

PAS DE TROIS FOR DANCE, PAINTING, AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The dance, painting, and philosophy triad depicts some sort of imbrication between these two artistic manifestations and philosophy, especially considering phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's writings on painting. Human body is hereby considered in its stillness, but depicted through the paintings of artists such as Degas, Matisse, and Toulouse-Lautrec, who in their paintings portray dancing as a premise to contemplate the human body. Such purpose will be reached through the genuine intersection of the works of painters that portray dancing in their works. This study aims to understand how the perception / sensation of a body in dance can also be expressed in painting, as well as to reflect on the status of the body and dance in the visual arts, particularly in painting through phenomenology. This present research is a qualitative descriptive study that uses phenomenology as a methodological approach from the perspective of esthesiology and its concepts, seeking to understand sensitiveness and the voices of silence.

Palavras-chave: Body. Dance. Esthesia. Philosophy. Painting.

Dancing is pointed out as an ephemeral type of art, since it is grounded in the moving body, and therefore in constant transformation, it can thus provide interesting sources of research, and an extended theoretical frame, which has been used to study it. In this article, we interact with painting, philosophy, and dancing to understand it from the perspective of painters such as Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Matisse, who have chosen the dance as a theme to be painted in some of their works.

The dance, painting, and philosophy triad depicts some sort of imbrication between these two artistic manifestations and philosophy, especially considering phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's writings on painting. Human body is hereby considered in its stillness, but depicted through the paintings of artists such as Degas, Matisse, and Toulouse-Lautrec, who in their paintings portray dancing as a premise to contemplate the human body. The relationship and interfaces with the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty take place in understanding these two languages of art as the voices of silence. The silence of the static gestures of dance in painting with its huge ability to create senses, and meanings, considering that it is language but it does not communicate by speech, instead, it communicates in its own way through the picture (canvas). Such purpose will be reached through the genuine intersection of the works of painters / illustrators that portray dancing in their works. This study aims to understand how the perception / sensation of a body in dance can also be expressed in painting, as well as to reflect on the status of the body and dance in the visual arts, particularly in painting through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. This present research is a qualitative descriptive study that uses phenomenology as a methodological approach from the perspective of esthesiology and its concepts, seeking to understand sensitiveness and the voices of silence.

The perception / sensation of a body in dance can be expressed in this artistic language itself and in painting. This statement initially answers the question raised in this article. For such statement we take, for understanding the concept of the perception of Merleau-Ponty. According to this French philosopher, perception must be acknowledged from the point of view of life, that is, of movement, which, in the vital plane of our beings-in-the-world condition, shows our experience of perceiving as movements toward existence.

The experience of perceiving requires, according to Caminha (2008), the concrete or phenomenal presence of something perceived with the senses. Therefore, it differs from thought in a strict manner, due to its sensitive character, which always brings us back to the emergence of the phenomenon perceived as being that phenomenalizes for us. Perception then comes from the manner in which one encounters the world through the movements of their body.

It is through the body that our relations with things and people occur, thus it is paramount to firstly perceive ourselves as the body that we are, with restrictions and possibilities at times unknown, so that, through this body, we perceive

the other and the world. The perception of the other is given by the empathy of two corporeities that communicate not as “I think”, but as “I feel”. The body is the subject of activity that acknowledges the perceived forms that appear to us as phenomenal manifestation of the world. The body that perceives turns the world into a “mean of behaviors”, in which whatever appears becomes present in a site that is both perceptive and motor (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004).

Degas dancers: the status of the body and dance

The painter takes his body with him, says Valéry. And in fact, it is not seen as a spirit would be able to paint. By lending his body to the world, the painter turns the world into painting. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions, but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004, p. 50).

Merleau-Ponty's quote makes us think about the status of the dancing body of the *Degas* dancers under his investigative gaze. The artist, in vogue, had access to the routine of classes, rehearsals, backstage and performances of the dancers, becoming one of the most important painters in the representation of the art of ballet. The charm of the movement encouraged *Degas* to perpetuate the expressions of the dancers, he was considered one of the representatives of this art style at that time. Hammond (2011) claims that the reasons that made the artist explore the theme of the dancers would be that they are the human beings who live and work with body movement and expression, and because they would also be perfect models of the female body. This French artist, in a certain manner, was giving expression to his art through the body of the ballet dancer and their dance.

Newall (2011) states that Edgar Degas was a lonely and difficult artist, not much to socialize with. However, as far as defending his artistic conception, he always did so in an intelligent and case-by-case manner. From the very start, he was one of the leaders of the group and throughout his life he created several works with the purpose to always evolve and improve his paintings (VALÉRY, 2003). Degas was most greatly acknowledged for works in which he portrayed horses, dancing, ironing, women in their toilets, and other everyday life scenes.

