



# The Fierce Tribe: Masculine Identity and Performance in the Circuit

*Mickey Weems*

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## **The Fierce Tribe: Masculine Identity and Performance in the Circuit** Mickey Weems

Mickey Weems applies overtly interdisciplinary interpretation to a subject that demands such a breakdown of intellectual boundaries. This is an ethnography that documents the folk nature of popular culture. The Circuit, an expression of Gay culture, comprises large dance events (gatherings, celebrations, communions, festivals). Music and dance drive a complex, shared performance at these events—electronic house music played by professional DJs and mass ecstatic dancing that engenders communitas. Other types of performance, from drag queens and concerts to contests, theatrics, and the individual display of muscular bodies also occur. Body sculpting through muscle building is strongly associated with the Circuit, and masculine aggression is both displayed and parodied. Weems, a participant-observer with a multidisciplinary background in anthropology, folklore, religious studies, cultural studies, and somatic studies, considers the cultural and spiritual dimensions of what to outsiders might seem to be just wild, flamboyant parties. He compares the Circuit to other traditions of ecstatic and communal dance, and uses his grounding in Afro-Brazilian Candomblé and in religious studies to illuminate the spiritual dimensions of the Circuit. And, a former U.S Marine, he offers the nonviolent masculine arrogance of circuiteers as an alternative philosophy to the violent forms of masculine aggression embedded in the military and much of western culture.

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