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Dance and Abstraction

Guest Editors:

Dr. Juliet Bellow

Department of Art, American
University, Washington, DC
20016, USA

Dr. S. Elise Archias

Department of Art History,
University of Illinois at Chicago,
Chicago, IL 60607, USA

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Message from the Guest Editors

Dear Colleagues,

The Special Issue focuses on the relationship between dance and abstraction broadly understood, encompassing explorations of non-objective form and "pure dance"; mediation and substitution; systems of economic circulation or technological data; racial constructs and the operations of subjecthood. In dance, visual art, and film prior to the 1980s, the body was often used in impersonal ways, as a manipulable and abstractable material, by artists who exploited both its general, universal qualities and its imbrication in the specificity of lived experience. Many works produced in this period also used the body to explore modern concepts of what makes a human being or experimented with bodies and forms of embodiment as they figured in collective political formations. The essays will show that abstraction, when conveyed through or combined with the performing body, is a crucial vehicle through which ideas motivating political and artistic practice have been given form over the past hundred years. Collectively, they provide a new framework for understanding both dance and abstraction, and are intended to promote further dialogue between the two fields.

Guest Editors



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Special Issue



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Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Dr. Andrew M. Nedd

Department of Art History,
Savannah College of Art and
Design, Savannah, GA 31402, USA

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Contact Us

Arts Editorial Office
MDPI, St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

Tel: +41 61 683 77 34
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