

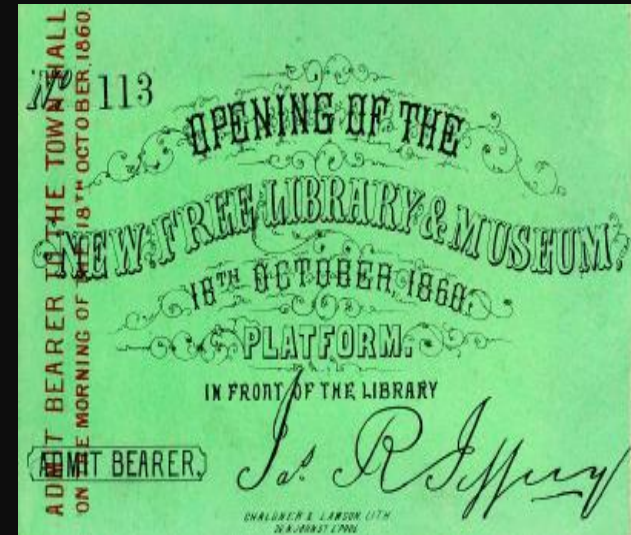


'A Permanent Civilising Effect'?

Debating Working- Class Museumgoers in Victorian Liverpool

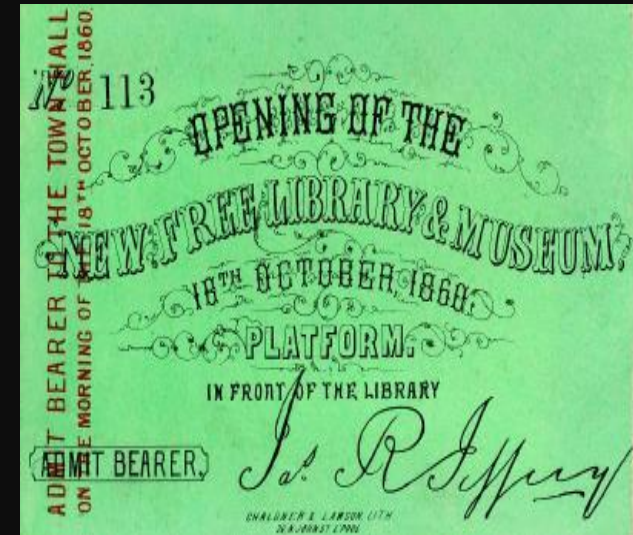
Liverpool's public museum: chronology

- **1845** Parliament passes Museums Act permitting local authorities to levy rates for public museums
- **1851** 13th Earl of Derby bequeaths Natural History Collection to Liverpool; museum committee established
- **1852** Parliament approves Liverpool's museum; Derby Free Library & Museum opens
- **1857** Foundation stone laid on new museum building
- **1860** Museum moves to its current location on William Brown Street