He always sought to improve trying to create complex compositions with many elements on the scene, portraying positions of greater technical difficulty that would make him work more cautiously and, in certain cases, with part of the theme out of sight, as if capturing the image in a photograph. He was an artist who used much of sketching to improve the shapes and positions chosen to create the scene of his works.

As a brilliant designer of his generation and strict observer of everyday life, Degas liked to create his fragmentary conceptions in artificial light, which rendered a magical dimension of spectacle. His thousands of dancers are constantly moving beings. As in photography, he would rather stick to the more complex body positions and balances, instead of seeking for the lightness and seductive grace of ballet. He brought to light how it was technically difficult both for the dancer to execute the movement herself, and for the painter who was ready to portray such movement. His passion for movement made his drawings quick and precise, showing his rare ability to challenge the immobility of a painting. Degas dancers always had some purpose in the scene, regardless of their postural placement, their bodies were always portrayed as having been aligned after a performance, or on the act of performing, or rather preparing to perform some activity. This passion for the movement is shown in a variety of works that portray the dance. The multiplicity of scenes, movements, scenic elements, and spatial notions in his works make it possible to read and reinterpret each scene projected on his dancers.

In his dancers, the quick movements were drawn as if they were observed without haste, in slow motion, step by step, so that these "interpolated movements" could revive imagination and become a source of invention and inspiration. The fascination of the dancers caused Degas to observe the female form in action, or quiet, in tension for the exercise effort, and in rest or bored, waiting for the next movement of the rehearsals (SPENCE, 2001).

For Spence (2001), the pictures made the artist think of what had always drawn his attention when watching a dance spectacle, the way the moving body acquires possibilities of balance, twisting, stretching; more than a study of composition to be developed for painting, his dancers were an attempt to understand the human body in movement, its dynamics, its muscle alterations, its points of balance and tension, its specificity as living matter.

Degas, the great master of moving figures, defined himself as a "realist". As any member of the circle of impressionist painters, he would draw sketches out of the studio to then finish the work inside. The French artist would capture the moving instant and the manner which the dancers expressed themselves.

Here is an example of one of his most famous works: *The Ballet Class* (1874), oil paint on canvas, measuring 85cm x 75cm. Degas' *The Ballet Class* is composed mostly by the representation of dancers. His preference justify why he is known as a dancer painter, as explained by Grove (2001, p.47) "[...] Even more than jockeys, Degas' ballet dancers have so far determined his popular image." He struggled to capture the universe of perfect movements of dancers along with the expressiveness that contemplated the souls of those women, and of the spectators of the 19th and 20th centuries.



Figure 1. *The dance class*, painting by Edgar Degas.
 source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The Ballet Class depicts the appropriateness of the proportion of the figures, and shows the great mobility of the body of the ballerinas. The scene painted by Degas takes place in a large room, the dancers, the main characters that make up the painting, are facing a man in the center of the room who reminds us of a *ballet* teacher, although he does not wear specific clothes for this practice, but he is wearing ballet shoes. The teacher holds on to a stick, which can be used to guide the rhythm, and around him several dancers gather in a semicircle. Some are paying attention, others are not, the teacher's class denoting a certain behavior, lack of attention in *ballet* class.

In this emblematic painting of a ballet class “[...] Degas depicts the deterioration of such underpaid job that seems so easy to do” (GROWE, 2001, p. 51). He shows the daily practice, as well as the exhausted bodies and the resting breaks of the class. It is possible to note that Degas does not ignore the props used by the dancers, because they are always using many accessories, such as earrings, loops, necklaces, and coiffure, which was trendy at the time the picture was painted.

Although one can perceive in the image a possible disinterest of some dancers for the class of the *maitre*, the body in this dance presents itself with a singular gesture and movement. The movements of *ballet* can be understood as oriented, or disciplined bodies. The body of the classical *ballet* presents strict rules regarding body aesthetics; a desirable body pattern for the ballerina, both for those who are professionals, and for dilettantes.

Within this scenario of technical requirements and body patterns, the senses of the experiences presented by the dancers show subjective formulations in relation to the ideal of body and what is necessary to achieve it. The body required in this universe is fundamental, regarded as a view to progress in learning and, for the dancer, it is not possible to avoid what has already been determined by the ballet culture and conveyed by the acknowledged best companies of classical ballet. A thin (even skeletal), longlineal body is expected, without many curves denouncing the woman inside the *tutu*.

The composition of the scene in the work is formed by clippings of ballerina emotions and sensations. Amid the vain behavior in front of the mirror and the search for the perfect steps, it is possible to perceive the apprehension and nervousness of some of the other dancers, since, showing correct movements in the judgement of the strict *maitre*, meant guaranteeing a prominent role in the routines of the next presentations.

