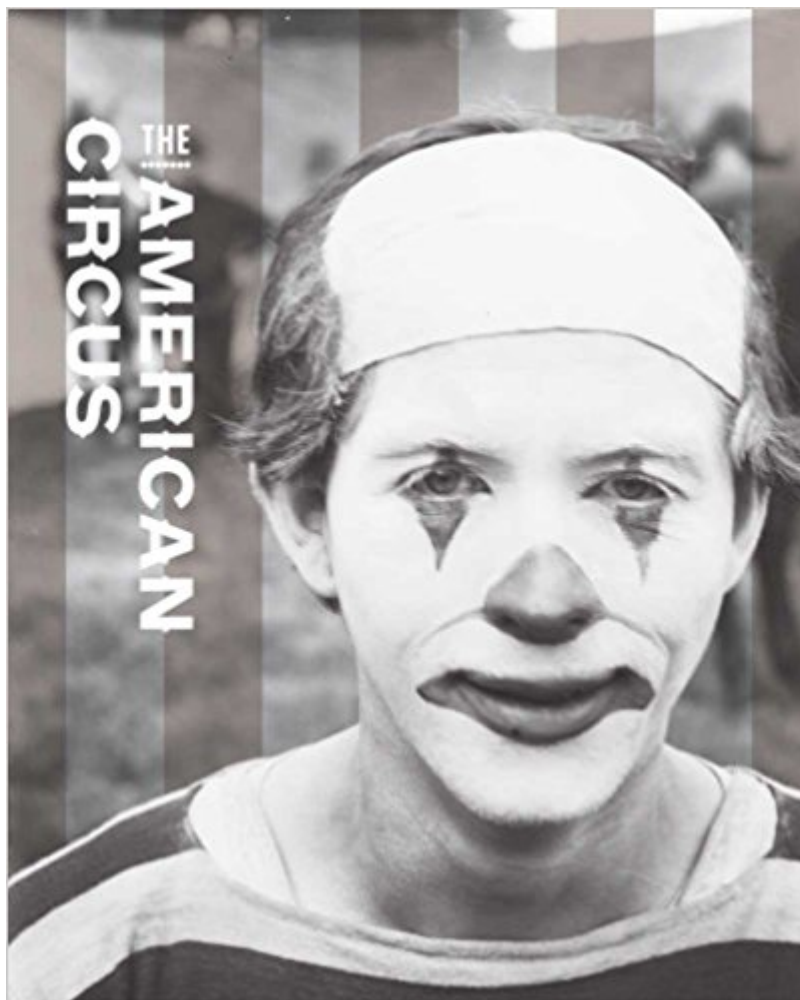


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The American Circus



Synopsis

The circus is a source of nostalgia for Americans of all ages, either from memories of attending P. T. Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth," or through the colorful evocations in many movies, television programs, and books. Interest in the circus phenomenon is unflagging, yet there have been few publications that look closely at how the circus's European origins were refashioned for an American audience. Lavishly illustrated and carefully researched, this volume explores how American culture, values, demography, and business practices altered the fundamental nature of the European circus, and how, by the end of the 19th century, they had transformed it into a distinctly American pastime. At the peak of its cultural significance, the circus was a sophisticated combination of theater and business, and made effective use of advertising, train travel, and hyperbole. The subjects in *The American Circus* reflect this complexity, ranging widely from thematic explorations of circus music and elephants to more closely focused studies of objects such as circus toys, souvenirs, and performers' costumes. The book also explores the dark and even nefarious side of the circus, and its associations with marginalized dimensions of American life and culture. With contributions from leading scholars, this stylishly designed volume aims to identify the salient features of an Americanized cultural product and to analyze its appeal for American audiences.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Beautifully illustrated, informative, and engaging.” — Glenn C. Altschuler, *Philadelphia*

Inquirer (Glenn C. Altschuler *Philadelphia Inquirer*) Selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Title

for 2013 in the Theater & Dance Category. (Outstanding Academic Title Choice 2014-01-21)

Susan Weber is director and founder, Kenneth Ames is professor of American decorative arts, and Matthew Wittmann is curatorial fellow, all at the Bard Graduate Center.

A massive, comprehensive and definitive tome on the American Circus...long overdue and deftly handled in this important catalog. Light on illustrations (readily available elsewhere), the volume addresses key points in American circus history - and is now one of the key research texts for the topic. Only complaint; essays are Bard heavy and could have been more inclusive with contributions by circus scholars and historians outside of the Bard community. A must have ... but brace you bookshelves...a heavy piece of publishing.

A well researched and carefully developed history of the circus, lavishly illustrated. If you saw the exhibit at the Bard Center, this will add to your appreciation of the subject.

I have not read this yet but it looks great with plenty of fabulous pics!

An outstanding study that shines new light on the Big Top in American history.

Ok book

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