

Modern Corporeality: Body, Movement and Dance in Ellen Thesleff's Art

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*"A figure composed purely of color—movement—through color."*¹
Ellen Thesleff's journal, January 28, 1917

*"Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement."*²
Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 1975

Ellen Thesleff (1869-1954) stands alongside Helene Schjerfbeck (1862-1946) as one of the most significant artists to emerge in Finland in the nineteenth century. She belonged to a bohemian, upper-class Swedish-speaking family from Helsinki, which provided an encouraging environment for the artist, who became in 1890s one of Finland's earliest Symbolist and later from the beginning of the twentieth century on one of the first Finnish coloristic Expressionists. Later in her career from the end of the 1930s onwards she even moved towards more abstract compositions. Thesleff was an innovative experimenter in painting and woodcutting techniques and was known for her self-assured and dexterous treatment of color, light, and movement, through which she achieved widespread acclaim in Finland already during her lifetime.³

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards themes of female corporeality and movement in space underpin Thesleff's work. She painted vivid female figures and landscapes, placing emphasis on the artist's subjective experience and appearance of reality and nature. At the same time the Western denigration and confinement of the human body—particularly the female body—had begun to crumble. In her work specially after the year 1905 she started developing an expression of human movement, which meant painting movement and a dance-like language of expression, which included studies of everyday movement (for example physical work), sports, and play. This focus developed later in her career even into specific dance themes. The interest in movement also extended to her depiction of nature, shifting her landscape painting in the direction of a wilder, more frenzied kind of movement.

This essay explores how Thesleff round 1910s and later in 1930s and 1940s created new and modern alternatives in depicting female corporeality; moving, dancing and space. According to feminist art historian Griselda Pollock, it is important to examine how women painters developed alternative models for negotiating modernity and the spaces and bodies of femininity.⁴ Thesleff painted in a world dominated by men. Like Pollock has pointed out, the product of social structuration of sexual difference determined what and how women and men painted.⁵ Despite all the expectations, Thesleff could retain a bold and independent artistic attitude and career, and paint subjects that she wanted, and not subjects that were recommended for women of her time (like still life, animal and maternity scenes, etc.), making her expression particularly unique and arresting.⁶

The thesis of this essay is, that Thesleff's aim in painting was not only to document or repeat the body, movement, or dance on canvas, but to *live it in space* and to let *the modern corporeality to happen* on the canvas. Like Pollock notes, from the phenomenological point of view space is not for sight alone, but by means of visual cues refers to other sensations and

relations of bodies and objects in a lived world. The spaces of femininity are those from which the femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice.⁷ To this end Thesleff's painting can be seen or "read" as social practice of an individual manifestation: She did not make "proper" choices for a woman of her time but chose a career as a modern painter. The corporeality happening in Thesleff's art was connected on new ideas of freedom and emancipation of the female body of her own time. In the feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous's words we could suggest that in painting Thesleff "did put herself into history."⁸ In Thesleff's depictions of the female, the body is often active and daring; dwelling in the nature, actively practicing sports or even dancing. Cixous's creative and perpetual feminist philosophical thinking gives a possibility to look and interpret Thesleff's oeuvres even further and discuss how they influence our corporeality now, and not only as an upholder of a certain style or period.

***Girls in the Meadow* – Towards living corporeality**

Thesleff's growing interest in the corporeality and movement can be explicitly seen for the first time in the oil painting *Girls (Girls in the Meadow)* (Fig. 1, 1906, oil on canvas, HAM Helsinki Art Museum, Katarina and Leonard Bäcksbacka Collection). Thesleff's portrayal from the young girls moving together in nature shows a change in her artistic expression towards color Expressionism: the work was radical in its spontaneous and liberal way of depicting in colors the moving female body in nature. The transition in the way of painting is significant compared to her early symbolist work from the 1890s, in which human figures are frequently shown as silent, motionless and even meditative. However, beneath the motionless surface lived already a potential, a certain kind of raw energy giving an impression that the artist already anticipated the importance of spontaneous movement in painting human life. In *Girls (Girls in the Meadow)* this becomes apparent. The figures are depicted with vigorous brushwork, so that they blend in harmoniously with the surrounding natural environment, which in turn supports their bodily existence. The movement is on the surface of the canvas; the work is painted in bright colors, leaving visible traces of the artists' own brushwork in the composition. Thesleff used a palette knife to spread the paint directly onto the canvas in thick layers so that the color physically stood out from the surface of the canvas to create three-dimensional movement.

