Labyrinthine Depictions and Tempting Colors:
The Synaesthetic Dances of Loïe Fuller as Symbolist Choreography

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ABSTRACT

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Labyrinthine Depictions and Tempting Colors: The Synaesthetic Dances of Loïe Fuller as Symbolist Choreography (246 pp.)

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This study explores Loïe Fuller’s use of synaesthesia to bring together various sensations so as to create a dreamlike effect in her choreography, while at the same time presenting a visual representation of symbolist ideals. On the music-hall stage she created popular ideas that had otherwise been restricted to small experimental theaters. In the visual arts, she became a constant public image of poster art as well as paintings, sculptures, and prints. She also dramatically presented the visualization of avant-garde color theories, while simultaneously representing symbolist ideals of the literary world.

By tracing her explorations with the other arts in the context of various artistic, scientific, and movement theories, Fuller’s work can serve as a model for interdisciplinary studies in the fine arts. In that regard, this dissertation considers an area of art practice, namely dance, that is commonly neglected by art historians as many are not fully aware of how integrated an art form it is.

The results of this study reveal that the choreography of Fuller is a visual representation of symbolist ideals through her use of synaesthesia. Fuller found contradictory and highly individualistic ways to communicate moods, emotions, and colors in her choreography, and she communicated personal messages of a spiritual, moral, or religious nature through a variety of senses. By tracing her explorations with
the other arts in the context of various artistic, scientific, and movement theories, Fuller’s work serves as a model for interdisciplinary studies in the fine arts. In that regard, this dissertation also considers how dance in itself incorporates movement, music, visual arts, and philosophical and aesthetic ideals.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

William F. Condee
Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts
For my husband, Henry C. Kappel IV
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of DVD Images</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Loïe Fuller</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuller Scholarship</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller in Historical Context</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuller’s Choreographic Contemporaries</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isadora Duncan</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mikhail Fokine</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaslav Nijinsky</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth St. Denis</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Synaesthetic Methodologies</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synaesthesia and Color Hearing</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuller and Synaesthesia</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Symbolist Methodologies</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolist Choreography</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Analysis of Fuller’s Work</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Photograph, <em>Serpentine</em> Dance, Edison Art Company</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller, Otto Sarony</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Andrea Mantegna, <em>Saint Sebastian</em></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller, 1893, Photograph</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller, 1893, Photograph, Reutlinger</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller in costume for “Dance of the Serpents”</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller, Photograph</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>U.S. Patent Drawing No. 518, 347; April 17, 1894</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller, <em>Lily</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Fire Dance</em> or <em>The Dance of Flame</em></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller in <em>Fire Dance</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller as Salomé</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Loïe Fuller as Salomé</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Gustave Moreau, <em>Salome Dancing before Herod</em></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Loïe Fuller Théâtre, Paris Exposition Universelle</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Théâtre Loïe Fuller, Henri Sauvage</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pierre Roche, <em>Loïe Fuller, Drame</em></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pierre Roche, <em>Loïe Fuller, Comedie</em></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pierre Roche, <em>Loïe Fuller: Fire Dance</em></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pierre Roche, <em>Loïe Fuller</em></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 21: Edouard Houssin, *Loïe Fuller* .................................................................69
Figure 22: François Carabin, *Loïe Fuller* .................................................................70
Figure 23: François Carabin, *Loïe Fuller* .................................................................71
Figure 24: François Carabin, *Loïe Fuller* .................................................................72
Figure 25: Théodore Rivière, *Loïe Fuller: Lily Dance* ..............................................73
Figure 26: Théodore Rivière, *Lily Dance* .................................................................74
Figure 27: François-Raoul Larche, *Loïe Fuller, the Dancer* ......................................75
Figure 28: François-Raoul Larche, *Loïe Fuller Lamp* ...............................................76
Figure 29: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / La Danse du Feu* .....................................79
Figure 30: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / Loïe Fuller* ...............................................80
Figure 31: Jules Chéret, *Loïe Fuller* .........................................................................81
Figure 32: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller* ..........................................82
Figure 33: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller* ..........................................83
Figure 34: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller* ..........................................84
Figure 35: Jules Chéret, *Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller* ..........................................85
Figure 36: Jean de Paléologu, *La Loïe Fuller* ..............................................................86
Figure 37: Jean de Paléologu, *Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller* ..................................87
Figure 38: Jean de Paléologu, *La Loïe Fuller/ Folies-Bergère* ..................................88
Figure 39: Georges Meunier, *Folies-Bergère/Loïe Fuller* ..........................................89
Figure 40: Fernand Sigismond Bac (Bach), *La Loïe Fuller / aux Folies-Bergère* ........90
Figure 41: Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Study of Fuller at the Folies-Bergère* .................91
Figure 42: Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère* .......................92
Figure 43: Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère* .........................93

Figure 44: Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère* .........................94

Figure 45: Isadora Duncan, Photograph .................................................................101

Figure 46: Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera* .................................................................105

Figure 47: Isadora Duncan, *Three Graces* ...............................................................106

Figure 48: Isadora Duncan in the Garden, Photograph .............................................107

Figure 49: Nijinsky as Petrouchka, Photograph ........................................................110

Figure 50: Nijinsky as Petrouchka, Photograph ........................................................112

Figure 51: *L’après-midi d’un Faune*, Nijinsky as the Faun, Photograph ..................113

Figure 52: *L’après-midi d’un Faune*, Faun with Nymph, Photograph .......................114

Figure 53: Ruth St. Denis, *Radha* ........................................................................117

Figure 54: Alexander Rimington, Photograph, Color Organ .....................................129

Figure 55: Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition* ..........................................................144

Figure 56: Gustave Moreau, *The Suitors* ...............................................................154

Figure 57: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................174

Figure 58: Loïe Fuller, Hand painted frames from film image ....................................181

Figure 59: U.S. Patent Drawing No. 533, 167; January 29, 1895 ...............................186

Figure 60: Loïe Fuller, Photograph ...........................................................................187

Figure 61: Loïe Fuller, Photograph ...........................................................................188

Figure 62: Loïe Fuller, Photograph ...........................................................................189

Figure 63: Isaiah West Taber, Photograph ................................................................190

Figure 64: *Loïe Fuller*, Photograph, c1896 ............................................................191
Figure 65: Isaiah West Taber, Photograph .................................................................192
Figure 66: Loïe Fuller, Photograph.............................................................................193
Figure 67: U.S. Patent Drawing No. 513, 102; January 23, 1894 ..............................198
Figure 67a: Loïe Fuller Imitator, Photograph.............................................................194
Figure 68: Loïe Fuller, *Fire Dance...........................................................................199
Figure 68b: Jody Sperling (Choreography in the style of Fuller), Photograph ..........195
Figure 69: *The Serpentine Dance*, Will Bradley........................................................171
Figure 70: *Laocoön and His Sons*, Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros......172
Figure 71: Poster, *La Loïe......................................................................................173
Figure 72: Top: Loïe Fuller; Bottom: Brygida Ochaim...............................................213
Figure 73: Jody Sperling, *Magic-Lantern Dance.....................................................214
Figure 74: *Water* from *Dance of the Elements*, Jody Sperling ..............................215
Figure 75: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................216
Figure 76: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................217
Figure 77: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................218
Figure 78: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................219
Figure 79: Jody Sperling, Photograph ......................................................................220
LIST OF DVD IMAGES

DVD 1: Lindberg, Jessica. *Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance*......................... see attached DVD
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twentieth century, dance shifted away from traditional ballet structures, expanding its boundaries through a new sense of freedom, thereby creating modern dance. Many choreographers borrowed elements from a variety of “exotic” cultures, Indian, Chinese, Javanese, and Japanese (Anderson, 158), combining this newly found liberation with a sense of artistic enthusiasm, which often resulted in a unique contribution to concert art dance. Modern dance discarded the strict formalities of classical ballet to explore different physical forms and philosophies (Friesen, 99). The most obvious departure is that the modern dancer is not restricted by pointe shoes, allowing dancers a much more aggressive and expressive range of motion.

Modern dance in itself is difficult to define. It is not so much a specific technique, as it is an attitude toward dance, one that encourages individualism and personal creativity. Anderson states in his general dance history text Ballet and Modern Dance: “Modern dance can be likened to the phoenix, the magical bird of Arabian mythology that, after living out a cycle of years, regularly burned itself on a funeral pyre, only to rise renewed from its ashes. The phoenix of the arts, modern dance has had its own cycles of creation, and it remains in a perpetual state of metamorphosis” (165).

1 Pointe shoes are used by ballet dancers when dancing sur les pointes, or on the tips of the toes (Cohen, 1962, 21). The satin shoes were first padded with cotton wool and then later stiffened with glue and darned, or blocked, to give the shoe extra support. Today the toes of pointe shoes are reinforced with a box constructed by several layers of strong glue in between layers of material. Some boxes are even made of more modern materials (Grant, 89).

2 This image of the phoenix rising from the ashes is symbolic not only of dance, but also the purpose of this work, to discuss the connection of Loïe Fuller and her choreographic work to the Symbolist movement through the use of synaesthesia.
Similarly, the trends in modern dance embody the mood of the transitory, constantly morphing, period to the twentieth century. The modern dancer is grounded, works barefoot, and cooperates with gravity rather than seeking to defy it (Freisen, 99). Modern dance choreography explores the effects of gravity through the incorporation of swinging and falling motions, and utilizes the center of the body as the initiation. By down-playing the fairy tale roles typical of romantic and classical ballet, as well as the elaborate spectacle and pageantry, early modern dancers abstracted pedestrian movement representative of the common person and his or her relationship to society (Anderson, 157-159).

As a representative of how early modern dance rebelled against the rigidity of classical ballet, Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) developed her own style of dance that laid the foundation for future choreographers. Conceptualizing her idea as a moving image produced by swirling silk illuminated by multicolored lights, Fuller built upon popular entertainment in Paris and London in the late nineteenth century (Sperling, 2001, 1-3). The panorama, diorama, phantasmagoria, and magic lantern shows used colored lights projected on a static screen (Sperling, 2000, 1-3). Instead of having a moving picture on a stationary backdrop, Fuller inverted these performances and moved the screen that was her costume into fantastic shapes and mystical images. In her article, Loïe Fuller, Sally Sommer states, “Like many innovative artists, she possessed the ability to coalesce certain theories, activities, and modes of performance already being practiced into a singular form—and then to add to them individual contributions of great originality” (54). As Fuller danced, she fused dance, light, color, costume, and body into a single, mysterious, visual image.
Fuller stated in an interview published in *Éclair* (May 5, 1914):

> I wanted to create a new form of art, an art completely irrelevant to the usual theories, an art giving to the soul and to the senses at the same time complete delight, where reality and dream, light and sound, movement and rhythm form an exciting unity.

> Specialists of the dance do not understand that I aim only to give an harmonious impression trying to express the spirit of the music. I intend to continue it, in some way, to continue it as the waves unfurling on the shore continue to obey the breath of the wind. I try to follow thus the musical waves in the movements of the body and in colors; I am trying to create a harmony between sound, light and movement (qtd. in Sommer, 1981, 390).

Her goal of creating a new art form through expression combining a variety of senses was grounded in expressing the “spirit” of the music through color and movement.

This study argues that Fuller’s intention to create a new artistic dance form embodies the mystical ideals of the Symbolist movement, espousing a participation of the different senses in the creation of art where the creative act becomes a synaesthetic transformation of artistic experience. Fuller’s choreography transcends visual form bringing together various sensory experiences to create a dreamlike effect in her choreography consonant with Symbolist ideals. I will therefore suggest that Fuller, striving to express experience through symbolic forms, fits into the greater historical context as a founder of Symbolist dance. Symbolist artists and writers valued unity of

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3 For the purposes of clarity, the movement referred to as Symbolism will be represented with a capital S; the idea of symbolism in its ordinary reference to symbols will be represented with a small s.
experience in art, and dreams were perhaps the most frequently invoked alternative to conscious perception for nineteenth-century philosophers and poets. By focusing on Fuller’s choreographic development at the turn of the twentieth century, it will be shown that her sensibilities held a specific ideal of mystery manifested in all the arts of the period—literature, visual art, music—that only Symbolism idealized. I will examine Fuller’s choreographic development and her place within the history of theater and dance. I will also discuss the ways in which Fuller’s choreography, specifically *Serpentine* (c. 1891) and *Fire* (c. 1895/1896) dances, reflects synaesthetic theories common among the Symbolist movement and produces a visual representation aligned with that ideal.

**History of Loïe Fuller**

Dancing barefoot, Fuller introduced two new elements into concert art dance: freedom of movement and the solo form. Much of Fuller’s work centered on the imaginative transformation of nature through the use of symbols. Those symbols were created through the combination of costume, movement, music, and lighting effects. Illuminated by colored lights that she designed and patented, Fuller transformed her body through the use of a long billowing skirt into a kinetic sculpture that blended light and movement (Sommer, 1981, 390). Changing accepted concepts of technical virtuosity, she focused on the creation of symbolic, illusive images.

Mary Louise (later to be known as Loïe) Fuller was born in Fullersburg, Illinois, on January 22, 1862. Shortly after her birth, the Fullers moved to Chicago. There, her father opened a tavern, complete with entertainment, and her mother worked as a singer.

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4 Sometimes Fuller is photographed or depicted as wearing *pointe* shoes or a type of heeled shoe. Further study will determine if these shoes were remnants of the romantic ballet era, since Fuller did not need ballet shoes to perform her technique.
The combination of the two probably fascinated Fuller, and it was natural that she would have embarked on a theatrical career. As a child, Fuller studied singing at the Academy of Music in Chicago and had parts in several musicals, as well as various theatrical roles. In 1878, she moved to New York for a part in Dion Boucicault’s *The Shaughraun*, and during the next twelve years gained a wide range of stage experience. She quickly transformed from “Mary Louise Fuller from Chicago” to “Marie Louise” then “Louise,” “Lois,” and emerged as “Loie Fuller from New York” (Harris, 16). Performing in vaudeville roles, stock companies, and burlesques, Fuller even took some male roles in several productions. In 1889, she went to London and made her debut at the Globe Theater in a production called *Caprice*, which received mixed reviews from the critics. For some, the play was seen as “dull and childish,” but Fuller was referred to as “fresh, quaint, original and pleasing” (qtd. in Wearing, 69).

Fuller spent a little over a year in London as a successful member of the Gaiety players, performing as a skirt dancer. Skirt dancing was a very popular vaudeville form where steps and acrobatic kicks were performed in a skirt that would show just enough leg to keep male spectators interested (Hardy, 253). Kate Vaughn (1852-1903) created what was called the skirt dance at the original Gaiety Theater around 1876. Much of the grace of skirt-dancing depended upon the posture and balance of the body. Many of the most difficult movements were only possible to those who possessed the gift of balance to a marked degree, while even ordinary movements were made extraordinary by those

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5 The evolution of Fuller’s name from “Loie” to “Loïe” is discussed later in this chapter. 6 Dancers prior to Vaughn wore the conventional Italian wardrobe, a long dress, similar to that worn in ballet. This type of “costume” hampered many dancers’ abilities, while the new form of skirt dancing relieved this burden. The skirt was the main theme in the dance, but proper arm styling was just as important. The dance consists of kicking, hopping, gliding, posing and turning, similar to the ballet of the times.
with an obvious facility of balance. The grace and agility of any talented skirt dancer, such as Alice Lethbridge, made many of the movements famous, such as a magnificent revolving movement (later to be known as the “waltz movement”), which greatly depended upon a sense of balance and control (Hardy, 253).\(^7\) Thousands came to see Vaughn and Lethbridge dance the new art form of skirt dancing, as they were considered to be some of the best skirt performers at that time, and, as a result, imitators seemed to be prevalent throughout Europe and America (Hardy, 252).\(^8\) This new type of skirt dancing was a sensation and although this type of dance influenced Fuller, she wanted to expand on these simple “skirt dances” and make them stand for something more.

By 1891, having moved back to New York, Fuller’s career took a new direction when she performed the first rendition of her *Serpentine* dance. Appearing in a play called *Quack, M.D*, wearing a gauzy, flowing costume, Fuller twisted and turned with soft music on a dimly lit stage as part of a hypnotism scene. Although the play soon closed, she had found her form in the exploration of light and movement. A reviewer for the *New York Spirit of the Times* wrote:

_Suddenly the stage is darkened, and Loïe Fuller appears in a white light which makes her radiant and a white robe which surrounds her like a cloud. She floats around the stage, her figure now revealed, now concealed by the exquisite drapery which takes forms of its own and_

---

\(^7\) When Lethbridge first introduced this movement, she did not give it any special name, and merely called it the “waltz movement.” The movement consists of dancing the ordinary waltz, and suddenly bending the body backwards, until it is almost at a right angle. In this position the body slowly rotates around its own axis, and moves around in a big circle (see fig. 1). The swaying of the body in slow time to the rapid movements of the feet, and the effect of the waving skirts, lend an air of grace to the dance. (Bremser, 2)

\(^8\) Not all performers used a full-length skirt; some dancers used scarves to create the billowing effect of the fabric. Others used an elongated skirt, but instead of attempting Lethbridge’s “waltz movement” with a backbend, they chose to keep the fabric on the floor and create a swirling motion (Hardy, 253).
seems instinct with her life. The surprised and delighted spectators do not know what to call her performance. It is not a skirt dance, although she dances and waves a skirt. It is unique, ethereal, delicious. As she vanishes, leaving only a flutter of her robe upon the stage, the theatre resounds with thunders of applause. Again she emerges from the darkness, her airy evolutions now tinted blue and purple and crimson, and again the audience rise at her and insist on seeing her pretty, piquant face before they can believe that the lovely apparition is really a woman. Let us have the Serpentine Dance at the Casino and it will be the talk of the town. (*New York Spirit of the Times*)

In the development of the choreography for *Serpentine* dance Fuller demonstrated some practical reasons for her dance expression, stating that she had a costume that was much too large for her (Fuller, 31). The robe was so long that she constantly stepped on it. Compensating by lifting her arms in the air, she began to flutter around the stage (see fig. 2); the audience, recognizing that she looked like a butterfly, applauded with great enthusiasm. This led to Fuller’s exploration of this type of dance choreography utilizing the manipulation of fabric.
Figure 1. Photograph

*Serpentine Dance*

Edison Art Company
Figure 2. Loïe Fuller

Otto Sarony- photographer

Photograph

c. 1890-1910

New York Public Library, New York

b&w

15 x 10 cm

mounted on board 17 by 11 cm
Fuller’s first choreographic program, the minor musical *Uncle Celestin*, was presented in New York at the Casino Theater on February 15, 1892. A dispute over salary caused her to leave there and move to Madison Square Theater, where she remained until the end of June, 1892. The Casino Theater immediately replaced Fuller with a performer named Minnie Renwood, who was the first of many imitators who plagued her career. Fuller did have the foresight to copyright her dances and brought suit against Renwood. However, her claim was denied because:

The merely mechanical movements by which effects are produced on the stage are not subjects of copyright where they convey no ideas whose arrangement makes up a dramatic composition. Surely these described and practiced here convey . . . to the spectator no other idea than that a comely woman is illustrating the poetry of motion in a singularly graceful fashion. (“Fuller v. Bemis,” 929)

With our modern day understanding, it is difficult to imagine why anyone would perceive of these dances conveying “no other idea.” If the choreography is illustrating “the poetry of motion,” then it becomes obvious that Fuller’s dances stood for something more. Although disappointed by the outcome of the suit, Fuller responded by concentrating on her work more intensely.⁹

Even though she lost the suit and imitators watched her choreography closely, Fuller had perfected five dances and wanted to present them in Europe. Dancing in Paris was her dream, but without proper financing that seemed unrealistic. She persevered and received a position performing between different acts at the Paris Opera. To her dismay,

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⁹ Today one needs to acquire the proper copyright authorization to perform another’s choreographed dance.
however, when she arrived, she found an imitator, Mabel Stuart, already performing the *Serpentine*\(^{10}\) dance at the *Folies-Bergère*. Fuller immediately went to watch her, and seeing that she was not a threat, persuaded the director to review her original choreography. Impressed by her work, the director immediately replaced Stuart with Fuller.

Making her debut at the *Folies-Bergère* on November 5, 1892, Fuller performed four original dances: *Serpentine, Violet, Butterfly*, and a dance that was later named *La danse blanche*. The audience reacted with enthusiasm because of the synaesthetic use of color in motion. One reviewer wrote of her:

I know well that symbolism, occultism, and neocatholicism are the fashion. They distract us, at least from everyday life…And I explain to myself the great success of Loïe Fuller by the feeling she gives visions of the infinite. She is not a woman of flesh and bone and brown hair. She is an apparition equal to those ideal creatures that one perceives, restless, seductive and unreal in the paintings of Mantegna…One’s eyes follow Loïe Fuller who undulates and turns like a dervish, as a child follows from afar the slow flight of the dragonfly, whose iridescent wings have exactly the changing reflections of the robe of the American… (qtd. in Holmes, 117)

Fuller provides a vision of the infinite. She is a distraction from the mundane world, an escape from reality into a mystical vision with “iridescent wings.”

Even in this review, the reader gets a sense that Fuller represents something more

\(^{10}\) “Serpentine” had become both a specific and a generic term: it referred to a particular dance of Fuller’s but also to her style of dancing in general.
than her physicality; her image stands for something symbolic. Fuller’s body, as well as her choreography, was identified as a flawless work of art in motion.

In the connection of Fuller’s image and choreography to the subjects in Mantegna’s paintings, it is necessary to compare the two. The subject’s body in Andrea Mantegna’s (1431-1506) painting *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1460 (see fig. 3), appears flawless, as if it has been carved out of the most perfect, although fleshy, marble (Caldwell, 376). Juxtaposing it against the Corinthian column, Mantegna created an image as beautiful as any that could be found in nature. According to the Italian painter, Vasari (1511-1574), Mantegna “always held that the antique statues were more perfect than nature. He also thought that the very muscles, veins and nerves were more clearly marked in statues than in life, where the softness of the flesh clouds the outline” (Vasari, 156). In Fuller’s choreography, the softness of the fabric clouds the image of the body. Although her physical features were not perfect, Fuller was rather plump; the image the viewer perceives while she is dancing is more perfect than nature. Mantegna’s portrayal of Saint Sebastian’s body was a reflection of the combination of numerous perfections, producing a single figure of unsurpassed beauty. Similarly, Fuller’s image transcends reality through the combination of a variety of senses, creating a synaesthetic effect, producing a single figure of unsurpassed beauty.
Figure 3. Andrea Mantegna

Saint Sebastian, 1456-1459

Panel, 68 by 30 cm

Louvre
At Fuller’s debut, the movements of her body shrouded by the fabric, appeared more perfect than nature, with a transcendent seductiveness in her choreography. The audience applauded and asked for numerous curtain calls. After the opening performance, one reviewer referred to her performance as a “success without precedence in this theater” (qtd. in Harris, 18). By the next day a ticket could only be obtained with an advance reservation, demonstrating that Fuller had arrived as a sensation in Paris. Within months of her debut, imitators of her costume and choreography were everywhere. As a result of making the Folies-Bergère respectable by holding matinee performances so that women and children could see her work, no matter how many performers were added to the program, Fuller was always the headliner. Given the nickname “La Loie” and “La Creatrice,” Fuller was often billed as “La Loïe Fuller.” The “La” was important: it emphasized that this was the Loie, the genuine performer, not to be confused with the many imitators. The diéresis in “Loïe” was necessary to preserve the pronunciation, which, without the two dots above the “ï,” would be “Lwah” in French and would mean “goose” or “law” (Current, 51). Fuller promptly began using the French spelling in her signature so that her name would seduce the viewer in much the same way as her choreography.

Everyone was dazzled with Fuller’s new dance art. Like the perfected image of Saint Sebastian created by Mantegna’s use of architectural and bodily proportions, the serpentine movements of Fuller’s choreography mesmerized audiences through her synaesthetic blend of reality and dream, light and sound, and movement and rhythm:

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11 Fuller received a compliment from the organizer of a private dinner, where the menu, illustrated by Toulouse-Lautrec, listed one of the dishes as foie gras de l’oie Fuller (“fat liver of the goose Fuller”) (Current, 83).
This is not a dance but a witchery, almost a religion….La Loïe Fuller…has also reminded us that the dance is not an exercise in acrobatics; she has inspired us to disdain pointes and ballerinas in pink tights and gauze skirts. She has restored our admiration for simple and harmonious poses, and her gestures have often made us think of ancient statuettes. She has prepared us to appreciate the art of Isadora Duncan.

(qtd. in Current, 177)

Perceiving Fuller’s choreography as “witchery” demonstrates that there was more to Fuller’s dances than just the movement. Relying on the beauty and spectacle of color in motion, Fuller combined sound, light, and movement to elevate her figure to that of an ideal symbolic creature (Sommer, 1975, 67).

In her manipulation of fabric, lit with constantly changing colored lights, Fuller created fantastic, suggestive shapes in her dances. The movements in each stood for more than just Fuller’s physical exertion. The Serpentine dance was created in 1891 with choreography and costuming by Fuller. The music was a popular tune of the time, Loin du Bal by Ernest Gillet (1856-1940) (Sommer, 1981, 391). In the dance, Fuller appears on a darkened stage in a long, flowing dress that is tight around the waist but then falls to the floor. Wavy lines circle the hem of the dress, as well as the neckline (see fig. 2). The folds of the garment start to undulate, much like the lines on the hem and neck, while light and energy radiates from the dancer (see DVD 1, Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance; Films of Loïe Fuller and her imitators). Fuller holds the hem of the skirt at shoulder height creating “rowing” motions with cascading folds of fabric becoming a whirling vortex of motion. Moving from side to side, always bathed in light, she turns her back, dips her
head to the audience and encircles her head with the billowing fabric (see fig. 1). She appears like a flower when a moment before she looked as if she was a butterfly. The dance ends with a beam of light fixed on her as the transparent fabric falls in glorious fashion (Sperling, 2001, 1). Developing *Serpentine* over the next few years, Fuller exploited the manipulation of light and fabric, color and movement (Sperling, 2000, 1).

To accentuate the changing lights against the manipulation of the fabric, Fuller invented certain devices that would aid in the creation of more spectacular effects. Fuller utilized wands hidden in the fabric to extend the reach of her arms. She also developed several lighting devices to project certain images or colors. As a result of her popularity, and in response to her competition, Fuller decided to patent several devices that made the illusions of her dances possible. The earliest of these were her costumes that were filled with embellishments or flowers (see figs. 4, 5, and 6). The panels were sewn with serpents of silver scales, or with butterflies spreading their wings. Fuller later improved on these designs by adding wands to aid in the manipulation of the extensive fabric. According to Marx, with their use, “The folds of the garment [could] assume variegated and fanciful waves of great beauty and grace” (qtd. in Sommer, 1975, 60). The wands were to be made of aluminum or bamboo and sewn into the lower part of the skirt at the sides where the dancer could easily reach them (Sommer, 1975, 60). The skirt, composed of three triangular panels of cloth, was hung from a headband and fell loosely to the floor, completely enshrouding the figure (see fig. 7 and 8). It could be opened at the front for greater visibility and to allow more freedom of movement of the fabric. This design was

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12 In viewing the extant film evidence of Fuller’s choreography, much of the performance is lost because of the black and white film. In viewing the _Annabella_ footage (one of Fuller’s imitators), where the individual film frames were hand painted by the Einstein Art Company, it gives the modern day viewer a better sense of the effect of Fuller’s lighting.
the model for most of the costumes in her various dances. On some occasions the fabric would be painted or dyed and illuminated by lights; other times the natural silk or fabric material would glisten in the changing lights. In certain dances Fuller would raise the fabric ten or twelve feet into the air (Sommer, 1975, 61) (see fig. 9). It is important to remember that manipulating the bulk of the material took massive amounts of strength and physical effort and was possible only through this innovative costume.

