



FACT SHEET

***Under The Big Top* June 11-Sept. 18, 2016**

For centuries, the circus has been a popular form of entertainment in many countries around the world. Including demonstrations of skill and strength, beauty and oddities, circuses have not only attracted audiences of all ages but have also intrigued artists that have attempted to capture this unique experience in various media. At times awe-inspiring, and fear inducing at others, the circus tantalizes every sense.

The artists represented in *Under the Big Top* convey both the circus as a spectacle and the very human participants in it. At the center of the exhibition is Marc Chagall's series of prints *Le Cirque*, complemented by historic and contemporary artists such as Walt Kuhn, Lew Tilley, Edgar Britton, Pamela Joseph, and featuring a stunning selection from famed contemporary artist Cindy Sherman's *Clowns* series.

Marc Chagall (1887-1985)

Born in Belarus in 1887, Marc Chagall's interest in art developed at an early age. In 1907 he moved to St. Petersburg to study at the Imperial Society for the Protection of Fine Arts. The following year, Chagall studied at the Svaneva School. In 1911 he moved to an artist colony, La Ruche, where he further developed his personal style, which was very dreamlike. In his later years, he began to experiment with new art forms such as stained glass and sculptures and was commissioned to produce numerous large-scale works around the world. In 1977 Chagall received the Grand Medal of the Legion of Honor, and was honored with a retrospective exhibition at the Louvre. He died in 1985 at the age of 97, leaving behind a huge collection of work along with a rich legacy as an iconic Jewish artist and pioneer of modernism.

Walt Kuhn (1887-1949)

Walt Kuhn's 1937 painting *Trio*, which is a cherished work in the FAC's permanent collection and featured in this exhibition, is an example of this innovative American modernist's inclination toward obscure and vaudeville subject matter. Kuhn is best known for his seminal role in the 1913 Armory Show, which brought European avant-garde art to America. In this particular piece, he used the characters' guise as a means of personal expression. The three acrobats were executed from live models, two of whom were professional acrobats known as the Roma Brothers. The characters in *Trio* are dissociated from their conventional cheerfulness, stereotypical of the roles they play in circus acts. *Trio* is emblematic of his later work on portraits of circus characters, which was personally inspired by the development of his personal obsession with circus performances. This work predates his mental breakdown which was prefaced by his near-daily attendance of the Ringling Brothers Circus. Despite the difficulty of his last years, Kuhn was a prolific artist who influenced many different artistic media, from painting to printmaking, sculpting to cartooning.

Lew Tilly

(1921-2005)

Lew Tilly was a contemporary printmaker, painter, graphic designer, photographer, animator and filmmaker. He began his career studying at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, but moved to Colorado Springs one year later to study under Boardman Robinson, and eventually became an instructor at the Fine Arts Center School. He spent the rest of his life traveling the world conquering one artistic challenge after another. He served a stint in the Peace Corps, designed and built an African-style house in Georgia, and served as writer-producer-director for the Alexander Film Company. After Tilly died in 2005, his Gazette obituary accounts the "Renaissance Man" he was: "Lewis Lee Tilly III: painter, poet, printmaker, photographer, illustrator, watercolorist, animator, filmmaker, writer, graphic designer, computer art expert, scholar, experimental architect, actor, set designer, raconteur, gourmet cook, jazz fan and world traveler..."

Edgar Britton

(1901-1982)

In 1943, Edgar Britton moved to Colorado Springs at the request of Boardman Robinson to teach at the Fine Arts Center School and Fountain Valley School. By that time, Britton had achieved great recognition as a student of Regionalist master Grant Wood and had received numerous public commissions under the Works Progress Administration. As a draftsman, painter and sculptor, Britton forwarded figurative traditions in an era dominated by abstraction. His uniquely energetic figures were nonetheless aggressively modern in their simplicity and expressive form.

Pamela Joseph

(1942-Present)

Pamela Joseph is a multi-media artist who has exhibited internationally and created the edgy 2013-2014 Fine Arts Center exhibition, *The Sideshow of the Absurd*. This particular exhibition (parts of or in its entirety) has been featured in ten museums and galleries around the United States. The intention of the exhibition being to disseminate information and nostalgia for a lost indigenous American art form, to stimulate ideas, provoke thought, and act as a catalyst for understanding the present. The very notion of a sideshow implies "otherness," the displaying of freaks, "people who are not like us." Therefore, an underlying theme of the works in this exhibition is tolerance, facing viewers with difference as a source of power and strength rather than fear.

Cindy Sherman

(1954-Present)

Cindy Sherman achieved international success early in her career and is recognized as one of the most successful and respected photographers of the late 20th century. Sherman's work has been exhibited and acquired by many major international museums. Nearly all of Sherman's photographs throughout her notable career feature the artist herself portraying the subject. Her appearance is altered through the use of costumes, make-up, prosthetics, and in more recent years, via digital manipulation. The artist asks us to question our preconceived notions of beauty and identity, and elicits powerful responses whether because the images and characters feel eerily familiar, or because they confidently stride a fine line between beautiful and grotesque. Her 2003-2004 *Clowns* portraits have been exhibited around the world and the FAC will feature one stunning photograph for this exhibition.