



Manchester
Metropolitan
University



CIRCUS

symposium

PHILIP ASTLEY AND THE LEGACY OF MODERN CIRCUS

26th – 27th September 2017

Manchester Metropolitan University's
Cheshire campus



CIRCUS SYMPOSIUM: PHILIP ASTLEY AND THE LEGACY OF MODERN CIRCUS

The main objective of *Circus Symposium: Philip Astley and the Legacy of Modern Circus*, organised by Manchester Metropolitan University's Cheshire Campus, is to bring together researchers and artists in order to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of Modern Circus by Philip Astley (1742 – 1814), who was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, United Kingdom. The event will offer delegates the opportunity to reflect on Astley's legacy from a contemporary perspective through scholarly fora and a range of workshops and masterclasses.

A range of activities are already taking place locally, such as the Philip Astley Project in Newcastle-under-Lyme. This symposium will contribute to these celebrations, and offer a timely reappraisal of the importance of Astley and his lasting artistic legacy.

The entertainment industry commenced with Modern Circus, when Philip Astley fused horse riding with acrobatics in a circular space around 1768. This innovation developed further between the Victorian period and the present day, and the aim of the symposium will be to chart these transformations and map out the contemporary legacy of circus today in the arts.

The aims of the event are:

- To contribute to artistic and scholarly research on the Cheshire Campus;
- To foster the development of an international network of scholars and artists with a focus on the legacy of circus and popular culture in theatre and the performing arts;
- To bring together artists and researchers interested in circus skills and their historical development;
- To promote academic and artistic exchange locally, nationally and internationally;
- To bring British and international universities together to develop collaborative research projects on Modern Circus;
- To produce scholarly material with a focus on Modern Circus.

We believe that this event will be an opportunity to contribute to a fruitful environment for scholarly and artistic research on the Cheshire campus throughout 2017.

Evoé Bacchus!

Professor Eliene Benício and Dr Patrick Campbell
Symposium organizers

Hosted by:

Manchester Metropolitan University's Campus Cheshire
Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Professor Christine Horrocks

Partners:

The Philip Astley Project; Van Buren Organization; Federal University of Bahia (UFBA)

Symposium organizers:

Professor Eliene Benício Amâncio Costa (UFBA)
Dr Patrick Campbell (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Vice-Chancellor Cheshire Campus Office:

Executive PA: Charlie Barratt

Marketing, Communications & Development:

Marketing Assistant: William Dunleavy
Creative Design Studio Manager: Martin Robinson

Logistics:

Coordination: Research and Knowledge Exchange Office
Enterprise Administrators: Maddalena Baccelliere-Shaw
Maureen Boczek, Kerri Tomkinson

Translation Team:

English/Portuguese: Carla Jarret

Axis Arts Centre Team:

Director: Jodie Gibson
Performer/Film Editor: Calum Dwyer
Performer: Laura Harrison
Department of Contemporary Arts Technical Team

Department of Contemporary Arts:

Bev Stevens
Associate Head of Department of Contemporary Arts

Dr Martin Blain

Head of the Graduate School, Cheshire Campus

Dr Jane Turner

Principal Lecturer in Contemporary Theatre and Performance

Modern Circus Exhibition: OPEN SPACE

Curatorship: Jodie Gibson and Eliene Benício, Department of Contemporary Arts Technical Team

