



THE SPORTS *SHOW*

Athletics as Image and Spectacle

DAVID E. LITTLE

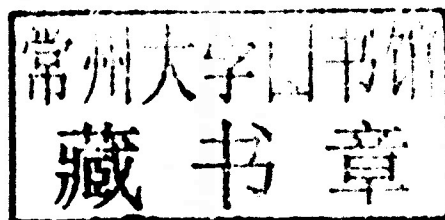


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Essays by Simon Critchley and Joyce Carol Oates



MIA MINNEAPOLIS
INSTITUTE OF ARTS

This book was published in conjunction with the exhibition "The Sports Show," held at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, February 19 through May 13, 2012.

Generous support was provided by Dorsey & Whitney LLP.

Editor: Elisabeth Sövik
Designer: Jessica Zubrzycki
Digital image postproduction: Josh Lynn
Proofreader: Laura Silver
Publishing and production management: Jim Bindas,
Books and Projects LLC, Minnetonka, Minnesota

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Portions of "Working-Class Ballet," by Simon Critchley, appeared in conjunction with the exhibition "Men with Balls: The Art of the 2010 World Cup," apexart, New York, New York, and in "A Puppet or a God? On the Films of Philippe Parreno," *Philippe Parreno* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, JRP/Ringier, 2009).

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Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404
www.artsmia.org

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Printed in Singapore by Tien Wah Press



Distributed by the University of Minnesota Press
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401
www.upress.umn.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The sports show : athletics as photography, media, and spectacle / David E. Little [exhibition curator] with essays by Simon Critchley and Joyce Carol Oates.

p. cm.

Summary: "This book explores the role of photography and media (television, video, and digital technology) in transforming sports from a casual leisure activity into a spectacle of mass participation. It catalogs photography and other media exhibited at "The Sports Show" — an exhibit held at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, February 19 through May 13, 2012"— Provided by publisher.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8166-7937-9 (hardback)

1. Photography of sports—Exhibitions. 2. Sports—Social aspects. 3. Mass media and sports. 4. Digital media. I. Little, David Eugene, 1963-
TR821.S73 2012
779:9796—dc23

2011041220

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FOREWORD

Museum leaders like to remind people that significantly more Americans visit museums each year than attend professional sporting events. With the Minneapolis Institute of Arts exhibition “The Sports Show,” the public doesn’t have to choose. Capturing the excitement and rush of adrenaline experienced in any sporting event, the exhibition spotlights the artistry of more than one hundred years of photography and media works. Created with the unique vision of innovative artists, these works reveal the transformation of sports from community entertainment into spectacles of mass participation.

Astounding works by renowned artists such as Alfred Stieglitz, Andreas Gursky, Alexander Rodchenko, and Andy Warhol put viewers in the center of the “game” with dramatic images and arresting points of view. The images presented here transcend the specifics of sporting events and communicate enduring social, political, economic, and cultural issues. The fame of the artists is certainly matched by the fame of many of the players, and the exhibition explores the role of photography and media in creating the popular sports icon.

I am grateful to our catalogue essay authors, including the organizing curator, David E. Little; Simon Critchley, professor of philosophy at the New School of Social Research; and award-winning writer Joyce Carol Oates. Their essays challenge readers to consider the deeper

historical and cultural significance of sports and its images. In short, this is an exhibition that brings together art fans and sports fans.

Fervent sports fan and passionate photography scholar David E. Little, Curator of Photography and New Media, arrived at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in 2009 and immediately began to work on this exhibition. Drawing on his expansive knowledge of both sports and photography, this project has definitely been a labor of love for David. I am grateful to him for his vision and dedication.

“The Sports Show” highlights many classic sports photographs from the MIA’s outstanding collection of over 11,500 photographs in the Department of Photography and New Media, including our recent acquisition *Lew Alcindor, basketball player, 61st Street and Amsterdam Avenue, New York, May 2, 1963*, by Richard Avedon. Founding curator Carroll T. Hartwell, who organized a landmark Avedon exhibition in 1970 at the MIA, helped build the museum’s superior modern photography collection with strengths in American photojournalism and documentary work. The department continues to grow into the twenty-first century under David’s leadership.

