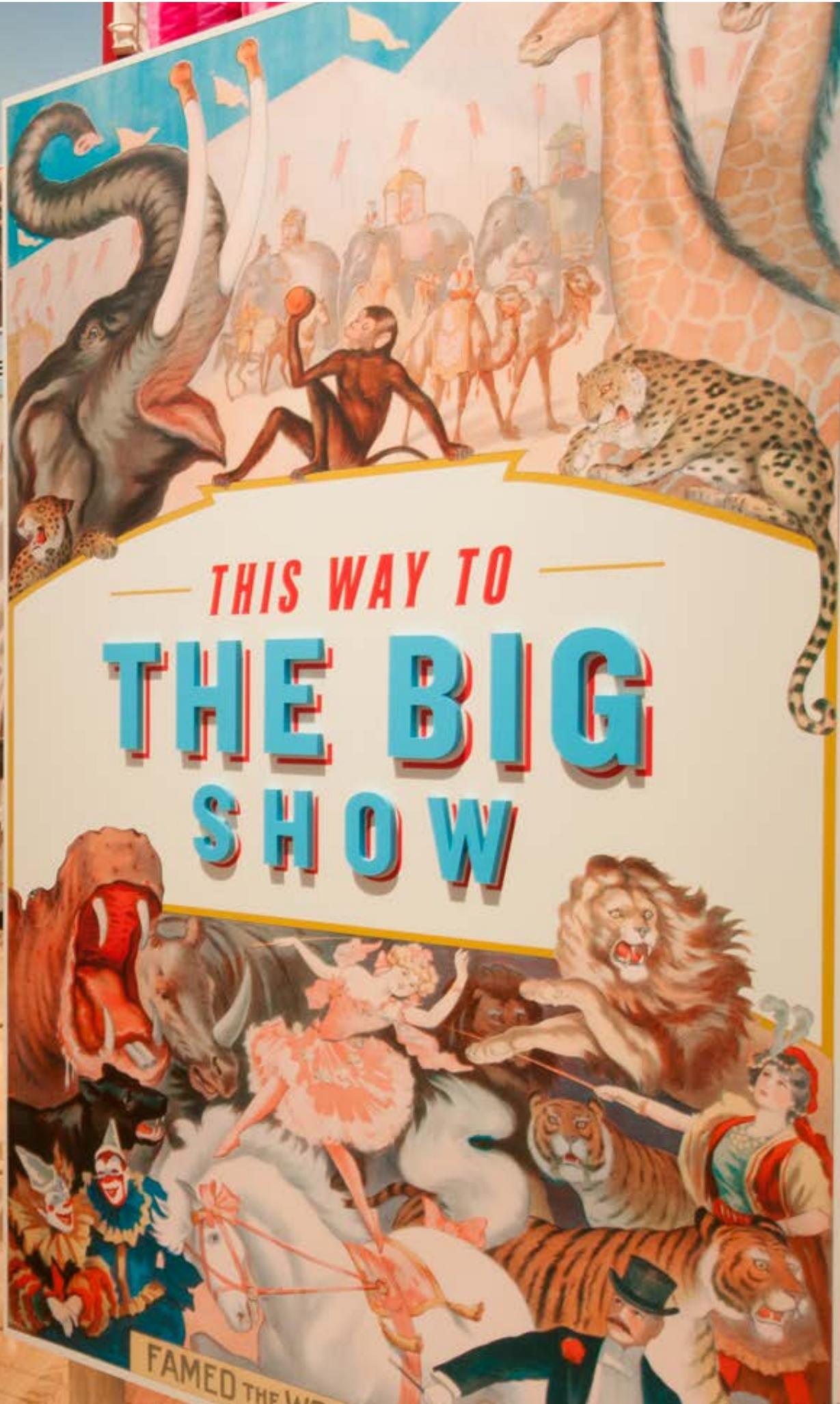




The Ringling

CIRCUS MUSEUM





CIRCUS MUSEUM

Tour the Circus Museum and learn about the history of the American circus in the Tibbals Learning Center and Historic Galleries buildings! This guide is designed to help teachers facilitate conversations and learning with their students while exploring the Circus Museum.

ABOUT THE CIRCUS MUSEUM

Circus magnate John Ringling (1866-1936) and his wife Mable (1875-1929) bought this property in 1911 and moved to Sarasota, Florida. Fifteen years later they completed Ca' d'Zan, a palatial winter residence on Sarasota Bay. As avid art collectors, John and Mable also built the Museum of Art and filled it with artworks they collected on their travels to Europe.

