

ULRIKA, MAX, JANE & CO

Julie Cook

Ulrika, Max, Jane & Co is a special artists' book edition produced for: *Sex Work: A Cultural History*, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, Germany. A large historical and contemporary art exhibition on sex work where a collective of sex workers have been involved at every stage - 'nothing about us without us' is central to the show. In 1999 a small group of striptease artists formed a company called Olympia Moments Ltd and for ten years pursued traditional striptease on their own terms as an underground party scene. The events took place in the private rooms of London pubs, and you had to be recommended to go. The women organised the evenings themselves and made up their own rules.


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THOSE OLYMPIA MOMENTS
PAUL DAVIES

'There's a book to be written about the rooms above pubs - they are the moots, the workshops, the laboratories and rehearsal rooms, the alternative surgeries and secret conclaves of the English'. So wrote *The Sunday Times* restaurant critic, A.A. Gill, himself respectfully front of house, but inclined nevertheless to the shadows.

This is a book about some of those upstairs rooms, backrooms and basements, specific to the fringes of the City of London and dedicated, of an evening, to the function of sexual entertainment. Looking for sex (and I don't mean actual sex, just those vital approximations of it) is reassuringly indiscriminate, there is little to differentiate the urges of the sexes or their age. At eighteen I remember roaming the backstreets of Manchester searching for the stuff. There seemed little else of interest to look for as you went out in to the city, and years earlier I'd have been found peering in the hedgerows of suburbia hoping to find sodden, abandoned copies of *Fiesta*.

So discovering the phenomena called Olympia Moments in London was quite natural and satisfying in a way, some point of arrival. Each first Thursday of the month, Julie and I would grace the portal of another back stair