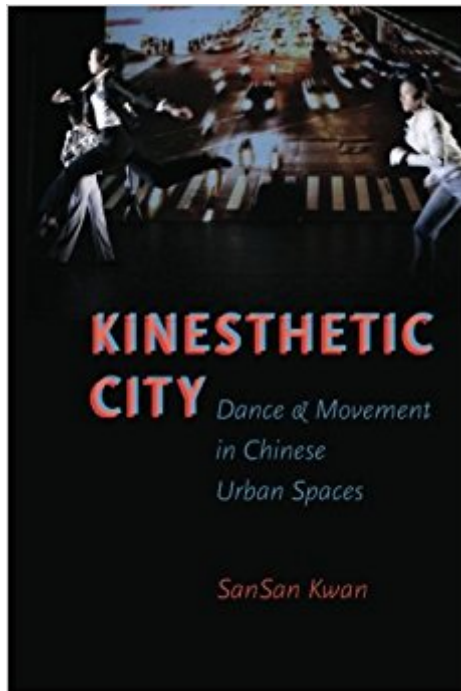




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Kinesthetic City: Dance And Movement In Chinese Urban Spaces



Synopsis

In *Kinesthetic City*, author SanSan Kwan explores the contentious nature of Chineseness in diaspora through the lens of moving bodies as they relate to place, time, and identity. She locates her study in five Chinese urban sites--Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, New York's Chinatown, and the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles--at momentous historical turning points to parse out key similarities and differences in the construction of Chineseness. The moving bodies she considers are not only those in performances by some of the most well-known Chinese dance companies in these cities, but also her own as she navigates urban Chinese spaces. By focusing primarily on kinesthesia--the body's awareness of motion--to gather information rather than more traditional modes of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, she highlights the importance of motion in the determination of space. In examining in these specific places at these precise historical moments, Kwan illuminates how moving bodies contribute to the production of those places and those moments. For Kwan, Chinese communities in diaspora provide particularly salient examples of how when and where our bodies are help to determine who we are. Whether engaged in otherwise unremarkable walking or in highly choreographed acts of political protest, human movement exists in dialogue with the kinesthetic of these city spaces, helping Chinese communities make meaning of themselves away from mainland China. As a whole, *Kinesthetic City* offers dance studies ways to extend movement analysis to study not only concert, folk or social dance, but also quotidian movement and urban flow.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (January 4, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199921539

ISBN-13: 978-0199921539

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 0.8 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,388,641 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #91 inÂ Books > Arts &

Photography > Performing Arts > Dance > Popular #102 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography >

Performing Arts > Dance > Folk #145 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Dance > Modern

Customer Reviews

Every field has its jargon to obscure meaning from the un-initiated. I have trouble reading my doctor's prescription or my lawyer's trust treatise, yet meaning is there for the eye for whom it is intended. Likewise, many parts of this book are meant for a specialist. For example, the introduction expands on numerous kinesiology quotes of a highly philosophical nature that devolve into gobbledygook. On city planning, geography, and movement in Chinatowns: "Collectivities often persist in their projects despite the catachrestical and disputed nature of the identity terms under which they are mobilized; despite the ontological impossibility of identity, people do work together." Say what? Getting past the strained (catachrestic?) introduction, Kwan gets into the meat of her subject. "Dance and geography helps me argue for dance as a new epistemology for understanding space as a site and a process of meaning-making." And then it gets interesting. In subsequent chapters, Life and dance and urban concentrations of Chinese all come together. Kwan has insightful observations and theories on how a very similar people congregate and form communities in very different cities--Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, New York, and Los Angeles. All is seen through the eyes of a dancer. If Kwan were a foodie, she could call it a movable feast. Four and a half stars.

This book is a thought provoking, beautifully written account of kinesthetic experience, choreography in Chinese urban spaces and the cultural and socio-political circumstances that shape movement and Chinese identity. I recommend this book to anyone interested in identity politics, dance, movement and mutual processes whereby we shape and are shaped by spaces and moments in time.

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