Another important painting to reflect upon the status of the body in the works of Degas is the *Four Dancers Behind the Scenes* (1889). On this painting, Borba (2016) comments the “missing” parts of the end of the arm, hair, shoulder, legs and feet of some dancers. She claims that they are not really supposed to be shown, but to expand as art. “The image suggests that we go beyond the scene of discourse so that we ourselves conceive the form that it may *come to be*, outside the limits of formal, realistic, or beyond an *imitative*” (BORBA, 2016, p. 166).

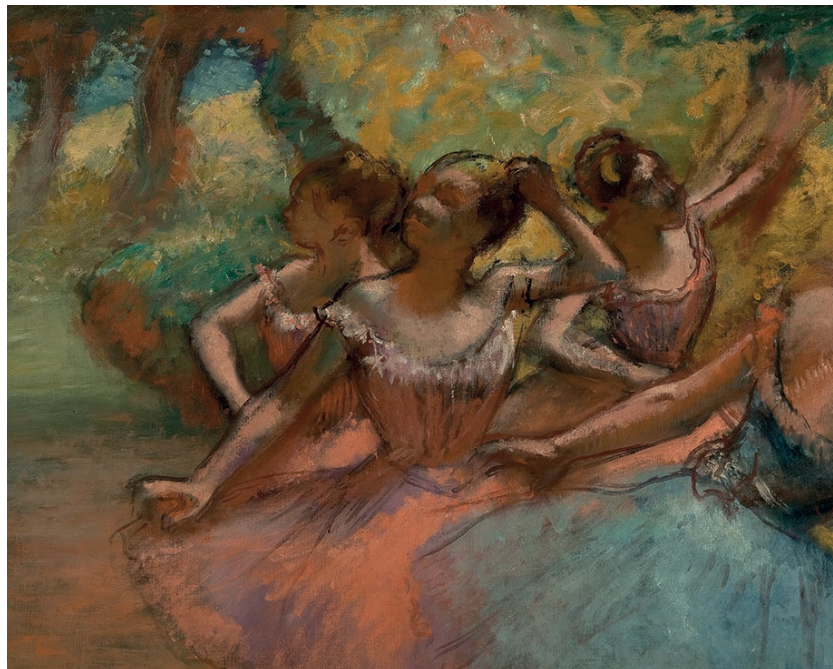


Figure 2. *Four ballerinas in scene*, painting by Edgar Degas.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The author also comments that the painting of the *Four Dancers Behind the Scenes* keeps the painter in front of the picture. That where he should be. If it is perceived as seen from above, it is due to the very expressiveness depicted. “[...] Tones, colors, forms denounce what Degas possibly intended: our perceptions should be in harmony, in a complicit or conflicted manner, with what could only arise from *poiesis*”. (BORBA, 2016, p. 166)

Degas portrays the girls on that picture in the aisle before entering the stage. Although all his paintings were created in his workshop, “[...] Degas, however, wanted the painting to appear spontaneous [...] his constant quest was to make the observers feel as if they were exactly there, at his side” (MÜHLBERGER, 2010, p. 46).

This painting shows a subjectivity of movement, even when the dancers are not on the scene or making the technical gestures typical of the classical *ballet*. Such bodies portray detailed movements in which the viewer’s subjectivity is sharpened to interpret the sensations promoted by the artist’s sensitivity in composing his works.

The feeling of those who appreciate them is always that of a movement. The result is always a movement that is characterized as a passing of an instant – an instant that only rests; it is ornamented with the potential of a new displacement. Deleuze & Guattari (1992) tell us that such sensation is built with emptiness, of itself within itself.

With regard to this same painting, we noticed that the dancers were not necessarily posing, ecstatically for the artist, but rather, they were surprised by the artist while in motion. Therefore, the artist’s look and movement had to follow on the same speed of the movement observed. Thus, thinking about the movement is mostly thinking about the mobility of those who draw. The movement of the completed drawing corresponds to a peculiar movement of the hand, wrist, arm, and the entire body of the artist.

Another relevant painting by Degas to reflect upon the status of the body in dance under the bias of painting and sensation is *Etoile or Prima Baillerina* from 1876. This painting by Degas depicts the body in motion of the first dancer, as well as its dynamics, its muscular alterations, its points of tension and balance, its specificity as living matter. Such specificity, according to Valéry (2003), imposes the movement. Motion and speed allow observers to better understand the appearance of the figure as a whole, keeping them from turning their attention to isolated parts.

