THE NUDE BODY IN ALBANIAN ART: FROM THE RITUAL BODY TO THE SECULAR BODY

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Abstract

The nude body constitutes one of the most enduring, yet simultaneously one of the most contested, subjects in the history of art. Its absence or presence, as well as the manner of its representation, has never depended solely on the aesthetic demands of a given period; rather, it has been determined by the religious, moral, political, and cultural regimes that define what may be seen, how it may be seen, and what meanings the body may assume within a particular society.

This article examines the history of the representation of the nude body in Albanian art from prehistory to the end of the nineteenth century—a historical moment when new forms of secular art and visual modernity began to consolidate within Albanian culture, bringing with them, albeit cautiously and only partially, the first manifestations of the artistic nude as an autonomous genre.

The central argument is that this history cannot be described as a straightforward progression from the "absence" to the "appearance" of the nude. Rather, it should be understood as the history of the transformation of the body's function and status over time: from the ritual figure of fertility in prehistoric art, to the idealized and divine body of Antiquity; from the sacred and codified body of Christian art, to the various regimes of restriction and visibility that characterized subsequent periods; and finally, to the photographed, staged, and artistically employed body that emerged during the cultural modernization of the second half of the nineteenth century. From this perspective, several photographs by the Marubi dynasty and by Kolë Idromeno depicting the nude body should not be regarded merely as isolated episodes in the history of Albanian photography; rather, they mark a significant shift in the visual regime governing the body, which begins to function as an object of observation, documentation, and gradually as a potential model for secular artistic practice.

The study combines historical-artistic methodology with iconographic and cultural analysis, while engaging, in a methodologically controlled manner, with theoretical concepts developed by Kenneth Clark, Mary Douglas, Hans Belting, and Walter Benjamin.

Keywords: ***nude body, artistic nude, Albanian art, iconography, photography, modernity, Marubi dynasty, Kolë Idromeno.***

Introduction

Between veneration and contempt, idealization and prejudice, sanctification and humiliation, the nude body has remained one of the most persistent subjects in the history of art. Yet from the earliest representations of fertility through to modern and postmodern depictions of the human body, it has never represented merely an anatomical body. Depending on the historical period and cultural context, it has functioned as a sign of fertility, a symbol of the divine, the embodiment of aesthetic perfection, an object of desire, a figure of suffering, the body of sin, the sacred body, a politically regulated body, a mirror of existential anxieties, or an autonomous subject of artistic representation. The enduring presence of the unclothed human body in art—and particularly of the female body—should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of an

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unchanging attitude toward nudity. On the contrary, the ways in which the body has been exposed, concealed, idealized, fragmented, instrumentalized, or aestheticized throughout history reveal the transformations of the cultural systems that have produced and perceived it. Consequently, the history of the nude is simultaneously a history of vision itself.

At this point, Kenneth Clark's distinction between the concepts of *naked* and *nude* becomes particularly significant. For Clark, to be *naked* is simply to be unclothed, deprived of both clothing and the protection it affords. The *nude*, by contrast, constitutes a cultivated mode of artistic representation through which the unclothed body is transformed into an idealized and aesthetically organized form. Accordingly, the nude is not merely the physical condition of undress but a cultural and artistic construction[390].

This distinction is especially valuable for the history of Albanian art because it allows us to distinguish between the presence of the unclothed figure and the emergence of the nude as an autonomous artistic category. A female configuration on a prehistoric ritual object, an idealized body in ancient sculpture, the representation of Christ in iconography, figures appearing in ecclesiastical murals, or subjects recorded by the pioneers of photography do not possess the same aesthetic, cultural, or functional status. The body remains biologically identical, yet the symbolic regime that organizes and assigns meaning to it changes fundamentally.

Accordingly, the principal concern of this study is not merely to determine when the artistic nude first "appears" in Albanian art. More importantly, it seeks to examine the function assumed by the unclothed body in each historical period and the visual regime that renders that function possible.

From this perspective, the body may be interpreted on several levels. In prehistoric art it functions as a ritual sign associated with fertility; in Antiquity as an ideal, heroic, or divine body; in Christian art as a body incorporated into a theological order; during subsequent periods as a body subjected to diverse moral and religious codes; while in the nineteenth century, through the emergence of photography and the modernization of urban culture, it gradually acquires a new status as an object of observation, documentation, and individual artistic experimentation.