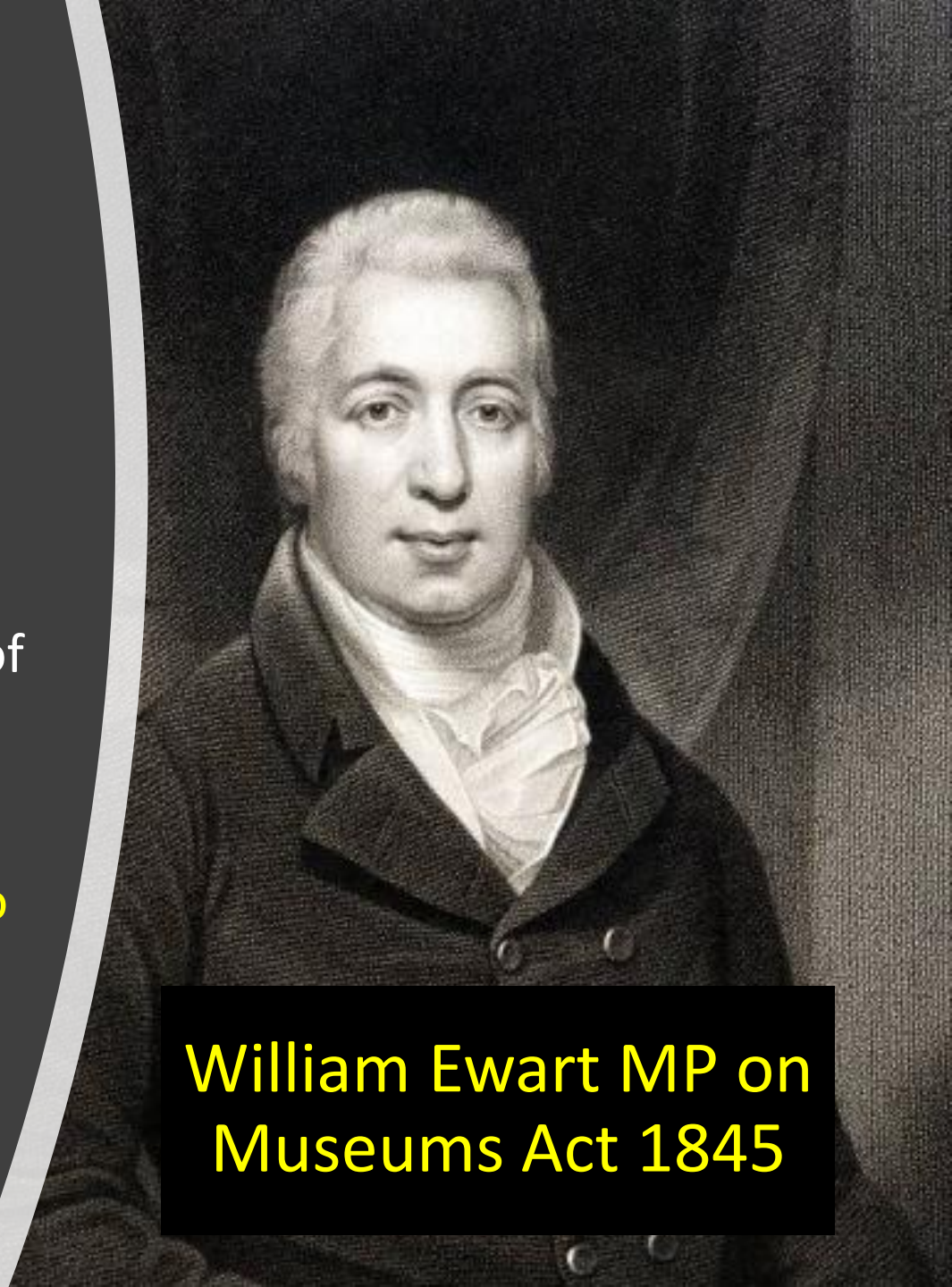
Liverpool's public museum: chronology

- **1906** Major expansion of museum buildings
- **1941** Museum suffers bomb damage during the Blitz
- **1956** Museum reopened
- **1986** Museum becomes nationally owned as part of National Museums Liverpool
- **2005** Reopens as World Museum Liverpool after £35million redevelopment



There are peculiar circumstances at the present time which allow for the diffusion of works throughout the country ... by means of railway

