

Articulate Muscle at the Whitney Museum: Recognizing Bodybuilding as an Artform

by

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Introduction

A significant focus and theme of ancient and modern art is the human form. The study and appreciation of the beauty of the human body. The portrayal of the idealized human form has a significant place in Western art history stretching back to the Greeks, Romans, and Renaissance, and still continues to this day. The portrayal of human beauty was traditionally limited to body posture like sitting, standing, sleeping, and movements such as walking, running, and dancing. The human figure is one of the most enduring and versatile themes in the visual arts. Few art forms are not related to the human figure. The human figure is a common subject of visual art and the aesthetics of a young and physically fit human body has an undeniable universal appeal. Traditionally the study of the human form was limited to art forms like photography, sculpture, painting, figure drawing, literature, and fashion. However, in recent human history, from late 20th century up to today the notions of aesthetics and awareness of the human form have changed. Economic prosperity and opportunity have given rise to the recreational use of exercising, a sport that eventually came to be known as bodybuilding.

Just as an artistic discipline, bodybuilding is an art form that can be analyzed and examined. To make the case that bodybuilding is an art form in the traditional sense of the word we must look to the definition of art. Art is defined as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power (“Art,”def.1). Though the definition of art is heavily debated and has changed over time, all previous and current descriptions mention the common idea of having imagination, skill, and creativity. All of these ideas are applied and can be seen in the sport of bodybuilding. For the remainder of this paper

this definition shall be used as a guideline of what art is and shall be looked at. This shall be used as a criteria to judge bodybuilding as to whether or not it deserves the privilege of being called a form of art.

When judging a bodybuilder on their physique there are various factors that are looked at. Balance, proportion, symmetry, and anatomy are all inspected and considered when not only gazing upon a work of art, but a bodybuilder as well. The attention to detail and high scrutiny is put into every viewpoint when deciding if a piece is fit for a gallery and whether a particular bodybuilders physique will win the show. With each posing routine a bodybuilder can create different feelings and moods depending on the style of posing. Like other artists, some bodybuilders make a name for themselves and can create their own identity either through their work, personality, or a particular body part. Michelangelo is well known for his personal arrogance, his work the Sistine Chapel, and his brilliant sculptures like the David.

In comparison a bodybuilder like Arnold Schwarzenegger is well known for his braggadocious personality, charisma, self-discipline, and size. When Schwarzenegger was competing on stage the exhibition of his body was put in a broader context by the contestants that surrounded him and looked at by judges who scored based on aesthetics. Clearly, both ways a piece of artwork is looked at and how an exhibition is viewed by an art historian or museum curator have many similar parallels to how a judge and audiences see a bodybuilder up on stage. This paper will argue that at its highest stature, bodybuilding is not simply a sport, but rather a presentation of fine art. First, the paper will compare the representation of the human form in Greek, Roman and Renaissance Art, then, comparing the performance and movement on stage, training and body aesthetics, shown by dancers in ballet, and the final comparison will be

to the 1976 Whitney Museum art exhibition. With the historical background, it will explain the different time periods and how each time period had an influence on art and the view of the human body. By comparing the performance and movement on stage, with the training and body aesthetics of a bodybuilder to a dancer, these comparisons will show how these endeavors are similar. Finally, the 1976 Whitney Museum art exhibition brings together the previous two and shows how the public and art world reacted to this exhibition. These three examples will show the parallels that bodybuilding has and will be compared and put side by side with the arts. This layout will be used in order to form a more perfect understanding of why bodybuilding deserves the privilege of being called a form of art.

Bodybuilding As Visual Art

A successful bodybuilder's goal is to create three-dimensional art that presents the human body in its most refined and muscled form. They hoped to capture the image of superhuman greatness that the Greeks and Romans could only dream of. Like any artist, it takes years and years of hard work, dedication, and training in order to make a masterpiece. What these people have done is use their body as a canvas to grow and mold their physique into top form for all to see.

George Butler the Co Author of the book and director of the film *Pumping Iron* stated that

"If you go to the Metropolitan Museum, or if you go to any of the great museums of Europe you will find pieces of sculpture that thousands and thousands of people are going to see for three, four hundred years what they admire as an item of considerable beauty. But when that piece of a sculpture turns into the flesh people are somehow frighten by it and I think that gets to do with the fact that bodybuilding, as an art form at this time, is so profoundly original and so far ahead of its time that people aren't ready of it yet "(*"RARE 1977 SPECIAL REPORT"*).

The earliest recorded history of bodybuilding dates back to ancient Greece, who existed from 2,500 to 200 B.C, physical fitness was held in the highest of regards and the appreciation of the human body and focus on health and fitness were unparalleled. Professors Lance C. Dalleck and Len Kravitz states that “the Greeks believed that development on the body was equally as important as development on the mind. Facilitating the growth of fitness were Greek medical practitioners such as Hereticus, Hippocrates and Galen"(Dalleck, MS, and Kravtyiz PHD 2). Greek and Renaissance work like Farnese Hercules, David, and Vitruvian Man all depict humans and its mythical beings as strong and powerful. *See figure 1, 2, 3*

After the Greek empire came the Romans who existed from 500 B.C. to 476 A.D. It was during this time of conquest and expansion that the empire mandated that all citizens maintain good physical condition to be prepared for future military service. All men between seventeen and sixty were eligible for the draft and trained in physical activities like running, marching, wrestling, discus, and javelin throwing. Rome's emphasis on fitness and training resulted in having a strong society of fit people who conquered almost all of the western world, expanding far beyond the reach of the Mediterranean Sea. After the end of the dark and Middle Ages were the Renaissance, which existed from 1,400 to 1,600 A.D, this period was marked with renewed interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture and the glorification of the human body. The philosophy and art of the Greeks and Romans were once again discovered and studied by the people of Europe. Artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci glorified the human form through sculpting and painting the figures of antiquity in muscular and powerful forms. The human body, both male and female, has throughout history been recognized as beautiful in design and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The rich tradition continued in the works showed

the importance of physical fitness as portrayed by history's greatest artists. These ideas shown directly in the artwork displayed a beautiful, idealized, and perfected human form. As centuries passed our notions of aesthetics and the human form has changed drastically as our standard of living as improved, because of this it gave rise to the recreational use of exercising. Eventually, it became a sport known as bodybuilding. This sport takes on the pursuit of transforming your body to become as defined and as muscular as possible, and that pursuit is shown through a variety of poses.

Posing provides a way of viewing the body as a whole from different and contrasting angles, allowing the viewer to see the body as a work of art in its full muscular and defined state. Posing contributes to the work by showing the viewer the degree of balance the subject has achieved. A bodybuilding competition measures a subject based upon balance, proportion, symmetry, and full development of all muscle groups. These poses contribute to a work of art by showing the viewer that they have achieved balance, proportion, symmetry, and full development of all muscle groups. Having a balanced composition of all parts and symmetry between both halves, the equilibrium of the body must encompass overall balance and conditioning from the top to the bottom. Mass, size, shape, muscular development, and contours are looked at in relation to the skeletal structure in order to present a pleasing muscle size and shape while separation and definition is shown by the absence of body fat and the visible presence of muscle striations. Presentation and stage presence is decided by the overall aesthetic presentation and appearance, including grooming, skin tone, poise, charisma, and the ability to display the physique to its optimum potential. All of this is judged through a variety of poses:

front double biceps, front lat spread, side chest, side triceps, back double biceps, back lat spread, abdominals and thighs, and most muscular.

Facing forward, the front double biceps pose shows off the musculature of the bodybuilder's arms, especially the size and peak of the bodybuilder's biceps and the front lat spread pose allows the bodybuilder to display the width of their lats. Looking parallel, the side chest pose displays the size and thickness of the bodybuilder's chest, shoulders, arms, and forearms from the side, in addition the side tricep pose displays the bodybuilder's triceps as well as the size of the shoulders and chest. From behind, the rear double bicep pose shows off the bodybuilder's size and separation of their arms from the rear, particularly their biceps mass and peak. This pose also shows off the thickness and definition of the bodybuilder's back muscles. The abdominals and thighs pose shows the development and definition of the bodybuilder's abs, and quadriceps muscles. Finally, the most muscular pose displays overall muscularity from the front, including the mass and definition of the bodybuilder's traps, shoulders, chest, arms, forearms, abs, quadriceps, and calves. *See figures 4, 5, 6, 7*

This historical background on fitness & views of the body that were made at the time shows how important the ideas about fitness and the body played out in the artworks that were made during each of these eras. As shown through the art of the Greeks and Romans the human body, both male and female, has been recognized as beautiful in design and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Having such a rich tradition in the works that were created shows the kind of importance that physical fitness had as well as the high regard that the body was viewed with. These ideas were all shown directly in the artwork that was being made as it was focused on displaying and praising an idealized and perfected human form. The significance of this

historical background of Greek, Roman, and Renaissance art is to show that those who do partake in this sport are in a sense living, breathing works of art. Through the integration of these images into this text this helps demonstrate that bodybuilders are not just mindlessly picking up weights and working out all the time, but rather they are both the marble and the sculptor.