Kaywin Feldman

Director and President

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Playing and watching sports has always been a part of my life and my relationship to culture and politics. I still remember the day Ali fought Frazier in the “Thrilla in Manila,” Satchel Paige autographing my program, arguing Cold War politics in a pub after basketball games with British teammates, and listening to the crowd roar at the Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, as the Americans came back to win the 1999 Ryder Cup. I suspect many readers of this catalogue and visitors to “The Sports Show” exhibition have their own memories of sport.

Despite this connection with sports, I never imagined that I would undertake serious research on the topic or organize an exhibition focused on sports photography and contemporary media. “The Sports Show” project was sparked during research in Berlin on a completely different topic. There, at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, I experienced Paul Pfeiffer’s media installation *The Saints*, which expressed the powerful role of sports and its images as a collective social experience. The installation inspired the exhibition, and I am delighted to premiere it in the United States.

An idea, though, is just an idea. Making “The Sports Show” into a book and an exhibition was a collaborative effort requiring the dedication and hard work of many people. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this project at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and beyond

the museum. Kaywin Feldman, Director and President of the MIA, enthusiastically supported “The Sports Show” from our first conversation. Though not a sports fan, she immediately understood my aim to illuminate the artistic significance of photography and media in sports. Matthew Welch, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, guided the project throughout, supporting its intellectual and aesthetic ambitions while making sure pragmatic details were attended to.

The catalogue and the exhibition were enriched by many institutional resources and talented people: Sarah Meister and Dan Leers, Museum of Modern Art; Jeff Bridgers, Verna Posever Curtis, Jonathan Eaker, Kristi Finefield, Barbara Natanson, and Jan Greci, Library of Congress; George K. Rugg, Curator, Department of Special Collections, Hesburgh Libraries, University of Notre Dame, and Charles Lamb, Assistant Director, Notre Dame Archives; Freyda Spira and Mia Fineman, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Jon Evans, Veronica Keys, and Anne Tucker, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Virginia Heckert and Paul Martineau, J. Paul Getty Museum; April Watson, Nelson Atkins Museum; Gisela Jahn, Leni Riefenstahl Foundation; Steffi Schulze, Camera Work Photogalerie GmbH; Harvey Robinson, Ali Price, Alecia Colen, and Howard Greenberg, Howard Greenberg Gallery; James Danzinger, Danzinger Projects; the always generous Martin Weinstein and Leslie Hammons,

Weinstein Gallery; Frisch Brandt and Jeffrey Fraenkel, Fraenkel Gallery; Samantha Sheiness, Andrea Rosen Gallery; Jochen Arentzen, Sally Hough, and Ana Castella, Sprüth Magers gallery; Emily Devoe, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery; Janice Guy, Murray Guy gallery; Andrea S. Huber and Danny Solomon, Solomon Fine Art; Maya Piergies and Peter MacGill, Pace/MacGill Gallery; Robbi Siegel and Sean P. Corcoran, Museum of the City of New York; Annette Völker, Andreas Gursky studio; Rachel Rampleman, Paul Pfeiffer studio; Amanda Schmidt, Arcangel studio.

Friends, colleagues, and collectors who provided important recommendations during different stages in the project include Julian Cox, at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the de Young Museum; Catharina Manchanda, Seattle Art Museum; Christopher Bedford, Wexner Center for the Arts; Maurice Berger, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Paul Roth, Avedon Foundation; Janet Borden, Janet Borden, Inc.; Henrietta Huldish, at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart; Peter Cohen, friend and collector; Claire Lozier and Andrew Smith, Andrew Smith Gallery; Marc Bauman; W. L. Pate, Jr.; Jim Cook; Darius A. Hines, co-founder of Radius Books; Denise Wolff, editor, Aperture Books; Jon Sisk and Sheila Burnett of Rowman & Littlefield Press; Yasufumi Nakamori, at the Museum of Fine Arts and his former colleague, Heather Brand; and Roger Conover at MIT Press.

Elisabeth Brandt dedicated long hours to completing a lengthy grant application days before giving birth to her first child. Thanks to my grant advisory committee: Kota Ezawa, Assistant Professor of Film at the California College of Arts and an exhibiting artist; Susan K.

