

IN THE INTERSECTION OF CIRCLES -  
VASLAW NIJINSKY DRAWS

By Thomas Röske

Until now, not much has been written about the visual works of Vaslaw Nijinsky. (1) In 1932, more than twelve years after they were made, some drawings were exhibited – the few reviewers approached them with either reverent appreciation or vigorous rejection – but without a thorough investigation to evaluate them. They were merely seen as an appendix to the biography of the outstanding dancer and choreographer, at a stage in his biography in which they were thought to illustrate symptoms of Nijinsky's mental crisis. So people still saw the rhythm of the dancer in them, and already saw symptoms of madness – they were not perceived as self-sufficient works.

Nijinsky himself took them very seriously. In fact, they played a vital role for his work on himself and in determining his place in the world.

In the following text the characteristics of the drawings and interpretations that have been suggested until now will be discussed, before attempting a new interpretation. I will follow the suggestions of Hans-Michael Schäfer in this catalogue, with a rough chronology of the works between 1918/19.

CHARACTERISTICS

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Almost all known images by Nijinsky consist of circles, segments of circles and similarly curved shapes. In the earliest drawings, he drew figures, whereby even the inner forms follow a restricted visual language (see also pp. 109-17). Everything here is established by a few simple lines. But the impression of the astonishing confidence of his pen is misleading. Looking more closely, you notice that much has been erased. Nijinsky has hidden his struggle for perfection in the design.

In contrast to this, in most of the non-figurative line drawings the line overlays previous lines until the curves indicate Nijinsky's satisfaction (*Series Arcs and Segments: Lines*, pp. 126-43). Here the radius of the forms corresponds to the radius of his forearm or his hand. The drawings can be read as a controlled record of steady body movement. As he had done previously, as a former dancer on the stage, Nijinsky fills out a form here with a pen as precisely as possible. This means that his geometry has a human dimension and is not rigid. One can clearly see that the drawing was done with hand and arm – without the aid of ruler and compass. Nijinsky consciously allows the forms in his pictures to take on a meaning that is not exact in the sense of a technical drawing, in favor of vitality, of breathing.

Other orientation points for these non-figurative drawings are the simple divisions of the paper he uses, especially the horizontal and vertical axes – hence the resulting symmetry in most of the pictures. It is important to the artist to place these mandorla-shaped forms on these axes (they are not ellipses, as is always mistakenly written). The fact that they are often cropped at both ends, their points thus seeming to lie outside the picture, makes for a monumental effect. The use of many parallel lines intensifies this further.

The drawings develop variations of the basic vocabulary. Curves push forward from the sides, confront or touch each other, or connect certain points on the vertical and horizontal borders of the drawings. Two, three or more mandorla forms of different sizes stand alongside or on top of

each other, reach from the centre to one of the corners of the picture, cross and penetrate each other, or interlock. The sections are evenly filled in with parallel lines in red and blue, giving plasticity and direction and making connections and larger forms clear. In contrast, the closed quality of full circle forms is enhanced by filling them with further concentric circles.

Although Nijinsky certainly always turned his paper round while drawing, an overview of the series of drawings makes it clear that the vertical symmetry axis always dominates and any dynamic movement always aligns itself vertically. This knowledge helps us to position the drawings, which otherwise give no hint of their orientation.

The mandorla forms on their own can already be read as eyes. Nijinsky also often draws a circle at their centre, which gives the impression of wide-open eyelids and a staring look. Place two 'eye mandorlas' side by side, or two discs together in one mandorla, and the pictorial elements below them can be read as nose and mouth, resulting in the impression of a complete animal or human face (see ills. pp. 148-53). As with the individual 'eyes', there is, however, a balance between non-representational configuration and physiognomy, so that the latter seems to be expressionless, hollow-eyed and empty, and the viewer is forced to interpret it as a mask.

