

CIRCUS250
ART OF THE SHOW

9 JUNE – 14 OCTOBER 2018 ★ HUGH LANE ROOM



CIRCUS250: ART OF THE SHOW

Glorious Feats!
Graceful Acts on Horseback!
Awe-inspiring aerialists!

Immerse yourself in the world of the Circus with this exhibition and programme of exciting events. This exhibition forms part of the UK and Ireland-wide celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the original circus, established by Philip Astley in London in 1768. Dublin was the first city outside England to which he travelled, performing and giving riding lessons from 1773.

The exhibition showcases the work of well-known artists such as Jack B. Yeats, Mainie Jellett, Mary Swanzy, Harry Kernoff and Martin Gale RHA.

This exhibition and accompanying public programme bring some of the fun of the big top and the history of this inspiring spectacle to the Gallery. An exciting programme of performances, film screenings, workshops, talks and tours has been planned, including a residency by illustrator Steve Simpson.

We are planning even more exciting additions to the programme of Circus250 events at the Gallery! See www.nationalgallery.ie and follow the Gallery on social media for updates.



PHILIP ASTLEY IN IRELAND

Philip Astley, known as the 'father of the circus', came to Dublin after licensing difficulties forced him to stop performing in London in 1773. In December of that year, he opened his riding school on Inns Quay, giving performances and riding lessons, both of which proved hugely popular. He was also engaged to appear at Capel Street theatre. His horse, Gibraltar, but not Astley himself, was hired to perform with the 'Corsican Fairy', a performer with dwarfism, at Smock Alley Theatre. Astley stayed in Dublin until June 1774, and returned annually after that. In 1789, he opened his Royal Amphitheatre in Peter Street, near Christchurch, where he was granted a monopoly on circus performances for the following 7 years.

Jack B. Yeats, *The Double Jockey Act*
© Estate of Jack B. Yeats, DACS London / IVARO
Dublin, 2018



ARTWORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Some of the artworks in this exhibition were sketched rapidly by the artist from the audience stalls. Others were created later from memories and sketches of performances witnessed. Some works, such as the posters and programmes, were never meant to be displayed in a gallery, but rather were made to entice customers to the performances and to entertain and inform them when they arrived. There are also works which look more to the idea of the circus and its people. Martin Gale's *Arrival* explores the notion of the sudden appearance of a circus tent in an otherwise familiar rural landscape. The tent, part-concealed behind trees, gives a viewer a sense of the anticipation of the wonders to come. Painted during the Second World War, Mary Swanzy's *Clown by Candlelight* shows a melancholy clown lost in thought, possibly reflecting on his own situation, or perhaps he is a metaphor for the artist in a time of conflict.

Mary Swanzy, *Clown by Candlelight*
© The Artist's Estate



SPECIAL EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES

Events are free with no booking required unless otherwise stated. Tickets for events available at nationalgallery.ticketssolve.com. For Information, contact education@ngi.ie 01 663 3505.

The Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle Network (ISACS) is a national membership organisation which supports, develops and advocates for these collective art forms nationally and internationally. We are delighted to have worked with them on gathering ideas for the Gallery's celebration of circus. www.isacs.ie



Tropical Popical Nails
Below: Lords of Strut
Right: Dublin Circus Project



SUMMER SOLSTICE

Summer Solstice is Thursday 21 June, when the Gallery will celebrate its first Thursday Lates event in Circus style. Late opening to 8.30pm allows for a host of fun including refreshments and gigantic lawn games on the Merrion Square forecourt accompanied by a special outdoor performance by the acrobatic comedy duo **Lords of Strut** at 6pm and interactive demonstrations by **Dublin Circus Project**. Moving indoors, DJ Dermot Kelly will be spinning tunes in the courtyard and the fabulous **Tropical Popical** will be doing circus-inspired nail art. Following the launch event, visitors are invited to make the most of the long summer evenings with a variety of offerings on select Thursdays – details to follow on the website and social media!