Special thanks: Van Buren Family

SCHEDULE

Day 1 - Tuesday 26th September

- **9.00 - 9.30am** – **Registration** (Open Space)
- **9.30 - 10am** – **Opening of the Symposium** with Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Christine Horrocks, Professor Eliene Benício and Dr Patrick Campbell
- **10.00 - 10.45am** – **Keynote address** *What is Circus?* Professor Vanessa Toulmin, Founder and Research Professor at the National Fairground and Circus Archive and Director of City and Culture for the University of Sheffield.
- **10.45 - 11.00am** – **Question & Answer session**
- **11.00 - 11.15am** – **COFFEE**
- **11.15 - 12.00pm** – **Lecture Demonstration** *To Ask the Mask: Towards an Anthropology of the Commedia dell'Arte.* Professor Roberto Cuppone, University of Genoa, Italy.
- **12.00 - 12.15pm** – **Question & Answer session**
- **12.15 - 1.15pm** – *Roll up! Roll Up!* Theresa Heskins, Artistic Director of the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme; and Andrew Van Buren, specialist in Phillip Astley and illusionist.
- **1.00 - 1.15pm** – **Question & Answer session**
- **1.15 - 2.00pm** – **LUNCH**
- **2.30 - 5.30pm** – **Workshops**
Cheshire Contemporary Arts - room CCA 0-17 and CCA 0-24
Andrew Van Buren – Circus skills/show business workshop
Fabio Dall Gallo – Circus games - object manipulation
- **5.30 - 6.00pm** – **COFFEE**
- **6.00 - 9.00pm** – **Masterclass**
Centre for Contemporary Arts - room CCA 0-17
I'm Fa(i)ling: Clowning technique and the poetics of failure. Masterclass in Clown with Dr Richard Talbot, University of Salford, specialist in contemporary clown and comedy acting.

Day 2 - Wednesday 27th September

- **9.00 - 10.00am** – **Keynote address** *Circus Astley in Brazil.* Professor Mario Bolognesi, State University of Sao Paulo, specialist in clowns.
- **10.00 - 10.15am** – **Question & Answer session**
- **10.15 - 10.30am** – **COFFEE**
- **10.30 - 11.15am** – *Speaking, Intervening: Other ways of making and thinking drama and language teaching in the University.* Graça dos Santos, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, director the Parfums de Lisbonne – Festival.
- **11.15 - 11.30am** – **Question & Answer session**
- **11.30 - 12.15pm** – *From the Pool to the Crystal Tank and the Circus Ring: Female natationists in the Victorian period.* Professor Dave Day, Manchester Metropolitan University, specialist in Victorian Leisure and Sport.
- **12.15 - 1.00pm** – **Question & Answer session**
- **1.00 - 2.00pm** – **LUNCH**
- **2.00 - 5.00pm** – **Workshops**
Cheshire Contemporary Arts - room CCA 0-17 and marquee tent
Andrew Van Buren – Circus skills/show business workshop
Fabio Dall Gallo – Circus games - object manipulation
- **5.00 - 5.30pm** – **Closing of the Symposium**

Modern Circus Exhibition

Axis Arts Centre - OPEN SPACE

Schedule: 26th - 27th September 2017,
9.00am - 7.00pm

Curators: Jodie Gibson and Eliene Benício

Special thanks: Van Buren Family - owners of the exhibition

GUEST SPEAKERS

(In presentation order)

What is Circus?

Vanessa Toulmin

Abstract

As we approach the 250th anniversary of Philip Astley's Amphitheatre in London, widely cited as the birth of modern circus, this paper will present a polemic discussion on the issues and creative of what is circus today.

Circus from its inception was an entertainment form that was both global and local, contemporary and rooted in historical performance traditions and arguably itinerant but venue specific in nature. Its spread internationally created new forms and dynamic

interactions as it became part of the entertainment culture throughout the world, transforming transposing and creating new acts and scenographies through its development.

The rise and spread of contemporary circus in France, Australia and Canada in particular over the past fifty years has created a further need for dialogue debate ranging from contemporary v classical, modern v traditional, animal v human,

business v art to name but a few. The question of what is Circus today and what was Circus historically is placed through interaction with other international art forms, the national and colonial socio-political sphere it operates within and the 'traditional' vein of entertainment history it sprang from. This paper seeks neither to provide the answers but to welcome debate and to provide insights into the historical narrative within performance culture in which circus can be framed and also drew inspiration from.

Biography

Professor Vanessa Toulmin is Chair in Early Film and Popular Entertainment at the University of Sheffield, Founder and Research Professor at the National Fairground and Circus Archive and Director of City and Culture for the University of Sheffield.

She is the author of a range of articles, monographs on early film, Victorian culture, carnivals, variety and circus history and travelling fairs and entertainments. Her publications include *The Electric Edwardians*, *the Films of Mitchell and Kenyon*, *Pleasurelands*, and four monographs on Blackpool including Blackpool Tower. She has appeared in over 50 radio and television programmes co-produced *Circus Comes to Town* for the BBC and the *Show of Shows* a recent 70 minute archival documentary which premiered at Docfest in 2015 and recently shown on the BBC. As a curator her exhibitions include *Pleasurelands* with Museums Sheffield, *Circus Showmen*, *Top of the Bill* and others with partners across the United Kingdom.