Nijinsky also tried more complex compositions, such as those in which repeatedly, circle segments branch inwards from even ( $1/2$  to  $1/2$ ) or uneven ( $1/4$  to  $3/4$ ,  $1/3$  to  $2/3$ ) division points of other circle segments, so that a swinging pendulum motion leads into the centre of the image (Series *Arcs and Segments: Planes*, pp. 144-8). Sometimes the viewer finds an eye motif there, looking back at him or her (Series *Eye*, pp. 167-8). In these drawings, not all these explorations lead to a satisfying overall composition, which could suggest that Nijinsky was more interested in the process than the result.

The later landscape-format crayon drawing series in red and blue (Series *Sketchbook: Blue and Orange*, see ills. pp. 120-5) is dominated by the motif of single asymmetrically placed discs, rings or bulbous mandorla forms, most of which are cropped, thus appearing to be too big to fit onto the paper, which gives them a monumental look. Sometimes these cropped discs have a smaller disc placed on them off centre; sometimes this becomes the focus of a turning movement, in which superimposed ring forms layered around them seem to taper off; sometimes cropped rings appear in the circles, as if we can look through an opening into another space.

Probably subsequent to this, Nijinsky translates similar compositions using blue and red ink (Series *Black and red circular Segments*, pp. 161-5). Only then does he explore new territory with this medium. The result is a series of dark drawings, where the red ink and the white paper set the strongest contrasts to the dominant black ink. All of them are also based on compositions of circles (Series *Mask*, pp. 155-60 and Series *Eye*, pp. 167-9).

In fact, these images are over-painted. An oblique light source renders the original geometric compositions visible. Nijinsky has hidden his first ideas, if indeed he did not even want to eradicate them. What remain are like black abysses from which red and white single forms flash, occasionally a complete doll face (p. 159). Several drawings present large eye shapes, usually with a red upper lid – the black of the picture seems to look back at the viewer (Series *Eye*). With others you have first to reconstruct that the white or red spandrel shapes are the sides of a disc within a mandorla – the 'white of the eye'. Then you guess shadowy faces, often with unconventional 'hats' and 'collars' (Series *Mask*). These pictures also surely disturb many viewers because of the ambivalence in the design between non-representation and physiognomy.



Until now, Nijinsky's drawings are most commonly interpreted as belonging to the field of so-called 'psychopathological art' and are identified with the dancer-choreographer's madness: Marsden Hartley saw in them 'psychopathic charts'(2), Vera Krasovskaya thought that that 'Nijinsky had entrusted 'his torturous hallucinations to paper'(3). Ostwald judged that 'He continuously drew circles. He turned the spiral into a mania'(4), and in 2003 two authors found 'signs of (...) inner turmoil' in Nijinsky's drawings. (5)

Since the 18th Century, psychiatrists especially have wanted to read the pictures made by asylum inmates as symptoms of extreme mental states. Cesare Lombroso was the first, in his book *Genio e Follia* (1864), to set out an inventory of characteristics. (6) Others followed him in this until well into the second half of the 20th Century.

For them, Nijinsky's psychic crisis could be clearly visible in his pictures. In 1936 the psychoanalyst Ernst Kris interpreted 'the emptiness in the facial expression of schizophrenic creations, and the frequency with which the human face is rendered in their spontaneous productions, as part of the general contact disturbance of the schizophrenic.' (7) Hans Rennert judged in his book *Merkmale schizophrener Bildneri* ('Characteristics of Schizophrenic Artistry') (1962, 2 1966) very similar 'grotesque faces' as evidence of a 'disturbed, ambivalent emotionality', dictated by 'fear, a delusional atmosphere, a feeling of the uncanny and similar affective feelings.' (8)

The abstractions in Nijinsky's pictures would also be particularly suspect to Rennert: they would feature in his list of characteristics with the 'solidification of visual expression', with particular reference to the subordinate points of 'schematizing and geometrizing' and 'symmetric division'. Especially because it was possible to perceive a 'style change from relaxed image composition towards rigid symmetry' (9) in Nijinsky's visual development. On the tendency to 'geometrize', Leo Navratil in his book *Schizophrenie und Kunst* ('Schizophrenia and Art') (1965) says: 'The reality loss of the schizophrenic patient reveals the disruption of his ability to communicate in the rational sphere. His tendency to geometrize comes from an attempt to rebuild order from scratch.' (10)

