

THE JOHN & MABLE
RINGLING

MUSEUM OF ART



The reinstatement of the Art Galleries, including Gallery 18, shown above, has been designed to highlight the particular flavor of founder John Ringling's collecting as well as subsequent Museum acquisitions.

Curator's Spotlight: Gallery Reinstallations Reflect Ringling's Plan

by Rosilyn Alter
curator of Italian art

The reinstatement of all the art galleries in the Museum is a complex project involving many individuals working together to make every aspect of the presentation of the permanent collection conform to national professional museum standards. The goal of the Museum is to create an installation of the highest quality to enhance the public's understanding and appreciation of our important collection of art.

Where does one begin when confronted with the immense task of reinstalling an entire art museum? Months of preliminary planning were dedicated to selecting the art works to be exhibited and to determining the sequence of the galleries.

Because of the physical limitations in gallery space available, one major curatorial problem to be resolved

during this phase of planning resulted from having to restrict the number of works to be displayed despite the quality and wealth of the collection. There is space to exhibit at most 250 works of art; however, there are over 750 Old Master paintings and approximately 1,800 decorative-arts objects in the collection.

After careful study of the Old Master collection of paintings, it became apparent that its real strength was the result of its depth and breadth in the representation of certain schools, periods, or geographic areas. These groupings or units of the collection clearly reflect John Ringling's particular tastes and interests as an art collector.

An analysis of the installation of the art galleries just after Ringling's death proved very helpful in determining how the Museum's founder had organized or grouped the art

works he had purchased. Even though the collection of Old Master paintings has grown considerably since that time, its growth has essentially followed in the areas originally developed by John Ringling.

The reinstatement of the galleries will highlight the particular flavor of

Continued on page 11

Museum Awarded NEA Challenge Grant

The Museum recently received a major challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, to be used to create a Museum endowment. Income generated by this permanent endowment fund will provide critical ongoing support for the care and presentation of the Museum's permanent collection and for new acquisitions.

Continued on page 5

The Circus Galleries Reinstallation: What Was Done, and Why

by Dr. Laurence J. Ruggiero

The recent reinstallation of the Circus Galleries has substantially raised the standards applied to the Museum's circus collections, raised levels of public access to the collection by incorporating more objects into the exhibits, and, most importantly, raised the Museum's approach to circus objects and circus history to an honorable and important position. Significantly, it has also established a framework for future development of the circus collections.

One of the most noticeable changes in the Circus Galleries is the quality and tone of both its playful and formal aspects, as expressed in everything from color and texture to furnishings, lighting, framing, mounting techniques, labeling, and decoration. The cohesion of the various exhibition modules, which gather related objects in visually dis-

tinct areas and rooms, is also apparent, as is the level of conservation and condition established by the objects on view.

Although the major challenge of developing the "backyard" remains to be undertaken, the tone-setting entry, formal presentation galleries, and dedication of the main hall to large exhibitions of related materials in module divisions establishes a strong but flexible framework for changing and rotating exhibitions in the future. In this way, the galleries can accommodate the orderly growth and development of the collections, education programs attendant to them, and increasing exhibition and conservation standards for circus materials.

The entry hall or rotunda is an area filled with activity, similar to the entry of a tented circus; it welcomes

visitors and sets the tone of their visit. But this is a museum entry, not a circus entry, so its active elements—entering, exiting, purchasing admission, and passing through over a decorative "faux-dirt" floor—are slightly formalized by an exhibition of circus posters.

Another key feature of the entry experience is the view through the entry hall and formal galleries all the way back to the main hall, where visitors glimpse a colorful, dramatically lit display of glittering circus costumes, enticing viewers forward into the exciting experiences that await.

From the entry rotunda, visitors enter a formal exhibition gallery dedicated to circus history and themes as experienced in the fine arts. The current installation presents works of art related to the many circus acts and experiences that involve balancing and equilibrium. Although the objects exhibited here will change from time to time, this gallery is permanently dedicated to circus-related fine arts.