Girls (Girls in the Meadow) was painted after few years of life and working in Florence. After her studies at the Académie Colarossi in Paris Thesleff had travelled for the first time to Italy in the year 1894. This was a starting point for her transnational way of life travelling back and forth between Finland and Italy. At the turn of the century Thesleff started to reside more and longer periods in Florence. The city was exceptionally liberal, and in its daring atmosphere many determined women like Thesleff could gain a new kind of freedom.⁹ Specially from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards Thesleff was fearless in taking part in the avant-garde of the city and moving flexibly between the two worlds she inhabited: her own aristocratic past, and the present modernity of the *milieu artistique* and the bohemia of Florence. She became closely involved with the Anglo-American artist network, specially the theatre artist and theorist Edward Gordon Craig. In the same network were involved many other artists, such as Stephen Haweiss, Mina Loy, Marino Marinetti and Giovanni Papini.¹⁰ Thesleff started to live the avant-gardist movement and to develop her art towards new modernist movements like Expressionism, emphasis in the interest of the female spaces, corporeality and movement.

In *Girls (Girls in the Meadow)* Thesleff portrays a space of lived corporeality of femininity revolting the expectations of the late-Victorian era: brave and free female figures increasingly active, athletic, and mobile alone in the nature was not a typical initial setting for women of her time. According to art historian Janet Wolff, it is no coincidence that in a culture in which the corporeal had been progressively repressed, the metaphoric locus of social revolt was the body. In this era the consequences of movement and dance often signified the transgression of social roles, like for *Nora* in Henrik Ibsen's *Doll House*, or even for *Salome*.¹¹ This is also happening in *Girls*. The paintings initial setting connotes with H el ene Cixous's feminist idea of liberating writing: 'by writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her'.¹² *Girls (Girls in the Meadow)* represents female bodies in nature in a new and liberated way: by painting Thesleff represented the female body existing and moving free in space. The girl's bodies belong to them. Gravity exerts a strong pull on their heavy flesh, solidly anchoring them to the earth, from which they seem to draw their energy. Their legs are thus rooted as if they are trees seeking nourishment and strength from the soil.¹³

Girls (Girls in the Meadow) was painted in Thesleff's countryside summer atelier Villa Casa Bianca in Finland, near the city of Tampere. In the Finnish countryside Thesleff actively developed alternative models for negotiating modernity and the spaces and bodies of femininity.¹⁴ She often dressed as a male figure and headed out to enjoy nature on her own. To be present in space disguised as a male figure gave her untraditional freedom to regain her body and wander around alone in nature without any specific goal. It was even easier to move in trousers than in long and heavy skirt. Thesleff gained solitude and bodily freedom by blending her gender, and she produced her *plein air* art even though this kind of role-taking was normally intended only for the male body, as Amelia Jones has pointed out in her feminist art historical writings.¹⁵ Thesleff could not be the *fl aneuse* in the city¹⁶, but in the country side (both in Finland and Italy) she could be the *vagabond* and possess the possibility to look, stare, explore and express freely. Also the painting *Italian landscape* 1906 (Fig.2, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Finland), demonstrates how Thesleff daringly produced "free" interpretations of nature (landscapes) through living the modern (female) corporeality by wandering and working outside.

Girls (Girls in the Meadow) was among the first works to bear witness to Thesleff's stylistic revolution towards an expressionist strand of colorism, and it is considered one of the first Expressionist works of Finnish art.¹⁷ Thesleff was well ahead of her time in her homeland, and she gained admiration for her courageous avant-garde style, particularly in the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland. This was not self-evident for a female artist. Like Griselda Pollock has pointed out, the social structures determined what and how men and women painted.¹⁸ And also Thesleff faced critics, who questioned if it was acceptable for a woman to paint like this, so fearlessly and freely.¹⁹ For example the influential Finnish-speaking critic Ludwig Wennervirta wrote after the 1909 Autumn Exhibition in Helsinki, a few years later then *Girls* was painted: "It feels as if they [Thesleff's paintings] would slightly touch the extreme limits of the permissible."²⁰ As Wennervirta's critique shows, Thesleff's " criture feminine" (term deriving from H el ene Cixous) was outside of the masculine economy of patriarchal discourse.²¹ Her artistic approach and her subject matter were seen as a threat to the patriarchy and the social and gender norms of the time.

