130 - THE MODERN CIRCUS: HISTORY, INNOVATION AND SOCIAL TRANSITION

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1 INTRODUCTION

The circus symbolizes pleasure, and it is one of the oldest and popular artistic knowledge. In the arena, the stage of circus, the “professional of circus” parade, always with a lot of magic and enchantment.

Actually, the circus can be divided into three main branches: traditional, which is the more romantic vision of the circus, consisting of families that is living under canvas for several generations; the new circus, which is innovating the language of this art, inserting theatrical and multimedia elements, seeking a contemporary design, with the majority of its artists are not coming from traditional families; and finally the street performers, which are present since Brazil Empire. Without canvas and with much improvisation, they keep the circus in its simplest essence (CUNHA, 2010).

2 THE CIRCUS: ART HISTORY

The circus is one of the oldest artistic manifestations in the world. Its emergence and development accompany the historical and philosophical process of medieval, modern and contemporary societies.

The art of entertainment, like the circus, goes along with the societies since the beginnings, permeating the life of many different nations. And so the circus is constructed as a way of enchantment, evasion and abstraction of the real world, as a body art show, according to Soares (1998).

The circus is a secular body activity with high precision, coming from the entertainment. There is a hypothesis that “the remote ancestor of the circus artist must have been the caveman that, in a surprisingly bountiful hunting day, entered the jumping up and down, and arousing, with its grimaces, the laughter of his difficulties fellow” (TORRES, 1998).

One of the great events that inspired circus art was the manifestation of man on train different species of animals. However, knowing precisely the origin and / or birth of circus art is difficult. To Jacob (1992) cited by Duprat (2007) people in India and China were entertained by captured animals in various battles, being treated as trophies of conquest of the great civilizations. But was the Greek civilization that developed the principles of dressage in "Knossos", the first amphitheater which was created in 2400 BC, in which young athletes did exercises on a bull.

Already in China, the circus arts paintings from were discovered in almost 5,000 years ago that appear acrobats, contortionists and tightrope walkers. The acrobatic was a way of training for warriors who demanded agility, flexibility and strength. Over time, these qualities were added grace, beauty and harmony, to Castro (1997) cited by Araújo and France (2006).

Finally Torres (1998) shows that there are records that the roots of circus art are in racetracks from Ancient Greece and from the great Egyptian Empire. The first signs of the circus are recorded in the pyramids of Beni-Hassan, with drawings of tamers, acrobats, jugglers and contortionists. The performances of this period were intended to greet the victorious generals.

However was in Europe that the circus gained strength and developed. For Castro (1997) the shows took off in the Roman Empire, when its amphitheaters received skills presentations. The importance and grandeur of this spectacle can be provided by the Roma's Maximum Circus. There were presented eccentricities as Nordic blond men, exotic animals, fire-eaters and gladiators, among others. Nevertheless, between 54 and 68 AD, the arenas began to be occupied by bloody spectacles, with the persecution of Christians, who were thrown to wild beasts, distorting the circus proposal and decreasing interest in art.

The Maximum Circus Roma's is perfectly suited to the realization of the circus-hippodrome. It was the Romans' leisure space, where there was social participation of subjects and privileged, with capacity for 270 thousand people.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, this model from the Roman circus comes in a process of extinction due to the strong Christian influence that classified such manifestations as sinful practices. The artists began to be persecuted by religious authorities, forcing them to adopt nomadism (ANDRADE, 2006). Complementing Andrade (2006), Duprat (2007) argues that along with the decline of the Roman Empire, there was a decrease of interest in the Roman games, reaching its extinction. The artists who had guaranteed space in these artistic manifestations found themselves with the need to find alternatives. Dependent on the voluntary contributions of the people, tightrope walkers and mountebanks seek new parties, squares and streets, presenting themselves in various forms: acrobatics, illusionism, mime, ventriloquism, music and more.

For Jacob (1992) cited by Silva (2003), in the Middle Ages, the search for the sacred, by the cult of the spirit is extremely strong, this way, artists become very discriminated by the authorities. Louis XIV, for example, prohibits dancers court and other artists to demonstrate their skills in public highway, causing a mandatory grouping of presentations at fairs. So artists end up integrating the marginalized bunch, always looking for new cities where they could earn a bit more money and have more respect, characterizing the nomadism of this people.