Finally, the accumulation of eye motifs in Nijinsky would seem significant for Rennert and Navratil. (11) For the one the 'preferred part motif' of the 'single eye' symbolizes the 'experience of being looked at meaningfully'; (12) the other interprets it as 'an observing, warning and threatening eye' and points out that in the psychological diagnostic Rorschach test 'eyes are interpreted as paranoid complex responses.' (13)

For today's reader, probably each of these assessments would also hold true for many works by prominent 20th Century artists, which also show featureless faces, a development toward geometric shapes, an emphasis on symmetry or single eyes – although not all together. But above all, it must be remembered that many comparable works were made before Nijinsky's were created, so that influence cannot be discounted (see below).

However the aforementioned catalogues by Kris, Rennert and Navratil, which until now have not been subjected to detailed criticism (14), are in themselves questionable. First, much of the terminology used is not neutral, but consists rather of judgmental terms such as 'emptiness', 'torpor' and 'schematization' that originate in the language of psychiatric diagnosis and already prejudge an illness. Second, an unquestioned ideology of expression lies behind the conclusions that have been accompanied by other views of art since at



least the end of the 19th Century. And third, with all three writers, the number of examples given is not sufficient to give evidence of a valid argument by today's standards.

When one surveys the approximately 5.000 works of the famous Prinzhorn Collection at the Heidelberg University Psychiatric Clinic alone, donated for the most part between 1919 and 1921 by a large number of German psychiatric institutions, it becomes clear that there are no overarching characteristics. Prinzhorn's verdict, in his book about the Heidelberg collection, *Bildnerlei der Geisteskranken* ('Artistry of the Mentally Ill') (1922), is also 'rather modest. We cannot say with certainty that any given picture comes from a mentally ill person just because it bears certain traits.' (15) Written before surveys with more convincing methodology had been made, this restraint remains exemplary.

What is in question above all is the concept that works of art show symptoms of extreme psychological states, and are therefore 'sick' - not least bearing in mind the sinister developments in Germany in the recent past. On one hand, psychiatric diagnosis and thus the definition of what is 'healthy' and 'sick' is not 'natural', but evolves continuously. On the other hand, artistic work is basically a symbolic act; here experience, even the most eccentric, is translated in a unique, aesthetic way, and made accessible to the artist him or herself and to others. The work, therefore, always speaks of something, and is not of what it speaks.

Since Goethe, artistic works were called 'sick' by people who disagreed with the notion of art presented or which they found aesthetically incomprehensible. Even Prinzhorn, who was so cautious with 'traits', thinks that insanity shows itself in 'artistry' by overwhelming the viewer. This manifests in a sense of the 'uncanny' that is a reflection of the 'gruesome solipsism' of the schizophrenic 'which far exceeds the limits of psychopathic alienation'. (16)

Indeed, some of Nijinsky's drawings are uncanny, especially the mask like faces formed almost randomly out of circles, and the single eye shapes dominated by black. This could be explained by referring to the most 'common case' of the uncanny: when there is doubt about 'whether a lifeless object has a soul or not'. (17) Here, however, it is not yet clear what intentions lie behind Nijinsky's designs.

#### CONTEMPORARY HISTORY - BIOGRAPHICAL

Other interpretations of Nijinsky's pictures see in them responses to contemporary history and personal memories. They are based on a passage in the book by Romola Nijinsky.

First, she reports a short dialogue, which should have taken place towards the end of 1918 or early in 1919 within an actual installation by the artist: 'As the days passed, Vaslaw was working more and more. He seemed to make a drawing in three minutes with lightening speed. His study and rooms were literally covered with designs; no longer portraits or scenic or decorative subjects, but strange faces, eyes peering from every corner, red and black, like bloodstained shrouds. They made me shudder. "What are those masks?" "Soldiers' faces. It is the war." They were artistic creations, even though so frightening and morbid'. (18)

It is unclear which works Romola Nijinsky is referring to here. Does she mean the ink and gouache drawings? Then the comparison with the bloodstained shrouds would be inappropriate, because the drawings are predominantly black, not white.