***Ball Game* – Florence and vitalism**

At the beginning of the twentieth century Thesleff lived an active and emancipated life of travel and artmaking, moving frequently from Finland to Florence and back. While in liberal Florence in 1907, Thesleff met the British modern theater practitioner Edward Gordon Craig, who was to become her most influential artistic collaborator. Gordon Craig introduced Thesleff to the art of woodcutting, and Thesleff, for her part, became a respected figure in Craig's circle because of her artistic skills.²² Painting and graphic art thus became the two areas of emphasis in Thesleff's work, with the two techniques stylistically informing each other.

Gordon Craig was a prolific actor, director, and theoretician of the theater. Craig and Thesleff collaborated by spending time and working together. They discussed, shared ideas and also made wood cuts at the Arena Goldoni, a school of theatrical design run by Craig, which offered classes taught by artists of different disciplines across the genres of music, sound design, painting, theater history, dance, mime, puppet making, and improvisation.²³ Craig's ideas about theatre associate with comparative literature scholar Renato Poggioli's visions of the theater of the avant-garde, that shifted the theatrical experience from private to public experimentation. Theater thus became a free and open laboratory where the pure aesthetic end of the work of art became a negation – a work of art became more a process based on collaboration.²⁴ Reclining on creative sharing between different art forms was the way that also Thesleff and Craig worked together in Florence for quite many years until the spring of 1915, when Thesleff travelled back to Finland alone through war-torn Europe.

Through Craig Thesleff also became familiar with the popular early-twentieth-century vitalist reform movement in Europe. During the shift of the 1910s Thesleff created a number of paintings and woodcuts related to vitalist ideas on the theme of a ball game, for example the painting *Ball Game (Forte dei Marmi)* (Fig. 3, 1909, oil on canvas, Finnish National Gallery, Ateneum Art Museum).²⁵ Vitalism represented both a way of life and spiritual belief in a kind of life force or energy. An important figure in this movement was the French philosopher and writer Henri Bergson. His idea of the *élan vital*, first published in *L'Évolution créatrice* in 1907, represented a kind of vital force that was present in all living things. Offsetting this was the discovery of nature, where man was freed from the constraints of clothing, hairstyles, conventional manners, and urban restrictions. With this line of thinking, spending time in nature meant surrendering oneself once more to a state of hallowed spontaneity and shamelessness. The vitalist series of Thesleff's works on the same motive with figures on a seashore portray athletic, healthy, free, and powerful male and female body bursting with energy and playing or casting ball on a beach. Craig noted on Thesleff's works, particularly the woodcut versions of the *Ball Game*:

She [Thesleff] can suggest light almost as well as a French Impressionist can paint it; whilst her drawing of motion is pure genius. Her peculiarly nervous line is perfectly adapted for such impressions of life; she makes you feel the very rhythm of the earth in *The Ball Players*, and, rugged as the drawing appears to be at first glance, it possesses an innate refinement which suggests a lyric ...²⁶

One of the most important aspects of Craig's work had to do with bodily motion and movement, and through this, movement on stage from one place to another, or from a mood to another.²⁷ This attitude and deeper interest towards movement started to influence also Thesleff's working and art. By the early twentieth century, the representation of movement

and dance in visual art was no longer solely documentary. According to art historian Janet Wolff, dance became a symbol of the new, modern world. The Futurists, for example, wanted to capture the speed of the new century brought about by the massive movement and power of machines, while the Expressionists used dance to depict perceived authentic, original, and natural human behavior that was set in contrast to the materialism and alienation of the modern world.²⁸ Craig created a radical form of theatrical opposed to the standards of his time, believing that people would prefer to see rather than hear plays. This idea of visual theatre reclined largely on movement.