In this sense, the history of the nude body in Albanian art cannot be constructed simply as a chronological catalogue of works. Rather, it must first investigate the relationship between the body, the image, and the cultural context within which both are produced.

The central thesis of this article is that the history of the nude body in Albanian art does not constitute a linear progression from absence to presence. Instead, it is the history of successive transformations in the status of the body: from the ritual body to the ideal body; from the ideal body to the sacred body; from the sacred body to the restricted body; and finally, by the end of the nineteenth century, to the phenomenal body, the documented body, and the body as artistic model.

1. Prehistory: The Ritual Body

The history of the representation of the nude body in the territory of present-day Albania begins long before the emergence of secular art and well before the formation of the modern artistic genre of the nude.

At this point, however, terminological precision is essential. The prehistoric artefacts discovered within the territory of present-day Albania and its surrounding regions should not

[390] Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), 1–29.

automatically be identified with a later ethnic identity conventionally defined as "Illyrian." It is more accurate to speak of prehistoric cultures and populations that inhabited these territories. Within this context, anthropomorphic figures, frequently characterized by the pronounced representation of sexual features, constitute some of the earliest forms of bodily representation. Female clay figurines discovered at several settlements and dated to the Late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic periods testify to the centrality of the female figure within the symbolic systems of these prehistoric communities.[1]

Early Albanian historiography interpreted these artefacts primarily in relation to the cults of motherhood and fertility. Although this hypothesis remains significant, it must be formulated with methodological caution, since the ritual function of an archaeological object cannot be inferred solely from its external appearance.

Among the most representative examples of this typology are the female figurines of the Maliq culture dating to the Copper Age ***(Figs. 1, 2);*** the anthropomorphic vessels from Kamnik in Kolonjë dating to the Stone Age ***(Fig. 3);*** the anthropomorphic figures discovered at Shtoj near Shkodër[2]; and several other comparable finds. In all these cases, the human body forms part of a symbolic language that predates the modern distinction between the concepts of the *naked body* and the *artistic nude*.

Mary Douglas's concept of bodily boundaries and the relationship between the physical body and symbolic order offers an illuminating theoretical framework here. According to Douglas, the body functions as a model through which societies conceptualize boundaries, purity, impurity, and social order.[3] From this perspective, prehistoric figurines should be interpreted primarily as symbolic representations of the body rather than anatomical depictions. Their nudity must therefore be understood within this specific historical stage of both human civilization and artistic development. At this point, we are still far from the nude in Kenneth Clark's classical sense. The body is not represented for aesthetic contemplation; instead, it operates within a broader symbolic system encompassing fertility, reproduction, life, and the continuity of the community.

Thus, at the earliest stage in the history of its artistic representation, the unclothed body may above all be understood as a **body-sign**.

[1] Muzafer Korkuti, Shqipëria Arkeologjike [Archaeological Albania] (Tiranë, 1972), 9.

[2] Korkuti, Shqipëria Arkeologjike [Archaeological Albania], 19-20

[3] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 115–128.





Fig. 1, 2. Baked-clay statuettes, Coper Age, 4000 – 3000 years BC, Maliq, Korça.
Fig. 3. Anthropomorfic clay vessel, the New Stone Age period, end of the 4th millennium BC, Kamnik, Kolonja.

2. Antiquity: The Ideal and Divine Body

With the development of Greek culture and, subsequently, Roman civilization in the territories of Southern Illyria, the human body entered a far more sophisticated system of figurative representation.

Greek colonies and urban centres throughout these territories have yielded painted vases, figurines, reliefs, and monumental sculptures depicting nude figures. Apollonia, Dyrrachium, Butrint, Antigonea, and other archaeological centres demonstrate the integration of these Albanian territories into the artistic networks of the Greek and Roman worlds.[4]

Among the most significant surviving artefacts are several krater vessels from Apollonia dating to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, bronze figures of Zeus, Pan, and Poseidon, together with the second-century BCE relief of Atlas ***(Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7)***. These works testify not only to the presence of the nude figure but also to the diversity of its visual functions and representational typologies.

Particularly revealing is the bronze figurine of an intoxicated and sexually aroused Pan, dating from the third century BCE and discovered near Butrint. Here, the body of the deity is associated with nature, instinct, and heightened sexuality. Nudity openly affirms the body's sexual dimension, yet this dimension is fully embedded within the codified framework of Greek mythology.