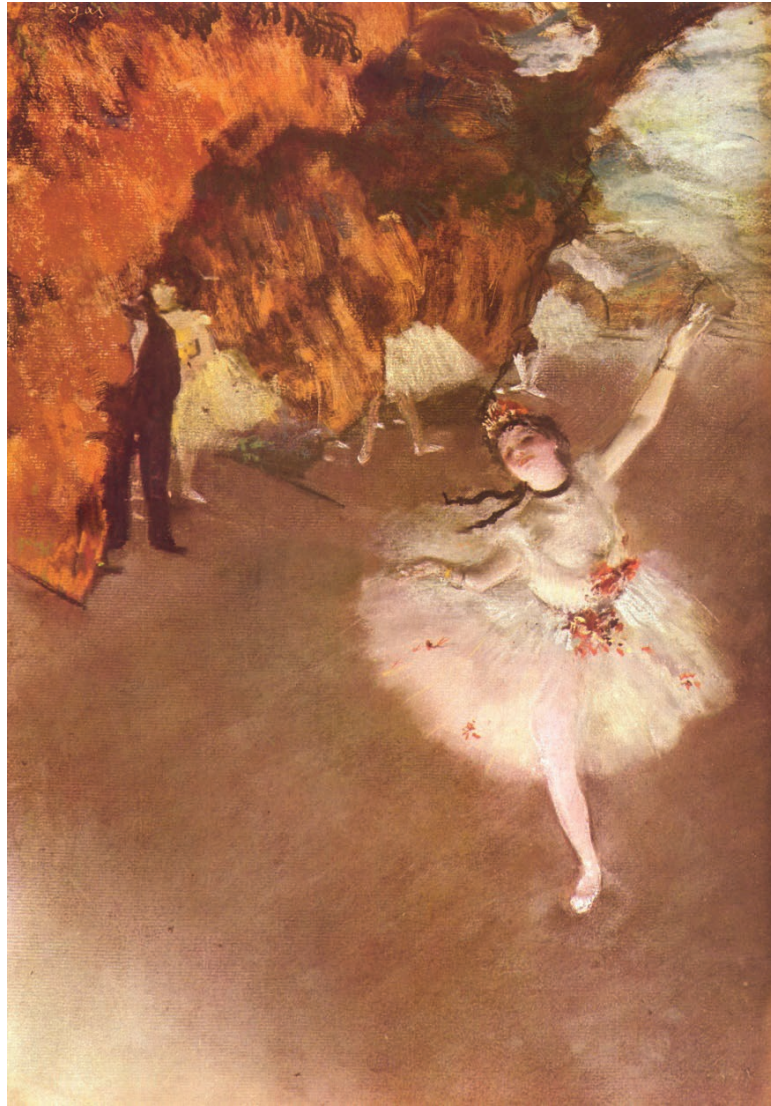


Figure 3. L'Etoile or Prima Ballerina, painting by Edgar Degas.
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

There are also three ballerinas in the quick-change rooms, as well as the presence of the *maitre du ballet*. As mentioned, the French artist also makes it obvious the “missing” parts or “disincorporation” of the figures of the dancers in the rooms and the dance instructor. The painter shifts the spectator’s look from the *Etoile* to the other dancers and their missing parts. This displacement causes a visual tension in the viewers, since they tend to automatically look at the center of the scene.

To unframe means to frame differently. Even in this picture there is the first dancer, there is a preponderance for the ground in this development. The scene is represented from an oblique point of view in relation to the stage and its composition. The discentration and consequent asymmetry reinforce the sense of movement giv-

en by the motion in the arabesque of the ballerina's arms, the balance in one of the legs and the foot positions of the other dancers in the rooms.

Costa (2014) states that the same alignment and body position of the dancer in this work can be found in several others. Degas chooses a view from the audience towards the stage to portray the solo of the first dancer. In the foreground there is the first dancer who is inside the stage portrayed bigger than the others and with delicacy through the light and detailed brushstrokes, differing from the second plane painted with stronger strokes where the forest scenario covers the rooms, and it is possible, as mentioned, to see a man and a dancer between the first and the second dancers. Right behind the soloist, there is also a third plan, in which there are dancers behind the second aisle waiting to enter the scene.

The reality that Degas portrays this time in the picture is not only the movement performed by the soloist on the scene, but what happens behind the scenes with the ballet group. The diagonal composition and the empty space in the lower left corner of the frame, draws the observer's attention not only to the main figure, but to the backstage of the spectacle as well. (COSTA, 2014, p. 69).

One must observe on *Etoile* the missing or the fragmented bodies: the first dancer is missing a leg, other fragmented bodies are missing upper limbs, trunk and head. We can think of the missing parts as a unity and plurality of the body and its parts; or even "[...] the body is present in every organ" (GIL, 2001, p.144), otherwise the body is everywhere. This sense of plurality can be observed in this analyzed work. The fragment simultaneously means the part and the whole and isolating is according to Deleuze (2011, p. 33-35) "[...] the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient to break with representation, to annul narration, to prevent illustration, to free the figure: to remain in the plane of the fact."

Accordingly, *Degas* must be removing body parts from his dancers to give them an identity and other senses to perceive the dance. And yet, his taste for ballerina paintings and his pictures bring the lightness, rhythm and smoothness, besides the sight of dancers at rest, rehearsing, in classes, tired, tying sneakers and fixing their skirts. Through its classical form, with light and impressionist reflexes, he observes the gestures of his protagonists in motion. His realism is not limited to an extreme formation of reality, it captures the essential and the most intimate, including the concept of everyday life.