Forte dei Marmi became a perfect place during the summers for Thesleff, her sister, and Craig to live and work according to the bodily principles of vitalism by enjoying fresh air and spa culture. Thesleff's sister Gerda Thesleff was a physiotherapist who herself actively practiced vitalist profession while living with Thesleff both in Italy and Finland. According to vitalist thinking, then, the prerequisite for a good life was harmony between man and nature. During the same summer 1909 when Thesleff painted *Ball Game (Forte dei Marmi)*, she wrote about in Forte dei Marmi:

I have found a new method of working. Listen: I press my chest deep into the sand to hear the Earth's heartbeat, and when I hear the rhythm, I connect with colors—and lines, of course—with a new-found sense of liberation and self-assurance. I cannot say what will become of this, but it's sure to be miraculous.²⁹

In the painting *Ball Game (Forte dei Marmi)* the figures' trajectory of movement is echoed by the curving, see-saw arc of the mountains and shoreline of Forte dei Marmi, the Italian spa and seaside town near Florence. The beach motif was used as an almost protective backdrop for the depiction of healthy and strong men and women moving on a monumental scale. Thesleff emphasized contrasts in picturing the moving body, noting how as the body moved abruptly one way, it was followed by a sequence of counter-movements to regain balance. This counter-movement was related to *contrapposto*, the classic pose of ancient Greek sculptures and Renaissance art, and Thesleff applied the same principle to convey dynamic tension in her figures.

Thesleff's way of working owed a great deal to Craig's ideas on the new theater of movement. He for his part reclined in his thinking on the dance reform of Isadora Duncan, with whom he had collaborated closely.³⁰ Duncan's ideas on body, movement and dance were close with the vitalist movements ideas. According to Isadora Duncan, the naturalness of dance laid bare the way in which the human body molded itself to the movement of the world surrounding it. Duncan's original approach to dance as a creative art led to her invention of a completely new style known as free dance.³¹ For Duncan, free dance meant the freedom and naturalness of the body: she rejected clothing which constrained movement and danced barefoot in soft, flexible garments that revealed the form of the body.³² Thesleff and her family members saw Duncan's performances already at the turn of the century in Munich, Paris, and possibly even in Finland, and Thesleff's archives contain programs of Duncan's performances on which Thesleff has sketched her own impressions of movement. She was already familiar with Duncan's movement-language when she started to collaborate with Craig.

In Forte dei Marmi, discovering in nature a paradise lost, Thesleff could run, aim for the sun, allow herself to be swept along by earth's gravity, or plunge into its depths. She pressed herself against the earth to listen and to understand the rhythm and movement of nature

around her. In her letters, she speaks about the connection between liberation and self-assurance. This spontaneous corporeal artistic language based on “natural movement” could be connected with Hélène Cixous’s claim “Write yourself. Your body must be heard.”³³ Cixous’s idea is that the corporeality of writing frees and renovates language. In *Ball Game* she studied figures in motion, carefully observing how bodies interacted with their surroundings – she lived the corporeality and tried to capture the unique and subjective experience on the canvas. Thesleff’s way of renewing the depiction of human body happened by painting the lived corporeality, “painting herself”, the sensations and relations of bodies and objects in her world. In *Forte dei Marmi* the natural rhythm of the sand on the shore, the mountain ridges, the waves and the wind-driven clouds unite her and nature and give their movement the same origin and purpose, freeing the human body from the conventional movement of the epoch.

Chopin waltz – To dance free

“Right now, I’m working on a painting called ‘Chopin’s Waltz,’ it’s wondrous!! and ‘Back’s Gavotti’—equally wondrous! My letter is already too long—my ‘Chopin’s Waltz’ beckons. A thousand well wishes to you! Yours, E.”³⁴

Ellen Thesleff to Edward Gordon Craig, February 22, 1933.

Later in her career, the most obvious examples of emancipative dance in Thesleff’s oeuvre is the theme of *Chopin’s waltz*, that she created a number of oil paintings and woodcuts from the 1930s onward (is also the name of the many works she created during this period). The theme *Chopin waltz* is a reminiscence from the years back in Florence working together with Gordon Craig, as we can also see from the letter to Craig. Thesleff was resided in Finland, and because of economic and political reasons she could not anymore travel as much as she would have wanted. But she and Craig stayed in correspondence sharing and collaborating artistic ideas and working methods until the ends of their lives.