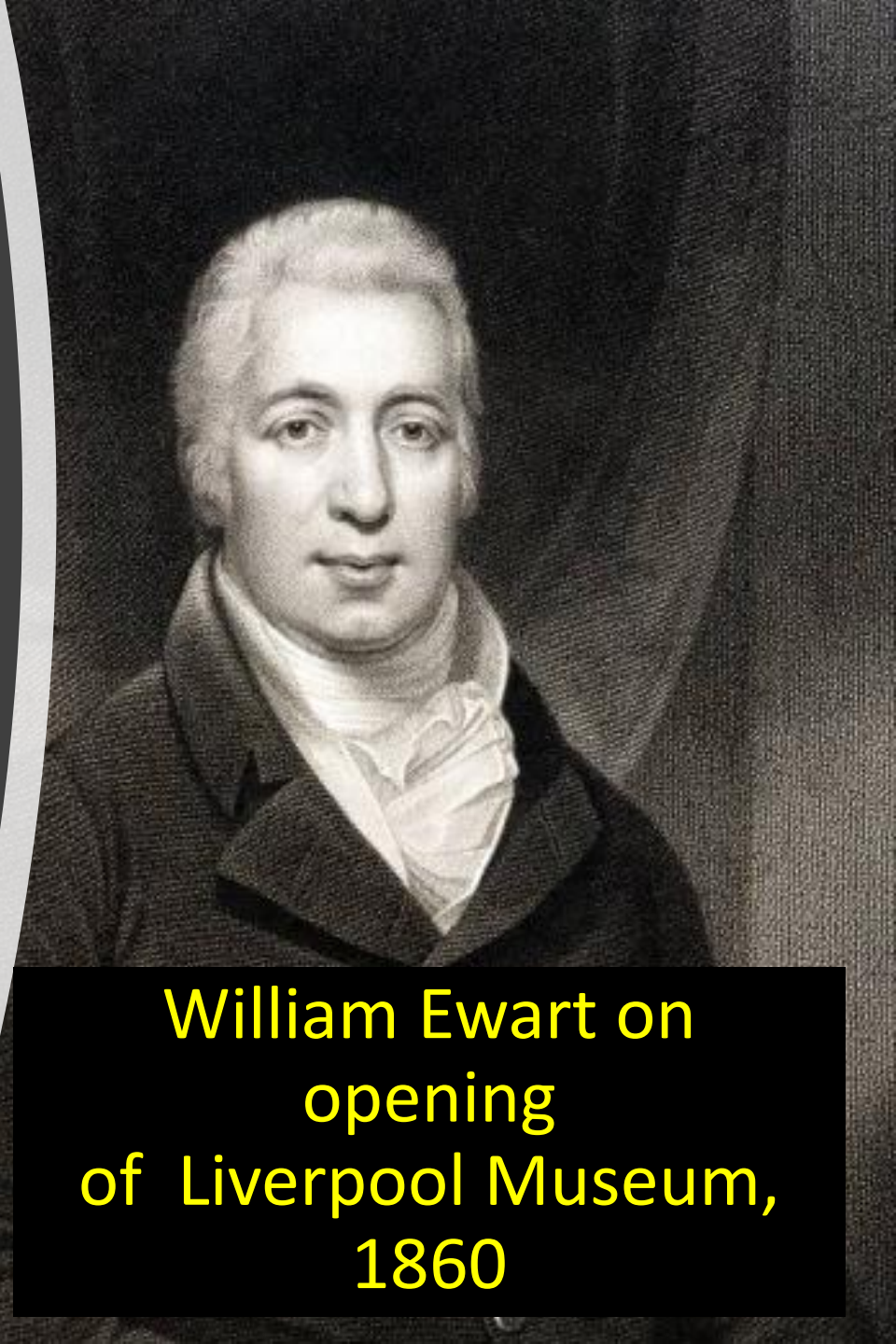
... It would be the fault of the Government if there was a single manufacturing or large town in the country deficient of a museum of such a character as might give a **sound taste in art to the population of that town**; and thus enable them to apply the skill they would obtain in the arts to manufactures.



**William Ewart MP on
Museums Act 1845**

It is a proud day for Liverpool to see this building now risen amongst us. I believe that this institution will have **a permanent civilising effect** on the character of our population. **I believe it will civilise them**; I believe it will Christianise them; I believe it will scatter the blessings of peace and of religion.

