

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM
Vol. 17, No. 4, 2010

BOOK REVIEW

Laurent Daniel (ed.), *L'Art et le Sport. Actes du XII colloque international du Comité européen pour l'histoire des Sports. Lorient 2007*, Biarritz-Atlantica-Paris Musee National du Sport, 2009, vol. 1-2, pp. 559, ISBN 978-2-7588-0159-7

Laurent Daniel's *L'Art et le Sport* is a collection of proceedings of the 12th International Congress of the European Committee for Sports History held in Lorient, France in 2007. The collection includes forty-three papers written by academics from thirteen European countries and the United States, representing such different research fields as history, sociology, art history and literature. Like in many other works on sport and art, Daniel aims to improve the understanding of specific history issues among members of the sport and art community and, at the same time, further the academic community's discussion of both contemporary and perennial social issues in sport and art.

This two-volume bilingual publication has 559 pages and includes an introduction, four parts with forty three chapters, notes and pictures. The four parts of the book are devoted to different study fields. Given the nature of the work, i.e. a collection of conference papers, precise definition of its general themes can be challenging. The publication reflects the diverse and at times contradictory nature of scholarship, but out of this dissonance emerges a valuable introduction to sport and art that with valuable contributions from old and new scholars to important area of research.

The first part *Réalité (Reality)* depicts an authentic portrait of sport struggle drawing on the existing paintings, sculptures and works of art. Many authors discuss the ways in which the visual has shaped and shapes sporting experiences. Consequently, the comparison of ancient and modern works of art from various parts of the world can help many scholars develop their research interests in the fascinating area of sports history.

Antoine Marcac's paper, which opens the first volume, is concerned with canoeing and tourism in inter-war France. The author shows the "artistic" relations between tourist photography and

the development of the sport of canoeing. Jacques Gleyse directs readers' attention to the absent female in graphic representations of bodily exercises in textbooks on physical education, health and morals, and criticizes the male domination during the period 1869-1935.

Other authors reveal how art achieves political functions through sport. Juan Carlos Truan and Jose Vegas focus on the development of sport comic books in Spain from 1883, through the 20th century wars and censorship, until the 1990s. Frédéric Delaive compares famous European and American painters who depicted sporting scenes, especially rowing and water landscapes. These differences, Delaive notes, are very important as historical sources of sport. Carmen Lúcia Soares confirms this claim by demonstrating the reasons why sport fashion changed after World War I in São Paulo, and discusses its function underlining the beauty of pictures, hygiene and efficiency in the developing world. A paper by Dónal McAnallen & Seán Crosson reviews valuable sources on the sporting and cultural history of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and Ireland in the early 20th century. These authors examine the sometimes problematic depictions of Gaelic games in newsreels, exploring the conditions of their production and reception in Ireland and by the GAA itself. In the same way, Annick Bonnet and Marion Fontaine analyze the role of audiences in sports entertainment performances in France through depiction of sports events in newsreels from the 1940s to the 1970s.

The visual also serves important communicative roles explored in *L'Art et le Sport*. Canadian scholar Stephanie L. Hamilton considers Plutarch's use of representations of athletic activity as a physical metaphor for the cultivation of mental strength and activity. Mike Huggins's paper "The Sporting Gaze. Towards a Visual Turn in Sports

History. Documenting Art and Sport”, shows the value of visual media for historical scholarship. He rightly points out that scholars have remained far too reticent to use such media despite the fact that sport has enjoyed a long relationship with visual representation. From newspaper reports to the silver screen, Huggins’s article reveals the richness and challenges these media present.

Bettina Kratzmueller reflects on the situation between the late Archaic and Early Classical periods in Greek history and presents antagonizing motives behind the interaction between reality and myth as well as written and pictorial traditions. Finally, Fernando García Romero explains the legendary boxing fight between Amykos and Pollux with the use of iconographic analysis and historical reconstruction. This symbolic bout represents an interpretive myth about the victory of civilization over barbarism.

