New exhibitions launch in Sheffield to celebrate 250



Blaze Tarsha in front of Degas' Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando (1879), showing the revered black French 19th Century aerial artiste suspended 200 feet in the air by her teeth The National Gallery

250 years ago, on an abandoned patch of land near London's Waterloo, showman, entrepreneur and equestrian rider Philip Astley drew out a circle in the ground and filled it with astounding physical acts. This spectacle was the world's very first circus.

Now, Circus! Show of Shows*,* a series of exhibitions funded by a £98,000 National Lottery grant is about to launch in Sheffield featuring one of the world's most famous circus paintings, Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas' *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando (1879)* depicting a black French 19th-century aerial artiste, one of the most revered circus performers of the time, suspended 200 feet in the air by her teeth to rapturous Paris crowds.

[quote=Professor Vanessa Toulmin]I'm overjoyed that this magnificent artwork will be the centrepiece of the Circus! exhibition in Sheffield.[/quote]

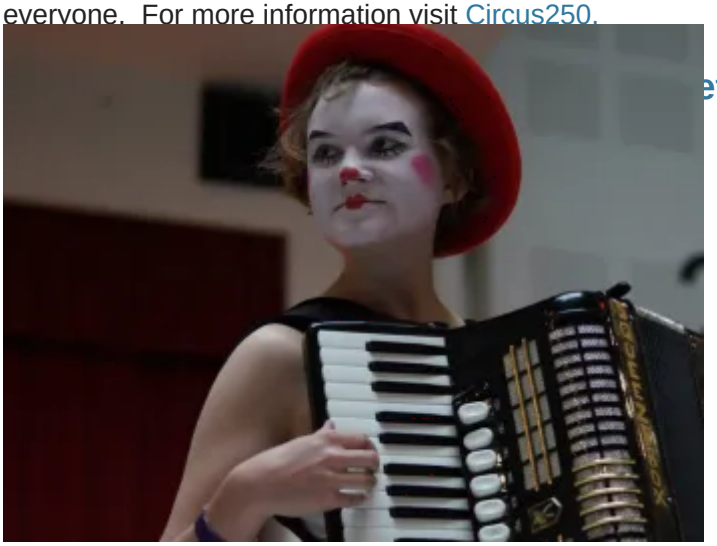
On loan from the National Gallery, Degas' *Miss La La* painting will be displayed at Weston Park Museum alongside a film of a spectacular new performance created by contemporary circus performer and aerialist, Blaze Tarsha, in response to the Degas work.

The exhibitions, which have been co-curated by one of the UK's preeminent circus experts Professor Vanessa Toulmin, will also be on show in Great Yarmouth and Newcastle upon Tyne in October. She said: "I'm overjoyed that this magnificent artwork will be the centrepiece of the Circus! exhibition in Sheffield. The painting presents many of the concepts of 19th-century circus that are as relevant today as they were then, including the freedom to perform regardless of race and gender and an appreciation of the sheer physicality and skill of the performer."

Exploring the remarkable hidden histories of women and black circus performers

Circus! opens at Sheffield's Weston Park Museum on 25 July 2018 and will explore the remarkable hidden histories of women and black circus performers, the use of animals in circus, and the enduring impact of circus on popular culture. *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando (1879)* will be joined by material from the National Fairground and Circus Archive and is also set to reveal a host of previously unseen items drawn from the city's collections.

Circus! continues at the Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life from 6 October 2018 and the Discovery Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne from 20 October 2018. The exhibitions form part of Circus 250, a UK-wide celebration marking the anniversary of this most pervasive, popular, born-in-Britain art form. Circus 250 will see museums, filmmakers, designers, theatres, orchestras, schools, libraries and circuses all join in – circus is everywhere and for everyone. For more information visit Circus250.



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Rosie

North East circus group take over museum and wow Olympic medallist