Liverpool Mercury, 19 October 1860



**William Ewart on
opening
of Liverpool Museum,
1860**

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill

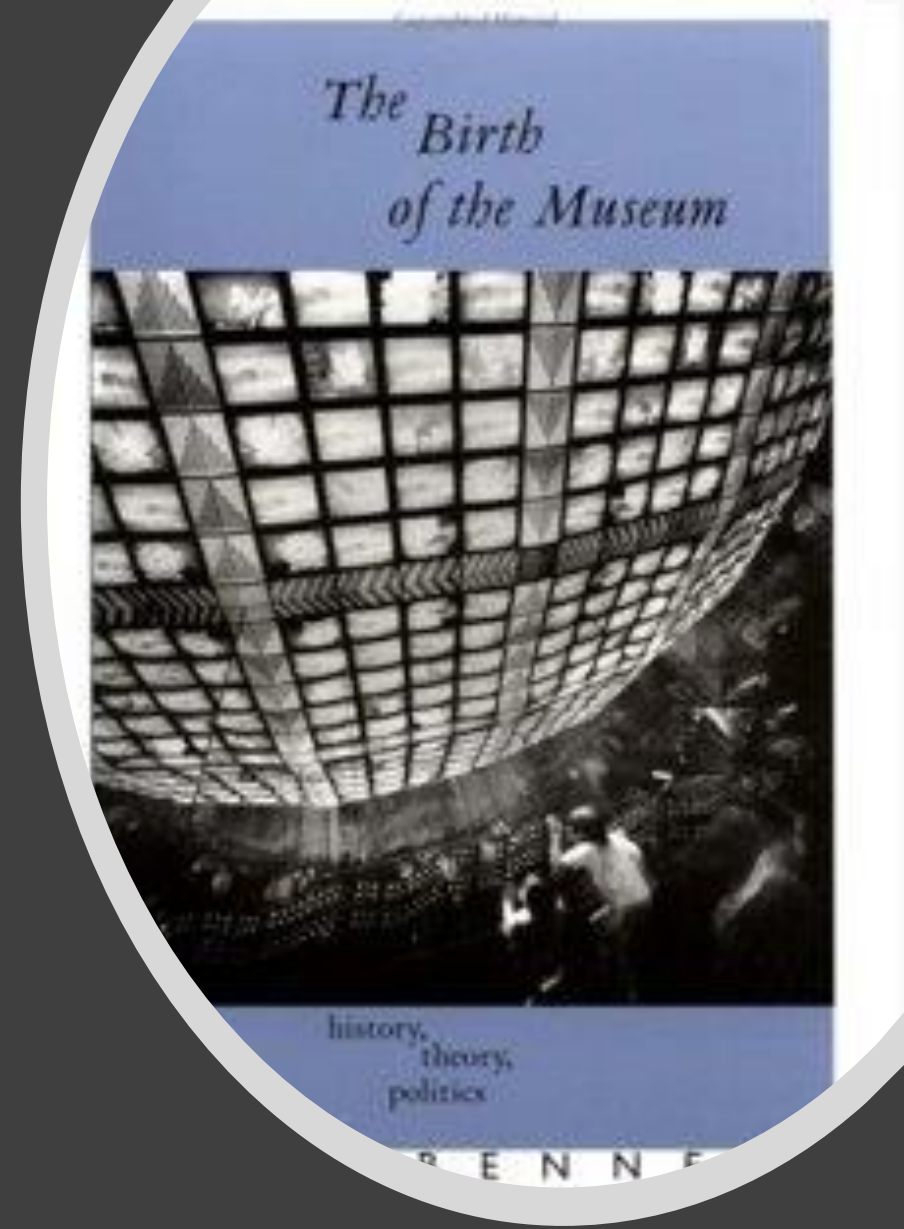
Museums =

- Disciplinary technologies
- Aimed to produce governable citizenry
- 'Hierarchical observation, normalising judgement & examination'



Tony Bennett

- Public museums and prisons = 'Janus face of power'
- Museums = persuasive rather than coercive power, which sought to regulate and reform the working classes through