The second part *Construction* examines cases of “building” a political perspective using sport and art. Robert G. Rodriguez and Allyson Flaster in their paper “Sports Metaphors in Political Cartoons” examine the role of sports metaphors in contemporary political cartoons by adopting a two-pronged approach. This paper determines links between sport and art in the political sphere through sport references within the metaphorical, allegorical and caricatured realm of political cartoons. Sébastien Laffage discusses the relationship between photography and sport through a collection of sports postcards. John McClelland’s work focuses on the function of the pictorial art of sport: instructional or pedagogical. Numerous pictures reveal the most important sources of our knowledge of the history of sport performances.

Sport as propaganda is also featured prominently in *L’Art et le Sport*. Iwona Grys and Zbigniew Pindor debate the subject of sport in art as propaganda in post-war Poland. Polish artists at some time changed their technique from social realism to open interpretation of art through collage and hyper-realism. Sport in Polish art is shown to have collaborated with social, political and cultural transformations. On the other hand, Marco Impiglia explains in his survey how the fascist regime in Italy in the years 1922-1943 used sport and physical education to shape the political values and environment of Italian people. Impiglia’s paper includes also fascinating analysis of the Fascist Art of Italy! John Allen explores Leni Riefenstahl’s genuine love of skiing and her less-than-genuine

relationships with those who helped develop her career as an actress and filmmaker. Trading on her physical beauty and sex appeal, Allen describes her relationships with men of physical prowess at political propaganda. Jakub Ferenc’s touches upon the media coverage of the Peace Race, a popular cycling race in post-war socialist Europe, and its role in developing national and regional identities. Although the work would benefit from more thorough references, it raises nevertheless a number of interesting questions about sport and political discourse in the popular media. David Imhoof devotes his article to the leaders and supporters who used sports as a vehicle to integrate sharpshooting into Third Reich policies through festivals in 1935 and 1936. Rémi Dalisson and Jean-Nicolas Renaud discuss artistic and sport festivals around the political ideal in France, which enhanced “integrative education” and served as metaphors of propaganda. Dalisson shows a deeper meaning of ‘putting in celebration’ of art and sport. Finally, Renaud describes the meaning of Francois Bocien’s painting ‘La Fête de la Navigation’.

Sport also allows different groups to identify themselves. Tanguy Philippe analyzes iconographical mythology and folklore in Irish culture in terms of meaningful conflicts and fights. Philippe underlines pop art as a tough trend in art and a component of mass culture. Sara Brady’s paper explains the sports and theater reality in contemporary Ireland. Sport was as a symbol of women’s emancipation, in which women could express themselves in the sense of freedom. It was also the main driving force of the feminist movement in the 1960s. The paper by Brice Monier, Reyes Berolin Cebrian and Angela Teja contains a metaphor of society in art, which represents an implied sense. The first volume ends with Cathal Kilcline’s article on the relationship between the Mediterranean Games and Nobel Prize writer Albert Camus. The author discusses relationships between sport, society and ethnic differences in colonial Africa to prove the importance of sport in postcolonial modern society.

The third part of the publication *Réalité ou construction? (Reality or construction?)* contains articles about works of many famous 19th-century painters related to sport issues and responses of sport historians to historical reality. Jean-Yves Guillain’s article examines the history of golf and arts devoted to the development of this sport in the United Kingdom. Guillain and Christian Vivier

present the themes of Gustave Caillebotte's paintings from the period 1875-1879. Christian Vivier and another French scholar Jean Nicolas Renaud discuss Gueldry Ferdinand's work and life, and Teresa Gonzáles Aja presents Pablo Picasso's works, especially those concerned with women in movement. In his painting of boats, water and swimming, the Spanish artist interpreted the desire to capture moments of happiness and moderately relate with his family as well as to represent himself. In the same way but in literature, Norbert Col analyzes literary and real statements about the art of boxing and national feelings on the example of the boxer Pierce Egan.

