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WITTE MUSEUM

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Witte Museum Features Hertzberg Circus Collection *Circus Folk: Secrets Behind the Big Top* Oct. 24, 2009-Feb. 14, 2010

SAN ANTONIO—From promoters to performers to roustabouts, *Circus Folk: Secrets Behind the Big Top* unravels the secrets from *behind* the big top and is drawn from the Witte's famous **Hertzberg Circus Collection**, one of the largest and most impressive collections of circus art and artifacts in the world. Come one, come all and discover exactly who circus folk were **October 24, 2009** through **February 14, 2010** in the Kathleen and Curtis Gunn Gallery.

They came from every corner of the world—some were born into it, others ran away to join it—but no matter the reason, they became circus folk, a family creating magic in a traveling tent show. It is a life lived dangerously, humorously, but most importantly, together.

Categorized into four sections, this exhibit takes visitors through every aspect of creating these traveling spectacles. The first section, Life in a Traveling Village, focuses on their life on the road. Circus folk lived their lives for the next performance on the tour, and traveled as a group by train, truck and motor home—creating a mobile village complete with places to eat, sleep and work.

The second section, The Circus Family, delves into their special ties that are a complex blend of business, love and family relationships. The business partnership between P. T. Barnum and Tom Thumb became a lifelong friendship that saved Barnum from financial ruin. Alfredo Codona and Lillian Leitzel had a passionate love affair that ended tragically when she died while performing. Daisy and Violet Hilton, conjoined twins, never spent a day apart. The circus family is like no other.

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The circus village is a physical place. In the third section, Getting Physical, visitors learn that athleticism and strength are required in all areas of the circus—from a roustabout using an elephant to put up tents as large as football stadiums to a great athlete flying through the air on a trapeze.

Finally, circus folk have rules, customs and beliefs—in and out of the ring. The fourth section, Rules of the Ring, explains the rules for work, play and travel. Rules are highly respected and apply to everyone from the circus stars and managers at the top to the cage cleaners at the bottom. Everyone has a place and knows the rules of their position, making the circus village function smoothly.

There is a \$3 surcharge in addition to museum general admission for *Circus Folk*. For more information call 210.357.1900 or visit www.wittemuseum.org. Note to Editors: high resolution images are available by request to: shannonstandley@wittemuseum.org.

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