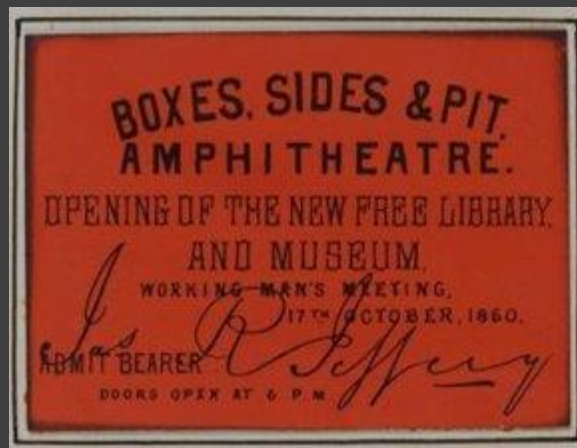
Kate Hill

- Hill = lack of sources makes it difficult to substantiate how working classes experienced museums
- Visitors = 'great unknown' for historians 'despite the weight of speculation, assumptions and pedagogy targeted at them'

Liverpool City Mission Lantern
Slide
Reference No: M 287 LCM/10/88

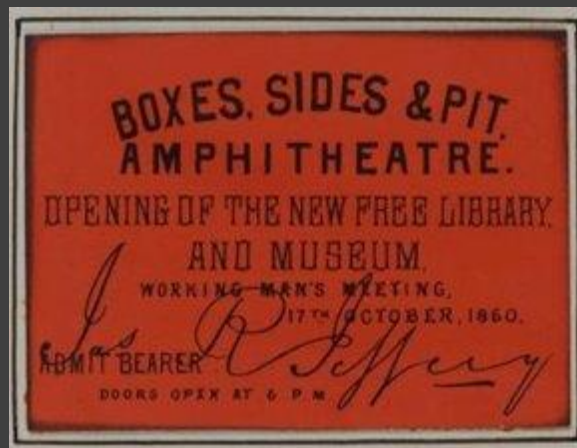
Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914





“ There was a time, sir, when what we know call workmen were looked upon as mere beasts of burden. Knowledge to them was a hidden thing ... and we were looked upon a class who knew only how to eat, drink, sleep and work. Yet amidst all this intellectual gloom we have reason to thankful that there have been spirits that have arisen ... Stephenson, Watt and Brunel... sprang ... from us showing us plainly that the mind that exists in the masses only needs cultivation and encouragement

Daniel Guile, 'A Working Man' in 'On the Opening of the Free Public Museum,' *Liverpool Mercury*, October 18 1860, p. 3



“ ... But, my working friends, we have a great deal to learn. Self-denial must be exercised. The power of the mind must gain complete victory over sensual appetites. Our leisure hours, instead of being spent in the taproom (‘hear, hear’ and applause), the singing room, and the dancing room, must be given to study, to thought, to perseverance, and to industry”

Gr. Br. Drunkenness, Select Committee
JAMES BLACK LIBRARY.

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EVIDENCE

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Leicester. - - -

ON

DRUNKENNESS,

PRESENTED TO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

AND
BY THE

SELECT COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE HOUSE TO INQUIRE INTO
THIS SUBJECT, AND REPORT THE MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,
WITH THEIR OPINIONS THEREUPON.

J. S.
J. S. BUCKINGHAM, Esq., M.P.,

IN THE CHAIR.

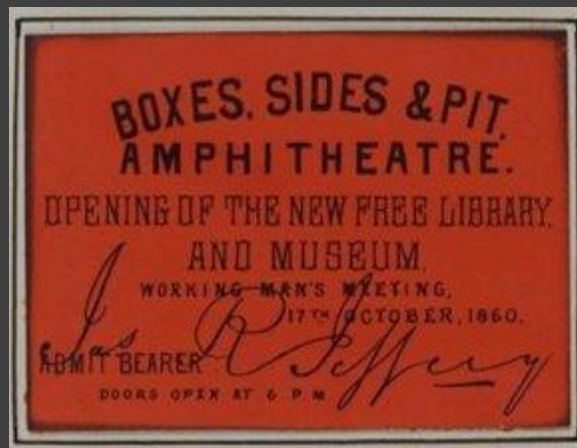
LONDON:

