

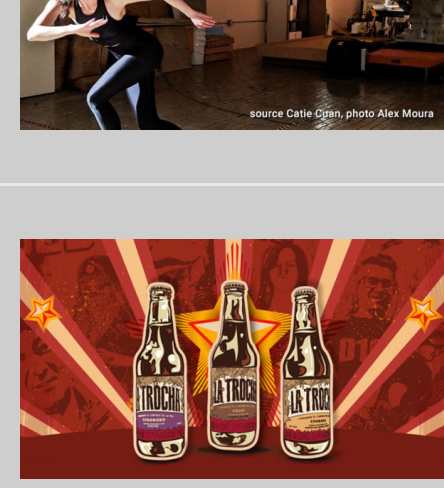
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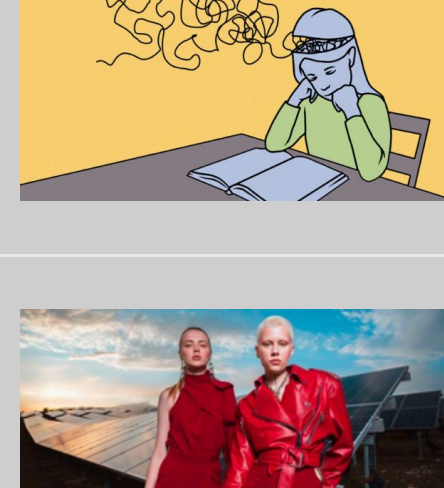
Thu, Aug 4
Dancing Robots Are Cutting In



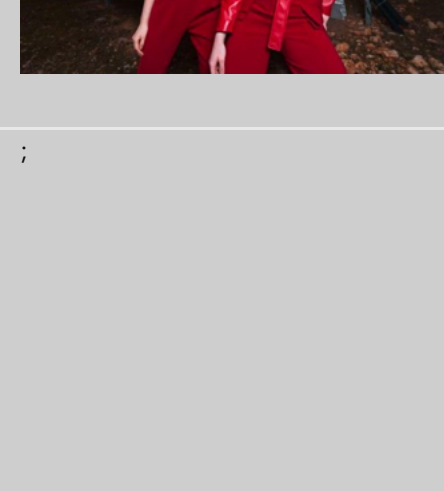