As shown with the historical background the human body in art is a central theme that has been explored heavily. With the poses that the bodybuilder displays on stage, certain key factors that the judges look for are taken into account: balance, proportion and symmetry, mass, size and shape, separation and definition, presentation and stage presence. All of these factors were looked at by the panel of judges in order to see who is the winner of a competition and who is deemed the best out of all those on stage. It is through the poses and visual comparison to Greeks, Romans, and Renaissance sculptures that make bodybuilding an artform.

Bodybuilding As Dance

Just as bodybuilding can be compared to ancient sculpture, it can also be compared to the artform of ballet. Beyond the movement involved in both art forms, bodybuilding and ballet share a specificity regarding the aesthetic of the body and the training required to achieve that aesthetic. The endeavors of bodybuilding and ballet both demonstrate balance, control, and alignment all while being mindful of the body's shape simultaneously presenting fluidity and rhythm. Through their performance and movement on stage, visual appearance, and training they both have a lot more in common than one might think. The appearance as well as the physical demands on the body that each individual athlete endures in training and on stage requires time, patience, and effort in order to master each individual crafts. Beyond the

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The posing techniques in ballet and in bodybuilding are a foundation that has to be maintained to being prepared on stage. The posing and transitions require hours of practice in order to achieve proper posture, flexibility, alignment, and mobility. For both the bodybuilder and dancer, this is needed to display the peak capacity of their technique. Both require being fully aware of their footwork and weight placement during their posing routine. This is the key that can set a bodybuilder apart from the rest of the lineup and set the dancer up to move swiftly across the stage. Seamlessly flowing from movement to movement with elegance and grace, proper posing can show the audience perfect presentation of the form and project the body as a living, breathing work of art.

Ballet is defined as “a classical dance form demanding grace and precision and employing formalized steps and gestures set in intricate, flowing patterns to create expression through movement” (“Ballet,” def.1). Although different than ballet in technique when posing on stage, a bodybuilder directs his or her figure in a similar fashion and like ballet its beauty is created through the movement of the human body. With fluidity and elegance, these transitions can show off the figure that the bodybuilder worked so hard to achieve. It is through posing that the bodybuilder can communicate directly with the audience. All of the hard work, strain, and sacrifice that is made shows that they have something to say. The emotions of excitement, intimidation, inspiration, and awe are clearly expressed to the audience. Elegant yet indirect hand postures, commanding dramatic shots, and charged facial contortions all combine to tell the story of passion, perseverance, and true grit. It is because of posing that their body can be shown

and be beautiful and pleasing while displaying their physique from all angles. No other bodybuilder is better known for his skills and techniques in posing other than Ed Corney, a fellow competitor and contemporary of Schwarzenegger that posed with him in *Pumping Iron* and in the Whitney Exhibition. *See figure 8, 9, 10, 11, 12*

When discussing posing, Schwarzenegger notes

“When you are on stage, you are not only an athlete but a performer as well. Bodybuilding is a sport, but it is also theater. Not only have to be good, you also have to make sure the judge has taken notice...Good posing is a performing art, and like all performing arts, it is often a matter of good timing...by having you a routine filled up a crescendo and saving the major wallops for last, your audience will be entertained and excited by your performance”(568).

Although bodybuilding may lack the charisma and energy that ballet holds, some may argue that there is no narrative, thus not making it art. However, not all art is representational as shown by artists like Jackson Pollock with his splatter paintings and Mark Rothko with his one colored canvas. The fluidity and the rhythm allows the body to shape, form, and mold itself into different positions. The same kind of thoughts of transforming and changing the body can be applied with the ballet and bodybuilder with how they train and pose on stage. It is this fluidity and rhythm that makes it a performing art similar to dance. When posing onstage the use of transitions, moving from one pose to another, mirrors how a dancer moves their own body. Each performer angles and moves their body to sway and thrill the audience.

Just like any performance, it would not be complete without music. Music is essential to turning the act of posing into a symphony as Schwarzenegger noted “ the faster movements contrast with the slower ones: the dynamic...constantly change. There are quick, dramatic movements, to be followed by slow, graceful ones. There is rhythm and there is a motion. And it is here you will find the highest level of achievement in bodybuilding” (632). Each of these

pieces are all geared towards individual posing routines to further complement the mood, style, and rhythm of the music. Choosing music is very important each individual bodybuilders choose a piece that fits for theme songs, like Chariot of Fire or Eye of the Tiger in order to fit their unique physique, posing style, and the tone they want to convey.

Ballet has a similar approach with its musical considerations, taking into account details like drama, pacing, and even the harmony of sound. According to David Pogue and Scott Speck “the music of the ballet is often written to mimic the action onstage...This music tells a story in a detailed, direct way...in a masterful ballet, nearly every note of the music corresponds directly to a particular motivation and action onstage.”(“Classical Music: Ballets and Ballerinas). A huge element of ballet music is strong rhythm, the music that is played often must be expressive to capture the emotions that are being portrayed through movement. The music that is shown in ballet allows the dancer to show a wide range of techniques and abilities that gives them the opportunity to move the audience.

Like bodybuilding, ballet requires great strength and muscle, however unlike the size and mass of a bodybuilder dancers traditionally prefer to look lean and strong. Having a focus on height leads to a preference for a dancer with long and lean arms and legs, with a relatively short torso, and a small hips and ribcage to help emphasize leg and arm movements. The dancers should have larger shoulders than hips with long neck to help convey the elegance of the performance This is conveyed by Elizaveta Mironova, the Manager at Victoria International Ballet Academy,

"Male ballet dancers must show strength and virtuosity. High, powerful jumps, quick turns, dynamism, and character mark out a great male performer. A muscular yet elegant physique is also crucial... Men focus on muscle strength, soaring jumps, and different turn varieties...world's most famous athletes incorporated ballet as part of their training. They aimed

to develop flexibility, strength, coordination, mental focus, and endurance. Examples include Jean-Claude Van Damme, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ray Emery, and Rio Ferdinand”(“Why Men Who Dance Ballet Have More Balls”).

Bodybuilding in this respect shares its similarities with the genre of plotless ballet that “use the movement of the body and theatrical elements to interpret music, create an image or express or provoke emotion” (“What is Ballet?”). As Bev Francis notes:

“The similarity between ballet and bodybuilding, apart from the artistic side of it, is the body awareness in ballet you have to know where each finger is placed, the angle of your head, the tilt of your head, the position of your shoulders...its absolute body awareness which is incredible training for bodybuilding because you have absolute body awareness of each muscle, how to move each muscle, where it is, and the basic stance is so similar...if you have the artistic part of the movement it brings another whole spectrum and another whole part of movement that I think is very, very important...every moment that you do become creative..and becomes more complete...It not just a...pose it is something that is achieved and something of beauty ”(“ Right Next Door: Bev Francis”).

With bodybuilding and ballet the athlete is very detail oriented on things like the angle the feet should arch, the placement of each finger, and the way the legs must be turned. This makes the performer extremely self conscious of every detail of their bodies especially their appearance. This mentality allows the athlete to achieve thoroughness and accuracy with the presentation that they show on stage. Schwarzenegger stated that

“Bodybuilding is about the maximum aesthetic development of the entire physique. The ideal bodybuilding physique would look something like this: Wide Shoulders and back tapering down to a tight waist; legs in proper proportion to the Torso. Big, shapely, and proportionate muscular development, with full muscles tapering down to small joints. Each body part developed, including such areas as a rear delts lower back of abdominals, forearms, and calves. Good muscular definition and muscle separation” (50).

Any visual based artist needs a visual reference of the human figure in a work of art as part of the creative process of capturing the human form. Much like the sculptures of ancient Greece, bodybuilders must sculpt and display their bodies in an aesthetically pleasing way. The Greek sculptors made it their mission to create art that showed the human body in it's most

distinguished and thoroughly muscled form. They hoped to capture the image of superhuman greatness, forms that only a few could attain. Now, modern bodybuilders are the sculptures brought to life, as living, breathing mounds of pure muscle that no stone figure could ever have.

Bodybuilding today emphasizes all those ideas that the ancient Greeks valued so much and they show all the weeks of work to be exhibited on stage through posing. As seven time Mr.Olympia Phil Heath said

“In bodybuilding at least things grow at different rates of time....When I first became Mr. Olympia people are like ' wow you look really really good' im like ' oh thanks' they asked 'what you do different?' I said ' I stopped training arms every week' there like "what?!" I go ' my critique always was that Phil Heath arms overpowers his physique it overpowers his delts and his chest. Okay so I was thinking 'if I train my delts and chest twice a week and then train my arms once every two, three weeks it'll even it out' and people will say ' no one wants to not train arms' yeah I dont not want to but in this game your trying to make sure everything is balanced ” (“ The Fighter and The Kid”).