Her work as a circus producer includes Professor Vanessa's Wondershow at the Roundhouse in London's Circusfest in 2012, artist in resident at Duckie and acted for five years as Creative Director of Showzam's: Blackpool's annual festival of Circus Magic and New Variety. From a long standing Lancashire show family she is intimately connected to both traditional and contemporary circus practice.



To Ask the Mask: Towards an Anthropology of the Commedia dell'Arte

Professor Roberto Cuppone

Abstract

The secret of the CdA has always been, and continues to be, found in the complementarity of Mask (historical legacy, typologies, physiology) and Canovaccio, as an authentic ante-litteram editing theory, which now links it to the movie storyboard.

Biography

Professor Roberto Cuppone teaches Theater Anthropology at the University of Genoa; as an actor, director and author he has worked with Losey, Nanni, Scaparro, Marcucci, De Bosio, Brintrup, Costa, Boso, Soleri, Merisi, Micol, Maag, Foà, Degli Esposti, Pagliai; and written about fifty theatrical texts that have been performed internationally.



Roll up! Roll Up!

Thereza Heskins

Abstract

At Staffordshire's New Vic Theatre, the introduction of circus into our aesthetic and our programme has enabled us to make significant creative and audience development. I'll talk about how we combine circus with narrative on our stage; how we use circus as an audience development tool; and I'll introduce our forthcoming *Circus Past, Present and Future* programme, when we'll collaborate with partners including No Fit State Circus, Circolombia, the Philip Astley Project and the Victoria and Albert Museum to create 13 new events and productions to celebrate the life and legacy of Philip Astley.



Biography

Theresa Heskins is a theatremaker. She is Artistic Director of Staffordshire's producing theatre the New Vic. Current productions include *Around the World in 80 Days* on national tour and at the Manchester Lowry this Christmas; *Treasure Island* at the New Vic this Christmas, *The Borrowers* at the Newbury Watermill, *Alice in Wonderland* at Newcastle's Northern Stage also at Christmas; Elizabeth Robin's suffragette play *Votes for Women* at the New Vic in spring 2018 to mark the centenary of women's suffrage; *Astley's Astounding Adventures* at the New Vic July 2018.

Pictures: Andrew Billington

Philip Astley

Andrew Van Buren

Abstract

Andrew presents a talk about the history of Philip Astley and his family's journey to gain Astley recognition and bring him home to his birthplace of Newcastle under Lyme.



Biography

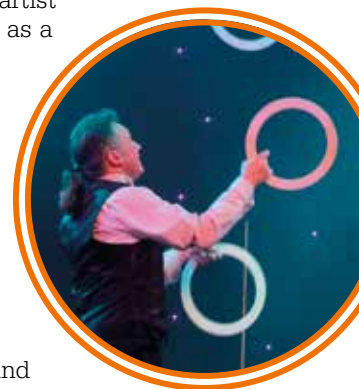
Andrew Van Buren was "Born in a trunk." - as a child grew up touring the world with his parents illusion show - regularly appearing in theatre and circus, mixing with performers, showmen, characters and stars of stage and screen. His first time on stage was at six weeks old in the Great Room Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London.

As a family they are famous for inventing and building their own illusions often performed surrounded. Andrew is also renowned for his showmanship and is recognised as one of the most experienced, professional and adaptable speciality performers around today. Uniquely combining mixtures of skills including magic, illusions, trick cycling, juggling, escapology and regularly appearing on television with his famous plate spinning - with real plates!

Andrew is one of only a few Gold Star Members of The Inner Magic Circle and member of showbusiness charity 'The Grand Order of Water Rats'. He tours the world with his partner Allyson who is the show head girl, an expert dancer, makeup artist and magic 'box jumper' as well as a member of the Lady Ratlings.

A few of Andrew's notable UK projects include performing their illusion spectaculars in The Brit Awards, The Royal Albert Hall, Glastonbury Festival and West End Theatres, also presenting their own shows in The Middle East, Blackpool Tower Circus and on luxury cruise liners around the world. Andrew and Allyson have performed for the Dubai Royal Family - Emir Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid. They represented Great Britain at World Expo in Spain before HRH Prince Charles. In November 2014 Andrew and Allyson were invited to Buckingham Palace along with a selected star studded line up of performers from The Grand Order of Water Rats to personally meet her Majesty the Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip.