John Ringling and four of his brothers started and operated The Ringling Brothers Circus, eventually becoming the undisputed "Kings of the Circus World" with their dazzling and daring traveling shows. After John's death in 1936, Ca' d'Zan, the Museum of Art, and his Bayfront property were left to the state of Florida and became a museum. The first museum director, Austin Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr. (1900-1957) expanded The Ringling complex to build a Circus Museum.

The Circus Museum continues to amaze and delight visitors with the spectacle and impressive logistics of the American circus. Housed in two buildings, the Tibbals Learning Center and the Historic Galleries, the Circus Museum is sure to wow and inspire learners of all ages. This guide takes you through each of the galleries in both buildings, providing context for the exhibitions and thought-provoking discussion questions and activities appropriate for students of all ages.

WELCOME TO THE TIBBALS LEARNING CENTER!



Inside the Tibbals Learning Center, named for Howard and Janice Tibbals, are two floors of gallery spaces designed to delight and inspire learners of all ages and features the amazing Howard Bros. Miniature Circus! Howard Tibbals built the huge, miniature circus over a lifetime, and he still adds to it today! Students are sure to love the model, which at over 3,800 square feet displays a large, but tiny model of a working circus in the 1910-1930 era.

Beyond the circus model, the Tibbals Learning Center features a poster gallery, a timeline gallery of circus history, a glimpse into contemporary circus productions and an interactive gallery where students can try their hand at various circus acts while learning about some of the fantastic performances from the Greatest Show on Earth. The Tibbals Learning Center is an engaging introduction to the circus for students of all ages, including chaperones!

Walking into the Tibbals Learning Center is a treat for the senses. On your left is William Woodward's *The Greatest Show on Earth* mural. Completed in 1990, this larger than life mural features famous scenes and circus performers from the 1970s and 1980s including the remarkable Flying Vazquez, animal trainer and presenter Gunther Gebel-Williams, renowned clown Lou Jacobs and his daughter, aerialist Dolly Jacobs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Based on this visual overview of circus performances, what can you expect when you go to a circus?
- What adjectives would you use to describe *The Greatest Show on Earth*?

Further inside the main lobby, on your right, is the Poster Gallery. This gallery rotates every 3-6 months with posters and objects from The Ringling's circus collection and archives. Museum staff rotate the posters frequently so they stay safe from over-exposure to light. No matter the exhibition, there is much to discuss and discover in the Poster Gallery!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do these posters have in common? What differences do you see between the posters?
- Figurative language, like the examples listed below, were used in circus posters to drum up excitement and anticipation when the circus came to town. Can you find an example of each type of figurative language?

ALLITERATION

Repetition of the first consonant sounds in several words.

HYPERBOLE

An outrageous exaggeration.

PERSONIFICATION

Giving human characteristics to objects, animals or ideas.

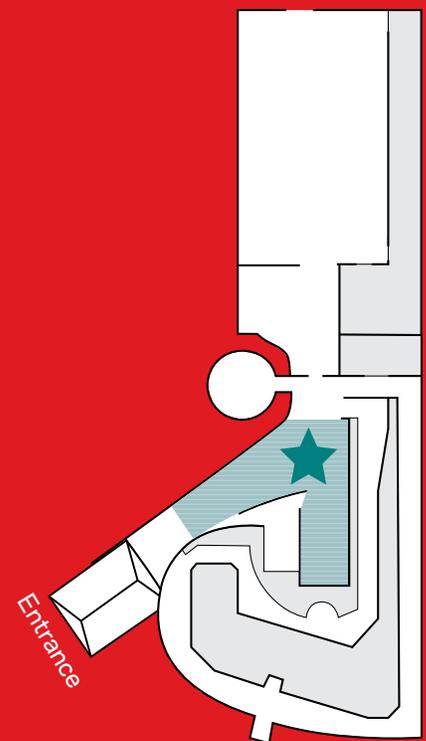
ONOMATOPOEIA

Words that sounds like their meaning (ex. "hissing").



POSTER GALLERY

William Woodward (American, born 1935),
The Greatest Show on Earth Mural, 1990.
Oil on canvas, 264 x 504 in. Gift of the
Feld Family and Feld Entertainment Inc.,
2012. SN11328



FIRST FLOOR



HOWARD BROS. CIRCUS MODEL

Howard C. Tibbals (Lender) (American, born 1936),
Howard Bros. Circus Model. Canvas, metal, wood,
plastic. Tibbals Circus Collection. TR2004.2743.1

Circus enthusiast Howard Tibbals began working on his circus model at the age of 17. Now over 70 years later we can learn about day-to-day circus operations from Howard's model created at a 1/16th scale. Howard was inspired by the traveling Ringling Bros. Circus from the early 20th century, and his model represents many of the performances, workers, and behind-the-scenes magic that made the circus truly remarkable. As you walk through the circus lot, the day unfolds providing a behind-the-scenes glimpse into life traveling with the circus, from the dining tent, to the dressing rooms, to the big top. The model ends back at the train station after a long day. Over a thousand workers would set up, perform, and break down the circus in a new town every single day!