Off either side of the Fine Arts Gallery is another formal gallery. One is dedicated to circus ephemera—paper products, from heralds to photographs, which are characterized by fragility and a relatively short lifespan. Currently this Ephemera Gallery presents the Museum's collection of the evocative photographic images of Edwin Martin, who has elegiacally documented the tent circuses that remain active today.

The last of the Museum's three formal galleries devoted to the circus collections is the Celebrity Gallery, intended to show a sequence of exhibitions presenting documents, images, and artifacts relating to an individual, partnership, team, or family whose history is closely associated with the history of the circus.

The current installation takes advantage of the Museum's Tom Thumb materials, which are unusual in their number, quality, and condition. Future exhibitions will extend far and wide among those celebrities

Continued on page 3



The recent reinstallation of the Circus Galleries includes a colorful, dramatically lit display of glittering circus costumes.


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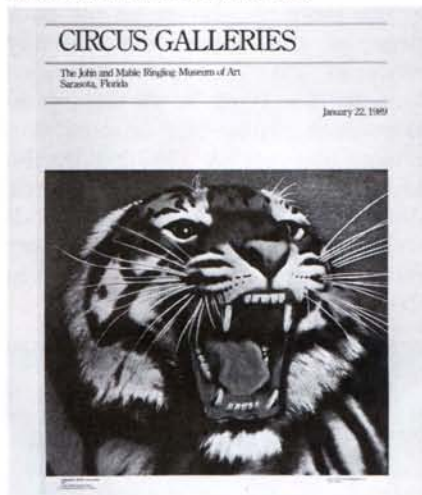
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associated with or a part of the circus.

The remaining areas of the Circus Galleries are devoted to less-formal galleries providing beautifully lit and flexibly defined informal spaces that lend themselves to the presentation of groups or modules of large-scale related objects. These modules will change over time, as additional objects from the collections are collected, conserved, and researched. The current modules are Circus Woodworking (manned by volunteers), Circus Props (including clown props and the famous Zacchini Cannon and Wallenda aerial platform), Costumes, and Wagons and Circus Model.

As new modules and exhibits for the formal galleries are developed, the initial installations currently on view will be rested, or will travel to form a continuous exhibition program that can be shared by Museum visitors as well as people around the state and the nation.

The Circus Galleries reinstallation project not only presents high-quality, exciting, educational, and entertaining exhibits now, but also provides the conceptual and curatorial framework for the long-term future development of the circus collections. It has set circus exhibition and conservation standards at a new height by defining areas of varying degrees of size and formality to accommodate ongoing growth, research, and education programs, thereby giving curatorial direction for the future. 



This poster commemorating the Circus Galleries reinstallation is on sale in the Circus Galleries shop.

Governor Martinez Appoints New Museum Trustees


Barbara A. Becker, Elven J. Grubbs, and Mary Cathryn Haller have been named to the Museum's Board of Trustees by Governor Bob Martinez.

Becker, of Belleair, is active in several arts groups, and is deeply involved with an organization that researches historic places and buildings in Pinellas County. She replaces former trustee Blair Culpepper.

Haller, a Bradenton resident who replaces former trustee John C. Manson, is vice president/secretary

of Miller Enterprises of Manatee Inc. and president of Classic Travel Inc. She is active in Manatee County civic affairs and in politics.

Grubbs lives in Sarasota, and has been publisher of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* since 1982. He also serves on the board of directors of the Sarasota County Chamber of Commerce; Grubbs replaces former trustee Joseph Penner.

Each of the new trustees will serve a four-year term. 



Barbara A. Becker



Mary Cathryn Haller



Elven J. Grubbs

Annual Children's Art Festival Encourages Creativity


Budding artists and artisans will get a chance to create their own masterpieces in a variety of media at the Museum's Children's Art Festival in April.

The children can choose among art-making activities including painting, drawing, jewelry-making, clay sculpture, and working with paper. Group-participation events such as a graffiti fence are also planned, along with story-telling sessions and musical improvisation.

Festival activities will be organized by local artists, art teachers, and educators, as well as members of various art, educational, and cultural groups. The Festival is a community-education program under the supervision of the Museum's education department.