Trying to get everything balanced and proportioned correctly is also part of the process. It requires honest judgment and harsh self-criticism. Hours spent looking in the mirror, not in vanity, but in curiosity and with the drive to make sure you can bring a complete package onstage for the judges and audience to see. In the same respect dancers too use the mirror to judge and assess their form and technique looking for flaws or shortcoming. Some of today's top judges, bodybuilders, and trainers all have their own take on different aspects of bodybuilding and how it can be viewed as an art form.

Steven Weinberger, head judge in the IFBB and co-owner of Powehouse gym, explains what a judges job is “what a judge does is the lineup comes out of the guys and we look, and we look for size, shape, symmetry, and condition ”(“Gifted”). Trainer Hany Rambod further explains “which basically means how big the muscle bellies are, how much they balance one another from your upper body to your lower body, your left side to your right side, and than the

overall leanness of the physique” (“Gifted”). Posing helps the judges see the body and allows them to critique it from different angles as Steven explains “most people think... 'how can you figure it out?', honestly when the guys get on stage once they start posing it all flows right in front of you its pretty easy to pick out ” (“Gifted”). This unique perspective of looking at the human form parallels with how a curator can find the right work to put in an exhibition. When being compared to the surrounding works the curator can easily pick out and find which is the best and decide which piece to keep and which piece to leave.

In order to achieve one's ideal physique, one must have to become an expert in understanding their body and how it responds to particular methods of training and constantly conducting an artistic experiment to see what methods will work the best. Both putting on a performance of endurance and holding the audience in a transitional, passing, and suspended place while depleted of food and water shows their dedication is on an almost masochistic level. The time and effort that is being put into each endeavor goes toward building a beautiful body and muscle structure that shows off power and grace. Both athletes needs to know how to present their best selves, hide their flaws, and leave an impression upon the audience. Learning to pose properly takes time, practice, and hard work. This attention to detail and practice allows them to display their physique to proper effect and show all the hard work that they did.

As bodybuilders training comes their coach and a dancers training is supplemented through an intense class syllabus. According to Atlanta Ballet

“Dancers take daily ballet technique classes and rehearse for upcoming or current programs. A typical day of work for a dancer starts early with an hour and half class to warm up and refine their technique. Class is followed by four to six hours of rehearsals, sometimes followed by an evening performance” (“Ballet FAQs.”).

With dancers there are certain exercises that need to be done in order to perform at their best. Through practicing cross-training and overall fitness their goal is to make it easier to practice in the studio, prevent injuries, and promote longevity. As Kathryn Boren, a dancer at American Ballet Theatre, said “I find that a lot of body-weight-bearing exercises are really beneficial for ballerinas. I do a lot of core exercises. That's one of the most important things I feel like in ballet technique. We have to be able to control everything from our center and have that stability” (“Watch the Extreme Workout Regimen of a Professional Ballerina.”).

Although it is difficult to mimic what they do in the studio and bring it into the gym dancers can target individual muscles and use that strength to help their overall coordination and performance. Strength within the legs, back, and core are muscle groups that are used often in performance, especially with the male dancer. As Keiichi Hirano, first soloist for The National Ballet of Canada, states that “male dancers responsibility is to support the female dancer and that requires a lot of strength. It's best for us to take as many positions possible to make any muscle that's weak to fire properly so that we have more elements in our coordination”(Take a Look at the Core Workout of a Male Ballet Dancer.). Basic strength training with light weights, especially in the legs, allows them to improve their poise, balance, suppleness, hip mobility, and coordination.

With bodybuilders they act as sculptors with dumbbells creating the perfect artwork with their body to be on display. But it is not being done with clay but rather with muscles. The art of sculpting marble and clay and the art of carving muscle actually mirror one another. When training that idea is kept in mind and is their reason to why they train, to work the muscles of the body with the sole intent and purpose of creating an image of beauty. Using different exercises

with machines, dumbbells, barbells, and free weights they shape the muscle from a variety of angles and use different techniques to sculpt and carve it. As great sculptors labor over their art, adding and subtracting materials to their work the bodybuilder meticulously carves, etches, and adds muscle definition and separation to their body. Hours are spent in the gym flexing and working the muscles in the correct manner to make this work of art unique in order to convey the most beautiful versions of themselves.

While the performance and movement on stage, visual appearance, and training that each athlete engages in are used for different purposes they both act as key elements in their overall portrayal on stage. Each element acts as a bedrock allowing them to improve their skills, build their body, and further improve their technique. Engaging in such rigorous routines help build strength and control. Each training session is a step closer to perfecting their craft with each having the end goal of inspiring different feelings and moods through their performances on stage. Each performance allows them to show off the creativity and skill that each individual has to offer to the audience by inspiring them with the grace and elegance of their bodies.

It is the end product of having a statue-like figure and presenting it on stage that makes bodybuilding an art form, viewing the body from all sides the viewer can see the development and prowess that these athletes present. The hard work, dedication, and passion that these athletes have to go through shows that, just like any art form, it is a labor of love. Bodybuilding at its highest level is not simply just a sport, but it is a display of fine art. It is the result of training, constantly posing in the mirror, with weeks, months and years going into preparing for those competitions, it is all for those fleeting moments onstage that makes bodybuilding an artform.

Bodybuilding As Performance Art in the Whitney Museum

The idea of the body as art is shown in its full potential during a very important event: The 1976 art exhibit at the Whitney Museum. The exhibit was heavily influenced by the 1977 film *Pumping Iron*. Shown in theaters in 1977, a year after the Whitney event, this film is a docudrama about the 1975 IFBB Mr. Universe and 1975 Mr. Olympia competitions. Its connection to the Whitney Museum is quite strong as without it the film would of never be finished and seen the light of day. While producing the movie *Pumping Iron*, funds for finishing this film was running low. So in response to this the director, George Butler persuaded the administrator at the Whitney, Palmer Wald, to organized an art show at the museum called: *Articulate Muscle The Body as Art*.

Instead of sculptures, paintings, or drawings, things you would usually find in a museum, there was three bodybuilders on display shown as a live and living exhibition: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Frank Zane, and Ed Corney. In place of the works of art that are usually shown instead, these three men were the main feature. Like any piece that is displayed at a museum, they were being viewed by people from all sorts of backgrounds that looked eager to see this performance art happen before their own eyes. Performance art can be defined as a

“form of arts practice that involves a person or persons undertaking an action or actions within a particular time frame in a particular space or location for an audience. Central to the process and execution of Performance Art is the live presence of the artist and the real actions of his/her body, to create and present an ephemeral art experience to an audience. A defining characteristic of Performance Art is the body, considered the primary MEDIUM and conceptual material on which Performance Art is based. Other key components are time, space and the relationship between performer and audience“ (“WHAT IS Performance Art ?”).

The goal of this exhibition was to scrape up enough money through admission fees and ticket sales to finish filming *Pumping Iron* and to find potential backers in the New York City

Art crowd. Moderated by New York Times critic Vicki Goldberg and prominent art historians like Eisler, Matthew Baigetl, Richard Brilliant, and Mason Cooley they were all part of a panel to talk about art and art history as well as the human form in art. The representation of the muscular body in art what is a subject heavily discussed, as well as what bodybuilding is and how it compares to art. *See Figure 13*

The panel further discussed and debating the merit of bodybuilding, discussing the history of art, and compared them to the works of Da Vinci and Rodin. Thousands of people came to see the sight of these men posing on a rotating turntable for this unique, one-time event. They would hit poses, hold those poses and those who were on the panel would analyze and critique the bodybuilders as living, breathing works of art. The value of this singular incident lies not in its significance or the profit that was made, but in the result and precedent of placing the bodybuilder within the setting of an artistic atmosphere. The dichotomy of the bodybuilders presented on stage in ancient classical sculpture seem to be quite parallel to one another once put together side by side. With this event, the bodybuilders would become living sculptures as they were posing on rotating platforms while the art critics analyzed the aesthetics of the bodybuilding physique and compared and contrasted the bodybuilders to Greek and Roman sculpture.

The reaction to this exhibition was split, the academics looked down upon it while the crowd loved it. The judges were not part of this exhibit but rather played the role of analyzing and critiquing the bodybuilders that were on stage and giving their opinion about the history of art, the bodybuilder's physique, and how the muscular human form connected to it. "In the

question and answer period that followed, the three performers were asked about the connections between art and bodybuilding. Zane reflected that

“[My body] is like a piece of sculpture because like a sculptor works at a statue with different tools ... I do the same thing ... but my apparatus is different. I use barbells, dumbbells, and pulleys. ... I feel like an artist ‘and] my body is a work of art.” To which Professor Eisler responded: “... if you are a work of art, you had the disadvantage of having a bad art teacher because, to me, your poses are the personification of nineteenth-century camp.” Boos and catcalls ensued. Goldberg hastily concluded the program and the academics breathed a sigh of relief " (“OBJECT LESSONS: WOMEN’S BODYBUILDING AND PERFORMANCE ART, 1970S-80S.”).