Events are Free. Booking required for Tropical Popical nail appointments € www.tropicalpopical.com



STREET PERFORMANCE AT THE NGI

We are delighted to be working with the 13th annual Laya Healthcare's City Spectacular, a free festival on Merrion Square from Friday 6 to Sunday 8 July. The festival showcases the best in international street performance.

We have invited two of the international performers to come over to the gallery to wow gallery visitors with their skills. **Mat Ricardo**, The Gentleman Juggler, is the first man in history to put the tablecloth back on a set table! He will discuss and demonstrate his work in *How to find an Audience* in the lecture theatre on Thursday 5 July at 6.30pm. **Jonathan Burns**, contortionist and flexible comedian will bring his unique brand of humour to the gallery as he performs on Saturday 7 July at 12pm.



Below: Jonathan Burns
Right: Mat Ricardo



LECTURES AND TALKS

These talks allow us to delve deeper into the world of the circus and explore the motivation behind the exhibition, the history of the circus in Ireland and the work of Jack B. Yeats, which prominently features in the exhibition. On 4 July Dr Richard McMinn will guide us through a history of the Circus in Ireland.

Leading expert on the work of Jack B. Yeats, which features prominently in this exhibition, Dr Hilary Pyle, will speak on 11 July. The monthly Tuesday Talk and Tea event in July will be given by exhibition Curator Joanne Drum.

Lectures: Wednesdays, 4 & 11 July, 1.15pm
Talk and Tea: Tuesday 10 July, 11am, €5



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Graphic designer and illustrator **Steve Simpson** will be in residence in our Millennium Wing Studio from 17 July to 12 August. Manchester-born Steve has over 30 years' experience creating work in his distinctive style, which shows the eclectic influences of the Arts & Crafts movements, 1950's advertising and folk art. He has won over 50 awards for illustration and packaging design, and his work has been seen on everything from a postage stamp to a 200ft screen in Times Square. He is a founding member of the Illustrators Guild of Ireland and OFFSKETCH.

As well as using the exhibition and collection to inspire his own work, Steve will also host a number of public events and workshops, including an in-conversation discussion with exhibition curator Joanne Drum, two workshops for children aged 8+, and two intensive

workshops, one for professional graphic artists and the other for students and recent graduates.

Events

In-conversation event

Tuesday 24 July, 11am

Illustration workshop for Graphic Design Students

Saturday 21 July, 2-5pm, €15

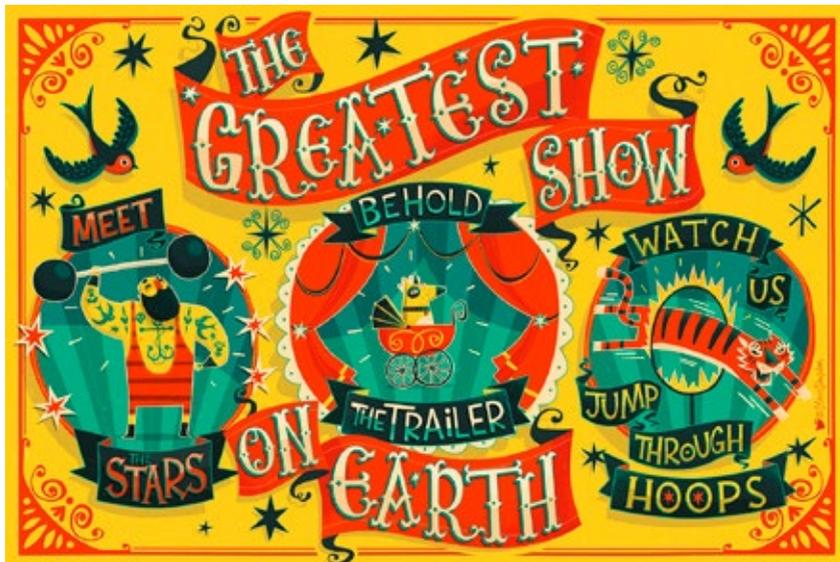
Illustration workshop for Graphic Design Professionals