Repeated TV appearances include *Blue Peter*, *The Generation Game*, *The Ant and Dec Show*, *Judge Jules Spin Cities*, *Cilla Black's Moment of Truth* and various music videos to name a few. Projects with Harry Hill, Paul O Grady, Lulu, Peter Kay and members of TV's *Coronation Street*. In 2015 Andrew taught TV's *Loose Women* and *Benidorm* actress Sherrie Hewson the art of plate spinning, presenting it on ITV's *Get Your Act Together* with Stephen Mulhern, Brian McFadden, Penn and Teller, Danielle Lloyd and Ray Quinn - with smashing results! Also recently making a featured guest appearance on the interactive 360 film of *Behind the scenes of the BBC news studios*.



Andrew and his father Fred first resurrected awareness in the 'Original Ringmaster' Philip Astley during 1981/1982 and since have worked towards gaining him recognition world wide. For the 250th anniversary of Philip Astley's birth they commissioned and funded the creation of a life sized statue of Philip Astley.

Andrew now works hard guiding the Newcastle under Lyme based Philip Astley Project team.

Further details: www.vanburen.org.uk



I'm Fa(i)ling: Clowning technique and the poetics of failure

Dr Richard Talbot

Abstract

Following some clowning performance practices derived from a period of training with Pierre Byland (Burlesk Centre) exploring the notion of the figure of the clown as anachronistic or out of sync. with regular or 'fashionable' time, this workshop shares practical skills for performing vertiginous states, such as suspense, toppling, tripping, stumbling and elementary falling. The workshop asks how these may be applied to devising for clown performance. Discussions during the workshop will consider these techniques in relation to contemporary performance poetics of failure, that is, as a determined exposure of the limitations of physical adaptation to environment, rather than a demonstration of performer virtuosity.

The clown's inexhaustible effort is inclined towards durationality, in what John Jordan (CIRCA) has called a 'marathon' form of performance. What opportunities emerge through slow or durational improvisations with falling? What rhythms, patterns and gags appear when time spent falling is more tightly constrained? The workshop will go on to consider how these techniques might be applied in a virtual or online environment.

As part of a two year research project *Modelling Interactive Clown Practices in Dementia Care* Richard Talbot has been working with Dr Claire Dormann, a specialist in Digital Games design and humour, to investigate online or 'tele'-clowning in dementia care (with support from British Academy/Leverhulme Trust small arts grant). Here it is proposed, witnessing and interacting with clowns who fall and fail can provide comic relief from the effort to keep in step and in sync with everyday temporality. In particular it is hoped that the project will contribute to an online care provision for people living with early stages of certain forms of dementia and for caregivers.



Biography

Dr Richard Talbot (School of Arts and Media University of Salford) studied clowning technique with Pierre Byland, Philippe Gaulier, Jon Davison, Ian Cameron, Enrique Pardo, Mick Barnfather and ClownLab and now teaches Clowning, Physical Theatres and Comedy Acting Methods in the School

of Arts and Media at the University of Salford. His research methods are predominantly practice-based, playful and parodic and often conducted in-role and around topics related to clowning, digital performance, comedy and laughter. A clownish alter ego, 'Dr Kurt Zarniko' continues to shadow his research and participate in his teaching as a mode of institutional critique. Richard Talbot frequently collaborates with Carran Waterfield on comic immersive performance (Nina and Frederick, Whissell and Williams) and also with Ridiculusmus, performing in *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Lapland* (2015).



Circus Astley in Brazil

Professor Mario Fernando Bolognesi

Abstract

In the State of Sao Paulo (Brazil) today, it is still possible to come across the Circus Astley. The name refers to Philip Astley, considered the creator of the modern circus. The Brazilian Astley is small and its spectacles have not got animals. Instead, the clown has a prominent place at the Astley, acting in entrées, skits and theatrical representations. The Astley is one of several small Brazilian circuses, responsible for intense cultural activity in the small towns of the Brazilian countryside.



