

Appel à communications / Call for papers
Colloque international / International Conference
Images and Representation of the circus



*Imprimerie Strobridge, New-York. Affiche, les météores volants, cirque Barnum and Bailey. 1902.
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This international conference, taking place in Rouen between the Musée des Beaux-arts and the Hôtel des sociétés savantes, will address the theme of images and representations of circus. Its aim is to invite researchers from various academic disciplines - sociology, anthropology, history, sport science, literature, musicology, performing arts, visual arts - to discuss these issues.

Research on the circus is currently experiencing a significant growth. In France, the Collectif de Chercheur-e-s sur le Cirque, which was initiated in the early 2000s and focused on the emergence of the contemporary circus, is now structured as an association and brings together French and foreign researchers. In North America, other networks (such as the Montreal Working Group or the Circus and Its Others network), contribute to the dynamization of research on and from the circus. At the University of Rouen-Normandie, various research projects have been conducted on the circus and its spaces (Lefevre and Sizorn, 2004;

Percheron, 2007; Loret, 2012). The local history of the circus as well as its contemporary dynamics are indeed particularly rich in this region of France. Rouen was the hometown to the first permanent circus in France in 1797, on rue Duguay-Trouin, where the Franconi family performed. Philip Astley, considered as the founder of modern circus, came to Rouen in 1785-1786. The "Cirque de Rouen", inaugurated in 1894 by the Cirque Rancy and destroyed in 1973, was a very important performance hall for the city, hosting in particular the program of the Théâtre des Arts following its destruction during the 1944 bombings. Twenty kilometers away, the Cirque-Théâtre, built in Elbeuf in 1892 and renovated in 2007, is today a national hub for the circus arts (Pôle national Cirque), contributing to the production and visibility of contemporary circus. The building is one of the last permanent circuses to be seen in France, the only one with a ring and a proscenium stage.

The 9th edition of the event "Le temps des collections" organized by the "Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie" will host the exceptional collection of Jeanne-Yvonne and Gérard Borg "Cirque et Saltimbanques" in 4 museums of the area from December 2021 to May 2022: posters, photographs, paintings, costumes relate to the theory of the circus as well as manifesting its relationship with other arts

In partnership with "Le temps des Collections" and the new forms of circus festival "Spring" in Normandy, this international conference will take place from March 2 to 4, 2022. It is led by researchers from the University of Rouen-Normandie and the Collectif de Chercheur-e-s sur le Cirque. It will be an opportunity to question the power and diversity of circus images, as well as the narratives that still structure it today.

Since Astley's first equestrian shows, the circus has conquered a large audience, but has also inspired other arts (literature, dance, cinema, etc.) and influenced popular culture. We can think for example of its prominent place in children's literature but also in the world of games, or look at the collections assembled by passionate amateurs. Some of its emblematic symbols (clowns, trapeze artists, big tops, etc.) also seem deeply rooted in collective representations. However, the diversification of aesthetics since the 1970s has led some artists to break with forms considered as "traditional" or to revisit them, thus contributing to the deployment of other circus imaginaries.

The conference will address the evolution of perceptions, representations and aesthetics of the circus as well as their use and reinvestment in and by other arts or media (literature - including children's literature – performing arts, cinema, radio, games and toys...). It will also look at the power of the imagination and the values associated with circus and how they impact those who are committed to the circus (cultural operators, institutions, critics, cultural policy makers, artists...). Despite its heterogeneity, the myths and narratives that shape the circus can also be analyzed through the lense of their persistence and impacts. They create forms of attachment that contribute to maintaining a universe that makes sense, a "taste for the circus" built on a popular culture, the ideal of mobility, the myth of virtuosity and others. The strength of circus images will constitute a privileged axis for the discussions during the conference. Particularly the stylized images in children's literature for example, and how they occupy the imaginary deployed whenever the circus is questioned (by circus artists, by audiences ...).

The objective of this scientific gathering is to bring together researchers who are circus specialists and/or who work on other objects and fields in which the question of circus representations is addressed (staging circus, circus stories, fantasized circus, etc.). The symbolic universes developed in and from the circus will therefore be discussed. What defines live performances will be studied for what it generates (receptions, appropriations, judgments) and for the social representations that it contributes to shape, move and how we interpret them.

