



99-107-SH, 1999, from the "Circus" project, 1991-2001

Date

1999

Primary Maker

Rhona Bitner

Medium

Cibachrome print

Description

"Circus" (1991–2001) marks the earliest series featured in Resound. Inspired by images Bitner made while attending a matinee of the expansive three-ring Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden in New York City, the hundreds of photographs that followed were the result of photographing seventy-six live performances by forty-six traveling circus companies over the course of a decade. In addition to the colors and spectacle of the performance, Bitner was drawn to how the circus mirrors real life. "We use the language of the circus to describe the everyday outside the tent—we jump through hoops, juggle home and work, hang by a thread." Bitner photographed circuses in New York and throughout Europe, building on the long-

established informal network between troupes to gain access. This series of photographs, made at the end of the twentieth century, unwittingly anticipated the decline of the circus as a popular form of entertainment in the US. Ringling Bros., the largest American circus, operated for nearly a century before folding in 2017 and the not-for-profit Big Apple Circus closed in 2016. In Europe, this artform and its traditions continue to thrive.

Dimensions

Image: 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm) Frame: 11 x 9 x 1 1/4 in. (27.9 x 22.9 x 3.2 cm)