Due to the tight nature of the gallery, we recommend splitting students into small groups of 3-5 as you traverse the Circus Model. The gallery flows one way and exits at the bathrooms to the left of the Circus Model entry on the first floor.

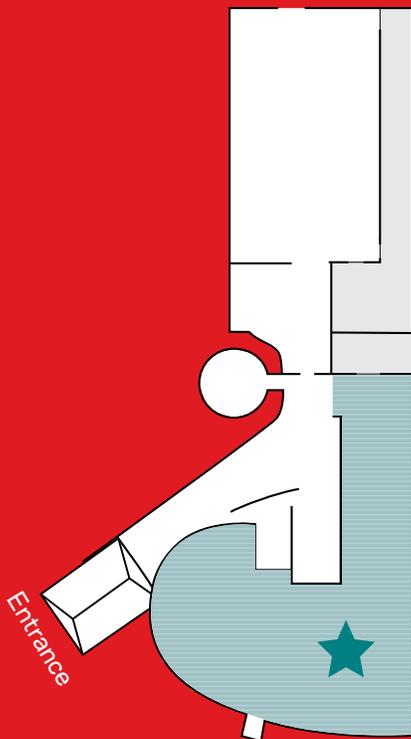
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

- What are some ways a person's life traveling with the circus is different from your life today? What are some ways your lives may be similar?
- What is something unexpected you learned about the circus?
- If you ran away with the circus, what job would you want to have and why?

FOR OLDER STUDENTS

- As you travel through the circus model, whose stories are being told? What stories may have been left out?
- What are some ways life in the 1910s-1930s is different to contemporary lifestyles today?
- What American ideals do you see represented in the circus model?



FIRST FLOOR

Step right up, folks! It's time to try your hand at circus performances! The Interactive Gallery in the Tibbals Learning Center is an engaging space for learners of all ages to discover daring circus acts first hand. In this gallery, students will learn about circus acts and the performers who perfected them. Each corner of the gallery features stories about performers for different types of circus disciplines such as clowning, acrobatics and daredevils.

We recommend splitting students into groups of 5-7 accompanied by a chaperone to rotate through the gallery.

RINGMASTER

Take turns introducing your circus.

CLOWN CAR

Learn all about clown makeup and squeeze into a clown car.

ACROBATS

Discover famous acrobats through objects and storytelling.

WALK THE WIRE

Try your hand, or balance, at walking the tight rope.

RIDE THE RING

Become a bareback riding equestrian extraordinaire.

SHOOT THE CANNON

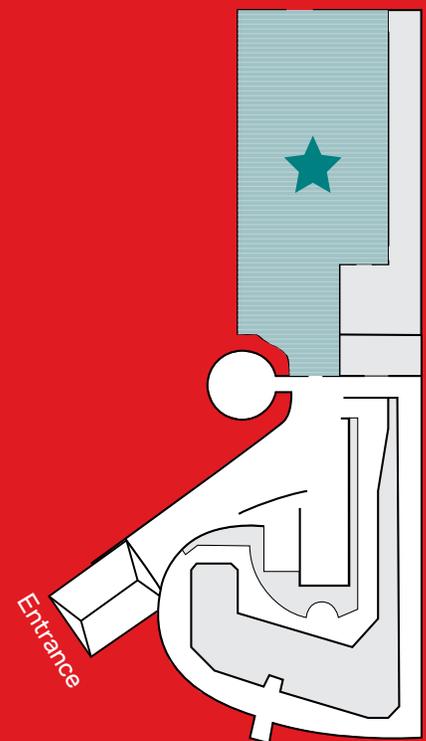
Discover the physics behind the remarkable human propulsion with a miniature cannon.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What circus performance did you most enjoy trying?
- What was your favorite object from this gallery?
Tell us a story about that object.
- What circus act did you find most impressive?
Would you want to try that act?



INTERACTIVE GALLERY



FIRST FLOOR



TIMELINE GALLERY

Howard C. Tibbals (Lender) (American, born 1936),
Howard Brothers Circus Model. Canvas, metal, wood,
plastic. Tibbals Circus Collection. TR2004.2743.1

Did you know the modern circus has historic roots? In this gallery, students will learn how circus history fits into world history—from the root of the word “circus” dating back to Roman athletes, to the technology used in the circus today!