In the fourth part *Médiation (Mediation)* the contributors seek to resolve the conflict and reach an agreement between art, sport and society. Éamon Ó Cofaigh analyzes the movie "Un home et une femme" (A Man and a Woman) by Claude Lelouch to demonstrate a racing movie as an example of the sports movie genre. Sports movies are aimed to encourage their audience to uniquely identify with the main characters. In the next article, Denis Jallat outlines the life of Gustave Caillebotte in the years 1881-1894, when he worked as an impressionist painter and yachtsman. Jallat's paper is a reflection on the dialogue between painting sea images and developing sailing in France in his times. Laurent Beru discusses the strategy of cultural information and enhancement of art and sport commentaries in French newspapers. Beru shows the famous football player Zinedine Zidane to be the source of inspiration for the art world and to attract attention of the consumer media. Joachim K. Ruehl in "Athletic Sports and the Arts at the Much Wenlock Olympian Games" outlines the history of a famous British cultural event combining sport and arts.

Polish scholar, Wojciech Lipoński, in his work *Kazimierz Wierzyński and His Poetry of Physical and National Restoration through Sport* presents the poetry of Kazimierz Wierzyński named "the Polish Montherlant" and its extremely significant role in Polish artistic life before War World Two. Lipoński compares two works: 'Les Olympiques' by Henri de Montherlant and 'Laur Olimpijski' (Olympic Laurels) by Kazimierz Wierzyński, whose common theme is the poets' belief in the physical and moral restoration of their nations. Lipoński also skillfully captures the artistic pulse of a nation coming to grips with its identity.

The relation between sport and art also reflects technological developments. Manuela

Hasse and Cinthia Lopes da Silva examine the relationship between sports and photography in the context of technological developments at the turn of the 19th century. They study the relationship of sport, photography and the press, revealing social problems hitherto neglected in sport history. Tim Harte in his paper "Filming and Constructing the 'New' Soviet Athlete" discusses the prominent role modern athletics played in the films of the Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, particularly in his 1929 masterpiece 'Man with a Movie Camera'. Joan M. Skrypzak focuses on the athletics as an expressive process in the art of German artist Willi Baumeister, whose definition of sports related to art provokes viewers' visual and cognitive acuity to more effectively engage in art, sports and the world beyond.

Renata Freccero and Jacques Gleyse discuss aesthetics and art in the history of modern physical education. Thomas Clerc's work reveals post-modern art criticism on the example on art works of Gianni Motti. The main issue addressed in Motti's work is the question of definition of art.

The last article analyzes the contribution of sport to literature. Its author Valeria Gramigna focuses on three texts dealing with the relationship between sport and literature. Sport is a physical adventure in the process of body cultivation, and through exercise humans can overcome their weaknesses.

Rather than providing a new perspective, Laurent Daniel combines in *L'Art et le Sport* a brief state-of-the-field of art and sport in the last two decades. This collection's sharp insights and numerous contributors' critical opinions elucidate many of the intricacies in the field. The authors of the articles examine many assumptions held in the sporting community and again demonstrate their uncanny ability to see sport and art in a new light.

All in all, *L'Art et le Sport* makes a successful attempt to bring the history of art, sport and social reality out of the shadow of forgotten past. Those seeking a single, theoretical model for sport and the visual, or a tidy discussion of sport and art will be sorely disappointed as this publication is not for them. However, like the messy art world of mixed metaphors and double entendres that the authors so frequently explore, this work with its complexity and dissonance, reveals the real state of the field. Its international authorship reflects the contributors' diverse perspectives. *L'Art et le Sport* offers a complex

analysis of art and sport in the 19th and 20th centuries, reflecting highly effective cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural research. The contributors' insights into the current issues surrounding art and sport are certainly relevant to any serious discussion of sport. Readers will definitely benefit from getting acquainted with these two volumes examining sport and art issues, while hopefully the sporting establishment will at least reflect on well-reasoned points regarding the importance of sport and art in the 21st century. If one wishes to experience the complexity and richness of the combination between sport and art, Daniel's *L'Art et le Sport* offers this opportunity.

Magdalena Mańkowska
University School of Physical Education in Poznań,
Poland