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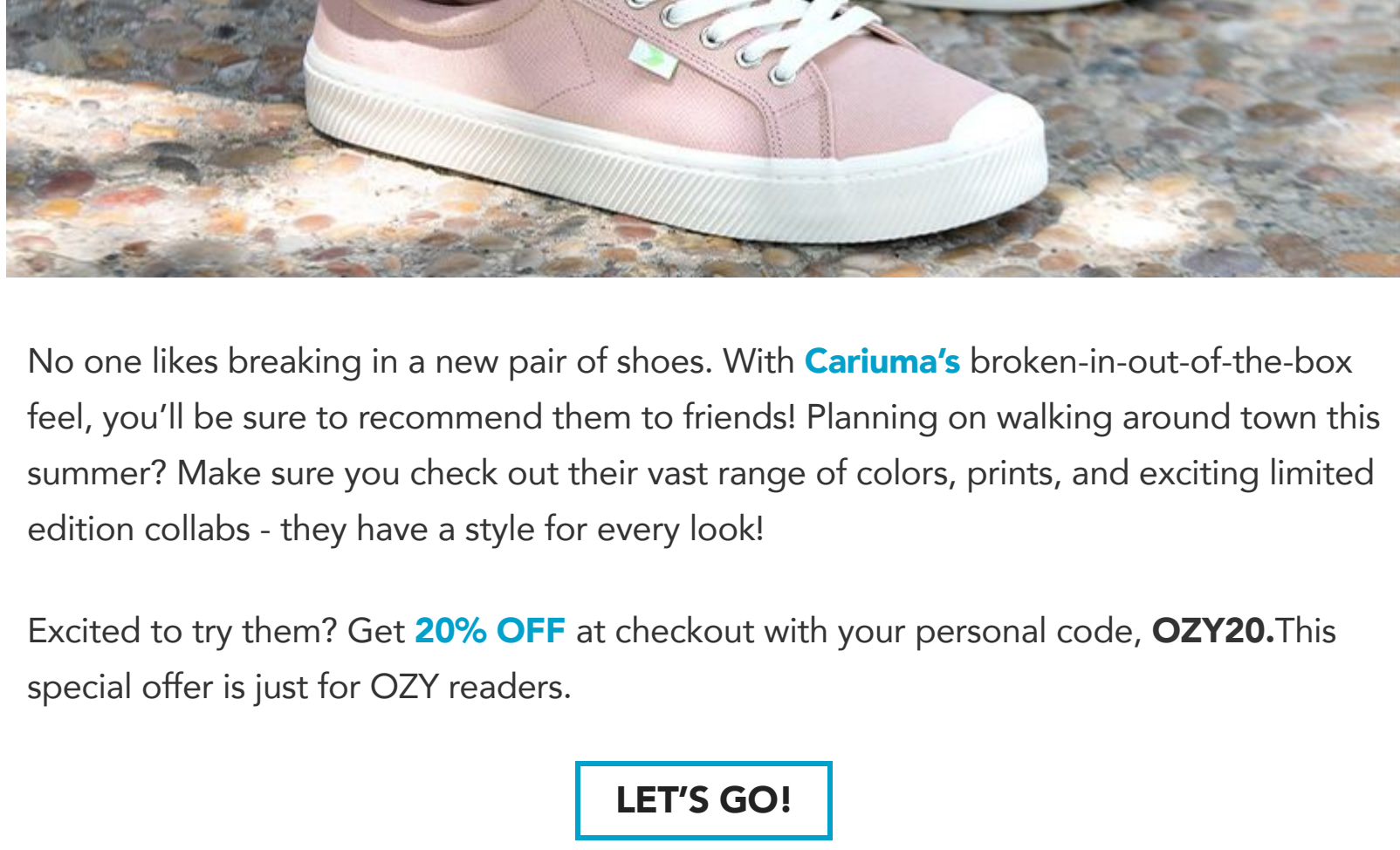
The newsletter to fuel — and thrill — your mind. Read for deep dives into the unmissable ideas and topics shaping our world.

