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Photography

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**OPAQUE MOTION:  
DANCE MOVEMENT AND OPTICAL  
UNCONSCIOUS**

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AKADEMIE MÚZICKÝCH UMĚNÍ V PRAZE

**FILMOVÁ A TELEVIZNÍ FAKULTA**

Fotografie

**DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE**

**NEPRŮHLEDNOST POHYBU:  
TANEC A OPTICKÉ NEVĚDOMÍ**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

OPAQUE MOTION: DANCE MOVEMENT AND OPTICAL UNCONSCIOUS

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

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## **Keywords**

Black box, dance movement, gesture, dance improvisation, optical unconscious, apparatus, sleep threshold, hidden movement, unconsciousness, impulse, opacity, dance body.

## **Klíčová slova**

Black box, taneční pohyb, gesto, taneční improvizace, optické nevědomí, aparát, práh spánku, skrytý pohyb, nevědomí, impuls, neprůhlednost, taneční tělo.

## **Abstract**

Nowadays improvisation in dance occupies a significant place in different performances, trainings of dancers and generally in many areas of life. Asking questions about the origin of a movement, the role of the unconscious in all its manifestations, as well as the importance of the body as an opaque physical shell for the movement, dance improvisation is investigated in this work. The purpose of the current research paper is to analyze the phenomenon of a movement in the context of its birth in dance and improvisation, based also on the concepts of the black box and the unconscious, to study the reverse phenomenon of lack of movement on the example of the state of standing on a threshold in dreaming and of the Japanese Butoh dance, as well as to observe every movement of the body in dance improvisation in practice. In addition, the main statement of the research was put forward, that due to the specific peculiarities of the phenomenon of improvisation and the constantly developing concept of the optical unconscious in contemporary culture, which takes various forms due to the technical evolution of apparatus and forms of social self-representation, the movement appears to be opaque. To achieve the stated goals, I studied the main theoretical works on the topic, with the help of which I characterized the dancing unconscious with the help of the example of improvisation, investigated historical facts about the study of movement, dance and perception of the human body in art. Thus, the object of the theoretical work is dance improvisation, and the subject of it became the movement coming from the depths of the unconscious. To answer the stated research questions, the current paper is based on several methods of general scientific research, such as generalization, deduction as a principle from general to particular, induction as a principle from particular to general, abstraction, as well as analysis. In the practical part of the current work, methods of observation, comparison, and experiment are used, which consist mostly in the observation and artistic interpretation of phenomena mentioned in the research paper.

## **Abstrakt**

Improvizace v tanci dnes zaujímá významné místo v různých představeních, při tréninku tanečnicků a obecně v mnoha oblastech života. Taneční improvizace je v této práci zkoumána na základě otázek o původu pohybu, o roli nevědomí ve všech jeho projevech a také o významu těla jako neprůhledné fyzické schránky pro pohyb. Cílem této výzkumné práce je analyzovat fenomén pohybu v kontextu jeho zrodu v tanci a improvizaci, a to i na základě pojmů black box a nevědomí, studovat fenomén nedostatku pohybu na příkladu stavu prahu spánku ve snění a japonského tance butó, jakož i pozorovat každý pohyb těla v taneční improvizaci v praxi. Dále bylo předloženo hlavní tvrzení výzkumu, že vzhledem ke specifickým zvláštnostem fenoménu improvizace a neustále se vyvíjejícímu pojetí optického nevědomí v současné kultuře, které nabývá různých podob v důsledku technického vývoje aparátu a forem sociální reprezentace, se pohyb jeví jako neprůhledný. K dosažení stanovených cílů jsem prostudovala hlavní teoretické práce na dané téma, s jejichž pomocí jsem charakterizovala taneční nevědomí na příkladu improvizace, prostudovala historická fakta o studiu pohybu, tance a vnímání lidského těla v umění. Objektem studie je tedy taneční improvizace a předmětem studia se stal pohyb vycházející z hlubin nevědomí. Pro zodpovězení stanovených výzkumných otázek je současný výzkum založen na několika metodách obecně vědeckého výzkumu, jako je zobecnění, dedukce jako princip od obecného ke konkrétnímu, indukce jako princip od konkrétního k obecnému, abstrakce a také analýza. V praktické části současné práce jsou použity metody pozorování, srovnávání a experimentu, které spočívají především v pozorování a umělecké interpretaci jevů uvedených ve výzkumné práci.

## **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction
2. The hidden impulses
  - 2.1. The black box concept
  - 2.2. Sleeping threshold
  - 2.3. The notion of movement
3. Dance improvisation as a black box
  - 3.1. The body evolution
  - 3.2. Optical unconscious in dance
  - 3.3. Dance body and the depth of improvisation
4. Conclusion
5. Bibliography
6. Supplement



## 1. Introduction

The movement is an omnipresent and fundamental part of existence. It would seem that the notion of movement and its peculiarities have been thoroughly studied in various fields of human activity from physics to cultural studies throughout many years. However, it still remains to be one of the most enigmatic phenomena of the world. In the current theoretical work called '*Opaque Motion: Dance Movement and Optical Unconscious*,' I reflect upon such questions as how the movement appears, where it is generated and what influences its manifestations. In addition, in the context of this topic, I am mostly interested in the concept of dance and especially the phenomena of dance improvisation, since I have many years of experience in ballet and modern dance. Moreover, several years of visual work with dancers led me to a thought that the movement not only plays a major role in dance, but also represents a kind of a driving force, that was emanated from somewhere inside the body. Additionally, studying the movement as a phenomenon, I consider it important to pay special attention to the concept of the unconscious in the context of both movement and its absence. Finally, nowadays, in the field of art and culture, visual interpretation of events and self-representation are becoming increasingly important. Social networks are developing, cameras are improving and the process of image acquisition is accelerating. The visual aspect of events is important not only in the process of capturing the object, but also in its further interpretation. At the same time, new ways of displaying objects, including new angles, processing and significant details, play a special role. With these changes in the visual world, the rest of the art spheres are changing, where visual perception is still the main link in representation. Thus, analyzing the notion of dance, it is possible to trace the changes both in appearance and in its content, which correspond to the modern trends of the world.

The current research paper consists of two big parts. The first after the *Introduction* was named '*The hidden impulses*' and is divided into three parts. As I mentioned in the first paragraph, my thoughts prompted me to study the features of the movement in more detail, how it was represented and studied by various representatives of different fields of science. Therefore, the chapter as the whole pays special attention to the concept of the unconscious as a source where every movement originates and arises. Inside the chapter '*The blackbox concept*' I am touching upon the notion of the 'black box' and its historical

perspective. I argue that the emergence of this concept was influenced by the invention of the button due to technological progress and acceleration of the speed of people's lives. The history of the button was fully described in the work of Rachel Plotnick. The inventions of various apparatus and mechanisms, the work of which remains to be hidden from human eyes, were also one of the harbingers of the scientific discourse about the 'black box.' In addition, I rely on the reflections of Vilém Flusser and Philipp von Hilgers, who described in detail the work of the 'black box' and its features of philosophical significance. Moreover, my thoughts are supported by such concepts as the 'blind spot,' which can be found in the works by Roland Barthes, the extension of human characteristics, developed in the Herbert Marshall McLuhan's works, vernacular photography and the meaning of social media described in the works by Nathan Jurgenson, as well as the notion of a cloud considered by James Bridle. These and other concepts help to achieve a complete description of the concept of the notion of the 'black box' in the context of the current research paper.

The second part of the first '*The hidden impulses*' chapter was named '*Sleeping threshold*.' As the name implies, I turn to the topic of sleep in order to approach the concept of the unconscious from the other side. Based on the works of Carl Gustav Jung, Sigmund Freud and James George Frazer, I touch upon the topic of the unconscious from the point of view of psychology and cultural studies. In addition, in my opinion, for a better understanding of the work of the human brain during sleeping and dreaming, I turn to Vyachelav Dubinin's lectures, who described it from the biological point of view. I have also conducted surveys of people who have experienced sleep paralysis, as well as a semester-long art work based on my observations, complementing the idea of being on the border of the conscious and unconscious. Finally, the third part of the first chapter is called '*The notion of movement*,' in which I study how the movement has been seen throughout the history and how it was interpreted both by ancient thinkers such as Zeno and Aristotle, and by more modern ones, for example, by Walter Benjamin, who considered the movement from the point of view of optical apparatus, or by Henri Bergson, who put forward the concept of duration and argued about the continuity of the movement.

The second big chapter of the research paper is called '*Dance improvisation as a blackbox*,' and is also divided into three parts: '*Body evolution*,' '*Optical unconscious in dance*' and '*Dance body and the depth of improvisation*.' First of

all, in order to have a better understanding of dance evolution, I turn to the history of body perception throughout human history, focusing on several fundamental stages on the example of the history of art in the European part of the world. Secondly, I am referring to the moment when photography and cinema appeared, because then, against the background of various political and social events, rapid changes occur in the minds of people, which change not only the flow and speed of life, but also the visual interpretation and language of art. Thus, following technical and scientific discoveries, many new opportunities and techniques appear in the art sphere, which open up a new world of interpretation of movement and dance, in particular. The body visually begins to split into parts, as well as its visualization with the help of various optical apparatus. Lastly, in the chapter '*Dance body and the depth of improvisation*' I am speculating about the role of the body in dance. Based on concrete historical examples, when very noticeable changes began to occur in the dance and the appearance of the dancers, as well as in the historical period of that time, I reflect upon how the dance changed towards a free movement, the importance of breathing and listening to the body, as well as the enormous importance of improvisation.

## **2. The hidden impulses**

### **2.1. The black box concept**

The notion of a 'black box' has a long history. A lot of researchers addressed and returned to this topic in one context or another. Hence, in the forties of the twentieth century electronic devices started being considered as 'black boxes' due to their being invisible for human eye work.<sup>1</sup> The black box is an opaque unit for which the inputs and outputs are visible<sup>2</sup>. So can be said about any device or phenomenon when it comes to something, where the result is more important than the process of its creation. However, in my opinion, it is important to analyze this notion's peculiarities in more detail.

From my point of view, the story of the black box phenomena began when mankind invented a button<sup>3</sup>. The ability to control anything by pressing a single button has accelerated and simplified life at times. People began to perform fewer actions than before to complete a particular task. For instance, it became useless to make unnecessary actions to call someone to the office, as it could be done only by moving a hand to a button and pressing it. Another example that I found very important in this regard is the evolution of cameras. In the old manual camera equipment samples, it is necessary to perform a bunch of actions to make one frame and make sure that no mistake was made that would ruin a photograph. Over time, the system of obtaining and saving images has become more complicated to such an extent that it has simplified the system of creating images to automation, digitizing and a push-button system. Since then photography has become available to more people that lead to a development of vernacular, tourist and amateur photography, for which special skills became practically not required.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philipp von Hilgers. *The History of the Black Box: Clash of a Thing and Its Concept*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Galloway A. R. *Black Box, Black Bloc*, April 12, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Plotnick R. *Power Button: A History of Pleasure, Panic, and the Politics of Pushing*, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Jurgenson N. *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*, 2019.

The above historical flow leads to the idea that a Canadian philosopher Herbert Marshall McLuhan developed in his research papers. Following his reflections, it comes out that wires and buttons have extended people's consciousness. They became an extension of their arms, fingers and eyes<sup>5</sup>, about the same way, for example, light bulbs and street lamps once became extensions of people's vision, or television and radio became extensions of mind<sup>6</sup>. People and places from all over the world began to be closer to each other in the human perception; the problems that have been broadcasted became as important as the news from a yard or street nearby. All these and other crucial inventions have reduced the space and time spent on obtaining new information.

However, despite the fact that everything has become as in the famous Kodak slogan "*You press the button, we'll do the rest,*" (*Picture 2 in the Supplement*) people's everyday lives started to fill up with different new kinds of 'black boxes.' It turns out that necessity to delve into the details of the subtleties of work from the inside of any device disappears, when the input and output become obvious and do not take up a lot of effort and energy to produce them. In addition, people started to obtain less time to study those devices in detail because of a significant increase in their number. Therefore, due to this, 'black boxes' have been gradually becoming more and more black, whereas people operate technology that they do not fully understand, inasmuch mechanisms are concealed from the view of their consumers.

In connection to the fact that photography became accessible to almost everyone, the need to capture moments, save emotions and share them with

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<sup>5</sup> Based on his concept, in 2021 I presented a project called "*Elusive Darkness: Turn Your Eye Off,*" where the main topics were about the role of electric light in our lives and the problem of light pollution. People with eternal fear of the unknown flooded the night with artificial electric light. The constant need for light led to the metaphor that people live with a built-in flashlight in their eyes, which opens an easy access to light at any time. This metaphor of an eye-flash was inspired by the work '*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*' written by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. The documentation is in the Supplement, *Picture 1 in the Supplement*.

<sup>6</sup> McLuhan M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964.

others became important in order to organize lives and set goals. The visual archive grew as well as the need to store it somewhere. The present moments, emotions and experiences started to be perceived as a potential future past<sup>7</sup> that need to be saved<sup>8</sup>. Photographing is about collecting the world, wrapping it up, saving it for the future and controlling it through experiences as though those moments took the form of souvenirs. As the world has transformed mainly into a digital appearance, there has appeared a need for digital storages. The informational clouds<sup>9</sup> expanded and, together with social media platforms, became new 'black boxes.' The latter, despite their apparent transparency and visibility, are also impenetrable and opaque for easy understanding of their work<sup>10</sup>. People use them but do not usually think about the inner processes, how their visual and text materials are stored, where these clouds are physically located and how safe is the use of the platform and service.

Despite this, the collocation 'black box' itself started to be widely used much after the invention of the button. In the fiftieth and sixtieth of the twentieth century the 'black box' was described as an unknown system that can be identified only by using special methods of identification. The term 'black box' first appeared in a special technological military language in the 1940s. According to the words of a German research scholar Philipp von Hilgers<sup>11</sup>, the term has been applied to name some vital items that were packed into black metal boxes during an emergency wartime diplomatic expedition in 1940 that was called the Tizard Mission<sup>12</sup>. Inside those black boxes laid high-power vacuum

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<sup>7</sup> Jurgenson N. *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Bridle J. *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Black Boxes / Art & Culture Health Society*, King's College London.

<sup>11</sup> Hilgers, P. *The History of the Black Box: Clash of a Thing and Its Concept*, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> A British delegation visited the United States during the World War II to obtain some industrial resources for military use. They hoped that American scientists would be able to help in developing new technologies for military operations. The British technical and scientific mission got its name from the initiator of the

tubes or magnetrons that were used in early radar systems. They could also be considered as 'black boxes' not only because of their opaque copper cases, but also due to their invisible work within. Moreover, in 1953 the new invention slightly touched the notion of the 'black box.' The flight recorder, or as it is also called a black box, was invented by an Australian scientist David Warren. The electronic recording devices obtained such a name because they are used after catastrophes and are decoded after tragedy, as well as due to the fact that radio, radars and electronic navigation aids were called in this way, because they were enclosed in non-reflective black boxes.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the term 'black box' has not remained only within the limits of physical and scientific inventions. It is metaphorically used in such scientific disciplines as psychology, philosophy, cultural studies, biology and others. In connection to the above, a special attention should be paid to the concept that was created and developed in behavioral psychology. Behaviorism is a systematic approach to the study of human and animal behavior, where reflexes or reactions to certain stimuli in the environment, which are perceived as reward or punishment, the consequences of individual story and motivational choices, are fundamental factors of the research<sup>13</sup>. In the behaviorist theory, one could claim that behaviorism understands the human mind as a kind of a hidden technological device or a 'black box'<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, it can be noted that some influence of cybernetics is visible in this concept. Cybernetics is concentrated on the comparison of the nervous system and brain to mechanical-electrical communication systems. Consequently, it proposed to treat living organisms and machines as analogies, since the work of mind and devices are opaque. Thus, the behavior of living organisms consists of reflexes and reactions, based on specific stimuli in the ambient conditions, and individual peculiarities. During this period of time of the development of science in the middle of the twentieth century, an American

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program, Henry Tizard, who was a British scientist and chairman of the Aeronautical Research Committee. He is also famous for making a huge contribution in the development of radar.

