

Poster Advertising a *Völkerschau* Featuring “Australian Cannibals” (1885)

Abstract

This 1885 poster advertises a *Völkerschau* of “Australian cannibals” organized by R. A. Cunningham, a Canadian who had recruited nine Aboriginal Australians as an agent for circus owner P. T. Barnum. He first took this group of Aborigines to North America, where they became part of a traveling show that Barnum had organized. Cunningham subsequently took over control of the show and brought the surviving seven members on a tour of Europe, including Germany. As both the depiction of the Aborigines (who are shown murdering and cannibalizing shipwrecked white sailors) and the caption illustrate, the individuals put on display were considered “the very lowest order of mankind” by the white organizer of this so-called human zoo. Cunningham, Carl Peters, and other such organizers exploited indigenous peoples and profited in the process.

Source



Source: Historisches Museum Frankfurt am Main. Photograph: Horst Ziegenfusz. Reprinted in David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, plate 7.

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