MR. D. MARTIN, 13, FOUNTAIN COURT, STRAND; OR OF MR.
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ROW; AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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“I consider myself one of the hardest working men in Liverpool (laughter) and I believe in my conscience that if [the museum] is taken advantage of by the working men of Liverpool, as I trust it will be, that the court I preside over will become comparatively empty and you will be able to make of me an idle man,”

T.S. Raffles, Liverpool Chief Magistrate ‘On the Opening of the Free Public Museum,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 18 1860, p. 3

(Below): Mr Toole, the toastmaster, at the opening of the Free Library and Museum, Liverpool, 1860, (LRO Ref: Hf 027 41 HUM)



People at the laying of the foundation stone of the Free Public Library, 1857.

(Above):
William Brown, laying of the foundation stone of museum
(LRO Framed Watercolours)

(Right):
Crowd includes Bishop of Chester, Nathaniel Hawthorne and J. A. Picton
(LRO Ref: P&SP - Libraries - Brown Library)

Liverpool's 'Old Families' (see: Tony Lane *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* [Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1987], pp.53-84)



James A. Picton

Picture from Liverpool Record office
museum opening collection
(LRO Ref: Hf 027.41 HUM)



William Rathbone

at the 'working men's meeting,'
October 17 1860
Liverpool Record office museum
opening collection
(LRO)



The 14th Earl of Derby

(Edward Smith Stanley, three times
Prime Minister)
Picture from Liverpool Record office
museum opening collection
(LRO)

Barriers to Access: Opening Hours

- Liverpool Museum was typically open only during working hours (10am till dusk) and remained closed on the day when labourers had most free time to frequent it (Sunday).
- Saturday 'half-holiday' was added in 1857, but museum remained closed to the public on Tuesdays and Fridays and completely shut on Sundays
- Wintertime Monday evening openings – practice terminated between 1871 and 1888
- Tuesday opening eventually began in 1890, with Sundays added following the First World War.
- Full seven-day week s finally implemented in 1922

Sunday Society Campaigning

Compliments of the Author 19
WORKMEN AND MUSEUMS:

BEING SELECTIONS FROM

A SERIES OF LETTERS

CONTRIBUTED TO THE "LIVERPOOL MERCURY"

During the latter part of 1885 and the beginning of 1886,

BY

"R. M."

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
EGERTON SMITH & Co., "MERCURY" PRINTING WORKS, WOOD STREET, LIVERPOOL.

1886.

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LIVERPOOL SUNDAY SOCIETY.

On Monday afternoon, the Liverpool Sunday Society met in the studio of the secretary, Mr. Wardlaw Laing, 8, The Temple, Dale-street, Councilor W. B. Bowring in the chair. This society has been recently organised on the same lines as the London Sunday Society, having much the same objects in view. There is a rapidly-growing feeling in Liverpool as to the necessity for a more rational observance of the Sunday amongst all classes than is possible at the present time. There are thousands of people in this city who are debarred from the pleasures of the art galleries, libraries, and museums, which are public property, on the only day they could possibly visit them. The friends of a more reasonable order of things have long felt the necessity for an organisation of some sort, round which they could gather, and several attempts at organisation have been made, but it has hitherto seemed as if public opinion was scarcely ripe for a successful movement. Now, however, a society has been formed

Barriers to Access: Comportment

It is requested that all parties visiting the museum come clean and in decent apparel to preserve an appearance of order and propriety. All smoking and spitting strictly prohibited. Children in arms not admitted nor children under 12 years of age unless accompanied by an adult.

Liverpool Record Office [LRO] 352 MIN LIB 1/2 Library and Museum Committee Minutes, 17 March 1853, pp. 84–86.