Aug 04, 2022
TODAY

The frontiers of AI technology are shaped by the capacity of machines to understand and respond to people — and there are plenty of concerns about what this does to our humanity. But when handled by artists and dancers, machine intelligence can transform the human-robot relationship from exploitative to empathetic.

—with reporting by [Sylvia Serafinowicz from London](#)

5 STARS FOR COMFORT

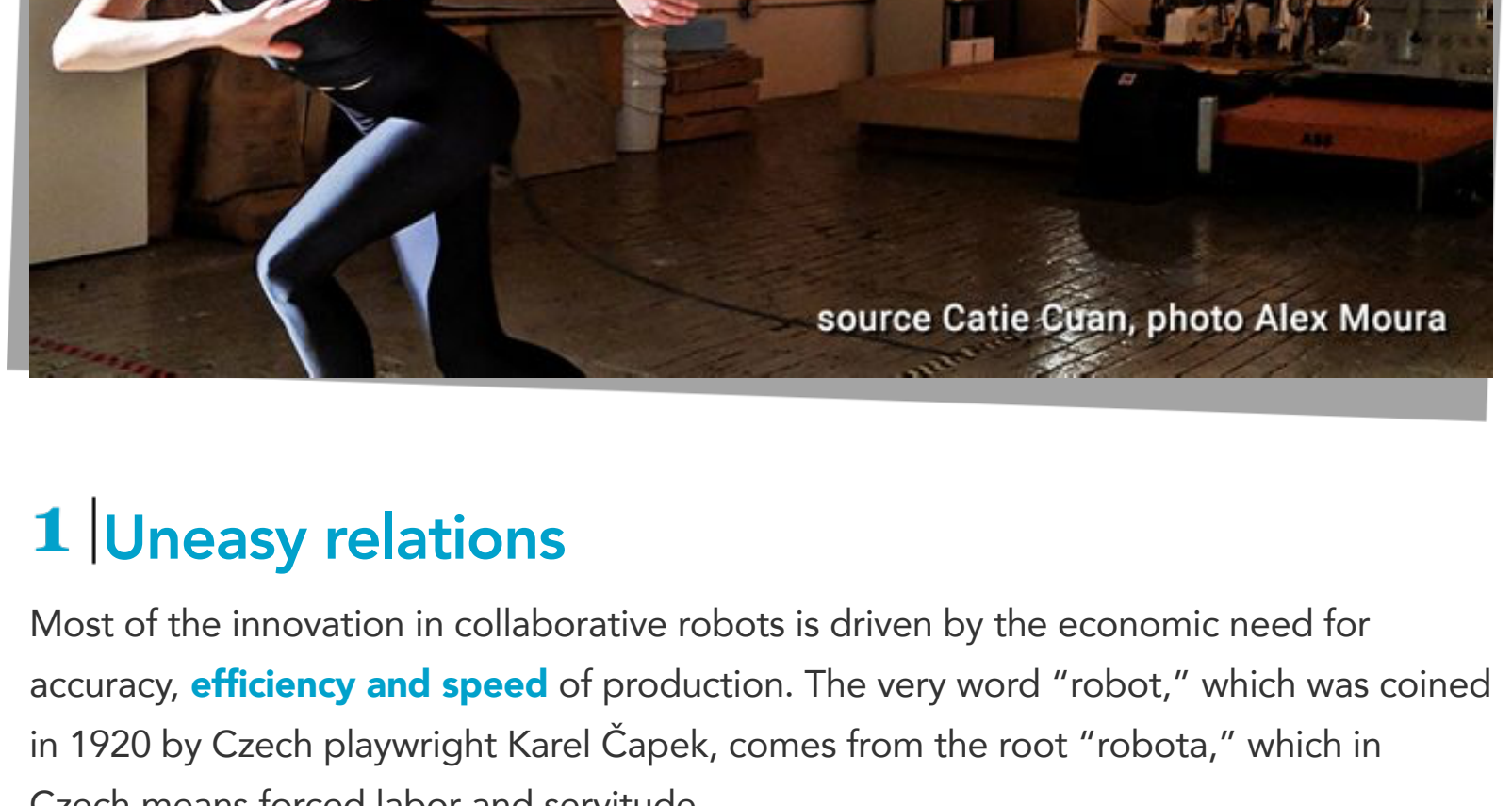


No one likes breaking in a new pair of shoes. With **Cariuma's** broken-in-out-of-the-box feel, you'll be sure to recommend them to friends! Planning on walking around town this summer? Make sure you check out their vast range of colors, prints, and exciting limited edition collabs - they have a style for every look!

Excited to try them? Get **20% OFF** at checkout with your personal code, **OZY20**. This special offer is just for OZY readers.

LET'S GO!

Moves like who?



source [Catie Cuan](#), photo [Alex Moura](#)

1 | Uneasy relations

Most of the innovation in collaborative robots is driven by the economic need for accuracy, **efficiency and speed** of production. The very word "robot," which was coined in 1920 by Czech playwright Karel Capek, comes from the root "robota," which in Czech means forced labor and servitude.

Maybe that's why we're afraid the machines will someday turn against us. That's not a new fear. In a 1942 short story called "Runaround," Isaac Asimov introduced what he called "three laws of robotics," in which he advanced the idea that the single most important consideration in the further development of robots was the prevention of harm that machines might cause to humans.

But what if humans were the aggressors and robots the victims?

That was the premise of "**Slave/Master**," a 2017 installation and performance at London's V&A Museum. Featuring humans dancing with robots, the work showcased increasingly anxious and evasive behavior by machines in response to the human dancers, whose movement over time became more abrupt and erratic. In terms of how artists are addressing provocative questions about our relationship with machines, "Slave/Master" was just the beginning.

2 | Trust exercise

Artists and choreographers around the world now combine state-of-the-art **collaborative robots** with dance as a means to explore the frontier of human-robot relations. Last year, the Georgia Tech Center for Music Technology, in collaboration with Kennesaw State University, developed FOREST, a dance and music show featuring robots and humans performing in close proximity. The project studied robots' improvised and emotive responsiveness to movement and sound, but most importantly, developers say, it was a **trust-building experience**.