This year's Children's Art Festival will be held on the Museum grounds on Saturday, April 15, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (in case of rain, the activities will be rescheduled on Sunday, April 16). A single admis-

sion charge of \$3 for children will allow them to participate in as many activities as they wish. Adults will be admitted without charge.

Food and beverages will be offered for sale during the Festival. 



The annual Children's Art Festival offers young artists a chance to show their creativity.

Annette Lemieux Installation Is Third *Projects* Exhibition

The American artist's work uses photographs to offer varied images of sound

"Annette Lemieux, *The Appearance of Sound*" goes on view in the New Wing on April 21, as the third exhibition in the Museum's *Projects* series.

Lemieux is a contemporary American artist who works in such media as painting, sculpture, photography, found objects, or any combination of these media. For the Museum she is doing an installation based on the theme of sound. The exhibition will consist of large canvases on which are printed photographically derived images that strongly suggest sound, such as a nuclear explosion, a thunderous waterfall, or the pounding boots of marching soldiers. Integrated into these canvases will be found objects, painting, or words.

"Powerful, yet poetically presented, basic emotions drive Lemieux's work as she takes found photo-

**Powerful,
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drive Lemieux's work.'**

graphs and objects, sometimes combining them with her own paintings, and charges them with new or specific meanings," explains Joseph Jacobs, the Museum's curator of modern art. "Lemieux's work is based more on a sensibility or a

point of view than on a signature style or medium. The thread that holds much of her work together is her interest in cultural and social symbols—a flag, a portrait, folk songs, or adages—and how they function as vehicles for individuals and institutions to structure, manipulate, or just deal with life.

"An element of history and tradition is often present in her work, which functions to make contemporary concerns universal, timeless concerns," Jacobs adds. "Themes of death, loss, isolation, failure, and conflict, for example, are embedded in such social vehicles or institutions as family, nation, and war."

In conjunction with the exhibition, which runs through July 5, the Museum will offer a Dialogue with the Artist on May 1. Other events related to the Lemieux installation are listed in the Calendar pages in this issue.

Projects are small-scale exhibitions consisting of works made specifically for the Museum by emerging artists who play a significant role in formulating the issues that are vital to contemporary art, or by established artists who are under-recognized or whose work continues to have a powerful impact on the major issues in contemporary art.

This exhibition is supported in part by a grant from The John E. Galvin Charitable Trust, with additional funding from contributions to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation. 



A typical work by the artist: Annette Lemieux, American, b. 1957, *The Great Outdoors*, 1989. Latex on canvas, lamp, table, and chair, 86 x 142 x 48 in. Courtesy of the Josh Baer Gallery, New York City.

Development News:

New Corporate Members, Colleagues Recognized

Four additional business firms have joined the Museum as corporate members, as of February 15, 1989: Continental Illinois Trust Company of Florida, Tropicana Products, Inc., NCNB National Bank, and GTE of Florida.

The Museum thanks these four companies for their generous support.

New Colleagues

The Museum would like to welcome the following Colleagues to the Donor Membership program, as of February 15, 1989:


Mr. & Mrs. Edward Gordon
Mr. & Mrs. Robert D. Hevey
Mrs. Mary J. Rezek
Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Seidman

Medieval Fair

Thank you to all the hard-working volunteers who helped make this year's Medieval Fair such a successful event. A special thanks to Ron Voorhees, all the day chairpersons, the members, and the many organizations that support the Museum and its programs.

Von Marr Painting On View in Gallery 18

One of the paintings highlighted in the reinstalled south galleries is *The Mystery of Life*, by American artist Carl von Marr.

The painting, shown on the back page of this issue, was recently returned after being on extended loan to the West Bend Gallery in Wisconsin. Following a condition review and surface cleaning by the Museum's conservation department, the work was mounted in a period-style frame purchased for it. Visitors can now view *The Mystery of Life* in the south galleries. 

Publication Summer Hiatus

This will be the last edition of the Museum's membership publication until next fall. The next edition will be mailed to members early in September.