Saturday 28 July, 2-5pm, €45

8+ workshops

Fridays, 27 July & 10 August,
11am-12.30pm, €5

Updates on these events and more will be on the Gallery's website and social media.
www.stevesimpson.com



© Steve Simpson

DRAWING COURSE

Sketchbooks in Practice: Inspiration through observational sketches and notes

Many artists sketched circus scenes as they sat in the audience. Jack B. Yeats used his sketchbooks like a diary to record his experiences. Artist Julie Brazil will lead this intensive two-day course, which will focus on using drawing and sketching to observe life and to improve skills.

Based in the Millennium Wing Studio, the course will feature an exclusive visit to the Jack B. Yeats archive to view his rarely-seen sketchbooks. It will also feature a curator's tour of the *Circus250: Art of the Show* exhibition, a visit to the ESB Centre for the Study of Irish Art to view the sketches of Orpen and other prominent artists, and an outdoor drawing session. All materials provided.

Thursday 12 and Friday 13 July,
10am-5pm, €170
Limited to 12 participants.

POP UP TALKS

Gallery pop-up talks usually focus on works in the collection and exhibitions, and two of the three talks for *Circus250: Art of the Show* will follow the format, with Fala Buggy examining Mainie Jellett's three works, *Under the Big Top* on 20 July and Emma Hackett taking a closer look at Percy Francis Gethin's *Travelling Circus, County Clare* on 27 July.

On 13 July, we will welcome Johnie K., a clown with a long history of performing in circuses and with the renowned *Clowns without Borders*, who bring smiles and laughter to communities in crisis. Johnie K. will put on his clown face during his talk on *The Art of Clowning*.

Fridays, 1.15pm, 13, 20 & 27 July.
Hugh Lane Room/Room 31.

Harry Kernoff, *Circus Ring* (detail)
© The Artist's Estate

CIRCUS FILM FORTNIGHT

In association with the Friends of the National Gallery of Ireland.

Film, music, and animation will bring the circus to life on screen this summer. We begin with fantasy drama, *Big Fish*, directed by Tim Burton and starring Albert Finney and Ewan McGregor. Recent blockbuster, *The Greatest Showman*, starring Hugh Jackman will be sure to have you singing your heart out! For families with younger children, we will screen Walt Disney's *Dumbo*.

Fossett's, Ireland's National Circus, are celebrating their 130th anniversary this year. They are the subject of *Circus Born*, a documentary which will be screened on Sunday 29 July.

Big Fish, Sunday 15 July, 3pm, Free

Dumbo, Sunday 22 July, 3pm, Free

The Greatest Showman,

Thursday 26 July, 6pm, €5

Circus Born: The Story of the Fossetts,

Sunday 29 July, 12.30pm, Free

Films by permission of 

The films on 15 and 26 July will be preceded by *Women in Circus*, a 10-minute film on female circus artistes past and present, created by Circus250 as part of this year's celebrations.

COMMUNITY - CREATIVE CIRCUS

As part of Cruinniú na nÓg, the national day of creativity for children and young people on 23 June, the Gallery is partnering with Aosóg Child and Family Project to bring a day of circus-themed making and doing to this Dublin 7 neighbourhood. Including a variety of art-making activities and led by Gallery creative practitioners, the day will focus on the dynamism, fun and creativity of the circus environment.

For information, contact Brina Casey, bcasey@ngi.ie 01 663 3509.



FAMILY EVENTS

On select dates throughout the show, our weekly Sunday drop-in workshops will take inspiration from the exhibition. Families will be encouraged to create their own colourful characters and creatures, circus tents, and even try their hand at 'copyrighting' their unique clown make-up on an egg, as clowns do!

In September our sensory baby workshops will begin with a visit to the exhibition followed by a practical session exploring sound, colour and pattern.