Particular attention will be paid to social imaginaries (images, values, symbolizations...) and their effects. This call for proposals does not imply any disciplinary or historical restrictions (although circus is considered starting from equestrian theater in the 18th century).

Several themes have been identified by the scientific committee and presenters are invited to discuss them or go even beyond.

- **The classic representations of the circus**

Circus images are crossed by emblematic figures that have a certain permanence despite their transformations: even today, clowns, trapeze artists or circus tents are among the emblems that can evoke the circus on their own. This conference will be an opportunity to analyze the continuity or disappearance of these figures in the making of circus history. It will also allow us to analyze the multiple variations and reappropriations of these figures both in the performing art world and beyond. These figures are regularly present in images and stories of popular culture, from TV shows to children's books and toys. It will also be possible to discuss the methods and stakes of the images thus created and their uses, in particular for purposes of communication or marketing (posters, detour of the traditional signs, graphic charts to attract a broad audience...)

- **Relationship to the body, to risk and to virtuosity**

The uses of the body as well as the techniques are inscribed in conventions that govern the ways of doing as much as the ways of receiving and appreciating the acts and shows. What makes the circus artist is closely linked to a relationship to risk that has also shifted with "other" forms of circus, giving more place to abstraction, sensation, doing "less". How is this relationship to prowess and exposure to danger invested in different cultural, spatial and temporal contexts? How are the sensations or images of risk-taking and virtuosity reinvested by artists today? How can we analyze what is left of the commitment of the performing body through representations and discourses on the circus? What uses of prowess and circus bodies can we identify in the performing arts and media of yesterday and today?

- **Mobility and nomadism**

The imaginary of the margins, the association of the circus with bohemian life and its representations are also to be reinterrogated, historicized or considered in the light of current difficulties linked to a nomadic lifestyle. What real and imaginary spaces are mobilized by circus artists, as well as by audiences, cultural policy makers and other artistic or cultural actors? To what extent is nomadism still active, possible and in what form? How do the fantasies of mobility meet the economic, socio-political and identity-related issues of contemporary circus creation? How are collective images and representations of nomadism actualized in social practices? What is, in a way, the practical effectiveness of the myths associated with the circus?

- **Animalities and naturalities**

The presence or absence of animals - wild animals in particular - has been a dividing line between the so-called "new" circus and the so-called "traditional" circus in France in the late 1980s. Just like the presentation of wild and exotic animals in circuses or fairs, the exhibition of human monsters bears witness to a complex relationship to otherness and abnormality. Indeed, if circus space could be considered a non-standard space in which "elephant men" and "spider women" lived together, showing these "extraordinary" bodies also had an important power of normalization on people that came to observe them. The gradual banning of the presentation of wild animals on the rings of Western circuses today echoes the evolution of the relationship between humans and animals. The question of subjection and animal

domestication, as well as that of the border between humanity and animality, are now revisited by contemporary artists. To what extent do these representations give access to the human vision of nature, animality and the extraordinary?

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Submission process:

Proposals should be written in French or English. They will be presented in the form of a 300 to 400 words abstract indicating the object of study, the disciplinary and methodological framework, as well as the field mobilized and the sources used. This summary will be accompanied by a short bio-bibliography of 100 to 150 words.

A day for "young researchers":

Master students, Phd Candidates and postdoctoral students are invited to participate in a "young researchers" day. This doctoral seminar will be supervised and led by researchers. Different workshops will be offered: presentation by the participants of their current research; crossed analysis of archives and multidisciplinary; collaborative workshops.

Each participant in the doctoral seminar will be asked to present his or her current research in the form of a poster which must be sent electronically as soon as the registration is validated in order to prepare the workshops.

It is possible to participate in the doctoral seminar and also to submit a presentation for the international conference on March 3 and 4. It is also possible to participate without presenting at the conference.

Proposals for participation in the doctoral seminar include a short bio-bibliography of 100 to 150 words presenting the curriculum and current research (title, scientific background, disciplinary framework).

Calendar:

October 15, 2021: end of submissions, sent at the following addresses:

recherche.cirque.asso@gmail.com and colloque.cirque@univ-rouen.fr

October 30, 2021: selection of presentations and information to authors

February 15, 2022: submission of the first draft of the presentation (in English or in French)

March 2, 2022: doctoral seminar

March 3 and 4, 2022 : international conference

Registration:

Registrations will be made after acceptance by the scientific committee. The registration fee is 50€. It includes the entrance to the conference (and to the doctoral seminar for the young researchers) and lunches. Tickets to the show and visits of the exhibitions will also be offered to the speakers.

