

For Immediate Release  
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**The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery Hosts**  
***Sawdust and Spectacle: Under the Big Top in Small Town America***

The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery will present *Sawdust and Spectacle: Under the Big Top in Small Town America* from February 4 – April 21, 2010. Curated by Sara Johnson, chief curator, Southern Ohio Museum, this exhibition shines a spotlight on the glory days of the traveling circus in the United States from the late 19th century through the 1930s, focusing on its popularity in Midwestern states such as Ohio.

The exhibition features captivating imagery from Portsmouth native Clarence Carter and other major Ohio artists of the last century, as well as vintage circus posters and banners, toys, documentary photographs from the Ackerman Collection, the Carter Archives and other public and private Ohio collections, and an exquisite set of 13 circus dioramas by Sonny King, the son of a lion tamer. The various artworks and artifacts blend the grandiosity of the big top with the less-glamorous private lives of its performers.

Join the Riffe Gallery for the opening of *Sawdust and Spectacle: Under the Big Top in Small Town America* on February 4, 2010 from 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Curator Sara Johnson will lead a tour of the exhibition on February 24, 2010 noon – 1 p.m. Artists in the show include: Gifford Beal, Clarence Holbrook Carter, Paul Lewis Clemens, James Gantt, Fred Johnson, Yvonne Twining Humber, Henry Keller, Sonny King, Walt Kuhn, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Angelo Pinto, A. Schoenhut and Co., Yeteve Smith, Steiff, Paul Anderson Trapp, Paul Travis, Frank N. Wilcox and David C. "Snap" Wyatt.

The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery will also hold a Family Day Workshop Sunday, February 21, 2010 from 2 – 4 p.m. Local artist Helma Groot will help children ages 6-17 construct circus mobiles using plywood templates of clowns, horses, elephants, dancers, lions and more! Participants will decorate the circus-themed shapes with paint, glue, glitter, paper and other festive supplies. Once shapes have been decorated, participants will construct them into a mobile, and take home their own kinetic sculpture. Registration is required as space is limited and all children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Registration begins February 4 and ends February 18, 2010 online at [www.riffegallery.org](http://www.riffegallery.org).

Organized by the Southern Ohio Museum in Portsmouth, OH, Sara Johnson, Curator, with support from the Ohio Humanities Council, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Scioto Foundation, the Ohio Arts Council, the Richard D. Marting Foundation and the City of Portsmouth.

The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, 77 S. High St., Columbus, OH. Admission is free. Gallery hours are Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Wednesday and Friday, 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Thursday, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. and Saturday, and Sunday, noon-4 p.m. Closed Mondays and state holidays. Visit [www.riffegallery.org](http://www.riffegallery.org) or phone 614/644-9624 for more information. The Riffe Gallery is supported by the Ohio Building Authority. Media Sponsors include CD101, CityScene, Ohio Magazine, Time Warner Cable and WCBE.

Free group tours are available Wednesday through Friday throughout the run of each exhibition. To schedule a group tour contact Riffe Gallery director Mary Gray at [mary.gray@oac.state.oh.us](mailto:mary.gray@oac.state.oh.us) or 614/728-2239.

The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery showcases the work of Ohio's artists and curators, exhibitions produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program and the collections of the region's museums and galleries. The Riffe Gallery's Education Program seeks to increase public appreciation and understanding of those exhibitions. Admission is free. For information, call the Riffe Gallery at 614/644-9624.

The Ohio Arts Council is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically.

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**Images are available upon request.**

**Calendar Listings:**

*Sawdust and Spectacle: Under the Big Top in Small Town America*, February 4 – April 27, 2010. Curator Sara Johnson will lead a tour of the exhibition on February 24, 2010 noon – 1 p.m. This exhibition shines a spotlight on the glory days of the traveling circus in the United States from the late 19th century through the 1930s, focusing on its popularity in Midwestern states such as Ohio. [www.riffegallery.org](http://www.riffegallery.org) or 614/644-9624.

**Family Day Workshop**

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