Drop-in Family workshops:

Sundays, 1, 15 & 29 July, 11.30am-1.30pm

Baby workshops:

Monday 17 September, 12pm & 2pm, €5

GUIDED TOURS

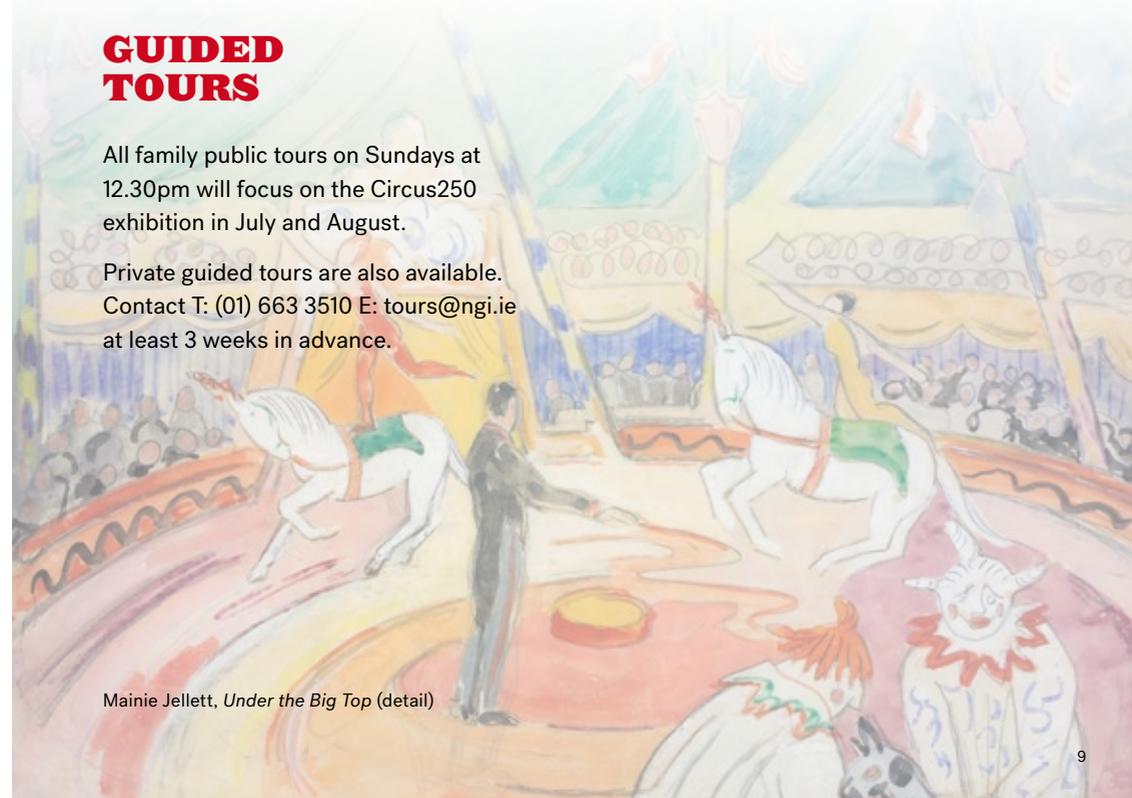
All family public tours on Sundays at 12.30pm will focus on the Circus250 exhibition in July and August.

Private guided tours are also available. Contact T: (01) 663 3510 E: tours@ngi.ie at least 3 weeks in advance.

PROGRAMME TEAM

The exhibition is curated by Education Officer Joanne Drum. Special thanks to all our colleagues and contributors who have worked so hard to make this exhibition and programme happen.

This programme has been devised by the NGI Education Department. Particular thanks to Dr Richard McMinn, Circus Historian, for his many valuable insights and advice in the preparation of the exhibition. Team members are: Sinéad Rice, Joanne Drum, Catherine O'Donnell, Brina Casey, Caomhán Mac Con Iomaire, Kate Drinane, Sarah Ward and Shane Morrissy.