The organizing committee does not cover accommodation or travel expenses to attend the conference. However, we invite young researchers who would have difficulties to fund their travel to communicate their possible needs.

Organizing and scientific committee:

Scientific leader and coordination : Magali Sizorn, PhD, lecturer in socio-anthropology, CETAPS, University of Rouen-Normandie

The scientific and organization committee of the conference includes members of the board of the french Collectif de Chercheur.e.s sur le Cirque (CCCirque) and invited recognized researchers. The committee also includes researchers from the University of Rouen-Normandie, from different research units.

Charles Batson, PhD, Professor in French and Francophone Studies, Union College, Schenectady New York.

Anne Bertin-Renoux, PhD, Lecturer in Educational Science, Université de Bretagne Occidentale.

Cécile Carayol, PhD, Lecturer in musicology, GRHis, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Pierre-Albert Castanet, PhD, Professor of musicology, GRHis, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Marine Cordier, PhD, Lecturer in sociology, University of Nanterre.

Agathe Dumont, PhD, Lecturer in arts, ESAD TALM, Angers.

Aurore Dupuy, PhD candidate in anthropology, LIRTES, Université Paris-Est and CETAPS, Université de Rouen-Normandie

Sébastien Fevry, PhD, Professor of visual culture and film studies, SSH/ILC/PCOM, UCLouvain

Florence Filippi, PhD, Lecturer, Professor in theatre studies, CEREDI, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Tony Froissart, PhD, Professor emeritus in history, University of Reims.

Alisan Funk, Teaching assistant at the circus department, Stockholm University of the Arts.

Philippe Goudard, PhD, Professor emeritus in performing arts, University of Montpellier 3.

Marion Guyez, PhD, lecturer in performing arts, University of Grenoble-Alpes.

Sylvain Ledda, PhD, Professor emeritus in theatre studies, CEREDI, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Betty Lefèvre, PhD, former professor emeritus in anthropology, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Florence Legendre, PhD, lecturer in sociology, University of Reims

Arnaud Le Marchand, PhD, Lecturer in socio-economics, UMR IDEES, University of Le Havre.

Louis Patrick Leroux, PhD, Professor of French and English Studies, Concordia University-Montreal.

Eléonore Martin, PhD, Lecturer in Performing Arts, Bordeaux Montaigne University.

Pierre Philippe-Meden, PhD, Lecturer in Theatre Studies, University of Montpellier 3.

Aurélien Poidevin, Lecturer in History, GRHis, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Stéphane Rioland, Lecturer in History and architecture, GRHis, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Pascal Roland, PhD, Lecturer in socio-anthropology, CETAPS, University of Rouen-Normandie.

Emilie Salamero, PhD, Lecturer in sociology, University of Toulouse 3.

Philippe Scieur, PhD, Professor of sociology, IACCHOS-CRIDIS/ILC-GIRCAM, UCLouvain.

Roberta Shapiro, Research fellow in sociology, IIAC-EHESS and CEET-Cnam.

Olivier Sirost, PhD, Professor of sociology, CETAPS, University of Rouen-Normandie

Cyril Thomas, Research and Development Manager, CNAC/Chaire ICiMa.

Partners :

The conference is co-funded by the University of Rouen and the Collectif de Chercheur-e-s sur le Cirque :

<https://cccirque.hypotheses.org/>
recherche.cirque.asso@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/CCCirque/>

It is organized in close partnership with the Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie and the Spring Festival, festival of new circus forms in Normandy. The festival is hosted by the Platform 2 Pôles Cirque en Normandie (Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf and La Brèche in Cherbourg).

The Centre national des arts du cirque (Department of Research), board member of Collectif des Chercheur-e-s sur le Cirque, will co-fund the conference and in particular the doctoral seminar.

A conference for the general public will be held on March 2 at 6:00 pm, in partnership with the University of All Cultures (UTLC), a series of conferences programmed by the University of Rouen and supported by the Flaubert Foundation.

This conference has received the support of the interdisciplinary Research Institute "Homme Société" of the University of Rouen.