Using her innovative lighting effects, Fuller created another ingenious choreographic work, *Fire* dance or sometimes called *The Dance of Flame*. The movement of Fuller’s *Fire* dance begins with her standing on top of a light-box, illuminating the movement from beneath. At the start of the dance she shoots up, lifts her arms, and spreads the fabric of her dress (with the aid of the supports hidden in the fabric) as wide as possible to embody the image of a broad, flat, gas flame (see DVD 1, *Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance*). Fuller moves forward, moving the drapery in figure eight patterns, first side to side, and then overhead, simulating flickering flames. She turns and raises and lowers her arms creating a whirling cascade of fabric around her body (see fig. 10), agitating the fabric so that it has the appearance of hot coals and dancing flames. The fabric is constantly in motion until the end of the dance when suddenly the flame is put out and Fuller disappears into blackness (McDonagh, 22).

Fuller responded to the rhythm of the music—in this dance it was always Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries*—heard at the time still in its freshness of the romantic flavor (McDonagh, 22). As the orchestra would begin to play, the lighting simulated a dim, bluish-red flame flickering at the center of the stage. The edges of Fuller’s skirt

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13 Fuller may have also responded to the tone of certain notes in the music. This may have been how she determined the changes in color for her lighting effects, demonstrating her use of “colored hearing” or “color music.” This will be discussed in Chapter 3.
stirred gently and then with a burst of energy, Fuller crossed her arms, making the flames climb higher. For a few seconds, only Fuller’s eyes showed through the layers of fabric and the changing lights (see fig. 11). As the intensity of the music swelled, Fuller moved her body and the fabric more quickly. The colors changed from red, to blue, to orange, to purple. The frenzied glowing fabric soared to its peak and then in a fury of light and sound, Fuller collapsed into a heap. A purple ember glimmered in a dying breath followed by total darkness. Audiences remarked, “One feels subtly transported into the strangest regions of the dream . . . in these astonishing apparitions, something satanic and demonic, but of a gentle Satanism, of a poetic and suggestive demonality, which sets one on the starry and luminous path of hashishien dreams…” (Menil, 340-341). Fuller’s choreography is not only “witchery” or “witchcraft,” but also dreamlike, “satanic,” and “demonic,” like a drug induced dream.

Further evidence of audiences being mesmerized by Fuller’s performances is shown in 1895. At the Empire Theatre in Edinburgh the spectators were unanimous in proclaiming her dances far superior to those of any of her imitators they had seen (Current, 84). The New York Spirit of the Times added: “Loïe Fuller continues in the melancholy Manchesterians and canny Scotchmen are roused to as much enthusiasm by her serpentine dances as the gay Parisians and gayer New Yorkers” (New York Spirit of the Times, July 27, 1895). Audiences everywhere were drawn in by her combination of light, movement, color, and music. The Chicago Press stated, as the “sensation” in Europe, Fuller was obviously an inspiration to national pride: “Our object is to stand up for art in general and native art in particular, and with this patriotic purpose we mean to say good words for Loïe Fuller, who, although a Chicago girl, has won the applause of
Europe” (qtd. in Current, 110). The San Francisco Chronicle stated, “Blood is thicker than water, and however indignant the Anglomaniacs, the Franco-maniacs and Italomaniacs may be, we intend to argue that there may be some good in America” (San Francisco Chronicle, November 13, 1896).

Even though audiences at the time were drawn in by her spectacular performances, some critics today argue about Fuller’s technique and the “good” in America. As a result of her lack of technical virtuosity in the body, critics of the time and current dance historians express uncertainty about the scope of her choreography because of her limited movement vocabulary. For instance, she relied on the use of simple pedestrian movements such as turning or walking that were enhanced by the movement of the fabric (Sommer, 1975, 53). A Boston critic declared, “The serpentine dance [which is later identified with Fuller’s persona], as Loïe Fuller dances it, is something utterly sui generic; with the skirt dance it has infinitely little in common” (qtd. in Current, 106). In the skirt dance, the swing of the skirt emphasizes the “graceful bodily movements” of the dancer. In the Serpentine dance that drapery and what is done with it—“it is too voluminous to be called a skirt”—is all important in itself; the performer’s body is seldom seen. “The serpentine dance belongs properly more to pyrotechnics than to the art of dancing. It is a sort of living fire-works” (qtd. in Current, 106). One critic commented: “It was evident that her movements had become…not quite graceful, yet much more pleasant than they used to be, and most especially of all, that she had secured the services of an exceedingly clever electrician” (qtd. in Current, 105-106). Fuller was, of course, the clever electrician.

Some of Fuller’s obituaries in Paris newspapers presented a similar theme. “Her
art had nothing to do with choreography,” declared one. “La Loïe Fuller was first and foremost an ingenious electrician.” A Berlin paper also put the matter nicely: “The effect of the dance creation that made Loïe Fuller famous consists less in the art of the dance than in the charm of color and light” (qtd. in Current 339). Another critic agreed, with the exception of Fuller’s invisibility created through her innovative effects while performing: “Through it all the young woman is as distinctly visible as though she were in a bath,” wrote Hugh Morton. He continued in stating she was without a doubt a “…mistress of electric effects”:

“But she doesn’t dance,” said an envious première danseuse who was watching her one night.

“My dear,” put in someone who was someone sitting close by, “do get her to tell you how she learned not to.”

She does not trip to set any measures [Morton conceded], and her feet do not meet and leave the stage with the rhythmic precision observable in almost every other dancer that has ever lived. The beauty of motion that she displays and with which she amazes all beholders is produced by a marvelous trick of manipulating hundreds of yards of web-like fabric and amid the fiercest glare of light that has ever been projected upon the stage.

Morton went on to conclude: “She is a spectacle that is scarcely equaled by rainbows, torchlight processions, Niagara Falls, or naval parades” (New York Times, February 25, 1896, p. 5, c. 6).
Figure 4. Loïe Fuller
1893
Photograph
New York Public Library
New York
Figure 5. Loïe Fuller

1893

Photograph

Reutlinger

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 6. Loïe Fuller in costume for “Dance of the Serpents”

1896

Photograph

Reutlinger

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 7.  Loïe Fuller

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 8.  U.S. Patent Drawing No. 518, 347

April 17, 1894

Marie Louise Fuller

Costume with Wands
Figure 9. Loïe Fuller

*Lily*

c. 1900.

Fuller, *Fifteen Years of a Dancer’s Life*
Figure 10. Fire Dance or The Dance of Flame

Photograph

Lafitte

Loïe Fuller, Fifteen Years of a Dancer’s Life
Figure 11.  \textit{Loïe Fuller in Fire Dance}

Photograph
Certain contributions of Fuller’s choreography are not disputed, specifically, that she introduced important new elements into concert art dance: freedom of movement and the solo form (Jowitt, 27). It will be seen that in her performances, whirling amid swaths of silk, Fuller transformed her body into a kinetic sculpture that blended light and movement and discarded technical virtuosity to focus on the expression of the elusive (Sommer, 1981, 390). Her choreography created fantastic, suggestive shapes created by manipulation of fabric and different, constantly changing, colored lights.

Even though critics argued about her technique, Fuller decided to expand the scope of her repertory and produce dances on a larger scale with more elaborate sets and larger group pieces. Her first effort in that regard was an interpretation of the story of Salomé in 1895, where she portrayed the character as a young girl in whom “a miracle of faith substitutes for the legendary cold-blooded and voluptuous Salomé, a mystical Salomé, chaste almost” (qtd. in Harris, 20) (see fig. 12 and 13). Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937), who became a friend and professional associate, composed the music, and the backdrop to the dance was an elaborate set similar to Gustave Moreau’s (1826-1898) symbolist Salomé paintings (Bucknell, 508) (see fig. 14). Georges Rochegrosse (1859-1938) designed the costumes and Fuller directed the lighting.

Fuller conceived of her Salomé as a “lyric pantomime” (Current, 80). Similar to Oscar Wilde’s version, Herod lusts after Salomé, but as a spiritual follower of John the Baptist, she looks to him for protection against Herod. Annoyed by Salomé’s lack of passion for him, Herod orders John’s decapitation. Only after this order has been given does Salomé dance for Herod, in the hopes of changing his mind. She finally offers to

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14 Oscar Wilde’s (1854-1900) Salomé play was written in 1892 but first published in English in 1894. Richard Strauss’ (1864-1949) opera Salomé was produced in 1905 using Wilde’s play for the libretto.
acquiesce to Herod if a reprieve is given to John. Moments later, the executioner presents the severed head and Salomé faints at the sight of it. In presenting this work, Fuller insisted that everything be completely new—choreography, lighting, setting, and musical composition (Current, 80). Fuller used traditional costumes, typical of the period. Instead of using the typical stage draped in black, Fuller chose to use a painted backdrop with an exact representation of Jerusalem. This synaesthetic effect was to give the audience the impression of looking out over the city. Fuller worked tirelessly to create the desired effect.

By February 1895 Fuller was busy overseeing painters, carpenters, and electricians as they got the theater ready for the production of Salomé. Furiously rehearsing, Fuller wanted everything to be perfect for her much anticipated new work. After watching a rehearsal, a theater critic wrote:

Loïe Fuller is known to almost everybody as the clever skirt dancer, but few know Loïe Fuller as an artist, as a great artist, such as she will reveal herself to the public in a few days’ time. As I saw her on the stage of this little theater—just sufficiently lighted to see the expression on her face—Pierné at the piano, Armand Silvestre and Pierre Berton following the working of her drama in the wonderful dance—it seemed scarcely believable that this small figure, in her ordinary dark walking dress, without the aid of lights or stage accessories, with no word spoken, could move us to the extent that she did.
Figure 12.  Loïe Fuller as Salomé

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 13. Loïe Fuller as Salomé

Photograph, 1895

La Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Paris
Figure 14. Gustave Moreau

Salome Dancing before Herod

1876

Oil on canvas.

The Armand Hammer Collection, Gift of the Armand Hammer Foundation.
Her dance to the sun, her religious dance, her dance of desperation, were all remarkable expressions of the mind, and had such an effect upon us that when she fell at the sight of John the Baptist’s head, we all rushed toward her and kissed her. It seems extraordinary…but it is a moment I shall not easily forget. Armand Silvestre, with her head in both his hands, kissing her on each cheek. Berton at her feet, and all of us with tears in our voices saying, as with one accord, “Que c’est beau!” (qtd. in Current, 81)

Although this critic enthusiastically praised her, Fuller’s new work was under intense scrutiny at its premiere to live up to her past work.

Opening on March 4, 1895, the reactions were mixed. Fuller received praise from Roger Marx (1859-1913): “To those acquainted with her past as an actress…Loïe Fuller reveals herself as a mimic second to none, with gestures full of authority, mobile and amazingly expressive features, her face reflecting joy, pity, anger, fright, anguish, one after another and all with startling effect” (qtd. in Current 81-82). A reviewer for *L’Echo de Paris*, also praised Fuller as an excellent “tragic mime.” But another writer for the same paper said she was “ignorant of the first step of the choreographic art” and was wholly inadequate as a mime. Still, this writer was forced to admit that she had “the gift of playing with electricity” (qtd. in Current, 82). A critic for *Le Figaro* agreed that she was neither dancer nor mime—“she mimes like a telegraph”—but deserves applause for the “exquisite effects” she obtained with her veils and lights (qtd. in Current, 83).

For the most part *Salomé* received negative reactions from the critics, much to Fuller’s disappointment. One review by Jean Lorrain stated:
…the unhappy acrobat is neither mime nor dancer; heavy, ungraceful, sweating and with make-up running at the end of ten minutes of little exercises… she maneuvers her veils and her mass of materials like a laundress misusing her paddle… luminous without grace, with the gestures of an English boxer and the physique of Mr. Oscar Wilde, this is a Salomé for Yankee drunkards. (New York Times, March 24, 1895, p. 32, c. 2.)

These words were especially harsh since two years earlier the same critic had written of the beautiful girl who swirled around in an ecstasy induced by divine revelations (Garelick, 2007, 128). Still it is important to note that, although they were in the minority, some critics disagreed and praised Fuller’s dramatic presentation of Salomé. Roger Marx, an influential critic and supporter of her work, appealed to audiences to view Fuller as the re-creator of the dance, freeing choreography from the formal limitations of ballet. He recognized “the opulent fairyland of light” and the “excess of beauty which results from a marvelous illumination and the intoxication to the eye that is given by the undulating nuances of the play of colors” (qtd. in Harris, 20).

In spite of his favorable review, however, the comments regarding that work were generally less than complimentary, and Salomé was soon cut out of the repertory (Sommer, 1981, 395). Fuller dropped the full-scale production, but she remained resourceful and adapted it to produce new solos. Interestingly, the spectacular lighting effect of Fuller’s Fire dance developed out of the Salomé failure. Originally introducing Fire dance around 1895, Fuller revised that work to include some of Salomé’s spectacular lighting effects. Like the phoenix rising out of the ashes, and the ever changing shape of modern dance, Fuller found new life in her Fire dance. As a result of her initial failure
with her “lyric pantomime,” Fuller transformed the material and created something entirely new.

After the failure of Salomé, Fuller changed her approach, moving away from “lyric pantomimes,” with La Danse Blanche, which sharply contrasted her preceding works. There was a voluminous white robe without any decorations. Instead of a single color of light, there were at least ten hues, ranging from steely blue to warm gray and from opalescent to iridescent (Current, 99). One observer, quoted by Current, commented, “Sometimes the dancer quickened her step, waving and rolling and tossing her dress, until it fell in thin sheets like falling bits of sky, and sometimes there would be a revelation of a human figure, perfect in outline and delicate in its rush through the air” (qtd. in Current, 99). Commenting that she felt that this piece was “really a dance,” Fuller stated, “However much I may give to exterior effects in my other dances, in la Dance Blanche, while the lights are manipulated with great nicety, the result depends on my movements and the handling of the dress” (qtd. in Current, 99). Stating that her philosophy was to create the unity of light, sound, movement, and rhythm, Fuller fulfills this artistic ideal in her “dance” choreography.

Appearing at the Lyric Theatre in February 1899, the London press greeted Fuller as a remarkable person and a true artist: “She is not merely the heroine of a few glittering moments during which she occupies the stage of the Folies-Bergère each night, for she holds in addition a conspicuous place in that society which includes those Frenchmen who in science, art, and letters are adding to the intellectual dignity of the human race” (qtd. in Current, 114). Another report was similar, “It is Loïe Fuller’s crowning merit that she does nothing in her dances which is unintelligent, nothing which is intended
merely to provoke the wonder of the vulgar” (*Monmouth Daily Review*, October 13, 1898).

As a result of her success, the influence of Fuller’s choreography and her lighting innovations were prevalent throughout Paris as early as 1900. An example of this was seen that year at the *Paris Exposition Universelle*, when a small theater designed for and dedicated to Fuller by architect Henri Sauvage (1873-1932) opened. Its façade was a sculptured curtain created by Pierre Roche (1855-1922) that simulated what the critic Camille Mauclair (1872-1945) described as “an immense veil of plaster caught in mid flight” (see fig. 15) (Mauclair, 95), imitating the undulations of the movement of Fuller’s fabric. It was crowned by a life-sized image of Fuller dancing along the ridge of the roof (see fig. 16), and stained-glass windows alternated with ceramic masks of her face (see fig. 17 and 18). Two dancing sculptures flanked the entrance, and at night the white surface of the building “shimmered in a rainbow of glistening splendor” (Mauclair, 95). The interior, designed by Francis-Jourdain (1876-1958), was hung with dark draperies (similar to the way Fuller performed her dances), on which shone a kaleidoscope of colors coming from stained-glass windows during the daytime and from hidden lamps in the evening. Completing the tribute was a foyer that contained a gallery of paintings, drawings, and sculpture—all various artists’ depictions of Fuller (Mauclair, 95) (see Appendix B).\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Some of the depictions of Fuller present in the foyer of the theater were part of a collection displayed at the Virginia Museum 1979.
Figure 15. Photograph

Exterior

The Loïe Fuller Théâtre

Paris Exposition Universelle

1900
Figure 16. Théâtre Loïe Fuller

Henri Sauvage

Paris

1900
Figure 17. Pierre Roche

Loïe Fuller

1901

Plaster cast for medallion representing Drame featuring the face of Loïe Fuller

19 ¾ diam.

Not signed
Figure 18. Pierre Roche

*Loïe Fuller*

1901

Plaster cast for medallion representing *Comedie* featuring the face of Loïe Fuller

19 ¼ diam.

Not signed
Since the image of Fuller was everywhere because of the artistic images that followed the 1900 Exposition in Paris, Fuller began to capitalize on her popularity and gathered a troupe of dancers to tour with her. Fuller formed her company by taking girls ranging from age eight to twenty years old and teaching them her choreographic style. The organization of the school in 1908 was quite unconventional, as the children were allowed great freedom of expression. They were encouraged to develop their own style of dance by listening to the music and letting their emotion create the movement as they “[lost] themselves in the sound” (Harris, 25). Bringing out the individuality of each dancer, Fuller capitalized on this in her productions, promoting the desired skill she needed for the correct effect. Fuller rehearsed her troupe endlessly until she was satisfied with the result.

Because of her sensation in Paris, Fuller and her troupe were invited many places, and she made the troupe members her family (Current, 194-206). In between tours, Fuller rented a house where the members of her troupe could practice and prepare the next season’s work. As a result of spending so much time with her entourage, they became her “family.” The students of the school were given nicknames (Peach, Plum Pudding, Kitten, Birdie, Buttercup, Smiles, Chocolate, Pinky, etc. [Current, 205]) to replace their conventional names; these were even listed in the programs. While it is not known if it was for security reasons or to create another illusion, Fuller did not permit the students’ real names to be made known. Fuller would permit individuality and freedom of expression, and possibly kept her students’ names private so that they could remain anonymous with the creativity of the troupe.

As members of her family, Fuller relied on her troupe for her intimate
relationships. After a tumultuous marriage to Col. William Hayes (nephew of President Rutherford B. Hayes), Fuller filed suit for bigamy in 1892, and as a result, seems to have turned to women for companionship (Christout, 214). The most significant of her relationships was with Gabrielle “Gab” Bloch, who fell in love with Fuller when she saw her dance at the Folies-Bergère. She wrote the following tribute to her idol: “I never see you exactly as you are, but as you seemed to me on that day” (Fuller, 228). Bloch fell in love with Fuller because of her captivating, mesmerizing presence on stage. Around 1900 Bloch joined the Fuller household where she remained for almost thirty years as companion, lover, and business associate. The two complemented each other: Bloch was intelligent, resourceful, and severe, while Fuller was outgoing, creative, and volatile. Physically, Bloch was dark with brunette features, while Fuller was fair with chestnut hair and blue eyes (Current, 388-389). The renowned dancer and choreographer Duncan described Bloch with the girls of the troupe in 1902: “She circulated around the bevy of brightly colored butterflies like some scarab of ancient Egypt” (Duncan, 96). In contrast, the artist Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), who was captivated by Fuller since seeing her in his childhood, remembered her as “an American whose long Botticellian figure answered all the canons of beauty’s ‘modern style’” (qtd. in Brown, 11). Interestingly, both Fuller and Duncan had a connection with Botticellian images at different points in their careers.

Event though the Botticellian image of Fuller answered the canon of beauty according to Cocteau, Fuller wanted to proceed with her “modern style.” Constantly in search of new ways to expand her synaesthetic technique, she turned to a new medium that developed at the same time as her career, the cinema (Harris, 31). An outgrowth of the slide shows, panoramas, and dioramas of the nineteenth century, the cinema
progressed rapidly through the work of the Lumière brothers, Georges Méliès, and Thomas Edison. Ironically, one of the films produced by the Edison Art Company was the *Serpentine* dance performed by one of Fuller’s competitors, Annabella Whitford Moore (known in the film as simply “Annabella”) (see DVD 1, *Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance*) (see fig. 1). The film was made in 1894 and the frames were hand painted to simulate the spectacular lighting effects Fuller used on stage. Instead of documentary pieces, comedies, or melodramas, some producers like Méliès began to develop photographic “tricks” to simulate fantastic scenes as early as 1896 (Harris, 32). For one sequence he made the actors appear to be underwater by placing the actors on one side of an aquarium and the camera on the other. The new medium of film was an enormous success because of creative thinkers like Méliès.

Realizing this new medium could expand her interests in light and motion even further, Fuller captured her *Serpentine* dance on film in 1904. Like her imitator, each frame was hand painted to produce a similar colored lighting effect as her choreography. At a time when there were only a few women filmmakers in the world, Fuller began to produce her own films in 1919. This was a natural extension of her interests in the synaesthetic combination of light, motion, and spectacular staging effects.

Deciding to adapt a fairy tale written by Queen Marie of Romania, Fuller produced *Le Lys de la Vie* (*Lily of Life*), the subject of a ballet that she had presented earlier. The narrative, a love story set in an other-worldly setting, provided the framework for an imaginative use of newly developing cinematic techniques. Two princesses fall in love with a prince who suddenly becomes deathly ill. One princess stays to help the prince recuperate, while the other sets out on a terrifying journey to find
the “Lily of Life” to save the prince. She ventures through a haunted forest, where she is chased by witches, frightened by goblins, and pursued by a serpent that climbs out of the sea (Harris, 32). Proceeding only because of her love for the prince, she obtains the flower. Although she returns with the lily and saves the life of the prince, he has chosen to marry her rival. The journey ends with the heroine ultimately dying of a broken heart. The fantastic images present in the story were suitable for Fuller to adapt her unique synaesthetic blend of light and motion to create a dreamlike effect.

To achieve these effects, Fuller, ever the innovator, demonstrated an unorthodox approach to her cinematography. Improvising slow motion effects by slowing the movements down and cranking the camera very quickly, using shadows of giant hands to demonstrate the haunted forest, and using the film’s negative image to create a ghostly effect as part of the finished film demonstrated Fuller’s innovation and skill in devising new techniques to present her work. The reviews were also quite favorable:

There is in all of this an exquisite freshness of spirit and imagination, but we want however to indicate the special cinematic qualities of this work, which realizes with an unexpected perfection some of our hopes…The most remarkable original technique is an audacious use of the “negative” which, combined with slow motion gives quite startling impressions of unreality…Dream countries appear to us where paradoxical nature shows us a sun penetrated by rays, luminous trees blown about by the breeze…From these few details one will recognize perhaps what a great step Miss Loïe Fuller has achieved for the art of the cinema. (Fréjaville, no page numbers, qtd. in Harris, 32)
Even though she changed her medium from the stage to film, Fuller still found ways to make her art new. Using masterfully creative effects even through the camera, she created symbolic images.

Fuller wanted to make another film, *Visions des Rêves*, another adaptation from Queen Marie’s poetry. It was her most ambitious project on film, based on the story of E.T.A. Hoffman’s *Copelius and the Sandman*. Fuller planned to use even more spectacular special effects:

- A man walking on space, —walking upside down—walking on the sky: A tornado cyclone, funnel shape sweeps twirling and swirling across the screen, taking up inside it—everybody and everything: Walking absolutely on—not in the water: The spirit leaving the body and going back into it again: Monsters that become invisible before your eyes and visible instantaneously; A tremendous jump over the moon: And eyeglasses that drop luminous eyes! (Letter from Fuller to Samuel Hill, 1927).

Unfortunately, Fuller never saw the result of these ideas, as she died before its completion in 1928.

*Fuller Scholarship*

Fuller was perhaps the most widely imitated woman in the theater. Some critics thought “perhaps the most significant thing she did artistically was to direct attention in some degree to the possibilities of lights and draperies in combination” (qtd. in Current 339). In contrast, a few French critics thought, at the time of Fuller’s death, that she
would have “a significant and permanent influence—a greater one than Duncan would have” (qtd. in Current, 339). As such, Fuller’s work has attracted the attention and respect of many artists, scientists, and theorists of her time, as well as scholars that came after her, investigating her mission as an artist, choreographer, and performer.

Fuller’s *Fire Dance* is a subject of Elizabeth Ann Coffman’s study, “Women in Motion: Dance, Gesture, and Spectacle in Film, 1900-1935” (1995). Coffman argues that Fuller is exploring subtle distinctions between an actual gesture (pantomimic) and a virtual gesture (symbolic), between the idea of moving and the idea of dancing, and the concept of woman and that of “Woman” (12). As such, Coffman correctly portrays Fuller as both a creator of movement and artistic lighting effects, and also a proponent of feminism as seen in the perspective of women’s roles at that time. These ideas of modernity and the idea of a feminist aesthetic are excellent additions to Fuller studies. However, they stop short of entering the specific purpose of the present discussion concerning Symbolist ideals and Fuller’s contribution to this movement.

In another study, *Vision and Spectatorship in the Work of Joseph Cornell: Stargazing at the Cinema* (1995), Jodi Anne Hauptman focuses on artistic appropriation of the body, showing how the artist’s gaze is directed almost exclusively towards women. Here Hauptman investigates the idea of Cornell’s voyeurism and his love of cinema as a link between vision and desire focusing on portraits and homages to female movie stars (57). Fuller is of great importance in this study because of her contribution to the contemporary debate about the female body, the nexus between art and sexuality, the desire and fantasy of that body, and the ideas of nostalgia and modernity. Hauptman’s spectacular treatment of the body in Fuller’s work, however, stops before linking this
topic with similar Symbolist themes demonstrated in other artistic media of the period, thereby encouraging a further, more inclusive look at Fuller’s contributions.

In “The Female Form: Gautier, Mallarmé and Celine Writing Dance” (1992), Felicia McCarren explains how in the tradition of literary interest in dance, the female body and feminine sexuality—and as a result, femininity itself—becomes the essential subject of dance. While McCarren highlights Fuller’s knowledge of disciplines such as electricity and hypnosis, she suggests there is something more than meets the eye regarding her work, again indicating that a more comprehensive study of Fuller’s activity vis-à-vis Symbolism is needed to correctly position her contribution to the period.

In examining the point of departure between the decadent dandy and the dance-hall girl or female performer on stage, Rhonda Kay Garelick, in Women Onstage: The Representation of Women’s Performances in the ‘Fin de Siecle’ (1991), points out the existence of a rich context in which to examine the beginning of modernism. Garelick focuses Chapter Three on the theatrical career of Fuller, which has served as a good background for Fuller’s work on stage. Mechanical reproduction, the beginning of the feminist movement, and crowd politics are brought into consideration. However, there is still little discussion about Fuller’s contribution as a Symbolist artist.