Subsequently she briefly mentions other pictures and Nijinsky's comments on them: 'Then other

designs came; fanciful butterflies with faces which bore a resemblance to Vaslav's and big spiders with the face of Diaghilev. "That is Sergei Pavlovitch, and these butterflies are we, the youth of Russia, caught in his web for ever."(19)

Such interpretations could relate to the circular compositions with small doll-like faces. In fact, a crayon drawing (noted by Romola) carries the title 'Diaghilev' (p. 110). (20) But can we really be convinced that this is Diaghilev, in front of this highly abstracted physiognomy?

In Nijinsky's 'Diary', the only authentic witness from his hand from the period before his admission into the Bellevue Sanatorium in March 1919, there is no passage that can help us with the interpretation of these drawings as portraits, and only one in which pictures are associated with war. However, these come much closer to his visual language in its degree of abstraction: 'I do not like an eye in a red cap with black stripes. I like an eye with hair on the head. I am God's eye, and not a warlike eye.' (21)

Surely Nijinsky was preoccupied, like other Europeans at the end of 1918, with the trauma of the Great War. And he certainly still had highly ambivalent feelings towards the Director of the Ballets Russes, as the 'Diary' proves. (22) But if both did, after all, play a role in his pictures, then it would be in a highly abstract form, looked at from a broader point of view - and in tension to other images.

These literal interpretations, which lead to the works being given titles after the fact, are based on a desire to defuse the images. (23) It was unbearable that Nijinsky, by avoiding titles, radically referred to their non-representational qualities.

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NEW INTERPRETATIONS

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CIRCLE

Several authors have connected the way Nijinsky concentrated on the circle in his drawing with his reworking of his dance script in 1916. (24) In 1917/18, he tried to 'simplify' it (25) by reducing the number of lines of notation, while the movements of the dancers were indicated by vertical and horizontal coordinates on a circle. (26) But Nijinsky did not only introduce the circle to visualize movement in a new way. It is already clear that he, as Romola Nijinsky reported in spring 1918, was working on a ballet about 'his own life put into a choreographic poem' which was based on the circle. 'The scenery was a design in curve, and even the proscenium opening was round. Vaslav worked out the whole design himself to the smallest detail, in blues, red, and gold, Raphaelistic in style.' This was consistent, because the work was located in the Renaissance, for which the circle was the symbolic form par excellence. (27)

Furthermore, Nijinsky explained to his wife at that time: 'the circle is the complete, the perfect movement. Everything is based on it - life, art, and most certainly our art. It is the perfect line.' (28) Nijinsky's interest was thus mainly in the 'experimental and philosophical dimensions' of the circle. That probably explains why in his late notes he hardly gives any examples of the practical application of his new choreographic system. (29)

Considering these developments, it seems plausible to see a continuation of his speculations about the circle in Nijinsky's free drawings. The earliest circles, from which figures and faces are constructed, form ideal 'molecules' that not only guarantee perfect form, but also symbolize their vitality. In contrast, the later, non-figurative drawings, in which circular forms meet, penetrate one another and contribute to an overarching dynamic, which could represent the harmonious



constellation of different movements or dimensions of movement – an abstract concept of ballet, which could apply not only to dance on stage, but to the aesthetics of any kind of movement. (30)

Interpreted in this way, the drawings can be connected to ideas which other abstract or non-representational artists of the time were concerned with – even up to their dreams of a fourth dimension. (31) Nijinsky may even have been encouraged by them to his own circle forms. His position in this was, however, significantly different to that of most of his contemporaries.

#### THE DRAUGHTSMAN AS A MEDIUM

This informs his 'Diary', this internal monologue, with which Nijinsky tried to order his affairs shortly before his breakdown. Here, he did not only occasionally mention his paintings. He also entrusted his thoughts about philosophy and his art in general to this manuscript, which can be connected to visual works, even if they are not directly addressed. Here it also becomes clear how much importance his pictures had for him.

