p. 114). Cordier has used lots of different methods to create Chemigrams, but the one above shows a self-portrait of his where he applied a thin layer of face cream and pressed his face into the photographic paper in full light (Barnes, M. 2018, p. 116). I have included this piece of work because it symbolises the mark he has left in photographic art as he is pressing his identity onto the paper, using his invented process. This piece was another form of experimentation which is a big part of what Cordier's work is about, he's constantly trying to find new ways of working, and has created a whole new method for potential artwork, therefore inspiring others.

Photographic History-My Exhibition display

The exhibition would be displayed in the Mission Art Gallery, Swansea, I have shown how the work would be displayed in the diagrams below.

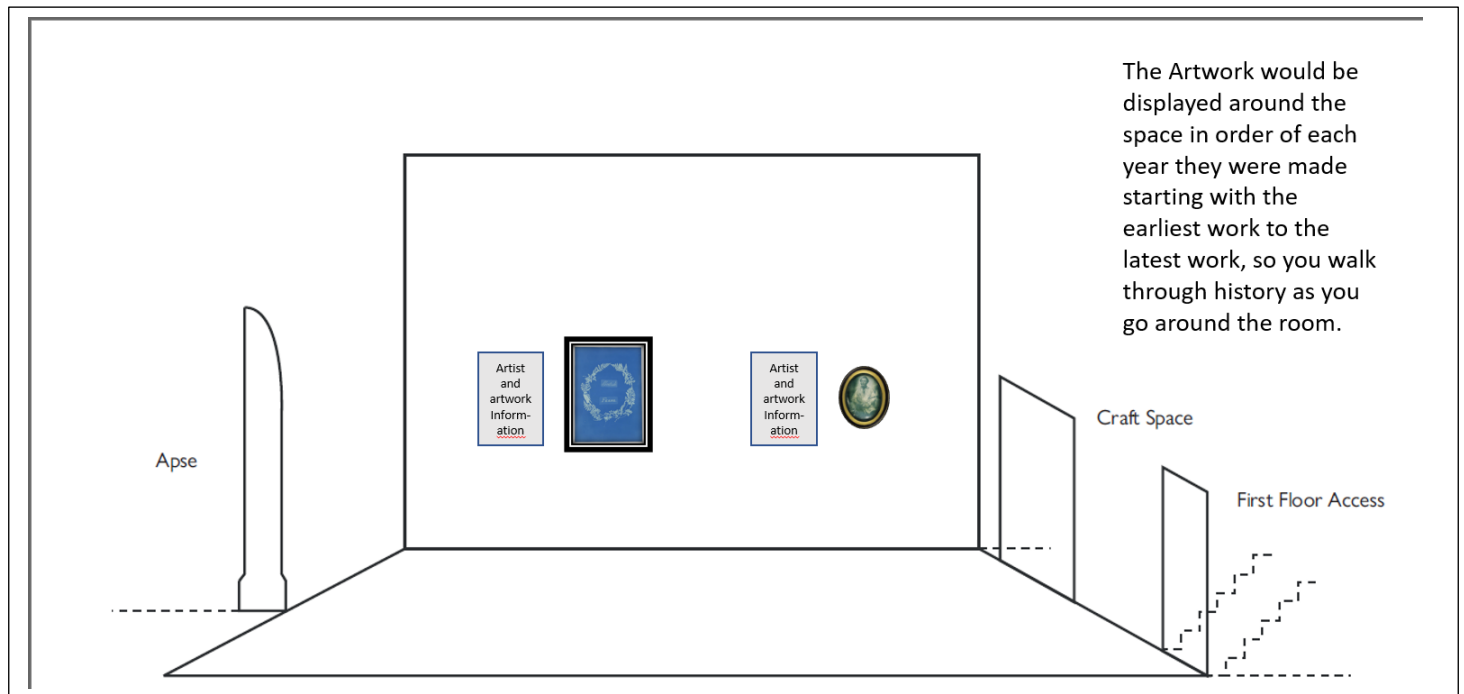