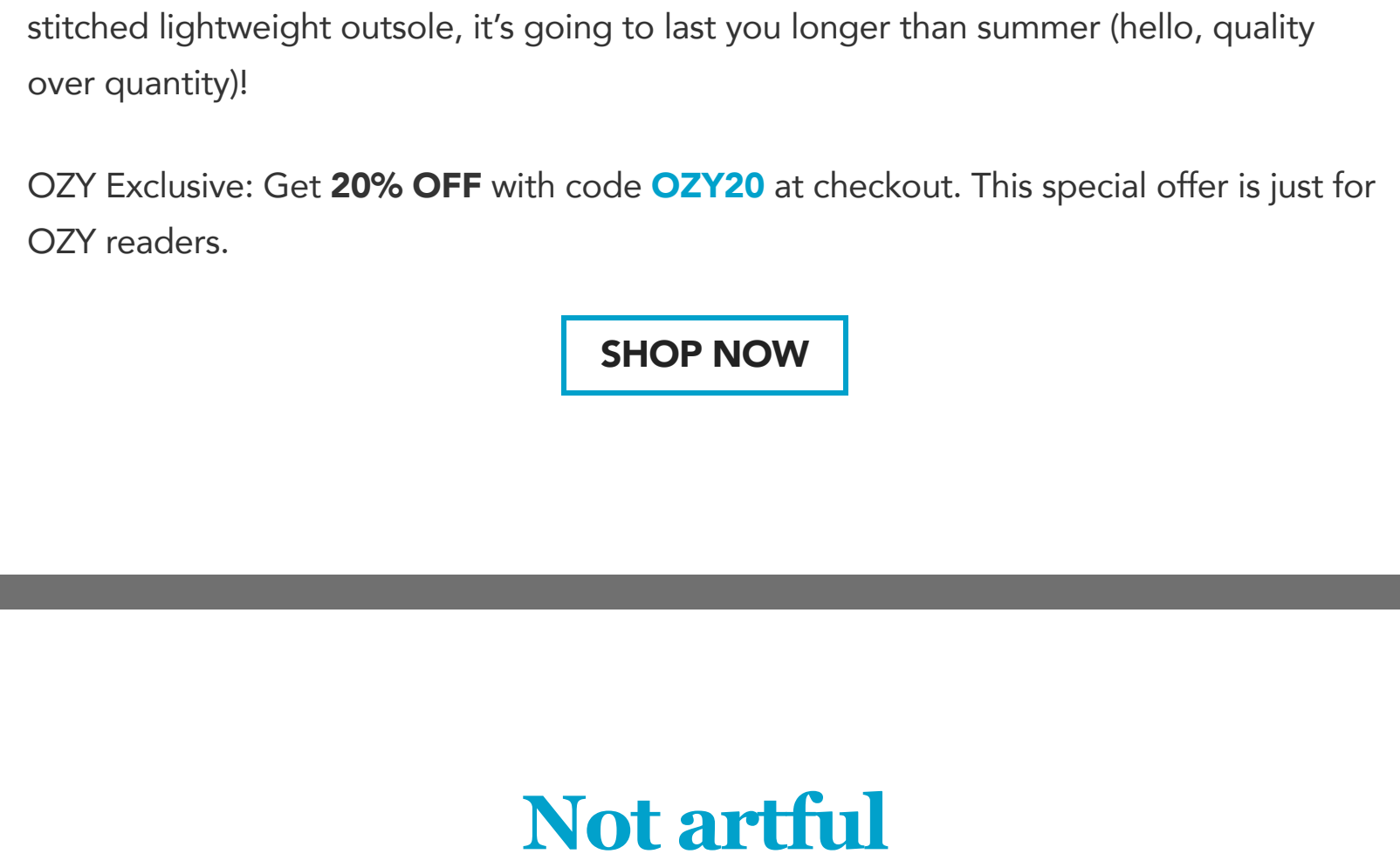
The final performance saw the dancers, musicians and robots improvising and moving in a **synchronized flow**. Some of the mechanical protagonists, such as a robot called Shimon, practiced their skills in rap battles with a human collaborator and became low-key famous. (You can find FOREST on [Spotify](#).)

3 | Dance floor as lab; lab as dance floor

Engineering and robotics firm Boston Dynamics developed a dog-like robot called Spot and, over several years, the firm has released carefully choreographed videos featuring this flagship product along with a human-like robot called Atlas. In videos that have gone viral, robots perform complicated **parkour** and **dance routines**. Monica Thomas, a professional choreographer and dancer who collaborated with Boston Dynamics, emphasized that **working with the robots** offered creative challenges to her essential ideas about movement and opened her eyes to the choreographic possibilities thanks to the unique ways in which robots move.

There is, however, a darker side.

