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The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle and Sexuality

By Ramsay Burt



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In this challenging and lively book, Ramsay Burt examines the representation of masculinity in twentieth century dance. Taking issue with formalist and modernist accounts of dance, which dismiss gender and sexuality as irrelevant, he argues that prejudices against male dancers are rooted in our ideas about the male body and male behaviour.

Building upon ideas about the gendered gaze developed by film and feminist theorists, Ramsay Burt provides a provocative theory of spectatorship in dance. He uses this to examine the work of choreographers like Nijinsky, Graham, Bausch, while relating their dances to the social, political and artistic contexts in which they were produced. Within these re-readings, he identifies a distinction between institutionalised modernist dance which evokes an essentialist, heroic, 'hypermasculinity'; one which is valorised with reference to nature, heterosexuality and religion, and radical, avant garde choreography which challenges and disrupts dominant ways of representing masculinity.

The Male Dancer will be essential reading for anyone interested in dance and the cultural construction of gender.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Ramsay's interpretations of dance are often surprising and unconventional, yet they are very convincing. He is truly rewriting dance history as we know it."

-Sally Banes, University of Wisconsin

About the Author

Ramsay Burt has taught art and design history and film studies to art students, as well as painting and exhibiting his own work. He has also taught dance history and theory and has recently completed a doctoral thesis on representation of masculinity in British new dance.

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