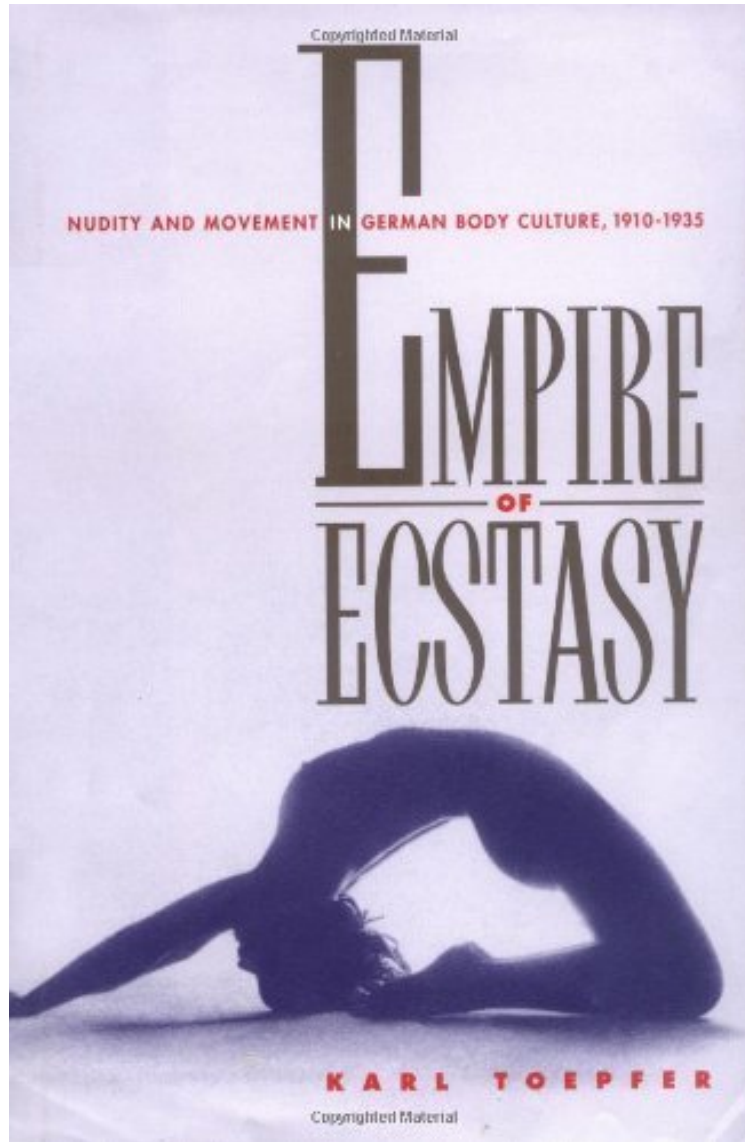


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Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910ndash;1935 (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism)

Karl Toepfer

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Karl Toepfer : Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910ndash;1935 (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910ndash;1935 (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism):

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Did you ever think you'd find a book with TOO MUCH nudity?By Tom TuerffThis book is positively fascinating for about the first half. You find out about the "nude dance" craze of the Weimar Republic and the dancers/dances/movements it inspired.However, Toepfer's work is SO complete, SO intricate, it comes off more like a doctoral thesis than a book.As pure reportage, it's a fine volume. But I kept waiting for some kind of idea of what the author thought about all of this; was it fascinating or does he just think it was weird? We never really find out.Still, some of the images he leaves you with makes you wish you could transport yourself back to some of these obviously sensual and often bizarre performances to see them for yourself.If you're a fan of dance history, or a nudist, I recommend this book. But don't be surprised if you put it down long before you finish; this is definitely more than most people would really want (or need) to know.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A valuable book for dance researchBy Satu Mariia HarjanneEstimated contributions in Carina Ari Library's large collection of dance literature in Stockholm, [...].6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Sculpting Space with Naked Human FleshBy D. C. DoranThis meticulous investigation into the Weimer Republic's naturist movements and its concurrent naked dance training/choreographic styles (together with the criticism/photography associated with them) will surely stand as the definitive study of these complex issues for many years to come. The dense chapters of this book serve up a most original interpretation of the ways in which "liberating divestiture" entered into the construction of the "identity of the avant-garde intelligentsia" through the visual presentation of the "modern body." Toepfer argues that both naturism and naked dance/ gymnastics aimed to break through the rationalizations for mass culture in a search of "transcendent" possibilities. In doing so, he takes advantage of much unpublished archival material and rare photographs. Quite a few of both are reprinted here. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this study is the central role played by women in the aesthetic enterprise between the Wars. A 23 page bibliography completes this important achievement. Toepfer is Professor of Theatre Arts at San Jose State University (California).

Empire of Ecstasy offers a novel interpretation of the explosion of German body culture between the two wars—nudism and nude dancing, gymnastics and dance training, dance photography and criticism, and diverse genres of performance from solo dancing to mass movement choirs. Karl Toepfer presents this dynamic subject as a vital and historically unique construction of "modern identity." The modern body, radiating freedom and power, appeared to Weimar artists and intelligentsia to be the source of a transgressive energy, as well as the sign and manifestation of powerful, mysterious "inner" conditions. Toepfer shows how this view of the modern body sought to extend the aesthetic experience beyond the boundaries imposed by rationalized life and to transcend these limits in search of ecstasy. With the help of much unpublished or long-forgotten archival material (including many little-known photographs), he investigates the process of constructing an "empire" of appropriative impulses toward ecstasy. Toepfer presents the work of such well-known figures as Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, and Oskar Schlemmer, along with less-known but equally fascinating body culture practitioners. His book is certain to become required reading for historians of dance, body culture, and modernism.

From the Inside Flap"A massive achievement. . . . Toepfer respects the body, wants to understand movement as the primary medium of ideas, and gives women the central role they actually played in this aesthetic and intellectual discourse."—Marcia B. Siegel, author of *The Shapes of Change*