It is noticeable that Degas had favorite positions and situations to portray the dancers, hands on the waist, dancers looking at their feet and tidying up their robes are recurrent in their pictorial works, thus numerous sketches in these positions were performed by the artist, in order to seek the perfection and detail of the body positioning in each movement.

The circularities of dance in Matisse

Matisse is another painter artist who gives us an insight of the moving body on the picture. *Dance I* (1909), *Dance II* (1910), *Jazz* (1947), a series of engravings made on cut paper, a technique that marks the artist's last works and *The Dance* (1932-1933), three oil panels on canvas, which are emblematic works to think of dance from the perspective of the *fauve* painter.

On the *Dance (I and II)* painting, oil on canvas measuring 259.7cm x 390.1cm (1909), and oil on canvas 260 x 391cm (1910), with two versions: the first, painted in March 1909, is the practice for the second, which was completed in 1910. The great work, inspired by the painting of William Blake *Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing*, was painted simultaneously with its companion work *Music*¹, which portrays naked characters playing music in a similar environment. The pieces were created especially for Russian art entrepreneur and collector Sergei Shchukin, who was a longtime associate of Matisse. This painting is often acknowledged as a key point in the development of Matisse's works of art, as well as in the development of modern painting. It is also often associated with the *Dance of the Young Girls* in *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky.



Figure 4. *Dance I* (1909), painting by Henri Matisse.
Source: www.googleimage.com

1 Only when seen together, they acquire their full resonance.

On the 1910 painting, we can see the expressive harmony of green, red and blue; five simplified figures of dancers and the idea of Man unified with the Earth and the Sky. On this painting “[...] The dancers grab by the hand, run through the hall involving the people who are far away [...] it is something extremely joyful [...] I didn’t need to warm up, this dance was in me” (MATISSE apud PLEYNET, 1994, p. 328).

Nóbrega (2008) states that in Matisse’s painting the world is not before the artist by representation, but it is instead a feverish event, crossroads where the ground and the lines, the contours slide under our feet. “This same attitude can be extended to the knowledge of the body, of the perception and the refusal of scientific, historical, philosophical or any other determinisms” (NÓBREGA, 2008, p. 143).

In the Matisse’s paintings cited, sensation is understood as perception, as movement. We refer to Nóbrega (2008) for this understanding when she says that sensation, according to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, is neither a state or a quality, nor the consciousness of a state or quality, as empiricism and intellectualism, but movement.



Figure 5. Dance I (1910), painting by Henri Matisse.

Source: www.googleimage.com

This painting draws attention to the simplicity of drawing, with its three basic elements, namely: dancers, an empty vastness of green, and another of blue, create an image in which the abstract relationships between shape and color are fundamental. We find distorted images, dynamic tension, rhythmic curves, and cut elements on the canvas, giving us the sensation of movement.

Five characters hold hands in order to create a circle as part of a whirlwind dance. The energy contained in the middle of the action is passed to the viewer through

the winding contours of the dancer's legs and feet at the end. The reddish-brown arms of the dancers are arranged on the blue background and they create a wavy rhythm throughout the image. Their anatomy is simplified to increase impact. As the middle dancer tilts her head forward, the curve of her shoulders becomes part of the ascending and descending patterns of her interlaced arms.

The diagonal pattern created by extended arms helps to keep the sensation of motion in the picture. At the top, on the right, the contour of the head of one of the dancers is cut off by the edge of the canvas, helping to give the impression of motion. At other parts of the painting, the characters cross or touch the edge of the canvas. Confinement causes the gaze to remain focused on the intentionally simple composition.

For Argan (1992), the picture has a mythical-cosmic meaning in which the (green) soil denotes the Earth's horizon, the curve of the world; the (blue) sky demonstrates the depth of interstellar spaces and the dancing figures are as giants between the Earth and the firmament. For the author, this is the picture of synthesis, of maximum complexity expressed with maximum simplicity. The painting was conceived by Matisse as an architecture of elements in tension in open space. The figures stretch and bend in the rhythm that transforms them and their beauty does not disassociate from the beauty of the space in which they move.

The picture expresses motion and rhythm derived from the rounded and bulky shapes of the dancing figures. These figures show a certain elegance (lightness of shapes), as well as a body and muscle strength that drives the movement. The figures conduct energy. The central lower figure, with an oblique position, acts as the "transmission shaft" of the clockwise ellipse movement, in a rhythm as if marking the time.

The movement and rhythm point to a certain dionisiac drunkenness (or enthusiasm) towards a liberation from human duality (in relation to Earth). For this purpose the red color (hot color), which can symbolize the fire that aspires to the heights, or the force of life, soon an initiation service, a divine strand; the tension suggested by the warm tone amid the cold colors (green and blue) is essential.