Biography

Professor Mario Fernando

Bolognesi is from UNESP, São Paulo State University. Scholar in Productivity and Research, Level 2 of CNPq ((National Council for Scientific and Technological Development). Graduated in

Philosophy on UNESP 1978. Master (1988) and Doctor (1996) in Arts/Drama on University of São Paulo, USP. Lecturer in Aesthetics and Arts History at UNESP (2003). He is dedicated to teaching, research and orientation in the post-graduation in the Arts Program of UNESP, covering drama and circus, with emphasis on the clown, comedy, and circus comedy studies.



Speaking, Intervening: Other ways of making and thinking drama and language teaching in the University

Maria da Graça dos Santos

(Subject of the Department of Lusophone Studies of the University of Paris Nanterre)

Abstract

Drama is included in the pedagogical practices of language teaching at Paris Nanterre University. Contrary to the usual when comes to language teaching, there the students do not learn sited, listening and taking notes: standing and moving they are actors who develop their senses to better listen, and reproduce the language of others that they seek to imitate. These classes entitled 'Passage from Body to Voice' is a kind of workshop that allows you to develop individual abilities by observing others when they speak or move. This specificity is further supported by public performances in interior or exterior spaces and allows students to intervene outside the academic habitus. They take the word and move into the city's forum in unusual productions bringing from the inside out. Supported on practices developed by the company Cá e Lá (Bilingual Company French/Portuguese) based on a specific work about the bilingual actor, this pedagogy interconnects in a singular way Drama and Language Teaching.



After a chronological presentation of the Company, we will evoke the specificity and impact of this activity that allows many students to practice and discover theatre while at the same time acquiring security and autonomy in the fundamental social act that consists in taking the word. We will analyse the practices taught and the aesthetics produced. It will be presented and commented various performances, shows and filmed footage, including in the scope of the Festival Parfums of Lisbonne organized for 11 years in collaboration between the Theatre Company and UFR Languages of Paris Nanterre.



Biography

Maria da Graça dos Santos is a Professor of Paris Nanterre University (EA 369 Roman Studies, also Director of CRILUS (Center for Interdisciplinary Research on the Lusophone World); Research

Associate at The Centre for Cultural History in Contemporary Societies (Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines University) where she is co-director since 2001 along Jean-Claude Yon in the research seminar *History of Performing Arts on 19th and 20th Centuries*, at History of Theatre Society,

National Library of France, Paris; also at CES (Social Studies Centre at University of Coimbra, where she is part of Faculty Cultural Heritage of Portuguese Influence).

Her work particularly studied the Salazar dictatorship and censorship. Director, actress and drama teacher, writes about the notions of physical body/social body, also about the people and body's scenic representations.

She has published several articles about the history of European drama and on Portuguese theater; is the author of *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Theatre Worldwide* (Dir. Michel Corvin), Bordas, Paris 2008. Published *The Denatured Show, Portuguese Theatre Under Salazar Regime, 1933-1968* (CNRS Edition, Paris 2002). Edited in Portuguese by Caminho; The book won the 'Revelation 2005' for the Literature Prize of *Máxima* magazine. She was a Scholar of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Fine Arts Department) between 1983 and 1986 (training in theater studies at the University of Paris III - Sorbonne Nouvelle) and between 1992 and 1996 (Doctorate at the Université Paris X- Nanterre) and is co-founder of Cá e Lá (Bilingual company French-Portuguese) where she has developed a specific work on the bilingual actor and about the connections between drama and language teaching. She is Director of Parfums de Lisbonne – Festival of urbanities crossed between Lisbon and Paris which its 11th edition was between May and July of 2017.



From the Pool to the Crystal Tank and the Circus Ring: Female natationists in the Victorian period

Professor Dave Day

Abstract

Interest in swimming for women during the second half of the nineteenth century was stimulated by the public appearances of professional female natationists who performed in endurance events, exhibited and raced in swimming baths, and displayed ornamental swimming skills in music hall tanks, aquaria and circuses. These aquatic promotions were constant features in the Victorian sporting and entertainment landscape and by the end of the century, working class 'naiads' and 'mermaids' were performing before all social classes.