They were not just a distraction for a dancer who had no engagement. For Nijinsky they had an almost existential importance, as an integral part of his life project. Like his writing (32) and all other artistic activities, he valued drawing and painting as work on himself: 'I want to be God, and therefore I try to improve myself. I want to dance. I want to draw. I want to play the piano. I want to write poetry. I want to compose ballets.' (33) And especially with the visual, he believed he was on the right track: 'I used to paint a lot, and I made good progress.' (34) Therefore even the appreciation expressed by his father-in-law pleased him (35), just as much as it hurt him that Romola and his parents-in-law supposedly ignored, or at least did not understand him on another occasion. (36)

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Several times, Nijinsky describes in his 'Diary', how on lonely walks he entrusts himself to inspirations, and follows the resounding voice of God and Nature – up to a point of dangerously passivity. (37) His dancing was animated in a similar way. (38) And he also experienced his writing as an involuntary act. Thus at one time he writes: 'I write without thinking,' (39) and another time: 'I do not know what to write, but God wants my writings because he knows their significance.' (40) At the same time Nijinsky was opposed to spiritualism. (41) He had experience of this in 1918, in the form of group séance, in which messages from 'the other side' were written down. (42) He differentiates his inspired writing from this: 'I know people who are saying that everything I write is a spiritualist trance. I would like everyone to be in such a trance, because Tolstoy was also in such a trance. So were Dostoevsky and Zola.' (43) Nijinsky is not, like the spiritualists, looking to the service of the ghosts of others; he is trying to follow his own feeling, which he is convinced is the expression of God.

It is likely that Nijinsky also saw himself as a medium when drawing. Indeed, two drawings in the Neumeier collection strongly recall a particular type of mediumistic drawing. In these drawings (pp. 114-15), the existing form seems to be to be created from involuntary movements of the pencil. At one time a face appears in the circular motion of the pencil and at another time the unintentional formation can be completely interpreted as the bust of a woman, emphasized by surrounding hatching.

This kind of searching through drawing for the materialization of something understandable, which indicates a willingness to receive, can be found in the mediumistic drawings of the opera singer Malvine Schnorr von Carolsfelds (1825-1904) (now in the Prinzhorn Collection), done in 1897. She believed that through them, she could get in touch with her late husband (see ill. p. 83). (44)

Looking at the field of mediumistic art, we can see that many of these works are defined by geometric figures, which refer to spiritual levels. It has long been established that this was one of the major sources of interest in abstraction at the beginning of the 20th Century. (45) Outstanding works which can be compared to Nijinsky's include paintings by the Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) and the Swiss artist Emma Kunz (1882-1963) (for both see ill. p. 83). Both recorded fundamental principles or laws about what lay behind perceptible reality. Both strongly referred to Christian religious ideas. (46)

#### NIJINSKY'S POSITION IN HIS PICTURES

What is special about Nijinsky's pictures is not only the claim of the artist to be the medium of communication for divine energy. It also shows in the position he takes himself in his works – and thus in the world.

This points to another passage in the 'Diary'. Nijinsky's entry is initially about the above-mentioned idea of a ballet with autobiographical scenes stage-designed in circles: 'Shakespeare understood the theater as an invention. I am life. The theater is life. I am the theater. I know its habits. The theater is a habit, and life is a non-habit. I am without habit. I do not like theater with a square stage. I like a round theater. I will build a round theater. I know what an eye is. An eye is a theater. The brain is the audience. I am the eye in the brain.' (47) The dancer-choreographer designs a theatre that is determined by vitality instead of convention and expresses this in its roundness. The vitality he himself embodies in his life (hence also the autobiographical dance project) ideally is at one with divine energy. As such, he stands opposite humanity, with his life and his divinely inspired vitality he mediates essential insights to humanity – as suggested by the metaphor of the eye and brain.

To this, Nijinsky adds: 'I like looking in a mirror and seeing one eye in my forehead' – a provocative paradox, since it is the third, 'enlightened' eye (Eph. 1.18), with which the heart perceives, that is absolutely not visible in the mirror. It is instructive, therefore, that the diary ends with a seemingly unrelated statement: 'I often draw one eye.' It clarifies the function that drawing has for Nijinsky: it makes his spirituality, the divine in him, visible 'I am God's eye.' (48)

Thus it becomes understandable why Nijinsky's eye images always appear as mandorlas – why his pictures 'see' with their mandorlas. A mandorla is created when two circles intersect. This fact is also behind the use of mandorlas for Christ and Mary in Christian iconography. The intersecting circles mean two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly – Mary and Christ participate in both.