In *Jazz* (1947), there is a search for a "simplified representation", captured in its frontality. About this work, Erber (2013) states that it has cost the fauve painter at least two years of dedication. Although Matisse began using the *cut-outs*² on the model of *Dance*, Erber comments that "[...] he made sure to affirm this technique not as a mere preparatory exercise, but as a result of a long journey that did not imply a condemnation of oil painting". (Erber, 2013, p. 7)

2 The cut gouaches are a technique used by him, when his physical limitations, due to some health issues, prevented him from achieving other genera.



Figure 6. *Jazz*, by Henri Matisse.
Source: www.googleimage.com

The scheme of combinations with circus motifs, including a manuscript, evokes this musical genre, following a rhythmic structure that ends up marked by a sudden act of improvisation. The artist discovered a new form of expression and loosened the reins of freedom in that “inner garden” of organic forms that covered the walls of his habitat, perforating, for instance, the motion of the dance that has always captivated him with an imaginary of increasing degree and complexity.

Néret (1998) claims that most of the twenty-two pieces of the work, loyal to the title of the compilation, represent motion variations. Matisse’s album transposes a jazz discourse into the language of painting, exploring almost, until saturated, the expressive force of motion. The titles of the compositions are largely themselves mobility index.

About this composition, the fauve artist himself will say that the accuracy of the picture does not represent the truth. Therefore, “[...] the obvious anatomical and organic inaccuracy of the drawings does not hinder the intimate trait of the character’s essential expression of truth, rather, they help to express it” (MATISSE, 2007, p.194).

When considering such inaccuracy of the body in the works *Jazz* and *Dance*, we may give rise to the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty’s (1994) statement that it is not the physical object that the body may be compared, since the accuracy of its

shape, and the definitions of the organism do not represent the “absolute truth” of the subject, science, or philosophy, but rather to the work of art. In the two paintings cited, body parts are studied so that they become expressive. They are forms that go beyond anatomical accuracy.

Matisse’s images have a sound background, chromatic and rhythmic improvisations, as we also perceive in the Jazz theme. He releases the forms, which allows him to work with them and obtain a greater agility in the solution of his compositions that give the idea of movement. The cut-off form allows for its rapid displacement from one position on the surface to another, providing experimentation with the same figure in different areas of the surface before choosing a permanent location. Jazz, which is a work made with cuts, refers to the two-dimensional surface on which these cuts are placed.

Dance (1932-1933) makes us turn our gaze to this oil on canvas that is formed by three panels, namely: the left one measuring 339.7 x 441.3 cm, the center one measuring 355.9 x 503.2cm and the right panel measuring 338.8 x 439.4cm. This work was commissioned by Albert Barnes, a physician and art lover. He commissioned it to Matisse in 1931 for a wall of the main hall of his gallery, which housed works by Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne, among others.

Matisse created a model for the wall, made of cut paper, which he could rearrange as he built the composition. However, the finished work was too small for the space, due to incorrect measurements. Instead of adding a decorative edge, Matisse decided to recompose the entire piece, resulting in a dynamic composition, in which the bodies appear to jump through the abstract space of pink and blue fields.



Figure 7. *The Dance* (1932-1933), painting by Henri Matisse.

Source: www.googleimage.com

The content of the plastically formalized sensation in the work does not represent accuracy, instead, it depicts a precise relationship associated with the entire development of this work, in which one wishes to perceive such an openness to the other, similarly to its variations.

It denotes expressive and singular units to figures that do not correspond to a vertical axis that ensures objectivity to the natural vision. There are ripples and motion on the picture, intuitive shapes of possible declinations, with not so well-de-

fined body contours. The figures engage in the dynamics of a potential trajectory; they are the characters of their own movements. On this picture each character virtually condenses the trajectory of their movement, there is no petrifying; on the contrary, there is surrendering to the motion as a moving moebius strip.

The suggestive rhythmic fragments of dance refer to the missing parts making them look as if they were endless. The movement creates dancing images, in the form of feedback, producing reverberations. There is a movement of images that are always circulating off the axis. According to Araújo (2007), Matisse's *Dance* as in pulse, shows through a game of repercussions, successively alternating between forms and backgrounds, full and empty. The inside from an outside perspective, circumventing and clipping the contour inside and outside, in fullness and emptiness, letting oneself manifest partly afar and partly close; in *Dance*, the motion that flows out is not only the solution for a space, but feeling and existing through sensation.

In the referenced canvas of the fauve artist Henri Matisse, *Dance I and II*, *Jazz*, and *Dance*, more than just an outline, each curve and twist of the bodies insinuate by provoking spatial ramblings and movements. Thus, the totality of the pictures cannot be acknowledged at once by the observer since they are open as a whole, depicting the unfinished parts, but allowing us to see the body engaged in incessant movement.