In all the works under the title *Chopin waltz* (both woodcuts and paintings) the dance and movement represented are easy to link to Duncan’s free dance. The Duncanian language of movement that conveyed a surrender to a wild and passionate spinning circle that was based not on a certain technique or choreography, but on improvisation, which her contemporaries described as breaking away from earth’s gravity. The freedom of the female body movement is strongly present, and as Jane Wolff has put it, in our culture “to dance” may mean the same as to be free. Wolff argues that the concept of the link between dance and freedom was born during the modernist period when dance so strongly expressed women’s need for social freedom.³⁵ The body of the dancing figure in Thesleff’s oeuvres is free from the restrictive clothing, gravity and even space. The gentle swaying of the woman’s clothing in pace with her steps, emphasizes the ease and lightness of the dance. The background is almost bare, and the impression of depth is conveyed by the movement of the woman.

In Thesleff’s *Chopin waltz* woodcuts (at least five different monotype versions printed from the same plate in Private and Public Collections in Finland) we can see a simply rendered elegant woman dancing freely while wearing loose-fitting clothing that leaves the woman’s body “free” and legs and feet visible. The use of arms and hands recall Duncan, as does the dancer’s solo role. For Thesleff the language of movement and gesture, and the emphasis on rhythm and music have become more important than ever. The woman’s left leg has swung backwards, as if seeking momentum for the next step or for a leap forward. Lines around the

female figure are like the direction and form of her movements advancing in time and space. They could also be seen as musical lines or notations. For Duncan, music and dance were inseparable because, according to her, music perfectly united the rhythms of nature (earth) and man. Duncan placed particular importance on the music of Chopin.³⁶ Thesleff's interest in the Chopin waltz theme might also be an allusion to the performances of Maggie Gripenberg, who was the first Finnish modern dance pioneer to follow in Duncan's footsteps. Gripenberg was an industrious choreographer in Finland during 1930s and 1940s and one of her choreographies was even called *Chopin Waltz*.³⁷

The two oil color paintings with the title of *Chopin waltz* from the years 1942 and 1946 (Both in Private Collections in Finland) are handling the same theme as in the earlier woodcuts. The technical medium shifting from woodcut to oil, is still existing, like it was in Florence at the beginning of the century. In the painted versions the woman in the center of the picture moves with the same light gait as in the woodcuts. Here, however, the forms and surfeit of color of the background make her movement progress more impulsively and rapidly. The woman seems somehow more worldly than the woman in the prints. In the background the nature is visible—the woman is clearly dancing on the earth's surface, in connection with the pull of earth's gravity (like it was the case both in *Girls in the Meadow* 1906 and *Ball Game (Forte dei Marmi)* 1909). She is no longer leaping freely and loose. The swaying of the waltz remains, but perhaps because of the appearance of gravity, the woman's own movement seems heavier than before.

Even though we in the *Chopin waltzes* easily can identify the Duncanian 'free' way to dance, we have to admit, that nothing is absolutely free. Like Janet Wolff points out, dance is always coded, stylized and appropriated in social and cultural contexts. The bodies produced by different dance techniques, are specific to those techniques.³⁸ There is no such thing as absolute freedom and certain rules apply even within the sphere of the dance, how we move and act "freely". Instead of pursuing harmonic notions of movement, early-twentieth-century modern art was more interested in dynamic movement.³⁹ However the history of modern, free, dance may well be seen as the history of female emancipation, born as a counterforce to classical tradition which determined the conventional and fettered position of women.⁴⁰ It is interesting to notice that still in 1930s conservative Finland it was the dancing female body that interested Thesleff, as if she would through the female corporeality and spaces try to capture the essences of the modern world. Like Wolff has pointed out, the dancer's body was increasingly important to modernism due to the culmination of a long period during which the body was culturally suppressed.⁴¹

The corporeality of painting

The unraveling of the corporeal freedom is visible in Ellen Thesleff's production from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end 1940s. Like Janet Wolff states, the corporeality of the dance makes it possible for us to think that we could touch things which in our culture have been suppressed.⁴² Thesleff's works speak out of how the body is both the basis for gender (and cultural) oppression, and the potential site of its overthrow.

