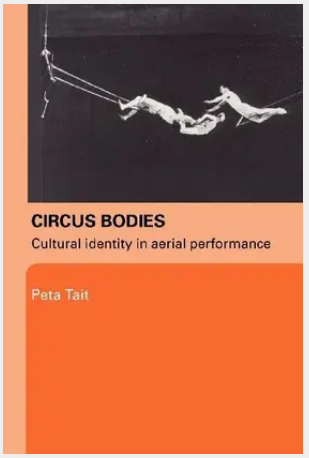
Tait

Circus Bodies

Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance



This pioneering study is one of the major publications in the increasingly popular and largely undocumented area of circus studies. Through photographs and illustrations, Peta Tait presents an extraordinary survey of 140 years of trapeze acts and the socially changing ideas of muscular action in relation to our understanding of gender and sexuality. She questions how spectators see and enjoy aerial actions, and what cultural identities are presented by bodies in fast, physical aerial movement. Adeptly locating aerial performance within the wider cultural history of bodies and their identities, Circus Bodies explores this subject through a range of films such as Trapeze (1956) and Wings of Desire (1987) and Tait also examines live performances including: * the first trapeze performers: Léotard and the Hanlon Brothers * female celebrities; Azella, Sanyeah, black French aerialist LaLa, the infamous Leona Dare, and the female human cannonballs * twentieth-century gender benders; Barbette and Luisita Leers * the Codonas, Concellos, Gaonas, Vazquez and Pages troupes * imaginative aerial acts in Cirque de Soleil and Circus Oz productions. This book will prove an invaluable resource for all students and scholars interested in this fascinating field.

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