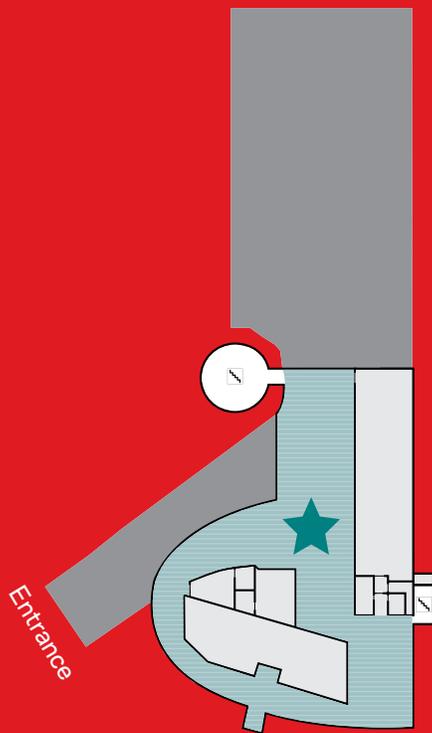
Students will find many curiosities on the second floor including a birdcage prop holding a shoe used by renowned clown Lou Jacobs. Walk around the Greatest Show on Earth Gallery and get a glimpse of circus life from the 20th century! Students who loved the *Howard Bros. Circus Model* will be delighted with an aerial view of the circus. Can you spot all your favorite circus tents from the birds eye view?

The second floor of the Tibbals Learning Center is also home to the Circus Archives! An archive is a collection of historical documents or records that provide information about a place, institution, or group of people.

If you are interested in using or accessing the Circus Archives as part of your classroom lessons, please visit ringling.org/archives.

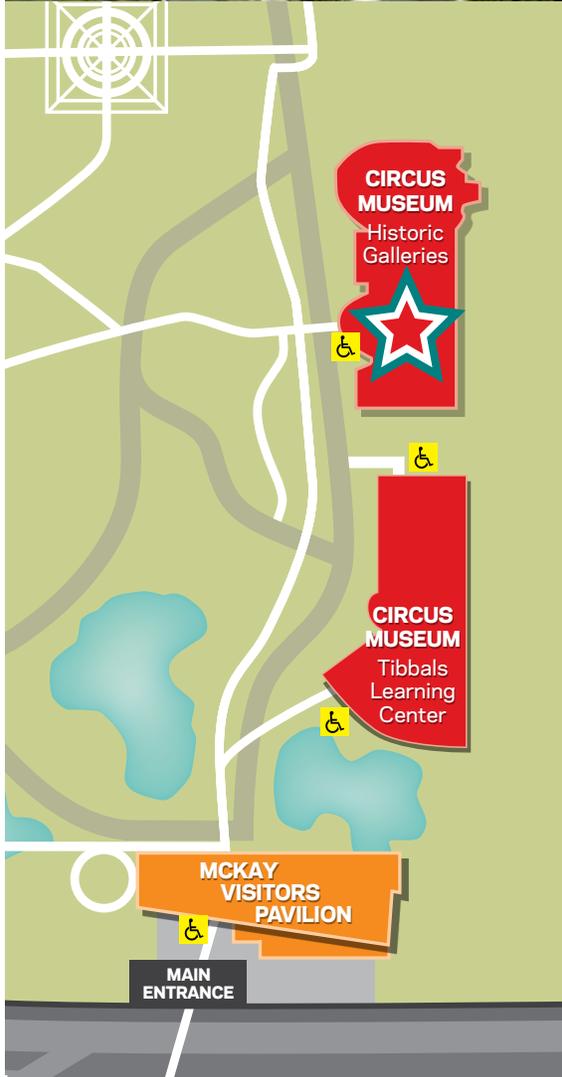
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How has the circus featured throughout world history? Why do you think humans are captivated by entertainment productions such as the circus?
- What is one surprising fact you learned about the circus?



SECOND FLOOR

WELCOME TO THE HISTORIC GALLERIES!



The first director of The Ringling Museum, A. Everett "Chick" Austin Jr. established the Circus Museum in 1948. After John Ringling moved the winter quarters of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus to Sarasota in 1927, many circus folks moved to the area in the off-season. Because of their generous support, the circus collections quickly grew and today The Ringling Circus Museum is one of the largest and most complete collections of circus history!

This building is the original Circus Museum building, completed in 1948. Inside, students will discover the remarkable story of the five Ringling brothers who built a circus empire to become the "Kings of the Circus World."

