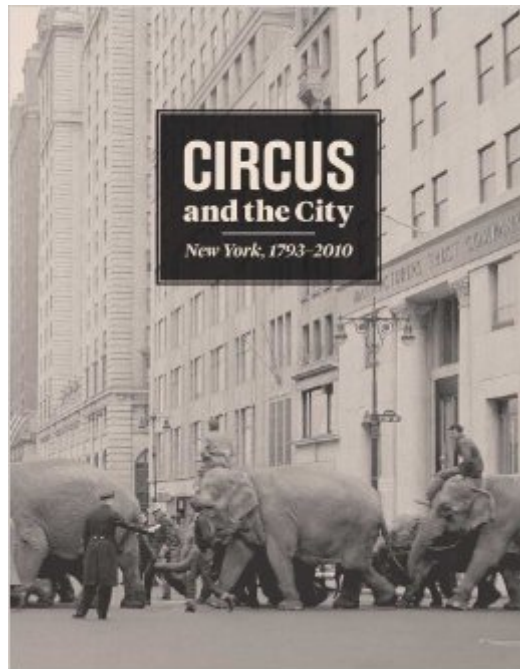


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Circus And The City: New York, 1793-2010



Synopsis

At the turn of the 20th century, the circus was the most popular form of American entertainment, and New York City was the hub of circus-related activity. Featuring superb archival photography, this book documents a wide variety of ephemera, images, and artifacts relating to the history of the circus in the city, from the seminal equestrian displays of the 18th century to the iconic railroad circuses of the late 19th century. Matthew Wittmann offers a thorough history of the circus in New York City, including stories of P. T. Barnum's triumphant entry into the circus business, the famous dwarf General Tom Thumb, and Jumbo, the African elephant that touched off a craze known as "Jumbomania." The histories of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, the WPA Circus of the Great Depression, and the Big Apple Circus are testaments to the enduring popularity of this American pastime.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I think that the Bard Graduate Center must be one of the most interesting places in the world today for studies in popular and material culture, and their publications series has not left me disappointed yet. This is the book version of an exhibit that was up from late 2012 through early 2013, and includes a 4-page chronology, 70 pages of textual history, a "selected catalogue" of 32 entries (each with two pages, generally one of text and one with the image(s); the number of items featured in this section is slightly higher as some entries have multiple pieces), a checklist, and an appendix with a

few historical texts about circuses in NYC. Like other Bard publications (at least all the ones I can remember) this was co-published with Yale University Press, and the production qualities are quite high: good quality paper, well printed and bound, well edited and proofed. While the history does indeed go through 2010, the main emphasis is on the pre-20th-century period. This is more than fair, since it will be less familiar to most readers, but anyone expecting as detailed coverage of the later 20th and early 21st century as for the earlier period would be disappointed. More likely to disappoint - and my one criticism - is that the checklist does not illustrate every piece from the exhibit. Most are shown, either there or in the selected catalogue, but a few are not to be seen at all. Included are not only posters and photographs - although there are those - but also some costumes and props, circus-related toys and art, even a couple of minted tokens. There is some coverage of the sideshows as well as the main circus acts. My favorite piece?

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