However, the Renaissance, unlike the previous period, was definitely characterized in human history as a period of great change, allowing more freedom, providing the development of numerous artistic expressions. At this time new ideas emerge which will then be disseminated throughout Europe, composing and valuing the arts and science (ANDRADE, 2006).

With this new sense, the circus shows become also appreciated by the nobility, requiring a process of adaptation to the new spectacles' public. The late seventeenth century, the Renaissance period and early Modern lidade, is marked by moments of circus' values and techniques exchange among the circus companies in Europe, who were seeking new circus' knowledge and experiences.

Then that from the seventeenth century, these mountebanks consolidate a strong dynasty, tradition or way of living from art in Europe, following a trading tendency, structured into stalls that functioned as stages, circulating freely through towns

and villages, keeping nomads features (DUPRAT, 2007).

For Henriques (2006) the circus performances in 1727, or mid-eighteenth century, were considered immoral, comedies and operas performed by gypsies on the outskirts of large cities. The nomadic movement represented not only social unrest, a move that has sparked diverse sensations, generated fascination, changing daily life, wonder, explosive and joyful feeling, uncontrollable and pleasurable transformation of the city through which they passed.

For Silva (2003), there were many groups that were formed in the eighteenth century, with the highlight of Philip Astley, who began his presentations around 1766, along with others British cavalry ex-officers. In 1770, he rented a vacant lot, building grandstands in front of a circular track, still in open air, thus forming the basis of the modern circus. After gypsies' nomadic movements and achievements of their circus shows, arose the characterization of the Modern Circus in 1770.

3 THE MODERN CIRCUS: THE CONVERGENCE OF THE DIVERGENCY

It was in the late eighteenth century that the circus featured values and characteristics which are preserved until today, assuming contemplative entertainment posture, performed in a more creative and organized way, with its circular arena and varied attractions, according to Silva (2008).

The modern circus is a result of the conjunction of, until then, two distinct spectacular universes: on one side, the English equestrian art, which was developed in the barracks; and on the other, the feats of the acrobats (BOLOGNESI, 2002).

Across Europe, the horse occupied a central place in circus presentations, then being called "little horses circuses", and mostly the riding numbers gave value to the presentation of the circus company (HENRIQUES, 2006).

The modern circus presents Philip Astley as his great "inventor" and "creator". Astley structured the first circus with an arena and equestrian performances. Over the years, Philip Astley incorporated jugglers, acrobats, clowns and riders in the same presentation, enabling multiple circus modalities, for Silva et al (2008).

According to Bolognesi (2009), the modern circus was formed in the late eighteenth century, from the initiative of the military Philip Astley (1742-1814). In 1768, he opened in London at Westminster Bridge Road, 687, Lambeth, the Astley's Riding School, designed to pass on the lessons he had developed in the British Cavalry. Besides the military exercises, he explored the performance of prowess of a man on horseback. From school, starting from 1770, the place became a playhouse. The amphitheater, built of wood, was destroyed by fire on several occasions: 1794, 1803, 1830 and 1841. Finally, in 1863, the space was demolished.

The scenic building, in its heyday, was composed of a circular track (circus ring) and stage. Initially, the place was fairly simple, but for each reconstruction, it received refinements of decoration and equipment, finishes Bolognesi (2009).

The show organized by Philip Astley in his amphitheater was composed initially of equestrian figures. But as entertainment, it was noted that there was monotony in their presentations. So, the circus eventually aggregates the mountebanks, being popular artists who performed in the squares, streets and fairs. The goal was to attract more audience, giving more varieties of entertainment.

Astley's circuses, in the late eighteenth century, were places with audience, cabins, dressing rooms, and circus ring at its center. The circus started to be a meeting point of the local public in small towns.

According to Torres (1998), the Philip Astley's Circus worked with military features: the uniform, the beating of drums, voices command for risk's numbers. Astley himself directed and featured the show, thus creating the figure of the master of ceremonies. Astley began to spread the modern circus and opened a branch in Paris, after an invitation to present himself to the king of France. Only later, some European countries such as Sweden, Spain, Germany, Russia and France itself, began to develop his circus art. In just fifty years, the modern circus had spread throughout the world.

Finally, the kind of spectacle recreated by Astley, by joining around himself acrobats' families , theater groups of fairs, gypsy dancers of bears, artists heirs of Commedia dell'Arte, also joined the comic and dramatic; associated the clown and mime with acrobatics, balance, the equestrian and animal training, in the same space. Right now, not only was creating a model of spectacle, but the structure of an organization (CERVATTI apud SILVA, 2003, p.22).