Fig 6. Mission gallery, Overview of the gallery, Last updated 2021

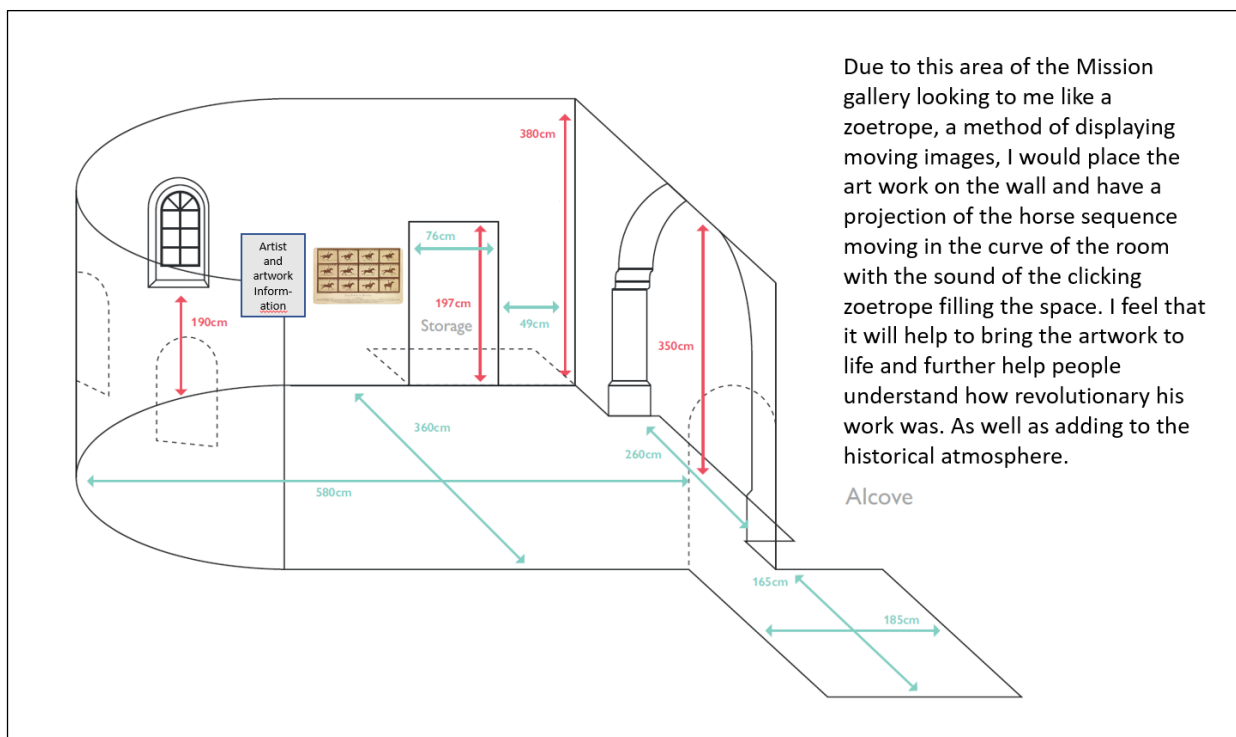


Fig 7. Mission Gallery, Overview of the Gallery, Last updated 2021

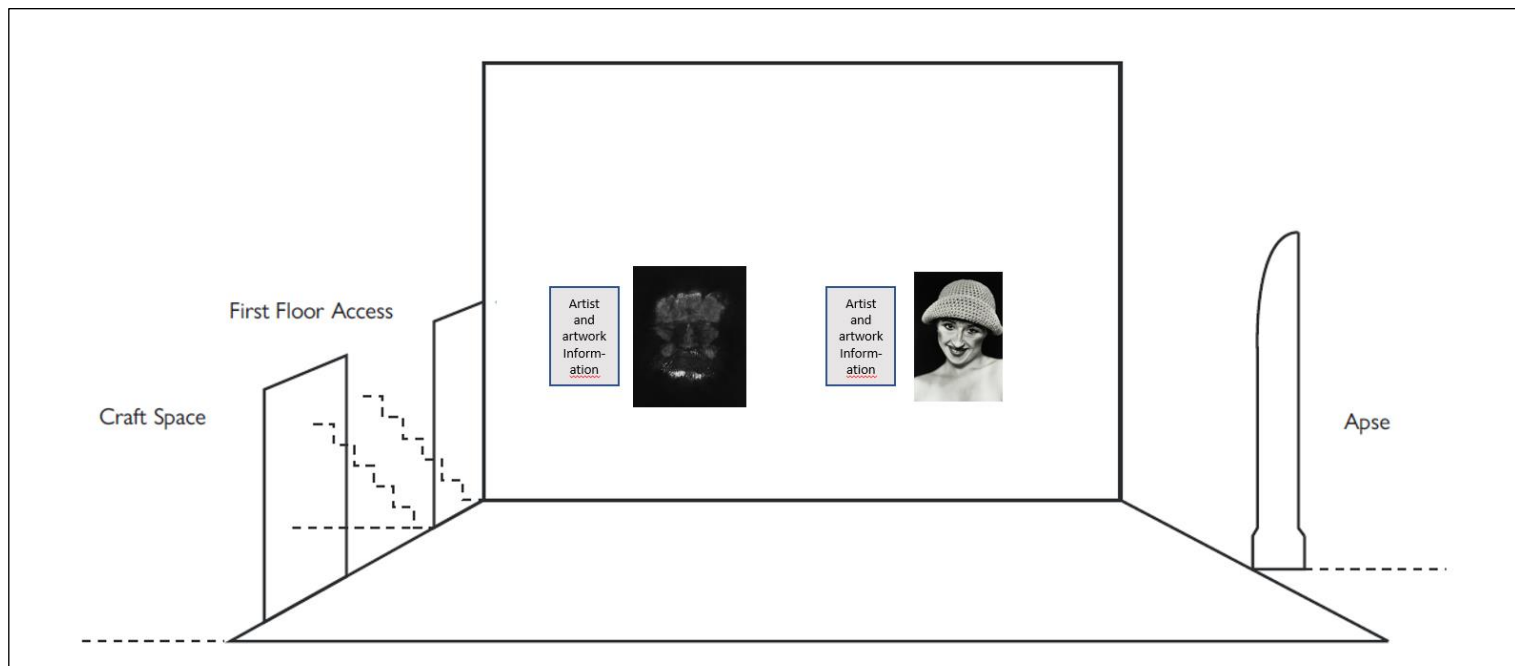


Fig 8. Mission Gallery, Overview of the Gallery, Last Updated 2021

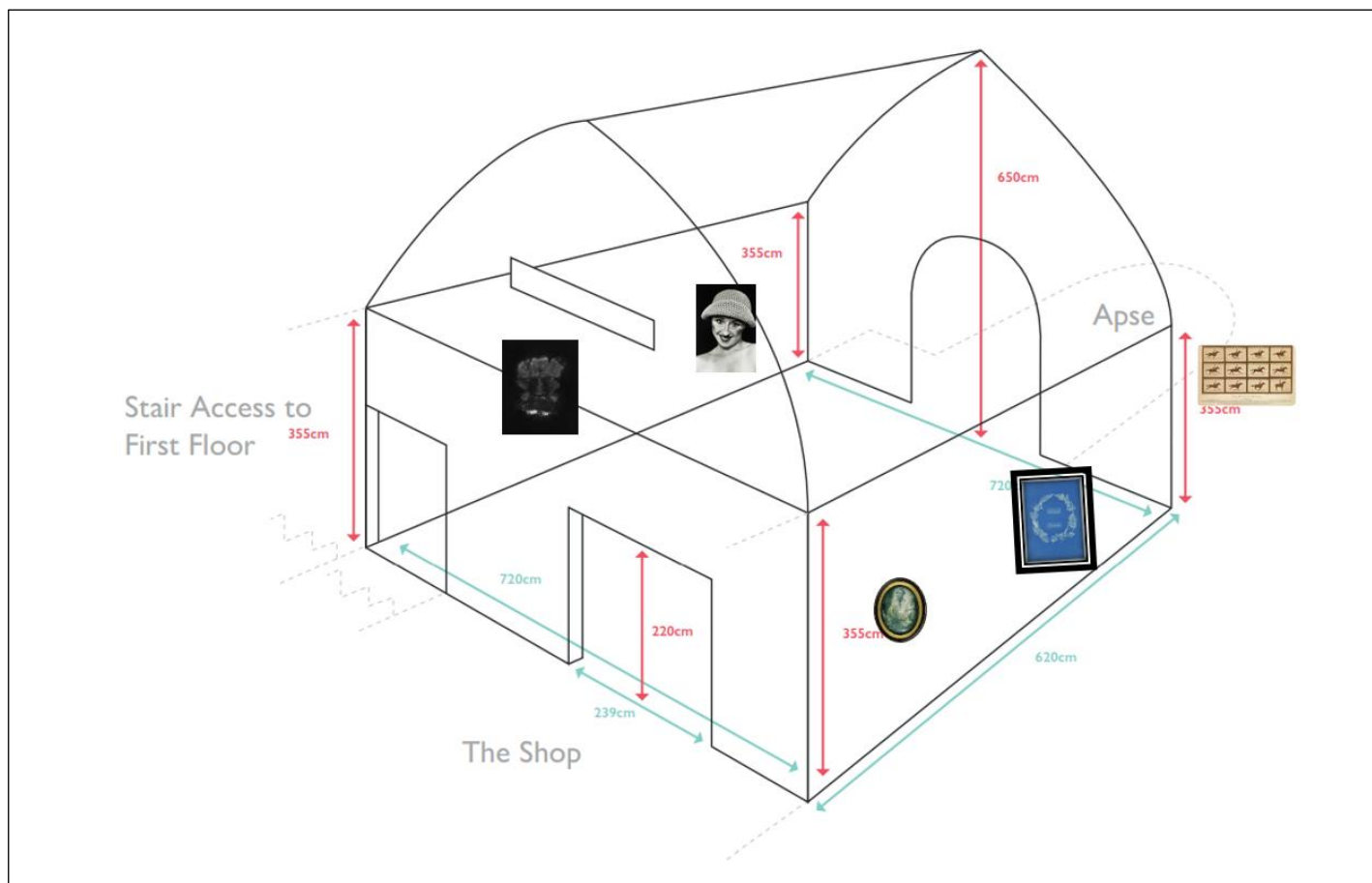


Fig 9. Mission Gallery, Overview of the Gallery, Last updated 2021

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