



47 PERFORMER'S ENTRANCE

Oil on canvas 50.75 x 66 cm
(20" x 26") Signed
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
(Museums)

A performer clothed in exotic costume rides out of the deeply shadowed Big Top at Sanger's Circus into the clear sunlight. His act is over, but others prepare to begin. "The romance of a big sagging tent", and the presence of the Spanish girls, bullfighter, and leering clown were eagerly remarked upon when this work was exhibited in 1927 at Sunderland²⁰, at a time when, throughout the country, such performers were the champions of popular affection.

From its appearance the performer's entrance might almost be the stage itself. Elwell has seized upon this strange inversion: visually there is drama to be found outside the performance. Against the dark interior the figures are silhouetted and active. The swirling movement of a red cloak is described by its flowing line and uneven edge in the painting technique. Guy-ropes create a pathway that attracts the viewer into the scene.