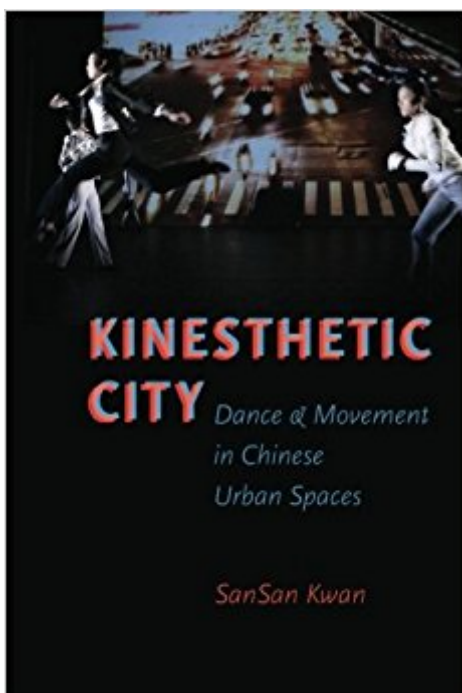


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Kinesthetic City: Dance And Movement In Chinese Urban Spaces



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

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Customer Reviews

"Kwan writes with a keen sensitivity to the micro-level kinesthetic forces of bodies in motion and the macro-level historical forces that shape place. The result is a series of nuanced and thoughtful readings of the politics of movement, location, and identity."--Anthea Kraut, Associate Professor, Department of Dance, University of California, Riverside "SanSan Kwan gracefully captures both the experiential dimensions and the larger significance of movement and dance. Her engaging study of choreography and urban space inspires us to think about Chinese identity in original, dynamic, and generative ways."--Josephine Lee, University of Minnesota "A fascinating portrayal of the texture of the Chinese city recounted from a novel standpoint, grounded both in an impeccable engagement with theory and a profoundly humane understanding of how the ordinary experience of the city is created." --Academia.edu "Informative and provocative, Kwan's analysis challenges readers to see 'ethnic dance' in a more meaningful, broader context... Highly recommended." --Choice "The book eloquently gives visibility to Asian and Asian American dance while expressing inherent complexities and multiple perspectives, encouraging scholars in the field to consider how we research, represent, and reconceptualize dance in our globalized world." --Dance Chronicle "[A] welcome addition to the fields of sinology, dance studies, and urban studies, especially at a time when these areas are being re-examined and even contested." --Dance Research Journal "Through bold experiments in kinesthetic ethnography, Kwan pushes existing boundaries for how we can think of dance-and, more broadly, movement-as reflective and productive of national, local, and ethnic identities Kinesthetic City offers an expertly designed, theoretically rigorous, and historically grounded inquiry into the production of identity and space through movement, demonstrating methodological innovation and multisited research." --Asian Theatre Journal "Kwan's analysis challenges readers to see 'ethnic dance' in a more meaningful, broader context... Highly recommended." --Choice Reviews Online "Kwan distinctly utilizes space theory to explain how bodies and space can be understood as mutually productive. Moreover, her description of concert dance and movement is detailed, vivid, and poetic at times. Kinesthetic City significantly contributes to Asian American dance studies, Chinese dance studies, and Chinese diaspora studies. The book eloquently gives visibility to Asian and Asian American dance while expressing inherent complexities and multiple perspectives, encouraging scholars in the field to consider how we research, represent, and reconceptualize dance in our globalized world." --Dance Chronicle "[S]triking for the way Kwan weaves vivid portraits of urban movement with research, socio-political analysis and dance. Through processes of visualizing, remembering and experiencing motion, Kwan crafts a deep reflection on Chinese identity and the politics and

ideologies of urban space." --In Dance" [A] fascinating investigation... at how certain Chinese urban spaces 'move', focusing on Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, New York's Chinatown, and the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles." --Thinking in Practice

SanSan Kwan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She has also taught at California State University, Los Angeles and the University of California, Riverside. She is co-editor, with Kenneth Speirs, of *Mixing It Up: Multiracial Subjects*. Her articles have appeared in *The Drama Review* and *Performance Research*, among other publications.

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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