Nijinsky's drawings are the ground on which circles meet. With the pencil at the final point of the movements of hand and arm, which transpose divine impulses, the draughtsman makes a supernatural ideal geometry visible in details, particularly those details which locate him in the overall design.

Metaphorically he makes that clear in the first drawing, with which the diary opens, in which his first and last names are written within two mandorle (Fig. 4).

So Nijinsky puts the essential idea of his 'Diary' into an image: that he is 'God in man,' (49) the alternative Christ. (50) The uncanny quality of the eyes and faces in the drawings is the result neither of madness nor the shudder of war, but of the fact that here, we are being looked at by God.



- 1 The literature is for the most part listed in the article written by Hans-Michael Schäfer in this catalogue.
- 2 Marsden Hartley, 'The Drawings of Nijinsky', in: *Nijinsky. An Illustrated Monograph*, ed. by Paul Magriel, New York 1946, pp. 68-73, here p. 70. The text dates from the late 1930s.
- 3 Vera Krasovskaya, *Nijinsky* (1974), New York 1979, p. 342.
- 4 Peter Ostwald, *„Ich bin Gott“. Waslaw Nijinsky – Leben und Wahnsinn*, Hamburg 1997, S. 222.
- 5 Pascal Sauvayre/Barbara Forbes, 'In the Dialectics of Imagination: Nijinsky's Sublime Defeat', in: *Imagination and its Pathologies*, ed. by James Phillips & James Morley, Cambridge/Mass. and London 2003, pp. 233-252, here p. 248.
- 6 German: Cesare Lombroso, *Genie und Irrsinn in ihren Beziehungen zum Gesetz, zur Kritik und zur Geschichte*, Leipzig 1887, pp. 185-219 (= chapter 'Die Kunst der Irrsinnigen').
- 7 Ernst Kris, 'Comments on Spontaneous Artistic Creations by Psychotics' (1936), in: E. K., *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, Madison, Conn. 1952, pp. 87-117, here p. 112.
- 8 Helmut Rennert, *Merkmale schizophrener Bilderei*, 2. ed., Jena 1966, p. 68.
- 9 Ibid., p. 72. Even Lombroso emphasizes "a particular tendency to painting arabesques and ornamental drawing (...), which show almost geometric forms," Lombroso 1887, see note 6, p. 206.
- 10 Leo Navratil, *Schizophrenie und Kunst*, München 1965, p. 80. The book was later reprinted by the Frankfurt publishing house S. Fischer, almost unchanged from the original.
- 11 For Joan Acocella's references to repetition as a symptom for illness, see her introduction to: *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, unexpurgated edition, ed. by J. A., New York 1995, pp. VII-XLVI, here p. XXXVII (herein after cited as Diary 1995).
- 12 Rennert 1966, see note 8, p. 43.
- 13 Navratil 1965, see note 10, p. 105 and 104.
- 14 But cf. Thomas Röske, 'Die Psychose als Künstler. Leo Navratils 'Schizophrenie und Kunst' – eine Kritik', in: *Außenseiter-Kunst. Außergewöhnliche Bildereien von Menschen mit intellektuellen und psychischen Behinderungen*, ed. by Georg Theunissen, Bad Heilbrunn 2008, pp. 103-117.
- 15 Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill. A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration* (1922), New York 1972, p. 265.
- 16 Ibid., p. 266.
- 17 Emil Jentsch, zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen' (1906), cited after Sigmund Freud, 'Das Unheimliche' (1919), in: GW XII, pp. 227-268, here p. 237.
- 18 Romola Nijinsky, *Nijinsky*, London 1922, p. 399.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Marsden Hartley takes up this idea. He sees in Nijinsky's last works a representation of the 'demon in pursuit' that 'attempted to destroy him': of that which 'he feared in Diaghilev, if not (...) Diaghilev himself,' Hartley 1946, see note 2, p. 70.
- 21 Diary 1995, p. 52.
- 22 See for example pp. 37, 42 ff., 77 ff., 103 f., 109 ff.
- 23 The so-called Character Heads by Franz Xaver Messerschmidt (1736-1783) have been post-titled with a similar intention.
- 24 For example, Françoise Reiss, *Nijinsky. A Biography* (1947), NY, Toronto, London 1960, p. 182.
- 25 Nijinsky 1981, see note 18, p. 378.
- 26 Claudia Jeschke, *Tanzschriften – Ihre Geschichte und Methoden. Die illustrierte Darstellung eines Phänomens von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Bad Reichenhall 1983, pp. 321-333.
- 27 Romola Nijinsky, *Nijinsky*. London 1922, p. 389. For this see Erwin Panofsky, 'Galileo as a Critic of the Arts. Aesthetic Attitude and Scientific Thought', in: *Isis* 47, 1956, pp. 3-15.
- 28 Romola Nijinsky, *Nijinsky*, London 1922, p. 389.
- 29 Claudia Jeschke, 'Russische Bildwelten in Bewegung, Bewegungstexte', in: exh. cat. *Schwäne und Feuervögel – Die Ballets Russes 1909-1929. Russische Bildwelten in Bewegung*, Munich 2009, pp. 59-89, here p. 76.
- 30 See also what Lincoln Kirstein wrote about Nijinsky's late concept for choreography 'Not only dance-movement, but motions for sport, industrial activity, physical exercise, could be simply recorded.' – L.K., *Dance. A Short History of Classical Theatrical Dancing*, 4. ed., New York 1974, p. 292.
- 31 Bourman supposes that Nijinsky's pictures aimed for this; see Anatole Bourman, *The Tragedy of Nijinsky*, London 1937, p. IX. Ostwald 1997, see note 4, p. 221, compares them to the 'non-representational art that flourished in Russia shortly after the Revolution'.