In Women, Artistic Dance Practices and Social Change in the United States 1890-1920 (1999), Linda Johnston Tomko, a dance scholar, recognizes the predominance of women as choreographers, producers, and teachers of new artistic practices in the U.S. during that period, explicitly dealing with the ideation in works of the Symbolist movement. She specifically approaches the interactions among cultural practices that were influential in the formation of a distinctive identity for Fuller and the Symbolist
movement.

Sylvia Ellis adds to the literature dealing with Fuller in her study titled, *The Plays of W. B. Yeats: Yeats and the Dancer* (1999). This study investigates the notion of dance and the figure of the dancer as an influence on Yeats’ drama, taking into consideration the animated interest in France and England in these subjects during the 1890s. In a highly theoretical way, she addresses how writers like Mallarmé responded to dance hall performers like Fuller (34). Her argument links the view of the dancer as embodying the fusion of abstraction, emotional and intellectual, with the tenets of Symbolist poetry. This interesting work also incorporates visual images and musical inspirations in its discussion of Symbolism.

In *Choreographic Ritual in Early Modernist Art, 1886-1910* (1994), Carolyn Bolen Rushton explores the renewal of the tradition of dance as ritual between the years 1886-1910, from Symbolism to fauvism. Therein, she addresses the question of modernist versions of choreographic ritual from the *Dance of Death* to the *Dance of Life*. Discussing the theme of dance in Paul Gauguin’s (1848-1903) and Henri Matisse’s (1869-1954) paintings and writings, Ruston argues that they are signifiers of a fundamental preoccupation with creation, paradise, and choreographic worship in ancient and popular forms (378). The conjunction of the themes of choreographic ritual and preoccupation with the symbolic nature of life and death are claimed to be demonstrated in *The Rite of Spring*, first performed by the Ballets Russes in 1913. Rushton’s study is doubly important for its methodology, comparing examples in choreography and visual art during the Symbolist period.

Another important study is the analytical work, *Isadora Duncan and Vaslav*
Nijinsky: Dancing on the Brink: An Examination of the Art and Lives of Isadora Duncan and Vaslav Nijinsky as a Means of Exploring Dance as Facilitator and Indicator of the Role of the Body in Cultural Transformation (1991) by Alice Bloch. Rather than adding to their biographies, Bloch explores the relationship between Isadora Duncan and Nijinsky in order to consider how dance manifests and influences the cultural construction of the body. Bloch’s work provides a stable construct on which to define the body and its use in choreographic form. Dance is an art of the body interacting with experience based on cultural influences. Thus Bloch’s argument supports the premise of the present work, that in an era of cultural transformation, the figures of Duncan and Nijinsky not only affected the style and content of Western concert dance, but also influenced its function and status in Western culture. Both theories affected the style and content of Western choreography, its relationship to the Symbolist movement, and the status of dance as an art form relative to the other arts at that time. The present work, linking Fuller and synaesthesia is based on a similar argument.

Bloch chose the figures of Duncan and Nijinsky because of their recognition as revolutionaries and revivalists of the art of dance in the early twentieth century. This relationship is quite consonant with the connection of Fuller and synaesthesia. It will be demonstrated that the blending of Fuller’s dance and the concept of synaesthesia was revolutionary, not only in the construction of the cross-modal association, but also in the interaction of symbols invoked synaesthetically. The mixing of reality and dream allowed sensory perceptions to unite in artistic experience. Thus, like her contemporaries, Fuller spoke for her generation by creating a new art form to express her own reality.
CHAPTER 2

LOÎE FULLER IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As a dancer, choreographer, and artist, Fuller needs to be placed correctly in the historical record. She clearly established a place for herself in art history as a visual subject: more than seventy artists from ten countries have created representations of Fuller in lithograph posters; oil, pastel, or watercolor paintings; sculptures in bronze, marble, terra-cotta, or glass; ceramic or porcelain works; and gold and silver jewelry and medals (Current, 128) (see Appendix B).

Many sculptors tried to capture the movement of the fabric present in Fuller’s art. François Aubertin (1866-1930) used the girls of her school as models for a series of allegorical paintings. He also designed a poster for her 1914 appearance at the Théâtre de Chatelet (Current, 344). Pierre Roche (1855-1922) produced the greatest number and variety of pieces using oils, medals, and gypsographs (painted in bas-relief in paper), a process he is credited with inventing (Current, 131). He was one of the few artists whose sculptures of Fuller were actually portraits: “They were flattering to both face and figure. Roche made most of his portraits early in her Paris career, images that he continued to use for years afterward—providing a perpetual youthful image of the dancer” (Harris, 30-31) (see figs. 17, 18, 19, and 20). Roche also wrote several articles about her choreography. Roger Marx wrote the essay La Loïe Fuller in 1904 and Roche illustrated that work with color-washed gypsographs depicting Fuller in her early Salomé role.
Figure 19. Pierre Roche

Loïe Fuller: Fire Dance

Bronze, c. 1897

21.5 h

signed left side of base: Pierre Roche;
founder’s mark, E. Genet on back;
Loïe Fuller on face of base

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
Figure 20. Pierre Roche

*Loïe Fuller*

Oil on canvas, c. 1893

22 by 18

Signed lower right: Loïe Fuller / Pierre Roche
Other sculptors were also captivated by Fuller’s image. Edouard Houssin created a realistic, small white marble bust of Fuller (see fig. 21). François Carabin (1862-1932) used bronze and ceramic to portray the dancer in a series of poses, most of which show her shorter skirts, without wands, that were typical during her early career in Paris (see figs. 22, 23, and 24). One of Fuller’s favorite sculptors was Théodore Rivière (1857-1912). He produced a marble representation of the lily dance, and also made many small sculptures of Fuller, who could easily obtain copies of his work from his foundry until the 1920s (Current, 131) (see figs. 25 and 26).

Sommer writes, “She was written about, painted, and sculpted by most of the important artists in Paris at the turn of the century” (Sommer, 1975, 53). Few of the artists made literal representations of Fuller; rather they sought to capture the swirling draperies and the rapidly changing colors produced by her special effects: “To express the ethereal qualities of the moving image, artists idealized the figure. It was not Loïe Fuller as a person who was the … dream but rather the vision she created” (Harris, 30).

Some of the most popular sculptural pieces were the bronze table lamps created by François-Raoul Larche (see fig. 27 and 28). Having four variations of Fuller’s figure, Larche combined the swirling movement and excitement of Loïe Fuller’s dance that also suggest the bustling ambiance of Paris, and the busy array of pavilions at the 1900 Paris Exposition. Also apparent is the sensuous undulation of her draperies…She has become the ubiquitous fin-de-siècle femme fatale. Finally, Larche also ingeniously included the new scientific wonder of the late nineteenth century—electricity. (Brandt, 46)
Figure 21. Edouard Houssin

*Loïe Fuller*

Marble, c. 1893

8 ¾ by 11 ½ by 7 ½

Signed front lower right: E. Houssin

Lent by The Cleveland Museum of Art
Figure 22. François Carabin

Loïe Fuller

Bronze, 1896-7

8 11/16 h.

Signed on base: R Carabin

Collection of the Virginia Museum
Figure 23. François Carabin

Loïe Fuller

Bronze, 1896-7

7 ¼ h.

Signed on base: R Carabin

Collection of the Virginia Museum
Figure 24. François Carabin

Loïe Fuller

Ceramic luster

1897-8

18 ½ h.

Signed on base: Carabin
Figure 25. Théodore Rivière

Loïe Fuller: Lily Dance

Gilded Bronze, 1896

Signed on side: Théodore Rivière
Figure 26. Théodore Rivière

*Lily Dance*

Marble, c. 1898

16 by 17 by 9

Signed on side: Théodore Rivière

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Gift of A.B. Spreckels to Theater and Dance Collection
Figure 27. François-Raoul Larche.

Loïe Fuller, the Dancer.

c. 1900. Bronze.

18 1/8 x 10 1/8 x 9 1/8" (45.7 x 25.5 x 23.1 cm).

Gift of Anthony Russo.
Figure 28. François-Raoul Larche (1860-1912)

*Loïe Fuller* Lamp

Gilt Bronze, c. 1896

18 ¼ h. (46.3)

Virginia Museum, Sydney and Frances Lewis Art Nouveau Fund
Additionally, other artists used Fuller as a model, showing her influence on designers in both Europe on the United States (Current, 132). Master glassworkers such as Emile Gallé, René Lalique, and Louis Comfort Tiffany mirrored her effects (Current, 132).

A popular figure for sculptors and glassworkers, Fuller attracted and wanted to attract the attention of other visual artists. To promote herself and her art form, Fuller commissioned and paid for at least thirty color lithographic posters for her performances at the Folies-Bergère and at various Parisian theaters and music halls. One of the artists to execute these works was Jules Chéret: “With excellent judgement she went to Chéret—Chéret the master of gorgeous and fantastic color—to herald her earlier performances in that metropolis to the gaiety of which his posters have added so materially,” commented the editor of the English magazine *The Poster* in February 1899 (qtd. in Current, 129) (see fig. 29, 30, and 31). Chéret produced three posters for Fuller, with the *Folies-Bergère/La Loïe Fuller* (1893) being the most famous and most reproduced (Current, 129). Printed in four different color combinations, the rarest being the dark green background with the figure of Fuller in orange, yellow, and celadon green (see figs. 32, 33, 34, and 35). Deviating from his usual style in all four images, Chéret set off the central figure, in much the same way she appeared on the stage, “by the dark background and the splashes and strokes of color [that] came as close as was possible in a static image to reproducing the illusion of swirling draperies” (Harris, 30). Current states, “In his long career as an affichiste, Chéret has produced nothing more successful than his series of designs for Loïe Fuller” (qtd. in Current, 129).

Other artists captured Fuller’s movement in the posters they designed. Jean de Paléologu (Pal) specialized in bicycle and theater posters, and he made at least four
posters of Fuller, signing all of his posters “Pal” (see fig. 36, 37, and 38). One of the rarest of the Fuller posters is Georges Meunier’s portrayal of Fire dance (see fig. 39). Meunier, a pupil of Chéret, was a French printmaker and poster artist. His work clearly shows the influence of Chéret in the use of clear pastel colors and the depiction of exuberant young women. His poster of Fuller shows a different style than what has already been seen; the figure is isolated on a dark background and almost overcome by the illusion of flames. One of the rarest works is by Fernand Sigismond Bac (1859-1952), who made one of the first Fuller posters in 1892 (see fig. 40).

Although less rare, one of the most famous poster artists, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, also created images in Fuller’s likeness, although he was never commissioned to so:

At the Folies-Bergère, Lautrec like all Parisians was fascinated by the dancing of Loïe Fuller…He would, no doubt, have liked to have been among those who did posters of her, but the dancer did not really appreciate his lithograph, even though it had success within a limited circle, for it went on sale in February-March 1893 and was reproduced in L’Echo de Paris on 9 December 1893. The meeting of the minds between Loïe Fuller and Lautrec never really happened. Why? (Current, 130)

The explanation given by a modern-day French cataloger of Lautrec is that the artist sought to find the “real person” and then reinterpreted that with a facial expression or a characteristic body pose. With Fuller that was difficult because once onstage “she tended to become an impersonal goddess communing with the forces of nature” (Current, 130). The Symbolist Camille Mauclair in Les Idées vivantes explained Fuller’s work:
Figure 29. Jules Chéret

*Folies-Bergère / La Danse du Feu*

1897
Figure 30. Jules Chéret

*Folies-Bergère / Loïe Fuller*

Color Lithograph

1897

48 7/16 by 34 ¼

Signed lower left right: J. Chéret / 97

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris
Figure 31. Jules Chéret

Loïe Fuller

Pastel on Paper, undated

46 ¾ by 31 3/8

Signed lower right and middle left
Figure 32. Jules Chéret

*Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller*

Color Lithograph, 1893

Signed middle right: J. Chéret

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris

Le Musée de l’Affiche, Paris
Figure 33. Jules Chéret

Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller

Color Lithograph

1893

48 13/16 by 34 11/16

Signed middle right: J. Chéret

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris
Figure 34. Jules Chéret

Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller

Color Lithograph

1893

48 13/16 by 34 11/16

Signed middle right: J. Chéret

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris
Figure 35. Jules Chéret

Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller

Color Lithograph

1893

48 13/16 by 34 11/16

Signed middle right: J. Chéret

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris
Figure 36. Jean de Paléologu

Poster

*La Loïe Fuller*

Color Lithograph

c. 1896
Figure 37. Jean de Paléologu

Poster

*Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller*

Color Lithograph

c. 1897
Figure 38. Jean de Paléologu

Poster

La Loïe Fuller/ Folies-Bergère

Color Lithograph

1893

48 13/16 by 33

Signed lower right: Pal

Printed by Paul Dupont, Paris
**Figure 39.** Georges Meunier

Poster

*Folies-Bergère/Loïe Fuller*

Color Lithograph, 1898

48 13/16 by 34 7/16 (124 by 88)

Signed lower left: Georges Meunier

Printed by Chalix (Ateliers Chéret), Paris

Le Musée de l’Affiche, Paris
Figure 40. Fernand Sigismond Bac (Bach)

Poster: *La Loïe Fuller / aux Folies-Bergère*

Color Lithograph, 1892

59 by 43 1/8

Signed lower right: d’après / Bac / 92

Printed in Lemercier, Paris
Figure 41. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Study of Fuller at the Folies-Bergère

c. 1893
Figure 42. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère

Color Lithograph

Hand Sprinkled with gold or silver dust

1893
Figure 43. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère

Color Lithograph

Hand Sprinkled with gold or silver dust

1893
Figure 44. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère

Color Lithograph

Hand Sprinkled with gold or silver dust

1893
The realism does not speak to the soul but it completely satisfies the intelligence. In it there is no spontaneity, no free improvisation, no individual fantasy, but a profound skill, an ‘execution’ achieved with disconcerting perfection” (qtd. in Current, 130). This is important because Mauclair is a symbolist writer commenting about Fuller’s work. A cataloger of Fuller thinks the reason was “probably [Fuller] did not like it [the lithograph series], since it was almost a caricature and thus it may have offended her” (qtd. in Harris, 30). Despite her feelings, the lithograph series of around fifty prints, hand colored and dusted with gold, silver, or bronze powder, captured her “remarkable floating movements as well as the changing light effects that Fuller achieved by using glass plates, large lantern projectors, colored gelatins, and other inventive devices” (Shapiro, 134) (see figs. 41, 42, 43, and 44).

The Fuller posters in themselves occupy an interesting place in the history of French theater posters. Fashioned by some of the leading artists of the time, Fuller inspired them to unusual creations, many different from the artists’ standard style. For instance, Chéret’s image of Fuller recreates what she did on stage, an illuminated figure against a dark backdrop. The image of Fuller executed by Meunier shows her on her toes, flames engulfing her body. Meunier shows the influence of Chéret but departs slightly from his style. Fuller’s choreography was an ideal subject for these posters in that these artists were seen as the most successful in interpreting the synaesthetic combination of her art form.

Although the ideal subject of many lithographic posters, Fuller herself preferred the smaller sculptural pieces created by Roche and Rivière. Since these sculptors were her friends, it was quite easy to obtain copies for distribution among her own circle as
well as present them for sale at the theaters during her performances (Harris, 30). In whatever medium, rather than capturing a representational image (although some sculptural pieces were done in Fuller’s likeness), these artists depicted the vision Fuller created with her fiery lighting and undulating fabric.

Ever present among the visual artists of the time, Fuller also came to be celebrated in music when a “talented young composer” (Current, 54), A. Hamburg, wrote the “Loïe Fuller Gavotte.” It was available as sheet music in arrangements for either piano or orchestra, and had two flattering pictures of Fuller on the cover. *Le Figaro* predicted that the music would “soon become as popular as she who inspired it” (*Le Figaro*, February 16, 1893).

Fuller was also honored in poetry by Léon Charly with several lines of verse, the last of which refers to her as “the one who plays with the rainbow” (Current, 54). Stéphane Mallarmé, the leader of the French Symbolists, praised her as a kindred spirit and devoted a serious article to her entitled, “Considerations on Loïe Fuller and the Art of the Dance.” She, like Mallarmé and the Symbolists, attempted to express the inexpressible, to surmount the limitations of language. Her dances seemed to him like poems without words. They constituted the “theatrical form of poetry par excellence” (Current, 54). Many commentators thought they had the effect of “witchcraft” (Current, 54; *Le Figaro*, February 9, 11, 1893; Kermode, 48-49).

Not only the subject of many artistic works, Fuller knew and interacted with many prominent figures of the time. She wrote extensively about Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), the French playwright, in *Fifteen Years of a Dancer’s Life*. The well-known art critic, Roger Marx and his wife were Fuller’s earliest friends in Paris. She was devoted
to sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), and became his self-appointed agent in 1903 when she brought a large sample of his work to America for exhibition in New York (Janson, 278). In that regard, she encouraged Alma Spreckels (1881-1968) of San Francisco and Samuel Hill (1857-1931) of Seattle to establish museums that would house extensive Rodin collections. Other luminaries included the astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), and his wife, Gabrielle (1876-1962), and scientists Marie (1867-1934) and Pierre Curie (1859-1906). Fuller became friends with the Curies after she wrote to them asking for a sample of radium for use in a dance she planned. They kindly explained the danger and expense of such a project, and she returned their favor by performing for them at their home (Current, 85-86). The Flammarions also lived in Paris and invited Fuller and her troupe to perform at their home. Being an author of general science books, Flammarion introduced Fuller to the laboratory study of color and light.

Demonstrating her connection with the musicians of the time, Salomé, and the versions of Fire dance that followed, showed Fuller’s use of serious music. Pierne, who studied under the French composer Cesar Franck (1822-1890), composed the Salomé score for Fuller. Although met with some criticism, its use shows how Fuller utilized the power of the music, and over the next few years, she continued to improve on the quality of her musical choices (Sommer, 1981, 395). By 1906, she was using orchestral pieces by Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), and Florent Schmitt’s (1870-1958) score for Tragedie de Salomé (1907).

From there, Fuller began to turn to modern composers who were working toward a synthesis of sound and color, “colored hearing” or “color music.” In 1911 she performed a piece to Claude Debussy’s (1862-1918) Petite Suite. Then she
choreographed his *Nuages* at the inaugural concert of the *Théâtre des Champs-Elysées* in 1913, and Debussy commented that it was the first time he really heard his music played. In 1914 Fuller introduced Alexander Scriabin’s (1872-1915) *Prometheus* to Paris and that same program also included Stravinsky’s *Feu d’Artifice*, a fiery composition that seemed indicative of Fuller’s choreography.

**Fuller’s Choreographic Contemporaries**

Various choreographers, including Fuller, contributed to dance and its relationship to the Symbolist movement. To see where her choreography lies in the history of dance, the focus is on the choreographers who were creating ballet and modern dance around the turn of the century. Key figures discussed are Isadora Duncan (1878-1927), Mikhail Fokine (1880-1942), Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950), Ruth St. Denis (1878-1968), and most importantly, Fuller.

**Isadora Duncan**

According to Sommer, theater historians, however, often describe Fuller as only a dance performer rather than a creative artist like Isadora Duncan (Sommer, 1975, 53). Duncan, known for her Grecian inspired costumes and naturalistic movement, occupies a place similar to Fuller in dance history; both women can be seen as some of the early founders of modern dance technique and expression. Fuller and Duncan actually had a brief period of professional association. Early in 1902, while Duncan was struggling for acceptance as a dancer, she was introduced to Fuller who was impressed by her work. Fuller arranged to have Duncan join her tour, but ultimately that relationship ended in
disagreement. Fuller felt that Duncan took advantage of her contacts to make her own
tour, and Duncan claimed that she left the company when she was attacked by another
member of the troupe (Current, 149-151). The differing accounts seem to show
bitterness, but both of the women admired the work of the other. Fuller wrote of Duncan:
“Oh, that dance, how I loved it! To me it was the most beautiful thing in the world. I
forgot the woman and all her faults, her absurd affectations, her costume and her bare
legs, I saw only the dancer and the artistic pleasure she was giving me” (Fuller, 228).
Similarly, Duncan wrote a glowing praise of Fuller’s work: “What an extraordinary
genius! No imitator of Loïe Fuller has even been able to hint at her genius! ... She
transforms herself into a thousand colorful images before the eyes of her audience.
Unbelievable … She was one of the first original inspirations of light and changing
color” (Duncan, 95).

Duncan, often considered one of the founders of modern dance, whose debut in
1901 followed Fuller’s, studied ballet as a child. Later, however, she broke away from
traditional dance, creating her own unique theories of movement. Stating that movement
is the expression of an inner impulse, Duncan found the source of this impulse in the
solar plexus (Layson, 48). As a result, her choreography was seen as gestural and
pantomimic rather than formal stage dance. Duncan’s “free dance” was often thought to
avoid set movements and instead to rely on the repetition of improvisations, which some
scholars believe never evolved into a formalized technique (Layson, 47). The dances she
taught to her disciples, however, all prove to have been carefully choreographed.

Typical Duncan programs consisted of solos choreographed to the music of such
composers as Christoph Willibald Glück (1714-1787), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-
1827), Richard Wagner (1813-1883), Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), and Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915). Duncan wore simple tunics inspired by Greek art and danced barefoot on an empty stage (see fig. 45). Her dance vocabulary was limited to variations of basic movements—walks, runs, skips, and jumps. Duncan’s eloquence manifested in her use of dynamic shading, rhythmic variety, and moments of rest and repose versus deliberate action. Her style imitated nature, “a profusion of gifts: beauty, life, health, abundance, and perhaps most important of all, a challenging correlative to inner, aspiration” (Starr, 417-418). In the following statement, Duncan revealed the source of her inspiration found in classical art sculptures and engravings:

While playing in the garden of my father’s house I tried by instinct to impart to my childish dance what I saw exhibited in the models of art. Thus, being deeply imbued with the perfect beauty of the copies of the great masterpieces, enhanced by the simplicity of dress, from early childhood I have considered the freedom of my body essential to the rhythm of movement. For this reason later on, with the development of my inborn disposition, a conscious study of rhythm was at the same time promoted. Dressed in the beautiful ancient dresses I went on in the mode of dancing which I felt ambitious to render equal in beauty to the Greek dances of the days of old. (Duncan, 17)
Figure 45. Isadora Duncan
Photograph
New York Public Library
New York
Fuller evoked Botticellian images, but Duncan was inspired to choreograph by Sandro Botticelli’s (1445-1510) *Primavera* (1478) (see fig. 46). In it, she saw the Three Graces become a part of the natural landscape with their soft, supple bodies dressed in transparent drapery (Jowitt, 22). Viewing the painting, she imagined the movement of the figures; the shifts of weight by the Three Graces, and the enigmatic gesture of Venus (see fig. 47). Making artistic and choreographic connections between dance, nature, culture and the Greeks, Flora (or Spring) was one of the first Greek figures that Duncan impersonated. According to Foster, “And now with wreathing arms and undulating body and bare, twinkling feet . . . she [Duncan] endeavors to present to us the vibrant atmosphere, the pulsing ecstatic quickening of all life, the langubrous, delicious dolce far niente of this marvelous season as she reads it in Botticelli’s masterpiece” (Foster, 1902). The masterpiece of *Primavera* inspired Duncan to create a similar choreographic masterpiece.

While choreographing *La Primavera* (1901-1904) in London, Duncan was also studying Greek culture, immersing herself in the Greek language as well as Greek poetry. She read Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), the eighteenth-century German art historian and classical architect who “emphasized the formal purity and passionless perfection of the Greeks—Platonic qualities echoed in the precise draftsmanship and cool balance of Botticelli’s *Primavera*” (Daly, 2001, 290). Duncan danced and choreographed the Greek friezes with the same heavenly expression, giving her choreography an other-worldly quality. It was not only Winkelmann, but also Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who influenced Duncan. Nietzsche’s writings caused her to move from an Apollonian perspective to the Dionysian approach in her choreography (Daly, 1994, 26). The
Apollonian side relates to Apollo and is calm, ordered, and balanced. In contrast, the Dionysian relates to Dionysus and is orgiastic, spontaneous, and intuitive. By moving from one side to the other, Duncan produced choreography that embraced her “free dance” style.

Embodying this style, Duncan threw herself into the spirit of dance: no longer merely thinking about the inspiration for it, she personified the idea of the dance (see fig. 48). As she developed as a dancer and choreographic artist, her dance was no longer just the Flora from *Primavera*; it was also the Furies and the Bacchantes (Jowitt, 26). She made her first appearance in Russia in 1905, where she created a controversy between ballet reform and true balletomanes; a controversy that divided those who saw a need for growth and change in ballet vocabulary and those who passionately loved ballet as it was. It was there that Duncan influenced Mikhail Fokine, who was also developing his ideas for a “new” ballet.

*Mikhail Fokine*

Mikhail Fokine (1880-1942) was another great dancer, choreographer, and reformer of ballet. Fokine saw the necessity of freeing ballet from arbitrary limitations. One of his more popular dances, *The Dying Swan* (1905), choreographed for Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) to Camille Saint Saëns’ (1835-1921) music, became the signature dance for Pavlova. Fokine’s *Eunice* (1907), where his dancers appeared dressed in Greek tunics dancing barefoot, was a direct result of Duncan’s influence. Even before choreographing this dance, Fokine began to realize that the choreographer’s approach to academic ballet needed to be changed. He began to formulate a new approach as early as
1904, and the fundamental ideas of his reform can be found in his historic letter to the

*London Times* on July 6, 1914:

1. To create in each case a new form of movement corresponding to the subject matter, period and character of the music, instead of merely giving combinations of ready-made and established steps.

2. Dancing and mimetic gesture have no meaning in ballet unless they serve as an expression of dramatic action.

3. To admit the use of conventional gesture only when it is required by the style of the ballet, and in all other cases to replace the gestures of the hands by movements of the whole body. Man can and should be expressive from head to foot.

4. The group is not only an ornament. The new ballet advances from the hands to that of the whole body, and from that of the individual to groups of bodies and the expressiveness of the combined dancing of a crowd.

5. The alliance of dancing with other arts. The new ballet, refusing to be slave either of music or of scenic decoration, and recognizing the alliance of arts only on the condition of complete equality, allows perfect freedom both to the scenic artist and to the musician. (*London Times*, July 6, 1914)

These reforms changed the way ballet looked. They shortened the length of ballet choreography, condensing the work to a much more cohesive performance. They also led the way for the idea of movement invention, completely transforming ballet as well as creating modern dance. One of Fokine’s best examples of the use of these five principles is the ballet *Petrouchka* (1911), which starred Vaslav Nijinsky.
Figure 46. Sandro Botticelli

*Primavera*

c. 1478

Tempera on panel

203 by 314 cm

Uffizi, Florence
Figure 47. Isadora Duncan

Three Graces

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Figure 48. Isadora Duncan in the Garden

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Petrouchka was created jointly by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) and Alexandre Benois (1870-1960), with choreography by Fokine set to Stravinsky’s score. The tale depicts a puppet (Petrouchka) gone mad; it serves as an allegory of human existence when it addresses the questions of who is in control and when does a person finally find freedom (Reeder, 106). The movements in Petrouchka were unique, because instead of relying on the traditional ballet vocabulary, Fokine, conscious of his ideas to reform ballet, choreographed Petrouchka using angular, disjointed, almost mechanical movements (Nelson, 9).

