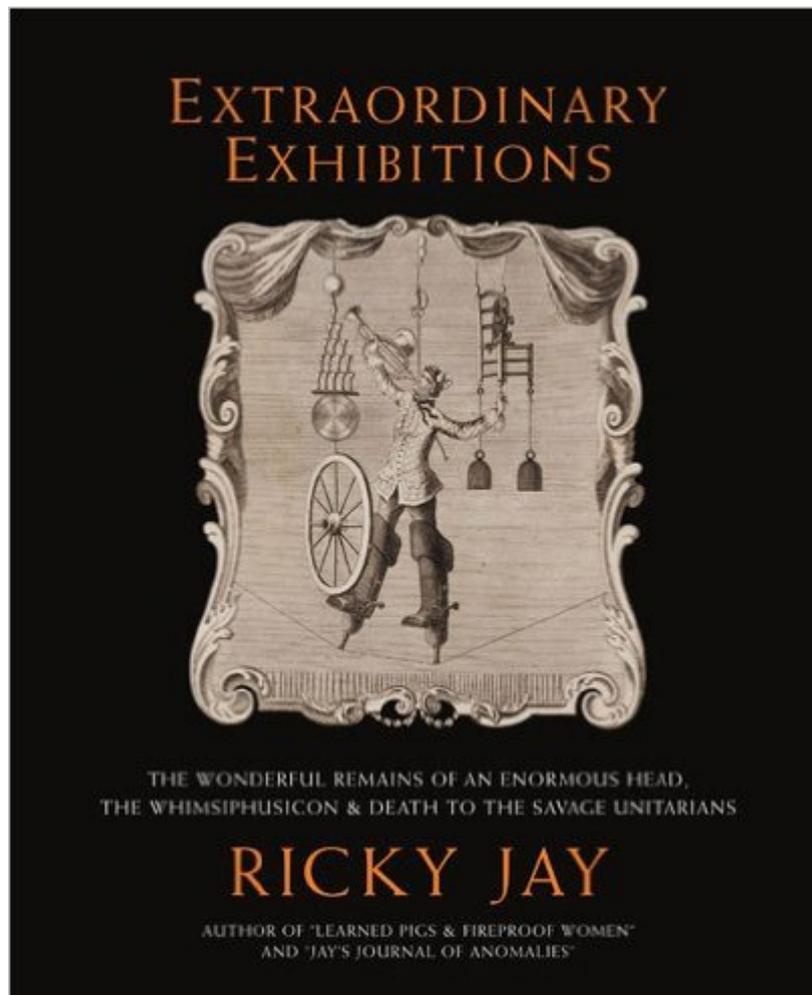


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Extraordinary Exhibitions: Broadsides From The Collection Of Ricky Jay



Synopsis

An informal history of sensational, scientific, silly, satisfying, and startling attractions based on seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century broadsides from Ricky Jay's extraordinary collection. It includes observations on the convention of promoting such appearances, digressions on the manner and method of printing advertisements to do so, and insights into the psychology employed to that end. All are compiled in a monograph that is itself a shameless attempt to entertain and elucidate. It is the contention of the author that neither the tongue of the most florid orator, nor pen of the most ingenious writer, can sufficiently describe the elegance, symmetry, and prodigious accomplishments of those who pass in review within these pages. Included are broadsides advertising: an armless dulcimer player, a ghost showman, a singing mouse, a chess-playing automaton, a cannon ball juggler, an African hermaphrodite, a chicken incubator, a rabbi with prodigious memory, a ventriloquist, a spirit medium, a glass blower, a woman magician, a speaking machine, a mermaid, a bullet catcher, a flea circus, and an equestrian bee keeper. Illustrated throughout.

Book Information

Series: Broad­sides from the Collection of Ricky Jay

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Quantuck Lane Press; First Edition edition (May 17, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1593720122

ISBN-13: 978-1593720124

Product Dimensions: 10.4 x 1 x 13.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,473,032 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #88 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Performing Arts](#) #142 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Circus](#) #409 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Popular Culture](#)

Customer Reviews

If you ever have a chance for a collector to show his collection, you run the risk of being terribly bored. Unless you yourself collect stamps, coins, thimbles, Hummel figurines, or Corvettes, you are unlikely to sympathize with the delight the collector takes in his hoard. Ricky Jay is a fascinating

man; he is a master magician, a historian of show business (especially of novelty acts), and an actor in David Mamet's movies. He collects something few others do: showbills for the jugglers, magicians, animal acts, ventriloquists, and other eccentric and novelty performances through almost four centuries. Don't worry, it is far from boring. Around eighty of his specimens are on display in a large format book, *Extraordinary Exhibitions: The Wonderful Remains of an Enormous Head, the Whimsiphusicon & Death to the Savage Unitarians* (Quantuck Lane Press). The broadsides are funny and beautiful, and Jay's learned and enthusiastic commentary about each one is on the page facing each specimen. It is all thoroughly entertaining, and like any show advertising, the posters make you wonder if the acts are really as described. There is so much verbal and graphic hyperbole on display here that a bit of incredulity is only sensible, but still: who, if confronted by an announcement for Signor Cappelli and his Learned Cats, with assurances that after he introduces his cats to the audience, they will "beat a drum, turn a spit, grind knives, strike upon an anvil, roast coffee, ring bells, set a piece of Machinery in motion to grind rice in the Italian manner with many other astonishing exercises", who, I say, would let incredulity overcome a wish to get a peek at the show? Let me just take the three displays mentioned in the subtitle.

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