Cahn, Professor, University at Buffalo, SUNY; Josh Siegel, Associate Curator, Department of Film and Media at the Museum of Modern Art; Benjamin G. Rader, James L. Seller Professor Emeritus of History; and journalist Jay Weiner. Thanks to Vince Leo, MFA Director, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and Susan Kismaric, former colleague at the Museum of Modern Art, for their close readings of my essay. Much appreciation to Simon Critchley for his contribution to the catalogue and to Joyce Carol Oates for granting permission to reprint an excerpt from her essay. Also, Kristine Stiles, Bruce Payne, and Kenneth Surin at Duke University, for being great teachers.

Thanks to supporters of the Department of Photography and New Media who provided special advice and help with "The Sports Show": Linda and Lawrence Perlman, Harry Drake, Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison, Beverly Grossman, Myron Kunin, Nivin MacMillan, David and Mary Parker, Henry Roberts, Eric J. Dayton, Andrew Dayton, Blythe Brenden, Diane Lilly, Mary Ingebrand-Pohlad, and Charlie Pohlad. Thanks as well to the Department of Photography and New Media Affinity Group.

Artist and friend Tom Arndt provided much needed inside perspective on camera technology. Nicole Soukup did a wonderful job assisting with research and the time line. The following people aided her research: Susan Larson-Fleming, Hennepin Historical Museum; John Wareham, Librarian, Star Tribune; Erin George, Assistant Archivist, University of Minnesota Archives; Roger Godin, Curator, Minnesota Wild; John Schissel and Rebecca Longawa, Timberwolves/Lynx; and Nicole Delfino Jansen, Minnesota Historical

Society. Tom Arndt would like to thank Brian Peterson at the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and John Doman at the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, with special thanks to Mark Peterson for his insights and his enduring friendship. Thanks also to friends Garrison Keillor and MIA trustee Ralph Strangis.

Many other Minnesota sports fans helped navigate the local sports scene, including Clark Griffith, Clyde Deopner, Jim and Donna Pohlad, Jim Gehrz, Tom Sweeney, Michael Sweeney, Chris Wright, Ralph Burnet, and Jennifer Phelps. A special advisory group provided important links to community leaders: Mike Opat, Chair, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, and MIA trustees Sheila Morgan, Mike Ott, and John Himle. Trustees Mary Olson and Betty MacMillan also lent a hand.

Many thanks to my fabulous colleagues who worked on the catalogue and exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts: Brian Kraft, Jennifer Starbright, Tanya Morrison, Roxy Ballard the exhibition designer, Tom Jance and the installation team, Bill Skodje the model builder, Mary Jane Drews, Mary Mortenson, Katie Murphy, Julianne Amendola, Kathryn Wade, and intern Elizabeth Rooklidge. Special thanks to the dream media team Ryan Lee and Mike Dust, to Katherine Milton, Sheila McGuire, Susan Jacobsen, and Alex Bortolot in Learning and Innovation, and to Anne-Marie Wagener and Tammy Pleshek, the dynamic public relations team. Laura DeBiaso, Kristin Prestegaard, and Jim Bindas kept the book on schedule with good cheer. Dan Dennehy and Josh Lynn ensured the digital images were just right. Kurt Nordwall provided framing expertise for the exhibition. DeAnn Dankowski gave important help with the rights, checklists,

and various other project details. Intern Anna Leicht compiled the bibliography. Thanks to the “smart team” who helped plan the exhibition details (you know who you are). Special thanks to Elisabeth Sövik, who read over the entire manuscript with a keen eye attuned to every word and argument, ensuring that the writing was clear and the facts were correct. Finally, Jessica Zubrzycki produced a fantastic design under a very tight deadline, and remained enthusiastic and smiling throughout.

Thanks to friends who shared good food and laughs along the way: Olga Viso and Cameron Gainier, Elizabeth Alexander, David Wilson and Dr. Michael Peterman, Andrew and Lisa Duff, Frank and Diane Lassman, John and Martha Gabbert, Maurice and Sally Blanks, Peter and Annie Remes, Tim Peterson, and Paul Shambroom. And heartfelt thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Myers and Dr. Michael Mooney, who really made this book possible.

Finally, this project and much more would not have been possible without my family, Dr. Arthur Bert and Catherine Little Bert, James and Margie Little, Joseph and Marion Little, and John H. and Mary Alexander. My wife, M. Darsie Alexander, listened patiently to many sports stories over dinners and offered her curatorial expertise and keen insights on the project. Nina, Sophie, and, of course, Buddy, provided pure joy.