Fokine’s Petrouchka was significant for several reasons. It was a fundamental depiction of tragedy in modern ballet, and it possessed authentic Russian folk scenes. Its choreography was new and surprising, and the execution of the dance itself (by Nijinsky) was outstanding. The dance relied on movement invention. Petrouchka’s movements are inwardly rotated and abstract, as if his arms and legs are being moved by his “strings” (see fig. 49). The ballet was an example of the diversity and potential that can be represented in dance, unique in the way it incorporated all mediums of the artistic world: choreography, visual arts, music, and dance, and it provided fertile ground for new ideas in the realms of theme, movement, set design, music, and costuming.

Vaslav Nijinsky

Nijinsky (1890-1950), Russian ballet dancer and choreographer, performed many great roles throughout his career. Among the great male dancers in history, known for his virtuosity and for the depth and intensity of his characterizations, Nijinsky had remarkable technical powers. His movements created the illusion that he was suspended
in midair. He choreographed and danced in *L’après-midi d’un faune* (1912), but it was his earlier performance in the title role of *Petrouchka* (1911), that made him widely known.

The character of Petrouchka was Nijinsky’s favorite role, “with wooden hands and feet moving in disjointed mechanical gestures” (Otswald, 47). The movements epitomized the ballet reforms of Fokine. The way Petrouchka holds his body, swaying from side to side with feet turned inwards, the harsh position of his arms, his drastic pounding on walls and floor—all were radical departures from the classical style of ballet. Ironically, though, the ballet *Petrouchka* symbolized Nijinsky’s ties to Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), the director of the Ballet Russes (1909), which was the company in which Nijinsky performed (Siegel, 478). In the ballet, the very existence of the character of Petrouchka, danced by Nijinsky, was controlled by a “magician.” In reality, Nijinsky was being controlled by Diaghilev whose interpretation of *Petrouchka* emphasized the puppet’s suffering. Petrouchka is seen as a mad puppet and Nijinsky, playing the part of the mad puppet, becomes mad himself (see fig. 50). Fearing the magician, literally and metaphorically, both Petrouchka (and simultaneously, Nijinsky) make a gesture of being decapitated. Although Nijinsky identified with the character of Petrouchka, he also made a name for himself with his own contribution to the choreography of the time.
Figure 49. Nijinsky as Petrouchka

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Similar to Fokine’s movement invention, Nijinsky discarded traditional ballet vocabulary and created a completely new dance technique in his masterwork, *L’après-midi d’un faune*, first performed at Théâtre du Chatelet in Paris, on May 29, 1912. With music by Claude Debussy (1862-1918), choreography by Nijinsky and décor by Léon Bakst (1866-1924), *L’après-midi d’un faune* utilized the unconventional. The choreographed poses emphasized two-dimensionality, as if the dancers were sculpted in relief, flowing from one position to the next (see figs. 51 and 52). Although its premiere caused an uproar among conventional balletomanes, *L’après-midi d’un faune* experienced some measure of acceptance, especially among sophisticated audiences (Siegel, 480). That success was not only a result of the movement invention, but also the introduction of a sexual element previously unseen on the ballet stage. The main character, the faun, originally danced by Nijinsky, “makes love” to the scarf discarded by a nymph. Nijinsky’s daring choreography brought out the best and worst of audiences. Shocked by the movement innovation and by the distinctly provocative gestures at the close of the dance, Nijinsky’s work aroused lively commentary and many protests.
Figure 50. Nijinsky as Petrouchka
Photograph
New York Public Library
New York
Figure 51.  *L’après-midi d’un Faune*

Nijinsky as the Faun

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 52.  *L’après-midi d’un Faune*

Faun with Nymph

Nijinsky

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Ruth St. Denis

Along with Fuller and Duncan, Ruth St. Denis (1878-1968) is often referred to as one of the three “mothers” of modern dance. In 1915, St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn (1891-1972) created the Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Arts (1915), one of the first professional schools for “aesthetic” dancing. Much of their repertoire consisted of dances inspired by ethnic styles and was often seen on the vaudeville circuit (one of the first professional dance venues that many Americans experienced), as well as the theatrical stage (Sherman, 179, 180). The scale of St. Denis’s work ranged from solo pieces to grandiose spectacles, such as the 1916 film *Intolerance* by D. W. Griffith (1875-1948). Although her work was seen as decorative by some choreographers, her contribution to modern dance in America cannot be disputed. Most dance historians discuss the showmanship and ornamentation of St. Denis’s choreography as part of the turn of the century American passion for the exotic (Desmond, 30).

One of her dances, *Radha* (1905), involves spectacle, orientalism, and sexuality (among other themes) onto the female body. It begins and ends with a vision of the Hindu goddess, Radha, in a pose showing spiritual contemplation, and the majority of the dance is made up of five variations that delight the senses (Desmond, 31). Rather than being a narrative dance, *Radha* contains only a small developmental structure—stasis, disruption, stasis. Most of the time the dancer is on stage is dedicated to displaying the female body in a new way, rather than focusing on forwarding the narrative through character development. Another aspect that propelled *Radha* was the development of surface decoration that incorporated soft lighting, the smell of incense, and an elaborate temple backdrop. St. Denis’s costume was heightened by jewels strategically placed on
her short jacket and flowing skirt; she wore flowers in her hair and jewelry on her arms and legs. Her mid-section and feet were bare, which at the time was perceived as semi-nude (Shelton, 54) (see fig. 53). Radha displays the female body in spectacular form, in the theatrical structure as well as the visual arrangement on the stage.

The choreography of St. Denis reiterates the flourish of decorations found in the theatrical presentation. She never studied Indian dance, but instead drew on images from books that were popular in the late Victorian era. She believed that “each gesture and pose should objectify an inner emotional state,” and Radha was created as “an elaborate network of spatial and gestural symbols” that evoke such states as despair, rapture, or inspiration (Shelton, 62). Like Fuller’s choreography, the movements are simple turns and flourishes of the dancer’s skirt, combined with ballet-like steps and simple limb movements; in other words gestural poses of the arms and legs. Many of the poses are performed in profile, enhancing the two-dimensional quality of not only the various poses, but also the relationship of the dancer to the stage space. The character of Radha herself emerges as a moving jewel against an elaborate backdrop. After displaying her beauty, she retreats into the backdrop, still visible, but at the same time beyond reach. Every aspect of St. Denis’s choreography contributes to this display of the exotic.
Figure 53. Ruth St. Denis

Radha

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Choreographers at this time were experimenting with creating new art forms or expanding old ones. Duncan brought about a revival of Greek ideas, Fokine revitalized ballet, Nijinsky blended the line between ballet and modern dance through his movement invention; St. Denis elevated the vaudeville stage with her presentation of exotic spectacles. Louis Vauxcelles stated the relationship between Fuller and Duncan: “Isadora sculpts. Loïe Fuller paints. It is useless to compare them” (qtd. in Current, 210).

Nonetheless, he went on to compare the two, judging Fuller’s work as less bookish, and more spontaneous. Claude Roger Marx, who as a child learned to dance the serpentine from Fuller and was the son of Roger Marx, stated: “Isadora has talent, Loïe has genius.” He went on to state on November 28, 1912:

We have been dazzled by Nijinsky in “The Blue God” and “The Afternoon of a Faun.” We have seen Prince Igor’s bowmen hurl their weapons toward the sky, the Firebird discover a supernatural people beneath some fantastic trees, Petrouchka die, and Zobeide stab herself at Sultan’s feet. Ought we to forget that this tremendous movement of renewal owes its élan to a modest, thoughtful, and pretty woman who has returned to us—Miss Loïe Fuller? (qtd. in Current, 210)

Fuller used color, light, fabric, and motion to provoke a synaesthetic effect, creating Symbolist choreography.
CHAPTER 3
SYNAESTHETIC METHODLOGIES

Through the interaction of symbols, Fuller created a new art form through her synaesthetic artistic experiments. Her combination of color, light, movement, and music appealed to the senses synaesthetically. Paralleling the ideals of artists in other media belonging to the Symbolist movement, Fuller’s aesthetic philosophy tried to achieve a synaesthetic effect. Fuller sought to exploit this perceptual synthesis, the most inclusive form of ideal expression, in her dance so that all the senses unite in the artistic experience. The word *synaesthesia* comes from the Greek *syn*, meaning union, and *aiesthēsis*, meaning sensation, literally interpreted as a joining of the senses (Harrison, 343). Synaesthesia is when sensory perception combines the information of one’s involved senses with responses from an uninvolved sense. Synaesthetic perception, if achieved, expands the level of the experience of the work (in this case the choreography of Fuller) beyond symbols because of its unconventional response in unrelated senses of natural perception.

Advocates of synaesthesia believe in the subjective interaction of all sensory perceptions. This common acceptance of synaesthesia resulted from two divergent philosophical positions. According to the more romantically inclined artists and writers, the interchangeability of the senses was evidence of a mystical correspondence to a higher reality. On the other hand, some artists joined forces with scientific researchers to study synaesthesia as a phenomenon of human perception. These two schools of thought represent the quasi-mystical and the pseudo-scientific arguments for synaesthesia. Both
interpretations deeply influenced the development of synaesthesia and the development of musical analogy in “colored hearing” in the visual arts (Zilczer, 101-102).

Scientifically, synaesthesia is defined as an involuntary physical experience of a cross-modal association, meaning that there is a crossing of the senses, where stimulation in one sense causes stimulation in another sense. For example, this would be like a ringing bell not only being heard but also seen (perhaps as a flash of light). Scientists have known about synaesthesia for centuries. One scientist, Richard Cytowic, a doctor of neuropsychology, has defined five diagnostic features of synaesthesia:

- The sensations are involuntary: they cannot be suppressed or incurred, though the intensity is influenced by the situation in which they occur.

- The sensations are projected into the environment: it is not just in the head, but the person actually sees a sound or hears a picture, etc.

- The sensations are durable and generic: every time you hear a bell you always see a color, it does not change over time or situation and will always be experienced with the stimulus.

- The sensations are memorable: they are often the aspect of something that is remembered best. For example, it may be easier to remember that a person’s name is yellow, rather than remember the name, although the color helps to recall the person’s name.

- The sensations are emotional: having this experience elicits an emotion and is viewed as an accomplishment. (Cytowic, 1989, 64-65)
All scientific synaesthetic theories assume that there is a link between a sensory stimulus and the synaesthetic perception (Cytowic, 1989, 66). The many aspects of these perceptions that could be used as an explanation for synaesthesia are appropriate for scientific study. This is contrary to the artistic theory of synaesthesia where the mystical, dreamlike, artistic instinct creates the connection through the combination of the senses.

While the diagnostic criteria for synaesthesia remain constant, the synaesthetic experience is different for every individual both scientifically and artistically. For example, among people who see letters as colored, there is not a set color for each letter from person to person. Those synaesthetically inclined operate with their own uniquely colored alphabet. It is interesting to note that at various times, the scientific community has attributed synaesthesia to everything from “illusion” to a “crossing of the wires in the head,” to genetics (Cytowic, 1989, 2). In certain cases, it was even thought that people who claimed synaesthetic experiences actually suffered from schizophrenia. Today, however, scientific experts generally agree that synaesthesia results when the stimulation of one sense directly causes the perception of another sense. When this occurs, the pairing is usually in one direction; sound may evoke color, but color may not evoke sound (Cytowic, 1989, 69).

Synaesthesia is a complex scientific and artistic phenomenon. Estimates of the number of those who are synaesthetes vary greatly, from between one in 2,000 to one in every 25,000 people. Studies have indicated that women are more likely to be synaesthetic, with ratios between females and males varying from 3:1 in the United States to 8:1 in the United Kingdom. Occurring most frequently in left-handed and ambidextrous individuals, synaesthesia is a unique brain experience that is considered a
source of artistic inspiration for creative brilliance, and therefore, is frequently linked to artistic genius. Typically, synaesthetes function at a very high level, having demonstrated extreme intelligence and excellent memories. Difficulty distinguishing left from right, and having a poor sense of direction, however, are also common traits of synaesthetes. Fifteen percent of people with synaesthesia have someone in their immediate family with autism, dyslexia or attention-deficit disorder. In addition, difficulties with mathematics do not appear to be unusual, although it is interesting to note that the well-known physicist, Richard Feynman (1918-1988), was synaesthetic. On a metaphysical level, it is also quite common for synaesthetes to report frequent experiences of déjà vu, clairvoyance, premonitions, the feeling of a presence, as well as precognitive dreams. Most synaesthetes initially reference their own experiences and assume that everyone perceives the world as they do (Cytowic, 1989, 76-80).

There are cases of adventitious synaesthesia, or non-inherent synaesthesia, which is a synaesthetic condition that can be deliberately or naturally induced: individuals who consume psychoactive drugs, like lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and phencyclidine (PCP), those who experience synaesthesia after a stroke or in conjunction to deafness and blindness have said to experience synaesthesia or aspects of it. This sort of synaesthesia “caused” by drugs or after a stroke is singular in which individuals who experience it only have synaesthetic occurrences altering their color hearing, vision, or touch perceptions. Drug induced synaesthesia does not last long, and since psychoactive drugs observably alter one’s natural brain processes and perceptions, this type of synaesthesia does not necessarily contribute to the current study. However, non-inherent synaesthesia does indicate that there is a significant link between consciousness and the condition
The neuropsychological definition of inherent synaesthesia is divided into two categories: two-sensory synaesthesia and multiple sensory synaesthesia. Two-sensory synaesthesia (when stimulation of one sense triggers a perception in another sense, without a direct stimulation of the second sense) (Cytowic, 1993, 86), the crossing of two senses, such as colored hearing (chromaesthesia—seeing sound, hearing color, or experiencing color linked to words, letters, and numbers) is the more common form. Typically, it exists when sound produces the perception of color. People with this type of synaesthetic connection perceive both written and spoken words with a vivid experience of color associations. They can “see” music, “smell” colors, or even “taste” words (Cytowic, 1989, 75). Specific physical responses that can be experienced include Colored-Olfaction (when a smell creates the perception of a color), Colored-Gustation (a taste which stimulates a specific color), and Tactile-Gustation (the taste of something experienced as a shape). Multiple-sensory synaesthesia is experienced when three or more senses become crossed (Cytowic, 1993, 87). It is a condition that is rarely seen because it manifests less often than the two-sensory type. This specific category of synaesthesia, however, is what Fuller tried to accomplish in her choreography in her combination of light, sound, movement, and rhythm.

Synaesthesia in art, as the Symbolists understood it, refers to multiple sensory experiences (like Fuller was trying to achieve) and was assumed to be something that could be captured in art. It was thus considered a source of artistic inspiration for creative brilliance, linked to artistic genius, and of great allure to artists during the Symbolist movement (Campen, 1997, 133-136). Symbolist painters in the late nineteenth
century explored theories of synaesthesia (Zilczer, 101), and there were two primary reasons for their interest in the concept. First of all, visual artists regarded music as the highest step on the ladder of the arts because it approached an immaterial state. Second, the influential idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk proposed by Wagner assumed that visual, auditory and other sensory elements were attuned in one combined experience. The experiments by Symbolist visual artists ranged from whistling during the act of painting (Delacroix) to drafts of synaesthetic rules of thumb. As a result of this type of activity, a tradition of musical paintings emerged in the nineteenth century (Zilczer, 102).

**Synaesthesia and Color Hearing**

*Audition colorée* (“colored hearing” or “color music”), the hearing of colors in music and vowels, is one of its most common manifestations of synaesthesia; synaesthetes who experience these phenomena more strongly than others who experience only experience an inner feeling of color (Cytowic, 1993, 90). There are three theories that attempt to explain the synaesthetic concept of colored-hearing: (1) a unity of the senses, or linkage theory, (2) a crosstalk theory, and (3) a theory that suggests colored-hearing occurs at the higher cognitive/cortical level of the brain (Cytowic, 1989, 75-80). First, the unity of the senses, or linkage theory, proposes that the perpetuation of a primitive perceptual experience in the human limbic system\(^\text{16}\) is the root cause of color synaesthesia. As this system evolved, perception was differentiated into two separate senses: hearing and vision (Harrison and Baron-Cohen, 1994, 343-346). Second, the crosstalk theory holds that auditory and visual information pathways might cross in

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\(^{16}\) The limbic system in humans functions as the decider of valence, those functions that remain the most important processes in the human brain (Cytowic, 1989, 22).
synaesthetes. Such cross-modal neural connections could be numerically greater than usual or simply used in different ways, and some believe higher cognitive/cortical level processing is involved. According to this view, colored hearing synaesthesia is the result of a chain of mental associations where some of the intermediate links have dropped out of awareness (Cytowic, 1993, 83-85). For instance, every time a trumpet is heard, a person might see the color red because of an association with the red uniforms of a brass band. Third, the cognitive theory suggests that feedback connections aid in imagery, memory, sensory attention and other cognitive functions, but could they also result in synaesthesia? Brain imaging tests show that words activate language, vision, and color processing centers in the brain of the synaesthete (Cytowic, 1989, 87). Logically, auditory and visual information must meet somewhere in the brain in order to be processed simultaneously. Although those systems normally contain feedback pathways, through synaesthesia they might be affected to include information from the other senses.

Interest in color hearing is first seen in Greek philosophy wherein it was debated as to whether color, like pitch, could be considered a physical quality of music (Gage, 227). In that context, the scientific contributions of Pythagoras cannot be understated. Relating the length of strings to successive octaves, in essence Pythagoras discovered the mathematical order of musical harmony. Around 550 B.C., the Pythagoreans offered mathematical equations for the musical scales, and along those lines, demonstrated that musical notes are able to be seen as relationships between numbers. Specifically, musical scales can be divided into eight notes or an “octave” scale. The basic example is this C-Major scale on the piano, consisting of just the white keys: C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. This is also the basic “do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do.” Pythagoras understood that the music of the
spheres implied cosmic fusion. In that context, the universe embodies a divine geometrical harmony that is mirrored in all natural phenomena. The harmony of celestial orbit parallels the irregularities of life on earth, and the basis of these correspondences are mathematically precise vibrations that can be manifested as light, sound, fragrance, or other sense stimuli.

In his *Musica Mundana* (*Music of the Spheres*), Pythagoras considered the fusing of diverse sensory input (synaesthesia) the greatest philosophical gift and highest spiritual achievement (Berman, 16). *Music of the Spheres* has been described as the place where the science, the philosophy and the religion of Pythagoras meet, (Bennett, 198) setting the stage for the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Total Work of Art) of the nineteenth-century. Ultimately it reconciles the deceptive everyday world with the authentic world of universal, abstract concepts. As a result, this perspective led to the idea that colors and sounds could be related according to mathematical rules.

Proceeding from Pythagoras and the Greek tradition, science continued to investigate the idea that colors and sounds could be related according to mathematical rules. The first known experiment that tested the hypothesis of Pythagoras was conducted in the sixteenth century. Because of the lack of a mathematical system of color harmony, the sixteenth century Italian painter Archimboldo (1527-1593) (well-known today for his portraits of fruits and vegetables), inferred a scale of grey values from the Pythagorean system of sound intervals. In doing so, he translated the grey scale to color hues and persuaded a musician at the court of Rudolph II (1552-1612) of Prague to install painted paper strips on his *gravicembalo* (an early piano, or a harpsichord that plays soft and loud), that when played, demonstrated a mathematical relationship
Leading into the eighteenth century, another obvious reference to synaesthesia and colored hearing is found in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694). Therein, he recounted the story of a blind man that felt “betrayed” when he learned what was implied at the mention of the word *scarlet*. When a friend of the blind man asked what he thought scarlet was, the blind man answered that it was “like the sound of a trumpet” (Locke, 38). Following Locke, the German philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), and the English physicist, Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) both mentioned synaesthesia in 1704. Leibniz recounted another case of a blind man understanding scarlet by the sound of a trumpet (Risset, 257). Newton’s treatise *Optics* (1704) dealt with, among other things, the parallel between colors of the spectrum and notes of the musical scale. Newton mathematically divided the visible light spectrum into seven colors. He then noted that the mathematical relationships of those colors were similar to those of the musical scale.

A system of color harmony and a system of musical harmony required a correspondence scheme to connect the two. Newton provided the foundation for a solution to the problem by assuming that musical and color harmonies are related by means of the frequencies of light waves and sound waves. The mathematical refinement of theories of color-sound correspondences proved to be a direct result of the solutions of musicological and mathematical problems. This can be seen when comparing the descriptions of Louis Bertrand Castel (1688-1757), the well-known mathematician and physicist, and Archimboldo. Still, technological problems made the practical performance of the refined ideas nearly impossible. Finally, prompted by Newton’s
theory, around 1742 Castel proposed the construction of the *clavecin oculaire*, a light organ, which was a new musical instrument that would simultaneously produce both sound and the “correct” color for each note. Castel was a firm believer of direct solid relationships between the seven colors and the seven units of the scale, a concept similar to that found in Newton’s *Optics*. In collaboration with the instrument maker, Rondet, he created his harpsichord with colored paper strips, lit by candlelight, which appeared on top of the instrument when a key was pressed (Peacock, 1988, 397-406).

It is interesting to note one improvement in the presentation of the refined color-sound correspondence, the discovery of the gas lamp. Around 1870, the German composer Kastner developed a gas lamp organ known as Pyrophone, which consisted of thirteen gas jets covered with foil that lighted crystal tips. The term “color organ” was first used in a patent application made by the British painter, Alexander Rimington, in 1893 (see fig. 54). His nine foot tall color organ resembled a customary house organ with a cabinet of fourteen colored lamps on top. The light of the colored lamps could be adjusted to certain gradations of hue, brightness and saturation. This resulted in tremendous progress compared to the paper strip harpsichords of the earlier centuries (Peacock, 1988, 397-406). Like most color organs, Rimington’s instrument did not produce musical sounds, therefore, it had to be played simultaneously with an organ that did so (Steadman, 16-25).
Figure 54. Alexander Rimington

Photograph

Color Organ

1893
Rimington’s color organ was an attempt to engage more than one sense of perception. Whereas Rimington could not produce an instrument to do both, Fuller with dance as her medium, created an atmosphere to capture the synaesthetic combination of light, sound, color, and movement. In that regard, current attempts to discover formal correspondence schemes of synaesthesia have been preceded by a long history of experimentation in art and science, from which it may be concluded that the phenomenon of synaesthesia is difficult to control or manipulate. Artistic experiments, especially by the symbolist movement, uncovered interesting dynamic and emotional aspects of synaesthetic perceptions, and have thereby contributed to the phenomenology of synaesthesia. The concept itself cannot be understood in simple correspondence schemes, as numerous experiments with tone-color relationships have shown.

During the late nineteenth century, the term “color music” was coined to describe a visionary new art form, created with colored lights and independent of easel painting. The American color theorist Maud Miles spoke for many of her fellow inventors and artists when she claimed:

The truest parallel that I can conceive between direct light rays of color and music would be to lay aside all attempts to represent objects either in a natural or conventional way, in using the color. To simply use the color as music, might prove a genuinely new art. Perhaps some genius will invent a pipe organ behind a screen of colored lights. If these same lights could be operated by the same keys that play the organ, and if they could be reduced in brilliancy as the music grows softer, then a nearly perfect music and color parallel would be produced. (Miles, 97)
By the late nineteenth century, a disparate group of artists, writers, and inventors had become convinced that “color music” represented the art of the future (Zilczer, 101).

The idea of color music was symptomatic of a fundamental shift in aesthetic theory. As an outgrowth of the Romantic and Symbolist movements, music was elevated to a status of supremacy over all other forms of creative expression (Bowlt, 5-17). The other arts, notably poetry and painting, were said to aspire to the “condition of music.” Artists came to believe that painting should be analogous to music. Proponents of musical analogy based their aesthetic theories on an abstraction of the idea of music, rather than on a clear understanding of musicology. For them music represented a non-narrative, irrational mode of expression. They reasoned that music, in its direct appeal to emotions and the senses, transcended language. Just as music was a universal form of expression, so should the visual arts attain universality by evoking the sensual pleasure or an emotional response in the viewer (Zilczer, 101).

In addition to color music, Symbolist poets also utilized the power of color in words to convey feeling, mood, and emotion; yet the dominance of color in Symbolism is not the result of aesthetic preference or poetic technique. Rather, color functions, with the synaesthetic poetic context of which it is an integral part, as the direct manifestation of a particular metaphysical stance. Color leads to the heart of what Symbolism is, for it is the ultimate literary expression of a general emotional state.

According to Locke, knowledge “is real only so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things” (Locke, 417). Any perception, therefore, which seems incongruous with external reality, must necessarily be rejected as illusion,

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17 The influence of synaesthesia in European modern art and literature has been investigated in greater depth than has the American phenomenon. Further study is needed to address this issue.
for knowledge comes of the harmony that exists between ideas and the objective reality, which he perceives through sensation. Primary qualities are the mathematical quality of things. Secondary qualities, which include color, are illusions; mental pictures conjured up in us by the aspect of some primary quality. Thus it is the object which determines our perception of secondary qualities; those qualities cannot exist in the abstract because they are unreal entities to begin with. The proof of the thesis is an example of the microscope. If there existed in the world an individual with a hypothetical "microscopic eye," he would be alienated from the rest of human society (Meltzer, 255). As a result, colors would disappear, being mere illusion.

The Symbolists’ trick of elevating color above form results in the dissolution of form into color, reflected in the very syntax of Symbolist poetry and as a result, Fuller’s choreography. Color is “secondary” in normal syntax, for it characteristically occurs as an adjective lending weight to the all-important noun. Since color itself is void of any ideational content, when it refers to an abstraction,

a sort of semantic boomerang effect is produced: instead of intensifying the object it should modify, the color returns to itself, and suddenly stands out in isolation. In this way a dissonance is produced, because the color word is operating conversely to its syntactical position, and the substantive it modifies belongs to a category to which color is not ordinarily attached.

(Meltzer, 256)

This is a dissonance which occurs repeatedly in symbolist verse and Fuller’s choreography, where such dissonance is possible—or most efficacious—with color, since color has no prescribed signifié. If we examine symbolist verse carefully, we note a
curious phenomenon: color is overwhelmingly used to create an abstractionism, to erase, in fact, the cumbersome catalogues of *signifiés* to which common language is shackled. If we examine Fuller’s choreography according to the same phenomenon, color is used to create the abstraction of her movement; it erases the language of the body. In either medium, color functions as an adjective modifying an intangible or it is anthropomorphized, personified. The effect is the erasure of form: to grant human characteristics to a word void of a concrete referent increases the sense, on the one hand, and adds weight to the color itself, on the other (Meltzer, 256). Dissonance is also achieved by the Symbolists when they force color to modify an inappropriate concrete noun in the case of Symbolist verse, and movement in the case of Symbolist choreography—a general technique of which synaesthesia would form a subcategory. Such misuse of words is plentiful and the resulting dissonance is evident in much Symbolist verse. Such dissonance, such discord in the syntax, serves the poet’s and choreographer’s purpose precisely: to create a dreamlike quality (Meltzer, 256).