Belle époque: the painting / dancing of Toulouse-Lautrec

Regarding the works of Toulouse-Lautrec, his posters on dance interests us. This French artist portrayed his interest in dancers, particularly those who attended the Moulin Rouge. In his posters the woman is the main representation, the center of attention, and the main source of inspiration for the artist.

In Toulouse-Lautrec's *Moulin Rouge*, dance and motion are important factors, and color is the basis of expression and is connected to the expression of spiritual and sensual values. The presence of women on the posters of this French painter signals their relevance for the artist. Appropriating the fame of some and the sensuality of all, he managed to arouse the desire of the people, persuading them to attend the show houses of that time.

Toulouse Lautrec's creations were influenced by Japanese art, Impressionism, and paintings by Edgar Degas. The artist visited the cabarets and brothels of Paris, capturing the nightlife of the belle époque in his pictures. He was mainly a printer, drawer, and painter.

The Moulin de la Galette was one of the most famous performing houses Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and his friends attended. La Goulue³ stood out among the dancers. Thank to La Goulue, the quadrille became a real show. This dance emerged as the cancan and had mostly become a dance exclusively for women. According to

³ She had gotten such nickname from being voracious for the pleasures of life, including drinking and eating. She often distinguished herself by walking through the halls emptying the clients' glasses.

Frey (1997), Toulouse-Lautrec loved a dance show, particularly with La Goulue. His drawings captured her silhouettes, affectedness, and arrogance. Because La Goulue was so popular in Montmatre, her posture suggests the frenetic and acrobatic movements of the cancan, caught in a precise instant. Framed by the flat caricature of the ballet dancer Valentin le Désossé, almost ethereal, on the first plane. Precise and diagonal strokes define the floorboards and the perspective. The silhouette of the audience in a semicircle that encloses the composition is a significant element.



Figure 8. *La Goulue*, poster by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec
Source: <http://www.pictorem.com>

At the Moulin Rouge, Toulouse-Lautrec met the dancer Jane Avril, with whom he developed a great friendship and affection, highlighting her often in his works.

In the spring of 1893, she commissioned him to produce an advertising poster so that her fans could buy it. In the first edition, the poster had 20 print runs, each one signed by the artist. But when he released it in the Jardin de Paris for the big crowd, the show house requested two more copies of the poster. By that same time, Jane's posters were already spread out all over Paris (FREY, 1997).

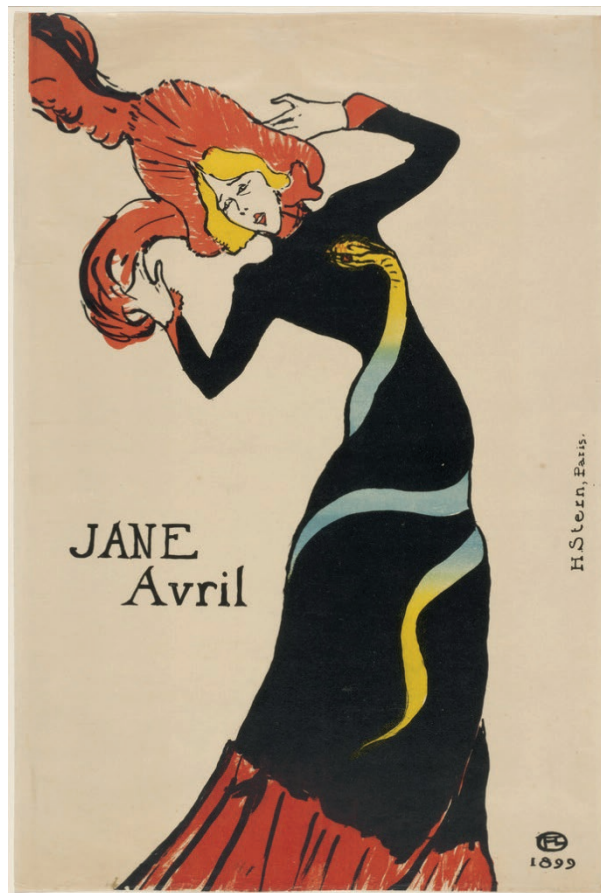


Figure 9 *Jane Avril*, Source: <http://www.janeavril.net>
poster by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Jane Avril's specialty was the cancan, but this is not the theme chosen by Toulouse-Lautrec for the poster. In this work there is a movement of fear and defense. Her body is bent to the left, highlighting all its sensual form. Her hands on the head represent fragility, while touching her feather hat, which covers her right hand. He chose to highlight Jane's sensuality, not only as a dancer, but also as an actress. She became popular and widely known due to his works..