<sup>13</sup> McLeod S. A. Behaviorist approach, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

psychologist John Broadus Watson and Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov investigated the stimulus-response reactions of living organisms from different perspectives. For instance, the most famous experiment by Ivan Pavlov was based on the studies of reactions of a living organism to an external influence associated with the restrictions that have arisen, including those associated with the restriction of movement. He conducted his experiments on dogs studying mostly food reflexes, which led him to a conclusion that transformation of an initially neutral stimulus into a meaningful signal with the appearance of a stable response to this stimulus became the most important in the scientific sphere. This concept has been also developed by another American behaviorist, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, who attached a special importance to the controlling nature of consequences that create conditions for behavior. All in all, behavior and workflow of mind was brought into the concept of a 'black box,' which describes the depth and unpredictability of the thinking and acting processes.

Summing up the above, the term 'black box' can be referred to any complex structure, that has visible and understandable inputs and outputs, but unnoticeable, unseen and unobvious inner workflows. For instance, when one pushes buttons on any device, selecting options, one neither knows nor cares how it works, because one needs a quick result of their queries. In this context, Vilém Flusser, a Brazilian Czech-born philosopher, writer and journalist of the XX century, raised the important question about how the input affects the output and what are their interactions and communications. He argues that at the moment when people lose the understanding of how any system works, it becomes a 'black box'<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, he deeply investigated the role of an apparatus<sup>16</sup> in connection to the 'black box' that it may create. He suggests that the 'apparatus' of a camera has its own mechanisms and 'program' that stands higher than human control. For example, all the operational<sup>17</sup> or technical images, different kinds of apparatus' such as cameras, computers and even political parties can become 'black boxes.' In his works, Vilém Flusser argues that

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<sup>15</sup> Flusser, V. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Farocki H. *Eye/Machine III*, 2003.



people can control the inputs and outputs of the listed above examples, but they may not understand what is happening in between and inside this work.

The concept of the 'black box' can be applied not only to what was written above, but also to life in general, since issues of any kind arise out of the inability to see below the surface. Moreover, this idea can be compared to some extent to a 'blind spot'<sup>18</sup>, which is a gap that connects two visible parts, while it itself remains invisible. In this connection, we can include both the internal mechanisms of living organisms or machines and photography as a general phenomenon. Photography remains to be invisible as though it is a 'blind spot' linking reality and the capturing apparatus like a bridge. It remains to be invisible until one can see it physically on a screen, printed or reproduced in any form. A French philosopher and semiotician of twentieth century Roland Barthes introduced such a concept as 'punctum' and 'studium' to express two phases of perception of photography, which are inner and outer. The outer is constructed from personal experiences that include education, cultural peculiarities, personal background and perception of the world. The inner, on the contrary, develops in each person individually, because everyone react to events in different ways, as events can affect everyone differently. This can be perceived as a 'blind spot' that connects personality and a photograph, leaving emotional traces. The process of that individual reaction is happening within a person, whose mind in this case becomes a 'black box.'

Simultaneously, the 'black box' concept has one very important difference from the notion of a 'blind spot.' Vilém Flusser paid special attention to the fact that the 'apparatus' is not a 'blind spot', but a 'black box.' It is impenetrable and opaque, whose operations except of inputs and outputs are hidden from anyone's view, while the 'blind spot' is mostly a static connection between two different parts, which recalls the symbol of a 'bridge.' What is happening inside a 'black box' can be compared to thoughts and actions that they could cause are similar to actions of a moving body. The idea above leads to a very important thought of the current research. The comparison of the concept of a 'black box' with thoughts, actions and body in general brings me to the idea that the phenomenon of dance, on which I elaborate in detail in the next paragraphs, is something that is produced from the depths of the mind. In general, the

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<sup>18</sup> Barthes R. Camera Lucida, 1980.

movements, actions and gestures are outputs, signals from the external environment are inputs that could trigger thoughts inside, and what is happening in between them, within the mind, is invisible, unseen and opaque.

## 2.2 Sleeping threshold

The current research is touching upon the topic of the inner part of people's essence, which is unconsciousness, when the mind has been compared to a 'black box.' This subject has been bothering scientists and culturologists for several decades since psychology, neurology and cultural studies started rapidly developing. The unconscious has two main layers that construct people's personalities and affect their existence, which are the personal or individual unconscious and the collective unconscious. According to Carl Gustav Jung's<sup>19</sup> works, the collective unconscious is closely connected to the personal and has a huge influence on it. Moreover, it is also divided into components, which are instincts, which create physicality, and archetypes or universal ideas, that are hidden in minds. Together they fill images, movements, events and other phenomena with meanings which are embedded culturally<sup>20</sup> and personally in people from birth. In this instance the unconscious could represent opacity, as though it can be compared to a "*deep dark water*"<sup>21</sup> with an unseen bottom. There can inhabit various living and inanimate creatures and cultural phenomena, which may not always be pleasant. In this connection, a Tarot card '*La Lune*' from the Marseilles Tarot Deck by Alexander Andreev can be mentioned, considering tarot cards as a storehouse of symbols, rather than magic items. The card, which can be viewed in the Supplement (*Picture 3 in the Supplement*), from my point of view, symbolically depicts the night and the state

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<sup>19</sup> Jung C. G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 1959.

<sup>20</sup> Frazer J. G. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1890.

<sup>21</sup> In this regard, '*deep dark water*' means impenetrable and dense water, like a river stream or deep ocean. It stands for a metaphor of impenetrability of consciousness and dreams. The citation is taken from one of the stories, where it is highlighted in bold, which were collected during the study of sleep paralysis. The stories are presented in *Table 1 in the Supplement*.

of dreams, or rather the borderline of consciousness when one falls into a dream. The water in which the nocturnal creature lives is what can be called the subconscious. A creature that, due to its biological characteristics, moves not forward, but backwards, which one does not want to meet in the state of awakening, because it is frightening and is embedded in a collective unconscious. It turns out that dreams appear to be a connecting link between the conscious and the unconscious, during which one is able to look beyond the dark and opaque water. In addition, in the current research paper it is necessary to analyze the matter of sleep in more detail from the point of view of movement both inside the dreams and within the physical body.

The notion of a movement and gesture, which are some of the key concepts in this work, can be found in sleep investigations. Sleep is a vital need for all living beings and about a quarter of people's lives is devoted to this process. This fact led me to investigate in detail the process of sleeping and almost every phenomena of it both in scientific and art spheres. For instance, the idea of standing on the threshold has been widely studied in biology and neurology. The Russian professor, biologist and specialist in the field of brain physiology Vyacheslav Dubynin in his lectures<sup>22</sup> deeply opens up the topics of brain activity and functioning of the chemistry that guides many processes within it. His lectures on dreams became the most attractive, from my point of view, because they are filled with numerous scientific facts and research. Sleep exists in order to maintain homeostasis and to work with information that people are daily receiving. It consists of cycles, each of which lasts about 1.5 hours, and then is replaced by the next part. Firstly, people fall into a slow-wave sleep, during which the body is 'scanned' and 'self-medicated.' Then there is a stage of paradoxical sleep, which is also known as R.E.M. or rapid eyes movement<sup>23</sup> and lasts only about 15-20 minutes each cycle through one night. During these phases, the brain processes the accumulated information and people often see dreams. The image of the wave signals from brain during sleeping can be seen, for instance, in the work *'Předmluva: Spánek jako biopolitický problém'* by Nikola

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<sup>22</sup> Dubynin, V. The brain and its needs. From nutrition to recognition, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Fukuda, K. Emotions during sleep paralysis and dreaming, 2005. Pp. 166–168.

Ivanov<sup>24</sup>. However, in these parts of sleeping one can face different kinds of deviations, such as sleep walking, involuntary body movements and sleep paralysis. In my opinion, the most intriguing topics became those that lead one to the condition of being on the border between sleeping and awakening. That is why I spoke to some ordinary people, collected and wrote down their stories of experienced sleep paralysis, sleepwalking, hypnagogia, lucid dreaming, sleeping loops and other states.

It is important to mention that during the stages of rapid eye movement, people are in a state where it is very easy to make them awake. Moreover, some of them can experience interesting and occasionally scary and unpleasant states. At these moments, one stands on a borderline between consciousness and unconsciousness, sleep and awakening, where the Super Ego and the Id meet, according to the Sigmund Freud's theory<sup>25</sup>. The Id is always with people throughout the whole life, since it is the 'owner' of the unconscious actions and thoughts. People have it innately and it is closely connected to the primary needs that guide the basic energy and behavior. When the Id captures consciousness more than usual, for example, in extreme situations, such as starving or freezing, people are unable to distinguish real objects from their images. For instance, one can observe fake oases when they are struggling and searching for any water in a desert. Moreover, the Id 'forces' people to go to sleep and have some rest, as it is the vital need of living. However, in this case some questions can appear due to linguistic features of naming the process of going into sleep: *where* one needs to *go*; is it *safe* there; will one *come back* from it, and so on.

In one of the semester FAMU projects I developed the idea of a juxtaposition of the two states of our lives, which are being awake and being asleep. In the project called '*Vulnerable emptiness*'<sup>26</sup> (FAMU, 2021), the notion of being in a safe and dangerous place at the same time has been touched. Moreover, I speculated upon the idea of being in the safest places in apartments

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<sup>24</sup> Ivanov, N. *Odpočinek v neklidu: Moderní biopolitika spánku / Předmluva: Spánek jako biopolitický problem*, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Freud, S. *The Ego and the Id*, 1923.

<sup>26</sup> Fonina E. *Vulnerable Emptiness*, FAMU, 2021. The documentation of the project is on *Picture 4 in the Supplement*.

and houses where people sleep. There, they are often always true with themselves, becoming vulnerable and unprotected to the external world. This thought appeared, since in this particular space one can uncover themselves and produce short or long daily rituals before one actually goes to sleep. During this phase, people are completely immersed in themselves, their thoughts, and the unconscious is gradually overcoming them. The Bed, which is perceived as the most protected place, becomes something like a portal to the unconscious. Nonetheless, the question of the safest place encounters a thought that when one falls into a dream, they never know what it is going to be like. However, despite this scariness, people are awaiting for it anyway<sup>27</sup>. On the one hand, it may be a positive dream, and people will wake up in good spirits; or it may not be seen at all and they will not attach any importance to this. On the other hand, it can be a completely incomprehensible, impermissible and scary experience. Moreover, one can be stuck between the two realities of human beings and not know what to do. In this case, one starts to feel vulnerable emptiness both inside them and in the environment where they appear, since no one will come and be able to help them.

One of the parts of the project '*Vulnerable Emptiness*' became an installation devoted to the phenomena of sleep paralysis and hypnagogic state. Three screens were placed in such a way that they never meet each other's 'faces,' since they are turned in different directions, giving a viewer a feeling of fragmentation and dismemberment of the body during these states. This is a representation of how the parts of the body are not connected to each other, because they do not respond to brain signals in a state of the sleeping threshold. The moving images on the screens are pixelated and their fluidity is difficult to catch, since it is practically absent. In the depth of the composition, another screen was placed behind the external appearance of a person. There one could notice how smoothly and slowly a certain abstraction is changing. The longer an observer looks at it, the more they notice the frightening humanoid silhouettes.

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<sup>27</sup> I touched upon the topic of obstacles to falling asleep and the desire for darkness in the project called '*The Route*' ('Current Sees,' FAMU, 2021), where it is visually speculated about what path people have to overcome before falling asleep, when they are hampered by chronic fatigue syndrome and constant looking at screens. *Picture 5 in the Supplement.*

This process is located behind the Bed, in the unconscious. These silhouettes are not accidental, since they are portraits of people who have experienced sleep paralysis. Their photographs were reduced to a point, because in this state one feels themselves small and unable to resist what is happening. This state reminds me of a story of Gregor from *'The Metamorphosis'* (*'Die Verwandlung'*) novella by Franz Kafka, where the character wakes up one morning finding himself transformed into an insect<sup>28</sup>. However, despite the fact that the insect is small, it is shown there enlarged, as well as in the case of the silhouettes.

The huge motion power is hidden within the body and cannot fully get out. The order inside of people's perception of their body and mind has been broken and violated. Time transformed from one continuous line to a dot<sup>29</sup> where there is probably is totally absent or it counts in a different way. People appear to stand at the threshold of being awake and sleeping, and in this case, the Id has a huge influence over the Reason. In this extraordinary state of sleep paralysis, one can often see that the safest place, the Bed or Bedroom, is not empty, but filled with a rather incomprehensible life. This happens because people wake up in a deep phase of paradoxical sleep, when there is still a noradrenaline blockage of the muscles and the brain partially continues to dream. They start to feel as if they became a Schrodinger's cat, half-alive and half not. In the project that was mentioned below, touching upon the problem of the opposition of a safe place and the unconscious, where people are constantly plunging, a series of prints was made that could convey this feeling has been created. At the exhibition, twelve different photographs were presented that are covered with the same black spot<sup>30</sup>. Every day when I woke up, I photographed my bed after sleeping,

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<sup>28</sup> Kafka, F. *The Metamorphosis*, 1915.

<sup>29</sup> In the lectures *'Dance and plastic art in the cinema. Features of the language and the history of drama'* led by Enji Taratuta, Vladimir Egorov and Denis Tagintsev, has been speculated about a different direction, which is from dot to line, when speaking about moving images, dance and cinematography, based on Tarkovsky's theory. I found it important to reverse this scheme to the concept *'from line to dot'* that shows the opposition of movement.

<sup>30</sup> The James Bridle *'New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future'* book became one of the inspirations, since he speculates about the darkness as something that makes us unable to see clearly what is in front of us and,

since it is different every day and there are no identical moments in time. However, the spot that covers the very heart of the beds, where people usually lie on the pillows, is everywhere the same. People do not know how time moves inside the unconscious state of mind, inside sleep or other phenomena that some people encounter, because it is individual for everyone<sup>31</sup>.

This sleeping threshold state can also be explained in accordance with the concept 'black box.' Being in this position, a person is alone with their mind flow, increasingly not understanding how their way of thinking works, which is still partially asleep. In this context, the Japanese Butoh dance as one of the main inspirations should be mentioned. Butoh dance appeared after the Second World War and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6th and 9th of August in 1945. It was a combination of practices and experiences that the Japanese founders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno wanted to combine with all the pain Japanese society has experienced as a reaction to the disaster. This impact is visible in the visual appearance of dancers, since they are skinny and mostly on every performance are covered in ashes, which reminds of the dead bodies after bombings. When butoh dancers perform, they speak with the audience a language of pain, confusion, horror and uncertainty. This mixture of feelings is inside, and it wants to free itself from the body. In the immobile, ground and heavy body, the audience feels a huge power that is hidden within. For instance, movements and dance in general in the very impressive

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therefore, to act meaningfully. From my point of view, the Darkness is a personal and unique substance that appears only when people are alone and go to sleep. Moreover, during the stay in the sleep phenomena that was mentioned before and in general during sleeping, people are always alone in an empty space, which makes them feel more vulnerable.