This presentation explores briefly the practices of these women during the last quarter of the century with a particular focus on Agnes Beckwith, the leading female swimmer of the era. In February 1872, Agnes and her brother Willie debuted in a plate glass aquarium at the Porcherons Music Hall in Paris as Les Enfants Poissons and Agnes was among the main attractions at the new aquarium in Brighton in August. This 'veritable mermaid' was continuously engaged for a hundred and fifty-one weeks at the Westminster Aquarium and she exhibited with Willie in America and Canada in 1883. These appearances created such an impression



that American natationists Cora MacFarland and Clara Sabeau subsequently adopted Agnes's routines and made successful careers exhibiting in showground booths. Agnes also swam in France and Belgium during the 1880s as well as appearing with Hengler's Cirque in Liverpool and Glasgow and with P T Barnum's 'Greatest Show on Earth' at Madison Square Garden in 1887. By the late 1880s, Agnes was leading her own group of lady swimmers and in May 1893, she appeared as Queen of the Waves at Captain Boyton's Water Show at Earls Court, London. She also appeared with Boswell's Grand Circus in 1894 and with Transfield's Circus in 1897, by which time she was firmly established as the most prominent female swimmer in the public imagination.

Biography



Dave Day is Professor of Sports History in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at Manchester Metropolitan University where his research interests focus on two main aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth century sport and leisure. One strand concerns the

biographies of sports coaches and the historical and cultural development of coaching and training practices. He has recently published two unique and seminal texts on this topic, *Sports Coaching in England in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789-1914* and *A History of Sports Coaching in Britain*. He is the leading European academic in this field and his current work concentrates on the transcultural transmission of coaching traditions across European frontiers. Dave has also published extensively on the swimming communities of the Victorian period and has considered the role of female natationists in journal papers and book chapters (see opposite). In uncovering the hidden histories' of these women he has exposed the inextricable links between sport and entertainment in this period by tracking their performances, not only at the seaside or in the swimming baths, but in specially constructed crystal tanks in the theatres and in circus performances that often required considerable innovation in the use of technology. He is currently working on a long-term project combining quantitative and qualitative biographical methods to illuminate further the life courses of working class and lower middle class women engaged as swimming performers, swimming teachers, baths matrons

and bath attendants during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

Dave can be contacted on d.j.day@mmu.ac.uk and followed on Twitter at [@natationist](https://twitter.com/natationist).

Day, D. (2016). Natational dress: functionality, fashion and the fracturing of separate spheres in Victorian Britain. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 19(2), 145-162.

Day, D. (2015). From Lambeth to Niagara: Imitation and Innovation amongst Female Natationists. *Sport in History*, 35(3), 364-390.

Day, D. (2012). What Girl Will Now Remain Ignorant of Swimming? Agnes Beckwith, Aquatic Entertainer and Victorian Role Model. *Women's History Review* 21(3), 419-446.

Day, D. (2011). London Swimming Professors: Victorian Craftsmen and Aquatic Entrepreneurs, in Neil Carter (ed.), *Coaching Cultures*, (London: Routledge ISBN: 978-0-415-59408-0).



WORKSHOPS

Four and five clubs - juggling duo patterns

This workshop focuses on circus games of object manipulation. Enjoy playful activities and have a juggling training group experience.

Biography



Fabio Dal Gallo is a Lecturer at the Theatre School and the Postgraduation Program in Performing Arts of the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. He is a member of the Interdisciplinary Research and Extension Group on Contemporaneity, the Imaginary

and Theatricality. He has experiences in Theatre in Education and Educational Processes in Performing Arts, focusing on Circus, Street Theatre, Improvisation and Games. He is also a juggler, equilibrist, clown and circus director and has performed in more than 50 shows.

Circus skills and show business workshop

Join Andrew Van Buren to learn show business and 'tricks of the trade' along with ground based circus skills, juggling, hula hoop, diablo, plate spinning and more!



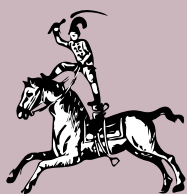
Modern Circus Exhibition

Axis Arts Centre - OPEN SPACE

Schedule: 26th – 27th September 2017,
9.00 am – 7.00pm

Curators: Jodie Gibson and
Eliene Benício

Special thanks: Van Buren Family -
owners of the exhibition



CIRCUS
symposium

