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TRENDS AND BUZZ

Pole dancing: for fitness, not about sex

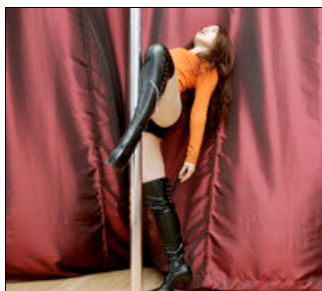
Posted by Jeremy Goldkorn, February 2, 2007 3:27 PM

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Pole dancing

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Healthy exercise

A lot has changed since the days when Tai-chi, Yangge (Northeastern Chinese fan dancing) and granny disco were the main forms of exercise available to urban Chinese. Beijing, Shanghai and other big cities have seen the arrival of international gym chains, yoga studios, salsa dancing classes, Pilates and just about every other exercise fad you could name.

But *The China Daily* has found a new Beijing fitness activity that is not usually associated with keeping fit in the west: pole dancing.

Yes, the dance form invented by American strip club owners is being offered as a way of keeping fit by one Ms Luo Lan, who *The China Daily* says "is trying to make exercise fun -- and not morally corrupt anyone". Luo's students back her up on this point:

Another student, Yuan Xi, dismissed concerns that pole dancing is just for bar girls or strippers, adding that her love of the pole had nothing to do with sex. "China is a very conservative country, and many people cannot accept this," said the 22-year-old. "Some men seem to think it's only about sex, but it's not. It's about dancing."

To illustrate the healthy nature of pole dancing, *The China Daily* article is accompanied by a gallery of 8 photographs. The article is here: [Girls cautiously pole dance their way to fitness.](#)

UPDATE: As a commenter points out, the story was actually from Reuters, apparently by Ben Blanchard, and that the article was on the website and did not appear in the newspaper.

There are currently [12 Comments](#) for Pole dancing: for fitness, not about sex.

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Comments on Pole dancing: for fitness, not about sex

pay attention to the source: it's by Ben Blanchard from Reuters, and when you refer to China Daily Website, it's not the paper. You'd better avoid misunderstanding.

Posted by: Tsuda | February 2, 2007 5:02 PM

I don't think this is the first time that your average girls, American or Chinese, got inspired by strippers.

Posted by: At the Money | February 3, 2007 1:43 AM

Irony headache!

"Some men seem to think it's only about sex, but it's not. It's about dancing."

And what's dancing about, again? Anyone? Anyone?

Posted by: Shan | February 3, 2007 2:47 AM

also, i think this story has been written about before, and before, and before...

Posted by: doug | February 3, 2007 11:11 PM

Keeping fit?? Who does she think she is fooling? Only in China would you have a training school for strippers that presents itself as helping people to "keep fit." Methinks this is exercise with Chinese characteristics.

Posted by: Eric Langager | February 3, 2007 11:16 PM

This seems like the kind of superficial and insignificant trend that will cause people to understand China even less. No doubt someone will soon say to me "I read that pole dancing is huge in China, Chinese people sure are strange, huh?"

My sister recently read an article that said that most Chinese women under 30 did not know how to cook. Turns out the author met some Shanghai club rats and assumed they were representative of China.

Posted by: Yan Xishan | February 4, 2007 4:09 AM

Pole-dancing as an exercise and not just stripping has been common in the West for over a decade. Rec centres and fitness clubs offer classes more and more frequently.

Posted by: Gardensnake | February 4, 2007 8:08 PM

I recently joined the 浩沙 gym that's opening later this month in the Henderson building in Beijing.

I was laughing with the sales girl about all the dance classes I wanted to take when she suggested I try their strip dancing classes as well. It took her a while to convince me that the gym was actually offering strip dancing classes. Perhaps, the classes are actually pole dancing classes.

time author and China hand Mark Kitto is perhaps most famous for being ousted by state-owned publishers for the That's magazines, which he helped start. But now there's something else for people to talk about when they talk about Mark – his new book, China Cuckoo.

Shanghai's Schemozzle by Sapajou : A series of cartoons crafted by Russian Army Lieutenant-turned-cartoonist Georgii Avksent'ievich Sapojnikoff, who also went under the artistic alias of Sapajou. He published cartoons for over 15 years in the North-China Daily News.

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Classic Danwei posts

- + **Learning about America from prison flicks** (2006.12): What Hollywood is teaching the world through prison films and TV shows like Prison Break and The Shawshank Redemption
- + **China's illegal yellow press** (2005.05): On the left is the front page of 'Military News', a newspaper without masthead, contact phone number or any kind of publication licence (required by Chinese law). The paper was purchased on the Beijing subway for two yuan, which is relatively expensive, as most of the city's daily newspapers cost only half a yuan.
- + **Ben Marcom Wednesday: Grannie Wang and the IT industry** (2004.06): There's a Chinese saying 'Grannie Wang boasts about her melons in order to sell them' (王婆买瓜, 自卖自夸). In other words, she blows her own trumpet, so you can't really believe her when she says the melons are tasty. So what does Grannie Wang do? Well, she can hire a 'tuor' (托儿) and a 'muliao' (幕僚). A *tuor* is a kind of tout employed to say good things about a company or product to entice customers; *muliao* is an old Chinese word meaning an advisor to a high official or general.

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Either way, I agree with Shan that nearly all forms of dance in the West and the East are steeped in sexuality. Few forms of popular dance classes in the West, however, are steeped in the idioms of the sex industry.

Posted by: Blake | February 4, 2007 8:46 PM

I recently started teaching a pole fitness class in Canada and trust me, when I was first offered the job my answer was no. Then I tried it...it is so empowering and such a great workout. Think about it, you're lifting your entire body weight with one arm. My opinion of using the pole for fitness changed after swinging around it once. The women in my classes say they've gone to gyms all their lives and have discovered muscles they didn't know they had with the pole. Empowerment is the most-used word when people are describing the feeling they get from it. From one conservative female to you, try it.

Posted by: Jen | February 20, 2007 3:23 AM

Jen, please never use the word "Empowerment" when describing pole dancing. If a bunch of men started dry humping and writhing around on a pole used for sexual exploitation you wouldn't think it was anything to call empowering.

[Comment edited for brevity and tone -- JG]

Posted by: Joshua | March 21, 2007 12:23 PM

Just because some people decide to associate pole dancing with sex does not mean it has to be. The things that are done in most pole fitness classes are also akin to what you acrobats do in the circus with ropes and material. Think about Cirque de Soleil! These people are amazing athletes and yes sometimes use a pole! OMG, are they being sexually exploited too?

Its all a matter of perspective and what's really empowering, yes I said empowering, about Pole Dancing is not allowing what other people think about it stop you from doing something you enjoy. Honestly its like playing on the monkey bars/jungle gym when you were a kid. I love it, my body is rocking because of it and teaching it is a lot more fun than any step aerobics or hi/lo class!

!!!!POLE DANCING ROCKS!!!

Posted by: JRain | March 22, 2007 1:54 PM

I'd rather that people were learning a **real skill** when they are at the gym (just in case, you know, their job as an er nai doesn't pan out) as pole dancing is a lot more useful than normal aerobics.

;))

has anyone ever been to Treasure Island in Beijing? craziest. pole dancing. ever. I have a lot more respect for those particular Russian dancing girls (and boys)

Posted by: juhuacha | March 23, 2007 8:40 PM

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