



The Circus 1870-1950



Two reviews
on a really
"big" book.

by Giovanni Iuliani

At first there was a 40 page sampling of the forthcoming book put out on the internet by Taschen, a European publishing house that specializes in art, anthropology and aphrodesia (since 1980). *Encyclopaedia Anatomica* for example is "A Selection of Anatomical Wax Models". This amazing collection was started by the Medici family who featured wax models in La Specola, a Florence museum. In *The Circus, 1870-1950* much is said about "Anatomical Wonders" (contortionists, sword swallows, human salamanders, etc.).

Taschen's *The Circus, 1870-1950* is the mother (in size only) of all books ever printed about this popular form of entertainment. It will stand alone for a long time to come. In fact it is so monumental in size (11.4 x 17.3") and volume (670 pages) that one can compare it to a bible used in a cathedral (if not the Vatican itself).

Written by such eminent writers like Dominique Jando who authored many books on showbiz and the very impressive *Histoire Mondiale du Cirque* (a world history of the circus) only surpassed by Henry Thetard's *La Merveilleuse Histoire du Cirque*, a classic European reference book. Then there is the award winning Linda Granfield who wrote *Circus: An Album*. However, Taschen wisely chose Fred Dahlinger, Jr., who was first inspired to become a lifelong circus aficionado after reading John and Alice Durant's *Pictorial History of the American Circus*. Mr. Dahlinger, Jr., author of *Trains of the Circus 1872-1956*, is one of the Florida State University's John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art curators.

In the making of Taschen's most monumental book ever written about the golden era of the circus, the task of Fred Dahlinger, Jr. was that of assuring its historical accuracy. Page after page full of spectacular illustrations of circus lore. Posters appear on double (even triple and quadruple sizes) pages that puts everything real close-up and in your face. What isn't in color is reminiscent of Edward J. Kelly photographs.

However, one must keep an open mind and remember that this book is about "the" American circus from the 1870's through the 1950's. It's not about anything or anyone in particular. So if you don't find Lucio Cristiani doing a backleap over to a third horse you will find some satisfaction in seeing what appears to be him beside the clown Lou Jacobs.

All in all, Noël Daniel did a great job in editing this masterpiece. As for the publisher, Taschen is to be congratulated for having invested in a work of art that few would have dared to venture. Definitely a precious gem in anyone's collection. 🍷



The Circus, 1870-1950 Daniel, Noël (ED) Jando, Dominique / Granfield, Linda / Dahlinger, Jr., Fred Hardcover 11.4 x 17.3 in, 670 pages, \$200.00 ISBN: 978-3-8228-5153-1 Multilingual Edition: German, French, English

The Circus 1870-1950 sells for \$200.00 and you can save shipping charges, for a limited time, by ordering from Susan Topham at Retail Sales, Circus World Museum, 550 Water Street, Baraboo, WI, 53913.



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