[4] "The Antiquity Pavilion," National Historical Museum, Tirana.





Fig. 4. Bronze figurine of Zeus, second half of the 4th century BC, Dodona, Përmet.
Fig. 5. Bronze figurine depicting the drunken Pan, 3rd century BC, near Butrint, Saranda.





Fig. 6. Bronze figurine of Poseidon, 2nd century BC, Antogone, Gjirokastra.
Fig. 7. Stone-carved relief of Atlas, 2nd century BC, Apollonia, Fier.

In representations of Eros, Apollo, and other mythological figures, the unclothed body becomes inseparable from the Classical idealization of beauty ***(Figs. 8, 9).*** The sculpture of the youthful Eros discovered at Qesarat represents one of the finest examples of this conception. Hartmut G. Döhl has situated the statue within the decorative programme of a *villa rustica* near the Vjosa River, interpreting it within the broader sculptural traditions of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds during the first century CE.[5]

This period marks a profound transformation in the artistic conception of the body. It no longer carries exclusively ritual connotations but also becomes the embodiment of the ideal form of divine beauty.Kenneth Clark's theory is particularly illuminating in this regard. According to

[5] Hartmut G. Döhl, "Der Eros von Qesarat," *Iliria* 19, no 2 (1989): 167–184.

Clark, the Classical Greek tradition transformed the unclothed body into a perfectly ordered form governed by proportion, balance, and ideal harmony.[6]
Antiquity therefore represents the historical moment at which the body acquires a new degree of aesthetic autonomy. It can now appear unclothed in works of art and be openly contemplated within public space because the human body—both male and female—is regarded as the highest expression of physical perfection.
From a modern perspective, however, this autonomy remains incomplete. The ancient body continues to bear mythological, political, and religious functions. Nevertheless, for the first time, the human body becomes one of the most powerful subjects of aesthetic representation.
In this sense, Antiquity marks the transition from the **body-sign** to the **ideal body**.





Fig. 8. Statue of Eros, 1st century AD, Qesarat, Tepelena.
Fig. 9. Statue of Apollo Pythian, 2nd centry AD, Apollonia, Fier.

3. Byzantium: The Sacred Body

With the institutionalization of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world and, subsequently, within the Byzantine Empire, the status of the image in general—and of the unclothed human figure in particular—underwent a profound transformation.
It would be historically inaccurate to claim that Christianity prohibited the representation of the nude body in art. Early Christian and Byzantine visual culture did not eliminate the human body; rather, it subjected its representation to strict theological regulation while fundamentally redefining its representational function. The partially unclothed body could appear in specific iconographic contexts, particularly in depictions of the Crucifixion, the Baptism of Christ, martyrdoms, the Resurrection, or the Last Judgment. In every instance, however, it was conceptually and visually integrated into a symbolic order in which its primary significance was theological rather than biological. The physical body represented the vessel through which the soul was manifested.
Hans Belting has demonstrated that, within Byzantine culture, sacred images did not function simply as "works of art" in the modern sense. Rather, they operated as visual mediators intrinsically connected to presence, veneration, and the believer's relationship with the sacred.[7]

[6] Clark, *The Nude*, 1–29.
[7] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), particularly the sections dealing with the sacred image, the cult of images, and their function in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Consequently, the body of Christ may appear naked or partially unclothed without constituting a *nude* in Kenneth Clark's sense of the term. His nakedness refers exclusively to the mystery of the Incarnation, suffering, sacrifice, and salvation.
Within the Albanian artistic tradition, the fourteenth-century **Epitaph of Gllavenica *(Fig. 10)***, together with several iconographic works of the same period ***(Fig. 11)***, testifies to the continuity of a figurative system in which the human body remains embedded within the order of the sacred. The body does not disappear; rather, its status and mode of representation are transformed. Whereas Antiquity elevated the body into an embodiment of aesthetic perfection, Byzantine iconography relocated it within an entirely different relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual.
This distinction is fundamental to any history of the artistic nude: the presence of the unclothed body does not necessarily imply the existence of the nude as an autonomous aesthetic category.



Fig. 10. Epitaph of Gllavenica, 1373, found in Ballsh (Fier



Fig.11. Onufri, fragment from the icon “Baptism of Christ”, 16th century, Church of the Annunciation, Berat.

