

Body, Image, Art, and Occultism in Modern Visual Culture (Madrid, 14–15 Oct 26)

Facultad de Geografía e Historia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Madrid, Spain), Oct 14–15, 2026

Deadline: Jun 1, 2026

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International Conference.

Revealed Dance: Body, Image, Art, and Occultism in Modern Visual Culture.

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, dance, image, body, and stage occupied a central place in the artistic and cultural framework of modernity. During the same period, various occultist movements and practices experienced significant growth, leaving a fundamental impact on the art and culture of the time. Furthermore, both contexts became fertile grounds for the development of women's artistic agency.

Considering these issues, this conference aims to explore the intersections between dance, art, and occultism, focusing on the influence of so-called "alternative spiritualities" on choreographic and artistic creations of the period, as well as the bodily and performative synergies of phenomena associated with spiritism, ritual, magic, illusionism, hypnotism, or mediumship. While dance and other performative practices are defined by their living and corporeal nature, their memory has persisted in material traces, many of which are constituted by images linked to the emerging mass communication. The development of reproduction techniques and scientific advances that led to the emergence of photography and cinema marked a paradigm shift in the representation and dissemination of activities associated with the stage and corporeality.

Against this backdrop, we propose to examine ephemeral practices associated with performativity, stage, gesture, body, and movement through the analysis of the permanence and circulation of images. In this conference, we aim to focus, on the one hand, on the impact these snapshots may have had on other artistic manifestations and, on the other, on their dissemination within the cultural framework of the period, also considering their survival in later times.

We propose to study these processes from cultural studies, art history, dance history, visual culture, material studies, and other related disciplines and methodologies. We invite researchers and doctoral students to submit contributions addressing these issues. Case studies are particularly encouraged, including but not limited to the following topics:

- Circulation of images and material culture associated with the stage and the spectacularization of practices linked to hypnotism, magic, spiritism, ritual, and "alternative spiritualities".
- The performativity of bodies in dance and altered states of consciousness and their visual representation.

- Questioning female archetypes associated with dance and "alternative spiritualities" through art and images.
- Analysis of spaces associated with occultism and the stage as sites for activating women's artistic agency.
- Iconographic migration of gestures, dances, and bodies in the cultural context of modernity.
- Ritual resonances in the survival of ancient models associated with dance and the culture of the transition from the 19th to the 20th century.
- Feminist movements through physical education systems and/or the practice of "alternative spiritualities."

Proposals

We encourage to submit a communication proposal in English or Spanish, for a 20-minute presentation on unpublished research, which may include graphic, sound, and/or audiovisual support. Proposals should include a title, an abstract detailing objectives, methodology, and expected results (250 words max.) and a short bio (200 words), and should be sent as a single PDF document to arteydanza@ucm.es

Submission deadline: June 1, 2026.

Organized by: Proyecto "Danza revelada. Mujeres, ocultismo, cuerpos y performatividad en la cultura visual de la modernidad" (Revelanza: PR17/24-31950). Acción financiada por la Comunidad de Madrid a través del Convenio Plurianual para la regulación del marco de cooperación en el Sistema Regional de Investigación Científica e Innovación Tecnológica suscrito entre la Comunidad de Madrid y la UCM, en el marco del VI PRICIT [Plan Regional de Investigación Científica e Innovación Tecnológica para el periodo 2022-2025].

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Reference:

CFP: Body, Image, Art, and Occultism in Modern Visual Culture (Madrid, 14-15 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 1, 2026 (accessed Jun 19, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52351>>.