In elevating color above form, the Symbolists succeed in creating a tension between the grammatical structure of a line and its content as well as the choreographic structure of a movement phrase and its content. The question is why has color been elevated to a primary quality? The answer lies in the metaphysics of symbolist verse. If we agree that the purpose of Symbolism is to aspire to something beyond the here and now, to an *Idéal*, then we may view that verse as essentially transcendental (Meltzer, 257). To further this idea to choreography, we may view the movement of Fuller’s fabric as transcendental. Written or movement language becomes far more than just aesthetically significant; it is viewed as a kind of lens to the *Idéal*. Such a lens, however,
is necessary only when there exists a disjunction of mind from matter—precisely the disjunction which comes with Locke’s theory of primary and secondary qualities (Meltzer, 258). Subjectivity becomes dominant, while objectivity—matter—is increasingly bypassed. Not only does the balance slant heavily to the subjective, but the distinction itself is rarely questioned, even today. Here is the fatal flaw in Symbolist metaphysics. One might state this dilemma as an irony: the gap which the Symbolist poets seek to bridge is the one which they never question, and their project is therefore doomed from the start (Meltzer, 258). The Symbolist poets attempt a union of two categories which are by their own admission irreconcilable. In Fuller’s choreography, however, the two categories are reconciled. Fuller’s use of color, as well as the Symbolist poets, may be viewed as an experiment against language: the attempt to remove the “word” from its traditional context and to transform it into pure idea. This is the essence of Symbolist theories in general. It is the decomposition of form into color which goes far to explain the curious successes of the Symbolist experiments in poetry, visual art, and choreography (Meltzer, 258).

The first Symbolist artists, scientists, and psychologists to experiment with synaesthesia attempted to manipulate and control sensory information that would form, at least for them, synaesthetic phenomena (Berman, 15). Artistic experiments with color-organs, musical paintings, and visual music, however, have typically revealed its perceptual and emotional aspects (Berman, 15). Subsequent psychological experiments with combined perceptions, operant conditioning, use of metaphor and semantic differential scales have produced a variety of methodologies to the study of synaesthesia. Currently, psychologists approach synaesthesia primarily as a neurological phenomenon,
while artists generally are exploring various media, including electronic and digital apparati, to bring forth a synaesthetic effect (Campen, 1999, 13).

Associating the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* with Richard Wagner’s name has long been a commonplace of cultural history, but it should be remembered during the Symbolist period that the idea was relatively new. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* became a typical code word for artistic longings that attempt to transcend the limits of art and the artwork, as traditionally understood (Dömling, 3). That it was ultimately impossible to reconcile the deceptive everyday world with the authentic world of universal, abstract concepts became a household idea during Symbolism.

Synaesthesia intrigued individuals during the Symbolist movement for its fusion of disparate senses. The union of the senses, through introducing dreamlike states, was not simply an idea. As seen above, multimodal concerts of disparate physical effects like music and light (*son et lumière*), sometimes including odor, were popular and often featured color organs, keyboards that controlled colored lights as well as musical notes. Long after the Symbolist movement in circa 1922 Leon Theremin (1896-1993) invented an “illumovox” to accompany his “etherphone” (Theremin), which, “when connected to the etherphone, projected evolving hues of the spectrum in direct correspondence to pitch changes on the instrument” (Godøy, 317-319); these correspondences were apparently just straightforward, with the lowest pitches as dark red, then successively higher pitches moving through orange, yellow, green, and so on, up to the highest pitches being almost ultraviolet. Theremin later developed gadgets to also add scents and tactile sensations to the instrument’s music (Galeyev, 1993, 201-203).

The first synaesthetic performances of color organs in concert halls were realized
at the end of the nineteenth century (Campen, 1999, 10). At this stage in the performance level, many questions came into view concerning the effects that synaesthetic performances had on the senses of the public. More than anyone else, it was the Russian composer, Alexander Scriabin, who was interested in the psychological effects of the simultaneous experience of color and sound. In contrast to the contemporary investigation of tone-color correspondences by experimental psychologists, Scriabin started at a more complex level of synaesthetic experiences. Starting from a system of color-key correspondences instead of color-tone correspondences, Scriabin investigated the emotional aspects of synaesthetic experiences of color during the change of one musical key to another.

According to Scriabin, the presentation of the right color corresponding with music worked as “a powerful psychological resonator for the listener” (Peacock, 1985, 483-506). Scriabin composed *Prométhée, poème de feu* (*Prometheus, Poem of Fire*, 1910) for orchestra, piano, organ, and choir. It also included a *clavier a lumières*, which controlled the play of colored light. Its use flooded the concert hall and culminated in a white light so strong as to be “painful to the eyes,” therefore achieving a synaesthetic effect. The first successful performance of *Prometheus* was staged in New York in 1915, when a color organ known as the *chromola* was used to play the light parts of the piece. The *chromola* projected twelve colors on a small white screen, but the public did not appreciate the performance and a critic compared it to “a pretty poppy show” (qtd. in Peacock, 1988, 397-406). The first performance failed because two of Scriabin’s conditions of a synaesthetic performance were not met. First of all, there was no “flood of light” in the concert hall, but only a projection on a small screen. In addition, the
chromola was not equivalent to the orchestra but instead was merely used as one of the instruments.

As an art theorist, Wassily Kandinsky’s concept of synaesthesia, as formulated in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1914), shaped the foundation for these experiments. He described synaesthesia as a phenomenon of transposition of experience from one sense modality to another, like in the sympathy of musical tones. In his work, he compared the human nerves to the strings of a piano, finding that if a note is struck on one of two pianos standing side by side, the exact same note on the other piano will resonate. Kandinsky was well acquainted with the scientific debates on direct versus associative perceptual processes in the academic psychology at that time, and explicitly defended his theory of direct synaesthesia against the arguments of associationist psychologists (Kandinsky, 1912, 2661).

Kandinsky and the Austrian composer, Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951) were interested in the problem of synaesthetic dissonance, which also intrigued Scriabin. After Schönberg published the atonal theory of dissonant harmony, Kandinsky wanted to make use of those principles in the painting and theater. In his theater piece *Der gelbe Klang* (*The Yellow Sound*, 1912), he experimented with the opposition of three types of movement: visual (film), musical, and physical (dance):

Duplicating the resources of one art (e.g., music), however, by the identical resources of another art (e.g., painting is only one instance, one possibility. If this possibility is used as an internal means also (e.g., in the case of Scriabin), we find within the realm of contrast, of complex composition, first the antithesis of this duplication and later a series of
possibilities that lie between collaboration and opposition. (Kandinsky, 1912, 2667)

Like Scriabin, Kandinsky wanted to alternate dissonance with consonance in order to intensify synaesthetic perceptions, so they would, in his own words, have a “deeper inner impact” (Migunov, 7-11). Together with fellow Russians, the composer Thomas de Hartmann (1886-1956) and the dancer Alexander Sacharoff (1886-1963), he experimented with synaesthetic relations among the three movements:

I myself had the opportunity of carrying out some small experiments abroad with a young musician and a dancer. From among several of my watercolors the musician would choose one that appeared to him to have the clearest musical form. In the absence of the dancer, he would play this watercolor. Then the dancer would appear, and having been played this musical composition, he would dance it and then find the watercolor he had danced (Kandinsky, 1920, 474).

Also, Schönberg worked with similar relationships in his theater piece Die glückliche Hand of 1913 (Gage, 227). When compared to the psychological research into cognitive schemes of color-tone correspondences at that time, these artists cared more for the emotional and dynamic aspects of synaesthetic perceptions. In this perspective they were forerunners of the psychological studies of the combined processes in synaesthetic perceptions (Hornbostel, 517, 538) and of more recent research into emotional aspects of synaesthesia.
Fuller and Synaesthesia

The many layers of meaning present in Fuller’s work compel deep symbolic interpretations, rather than mere literal perspectives. Fuller’s work exemplifies the engagement of the viewer by promoting the integration of emotion, the intellect, and the subconscious mind. Further exploration of synaesthetic effects connected with these mediums, through the use of movement, costume, lighting, and music, enabled Fuller to create a Symbolist atmosphere out of the symbolism of the natural elements she used for affecting her choreography.

In the 1914 interview, Fuller explained her ideas of dance, music, and light. She wanted to form a unity in the arts, a synthesis of music, movement, and meaning:

For this ideal I am drawn most particularly to modern music where so much pictorial orchestration opens such an enormous field to magical lighting that imagination directs me to unceasing innovation.

…Music is the joy of the ears, I wish it also the delight of the eyes, and to this end, to render it pictorial, to make it visible…I march, torch in hand, in unknown paths. (qtd. in Harris, 28)

Here, Fuller expressed her goal of combing multiple ideal forms and content—medium and message—a concept that was prevalent among the literary artists of the time. After her 1892 debut in Paris, it was not surprising that Fuller was discovered almost immediately by the Symbolists. Protesting against rationalism, moralism, and the materialism of the 1880s, the Symbolists preferred synthesis to analysis and mystery to reality (Hirsh, 1985, 97). Advocating art for art’s sake, the symbol is the medium between the idea and the audience.
Fuller herself struggled to explain the use of synaesthesia as it applies to her choreography. In *Fifteen Years of a Dancer’s Life* (1913), she expressed the definition of dance and the purpose of choreography as follows:

What is the dance? It is motion.

What is motion? The expression of a sensation.

What is a sensation? The reaction in the human body produced by an impression or an idea perceived by the mind.

A sensation is the reverberation that the body receives when an impression strikes the mind…

In the dance, and there ought to be a word better adapted to the thing, the human body should, despite conventional limitations, express all the sensation or emotions that it experiences…

Ignoring conventions, following only my own instinct, I am able to translate the sensations we have all felt without suspecting that they could be expressed. We all know that in the powerful emotions of joy, sorrow, horror, or despair, the body expresses the emotion it has received from the mind. The mind serves as a medium and causes these sensations to be caught up by the body…

To impress an idea I endeavour, by my motions, to cause its birth in the spectator’s mind, to awaken his imagination, that it may be prepared to receive the image. (70-71)

Fuller’s idea in this essay stands apart from scholarship written about her in that it expresses how the human body, through dance, can evince the subtle sympathetic
sensations through a combination of sensory experience, or synaesthesia, in a spectator.

Her conception of synaesthesia reflects ideas evident in the literature that would eventually be connected to Symbolism. Baudelaire’s “Correspondances” (1857), arguably his best-known poem, typifies his theory of synaesthesia and became the hallmark of a new generation of writers in Europe. Baudelaire expressed the superiority of the symbol over the symbolized:

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers

Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles

L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles

Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent

Dans une ténèbreuse et profonde unité,

Vaste comme une nuit et comme la clarté,

Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent. (qtd. in Shaw, 154)

Nature is a temple where living pillars

Sometimes let confused words escape;

Man passes there through forests of symbols

Which observe him with familiar looks.

Like long echoes becoming confused from afar

In a mysterious and profound unity,

Vast like the night and like clarity,

Perfumes, colors, and sounds correspond/ answer each other. (Shaw, 154)

Baudelaire believed in the “forest of symbols,” and “correspondences”; expression
ensues where every sound, color, and fragrance join together to form a higher representation of the truth.

Like Baudelaire, the work of Joris-Karl Huysmans, the French novelist and art critic, engages his readers with synaesthetic principles as well. First associated with Émile Zola (1840-1902) and the naturalist group, Huysmans later joined the French Decadents (Symbolists). During this latter period, in his famous novel, *À Rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884), he describes his “keyboard of liquors”:

Indeed, each and every liqueur, in his opinion, corresponded in taste with the sound of a particular instrument. Dry curaçao, for instance, was like the clarinet with its piercing, velvety note; kümmel like the oboe with its sonorous, nasal timbre; crème de menthe and anisette like the flute, at once sweet and tart, soft and shrill. Then to complete the orchestra there was kirsch, blowing a wild trumpet blast; gin and whisky, raising the roof of the mouth with the blare of their cornets and trombones; marc-brandy, matching the tubas with its deafening din, while peals of thunder came from the cymbal and the bass drum, which arak and mastic were banging and beating with all their might. (Huysmans, 45)

The action at this point in the novel involves visual engagement and the ability of art to challenge meaning in everyday life. The main character, Jean Floressas Des Esseintes, describes two pictures by Gustave Moreau: “Salomé Dancing before Herod,” and “The Apparition” (see figs. 14 and 55). Des Esseintes’s dreams about the paintings that are meant to “challenge the distinction between art and life” (Bucknell, 508). Similarly, Fuller’s choreography is meant to challenge the viewer’s ability to discern meaning in life as opposed to art. In writings about her dances, one Symbolist critic described
“fantastical visions, the rush of color, light and movement that seemed like the flow of music itself—abstract, evocative, emotional” (qtd. in Sommer, 1981, 392). The abstract becomes a reality through Fuller’s use of synaesthesia in her choreography.

The most ideal and inclusive form of expression, where all the senses unite in a combined experience, is through synaesthesia, and like the Symbolists of the turn-of-the century, Fuller sought to engage this experience in her art. Fuller worked tirelessly to constantly improve her performances and utilize new innovations in her use of light and fabric. Two of Fuller’s works, Serpentine (c. 1892) and Fire (c. 1892/3), both performed with a voluminous skirt of translucent silk, are of interest in their symbolic message through her use of synaesthetic theories. These theories, produced as a visual alignment with principles common within the Symbolist movement, motivating her creation of a Symbolist repertoire replete with synaesthetic experience. Her choreography was obviously visually based, creating fantastic, suggestive shapes by manipulating fabric and filtering in different, constantly changing, colored lights. Her intention was to transform the experience by involving other sensory participation. To understand fully the extent of innovation in Fuller’s unique contribution to dance requires examining choreographers who are contemporaries of Fuller, previous research comprising the record of Fuller’s dance background, her sympathies with Symbolist ideas, and the Symbolist idea of synaesthesia in art.
Figure 55.  
Gustave Moreau

The Apparition

c. 1874-76

Oil on canvas

142 x 103 cm

Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris
CHAPTER 4

SYMBOLIST METHODOLOGIES

Symbolism as an artistic movement is difficult to define because different mediums of expression were employed and the artists of the time were highly individualistic. To be a Symbolist was to promote individuality, and as a result, difficulty arises in finding uniform definitions. Unlike the impressionists, the artists of the Symbolist movement generally leaned more toward darkness than light, and their work was highlighted by the recurrence of supernatural themes. For example, they reacted against the rise of industrialism and disregarded socially acceptable themes by depicting animals as fantastic, hybrid creatures such as unicorns, chimeras, griffins, and sphinxes (Ilie, 215). Even though the term “Symbolist” sent a specific message in various artistic circles, its interpretation varied slightly with different nationalities. For example, the idea in Russian Symbolist music varied from the idea of French Symbolist poetry and Spanish Symbolist literature.

The European Symbolist movement in literature was inspired by an American, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), whose ideas were taken up enthusiastically by French poets. Fuller, also an American, inspired and captivated the attention of French poets. Poe’s ideas, expounded by the French poets, asked if poetry could refer to nothing but its own abstractions, and so aspire to music, which is the most creative of the arts. The poets wanted to achieve a poésie pure of lyrical intensity (Ivanov, 26). The passions and rationale of the everyday world were not wanted, and were even considered detrimental. In that regard, two things were significant: the language itself (the phonetic properties of
words, their connotations, sounds, melodies, etc.) and the symbols (fire, heaven, ice, lilies, etc.) (Ivanov, 27). A prime example of this is Mallarmé’s sonnet of *Poésies* published in 1887. While Mallarmé’s work typifies the work from this region, each poet individually explored and developed these themes, and the symbols were not arbitrary; they were more often discovered than actually created. Similarly, two things were important in Fuller’s work: the language itself, the medium of dance, and the symbols (serpent, fire, lilies, etc.).

Symbolist artists, perceiving the culture in which they lived as a shrouded reflection of the most important aspects of life, created an idealistic movement designed to reach beyond this world and embody the mysterious in an elegant, subtle, refined, intellectual, and elitist style. Fuller shrouded her physical form and embodied the mysterious, otherworldly qualities. Central to the purpose of Symbolism was the fundamentally mysterious nature of the human condition, and the artist’s goal to respect and preserve that mystery (Schubert, 29-34). In this sense, Fuller embodied Symbolist ideals using her unique combination of light and motion to both hide and reveal mystery: “Hidden in swirling diaphanous veils of painted silk gauze, mysteriously emerging from shadow into colored light, and crowned with a mane of fire-red hair, she epitomized their exotic vision of Woman as a sensuous but intangible dream metamorphosing into a flame, a cloud, a moth, or a flower” (Harris, 8). For artists she was a true synthesis of the performing and visual arts and a combination of music, color, and movement (Current, 128).

As an artist herself, Fuller’s work was a synaesthetic blend representative of the Symbolist movement. Raymond Bouyer wrote about Fuller in the autumn 1898 issue of
"L’Artist: “La Loïe Fuller! The very name evokes the ideal that reality denies us; with her, Art itself finds a place on the stage” (qtd. in Current, 112). Bouyer linked Fuller to Georges Rodenbach and quoted his ode to Fuller. Also connecting Fuller to Fernand Séverin, Bouyer said that both of them were “artists of silence,” great musicians whose “mute harmony” lingered in the mind. She was both a poet as well as a musician: “Miss Loïe, your magic originally is both poetry and dance,” Bouyer stated with rapture. “You are both ancient and modern. Bold heiress of the ancients, sister-soul of our souls, you are dream, dragonfly, fire, light, flower, star” (qtd. in Kermode, 48). Fuller and her choreography represented the ideals of the Symbolist movement where suggestion, rather than explicitness, symbols, rather than description, and musical leitmotifs, not variations, created a mood that was more important than transmitting information.

Most art forms historically use symbols as a starting point for expression. Symbols, by their nature, express through words, visual depictions, sound, or movement as both the point of reference and a host of other associations either moral or intellectual. By extension, symbols become representative of something other than nature. Symbolist artists sought to engage the perceiver by appealing to the unconscious mind, to the viewer’s emotions, and to the intellect (Nordau, 176). Instead of seeking an artistic motif in the tangible world, Symbolists looked inward and focused on the externalization of the idea, a process of objectifying the subjective into a more “real” world (Ivanov, 31). While inspiration from introspection was quite individualistic, the collaboration and exchange of Symbolist ideas was extensive, and many poets, writers, visual artists, musicians and dancers had intricate ties to each other (Nordau, 175).

The Symbolist movement originated in literature with the exploration of exotic
subject matter and cultures in allusive and enigmatic styles. Realists and naturalists who found value in describing the physical exactly as a tangible form, because they believed that a close study of visual appearances provided a direct approach to reality, were thus superseded. Some of this philosophy is embodied in art forms rather than explicated in expository form. Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Mallarmé and others wrote elegantly refined verse shortly after mid-century. Baudelaire, through his use of countless symbols, brought the invisible into being through the visible, linking the two through other sensory perceptions (synaesthesia), notably smell and sound. In “Les Paradis Artificiels” he stated that: “Common sense tells us that terrestrial things have but a faint existence and that reality itself is only found in dreams” (Baudelaire, 1926, 235). The line between fiction and fact blurred as both were but signposts in a higher, unseen reality. Relating this to Fuller, her work is ephemeral; it is a reality but it is presented in a dreamlike state. Awareness of this state could not easily be found through the usual senses or ordinary consciousness, however, and for some Symbolist artists, the path to that transcendent realm was through alcohol, drugs, and dreams.\footnote{This is an interesting connection to the drug induced synaesthesia discussed in Chapter 3.}

The Symbolists sought a truth to reality as they were beginning to conceive it, and they demanded an art that was faithful to psychological realities. Earlier romantic artists and writers like Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and Poe, laid the foundation for this detachment from reality and espoused a similar conviction of the futility of life; as Poe put it: “All that we see or seem / is but a dream within a dream” (Poe, 599). This idea seemingly made irrelevant the resolve of the naturalists regarding the literal truth of nature. Belgian Symbolist artists revived the tradition of visionary art that was deeply
rooted in earlier Flemish painting, with their visions now coming from their own imagination or from literature of the period (Hoffmann, 1972, 262). Idealists such as Mallarmé reveled in the ambiguous relationship of dream and reality.

Mallarmé perhaps more than any other Symbolist provides a direct link between Fuller and the Symbolists. Having established himself as the premier Symbolist poet in France, he regarded poetry as the ultimate beauty, and felt that dance was a visual expression of poetry. Mallarmé theorized that symbols were of two types. One was created by the projection of inner feelings onto the world outside. The other existed as budding words, slowly permeating the consciousness, expressing a state of mind initially unidentifiable as to its creator (Youens, 49). Those developments did not come without dedication and cultivation, both of which focused on the inner life. For instance, Mallarmé’s “L’après midi d’un faun,” as well as Nijinsky’s choreographic work of the same name, raise the same doubt about objective reality that characterized the Symbolist movement’s focus on inner experience. The artists of the movement sought to express their inner states through mysticism, primitivism, and the psychology of the unconscious.

Mallarmé’s work is an excellent example of his meticulously cultivated art of suggestion, or what he termed “fictions,” where words were introduced containing intricate associations and elaborate images (Saldívar, 70). In 1893, Mallarmé attended a performance by Fuller, and after seeing her dance he wrote an essay describing her as “an enchantress” who creates her own environment, draws it out of herself and gathers it in again in a silence of quivering silk” (Mallarmé, 307-9, qtd. in Sommer, 1981). Mallarmé went on to state that Fuller’s dance was “the theatrical form of poetry par excellence…this transition of resonances to the veils…is uniquely, the witchcraft that
Loïe Fuller performs, by instinct…” (Mallarmé, 307-9; qtd. in Sommer, 1981). Fuller introduced her own “fictions” in her choreography, containing elaborate images. Traditional dance movement was rejected and traditional usage of the stage was abandoned creating Fuller’s own art of suggestion. Fuller intentionally created disembodied abstract images that created the mysterious, dreamlike state that intrigued Mallarmé. In her work, he found the personification of the ideal theater—a theater without scenery, without words, without the importance of time and space, and without reality intruding between the idea and the audience. For Mallarmé, Fuller epitomized all these Symbolist ideals.

In Symbolism, the literary structures of plot and narrative were eliminated, and the element of time was embraced. Single words became imaginative metaphors open to several layers of interpretation and signification. Rules for word patterning in rhythm, rhyme, and stanza were relaxed or even completely rejected as traditional usage was abandoned. In essence, a world existed in the language itself, where the poet merged into the world of the work. Poetry delved into the exploration of the interior landscape of the irrational, and its authors turned inward to investigate the power of the language itself. Like music, words have the power to express something beyond their everyday properties. Similarly, traditional dance structure was eliminated. Rather than a grand pas de deux prominent in contemporary ballets, Fuller created a world in the dance language, the movement vocabulary of the swirling fabric. Delving into the irrational, the physicality of a woman transformed into a flaming ember or an undulating serpent, Fuller investigated the power of the medium—the synaesthetic combination of light, color, movement, and music. Like poetry and music, dance has the power to express something
beyond its physical properties. It is symbolic in its very nature.

The ultimate goal of Symbolist poetry was achieving the seemingly formless standards set by music, and writers of the time embraced this aspiration, such as Paul-Marie Verlaine (1844-1896), Juan Ramón Jimenez (1881-1958), and Paul Valéry (1871-1945), among others. The inner world of the Symbolist poet and the outer life that was led were often expressed as a complete contrast. Most of life was dull and monotonous, but Symbolist description was elaborate, rich, and often taboo. Symbolist works, replete with exotic countries, fantastic animals, and ethereal people, focused on the beauty of stage performers and dance-hall entertainers. Fuller’s work, obviously performed onstage, was also ethereal and exotic. The night club fantasies they created, often through a result of isolation, alcohol and drug use, sometimes resulted in sex (Bate, 1218). The mixing of sensory perceptions, an idea that was not foreign in their literary circles, was essential to their writings, much like the choreography of Fuller.

Like their literary counterparts, the visual artists of the Symbolist movement engaged in academic practices and explorations of personal expression that moved against naturalism and impressionism. Venturing beyond specific depictions, and using nature as a way of expressing mood, inner feelings, and emotion, Symbolist artists explored dreams as a conduit for presenting their own idealistic visions. Fuller explored this dreamlike state as a conduit for presenting her vision of “a new form of art…where reality and dream, light and sound, movement and rhythm form an exciting unity” (Harris, 28). Some Symbolist artists, including Henry van de Velde (1863-1957) and Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), envisioned a Socialist utopia, and were influenced by William Morris (1834-1896) and the English Arts and Crafts movement. Other artists,
Like Jean Delville (1867-1953), imagined a world founded on mystical Christianity
(Kingsbury, 165). For the most part, as long as there was not a connection between the
reality and the fantastic, artists could explore the dream world without any agenda for
social change. Fuller, as a Symbolist artist pursued her own theories and did not intend
any social change.

In order to understand how Brussels fits into the historical context of Symbolist
art history, it is necessary to look at the influence of Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), a
leader in the evolution of French Symbolist painting. Influenced early in his career by
Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) and Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856), Moreau
established new methods by fusing symbol with technique. The use of symbols itself was
not a new concept to painters as much of visual art involves symbolism and it higher
level, allegory. Moreau’s experiments with watercolor involve thickly applied paint in
the manner of Delacroix and as such, which have been seen as foreshadowing Abstract
Expressionism (Hirsh, 1985, 96). However, the development of his own style was to
break with realistic technique and introduce a different level in the work which in the
case of this texture was quite literal. Thematic development of symbols through detailed
mythological scenes was another Symbolist attempt to reach beyond the real. Moreau
integrated emotionally charged states that were thematically elaborated with leitmotifs
like Wagnerian operas, and he was known to constantly work on his paintings, never
really considering them finished (Hirsh, 1985, 96). For instance, he worked on The
Suitors periodically from 1852 to 1872 (see fig. 56). Similarly, Fuller constantly revised
her work looking for new advances in lighting. She often developed new work out of
previous dances. For example, Fuller realized that Salomé was unsuccessful, but
developed a section of that work into *Fire* dance, one of her most famous pieces. Like Fuller, Moreau influenced countless artists and writers in a variety of ways, including Mallarmé, Jules Laforgue (1860-1887), Marcel Proust (1871-1922), and Joris-Karl Huysmans, who often acknowledged the profound impact of Moreau’s work (see figs. 14, 55, and 56).

Subject matter was one source of unification among Symbolist artists. Fuller was inspired to create a different type of Salomé, a central figure for Symbolist artists. The literary source containing the biblical description of Salomé was vital to Moreau and many Symbolist artists, because to them, she symbolized the ultimate castrating female. Salomé’s story also had clear hints of male Oedipal anxieties, and as a result, she became a metaphor for the new man troubled by his gender role. Symbolists were not only obsessed with Salomé, but also with the female muse in her various appearances, and figures such as Eve, Lilith, Judith, Medusa, Pandora, and Jezebel recurred in the works of the artists (Garcia, 289). While in Baroque art female figures tended to be the victims of male cruelty and sexual assault, in Symbolist art men were more often portrayed as sexual victims, showing the shift in thinking of women as an inferior creature.
Figure 56. Gustave Moreau (1826-1898)

The Suitors

1852-1872

Moreau Museum, Paris
While the Symbolist movement is clearly demonstrated in the visual form, visual artists themselves were usually not inclined to publish theoretical manifestos in the nineteenth century (Hirsh, 1985, 95). As a result, the manifestation of Symbolist painting as a unique genre is difficult to distinguish. In spite of that, however, the Symbolist movement in the visual arts became multi-disciplinary in context and international in scope. In that regard, Brussels became one of the leading centers of both Symbolist art and literature. One prominent contributor in the visual arts affecting the Symbolist movement was Pierre Puvis de Chavannes’ (1824-1898) (His work can be compared to the frescoes of Piero della Francesca [c. 1420-1492] and Odilon Redon [1840-1916]). A fine illustrator of macabre subjects, some of which were inspired by Poe, Chavannes thought of himself as more “traditional” than Moreau and the other Symbolists (Hoffmann, 1972, 567). In spite of that, however, his compositions were quite similar to those of Moreau.