Walking On Sunshine

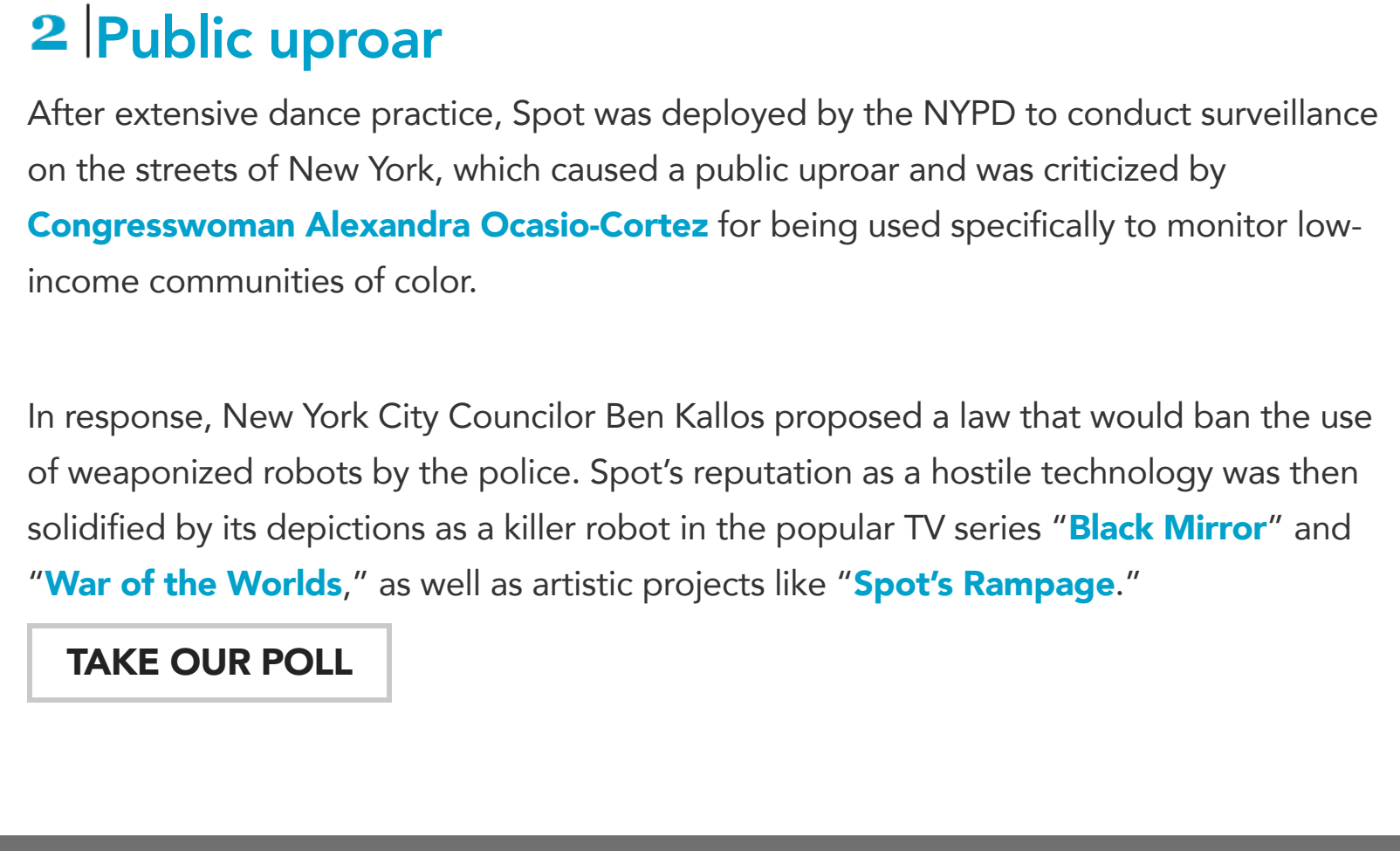


Inspired by sunny, summer days, and lounging by the beach with a drink in hand, the **OCA Low Yellow** is the perfect summertime sneaker. Crafted with robust canvas, this fashion-forward sneaker meets functionality, style, comfort, and fit. And with a fully-stitched lightweight outsole, it's going to last you longer than summer (hello, quality over quantity!)

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SHOP NOW

Not artful



source [Catie Cuan](#), photo [Will Hill](#)

1 | Surveill(d)ance

Boston Dynamics' roboticist Eric Whitman has praised choreography as a means of optimizing **existing hardware**. Yet such optimization translated directly into Boston Dynamics' successful deployment of robots into **military and police environments**. When the robot Spot dances, it practices its coordination skills and gains understanding of its surroundings, all crucial for its effectiveness as a surveillance tool or weapon.