4. The Ottoman and Post-Byzantine Period: The Restricted Body and Regimes of Visibility

The Ottoman period—from the second half of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century—should likewise not be interpreted as a historical epoch characterized by

the absolute exclusion of the human figure from artistic production. Such a characterization would be historically misleading.

Islamic art itself encompassed diverse figurative traditions, while the Albanian territories were inhabited by communities adhering to different religious and cultural traditions. Nevertheless, throughout much of the Albanian cultural sphere, the relationship between the human figure and both public and religious art underwent a significant transformation. Rather than fostering the development of monumental figurative art in the Western European tradition, artistic production increasingly privileged ornamental and calligraphic decorative forms of Eastern inspiration, particularly in both urban and rural environments. At the same time, the tradition of figurative painting continued within certain isolated Christian communities and ecclesiastical institutions, which retained a degree of autonomy under the agreements concluded between the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ottoman Porte.

For this reason, it is more appropriate to speak of different **regimes of visibility** than of an absolute prohibition on the artistic representation of the human figure. The crucial issue is not simply whether the body is represented, but where, for whom, and under what conditions it may become visible. The body is regulated, clothed, displaced from public space, or confined to private and religious settings, becoming subject to different moral and cultural codes.

Throughout this extended historical period, although under highly controlled and limited circumstances, the Christian artistic tradition within the Albanian territories never disappeared. This continuity is demonstrated by the mural paintings and icons produced during these centuries by Albanian post-Byzantine painters such as **Onufri** (sixteenth century), **David Selenica** (seventeenth century), **Kostandin Shpataraku** (eighteenth century), and many others. Churches and monasteries preserved the continuity of Byzantine iconology and iconographic traditions within their interiors.

Even so, the representation of the human body remained predominantly conceived in metaphysical rather than biological terms. It was understood as a **noumenal** body—a bearer of the soul—rather than as a **phenomenal** body possessing autonomous physical reality.

The history of the unclothed body during the Ottoman period should therefore be understood as the history of the coexistence of multiple figurative regimes governing bodily representation. It is precisely within this context that the work of the icon painter **Kostandin Shpataraku** acquires particular significance.

5. Kostandin Shpataraku: The Body Re-emerges on the Surface

Kostandin Shpataraku represents a distinctive moment in the history of the body within Albanian ecclesiastical art.

In the murals of the Church of Saint Marina in Llëngë, Pogradec, executed in 1754, the human body appears with an unusual degree of presence for the regional artistic context of the period. In the scenes **“The Raising of Saint Lazarus”** and **“The Martyrdom of Saint Marina”**, unclothed or partially unclothed figures are represented. Yet the most remarkable example is the scene of **“The Flood”**, in which the nude body becomes a powerful and central element of the composition ***(Fig. 12)***.



Fig.12. Kostandin Shpataraku. "The Flood" scene from the murals of the Church of Marena in Llëngë, Pogradec, 1754.

Nudity in this context is not detached from the biblical narrative. It is connected to the exposure of the body before catastrophe, death, punishment, and salvation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the painter constructs these figures grants the body a more concrete dimension. One observes a particular interest in anatomy, movement, gesture, and the relationships established between individual bodies.

This creates a tension between the **iconographic body** and the **anatomical body**.

A comparison with the mural traditions of the Late Gothic and Early Renaissance in Italy, particularly with Cimabue and Giotto, may serve as a formal parallel. However, in the absence of evidence demonstrating direct influence, it is methodologically more accurate to speak of stylistic affinities rather than proven artistic transmission.

The significance of Shpataraku lies precisely in this transformation: within a system that remained profoundly religious, the body begins to acquire a relative visual autonomy.

He does not abandon the iconographic tradition; rather, within its boundaries, he creates a space for observing the body through a more realistic visual approach.

In this sense, the mural scene **"The Flood"** may be interpreted as an intermediary point between the sacred body and the phenomenal body.

The body remains part of a religious narrative, yet it increasingly becomes matter, weight, movement, gesture, and anatomy.

Thus, Shpataraku does not yet create the nude as an autonomous genre; instead, he brings the sacred body closer to the concrete experience of the biological body.

6. The Marubi Dynasty: The Body Seen Through the Camera

A radical transformation occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century with the development of photography in Albania.

The Italian photographer **Pietro Marubbi** settled in Shkodër and became the founding figure of the photographic tradition in the country, a tradition that continued through his successors **Kel Marubi** and **Gegë Marubi**, as well as through other photographers, among whom the figure of **Kolë Idromeno** occupies a particularly significant position.