In the world of art, this event was quite significant as it showed that the public was ready and interested in bodybuilding. For the first time this niche sport has been brought into the public consciousness and because of the film *Pumping Iron* it is no longer just an obscure hobby. Being brought to the Whitney Museum gave bodybuilding a state of legitimacy and authority due to the new environment it was put into. The role that museum traditional play is to accumulate objects and materials of cultural, religious, and historical significance, with the end goal of preserving them. They act as repositories of information to protect and maintain artifacts for future generations. Museums collect, preserve, evaluate, and present articles of artistic, cultural, or scientific consequence for the greater education of the public. Because so much attention, expertise, and capital is invested in handling and preserving these artifacts, putting a work of art or having an event take place inside of a museum gives it an air of importance, thus creating a culture perpetuating in noble, refined, and sophisticated ideas of taste. With all of these cultural ideas surrounding the museum, presenting bodybuilding in this kind of environment raises it from just an obscure sport to a legitimate endeavor that holds great cultural, historic, and artistic significance.

Having the two different cultures of Venice Beach in California and New York City come together is a new exchange of peoples and ideas that have never come in contact with each other before. The high society of the art crowd in New York City has come in contact with a set of ideas that have never been brought up or discussed in the public, the idea that the body is art and the role of fitness and health in ones life. This event served as a guide to the art world to people who have never seen a bodybuilder up close and brought the idea of a muscular body to the wider audience. This event had an effect on the art world and what people considered to be performance art. Though the effect was not immediate the idea of the body as art has taken hold of the art worlds conscience. The film eventually did finish production it showed to investors, and those who watched the film, that the public has a keen interest in bodybuilding

The union of sports and arts came together at this event and showed how the human form can be viewed and admired in an artistic way. This exhibition proved that just like a sculpture or painting bodybuilding too can be viewed with the same rigor, analysis, and reverence. The combination of these two very different activities and schools of thought that allowed it to reach the mainstream consciousness and show the true nature of what bodybuilding is. As writer Henry Gilbert stated

“The acceptance of these rising-star bodybuilders by the artistic community at the Whitney served to demonstrate the curious nature of modern bodybuilding as a crossroads between sport and art by consolidating crucial themes of both artistic ideal and presentation and the physicality and conditioning of competitive sport. The synthesis of art and sport through exploration of classical aesthetic and athletic representation and performance, critical engagement with concepts of...physical perfection, and economic and commercial capacities has enabled bodybuilding to become a prominent industry in the mainstream social consciousness” (Gilbert).

This event showed that bodybuilding has the capabilities to make an impact outside of the stage. Combining the ideals of the aesthetics from art and the physicality of sports, once again it is shown that bodybuilding can be in the same league with the masters from the Whitney Museum and be looked at as a form of art.

Conclusion

As displayed in Greek, Roman, and Renaissance Art, ballet posing routines, and the 1976 Whitney Museum exhibition, the sport of bodybuilding has more in common with fine art than one might realize. Bodybuilding enjoys a rich tradition, as seen in many great works, that express the achievement of muscle development, symmetry, and posing. As discussed in this paper, bodybuilding appeals to an inherent human appreciation for harmony, symmetry, and rhythm.

Just as art requires dedicated craftsmanship success in bodybuilder requires discipline, dedication, and sacrifice. Just as great sculptors add and subtract materials to their work, the bodybuilder meticulously carves and adds muscle definition to his or her body. Similar to dancers who spend years training their bodies bodybuilders spend hours are spent in the gym, flexing, and working muscles to mold them into a work of art, completely original and unique.

Successful bodybuilders work hard in order to create the most beautiful versions of their bodies. It is the fact these bodies are beautiful and pleasing to the eye that makes this endeavor a form of art. As 1983 Mr.Olympia winner Samir Bannout notes, "You know this is a art form. It's a performance art. Really you're in it to make the body look beautiful. You want to have a strong but beautiful body. You're doing it so people can like your look...It's a beauty I always

appreciated" ('Origins Of Iron'). Clearly the appreciation of beauty in bodybuilding is crucial just as it is in art.

Similar in ways that the artist wants to please art critics bodybuilder wants to please and impress the judges. Beyond critics and judges the audience is a key part of both the experience of art and the experience of bodybuilding. Both bodybuilding and art can evoke emotions from its audiences. Calling something art it romanticizes it and places it on a higher pedestal, giving it an air of prestige and sophistication. Seeing bodybuilding as art changes how art can be categorized and defined by transforming the idea of what art is and creating openings for other forms of creativity pertaining to the human body. It matters to call bodybuilding an art form because not only is it rebelling against the established rules and conventions of the art world, but it also opens up an entirely new audience and exposes them to ideas they have never encountered before.

Bodybuilding is not merely a sport; it is an artform. Throughout time, the representation of the human body has been a vehicle for understanding the human condition. The human form's prominence and recurrence in art history across a multitude of mediums reveals the importance and the reverence that has been given over the centuries. Through supreme skill and imagination, bodybuilders have created an image of beauty that conveys emotional power and creativity. Therefore, the discipline of bodybuilding, deserves the honor of being called an art form.



Figure 1. Sosnovskiy, Sergey. "Farnese Hercules." *THE GALLERY OF ANCIENT ART*, Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale Di Napoli, 2006, ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=1991.

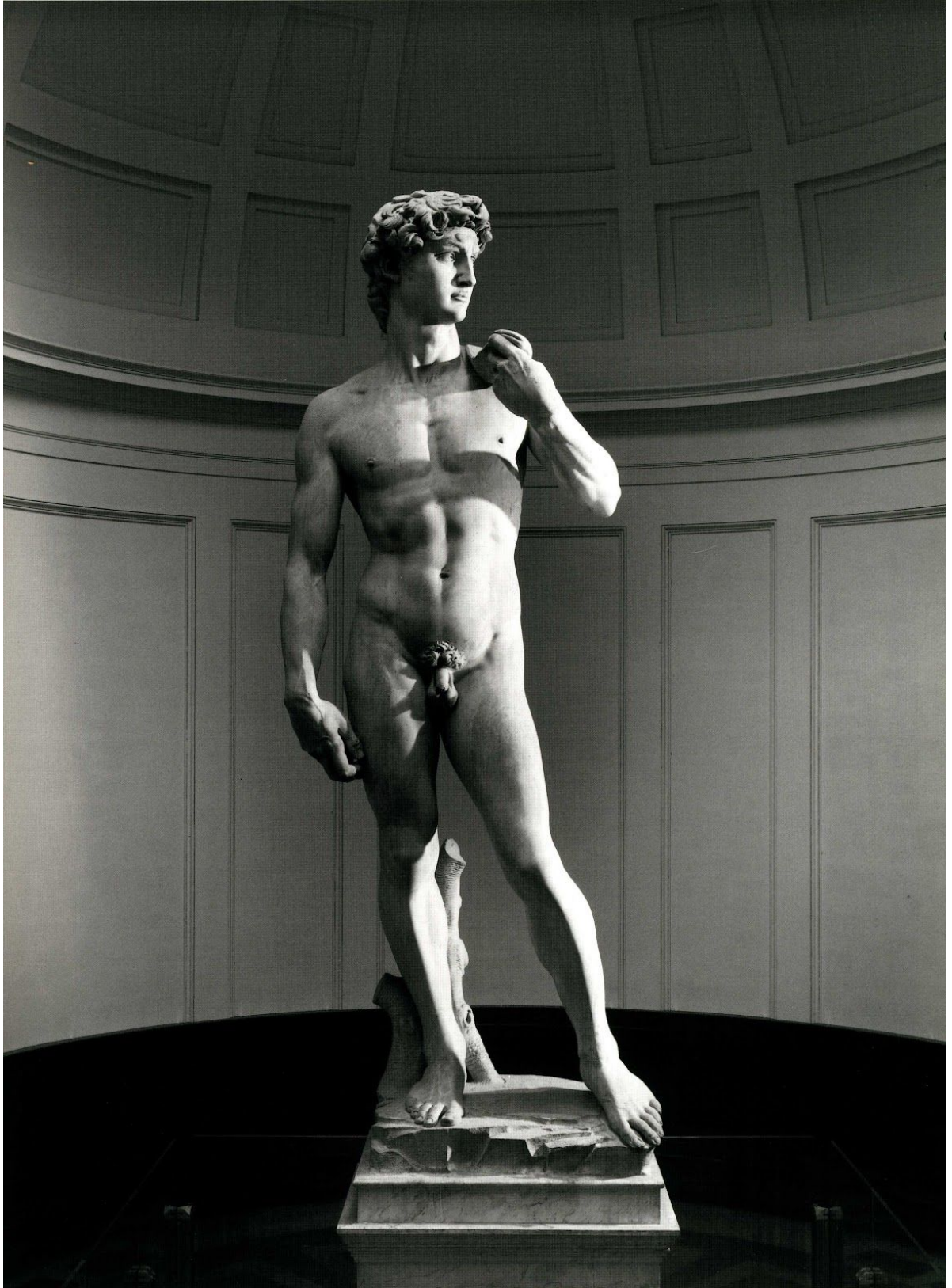


Figure 2. Buonarroti, Michelangelo, et al. "Michelangelo's David: from Symbol to Myth." *Michelangelo's David: from Symbol to Myth*, Royal Academy of Arts, Florence , 2006, pp. 1–1.

