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Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity
Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Monday, May 11, 2015 on PBS

An Exhilarating Portrait of Elizabeth Streb, the “Evel Knievel of Dance,” and her Extreme Action Company as They Defy Gravity, Embrace Danger, and Shatter Preconceptions about Age, Beauty, and Art

"What does it say about the state of Hollywood action filmmaking that this year's most dashing derring-do transpires in a doc about a choreographer?"
- Village Voice

(San Francisco, CA) -- Catherine Gund's ***Born to Fly*** follows iconoclastic choreographer Elizabeth Streb as she relentlessly pushes herself and her dancers to break free of the traditional, earth-bound confines of dance. Guided by Streb's daredevil approach to movement in which dancers slam against walls, dive through glass, and literally fly, the film asks: Can adrenaline be a form of therapy? When does movement become art? Why do her “gladiators” risk injury or worse to follow Streb literally to the edges of buildings and the tops of bridges? *Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity* premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, May 11, 2015, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Elizabeth Streb and the STREB Extreme Action Company form a motley troupe of flyers and crashers. Propelled by Streb's edict that “anything too safe is not action,” these superheroes challenge the assumptions of art, aging, injury, gender, and human possibility. The creator of a movement form called “POPACTION,” which is rooted in the exploration of both physical and emotional human potential, Streb's work explores the intersections of dance performance and stunt-work and provokes ideas about how fear might enhance our experiences. *Born to Fly* is told through interviews with Streb and the fiercely loyal and dedicated members of her company, exploring questions of what it means to express your vision through someone else's body and how it feels to be the physical embodiment of someone else's dreams. Featuring footage that spans Streb's life and career, as well as her choreography sketchbooks, the film follows her life from her childhood in Rochester to her early days in New York City, culminating with a thrilling series of gravity-defying performances called “One Extraordinary Day,” which took place during the Cultural Olympiad leading up to the 2012 Olympics in London. A wild and exhilarating reminder of the joy of art, *Born to Fly* allows viewers, however briefly, to imagine a more vibrant and fearless existence.

Visit the *Born to Fly* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/born-to-fly/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, preview clips and



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more.

About the Filmmaker

Catherine Gund (Producer/Director) is an Emmy-nominated producer, director, writer, and organizer, and the founder of Aubin Pictures. Her media work focuses on arts and culture, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, the environment, and other social justice issues. Her films — which include *Born to Fly*, *What's on Your Plate?*, *A Touch of Greatness*, *Motherland Afghanistan*, *Making Grace*, *On Hostile Ground*, and *Hallelujah! Ron Athey: A Story of Deliverance* — have screened around the world in festivals, theaters, museums, and schools; on PBS, Discovery's Planet Green, and the Sundance Channel. Gund's most recent project, *Born to Fly* pushes the boundaries between action and art, daring us to join choreographer Elizabeth Streb and her dancers in pursuit of human flight. Her multimedia project *What's On Your Plate?* is a fun and provocative documentary about kids and food politics, accompanied by a curriculum, website, and workbook for families. Gund currently serves on several boards including Art Matters, Bard Early Colleges, Osa Conservation and The George Gund Foundation. She co-founded the Third Wave Foundation, which supports young women and transgender youth, and DIVA TV, an affinity group of ACT UP/NY. She was the founding director of BENT TV, the video workshop for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth. She was on the founding boards of Iris House, Working Films, Reality Dance Company, and The Sister Fund and has also served for MediaRights.org, The Robeson Fund of the Funding Exchange, The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School, and the Astraea Foundation. She lives in NYC with her four children.

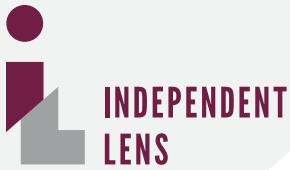
About Elizabeth Streb

Elizabeth Streb is an action architect, movement visionary and the founder of the STREB dance company. Born in Rochester, New York, in 1950, Streb was an adventurous child who loved to downhill ski — fast. After studying dance in college and riding her motorcycle across the country to California, Streb settled in New York City and began a decades-long investigation into the possibilities of movement and physics.

In 2003, Streb established SLAM (STREB Lab for Action Mechanics) in a converted garage in Brooklyn. With SLAM, Streb has created an innovative, multi-use space and a model of sustainability and community-building for arts organizations. SLAM serves as a school for adults and children, a rented rehearsal space for dancers, circus performers and other artists, and the home base for her dancers, the STREB Extreme Action Company.

Streb is a recipient of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Award (1997) and is a member of the New York City Mayor's Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission. In 2011, she was commissioned by the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Mayor of London to participate in the London 2012 Festival. On July 15, 2012, Streb and her company performed “One Extraordinary Day,” a series of daredevil events on landmarks throughout the city of London. In 2010, Feminist Press published Streb's autobiography, *How to Become an Extreme Action Hero*.





CREDITS

Directed by	Catherine Gund
Produced by	Catherine Gund and Tanya Selvaratnam
Cinematographers	Kirsten Johnson Albert Maysles Ian McAlpin
Edited by	Alex Meillier
Associate Producer	Jessica Ruffin
Music by	Adam Crystal

An Aubin Pictures production

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).



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