The work of Belgian Symbolist artists Delville and Fernand Khnopff further demonstrate Moreau’s influence. Delville took an interest in the theosophy of Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and the mystical ideas of Krishna Murti (Divine Spirit), believing that the true artist presents images that teach and transform human nature (Gerould, 1978, 27). Khnopff, influenced by reading Flaubert and Baudelaire, was the first artist to be written about as a Symbolist. In an 1886 article, Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916) stressed Khnopff’s modernism, and defined Symbolist art as part of:

A strong recoil of the modern imagination toward the past, an enormous scientific inquiry and unfamiliar passions towards a vague and still unidentified supernatural, has urged us to incarnate our dreams and even
our fear before the new unknown in a strange symbolism which translates the contemporary soul as antique symbolism did for the soul of ancient times.

Only it is not our faith and our beliefs that we put forward; on the contrary, it is our doubts, our fears, our boredoms, our vices, our despair and probably our agony. (Verhaeren, 290)

Knopff’s themes were the unconscious, dreams, silence, solitude, and precision (Verhaeren, 17). Every effect and every detail was deliberate, and his work rivals Moreau’s for its drama and complex imagery. In the same way, Fuller presents images that transform human nature. She becomes serpent, fire, lily, etc. She puts forward an unidentified supernatural creating a symbolism that transcends reality. As a representative of the pervasiveness of the Symbolist movement, the interactivity among various art media influenced many artists, musicians, and dramatists. Many of the artists of the Symbolist movement aspired to create a “more real” experience reflecting similar themes and maintaining a similar intent by combining the expression in other art forms. For example, Mallarmé was inspired by the choreography of Fuller and Symbolist visual art was influenced by the writings of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Rimbaud.

A recurring Symbolist theme was the use of magic as an outlet in mysticism against the excess of materialism and positivism. It was the tool that made their dreams overcome reality, in the sense that the visual images Symbolists created were seen as magical charms, and poems were incantations (Meltzer, 264). Occultism provided a sense of universal community, as well as a contact with eternal truths during a period of great change. Late nineteenth-century mysticism was shaped by ongoing scientific and
philosophical revolutions, and to create a new synthesis, occultists combined the psychological discovery of the unconscious with the mystical theory of other planes of existence (Henderson, 5). The image of the artist as seer or priest was basic to the art theory of the time; the unconscious was the source of creativity and occult vision, and certain artists operated as mediums and hypnotists. Fuller operated as a type of hypnotist; with her constantly swirling fabric, she mesmerized audiences with her fantastic colors, making her “dreamlike” world overcome reality.

Similarly, in the traditional theater, French and German Symbolists sought to eliminate the restrictions of illusionistic realism, although their efforts were stifled by conservative production methods. Successes in Symbolist theater occurred primarily in small private theaters accessible only to the social or intellectual elite (Green, 8). In contrast, Fuller had great freedom in the music hall; she could experiment with techniques available because of the use of electric light, thereby creating spectacular productions with elaborate special effects. Fuller was not confined by conservative traditions; she constantly looked for new materials that she could adapt to her uses. She utilized innovation to create her synaesthetic art.

**Symbolist Choreography**

In order to understand how dance influenced the writers of the Symbolist period, it is important to note that dance itself was in a state of transformation during this period. The shift from classical ballet to modern dance is expressed in Mallarmé’s “Ballets” (1886), where he makes a distinction between the potential of dance and the disappointing reality of ballet. Mallarmé suggests that dance should avoid narrative
allegory and instead contain metaphors that suggest the Symbolist ideal (Hirsh, 97). In Fuller’s performances, Mallarmé found the embodiment of the elements of dance that he most valued—the development of a motif, the removal of any reference to a specific place or time—which were also present in his work (Ivanov, 27-28). He recognized the structure of Fuller’s choreography and understood it as close to his own. Fuller’s choreographic arrangement builds on movement motifs, creating and image devoid of any specific narrative. Mallarmé’s verbal arrangements also build upon each other, painting a picture without reference to time and space.

In looking at Symbolist choreography as a part of the artistic culture of the time, it is necessary to look at the visual representations of Fuller and her choreography. In the sculptural evidence by Roche (see fig. 19), we see Fuller caught in mid-flight, her fabric swirling around her form, as if not bound by gravity, even defying the materials of the sculpture. The movement of the fabric captured in the bronze undulates about Fuller’s body. We can be sure that certain elements are faithful, the movement of the fabric, the winding and twisting of the body, and the climax occurring with the height of the fabric. Here dance transpires more in the world of the mind than anywhere else. Roche has abstracted the dance into this beautifully nonrepresentational figure of Fuller’s dance. Yet, the composition is undoubtedly representational of the dance. While Fuller unfolds her choreographic structure, the fabric engulfs the viewer and makes them think of symbolic images of a butterfly, fire, etc.

Like Mallarmé’s unfolding of his verse, Roche captures the unfolding spirit of Fuller and her Symbolist choreography. One foot is planted solidly on the ground, while the other is in motion, representing the “waltz movement.” It was sculpted to capture the
three dimensionality of her movement. She wears a dress that completely enshrouds her, taking the human form out of the equation. Although Fuller has long drapery covering her human form and confining her movements to one spot, her legs are free to execute the steps of her dance. In the sculpture, the cloth has rich folds, with little or no ornamentation except around the hem. In looking at photographic evidence (see fig. 2), the heel of the back foot of Fuller is lifted off the ground, evoking a greater sense of movement, similar to Mallarmé’s verse. In looking at Roche’s sculpture, the holding of the fabric also seems energized, the tension is greater as Fuller holds on so as not to break the movement of the dance. The fabric has a life of its own as it swings past the legs moving in place. This is not a static, confining dance, Fuller has a freedom of motion and a Symbolist animation to her movements, even within the material of marble or bronze. As Fuller turns her head to glance behind her, the fabric billows overhead in contrast to her stationary body. Just as the viewer’s eye glances upward, so too does Fuller take her eyes to the viewer as she moves from a vertical position to a backbend, from facing the audience to turning about herself. This also can be seen in the depictions of Fuller by Rivière (see figs. 25 and 26). The outstretched right arm of Fuller creates a diagonal to her opposite knee and ankle, which draws the viewer’s eye from one side of the body to the opposite side. The result is a definitely mobile, rather than static, composition giving the idea of movement, a Symbolist event, of the movement occurring in which the viewer is captured.
CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS OF FULLER’S WORK

Fuller was at the forefront of dance innovation during the artistic developments of the 1890s, a period dominated by Symbolism. The Symbolists were concerned with individual expression, and their art strove to create a mood or feeling, shifting from naturalism and impressionism, and focusing instead on representing the subjective experience beyond mere reality. Painters, poets, musicians, composers, and even film-makers, imbued with the ideas of the Symbolist movement, were attracted to the choreography of Fuller, yet history has not yet aligned her with this movement.

One reason for this may be that the term “Symbolist” has historically been rather vague and has not often been applied to dance. In the few cases where dance is included in the discussion of Symbolism, it is for the purpose of describing isolated dances, or as an added context to other Symbolist art forms. This should be seen as an error of omission. Because few historians and critics have been dancers, and until recent times a patronizing attitude toward dance has hindered interdisciplinary investigation embracing this field. Even though dance has been studied throughout history, there has long been a gap in the development of understanding between performers and scholars, historians and critics. The position of Symbolist dance has not advanced and dance historians have scarcely begun to embrace the term.

There could be any number of reasons for this lacuna, but one difficulty is that in order to say anything at all about dance other than relating a first impression, one has to analyze it; it must be first separated from the rest of culture and understood and, once
captured, then compared to the artistic and cultural milieu of the time. We must “take the phenomenon to pieces in the hope of finding out what makes it tick” (Royce, 13). It is hoped that this can be accomplished without deconstructing the dance itself.

Dance was undoubtedly a central tenet in Symbolist aesthetics. Mallarmé and Valéry both note the way dance dissolves the gap between the poet and the dancer (Brombert, 686). This then transforms the art form to an expression of higher reality, a perfect realization of the Symbolist aesthetic ideal. British poet Arthur Symons (1865-1945) suggested in The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899) that Symbolism was “a literature in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream” (6). Fuller’s choreography accomplished the same effect through her use of synaesthesia.

Clearly, modern research on Symbolism must expand its approach to include dance. The present study wishes to address part of this gap and place dance in an appropriate position in cultural studies, and recognize the choreography of Fuller in its artistic milieu as historical fact. Recent trends in research have approached dance in isolation rather than regarding it for its connections to anything else (Harper, 10). Dance must be addressed for what it is, an interdisciplinary field, one aspect of culture among many functioning in a distinctive way.

As Judith Lynne Hanna writes in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, “dance is a barometer of theology, ideology, world view, and social change” (1988, 281). Exploring the relationship of dance to the symbolic, Hanna calls attention to a neglected form of expression in the comparative and critical examination: “It offers, from ethnographic/historical record, an analytical typology of some of the ways in which
dancers and spectators draw the power of the supernatural to the human world” (281). Hanna offers two issues on the use of images of the symbolic divine in dance. First, is the symbolic knowable in bodily form? Hanna responds, “If the answer is affirmative, then it is more likely that a dancer, creating specific images in space, time, and with effort, can temporarily metamorphose into … subtle suggestions or attributes of an awesome numinous reality” (281-282). Second, attitudes toward the body, especially emotionality and sexuality, affect its symbolic use of dance and other aspects of life.

DeMarinis proposed several dimensions of dance acting as a mediator of meaning merging Symbolist ideals (Adams, 200). The interrelationship of these dimensions, operating in unison, is such that when and where there is an alteration in one of these dimensions; the others need to be reexamined for responsorial changes. Some of these dimensions are: interpersonal, psychological centering and spiritual balancing; interpersonal, social centering and spiritual balancing; releasing and containing of physical and spiritual energy; focusing of community social energy; mediating of powers inside and outside of self; bridging energies of gender, age, and class; and, caring at both the preventative and primary levels (Adams, 200).

These dimensions lend themselves easily to Symbolist choreographic forms governed by synaesthetic principles. In viewing a dance, the audience absorbs successive visual elements as one entity, creating a kind of synaesthesia. As a result, the dance in the immediate present must always be related to the movement, music, meaning, and metaphor of all dance.

To understand and perceive the synaesthesia of Fuller’s work depends upon memory, which is determined by different senses, examples of which are the combination
of primacy, frequency, recency, and vividness (Cohn, 185). A main theme establishes the basic character of a choreographic work and, stated first, it is representative of primacy. Established in importance, the motif is repeated many times throughout that movement, establishing frequency. A transition brings the viewer’s mind back to the theme because it is something different just before the theme is restated, representative of recency. A new theme, or a theme previously seen, is stated in a different, contrasting way, with a different energy or quality, or with a new accompanying rhythmic pattern, representative of vividness.

Fuller, like other Symbolist artists, believed that art could communicate universal messages of a spiritual, moral, or religious nature through personally conceived forms, colors, dreams, and moods (Goldwater, 116). A simple glance at Fuller’s titles for her work confirms such extra-textual allusions as commonly found in works of the Symbolist movement: *Midsummer Night’s Dream, Salomé, Ophelia, Tragedy Dance, Danse Macabre, La Danse de Martyrs, and School of Imagination Dances*, which include *Hatred, Joy, Sorrow, Laughter, Fear, and Faith*. Fuller’s choreography self-consciously developed some of the important Symbolist ideas in dance. In defining herself, Fuller inspired future generations as many Symbolist writers, musicians, and visual artists did in their media. As a result, her work is still relevant to dance today as it created new form, content, medium, and message.

Fuller expressed the intention to “create a new form of art” in the 1890s. Just as Symbolist artists invoked “art for art’s sake,” and aimed for representations suggesting dreams and illusions with recurrent images, Fuller explored themes expressing experience (Harris, 28). As painters forsook representation of the world through faithful
reproductions, and Symbolist writers’ struggled for a new “vocabulary” and form, Fuller’s choreography usurped the forms preceding it. It is no wonder that after her 1892 debut in Paris Fuller was embraced by the writers and artists of the movement almost immediately (Lydon, 160). Fuller found highly individualistic ways to communicate moods, emotions, and colors in her choreography. The transformative values espoused by Symbolist poets who claim that harmonies made of sudden, indefinable relationships transport the viewer to dream-like states are present in Fuller’s choreography (Valéry, 59). Like her colleagues in other media, she sought a new “vocabulary” to express the hidden truth of life.

Fuller’s aesthetic philosophy paralleled the ideals of artists in other media belonging to the Symbolist movement, perhaps most importantly the striving toward synaesthesia. In looking at the symbolism of Fuller’s choreography, specifically Serpentine and Fire dances, her choice of subjects involves symbols as a function or sign of things imbued with energy. For example, the serpent or snake in most folklore is symbolic of energy itself. Frequently encountered as a chthonic being, the serpent is an adversary of man, as an apotropaic animal. A serpent can represent the protector of sacred precincts of the underworld or have the soul of a human. As a sexual symbol, the serpent is masculine because of its phallic shape, but feminine because of its engulfing belly. Because of its shedding, it is a symbol of constant power of renewal (Becker, 343). Similarly, fire has many symbolic meanings. It also has a dualistic nature; it can be an agent of destruction, burning everything in its path, or a symbol for undying love. Fire is warm and sustaining, yet transformative and destructive. Prometheus risked the wrath of

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19 Chthonic means dwelling in or under the earth. It is also related to the underworld and death, and fertility and crops.
Zeus to bring fire to mankind. A source of life, warmth, and light, fire can be cleansing and purifying. Expressing fiery emotion also shows determination or strong desire (Panketak and Emerson, 926). Both serpentine and fire imagery fascinated Fuller.

Many Symbolist artists used serpent and fire imagery for its associations between forms of communication and mysterious/spiritual nature. The serpent simultaneously symbolizes all the primeval, cosmic forces and spirituality even while it embodies a fiery nature with a terrible swiftness and incredibly long life which is renewed annually. In the same way, fire has serpentine properties, undulating and twisting in the wind, only being extinguished when there is no air. Fire can renew life, in spite of its primeval cosmic forces of death and destruction. In contrast, a serpent is the earthliest of animal, cold-blooded, toxic, and phallic, which are not disambiguated. Many possible significations combine in their Symbolist representation. Likewise, other meanings inhere, such as the representation of the snake as the brain-stem and spinal chord, consistent with its predominantly reflexive psyche, symbolizing the unconscious. A Symbolist preoccupation with the ambiguity of gender is also reflected in the snake, as the mother image renders the serpent feminine, the snake nonetheless retains its use as a phallic symbol, completely masculine (Vries, 515).

The snake has acted as a diverse symbol throughout history, representing immortality, sin, protection, evil, femininity, and masculinity. In the book *Dream Animals*, Marilyn Nissenson and Susan Jonas further reveal the awe that the snake has inspired throughout the centuries, “They [snakes] were believed to mediate between life and death, earth and sky, this world and the next” (Hillman, 19). The snake slithers through our subconscious, evoking varying associations. In *Animal Dreams*, James
Hillman discusses the multiple symbolic functions of the snake, seeing it as a symbol of immortality because it constantly renews itself and is reborn as it sheds its skin, appearing dead when resting in the shade, yet coming back to life in the sun. It seems only appropriate that this diversely symbolic animal would prove highly emblematic in the choreography of Fuller, who was identified with the snake and the *Serpentine* dance throughout her life.

Fuller’s choreography contains conscious combinations of serpent imagery, including the sinuous movements of the serpent. She fully exploits the intersecting symbolism, involving the way the snake sheds its skin, its threatening tongue, the undulating pattern of its body, its hiss, its resemblance to a ligament, and its method of attacking its victims by coiling itself around them in the undulating movement she creates with the fabric, the sound the fabric makes when slicing through the air (similar to the hiss of a snake), the resemblance of the fabric to the movement of an actual body (be it human or serpentine), and the way the fabric coils around the human form.

Similarly, Fuller’s serpent dance also references biblical symbols of temptation. In this regard, but from a more metaphysical perspective, the snake is symbolic not only of personal sin, but also of the principle of evil inherent in all worldly things. In that framework, the snake, or the Devil lurking in the darkness to challenge the power of good, is a symbol of seduction. As a result of biblical references, snakes and serpents are still connected with “temptations.” Fuller has also been connected with temptation because of her transparent drapery and lack of traditional corset. Fuller was seen as a seductress; her serpentine choreography challenges the power of traditional dance and creeps into a new type of expression, and as a result, a personification of a new type of
symbol. Her movements were other-worldly—impalpable, intangible, and ethereal. An image of Fuller as an evil temptress can be seen in Figure 71. Here Fuller has her face and torso affixed to the body of a serpent. As a seductress; her serpentine choreography challenges the power of traditional dance and creeps into a new genre, and as a result, a personification of a new type of symbol.

Comparatively, the image of woman and serpent together were considered holy, since both embody the power of life. The image of the serpent-bodied Fuller can represent the inner power of the human body; the serpent, coiled in the pelvis like woman’s organs that give life, and Fuller, wrapped in her fabric like the serpent give creative and symbolic life. Likewise, Fuller embodies the power of life in that she transforms herself into a symbolic image, the serpent. Serpents were considered immortal because they were believed to renew themselves indefinitely by shedding old skins. Fuller metaphorically sheds her skin and becomes a butterfly, a lily, a serpent, etc. She is flesh and earth bound, but yet ethereal and mystical.

The serpent is one of the oldest symbols of female power. The names of the pagan goddesses were often based on signs representing the snake, which was the equivalent of saying that it was because of woman that the spirit had fallen into matter and evil (Cirlot, 385). Even in the preclassic Aegean civilization, woman and serpent together were considered holy, since both seemed to embody the power of life. Likewise, Fuller transforms herself into symbolic images in order to embody the mystical power of life. As natural metamorphosis affects life, Fuller metamorphosed, shedding her skin, turning into a serpent, a butterfly, a lily, etc. Literally shedding her skin and performing in diaphanous gowns, Fuller, as well as other contemporary performers (Duncan, Allan,
St. Denis), were rebuked for performing on stage as “nude appearing,” which seems quite tame to the modern eye (Sparshott, 308). Glimpsing brief moments of her flesh amid the floating material created the image of voluptuous poetry.

Fuller’s *Serpentine* dance can also take on a similar connotation in that she was enveloped by her own fabric, which, in turn, rejuvenated her creative powers. In China, the serpent was seen as being connected to the earth and water, and was therefore considered a Yin symbol (Mundkur, 173). Relating this to other dances in Fuller’s repertoire, the opposition of dances such as *Fire* and *Water*, and *Joy* and *Sorrow*, are examples of the Yin and Yang symbols. In Indian mythology, the *nagas* were serpents that functioned as beneficent or maleficent mediators between gods and humans and were sometimes (like other serpents in other civilizations) associated with the rainbow (Shulman, 114). In the same way, the kaleidoscope of colors used in lighting Fuller’s dances is a mediator between humanity and the divine, reality and the symbol.

In further relating serpent symbolism to Fuller’s choreography, her movement vocabulary must be taken into consideration. Through the manipulation of the fabric she used to produce her stunning visual effects, Fuller created elaborate images by drawing shapes with her costume. For the ancient Greeks, the snake coiled around the staff of Aesculapius, the god of medicine and healing, implying that as good is balanced by evil, so must health maintain equilibrium with sickness (Garai, 143). Fuller also had to maintain the same type of equilibrium both symbolically in her gestures and literally. In the description of the “waltz movement” where the dancer arches backward, perfect balance must be maintained in order to execute the desired effect (see fig. 57). The sinuous movement of the fabric reflects the image of the snake winding around the staff.
of Aesculapius. In her choreography, the lines did not have a beginning or an end and, once they came alive they were capable of depicting any shape. All that could be seen of the lines is what was immediately made manifest in space and time, and yet one was aware that, at either end, they extended into invisible infinity (see fig. 69). The same is true of the serpent, its body having a sense of never ending; there is a feeling that it is a continuation of the infinite materialization that is none other than primordial formlessness, the storehouse latency that underlies the visible world. In Fuller’s Serpentine dance, the undulating movement of the choreography represents the movement of a snake. Fuller created magical dances transforming her own physical form into a mystical expression through her snakelike manipulation of yards of billowing, luminous fabric and the endless possibilities of color in motion.

Fuller’s Serpentine dance not only took massive amounts fabric to create the undulating patterns, but also took massive amounts of strength to execute; her contorted body evoked an image like that of Laocoön (see fig. 70). After each performance Fuller was exhausted as if she had been through a battle. Similar to the futility of Laocoön’s efforts, Fuller’s arms ached from the strain of manipulating the immense fabric. Fuller literally brings to life the folds of the fabric undulating in the light of her own creation. She moved the heavy fabric of her costumes and defied gravity with the juxtaposition of agony and ecstasy. The pull of the fabric against her body and the physical exertion required to manipulate it (the agony), led to the complete suspension of belief in the transformation of the physical form of the body (the ecstasy) into the image of a winding serpent. An article in Le Figaro described Fuller’s performance: “Serpentine! ah! what a poor word to describe the impalpable, intangible, ethereal, supernatural essence that
arises from the floating of the soft material, from the quick glimpses of pink flesh, from the dazzling magic of colored lights—a voluptuous poetry” (1892).

Symbolist artists also used fire imagery to express the spiritual nature. The fear evoked in Fuller’s Fire dance arises from the thought of her body being consumed by flames. As Fuller states, “the material, dizzily swirling, is tinged successively with all the hues of the rainbow; and the vision is never so splendid, so magical, so enrapturing as at the moment when she is about to disappear, to be plunged into nothingness, to be lost in the darkness again” (Fuller, Fifteen Years, 146-47). The viewer loses sight of the woman executing the dance, belief is suspended and the flames overtake her. The flame is extinguished and the audience is left to wonder what happened to her (Sommer, 1981, 395).

While no direct evidence links Fuller’s Fire dance to Hawaiian lore, there are many correspondences with the dance of the beautiful but tempestuous “Goddess of Volcanoes,” Pele, (Friedman, 201). Like Pele, Fuller was both revered and feared in her Fire dance, as she evoked the infinite as well as the fear of fire. When Pele stamped her feet she caused volcanic eruptions and fiery devastations. Similarly, Fuller would stomp her feet to cue the technician to change the lighting to evoke the flames rising higher or the dying embers (Sommer, 1981, 395). She also would carve out patterns in the air with the fabric of her costume. In creating the figure eight patterns, Fuller would create images of flames arcing through space, much like volcanic eruptions carving lava patterns in the mountainside.
Figure 69.  *The Serpentine Dance*

Will Bradley

Book Illustration

*The Chap-Book*

December 1, 1894

7 ¼ by 4 ½ (19 by 11.4)

Signed Lower Right: Will Bradley (1868-1962)

Modernism, San Francisco
Figure 70. *Laocoön and His Sons*

Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros

Between 160 BC and 20 BC

White Marble

Vatican City, Vatican Museums
Figure 71. Poster

La Loïe

Color Lithograph, undated

39 5/8 by 28 1/8 (107.5 by 71.5)

Printed by George H. Walker & Co.

Boston and New York

Le Musée de l’Affiche, Paris
Figure 57. Jody Sperling
Photograph
Julie Lemberger
2005
To extend the comparison between Pele and Fuller, a brief look at dance in Hawaii is helpful. In traditional Hawaiian dance, namely *hula*, the basic element was poetry, accompanied by a melodic succession of pitches on a percussive instrument (Kaeppler, 38). The dance illustrated selective words from the text. In Hawaiian name chants, *Mele inoa*, a specific god or chief was honored and the goddess most often honored was the fire goddess, Pele. Kaeppler writes, “Pele personified the terrifying yet beautiful force of nature manifested as a volcano” (Kaeppler, 39). In these dances, Kaeppler continues, “The hands and arms described through appropriate gestures the events mentioned in the text; such as, shaping the hands like a flower or moving the arms in the manner of a bird’s wings in flight” (Kaeppler, 39). For Fuller, this symbolism is consciously honored by invoking the power of fire and capturing the terrifying force of nature in her movement. The billowing fabric moves like a flame swaying in the wind. The lighting effects create the appearance of hot flames and burning embers. The gestures of her arms describe the motion of the fire. The “fire” kindled inspiration in Fuller’s choreography. As a result of her mysterious illusion of turning herself into fire, audiences loved her.

**Analysis of Serpentine and Fire Dances**

Fuller’s choreography shows evidence of the synaesthesia representative of the Symbolist movement, and her *Serpentine* and *Fire* dances can be analyzed within these parameters. The viewer sees the first movement of the billowing fabric as the theme. In every successive movement, the theme is repeated, but with a variation. While the visual texture establishes the continuity of the same theme throughout with the billowing fabric,
the theme exhibits shape and growth. Repetitious movement in this dance constantly
reminds the viewer of the central symbolic image by exhibiting the attributes of a serpent,
thus relaying a symbolic message or emotion to the viewer. It is not important whether
this emotion is the same for each viewer, rather that each person experiences the
symbolic aspect and sensual associations in full.

Fuller’s choreographic dynamics, the degree of sudden or sustained movement,
sharp or smooth qualities, as well as the visual dynamics of the lighting and music, are
important features in her dances, particularly *Serpentine* and *Fire*. A particular
movement of increased dynamics climaxes with changes in lighting and the level of
intensity of the fabric’s motion. The viewer experiences the shift in light, the different
movement qualities of the fabric, and the dynamics of the music together with a sense of
tension and release. The articulation of her work, the manner in which the movement
begins and ends, how the lighting transitions from one color to the next, and how the
music combines to create a synaesthetic totality, is consistent in her choreographic style.

Choreographic form, musical form, and dynamic rhythms are the building blocks
of creating Fuller’s Symbolist choreography and something she communicates with every
part of her body. The dancer and the music become so fused that they are inextricable.
Fuller’s musicality was so organic that it could be sensed even when there was no music,
as it emerges from her inner sense, her own hearing of some sort of pulse. Musicality is
not merely feeling the music; it is communicating a higher reality through movement.
This is the level of musicality that Fuller wanted to capture in her choreography.

The musical form also shapes the choreographic form. Fuller typically used
articulated, fast paced movements and patterns of energy release in her manipulation of
the fabric. The fast rhythms of Fuller’s movement were tenser than her slow ones, the steady pulse indicating more or less repose. An abrupt shift in the tempo of the movement of the fabric shows an abrupt increase in tension, and a gradual increase would show a slow increase in tension. When the tempo of the music increases, Fuller increased her speed as well. There is constant tension because the pulse of the fabric as well as the projected lighting kept changing. Fuller wanted to internalize the tempo as well as the feeling of the color. Fuller tried to do this with most of her pieces, as opposed to using music and lighting differently in each piece. She may have focused on different aspects of the music and lighting, but she always wanted to engage the synaesthetic effect.