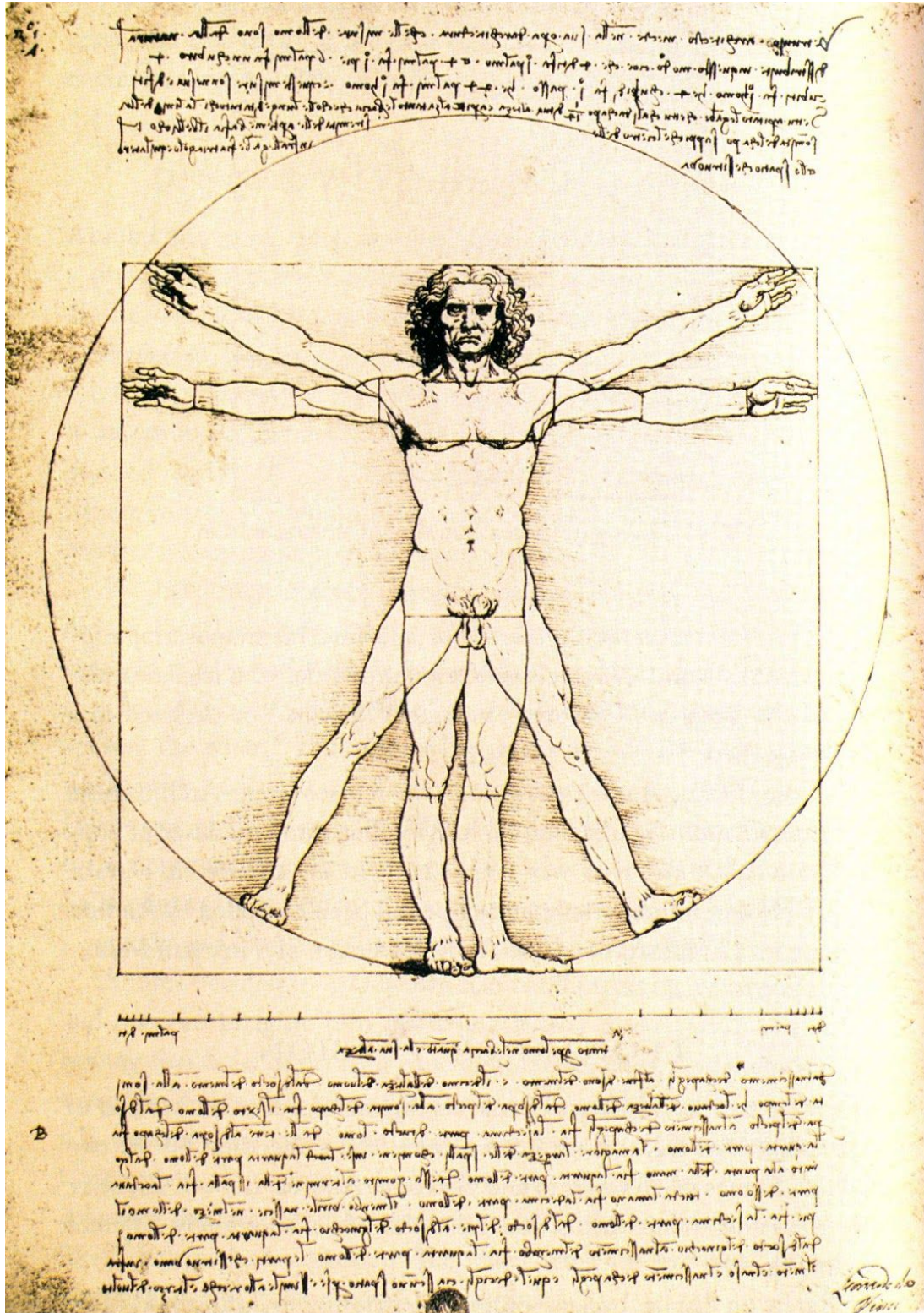
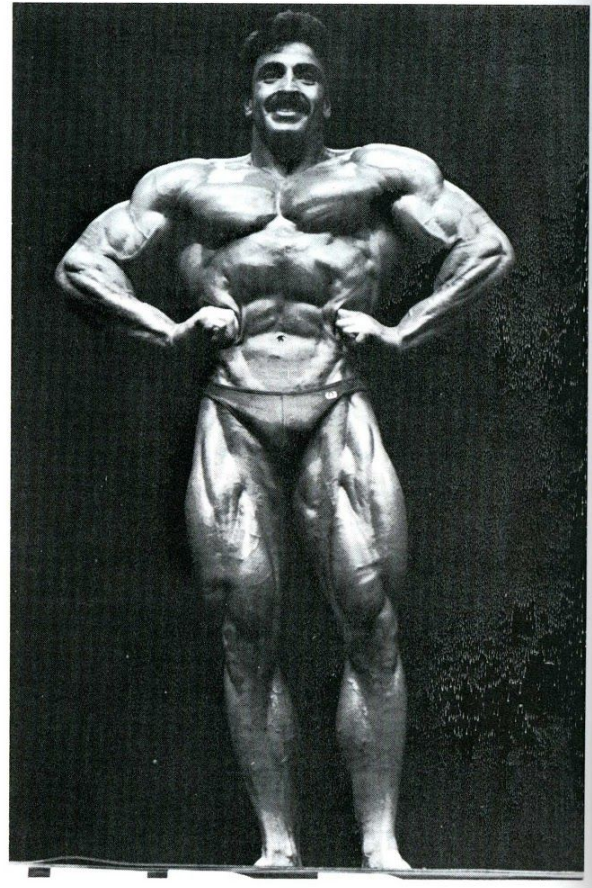


Fig. 44. Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*.

Figure 3. Isaacson, Walter. "Leonardo Da Vinci." Leonardo Da Vinci, Simon & Schuster, Venice, 2017, pp. 154–154.j

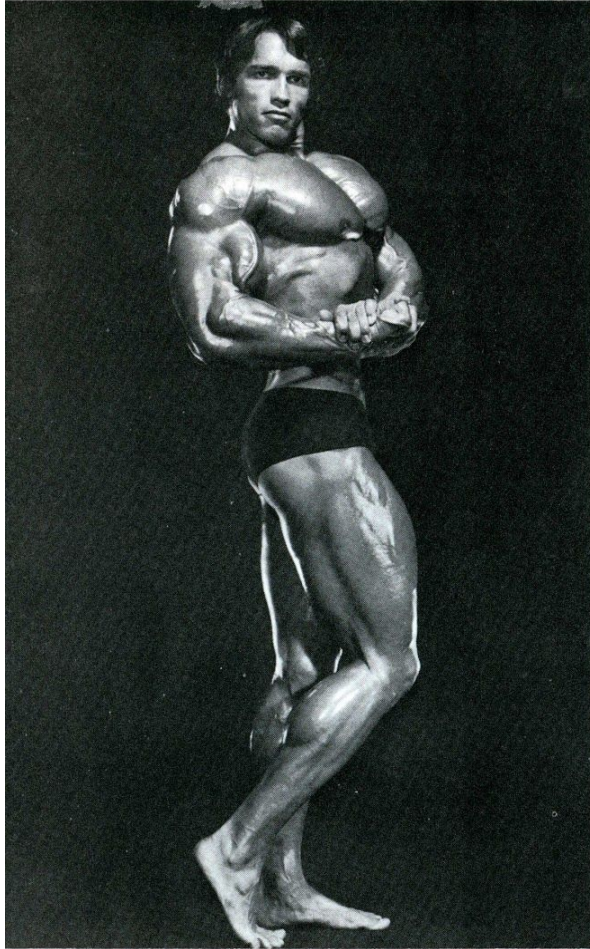


Front double biceps

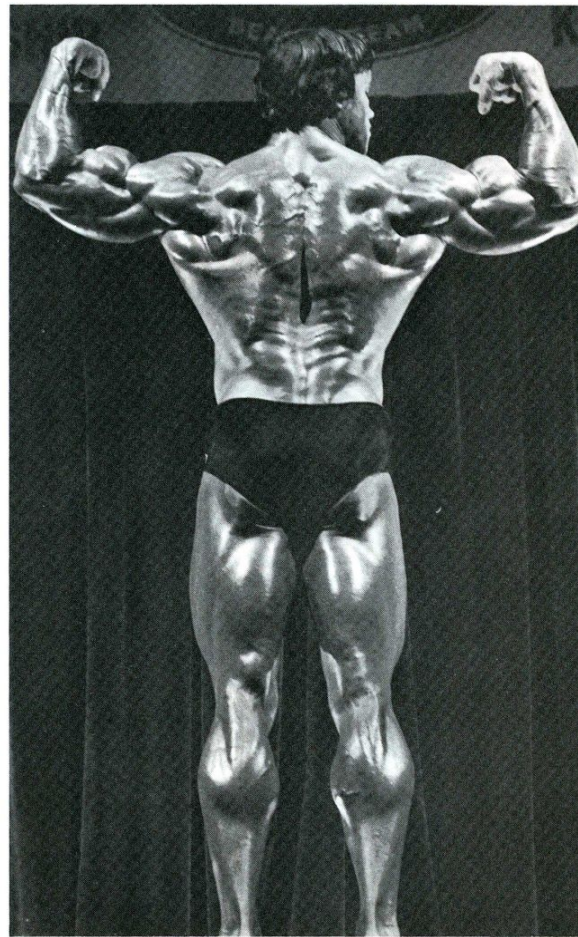


Front lat spread (Samir Bannout)

Figure 4. Caruso, Jimmy. *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised* , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 576–576.
Balik, John. *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised* , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 576–576.