I dedicate this book to Lt. Col. Walter E. and Mary Little for their unconditional love and support.

David E. Little

*Curator and Head, Department of
Photography and New Media
Minneapolis Institute of Arts*



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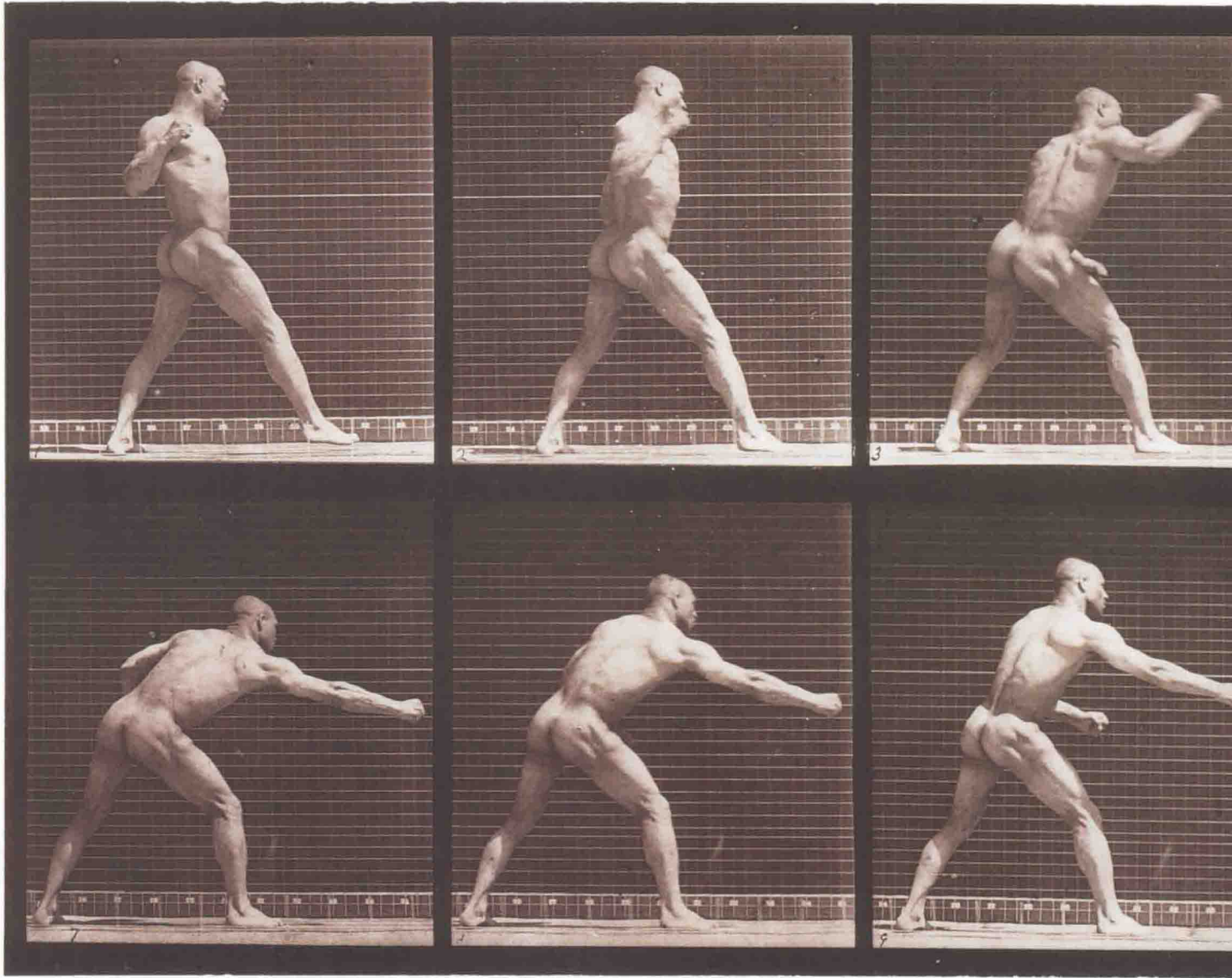


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EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

Animal Locomotion, plate 344, 1887



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