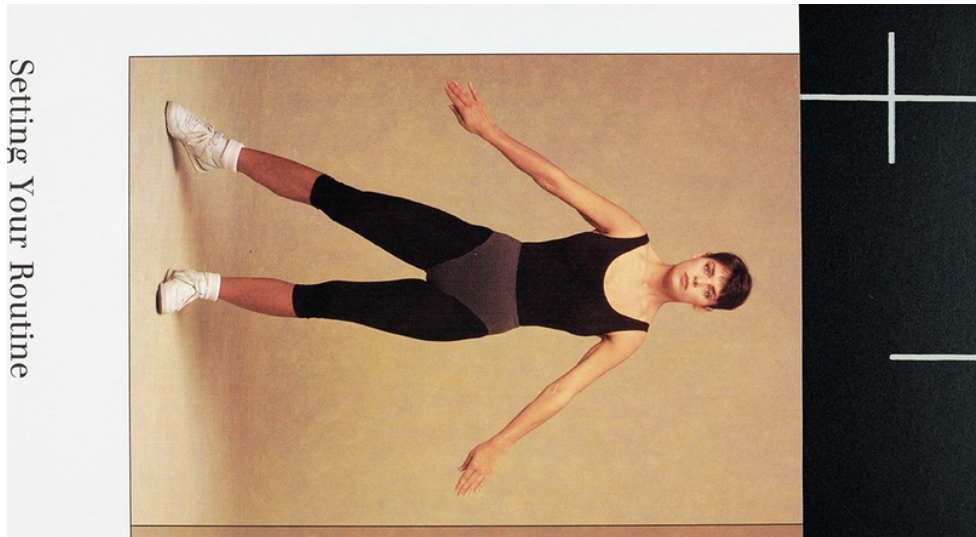


ARTFORUM



Mungo Thomson, *Time Life. Volume 2. Animal Locomotion*, 2015–22, 4K video, color, sound, 5 minutes 21 seconds.

Mungo Thomson

KARMA | NEW YORK

I guess I'm being doubly nostalgic here, reminiscing about a gallery scene where you could sip a can of PBR while contemplating the 1960s. Though usually considered an inheritor of the cheerful LA Conceptualism promulgated by John Baldessari, Thomson (b. 1969) identifies as a child of Northern California, raised among the dissipating energies of the counterculture. A film such as *Untitled (Margo Leavin Gallery, 1970–)*, 2009, recovers the past through both medium and message. The celluloid reel, Rolodex, and roster of art-world contacts are all perfectly synced to evoke the same period style. (Side note: Don Draper's famous *Mad Men* soliloquy on slide carousels first aired in October 2007.) The consistent anachronism of Thomson's earlier work stands in contrast with the temporal drift of his exhibition "Time Life," a series of seven digital videos with references drawn freely from the nineteenth century to the present.

The exhibition's title nods to Time-Life Books, a now-defunct purveyor of direct-mail encyclopedias, catalogues, and how-to manuals that, prior to the rise of the Internet, were familiar fixtures in American middle-class homes. The conceit of the videos is that we are

into “machine vision”—images intended for technical devices rather than human eyes. That is, “Time Life” may be less concerned with the past, or even the present, than with an increasingly plausible future where traditional receptacles of memory are supplanted by server farms for raw data. Watching Thomson’s videos, I suddenly recalled a headline from the routinely oracular satirical newspaper *The Onion*: “Google Announces Plan to Destroy All Information It Can’t Index.” The article, I later checked, was published in 2005.

— Colby Chamberlain