



# Venus with Biceps: A Pictorial History of Muscular Women

*David L. Chapman*

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Over the last one hundred years, the image of the physically strong, confident, muscular woman has been the object of derision, fascination, and erotic fantasy; she is often portrayed, in both photography and illustration, as a sexy dominatrix, sexless mannequin, or sideshow freak. In this fascinating collection of rare archival images from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, authors David L. Chapman and Patricia Vertinsky trace the peculiar yet fascinating history of muscular women in popular culture.

One of the battlefields in this cultural conflict appeared in popular imagery: posters, advertisements, comic books, magazine illustrations, and (most particularly) photography all offered outlets of expression for many muscular women. Until quite recently, however, such females were packaged for the general public as physical monstrosities, lesbian man-haters, kinky sex objects, or beautiful living statues. At the same time, many women, including those in the emerging female bodybuilder community, have had to fight hard to reclaim the image of female muscularity as their own.

Featuring some two hundred full-color and black-and-white illustrations, many never before published, *Venus with Biceps* is a beautiful and historically significant book about gender, image, social expectations, and female power.

**David L. Chapman** has written extensively on gay erotic photography and male bodybuilders.

**Patricia Vertinsky** is a professor at the School of Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia who has written four previous books on sports and gender.



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