

# LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

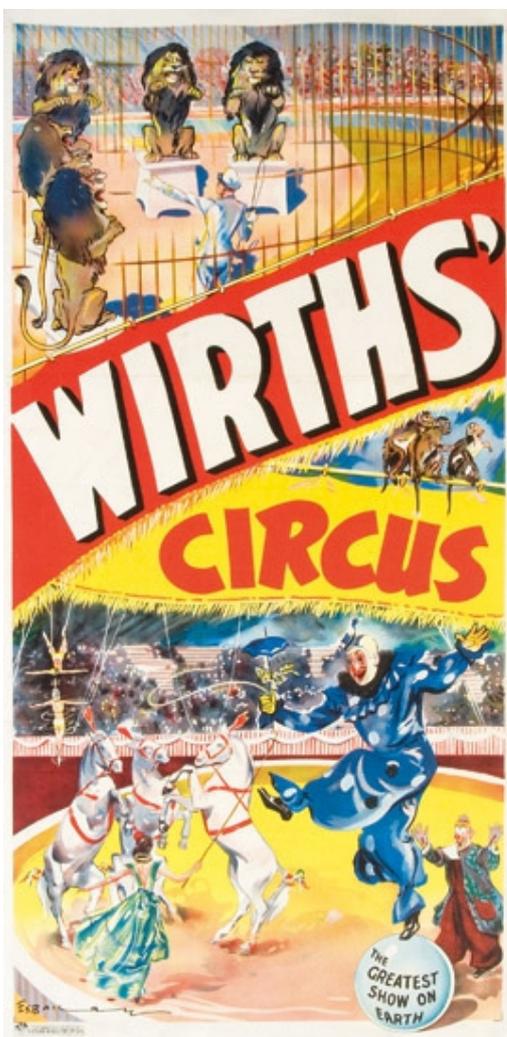
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*An ad-hoc one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy*

## Lex's Grandpa goes to the Circus

When Lex's grandpa was a lad, he'd get off the train at Flinders Street, cross over Princes Bridge, and go to the circus. These days, Melbourne has no dedicated circus site – and Lex thinks that's a shame.

For the best part of a century the Crown land where the National Gallery of Victoria now stands was the permanent home of Marvelous Melbourne's circuses. In the 1870s it housed Cooper and Bailey's Great American Circus, then Fitzgerald's Circus, and finally the Wirths Brothers' Circus.



Following a disastrous fire in 1953, the Dunstan Government decided to use the site for an Arts Centre. Visiting circuses were relegated to the far end of Richmond, or to the Flemington Showgrounds – Crown reserves configured, managed, developed and serviced for altogether different primary purposes.

Of course, the whole circus genre has changed dramatically over the decades. We no longer want to see animals being mistreated. But we continue to delight in the acrobats, clowns and magicians of Cirque du Soleil, and Silvers, and Circus Oz, and a dozen other itinerant troupes.

What a pity they don't have a decent home.

*In his imagination Lex sees a permanent, purpose-built, architect-designed Big Top. Not made of scaffolding and canvas, but of crystals and fairy-floss, with minarets and cupolas...*

**Back to earth, Lex!**

There was another side to the Wirths' Circus site – a seedy side. One venue there was the Forty Club, an enterprise which notoriously sold sly grog “carried in under the eyes of the police.” Quite possibly that's where Lex's grandpa was going.

See you there! Lex Loci

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