- 32 Diary 1995, p. 189.
- 33 Diary 1995, p. 145.
- 34 Diary 1995, p. 152.
- 35 Diary 1995, p. 179.
- 36 Diary 1995, p. 193 f.
- 37 For example, Diary 1995, p. 14 f. and 74 ff.
- 38 Diary 1995, p. 7 f. and 203 f., p. 214 he states: 'I know that all movement comes from God'.
- 39 Diary 1995, p. 41.
- 40 Diary 1995, p. 144.
- 41 Diary 1995, pp. 23, 36, 46, 73 f., 154, 177 f.
- 42 Romola Nijinsky, *Nijinsky*, London 1922, p. 392.
- 43 Diary 1995, p. 45.
- 44 Théodore Flournoy shows similar writings in his book „Esprits et Médiuims“ (Genf/Paris 1911), see Peter Gorsen, „Der Eintritt des Mediums in die Kunstgeschichte. Das Unerklärliche – der surrealistische Schlüssel“, in: *The Message. Kunst und Okkultismus*, ed. by Claudia Dichter and others, exhibition catalogue, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Cologne 2007, pp. 17-38, here p. 36. Compare also the drawings of Helen Butler Wells from the 1920's in: *ibid.*, p. 65.
- 45 See for example: *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, New York 1986; *Okkultismus und Avantgarde. Von Munch bis Mondrian 1900-1915*, exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt am Main, Ostfildern 1995; Lynn Gamwell, *Exploring the Invisible. Art, Science, and the Spiritual*, Princeton, Oxford 2004.
- 46 See: *Okkultismus und Abstraktion – Hilma af Klint*, exh. cat., Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Wien, and others, Vienna 1991; *Emma Kunz*, exh. cat., Basel 1976.
- 47 Diary 1995, p. 52. Did Nijinsky know that the theatre where most of Shakespeare's plays were first seen, the London Globe, was in the round?
- 48 Diary 1995, p. 52.
- 49 Diary 1995, p. 48.
- 50 He sees himself as 'Christ without a Beard', who he also claims to have drawn, Diary p. 23, cf. pp. 25, 31 f., 53, 73.

*Translated by Peter Cross*