2 | Public uproar

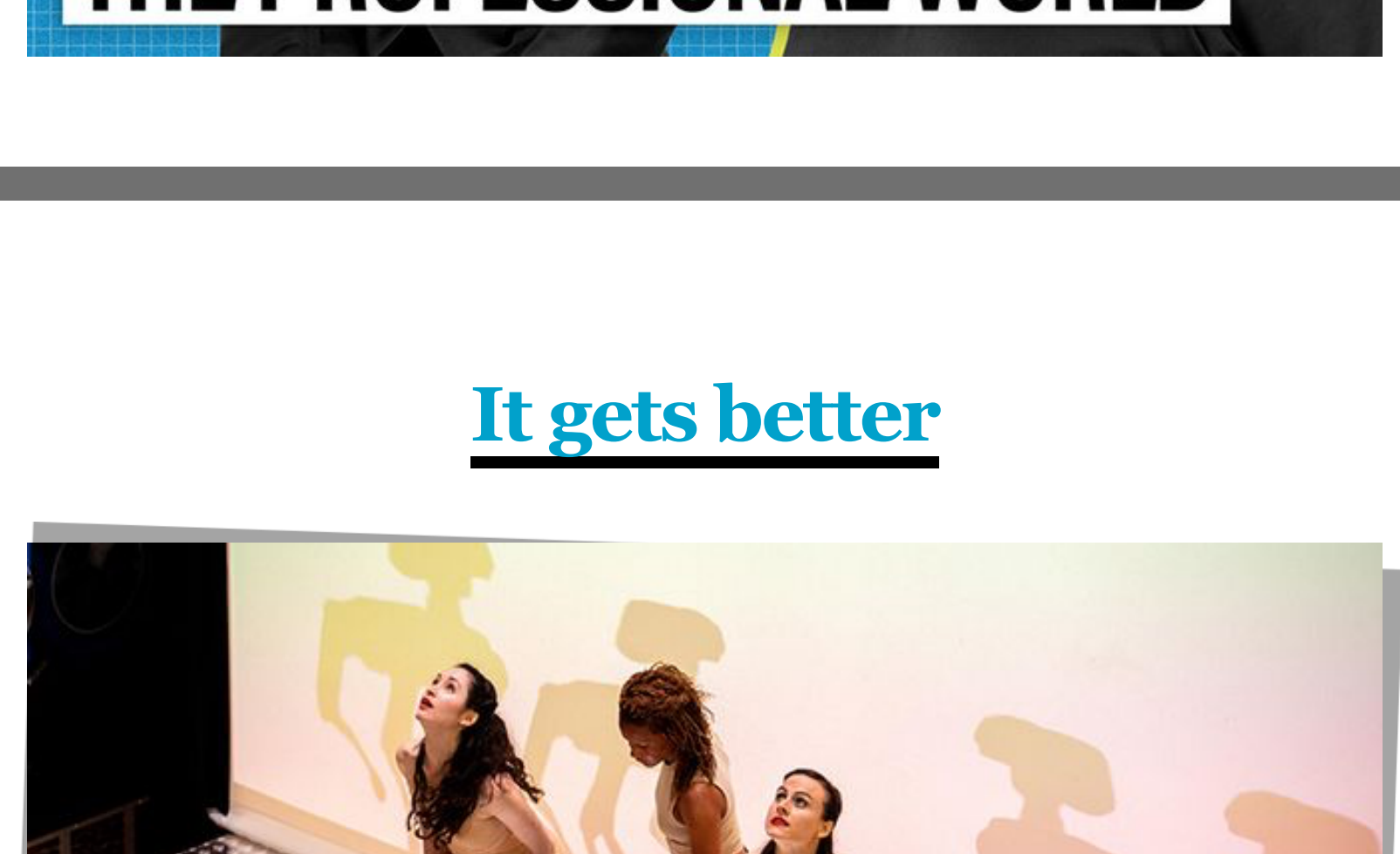
After extensive dance practice, Spot was deployed by the NYPD to conduct surveillance on the streets of New York, which caused a public uproar and was criticized by **Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez** for being used specifically to monitor low-income communities of color.

In response, New York City Councilor Ben Kallos proposed a law that would ban the use of weaponized robots by the police. Spot's reputation as a hostile technology was then solidified by its depictions as a killer robot in the popular TV series "**Black Mirror**" and "**War of the Worlds**," as well as artistic projects like "**Spot's Rampage**."