After the success of Astley's shows, the also rider Charles Hughes created in 1780, one of the first shows companies in the world that was called Royal Circus, and for the first time this kind of show and space appeared under the name "circus" . The success of his company was responsible for the popularity and acknowledgement of this name until nowadays, according to Duarte (1995).

Finally, the modern circus is characterized by having several circus attractions, such as equestrian numbers, animal training, tumbling, pantomimes and dances, and also for being, in an organized way, an opportunity for entertainment and leisure. The circus attractions were made by nomadic artists who performed in various public spaces.

For Henriques (2006) the characters that have marked the history of circus are known as nomads, travelers, such as Gypsies and mountebanks, performers who entertained the public at fairs and in public square presentations from city to city. The nomads were recognized as "peoples bums" who left signs of destruction and abandonment through which they passed, establishing escape routes, detonates desires, fragmentation of identities and offering unpredictable and dangerous ways and possibilities.

During the nineteenth century, the circus shows have proliferated throughout Europe, increasing the number of companies that made shows, mostly in stable installations, built in wooden structure in the open (uncovered) in adapted theaters or amphitheaters (DUPRAT, 2007).

Still in accordance to Duprat (2007), the circus shows have great influence on the society of the time, mostly in the form of fun and entertainment of the people and the ever growing bourgeoisie. This relative stability consolidates a new group of artists, a company formed by the union of military graduates and itinerant artists families, mountebanks, artisans as puppets presenters, jugglers, illusionists, magicians, gypsies, actors from the theaters and street fairs, nomads by excellence. These are companies that have emigrated from the European continent to other continents.

One of the first continents that had been honored by the Circus was the America. In the mid nineteenth century the circus came to the United States through various circus troupes from Europe. Purdy Brown, along with his brothers Nathan and Seth, cover the circus arena with a tarp and a central mast, and then come the mold of "canvas circus." The arrival of the British juggler Thomas Taplin and his troupe in New York spread the circus by the United States over the generations. However it was the work of the showman Phineas Taylor Barnum that "canvas circus" was broadcast, using colorful posters, as a means of disseminating, and a huge circus tent, taking further steps to spectacles.

The Circus spreads joy and entertainment around the world, being widespread by the work of circus troupes and by word-of-mouth marketing from viewers.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The circus and circus art, trespassing centuries, incorporated new clothing constituting a cultural spectacle of a permanent nature, with its charms and fascinations.

Note that the possible origins of the circus knowledge are inaccurate and dialogue between China, Egypt and Greece. It is notable that in each region mentioned, the circus art presents notable features, whether bodily, military and/or political.

Europe has great importance in the evolution and thrust of the circus. Starting from the great Roman circus shows, with the hippodrome-circus as leisure space for the reasoning and the emergence of modern circus in the late eighteenth century. The movements of nomadic mountebanks in Europe were responsible for creating the modern circus, having highlighted the military and English horseman Philip Astley, who in 1766 built an open space for his equestrian performances.

Gradually, the modern circus gained new adherents as the acrobats, artists specializing in pantomimes, dancers/ballerinas and clowns.

Of military origin, the modern circus has become a new leisure area at the end of the eighteenth century, filled with many new artists and circus skills.

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THE MODERN CIRCUS: HISTORY, INNOVATION AND SOCIAL TRANSITION

ABSTRACT

Through the literature review, this article aims to inform and bring the history of the circus, from its possible origins to the modern circus concept, recognizing its values and premises as secular art. The circus art as entertainment keep pace with companies since their beginnings, permeating the life of different people. It is difficult to accurately date the origin of this art; sometimes it is in China, sometimes in Greece or Egypt. And so the circus is built, as a form of enchantment, retreat and abstraction from the real world for Soares (1998). One of the major facts that inspired the circus art was the human capacity in training animals. The shows have gained impulse as a leisure space in the Roman Empire with the creation of amphitheaters, characterized as circus-hippodromes. At the end of the 18th century the modern circus was born that is the result of two universes conjunction: the English equestrian art, which was developed in barracks; and the feats of the acrobats, founded by English military Philip Astley (BOLOGNESI, 2002). Finally, the modern circus is characterized for presenting many circus attractions, such as animal presentations, acrobatic jumps, pantomimes, dances, and clowns.