The present-day archive of the National Museum of Photography **"Marubi"** documents the development of Albanian photography through various techniques and formats, including early photographic processes as well as later technical innovations.[8]

With the emergence of photography, not only the method of recording images changed, but also the very regime of vision.

[8] National Museum of Photography "Marubi," Online Archive, Shkodër: National Museum of Photography "Marubi."

The body was no longer solely a figure constructed by the artist. It could now become a subject placed before the photographic apparatus.
Photography records the body at a particular moment and establishes a new relationship between reality, image, and memory.
Walter Benjamin connected photography and mechanical reproduction with the transformation of the status of the artwork, examining the tension between **cult value** and **exhibition value**[9].
Within the Albanian context, photography should be understood as one of the means through which society gradually became visible to itself.
Among the thousands of negatives preserved in the Marubi studio archive, there are several rare examples, distinguished by their subject matter, that depict partially uncovered female figures. Two of these were produced by Pietro Marubbi and date from before 1900 ***(Figs. 13.14)***. Another, slightly later photograph entitled **"Woman with a Fur Coat"** (*Grue me qyrk*) is attributed to Kel Marubi ***(Fig. 15)***.[10]
These photographs should not automatically be classified as **nudes** in Kenneth Clark's sense of the term. They are primarily portrait, documentary, or social photographs. However, the fact that the body could be recorded by the camera, preserved as a negative, and incorporated into an archive fundamentally altered its cultural status.
The body now became simultaneously the subject and the object of the photographic apparatus.
If in prehistoric art the body functioned as a ritual sign, in Antiquity as an idealized body, and in Byzantine iconography as a sacred body, at the threshold between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it appears also as a **recorded body**.
This constitutes one of the most significant indicators of the beginnings of Albanian visual modernity.



Fig. 13. Pietro Marubbi, Çingije (a Roma woman). Part of the collection of the National Museum of Photography "Marubi".
Fig. 14. Pietro Marubbi, Lypse woman who came to Shkodër. Part of the collection of the National Museum of Photography "Marubi".

[9] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," on The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 24–27.
[10] National Museum of Photography "Marubi," *Online Archive* (Shkodër: National Museum of Photography "Marubi").



Fig.15. Kel Marubbi, Woman in a fur coat. Collection of the National Museum of Photography "Marubi".

7. Kolë Idromeno: The Body as Artistic Model

At the end of the nineteenth century, photography and painting converge in a particularly significant manner within the artistic activity of Kolë Idromeno.
Idromeno represents a key figure in the modernization of Albanian culture in Shkodër. Painter, photographer, architect, and stage designer, he is closely associated with the process of transformation and modernization within Albanian art. Scholars of the field have identified him as one of the most representative figures of Albanian artistic development at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.[11]
The archive of the National Museum of Photography "Marubi" preserves several photographic negatives produced by Idromeno. Although their precise dating has not been established with absolute certainty, they most likely belong to the years 1892–1894. These were the years when he was working on several of his artistic projects in painting, and the process of their realization reveals his frequent reliance on photography as a creative resource.
These photographs are particularly significant because they depict partially unclothed male figures, staged in dramatic poses within the artist's studio ***(Figs. 16, 17).***

[11] Mikel Prendushi, *Kolë Idromeno* (Tirana, 1985).

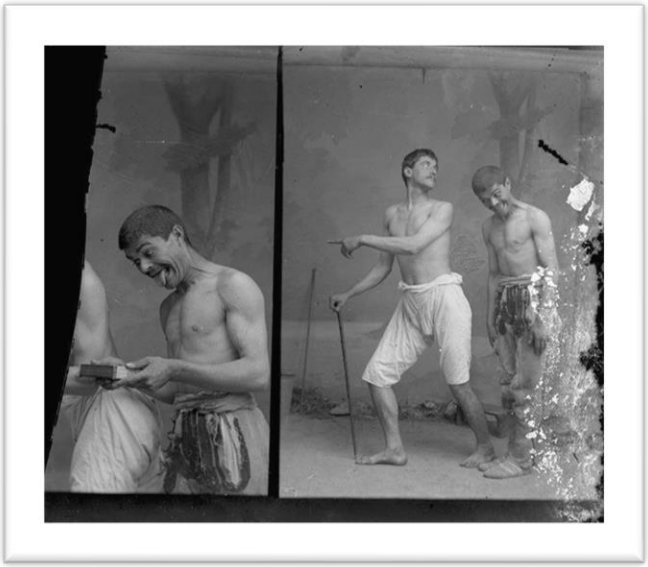

Fig.16,17. Kolë Idromeno, preparatory stagings for painting compositions, photos taken around 1892-1894. Collection of the National Museum of Photography "Marubi".