TAKE OUR POLL

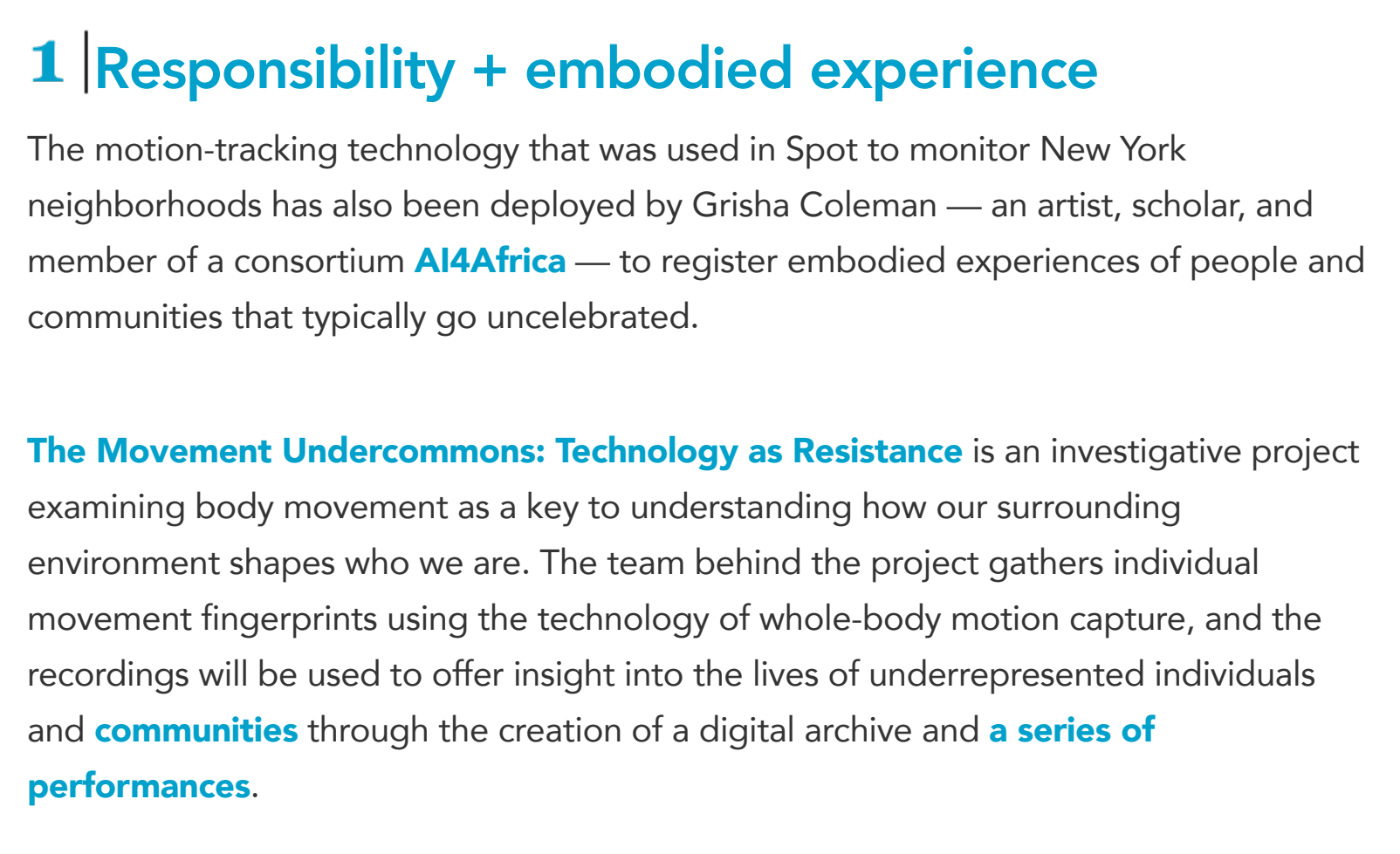
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on *The Carlos Watson Show!*



REID HOFFMAN:
HOW LINKEDIN TRANSFORMED THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

It gets better



source [Catie Cuan](#), photo [Marifai Miranda](#)

1 | Responsibility + embodied experience

The motion-tracking technology that was used in Spot to monitor New York neighborhoods has also been deployed by Grisha Coleman — an artist, scholar, and member of a consortium **A4Africa** — to register embodied experiences of people and communities that typically go uncelebrated.

The Movement Undercommons: Technology as Resistance is an investigative project examining body movement as a key to understanding how our surrounding environment shapes who we are. The team behind the project gathers individual movement fingerprints using the technology of whole-body motion capture, and the recordings will be used to offer insight into the lives of underrepresented individuals and **communities** through the creation of a digital archive and a **series of performances**.

2 | Do nothing, with AI

As a response to a modern culture that fetishizes being busy and productive, artist Emanuel Gollob has launched an installation called "**Doing Nothing with AI**" in order to glorify, well, doing nothing. Gollob wrapped an industrial robotic arm with a purple, green and pink skin that is spiky yet soft and looks at once dangerous and inviting. The robot then comes alive when it detects passers-by, and begins to perform a **hypnotizing dance**. The work carves a space for technology to help us decelerate the pace of modern life. Moments of inactivity and boredom can be restful and even inspirational.