Figure 10. *Jane Avril Jardin of Paris*, poster by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec
 Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The paintings of Toulouse-Lautrec highlight the dancers and prostitutes around the streets and night cabarets of Paris. They depict the oblique and decentralized perspectives inspired by Japanese engravings, the simple and confident traits, the dramatic colors and the flat shapes (BECKETT, 1997). His posters explore the silhouettes of the figures, achieving a symbolic visual element function and adapt to the function of the graphic pieces. They aim at the functionality and practicality of multiple impressions. Toulouse-Lautrec executed numerous announcements from the night houses, especially the *Moulin Rouge*, in which he immortalized Jane Avril, La Goulue and Yvette Guilbert. The caricatures retain the original traits of the depicted vedets, explored in an ironic and satirical manner.

Under the broadest risk: dance, painting, and philosophy

In Degas, Matisse and Toulouse-Lautrec the analyzed paintings, for the time be-

ing, give us the feeling of a continuous flow provided by missing and unfinished elements in these works. The works regard a possible tracking sensation shown in a missing arm or leg as observed in Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec, or in the absence or extent of unfinished elements, as seen in Matisse. The set gives the observer a relative view of such missing and unfinished elements, allowing them to see what is actually not there to be seen, subtracting adjacent information from the painting. The common logic of a movement or action is reversed on them, and the marks are evocative of what normally remains hidden and concealed in an object, the process.

In the artists cited, the body is a work / an object of art. For Merleau-Ponty (2004) the body is a work of art, and its language is poetic. The manner which this author regards the body as a work of art reminds us of the pictures of Degas, Matisse, and Toulouse-Lautrec as referred to in the text. It is a body that creates and re-creates the creation, becoming both singular and plural, and there is an embedded form of such singularity and plurality, expressing the unity in diversity, blurring the biological and the cultural worlds, taking on roles of subjectivity in a variety of personal, interpersonal, or collective instances, as configured in the body, which is both matter and spirit, flesh and image.

The French phenomenologist will also say that the body is sensitive and in uttering such writing quotes the painting to speak of such sensitivity. The experience of painting is described to demonstrate that there is an exchange between the artist's body and the object to be created. If it is true that there is a primacy of the visible in painting, it is important to realize that, when painting, the artist lends his whole body to the world to turn it into painting. It is also with the full body that we reckon not any specific painting, but a certain aspect of the world as depicted by such painting (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004).

Painting is then characterized as a practice that can dodge from moral concepts or cultural patterns. Unlike philosophy or literature, which always tend to a certain point of view, or explicit opinion, painting does not demand any appraisals from the painter. "The painter is the only one who has the right to look at all things without any demand of appreciation" (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004, p. 15).

Painting, as well as dancing, somehow tries to express all aspects of being, through the visual spectacle that celebrates the piece. It does not express only visual data; the smell, the touch, even the taste, in a painting or poster similar to the *Dance, Prima Baillerina* or *Jane Avril*, are conditioned to the visual, incarnated and expressed by it.

The painter, just as the choreographer, sees, feels, operates, and transforms the world from a particular, singular, own, successive perspective that is never equal, not even for himself. The body, in this sense, cannot be seen as fragmented, static, but as fundamental to living, to looking at things. Knowing the body leads to the need to overcome the notion of technical man, *homo faber*, adding to these notions the concept of imaginative man, one capable of creating and destroying ghosts, of creating and destroying taboos.

The dance bodies painted by Degas, Matisse, and Toulouse-Lautrec create meaning and in that process, they share the experience of their painters/artists who perform with their brushstrokes on the canvas the movements (steps) of a particular dance. As Merleau-Ponty (1999) notes, the body is not only a sum of juxtaposed organs, but a synergistic system in which all functions resume. The body is the common texture of all objects and, in relation to the perceived world, the general world of understanding is the place and the very actuality of the phenomenon of expression; where sensory experiences impregnate each other.

The paintings and posters of the artists mentioned show such sensitive and intelligible body, a phenomenological body that stroll through the hands of these painters to bring up to the surface the living robust culture of dancing classical, modern/contemporary ballet or cancan. The ballet world provided Degas with a wide repertoire, such as the resting, the rehearsal room, the tethering of the shoes, the technical exercises on the bar and on the stage; the cancan dance provided Toulouse-Lautrec with an opportunity to portray the spectacle of the daily life of the French cabarets and their dancers in ballrooms and brothels. Painting and body as a work of art are set in a field of possibilities for the experience of the sensitive, not as a thought of seeing and feeling, but as a reflection of philosophy. Philosophy in its making, as Merleau-Ponty (2004, p. 60) stated, is that which cheers the painter, “[...] not when he expresses opinions about the world, but when his vision turns into gesture, as Cézanne will say, he ‘thinks through painting’”.

Finally, painting and dance are constructs of our body, they are expression and every time one paints or dances what they construct, they elaborate the expressions of their bodies as a living experience in the world, they perceive and are perceived.

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