Fiona Candlin on Museums and Touch

rethinking
art's histories

Art, museums and touch

Fiona Candlin



- Regulations were only introduced to prevent visitors handling artefacts when museums began to freely admit *all* members of the public
- Prior to this, touch seen as congruent to 18th-century museums' enlightenment ideals and remained so whilst institutions like the British Museum maintained a de facto exclusivity.
- When this status quo changed, museums entered a different 'sensory regime' in which certain types of touch, and certain people's touch, were now off-limits.
- Working-class touch became 'associated with damage,' and 'a lack of common sense'
- Attempts regulate 'who touched and who looked.'

Museums and Touch

“Mr W. Rathbone rose and said ... he was aware of that objections might be raised to [opening Liverpool Royal (Institution to the public)], ... arising from **the apprehension of mischief from the too prevalent habit of our countrymen of examining objects of curiosity through the medium of their fingers.**”

- ‘Liverpool Royal Institution,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, February 17 1826, p. 3.

“[Visitors] do not belong to any class of society in particular. A large proportion belong to the **operative classes**, and of these again many are youths in their apprenticeship. The advantage to these which [the museum] presents would be difficult to over-estimate, and the effect is **beginning already to tell in a marked manner upon their conduct.** For some time after the [museums’] opening , before the system of its organisation was fully understood, **a slight degree of disorder and irregularity was perceptible. Individuals came direct from their occupations, with unwashed hands and negligent attire. To leave no excuse for this conduct, the Committee provided lavatories, which were for a time useful, and answered their purpose. The necessity for them has now almost entirely passed away.** Frequenters having become fully aware that the regulations are calculated to promote [their], cheerfully and cordially co-operate with the officers to this end. “

- *Report of the Library and Museum Committee of the Town Council of the Borough of Liverpool* (Robert H. Fraser: Liverpool, 1853), pp. 6-7

Museum Evening Openings

- January 1870 Thomas Moore notified the museum committee of ‘the great inconvenience’ generated by ‘large and increasing numbers of young people’ using evenings ‘for promenading and conversation rather than for the inspection of objects.’
- December 1870; youngsters again caused ‘annoyance and crowding out [of] well-conducted persons’ via a litany of ‘irregularities’ such as ‘persons wandering about without any object,’ ‘idlers ... occup[ying] seats to the exclusion of others,’ and visitors ‘spitting on the floors, lounging about and obstructing passages.’
- Museum committee discontinued evening openings in September 1871.
- Evening opening reinstated in 1888 – but only to avoid opening on Sundays

Working-Class Voices 'Speaking Back'

'Two working men' made 'very strong remarks as to the foolishness of expecting artisans to come to such a place after a hard day's work.'

One of the (unnamed) men objected that he was 'too tired to appreciate the beauties of the place,' highlighting various impracticalities associated with evening attendance:

As most working men live a mile or two from their work, it was impossible for them to get home after a hard day's work, get cleaned and get tea, then go to the museum with his wife and children, especially as he had to go to bed early in order to rise at five in the morning.

Mercury, 4 October 1888, p. 7. *Mercury*, 2 October 1888, p. 5.

Working-Class Voices 'Speaking Back'

'Medicine' at the Museums.—It may not be without interest, from a Folk-lore point of view, to place on record that but a few days ago, an Irish lad suffering badly from scrofulous sores, was brought to the Mayer Museum by his parents, who earnestly besought the authorities that they might be allowed to touch the child's neck with an Irish Stone Celt, exhibited in one of the cases. It was unavailing to try and persuade the deluded and superstitious couple, that no possible good could follow such an application. As their faith in the efficacy of the Stone could not be shaken, and they were loth to go away without being allowed to try this, in their belief, unfailing remedy, opposition was finally, and not without some hesitation, withdrawn, and the ancient implement placed in their hands. After the operation the parents departed happy, grateful, and in the most perfect confidence that their child would be healed, and not without expressions of surprise that so great a boon had been conferred on them without the fee, which they were prepared, and that very gladly, to pay.

Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums 1:1 (Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons,, 1897), p. 28