KEYWORDS: Circus. Philip Astley. Circus Art.

LE CIRQUE MODERNE: HISTOIRE, INNOVATION ET SOCIAL TRANSITION

RÉSUMÉ

Grâce à l'examen de la littérature, cet article vise à informer et font revivre l'histoire du cirque, depuis les origines possibles de la conception du cirque moderne, tout en reconnaissant ses valeurs et les hypothèses que l'art profane. Le cirque arrive en sociétés de divertissement depuis le début, imprègne la vie de nombreuses personnes différentes. Il est difficile de dater

précisément l'origine de cet art, parfois apparaît en Chine, maintenant en Grèce et maintenant en Egypte. Et si le cirque est construit comme une forme d'enchantement, d'évasion et d'abstraction du monde réel, Soares (1998). L'un des événements majeurs qui ont inspiré le cirque était la capacité humaine dans la formation des animaux. Les spectacles ont pris de l'ampleur comme espace de loisirs dans l'Empire romain, avec la création moderne qui résulte de la combinaison de deux mondes: l'équitation anglaise qui était l'amphithéâtre, le cirque-like caractérisé hippodrome. Dans la fin du XVIIIe siècle est né le cirque développé dans les casernes, et les prouesses des acrobates, fondé par le britannique militaire Philip Astley (BOLOGNESI, 2002). Enfin, le cirque moderne se caractérise par plusieurs attractions du cirque tels que les actes des animaux, tumbling, pantomimes, danses et clowns.

MOTS-CLÉS: Cique. Philip Astley. Art du cirque.

EL CIRCO MODERNO: LA HISTORIA, LA INNOVACIÓN Y LA TRANSICIÓN SOCIAL

RESUMEN

A través de la revisión de la literatura, este artículo pretende informar y traer la historia del circo, desde los posibles orígenes hasta la concepción del circo moderno, reconociendo sus valores y premisas como arte secular. El arte del circo como entretenimiento acompaña a las sociedades desde los primordios, permeando la vida de los más diferentes pueblos. Es difícil datar con precisión el origen de este arte; ora se presenta en China, ora en Grecia y ora en Egipto. Y así el circo si construye, como forma de encantamiento, fuga y abstracción del mundo real para Soares (1998). Uno de los principales hechos que inspiraron el arte del circo fue la capacidad humana en el adiestramiento de animales. Los espectáculos han ganado impulso como espacio de ocio en el Imperio Romano con la creación de los anfiteatros, caracterizado como un circo-hipódromo. A finales del siglo XVIII nació el circo moderno que es el resultado de la conjunción de dos universos: el arte ecuestre inglesa, que se desarrolló en el cuartel; y las hazañas de los saltimbanquis, fundado por el militar inglés Philip Astley (BOLOGNESI, 2002). Por fin, el circo moderno se caracteriza por presentar varias atracciones de circo, como números con animales, saltos acrobáticos, pantomimas, bailes y payasos/clown.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Circo. Philip Astley. Arte de Circo.

O CIRCO MODERNO: HISTÓRIA, INOVAÇÃO E TRANSIÇÃO SOCIAL

RESUMO

Através da revisão de literatura, o presente artigo tem por objetivo informar e trazer a história do circo, desde as possíveis origens à concepção do circo moderno, reconhecendo os seus valores e premissas como arte secular. A arte circense como entretenimento acompanha as sociedades desde os primórdios, permeando a vida dos mais diferentes povos. É difícil, datar com precisão, a origem desta arte, ora apresenta-se na China, ora na Grécia e ora no Egito. E assim o circo se constrói, como forma de encantamento, de fuga e abstração do mundo real, para Soares (1998). Um dos grandes fatos que inspiraram a arte circense foi a habilidade humana no adestramento de animais. Os espetáculos ganharam impulso como espaço de lazer, no Império Romano, com a criação moderno que é resultado da conjunção de dois universos: a arte equestre inglesa, que era dos anfiteatros, caracterizados como circo-hipódromo. No final do século XVIII nasceu o circo desenvolvida nos quartéis; e as proezas dos saltimbancos, fundado pelo militar inglês Philip Astley (BOLOGNESI, 2002). Por fim, o circo moderno caracteriza-se por apresentar várias atrações circenses, como números com animais, saltos acrobáticos, pantomimas, danças e palhaços/clown.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Circo. Philip Astley. Arte Circense.