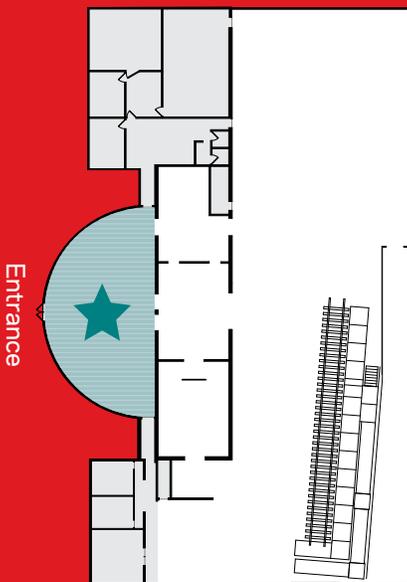


ROTUNDA GALLERY

In this circular gallery that evokes the feeling of being in the center of a circus ring, students will discover some original objects that tell behind-the-scenes stories from the American circus. Rotated frequently, the objects in this gallery may be different each year, but the captivating stories they tell are timeless.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What stories are told through the objects in this gallery? Whose stories do they tell?
- Which objects would have been used in a circus performance? Which were personal objects?
- Why do you think the museum wants to collect personal objects in addition to objects used during the circus performance?



As you step out of the Rotunda Gallery, you will be met by an authentic wooden ticket wagon. Built in 1911, this wagon traveled the nation for decades as a hub for circus-goers to purchase their tickets, and later as a personal office for the Ringling brothers. On the walls are enlarged photographs of the wagon in the midst of the circus crowds. Ticket sellers didn't use calculators, they did all their sums lightning fast by memory! This gallery is a great place to practice mental math!

Behind the ticket wagon, you'll find the Wagon Room. This large, cavernous gallery holds over a dozen circus wagons and vehicles including the Wisconsin railroad car, John and Mable's private Pullman coach. You'll also find a dazzling wagon wheel wall showcasing the incredible detail circus artisans imbued into all aspects of the circus, right down to the wheels on a wagon!

At the far left of the gallery is a mid-20th century sideshow banner line. This portable sign was folded and transported by train from town to town and advertised the sideshow tent, which circus-goers could visit for an additional ticket cost. The sideshow has a complex history. Though the circus certainly entertained public curiosity about individuals who were different or "other" and sold tickets to exploit those differences, it also welcomed those individuals into the circus family providing a job, stability, and a place to belong.

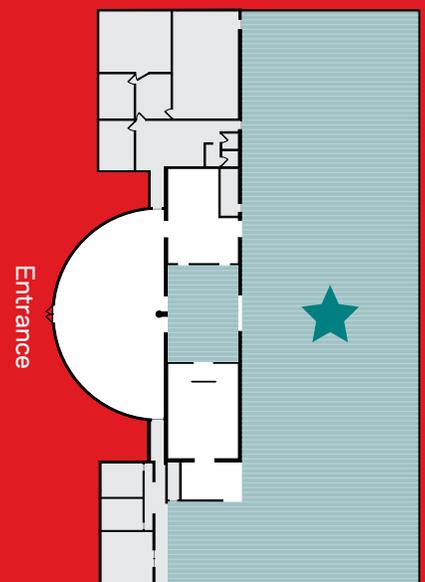
To the far right of the gallery is a woodcarver's studio. Students may find volunteer woodcarvers hard at work replicating and demonstrating the delicate artisanship that goes into circus woodcarving. If the volunteers are present, feel free to say hello!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How has transportation changed in the past 100 years?
How has it stayed the same?
- Based on the objects in this room, why do you think the circus used bright colors and patterns?
- What are some ethical considerations when discussing the sideshow banner line? How should we treat those who are different from us?



WAGON ROOM





RINGLING FAMILY GALLERY

John Ringling came from a large family. His father, August Ringling, was a saddle maker who, with his wife Marie, emigrated from Germany and settled in the mid-west. Together they had seven children, and five of the brothers formed the Ringling Bros Circus.

AL RINGLING (1852-1916)

Chose acts for the big top and sideshow

OTTO RINGLING (1858-1911)

Controlled the money spent

ALF T. RINGLING (1861-1919)

Ran the press department

CHARLES RINGLING (1863-1926)

Was in charge of advertising

JOHN RINGLING (1866-1936)

Managed routing and transportation arrangements

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What business would you like to start with your family or friends?
- How did the Ringling brothers use teamwork to make their circus a success?
- What is something from the Ringling brothers' story that could help you during group work?