Here a fundamental transformation takes place: the body is no longer merely an object captured by the camera; it becomes working material for the artist.

Photography becomes a laboratory in which the artist experiments with posture, gesture, anatomy, and the dramatization of the figure. Subsequently, these photographic studies are transferred into painting, appearing as scenes and characters in the works **"False Testimony"** (*Dëshmi në rrenë*) and **"The Irregular Marriage"** (*Martesa e parregullt*), both dating precisely from the years 1892–1894 ***(Figs. 18, 19)***.[12]

This does not diminish their importance. On the contrary, it makes the phenomenon even more significant: photography is not merely a reproduction of painting, but rather an experimental space in which the artist studies the human body.

Thus, Idromeno creates an intermediate zone between photography and painting, where the body can be observed, staged, and employed as a model. This marks the moment when the concept of the **body as model** clearly emerges.



Fig.18,19. Kolë Idromeno,Testimony in the deception, oil, created around 1892-1894, private collection

[12] National Museum of Photography "Marubi," Shkodër.



Fig.20. Kolë Idromeno, Irregular Marriage Preparatory sketch, 1892-1894. National Gallery of Arts' collection.

If Antiquity created the ideal of the body and Shpataraku brought the iconographic body closer to anatomical reality, Idromeno introduces the body into the very process of artistic image production.

At this point, a new history of the body becomes possible: the history of the body as an object of anatomical study, artistic exercise, and, subsequently, as a model for the nude.

Claims that other artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—such as Murad Toptani, Simon Rrota, Andrea Kushi, or Ndoc Martini—also produced nude works should, at present, remain within the status of secondary historiographical evidence, since identifiable works or primary documentation confirming such assertions are still lacking.

Conclusion

From prehistoric figurines to Idromeno's photographic studies, the presence of the unclothed body in Albanian art does not represent a linear progression from antiquity toward the beginnings of modernity. Rather, it reveals a series of transformations in the ways through which the body has been understood, represented, and perceived across different historical periods.

In prehistory, the body functioned primarily as a ritual sign associated with fertility, reproduction, and the continuity of life. In Antiquity, it entered the system of the Classical ideal and became an embodiment of beauty, strength, and the divine. In Christian and Byzantine art, the body did not disappear; instead, it was placed within a theological regime in which its meaning was connected to incarnation, suffering, sacrifice, and salvation.

During later historical periods, particularly within the Ottoman context, one cannot speak of an absolute disappearance of the human figure. More accurately, one should speak of transformations in the regimes of visibility and in the functions that the body could assume within religious, public, and private spaces.

Within this broader panorama, Kostandin Shpataraku represents a particularly significant moment. In several of his murals, the nude body remains part of a theological universe, yet it acquires a more concrete anatomical and phenomenal presence. In this way, the sacred body begins to approach the tangible human body.

With the Marubi dynasty, an even deeper transformation takes place. The camera renders the body recordable, reproducible, and archivable. The body becomes the object of a new visual regime in which documentation, memory, and observation intersect.

With Kolë Idromeno, this process reaches another level. Photography enters the artist's creative laboratory, and the body becomes a model, an object of study, and a structural element in the construction of the painted image. Photography does not replace painting, nor does painting replace photography; rather, they generate two new artistic modes of seeing and representing the body.

Therefore, the history of the nude body in Albanian art is less a history of its presence or absence than a history of the transformation of its status.

From the ritual body, to the ideal body; from the ideal body to the sacred body; then to the restricted body; to Shpataraku's phenomenal body; to the photographic body of the Marubi dynasty; and finally to Idromeno's body-as-model, we encounter a sequence of transformations that prepare the emergence of the nude as a conscious category of secular Albanian art.

In this sense, the end of the nineteenth century does not mark the absolute beginning of the history of the nude in Albania. Rather, it marks a transformation of regime: the body gradually begins to detach itself from its exclusively ritual, mythological, or religious function and enters a new system in which it can be observed, photographed, studied, staged, and ultimately conceived as an autonomous aesthetic subject.

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