<sup>31</sup> This idea was inspired by one German experimental film (unfortunately, the lecturers did not mention its name), where a dancer is moving around a space that exists in another time continuum. She has one time but everything around her is completely different one. This visual metaphor can be compared to the hypnagogic state or sleep paralysis, when the physical body is in its own space, and thoughts are hovering in another. The link is in the *Bibliography*.

performance by a Japanese dancer Atsushi Takenouchi<sup>32</sup> in the film directed by Ashton represent those heavy movements that cannot be compared to the power hidden within the body. This led me to a thought that the state that butoh dancers try to convey is quite similar to the state that people experience during sleep paralysis. From my personal experience, in this state I could feel the liminality as if I became pixelated, as the whole body did not respond to the brain's signals<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, both in butoh dance and in the sleep borderlines time transformed from one continuous line to a dot, where there is probably no time or it counts differently. This reminds of the Walter Benjamin's concept of 'optical unconscious'<sup>34</sup>, when people's mind is disoriented and starts to notice every slow and unseen movements in the whole state of immobility and pay much attention to them.

To conclude the said above, the superposition of such sleep deviations leads to a thought that people do not know what is happening during the night as they remember only a small part of dreaming. They do not and cannot understand everything there but they are capable of thinking it without claiming it<sup>35</sup>. "*The sleep of reason produces monsters*<sup>36</sup>" and hides them so as not to stress and frighten people. The Beds became a border to the unconscious world, which is merely impossible to understand. In dreams or during deviations, people do not always find themselves where they would like or want to be. In this case, 'I do' and 'what happens to me' are not in harmony. People go to sleep, however, they often encounter danger, that gives ground to a thought that it can be a

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<sup>32</sup> Ashton R. B. Andina: Stay Lo x Atsushi Takenouchi, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> In support of these words, I can cite the mentioned earlier stories I have collected of people who have experienced sleep paralysis. *Table 1 in the Supplement*.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin, W. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1935.

<sup>35</sup> Bridle, J. *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Francisco Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, c. 1799. *Picture 6 in the Supplement*.



confrontation between them and themselves, and that sleep appears to be a certain mind violator<sup>37</sup>.

### **2.3. The notion of movement**

Taking the written in the previous parts of the chapter into account, every topic that is investigated in the current research, touches upon the notion of movement in any of its manifestations, which are the hidden impulses that are generated in the brain, the feeling of immobility during sleep deviations, the signals inside apparatus that trigger any kind of reaction, freezing the moment by the process of photographing, dancing, et cetera. The movement appears to be the output of the process that is happening before it. Every movement begins from a signal that can be considered as an input, and then this signal is processed and becomes an output. What is happening in between is hardly visible and mostly not understandable.

Based on the above ideas, an analogy between the notion of a 'black box' and human movement can be made. Any movement implies an act, a process, a progress development with or without result, or a gesture<sup>38</sup>. Movement allows an object to change a position in space. On the contrary, in photography the opposite action can be seen that is usually considered as a freezing of the moment. Images can be described in certain instances as metaphors of death of a gesture as they stop it in one particular moment in time, revealing the optical unconscious<sup>39</sup>. However, they preserve the dynamics untouched. In confirmation of this, chronophotography, sports photography or art photography with blurred motion effects can be cited. As a result, one can observe a phenomenon of optical unconscious that strengthens the concept of the 'black box' in its meaning.

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<sup>37</sup> Druzhkin Y. Night as a Trance / Night: Rituals, Art, Entertainment: Vol.4. 2014. Pp. 45-52.

<sup>38</sup> Agamben, G. Notes on Gesture, 1992.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin W. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, 1935.

However, for further research it is very important to draw attention to the phenomena of the movement itself, which has been studied by humanity throughout thousands of years. First of all, in general, movement is a change of a position of a body or its parts in space over some particular time. In a more general sense, movement is a change of a state of anything through a certain period of time. Motion can be chaotic, like, for example, Brownian movement, and parallel, as a reaction to something or a planned gesture. Moreover, it can be a transformation or a change of a form or content through time. Generally speaking, it requires time, space and energy for its dynamics and every living object possesses these properties, as movement is a way of their existence.

The notion of movement has always been opposed to immobility. For instance, Zeno of Citium, a Hellenistic philosopher of the IV-III centuries B.C.E., created several paradoxes, through which he developed his thoughts about the nature of movement. In the paradox about Achilles and the Tortoise, he discussed the opposites of movement, its impossibilities, duration and the present moment. His dialectical exercises show that the fast Achilles would never be able to get to a slow turtle<sup>40</sup>. According to his words, movement as such is impossible, but the continuity of movement or its separate phases are the two main ways of perceiving the movement of human bodies. Aristotle, a Greek philosopher from the IV century B.C.E., in his book called '*Physics*' dealt with the most general principles of natural or moving things. He also reflected upon Zeno's studies of motion and time-space peculiarities:

*The second is the so-called 'Achilles', and it amounts to this, that in a race **the quickest runner can never overtake the slowest**, since the pursuer must first reach the point whence the pursued started, so that the slower must always hold a lead. This argument is the same in principle as that which depends on bisection, though it differs from it in that the spaces with which we successively have to deal are not divided into halves. The result of the argument is that **the slower is not overtaken**: but it proceeds along the same lines as the bisection-argument ..., so that the solution must be the same. And the axiom that that which holds a lead is never overtaken is false: **it is not overtaken, it is true, while it holds a lead**: but it is overtaken nevertheless if it is granted*

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<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, Book VI, 350 B.C.E.

*that it traverses the finite distance prescribed. These then are two of his arguments<sup>41</sup>.*

Zeno confirms his views in his second paradox about the motion of an arrow. There he believes that the arrow is never moving, since it is static, because it is just occupying a particular place in space for some time, as if it was a description of the future invention of the concept of chronophotography. From this, he suggests that the flying arrow is motionless at every instant. He concludes that time consists of constants and therefore motion does not exist<sup>42</sup>. Aristotle in the same work wrote about this Zeno's thoughts<sup>43</sup>:

*Zeno's reasoning, however, is fallacious, when he says that if **everything when it occupies an equal space is at rest**, and if that which is in locomotion is always occupying such a space at any moment, the flying arrow is therefore motionless. This is false, for time is not composed of indivisible moments any more than any other magnitude is composed of indivisibles.*

Zeno's discourse on motion was reflected in the movement studies of the 19th century in the works of an English photographer Eadweard Muybridge, a German inventor and photographer Ottomar Anschütz and a French scientist and chronophotographer Étienne-Jules Marey. At that time new means of visual representation occurred. Photographic images created in many different techniques opened up new ways of depicting the world, as well as new questions, for instance, are photographs capture the real or imaginative world, as if they were paintings. Camera frames, angles, exposures and materials have made photography one of the new ways to explore the world and its details and features. That is why at that time chronophotography appeared, which is of great importance for current research. In general, chronophotography is a photographic technique, which allows one to record the movement of an object by photographing its individual phases at short equal time intervals. Chronophotography became an intermediate stage in the process of inventing

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<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, Physics, Part 9, Book VI, 350 B.C.E.

<sup>42</sup> Huggett N. Zeno's Paradoxes / Achilles and the Tortoise, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, Physics, Part 9, Book VI, 350 B.C.E.

cinema, since it made it possible to understand the basic principles of recording a moving image. Étienne-Jules Marey was the first who used this term in support of his studies of movements of animals and birds (an example is the *Picture 7 and Picture 8 in the Supplement*). Another one of the most famous experiences of chronophotography was carried out by Eadweard Muybridge. He examined the horses' gallop in order to understand if they lift all the four legs during running (an example is the *Picture 9 in the Supplement*). Moreover, he studied phases of movements of people in different types of motion. The results of such experiments were a series of photographs that recorded individual phases of the movement. All those experiments with decomposition of motion into parts follow Zeno's thought of impossibility of movement (for example, *Picture 10 in the Supplement*).

On the contrary, we cannot reject the continuity of a movement. According to a French philosopher Henry Bergson, time is not a static notion and therefore the movement is continuous. In contrast to the theory that motion consists of many static moments that are constantly dissected depending on time and space, Bergson argues that duration exists, which is an uneven progression that fills the world. He is sure that time and motion have been incorrectly measured, since they have been measured like static objects and not progressions. It should be noted that Henry Bergson was the first scholar who expressed cinema as a 'moving image,' since movement, time and fragmentations are fundamental characteristics of cinematography<sup>44</sup>. He is convinced that the fragmentation of the notion of movement in the study of the phenomenon occurs because the mind is able to think in images and symbols, thereby fixing the associative series and expressing the movement by static words, meanwhile the '*movement is reality itself*.'<sup>45</sup> Immobility, based on his reasoning, does not exist, since it strongly depends on the feeling and comparison of the object with others. In his work called '*The Creative Mind*,' Bergson cites as an example the movement of two trains that travel in the same direction at the same speed. He points out that for passengers in this situation, the trains will be immobile, while for observation outside of moving trains, on the contrary, there will be movement. Bergson

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<sup>44</sup> Totaro D. Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the philosophical properties of cinema, January 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Bergson H. *The Creative Mind*, 1946, P. 169.

compares the work of mind with a cinema apparatus, which mechanically breaks the visible into parts or frames, and then restores the movement back after fragmentation with the help of the projecting apparatus<sup>46</sup>: *'...the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind.'*<sup>47</sup> That is why, according to his words, in the cinematographic process there is a created illusion of a movement, since the process of reproduction of the captured scenes and moments involve sequences of already static images and not the immersion of one movement into another.

The speculation above occurs also in the context of the perception of dance through the prism of the instrument, such as the human eye, which can also act as an optical device, or recording and reproducing apparatus. The constant opposition of continuity and discontinuity of human movement is one of the main characteristics of any dance form. The continuum of movement and its separated phases are the two main ways of perceiving the movement of human bodies in space. From a biological point of view, a movement gives the body a possibility of active interaction with the environment and moving from place to place. Moreover, a movement is the result of the interaction of external forces to the body and its own forces, such as, for instance, muscle reduction, breathing and heart beating. It is visible how an object or a part of a body changes place in a certain period of time and it is visually continuous. This leads to a thought that a movement is a transformation and a constant development, without which the world does not exist.

All the said above in general refers to dance and, in particular, dance improvisation. During dancing a person symbolically, but at the same time sensually, constantly lives what is in the depths of their consciousness, which are the transition into nothingness, metamorphoses and transformations, renewal and rebirth of everything that exists, mobility and immobility, movement in stopping and so on<sup>48</sup>. In addition, this moment of standing on the border of

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<sup>46</sup> Totaro D. Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism: Henri Bergson on the philosophical properties of cinema, January 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Bergson H. Creative Evolution, 1998. P. 332.

<sup>48</sup> Aylamazian A. M. Free dance as a cultural and historical Practice of improvisation, 2021.

consciousness appears in dance not speculatively, but in the experience of movement, which can be sometimes deeply connected with music or sounds around. According to Nikolai Bernstein's words<sup>49</sup>, a Soviet neurophysiologist, whose works<sup>50</sup> were mainly connected with developing and researching the movement using motion-tracking devices, the movement in improvisation is not a reaction to the past, but proceeds from the image of the future, from something that does not yet exist. In addition, it should be noted that dance improvisation often consists of frequent shifts of tension and relaxation of the body, as if it is following the breath or breathing by itself, which contradicts the Zeno studies. This may indicate that in this state the body becomes less controlled and that is why it begins to move from internal signals, and not because of muscle memory. Lastly, the degree of uncertainty in the future behavior of a dancer during improvisation may open up the unseen movements that are embodied through the process of the invisible becoming visible. The constant search of a hidden movement can be done only through the movement itself, which arises due to the signals of the unconscious thought process.

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<sup>49</sup> Bernstein N.A. *Essays on the physiology of movements and the physiology of activity*, 1966.

<sup>50</sup> As an illustration of Nikolai Bernstein's studies and experiments, see a cyclogram of cutting metal with a chisel and hammer, *Picture 11 in the Supplement*.

### **3. Dance improvisation as a black box**

#### **3.1. The body evolution**

The speculations about dance, movement and optical unconscious led me to a thought that the human, and especially dancer's body, plays a crucial part in the whole process of motion. The body stands for an opaque shell, non-transparency of which makes the future movement more unpredictable and therefore 'blackboxed.' However, to gain more understanding in this concept, it is necessary to trace how the perception of the body has been changing in the history of mankind. The human body has undergone multiple changes in perception throughout history. Since technological progress, religious, cultural, and ethical worldviews are in constant change, the image of a person, their spiritual and physical components are also reinterpreting with time. Such changes are especially felt in the art sphere, where visual representation is in the foreground. The concept of the body has multifaceted meanings. Many dictionaries, defining the meaning of the body, distinguish different, often mutually exclusive meanings, such as external form, internal structure, border, fullness, wholeness, but at the same time its dissection into many components, the presence of the spirit or, vice versa, its absence. This large set of definitions of the concept of the body leads to the complexity of its definition. This produces such problems as where the body ends or begins, what makes it up, what is the status of its individual parts, how it changes in different positions in space, and other complex issues. In the current research paper, I am exclusively touching upon the human body, what role it plays in connection with the human mind and unconscious, how it is modified through the motion in dance and improvisation.

The human body represents several meanings in culture. We can point to a real body, which is a physical body that we feel, see and move. In this case, we can often hear about the opposition of physicality and spirituality of a person<sup>51</sup>. The human body consists of many constituent parts that form a single and fully functional whole. Thanks to this physical principle, a person is able to feel, for instance, they can hear, see, can distinguish tastes and smells, inhale air, feel

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<sup>51</sup> This is what many religious systems teach, for example, "*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing*" (John 6:63).

the touch, weight and texture of an object with their skin. Moreover, the ability to think comes from the physical body. "*The very concept of mind - the ability to think - is due to physicality, the presence of physiological processes that are carried out in the human body by any organs of the body,*"<sup>52</sup> - state the Russian philologist Dmitry Gudkov and linguist Maria Kovshova in their mutual scientific paper called '*The body code of Russian culture: materials for the dictionary.*' From their observations it follows that the human mind can be defined<sup>53</sup> as "a space in which intellectual activity is carried out" or as "a path, a road in a certain direction, which should be followed by a particular person." By virtue of the given definitions it can be concluded that the mind has the ability to materialize an action, while what kind of action it still will be is unknown, since the mind is a kind of a 'black box,' as mentioned in the previous chapters of the current research paper.

Continuing the issue of the body in historical and cultural perspective, in addition to the physical body, there is an imaginary body. This is how people perceive and imagine everything around them, images, conscious and unconscious, including themselves and their life roles. In this regard, this type of a body lies in the formation of the Ego<sup>54</sup>, where the concept of mirroring plays a huge role. Moreover, since I have touched on the role of mirroring and play, it is important to mention the analysis of the phenomenon of the Play element in culture in relation to the topic. Human activity in general is nothing more than a lifelong play that never ends. According to a research of a Dutch historian and one of the founders of modern cultural history Johan Huizinga<sup>55</sup>, who created the '*Homo Ludens*' book, the Play element is even older than culture. While people formed and produced first signs of cultural behavior, the Play element was already present. For example, one can observe the game of animals or even the

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<sup>52</sup> Gudkov D. B., Kovshova M. L. *The body code of Russian culture: materials for the dictionary*, 2007. P. 248.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. P. 269.