Mainie Jellett, *Under the Big Top* (detail)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Thursday 21 June

4.30–8.30 Thursday Late

Featuring Lords of Strut, Dublin Circus Project, Tropical Popical, food, drinks, DJ, games and more

Sunday 1 July

11.30–1.30 Drop in Family Workshop

Clown Eggs with Louise McGrath

Wednesday 4 July

1.15 Lunchtime Lecture

Another Little Trouble Over: the unique characteristics of the circus in Victorian and Edwardian Ireland
Dr Richard McMinn, Historian

Thursday 5 July

6.30 Talk

How to Find an Audience
Mat Ricardo, The Gentleman Juggler, Variety Performer
Location: Lecture Theatre
In association with Laya Healthcare's City Spectacular

Saturday 7 July

12.00 Street Performance

with Jonathan Burns
Flexible Comedian, Contortionist
Location: NGI Front Lawn/Courtyard (depending on weather)
In association with Laya Healthcare's City Spectacular

Tuesday 10 July

11.00 Talk and Tea

Circus250: Art of the Show
with Joanne Drum. €5

Wednesday 11 July

1.15 Lunchtime Lecture

Jack B. Yeats and the Circus
Dr Hilary Pyle, Yeats Biographer

Thursday 12 July

10.00–5.00 Drawing Course

Sketchbooks in Practice: Inspiration through observational sketches and notes with artist Julie Brazil. €170

Friday 13 July

10.00–5.00 Drawing Course (day 2)

Sketchbooks in Practice: Inspiration through observational sketches and notes with artist Julie Brazil. €170

1.15 Pop-up talk *The Art of Clowning*

Johnie K, Clown

Sunday 15 July

11.30–1.30 Drop in Family Workshop

Colourful Circus Characters and Creatures with Eimear Murphy

3.00 Film Screening *Big Fish*

Free. Running time 2h05m

Preceded by a 10-min short film,

Women in Circus

In association with the Friends of the National Gallery of Ireland

17 July–12 August

Steve Simpson Artist in Residence

Millennium Wing Studio

Friday 20 July

1.15 Pop-up talk

Manie Jellet's *Under the Big Top*
Fala Buggy, Art Historian

Saturday 21 July

2.00–5.00 Illustration Workshop

for students of graphic design, visual communications with Steve Simpson. €15

Sunday 22 July

3.00 Family Film Screening

Dumbo

Free. Running time 1h04m

In association with the Friends of the National Gallery of Ireland

Tuesday 24 July

11.00 In-Conversation Event

Illustrator Steve Simpson with Exhibition Curator Joanne Drum

Thursday 26 July

6.00 Film Screening

The Greatest Showman

€5. Running time 1h45m

Preceded by the short film,

Women in Circus

In association with the Friends of the National Gallery of Ireland

Friday 27 July

11.00–12.30 8+ Illustration Workshop
with Steve Simpson. €5

1.15 Pop-up talk *Percy Francis Gethin's Travelling Circus, County Clare*
Emma Hackett, Art Historian

Saturday 28 July

10.33–5.00 Illustration Workshop

for graphic design professionals
with Steve Simpson. €45

Sunday 29 July

11.30–1.30 Drop in Family Workshop

Big Top Grand Design with Kate Dick

12.30 Documentary Film Screening

Circus Born: The Story of Fossett's

Free Running time 85 min

A Documenting the Arts project, supported by the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board

Friday 10 August

11.00–12.30 8+ Illustration Workshop

with Steve Simpson. €5

Monday 17 September

12pm & 2pm NGI Baby workshops

with Frances Coghlan. €5

Booking opens at 9am on

Tuesday 11 September



Cover: Martin Gale, *Arrival* (detail). © Martin Gale, IVARO, Dublin 2018

Follow us on
www.nationalgallery.ie
#Circus250



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