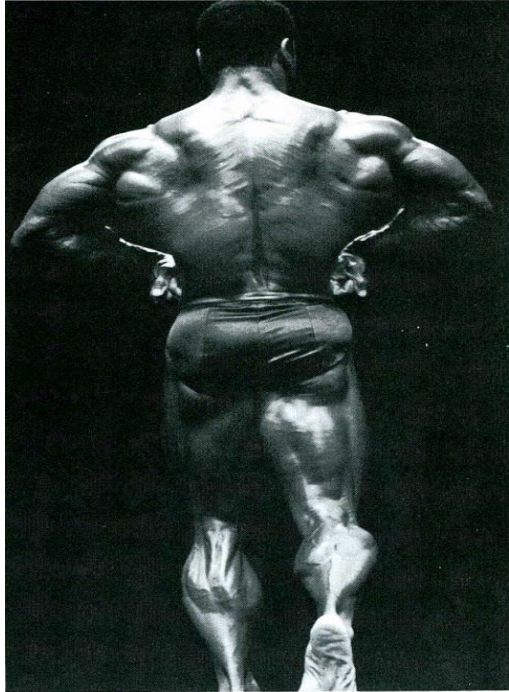


Side chest shot

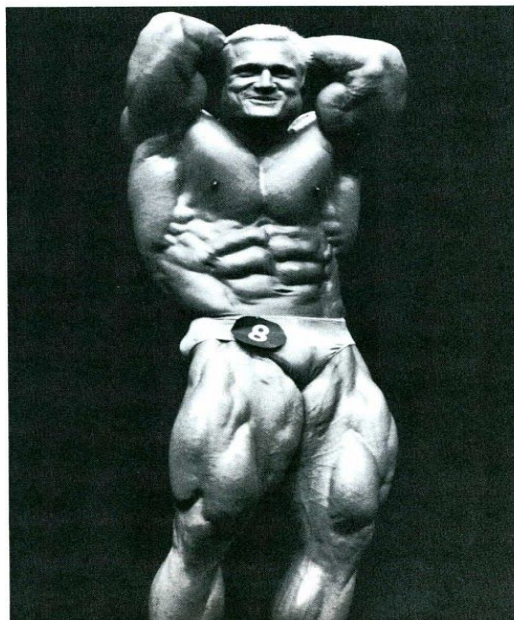


Rear double biceps

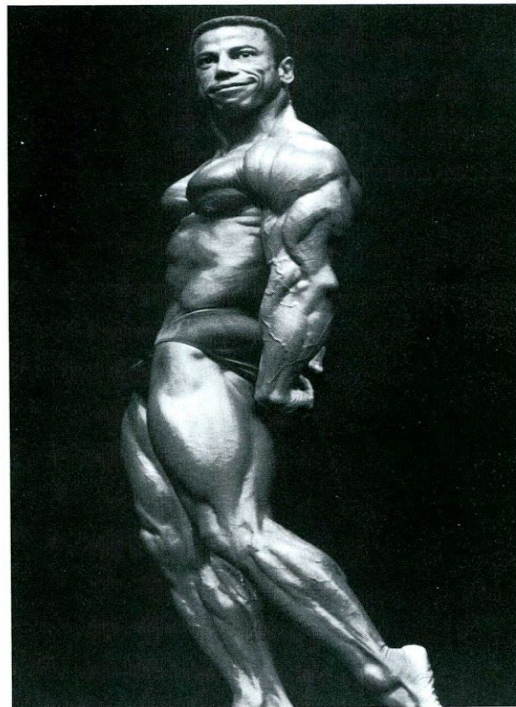
Figure 5. Caruso, Jimmy. *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised* , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 577–577.



Rear lat spread (Chris Dickerson)



Abdominal pose with hands behind head and leg extended (Tom Platz)



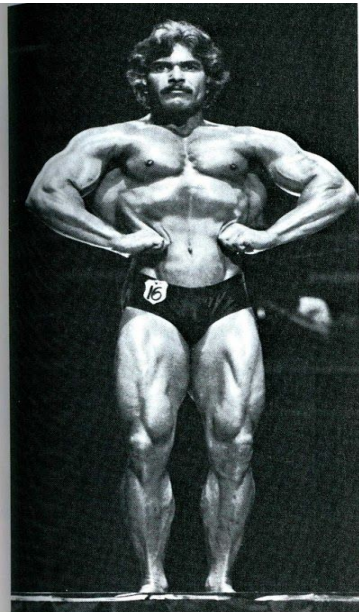
Side triceps (Chris Dickerson)

Figure 6. Balik, John .The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 578–578.

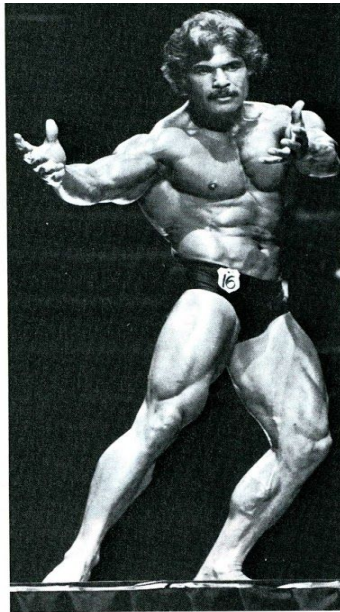


Figure 7 Zeller, Art .The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 625–625.

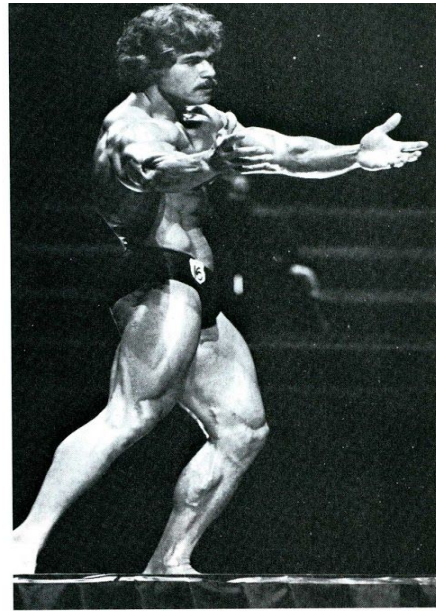
Figure 8. Balik, John .The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 627–627.



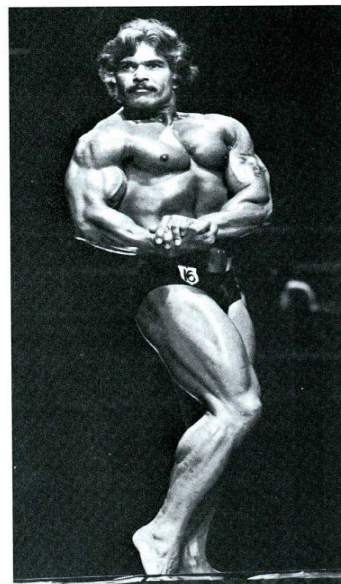
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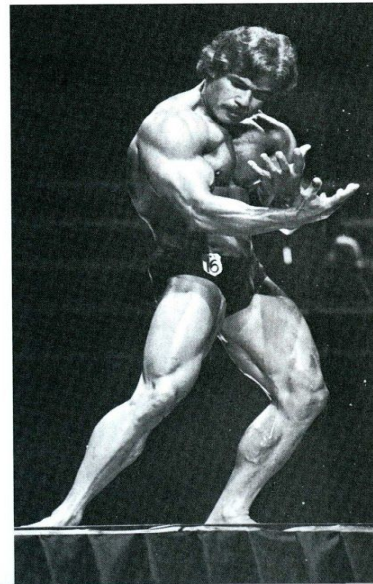
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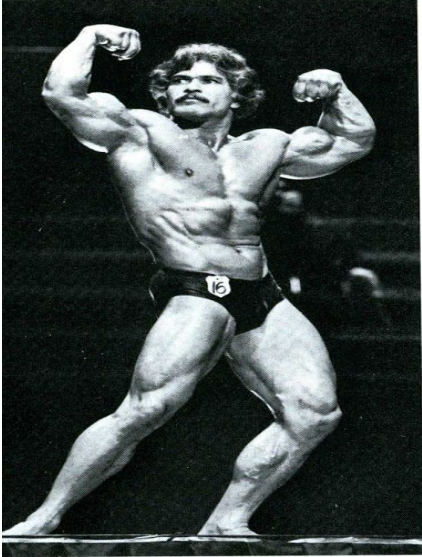