<sup>54</sup> Lacan J. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Huizinga, J. *Homo Ludens. Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*, 1938.



role of inanimate nature<sup>56</sup> in the big picture of the world. The notion of Play obtains a function that is necessarily filled with meanings and has particular purposes. It mainly deals with release of excess power, need for discharge, satisfaction of fictitious desires, or the innate instinct of imitation. Moreover, it is often followed with tension, joy and fun. Generally speaking, the Play element has formed culture, as it appears to be its one of the main basis. It can be clearly observed in languages, for instance, such linguistic phenomena as the game of words, myths, cult and everyday life.

Currently, the Play element did not fade away and did not lose its meaning for human society. It appears immediately there, where any kind of interaction is needed. People obtain and play different roles throughout their lives, for instance, they change them, play several roles at the same time, start the 'game' from the beginning and so on. Moreover, there is the front and the back of a play, where people prepare for a 'performance' and where they 'perform' to the 'public.'<sup>57</sup> In society, which basically cannot exist without giving every person a particular role, people do not think much about the play element during the process of living. They take it for granted, study and accept the rules and dive into a 'game' to achieve life goals on different levels. However, it is interesting to note that a Play element is a form of a free activity, which is perceived as unreal and not connected with everyday life, according to the speculations of Johan Huizinga. It can be compared to sport, board or desktop games, where actions take place in particular special space and time and in accordance with the fixed rules. Those games are mostly competitions or leisure time. Based on these thoughts, the Play element of cultural interactions gives everyone a particular

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<sup>56</sup> In the project '*Seen Unseen*' I developed an idea of the transfer of human qualities to another class, such as plants in particular. After I realized the fact that many plants may possess optical cells in their 'bodies,' I imagined that these 'small eyes' help plants better search a source of nutrition. This project became an observation of plants, their movements and surroundings. It is also an attempt to become a plant in order to better understand what they see. The documentation is in the *Picture 12 in the Supplement*.

<sup>57</sup> Goffman, E. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959.

role in different situations, with the help of which a person needs to mimicry<sup>58</sup> in order to become a part of a selected world and complete the set 'missions.' Shortly speaking, this analysis of one of the main features of human beings constructs the imaginary body.

Another integral part of human existence, along with the real and imaginary body, is the symbolic body. This is the part of human existence that gives life meanings and significance that form cultural codes and shape life as people used to see and know. In this regard, the body acts as a kind of a construct, including social and individual experience, memory, intentions, a set of sacred meanings, and so on. Meanwhile, the difference between the space of culture and the space in general should be taken into account. A broad concept of space is usually dealing with the physical and material world. In other words, space can be thought of as a dimension of being, as a region for existence. In this sense, the space of culture is similar to the concepts of topos or top, which Aristotle developed in his works<sup>59</sup>. That means a place in which both a certain kind of problem and an effective way of acting that meets the problem seem to be. Among other things, the very concept of culture comes from the Latin word 'cultura' that means cultivation, upbringing, education, reverence. By joining the cultural world, a person cultivates his space, puts it in order and plants new sprouts of knowledge. The French Enlightenment writer, historian and philosopher of the 18th century Voltaire wrote in his satire called '*Candide, or Optimism*': "All that is very well," answered *Candide*, "but let us cultivate our garden."<sup>60</sup> In other words, a person must first of all do his job, what his soul is for, what he is called to do, no matter how circumstances develop around him<sup>61</sup>. This metaphor directly leads to a meaning of culture itself, which is the totality of material and spiritual values of people that over time have become collective and

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<sup>58</sup> Waskul D. and Lust M. Role-Playing and Playing Roles: The Person, Player, and Persona in Fantasy Role-Playing, Number 3, 2004. P. 336.

<sup>59</sup> Aristotle, Topics / Organon, IV century B.C.

<sup>60</sup> Voltaire, *Candide, ou l'Optimisme*, 1759.

<sup>61</sup> Serov V. Encyclopedic dictionary of winged words and expressions, 2003.

fundamental in the context of the formation of both a personality and a sense of oneself in the external environment<sup>62</sup>.

Thus, the proposed classification above demonstrates a certain ratio of the real, imaginary and symbolic in the life of both an individual and society. From this follows, that in arts and literature the symbolic body was most often used as a symbol or a metaphor for some phenomena, and underwent various changes in its representation and symbolism through time. To begin with, images of people's bodies can be found in prehistoric times. However, despite the apparent realism of the image, those artifacts have been endowed with sacred meanings. Moreover, the human body was integral and separated at the same time, since its individual parts had an independent value. For instance<sup>63</sup>, belly, chest or legs of Venus are important both together and separately, as soon as each embodies a certain important function, such as childbirth, fertility, settlement, and so on<sup>64</sup>. A little later, the artistic canon of body proportions was created, which is an unchanging, conservative, traditional set of norms and rules, with the help of which it became possible to create an ideal human body in various forms of art in a certain period of time. Thus, in the Ancient times every single drawing or sculpture of a human body was endowed with a certain sacred meaning and cultural symbolism, which came from mythology and beliefs of different peoples (for instance, the scene of the judgment of the dead in the presence of Osiris on

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<sup>62</sup> Inspired by the work of Voltaire and, in particular, this last phrase of satire, I created a triptych of posters embodying this idea: *"In a world of endless and rapid changes, we often do not notice the course of our own life. We are constantly observing the outside world, which is why the days rush by like a whirlwind. We must not forget to plant our own thoughts and cultivate our own garden."* One of the posters was exhibited in 'A New View of Matter' exhibition, Gallery Panel FAMU, 2022 (*Pictures 13 and 14 in the Supplement*).

<sup>63</sup> In the chapter below we pay attention to the examples of that art which was mainly in the European part of the world. This does not mean that Oriental or any other art is not important in the evolution of the representation of the human body.

<sup>64</sup> For instance, the Venus figurines, the Upper Paleolithic statuettes can be mentioned (*Picture 15 in the Supplement*).

the Papyrus of Hunefer, *Picture 16 in the Supplement*). This is noticeable, for example, in the stylized and simplified forms of the human body in Ancient Egypt sculptures and imagery, which, although devoid of hypertrophied body parts, are still in an unnatural position. Later, Protagoras of Abdera (485-415 B.C.E.), an ancient Greek philosopher and sophist, deduced the thesis<sup>65</sup> "*Man is the measure of all things,*" which led to the construction of an ideal human body that has been measured with the same methods<sup>66</sup>. This led to a fixation of this tradition in the initial classical studies in arts and drawing.

In the Middle Ages and the Modern period with Renaissance and Reformation, the human body has been gradually enslaved and thus acquired new meanings, since new religious forms began to spread and humans came to think of themselves as 'the supreme creations.' Moreover, physicality began to represent something unacceptable, so the body began to be tortured, exhausted, hidden and disguised. During these times asceticism began to be a part of a representation of human beings. It should be noted that in the Middle Ages a difference between religious and secular art appeared, where the first follows the path of symbolization of the image, while the second strives for the likeness of life and hyperbolization. In the Modern times, this division continues to spread

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<sup>65</sup> None of the Protagoras' writings have survived. We get acquainted with his teachings mainly from the reports of Plato and Diogenes Laertius. In Plato's work, where he criticizes Protagoras' reasoning, we can find references, for example, to this: "*Of all things the measure is man: both of things that are (man is the measure) that they are, and of things that are not (man is the measure) that they are not.*" Or: "*For he says somewhere that man is "the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not."* You have read that, I suppose?"

<sup>66</sup> In the *Picture 17 in the Supplement* I demonstrate examples of the two canons depicting the human body. In Ancient Egypt the body followed special rules in order to produce a meaning of a scene on the relief, and the sculptures also followed these rules. In Ancient Greece and then Ancient Rome the emphasis in depicting the human body has shifted to the idealization of the shapes of the body. In addition, artists of that time were also interested in how and which muscles work when making a movement, which is observed in many sculptures that are not just static, as in Egypt before, but frozen in motion.

and takes on new directions that are visible in religious art. For instance, the synthesis of realistic and symbolic images can be found in a visualization of the crucified Christ on the cross. During the modern period the human body has been endowed with new forms, echoing the changing trends of beauty. Closer to contemporary times, everything began to change gradually.

In the XIX-XX centuries were rapid changes in all the spheres of human activity, including how people perceive the world around them. Photography, moving images, cinema and reproductions<sup>67</sup> were invented, life began to accelerate, news reached recipients faster, and automation also accelerated the path of lives. In this regard, many artists have freed themselves from the tradition of realistic or symbolic depiction of people, and the image of a person in art became a mirror of a new thinking. Artists twisted, depersonalized and tormented human bodies. On the one hand, they mirrored the time of world wars and atomic bomb explosions<sup>68</sup>, and on the other hand, science, psychoanalysis, medicine and other fields developed. The image of a person becomes an artistic statement and a constructed image, consisting of many parts and details. Over time, much attention has been paid not to the plot, but rather to the transience of movement, feeling, sensation, inner state, anonymity or conscious absence.

In the XX-XXI centuries, the canon of a human body started to be closely connected to peculiarities of the 'consumer society.' In this environment the body became a central point of forming an idea of oneself, and beauty and attractiveness transformed to a source of respect, icon, repetitive image and recognition. All signs and signals from the outside suggest to a person that their body needs to be adjusted to certain standards in order to be successful, beautiful and not to stand out from society. This standardization and conveyor are closely intertwined with newborn political forms, ongoing technological progress, the concepts of reproduction and widespread accessibility. An idea of the functionality of the body can be also added to this list, especially if we are talking about the era of postmodernism. As the Soviet and Russian Doctor of

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<sup>67</sup> Benjamin, W. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1935.

<sup>68</sup> For instance, in the previous chapters the Japanese Butoh dance was mentioned, which appeared as a reflection of all the thoughts and feelings of the atomic tragedy of that time.

Philosophy Vladimir Kutyrev reflected<sup>69</sup>, "... *the body becomes "empty," without properties.*" *This is the embodiment of the social phenomenon of a "man without properties" ... When we communicate on the Internet without knowing our age, nationality, or "about organs" (instead of gender, gender), then we act as people without properties. As "someone".* In addition, modern art has not only shattered the human body into pieces, turned it out or erased it, but also hyperbolized its individual parts, embodying a particular concept.

### **3.2 Optical unconscious in dance**

With the new passage of time, ideas, technologies and views, since the end of the XVIII century it is possible to detect the splitting of the visual field and the formation of a new vision<sup>70</sup>. People observe themselves in a gradually dismembering urban space, where an uncontrolled flow of movements, signs and images runs through it with an increased speed<sup>71</sup>. The contemplative distance that used to be is no longer possible<sup>72</sup> and citizens become an integral part of the surrounding variability. Convulsion and shock become the new first form of a sensory experience of collision with a new space, and discontinuity becomes common for modern perception.

In this connection, new visual possibilities of humanity, such as cinema and moving images, change the perception of both the world and the self-perception of oneself in this environment. When the first photo and video cameras appeared, the dominant idea that "*All the world's a stage, And all the men and*

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<sup>69</sup> Kutyrev V. A. *The philosophical image of our time (the lifeless space of post-humanity)*, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> This topic has been widely analyzed by Walter Benjamin in his works, such as '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*' (1935) and '*Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*' (1935).

<sup>71</sup> The metaphor of the uncontrolled flow reminds me of the well-known photography series '*City of Shadows*', created by the Russian photographer and artist Aleksey Titarenko in the period between 1991 and 1994.

<sup>72</sup> McLuhan M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964.

women merely players"<sup>73</sup> passed away to the past. In connection with the radical and rapid changes in the world, human consciousness, the emergence of new ideas and ideologies, everyone got the opportunity to join the world of art in any of its manifestations. Art entered the wide mass world, began to be mechanically replicated and many copies in different media and quality appeared. However, despite the accessibility of art, originals continued to obtain their inimitable 'auras',<sup>74</sup> which cannot be replaced by that kind of reproduction. Notwithstanding, photography became something that does not have its first and only original, as any copy that was printed became unique or reproduced. In addition, many speculations around depicting the world by photography appeared, and people and scholars called into such questions as if it was art, when it can depict the world as it is. However, the world through the camera has never been the same as what people see with their own eyes. It seemed completely different, as though it has been seen from a different angle or showed an unprecedented feature. Finally, photography foreshadowed the appearance of film, and later the film industry started to grow and gradually became a mass and omnipresent phenomenon.

The transformations that were written above had transformed the idea of a 'stage and actors' into a 'film and film actors,' when speaking about how people feel themselves in the ever changing society. People gradually began to see the world around them as a set of scenes from a life-long movie, and themselves as the characters of it. The whole world became filtered through the new

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<sup>73</sup> Shakespeare presents his idea in the monologue speech '*All the world's stage*' from the pastoral comedy '*As You Like It*' (1599) in Act II Scene VII from the character Jaques. Approximately at the same time he wrote similarly: "A *stage where every man must play a part, And mine a sad one*" in '*The Merchant of Venice*' (between 1596 and 1599). Many people of all times have made similar comparisons. For instance, long before Shakespeare this idea was expressed and slipped into one of the works of the Roman poet Juvenal in the early II century AD. In his '*Satire 3*' these lines can be found: "...*All of Hellas is a stage, and every Greek's a player...*"

<sup>74</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1969.

phenomenon of culture industry<sup>75</sup> and people accepted all the goods it gave without noticing how the transformation of their mind happened. As German sociologists, philosophers and representatives of the Frankfurt school of the XX century Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno and Max Horkheimer mentioned in their collaborative work called '*Dialectic of Enlightenment*' in the chapter '*Culture industry. Enlightenment as a deception of the masses*,' the feeling "of the moviegoer perceiving the street on which the cinema stands" is taken as "a continuation of the spectacle that has just ended"<sup>76</sup>. Together with this, it became vital for actors not to play the roles like in theaters, but on the contrary, pretend to play as though they are not playing<sup>77</sup>. As Walter Benjamin mentioned in his work under the name '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*,' filmmaking appeared to be something more personal: "The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera ... is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror," - he speculated. - "But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. ... Before the public"<sup>78</sup>. Hence, the mirroring of a self becomes public and the borders between film and perception of life smoothed down<sup>79</sup>. Reflecting on the fact that all people live with the 'film perception of the world' and that the whole

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<sup>75</sup> Adorno, T. W. & Horkheimer, Max. Culture industry. Enlightenment as a deception of the masses / *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1947.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1969.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> This idea has been implemented in the American psychological science fiction comedy-drama film called "*The Truman Show*" directed by Peter Weir in 1998. The main character Truman Burbank, played by Jim Carrey, unexpectedly for him became a star of the reality television program "*The Truman Show*." He has spent his entire life on a simulated island that was a set where the show was filmed. He did not know about this fact and lived a normal life in the show until he discovered that everything was totally fake. His life was mirrored and transported to the screens all around the world, and the public watched this experiment.



environment is drowned in cameras, it turns out that people's lives are always under record and they live a constantly filmed life, since it became much easier to install any camera anywhere and watch anything unnoticed<sup>80</sup>. Moreover, people can take pictures or record videos covertly or openly without much difficulty, because a camera in general is affordable and has become an integral part of daily existence<sup>81</sup>.