The accompaniment is very important in Fuller’s *Fire* dance. Fuller feels the beat of the music and moves accordingly. The musical flow speeds up to a frantic, fast paced, crescendo accompanied by Fuller’s lively movement, and then back to a more grounded, subdued, resolution in the music and movement. This cycle of quiet repose with sudden accents parallels the energy of Fuller’s body and as a result, the fabric which becomes the manifestation of her movement. Fuller stretched her arms and torso very smoothly, but very quickly in a controlled and choreographed manner. The motion starts from the energy waving through her body and then the cycle repeats over and over again. The rippling starts at the base of her spine and up through each vertebra until the energy is sent out through her arms, at the same time beginning again at the base of her spine. The symbolic imagery in the form of a wave utilizes staccato movements interspersed between the smooth undulating patterns of the fabric caused by the rippling and turning motion of Fuller’s body. The music reiterates Fuller’s movement in the swell and
crescendo reached in the piece when Fuller brings the fabric to its peak and then almost disappears beneath the fabric as if the fire has gone out.

Fuller’s arms and legs have their own sense of rhythm and energy. Usually her arms were a natural response to what the torso was doing. Her legs had a lightness to them with a countering weightedness. The energy was sent down through the feet in a direct path without seeming heavy or weighted. This seems contradictory, but Fuller’s dance requires this sense of moving in a smooth and direct way very quickly with an accompanying sense of lightness and ease of the joints and muscles so that the fabric can flow. The arms generally were at the sides of the body moving in lifted, twirling, and rising and falling positions.

An example of a specific arm movement would be the action of the “waltz movement.” The undulation of the energy of the fabric matches the music, radiating from the torso of Fuller, and from the mesmerizing, grounded, energy of the symbolic imagery. The energy then grows within Fuller and the viewer, causing a climax to ripple up Fuller’s body, up the fabric swirling around her body, and also causes the energy of the viewer to escalate and become symbolic of something more. This energy then climaxes, just as the energy is released over the top of Fuller’s head, and the dance then concludes with a slower subdued energy, similar to the ripple of energy that cascades in the fabric. It is ends with the fabric falls to the floor like a dying ember (Harris, 22). The sense of energy in the movement and music is experienced as synaesthesia.

Fuller also utilized different rhythms in different body parts. The arms would be doing eighth notes, the torso quarter notes, and the feet whole notes (see DVD 1, Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance). She would adjust her torso reminding the viewer that the dance
required a fluidity of movement in various body parts. The movement of the fabric was a constant reminder that the energy of the dance was very symbolic. The action of the torso and arms is really secondary and constant. It is not accented, but rather a continual action. The emphasis comes in the different motions of the arms and turns of the body moving the fabric to represent symbolic images.

In the fundamental movements of Fuller’s dances, the legs are restrained by the weight of the body, but the arms are free, except for holding the fabric (see DVD 1, Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance). The leg on which the whole weight of the body rested was placed on the ground with whole sole of the foot. The other leg was slightly raised, stretched or bent, the toes as a rule being inclined downward. The body remained vertical and the arms resting at the sides were raised up; the upraised arms were then lowered until they reached the ground, first with the fabric and then with the whole arm. This motion is suitable for both slow and sudden execution. The heel of the foot on which the weight of the body rested remained a stable base, whereby the movement of the arms contained extreme elasticity. Turns and flourishes of the arms were elements used almost as frequently as in her choreography, enabling the dancer to turn 360 degrees by swinging her arms in the opposite direction she intends to turn. The torso is driven to the desired movement by reaction; the movements include inclining, reclining, and side bending. Fuller combines these movements and executes them while keeping her torso stiff or accompany them by bending the spine forward or backward. She then stretches out her arms in the direction of the position to which she at first turns slowly, and at the end violently. She keeps the arms outstretched to keep consistency while turning. While moving the arms she is able to reach a complete revolution with her body, maintaining
her balance, with her outstretched arms and fabric constantly in motion (see DVD 1, Loïe Fuller’s *Fire Dance*).

Even though the coordination of the arms with the torso and the steps of the feet are important, the symbolic imagery becomes the most important factor in Fuller’s choreography. The movement of a serpent or fire enriches the performance experience as the audience can relate to it in a symbolic way. This is why the use of the symbolic images is so important. Fuller’s dances consisted of figures in which the dancer tried to show a variety of symbolic meanings. Performing solo or in a group, the movements showed grace and elegance in spite of the tremendous effort it took to manipulate the fabric. Some dances were slow and adapted the lighting to reflect the symbolic meaning of the movements, others preferred lively steps and elaborate lighting effects (see fig. 58).

Fuller’s time effort was diverse. She alternated slow, sustained movement with quick flowing movement of the fabric. Spatially, she remained in one location, as a result of her lighting effects. She moved mainly the vertical and horizontal dimensions, although the movement of the arms and fabric sliced through the transverse plane, twisting and turning about a central axis. Tending to use the horizontal diagonal, her efforts were light, sustained and sudden, direct and indirect, free and bound. The subtleties in the choreography are its essence. Each movement or movement phrase has its own unique nature. The action may occur in the slightest movement in a shift of weight or in the movement of the arms, but the intricacies of these movements are what make Fuller’s choreography what it is—a synaesthetic combination of the mind and the body.
Figure 58.  Loïe Fuller
Hand painted frames from film image
New York Public Library
New York
From this viewpoint, Fuller’s work is clearly aligned with the use of synaesthesia in the Symbolist perspective in painting and literature, prevalent from 1886 to 1905. Growing out of romanticism, characterized by mythological or mystical themes, as well as a preoccupation with death, dreams, evil, decadence, *femme fatales*, and the occult (Schubert, 5), it is clear that Fuller’s work demonstrates the use of Symbolist ideals in choreographic form, it is natural to pursue her involvement with the Symbolist ideas of synaesthesia. For instance, both the *Serpentine* and *Fire* dances express the beauty of movement itself and the coherence of Fuller’s vision to create an atmosphere in which the viewer is transported to another state of mind. Each work corresponds to reality, either in the representation of flickering flames or the winding of the serpent, and reinforces the beauty of those natural phenomena. Clearly, sensory perceptions blend to take the viewer to a unique and ever-changing environment, utilizing the idea of synaesthesia to incorporate movement, lighting, costuming, and music. The symbolic images of the serpent and fire can clearly have multiple interpretations. For example, among other things, the serpent can be seen as a symbol of the fall of man, as tempter/temptress, or as a sensual beguiling creature; fire can be interpreted as death, rebirth, purification, or punishment. Fuller’s use of natural elements allows viewers to choose the symbolic meaning for themselves, in terms of what dreams each individual has when viewing her choreography. This mysterious state of mind that is present in Fuller’s work lies beyond everyday meaning.

Focusing on the two dances of Fuller, *Serpentine* and *Fire*, both prominent features in the genesis of modern dance choreography, Fuller is at once identified with modern dance, and also as the creator of a breakthrough performance genre that blends
the line between dance and performance art, involving synaesthesia developed on the basis of Symbolist art. When evaluating Fuller and synaesthesia, the consideration is not about sound symbolism or metaphor, but rather perception, specifically a joining of the sensory perceptions. Past studies have often attributed synaesthesia with visual artists such as Wassily Kandinsky or musicians, such as Alexander Scriabin, but none have done so using dance performance as the synaesthetic inspiration to Symbolist artists. Fuller’s medium brought together a variety of sensations—physical movement, music, costumes, and lighting to create a dreamlike effect, exemplifying the concept of synaesthesia.

Fuller’s work also expanded the profession of dance, as evidence in her notable debut performance in 1892 at Folies-Bergère. By presenting matinee performances for women and children to see her choreography in a respectable performance venue, she became known as the “fee lumineuse,” the Fairy of Light, who thrilled both children and adults (Sommer, 1981, 389). Through her use of changing lights and the manipulation of voluminous fabric, Fuller transformed her physicality into a being that communicated to others beyond the accepted rules of nature, demonstrating that synaesthesia was accomplished. Fuller was a normal person, one whose physicality was average, yet she was able to project a stronger impression to her audience.

The synaesthetic perception cannot be fabricated at will; but it also cannot be suppressed. It assumes that some objective stimulus exists to create the synaesthetic effect, and in the case of Fuller, that activity is provided by her choreography and staging efforts. For example, one of Fuller’s dances employs a specific stage arrangement of lights and mirrors, the purpose of which is “to produce an illusionary effect to the eye of
the spectator” (see fig. 59) (U.S. Patent No. 533,167, January 29, 1895). In that design, the mirrors create an octagonal room bisected by the front of the stage, with the dimensions of the octagon determined by how many dancers are performing. Crucial to the desired effect is the use of heavy black drapery that lines the rest of the stage and minimizes the ambient light present in the performance space (Sommer, 1981, 392). The resulting effect not only produces the impression of many performers on stage because of the reflections in the mirrors, but also gives the illusion that the dancers are turning in different directions as their images jump from one mirror to the next. Thus, viewer impact is involuntary, but still elicited by the objective stimulus of the optical illusion created by the mirrors. The theatrical magic is created by Fuller’s ingenious use of staging effects to transform the image of the dancer(s) onstage. Although synaesthetic perception is an involuntary, elicited illusion, the combination of senses is perceived as real and not imagined. It is “in the mind’s eye.”

Synaesthetic experience involves a generic nature and true synaesthetes never see complex shapes. The precepts are simple: “blobs, lines, spirals, and latticed shapes; smooth or rough textures; agreeable or disagreeable tastes such as salty, sweet, or metallic. Repetition, with radial or axial symmetry, is also common” (Glickstein, 637-642). The Symbolists’ interest in lines, circles, and spirals segues into Fuller’s choreography which relied heavily on the use of billowing fabric manipulated in such shapes as spirals, lines, or circles, and was often performed with radial or axial symmetry (see figs. 60, 61, 62, 63, and 64). Sommer stated that “[Fuller] became the moving vortex of billowing luminous silk. Movement of the body served only to set the silk in motion, and all movement activated the draperies” (Sommer, 1975, 54). Fuller was directed “by
natural instinct,” as she wrote herself, “through inspiration of making the draperies of my voluminous robes take on forms and shapes (spirals, lilies, butterflies, ripples, etc.) which could only be accomplished by a rhythmical and continuous repetition of the same movements…” (qtd. in Sommer, 1975, 55).

Three examples serve to illustrate this point. Always illuminated with constantly changing colors, Fuller would often begin her dances by rippling the folds of her garment. Then in a swirl of fabric, she would grab the hem of her skirt or the wands sewn into the costume and with a rapid, rowing-type movement at shoulder height create cascades of folds in her robe (see fig. 65). The fabric becoming a bustling, billowing mass of energy, Fuller would then move from side to side, turn her back to the audience, and dip her head so that the skirt encircled her torso (see figs. 57 and 66) (see DVD 1, *Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance*). Another of her fabric manipulations was a large figure eight. Fuller would carve arcs in the space, first moving the fabric from one side of her body to the other, then repeating that same motion over her head (see fig. 67a). One last technique to be considered was a movement where she made a slow turn while moving her arms. She held the fabric extension inside her garment, and using an up and down motion, created a rippling effect as she turned faster and faster (see fig. 68b) (see DVD 1, *Loïe Fuller’s Fire Dance*). The result of all of these movements was that her garment appeared to be in constant motion, while her body was the center of a swirling vortex of fabric (Sommer, 1981, 390). As shown by these examples, Fuller used repetitive geometric motions to develop choreographic designs that clouded the human form and created the simple geometric patterns recognized in synaesthetic experience.
Figure 59. U.S. Patent Drawing No. 533, 167

January 29, 1895

Mirror Room

Marie Louise Fuller
Figure 60. Loïe Fuller

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Figure 61. Loïe Fuller

Photograph

Langier

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 62. Loïe Fuller

1896

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Figure 63. Isaiah West Taber

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 64.  *Loïe Fuller*

Photograph, c1896

B. J. Falk (1853-1925)

Photograph by cabinet photograph: albumen

17 x 11 cm.

mounted on board 28 x 24 cm.

New York Public Library, New York
Figure 65. Isaiah West Taber
Photograph
New York Public Library
New York
Figure 66. Loïe Fuller

Photograph

New York Public Library

New York
Figure 67a. Loïe Fuller Imitator

Photograph

New York Public Library, New York
Figure 68b. Jody Sperling (Choreography in the style of Fuller)

Photograph

Julie Lemberger

2005
The popularity of Fuller’s dances with her audiences ignited a choreographic craze, with imitators creating dances that copied her costumes and her manipulation of fabric in various geometric shapes. Here it is important to point out that, despite the competitive onslaught, Fuller’s synaesthetic predispositions remained consistent. She did not deviate from her natural inclinations, and in response to her challengers, she published her intention to take legal action against anyone who copied her dances in theaters or music halls (Chafee, 520). To protect her interests further, she decided to patent the devices used to manipulate her skirt and create her spectacular lighting effects. The use of such geometric shapes, her drive to improve her stage effects, and the lengths Fuller went to in order to remain consistent with her normal perception are clear indications that she was protective of the synaesthetic processes she brought to her choreographic career.

A synaesthetic experience is easily and vividly remembered (Harrison and Baron-Cohen, 345). In the case of Fuller’s dances, an audience member might not remember the name of a certain dance or how the effect was achieved, but the overall impact would not be forgotten. An excellent example is one of the spectacular devices of Fuller’s own design that was used in Fire dance (see fig. 67). The patent record describes it as a means of illuminating the figure of the dancer from beneath the floor of the stage: “This could be done either by constructing a false wooden floor with one or more glass-covered openings in it or a false floor made entirely of glass, or by placing glass plates into holes made into the existing stage floor” (Harris, 19-20). Incandescent lights were placed directly under the glass and the stage was completely draped with black fabric. A glass pedestal, lined with mirrors and with a glass piece at the top, was used to allow light to
pass from the floor to the figure, and the surrounding portion was silvered to reflect the figure and the black draperies. This allowed Fuller to be seen as if she were hovering in mid air, mysteriously suspended, creating quite a memorable impression (see fig. 11). As the patent record states, “It will now be seen that the figure of the dancer, clothed preferably in white or some color sufficiently contrasting with the color of the scene, standing on a plaque on top of the pedestal, will appear to be mysteriously suspended in air” (U.S. Patent No. 513, 102, January 23, 1894). Then, by changing and combining different colored bulbs, Fuller could create different effects according to her intention: “It is possible to change the tone of the scene from one color to another, and by combining the various primaries, other colors will be produced” (U.S. Patent No. 533, 167, January 29, 1895). That production was the first time “before a public audience an artist was playing with projected lights as the Impressionist painters, particularly Seurat, had done with pigments” (Harris, 19). By using such staging effects, Fuller created a projected external objective stimulus in which the memorable perception was perceived. The result was such that the audience felt overwhelmed by the synaesthetic perception elicited from overlapping sensations during her performance.
Figure 67.  U.S. Patent Drawing No. 513, 102

January 23, 1894

Glass Floor

Marie Louise Fuller
Figure 68. Loïe Fuller

*Fire Dance*

Photograph
When one experiences a synaesthetic effect, there is often a “Eureka” sensation, when one has an insight into the work of art (Zilczer, 109). Synaesthesia is often emotional, and Fuller emphasized “Eureka” moments in her choreography. As stated previously, she once performed a dance early in her career using a costume with a skirt that was too long. Her dance was created partly by exigency: to avoid tripping on the overlong costume, she held it in her hands, raising them over her head while she continued to dance around the stage in a traveling pattern. When she waved her arms in an up and down motion, as if flying, she was actually holding the hem of her skirt off the floor. She later recalled this event: “There was a sudden exclamation from the house: ‘It’s a butterfly! A butterfly!’ To my [Fuller’s] astonishment sustained applause burst forth” (Fuller, 28). This “eureka” of captivating her audience through her simplicity of movement, which in essence was a simple traveling pattern accompanied by the movement of the fabric, brought about a whole new development in her choreography, which often exploited a basic gesture such as the flying motion.

Later in her career, Fuller used a similar type of staging effect to further captivate her audiences. In her Fire, the staging effect of the electric lights and the mirrored and glass pedestal allowed her to perform her movements lit by red, yellow, and orange colors (Harris, 22). Those colors created the idea of a flaming sunset, or a dying ember. Layers of un-hemmed fabric, creating the illusion of small tongues of fires, would shroud Fuller as she performed, and the ends of the various layers of fabric, which she would unfurl as the dance progressed, completely covered the glass pedestal on which she stood. Finally, cued by Fuller’s feet, the electrician beneath the stage, who operated two lighting effect lanterns, would insert film of different colors.
She [Fuller], in turn, responded to the rhythm of the music—in this dance it was always Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries*—heard then still in the freshness of its romantic fervor. As the orchestra began to play, a dim, bluish-reddish flame flickered at the center of the stage. The edges of the silk stirred gently as the dancer agitated the bottom of the skirt. Then, holding the canes hidden in the sides of the skirt, she crossed her arms before her face and, as the layers of flame seemed to climb higher, for a few seconds, only her eyes showed through [see figs. 11 and 68].

The intensity of the music built up, the veils moved faster, the flames leaped higher—red, blue, orange, purple—the frenzied, glowing silk soared fifteen feet into the darkness. Then, amid a great crescendo of light and sound, the dancer suddenly sank in a heap. A purple ember flickered in a dying gasp. Then, total darkness. (Harris, 22)

The impact Fuller had on her audiences was remarkable. Certainly, the effect on those who first saw her perform *Fire* was unforgettable, for to them it seemed as if she became engulfed in flames, which was an image that must have produced strong feelings. Clearly, a synaesthetic experience was achieved from the combination of light, color, movement of the body, and movement of the fabric. Fuller’s choreography, placing the elements of dance and Symbolism on stage, successfully elicited an emotional response from multiple sensations in her audience.

Fuller’s creation of new artistic dance choreography thus created and depended on a Symbolist dreamlike effect in her choreography. Embodying mystical ideals, Fuller adopted synaesthetic participation of the different senses in the creation of her art, in the
same way the Symbolist movement manifested synaesthesia in all the arts—literature, visual art, and music. Fuller’s Symbolist choreography could not have achieved its effect outside the Symbolist movement; the audience was expected to experience a specific ideal of mystery where artistic experience is transformed and all the senses combine in the creative act.

The representation of Fuller’s dance does suggest a Symbolist performance that transcends reality. The effect is made by her holding the fabric in her hands, suggesting a victory over the human form or a symbolic representation of an image larger than what is actually being presented. Even in the sculptural depiction of Fuller, one can see energetic movement as if actually present at the performance of this dance. With one foot lifted off the ground, she is uplifted, the figure is moving, circling around herself out of ordinary reality. Although the fabric is moving in two different directions, both upward and outward, somehow they converge and depict a constant swirl of energy. The tempo of the movement is captured; a sudden burst of energy to lift and swirl the fabric.

Obviously, these matters were of great importance to Symbolist artists who engaged the perceiver with the illusion of reality and Symbolic representation. Even so, when reminded of the written evidence suggesting what Fuller’s dances looked like, it is interesting to imagine that these static sculptures portray the lively undulating of the fabric. While it is likely that this dance captures what Mallarmé talked about, it seems just as likely that it is what the Symbolist artists tried to capture in their Symbolist depictions.

Other images to consider when talking of Fuller’s Symbolist choreography are the lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec (see figs. 41, 42, 43, and 44). The images show the
figure of Fuller encircled by her fabric. The figure of Fuller lifts the fabric high in the air although her body cannot be seen. The only body parts that can be clearly distinguished are her head and feet. Similar to the sculptures by Roche and Rivière, the lithograph images of Fuller are seen as if they capture the motion of the swirling fabric. Her body is abstracted, as if nonrepresentational of the human form, symbolizing something larger. The viewer’s eye follows the diagonal of the arms of Fuller through to her feet, forcing the eye to move in the same manner as the weaving of the choreography. The lithograph itself is not elaborate, the color changes in a similar way that her lighting changes in her performances, while the energy of movement captured in the pose makes it seem as if the figure could dance off the page.

In the sculpture by Roche, Fuller stands with her feet together, showing her stability and prominence, separating her from the moving fabric (see fig. 19). The eye finds rest upon her solid foundation. In opposition, the fabric sweeps in a bold movement as the lifted left arm appear as if she has been caught mid turn. She swirls and rejoices as she has come to embody fire; the viewer is enraptured by her movement. The feet are still firmly planted. The figure remains three-dimensional. The sculpture differs markedly when it is considered in a symbolic light. The movement captured symbolizes fire, fire that consumes without destroying. This complicates the question of whether this is a dance which the sculptor saw or one he devised from his imagination. The question is not whether this is Fire. It is certain that the artist had this in mind when he created the piece.

Whether or not the artist fashioned a symbolic representation of Fuller’s choreography or of one of her specific dances, Serpentine or Fire, does not matter as the
element present in all of the visual evidence of Fuller’s choreography is a coherent depiction of energy. The figure is in constant motion, suggested by the lines in the visual composition. This however, can relate to the choreographic idea of energy when we talk about dance. The movement of the lines within a composition causes the eye to dance as it moves about the figures instead of the figure being a vivid mover. The energy created is like the unfurling of a scroll or the waving of the fabric, this kind of energy is the kind we encounter when viewing Fuller’s dance. The energy within dance is related not only to the speed of movements, but also to the surprisingly organic nature of the human body as it moves with weight and with flow. The figures in any of these depictions seem composed of curvilinear lines, suggesting the constant energy of the movement, the emotional character, and the body seemingly abstracted into a symbolic image. It is almost impossible to know what Fuller’s body is doing underneath the fabric.

It is interesting to note the opposition in Fuller’s choreography. In her Serpentine dance, Fuller creates the base movements of the serpent. Fuller’s serpentine movements brought life to the rest of her choreography, including her Fire dance. In The Butterfly dance, she is freed from gravity and transformed into an ethereal creature. Uniting these dances in her repertoire, Fuller also represented symbols of the cosmos, the opposition of the controlling forces of nature. The physical and psychological presence of Fuller’s choreography gives the viewer the opportunity to let the imagination run free and suspend belief that a woman is creating these fantastic, symbolic images. Some view it as expressive of the subjugation of women’s bodies and enslavement of their spirit by a violent and oppressive male-oriented culture, which viewed Fuller’s life-giving, creative, primal energy as threatening (Garelick, 2007, 8). This relates to the culture of that time,
oppressed by the male-oriented society. Others see Fuller’s choreography as an elevation of the spirit, a glimpse into another world, where, freed from base instincts, dreams are free to meander where they will.

Fuller was held in great esteem during the Symbolist movement. She never danced for its own sake; her dancing held meaning to the viewers and brought them to a dream-like state where perceptions of all their senses could participate in the artistic experience:

Miss Fuller has revealed to artists the magical effects produced by the traversing of substances by light and color. It is possible to trace the same influence to furniture decoration and even architecture…Well, the taste shown for sinuous forms in furniture and nick-nacks undoubtedly has its analogue if not origin in the skirt dance. This achievement is somewhat analogous to what Miss Fuller has brought about in the art of dancing….

Thus Miss Fuller’s impression upon the world will not have been a transient one. What mark has been left by the great dancers of former generations—Taglioni, Fanny Essler and others? None at all. Something will, however, remain to recall the memory of Loïe Fuller. She has contributed towards the creation of a new style: she has come upon the scene at the right moment. (Anet, 270, 278)

For Symbolist dance, Fuller fulfilled her goal of finding a way to express the unknown through movement. She could embody the ideals of the Symbolists through her use of synaesthesia.
CONCLUSION

Fuller experienced an extraordinary and enduring success as a result of her dedication to her art and her serious devotion to it. She never strayed from her intent of exploring the combination of color and movement to create a synaesthetic illusionary effect on stage (or later, on film). She constantly experimented with new lighting techniques and adapted any material to suit her purpose. She had a tremendous attention to detail which often resulted in disagreements with some associates. As Harris states, “behind the totally feminine image was a determined woman intruding—and succeeding—in male-dominated areas of theatrical production” (Harris, 33).

In 1933, La Vie parisienne noted “the famous creator of the serpentine, she who first had the idea that electricity could contribute to the dance, some time ago closed her eyes to that light of which she demanded so much…But some devoted hands have persevered her legacy, and her pupils survive as priestesses of rhythm, light, color” (qtd. in Current, 335). Gab Bloch (now using the name Sorère), made and presented films of the students of Fuller’s school performing “Les Ballets de Loïe Fuller.” One critic praised Bloch for continuing the “artistic and cinematic integrity” that Fuller expected in her dances. Another mentioned that the films were usually boring and arcane, but still could be recommended (Huddleston, 257).

Fuller has been and still is being commemorated to this day. In the Maryhill Museum, sculptures, drawings, posters, and photographs were collected in Fuller’s honor in the Hall of Dance. Ruth St. Denis acknowledged her own and “other dancers’ debt to Fuller (Current, 337): “She brought appurtenances—lights and veils—to dance and where
I would be, pray, without my lights? Where would Isadora have been without her simple lighting effects? Where would theatre dancers of today find themselves without Loïe’s magnificent contributions?” (Terry, 30). To express her appreciation, St. Denis performed *The Ballet of Light* on August 3, 1954. The program listed her dances as “Reminiscences of Loïe Fuller, to whom the Hollywood Bowl performance was a tribute” (Kraus, 146).

Many museums have presented exhibitions about Fuller and her work. Organized by Margaret Haile Harris, “In Celebration of Loïe Fuller” was shown at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco December 10, 1977 to February 26, 1978. The led to a larger exhibition “Loïe Fuller: Magician of Light” at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond March 12 to April 22, 1979. From September 30 to November 30, 1987, Fuller was featured at the Musée Rodin in Paris.

Fuller’s work has been experiencing a resurgence of artistic and public interest. Sally R. Sommer has written extensively about Fuller’s life and times. Marcia and Richard Current published a biography entitled *Loïe Fuller, Goddess of Light* in 1997. Giovanni Lista compiled a 680-page book of Fuller-inspired art work and texts in *Loïe Fuller, Danseuse de la Belle Epoque*, 1994.

Fuller continues to be an influence on contemporary choreographers. In September 1988, Fuller’s choreography was brought to life when Brygida Ochaim, a German dancer, presented a twelve minute piece that invoked the spirit of Fuller’s choreography at the International Dance Biennale in Lyons, France (see fig. 72). Jody Sperling and Time Lapse Dance began creating Fuller-style solos with live piano accompaniment for New York City audiences in 2000. Fascinated by Fuller, Sperling
has made several attempts to devise works employing Fuller’s costuming and lighting
effects, which account for much of Sperling’s choreographic style. Both Fuller and
Sperling acknowledged the synaesthetic fascination with mists, fogs, dawns, twilights,
and nebulous shapes arising out of shadows that made Fuller a choreographic exemplar
of such artistic trends as Symbolism. Sperling made these artistic alliances apparent in
her work (see figs. 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, and 79). Although she does not intend to
illustrate the music literally (colored hearing); sounds and movements harmonize in her
choreographic suites, some performed with movable silver panels with reflecting
surfaces, similar to Fuller’s “mirror room.”

