

Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, No 15: Revealed Dance

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Revealed Dance: Women, Bodies, and Esoteric Practices in Modern Visual Culture

Thematic dossier, Journal: *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*. Serie VII Historia del Arte

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This special issue seeks to open a line of inquiry into the convergence of imaginaries associated with dance, performativity, and esoteric practices within the visual and material culture of modernity—spanning roughly from the 1880s to the 1930s—paying particular attention to the agency of women in this context.

The dossier is grounded in the premise that the stage and esoteric circles functioned as spaces that fostered women’s creativity and intellectual production, as well as platforms for the assertion of their rights. Griselda Pollock (2013) argued for the need to rethink the myth of modernism by attending to the spaces frequented by women, especially those linked to the domestic sphere and to daytime urban environments. Building on scholarship that has recovered the role of women and dissident identities in the cultural and artistic context of modernity (Benstock 1992; Latimer 2005; Clúa 2016), it becomes necessary to reassess the specificities of the stage as a site for the recognition and legitimization of women’s creative labor. Dancers, choreographers, actresses, singers, and artists emerged as modern celebrities who broke with traditional models of femininity, articulating complex strategies of (self-)representation. These strategies reconfigured archetypes associated with the feminine—such as witches, madwomen, mediums, priestesses, visionaries, and other *femme-fatales*—while simultaneously asserting themselves as active creative subjects, contributing to the construction of the New Woman (Clúa 2016; Dickinson 2017; Durán 2021).

With the rise of modernity, the stage played a key role in reshaping nightlife through variety shows that brought together dance, theatre, singing, circus, and early cinema alongside illusionism, hypnosis, spiritualism, and phantasmagoria. At the same time, the modern cultural context displayed a growing interest in phenomena associated with occultism, spiritualism, magic, and diverse ritual practices linked to so-called “alternative spiritualities” (Pasi 2014). These developments contributed to the emergence of a modern esoteric imaginary deeply shaped by the performative nature of these practices, as well as using images within complex processes of spectacularization and promotion tied to the rise of mass communication (Pascal 2021; López Arnaiz et al. 2023). In this regard, it is essential to acknowledge the evident influence of occultist currents and circles on certain artistic proposals associated with avant-garde movements. This interrelation highlights the

need to approach the period from a perspective that integrates practices related to “alternative spiritualities” as constitutive elements of the cultural ecosystem of modernity.

Internationally, the fields of Hermeticism and Esotericism have paid particular attention to the links between these phenomena and creativity (Hanegraaff 2021; Pasi 2016). Since the late 1980s, this topic has also been addressed in major exhibitions and key monographs (Freeman et al. 1989; Fauchereau et al. 2021; Partridge 2004; Brown 2018). More recently, Spanish academia has incorporated these lines of research into various projects with published results, demonstrating the potential of this field and the need to further expand the study of modernity from this perspective (Piñol 2018; Sarrugarte Gómez 2023; López Arnaiz et al. 2023; Bonet et al. 2024).

In light of these considerations, the dossier specifically proposes the study of phenomena associated with occult practices in relation to the dance and stage context of modernity, through the analysis of images and material culture. Bodily practices linked to the stage—dance, performativity, hypnosis, spiritualism, magic, and ritual—were captured in a wide range of visual materials, including photographs, postcards, and drawings, in which gestures, poses, and movements resonate.

Proposed topics include, but are not limited to:

- The circulation of images and material culture related to the stage, and to processes of spectacularization associated with hypnotism, magic, ritual, and “alternative spiritualities”.
- The convergence of dance, magic, illusionism, hypnosis, and ritual within the stage and cultural context of modernity.
- The role of dance, the body, and “alternative spiritualities” in the transformation of leisure and culture in modernity.
- The use of the body and performativity in relation to visual and performing arts and/or esoteric practices (hypnosis, mediumship, spiritualism, etc.).
- The presence and circulation of images—photography, cinema, shadows, and phantasmagoria—within the stage context of modernity.
- The convergence of dance and ritual in modernity from transcultural and postcolonial perspectives.

Studies on women artists, choreographers, dancers, producers, writers, thinkers, and dissident identities connected to these contexts.

- Female archetypes associated with magic, esotericism, and spirituality (witches, mediums, visionaries, mystics, priestesses), approached from critical perspectives.
- Studies on companies, theatrical spaces, or artistic communities linked to the thematic lines of the dossier.
- Archives, albums, images, objects, collections, and visual and material sources related to the dossier’s themes.

Submission:

Contributions must be submitted by December 31, 2026, via the ETFVII journal website after registering at the following links:

<https://revistas.uned.es/index.php/ETFVII/index>

<https://revistas.uned.es/index.php/ETFVII/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

Selected articles will be published in issue 15 (October 2027).

Languages: Articles are accepted in Spanish and English.

Contact information: serie7.revista-etf@geo.uned.es

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