New digital social technologies have made people redefine mostly every vital aspects of life, which are, for instance, visibility, privacy, memory, death, time, space and how they see others, the world and themselves<sup>82</sup>. The new online space and social media gave an opportunity to capture and record life moments in order to share and show them to others. There people can see which roles the others take, how they play them, do they achieve success or do they change them, and so on. However, the increased fear of increased openness of life does not turn people away from the camera. It happens because this way of sharing lives on social networks and messengers has already become a unit of

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<sup>80</sup> For example, we can observe others in the streets, or try to detect someone to understand what they were doing or where they were going by using e.g. <https://www.earthcam.com/>

<sup>81</sup> The idea of constant surveillance and control was described in detail in the XX century, when totalitarian regimes were actively developing in world history with their undisguised desire to control every action of all people. In the novel of George Orwell called "1984" he details the topic of surveillance: TV screens turned into tracking screens for everything that happened in people's homes; people are constantly watched by Big Brother, who sees and knows everything; everyone spies on each other. The constant feeling of fear and helplessness only begins to increase when one realizes that about the same thing happened during the XX century, when socialism prevailed in some countries. In addition, at least in Russia, this trend continues to develop. For example, in Moscow, there is no free space, where there would not be a camera or a group of them. Recently, the Moscow Metro was equipped with cameras with facial recognition systems that track and identify individuals and with the help of which it became possible to pay for the ride.

<sup>82</sup> Jurgenson, Nathan. The social photo: on photography and social media, 2019.

communication<sup>83</sup>. Thus, the type called social photography appeared that does not imply the creation of masterpieces, but is important in the transmission of emotions and sharing experience. From this moment on, people feel the need to be 'regular tourists' by recording their presence and documenting what they have seen and what emotions they felt. Even professional photographers and videographers create such 'diary inscriptions,' recording videos or taking photographs, without thinking much about the composition or beauty. Instantaneity and memory are the main features in such diaries of life. Due to the fact that people are constantly looking for different ways to capture anything, they began to see everything around as a potential image<sup>84</sup>. A rise of vernacular photography leads to the idea that people see the world through the prism of the camera's perception, and the brain or mind, where the information gets, as a film or a memory card. The visual embodiment of this idea can be considered an experimental 1929 Soviet silent documentary film "*Man with a Movie Camera*", that was directed by a Soviet pioneer documentary film and newsreel director Dziga Vertov. He used a movie camera as a means to create a visual diary. According to the credits, which were displayed at the very beginning of the film, this film is an "*experience of transmission of visible events. The film is without a script, without scenery and actors.*" In addition, in some scenes appeared a metaphor of a 'camera-eye'. Nowadays, the concept of a visual diary is not forgotten, but expanded in its meanings. Many photographers and cinematographers turn to it to find a safe place to relax and distract themselves from their main work and projects, recording what they think to capture, following their 'camera-eye' wishes and desires.

The above reflections confirm the searches of Sergei Eisenstein, who was a Soviet film director and film theorist, a pioneer in the theory and practice of montage. When sound cinema appeared at the beginning of the XX century, a lot of film theorists of this period seriously speculated about the new reality and concepts. Sergei Eisenstein assures that montage does not fade with the innovations in cinematography. In his opinion, the frame is not an element of montage, but, on the contrary, its 'cell.' The most important notions of any film the cinematographer considered the 'collision' and 'tension': "*What is*

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

*characterized by montage, and, consequently, its embryo, the frame? ... A collision. The conflict of two adjacent pieces. Conflict. A collision*<sup>85</sup>. Lev Kuleshov, another Russian and Soviet filmmaker and film theorist, stated that "... *If there is a thought-phrase, a particle of the plot, a link in the entire dramatic chain, then this thought is expressed, laid out in frames-signs, like bricks...*"<sup>86</sup>. Unlike Kuleshov's understanding of montage principles, which is based on the fact that montage is a concatenation or a chain of pieces that can be compared to a kind of a row of 'bricks' and ideas, Sergei Eisenstein was convinced that since the frame is a cell of montage, it should also be considered from the point of view of conflict. He was assured that "*intra-frame conflict is a potential installation.*" It might be a "*conflict of graphic directions (lines), the conflict plans (among themselves), conflict of volumes, conflict of masses (volumes filled with various light intensity), conflict of spaces, conflict of subject and spatiality, or the conflict of event and its temporality.*" In other words, any person is engaged in the composition of a frame, they always montage it. Summing everything up, if we follow the idea that people have built-in 'camera-eyes' in their heads and want to capture everything they see, they constantly live montage and film.

Taking the written above into account, the perception of the surrounding world is always changing, not only in the pace and shapes, but also in perception of colors and light. Vision is gradually "*becoming part of the physiology and shaky temporality of the human body*"<sup>87</sup> and all the experiments with motion turned out to be aimed at the functioning of the perceiving body<sup>88</sup>. The boundary between internal experiences and external signs have been blurred, however, the vision and movement became inseparable, since the emotional perception of external factors in dance started to be more important. Moreover, when photography begun a series of technical shifts, the body started to be filmed and

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<sup>85</sup> Eisenstein, S. *Montage Moscow*, VGIK, 1998.

<sup>86</sup> Kuleshov, Lev. *The Art of Cinema*, Publishing House thea-cinema-print, 1929.

<sup>87</sup> Goethe W. J. *Theory of Colours*, 1810.

<sup>88</sup> For instance, '*Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*' by Marcel Duchamp, 1912 (*Picture 18 in the attachments*).

depicted newly and uncommonly in comparison with previous periods of history. Different techniques produce various types of visualization and reveal hidden details by stopping motion to some extent or demonstrate the never-ending flow of motion of the blurring technique.

First of all, photography transformed the pose of a person, made it more natural and allowed people to create more complex compositions and unpredictable embodiments of ideas. By freezing a moment, photographers with the help of their optical apparatus take possession over the movement and break it into pieces, leaving the feeling of elusiveness and evanescence in front of a viewer. It became possible to highlight details and zoom them in order to see and understand how it is constructed and what it consists of. The study of features of color perception, time and its decomposition into its components, the elusiveness of the moment had a big influence on visual arts, where new directions have been also rapidly developing, such as cubism, pictorialism, impressionism, modernism, pointillism, estetism and many others. X-rays, close-ups in photographs, and macro photography were quickly attracted to the service of art. Thanks to discoveries that were originally intended for completely different purposes, many new techniques for creating images have been adapted, such as, for example, photograms or radiography. As a result of the above, it became possible to think through poses, use a close-up, experiment with editing, or, on the contrary, catch the body in its natural, spontaneous state using different techniques depending on the initial idea.

Artists became more likely to be external observers of what is happening, trying on the role of a passerby. The same situation happened in the new way of looking at dance in general. An example to the above is the work of the French impressionist Edgar Degas, who used photographic images in order to study and examine how the human and especially a dancer's body is constructed and how it can move (for example, *Picture 19 in the Supplement*). In this regard, it is necessary to emphasize that not only photography, but also videography brought a new interesting look at the human body and dance. The video opens up a new field of observation, capturing bodies, simple characters, ordinary faces, minor actions, moving sets, as well as introspection. For instance, the American director Michael Langan together with the production designer Terah Maher created a short film '*Choros*,' in which they interpret the concept of a point and a

line in motion<sup>89</sup>. Through a combination of music, narrative and fragmentation of the movement they conveyed a feeling of being in another time space, where the movement is divided into parts<sup>90</sup>, similar to what Walter Benjamin mentioned, thinking about the optical unconscious.

In general terms, thanks to new technologies, changes in the way of looking at the world, in addition to the rapid changes of external image of the body, its inner perception and feeling is also constantly changing. The body, which has become almost transparent thanks to, for example, X-rays, is now available for direct internal observation. A journey inside the body became possible, and people are able to see organs, including the organ of thought. However, despite this apparent transparency, the movement itself remains to be invariably opaque, since how and where it appears continues to be a mystery. In this regard, dance and especially dance improvisation are the most significant phenomena for the observation and contemplation of the movement, using different apparatus means of depicting, zooming, blurring and fragmenting, since optical unconscious can help to move closer to the topic of the dance unconscious.

### **3.3. Dance body and the depth of improvisation**

How the perception and image of the human body has changed throughout history is incredibly important for the current research in order to observe and notice similar changes in dance. The dance body, its feeling and self-perception has been transforming in parallel with the general trends in culture and art within a particular period of human history. It would be enough to recall how the plasticity of dance has changed from literally frozen movements at balls and canonical, traditional variations in ballet to free swinging in modern dance, where improvisation often plays a crucial role. The current chapter is devoted to how,

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<sup>89</sup> Choros, 2011, 13 min. Directed by Michael Langan and Terah Maher.

<sup>90</sup> In addition, such visualization of a movement has been interpreted by the Italian futurism artists, such as Giacomo Balla and his work called 'Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash,' *Picture 20 in the Supplement*.

following the general trends and changes in people's minds, plastic art has changed and developed. In addition, I would like to touch upon the problem of the dance body and the movement that was born from it, as well as the way the dance improvisation has become one of the most necessary dance part.

To begin with, the big and most visible dance revolution took place in a period, when time accelerated, scientific discoveries appeared one by one and the world has been rapidly changing and turning upside down, as I have slightly touched in the previous chapters. When the audience first saw Loie Fuller's snake dance, they were amazed at how new and contradictory the new dance body looks in the process of dance. Loie Fuller was an American actress and dancer who stood at the very origins of a new direction of dance, which became the dance of the Modern era. Her dance was called '*Serpentine*'<sup>91</sup> and was based on a spectacular combination of free movements, spontaneously formed by music, and a costume, which consisted of many huge fluttering fabrics that reflected the light directed at them. After watching her dance, the Belgian writer Georges Rodenbach<sup>92</sup> noted that "*the body was enchanted by the fact that it could not be found.*" This suggests that from that particular moment the body began to present a completely different appearance, weight and meanings. It should be also noted that electricity in theaters displaced gas in the 1880s, therefore, this fact and that the audience was sitting in a complete darkness from that moment on, in which only the stage was illuminated, completely impressed the minds, which made Loie's dance even more incredible and unbelievable for the audience.

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<sup>91</sup> As an example, a short silent film by the Thomas Manufacturing Edison company in 1895, which was shot with a kinoscope, in which Loie Fuller's dance performed by Annabelle Moore is recorded, can be mentioned. Loie Fuller did not star in Edison Studio films. However, later she performed her dance in front of a movie camera, but this recording did not receive such attention as the film with Annabelle Moore.

Annabelle Moore, 1895: <https://youtu.be/w0M2kvvVcdI>

Loie Fuller, 1897: <https://youtu.be/JSxOPV9E0kM>

<sup>92</sup> The history of the body. Volume 3. Change of view: XX century / 2nd edition edited by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Curtin, Georges Vigarello, 2019.

Loie Fuller stayed up to date with scientific discoveries and in 1898 opened her own laboratory in Paris, where she conducted researches on electric light. This confirms the fact that art echoed scientific discoveries, urbanization, industrialization, secularization and gradually introduced new forms in its own interpretations. A modernized society began to act contrary to the traditional<sup>93</sup>, possessing the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and setting a new rhythm of life. During the Modern period, a search for the newness that could not have existed before appeared. In addition, the masters have been looking for ways to overcome the eclecticism of the past, striving to the harmony of art and life in the industrial era. One of the main ideas of the newborn style was the destruction of the traditional distinction within art, searching how to create the 'Unity of arts.' This concept has been most widely used in interior design, graphics, furniture, glass, textiles, ceramics, jewelry and metal. In different works of art, one can see the desire to combine artistic and utilitarian functions, involving all spheres of human activity in art, following the traditions of romanticism and symbolism, but at the same time decorative and applied arts flourished and played with the new colors, since the interest in new technologies has been only increasing. Henry Clemens van de Velde, a Belgian art theorist, expressed the idea that the ornamental, aesthetic principle is inherent in the very form of the object. This idea points to the main motif of the modern period, which is a wavy plant that compares a man-made form with a natural one and vice versa. Due to the rejection of right geometrical angles, symmetry and straight lines in favor of smooth, curved lines, it was possible to imitate the natural forms of plants.

Naturalistic references have become noticeable in the art of dance. This is how Camille Mauclair, a French art critic, commented on the innovations in dance in 1900<sup>94</sup>: a dancer "*became a spinning top, an ellipse, a flower, an unusual bowl, a butterfly, a huge bird, a multifaceted rapid sketch of all forms of flora and fauna.*" The illusion of ephemerality<sup>95</sup>, which was formed due to special

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<sup>93</sup> Podvoysky D. G. Modern / The Great Russian Encyclopedia.

<sup>94</sup> The history of the body. Volume 3. Change of view: XX century / 2nd edition edited by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Curtin, Georges Vigarello, 2019.

<sup>95</sup> It is also important to note that the topic of dance as an ephemeral art coincides with the beginning of romantic ballet, which was popular in Europe in

movements, reminded many observers of a butterfly<sup>96</sup>: "*Dance seems to exist solely for its own sake, for the moment, and then it disappears, except as a memory. This quality is the tragedy and beauty of dance. Because it can touch so deeply, but live so briefly, the urge to preserve it somehow, like a butterfly under glass, taunts, teases and eventually frustrates.*" Such an illusion follows physical processes, since the questions raised by dance have been closely following researches of that time about the nature of movement. With the help of swings of fabric, a dancer seeks to depict the trajectory of movement in space. The body becomes a source, where how it moves and what melody it conveys became important, as can be seen, for example, in chronophotographs of Étienne-Jules Marey or in others. It turns out that due to a deep study of the nature of light and its effect on the body, experiments with photography and new technologies for recording moving images, new research in the field of reflexes and physiology, the new wave of dance began to possess new means of art, such as light, speed, color and elusiveness. A dancer moved, becoming a part of an unknown force, the impulses of which are aimed to display them through a body, which has become a function of a resonator. Loie Fuller understood<sup>97</sup> a movement as "*an instrument with which a dancer throws vibrations and waves of visual music into space.*" Generally speaking, thanks to Loie Fuller, the idea of a dancing body changes to a shimmering new body.

By the end of the XIX century, appeared a new understanding of the space inside the body that is closely connected with the outside factors. Perception of such signals that go before realization of feelings and emotions causes a 'motor

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the 1830s and 1840s and which corresponded to the tendency for exotic escapist fantasy. In romantic ballet a conflict between man and nature, reality and the supernatural are important. The new lightness and weightlessness of the ballerina became the basis for the birth of a new canon in the field of ballet. It is visible in such romantic ballets, as *The Sylph* (1832) and *Giselle* (1841).

<sup>96</sup> This is what Casey Charness, a film theorist, commented. Source: Parfitt C. 'Like a butterfly under glass': the cancan, Loie Fuller and cinema, *International Journal of Performance Arts and DigitalMedia*, 2016.