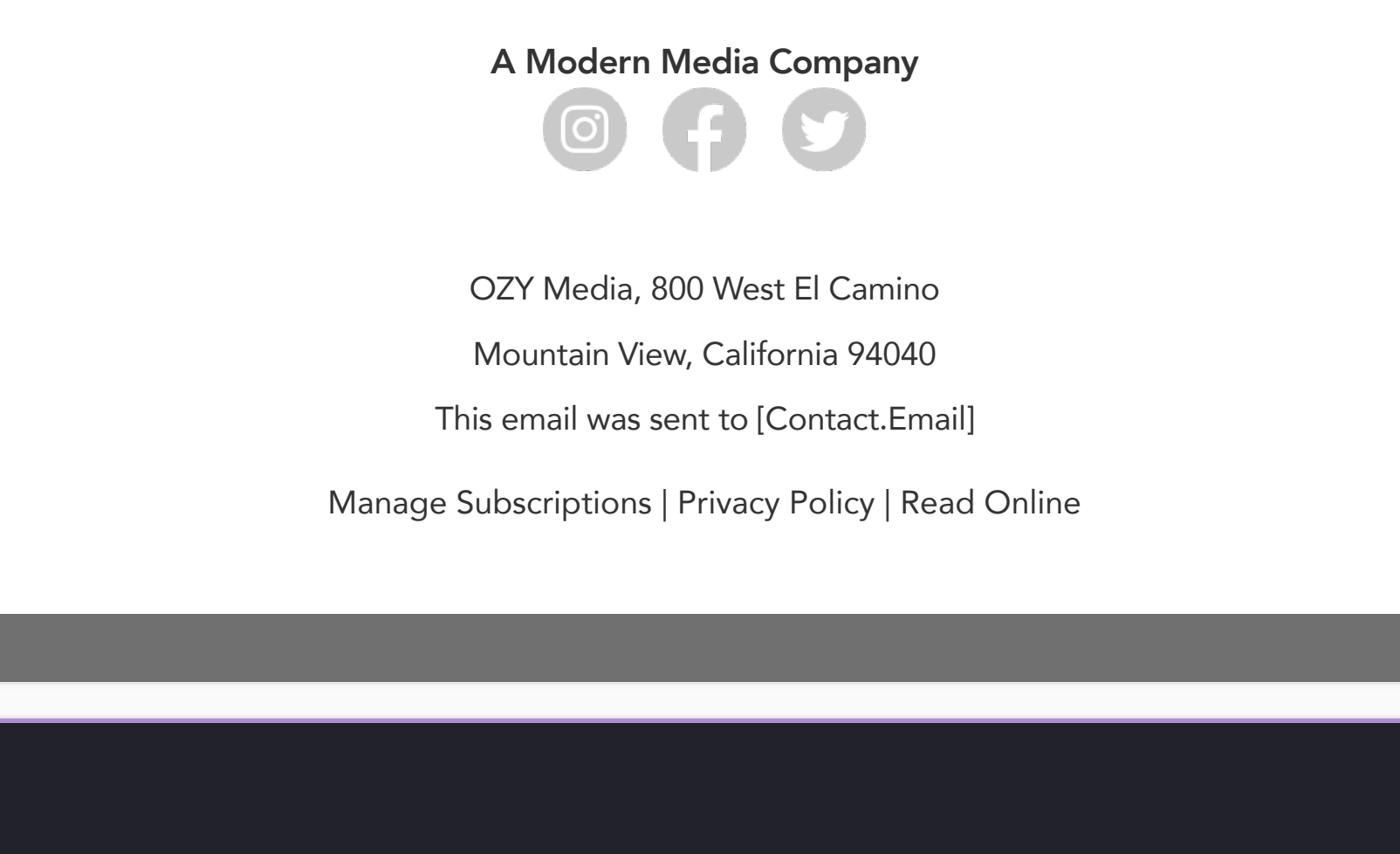
3 | Next frontier

Catie Cuan is a pioneer in the new discipline of choreobotics, which explores the parallels between human and robotic movement and forges communication between robots and people through movement. The goal of this field is to ensure that new technologies evolve in harmony with humans, and are deployed in good faith. Cuan points out that, since robots will increasingly move from the factories into our living spaces, we must develop ways of being with them that feel **empowering rather than frightful**.

To support this mission in 2022, choreographer and professor Sydney Skybeter, together with Eric Rosen, a Ph.D. candidate in computer science, have launched a course called **Choreobotics 0101** at Brown University. The course's mission is to teach "the next generation of engineers how to create technology that minimizes harm and makes a positive impact on society."

TAKE OUR POLL

Community Corner



What makes you excited — or scared — about the future of robotics?

Share your thoughts with us at OzyCommunity@Ozy.com.

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