



Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation

By Helen Stoddart

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One of the most popular forms of international entertainment, the circus remains almost entirely absent from scholarly studies of theatrical forms. *Rings of Desire* is an introduction to the cultural history of the circus and its aesthetic reaches. Helen Stoddart outlines the particular challenges this live, dangerous, and body-centered form presents to literary and film representation, exploring works by Charles Dickens, Federico Fellini, and Wim Wenders. It offers new ways of thinking about the meaning and significance of the circus as a uniquely modern form of art and entertainment.

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Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation By Helen Stoddart Bibliography

- Rank: #5297918 in Books
- Published on: 2001-03-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .70" h x 5.46" w x 8.52" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

That archaic fantasy machine that for generations has spun the circus into an adolescent and artistic French Foreign Legion for runaways and misfits continues to provide dramatic grist for authors, both popular and academic, who seek to explicate both its charms and its illusions. Like Nell Stroud's recent account of circus life (Jossier, LJ 2/1/01), Frega's work is an inside-out treatment of the circus cosmos but here as told through the multigenerational story of the Hubers Betty, Fritzi, and Bobby. The Hubers are circus bloods and brethren, and their stories, interviews, and anecdotes create a fascinating and immediate narrative of performance, struggle, and the insatiable desire to perpetuate a uniquely nomadic and creative life through constant reinterpretations and definitions of identity. Over a period of time, as the Hubers accept scholar and university professor Frega as a trusted chronicler, a lucid portrait of this singularly attractive and bitterly harsh world emerges. Conversely, Stoddart (English and film, Keele Univ., England) presents a decidedly academic treatment of both the aesthetics and cultural history of the circus and the multitudinous economic and social changes it is facing. In the second part of the book, Stoddart applies the circus as an aesthetic template to consider the inherent challenges it makes to literature and film. Stoddart's text will work best for academics, but Frega's story is heartily endorsed for all performance collections. Barry X. Miller, Austin P.L., TX

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About the Author

Helen Stoddart is Lecturer in English and Film Studies at Keele University.

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