<sup>97</sup> *The history of the body. Volume 3. Change of view: XX century / 2nd edition* edited by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Curtin, Georges Vigarello, 2019.



release,' whose effects can be seen at the levels of muscle tone, breathing, and the cardiovascular system<sup>98</sup>. That leads to a statement that perception and mobility are closely connected with each other. The fundamental basis on which the new modern dance is based is involuntary movements. Moreover, during the same period of time, against the background of the study of the unconscious, hypnosis became popular. Thus, in the Loie's Fuller autobiography, she mentioned that initially, when there were the first performances of her dance in 1891, she wanted to portray a young woman immersed in a hypnotic dream, since sound waves, or external factors, enter the body and "*make the muscles and nerves trembling ... unconsciously.*"<sup>99</sup> Precisely because the movement is involuntary and affects the internal impulses of a dancer, improvisation began to be actively used in the dance performances. Hence, Isadora Duncan, an American dancer, who also became the founder of modern dance, described the first motivation of her dance:<sup>100</sup> "*I on the contrary sought the source of the spiritual expression to flow into the channels of the body, filling it with vibrating light - the centrifugal force reflecting the spirit's vision. After many months, when I had learned to concentrate all my force to this one Centre I found that thereafter when I listened to music the rays and vibrations of the music streamed to this one fount of light within me - there they reflected themselves in Spiritual Vision not the brain's mirror, but the soul's, and from this vision I could express them in Dance...*" To find the very movement that will come from within, "*For hours I would stand quite still, my two hands folded between my breasts, covering the solar plexus. My mother often became alarmed to see me remain for such long intervals quite motionless as if in a trance - but I was seeking and finally discovered the central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power, the unity from which all diversities of movements are born...*" Moreover, it is important to note that Isadora Duncan became one of the first dancers to abandon the corset, since it caused "*distortion of the beautiful human skeleton, displacement of internal organs, degeneration of a good part of the muscles in*

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Duncan I. My life, 1927.

*the woman's body,*"<sup>101</sup> and it created difficulties with breathing, which was also one of the most important elements in the new dance.

Consequently, people began to pay more attention to the peculiarities of the dance body, gave it greater freedom in all its manifestations, began to listen to it more precisely and follow its impulses and changes. The body has become a repository of hidden and invisible reflexes emanated from the interaction with the external environment; a storehouse of emotions, feelings and sensations. A lot of dancers have picked up the flow of a new era of dance, finding more emotional response in the new movements, because since then it became possible to express various emotions and thoughts through movement that were related to themselves and also to present events. Thus, there were various dance searches for the center, from where unconscious movements originate. An example is the statement of Helen Moller, who was one of the first teachers of modern dance<sup>102</sup>: "*All true physical expression has its generative centre in the region of the heart, the same as the emotions which actuate it. Movements flowing from any other source are aesthetically futile.*" In this statement, one can notice the comparison to a classical dance, the meaning of which lies in a completely different idea. In the classical forms of dance, arms and legs work segmentally, drawing figures and the body appears to be not the single whole. Hence, the classical dance stylized the forms, while modern dance dealt with movement at the level of its origin, which lies beyond any form. Another example of such searchings for the source of movement is the practice of Martha Graham<sup>103</sup>, an American dancer and choreographer who created her own school and developed her own dance technique based on her ideas. Thanks to her work<sup>104</sup>, since the 1930s, the pelvis has become the source of the driving forces

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<sup>101</sup> Daly A. *Done into Dance*, 1995. P. 31.

<sup>102</sup> *Dancing with Helen Moller. Her Own Statement of Her Philosophy and Practice and Teaching Formed upon the Classic Greek Model, and Adapted to Meet the Aesthetic and Hygienic Needs of To-Day*, 1918.

<sup>103</sup> The dance technique of Martha Graham can be seen, for example, in a silent film of her and Dance Group in excerpts of *Chronicle*, Guild Theatre, New York City, 1936.

<sup>104</sup> Graham M. *Blood Memory: An autobiography*, 1991.

of the human body, which, according to her thoughts, is the center of gravity, the point of concentration of body mass and the trajectories of its movement. The body started to be a place where emotions became visible through work that combines "*bodily mechanics and chemistry, the work of the heart, lungs, stomach, spine and other organs.*"<sup>105</sup> A movement started to be perceived as a generalization of internal mobility that was partly involuntary, and dancers needed to adjust themselves to start to feel this within their bodies. Thus, the place of the hearth of the motion traveled along the body and reflected the techniques and fantasies of the dance.

Observation of physiological rhythms of the human body through the prism of dance, attention to breathing and heart rate, a sense of the center of gravity, contributed to the active development of improvisation. It was not by chance that the term improvisation comes from the Latin word 'improvisus,' which means unexpected, sudden. Dance improvisation is created during the performance process without any special preparation, since it appears to be a dancing in the present, where every movement is generated from the depths of mind. The essence of such improvisation is instantaneity, interaction, process and research. Moreover, in this form of dance, the main means of expression are consistent tension and relaxation, in contrast to the apparent lightness and figurativeness of classical ballet. Revealing this thought, silence and stillness before movement have become very important for concentration<sup>106</sup>: "*Let's listen to the pounding of our heart, the whisper and murmur of our own blood,*" - taught Mary Wigman, who was a German dancer, choreographer and pioneer of expressionist dance, dance therapy and movement training without pointe shoes. Her speculations about the role of breath also formed the basis of improvisation, since "*it controls muscular and articulatory functions,*" and the pace and speed of a dancer's movement is totally affected by the "*dynamic power of breathing.*" That means that the alternation of inhalation and exhalation sets the dancers the basic principle of tension or relaxation and produces a continuous connecting relationship between the inner and outer spaces, mind and body, conscious and unconscious, whereas breathing produces vibrations that cause involuntary

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<sup>105</sup> The history of the body. Volume 3. Change of view: XX century / 2nd edition edited by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Curtin, Georges Vigarello, 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

movements. These movements are often resemble waves, that build up the whole world, because there nothing immobile exist, for instance, the movements of trees following the direction of wind waves, water, the birds' flight, animal movements, light waves, and so on<sup>107</sup>.

Realizing the importance of movement and the impossibility of immobility, special exercises have been gradually developing to sharpen the attention on absolutely any movements, even hidden ones. For instance, the exercises of Genevieve Stebbins, an American author and performer, have been aimed at realizing the importance of where the movement begins, based on relaxation practices, a special breathing technique, that had a strong influence of yoga<sup>108</sup>. Another American dancer Ted Shawn together with his wife and dancer Ruth Saint Denis paid a special attention to a spine movement as a fundamental human movement<sup>109</sup>: "*The goal is to consciously make each vertebra move separately, freeing the spine from any stiffness that can interfere with the movement of pure continuity.*" This goal formed the basis of their exercises, which were based on spiral descents and ascents, claiming that the spine is like a spring. The technique based on the continuous alternation of loss and restoration of balance, which was developed by Ruth Saint Denis, also became one of the bases of improvisation.

However, it is important to note that improvisation is born not only due to internal impulses, but also due to the influence of external factors. Their symbiosis gave rise to the very movement that would determine the trajectory of the dance. It is also necessary to be able to feel not only the physiological processes and the body, but also what is happening around it, for example, the surrounding environment, its currents and changes, innovations, social movements and world events. The totality of all factors generates movement

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<sup>107</sup> Speaking of waves, I would like to mention the Undefined dance by Isadora Duncan, which is based on the wave movements of the body. Link: <https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/anna-duncan/unidentified-dance-by-isadora-duncan/>

<sup>108</sup> Stebbins G. Delsarte System of Expression, 1887.

<sup>109</sup> Shawn T. Every Little Movement, 1963.

from within, connecting pieces of the intermittent rhythm of life. For example, Rudolf Laban, a dancer and teacher, to improve the feeling of the moment, invented a technique that will help to generate awareness of the moment, being *'here and now.'* From his point of view, the improvisation begins with the fact that the sense of the integrity of the body is shading, a dancer feels disoriented and new motion abilities that were not used in ordinary life before are revived. Thanks to this technique, it turns out that he makes the unconscious work sharper, reproducing movements to the light that gradually brings the body together. This also happens because a dancer begins to work with the body weight, contracting and relaxing various muscles. This example leads to another dance experiment that was held by an American experimental dancer Steve Paxton<sup>110</sup>. He developed a dance of 'gravitational distribution' that was based on the exchange of weight between participants. This was a kind of a contact improvisation, where all parts of the body, except hands, could touch the partner. The dancers shifted their own weight on the others or took the weight of another dancer, through which a weight dialogue was born. From this bodily interaction follows, that movements were born not only due to deep feelings, but also as a reaction to external changes. From multiple exchanges in motion, various influences and impulse forces occur, which regulate rhythms, accents, dynamics of the dance movements, and the final form and pose cannot be predicted. Generally speaking, the form of the body became not very important in dance improvisation, but the very process of the origin of movement and its transmission. Moreover, all the examples above lead to a conclusion that the movement in any dance improvisation form are generated from within the dance body and are unpredictable, since they come from the depths of unconsciousness.

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<sup>110</sup> The history of the body. Volume 3. Change of view: XX century / 2nd edition edited by Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Curtin, Georges Vigarello, 2019.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Let's consider the results of the current research aimed at studying the phenomenon of movement that comes from inside the human body in dance improvisation. The issue of the hidden impulses that are generated inside the body displays the metaphorical meaning of the concept of the notion of the 'black box,' which reflects the work of any hidden mechanisms, including the work of the human mind. Having studied various theories and concepts that were carried out in connection with the emergence of this concept, as well as having analyzed the work of human perception during sleep deviations that occur when a person is in a state of borderline between sleep and reality, I came to the conclusion that throughout the history the human body is always appear to be an important shell for the conscious, despite the fact that it has been modified, trying on various symbolic, aesthetic and ideological forms.

Thanks to various experiments, inventions of dance exercises and practices, new scientific discoveries, the study of the body gradually erased the boundaries of the conscious and unconscious, which became an important aspect of the current research paper. The body is no longer a means of expression and the creation of forms, but an inseparable whole with the unconscious. Dancers feel their physicality through a dialogue with themselves and the world around them, immersing into the flow of what they feel. They create themselves through movements, contemplate and study outgoing movements, completely dissolve in thoughts, listening to how the body itself wants to move. I have often wondered how movement is born and in 2021 I began to observe using a 'camera-eye' the smallest dance movements. One of the observations was based on the feeling of the space in which the dancer was placed. Before the improvisation, it is necessary to adjust so that every cell of the body can feel any change in the surrounding environment. Anna Kroupová<sup>111</sup>, a choreographer that currently is studying at HAMU, moved spirals, her movements went from the pelvis along the spine, then accelerating and slowing down to such an extent that the movement stopped, and then appeared again. The tension of the body was replaced by its relaxation and dumping, then to give birth to a new movement, which the dancer initially does not know about. In this case, an important role was played by

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<sup>111</sup> Link: <https://vimeo.com/673982229>

sounds and movements in the environment, which strongly influenced improvisation. In another observation, the dancer was placed in different conditions. Natalie Tunová<sup>112</sup>, a dancer from Duncan Center and HAMU, created a dialogue with herself through a shadow. In this example it is also possible to trace the waves of relaxation and tension of muscles, twisting of the spine, which generated distortions and unusual fleeting forms that replaced each other like a waterfall.

It turns out that dance improvisation is a process of spontaneous creation of movement; it is an impulsive form that can evoke dramatic and thought-provoking content. It can be considered not only as the deep process of creation of a new movement, but also as the liberation of the body from the usual movements. Many improvisations focus on finding a deeper way to comprehend a person's hidden thoughts or feelings. During the Renaissance time, then Romanticism and the period of conservative classical ballet, improvisation was used rarely and only the leading ballet artists such as Anna Pavlova could do that time after time, since it was used mostly to improve choreography and correct mistakes and failures during a performance. From the XIX century, rapid changes began, as the world began to modify due to technological progress, scientific development and the acceleration of life. Loie Fuller has demonstrated a new wave of dance performance, which impressed many thinkers and critics, as well as the audience. Her free movements, the absence of hindering factors to them prompted many dancers to change their views on dance, supporting the new wave. Hence, improvisational performances started to flow, and Mary Wigman, Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham and many others developed improvisation in different techniques and philosophies. Moreover, since the XIX century's development in dance techniques, improvisation began to be used in dance therapy, dance education and music in the XX century, for instance, Michael Jackson combined improvisation and his songs during recording his video clips and performances. In addition, similar dance improvisations can be seen at performances by other singers and musical groups, for example, by Freddie Mercury from 'Queen' or jazz and blues musicians.

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<sup>112</sup> Link: <https://vimeo.com/695742938>

The human body has undergone many changes, it has been cut into pieces, reduced to dots, increased in size, erased, twisted, and so on. The dance, following these changes, also was constantly changing. Corsets were abolished, pointe shoes or dance slippers ceased to be the main component of the costume, clothing began to be loose, and soon there were fewer clothes, gradually exposing the dancer's body, since the emphasis began to be on physicality, flexibility, roughness and skin of the human body. Dancers began to listen to their body, trying to feel every slightest movement of it, starting with the heartbeat, breathing and involuntary contraction of the muscles catching balance. Involuntary movements or lack of them, the search for the center of gravity of the body, an acute sense of body weight prompted the development of dance improvisation, which became an obligatory component in the further development of dance genres. Moreover, the new vision of the human body has been influenced by the appearance of photography and cinematography. The new optical apparatus allowed not only to freeze a certain moment of movement, but also to manipulate the visual image in different ways. With the help of photography, the past is fixed, but it is always born under the gaze of the beholder in the present. According to the words<sup>113</sup> of a German novelist, sculptor, illustrator and graphic artist Günter Wilhelm Grass, photography is capable of revealing the future, the past, the imaginary, including the secret and hidden. Walter Benjamin, in his reflections, has speculated that nature, events and movement facing the camera are not the same as one is able to see with their own eyes, because special devices allow one to reveal what they cannot see on their own, which is the optical unconscious. The discoveries of Eadweard Muybridge, Étienne-Jules Marey and some other chronophotographers gave an opportunity to view the movement in hidden details of its motion. Due to the formation of urban culture, the growth of reproductions, distribution of mass culture, gradual implementation of the new technology for communication, the growth of the need of social media for sharing experiences, people became an eyewitness to reality.

Generally speaking, thanks to the availability of various methods of imprinting the reality, the development of videography and photography and various techniques, has prompted people to capture reality more, since in a

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<sup>113</sup> Grass G. The box: Tales from the Darkroom, 2011.



fleeting moment one can see many whole worlds. Being in the moment, '*here and now*,' transformed the dance visual impression. The way an artist sees dancers and dance in general reflects contemporary dance in general. It can be noticed that improvisation, with its rhythmic breathing, as though the body of a dancer or a group of dancers obeys the breath of a huge creature, is developing to this day. If we consider the contemporary trends of dance, we can pay attention to the hyperbolic physicality, huge symbolism and naturalism. As an example, I can hold a performance '*4xPROTOŽE*' of 2021 by a Czech dance group '*soc.kult*' that deals with contemporary issues, or a choreographic performance '*The Dream of Medea*' of 2004 by a French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj. Despite the fact that my observations are still ongoing and I plan to produce more contemplation on dance improvisation movements in the nearest future, it can be already noticed that each dance performer generates different, dissimilar movements that echo what was written above in the chapters. In addition, every improvisation is unique and cannot be repeated, since the movement is born from the present moment, which instantly becomes the past. Moreover, the issue of a movement and the body I find relevant, therefore I am planning to delve into the study of various forms of dance improvisation based on contemporary dance trends, as well as the basis on which they take such a form, visual appearance and character of the movement. The current and future work, in my opinion, once again confirm that dance improvisations work as an output of some inner unseen work, and the dance in general can be characterized as opaque and 'blackboxed.'