Thesleff's aim in painting was not only to document the body, movement or dance, but to let the corporeality to happen on the canvas. Thesleff's moving and dancing bodies are emancipative and feminist in nature in how they visualize the transgression of social norms of the female body in the beginning of the 20th Century. Like Janet Wolff has pointed out,

inappropriate dancing can be a rebellious act, even though dance in itself is no different from other kinds of social practices.⁴³ Thesleff's artistic approach and her subject matter was seen as a threat to the patriarchy and the social and gender norms of the time. In my view, this is particularly apparent in her way of portraying the moving body in space, and it comes near to what Hélène Cixous coined with "écriture féminine": Thesleff created a kind of writing (painting), that was outside of the patriarchal discourse.⁴⁴ The way Thesleff depicted movement and dance, could be read as a symbol of liberation in the modern world, a liberation of the fixed genders roles of the time and a move towards a more fluid expression of gender, especially at the end of her career.

The oeuvres handled in this essay, show an artistic evolving of the modern corporeality and spaces – a continuum of movement and manifestation. The painting *Girls (Girls in the Meadow)* from 1906 showed how Thesleff broke gender norms, both in picturing the liberation of moving female bodies in the painting itself, but also in the way she worked as the modernist painter genius alone outside in the nature. In *Ball Game (Forte dei Marmi)* from 1909, she literally lived, painted and engraved the new vitalist corporeality during her time both in Florence and Forte dei Marmi. Movement was everywhere, in everything living, and working in nature, she did put her living body into her work. Later, in the 1930s and 40's, with the *Chopin's Walz*-theme Thesleff continued to express a sense of freedom through her depiction of movement and *free dance*. In *Chopin's Waltz* the woman is present and expressing through dance and movement her freedom and enjoyment shifting away from the fettered position of women. It is felt that through dance the human body can express genuine emotions.⁴⁵

Thesleff's way of renewing the depiction of human body happened by painting the lived corporeality, "painting herself", the sensations and relations of bodies and objects in her world. For Thesleff painting appeared in the spirit of the avant-garde a process and free activity, some kind of a play, where many kinds of ways and forms of expression were possible. Like she herself wrote: "A figure composed purely of color—movement—through color."⁴⁶ It seems that through painting she could question and reform the ideas and power relations concerning female corporeality and movement that were taken for granted during her own lifetime. The gendered corporeality and space in Thesleff's oeuvres disentangle the norms, and it could be seen and read as a kind activism that Cixous talks it in the *Laugh of the Medusa*: "Woman must put herself into the text [here painting]—as into the world and into history—by her own movement."⁴⁷

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Notes

- ¹ Ellen Thesleff's journal 28.1.1917. The Archive of Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsinki, SLSA 958.
- ² Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, translated by Paula Cohen and Keith Cohen (The University of Chicago Press: *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4., 1976), 875.
- ³ Hanna-Reetta Schreck, *Jag målar som en gud. Ellen Thesleffs liv och konst*. (Helsinki/Stockholm: Svenska Litteratursällskapet and Appel, 2019).
- ⁴ Griselda Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrad, ed., *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: Icon Editions, 1992), 247-248.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 261 and 265.
- ⁶ Schreck, *Jag målar som en gud. Ellen Thesleffs liv och konst*.
- ⁷ Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, 252.
- ⁸ Cixous, *The laugh of the Medusa*, 875.
- ⁹ Bruno P. F. Wanrooij, ed., *Otherness. Anglo-American Women in 19th and 20th Century Florence* (Georgetown University: Cadmo, 2001), 4-5.
- ¹⁰ Schreck, *Jag målar som en gud. Ellen Thesleffs liv och konst*.
- ¹¹ Janet Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 70, 75.
- ¹² Cixous, *The laugh of the Medusa*, 880.
- ¹³ The Finnish Art Historian Riikka Stewen suggested in her article, that air and gravity play an important role in this particular work. FRad for more: Stewen, Riikka. *Ilman ja liikkeen fenomenologiasta: Ellen Thesleff, Isadora Duncan, Edward Gordon Craig*. *Tahiti*, 9(3), 2019, 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.23995/tht.88670>
- ¹⁴ Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, 261 and 265.
- ¹⁵ Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 62, 57.
- ¹⁶ Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, 255. See also Janet Wolff, The invisible “flâneuse”: Women and the Literature of Modernity, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2(1985):3, 37-46.
- ¹⁷ Salme Sarajas-Korte, Ellen Thesleff's Years 1890-1915, in Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse, ed., *Ellen Thesleff* (Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery, 1998), 50.
- ¹⁸ Pollock, *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, 247-248.
- ¹⁹ Specially in the critiques of Sigurd Frosterus and Gustav Strengell, in Schreck, *Jag målar som en gud. Ellen Thesleffs liv och konst*, 222-229.
- ²⁰ Wennervirta Ludwig, in the Newspaper “Kotitaide 10”, Finnish National Gallery, Archive, Press Cuttings, Helsinki, Finland.
- ²¹ Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 883. According to Cixous it was impossible to define a feminine practise of writing (écriture féminine). This practise can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

