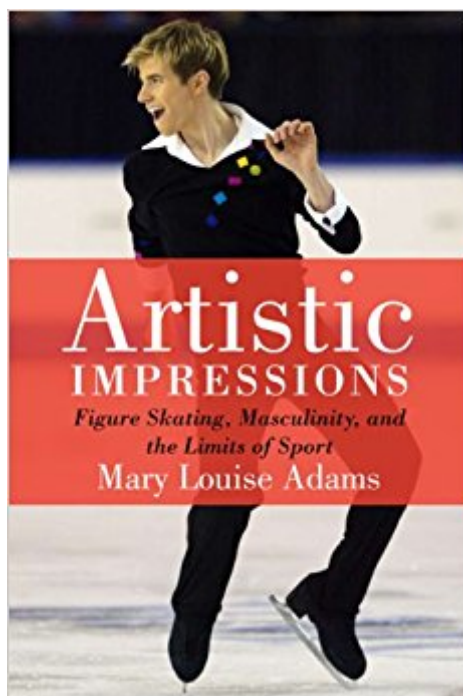


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# Artistic Impressions: Figure Skating, Masculinity, And The Limits Of Sport



## Synopsis

In contemporary North America, figure skating ranks among the most 'feminine' of sports and few boys take it up for fear of being labelled effeminate or gay. Yet figure skating was once an exclusively male pastime - women did not skate in significant numbers until the late 1800s, at least a century after the founding of the first skating club. Only in the 1930s did figure skating begin to acquire its feminine image. *Artistic Impressions* is the first history to trace figure skating's striking transformation from gentlemen's art to 'girls' sport. With a focus on masculinity, Mary Louise Adams examines how skating's evolving gender identity has been reflected on the ice and in the media, looking at rules, technique, and style and at ongoing debates about the place of 'art' in sport. Uncovering the little known history of skating, *Artistic Impressions* shows how ideas about sport, gender, and sexuality have combined to limit the forms of physical expression available to men.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'It was the movement to music that first drew me to figure skating, and it is still that aspect which fascinates me today. But like all young male figure skaters, I had to endure the social taboo of participating in the sport. I enjoyed reading Mary Louise Adams' remarkable book about the history of our sport. I was intrigued by how gender differences affected the direction of figure skating from the time of Sonia Henie to the present.' (Louis Stong, Skate Canada Hall of Famer and consultant; coach of World Champions Barbara Underhill, Paul Martini, and Kurt Browning)&#145;This book

offers an excellent history of the sport with respect to gender; Artistic Impressions should be a required reading for anyone involved in the marketing and development of figure skating; (Melanie Hoyt International Figure Skating Magazine; August 2011) Mary Louise Adams offers a thoughtful and complex discussion about sport, gender, and sexuality. Artistic Impressions is an excellent fusion of historical research and sociological analysis. (Douglas A Brown Sociology of Sport Journal, vol 29:01:2012) It is full of fascinating detail. I learned a great deal and was impressed at how engagingly Adams explained some of the specificities of the transition from a set of sporting activities being embedded in masculinity to one so strongly inflected with femininity. Adams succeeds in putting figure skating onto the agenda of the history of sport. (Kath Woodward Sport in History, vol 32:01:2012) Artistic Impressions is an important book and a long-overdue contribution to the history of figure skating. (Paul J. DeLoca Journal of Sport History; vol 40:02: 2013)

I thoroughly enjoyed Artistic Impressions, Mary Louise Adams' unparalleled history of figure skating. Her account of the sport's changing composition will take most readers by surprise, while her exploration of skating's gendered history breaks new analytical ground. Impressively researched and engagingly written, Artistic Impressions reflects Adams' in-depth knowledge and appreciation of both figure skating and gender studies. (Nancy Theberge, Departments of Kinesiology and Sociology, University of Waterloo)

Though written for a popular audience, the authors scholarly approach shines through. This is a fascinating exploration of the history of figure skating through the lenses of gender and sexuality. Well worth the read.

Figure skating is generally considered an effete sport, so readers will be surprised to learn that it was originally practiced almost exclusively by men. Adams looks at the issue of how skating came to be considered a sport for women and the effects this has had on the discipline as a whole. This is a matter of serious concern for people who love skating and fear that its reputation as a sport for women discourages young men from taking it up. Artistic Impressions: Figure Skating, Masculinity, and the Limits of Sport is the first book to take a serious scholarly look at how gender is conceived within the skating community and how this affects the sport. Adams succeeds masterfully in depicting the challenges presented to the sport by its artificially constrained conception of what constitutes masculinity and femininity. The book is well researched and its claims are well

documented. It's quite simply a treasure trove for fans of skating who are interested in this issue, as well as for sociologists and others who are interested in gender issue more generally. What is more, it's a good read and that is a rarity among scholarly works. I cannot recommend it highly enough!

Very insightful analysis of the development of place occupied by figure skating in the cultural landscape since its inception, in particular its evolution from a pastime activity for upper-class men to the competitive female-dominated sport it is today. In addition, the author presents a very complete and carefully documented history of figure skating, compiling citations from hundreds of sources spanning more than 200 years.

good

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