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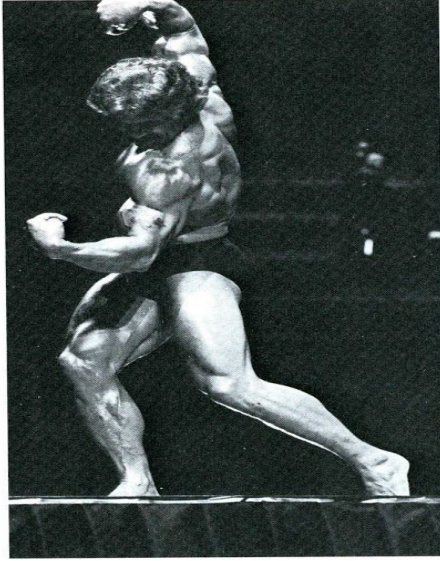


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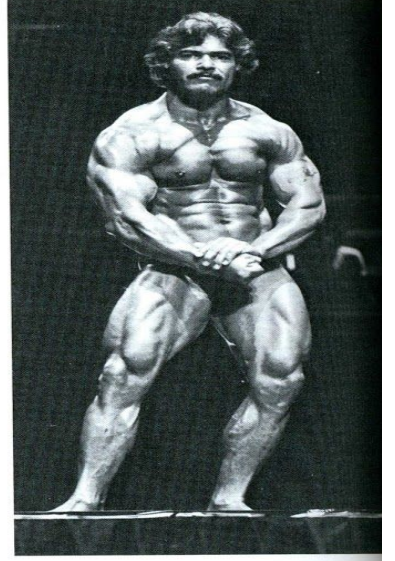
Ed Corney is considered one of the great posers of all time, not just because of his mastery of each individual pose, but also because he considered each transition between poses to be as important as the poses themselves. Corney developed a free-posing routine that was both beautiful and dynamic and that was carefully constructed to emphasize his strong points and draw attention away from his less impressive body parts.



6

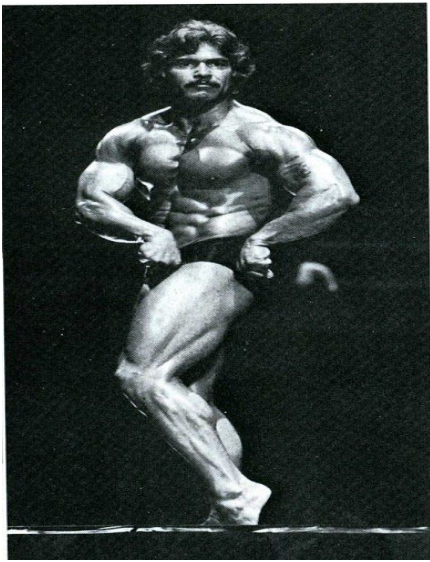


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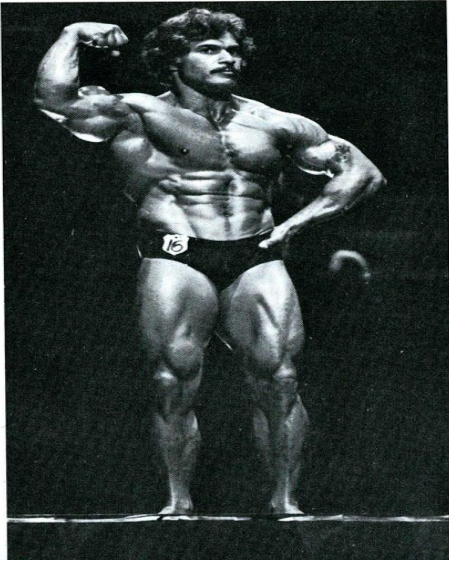


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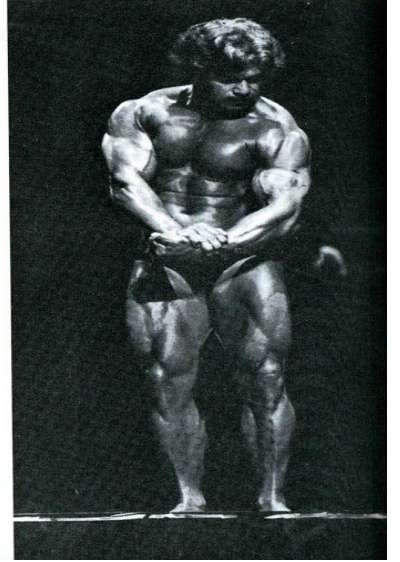
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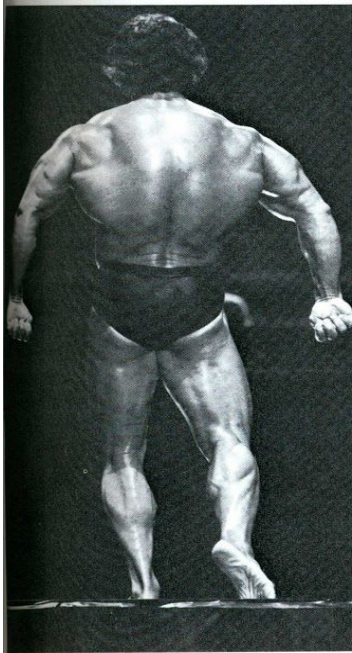


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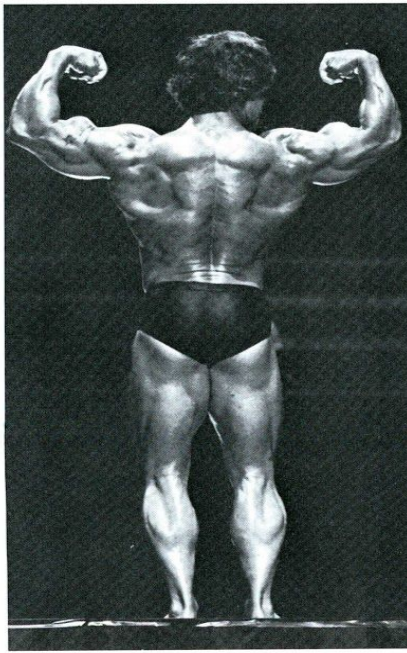


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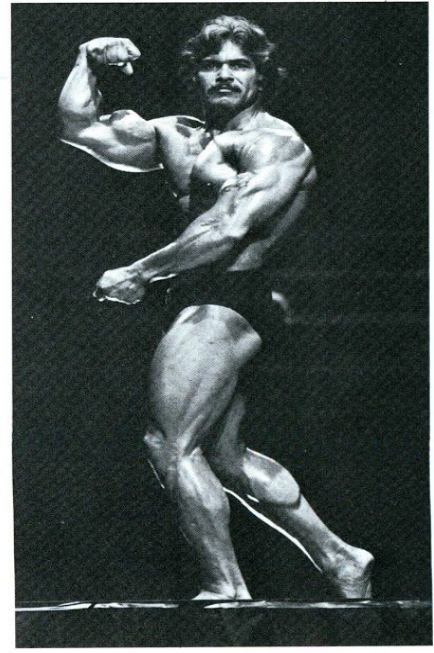




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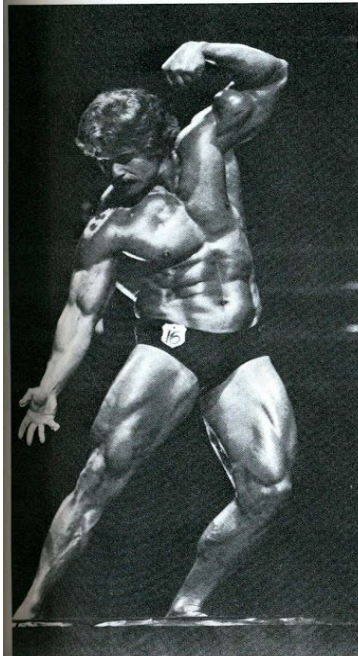


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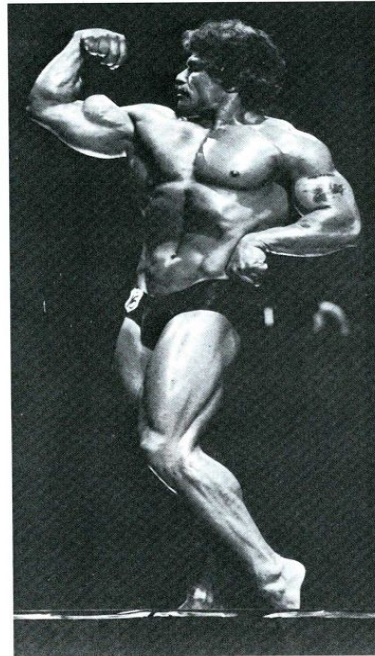