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## Supplement

Table 1. The sleep paralysis stories that were told by ordinary people. Some of them have been translated from Russian

Varvara Anisimova	<p>This happened about 2 years ago. I almost fell asleep, but suddenly I saw that the door in the room was opening. My brother appeared in the doorway, with a strange face, not walking like a normal person, but sneaking around... I wanted to get up and deal with him, but I realized that my body was stiff - I couldn't move, as if I was paralyzed, and I just started screaming. As he came closer and closer, I could see that his face was disfigured, and I was very scared, and I started to scream harder. My sister was sleeping with me in the room, and she woke me up and my vision disappeared.</p>
Petr Timofeev	<p>I went to bed early that day, and fell asleep quickly. From the dream, I remember that it was evening. I was walking along the road past the Chekhov hotel. I saw a man and moved in his direction. After a few steps, I turned my head to the side and suddenly felt that I was firmly taken by the hands. I tried to free myself, but I was grabbed thoroughly. The man began to spin me around and I noticed that behind my back near the intersection there was a cart (britzka) with a dark horse. After a few seconds I was thrown backwards into the horse. It got up on its hind legs and started to scream... At this moment, from a strong fright, I felt that I woke up and noticed that my hands were clenched on my solar plexus and I could not open and move them. It lasted about 3 minutes. At first, I thought about it, about the impossibility of influencing the situation, of doing something, when you can only watch what is happening. It was at the end of November, after I had left the army.</p> <p>As a child, there was a funny feeling when you fall</p>

	<p>somewhere, as if there is nothing under you. And also when you do not feel the skeleton of the head, as if there is a huge space behind you. it's been a long time since this happened)</p>
Juan Cevallos	<p>Tall cypress trees surrounded my parents' house. In front of the only window of my room, the branches of the trees created a natural curtain. During the night, they projected to the interior of my room an infinite combination of shadows in constant movement. The strong winds of the month of August in Quito, animated the show that took place over the roof and over the white closet that was in front of my bed.</p> <p>Every night as if it was a ritual before going to sleep, I listened to the same CD of that Argentinian band I liked. In the middle of humming and improvised rhythms with my fingers on the pillow, I fell asleep every night.</p> <p>I remember listening to the intense singing of the birds. I was outside in the garden. The wind was so strong that I could feel my hair moving in front of my face while I walked around.</p> <p>When I walked, I tried to understand and remember that drum beat I couldn't play, I counted over and over again: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4. When the numbers and the rhythm made sense in my head, I decided to walk around the garden a little longer. With my hands beating the air, I played on an imaginary drum set for a while.</p> <p>When I memorized the rhythm, I told myself it was time to wake up. As I tried to open my eyes, I could see the shadows of the tree branches on the ceiling of my room. I could not fully open my eyes, my eyelids were too heavy, and every time I closed them, I appeared again in that garden.</p> <p>Every attempt to wake up or move was useless, I couldn't feel my body. I remember looking at the garden, the trees and hearing the birds. I was so scared. I felt that</p>



	<p>I was a prisoner in my body, that I would never move again. In my chest, I felt a lot of pressure. I could not breathe. It seemed that something very heavy was on me. Or maybe my body was an empty shell, inert, stripped of my soul. A strange cold sensation ran through my neck, back, and legs. While the damn birds did not stop singing, in a complete panic I remember that I wanted to scream.</p> <p>I laid down on the grass of my imaginary garden and a scream that drowned in my throat woke me up in my room finally. Sitting on my bed I watched the shadows of the trees moving intensely by the strong winds, a sense of relief and deep fear made me get out of bed, and walk to the garden of my parents' house to wait for the sun to rise accompanied by the fear and the singing of the birds.</p>
Alena Solomonyan	<p>It was when I was 20 years old after I had a lot of stress. I was sleeping. In the morning, I felt like I woke up from dreaming but at the same time I didn't really wake up. I opened my eyes, wanted to move, maybe to move on my side, and I realized that I couldn't. That was as if I was dreaming or was in reality at the same time. Such feelings. However, in this state, I was slightly afraid, but I had thoughts that this might be a dream. I understood everything, saw our room and the sun through the window. I was aware of what was happening, but I had a feeling that it was only a dream. I laid in this state for about five minutes, and then I woke up. And after I remembered it, I was very surprised. I didn't know this could happen. Then, when I talked to my friend, she said that she is always very afraid of it every time she has sleep paralysis. I don't get sleep paralysis very often, but sometimes I do. It is such an unpleasant feeling for me.</p>
Pavel Makarov	<p>It was just really creepy. It was a borderline state between sleep and reality. I was lying on the couch and could not move, and on the edge of the bed sat a terrible</p>

	<p>witch, similar to my dead grandmother, who had a cat growing out of her head. She was silent and swayed. It was fucking disaster. I couldn't move at all.</p> <p>I felt a strong fear, I tried to move, but, in my opinion, I could only move my legs slightly. There was a very very strange state, either I sleep or I don't. Anyhow, it's gross.</p> <p>My memories of the condition are very blurry, it was a few years ago, but my body was just barely able to move. I think I woke up abruptly. My heart was pounding like hell.</p>
Senya Bogdanov	<p>Well, I've been having sleep paralysis for about six years now. Now I run into them at least a couple of times a week for sure. The last one was this night (15 March 2021).</p> <p>To tell the truth, sleep paralysis has not caused me great emotions for a long time now. The first times (I was then 16 years old) were, of course, scary and unpleasant. Then, because of the paralysis, I did not sleep well many nights. After a certain number of times, I got used to them (unfortunately, I can't describe this number even approximately). Now this state has become so familiar and commonplace for me that in the moments when it occurs, I think: "Oh are you kidding me?! Can I get some sleep now?!" There were times when I could experience up to 10 such states in one night. It's not very pleasant, to be honest.</p> <p>I will try to describe my feelings in as much detail as possible.</p> <p>The state of paralysis is short-lived. It is difficult to say exactly how long it lasts, but I think it is usually no more than a minute. On average, probably 30-40 seconds. Often during the night, there can be several paralysis – 2 or 3 times.</p> <p>In the body, there is a feeling of strong trembling</p>

(only a feeling - in fact, the body does not tremble. I had a sleep paralysis when there was one more person in a room - he said that the body does not move), while it is impossible to move - the feeling that the limbs move extremely slowly. However, it is still possible to blink, move your eyes, and control your breathing.

I also learned how to bite my lip to bring my body to life. The first few times it didn't work, because the mouth just wouldn't move. But after a certain amount of paralysis, I mastered this, so to speak, skill. Not much help lately, by the way. But the moment is interesting - apparently, it is possible to make the brain perform some relatively complex movements in this state.

Paralysis is always accompanied by hallucinations (in general, in scientific terms, this is called "pseudo-hallucinations") - auditory, visual, or both at the same time. Hallucinations are always unpleasant.

Auditory sounds are either unpleasant loud sounds (for example, today it was a sound like someone is vomiting right in the ears. Sounds can be very different - whistling, noises, screeching, sounds of musical instruments, etc.), or a voice. The voice is always the same, has an unpleasant timbre, as if male and female at the same time. Both very low and high. The feeling that the speech is articulate, and that the voice speaks in Russian, but the words are impossible to understand. At the same time, the intonation is calm, as if the voice is just telling something.

Visual images are images of some scary creatures (such, you know, typical for horror movies - with big black eyes). As a rule, they are seen somewhere in the field of peripheral vision. At the same time, the feeling that they somehow move randomly ("sausaging", in short). Often such hallucinations are accompanied by voices - it seems that someone is standing over the bed and saying

something.

It happens when images are seen right in front of your face, but this happens not often. With such hallucinations, sounds are usually either not present, or they are just unpleasant noises, but in no case speech.

In a state of paralysis, I am always aware that hallucinations are hallucinations. I do not feel fear, on the contrary, I try to carefully examine these images or understand the speech.

When this state is suitable, an unpleasant feeling persists for a while, you know, like with a strong excitement. When the level of adrenaline in the blood rises, and you feel your own breathing, your heartbeat.

I do not know what exactly determines the probability of entering a state of paralysis, but I have noticed that I often catch paralysis when the room is stuffy.

Something like that :)

Many people write that during sleep paralysis, it seems to them that someone is sitting on their chest. I don't have this, even when I sleep on my back (I usually sleep on my side).

Oh, I forgot to tell you that I only get paralysis when I fall asleep.

It's different for everyone. Many of my friends have never had it happen at all.

I wrote a post on Twitter, and there was one person who also has it regularly.

I can describe the most vivid episode!

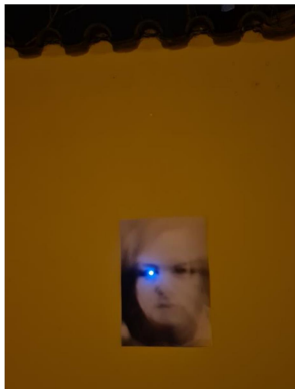
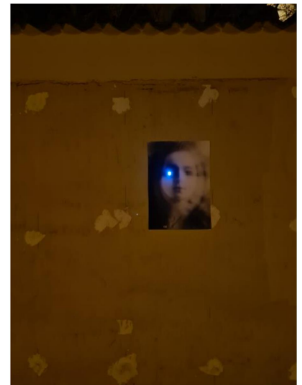
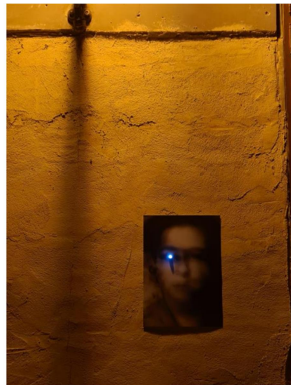
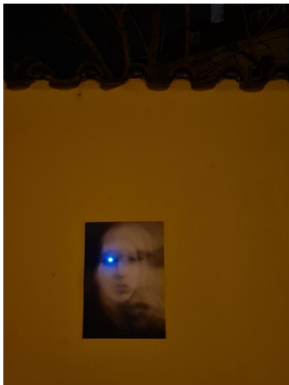
I don't know how interesting it is, but I remember it very well, because I was very frightened.

When the paralysis first started, and when I was still not used to it, I had a vision of a head appearing in front of me and looking at me. And, after a while, it flies into my face with an unpleasant loud sound and seems as if it "moves into" me, or something. It was just very

	unpleasant.
Anna Sobeschakova	<p>This has happened several times. In moments of maximum emotional stress, moral exhaustion and physical, bodily fatigue.</p> <p>I had a dream in a dream in a dream. Maybe even on the third level. I dreamed that I was dreaming and dreaming a dream. I saw myself lying in my bed. More precisely, not from the outside, but as in reality, with my own eyes and from my own position lying on my back.</p> <p>I don't remember what scared me so much, but I had to get up right away. It seemed to me that if I did not wake up right at the moment (not to fully awaken, but to wake up in a dream), I would no longer live. That I might die.</p> <p>I tried to get up, I tried to scream, but I couldn't do both. I mentally called out to my dad, trying to shout at the same time. It was a mad rush to break out of this state of fear. But not a single part of my body obeyed me. And no one could save me.</p> <p>When I was able to wake up with a wild effort, it felt like I was lifting a ton of weight and had experienced some kind of disaster. I think I was really sweating. I was out of breath, like I'd run a marathon. I wasn't even happy that it was over.</p> <p>This is about the most terrible case.</p>
Julia Shcherbakova	<p>In my understanding, sleep paralysis is usually when people see something that is not really there. They think that it's real. It wasn't quite like that for me. It was a half-lucid dream, since I was practicing it and already knew I was dreaming. Actually, I don't know how much I knew I was dreaming, but it was something on the edge of consciousness. I didn't see much of it. Just darkness. Or I don't know what it was. I don't remember much anymore. I remember that at some point, I started to wake up and I</p>

	<p>was very scared. I couldn't move or do anything. There was such a very strong sense of fear. I realized that I just had to wake up for this to end, and at some point, with an effort of will, I woke up.</p>
Michael Amico	<p>My sleep paralysis didn't happen in the middle of the night but rather just as I was falling asleep. I was at that point between consciousness and sleep when I could still just barely perceive things around me. Suddenly it felt like my breathing had stopped - like if I needed to tell my body to breathe again or I would suffocate. I had to fight my way back to consciousness as panic rose up inside me. It was like I was clawing myself out of a dream. When I did wake myself up it was like coming up out of some <b>deep dark water</b> and gasping for breath.</p>
The author's experience	<p>I had sleep paralysis several times when I was studying at the Moscow State University. It is likely that severe stress and lack of adequate sleep affected this condition.</p> <p>My very first sleep paralysis occurred at a time when sleep cycles were changing. I kind of woke up, but not completely. I was in a very sleepy state. I tried to move my legs and arms, but nothing worked. My eyes seemed to be open, and I could see the ceiling and part of the room. It was dark, but there was no one there. My brain was busy trying to figure out why my body wasn't responding to its signals. I was very curious why this was happening. However, unpleasant pulling and pressing sensations were still present. At that time, I did not know about the existence of sleep paralysis.</p> <p>My second sleep paralysis occurred sometime after the first one. It probably happened when it was almost time to get up. I realized this because I was driven into a state of sleep paralysis by my cat. She usually comes to sleep on my bed in the morning. As usual, she jumped on</p>

the bed from the side of the pillow and began to walk to my feet. At the moment of the jump, apparently from the fact that the bed abruptly began to move, my brain almost woke up. I knew it was my cat, but at the same time I couldn't move to say or to move her away from my face. She decided to smell my face and tickled me with her whiskers. I didn't like it very much, but there was nothing I could do about it. I felt the same tugging sensation in my body, and my brain was again curiously occupied with the question of why my body was not listening to it. I decided to wait until the cat went to sleep. When she finally left, I drifted into the last few minutes of sleep.