Sperling has also imitated one of Fuller’s famous lighting effects, standing on a
box while her costume swirled as light shined from beneath her, changing hues until
waves of colors and tides of fabrics engulf her, making her body seem to dematerialize.
Fortunately, most of Sperling’s choreography tries to capture the spirit of Fuller’s
aesthetics. Some are surprised to realize that Fuller’s dance technique, at least as
interpreted by Sperling, involve the same type of pedestrian movements that Fuller used:
walks, runs, and little turning steps. From such kinetic simplicity, enchantment was born
in Fuller’s work and lives today in Sperling’s choreography.

Jessica Lindberg spent three years researching and reconstructing Fuller’s Fire
Dance and returned this Fuller master work to the stage in 2003. Lindberg collaborated
with lighting designer Megan Slayter in 2004 to reconstruct Fuller’s Night (1896) for
performance by Momenta!, a dance company in Chicago. Momenta! performed Fuller’s
Fire dance (Lindberg’s reconstruction 2003) at the “Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre”
exhibit presented by the National Gallery of Art, Washington and The Art Institute of
Chicago in 2005. Lindberg lectured at the exhibit in Chicago on Fuller’s choreographic style and her influence on artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec.

Megan Slayter and Jessica Lindberg are also preparing another Loïe Fuller performance. Spending two weeks in Paris, going through several historical archives, including photographs and writings at the Paris Opera and the Auguste Rodin Museum, they planned to recreate the third and final dance from Fuller’s original 1896 concert, *Lily of the Nile*. *Night, Fire dance, and Lily of the Nile* were performed this summer in Chicago in partnership with Momenta! Dance Company. This was the first time the three dances have been performed together in over 100 years. This performance will be included on a new DVD documentary on Fuller available in 2008.

Fuller mesmerized audiences and captivated the imagination. Her work serves as inspiration to countless artists and scholars. J. Henry Friedlander, apparently an American, sent Fuller the following note, which she treasured enough to keep for the rest of her life: “Thus ends the fête—and as fair nature cherishes the thought of coming spring—so shall we all of us, disciples of the beautiful and true, cherish the souvenir of our ‘Loïe,’ symbol of pure charm and grace” (Fuller, *Fifteen Years*, 184-185). For my own work, Fuller has served as an inspiration. In looking at the way she utilized synaesthetic, scientific, and avant-garde theories; she was undaunted in the pursuit of her ideal art. This study only scratches the surface of the contributions Fuller has made to studies about synaesthesia, the Symbolist movement, dance, visual art, lighting effects, filmmaking, and feminist thought. To build upon this work, further research needs to be conducted to study if the term “modern dance” could or should be replaced with “Symbolist dance.” Also, researching and interviewing to see if many dancers and
choreographers are synaesthetes could reveal more light on the subject. What was once considered intuition could now be explained as a synaesthetic response. Further studies could also be conducted with regards to Fuller being a visual link between Symbolism and Art Nouveau.

Fuller’s choreography captured the eyes of the audience with her creative, life-giving, primal energy. In her choreography, Fuller not only elevated the art of skirt dancing to more than the dance-hall girl, she also elevated the image of American women. An admirer wrote:

Is she pretty, this American? I do not know about that, but she has no need to be pretty. She is more than lifelike. She is an apparition, not a woman of flesh and blood.

As every original has its imitations, so the multicolored gown now appears everywhere, but it is only a copy and a counterfeit of Loïe Fuller’s mysterious gown.

A strange thing—it is the American, less than a tenth as pretty as the beauteous Emilienne d’Alençon or one or another of the Nouveau Théâtre serpentine ballerinas—it is the creator of this singular, unreal, fantastic dance who remains the fairy queen of the new kind of entertainment that has made a convert of all of Paris. (Rastignac, 26; qtd. in Holmes, 117)

By tracing her explorations with the other arts in the context of various artistic, scientific, and movement theories, Fuller’s work can serve as a model for interdisciplinary studies in the fine arts. In that regard, this dissertation considers an area of art practice, namely dance, that is commonly neglected by art historians as many are not fully aware of how
integrated an art form it is. Dance in itself incorporates movement, music, visual arts, and philosophical and aesthetic ideals. Sommer translates a column entitled “Petit Billet de la Semaine: A Miss Loïe Fuller,” from *Le Monde Artiste*, 18 December 1892:

Like a strange jewel hidden in the depths of your black velvet case, you exude outwards, heated from the burning cinders. Prismatic rays play in your hair; the light caresses and lasciviously plays on your hair; the light caresses and lasciviously plays on your plump childish body, exquisitely denuded by the transparency of the rosy silk crêpe. A whirlwind stirs you, and like a fabulous salamander you become smoky-colored from the burning flame. It is a mirage, a magic, which burns our vision, intoxicating our spirits (qtd. in Sommer, 1981, 392-394).

Fuller emerges as a seemingly unfathomable performer through the examination her *Serpentine* and *Fire* dances and the use of synaesthesia. She is the embodiment of not only numerous Symbolists writers and artists, but also current scholars, artists and historians who, entranced by her mysterious allure, have sought to justifiably portray her. Even by combining all of the various Symbolist interpretations of her choreography, we do not gain a better understanding; instead, we are confounded even more. We must acknowledge that Fuller and *Serpentine* and *Fire* dances are products of the imaginations of the various artists throughout history who have “created” her. Artists and audiences alike have been attracted to her because she is so foreign, so abstract—she presents no boundaries. Fuller stated:

Just as in the best acting, the dancer for the time must be the creature she is representing, and it must be remembered that in the dances that stir the
public this creature is no ordinary mortal. She is some creation of a poet, some spirit of music, a dream of mythology, a woman of a remote period or fantastic time, a being of high romance or drama. To make her live, the dancer must understand her. It is desirable to this end to read old literature, to think, dream, imagine oneself a woman of any age or status. Not until a dancer does this is she able to uplift an audience into the feeling that this is the expression of a woman’s soul; that it is not pantomime, but life. (qtd. in Current, 199)

By giving our imagination free reign to mold her work to our own desires, she is the ultimate representation of symbolist choreography.

When Fuller died in 1928, her body was cremated according to her wishes. One reviewer from the *New York Times* stated: “From a tall chimney of the crematorium rose whirling spirals of smoke that made one observer think of Loïe’s whirling draperies of long ago. It was the ‘last manifestation of the sublime dancer.’ Her ashes, in a ceramic urn, were placed in a columbarium receptacle not far from Isadora Duncan’s” (*New York Times*, January 5, 1928, p. 29, c. 4). A Paris newspaper gave an interesting summation of Fuller’s choreography: “Did she dance? No. And yet that is the way fire dances” (qtd. in Current 339).
Figure 72. Top: Loïe Fuller

1928

Photograph

Cinematique de la dance

Bottom: Brygida Ochaim

Photograph

Reconstruction of the dances of Loïe Fuller

Photo: Christina Ganet
Figure 73. Jody Sperling

*Magic-Lantern Dance*

Photograph

Julie Lemberger

2003
Figure 74.  *Water* from *Dance of the Elements*

Jody Sperling

Photograph

Stephanie Berger

2005
Figure 75. Jody Sperling
Photograph
Adam Keller
2006
Figure 76. Jody Sperling
Photograph
Adam Keller
2006
Figure 77. Jody Sperling
Photograph
Adam Keller
2006
Figure 78. Jody Sperling

Photograph

Adam Keller

2006
Figure 79. Jody Sperling
Photograph
Julie Lemberger
2005
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APPENDIX A

THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF LOÏE FULLER

1891
Serpentine

1892
Violet
Butterfly
La Danse blanche

1893
Widow
Mirror
Good Night Dances
La Danse des nuages
The Flower
The Rainbow

1895
Salome (Salute of the Sun, Les Eclairs, L’Orage)
La Nuit
Le Firmament
The Lily Dance
Fire Dance (Flame)

1898
The Bird
UnePluise de Fleurs

1899
Les Sylphes
Lumiere et tenebre
Danse de l’or
L’Archange

1901
Danse fluorescent
La Tempete

1902
La Danse funebre
La Danse religion
La Danse de peur
La Danse d’aveugle
La Danse inspiree par le nocturne de Chopin

1903

The Grottoes
Danse mysterieuses
Las Petites femmes
Chez les papillons
L’Eau
Danse l’espee

1904

Radium Dance

1905

Flight of the Butterflies
Dance of 1000 Veils (Storm at Sea, Wrecked, Lost, River of Death, The Fire of Life, Ave Maria, The Land of Vision)

1906

Bottom of the Sea
Egyptian Dance from Aida
Gypsy Dance from The Huguenots
Spanish Dance from Carmen

1907

India Pantomime (Les Ames errantes, Les Nuages qui passent, Les Feux de l’enfer
Salome (d’Humieres-Schmitt)
(Danse des perles, Danse du paon, Danse des serpents, Danse de l’acier, Danse de l’argent, Danse de la peur)

1908

Ballet of Light (Open Sea, Snowstorm, Unfolding Spirit)

1909

Butterflies (Massenet)
Marche torque
Elfin Dance
Spring Song
Ophelia
Tragedy Dance
Diana the Huntress
Dance des sylphes
Dance of The Hands
Peer Gynt (As’s Death, Dance of Anitra, The Arab Dance, Solveig’s Song and Mourning)
Ave Maria
Prelude No. 4 (Chopin)
Valse, Rosen aus Dem Suden
Chaconne (Durnad)
Bacchanal
Tarantella
Scherzo (Schumann)
Das Madchen und der Tod
Suite (Rameau)
Studies, Op. 25 (Chopin)
Serenade (Schubert)
Shadow Dance (Meyerbeer)
Midsummer Night’s Dream
Lied
Intermezzo
Nocturne (Griffin)
Finale
Wedding March

1910
Volcanic Eruptions
Sweeping Fires

1911
Dance of Miriam
Danse Macabre
La Danse de martyrs
Danse de l’offrande
Danse de coquetterie
Dance of the Eyes
Numero fantastique (Un Grand voile)
L’Oiseau noir
Danse ultra violette

1912
Cycles de danses
Les Petits riens (Mozart)
Water Music (Handel)
Points of Light
Nell Gwyn Dance
Dance for Music from Diocletian
Danse des sylphs (from The Damnation of Faust)

1913
Mille et une nuits (Fetes, Sirenes, Pelleas et Melisande, Dans l’oasis, Orgie de lumiere)
Children’s Corner (Dr. Gradua and Parnassum, Jimbo’s Lullaby, Serenade a la Poupee, La Neige Danse, Le Petit berger, Gollywog’s Cakewalk)

1914

Hall of the Mountain King (Peer Gynt)
Orchestration de Coulerus sur deux preludes
Promethee
Pastorale
La Foret Hantee
La Feu d’artifice
Egyptian Sun Dance

1915

Ballet of Serpents
Ballet d’opal noire
Black Flame
Marche militaire
School of Imagination Dances (The crowd in succession: Hatred, Joy, Sorrow, Indignation, Sacrifice, Waiting, Longing, Suspense, Despair, Tears, Laughter, Fear, Indifference, Emotion, Calm, Anxiety, Ecstasy, Faith, Abadonment)
Clown Dance
Battle of the Flowers
Emptying the Bobbin of Its Thread
The Wind
Thunder
Water
The Grinding Mill
Tearing of the Rose
Till She Falls
Butterfly and Birds
St. Jean Preaching to the Birds
St. Jean Walking on the Water
Little Witches

1920

Le Lys de la vie

1921

Chimeres
Chant de Nigamon
Saudades de Brazil

1922

Ballet fantastique
Les Ombres
Sorcieres gigantiques
Ombres partes (Gennes Feeriques, Point, Feu, Lys)
Bal de neige

1924

Temptation de feu
Le Deluge

1925

L’Escalier monumental

Compiled by Margaret H. Harris and Sally R. Sommer.
APPENDIX B

A LIST OF ARTISTS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS OF LOÏE FULLER

AUBURTIN, Jean-François [Francis] (1866-?), French
Poster: *La Loïe Fuller et son e'cole de danse*, color lithograph, ca. 1914; 167 X 128.5 cm.

BAC [Bach], Fernand Sigismond (1859-1952), German, worked in France
Poster: *La Loïe Fuller/aux Folies-Bergère*, color lithograph, 1892; 148.5 X 107.5 cm.; also in 77.5 X 61 cm.

BERNSTAMM, Leopold (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Sculpture: *Loïe Fuller*, bust, date unknown; piece is now lost; size unknown.

BOOKPRINTER, Anna Marie [Valentien, Anna] (1862-1971), American
Ceramic dish: *Loïe Fuller*, made at Rookwood Pottery, Cincinnati, 1903; 10.2 x 15.2 X 8.9 cm.

BRADLEY, Will (1868-1962), American
Book illustration: “*The Serpentine Dance,*” black and white, in *The Chap-Book*, December 1, 1894; 19 x n.4 cm.

CARABIN, François Rupert (1862-1932), French
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; 20.5 X 20 X 15 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 22.5 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 22 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 19.5 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 18.5 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 18.8 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1896-97; height 21 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, 1897-98 (M. Harris), 1901-2 (Museum Villa Stuck); 17 cm.
Ceramic luster: *Loïe Fuller*, 1897-98; height 52.5 cm.
Ceramic luster: *Loïe Fuller*, 1897-98; height 46 cm.

CHALON, Louis (1866-?), French
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1894 (M. Harris), ca. 1903 (Museum Villa Stuck); 22.2 X 16.5 X 16.5 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1903; 22.2 X 20.3 X 10.6 cm.

CHÉRET, Jules (1836-1932). French
Pastel on paper: *Loïe Fuller*, undated; 118.7 X 80.3 cm.
Poster: *Folies- Bergère / La Loïe Fuller*, color lithograph printed in four
combinations of colors, 1893; 124.2 X 85.5 cm.
Poster: Folies-Bergère / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph reproduced in Les Maîtres de l'affiche, 1897; 38.9 X 29.2 cm.
Poster: Folies-Bergère / Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1897; 123 X 87 cm.
Poster: Folies-Bergère, La Danse du feu, color lithograph, 1897; 122.5 X 83.5 cm.

CHOUBRAC, Alfred-Victor (1853-1902), French
Poster: Folies-Bergère / tous / les soirs / à 10h. 1/2 / L'origanale / Loïe Mystérieuse, color lithograph, 1893; 150 x 99.5 cm.

COLIN, Paul (1892-1985), French
Gouache on paper: Maquette for Loïe Fuller poster, 1925; 150 X 112 cm.
Poster: Champs Elysées / Music Hall / Les Féeries fantastiques / de la Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1925; size unknown.

CROZIT (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Watercolor on paper and cellophane: Fire Dance: Study of Loïe Fuller, no date; 29.9 X 22.7 cm.

DAUM FRÈRES, French, founded 1878 in Nancy
Sculpture: Loïe Fuller, pâte de verre, 1900; size unknown

DÉCORCHEMENT, François-Emile (1880-1971), French
Sculpture: Loïe Fuller, pâte de verre, sculpted by R. Raymond, ca. 1912; height 17.1 cm.

FEURE, Georges de [Georges Joseph van Sluijters] (1868-1928), Dutch, worked in France
Poster: Tous les soirs a 10 heures a la / Comédie Parisienne / La Loïe Fuller / dans sa / creation / nouvelle / Salomé, color lithograph, 1895; 130 X 94 cm.

GARNIER, Jean (dates unknown), French, active 1890-1910
Bronze: Danse serpentine, 1893; 41.3 X 22.2 cm.

GALTIER, F., (dates unknown), French
Poster: La Loïe Fuller / From the Album / Souvenir to / La Loïe Fuller/ on her 550th Night / From the Students “Des Beaux-Arts” / Paris, March 24th 1895, color lithograph, 1895; 54 X 41 cm.

GÉRÔME, Jean-Léon (1824-1904), French
Sculpture: Loïe Fuller, ou La Danse, white marble, 1903; 87 x 47 cm.

GRÜN, Jules-Alexandre (1868-1934), French
Poster: Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1901; 160 x 109.8 cm.
HASKELL, Ernest (1876-1925), American
Pen sketch: *Loïe Fuller*, 1901; size unknown.

HEINE, Thomas Theodore (1867-1948), German
Woodblock illustration: "The Serpentine Dance" in *Die Insel* 5 (1900); size unknown.

HOETGER, Bernhard (1874-1949), German, worked in France 1900-1911
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1901 (Museum Villa Stuck), ca. 1910 (M. Harris); 26 X 35.6 X 29.2 cm.
Bronze: *Tempête*, ca. 1901; height 31 cm.

HOUSSIN, Edouard Charles-Marie (1847-1917), French
Sculpture: *Loïe Fuller*, white marble, ca. 1893; 22.2 X 29.2 x 19 cm.
Bronze portrait mask: *Loïe Fuller*, 1897; height 30.5 cm.

LARCHÉ, François-Raoul (1860-1912), French
Gilt bronze table lamp: *Loïe Fuller*, 1901; height 33 cm.
Gilt brass table lamp: *Loïe Fuller*, before 1909; height 33 cm.
Gilt bronze table lamp: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1901; height 45.4 cm.
Gilt bronze table lamp: *Loïe Fuller* (*Fond Memories*, 1883-1908); height 45 cm.

LARSSON, Gotfride (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1894; 39.4 X 15.2 cm.

LELONG, Rene (dates unknown), French
Oil [?] on canvas: *La Loïe Fuller, Queen of Light*, 1910; size unknown.

LEMMEN, Georges (1865 - 1916), Belgian
Conte crayon on paper: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1900; 46 X 69.5 cm.

LEROLLE, Henry (1848-?), French
Oil [?] on canvas: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1893; piece is now lost; size unknown.

LEVASSEUR, Henri Louis (1853-?), French
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1894; 38.1 X 19 cm.

LEYMARIE, Auguste-Louis (dates unknown), French, active ca. 1910-25
Poster: *Les / Danseuses / de Loïe Fuller*, 1922; 79 X 19.5 cm.

LOPES-SILVA, L. (1862-?), French
Poster: *Nouveau / Théâtre / Bouton / d'Or*, color lithograph, 1893; 150.5 X 97 cm.
LOUCHET, Charles (dates unknown), French
Gilt Bronze: Loïe Fuller, undated; 22.5 X 17.1 cm.

LÖWENTHAL, Arthur Imanuel (1879-?), Austrian
Bronze: Untitled, 1903; 38.1 X 20.3 X 10.2 cm.

LUCAS, E., Charles [Charles-Louis] (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Poster: Folies- Bergère / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, ca. 1893; 99.7 X 152.4 cm.

MARS-VALLET, Marius (dates unknown), French
Bronze table lamp: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1900; 114.3 X 86.4 cm.

MASSIER, Clément (1845-1917), French, and
LÉVY-DHURMER, Lucien (1865-1953), French
Charger: Untitled, stoneware with luster glaze, ca. 1895; diameter 49.5 cm.

MAURIN, Charles (1856- 1914), French
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 61.5 X 45 cm.
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 61.4 X 45.5 cm.
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 59.7 X 45.7 cm.
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 59.7 X 45.7 cm.
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 58.4 X 45.7 cm.
Pastel on paper: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1898; 59.7 X 43.2 cm.

MAZZA, Aldo (1880-?), Italian
Pastel on paper [?]: Loïe Fuller, 1914; size unknown.

MEUNIER, Georges (1869 -1939), French
Poster: Loïe Fuller at the Music Hall, color lithograph, 1898; 120 X 86 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère/ Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1898; 124 X 88 cm.

MICHAEL- LÉVY, C. (dates unknown), French, active 1885-1915
Bronze: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1894; 29.2 X 17.8 X 7.6 cm.

MOSER, Koloman (1868-1918), Austrian
Watercolor: Loïe Fuller, Butterfly Dance, ca. 1900; size unknown.

NOURY, Gaston (1866-?), French [?]
Gouache: Untitled, lead pencil on paper, date unknown; 22 X 15 cm.

ORAZI, Manuel (1860- 1934), Italian, worked in France
Poster: Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1900; 200 X 65 cm.
Poster: Théâtre de / Loïe Fuller / Exposition Universelle / rue de Paris, color
lithograph, printed in three editions in three different color schemes, 1900; 201 X 60.5 cm.

PAGET-FREDERICKS, Joseph (1905-63), American
Watercolor: Loïe Fuller: Oiseau de la nuit, ca. 1925; 32.8 X 45.8 cm.
Watercolor: Loïe Fuller: Winged Victory, ca. 1925; 35.8 X 48.7 cm.

PAL [Paléologu, Jean de] (1860-1942), Romanian, worked in France 1893 - 1900
Poster: La Loïe Fuller / Folies- Bergère, color lithograph, ca. 1893; 123 X 83 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, ca. 1896; 130 X 89.5 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, ca. 1897; 78 X 58 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Torrs les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1897; 92 X 63 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1897; 132 X 95 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, 1897; 132 X 95 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, ca. 1897; 124 X 83 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère /Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, ca. 1897; 124 X 84 cm.
Poster: Folies- Bergère / Tous les soirs / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, date unknown; 85.5 X 57 cm.
Poster: Apollo Théâtre / La Loïe Fuller, color lithograph, date unknown; 140 X 105 cm.

PFEFFER, Clara (dates unknown), American
Gilt bronze: Untitled, ca. 1903; 39.4 X 20.3 X 8.9 cm.

POSS, Jan (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Line drawing: Loïe Fuller, 1981; size unknown.

REISSNER STELLMACHER AND KESSLER (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Bronze luster: Loïe Fuller, ca. 1900; size unknown.

RENAUD, Francis (dates unknown), French [?]
Bronze: Loïe Fuller, black patina, 1901; height 26.7 cm.

RIVIÈRE, Théodore Louis-Auguste (1857- 1912), French
Sculpture: Loïe Fuller, white marble, ca. 1898; 23.5 X 24.1 X 16.5 cm.
Sculpture: Loïe Fuller: Lily Dance, white marble, ca. 1898; 40.6 X 43.2 cm.
Biscuit porcelain: *Loïe Fuller Dancing*, Sèvres, date unknown; 24 X 19 cm.
Sculpture: *Loïe Fuller*, white marble, ca. 1898-99; size unknown.

ROCHE, Pierre [Massignon, Fernand] (1855-1922), French
Oil on canvas: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1893; 55.9 X 45.7 cm.
Oil on canvas: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1894; 41 X 32.5 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1894; 53.4 X 17.8 X 17.8 cm.
Bronze weathervane: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1896; height 68 cm.
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller: Fire Dance*, ca. 1897; height 54.5 cm.
Bronze finial: *Loïe Fuller*, 1900; 10.5 X 7.7 cm.
Bronze medal: *Loïe Fuller*, 1900; diameter 7.2 cm.
Bronze medal: *Loïe Fuller*, two pieces, 1900; 19 cm. obverse, 18 cm. reverse
Sculpture: *Loïe Fuller*, used over entrance to her Exposition Universelle pavilion, 1900; size unknown.
Silver medal: *Loïe Fuller*, 1900; diameter 7.2 cm.
Bronze medal: *Loïe Fuller as Comedy*, cast from 1901 plaster model, date unknown; diameter 48.9 cm.
Bronze Medal: *Loïe Fuller as Drama*, cast from 1901 plaster model, date unknown: diameter 48.9 cm.
Clay bas relief: *Loïe Fuller Dancing*, date unknown; 18 x 19.5 cm.
Plaster cast for coin: *Loïe Fuller*, date unknown; diameter 1.93 cm.

ROCHE, Pierre, and
DAMMOUSE, Albert-Louis (1848-1926), French
Plaque: *Loïe Fuller*, pâte de verre in gilt bronze frame cast by Dammouse, presentation to Alma Spreckels, ca. ,903; 11.4 X 6.8 cm.

ROCHE, Pierre, and
MARX, Roger (1859-1913), French
Portfolio: *La Loïe Fuller*, 27 unbound pages, paper wrapper, and 14 pages illustrated with gypsographs, text by Roger Marx, edition of 130 copies, 1904; 26 X 20 cm.
Gypsograph: *Loïe Fuller Dancing*, red, 1904; 9 x 5 cm.
Gypsograph: *Loïe Fuller Dancing*, blue, 1904; 9.5 x 9 cm.
Gypsograph: *Loïe Fuller Dancing*, white, 1904; 10 x 7 cm.

RODIN, Auguste (1840-1917), French
Bronze: *Head of Loïe Fuller*, set on black marble base, date unknown but Rodin sold Dec. 16, 1916; piece is now lost; height 18 cm.

ROYAL BAYREUTH HELIOSINE, (dates unknown), German
Ceramic dish: *Untitled*, ca. 1900; diameter 13 cm.
STEVENS, A. E., (dates unknown), nationality unknown
Poster: *Loïe Fuller*, color lithograph, date unknown; 218 x 102 cm.

STOLTENBERG-LERCH, Hans (1867-1920), German / Norwegian
Gilt bronze vase: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1897; 14.6 X 14 cm.

STUDENTS, L’Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, French
Twenty-three watercolors: *550th Performance of Loïe Fuller at the Folies-Bergère*, 1895; various sizes.

TERESZIUK, [Tereszizck], Paul (dates unknown), Austrian, active 1895-1925
Bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1897, 36.8 X 15.2 cm.
Porcelain lamp: *Loïe Fuller*, produced by A. Forster & Co., Vienna, date unknown; height 66 cm.

TETERGER, Henri (1862-?), French
Bracelet: *Untitled*, of linked dancers, ca. 1900; size unknown.

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, Henri de (1864-1901) French
Lithographs: *Miss Loïe Fuller*, edition of 50 prints, printed in black, individually tinted with watercolors and sprinkled with gold, silver, or bronze powder, 1893; approximate sizes 40 X 28 cm.
Oil [?] on canvas: *Au Music-Hall: La Loïe Fuller*, 1892; size unknown.
Oil [?] on Canvas: *La Loïe Fuller aux Folies-Bergère*, 1893; size unknown.
and Oil [?] on canvas: *La Loïe Fuller sur la piste*, 1893; size unknown.

TRETTER, Anna (1956-), German
India ink / cigarette ash on paper: *Hommage au Loïe Fuller*, 24-item series, 1991; 132 X 248 cm.

WALTER, Almaric-V. (1859-1942) French
Sculpture: *Loïe Fuller*, pâte de verre, sculpted by Jean Descomps, 1920-30; 19.3 X 28.9 cm.

WANDT, Ernest (1872-?), Belgian.
Gilt bronze: *Loïe Fuller*, ca. 1897; 33 X 16.5 cm.

ANONYMOUS
Poster: *La Loïe Fuller / aux Folies-Bergère*, color lithograph, printed by Dupuy & Fils, Paris, ca. 1893; 78 x 61 cm.

ANONYMOUS
poster: *La Loïe Fuller*, color lithograph after a B. J. Falk photo, ca. 1896; 72.4 x 49.5 cm.
ANONYMOUS
Poster: *La Loïe Fuller*, color lithograph, 1897; 213 X 98.5 cm.

ANONYMOUS
Gold Brooch: *Untitled*, with precious stones, ca. 1901; 5.5 X 2.5 cm.

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