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- ²² Ellen Thesleff's letter to her mother 1912 or 1913. Archive of Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsinki, SLISA 958.
- ²³ Ilaria B. Sborgi, Behind the Mask: Dorothy Nevile Lees' Florentine Contribution to Edward Gordon Craig's "New Theatre", in *Otherness. Anglo-American Women in 19th and 20th Century Florence* (Georgetown University: Cadmo, 2001), 18-19.
- ²⁴ Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 135-136.
- ²⁵ The Finnish Art Historian Marja Lahelma has handled more profoundly the relationship between Ellen Thesleff's art and the vitalist movement and reform in her article: Lahelma, Marja. *Maapallon sydämenlyönnit: Ellen Thesleff ja elämänvoima*. Tahiti, 9(3), 2019, 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.23995/tht.88663>
- ²⁶ Edward Gordon Craig, *A Note on the Woodcuts of Ellen Thesleff* (London: The Beau, No 1, 1910).
- ²⁷ Patrick Le Boeuf, *On the Nature of Edward Gordon Craig's Über-Marionette*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Volume 26, Issue 2 (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 102-115.
- ²⁸ Janet Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 73-74.
- ²⁹ Ellen Thesleff's letter to her sister Thyra Söderhjelm/Castrén 1909. The Archive of Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsinki, SLISA 958.
- ³⁰ Edward Craig, *Gordon Craig: The Story of his Life* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 189-190, 193.
- ³¹ Juliette Laffon, Avant-propos. *Isadora Duncan 1877-1927. Une sculpture vivante* (Paris: Musée Bourdelle, 2009), 10.
- ³² Lilian Loewenthal, *The search for Isadora: The Legend and Legacy of Isadora Duncan* (Princeton Book Company, 1993), 3–7.
- ³³ Cixous, *The laugh of the Medusa*, 880.
- ³⁴ Ellen Thesleff's letter to Edward Gordon Craig February 22, 1933. Bibliotheque Nationale de France (BNF), Paris. Archives Edward Gordon Craig.
- ³⁵ Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 69.
- ³⁶ Loewenthal, *The search for Isadora: The Legend and Legacy of Isadora Duncan*, 3-7.
- ³⁷ Anne Makkonen, *Maggie Gripenberg — suomalaisen taide-tanssin uranuurtaja*, Helsinki, The University of the Arts, Theatre Academy, 2017. <https://disco.teak.fi/tanssi/2-2-maggie-gripenberg-suomalaisen-taidetanssin-uranuurtaja/>.
- ³⁸ Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 82.
- ³⁹ Johanna Frigård, *Alastomuuden oikeutus: Julkistettujen alastonvalokuvien moderneja ideaaleja Suomessa 1900-1940* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002), 105.
- ⁴⁰ See for more Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 69, and Ginot Isabelle & Marcelle Michel, ed. *La danse au XXe siècle* (Paris: Larousse, 2002), 82.
- ⁴¹ Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 75.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 75.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 82.
- ⁴⁴ Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 883.

⁴⁵ Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, 79-80.

⁴⁶ Ellen Thesleff's journal 28.1.1917. The Archive of Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsinki, SLSA 958.

⁴⁷ Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 875.