Picture 1. Fonina E. Elusive Darkness: Turn Your Eye Off, FAMU, 2020/2021



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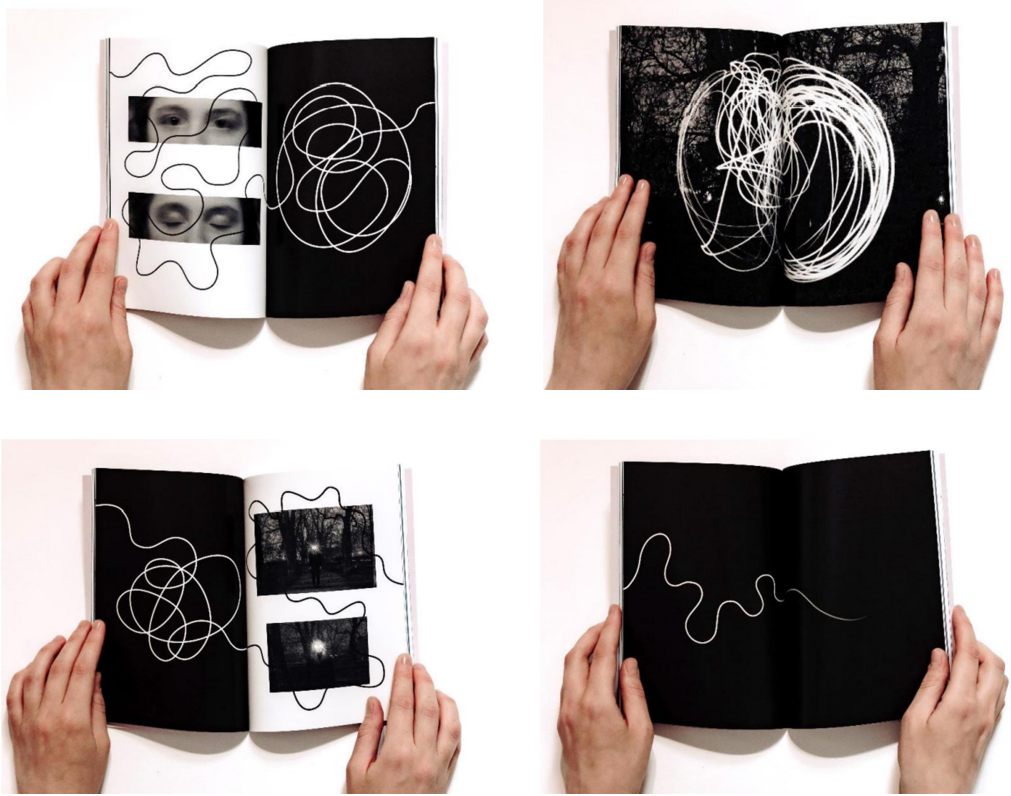
Picture 2. The Kodak slogan, 1888



Picture 3. La Lune. On the left: from the Marseilles Tarot by Alexander Andreev.  
On the right: Jean Dodal Tarot card deck, Lyon, XVIII century



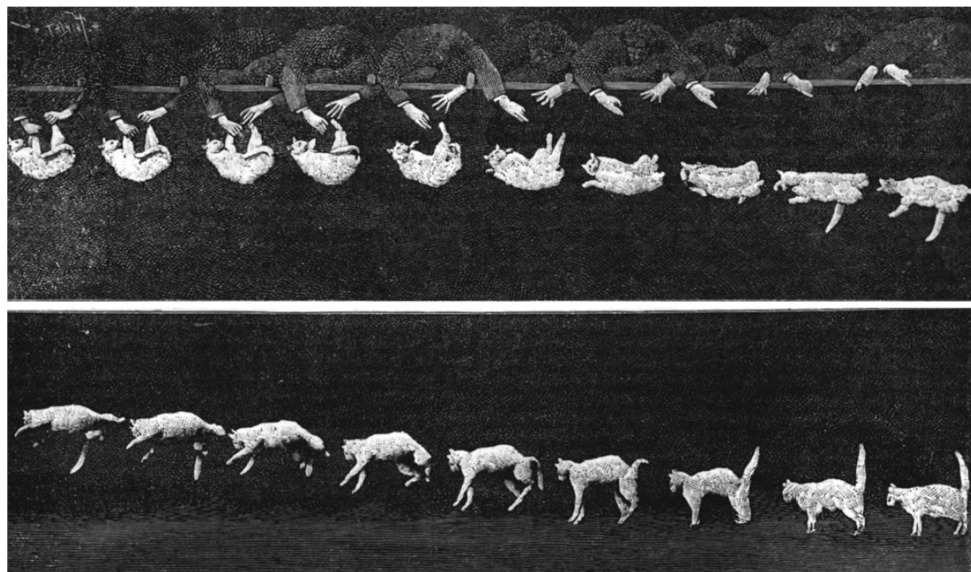
Picture 4. Fonina E. Vulnerable Emptiness, Altenburg 1964, Prague, FAMU, 2020/2021.



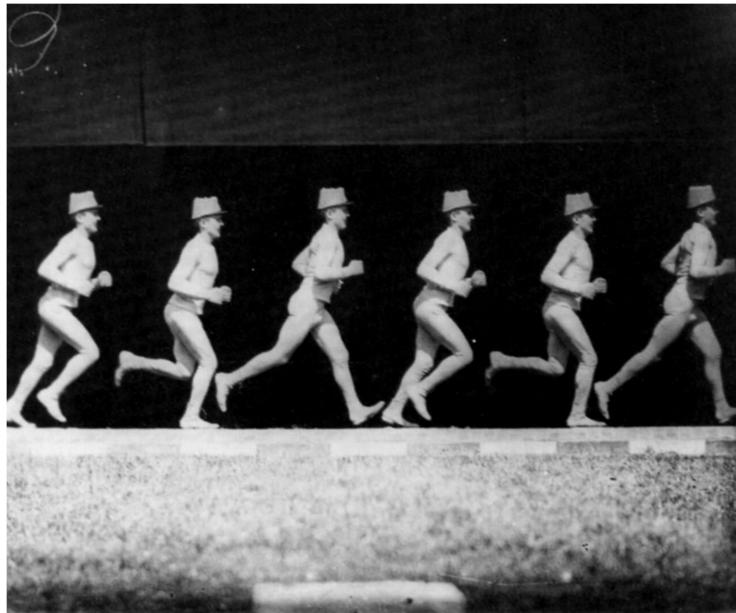
Picture 5. Fonina E. The Route from the 'Current Sees' book, FAMU, 2021.



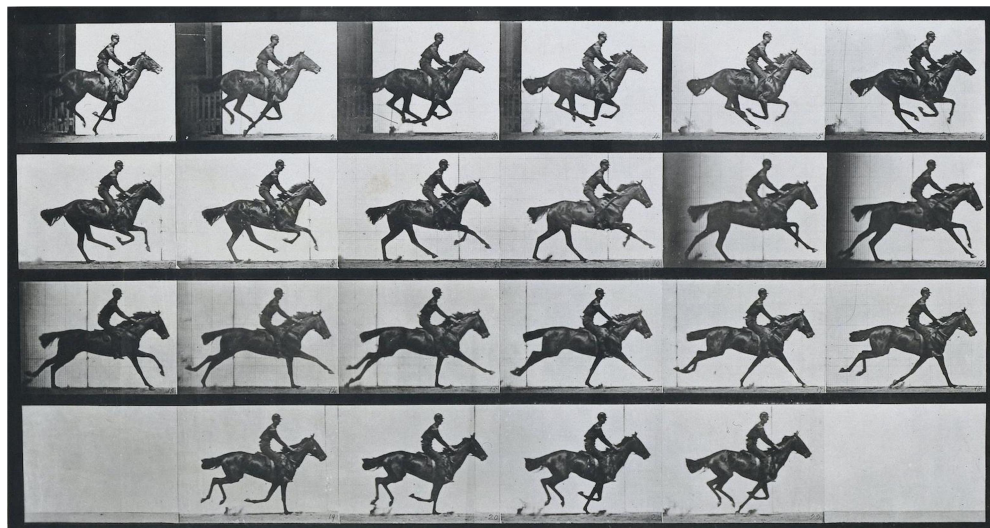
Picture 6. Francisco Goya, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (El sueño de la razón produce monstruos), c. 1799.



Picture 7. Étienne-Jules Marey, 19 consecutive frames demonstrating the cat's ability to land on four paws with a 180° flip in the air. The work was published in 1894 in the journal Nature.



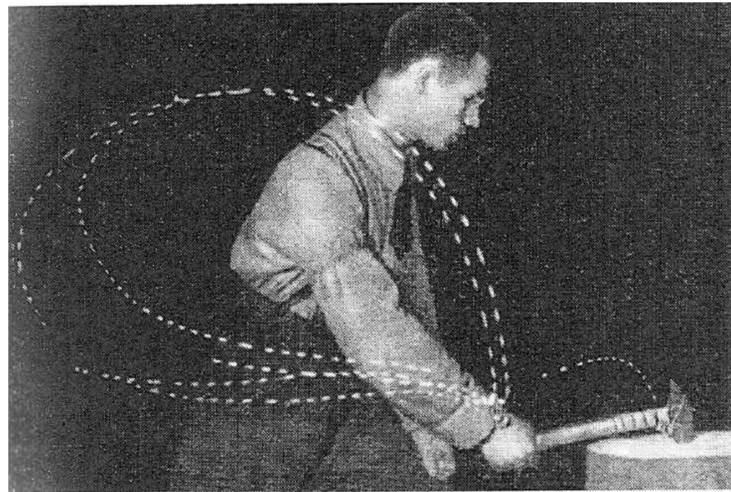
Picture 8. Étienne-Jules Marey, *The Running Man*, 1883.



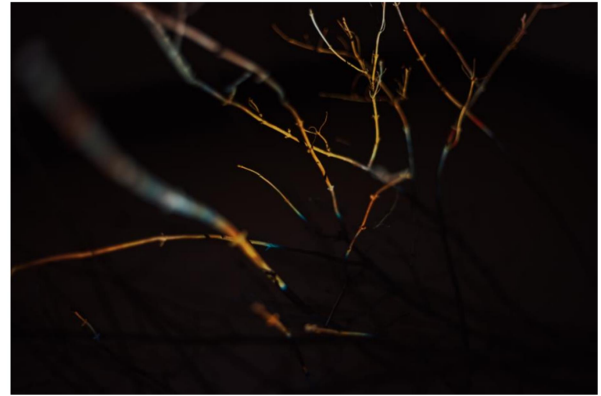
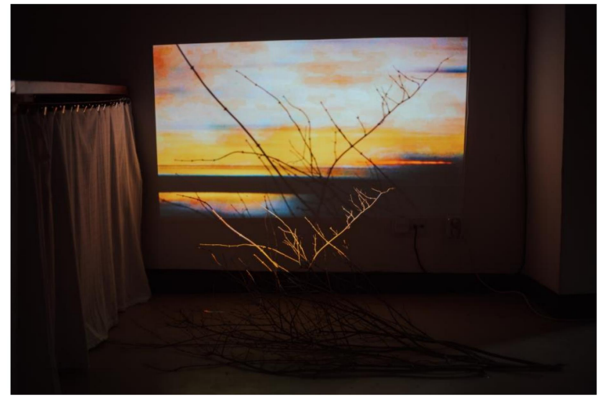
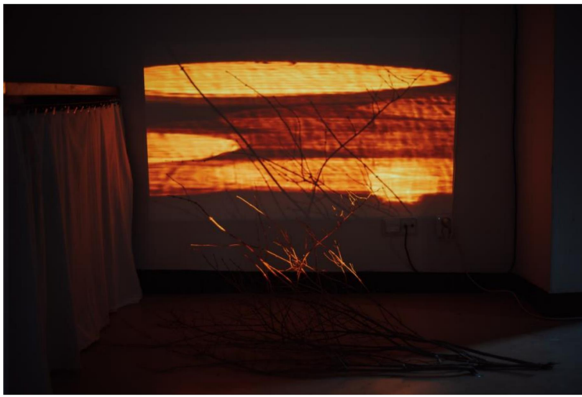
Picture 9. Eadweard J. Muybridge, *'Bouquet', Galloping*, 1887. Collotype on paper. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



Picture 10. Eadward J. Muybridge, Woman Dancing, Plate 187 from Animal Locomotion, 1884-1886.



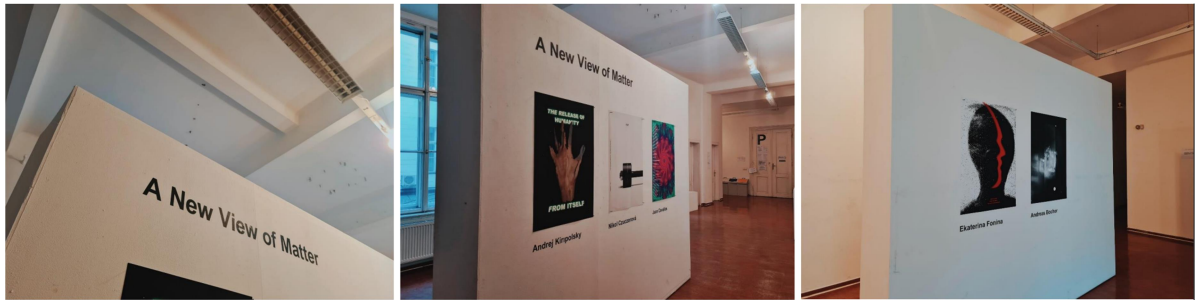
Picture 11. A cyclogram of cutting metal with a chisel and hammer.



Picture 12. Fonina E. Seen Unseen, 'We are fucked, but don't panic' exhibition, Prostor Olga, Prague, FAMU, 2021/2022



Picture 13. Fonina E. "Your Own Garden", triptych, screenprint, 2022.



Picture 14. "A New View of Matter" exhibition, Gallery Panel FAMU, digital print, 2022.





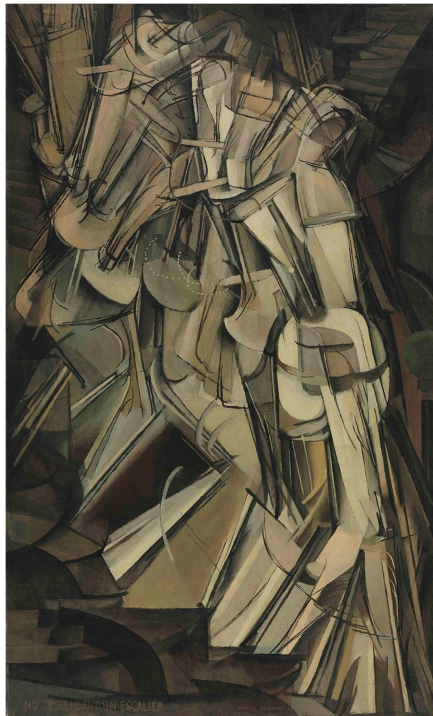
Picture 15. The Venus figurines, the Upper Paleolithic statuettes. On the left: the Venus of Hohle Fels or the Venus of Schelklingen, the earliest Venus figurine, c. 40,000-35,000 years ago. On the right: the Venus of Willendorf, c. 25,000 B.P.



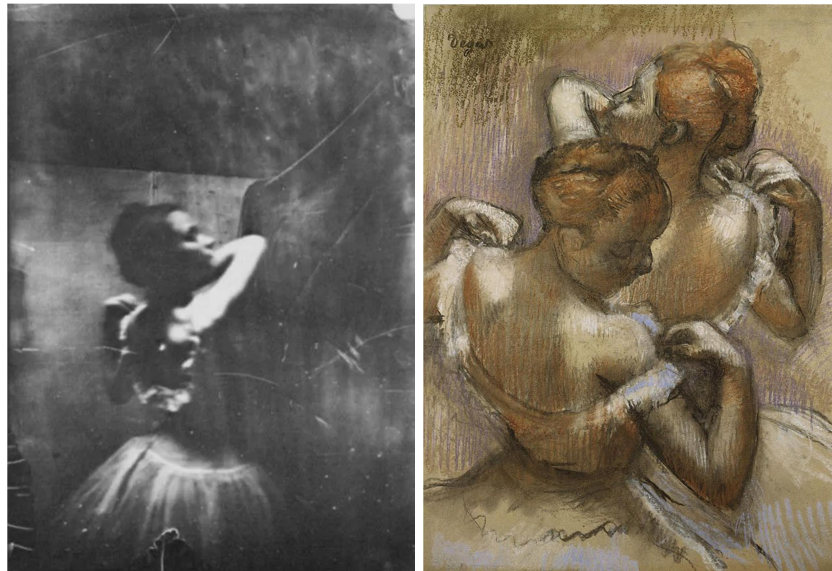
Picture 16. The judgment of the dead in the presence of Osiris, Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Hunefer, c. 1275 BCE.



Picture 17. Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece body canons. On the left: the Roman Emperor Trajan makes offerings to Egyptian Gods, Dendera Temple, Egypt. On the right: Polykleitos of Argos, Doryphoros, Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original, Museo Nazionale, Naples.



Picture 18. Marcel Duchamp, Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2 (French: Nu descendant un escalier n° 2), 1912.



Picture 19. On the left: Edgar Degas. *Dancer Adjusting Her Shoulder Strap*, c. 1895-96, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris, France. On the right: Edgar Degas. *Two Dancers Adjusting their Shoulder Straps*, c. 1897. Fine Art America.



Picture 20. Giacomo Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (Italian: *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio*), 1912.