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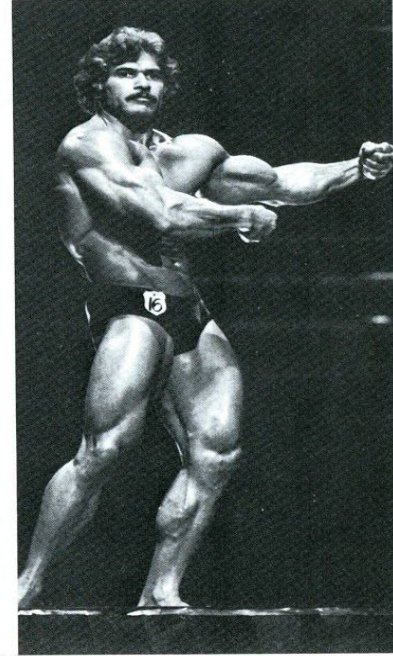
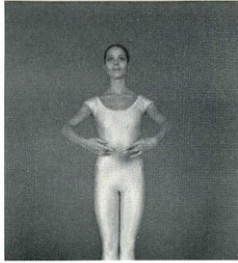
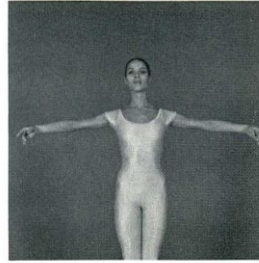
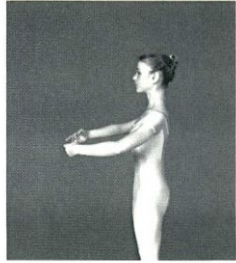


Figure 10. Balik, John .The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding : The Bible of Bodybuilding, Fully Updated and Revised , Simon & Schuster , 1999, pp. 629–627.

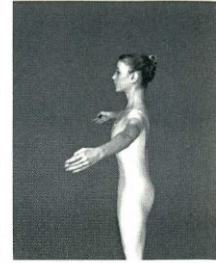
The Positions of the Arms



1st position. (In the Cecchetti method this is called 5th position en avant.)

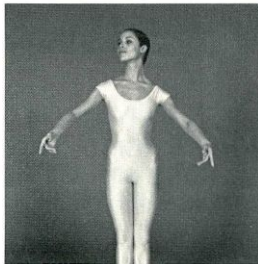


2nd position.

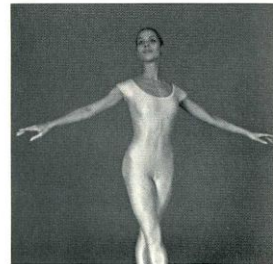


2nd in profile.

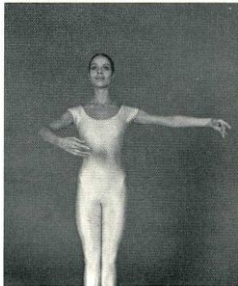
NOTE: In a commonly used version of 3rd position low in the Soviet syllabus, both arms are placed lower (at the level of demi-seconde) rather than at the traditional level, as pictured below.



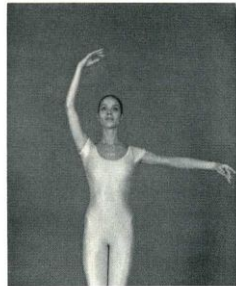
Demi-seconde (palms up). Note lifted elbows.



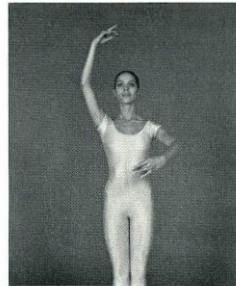
Demi-seconde (palms down).



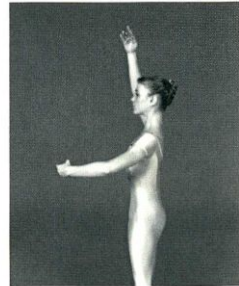
3rd position low. (In the Soviet syllabus this is called "small pose.")



3rd position high. (In the Soviet syllabus this is called "big pose.")



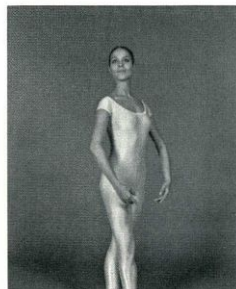
4th position.



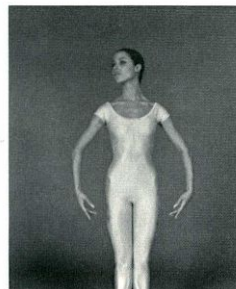
4th in profile.



5th position en haut. (In the Soviet syllabus this is called 3rd position.) The distance between the hands is equal to the length of the dancer's little finger.



5th position en bas (shown in croisé). (In the Soviet syllabus this is called "preparatory position.")



5th position en bas in the Bournonville style. The fingertips are outside the thighs.



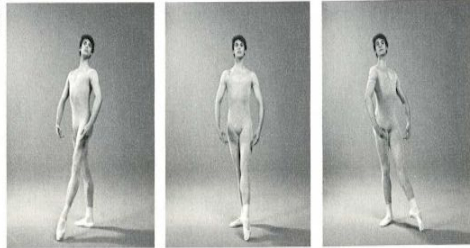
5th position en haut, in the style of the Romantic period.

Figure 11. Cook, Susan. "Classical Ballet Technique." *Classical Ballet Technique*, Board of Regents of the State of Florida, 1989, pp. 28–28.

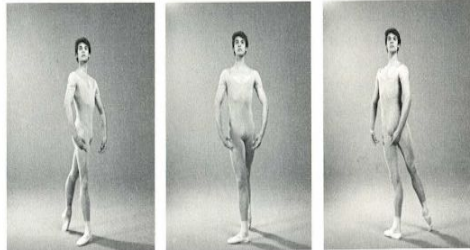
The Nine Directions of the Body

The positioning of the legs and torso and the direction of the head and eyes **in relation to the audience** differentiate the nine directions of classical ballet. At the discretion of the teacher, the arms can be placed in a variety of classical positions, several of which are pictured on the following pages.

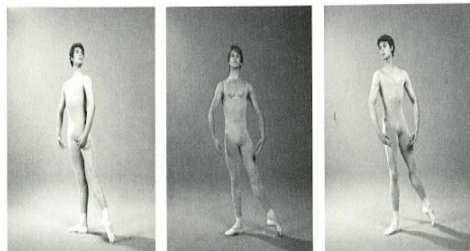
SHOWN WITH ARMS
IN 5TH EN BAS



Croisé devant. À la quatrième devant. Effacé devant.



Croisé derrière. À la quatrième derrière. Effacé derrière.

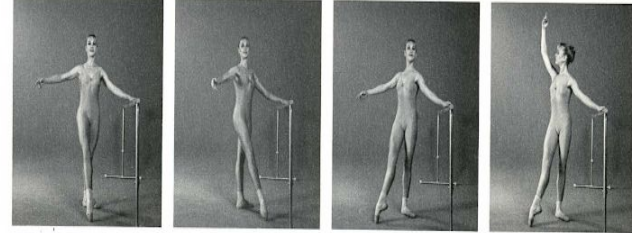


Écarté devant. À la seconde. Écarté derrière.

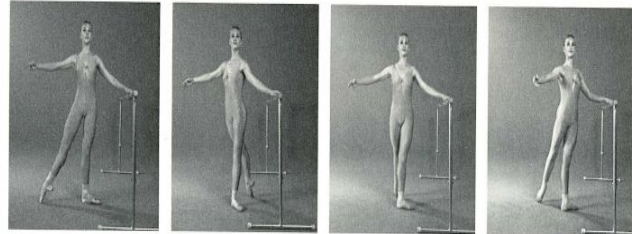
Using the directions of the body at the barre

Port de bras may vary at the discretion of the teacher.

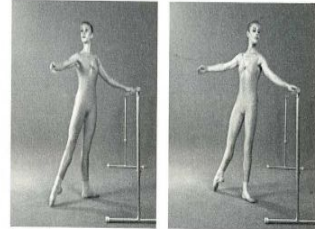
Working with the outside leg



Devant en face. Croisé devant. Effacé devant. Soviet effacé devant with head turned toward the working leg (shown with arm 5th en haut).



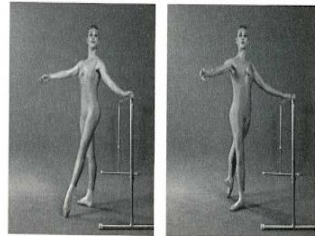
À la seconde. Croisé derrière. Derrière. Effacé derrière.



Écarté devant. Écarté derrière.

Working with the inside leg

The effacé and écarté positions are rarely used when working with the inside leg.



Croisé devant. Croisé derrière.

Figure 12. Cook, Susan. "Classical Ballet Technique." *Classical Ballet Technique*, Board of Regents of the State of Florida, 1989, pp. 40–41.



*Figure 13.*Erwitt, Elliott. “Arnold SCHWARZENEGGER during the Performance Series, ‘Articulate Muscle: The Male Body in Art’ at the Whitney Museum.” Pro Mangum Photos, Orange Logic, 25 Feb. 1976, pro.magnumphotos.com/image/NYC32286.html.

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