

Title: The Exquisite Pose: Dancing on the Cabaret Stage
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The flowing movements and simplicity of the dance, along with the trappings of primitivism and classicism, caused many to rethink the basic precepts of dance in Russia. The excitement of the revealed body writhing in ecstasy was not only part of a new aesthetic, but also extremely popular with the audience. This new conception of dance as a form of expression was the creation of a new genre outside of the traditional form of ballet. The blatant sexuality of the dance broke down barriers of the traditional roles of audience and performer, and experimentation with movement and the body was part of the exploration of the new conception of theatrical space. While the nuances of innovative dance could be staged with great success on the cabaret stage, even taking into account the limitations of low ceilings and small prosceniums, the modern dancers were able to connect with the generally sympathetic audiences. The cabaret stage (and the concurrent rise of the technology of photography) also dictated a certain stylistic emphasis in the dance of that era – the use of the still pose as an integral part of the dance. Ida Rubenshtein was known more for her angular poses than for her great ability to dance. Isadora Duncan's dances were inspired by the figures depicted on Greek and Roman vases and she often incorporated the fixed arm and leg placements found on classical ceramics into her dances, lending a sense of immobility within the flow of performances. Other dancers used the same technique, drawing on Assyrian or Egyptian sources for inspiration. The cabaret took this impulse toward immobility a step further, staging cameos, silhouettes, living paintings, and music boxes to accentuate the human form in pose. It is my contention that the limited spaces available in the cabaret transformed dance from an art reliant on the dictates and conventions of the ballet stage to more plastic, expressive forms which combined movement and immobility suited to a small audience on an intimate stage.