



THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF MAKE
PROCESSION THROUGH THE ARCHIVE.
THE GESTURES AND ATTITUDES OF
THEIR LAMENT ACKNOWLEDGE THE
CONTOURS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS – AS
A DENSE CONCENTRATION, IN ALBUMS,
BOXES AND DRAWERS.



The archival photograph series that lies at the heart of this work by Elizabeth Price was assembled from a wide variety of sources by the Museum's first curator, Henry Balfour (1863–1939).

'Photos I find are so important an adjunct to a Museum', he wrote in 1896, 'that I try to beg all I can for a series I am making for the Museum.' By 1920 he had accumulated over four thousand prints and negatives and in 1930 Balfour decided to create a systematic research resource out of the material.

'When completed', he noted, 'this collection will be very valuable for reference.' Following his own interest in comparative technology, Balfour created a cross-cultural thematic series for the photographs. Pasted onto uniform cards and kept in a series of solander boxes, it included such topics as 'food quest', 'deformation and disease', 'tattooing and cicatrisation', 'land travel and transport', 'dance and drama' and 'magic and religion'.

Within the thematic groupings, photographs taken by a wide variety of photographers between the 1860s and early 1930s were brought together. A further series – a mixed geographical one – was created by Balfour and his assistant E. S. Thomas to run alongside the thematic one. This arrangement meant that researchers would be able to search the photographic archive both thematically and geographically, in keeping with the Museum's arrangement of artefacts.

Elizabeth Price: A PROCESSION

The Contemporary Art Society Award

18 March – 29 May 2016

Pitt Rivers Museum, Long Gallery

In partnership with the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology and the Ruskin School of Art



Pitt Rivers
MUSEUM
Archaeology and World Archaeology



Supported by public funding from
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

